



**COMENSA**  
COACHES AND MENTORS OF SOUTH AFRICA

Policy and Criteria for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) of COMENSA Members who wish to apply for a Coaching or Mentoring professional designations but who do not have the required underlying qualification as required by Section 28.h.ii of the South African Qualifications Authority Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and registering a Professional Designation for the Purposes of the National Qualifications Framework Act, Act 67 of 2008, as amended September 2020.

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## Foreword

Professional bodies such as Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA) have a critical role in quality assurance and standards development in the South Africa National Qualifications Framework (NQF) environment. Professional bodies, and the registration of their designations, contribute to strengthening social responsiveness and accountability within professions and promoting pride in association for all professions and occupations.

Redress is also a key imperative in the South African policy and regulatory environment. It is critical that perceptions of exclusionary practices be addressed upfront and that professions do not apply unjust policies and practices regarding who gains access to a profession.

COMENSA is proud to be working with the custodian of the NQF, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to make sure that all South Africans benefit from the professional development.

Signed on this 14<sup>th</sup> Day November 2022



Andre Retief  
COMENSA Board Member & MCSC Chairperson

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## Definitions

1. In addition to the definitions as determined in the SAQA Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and registering a Professional Designation and the prevailing MCSC Glossary of Acronyms and Terms, the following:
  - a. “Coaching” as defined by COMENSA means a professional, collaborative and outcomes-driven method of learning that seeks to develop an individual and raise self-awareness so that he or she might achieve specific goals and perform at a more effective level". Coaching is about creating change that helps to enhance performance and learning.
  - b. “External Moderator” means a person who understands the relevant COMENSA Behavioural Standards Framework and is not a member of COMENSA.
  - c. “Mentoring” as defined by COMENSA means "a partnership in which a mentee is assisted in making significant advances in knowledge, perspective and vision in order to develop their full potential; the mentor's wisdom is utilised by the mentee to facilitate and enhance new learning and insight". The mentor focuses on the development of the learner and passing on personalised, domain-specific knowledge.

“Recognition of Prior Learning or RPL” as defined by COMENSA means a process undertaken by a member of COMENSA to achieve a professional designation without having achieved the required underlying the qualification.

## Purpose

2. This policy establishes the criteria for COMENSA to recognise the prior learning of members who seek to be awarded one of the COMENSA registered professional designations without having the required underlying qualification.

## Introduction and Background

3. COMENSA is a Professional Body recognised by SAQA in terms of its Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering Professional Designations.
4. COMENSA has registered Professional Designations for Coaches and Mentors with SAQA in terms of Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering Professional Designations.
5. The SAQA Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering Professional Designations requires a Professional Body to have policy and criteria on RPL to award designations for members who do not have the required underlying qualification.

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## Objectives

6. The objectives of this policy are to:
  - a. Advance a comprehensive, quality-assured and resource-driven approach to optimise the delivery of a structured RPL process.
  - b. Establish a clear RPL process with fair rules including a clear and distinct application with feedback.
  - c. Ensure quality assurance and benchmarking of RPL applied by COMENSA **RPL Evaluators** and overseen by an External Moderator.
  - d. Provide an overview of the roles and responsibilities of parties to the RPL Process.

## Scope

7. This Policy applies to all Members of COMENSA who apply to be awarded one of the COMENSA registered Professional designations as well as all office bearers of COMENSA who perform functions associated with the awarding of such designations.
8. RPL in the context of this policy is utilized for the sole purpose of recognizing previous learning and experience for the sake of recognizing learning that is equivalent to the training hours for the underlying qualification required to enable the awarding of a COMENSA registered Professional designation.
9. The process of RPL in the context of this policy is about:
  - a. Identifying what the candidate knows and can do.
  - b. Matching the candidate's skills, knowledge and experience to the relevant COMENSA Behavioral Standards Framework.
  - c. Evaluating the evidence provided by the candidate against the relevant COMENSA Behavioral Standards Framework.
  - d. Awarding a designation to the candidate for coaching or mentoring skills, knowledge and experience built up through formal, informal and non-formal learning that occurred in the past.

