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Skills for Inclusive Growth



Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
Assessor's Course and Toolkit

CONDUCTING RPL ASSESSMENT



Policy Document



Skills for Inclusive Growth

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Introduction and Background

Introduction

Research done between 2016 - 2018 showed major skills shortages across the hospitality and tourism workforce. This is particularly evident in rural and remote communities throughout Sri Lanka. Opportunities for the workforce to improve skills are not readily accessible in Sri Lanka which constrains industry productivity, quality and efficient service delivery and product quality. This is a major contributor towards hospitality and tourism sector growth, which constrains gainful employment and income levels. Tourism remains untapped in terms of its potential to raise living standards in Sri Lanka.

The tourism and hospitality sector has a high level of people working in the informal sector i.e. without formal qualifications. 80% of the industry is micro and small business. Many businesses are not registered as tourism businesses (SLTDA) and are considered informal, but many of these are still registered business entities. However, significant numbers of people have skills in hospitality and tourism that they have acquired through workplace experience, industry short courses and self study, which are not currently recognised in the regulated vocational education system.

RPL provides an opportunity to recognise those skilled people, which can enhance the skilled worker base in the sector and create opportunities for the workforce to upskill to higher skills levels. The workforce seeking formal and recognised qualifications creates demand. These are the people that want to progress in the industry or take the skills overseas.

The RPL system currently has limited availability for use in the hospitality and tourism sector. As such, the sector needs qualified industry experienced people to become RPL assessors to support the implementation of RPL across the sector. This applies to other sectors, and the RPL model will support the supply of RPL in those sectors in time.

RPL policy supports the government's commitment to recognise and develop the skills of all unskilled employees in the Tourism industry to address the mismatch between labour supply and industry demand. The strategy is to use RPL to support skilled people in the workforce by formally acknowledging their experience. A well developed policy needs to be put in place to ensure the process and procedures are delivered in a transparent manner. This would maintain and enhance the perceived value and reputation of qualifications issued via the National Vocational Qualification system (NVQ).

One of the main challenges is growing the skill base and retaining employees within the Tourism industry.

There are a number of further challenges in providing the workers with opportunities for formal qualifications that lead to career growth, such as:

- That many workers across the tourism value chain have no formal qualifications
- That the existing workforce is unable to access TVET courses as these are often not available outside working hours.
- That TVET courses are not modular, and are needed for allowing the workforce to accumulate the skills they need to pursue careers in the tourism and hospitality sector.
- New industry relevant training courses are becoming available and existing workers want to be able to pursue these programs to advance their career and income earning prospects.
- There are actually no assessment materials in many tourism qualifications making assessment discretionary and not standardised or transparent.

A course was designed to meet these needs by developing a system and a pool of assessors. The RPL system needs to be consistent and the assessors need to be (re)trained, to differentiate it from the current system. New roles within the system will require the recruitment of RPL facilitators who will in turn support the implementation of a transparent and reliable quality assured RPL system.

The implementation of RPL enables access for skilled personnel to access higher level skills development in the tourism and hospitality sector in Sri Lanka.

National Policy Statement on RPL

The National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education, November 2018, highlights a range of challenges within the present RPL system, such as:

- There is no common procedure for RPL application submission.
- Some Assessors are not sufficiently updated on National Competency Standards (NCS), assessment rules and regulations.
- The Assessor database is not updated. Inactive Assessors are in the database.
- Assessors are not available in some occupations related to medium (Tamil and English) and geographical area.
- Assessment materials are often lacking, not improved, updated or developed sufficiently.
- Institutions have to pay a high cost to TVEC for semester end exams.
- There is no proper mechanism to obtain a recognised certificate Record of Achievement (RoA) for a particular unit/s of NCS.
- There is no mechanism to obtain a full qualification (NVQ) for a person who obtained required RoAs for a full qualification. i.e.
 - i. conducting a common theory test as an eligibility,
 - ii. Not accepting or acknowledging industry standards or requirements for competence.
- With consistency of assessment, there are challenges where:
 - The number of students / units assessed per day are not clear.
 - There is no mechanism for verification and auditing of assessments including quality checks of assessors competence and the relevance of the assessment instruments they use.

