

# Framework for Recognition of Prior Learning



**National Institute of Open Schooling**  
(An autonomous Institution under MHRD, Govt. of India)



# **FRAMEWORK FOR RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING**



**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF OPEN SCHOOLING (NIOS)**

(An autonomous Institution under Ministry of  
Human Resource Development, Government of India)  
A-24-25, Institutional Area, Sector-62, Noida, U.P.

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MINISTER OF  
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



मंत्री  
मानव संसाधन विकास  
भारत सरकार



*M. M. Pallam Raju*  
एम. एम. पल्लम राजू

### Message

The Government of India has given importance to the skill and knowledge development of the workforce in its XII Five Year Plan. A National Skill Development Mission has been formed under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. The Skill Development Mission envisages devising a comprehensive scheme for developing diverse and wide range of skills for youth that will enable the country to reap the scientific and demographic dividend.

Learning through working does help in imbibing skills, and needs to be recognized and certified and appropriately rewarded. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a welcome method of assessment that considers whether the candidates can meet the assessment requirements for competencies or a set of competencies that they already possess. Valuing and recognizing these learning outcomes may significantly improve individuals self esteem and well being, motivate them to further learning and strengthen their labour market opportunities. This may also help integrate broader sectors of the population into an open and flexible education and training system.

Recognition of Prior Learning as a part of National Vocational Education Qualifications Framework (NVEQF) will support the attainment of qualification through diverse routes. This will also help to assess the competencies acquired by the learner through prior learning experiences and will assist the progression through NVEQF.

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), which has diverse vocational courses with long standing experiences, is attempting to reach the unreached through this RPL framework which is holistic in its nature and by devising flexible assessment approach. This will help to assess and validate non-formal and informal learning to progress to further education and/or training, even finding jobs. I am sure that this will give a new impetus to Vocational Education, proving beneficial to the youth, especially of the unorganized sector and industry.

I am confident that this will aid the growth and development of the nation. I wish NIOS all the success in this endeavour.

(M.M. Pallam Raju)



## FOREWORD



Today, in a complex and fast changing world, it is necessary for individuals to acquire and adapt competencies which includes, knowledge, skills and attitudes, through all forms of learning to cope up with various socio-economic challenges in the life. It has almost become imperative to look beyond the formal education system for recognition of competencies that one has acquired informally. A system of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), if available, to the workforce in informal economy, this will enable them as well as employers to stake their claim in societal development.

In this era of globalization, the institutions and organizations must strive to open up learning opportunities to all, making education and acquiring skills a lifelong process. In 2009, the “Belem Framework for Action” adopted by 144 delegations of UNESCO member states at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education in Brazil re-affirmed the role of lifelong learning in addressing development issues and member countries were explicitly mandated to develop guidelines to recognize, validate and accredit all learning outcomes including those acquired through non-formal and informal learning setups.

India's Vocational Education & Training (VET) system has almost not been able to address adequately on recognising and certifying the skills acquired through the prior learning, while one gets engaged in the organized and/or unorganized setups. Recently, the Govt. of India has come out with the National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF), which strives to build a flexible education and training system and permits individuals to accumulate their knowledge and skills in a progression mode. The NVEQF principles overrides on a series of levels of competencies / skills to be acquired and making education & training relevant to the workforce, as been arranged in ascending order starting from RPL 1 and RPL 2 and leading towards level 1 to 10. The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), in specific terms, as well as Open Schooling system in general has been mandate to develop assessment system and evolve processes of certification to offer such recognition to prior learning with industry support, which would lead to career progression and skill up gradation of the workforce.

Keeping this in backdrop, the NIOS has attempted to develop a **“Framework for the Recognition of Prior Learning”** with the objectives to facilitate the implementation of RPL that will facilitate in integrating the formal and non-formal/informal sector based skills. This will give individuals an incentive to learn, empower them and enable them to become more active in the labour market particularly, the disadvantaged groups, in creating more level-playing field in education and training.

  
Dr. S.S. Jena  
Chairman, NIOS

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# 1 INTRODUCTION



Skill building is viewed as an instrument to improve the effectiveness and contribution of workforce to the overall productivity and production. It could also be seen as an instrument to empower the individual and improve his/her social acceptance or value.

In a globalized economy, a large pool of skilled workers is indispensable for attracting foreign direct investment. Developing skilled workers enhances the efficiency and flexibility of the labour market; skills bottlenecks are reduced, skilled workers are more easily absorbed into the economy, and their job mobility is improved. India's transition to a knowledge-based economy requires a new generation of educated and skilled people. Its competitive edge will be determined by its people's ability to create, share and use knowledge effectively. A knowledge economy requires India to develop knowledge workers and knowledge technologists - who are flexible and analytical and who can be the driving force for innovation and growth.

