South African Council
for the Architectural Profession

51 Wessel Road, Right Wing,
Rivonia, Sandton, 2128

P.O. Box 1500, Rivonia, 2128

Tel: 011 475 5000 | **Fax:** 011 479 5100

Email: info@sacapsa.com
Web: www.sacapsa.com

Name of the Policy:	Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (RPL)
Revised	18 February 2026
Date of recommendation:	02 March 2026
Approval by Council	27 March 2026
Signature: President of Council	
Next Review Date	March 2028

Council President: Mr C Nduku. **Council Vice President:** Ms L Shongwe.
Council Members: Mr R Vuzane CA (SA); Ms M Pepeta; Mr K Bingham; Dr J Mirembe; Mr V Phailane; Ms K Cupido; Ms S Bongela; Mr L Nematswerani; Mr D Basdew.
Registrar: Advocate T Fiduli

South African Council
for the Architectural Profession

51 Wessel Road, Right Wing,
Rivonia, Sandton, 2128

P.O. Box 1500, Rivonia, 2128

Tel: 011 475 5000 | **Fax:** 011 479 5100

Email: info@sacapsa.com
Web: www.sacapsa.com

Definitions

"The Act" means the Architectural Profession Act, 2000 (Act 44 of 2000);

"Applicant" means a Registered Professional applying for Recognition of Prior Learning;

"HEQsF" means the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework.

"NQF" means the National Qualifications Framework, the system that records levels of learning achievement to ensure that the skills and knowledge that have been learned are recognised throughout the country.

"**Identification of Work"** means the type of work identified for each category of registered professionals.

"Outcomes" mean the competencies required to function in the category applied for.

"SAQA" means the South African Qualifications Authority.

"Recognition of Prior Learning means the previous learning and experience of a learner, howsoever obtained, against the learning outcomes required for a specified qualification and the acceptance for qualification of that which meets those requirements; and **SAQA** defines it as a process through which non-formal learning and informal learning are measured, mediated for recognition across different contexts, and certified against the requirements for credit, access, inclusion, or advancement in the formal education and training system, or workplace.

"Registered Professional" means a person registered with SACAP in terms of Section 19(2)(a) of the Act;

"SACAP" means the South African Council for the Architectural Profession, and Council has the same meaning.

"Specific outcomes" imply the detailed, measurable, verifiable skills, abilities, and values that must be demonstrated;

"Scope of Practice Matrix" as reflected in Schedule 2 of the IDoW, means work identified to be undertaken by the Architectural professional in terms of the professional's education and training, demonstrated in their professional competency, performing at the required level of complexity for the respective building type.

Council President: Mr C Nduku. **Council Vice President:** Ms L Shongwe.
Council Members: Mr R Vuzane CA (SA); Ms M Pepeta; Mr K Bingham; Dr J Mirembe; Mr V Phailane; Ms K Cupido; Ms S Bongela; Mr L Nematswerani; Mr D Basdew.
Registrar: Advocate T Fiduli

South African Council
for the Architectural Profession

51 Wessel Road, Right Wing,
Rivonia, Sandton, 2128

P.O. Box 1500, Rivonia, 2128

Tel: 011 475 5000 | **Fax:** 011 479 5100

Email: info@sacapsa.com
Web: www.sacapsa.com

1. Preamble

a) Section 19 (2) (b) (iii) and (4) of the Architectural Profession Act 44 compels the South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP) to consider the submission of evidence of prior learning in architecture in its registration process. This must take into account "previous learning and experience of a learner, however obtained, against the learning outcomes required for a specified qualification and the acceptance for qualification of that which meets those requirements."

b) The policy provides mechanisms to recognise prior learning, experience, and demonstrated competence, enabling applicants to progress to higher registration levels. RPL also serves as a tool to redress past inequities in access to education and professional opportunities, although it applies to all eligible applicants.

c) RPL is a statutory mandate and a mechanism designed to support the transformation of the architectural profession. It assists in removing both visible and invisible barriers within the profession. The RPL assessment process also promotes the notion of lifelong learning, ensuring that all learning—regardless of how, when, or where it was obtained—is recognised and acknowledged. Assessment of such learning shall be conducted against the ten (10) professional competency outcomes.

d) The RPL policy must be read in conjunction with the steering documentation of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning, which served as a guide for SACAP's development of the RPL policy.

