

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
Procedure for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Title of the document	Procedure for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Purpose of the document	The purpose of the document is to set out the procedures and guidelines for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.
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Document owner	Teaching and Learning Committee, FASS
Approved by	Faculty Board, FASS

Background documentation:

- 1. Regulation for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT), Stellenbosch University, June 2017**
 - 2. Policies on the Recognition of Prior Learning, Credit Accumulation and Transfer, and Assessment in higher education, Council of Higher Education, August 2016**
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1. Definitions¹

- 1.1 **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 subframeworks of the NQF in order to facilitate lifelong learning and access to the workplace. **Only formal learning is considered for credit accumulation and transfer (CAT).**
- 1.2 **Credit accumulation** refers to the totalling of credits towards the completion of a qualification.
- 1.3 **Credit transfer** refers to the vertical, horizontal or diagonal relocation of credits towards a qualification.
- 1.4 **Formal learning** is credit-bearing learning, within the Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework (HEQSF) of degree-seeking or non-degree-seeking students, within SU and other institutions.
- 1.5 **Informal learning** is learning that results from daily activities related to paid or unpaid work, family or community life, or leisure, including incidental learning.
- 1.6 **Non-formal learning** is planned educational interventions that are not intended to lead to the awarding of qualifications, for example professional short courses and in-service training courses.
- 1.7 **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** is a term that refers to the principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and skills of a person are made visible, mediated and rigorously assessed and moderated for the purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development. RPL applies to informal and non-formal learning only. Learning resulting from formal routes will normally be recognised via Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT), but in cases where CAT is found not to be applicable, the RPL route may be explored (CHE Policy 4.2.1).

2. Points of departure

- 2.1 The procedures and guidelines for RPL and CAT in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences function wholly within the framework, principles, standpoints and procedures as set out in the University's regulation document on RPL and CAT, as well as the general admission requirements set out in the Calendar of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.
- 2.2 RPL and CAT are considered together in this regulation since the SU processes involved are closely related.

¹ Passages in italics in this document are verbatim quotes from the CHE "Policies on the Recognitions of Prior Learning, Credit Accumulation and Transfer, and Assessment in higher education", August 2016, as included in the SU Regulation for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT), June 2017.

- 2.3 In accordance with the SU regulation, this procedure provides the framework within which:
- 2.3.1 applicants' prior formal, informal and non-formal learning may be evaluated by experts as being sufficient preparation for the envisaged programme when measured against the learning outcomes of the particular academic programme or module(s);
 - 2.3.2 based on such evaluation of formal (where CAT is found not to be applicable), informal and non-formal learning, applicants may be granted admission to an academic programme for which they otherwise do not meet the admission requirements (**RPL for access**);
 - 2.3.3 based on such evaluation of formal (where CAT is found not to be applicable), informal and non-formal learning, applicants may be exempted from certain credits that are normally required as part of the programme (**RPL for exemption**); and
 - 2.3.4 based on such evaluation of formal learning, credits previously completed by the applicants may be transferred to other qualifications (**CAT for transfer**).

3. Aims

- 3.1 The aim of this document is to set out the procedures and guidelines for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, as they are defined in the University's regulation document.
- 3.2 In accordance with the University's regulation, the Faculty recognises that accessibility is a primary aim of RPL/CAT, but that the following important aims of RPL/CAT also apply in the Faculty as far as they are applicable to postgraduate programmes:
- 3.2.1 **Placement** – to determine, by means of assessment, an appropriate level of access to the learning or teaching programme for an individual;
 - 3.2.2 **Accelerated status** – to grant an individual access to a learning and teaching programme at an NQF level that is higher than a qualification already achieved;
 - 3.2.3 **Accelerated stance** – to award credits for a part of a learning programme for which an individual is registered on the basis of RPL/CAT;
 - 3.2.4 **Crediting** – to award transferable credits within certain specified restrictions² for learning that meets the requirements of a module as a whole or partially for a learning programme or a qualification.

4. General provisions

- 4.1 Recognition of prior formal, informal and non-formal learning is valid for one application year. If an applicant does not register for the particular application year, he/she would have to apply anew for another application year and the evaluation of the re-application will be conducted in the context of the circumstances prevailing at that time.