Self-employment and small business continue to play a vital role in this regard. A large part of the 18-24 years age group in India has never been able to reach college. Appropriate skill-development and vocational training can facilitate entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly when such skill development is coupled with enabling financial or other inputs. Alongside the skills required for the occupation, managerial skills to manage an enterprise and financial training for maintaining accounts and understanding markets can also assist in setting up small enterprises, thereby generating further employment and improving incomes. Such training can take place across various occupational groups, including tailoring, construction automobiles, IT and transport.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is an important element of the nation's education initiative. It consists basically of practical courses through which one gains skills and experience directly linked to a career in future. In order for VET



to play its part effectively in the changing national context and for India to enjoy the fruits of the demographic dividend, there is an urgent need to redefine the critical elements of imparting vocational education and training to make them flexible, contemporary, relevant, inclusive and creative.

**Formal vocational training** follows a structured training program and leads to certificates, diplomas or degrees, recognized by State/Central Government, Public Sector and other reputed concerns.

**Non-formal vocational training** helps in acquiring some marketable expertise, which enables a person to carry out her/his ancestral trade or occupation. In a way through such non-formal vocational training, a person receives vocational training through 'hereditary' sources. Often 'Non-formal' vocational trainings are also received through 'other sources'. In such cases training received by a person to pursue a vocation, is not ancestral and is different from the trade or occupation of his/her ancestors.

(Source; National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) report No. 517, 61/10/03)

Two types of vocational education and trainings are available in India: a) *Formal and*; b) *Non-formal*. Provision for VET, at present, is generally oriented towards job opportunities in the organized sector of the economy. It is a well-known fact that in India about 92 per cent of the working population is employed in the informal or unorganised sector of economy and about 8 percent in organized sector. According to Social Security for Unorganised Workers, a report by the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector in 2006, "All unincorporated enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the production and sale of goods and operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and employing less than 10 persons" constitute the unorganised sector.

With about 12 million persons expected to join the workforce every year, and an existing skill development capacity of about 3.4 million, it is imperative that we need to enhance the skilling and technical education capacity to about **15 million** (considering that even sections of the

existing workforce would have to be trained). India has set a huge target of training 500 million people by 2022 which requires programs that are scalable, replicable and accessible. A large portion of the employment would occur in the lower portions of the skill pyramid. There is large demand and supply gap where the current supply is unable to meet the ever growing labour demands both in quality and numbers.

The unorganised sector today contributes more than 60 per cent share to the GDP of the country. Skilling of the existing workforce and new entrants is required to improve the production in micro and small enterprises, particularly those which are part of the

unorganized sector. Such skilling would address two interlinked issues—first, the quality of goods or services provided by that enterprise and at a larger scale by the sector would improve. Second, the occupational status of workers would get strengthened as the nature of the tasks they perform becomes specialized and skilled. Such strengthening of the occupational identity is necessary for improved working conditions such as safety, job security and pay, while correspondingly ensuring consistent higher quality standards across the particular occupation.

It is, therefore, necessary to promote main employment generation activities like (a) agriculture, (b) labour intensive manufacturing sector, such as food processing, leather products, textiles (c) services sectors: trade, restaurants and hotels, tourism, construction and information technology, etc. and (d) small and medium enterprises. Therefore, employment needs to be generated in all the sectors, namely primary, secondary, and tertiary.

Today, in a complex and fast-changing world, it is necessary for individuals to acquire and adapt competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) through all forms of learning to cope with various challenges. However, qualifications system still focuses on recognition of competencies acquired through the formal system of education. As a result, a large number of individuals' who have acquired learning through informal or non-formal learning modes remain unrecognised. This leads to a huge under-utilisation of human talent and resources in society. Therefore, the learning outcomes that young people and adults acquire in the course of their life in non-formal and informal settings need to be assessed, certified and recognized to motivate them for lifelong learning and to enhance their productivity.

## Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment that considers whether the candidates can meet the assessment requirements for a competency or a set of competencies that they already possess.

The demand for the recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of all forms of learning with a focus on non-formal and informal learning outcomes was expressed through the Belém Framework for Action, adopted by 144 Delegations of UNESCO Member States at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in Brazil in December 2009.

**Recognition of Prior Learning is a form of assessment that acknowledges skills and knowledge gained through:**

- formal training;
- non-formal or informal training;
- work experience; and
- life experience.

The RVA of non-formal and informal learning is a key lever in making lifelong learning a reality. It renders visible and gives value to the hidden and un-recognised competences that individuals have obtained through various means and in different phases of their lives. Valuing and recognising these learning outcomes may significantly improve individuals' self-esteem and well-being, motivate them to further learning, and strengthen their labour market opportunities. RVA may help to integrate broader sections of the population into an open and flexible education and training system and to build inclusive societies.

### RPL as part of NVEQF

India's VET system has almost no system where the prior learning of an individual who worked in the unorganized sector for decades is recognized and certified. It is specifically relevant to the traditional occupations in various parts of the country.



