

CHARTALL BUSINESS COLLEGE

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY CREDIT ACCUMULATION & TRANSFER POLICY

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Definitions

“Articulation” arrangement means an approved arrangement in which two or more programmes, from different institutions, are linked in order to enable a student to progress seamlessly to further study at or from Chartall Business College.

“Credit” refers to the measure of the volume of learning required for a qualification, quantified as the number of notional study hours required for achieving the outcomes specified for the qualification.

“Credit accumulation” means the totalling of credits required to complete a qualification or a part qualification.

“Credit transfer” means the vertical, horizontal or diagonal relocation of credits towards a qualification or part qualification on the same or different level, usually between different programmes, departments or institutions.

“Credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) system” means an arrangement whereby the diverse features of both credit accumulation and credit transfer are combined to facilitate lifelong learning and access to the workplace.

“Formal learning” means learning that occurs in an organised and structured education and training environment and that is explicitly designated as such.

Formal learning leads to the awarding of a qualification or part qualification registered on the NQF.



“Informal learning” means learning that results from daily activities related to paid or unpaid work, family or community life, or leisure, including incidental learning.

“Non-formal learning” means planned educational interventions that are not intended to lead to awarding of qualifications or part qualifications

“Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)” means the principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and skills of a person are made visible, mediated, rigorously assessed and moderated for the purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition, or further learning and development.

“Subject” means a specific module that is studied as a component of an award programme.

Introduction

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation & Transfer (CAT) are key vehicles to redress past injustices and recognise competence gained through practical workplace learning and experience (White paper on post school education: March 2013). However, the DHET recognises that there have been challenges *“obtaining a common understanding and approach across the post-school system, and so a revised set of guidelines will be produced. The Department will draw on the report of the Ministerial Task Team on RPL to produce these guidelines.”* (ibid, p 73).

This revised Chartall Business College policy (Version 3) incorporates the new CHE policy that was released in August 2016.

Key RPL relevant statements from the CHE policy include (quote from page 1, emphasis added):

- *RPL may be used to grant access to a qualification programme, or advanced standing/exemption from modules or courses constitutive of a particular qualification.*
- *In higher education, exemption from modules or courses does not translate to credits being awarded for those modules or courses. No credits should*



therefore be awarded for the modules or courses that a student is exempted from doing on the basis of RPL.

- A student who, on the basis of RPL, is granted exemption from doing some modules or courses in a qualification programme will complete the qualification with a total number of credits that is less than the normally required number of credits for the qualification in question. RPL creates such an exception, and the student concerned should not be compelled to do more modules or courses to make up for the difference in the total number of credits.
- Full qualifications on the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) cannot be awarded solely on the basis of RPL. Similarly, exemption based on RPL should be limited to not more than 50% of the modules or courses of the qualification programme in question. This means that no student should be exempted from more than 50% of the modules or courses required for any particular higher education qualification.
- Not more than 10% of a cohort of students in a higher education programme should be admitted through an RPL process.
- Higher education institutions (HEIs) should ensure that quality assurance processes that address the specificities of the RPL process (including applications, assessment, and reporting and management systems) are implemented; and that administrative and support systems, both prior and subsequent to RPL assessment, are in place.

To summarise:

- There are two forms of RPL in CHE – RPL for access and RPL for exemption;
- No credits are awarded – only exemption and access;
- Each has specific caps (no more than 50% of a qualification can be gained via exemption and no more than 10% of a cohort can get in via RPL);

Key CAT relevant statements from the CHE policy include (quote from page 1, emphasis added):



- *The recognition of credits for the purposes of transfer from one qualification to another is determined by the nature of the qualifications, the relationship between them, the nature, complexity, and extent of the curricula associated with the specific subjects to be recognised for exemption and/or inclusion, and the nature of the assessment used.*
- *Any and all credits for an incomplete qualification may be recognised by the same or a different institution as meeting part of the requirements for a different qualification; or may be recognised by a different institution as meeting part of the requirements for the same qualification.*
- *A maximum of 50% of the credits of a completed qualification may be transferred to another qualification. This practice seeks to protect the integrity of qualifications by ensuring that the exception does not become the norm.*
- *Credits obtained from studies that do not lead to full qualification (for example, non-degree studies) should count for credit accumulation.*

To summarise:

- CAT applies to subjects at the same level, same time, same complexity and same assessment method;
- Actual credits are transferred;
- There is a specific cap (no more than 50% of a qualification can be gained via CAT)

This policy has the following aims:

- To provide a structure and guidelines on how to implement RPL and CAT so that students who would previously have been denied the right to enrol on a HET programme can now apply;
- Provide guidance as to how students can gain EXEMPTION for learning already completed to prevent re-training of skills and knowledge already mastered (not CREDIT);
- Provide guidance as to how students can gain CREDIT for subjects already completed that are equitable and have parity to those subjects on the Chartall Business College BBA.



