POLICY ON

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

(RPL)

"Building a seamless Education and Training System"

	POLICY ON RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

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REVISION HISTORY

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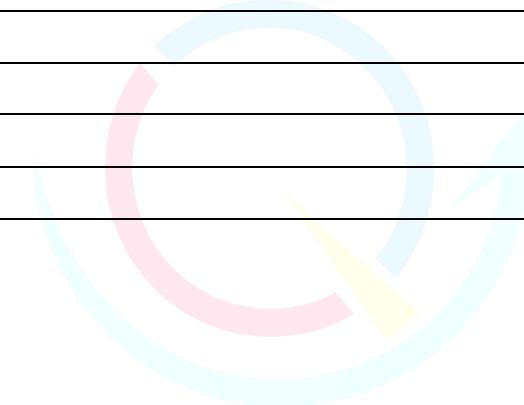
FOREWORD BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

In adopting the National Credit and Qualifications Framework (NCQF), Botswana hopes among other things, to achieve an efficient system of lifelong learning education and training that recognises and tracks all learning achievements (formal, informal and non-formal) and provides regional and international recognition of qualifications acquired through the Botswana education and training (E&T) system.

BQA sees it as a priority to promote the coordination and harmonisation of processes for the Recognition of Prior Learning on the part of all those involved in education and training in Botswana. Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA) is mandated by section 4 (1) of the BQA Act No 24 of 2013, to provide for and maintain a national credit and qualifications framework (NCQF). To achieve this, the same Act 4, (2f) directs the Authority to develop policy and criteria for the recognition of prior learning (RPL).

Many people in Botswana have been denied the opportunity for either employment or further training, which has had a detrimental impact on both the individual's welfare and the country's economy. Often than not, due to the absence of an RPL system, people holding certificates in hand are employed than those who bear non-formal qualifications and experience. Though there is no research evidence to prove it, history has always shown that experience is the best teacher. Taking the RPL route will consequently have a positive effect on cost recovery and productivity.

RPL is potentially rich with benefits for individual Batswana, communities and the nation. These benefits could range from helping to chart pathways out of poverty to the elevation of our quest for a knowledge society.

I am delighted to be associated with a policy designed to bring discipline and focus to an approach to qualifications that supports the quest for flexibility, freedom and human dignity. This policy responds to many provisions in Botswana's various education, skills development and human resources policies. It reflects experience gained in a range of pilots, as well as in approaches initiated in several ETPs. It is delightful to know that adopting an RPL system and implementing this policy means giving people credit for learning that took place in environments and situations outside of formal institutions, including through informal and non-formal education, work and life experiences.

BQA will ensure that ETPs and workplaces put in place RPL systems for learning programmes and qualification design to promote cross-sector qualification linkages and facilitate credit transfer between subsectors of the education and training system. I urge all those involved in this important undertaking, stakeholders and communities of trust, to work together intently for the effective implementation of this policy. This will go a long way in the further development of the system and consequently benefit lifelong learners and the nation at large.

I wish to acknowledge valuable input made by BQA technical and reference teams, steering committees, including individuals and organisations, internal and external, in the drafting of this policy.
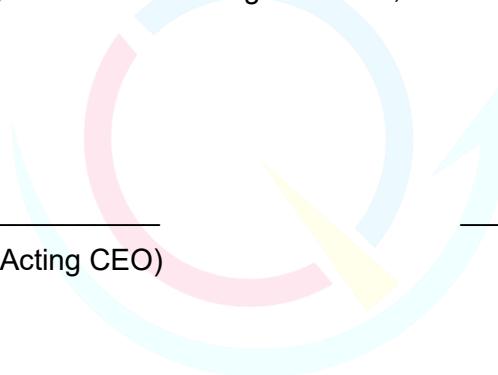
I thank you.

_____   _____

Boitumelo Watlhaga (Acting CEO)   Date

PREAMBLE

Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA) is a statutory body under the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD. It was established through the Botswana Qualifications Authority Act, 2013. The objectives of the Authority are to provide for and maintain a national credit and qualifications framework, and to co-ordinate the education, training and skills development quality assurance system. Section 4 subsection 2(f) of the Act mandates the Authority to develop policy and criteria for work-based teaching, workplace learning and work-based learning programmes, the recognition of prior learning, (RPL) and the credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) systems.

