APPROVAL BODY/DEPARTMENT	DATE APPROVED
School of Education	07th April 2017
School of Social Sciences	07th April 2017
Office of the Registrar	12th April 2017
Student Services	12th April 2017
School of Business and Management Studies	12th April 2017
Centre for Continuing and Professional Development	12th April 2017
Centre for Instructional Technology	12th April 2017
Editorial and Publications Centre	12th April 2017
Centre for Research and Innovation	12th April 2017
Financial Services	12th April 2017
School of Science and Technology	12th April 2017
Executive Management	25th September 2017
Programmes Committee of the Board	4th October 2017
BOCODOL Board of Governors	2nd November 2017
Date of Effectiveness	2nd November 2017
Review Date	Once every 5 years

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

BOU – Botswana Open University

NCQF – National Credit and Qualification Framework

PLA - Prior Learning Assessment

RCC- Recognition of Current Competence

RNPE - Revised National Policy on Education

RPL – Recognition of Prior Learning

SADC – Southern African Development Community

SAQA -South African Qualifications Authority

UNISA- University of South Africa

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Assessment refers to making a value judgement on the candidate's ability to demonstrate achievement of stipulated learning outcomes.

Credit refers to the quantifying of the volume of learning required for a specific qualification. In this Policy, one credit is equated to 10 notional learning hours.

Credit accumulation refers to the totalling of credits required to complete a qualification or part qualification.

Credit transfer refers to the vertical, horizontal and diagonal relocation of credits towards a qualification or part qualification on the same or different level usually between programmes.

Programme refers to a structured and purposeful set of learning experiences that lead to a qualification.

Qualification refers to a registered national qualification.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL), sometimes referred to as Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) or Recognition of Current Competence (RCC) is a process to assess skills and knowledge acquired in informal or non-formal contexts against the stipulated learning outcomes of a course or programme. This learning is sometimes described as informal, non-formal or experiential learning.

RPL Candidate refers to a person making a submission to be assessed on his/her prior learning competencies and who has submitted the application for assessment.

RPL Advisor refers to the officer responsible for applying the standards of RPL and who determines the eligibility of the candidate to apply for prior learning recognition.

Assessor refers to the accredited officer who will make a value judgment on the work submitted by the candidate and gives it a grade.

Academic Specialist refers to the Lecturer of the course on whose content the RPL candidate wishes to be assessed.

Internal Moderator refers to an internal specialist engaged to monitor the quality of the RPL process by verifying that the assessment has been carried out according to procedure and standard.

External Moderator refers to a neutral specialist engaged to monitor compliance and consistency to RPL assessment provisions.

1.0   PREAMBLE

1.1   The provision of unlimited access to quality education is an obvious concern for any educational system, Botswana included. The Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE: 1994) makes mention of the need for provision of equal access to education and training opportunities. Pursuant to this notion, the Botswana National Credit and Qualifications Framework (NCQF) underscores the need for promotion of access to and equity in education and training as well as acquisition of relevant qualifications. It is noted that most adults are marginalized with regard to issues of access and equity, largely due to lack of formal learning which leads to certification. It is, however, noted that such people have amassed a wealth of un-certificated knowledge and skills from experiences accumulated from their communities, workplaces and general daily interactions.

1.2   It is against the afore-mentioned background that the concept of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) has gained momentum. The Botswana Open University (BOU), as an institution mandated to bridge the education gap by minimizing barriers and enhancing access to education and training opportunities, recognizes the need to institutionalize Recognition of Prior Learning. The development of the RPL Policy thus articulates the processes and procedures for ensuring recognition of knowledge, skills and competencies gained either informally or non-formally.

1.3   The development of this RPL Policy has been informed by other policy documents, both locally and internationally including: Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), University of South Africa (UNISA) RPL Policy, South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Policy on RPL, and South African Council on Higher Education policies on RPL. Specific attention has been given to the National RPL Policy.

1.4   This policy should be read and implemented in conjunction with other BOU policies on learner admissions and assessment.

2.0   POLICY AIMS

2.1 The Policy aims to acknowledge that some knowledge, skills and competences are gained through non formal and informal means and may not necessarily be certified and credited. The policy therefore intends to give direction on recognition of such.

3.0   POLICY OBJECTIVES

3.1 To facilitate access, exemption or attainment of an award through recognition of prior learning.

3.2 To serve as a guideline for implementation of RPL within BOU.

3.3 To serve as a reference point for all officers responsible for communicating information to students and other stakeholders.

4.0 SCOPE

4.1 Prior learning assessment targets current and prospective students who wish to demonstrate that they have acquired learning through work and life experiences that is equivalent to the learning outcomes of a course or programme.

4.2 All courses and programmes offered by the institution shall have provisions for Recognition of Prior Learning.

5.0 KEY POLICY PRINCIPLES FOR RPL

5.1 People learn every day; non-formally and informally from voluntary service, workplace, home or community. RPL suggests this knowledge deserves to be recognized. Assessment should recognize learning regardless of how, when and where it was acquired provided the learning is relevant to the learning outcome in the qualification.