Abbreviations

MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAITA	National Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Authority
NCS	National Competency Standard
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
NVQF	National Vocational Qualifications Framework
RoA	Record of Achievement
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
TVEC	Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
VTA	Vocational Training Authority

Definitions

Applicant	is an individual who is interested in the RPL process and makes an application.
Assessment	is the process by which evidence of a candidate's work is collected and judged to decide whether an individual meets the predefined criteria for obtaining formal recognition. This could be credits, exemption of academic prerequisites, a part or full qualification or any other award. In an RPL assessment, the competence or non-competence of the candidate is judged against the specified National Competency Standards.
Assessor	is a person registered by the relevant body (TVEC) in accordance with established criteria to conduct assessments for registered occupational qualifications and part qualifications.
Candidate	is an applicant who has been accepted to undergo RPL assessment.
Credit	is the value given within a learning programme for achieved learning.
Portfolio	is a collection of documents or other papers that represent a person's work.
Prior learning	refers to competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes) that are acquired prior to an assessment and/or recognition process through work, earlier study or experience. Prior learning typically comes from non formal and informal learning (but in some cases could be an uncompleted period of formal learning).
Qualification	(also referred to as certification), is the final outcome of a successful assessment process. This could be a full qualification, credits or exemptions. It is the official recognition of learning and confers official recognition by the authority that awards it.
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	is the principles and process through which the prior knowledge and/or skills of an individual are given a value. It is a means to formally identify, assess and validate existing learning for the purpose of certification, alternative admission and future learning and development.
RPL practitioner	is a person that functions in one or more aspects of RPL provision. This includes: policy development, advice, portfolio course design and facilitation, assessment and moderation, administration, monitoring and evaluation, research and development.
Record of Achievement (RoA)	is a certificate awarded for successful completion of a unit of competency. It is provided to the candidate in cases where they are competent in one (or more) units, but not the full National Competency Standard.

Training providers	are bodies that deliver learning programmes which culminate in specified registered qualifications and part qualifications.
Unit of competency	is the specification of knowledge and skill, and the application of that knowledge and skill, to the standard of performance expected in the workplace. A unit of competency is the smallest unit that can be assessed and recognised.

1. Ownership

This policy is the responsibility of TVEC.

2. Scope

This policy has been established to support the implementation of RPL within the Tourism and Hospitality sectors in Sri Lanka.

The policy has been developed and implemented by the [insert name] to support and provide clear instruction and guidance for implementing RPL for candidates seeking assessment in the Tourism sector. The RPL system is to be accredited by the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) and Implemented by National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA).

3. Review and Maintenance

Maintenance and review of the [Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\) Policy for the Tourism and Hospitality Sector](#) is the responsibility of the [xxxxxxxxxxxx]. The [xxxxxxxxxxxx] will maintain ongoing records of the elements and application of this Policy. The [xxxxxxxxxxxx] will provide ongoing reports to all relevant stakeholders.

4. Change Record

Date	[1 October 2020]
Version	1.0
Description	First creation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy for the Tourism and Hospitality Sector
Author	[xxxxxxxxxxxx]
Status	[Pending review by XYZ]

5. Effective Date

This policy is effective from [1 November 2020].

6. Legislative Base

The policy complies with the following legislation, policies and regulations:

- Part II - Chapter VI Act no 20 of 1990 Tertiary and Vocational Training Act - Establishment of National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority.
- National Strategy on TVET for Provision for Vulnerable People in Sri Lanka.
- National Vocational Qualification Framework of Sri Lanka - Operational Manual November 2009

7. Audience and Applicability

This RPL policy for tourism and hospitality constitutes an overarching quality assurance framework for the provisioning of RPL in the tourism and hospitality sector, to be implemented by all RPL practitioners, training providers, assessment centres and workplaces, accredited by the TVEC and approved by [insert name(s)]. It is applicable to all occupational qualifications, part qualifications, trades and professional designations registered on the [insert body name here]

This RPL policy is applicable to all institutes practising RPL in the tourism and hospitality sector in Sri Lanka. The National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA) has the mandate to conduct RPL in the industry sectors.

8. Responsibility for Implementation

The Assessment Division of NAITA and the Certification Division of TVEC are responsible for the adherence and implementation of this policy.

Section (38) (a) of the Part II , Chapter IV- Establishment of National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA)- Parliament Act of No. 20 1990 Tertiary Education and Training Act as included, inter alia conduct National Trade Tests those fields that have be approved by Minister and 37 (C), (d) conducting examinations and issuing of certificates and other awards in relation to vocational training and conducting National Trade tests. This power is exercised in collaboration with Tertiary Vocational Training Education Commission (TVEC) which has overall responsibility for the National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF).

