



RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT

GLOSSARY

Recognition of prior learning (RPL): Credit and acknowledgement of the competencies – or a portion of the competencies – required through previous learning and experience for registration in a specific category.

Outcomes: The competencies required to function in the category applied for.

Specific outcomes: The detailed, measurable, verifiable skills, abilities and values that must be demonstrated.

Assessment policy and method: The institutional requirements regarding assessment as well as methods to be used viz. tests, assignments, portfolios, etc.

Assessment criteria: Essential evidence that a candidate has achieved an outcome

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the process of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as sanctioned by the South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP) is to assess previously acquired skills and knowledge of an applicant applying for professional registration in one of the four categories identified in the Architectural Profession Act, 2000 (Act No.44 of 2000) and/or to register as a candidate in any of those categories and/or to write the Professional Practice Examination leading to registration. This document contains assessment guidelines and requirements for both applicants and assessors, as well as an assessment framework and pro forma report.

TRANSFORMATION AGENDA

RPL forms a vital part of SACAP's transformation agenda. The South African architectural profession remains challenged as it has not made significant improvement with reference to equity and redress, within the new democratic dispensation. While the focus of the current transformation initiatives remains largely at increasing the intake of students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds at architectural learning sites (ALSs), this is a slow process with a minimum turn-around time of about eight years from beginning architectural studies to completing the PPE. When considering the

disparity in the quality of secondary school education, under-preparedness for university is another serious concern, whilst at the same time universities face resource challenges and generally have limited capacity to support under-prepared students.

On the other hand, the reality of the South African architectural profession is that a significant number of practitioners from historically disadvantaged backgrounds actively practise their trade, with no opportunity to upgrade their professional standing other than enrolling for full time studies at an ALS. RPL affords these practitioners the opportunity to advance their knowledge and skills in order to upgrade their professional status. In this regard RPL will improve turn-around time on transformation than the only other currently available alternative, that of full time studies. It is emphasised that obtaining advanced professional status via RPL, will be subject to rigorous assessment and evaluation so as to ensure that the knowledge, skills and professional competencies of such persons are on par with their counterparts who have qualified via the traditional academic route. In this regard, continuing professional development (CPD), including registering for courses at recognised ALSs is vital to bridging possible knowledge gaps, while still in full time employment or practise.

ASSESSMENT PHILOSOPHY AND OUTCOMES

The fundamental philosophy on which the assessment is based is that practitioners in all four categories essentially share similar professional landscape and social responsibilities at different competencies. They are exposed to the same technological, environmental, legislative and socio-economic parameters and constraints, although arguably to different degrees depending on the complexity of the project and circumstances. At the same time it should be emphasised that there is considerable overlap between the four categories, and that the competencies required can never be as neatly packaged as documentation might suggest. RPL recognises that over time as experience is gained, competencies are gained, which allows an applicant to apply for recognition and a higher level qualification.

Architecture can be defined as the art and science of building. "The art and science of designing and building open areas, communities and other artificial constructions or environments, usually with some regard to aesthetic effects"¹. For the purpose of the RPL process, the essential skills and knowledge required to practise architecture in a sustainable, socially responsible and financially viable way were clustered into a range of ten specific outcomes referred to as professional competencies:

¹ Bartuska, T.J. and Young, G.L. (editors). 1994. *The built environment: creative enquiry into design and planning*. Menlo Park, Ca.: Crisp, p.138)

Competency definition	Outcome #
Architectural design	1
Environmental relationships	2
Construction technology	3
Building structures	4
Contextual and urban relationships	5
Architectural history, theory and precedent	6
Building services and related technologies	7
Contract documentation and administration	8
Computer applications	9
Office practice, legal aspects and ethics	10

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

1. INTRODUCTION

This document is intended to guide applicants through the preparatory and assessment phases of the RPL process established by SACAP for evaluating applicants for the purpose of registration in one of the four categories of the Architectural Profession Act, 2000 (Act No. 44 of 2000). The four categories are:

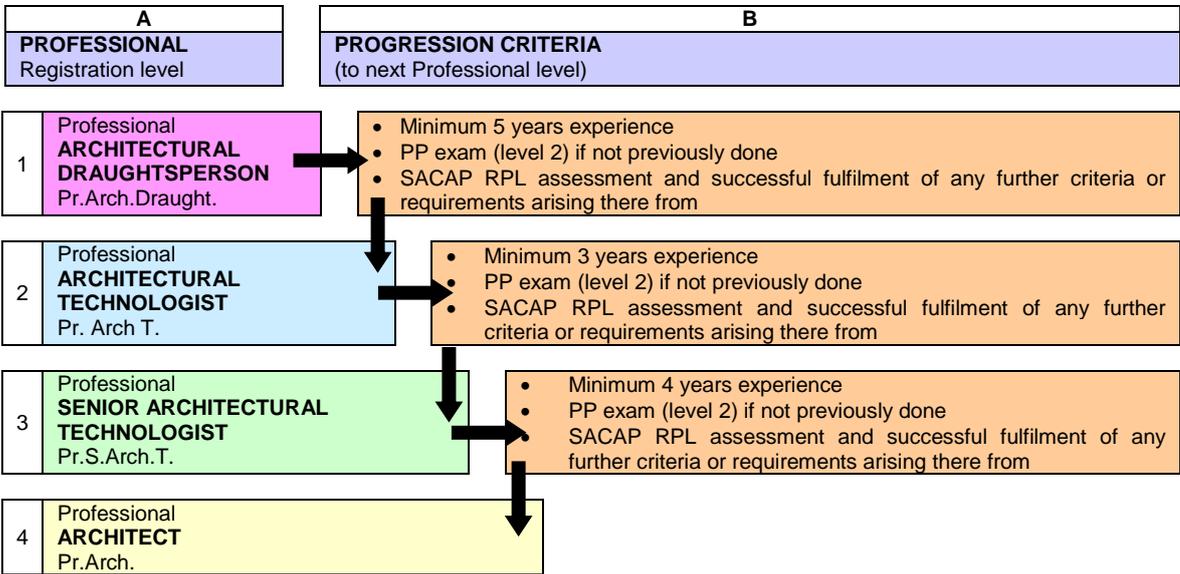
- The Professional Architect
- The Professional Senior Architectural Technologist
- The Professional Architectural Technologist
- The Professional Architectural Draughtsperson

2. ELIGIBILITY OF APPLICANTS

Only applicants who are registered professionals (not Candidates) and have passed the Professional Practice Examination (PPE) would be eligible for the RPL process. Those applicants without any formal tertiary qualification will have to first register as Candidate Architectural Draughtspersons, pass the PPE and apply for registration as Professional Architectural Draughtsperson.

3. MATRIX FOR RE-GRADING OF PROFESSIONALS THROUGH EXPERIENCE

The following matrix establishes the framework for the progression of **registered professionals** to another level of PROFESSIONAL registration through RPL and EXPERIENCE in the Architectural Profession. (Refer to the full framework available on the website www.sacapsa.com):



4. ASSESSMENT METHOD

The RPL evaluation is primarily based on a panel assessment of evidence and an interview which measures an individual's existing learning outcomes against the outcomes required for registration in a relevant category. An applicant could also be subjected to a written or oral examination on specific aspects of architectural practice, required to attend structured CPD courses, attend lectures at a recognised ALS and / or be requested to prepare an assignment in the form of either an essay research paper or a design project.

The assessment follows an outcomes based methodology. The frames of reference for assessment are the ten requisite SACAP Competencies and the alignment to the relevant NQF as per the HEQsF. Each competency is broadly weighed to correlate with the credits in the curriculum of a typical accredited program in architecture.

In all four categories the level of proficiency must be considered appropriate to the complexity of the projects envisaged at that particular level. This assessment must, therefore, be guided by the following documents, which must be thoroughly studied by both applicants and assessors:

- The HEQsF
- SACAP competencies
- SAQA Criteria & guidelines for the implementation of RPL All categories
- SACAP draft regulations for the identification of work All categories
- SACAP policy & requirements: practical training All categories
- SAQA registered qualification: B Arch, M Arch (Prof) Candidate Architect
- SAQA registered qualification: BAS Candidate Senior Architectural Technologist
- SAQA registered qualification: B Tech Candidate Senior Architectural Technologist
- SAQA registered qualification: N Dip Arch Tech Candidate Architectural Technologist
- SAQA registered qualification: N Cert Arch Tech Candidate Architectural Draughtsperson

The RPL Assessment Panel, which will comprise relevant professionals and academics may be able to verify successful achievement of all outcomes from the relevant assessment and subsequent interview with the applicant. In the event that the panel could not verify specific components of the required outcomes from the evidence presented by the applicant, these outcomes must be tested through oral, written and/or practical examination. If an applicant is assessed as inadequate due to not achieving the

structural critical outcomes, the applicant must gain further experience under mentorship for re-assessment and attend CPD courses.

5. APPEALS PROCESS

An unsuccessful applicant may lodge a thoroughly motivated appeal in writing to the Registrar who, in deliberation with the RPL Appeals Committee, may:

- 5.1 Instruct the relevant panel to consider additional evidence;
- 5.2 Invite the applicant for re-assessment; or
- 5.3 Dismiss the appeal and advise the applicant on the available processes for “upskilling”.