2. Purpose and objective of the policy

a) SACAP recognises RPL as a key principle under the Architectural Profession Act, particularly in addressing blockages in the skills pipeline within the built environment.

b) The RPL mechanism assesses previously acquired skills and knowledge, providing professionals with the opportunity to register in the appropriate category and to progress to higher levels of professional registration.

c) The policy shall apply to all applicants seeking recognition of prior learning for registration to higher categories of registration, thus serving as an integral route for the attainment of professional designations or titles in the architectural profession.

Council President: Mr C Nduku. **Council Vice President:** Ms L Shongwe.
Council Members: Mr R Vuzane CA (SA); Ms M Pepeta; Mr K Bingham; Dr J Mirembe; Mr V Phailane; Ms K Cupido; Ms S Bongela; Mr L Nematswerani; Mr D Basdew.
Registrar: Advocate T Fiduli

51 Wessel Road, Right Wing,
Rivonia, Sandton, 2128
P.O. Box 1500, Rivonia, 2128
Tel: 011 475 5000 | Fax: 011 479 5100
Email: info@sacapsa.com
Web: www.sacapsa.com

d) The policy outlines the SACAP's standards and processes for RPL applications to ensure transparency and consistency.

e) Moreover, the policy sets out the assessment criteria which must be fair, reliable, valid, and bias-free.

f) RPL is based on the principle that all registered professionals operate within the same professional and social environment, but at different levels of competence and project complexity. Assessment, therefore, measures competence appropriate to the relevant registration category.

g) Experiential learning in the workspace, particularly under good mentorship, is valued as a means for candidates to achieve the necessary knowledge, understanding, application, and problem-solving abilities required at the various levels of competency assessment.

h) The RPL process recognises non-formal and informal learning by assessing skills and knowledge gained through experience, providing an alternative pathway for professionals without formal qualifications to register in an appropriate category.

3. Nature and scope

a) The RPL processes involve the identification, documentation, assessment, and recognition of prior learning (knowledge, skills, competencies, and values acquired formally or informally).

b) The prior learning is assessed in accordance with the 10 professional competencies.

c) The RPL assessments are an outcome-based methodology and are undertaken in accordance with the SACAP 10 Professional Competencies, which are aligned to the relevant NQF as per the HEQsF.

d) Each competency is broadly weighed to correlate with the credits in the curriculum of a typical accredited program in architecture.

e) Only applicants who are registered professionals (not Candidates) for the required minimum period stipulated in the matrix below shall be eligible to apply and be considered for the RPL processes.

f) Registered professional practising in any capacity in the architectural profession shall be eligible to apply and be considered for the RPL.

Council President: Mr C Nduku. **Council Vice President:** Ms L Shongwe.
Council Members: Mr R Vuzane CA (SA); Ms M Pepeta; Mr K Bingham; Dr J Mirembe; Mr V Phailane; Ms K Cupido; Ms S Bongela; Mr L Nematswerani; Mr D Basdew.
Registrar: Advocate T Fiduli

South African Council
for the Architectural Profession

51 Wessel Road, Right Wing,
Rivonia, Sandton, 2128

P.O. Box 1500, Rivonia, 2128

Tel: 011 475 5000 | **Fax:** 011 479 5100

Email: info@sacapsa.com
Web: www.sacapsa.com

g) Applicants who do not have any formal tertiary qualification shall first register as Candidate Architectural Draughtspersons, complete the compulsory period of candidature under mentorship, submit monthly training records during the period of candidature, write and pass the Professional Practice Examination (PPE), and apply for registration as Professional Architectural Draughtsperson, before applying for RPL to progress to the next registration category.