9. Review

This Policy will be revised every three (3) years or as soon as any of the information within the policy becomes invalid or amendable.

10. Purpose

The purpose of the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy for the Tourism and Hospitality Sector is to provide a methodology in Sri Lanka for the assessment and recognition of prior learning in tourism and hospitality sector occupations.

Sri Lanka requires a well trained workforce to develop the tourism and hospitality sector. Job creation, industry competitiveness and the sustainability of the sector significantly depend upon human capital. RPL is an important means of elevating unskilled individuals into skilled workers.

The policy is based on the vision of RPL as a tool to create a mature, sustainable and responsible workforce in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Recognition of prior learning can be effectively used in occupations where skills gaps exist, such as food and drink service, housekeeping, food preparation, guest relations, maintenance, administration, professional managers and tour guides.

Increasing the number of skilled staff available will positively impact the quality of the visitor experience and the success of the enterprise. It will also contribute significantly to the economic prosperity of Sri Lanka and the quality of life of all citizens, through job creation and by increasing the annual Gross Domestic Production (GDP) of the country.

11. Objectives

- 11.1.** To address the skill shortages that stifle development, growth and employment creation through a carefully implemented RPL system.
- 11.2.** To implement a system of benchmarking and awarding qualifications to suitably experienced and skilled candidates who are currently unemployed or underemployed. This includes formalising skills that have been developed in the informal economy.
- 11.3.** To be inclusive to people who require additional support to benefit from RPL.
- 11.4.** To benefit the large number of people who have gained skills and knowledge from course attendance, but currently have no way to benefit from their investment in training due to a lack of certification.

By assessing and valuing the existing competencies of individuals, and increasing access to further skill development, the RPL policy seeks to ensure that RPL contributes to:

- 1.** Redress and improve livelihood for those who have been historically disadvantaged;
- 2.** The creation of a vibrant, entrepreneurial and well-skilled workforce to take the country forward; and
- 3.** Improved equity through opening new, alternative routes to qualifications.

12. Principles

The core principles of Recognition of Prior Learning should always apply. RPL is flexible, accessible, reliable, fair and inclusive, transparent, valid, quality assured, and learner focused.

Principle	Description
Flexible	Individuals who come to the RPL process will have a diverse range of backgrounds, experience, abilities and come from different occupations and industries. The RPL system must be flexible to accommodate and adapt to their wide range of needs, goals and experiences of the major stakeholders.
Accessible	RPL is an inclusive and accessible process. It applies to learners of all ages and levels of experience, including vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. RPL should be a gateway to learning, not a barrier to entry. Applicants and candidates should be supported and encouraged in the process.
Reliable	The RPL system ensures that candidates' learning outcomes and assessment procedures comply with all regulatory requirements to award credit or a qualification. An assessment process is reliable when there is consistency in results between assessors. That is, when two or more assessors give the same result based upon the same evidence.
Fair and inclusive	RPL applies to learners of all ages and levels of experience, including vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. It should be equitable and sensitive to the social context of applicants, and take into consideration personal factors of the candidate, such as informal learning backgrounds, historical disadvantages and barriers to education. Support services should consciously address invisible barriers to success in the RPL process. These barriers could take many forms, such as levels of numeracy, literacy or non-technical barriers such as the anxieties that arise when adult learners, who may be unfamiliar with formal education, enter the RPL process.
Transparent	Candidates shall be aware of how they shall be assessed, when and by whom, what the national competency standards are and what they will be assessed against.
Valid	Assessment methods for RPL must be of equal rigour as other assessment methods such as formal education. They must be fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning.
Quality assured	Procedures, documentation, record keeping and system verification should be detailed and available for scrutiny.
Learner focused	RPL must promote and recognise the positive aspects of an individual's learning, rather than their deficiencies. RPL is a learner centric system and the needs of the applicant / candidate should be paramount.

13. Quality Assurance

- 13.1.** Recognition of prior learning should be fully embedded within the quality assurance procedures of skills development providers (NAITA, VTA) and awarding bodies (TVEC).
- 13.2.** RPL should maintain the standards of the National Vocational Qualifications Framework and its awards.
- 13.3.** RPL processes should be credible to all stakeholders.
- 13.4.** Assessors conducting RPL assessments should be registered with the TVEC.
- 13.5.** To ensure overall credibility and consistency of the process of RPL, RPL providers should comply with the quality assurance and certificate requirements as set out in TVEC policies and regulations.