² See paragraph 4.2 of the general provisions.

- 4.2 In the case of RPL for exemption and CAT for transfer:
- 4.2.1 At undergraduate level, for both three-year and four-year B programmes the requirement is that you must obtain at least all the credits of the last two years of study at Stellenbosch University.
- 4.2.1.1 For three-year B programmes, the Faculty recognises a maximum of 126 credits at first-year level (NQF level 5).
- 4.2.1.2 For four-year B programmes (BA in Visual Arts, BMus and B in Social Work), the Faculty recognises at the most half the total credits required for the programme (NQF level 5 and/or 6).
- 4.2.2 At postgraduate level (excluding PhD and 100% thesis M programmes), the Faculty recognises at the most one quarter of the total credits required for the relevant programme.
- 4.2.3 As a rule, only credits obtained in the previous 5 years are recognised as transferable.
- 4.2.4 A specific set of learning on the grounds of which admission to any postgraduate programme is granted under RPL, cannot also be used for granting exemption of credits within the same programme.
- 4.2.5 Exemption from module(s), as RPL, can be granted on the strength of short course(s) outside the HEQSF (in other words, non-credit-bearing) completed by the applicant, on condition that the course contents, duration and assessment of the short course are at least equivalent to that of the module(s).
- 4.2.6 Each credit exempted or transferred, must correspond to ten notional study hours.
- 4.2.7 The evaluation of applications for credit transfer is considered on departmental level, based on the relevance and equivalence of the relevant module content on the year level (and corresponding NQF level) that credits can be recognised for in a particular programme.
- 4.3 Not more than 10% of a cohort of students in a programme may be admitted through an RPL process

5. RPL/CAT at undergraduate level

- 5.1 In the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences **RPL for access** is normally not applied at the undergraduate level. Granting access to undergraduate students who do not meet the statutory requirements regarding admission to bachelor's degree studies is accomplished by means of the route of the Discretionary Powers of Senate, which entails that the relevant dean submits a proposal to the Vice-Rector (Learning and Teaching) for recommendation to the Matriculation Board.
- 5.2 **Credit transfer** may only be granted on a per-module basis, i.e. a complete module of an academic programme is the smallest learning unit for which credits may be transferred. Also refer to the general provisions (specifically 4.2) in this regard.

6. RPL/CAT at postgraduate level

- 6.1 In accordance with the University's point of departure that research must be stimulated, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences gives priority for **RPL for access** to prospective postgraduate students. For RPL at postgraduate level, it is recognised that postgraduate access and pass requirements differ greatly from programme to programme, that they are geared particularly towards proven research competence and can therefore be accommodated more easily on a case-by case basis by the unique academic environments.
- 6.2 In the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences the RPL for access process is divided into three phases:
- Phase 1:** Pre-assessment.
Phase 2: Evaluation of the applicant's request.
Phase 3: Administrative processing and support of the applicant.
- 6.3 **Credit transfer** may only be granted on a per-module basis, i.e. a complete module of an academic programme is the smallest learning unit for which credits may be transferred. Also refer to the general provisions (specifically 4.2) in this regard.

7. Staff and procedures involved in the administration and evaluation of RPL for access applications at postgraduate level

- 7.1 **An RPL facilitator.** This is someone with the necessary expertise who has been nominated by the Department or Programme Committee involved in the RPL process to assist the applicant in the pre-assessment phase (Phase 1) and in the post-assessment phase (Phase 3). The Chairs of Departments or Programme Committees nominate this person.
- 7.2 **An Assessment Committee.** Departments or Programme Committees that have applicants who wish to gain access to postgraduate programmes by means of RPL convene an Assessment Committee that consists of:
1. the Chair of the Department or Programme Committee,
 2. the RPL facilitator,
 3. the Chair **OR** Vice-Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee, and
 4. a member of the Teaching and Learning Committee representing the relevant academic environment (Languages, Social Sciences, or Arts).

The Assessment Committee may, where appropriate, be supplemented by any other competent person within the department/programme/Faculty nominated by the Assessment Committee for this purpose.

