

**Guidelines**

**RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING**

Version Control	
Document Number	3-2 Guidelines
Status (draft version / approved)	Final
Policy owner	Team Leader – Professional Services
Effective from	Date of approval by the Director
Review date	+3 years

Related FHEC documents: policies / procedures / guidelines, etc.	Policy 3-1: Competency Based Assessment Policy 3-2: Recognition of Prior Learning and Current Competency
--	---

**1.0 Five best practices for the Recognition of Prior Learning**

- 1.1 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a valid method of enabling individuals to claim credit for units and qualifications of the FQF, irrespective of how, when and where the learning took place, provided that the learning is relevant to the outcomes. There is no difference between the achievement of the required standards through prior learning and through a formal programme of study.
- 1.2 RPL must comply with all regulatory requirements for assessment. RPL policies, processes, procedures, practices and decisions should be transparent, rigorous, reliable, fair and accessible to individuals and stakeholders to ensure that users can be confident of the decisions and outcomes.
- 1.3 RPL is a learner-centred voluntary process. The individual should be advised on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate to support a claim for assessing RPL, and be given guidance and support to make his or her claim.
- 1.4 The process of RPL is subject to the same standard of quality assurance and monitoring processes as any other form of learning and assessment.
- 1.5 Assessment methods for RPL must be of equal rigour as other assessment methods, must be fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning. An individual may claim RPL for any whole unit unless the assessment criteria of a unit states otherwise. For example, if an external assessment sets the standard of learning

outcome that a learner must achieve, then the learner must pass the external assessment to achieve the unit and gain the credit.

## 2.0 General Principles of RPL Assessment Methods

- 2.1 Assessment approaches should include reasonable adjustments for the literacy levels, cultural background and experiences of students, and should not be a proxy for the assessment of skills such as literacy except where these are intrinsic to the learning outcomes of the qualification component.
- 2.2 Assessment approaches should address the specific evidence required to demonstrate prior achievement of the learning outcomes and assessment requirements of the particular qualification components for which credit is sought.
- 2.3 Assessment approaches should provide a range of ways for individuals to demonstrate that they have met the required outcomes and can be granted credit. These might include:
- Mapping of learning outcomes from prior formal or non-formal learning to the relevant qualification components;
  - Questioning (oral or written);
  - Observation of performance in work based and/or simulated environments
  - Challenge examinations/assessments;
  - Consideration of third party reports and/or other documentation such as articles, reports, project material, papers, testimonials or other products prepared by the RPL applicant that relate to the learning outcomes of the relevant qualification component;
  - Consideration of a portfolio and review of contents; and
  - Participation in structured assessment activities that individuals normally would be required to undertake if they were enrolled in the qualification components.
- 2.4 The assessment outcomes may enable the learner to meet the entry requirements and/or components of the qualification which may reduce the duration of the qualification.
- 2.5 The agreed credit outcomes of the assessment of the previous learning through RPL are specific to the individual.
- 
- 2.6 They may establish a precedent which can be used for other RPL assessments.
- 2.7 In general, these guidelines also apply to Recognition of Current Competency (RCC) process for award of credit for qualifications using competency based assessment.

## 3.0 Guidance for implementation

The FHEC will expect the following elements to be present in any RPL policy operated by a provider/organization that offers RPL assessment:

- 3.1 ***Claiming of credit – information, advice and guidance.***  
Once learners have decided to consider their learning for RPL purposes, they will need to know about:

- How to claim credit via the RPL process;
- Sources of professional support and guidance available to individuals and employers;
- The administrative process for RPL applications;
- Timelines, appeals processes, and any fees or subsidies; and
- The currency of existing evidence, qualification, experience, skills or competence. (i.e. does the evidence relate to current learning? Where HEIs/centres and / or professional, statutory or regulatory bodies have specific requirements and / or time limits for the currency of evidence, certification, or demonstration of learning, these should be made clear and transparent)

### 3.2 *Pre-assessment – gathering evidence and giving information*

- 3.2.1 When an individual has decided to pursue an RPL route towards achievement, it is vital that the learner is fully informed of the RPL process and has sufficient support to make a viable claim and to make decisions about evidence collection and presentation for assessment.
- 3.2.2 During this stage the candidate will carry out the evidence collection and develop an assessment plan. The evidence required for the award of credit will depend on the purpose, learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the relevant unit within the FQF.

### 3.3 *Assessment / documentation of evidence*

- 3.3.1 Assessment as part of RPL and within the FQF is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgements about a learner's prior leaning and experience in relation to unit standards.
- 3.3.2 Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of units and qualifications and the RPL system as a whole. The assessment process for RPL must be subject to the same FHEC's quality assurance processes as any other of the assessment process.
- 3.3.3 Learners' work which contributes towards their claim for credit via the RPL process should be internally and externally verified and all achievement documented as for conventional learner achievement, all RPL – related achievement should be marked as such in all documentation.
- 3.3.4 There is no fundamental difference in the assessment of previously acquired skills and knowledge and the assessment of skills and knowledge acquired through a current learning outcome.

### 3.4 *Awarding credit*

- 3.4.1 Awarding organisations/HEIs are responsible for awarding credit. The procedure is the same as for other forms of assessment. The credit is recorded in the learner record.



### 3.5 *Feedback*

- 3.5.1 After the assessment the assessor will need to give feedback to the candidate, discussing the results and giving support and guidance on the options available to the candidate, which may include, for example, further learning and development.

### 4.0 **Exemptions from programme requirements**

- 4.1 A learner may be granted an exemption from some programme requirements on the basis of prior learning experiences.
- 4.2 It is the responsibility of the provider to grant the exemption(s) in accordance with the requirements and guidelines below:
  - 4.2.1 The provider should outline their criteria for exemption arrangements on the basis of prior learning for each programme submitted to FHEC for validation. A provider should identify the criteria for the granting of exemption to a learner during consultation for the development of the programme.
  - 4.2.2 The information should be available in advance of selection of learners and available to prospective learners in all programme literature.
  - 4.2.3 For uncertified learning experiences, the learner will be required to present evidence to demonstrate how he or she meets the relevant programme requirements.
  - 4.2.4 This evidence must demonstrate clearly how, when and where the learner met the criteria.
  - 4.2.5 The evidence presented will be assessed in a fair and consistent manner against the assessment criteria for the specified learning outcomes. This prior learning evidence must meet the assessment standards of authenticity, currency, validity and reliability.
  - 4.2.6 If the evidence does not meet the assessment criteria the learner will be advised to of this decision.
  - 4.2.7 If the learner is not happy with the decision, he/she should be advised of the appeals procedures to be followed.

### 5.0 **Roles and responsibilities in RPL**

Best practice in RPL has shown that there are a number of important roles that need to be identified in order to facilitate the recognition of prior learning. These roles include the FHEC, providers, mentors, learners, RPL assessors and external verifiers. While there may be variation in practices and allocation of responsibilities within each of these roles it is important to be aware of their function to ensure that recognition of prior learning is successfully implemented.

#### 5.1 *The RPL Learner*

- Reflects on their informal and non-formal learning.
- Identifies learning pathway/qualification to be achieved.
- Obtains the relevant unit standards to be assessed against prior learning.
- Provides evidence of learning and develop portfolio of evidence.
- Identifies with assessors the areas of learning that still needs to be upgraded so that full credits/qualification may be achieved.
- Meets with their RPL advisor regularly.

## 5.2 *The FHEC*

The role of the FHEC regarding RPL is to:

- Provide guidelines to the providers for the implementation of RPL;
- Monitor such implementation;
- Validate learning programmes;
- Externally moderate assessments; and
- Certify competent learners.

## 5.3 *The Provider*

5.3.1 The role of the provider is to implement the procedures of recognition of prior learning to:

- Ensure access;
- Transfer and progression of learners; and
- Facilitate learners through the recognition of prior learning process.

5.3.2 Providers should ensure that all RPL policies and procedures are consistent with the relevant FHEC and FQF principles.

5.3.3 Providers will require personnel to assist the facilitation of prior learning. This includes mentors, assessors and moderators.

## 5.4 *The RPL Advisor/Mentor*

The RPL advisor or mentor should provide support to the learner; such support must include but not be limited to:

- Providing information and advising the learner on the RPL process for entry to programmes, for exemptions and achievement of a qualification or part of it.
- Assisting with the determination of eligibility of a learner for entry to programmes, exemptions and attainment of an award as appropriate.
- Assisting the learner to analyse the standards for achieving a qualification part of it in terms of his or her prior knowledge, skill and competence and the matching of these to the learning outcomes of the qualification.
- Advising the learner in identifying of and gathering of evidence.
- Identifying the learning gaps in terms of knowledge, skills and competence for an award.
- Co-coordinating the RPL process (in a centre, workplace, etc.).
- Acting as a liaison between the assessor, provider and the FHEC.

## 5.5 *Assessor and Internal Moderator*

- 5.5.1 The assessor is central to the implementation of RPL for the purpose of the learner achieving a qualification. Providers, as part of their quality assurance policies and procedures will require assessors to accurately assess the evidence of candidates against the registered qualification or unit standards.
- 5.5.2 RPL is a mode of assessment and like all assessment modes needs to be fairly and consistently applied. The assessment and internal moderation for RPL by a provider will be conducted in line with the FHEC Policy on competency based assessment.
- 5.5.3 In order to facilitate RPL, assessors will need to be trained and experienced in their specific field and be registered for assessment in terms of assessor registration policy requirement for the particular qualification or part of it.
- 5.5.4 Assessors will be required to:
- Assess i.e. judge the learner's evidence against the national standards as outlined in the qualification or unit standards.
  - Make recommendations for either achieving a qualification / unit standards, or entry to a programme, or an exemption to the learner, the provider and to ETQA as appropriate.
- 5.5.5 In case of learners applying to FHEC directly for recognition of prior learning FHEC will refer the learner to accredited providers, who offer RPL services.
- 5.5.6 The Internal verifier /moderator role includes but is not limited to the following:
- To verify and check that the assessment process adhered to accepted standards and principles
  - To report on assessment principles that do not comply with accepted standards
  - To advise and assist assessors in implementing policies and procedures pertaining to RPL and Assessment.

## 5.6 *External Moderation*

- 5.6.1 The process of assessment of a candidate's evidence for competence will need to include external moderation to ensure consistency and compliance with national standards. External moderation will ensure the standard for awarding credits is met and the overall credibility of registered qualifications is maintained.
- 5.6.2 External Moderation will be conducted in line with FHEC policy for Competency based assessment.

**6.0 Evaluation, review and improvement**

- 6.1 FHEC is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the recognition of prior learning processes as part of monitoring the quality assurance of programmes in HEIs.
- 6.2 The effectiveness of an HEI's RPL Policy implementation and procedures shall be monitored and reviewed against quality objectives to identify and implement appropriate amendments aimed at improving the effectiveness, economy and efficiency of the process.

**7.0 APPROVED BY THE DIRECTOR, FIJI HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION**



Linda Aumua  
Director  
Fiji Higher Education Commission

22.08.17

Date

