

IEB RPL Training and Development Workshop 6-7 November 2002

SUMMARY OVERVIEW

Issues relating to the Fundamentals: Language (CLS), Maths (MMLS) and Financial Literacy (FL)

1. Framework Questions

RPL is a process to determine an individual's applied competence in specified outcomes and levels for a range of purposes. RPL is an assessment done outside a formalised learning process, and draws on experiential and other forms of evidence instead of formal assessment of a learning process.

- What are the stages of an RPL process?
- What are the components of an RPL process?
- What are the consequences of results at different stages?
- What instruments are needed?
- What are the resource (human, material, financial and physical) implications of a specific delivery model for IEB?

A summary of other key issues/ questions around RPL as discussed in the workshop is given in point 4 below.

2. RPL against Assessor Standards and RPL against the Fundamentals

The IEB's current delivery of RPL against the assessor (ASSMT 01) and related standards (moderator, verifier, facilitator and OD standards) was used to model an RPL process. Differences and similarities between assessor standards and the fundamentals were identified as follows:

Differences

- Assessor standards are generic across learning areas, and the RPL assessor against these standards simply needs expertise in assessment; for the Fundamentals an RPL assessor should have subject matter expertise in the learning area for which the candidate is applying for RPL.
- ASSMT 01 and other assessor standards are at one specified level only. The Fundamentals range from ABET levels culminating at NQF Level 1 and across FET levels up to NQF Level 4.

- ASSMT 01 and other assessor standards are 'stand alone' (e.g. for registration as an assessor), or part of a qualification. The Fundamentals are generally achieved as part of a qualification, and may need to be clustered together at a level (e.g. a standard for reading at a level cannot be achieved without the standard for writing; some maths standards are inter-dependent).
- Clients for ASSMT 01 and other assessor standards are often individuals, or companies seeking RPL for employees to become registered assessors. Clients for the fundamentals are rarely individuals. They are (a) companies who have identified employees in order to bridge them, enter them into learnerships, or achieve credit so that a qualification can be awarded; or (b) SETAs who are co-ordinating providers for the implementation of their own strategic objectives.
- RPL candidates for ASSMT 01 and other assessor standards are usually at the level of the standard and don't have too much difficulty gathering the relevant evidence. RPL candidates for the Fundamentals are often identified for RPL at too high a level, based on past certification rather than current competence.

Similarities

- ASSMT 01 and other assessor standards and the fundamentals are generally achieved through the medium of English (except in the case of achievement of other languages), although this is not specified in the standards. Implications for candidates who wish to achieve assessor standards or maths or financial literacy standards in other languages have not been addressed.
- ASSMT 01 is a compulsory requirement for becoming a registered assessor. CLS and MMLS are compulsory for achievement of a qualification at a specified level per SAQA requirements. FL is compulsory for the achievement of INSETA qualifications.
- Prior to all RPL processes it is vital that candidates are aware of consequences. **Employers and employees must have shared understandings of issues such as impact of RPL on promotion and job security.**

3. Key Issues/ Questions for RPL: Discussion Notes

Purpose Questions

RPL is a process to determine an individual's applied competence in specified outcomes and levels for a range of purposes.

- *How do you ascertain readiness for RPL?*
- *Can you RPL a group?*

- *Can you RPL where there are no unit standards?*

Ideally RPL should only refer to certification for the award of standards and qualification. In reality the RPL process itself can end up determining its purpose. E.g.

- Candidate presents for RPL for standards at certain levels;
- Process indicates that candidate is not ready to present evidence for the level: gaps identified;
- Candidate referred to top up training OR
- Placement in a learning programme at a lower level OR
- Client advised to adjust learning programme.

i.e. RPL for certification can result in gap identification, top up training or placement.

While a group of learners can go through certain aspects of the RPL process as a group, RPL results are always for individual performance.

In the IEB context we offer RPL against specified unit standards only. An individual's life experience and knowledge could be assessed against other criteria, but a clear purpose for this would have to be stated.

Evidence Questions

- ***What constitutes sufficient evidence to determine competence at a level?***
- *What is the difference between site-based assessment, formal summative assessment (as in an external exam) and RPL? Why can't an RPL candidate simply present him/herself for the exam?*
- *What is the relationship between knowledge and experience?*
- *How are the Critical Outcomes assessed?*
- *How are 'levels' of performance within an NQF level assessed?*

We make a distinction between the assessment of those learners working through a learning programme and those presenting for RPL.

- Learners embarking on a learning programme will go through a continuum of learning and assessment opportunities within a learning and teaching process, in order to progress towards a final assessment. Any course-end assessment is a sampling of performance against outcomes, on the assumption that a learner has progressed and been assessed at regular intervals. This understanding is reinforced by national assessment policy, which now requires that a learner's final competence result at a level is made up of both continuous/ site-based assessment and a final summative assessment. Assessment against a final programme linked summative assessment only, as suggested sometimes for RPL candidates, would be both insufficient and inappropriate.
- An RPL candidate is **assumed competent** at the level for which he/she presents for RPL (although this is not always the case). That is, the learner

has not been through a structured learning programme, but has acquired the relevant skills and knowledge through experience and other learning opportunities. The RPL assessment is designed to:

- Check specified evidence of that competence
- Assess whether that evidence is authentic and sufficiently current for competence to be declared.

The evidence required may be different from that elicited through a formal assessment; for example, real-life or workplace productions, or references from others, may serve as evidence.

The relationship between knowledge and experience is given expression through the fact that every unit standard (ideally) has both a knowledge and an applied skills component. For the RPL candidate evidence gathered from application in experience can become a way of proving knowledge.