7.3 **The Faculty Administrator.**

The result and recommendation of the Assessment Committee meeting(s) are submitted in a fixed format (see Appendix A) via the Faculty Administrator to the Teaching and Learning Committee for further processing with a view to submission to the Faculty Board for inclusion in the communication report to the Senate.

If the Teaching Committee rejects the application, the Faculty Administrator or his or her representative communicates the result of the RPL process formally to Departments and applicants, including any feedback or comments from the Assessment Committee. If the application is approved the Chair and/or Vice-Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee communicates the result to the RPL facilitator; however, after this the application still has to serve at the Faculty board before it is officially approved and communicated to the Senate.

The Faculty Administrator keeps a record of (a) applications for RPL, (b) unsuccessful results of the RPL process, and (c) successful results of the RPL process.

- 7.4 **The Teaching and Learning Committee.** The Teaching and Learning Committee deals with the results and recommendations of the RPL process as it would with any other request from the Faculty for special admission, and makes recommendations on the matter to the Faculty Board, after ensuring that the requirements for the RPL process in the Faculty have been met
- 7.5 **The Faculty Board.** The Faculty Board ratifies the results and recommendations stemming from the RPL process with a view to communication to the Senate.

8. The RPL process in detail

- 8.1 The prospective applicant makes contact with the Department or Programme Committee and requests to be subjected to the RPL process.
- 8.2 The ARPL facilitator contacts the applicant for a pre-evaluation in order to ascertain the purpose and possible success of the application.
- 8.3 If the possibility of the application being successful is **low** (i.e. the applicant does not meet the minimum requirements), the applicant is referred to alternative study paths as far as is reasonably possible.
- 8.4 If the possibility of the application being successful is **high**, the facilitator conveys the following to the applicant:
- 8.4.1 that the applicant has to apply formally for admission to the University so that the application may be processed and a student number allocated (**the student number has to be supplied on the RPL application form in Appendix A**);
 - 8.4.2 that certified copies of previous qualifications have to be provided (this documentation must accompany the application form for the University and forms part of the documentation provided to the Faculty Administrator; a second set of copies of these qualifications has to be included in the documentation presented to the Assessment Committee);
 - 8.4.3 any additional documentation that needs to be submitted for the assessment (e.g. a portfolio);
 - 8.4.4 the requirements that this documentation must satisfy;
 - 8.4.5 the criteria according to which this documentation will be assessed;

- 8.4.6 the date on which the documentation must be submitted;
 - 8.4.7 any other supplementary instruments that may be required for the assessment (e.g. a challenge examination, or an interview), where applicable; what these instruments entail; what will be expected of the applicant in this context; and the criteria that will be applied;
 - 8.4.8 the date(s) of the assessment(s).
- 8.5 The facilitator determines the closing dates for submissions to the meetings of the Teaching and Learning Committee and plans the assessment process accordingly.
 - 8.6 The assessment opportunity (or opportunities), as determined in 8.4, takes place.
 - 8.7 The RPL facilitator convenes a meeting of the Assessment Committee. **(It must be kept in mind that the members of the Assessment Committee need sufficient time to study the documentation thoroughly before the scheduled meeting.)**
 - 8.8 All documentation (proof of previous qualifications, a portfolio – if applicable – and a report on the results of the pre-assessment(s)) are sent to the Assessment Committee together with the completed RPL application form in Appendix A. On the RPL application form the facilitator provides a full motivation for the recommendation to the Assessment Committee.
 - 8.9 The Assessment committee evaluates the RPL application, decides on the merits of the application, and reports its finding to the Teaching Committee, via the Faculty Administrator. The complete set of documentation (as provided to the Assessment Committee) is submitted to the Teaching and Learning Committee. Certain conditions, for example, the successful completion of additional work (for which the applicant may have to enrol as a special student before he or she may be admitted to the program, see 11.8 below) may be set, if the circumstances of the applicant make it essential to comply with the admission or recognition requirements.
 - 8.10 The result of the RPL process is then, once it has been approved by the Faculty Board and communicated to the Senate, formally communicated by the Faculty Administrator or his/her representative to the applicant.
 - 8.11 If the result is negative, alternative channels for study must be communicated to the applicant, as far as this is possible for the RPL facilitator and the Assessment Committee.
 - 8.12 If the result is positive, the RPL facilitator assists the applicant in finalising the RPL process.

