Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

CEDAR INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY NPC

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Contents

Purpose

1) Cedar recognises that learning takes place in a broad range of contexts including work-based experience, life experience, self-tuition, professional development programs, or higher education provider programs. Granting advanced standing for prior learning ensures that students commence study at a level that recognises their previous learning experiences and are not made to repeat similar modules within a Cedar course.

2) This policy provides a framework to guide the application and evaluation process of relevant prior learning and experience.

Scope

3) This policy applies to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) candidates (all students and potential students who wish to receive formal recognition at Cedar for previous learning) and staff involved in the RPL process.

4) This policy does not provide for advanced standing for modules passed at another accredited higher education institution. Learning resulting from formal routes will normally be recognised via the Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) process. However, in cases where CAT is found not to be applicable, the RPL route may be explored (CHE Policy 4.2.1).

Policy Provisions

5) RPL serves two purposes. It either provides alternative avenues to gaining course admission *or* allows exemptions from modules in which learning outcomes have been satisfied by prior learning.

    a. RPL for *access*:

        i. promotes inclusion by overcoming access barriers to higher education and providing alternative admission routes;

        ii. is based on an evaluation of informal and non-formal learning (applicants may be granted admission to a Cedar course for which they otherwise do not meet the admission requirements);

        iii. is evaluated against the admission requirements of the qualification in question; and

        iv. recognises relevant forms of prior learning in place of normal minimum admission requirements for those who:

            (1) lack formal prerequisites;

            (2) do not hold a National Senior Certificate with passes at levels accepted for direct admission to Cedar qualifications; or

            (3) are adult learners seeking to commence higher education studies.

    b. RPL for module *exemptions*:

        i. Are based on an evaluation of informal and non-formal learning. Applicants may be exempted from certain lower level modules that are normally required as part of a qualification programme.

    ii.   A granting of advanced standing is an acknowledgement that a student has the knowledge, understanding and skills measured against the learning outcomes of particular modules offered by Cedar.

Policy Rules

6) RPL may be explored only in cases where CAT is not applicable.

7) Prior learning must normally be less than 10 calendar years old to be eligible for RPL. In exceptional circumstances and at Cedar's discretion, advanced standing for prior learning older than 10 calendar years may be granted providing no currency of knowledge issues apply.

8) RPL is granted for whole modules only; that is, advanced standing will not be granted for part of a module offered at Cedar.

9) Full qualifications cannot be awarded solely on the basis of RPL.

10) RPL cannot be used to grant an individual exemption from more than 50% of the modules required for any Cedar qualification offered. Consequently, a student must obtain at least 50% of a qualification through the completion of modules at Cedar for any given qualification.

11) The same set of prior knowledge cannot be used for obtaining more than one qualification.

12) Applications will be subject to customised assessment criteria, which may include:

    a.   assessment of a detailed portfolio of evidence (collection of documents to prove prior informal learning);

    b.   presentations;

    c.   essays;

    d.   performance testing;

    e.   examples of work;

    f.   special projects;

    g.   reports, critiques, articles;

    h.   literature reviews;

    i.   interviews or debates; and

    j.   satisfactory completion of a challenge examination, oral examination, access test or placement test.

13) As the RPL assessment process is not a regular process, applications for RPL must be made well in advance of the course enrolment period.

14) Advanced standing awarded through RPL will lapse if the student fails to complete module(s) in the course selected or does not remain enrolled in that course.

15) Eligibility for RPL does not guarantee a place in any course.

16) If an applicant does not qualify for RPL, alternative learning pathways may be advised.

17) If RPL is a possibility, the applicant makes formal application through the prescribed documentation procedure (RPL Application Form).

18) The RPL Practitioner will ensure that the applicant is supported throughout the process.

19) RPL is evidence based via the use of a portfolio and/or customised assessments.

20) Where potential for RPL is identified, an Evidence Plan is developed outlining what evidence and/or assessments are necessary based on the requirements of course/module curriculum, having regard for the candidate's context.

21) RPL candidates must cooperate with Cedar's RPL practitioner by providing sufficient evidence for evaluation.

RPL Procedures

22) A potential RPL candidate approaches Cedar and, by means of an interview, the potential for RPL is determined either for course access or module exemptions.

23) **Step 1:** Determining the purpose and scope of the qualification/module(s):

    a. Discuss and identify the candidates study goals and intentions.

    b. Determine the outcomes of the relevant qualification/module(s) in question.

24) **Step 2:** Determining the evidence required for evaluation/assessment purposes:

    a. Determine learning outcomes and assessment criteria for which the candidate must collect evidence, or assessments tasks to be set.

    b. Evaluate practicability of RPL with regards to time, resource and facility constraints.

25) **Step 3**: Gathering evidence/completing assessments

    a. The RPL candidate compiles a Portfolio of Evidence based on the Evidence Plan and in consultation with the RPL practitioner.

    b. Any relevant assessments identified by the RPL Practitioner are completed and submitted.