Recognition of Prior Learning assessment plays a critical role in formalising of peoples' skills that are otherwise undocumented. This document therefore goes a long way in assisting all the relevant stakeholders realise their goal of contributing to the reduction of the nations' skills deficit. The document comes at the opportune time where the country focuses on prioritising Technical and Vocational education, which is envisaged to help contribute towards unlocking employment opportunities.

This policy on recognition of prior learning plays an important role in guiding all Education and Training Providers, Workplaces, Assessment Centres and any other relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the RPL assessments. These assessments apply to all qualifications and part qualifications that are registered on the NCQF. The policy further articulates the stake of various role players in the RPL assessments. For successful implementation of this policy, it should be read I conjunction with the RPL and CAT policies.

	POLICY ON RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

1.0 ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BNVQF	Botswana National Vocational Qualification Framework
BOTA	Botswana Training Authority
BQA	Botswana Qualifications Authority
ETP	Education and Training Provider
ETSSP	Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan
LLL	Lifelong Learning
NCQF	National Credit and Qualifications Framework
RNPE	Revised National Policy on Education
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning

2.0 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

2.1 **"Assessment"** is a process of collecting evidence of learners' work to measure and make a judgment about the achievement or non-achievement of specified NCQF qualifications or part qualifications.

2.2 **"Education and Training Provider (ETP)"** a person or BQA-accredited entity that provides or organises a learning programme of education and training, including the provision of professional development services.

2.3 **"Formal learning"** learning that takes place in education and training institutions, is recognised by relevant national authorities and leads to the acquisition of qualifications. Formal learning is structured according to educational arrangements such as curricula, qualifications, and teaching-learning requirements.

2.4 **"Informal learning"** *is* learning that occurs in daily life, in the family, in the workplace, in communities, and through the interests and activities of individuals. In some cases, the term experiential learning is used to refer to informal learning that focuses on learning from experience.

2.5 **"Learning outcomes"** are the building blocks of qualifications. Qualifications may be made up of unit standards as one form of learning outcomes, statements of learning outcomes, as another form, or a combination of the two.

2.6 **"Non-formal learning"** learning that has been acquired in addition to, or alternatively, to formal learning. In some cases, it is also structured according to educational and training arrangements but is more flexible. It usually takes place in community-based

settings, the workplace, and through the activities of civil society organisations. Through the recognition, validation, and accreditation process, non-formal learning can also lead to qualifications and other recognitions.

2.7 **"Professional Body"** A professional body is a legally recognised organisation that represents a specific profession and is responsible for setting standards of practice, promoting professional development and ensuring the quality and relevance of qualifications related to its field.

2.8 **"Recognition of Prior Learning"** is the process of identifying, assessing, and recognising what a person already knows (knowledge) and can do (skills), despite the method of acquisition (including formal, informal, and non-formal), without taking them through the formal or additional learning process.

2.9 **"RPL Centre"** An entity registered by the Authority for the purpose of conducting RPL assessments for specified NCQF registered qualifications and part qualifications.

2.10 **"RPL Practitioners"** Assessment practitioners include both conventional and RPL assessors, moderators and evidence-collection facilitators. It is the responsibility of all practitioners to familiarise themselves with the policy and stay up to date with assessment trends and developments in their subject areas. Furthermore, they must ensure that no individual is disadvantaged or discriminated against by the assessment process and maintain the credibility of assessments.

3.0   POLICY STATEMENT

To achieve the above critical objectives, Botswana Qualifications Authority commits to facilitating the complete implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the RPL policy across the education and training sub-systems of the NCQF.

4.0   PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to recognise and validate all types of learning and guide the implementation of RPL in Botswana. The policy simultaneously sets out the broad conditions and expectations for providers and regulators of RPL regarding its effective implementation, management, and quality assurance. RPL, as conceived in this policy, gives fair recognition to knowledge, skills and competences that are currently not accredited, and enhances access to education and skills development.

5.0   OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are to:

5.1   Promote identification, assessment, and validation of formal, informal and non-formal learning by recognising knowledge, skills, and competences against NCQF standards.

5.2   Establish a common understanding about RPL and associated principles within the context of lifelong learning and the NCQF.

5.3   Facilitate the development of institutional/operational RPL policies and processes across Government Departments, ETPs, awarding bodies, workplaces and professional bodies.