The Government of India has also initiated the action on Recognition of Prior Learning as a part of National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) vide its Executive order issued by the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012. The NVEQF supports the attainment of qualifications through diverse routes, including the recognition of prior learning (**Fig. 1**). The recognition of prior learning will assess the competencies acquired by the learner through

prior learning experiences and support NVEQF awards.

		Case I	Case II	
Level	Certificate	Equi-valence	Equi-valence	Certifying Body
10	NCC 8	Degree	Doctorate	University and SSC
9	NCC 7	PG Diploma	Masters Degree	University and SSC
8	NCC 6			University and SSC
7	NCC 5	Advanced Diploma *	Bachelors Degree**	*Board of Technical Education and SSC **University and SSC
6	NCC 4			
5	NCC 3	Diploma*	Grade XII**	*Board of Technical Education, and SSC **School Board and SSC
4	NCC 2			
3	NCC 1			
2	NCWP 2	Grade X	Grade X	School Board and SSC
1	NCWP 1	Grade IX	Grade IX	School Board and SSC
RPL	RPL 2	Grade VIII	Grade VIII	NIOS/SOS and SSC
	RPL 1	Grade V	Grade V	NIOS /SOS & SSC

**Figure 1: Architecture of the NVEQF**

RPL	:	Recognition of Prior Learning
NCWP	:	National Certificate for Work Preparation
NCC	:	National Competency Certificate
SOS	:	State Open School

**Recognition** is the process by which a person's existing skills, knowledge and experience, regardless of how they have been acquired, are assessed towards the achievement of units of competency from nationally recognized training packages or accredited courses. Recognition is an assessment process. It is a process by which prior learning is given a value. It is a means by which prior learning is formally identified, assessed and acknowledged.

**Assessment** in RPL is a mechanism for determining competence of an individual against a **benchmark**.

More than 90% of the total workforce in India is engaged in the unorganized sector. The contribution of the unorganized sector to GDP is about 60%, but it suffers from low productivity syndrome, compared to the formal sector. The work is of inferior quality and inferior terms of employment. People working in the unorganized sector have low incomes and they look for multiple skills and activities to enhance their income. Primitive production technologies, lower order skills and limited exposure to the outside world are responsible for such poor productivity and income levels. There is a need to recognize the skills of workers who have acquired skills outside the formal education system and at the same time provide them with short term learning opportunities for multi-skilling and upskilling. A common RPL framework is, therefore, needed as the vocational training, both in the formal and informal modes which vary greatly in India.

Improvement in quality demands higher standards of service and skill training. In some cases, it also requires conformity to legislation and regulations and could be delivered only by people with recognised skills. This calls for an approach to the development of RPL policy and practices that explicitly addresses the visible and invisible barriers to learning and

*Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)* is the formal assessment, certification and recognition of the skills and knowledge a person has regardless of how or where the competencies **may have been attained, that is, through formal or informal training or work experience (paid and unpaid) voluntary work and life experience.** It creates new routes to qualifications for adults, taps unrecognized talent, motivates for resuming formal studies and critical assessment which is a good start before re skilling link RPL to national curriculum and qualification as the currency of learning, speed up the process of RPL for under privileged people who lack educational opportunities and for those acquiring skills in informal situations.

The need for RPL in India arises from the national objective of moving towards a lifelong learning society, in which learners will be enabled to take up learning opportunities at chosen stages throughout their lives.



services. Such an approach must generate the commitment of all role players to remove these barriers and to build a visible, usable and credible system as an effective and creative vehicle for lifelong learning. RPL enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using any appropriate assessment methodology. Assessment takes many forms, and can be offered in as many ways as there are individuals in the workforce. In many instances, assessment will form part of a training and assessment programme. However there could be pathways where combined training and assessment mode has not been used. These pathways may include experience on the job or life's less formal activities, or training in another sector, another state or another country.



The RPL will give value to all learning, no matter how that learning is achieved. RPL is a valid method of enabling individuals to claim credit for competency standards and/or qualifications, irrespective of how their learning took place. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given competency or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting a competency, competencies or a whole qualification.

## Purpose of RPL

The purpose of the RPL policy and procedure will be to recognize competencies acquired through formal or informal training and to allow vertical mobility in education and placement.

## Benefits of RPL

Following are some of the potential benefits of RPL:

- ❖ It provides access or alternative admission to formal studies;
- ❖ It allows the participant to complete formal education in a shorter period of time and usually at less cost;
- ❖ It provides certification for unrecognized skills;
- ❖ It awards credit for such learning that meets the requirements of a learning programme (vocational/academic);
- ❖ It empowers mature and adult learners;
- ❖ It provides opportunity to those who did not get the opportunity of formal schooling;
- ❖ It addresses visible and invisible barriers to learning.



The main principle underpinning Recognition of Prior Learning is that the focus of recognition should be on the outcomes of learning, rather than how, when or where the learning occurred.

The various other principles that should form the basis of implementation of RPL include the following:

### Learner-focused

RPL should be a gateway, and not a barrier, to learning. RPL should promote the positive aspects

of an individual's learning experience, as opposed to its deficiency. RPL should be a voluntary activity on the part of the learner.