h) Applicants who are registered as professionals and who do not have any formal tertiary qualification are free to apply for RPL to register in an appropriate category based on competencies amassed in practice.

i) Applicants who have not written and passed the PPE previously shall be required to do so before being allowed to upgrade, after a successful RPL assessment.

j) RPL recognises competencies gained through experience and assesses non-formal and informal learning to ensure applicants meet the minimum requirements for the relevant registration category.

4. Principles of RPL assessments

a) SACAP strictly adheres to the principles of assessment as enunciated in the SAQA and its core principles of openness and accountability. All RPL assessments shall be undertaken on the following principles:

- An explicit commitment to the principles of equity, redress, and inclusion;
- Objectively;
- Fairly;
- With an absence of bias;
- With supportive administrative procedures;
- With transparency
- With accountability.

5. Matrix for re-grading through RPL

The following matrix outlines the required years of experience to apply for RPL in each registration category and the progression to the next level of professional registration through the RPL process.

A	B
PROFESSIONAL Registration level	**PROGRESSION CRITERIA** (To next Professional level)

Council President: Mr C Nduku. **Council Vice President:** Ms L Shongwe.
Council Members: Mr R Vuzane CA (SA); Ms M Pepeta; Mr K Bingham; Dr J Mirembe; Mr V Phailane; Ms K Cupido; Ms S Bongela; Mr L Nematswerani; Mr D Basdew.
Registrar: Advocate T Fiduli

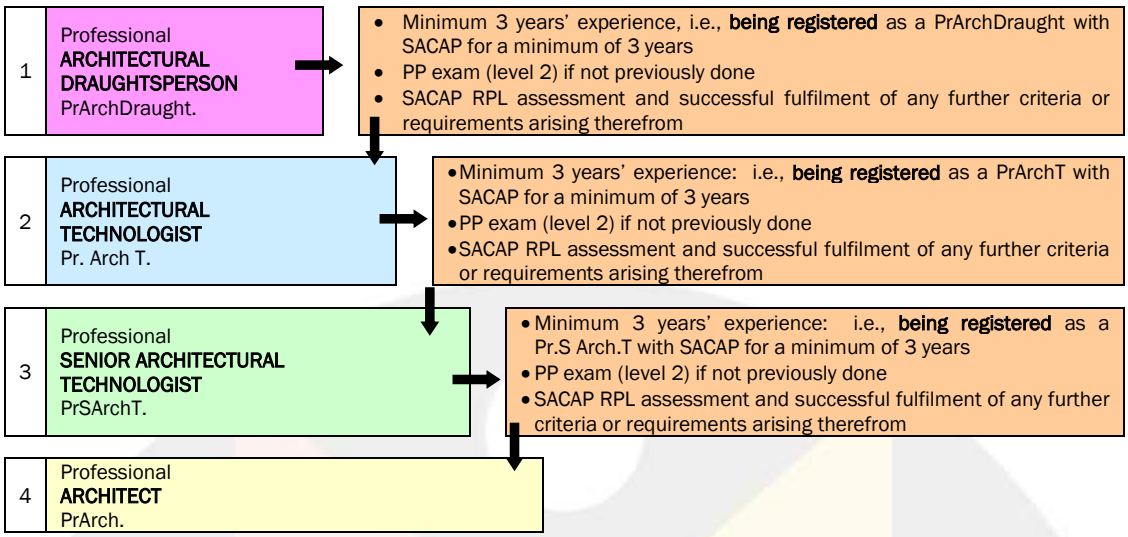
South African Council
for the Architectural Profession