It is recognised in this policy that “*one of the rationales for introducing distance education is to open access to more students and more diverse students.*” (Curriculum design, development and delivery for DE in a digital era, p 23). RPL and CAT are important tools to open up access to more people who would not traditionally be able to enter full-time, face-to-face provision.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is internationally accepted as a vehicle to widen access to education and training.

RPL refers to the formal identification, rigorous assessment/moderation and acknowledgment of the full range of an individual's skills, knowledge and capabilities, irrespective of how and where they have been acquired. It is the acknowledgment of skills, competencies, knowledge obtained through:

- Formal, informal or non-formal learning
- On-the-job experience
- Life experience.

RPL mediates the so-called non-formal and/or informal learning, RPL advisers assist students to evaluate and translate their prior learning into their perceived formal equivalents for recognition. Its intended outcome is the recognition of such prior learning for the purposes of alternative access and admission to higher education learning programmes, or for advancement within qualification programmes (advancement via subject exemption).

This policy recognises two forms of RPL:

- RPL for access: this is for potential students who are over the age of 23 and don't meet the conventional school leaving requirements for admission to undergraduate programmes.
- RPL for advanced standing is for students who are able to demonstrate that they have acquired learning equivalent (same level or higher, same content or more, same credits or more) to that taught and assessed in part of a qualification. This process does not result in credits awarded – it results in



exemption from the matched subjects. The number of credits that may be exempted through this route is limited to 50% of the whole qualification.

Principles

- All students and potential students have the right to apply for RPL.
- Students apply for advanced standing must first enrol for the degree and then apply for RPL as an enrolled student.
- Advanced standing applicants may spend no more than two semesters focused on RPL mediation, thereafter they must enrol for subjects even if they are still completing their RPL for exemption processes.
- Chartall Business College will support all students through the RPL process by providing guidance and assistance to mediate the workplace learning and match it to the outcomes in the Chartall Business College programme.
- Competence (knowledge, skill and reflexive) that has been acquired by experiential or other forms of learning, will be assessed and if found sufficient, the learning will be recognised for the purposes of access or credit.
- RPL is more than a process of assessment: rather, it is a specialised pedagogical process that also includes “translation” of informal and non-formal bodies of knowledge into their formal and structured equivalents based on specified competencies. RPL will require close consideration of the associated epistemologies and specifically of the differentiation between experiential and academic knowledge, and hence of the areas and levels to which RPL can appropriately be applied. It also requires clear understanding of the possible contribution of such informal and/or non-formal knowledge to each particular qualification type in higher education.
- The implementation of RPL is context-specific, in terms of institution, discipline, programme and level.
- RPL, as defined nationally by SAQA, applies to informal or 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.



RPL for access

- Chartall Business College will offer an advising service for potential candidates who seek admission through RPL.
- Only candidates, who have been properly advised, completed the application forms and submitted the necessary documentation and fees will be considered for admission via this route.
- Candidates will be required to attend a portfolio-building and preparation workshop. This will be delivered at Chartall Business College Campus and it is available on-line through a custom designed e-learning programme that guides candidates through the process.
- To be accepted for an RPL assessment, a student will have to demonstrate through a portfolio of evidence that he/she has achieved is the equivalence to school leaving competence, i.e. a National Senior Certificate at NQF Level 4.
- The potential student's portfolio will be assessed against generic outcomes / level descriptors at NQF 4 (such as comprehension of academic texts, ability to do research, ability to summarise and analyse texts, etc.). This will be used to predict entry level capability for success in higher education.

Conditions for Admission

There are two possible outcomes of an RPL for access assessment:

- If the portfolio meets the specified standards for entry, the Academic Committee will accept the student conditionally for one year. The student will have to pass all his/her modules for the year in order to gain full acceptance for the rest of the programme.
- The potential student may be unsuccessful in meeting the standards for RPL. In this case, the Programme Coordinator would advise the applicant on what steps might be necessary to improve their capabilities. This is will usually involve advising the person to enrol for an NQF 4 qualification to build the necessary skills at that academic level.