26) **Step 4:** Determining candidate eligibility:

    a. The RPL practitioner evaluates whether sufficient evidence has been provided to present to the RPL Panel.

    b. The RPL Panel compares evidence provided and/or assessment results, against corresponding outcomes of the relevant course or module(s).

27) **Step 5:** Determining further steps:

    a. If learning outcomes are mostly satisfied, determine whether further assessments or evidence can be sourced to satisfy outcomes not met.

    b. If the candidate does not satisfy module requirements, or if the candidate has insufficient means of providing evidence, the RPL Practitioner in consultation with the RPL Panel and candidate shall determine whether more evidence can be gathered or whether RPL is not a feasible option.

Evaluating RPL

Portfolio of Evidence

Types of Evidence

28) When compiling evidence of prior learning, the candidate may consider the following types of evidence:

    a. Direct evidence is evidence produced by the candidate and is deemed as the primary source of evidence.

b. **Indirect evidence** is evidence produced by the candidate from another source, for example the candidate's record of results from a previous institution of learning or correspondence from an employer.

29) Evidence can be compiled from a variety of sources, including but not limited to:

a. formal and informal on-the-job education and training (work-based learning);

b. work/life experience (experiential learning);

c. description of tasks undertaken;

d. in-house education and training;

e. self-study;

f. community involvement;

g. performance appraisals;

h. testimonials;

i. projects;

j. previous studies; and

k. other experience and pursuits.

Quality Criteria of Evidence

30) The fundamental principles of evidence quality include:

a. **Validity:** evidence must relate to the relevant outcomes and criteria to be assessed.

b. **Authenticity:** evidence must be attributable to the candidate.

c. **Sufficiency:** there must be enough evidence to allow an informed judgement of whether the candidate has met the requirements for competence.

d. **Currency:** the candidate must demonstrate current knowledge and skills relevant to the specific discipline/subject area.

Portfolio of Evidence Procedure

31) The RPL candidate compiles a Portfolio of Evidence based on the Evidence Plan in consultation with the RPL practitioner.

32) The Portfolio of Evidence is reviewed by the RPL panel.

33) Based on the Evidence Plan, the Portfolio of Evidence is evaluated:

a. If the Portfolio of Evidence is insufficient, the RPL practitioner details what further evidence is required.

b. If the Portfolio of Evidence is deemed unacceptable and it is recommended that the RPL process be discontinued, a report is written by the Registrar or RPL Practitioner detailing the reasons for the decision. The RPL practitioner will then advise the applicant on alternative learning pathways.

c. If the Portfolio of Evidence is acceptable an RPL Assessment Plan is compiled to assess the Portfolio of Evidence. The Assessment Plan must detail how competence is to be assessed against the required module outcomes.

Assessment Approach

34) When evaluating an RPL candidate, Cedar may use a broader approach than the regular assessment criteria used in assessing module outcomes depending on the context of the candidate's background. Moreover, rather than consisting of assessment processes only, RPL includes 'translation' of informal and non-formal bodies of knowledge into their formal and structured equivalents based on specific competencies.

35) Assessment criteria should seek to accommodate the knowledge and skills gained by the learner in terms of their value for the envisaged course of study. In response to the uniqueness of each individual case, consideration should be given to the fact that prior knowledge and skills acquired might only be expressed in language and vocabulary that is not necessarily the media of teaching and learning at Cedar.

36) When assessing against discipline criteria, suitable staff with the relevant disciplinary expertise will be involved in assessing the learning achieved by RPL.

37) All assessments shall be moderated using the Moderation of Assessment Task Design form.

38) RPL assessment establishes whether the student/applicant:

   a. is able to meet module outcomes or competencies;

   b. is able to embark on a particular course of study in view of previous experience and current knowledge; or

   c. can be deemed competent or qualified in terms of the assessment criteria embedded in the course/module(s).

Assessment Process

39) A candidate's knowledge, skills and competencies will be assessed by an RPL panel based on carefully designed assessment tasks.

40) A candidate found to be 'competent', meeting the required learning outcomes for the module(s), will be notified accordingly by Cedar.

41) A candidate found to be 'not yet competent' in certain learning outcomes, may either be requested to do additional set work and be assessed at a later date, or will be advised to follow the traditional route of study and register for the module.

Appeals

42) An RPL candidate who is not satisfied with the outcomes of the RPL process, has the right to appeal in writing to the Registrar.

43) The Registrar and Academic Management will review the decision with the Board of Directors and notify the applicant of the decision in writing.

44) The decision of the Board of Directors is final, and no further discussion will be entered into.

Academic Records

45) Successful RPL outcomes shall be verified and signed by the Registrar. Such verification shall appear on the original application documentation for safe keeping on Cedar's server.

46) In contrast to CAT, an RPL exemption from a module *does not* translate to credits being awarded for that module.

47) Students receiving module exemptions will complete that qualification with a total number of credits that is less than the usual amount for that qualification.