9. Mechanisms for the support of and feedback to applicants

- 9.1 Departments and Programme Committees involved in the RPL process nominate a competent person from their own staff members or environments who can act as RPL facilitator to assist prospective applicants in compiling their applications through to the completion of the RPL process.

- 9.2 The Assessment Committee compiles, where appropriate, commentary or feedback on the application for RPL and attaches it to the report on the result of the RPL process (the signed RPL application form in Appendix A), which is submitted via the Faculty Administrator to the Teaching and Learning Committee.
- 9.3 Feedback to successful and unsuccessful applicants is done uniformly via the office of the Faculty Administrator, in consultation with the RPL facilitator involved.

10. Costs attached to RPL/CAT

- 10.1 The costs attached to RPL/CAT are wholly for the account of the applicants. These include, for example, any costs for travelling and subsistence with a view to RPL for access assessment opportunities, as well as any costs that may be incurred in the compilation of applications, or the acquisition and drafting of documents.
- 10.2 Furthermore, applicants who wish to gain admission to the University through the RPL process must fill in an application form and pay the application fee that applies at that time.

11. Assessment instruments and routes that may be used in the Faculty's RPL process for admissions at postgraduate level

Departments and Programme Committees are free to use one, or a combination, of the following (or similar) assessment instruments for RPL at postgraduate level one:

- 11.1 **Admission assessment instruments** (for example, admission or placement tests and challenge examinations that are assessed quantitatively by competent academic staff at the department);
- 11.2 **Learning portfolios** (for example, the applicant submits an extensive set of documents and/or other evidence to illustrate his/her previous learning. This documentation is assessed qualitatively by competent academic staff at the department);
- 11.3 **Supplementary work in advance** (for example, a student is admitted to a learning programme on condition that he/she completes supplementary work according to specified expectations before final admission);
- 11.4 **Supplementary work during a learning programme** (for example, a student is admitted on condition that he/she does supplementary work during the course of the learning programme);
- 11.5 **Recognition of formal learning** (for example, sections or the whole of learning programmes in related fields, certified as qualification by a higher education institution);

- 11.6 **Recognition of non-formal learning in the form of professional short courses, in-service training courses, etc.** (for example, learning that is not certified as a qualification (or part thereof) by another higher education institution);
- 11.7 **Recognition of informal learning** (for example, learning that has occurred in work or other environments on the initiative of the individual).
- 11.8 **Admission via registration as a special student**³:
- 11.8.1 In the case of applications for *Honours programmes* it is possible that the RPL facilitator submits an application to the Assessment Committee recommending that the student be admitted 1) on the basis of any combination of circumstances as described in 11.1 to 11.3 above, or 11.5 to 11.7 above; and 2) on condition that the applicant registers as a special student and completes one third of the credits of the Honours programme to which the applicant requires admission within the following year (or two years at most). Credits accumulated in this manner are recognized when the candidate officially registers for the programme. **(The most common route of access to an Honours programme where the applicant has obtained the required qualification level but not in the required subject at third year level is that the applicant applies to be admitted as a special student to complete all three years of the specific subject within one year; this is a recognized access route and is not processed as a RPL application.)**;
- 11.8.2 In the case of applications for *Masters' programmes* where the applicant has not obtained an Honours degree in the relevant field the RPL facilitator submits an application to the Assessment Committee recommending that the student be admitted 1) on the basis of any combination of circumstances as described in 11.1 to 11.3 above, or 11.5 to 11.7 above; and 2) on condition that the applicant registers as a special student and completes one third of the credits of the Masters' programme to which the applicant requires admission within the following year (or two years at most). Credits accumulated in this manner are recognized when the candidate officially registers for the programme. (In certain fields, access to a Masters' programme, which constitutes a 100% thesis, is not possible via the RPL route.)