Note: The CHE's criteria for accreditation state that admission of students via the RPL route should not constitute more than 10% of any cohort.



However, page 89 of the CHE's 2014 publication: Distance Higher Education Programmes in a Digital Era: Programme Accreditation Criteria states on page 89 "...in ODL programmes which are designed to promote improved access, the ratio may be higher than 10%, although the RPL process outlined by the institution should be sufficiently rigorous to inspire confidence in the integrity of the programme as a whole." As such, Chartall Business College will consider 10% of a cohort as the norm but will not exclude deserving candidates simply to achieve this ratio. This will be at the discretion of the Academic Committee.

RPL for advanced standing (exemption)

- RPL for advanced standing recognises that a student has sufficiently mastered the content of parts of a programme and grants exemption from needing to complete the subject.
- A student may apply for RPL for Advanced Standing during the course of study. Application for RPL must be made to the Programme Coordinator.
- The student will be required to present evidence of competence equivalent against specified outcomes of a qualification. Evidence required must be agreed to by the Programme Coordinator, the appointed faculty-assessor and the student.
- Evidence will be presented in a portfolio reflecting appropriate levels of knowledge and skill in the field. This would normally comprise a range of supporting materials and evidence attesting to the student having met the learning outcomes of the identified module, such as:
 - work-based assessments
 - current Curriculum Vitae
 - essays
 - certified copies of professional references
 - certified copies of industry awards
 - reports
 - workplace documentation, such as position description, third party reports (performance plan and report), work samples, professional development activities



- A student may not be EXEMPT for more than 50% of the credits towards a qualification offered at Chartall Business College by means of RPL.
- The final Statement of Results will show 'exempt' next to a subject achieved through RPL. This student will graduate with fewer credits.
- Only NQF 5 and NQF 6 subjects may be exempted via RPL. The NQF 7 subjects may not be exempted.
- A qualification cannot be awarded with distinction if any RPL exemption is granted.
- Students may not enrol for more than five subjects per semester (this includes those they are completing via RPL). They may to enrol for subjects to start studying while they are doing RPL.

Note: Short courses offered outside the HEQSF are non-credit bearing and, thus, individuals who register for and attend such short courses are not awarded credits against any level on the National Qualification Framework (NQF). This means no credit will be accumulated and/or transferred from such short courses. However, the learning acquired counts for RPL.

Credit accumulation & transfer (CAT)

Credit transfer and articulation arrangements increase opportunities for students WITH qualifications to access higher education by facilitating student mobility between institutions and sectors.

Chartall Business College recognises that the following good practice principles should not compromise the academic integrity of courses and programmes. Effective credit transfer and articulation is a key component in making lifelong learning a reality. It can also mean efficiencies in both time and money for students, institutions, and government.

Principles

1. The focus of credit transfer arrangements from prior programmes and courses achieved by a prospective student is to establish the equivalence of learning



outcomes, regardless of the similarity or differences of the education processes involved.

2. Differences could include the processes of delivery, teaching methodology and assessment.
3. All that is important is that the prior provider is an accredited Higher Education provider.

Application process for credit transfer

- Chartall Business College's website will provide general information and documentation about credit transfer, processes for applying for credit transfer, including any restriction to credit transfer when applying for specific programmes.
- All applications for credit transfer must be made using the relevant application form for credit.

Documentation required for credit transfer

Individual applications for credit transfer must be accompanied by the following documentation:

- Certified copies of all official academic transcripts of the applicant's formal higher education studies from each higher education institution attended (that are relevant to the application). This transcript (according to the HEQSF, 2013 p.20) will detail:
 - The name of the issuing institution
 - The registration number of the provider (in the case of private providers)
 - The graduate who is entitled to receive the qualification
 - The full title of the qualification including designator and qualifiers
 - The qualification ID number from the NQF
 - The NQF exit level and total credits of the qualification
 - The NQF level and credit value of each module (unless included in the supplement)
 - The academic achievement of the graduate
 - The person in the institution authorised to issue the documentation.

HEQSF (2013, p20) states: *"In order to improve the portability and transparency of qualifications each transcript issued by a higher education institution to a current or former student must have attached to it an official supplement. The supplement must provide a description of the nature, level, content and where appropriate the context of the studies pursued by a student and assessed by the institution."* This transcript will also be required to process an application for CAT.