In relation to the CCOs, the SBA requirement in assessment policy is a way of ensuring that critical outcomes such as 'working in a group' are assessed. For the RPL candidate, evidence from experience would need to be presented (e.g. authenticated narrative of group endeavour). Most unit standards foreground some CCOs in respect of relevance to learning area. Some of the developmental CCOs may be easier to capture in RPL than in a learning situation (e.g. developing entrepreneurial activities) for a candidate who is being assessed against SMME or financial literacy standards.

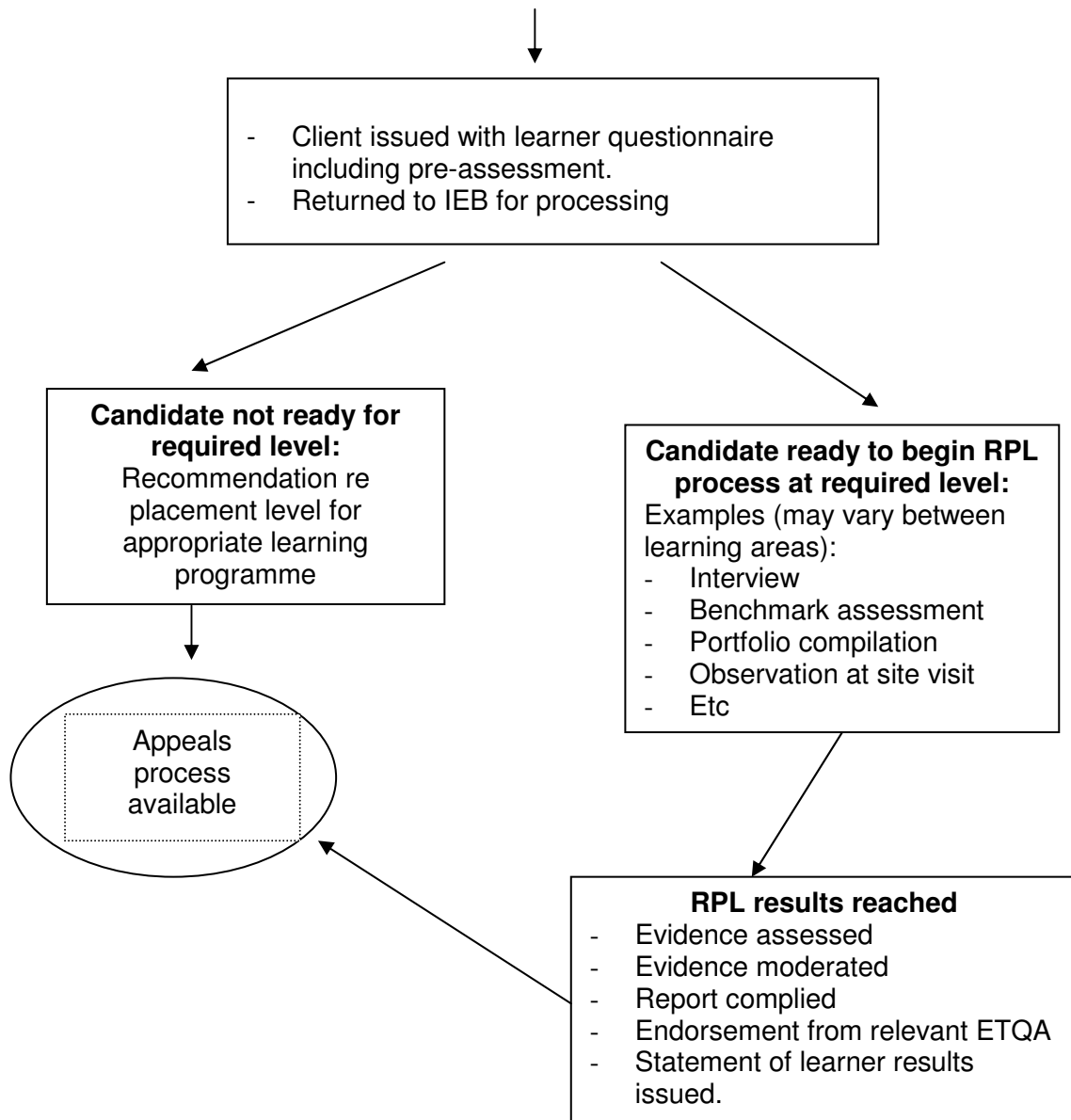
Regarding terms of distinctions within the levels, it is likely that most RPL candidates are simply assessed as competent if this is the case.

Process Questions

- *Who advises learners on RPL?* The IEB advises clients to address certain issues before embarking on an RPL process: e.g. the negative consequences of unrealistic expectations, candidate fears, the need to bring in the unions, the need to explain the consequences of RPL to the learner etc.
- *Are subject matter experts needed to apply RPL?* Yes.
- *What are the time and practicality implications of RPL?*
- While RPL can be time consuming, it can also save time through (i) fast tracking learners who don't need to undertake courses; or (ii) ensuring that learners are not set up for failure by being put into learning programmes which they can't cope with.
- *Who is responsible for monitoring and evaluating RPL policies and processes amongst RPL providers?*
- The appropriate ETQA: in the IEB context, this means the ETDP SETA for RPL against assessor and related standards, and Umalusi for RPL against the Fundamentals (OR Umalusi AND the appropriate SETA if these are within an industry based qualification).

Draft Model of the RPL Process

Takes place once agreement on scope, roles and responsibilities has been reached with client.



*IEB Process Document
November 2002*