5.4   Provide a framework for the monitoring and evaluation of RPL practices in Botswana.

5.5   Define the roles of key stakeholders in the implementation of RPL.

6.0   SCOPE

This RPL Policy sets out criteria for recognising prior learning and applies to;

6.1   BQA, Government Departments, ETPs, awarding bodies, workplaces, professional bodies, RPL practitioners, and RPL candidates.

6.2   All qualifications and part qualifications registered on the NCQF.

6.3   This policy is to be referenced with other pertinent policies, legislation, regulations and collective agreements.

7.0   POLICY PRINCIPLES

This policy is underpinned by the following principles:

7.1   Qualifications attained through RPL are the same as qualifications achieved through the conventional progression of study.

7.2   Learning does take place outside formal institutions of learning.

7.3   Participation in recognition of prior learning is a voluntary matter for the individuals.

7.4   ETPs/Awarding Institutions/centres should be accredited by BQA and/or in consultation with other mandated regulatory bodies.

7.5   RPL is a mediated and developmental process that uses assessment methods that satisfy principles of validity, reliability and appropriateness.

7.6   Where credit is awarded, it must be based on assessed evidence of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired formally, informally and non-formally.

7.7   Processes for the recognition of prior learning should be credible, transparent, rigorous, and must also include appropriate appeals mechanisms and reviews.

7.8   Roles and responsibilities of all awarding bodies and stakeholders involved in the RPL process must be clearly defined.

7.9   RPL practitioners must be provided with appropriate training and support.

7.10   RPL assessment should conform to and be subjected to the same principles and quality assurance or validation processes as conventional assessments to ensure credibility of RPL processes and outcomes.

7.11   Information about RPL, including policy, processes, and procedures, should be readily accessible and made public by all ETPs who offer RPL services.

7.12   RPL assessment should be structured to be cost-effective.

7.13 RPL administration must entail the use of methods of assessment that are flexible and mirror those used in learning programmes.

7.14 Credits awarded through RPL are transportable and transferable under the same terms and conditions outlined in the National Credit Accumulation and Transfer Policy.

7.15 Implementation of RPL should incorporate the use of Information and Communication Technology.

7.16 The purpose and expectations of RPL policy should be clear to candidates claiming access or credits towards unit standards, part qualifications and qualifications.

8.0   INTRODUCTION TO RPL IN BOTSWANA

RPL was introduced into the Botswana education and training system in 2006 under the Vocational Training Act No. 22 of 1998, which established the Botswana Training Authority (BOTA). BOTA developed and implemented the Botswana National Vocational Qualifications Framework (BNVQF) in response to the mandate to increase access to vocational training and promote learning and skills developed in all sectors of the Botswana economy. The BNVQF has now been replaced by the NCQF as a mandate of the BQA as of 2013.

8.1 Botswana Qualifications Authority is mandated by Section 4 (f) of the Botswana Qualifications Authority Act No. 24 of 2013 to develop policy and criteria for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

8.2 The National Human Resource Development Strategy (NHRDS 2009-2022), which is a platform for building Botswana's strategic human resource potential based on the labour market and attainment of its people, draws on a Life-Cycle analysis, which points to areas of concern in Lifelong Learning (LLL) in Botswana where RPL would contribute to addressing the following:

8.3 A highly selective and restrictive access due to lack of facilities and opportunities, especially in non-urban areas.

8.4 Lack of personal commitment and recognition of the need for self-development.

8.5 Lack of appreciation that learning is a life-long activity.

8.6 The national Vision 2036 – *Achieving Prosperity for All* – recognises education and skills as a basis for human resource development. There is a clear commitment to providing lifelong learning and training opportunities for all citizens in a curriculum framework that is outcome-based, with emphasis on technical and vocational skills as

well as academic competences. A national dedication is made to equip Batswana with requisite knowledge, skills and competences through education and training to their full potential, enabling them to compete globally.

8.7 The Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) 1994, which outlines the need for a modern educated, and knowledge-based workforce informed by the Education Commission (1993), provides a road map in terms of access to vocational education, life-long education and training opportunities, and linkages with business and industry.