51 Wessel Road, Right Wing,
Rivonia, Sandton, 2128

P.O. Box 1500, Rivonia, 2128

Tel: 011 475 5000 | **Fax:** 011 479 5100

Email: info@sacapsa.com
Web: www.sacapsa.com



6. Composition of the assessment panel

a) The RPL Assessment Panel shall consist of three (3) members, drawn from both architectural academia and professional practice, with the composition ensuring a balanced representation of expertise across design, technical, and regulatory aspects of the profession.

b) The Panel members shall be appointed based on their experience, competence, and ability to assess applicants against the required professional outcomes.

c) The Chairperson of an RPL Assessment Panel shall be a registered professional at the same or higher registration level than the Applicant(s), as the focus is on assessing practical learning. At least two (2) members of the Panel shall also be registered in the category for which the Applicant is applying, or at a higher category, to ensure relevant expertise and appropriate evaluation of competencies.

d) The Chairperson shall ensure that the assessment is conducted in a transparent, fair, and objective manner, and shall oversee the proper functioning of the Panel in accordance with established procedures.

e) Panel members shall declare any actual or perceived conflicts of interest regarding any Applicant before the commencement of the assessment and shall be recused from evaluating any Applicant for whom a conflict exists.

Council President: Mr C Nduku. **Council Vice President:** Ms L Shongwe.
Council Members: Mr R Vuzane CA (SA); Ms M Pepeta; Mr K Bingham; Dr J Mirembe; Mr V Phailane; Ms K Cupido; Ms S Bongela; Mr L Nematswerani; Mr D Basdew.
Registrar: Advocate T Fiduli

South African Council
for the Architectural Profession

51 Wessel Road, Right Wing,
Rivonia, Sandton, 2128

P.O. Box 1500, Rivonia, 2128

Tel: 011 475 5000 | **Fax:** 011 479 5100

Email: info@sacapsa.com
Web: www.sacapsa.com

7. Application procedure

a) An Applicant may only apply for RPL if they are currently registered with SACAP in any professional registration category.
b) Applicants are encouraged to seek guidance from SACAP, including mentorship, to support them in developing and preparing their applications and portfolios.
c) RPL is granted to registered professionals with relevant experience across building types and complexities, providing a clear and transparent pathway for progression through registration categories.
d) An Applicant shall submit an electronic portfolio of evidence for the professional category immediately above their current registration.
e) If an Applicant does not have the means to compile and submit an electronic portfolio, they may seek assistance from SACAP.

8. Portfolio of Evidence Submission

a) The portfolio of evidence must be submitted in accordance with the following requirements:
    i. Projects: A minimum of five (5) recent projects demonstrating the Applicant's involvement from inception.
    ii. Projects in the portfolio shall demonstrate variations in complexity and, where possible, building type within the scope of the Applicant's registration category.
    iii. A maximum of ten (10) PDF images (Drawings) per project, clearly showing the Applicant's contribution and, where relevant, referencing the ten (10) required competencies for the registration category as set out below.

Architectural Design
Environmental Relationships
Construction Technology
Building Structures
Contextual and Urban Relationships
Architectural History, Theory, and Precedent
Building Services and Related Technologies
Contract Documentation and Administration
Computer Applications
Office Practice, Legal Aspects, and Ethics

Council President: Mr C Nduku. **Council Vice President:** Ms L Shongwe.
Council Members: Mr R Vuzane CA (SA); Ms M Pepeta; Mr K Bingham; Dr J Mirembe; Mr V Phailane; Ms K Cupido; Ms S Bongela; Mr L Nematswerani; Mr D Basdew.
Registrar: Advocate T Fiduli