### Accessibility

RPL should be an accessible and inclusive process, applicable to all learners at all levels. Accessibility can be facilitated through:

- ➔ Initial information and advice (awareness raising);
- ➔ Manageable systems in terms of time and money from the perspective of both learner and learning provider;
- ➔ Easy to understand and easy to implement processes;
- ➔ Embedding of RPL in the programme design stage in order to become an integral part of certification.

### Flexibility

A range of different approaches to RPL in terms of both support and assessment should be encouraged to address the diversity of learner needs, goals and experiences across the different sectors.

### Reliability, transparency and consistency

RPL processes should ensure reliability, transparency and consistency in the assessment.

## Clarity of role

The roles and responsibilities of participants/learner, assessor, learning provider, and receiving institution should be clearly defined. Staff involved in managing and supporting the RPL process should be provided with appropriate training and support.

## Quality

RPL should be underpinned by a quality assurance mechanisms.

## Legislative Aspects

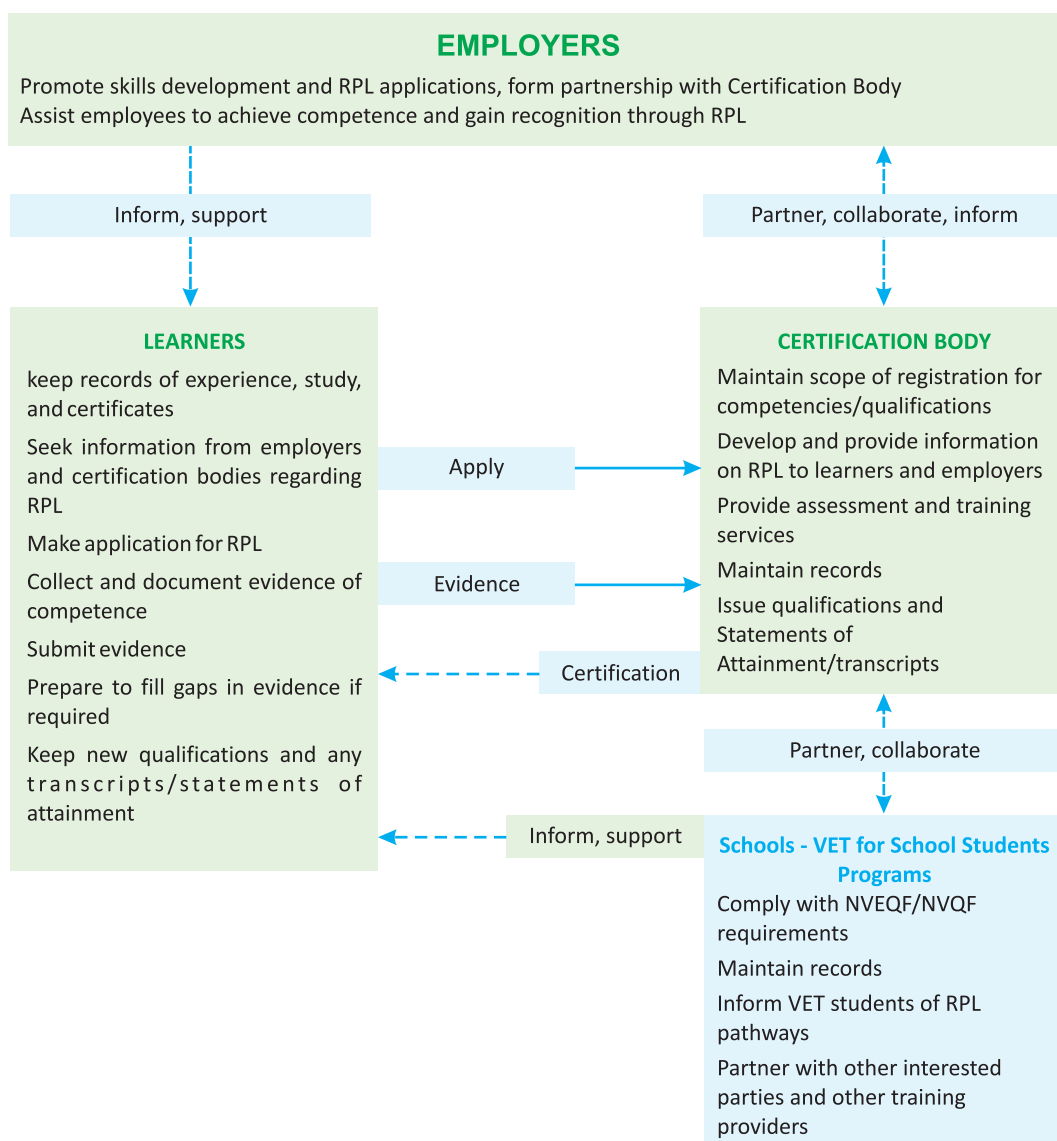
The implementation and management of RPL is within the framework of the following Government legislations:

- ➔ Article 45 of the Indian Constitution which aims to provide all Indians free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of fourteen years.
- ➔ Governments initiative for the universalisation of Secondary Education
- ➔ Focus on pre-employment training and lifelong learning as the objectives of the National Policy on Skill Development.
- ➔ The National Vocational Education Qualifications Framework (NVEQF) which aims to provide mechanisms for adults or mature learners to gain relevant qualifications by recognizing the learning, regardless of when, how and where the learning took place, at the Level 1 and 2 corresponding to class V and VIII of the Indian education system.



# STAKEHOLDERS IN RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

There are four key stakeholders in the RPL process, namely Awarding and Certification Body, Mentor, Assessing Agency/Assessor, and Participant/Learner. The key links between the employers, learners and certification body are outlined in Figure 1.



## Participants in RPL

- Skilled workers engaged in organized and unorganized sectors small scale enterprises
- Self employed people
- People engaged in “traditional activities”

## RPL Awarding body

The role of the RPL awarding body will be to accredit the assessors for assessing the competencies of the candidates as per the procedures of recognition of prior learning and facilitate learner's progression.

Awarding bodies must ensure that a database of learners' achievement and award of individual competencies and qualifications is maintained.

RPL awarding bodies should publish information on a regular basis describing the extent to which their policies on the recognition of prior learning have been implemented and also publish examples of best practices.

The people involved in the assessment certification and recognition process will include mentors, assessors and external authenticators.

## Assessing Organizations/Assessors

Registration of Assessing Organizations or Assessors will be done to ensure standards and quality of assessment. Assessing organisations wishing to carry out RPL must ensure that:

- They meet all accreditation requirements as specified by the legislated accreditation bodies.
- Learners are registered as soon as they formally start to gather evidence
- Records of assessment are maintained as for any other competency/qualification
- Certification and claims are made according to normal procedures
- All relevant evidence is assessed before assessment decisions are confirmed
- Personnel with appropriate expertise are appointed to support the RPL process.

## Role and Responsibility of Assessing Agency

The role and functions of the assessing agency/assessor will be as follows:

- use the criteria for assessment,

- ❑ use appropriate assessment techniques,
- ❑ ensure that the evidence provided is sufficient to make impartial judgments,
- ❑ assess collected evidence against the standard.
- ❑ provide detailed feedback to the applicant,
- ❑ ensure that assessment procedures are recorded correctly and all parties are advised,
- ❑ maintain the integrity of the assessment system,
- ❑ comply with assessment instructions provided by the Assessment Centre,
- ❑ the registration of RPL assessors is a critical component for the success of implementing the RPL procedure.
- ❑ arrange reassessment ,if required.
- ❑ record and report decisions in the required format.
- ❑ liaise with the moderator and participate in the moderation process.

## Mentors

Participants in RPL will need support and guidance to make an application for the recognition of prior learning for either entry to programme, exemptions or for awards. A mentor or facilitator will be the key support for learners in the facilitation of the recognition of prior learning process.

The support to be provided by the mentors will include the following;

- ❑ Providing information and advising the participant/learner on the RPL process for entry to programmes, for exemptions and award.
- ❑ Assisting with the determination criteria of eligibility of a learner for entry to programmes, exemptions and attainment of an award as appropriate.
- ❑ Assisting the learner to analyse the standards for an award in terms of his or her prior knowledge and skill and matching of these to the learning outcomes for the award of qualification.
- ❑ Advising the learner on identifying and gathering evidence.
- ❑ Identifying the learning gaps in terms of knowledge, skills and ability for an award
- ❑ Acting as a liaison between the assessor and the awarding body.

## Assessors

Assessors will be required to assess or judge the learner's evidence against the performance criteria as outlined in the national occupation standards

The assessor will make recommendations for either an award, or entry to a programme, or an exemption to the candidate/learner.

RPL can only be granted by qualified assessors working with or on behalf of the accredited training providers.

To ensure the quality of assessment, only subject matter experts and trained assessors will be responsible for the assessment. The assessor is, therefore, central to the implementation of RPL.

In order to facilitate RPL, assessors will need to be trained in their specific field and in assessment requirement for the award.

## External authenticator

The process of assessment of a candidate's evidence will need to include external authentication to ensure consistency and compliance with national standards.



## ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION OF PRIOR LEARNING

The purpose of the RPL policy and procedure will be to widen learner access, to recognize formal and/or informal training and to allow vertical progression in education and placement.

RPL practice therefore cannot take a '*one-size-fits-all*' approach. However, all RPL practice will be measured against the agreed criteria which are considered the core basis upon which all RPL systems are developed. It is therefore acknowledged that providers of education and training will have very different strategies in implementing RPL and that these strategies will be closely linked to the target group for which the system is developed.

An RPL strategy requires a holistic and flexible assessment approach. It should recognize the diversity of knowledge and learning styles that mature learners bring into the assessment. All assessments should meet the assessment criteria of quality and credible assessment, namely: open, fair, valid, transparent and reliable.

An applicant is considered eligible for assessment when he/she demonstrates the skills and knowledge or provide evidence as specified in the competency standards. Evidence is assessed against the learning outcomes of the current recognised formal programs.

Evidence may include the following:

- ❖ Certificates (originals or, preferably, certified copies) of completed courses and qualifications;

**Assessment** a process in which evidence of performance is gathered and evaluated against agreed performance criteria.

**Performance** includes skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes, and the ability to transfer these to new situations.

**Assessment criteria** state the type and quality of performance against which the candidate is assessed.

**Authentic** means that the information and evidence provided is genuine and trustworthy.

**Valid** means that the information and evidence relevant to the qualification or competency being applied for, is well-founded, and adds weight to the RPL application.

**Reliable** means that the evidence can withstand scrutiny, has integrity and reasonably indicates that the applicant is able to perform a task to a specified standard with regularity and consistency;

**Sufficient** means that an adequate amount of evidence must be provided.



- ❖ Resume, supported with evidence of its authenticity;
- ❖ Awards and prizes;
- ❖ References from employers;
- ❖ Work record portfolios;
- ❖ Letter from clients;
- ❖ Evaluations from supervisors;
- ❖ Products of work;
- ❖ Skills and knowledge.

Report written by the candidate, supported with evidence of its authenticity;

## Assessment Tools

A variety of suitable, approved and moderated assessment tools will have to be developed.



Suitable unit of competency or competency standards that have been developed by a recognized Sector Skill Council or awarding and certification body will have to be provided to all the stakeholders. Competency standards define the competencies for effective performance in the workplace, and are statements of key functions or tasks in a particular job or occupation. Standards are expressed in outcome terms and have a uniform format comprising title, unit descriptor, elements, performance criteria,

range statement and evidence guide. They are also referred to as units of competency. These units of competency are the building blocks for VET sector qualifications and are nationally recognised.

Each unit of competency is a series of work activities directed towards the achievement of the overall outcome. Unit of Competency specifies the knowledge and skills for a workplace outcome or activity the application of these to the standard of performance expected at the workplace.

For each unit there are a number of performance criteria/indicators that specify the required level of performance. The critical aspect of evidence usually reflects the performance criteria. Evidence is anything that supports the claim of the applicants that he/she is competent on a recognized learning outcome/performance.

## Development of RPL Benchmarking Tools

The following steps need to be taken for development of benchmarking tools:

1. Establish whether there are suitable unit of competency or competency standards that have been developed by a recognized awarding and certification body and are registered on the NVEQF or other relevant qualification framework.
2. Each unit of competency is a series of work activities directed towards the achievement of the overall outcome. Unit of Competency specifies the knowledge and skills for a workplace outcome or activity the application of these to the standard of performance expected the workplace. Elements of Competencies provide the RPL benchmark.
3. For each unit there are a number of performance criteria/indicators that specify the required level of performance. The critical aspect of evidence usually reflects the performance criteria.

## Assessment methods

A variety of assessment methods will have to be used for assessment of the candidate's competency against unit of competency. The underlying principles for the assessment should include the following:

- ❑ **Appropriate:** a variety of assessment methods will be available to ensure that assessment is suited to the performance being assessed.
- ❑ **Fair:** assessment methods will not disadvantage individuals or groups by hindering or limiting them in ways unrelated to the evidence sought.



- ❑ **Integrated with work and / or learning:** evidence collection can be ongoing, linked with normal work and / or learning.
- ❑ **Manageable:** the methods used will be straightforward, readily arranged and will not interfere unduly with work or learning.
- ❑ **Systematic:** planning and recording will be rigorous to ensure sufficiency and fairness in assessment.
- ❑ **Open:** applicants will understand the assessment process and the criteria to be applied, and can contribute to the planning and accumulation of evidence.
- ❑ **Consistent:** given similar circumstances the assessor would make the same **judgment** again and the **judgment** will be similar to **judgments** that other assessors would make.

## Evidence

Information gathered through the use of a variety of assessment tools, which will provide proof from which the assessor can make a judgment about competency. Evidence is anything that supports the claim of the applicants that he/she is competent on a recognized learning outcome/performance. Evidence is information upon which an assessor makes a judgment of competency. In most assessments, evidence is gathered from more than one source, in more than one situation and can have many forms. Direct evidence is observation of performance. Indirect evidence can include evaluation of products or services, simulations or skills tests, questioning or reports from others.

## Evidence should be

- ➔ **Valid:** assessment will be fit for purpose, so that assessment focuses on the requirements specified in the competencies.
- ➔ **Authentic:** the assessor will be confident that the work being assessed is attributable to the person being assessed- outside assistance must not disturb the assessment
- ➔ **Sufficient:** that the quality of evidence will establish with confidence that all criteria have been met and that performance to the required standard could be repeated with consistency.