## Value and Benefits of Recognition of Prior Learning or RPL

10. Undergoing an RPL process as an active member of COMENSA has numerous benefits and value that includes but is not limited to:

10.1 it facilitates access for persons who may not have had the opportunity to do further study

10.2 It acknowledges the value of learning outside of formal setting and recognises the history of self-development and learning that people have embarked on in their life

10.3 It validates the worth of the learning that people have achieved by themselves in their self-development journey

10.4 It enables people to progress to another education and training programme once recognised

10.5 It eliminates unnecessary repetition of duplication of material already familiar to the person.

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- 10.6 It shortens the time necessary to earn a designation and therefore motivate a person who might otherwise be discouraged by the length of time required to do so.
  - 10.7 It helps to efficiently identify the skills gaps and knowledge allowing for a focus personal development ongoing training to close those gaps for recognition of competence and designation.
  - 10.8 It provides recognition of competencies and practical achievements and therefore opens opportunities within the job market as well.
  - 10.9 It empowers people who were unfairly discriminated against in the past with respect to education and employment opportunities and are now allowed access to these opportunities.

Most importantly RPL through COMENSA may give a member access to a professional designation that allows a person to be formally registered as a member of a Profession, defined by SAQA as *“A disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards enforced by the profession and who hold themselves out as, and are accepted by the public as possessing specialised skills and knowledge in a widely recognised body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level, and who are prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others.”*

### **Recognition Categories**

- 11 For the purpose of this Policy COMENSA will recognise the following categories of Prior Learning:
  - 11.1 Members who have applied to be awarded a COMENSA registered Professional designation who have not had formal coach and/or mentor training but are able to demonstrate that they have gained other learning, including formal, informal or non-formal training, work experience and/or life experience (personal & professional), that has adequately prepared them in the knowledge and practice of COMENSA’s relevant Behavioural Standards Framework.
  - 11.2 Members who have applied to be awarded a COMENSA registered Professional designation and who have been awarded a professional designation by another professional body, and that member is able to demonstrate through the submission of portfolio of evidence alignment with the COMENSA’s relevant Behavioural Standards Framework, the evidence also including evidence that closes out any gaps with the relevant COMENSA Behavioural Standards Framework.

### **Policy**

- 12 COMENSA shall recognise the appropriate prior learning of a member who applies to be awarded one of the COMENSA registered Professional designations where that member has applied to have that prior learning recognised in terms of this policy and where the prior learning meets the criteria for recognition described in this policy.

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- 13 COMENSA shall appoint and train RPL Evaluators as advisors from amongst its credentialed members who will guide and support applicants during the recognition of prior learning evidence gathering and to undertake the review of applications.
  - 14 COMENSA shall appoint an external Moderator who has an understanding of the COMENSA Behavioural Standards Framework and is appropriately skilled and experienced to quality assure the awarding of COMENSA registered Professional Designation on the basis of RPL.
  - 15 In administering the Policy and Criteria COMENSA shall:
    - 15.1 Comply with the national SAQA Policy and Criteria for the Recognition of Professional Bodies and the Registration of Professional Designations.
    - 15.2 Include an RPL route as an integral requirement for attainment of its professional designations as stipulated in the SAQA Policy and Criteria for the Recognition of Professional Bodies and the Registration of Professional Designations.
    - 15.3 Collaborate with SAQA and the Quality Councils to advance quality RPL provisioning in the sector.
    - 15.4 Progressively develop and enhance its capacity to initiate and support RPL provision in accordance with this policy.
    - 15.5 Recognise prior learning aligned to the relevant COMENSA Behavioural Standards Framework.
    - 15.6 Implement a fair and consistent review procedure, which shall include a clear and fair appeals process.
    - 15.7 Ensure that candidates receive appropriate guidance and support in the preparation of evidence.
  - 16 COMENSA will not charge for recognition of prior learning as the cost is an integral part of the credentialing process.
  - 17 No information supplied to COMENSA by a candidate as part of the RPL process will be divulged to any unauthorized third party.

### **Criteria**

- 18 Members applying to be awarded a COMENSA registered professional designation on the basis of recognition of prior learning are required to complete the same online application form for Credentialing found under <https://www.comensa.org.za/membership/> and compile a Portfolio of Evidence that includes valid and reliable evidence.
- 19 Prior Learning of applicants who seek to be awarded one of the COMENSA registered Professional Designations shall be recognised as sufficient fulfilment of the formal training hours for the underlying qualification of the relevant COMENSA registered professional designation if the applicant is able to adequately demonstrate:
  - 19.1 How each element of the relevant COMENSA Behavioural Standards Framework has been covered in other formal/informal/non-formal training.