South African Council
for the Architectural Profession

51 Wessel Road, Right Wing,
Rivonia, Sandton, 2128

P.O. Box 1500, Rivonia, 2128

Tel: 011 475 5000 | **Fax:** 011 479 5100

Email: info@sacapsa.com
Web: www.sacapsa.com

9. Assessment Scales

SACAP ASSESSMENT SCALE											
PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY	LEARNING LEVEL REQUIREMENTS PER CATEGORY	OUTCOMES FIELD & NUMBERS									
		Architectural design	Environmental relationships	Construction technology	Building structures	Contextual & urban relationships	Architectural history, theory & Precedent	Building services & related technologies	Contract documentation & administration	Computer applications	Office practice, legal aspects, and ethics
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Professional Architect	Knowledge										
	Understanding										
	Application										
	Problem solving										
Prof. Senior Arch. Technologist	Knowledge										
	Understanding										
	Application										
	Problem solving										
Prof. Arch. Technologist	Knowledge										
	Understanding										
	Application										
	Problem solving										
Prof. Arch. Draughts-person	Knowledge										
	Understanding										
	Application										
	Problem solving										

10. Application procedure & requirements

a) All applications shall be accompanied by the prescribed fees.

b) Applications shall contain a cover page with the applicant's name, registration number, and category registration, and an index page.

c) All submissions must be converted to PDF format: 1 project = 1 PDF compilation;

d) Should an applicant require guidance with this process, they may request assistance from SACAP.

e) The Applicant may request a pre-scrutiny of their portfolio by SACAP before formal assessment by the Panel.

Council President: Mr C Nduku. **Council Vice President:** Ms L Shongwe.
Council Members: Mr R Vuzane CA (SA); Ms M Pepeta; Mr K Bingham; Dr J Mirembe; Mr V Phailane; Ms K Cupido; Ms S Bongela; Mr L Nematswerani; Mr D Basdew.
Registrar: Advocate T Fiduli

51 Wessel Road, Right Wing,
Rivonia, Sandton, 2128
P.O. Box 1500, Rivonia, 2128
Tel: 011 475 5000 | Fax: 011 479 5100
Email: info@sacapsa.com
Web: www.sacapsa.com

f) A pre-scrutiny does not guarantee a successful RPL outcome; it is intended solely as a tool to guide Applicants in preparing their submission.

g) An applicant shall read this policy to ascertain the requirements and procedures, and to consider their suitability for registration and progression.

h) An application for RPL may be submitted via the applicant's online profile or in person and must include the following information:

   i. A motivation letter.

   ii. Reference letters from clients, consultants, contractors, mentors, and/or supervisors confirming that the Applicant performed their duties personally, competently, and to a satisfactory standard.

   iii. The portfolio must include the following project-related documents:

   - Architectural professional–client agreements;
   - Conceptual work;
   - Design development and technical studies;
   - Minutes of meetings; and
   - Certifications relevant to the project.

i) Once the portfolio of evidence has been received, the administration shall review the application for completeness.

j) If the information is not complete, the administrator shall request further information from the Applicant.

k) Once the application is complete, it shall be submitted to the Assessment Panel for an interview with the applicant.

l) Only the original and authentic work of the Applicant shall be considered for evaluation and assessment.

11. Assessment methodology

a) The criteria for RPL assessments must be applied consistently and equitably to all applications.

b) The Assessment Panel shall interview the Applicant to measure the Applicant's existing learning outcomes against the outcomes required for registration in the relevant category.

c) The Applicant may, as part of the assessment process, be required to complete or fulfil any other relevant requirements that the Assessment Panel deems necessary.

Council President: Mr C Nduku. **Council Vice President:** Ms L Shongwe.
Council Members: Mr R Vuzane CA (SA); Ms M Pepeta; Mr K Bingham; Dr J Mirembe; Mr V Phailane; Ms K Cupido; Ms S Bongela; Mr L Nematswerani; Mr D Basdew.
Registrar: Advocate T Fiduli

51 Wessel Road, Right Wing,
Rivonia, Sandton, 2128
P.O. Box 1500, Rivonia, 2128
Tel: 011 475 5000 | Fax: 011 479 5100
Email: info@sacapsa.com
Web: www.sacapsa.com

d) For all four categories of registration, the level of proficiency must be appropriate to the complexity of projects envisaged at that level.