## Types of Evidences

The following table is a guide for the types of evidence and examples of each. Candidate may be required to provide several types of evidence for each unit of competency to satisfy

the assessor. In some cases the types of evidence candidate gathers may be able to meet more than one performance criteria, be sure to check this in order to save time.

Types of evidences may include the following:

S. No.	Types of evidences	Examples
1.	Direct demonstration/ observation	Performance of a task, or range of tasks, either in the workplace or in a simulated work environment, witnessed directly by an assessor
2.	Indirect demonstration	Use of photographs, videos, etc. showing performance of a task when the assessor cannot be present
3.	Review of Products	Models, items, objects that have been made, fixed or repaired by the candidate
4.	Workplace documents	Written communication, Rosters, budgets, reports, standard operating procedures etc. developed by the candidate, log book.
5.	Questions-written and oral	Asking the candidate about real or hypothetical situations to check understanding, task management and contingency management skills. May be short answer, discussion, multiple choice, etc. response to the scenarios, knowledge of policy and procedures.
6.	Assignments	Projects, reports, essays.
7.	Third party reports	Documented and verified reports from supervisor, colleague, subject expert, trainer or others, performance review, in-depth investigation, interview with employers, supervisors and peer group.
8.	Self-assessment	A candidate's personal statement on their performance (not generally sufficient in isolation)
9.	Simulation	Simulated activity to accommodate difficult to demonstrate criteria e.g. emergencies, contingencies, difficult behaviours etc.
10.	Portfolios	Collections of evidence compiled by the candidate, product with supporting document, historical evidence, journal, log book, information about life experiences.

## Certification

RPL can result in a full qualification, or a statement of attainment for partial completion of a qualification. Statements of attainment are awarded when an applicant is granted RPL for a particular unit of competency or units of competency. Both forms of certification are recognised nationally.

When the participant in the RPL process successfully meets all the requirements for a nationally recognized qualification in his/her occupation, a record of the units of competency that have been attained by him/her will be sent to the certifying agency for issuance of Competency based Certificate for RPL.

If the candidate does not meet all the assessment requirements, he/she will receive a Statement of Attainment (partial qualification) mentioning the units of competency attained by him/her. He/she can then come back at a later stage to be reassessed and gain full qualification.

## Appeal Mechanisms

An effective means of appeal should be established by awarding body in relation to RPL decisions.

Processes should be fair, transparent, accountable and subject to appeal. Information about appeal mechanisms should be provided at the commencement of RPL procedures.

Implementation of RPL will be governed by the following:

1. Policies, processes, procedures, practices and decisions should be transparent, rigorous, reliable, fair and accessible to individuals so that users can be confident of the decisions and outcomes of RPL.
2. The policies and practices for the education and training providers for recognition of prior learning should be clearly documented and made available to all users by the assessing and awarding body.
3. Assessment criteria for the recognition of prior learning should be made explicit to applicants, and applied consistently and fairly.
4. Assessment criteria should be based on learning outcomes of qualifications or standards of knowledge, skill and set out set out by the relevant Sector Skill Council under the NVEQF.
5. Assessment methods should accommodate the literacy levels, cultural background and educational background of applicants.
6. Assessment methods for RPL must be of equal rigour to other assessment methods. The evidence submitted by the applicants should be equitable, culturally inclusive, fair, flexible, valid, sufficient and authentic.
7. Participation in RPL for access, transfer and progression to education and training or for the achievement of an award will be a voluntary matter for the individual. It is important for the learner to identify the unit standard/ qualification against which they would like to receive RPL.
8. Applicants should be fully informed of the application process, the stages within it and the nature and range of evidence that is considered appropriate to support a claim for the RPL.

#### Process of RPL

- Identify what a person knows and can do.
- Match the person's knowledge, skills and experience to specific standards and the associated assessment criteria of a qualification.
- Assess the learning against those standards.
- Credit the person for skills, knowledge and experience built up through formal, informal and non-formal learning that occurred in the past.

9. The individual should be offered proper guidance and support during assessment of competencies and to make a claim for the award. The information provided to the participant should be easy to understand and should recognise the diversity of learners.
10. Evidence of learning must be valid, authentic and sufficient. The evidence provided for RPL must address the currency of competencies being assessed. This is also known as *Recognition of Current Competence*. Since there could be no one RPL model suitable for all qualifications and all situations different models will have to be adopted for different sectors or a set of occupations. Some of the sectors and occupations are listed below, as an example. However, whichever model of RPL is adopted, it must be aligned with the learning outcomes, goals and objectives of the qualification.

## Procedures for implementation of RPL

The applicant seeking RPL will contact the Mentor and the Assessor accredited by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) for guidance on how to go about to obtain recognition for prior learning.

The various aspects of the RPL process are as follows:

### Step 1: Application

Prospective candidates will apply for RPL by completing the relevant **application form**.