14. Language and Accessibility

- 14.1.** To ensure that RPL is widely accessible, fees for the delivery and administration of RPL services should not be so high that they become barriers to candidates.
- 14.2.** Language shall not be an inhibiting factor when conducting RPL. Many jobs in the tourism industry do not require employees to be fluent in multiple languages. The aim is to ensure that candidates:
 - Are not disadvantaged from enrolling for RPL because they are unable to express their knowledge and skills in a particular language
 - Are assisted by translators and interpreters where necessary
- 14.3.** Candidates shall, as far as possible, be assessed in their native language in which they are proficient, especially for levels 1-4 as mastery of another language cannot be expected at this level. However, where a certain level of English proficiency is required in a unit of competency within a qualification, candidates must comply with the requirements of the unit standard.

15. Communication and Documentation

- 15.1.** A clear statement of the policies, processes and practices of the vocational education and training providers and awarding bodies for RPL should be available to all users in Sinhala, Tamil and English.
- 15.2.** Processes and practices for RPL should be clearly documented.
- 15.3.** Processes and practices for RPL should be communicated openly and clearly to all (applicants/ candidates, education and training staff, assessors and other RPL professionals).

16. Process

- 16.1. The RPL process should be easy to understand, fair and transparent. It should be conducted in a reasonable time frame.
- 16.2. The RPL process should be organised in such a way that it does not create barriers for the applicant. Such barriers could be related to numeracy, literacy, language, location, or non-technical barriers such as the anxieties that arise when adult learners, who may be unfamiliar with formal education, enter the RPL process.
- 16.3. Appropriate resources to support the RPL process should be in place.
- 16.4. Guidance and facilitation support should be available for applicants and all involved in the processes of recognition of prior learning.
- 16.5. An appropriate appeals mechanism should be in place.
- 16.6. RPL needs to have a clear workplace focus, while also encouraging further learning. Training providers and employers need to work together to ensure that flexible options for further learning (including distance and e-learning options) are available and encouraged.
- 16.7. Large workplaces should be accredited. Medium and small workplaces should be allowed to use registered assessors to conduct RPL assessment.
- 16.8. All RPL assessment centres should be accredited by TVEC.

17. Assessment

- 17.1. Assessment criteria for RPL should be published in Sinhala, Tamil and English, made explicit to applicants, and applied consistently and fairly.
- 17.2. Assessment criteria should be based on learning outcomes of awards or standards of knowledge, skill and competence set out in the National Vocational Qualifications Framework and by the relevant awarding bodies.
- 17.3. Evidence submitted by candidates should meet the rules of evidence and be valid, authentic, sufficient, current and reliable.
- 17.4. Assessment and verification mechanisms for RPL should be appropriate and fit for purpose.
- 17.5. All RPL providers conducting assessments must ensure that they abide by the core principles of RPL.
- 17.6. Under the unified national TVET system of Sri Lanka, NAITA shall be responsible for the development and updating of the assessment resources. Assessment resources for each unit may include (but are not limited to):
 - Evidence Matrix.
 - An outline of the task(s) to be completed in order to solve the problem or complete the application.
 - Tools, equipment and materials and other assistance required (such as helpers, reference materials etc.).
 - A justification as to why the problem was solved in the way it was, or how the application was carried out.
 - Areas in which questions should be asked in order to assess the underpinning knowledge.

18. Responsibilities

Action	Responsibility
Initial contact, discussion and application: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Application ■ Support, advice and guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Candidate ■ Training provider personnel
Preparation of portfolio / evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Candidate
Assessment of portfolio / evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assessor(s)
Where the candidate is assessed as ‘competent’ and will receive a qualification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Feedback to candidate ■ Documentation to the training provider ■ Documentation to TVEC ■ Issuance of qualification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assessor(s) ■ Assessor ■ Training provider ■ TVEC
Where the candidate’s portfolio does not satisfy competency requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Feedback to candidate ■ Documentation to the training provider ■ Documentation to TVEC ■ Issuance of RoA (if applicable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assessor(s) ■ Assessor ■ Training provider ■ TVEC
Appeals process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Request appeal ■ Process appeal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Candidate ■ TVEC
Development and update of assessment resources	TVEC, NAITA and other training providers

19. Associated Documentation

- RPL Implementation Guide
- RPL Handbook
- RPL Assessors Course and Toolkit



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