8.8 Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (ETSSP) 2015, which is a plan for Lifelong Learning (LLL), is strongly and implicitly, supportive of the need for RPL: "The Lifelong Learning sub-sector focuses on strengthening opportunities for equal access to the institutions of public education as well as on providing a second chance for individuals. It encourages work-based learning and offers a smoother transition from school to adult life by combining education and employment, thus bringing flexibility to pathways and choices. Moreover, it puts lifelong guidance and counselling to the forefront and emphasises their importance to improve students' progress through complex learning pathways." (p.107).

8.9 The Cardno Report (2006), which was a study to establish the National Credit and Qualifications Framework (NCQF) highlighted:

8.9.1 Minimal RPL procedures are one of the limiting factors to learners' progression and access to other qualifications.

8.9.2 Absence of RPL processes and experience by many Education and Training Providers (ETP) are some of the important issues of discussion relevant to the NCQF.

9.0 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The following elements must be present in any RPL policy operated by Education and Training Providers and RPL Centres:

9.1 Registration of RPL Assessors and Moderators
RPL assessors and moderators should be registered in line with the BQA regulations.

9.2 Capacity Building of Staff

Institutions/Education and Training Providers (ETPs) and RPL Centres, must develop and implement capacity-building plans for staff:

9.3 Awareness and Publicity

Institutions/Education and Training Providers (ETPs) and RPL Centres should provide clear information on Recognition of Prior Learning policies, procedures and practices to all stakeholders.

9.4 Assessor Guidelines

There should be Criteria and Guidelines for RPL assessments to ensure adherence to the principles of assessment.

9.5 Moderator Guidelines

There should be Criteria and Guidelines for the Moderation of assessments for instituting quality assurance.

9.6 Candidate support

Support services need to be developed to complement the RPL processes and assist candidates in the preparation and planning for assessment.

9.7 Awards

Education and Training Providers (ETPs), RPL Centres, and awarding bodies are responsible for awarding the achievement of learning outcomes by the learners.

The procedure for awarding the achievement of learners is the same as for other forms of assessment but should be inclusive of RPL candidates' needs. The learner achievement should be recorded in the learner record data base.

Learning that has been recognised and awarded should be clearly identified on student transcripts.

9.8 Review and Evaluation: Quality management Processes

9.8.1 Arrangements for the regular monitoring and review of policies and procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning should be established. These arrangements should be set within established institutional frameworks for quality assurance, management, and enhancement.

9.8.2   The quality assurance and standards should be included in an institution's general procedure. Regular review of policies and practices will enable the Institutions/ Education and Training providers (ETPs) to assure themselves, learners, partner organisations, and stakeholders of the quality of their approach towards the Recognition of Prior Learning and the maintenance of academic standards.

9.8.3   The design of RPL appropriate methods and processes for gathering evidence and making judgments about a candidate's performance in relation to registered qualifications should be aligned to the RPL Policy.

9.9   Appeals

9.9.1   All RPL assessments should be subjected to the appeals process.

9.9.2   The RPL process should be limited to procedural flaws.

9.9.3   Candidates should be informed about the ETP's appeals process.

10.0   ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

10.1   Botswana Qualifications Authority should:

10.1.1   Create a framework and an enabling environment within which RPL is to operate.

10.1.2   Develop a strategy and an implementation plan and guidelines for implementation of the RPL policy.

10.1.3   Ensure that registered and accredited education and training providers develop implementation systems for RPL.

10.1.4   Lobby and motivate workplaces to support RPL initiatives in their respective sectors.

10.1.5   Develop criteria and guidelines on qualification design to promote cross-sector qualification linkages and facilitate credit transfer between the sub-sectors of the education and training system.

10.1.6   Design and develop qualifications and part qualifications to enable Recognition of Prior Learning and associated Credit Accumulation and Transfer.

10.1.7 Review all registered qualifications and unit standards to ensure that they are RPL compliant and do not impose unnecessary barriers to RPL candidates.

10.1.8 Ensure the review of RPL Policy in consultation with all stakeholders as appropriate.

10.1.9 Ensure the availability of competent RPL advisors, facilitators, assessors, moderators, and administrators at ETP's.

10.2 Education and Training Providers and RPL Centres should:

10.2.1 Provide an enabling environment for RPL implementation.

10.2.2 Develop and implement RPL policies, processes, and procedures that conform to this policy as part of the requirements for registration and accreditation.

