



BOU POLICY ON RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) AND CREDIT ACCUMULATION AND TRANSFER (CAT)

Consultation Page

Approval Body	Date
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INTRODUCTION

- 1.0 The Botswana National Credit and Qualifications Framework (NCQF) underscores the need to promote access to and equity in education and training, as well as the acquisition of relevant qualifications. This policy will address issues of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) when accessing Botswana Open University (BOU) programmes. The policy will help improve recruitment, reduce time to completion, and possibly improve retention.
- 1.1 The development of this policy has been informed by other policy documents, both locally and internationally, including the University of Cape Town (UCT) RPL Policy and the University of Botswana Articulation, Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure.
- 1.2 The policy should be read and implemented in conjunction with other BOU policies on student recruitment, Assessment, General Academic Regulations and RPL Procedure manuals.

2.0 ACRONYMS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

BOU – Botswana Open University

CHE – Council on Higher Education

NCQF – National Credit and Qualifications Framework

PLA - Prior Learning Assessment

3.0 DEFINITION OF TERMS

- 3.1 **Advanced standing:** Admission into a programme at an intermediate level
- 3.2 **Comparability:** the degree of similarity between two qualifications in terms of purpose, level, credits and learning outcomes to determine the extent of credit transfer within or between institutions
- 3.3 **Credit:** the quantifying of the volume of learning required for a specific qualification. In this Policy, one credit is equated to 10 notional learning hours. Notional hours of learning comprise the total amount of time it would take an average learner to meet the outcomes defined in a learning

experience and include, inter alia, face-to-face contact time, time spent in structured learning in the workplace, time for completing assignments and research, and time spent in assessment processes.

- 3.4 Credit transfer:** the vertical, horizontal and diagonal relocation of credits towards a qualification or part qualification (CHE, 2016)
- 3.5 Recognition of prior learning (RPL):** The means through which formal, informal and non-formal knowledge can be assessed and recognised by a higher education institution for the purposes of access and admission, recognition and certification.
- 3.6 RPL Candidate:** a person making a submission to be assessed on his/her prior learning competencies and who has submitted the application for assessment.

4.0 Purpose of the Policy

Prior learning assessment may, in the end:

- 4.1 Create access to a programme for a student who otherwise would not have qualified according to the entry requirements.
- 4.2 Award credit to a candidate without having to go through a course and get exempted if found competent
- 4.3 Allow the transfer of credits from the previous qualification and get exempted from doing the course.

5.0 SCOPE

This policy covers:

- 5.1 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 they intend to study.
- 5.2 Students seeking credit transfer or exemption based on prior formal academic Qualifications from recognised institutions.

- 5.3 The assessment processes for both prior learning and credit transfer/exemption shall be availed to all candidates irrespective of geographical location or special needs.

6.0 POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are to:

- 6.1 Facilitate access to further study and lifelong learning opportunities, transfer and award of credits leading to certification of qualifications within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), thus promoting equity of access and fair chance to all learners.
- 6.2 Regulate the implementation of RPL for consistency and quality.
- 6.3 Serves as a reference point for all officers responsible for communicating information to students and other stakeholders.
- 6.4 Avoid duplication and repetition of learning.

7.0 Policy Statement

This Policy intends to assist the Botswana Open University in determining, assessing, and offering an opportunity to prospects who seek access through recognition of prior learning. The processes and procedures for its application and implementation are contained under the policy implementation section of this policy document.

8.0 Policy Principles

8.1 Equality and Equity

RPL assessment shall be available to all, regardless of age, geographical location, background or special needs.

8.2 Validity and Reliability

Assessments shall accurately measure the knowledge, skills and competencies of the candidate

8.3 Transparency and Accountability

The process shall be open, documented with clear procedures for smooth assessment and decision-making

8.4 Quality Assurance

Established quality standards for qualifications and learning will be adhered to to ensure academic integrity.

8.5 Student Empowerment

Prior learning shall be recognised regardless of how it was acquired.

9.0 Policy Implementation

9.1 The RPL processes shall be coordinated from the RPL office and monitored by the RPL Assessment Panel.

9.2 Assessment shall be handled by well-qualified and highly skilled professionals, as accredited by BQA

9.3 Candidates may be exempted from up to 40% of the courses in the programme they applied for, or in the case of credit transfer, up to 50%

9.4 The RPL is open to new candidates who may wish to access BOU programmes as well as enrolled/admitted students who may wish to be exempted or get advanced placement.

9.5 For the purposes of academic record, all credit transfers, advanced placement, and exemptions will be recorded as exempted with no grade thereof. However, if the Credit transfer is internal (i.e., from a BOU programme to another), the marks will be retained.

9.6 RPL assessments shall be affordable to all candidates. Chargeable fees for all RPL services will be listed on the BOU Fee Schedule

9.7 The RPL process will be explained fully to all candidates before they can undertake any assessments.

9.8 All RPL candidates are free to appeal against decisions taken about their application or assessment results. The BOU Appeals Procedure will apply.

- 9.9 Results or decisions on all RPL processes and assessments will be communicated to the candidate directly or otherwise listed on the BOU website.
- 9.10 Staff involved in managing and supporting the RPL process should be given adequate training and consistent support.

10.0 RPL POLICY REVIEW

The RPL policy shall be reviewed after five (5) years or earlier as determined by need.