12. The assessment plan and requirements for assessment instruments

- 12.1 At postgraduate level each Department or Programme Committee involved in the RPL process describes the assessment plan that will typically be adopted in that specific environment, and what the standards and criteria are that will typically apply for each assessment instrument. The assessment plan is a brief description of the assessment instruments that will be used for the RPL, along with the standards and criteria that will apply for each assessment instrument. A full report on the assessment plan is provided in the RPL application form (Appendix A).

³ The cases described in 11.8 serve before the Teaching and Learning Committee twice: first when the condition is set that the applicant register for one year as a special student before he or she is admitted to the programme, and for a second time after the candidate has met the conditions set. Only after the application has served before the Teaching and Learning Committee for the second time may it be included in the documentation for the Faculty Board to be considered for approval by the Faculty Board and communication to the Senate

13. Guidelines for appeals by unsuccessful applicants

- 13.1 Unsuccessful candidates may apply in writing to the Dean, with proper motivation, to appeal against the finding of the Teaching and Learning Committee.
- 13.2 The Dean submits these applications for appeal to an ad hoc Appeal Committee for consideration of their merits.
- 13.3 The ad hoc Appeal Committee consists of the Dean, Vice-Deans, the Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee and the concerned RPL facilitator.
- 13.4 If the application for appeal is upheld, the Appeal Committee, via the Dean, requests the Teaching and Learning Committee to reconsider the application.
- 13.5 Applications for appeal will only be granted based on one of the following considerations:
- 13.5.1 If there has been an error in the procedures adopted by the Assessment Committee.
 - 13.5.2 If the Assessment Committee has made an error in the finding and/or the recommendation that has been made.
 - 13.5.3 The applicant can submit documentation that became available only after the submission of the application and that can influence the result of the application significantly (on the understanding that this measure cannot be used to take into consideration for a second time an application that was initially incomplete).
- 13.6 An application for appeal may be considered only once

14. Alternative possibilities for study for unsuccessful applicants

- 14.1 Unsuccessful applicants are informed about alternative possibilities for study that they could pursue, in as far as such information can reasonably be expected from the RPL facilitator and the Assessment Committee.

15. Publication of RPL/CAT procedure

- 15.1 The Faculty makes its procedures for RPL/CAT known in Afrikaans and English in a formal format in its annual Calendar, and in a user-friendly format on its website and, where appropriate, other Faculty publications. Programme Committees and Departments are free to publicise the Faculty's RPL/CAT procedures, where appropriate, in programme, course and module handbooks.

APPENDIX A**Rapport of the result of the RPL process for access to postgraduate programmes in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences****Documentation that has to accompany the report:**

1. Copies of the certificates of the qualifications for which the applicant requires recognition.
2. Copies of the study records of all qualifications, or parts of qualifications, which the applicant completed.
3. Any other documentation that may serve as motivation for the approval of the application.

Department or Programme Committee involved in the RPL process:	
Full name and surname of applicant:	
Student number of applicant:	
Programme that the applicant is applying for:	
Admission requirements of programme that applicant is applying for:	

RPL assessment instruments and/or access route(s):

Specify:

- *all assessment instruments (with dates when the assessment(s) took place);*
- *access routes that were followed; and/or*
- *indicate the prior learning that was considered.*

Motivation:

Motivate (concisely) – with reference to the results of the assessment instruments and/or access routes as indicated above – on which grounds the application should be recommended.

Conditions set for the applicant to gain access:

Specify in detail with relevant due dates.

Recommendation:

The Assessment Committee has thoroughly considered the application for RPL for access by the above mentioned applicant and recommends as follows:

- 1. That the applicant is granted recognition / is not granted recognition for** *(scratch what is not applicable; and specify formal, non-formal and informal learning):*

- 2. That the applicant is granted access / is not granted access for** *(scratch what is not applicable; and specify programme):*

Signed

Chair of Department / Programme Committee:	
Name (in print)	Signature

RPL facilitator:	
Name (in print)	Signature

Chair / Vice-Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee:	
Name (in print)	Signature

Member of the Teaching and Learning Committee:	
Name (in print)	Signature

Additional Assessment Committee Member (specify function):	
Name (in print)	Signature

Date: