



**POLICY AND CRITERIA FOR RECOGNITION OF
PRIOR LEARNING IN ZAMBIA**

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

RPL Recognition of Prior Learning

ZAQA Zambia Qualifications Authority

ZQF Zambia Qualifications Framework

PCL Prior certificated learning

APEL Prior experiential learning

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1.0 Introduction

The Zambia Qualifications Authority Act No. 13 of 2011 was passed by the Government of the Republic of Zambia to *“provide for the development and implementation of a national qualifications framework; establish the Zambia Qualifications Authority; provide measures to ensure that standards and registered qualifications are internationally comparable; and provide for matters connected with, or incidental to the foregoing”*.

The Authority shall, with the approval of the Minister, develop and implement a National Qualifications Framework for the classification, recognition, publication and articulation of quality assured national qualifications.

The Zambia Qualifications Authority shall:

- 1.1 develop and implement policy and criteria, in consultation with relevant awarding and quality assurance bodies, for assessment, recognition of prior learning and credit accumulation and transfer in order to achieve the objectives of the Zambia Qualifications Framework.
- 1.2 recognise and validate competences for purposes of certification obtained outside the formal education and training systems;
- 1.3 recognise and validate competences for purposes of certification obtained outside the country.

2.0 Background

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Zambia has been applied at various levels of education system. Level 3 Certificates (Trade Tests) have been conducted for more than fifty years mainly in vocational and occupational trades. More recently, RPL has been used to upgrade qualifications.

One of the objectives of the Zambia Qualifications Authority under the Act No. 13 of 2011 is to facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, as well as to offer training and career paths. For this to be achieved, the Government

encourages recognition of prior learning as one of the ways of expanding access to education and training.

3.0 Scope of the Policy and Criteria for Recognising Prior Learning.

This document sets out the policy and criteria for recognizing prior learning under the Zambia Qualifications Framework. Principles and Procedures for the recognition of prior learning are described and intended for use by appropriate Authorities and the general public as defined under the ZAQA Act. This document shall be read in conjunction with the Zambia Qualifications Framework Level Descriptors.

4.0 Rationale

The aim for recognising prior learning in Zambia is to allow learners who have not been able to attend formal education but have managed to gain significant experience in a particular field to be given an opportunity to earn a qualification or to upgrade an existing qualification, which can be at any level of education and training. This policy recognises equivalences rather than a precise match between experience and academic learning. Assessment of learning from experience, consideration of relevant competences and equivalences contained in the qualification requires a set of agreed criteria, policies and procedures which this document specifies.

The overall goal of this policy is to stipulate well established criteria and mechanisms for recognising prior learning with a view to determining whether a candidate meets all or part of the requirements for the attainment of a qualification.

It is, therefore, necessary that a systematic, nationally approved approach is developed. This will protect the integrity of qualifications assured by the ZAQA.

5.0 Guiding Policies

There are various methods to measure prior learning based on historical or current evidence of performance. Good practice in assuring and enhancing quality and standards by Awarding and Quality Assurance bodies is guided by the following policies:

- 5.1 policies and procedures should be explicit and fair; and applied consistently;
- 5.2 policies and procedures adopted should help an institution to demonstrate that it properly exercises its responsibility for the standards of all awards granted in its name;
- 5.3 information available to learners and staff should be clear, explicit and accessible;
- 5.4 roles and responsibilities of learners should be clearly defined;
- 5.5 learners wishing to access recognition of prior learning should be competent to undertake their responsibilities;
- 5.6 appropriate support should be offered to learners;
- 5.7 policies and procedures should be monitored and reviewed regularly.

These policies shall be applied without discriminating potential candidates seeking certification in Zambia based on their disability, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age or nationality.

6.0 Types of Learning

The following types of learning shall be considered for RPL:

- 6.1 Formal - learning obtained through organized training in a school system from pre-school to a university leading to an award.
- 6.2 Non formal – learning obtained through organised training not leading to an award (e.g. an agriculture training, college, faith – based institution, etc.)
- 6.3 Informal- learning obtained through experience.

7.0 Benefits of RPL

There are benefits of RPL to learners and industry.

- 7.1 A learner should be able to establish the value of his or her competences through an assessment of prior learning for the purpose of:
 - 7.1.1 personal development by gaining credits towards a qualification
 - 7.1.2 progression into a learning programme
 - 7.1.3 seeking acceptance to higher studies
 - 7.1.4 promotion or a salary enhancement in an organization
 - 7.1.5 changing a career path
 - 7.1.6 necessity to abide to a new regulation to protect employment
- 7.2 Industry:
 - 7.2.1 Fast tracking workers through the skills recognition process
 - 7.2.2 Reduction in costs of training
 - 7.2.3 Reduction in down time while workers are in training
 - 7.2.4 Efficient identification of skills gaps allowing for more focused training

8.0 Guiding Principles

Principles to guide RPL are presented under the following headings

- 8.1 Policies and procedures
- 8.2 Information
- 8.3 Roles and responsibilities
- 8.4 Support
- 8.5 Monitoring and review

8.1 Policies and Procedures#

8.1.1 Principle 1

Decisions regarding the recognition of prior learning should be transparent and demonstrably rigorous and fair.

Where recognition of prior learning is being sought for the award of credits, the awarding or quality assurance bodies will assure themselves that the learning derived from experience or prior certificated study is equivalent to that of the learning that might otherwise have been achieved by following the awarding or quality assurance body's accredited programme of study. In reaching a decision about the equivalence of learning, the awarding or quality assurance body will consider a combination of skills and learning outcomes as well as the level and relevance of the subject knowledge and understanding to be evidenced by a learner.

As with other methods used to assess student's learning and achievement, the awarding or quality assurance bodies will want to ensure that the decision-making process used to assess a claim for the recognition of prior learning, and the outcomes of this process, are transparent, consistent, repeatable and demonstrably rigorous and fair.

8.1.2 Principle 2

Where limits are compulsory on the proportion of learning that can be recognized through the accreditation process, these limits should be explicitly stated. The implications for progression, the award of a qualification and its classification should be clear and transparent.

- 8.1.2.1 In recognising prior learning, the awarding or quality assurance body will describe and explain their decisions for stipulating limits, if any, on the volume of learning that can be achieved through the

recognition process. Limits may be applied to the smallest or a maximum amount of learning that can be accredited or claimed. For example, a module or cluster of learning outcomes may be applied for recognition.

8.1.2.2 When deciding whether limits are compulsory on the proportion of a qualification that may be recognized, the awarding or quality assurance body shall consider appropriateness of the use of credits to award or claim exemptions.

8.1.2.3 The awarding or quality assurance bodies may also wish to include in its submission consideration of whether learning derived from experience which is successfully accredited should be graded and, if so, how. Similarly, useful consideration may also be given to whether grades awarded by another education awarding or quality assurance bodies can be accepted, when a claim for the recognition of prior certificated learning has been successful.

8.1.2.4 Learners will need to be made aware of any limitations to progression or the range of qualification classifications that are normally available in a programme of study, which may apply if their application is successful.

8.1.3 Principle 3

Prior experiential or certificated learning that has been accredited by the awarding or quality assurance bodies shall be clearly identified on student transcripts.

The awarding or quality assurance body shall identify how the recognition of prior learning may be stated on student transcripts of learning.

8.2 Information

8.2.1 Principle 1

The awarding or quality assurance bodies shall provide clear and accessible information for learners, teaching and instructional staff, examiners, assessors and stakeholders about its policies, procedures and practices for the recognition of prior learning in accordance with the ZQF Level Descriptors.

The awarding or quality assurance bodies shall develop their own policies, procedures and practices for the recognition of prior learning, reflecting their individual organizational structures and missions.

8.2.2 Principle 2

The terminology, scope and boundaries used by the awarding or quality assurance body in its policies, procedures and practices for the recognition of prior learning shall be explicitly defined in information and guidance materials.

The awarding or quality assurance bodies are encouraged to clearly set out and unambiguously define the terms they have adopted in the documentation setting out their policies, procedures and approaches regarding recognition of prior learning.

8.2.3 Principle 3

Information and guidance materials outlining the process for assessing of claims for the recognition of prior experiential or previously certificated learning shall be clear, accurate and easily accessible.

Each of the stages in processes for the assessment of claims for the recognition of prior empirical or prior certificated learning shall be carefully and clearly identified.

8.2.4 Principle 4

The awarding or quality assurance bodies shall state the range and form of assessment appropriate to consider claims for the recognition of prior learning.

The awarding or quality assurance bodies shall state the range of assessment tools to be used in assessing claims for the recognition of prior learning and the appropriateness of such tools.

8.2.5 Principle 5

Criteria to be used in judging a claim for the recognition of prior learning shall be made explicit to learners, teaching and instructional staff, stakeholders as well as assessors and examiners.

The process, rules and regulations for assessing an application for recognition of prior learning shall be clearly stipulated by the assessor.

8.2.6 Principle 6

The assessment of learning derived from experience shall be open to internal and external scrutiny and monitoring within institutional quality assurance procedures.

The assessment of learning derived from experience should, in general, be subject to the same institutional internal and external quality assurance procedures as assessment of learning through more traditional routes.

8.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Principle 1

The scope of authority and responsibilities for making and verifying decisions about the recognition of prior learning should be clearly specified.

The awarding or quality assurance bodies shall outline clearly where the authority lies for making the decision to accredit learning derived from experience or prior certificated study, and the procedures to be followed.

8.4 Support

8.4.1 Principle 1

Awarding and Quality Assurance bodies shall give clear guidance to learners about when a claim for the recognition of prior learning may be submitted, the timescale for considering the claim and the outcome.

The procedure for RPL shall clearly stipulate timelines for processing of applications.

8.4.2 Principle 2

Awarding and Quality assurance bodies shall make appropriate arrangements to support learners submitting claims for the recognition of prior learning and to provide feedback on decisions.

The procedure for RPL shall clearly provide for adequate guidance to the applicants for preparing applications and for timely feedback.

8.5 Monitoring and Review

8.5.1 Principle

Arrangements for the regular monitoring and review of policies and procedures for the recognition of prior learning should be clearly established. These arrangements shall be set within established institutional frameworks for quality assurance, management and enhancement.

8.5.1.1 Regular review of policies and practices will enable the awarding or quality assurance body to assure itself, learners, partner organisations and stakeholders of the quality of its approach towards the recognition of prior learning and the maintenance of academic standards.

8.5.1.2 The assurance of quality and standards shall be included in an institution's general procedures.

List of Protected Terms

The following terms are defined as specified below for the purposes of this document only.

Accreditation:	is a term frequently used as a synonym for the recognition of learning as defined in this annexure. However, in this policy it is more properly used to signify the most formalized and widely practiced forms of recognition.
Recognition of prior learning (RPL):	the comparison of the previous learning and experience of the learner how so ever obtained against the learning outcomes required for specified qualification, and the acceptance for purposes of qualification of that which meets the requirements.
Prior certificated learning (PCL):	is previously assessed learning considered and, as appropriate, recognized for an award.
Prior experiential learning (APEL):	is previous learning achieved outside education or training systems and assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for an award.
Recognition (of learning):	any process that acknowledges and establishes publicly that some reasonably substantial and significant element of learning as taken place and can be assessed to have done so.