e) RPL assessment evaluates all forms of learning, formal, non-formal, and informal, using multiple strategies to ensure that an applicant's knowledge and experience are fairly recognised.

f) The RPL assessment shall be guided by the following documents, which must be thoroughly studied and applied by both Applicants and the Assessment Panel:

- Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF);
- SACAP Competencies;
- SAQA Criteria and Guidelines for the Implementation of RPL;
- Identification of Work Policy;
- Practical Training Policy; and
- SAQA Unit Standards.

g) The Assessment Panel shall verify the achievement of all required outcomes through evaluation of the submitted evidence and subsequent interview with the Applicant.

h) If the Panel is unable to verify specific components of the required outcomes from the evidence presented, those outcomes may be assessed through oral, written, and/or practical examination, as deemed appropriate by the Panel.

i) In certain instances, architectural work performed by the Applicant may require on-site verification. In such cases, verification shall be conducted by the RPL Panel member who is closest to the specific project site in question.

j) Where there is insufficient evidence to declare an Applicant competent for a designated category, the Assessment Panel may request that the Applicant submit additional evidence within a specified timeframe.

k) Evidence of prior learning and experience shall be assessed based on the documentation provided by the Applicant.

l) Upon completion of the assessment process, the Assessment Panel's written feedback report and the Applicant's portfolio of evidence shall be submitted to the Registration & Recognition of Prior Learning Committee.

12. Gaps in knowledge and skills development

a) If gaps are identified, the Applicant may be required to work under mentorship, attend CPD or educational modules, undertake self-study, and/or reapply with updated evidence.

Council President: Mr C Nduku. **Council Vice President:** Ms L Shongwe.
Council Members: Mr R Vuzane CA (SA); Ms M Pepeta; Mr K Bingham; Dr J Mirembe; Mr V Phailane; Ms K Cupido; Ms S Bongela; Mr L Nematswerani; Mr D Basdew.
Registrar: Advocate T Fiduli

51 Wessel Road, Right Wing,
Rivonia, Sandton, 2128
P.O. Box 1500, Rivonia, 2128
Tel: 011 475 5000 | Fax: 011 479 5100
Email: info@sacapsa.com
Web: www.sacapsa.com

b) If an application is assessed as not successful in terms of structural or critical outcomes, the Applicant shall be required to gain further experience under mentorship for re-assessment and may be required to attend relevant Category 1 CPD activities.
c) All unsuccessful Applicants may, after addressing identified shortfalls, reapply for RPL.
d) Upon reapplication, they shall present evidence of experience gained under the competency requirements to the Assessment Panel for evaluation.

13. Procedure after the conclusion of the assessment

Upon successful completion of the RPL assessment, the Assessment Panel shall recommend to the Registration and RPL Committee whether the Applicant has met the required outcomes and competency standards for the relevant registration category.

14. Right to Appeal

a) An Applicant whose application for RPL has been declined by the RPL Committee may appeal to Council in terms of SACAP's Registration Appeals Policy, upon payment of the prescribed fee.
b) The Applicant may submit a fully motivated and substantiated appeal. Appeals must reach SACAP's office within thirty (30) days from the date of the letter confirming the outcome of the original RPL Panel assessment.
c) The Council shall hear the appeal within sixty (60) days of receipt of the appeal and all supporting documentation.

15. Revision of the policy

The policy shall be reviewed every two (2) years, unless material changes to legislation, regulations, or professional practice requirements occur that warrant an earlier review.

Council President: Mr C Nduku. **Council Vice President:** Ms L Shongwe.
Council Members: Mr R Vuzane CA (SA); Ms M Pepeta; Mr K Bingham; Dr J Mirembe; Mr V Phailane; Ms K Cupido; Ms S Bongela; Mr L Nematswerani; Mr D Basdew.
Registrar: Advocate T Fiduli