5.2 Credit is awarded for demonstrable knowledge and skills acquired through experience and not for experience alone.

5.3 RPL for credit must make it possible to award credit towards a qualification or part qualification as guided by the NCQF.

5.4 RPL for access must cater for all learners across all levels who do not meet the entry requirements for a qualification.

5.5 Prior learning assessment must comply with all other regulatory assessment policies, procedures and processes.

5.6 The assessment must be up to the standard and must be transparent, equitable and accessible to all stakeholders.

5.7 RPL assessment like any other assessment should conform to assessment principles and be open to appeal and review.

5.8 Prior learning assessment must cater for international candidates through strategic partnerships and networks across borders.

5.9 Prior learning assessment must be quality assured like any other assessment procedures.

5.10 The RPL assessment instruments will be developed by the department/discipline in which the credit is sought.

5.11 Staff involved in managing and supporting the RPL process should be given adequate training and consistent support.

5.12 Roles and responsibilities of RPL officers must be clear and specified.

5.13 RPL Assessment should be structured and offered at minimized costs to the candidate.

6.0 EVIDENCE OF KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

6.1 A candidate applying for RPL shall be required to produce full documentation of specific skills, knowledge and values related to the learning outcomes of the course for which they seek recognition. The documents may include:

6.1.1.1 Portfolio of evidence

6.1.1.2 Non-credit certificates

6.1.1.3 References from past employers and testimonials

6.1.1.4 Work products/artifacts to demonstrate skills in workplace performance

6.1.1.5 Satisfactory performance in oral or written examinations

6.1.1.6 Performance evaluations e.g. video, role plays, audio presentations

7.0   RPL OUTCOMES

7.1   Prior learning assessment may in the end:

    7.1.1 Create access to a programme for a student who otherwise would not have qualified according to the standing entry requirements.

    7.1.2 Award credit to a candidate without having to go through a course. However, for academic programmes, the candidate will do at least 60% with the College and can get at most 40% of the final qualification through RPL.

8.0   RE-SUBMISSION FOR ASSESSMENT

8.1 In the event that the candidate's prior learning assessment result is unsuccessful, the candidate may re-apply for one additional assessment opportunity provided that more evidence has been submitted.

9.0   RPL PROCESS

9.1 The starting point in RPL assessment is for the student to apply for prior learning assessment, producing all valid documents and/or evidence of claims made on knowledge and skills gained. The claim could be on prior knowledge and, or skills that justifies equivalence to the entry requirements.

9.2 A Candidate will be required to document their claim for competency in sufficient detail to enable the Assessor to decide on the assessment needed. The RPL Advisor will assist candidates to identify the best means to prove their claim, to

select and organize acceptable evidence and to complete and submit the application.

9.3 After application for RPL, the candidate must have submitted all documents required within two (2) weeks.

9.4 Upon applying for RPL, the candidate must:

   9.4.1 Complete an RPL Application Form

   9.4.2 Provide Performance criteria for competency learning outcomes

   9.4.3 Provide Guidelines as to possible sources of evidence

   9.4.4 Provide Certified copies of Identification Documents

   9.4.5 Provide Certified copies of certificates

   9.4.6 Provide Curriculum Vitae

9.5 The applications will be processed within ten (10) working days.

10.0 PRINCIPLES OF RPL ASSESSMENT

10.1 Assessment is part of the teaching and learning process. It is used to gather and interpret information leading to making a value judgment on the candidate's achievement. The RPL Assessment will include mapping of learning outcomes from informal or non-formal learning to the relevant qualification components.

10.2 In order to apply for RPL, the candidate must provide current, quality evidence of their competency against the outcomes of the particular unit.

The Assessor must be satisfied that the candidate is currently competent against the particular unit standard of competency. The assessment will be guided by the following principles;

10.2.1   Authenticity - the candidates own work.

10.2.2   Validity - directly related to the current version of the endorsed unit of competency.

10.2.3   Reliability - shows that the candidate consistently meets the endorsed unit(s) of competency.

10.2.4   Currency - reflects the candidate's current capacity to perform the aspect of the work covered by the unit(s) of competency).

10.2.5   Sufficiency - covers the full range of elements in the relevant unit of competency and addresses the four dimensions of competency, namely, task skills, task management skills, contingency management skills, and job/role environment skills.

11.0   REGISTRATION AND ADMISSION PROCEDURES

11.1 The candidate follows the existing registration and admission procedures and then goes further to complete the RPL Assessment Application form.

12.0 RPL APPEALS PROCEDURE

12.1 An applicant who wishes to challenge the RPL assessment outcome may do so according to the existing Assessment Appeals procedures.

13.0 DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

13.1 Information on RPL shall be availed through existing media of publication of University programmes and services and shall be included as an option in all Application Forms.

14.0 RPL ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE

14.1 The RPL Assessment schedule will be reflected in the Annual Academic Calendar.

15.0 FEES

15.1 Fees and charges for the services shall be determined by the University and are subject to review from time to time as appropriate.

15 .2 Fees may be refundable as determined by the University.

16.0 RPL POLICY REVIEW

16.1 The RPL policy shall be reviewed at the end of every five (5) years, or earlier as determined by the University.