48) Certificates awarded at the successful completion of a qualification will not reflect that a candidate has gained access to a programme or been awarded advanced standing through RPL processes.

49) The academic record of that student will reflect 'exempted' against the modules that s/he was exempted from.

RPL Quality Assurance

50) Quality assurance involves RPL application, assessment, reporting and management systems. Consequently:

   a. RPL is structured and organised by clear policies and procedures;

   b. Portfolio/assessment results inform RPL decisions;

   c. module exemptions are only granted for the relevant programme;

   d. competent assessors with appropriate discipline expertise evaluate the applicant;

   e. RPL practitioners shall register with a professional forum for RPL practitioners which meets the requirements of the National Co-ordinating Mechanism for RPL and undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for RPL practitioners, meeting professional requirements;

   f. personnel involved in assessment have adequate training or experience;

   g. assessors engage in professional development as opportunities arise from time to time;

   h. candidates will be supported throughout the process;

   i. RPL transparency will be achieved through well documented processes; and

   j. Cedar ensures that all RPL applicants are treated with fairness and justice, that processes and procedures are reasonably practicable.

Review of Policy

51) The RPL policy is reviewed at least every 5 years (or as the need arises).

52) The review process considers the following:

   a. RPL policy alignment to legislation and regulations;

   b. consistency and fairness of RPL practices and admissions;

   c. RPL staff capacity and resources;

   d. timelines and logistical challenges; and

   e. data management.

53) Any inadequacies or required improvements identified in the review process will inform a subsequent policy update.

Access to information

54) Information based on this policy is public information and must be published as a registration requirement.

55) RPL information will be available on Cedar's website.

56) Academic Management will ensure that all staff engaged in RPL are informed of the processes and issues involved, and the potential barriers commonly experienced by adult learners seeking to enter higher education.

Glossary

Advanced Standing is the recognition of prior studies taken at other institutions that have equivalence to similar studies at Cedar. this means that once advanced standing is given, the student is not required to study these Cedar modules.

Assessment Plan describes how the candidate will be assessed for RPL. This includes assessing the Portfolio of Evidence and may include further written tests or completion of other assessment tasks.

Challenge Examination is an examination which a discipline may require a student to successfully complete before granting advanced standing on the basis of non-formal prior learning for a specific Cedar module. Examinations may incur a fee at the discretion of Academic Management.

Credit – recognition granted towards meeting the requirements and learning outcomes of a module at Cedar. Each credit corresponds to ten notional study hours.

Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) is a term that is used to refer to the mechanism for promoting articulation between qualifications within a sub-framework of the NQF. The purpose of CAT is to provide for mobility of students and enhance their chances to successfully complete their qualifications. CAT also provides for articulation across the sub-frameworks of the NQF in order to facilitate lifelong learning and access to the workplace. Only formal learning is considered for CAT.

Evidence Plan is a formalised plan for gathering and compiling the required evidence on which the RPL candidate will be assessed. This evidence is compiled into the Portfolio of Evidence. The evidence plan is based on the requirements of the curriculum, in particular the outcomes and assessment criteria. Required evidence may include further written tests or completion of other assessment tasks.

Experiential learning – see Informal Learning

Formal learning consists of programmes or courses undertaken with recognised higher education providers. Such learning has already been assessed by an educational establishment within the Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework (HEQSF). Formal learning leads to the awarding of a qualification or part qualification registered on the NQF and may apply to credit accumulation and transfer.

Informal learning means learning has been gained from daily activities related to paid or unpaid work, family or community, leisure or life experience including incidental learning.

Non-formal learning means planned educational interventions that are not intended to lead to awarding of qualifications or part qualifications, for example professional short courses and in-service training courses.

Portfolio of Evidence constitutes all required evidence identified in the evidence plan. The RPL candidate will be assessed on the evidence contained in the evidence portfolio.

Programme is a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification. Programmes may be discipline-based, professional, career-focused, inter or multi-disciplinary in nature. A programme has recognised entry and exit points. All higher education programmes and qualifications must have a core component and may have a fundamental and/or elective component

depending on the purpose of the programme or the qualification. The credit allocation for core, fundamental and elective learning will depend on the purpose of the programme or qualification.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) - the process through which non-formal learning and informal learning are measured, mediated for recognition across different contexts and certified against the requirements for access, inclusion or advancement in the formal education and training system or workplace. RPL can be employed to gain access to, or exemption from modules and/or courses that contribute towards a particular qualification.

RPL practitioner is a person appointed within Cedar who is well acquainted with the field of study and acts in a supportive role to the RPL candidate.

RPL panel is established by appointment and consists of a trained RPL assessor, an industry representative (where suitable) and academics with relevant expertise from various departments/faculties to evaluate the Portfolio of Evidence against relevant outcomes.

RPL candidate is the person applying for RPL.

RPL Portfolio contains all documentation concerning a particular RPL candidate.

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Related Internal Documents

Admission and Registration Policy

Credit Accumulation and Transfer Policy

Enrolment Application form