Submission of applications for credit transfer

- Credit transfer application forms will be processed for current or intending Chartall Business College students.
- An administration fee will be charged to process the applications. Should the student enrol then the fees due will be discounted by the administration fee.
- Informal advice can be obtained from Student Administration prior to an application for admission being received. This advice is indicative only, and is not binding on Chartall Business College in terms of the final outcome.
- For applicants, credit transfer applications should be submitted to Student Administration at least two weeks before admissions close for a new teaching period.
- Current students should submit credit transfer applications at least two weeks prior to the commencement of the teaching period in which credit transfer is being sought.

Acknowledgement of application

The applicant will receive a written or electronic acknowledgement of receipt of an application for credit transfer no later than two working days of the application being received. The written acknowledgement will indicate whether the application is complete and what additional documentation is required.

Determination of credit transfer for programme credit

The QA & Assessment Manager will initially be responsible for the assessment of credit transfer (with advice from the faculty head and / or Academic Director). Over time this function may be devolved to the Student Administrators for more common requests where similar credits have already been approved.

Credit transfer

When assessing an application for credit transfer the QA & Assessment Manager takes into consideration the following four factors:

- the qualification and level of studies completed;
- the currency of the content (especially for modules relating to information technology, law, etc.);
- the content and learning outcomes of the modules completed;
- the existence of any programme-specific agreements regarding programme credit;

For international qualifications, the student will follow the normal verification procedures with SAQA and submit the relevant documentation with the application.

Study that is considered appropriate to provide credit transfer for a specific Chartall Business College module must demonstrate:

- substantial equivalence / correspondence in learning outcomes with the Chartall Business College module;
- sufficient currency;
- an equivalent / corresponding level of study duration (e.g. equivalent to a 12 credit course if that is the credit value of the module for which credit transfer will be awarded).

Credit transfer will not normally be granted for formal studies completed by a student more than 10 years before a student makes an application for credit transfer. Note that some subjects (e.g. information technology, law, etc.) will require even more currency.

Notification and recording

On the basis of the credit transfer assessment made by the QA & Assessment Manager, Student Administration will provide the applicant with a Notice of Credit Transfer containing details of the credit transfer.



Acceptance of credit

- The Notice of Credit Transfer details will not be activated until Student Administration receives from the applicant a written acceptance of the offer of credit provided in the notice. This must be received within 15 working days of the notification, and in the case of a new students must be accompanied by a registration form.
- Student Administration will record the credit transfer on the student's record.

Decision review and appeals

This review process relates to both RPL and CAT.

- If the applicant/student is dissatisfied with the decision after the CAT or RPL process, they may request a review of the assessment with the Academic Director, stating the grounds for the request.
- Requests for a review must be received by Chartall Business College within 15 working days of the date of issue of the outcome of the CAT or RPL assessment.
- The request must include an outline of the matters that have led to the request or appeal, the grounds for requesting the review or lodging the appeal and any documentation in support of the applicant/student's case.

Grounds for review

The grounds for requesting a review of a credit transfer assessment or for lodging an appeal against the assessment are one or more of the following:

- Chartall Business College failed to follow relevant credit transfer process; or
- Chartall Business College failed to follow its own published procedures and guidelines for RPL and credit transfer.



Advice to the applicant of the outcome of the review

- Within 10 days of receipt of the written request the faculty will advise Student Administration in writing of the outcome of the review of decision or appeal.
- Within five days of receipt of the outcome, Student Administration will provide the student official written advice of the outcome, including the basis for the decision.

Monitoring of decisions – review and reporting

- The QA & Assessment Manager will provide semester reports to the Academic Committee regarding the implementation and impact of CAT and RPL within Chartall Business College.
- The Academic Committee will arrange for an overall review of the effectiveness and impact of Chartall Business College's processes for CAT and RPL to be undertaken at least every two years.
- Where relevant such a review may lead to recommendations regarding policy and procedural changes.

References

Ministry of Education: Higher Education Qualification Framework: October 2007;

CHE: Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC): Policy for RPL and CAT: August 2016.

CHE: Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) Criteria for Institutional Audits: November, 2004;

CHE: Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) Criteria for Programme Accreditation: November, 2004;

Criteria for programme accreditation; The programme criteria (HEQC, 2004);

SAQA: National Policy for the Implementation of RPL (SAQA March 2013)

DHET: White paper on post school education: March 2013

SAQA National Policy for Credit Accumulation & Transfer (October, 2013)