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- 19.2 What they understand each element of the relevant COMENSA Behavioural Standards Framework to mean (demonstrating knowledge).
  - 19.3 How they apply each element of the relevant COMENSA Behavioural Standards Framework in their practice (demonstrating practice).
  - 19.4 How many equivalent hours of training they have had for each element of the relevant COMENSA Behavioural Standards Framework.
- 20 The Prior Learning of applicants who seek to be awarded one of the COMENSA registered Professional Designations on the basis of having been awarded an equivalent professional designation by another professional body shall be recognised as sufficient fulfilment of the qualification criterion of the COMENSA registered professional designation if the applicant is able to:
- 20.1 Adequately demonstrate that the awarding requirements of the designation they have been awarded are equivalent to the relevant COMENSA Behavioural Standards Framework.
  - 20.2 Provide a log of the requisite credentialing hours for the particular credentialing level.
  - 20.3 Present a valid credentialing certificate at the equivalent level from another body.
  - 20.4 Provide adequate evidence that a coaching or mentoring demonstration evaluation was undertaken as part of the process of awarding the professional designation.
  - 20.5 Provide evidence for how they have made up for any gaps between the awarding requirements of the professional designation they have been awarded and those of the relevant COMENSA Behavioural Standards Framework.
  - 20.6 has completed pre-evaluation form that covers self-awareness, opportunities for growth and diversity.
- 21 Any person assessing applications for recognition of prior learning on behalf of COMENSA shall apply the following principles:
- 21.1 The focus is on what has been learned and not on the status of the institution, organisation or place where the learning was obtained.
  - 21.2 Recognition is awarded for the evidence of knowledge and skills acquired through experience and not for experience alone.
  - 21.3 Prior learning is made explicit through assessment and/or other methods that engage the intrinsic development of knowledge, skills and competencies acquired.
  - 21.4 Measurement of the learning takes place against the relevant COMENSA Behavioural Standards Framework.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

- 22 The COMENSA Board will:
- 22.1 Consider and approve the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.
  - 22.2 Manage all Recognition of Prior Learning Appeal Processes.
- 23 The COMENSA Membership Criteria and Standards Committee shall:

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- 23.1 Keep abreast of current Recognition of Prior Learning statutory requirements.
  - 23.2 Recommend changes to the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.
  - 23.3 Recruit, select, appoint and train COMENSA External Moderators.
  - 23.4 Recruit, select, appoint and train COMENSA RPL Evaluators.

24 RPL Candidates:

- 24.1 Supply a complete and comprehensive portfolio of evidence;
- 24.2 Respect the processes and procedures of institutions and workplaces.

25 COMENSA RPL Evaluators will

- 25.1 Adhere to the requirements as set out in this policy.
- 25.2 Meet professional requirements, including the participation in continuing professional development activities, to be developed and agreed with the community of RPL Evaluators
- 25.3 Be responsible for ensuring that the review process is carried out.
- 25.4 Recommend appropriate changes to the Policy to the MCSC.
- 25.5 Upload Recognition of Prior Learning Review Results to the COMENSA Web Site.
- 25.6 Keep the necessary records and documentation utilised during the conducting of RPL advising and review.
- 25.7 Liaise with the RPL candidate regarding the review process including offering advice and support to the applicant.

26 COMENSA External Moderators will:

- 26.1 Ensure that a fair, valid and appropriate evaluation process was implemented by the RPL Evaluators.
- 26.2 Upload Recognition of Prior Learning Moderation Results to the COMENSA Web Site.
- 26.3 Keep the necessary records and documentation utilised during the conducting of RPL Moderation.

**27. Policy and Criteria Implementation and Review**

- 27.1 This policy and criteria comes into effect on the date of signature by the Vice President of COMENSA.
- 27.2 This policy and criteria will be reviewed procedurally annually.

**28. Legislation, Regulations, Policies and Guidelines applicable to this Policy and Criteria**

- 28.1 The following have applicability in the whole or in part:
  - 28.1.1 The Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996
  - 28.1.2 The National Qualifications Framework Act, Act 67 of 2008
  - 28.1.3 The Protection of Personal Information Act, Act of 4 of 2013
  - 28.1.4 SAQA Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body & Registering a Professional Designation.
  - 28.1.5 The Accreditation Policies, Criteria and Processes of Quality Councils in South Africa.
  - 28.1.6 All COMENSA MCSC Portfolio Committee Policies and Criteria.