6. MODERATION AND REVIEW

SACAP’s RPL Appeals Committee will serve as an advisory as well as a moderation panel, and as a review and an appeals mechanism in support of regional RPL panels.

The committee will comprise of relevantly qualified professional and academics.

7. PREPARATION FOR APPLICANTS – GENERAL

Each application will be screened in accordance with an online self-evaluation questionnaire and the relevant preparation guidelines for such applicant will be issued accordingly.

8. EVIDENCE OF PREVIOUS LEARNING

Learning and experience will be assessed based on the evidence provided by the applicant. This evidence will *inter alia* include:

8.1. Online assessment

This will be in the form of an online test that will assess general knowledge and skills required of the relevant category of registration applied for.

8.2. Portfolio

The outputs of architecture are creative and graphic. Applicants should exploit the portfolio to showcase the building projects and other relevant products of architectural practise (e.g. Articles, lecturing, papers etc.) they have been involved with. It is recommended that they study design assignments and dissertations at schools of architecture to familiarise themselves with the latest presentation techniques. Some requirements are:

- The portfolio should be an A3 document in landscape format with the applicant’s

name and the category being assessed on the cover page.

- It should have a table of content listing projects chronologically from the most recent. Projects older than five years should be added with circumspection.
- Projects should be illustrated with design development drawings (reduced to A3) and photographs, and each project should be elucidated with a description of locality, client, nature and scope, and a statement of the applicant's involvement, e.g. development of the brief, designer or part of the design team, technical documentation or contract administration.

8.3. Curriculum Vitae

There are a number of authoritative guidelines available on CV writing. Some critical requirements:

The CV should be a properly bound document with a cover page identifying the applicant. Applicants are requested to submit **one original and three copies** of their CV's.

- A table of contents.
- The candidate's application form should constitute the first item.
- A declaration outlining previous work and experience, with a concise statement motivating the application and why the candidate believes it should be approved.
- Practical and academic experience should be chronologically listed, with the most recent achievements first.
- **Evidence** must be offered for any achievement claimed. Failing to include such evidence could result in delays and even refusal. Appropriate evidence includes:
 - Certificates for previous tertiary level courses completed;
 - Certificates for previously gained professional registration;
 - References or testimonials from current and past employers, supervisors and/or colleagues in a professional category similar or higher than that being applied for.
- Such substantiating documentation should be clearly and correctly cross-referenced with the achievement claimed.
- It must be emphasised that misleading information would cast serious doubt on an applicant's integrity and his/her suitability as an architectural professional.
- Generally a CV must be reader-friendly and the current trend is to focus on the quality of references, rather than quantity. Applicants should omit items and claims that do not have direct relevance to the application.

8.4. Recommendation from employer/s or clients

The employer or client recommendation will have to clearly explain the duties and responsibilities of the applicant with regard to the respective practice / organisation / projects. This is vital in assessing the experience gained, with reference to the ten professional Competencies as defined by SACAP.

9. POSSIBLE REQUIREMENTS FOR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Should the RPL assessment reveal gaps in learning or experience required for articulation to a higher category of registration, a list of requirements will be issued to the applicant.

This will *inter alia* include:

- 9.1. Working with a mentor; and an evaluation of such experience;
- 9.2. Attending relevant CPD modules;
- 9.3. Attending part-time classes at a recognised ALS;
- 9.4. Extensive self-study reading which will be assessed by the RPL panel.

A list of relevant readings will be provided for each applicant, based on their respective academic /experiential profiles.

10. LEARNING LEVELS FOR ASSESSMENT

LEVEL	LEARNING LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
	Knowledge	To be able to recall and remember facts and information (recall).
	Understanding	To not only recall facts, but especially to understand their impact (insight).
	Application	To apply existing knowledge to new situations.
	Problem solving	To solve a complex problem (analysis, synthesis & evaluation).

11. SACAP ASSESSMENT SCALE

PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY	LEARNING LEVEL REQUIREMENTS PER CATEGORY	OUTCOMES FIELD & N°									
		Architectural design	Environmental relationships	Construction technology	Building structures	Contextual & urban relationships	Architectural history, theory & precedent	Building services & related technologies	Contract documentation & administration	Computer applications	Office practice, legal aspects and ethics
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Professional Architect	Knowledge										
	Understanding										
	Application										
	Problem solving										
Prof. Senior Arch. Technologist	Knowledge										
	Understanding										
	Application										
	Problem solving										
Prof. Arch. Technologist	Knowledge										
	Understanding										
	Application										
	Problem solving										
Prof. Arch. Draughts-person	Knowledge										
	Understanding										
	Application										
	Problem solving										