10.2.3 Provide information about RPL, and collaborate with, the industry to promote RPL among employers and employees.

10.2.4 Integrate RPL with equity and access strategies to cater for disadvantaged groups.

10.2.5 Pursue institutional funding and student sponsorship models to promote the implementation of RPL.

10.2.6 Subject RPL assessment and outcomes to the same quality assurance and validation processes as those for conventional learning/assessment to bolster the credibility of RPL and credits and or qualifications awarded.

10.2.7 Disseminate information about RPL and associated credit recognition and transfer requirements and processes to learners as part of admission information services.

10.2.8 Conduct RPL assessments in the candidates' language of choice where practicable and where RPL assessors can do so.

10.2.9 Establish an appeal process and inform candidates about the ETP's appeals process.

10.2.10 ETPs should ensure that they have the staff capacity to deliver RPL services.

10.3 Professional Bodies should:

10.3.1 Comply with the RPL policy requirements.

10.3.2 Collaborate with Botswana Qualifications Authority, Education and Training Providers, and other stakeholders for the implementation of RPL.

10.3.3 Offer RPL for registered professional designations to ensure that no potential member is excluded from any level of membership.

10.4 Practitioners should:

10.4.1 Familiarise themselves with the RPL implementation guidelines and their role in the RPL process

10.4.2 Actively advocate for RPL.

10.4.3 Ensure that there is inclusiveness as much as possible in the RPL opportunities.

10.4.4 Deliver RPL assessment with the same quality assurance standards.

10.4.5 Consider the needs of each candidate when conducting RPL assessment to ensure parity and access for all.

10.4.6 Keep up with trends and developments in RPL.

10.5 RPL candidates should:

10.5.1 Familiarise themselves with and adhere to RPL requirements, processes, and procedures.

10.5.2 Be honest when answering RPL readiness assessments so that scarce resources are not allocated to people who do not have prior learning to be assessed.

10.5.3 Accept co-responsibility as an equal partner in the RPL process.

10.6 Awarding Bodies should:

10.6.1 Recognise RPL as a legitimate option for credit accumulation and part or full qualification award.

10.6.2 Collaborate with Botswana Qualifications Authority, education and training providers, and other stakeholders to support the implementation of RPL.

10.6.3 Communicate RPL assessment results to the candidate and BQA.

11.0 DATA PROTECTION

11.1 BQA's Data Protection Policy, issued under the mandate of the BQA Board, underscores the Authority's unwavering commitment to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, accountability, and regulatory adherence.

11.2 The policy ensures protection of natural persons regarding the processing of personal data, free flow of personal data in the provision of services, protect fundamental rights and freedoms of natural persons insofar as they relate to privacy and the protection of personal data.

12.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

12.1   Monitoring

BQA will conduct continuous monitoring of RPL implementation through:
- Tracking accreditation and compliance of RPL Centres.

- Reviewing adherence to RPL processes, assessment standards, and quality assurance requirements.

- Collecting and analysing data on RPL applications, assessments, outcomes, and turnaround times.

- Engaging stakeholders for feedback on effectiveness and challenges.

 Key Monitoring Indicators include:

- Number of accredited RPL Centres.

- Uptake of RPL candidates and completion rates.

- Compliance levels of providers.

- Quality of RPL assessments (moderation and verification results).

- Average time taken to complete RPL processes.

12. 2. Evaluation

Periodic evaluations shall be conducted to assess the efficiency, relevance, and impact of the Policy. These include:
- **Annual Implementation Review**

- **Mid-term Evaluation (every 3 years)**

- **Impact Evaluation (every 5 years)**

Evaluations will determine the extent to which RPL contributes to access, mobility, lifelong learning, and workforce development.

12.3. Reporting

BQA shall produce annual RPL implementation reports and share evaluation outcomes with relevant stakeholders.

13. Policy Review

The Policy shall be reviewed every five (5) years or earlier when necessary to address emerging issues or changes in national priorities.

14. APPROVAL

This policy was approved by the Board and signed on behalf by:

DESIGNATION	NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE
Chief Executive Officer (Acting)	Ms. Boitumelo Watlhaga		18/11/25
Quality Assurance and Framework Maintenance Committee Chairperson	Prof. Richie Moalosi		18/11/25
Board Chairperson	Mr. Gabaake Gabaake		18/11/25