### Step 2: Pre-Assessment

Pre-assessment guidance, counseling and support will be available to prospective learners. Learners should be informed about the RPL process, and should have a clear understanding about their rights and responsibilities.

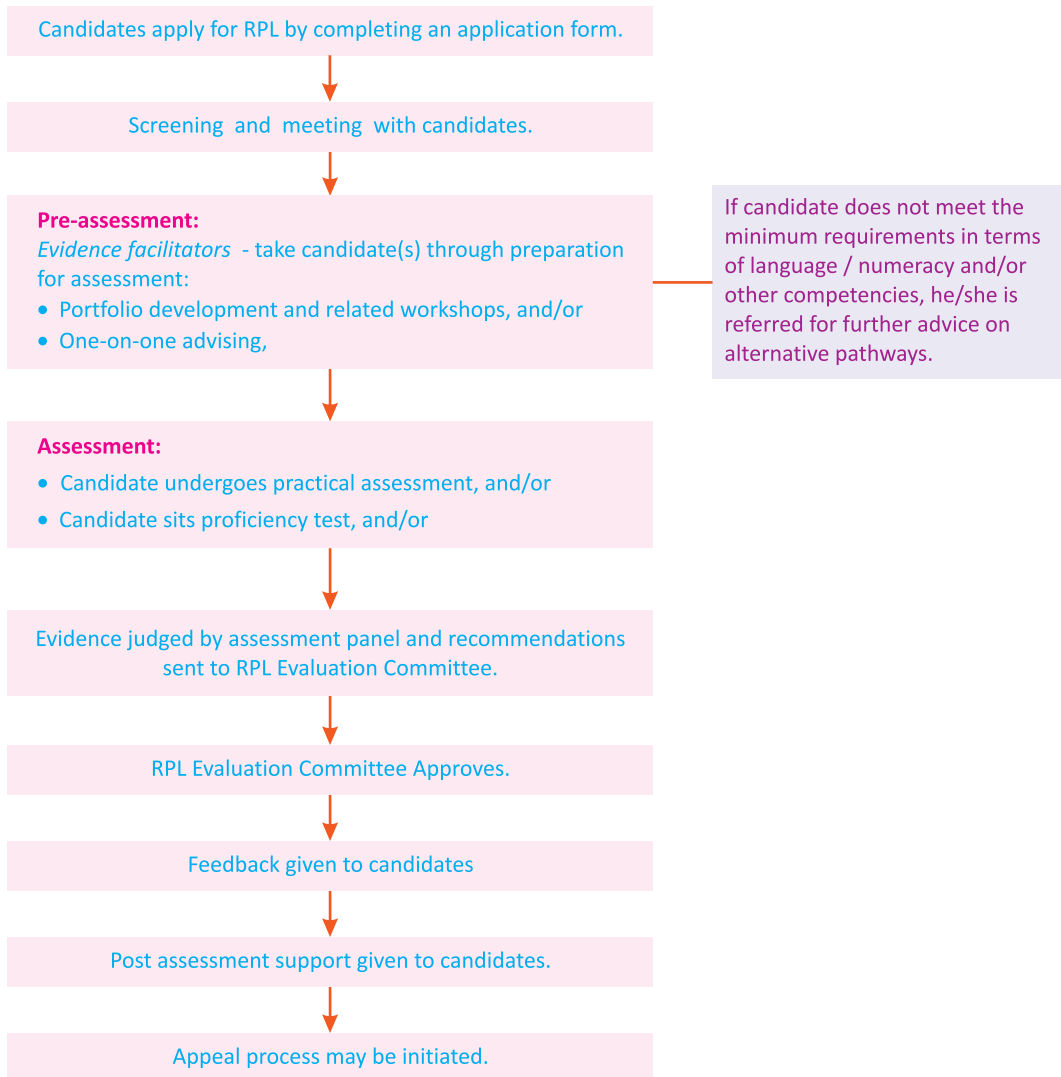
### Step 3: Screening of Applications

The screening of application forms to determine the viability of the application for RPL will be done by the awarding body. Applicants who do not meet the minimum requirements for RPL will be notified in writing.

### Step 4: Portfolio Workshop

Candidates who meet the minimum requirements will be invited to attend a workshop on assessment processes or a one-on-one meeting with the Assessors.

## Assessment Process



### Step 5: Assessment

Candidates' portfolios will be assessed by a registered assessor. In addition to the portfolio, candidates will be required to write a compulsory proficiency or subject related test.

### Step 6: Evaluation and Moderation

The Assessor will make a judgment based on evidence and formulate a recommendation for moderation and approval by the Panel of Experts.



### Step 7: Feedback to Candidates

Candidates will be assessed as COMPETENT or NOT YET COMPETENT and a written feedback on the outcome of the assessment will be provided to candidates once a final decision has been received from Panel of Experts. Candidates who are found NOT YET COMPETENT in the assessment process will be given an opportunity to improve on the portfolio and re-submit the portfolio for a second assessment.

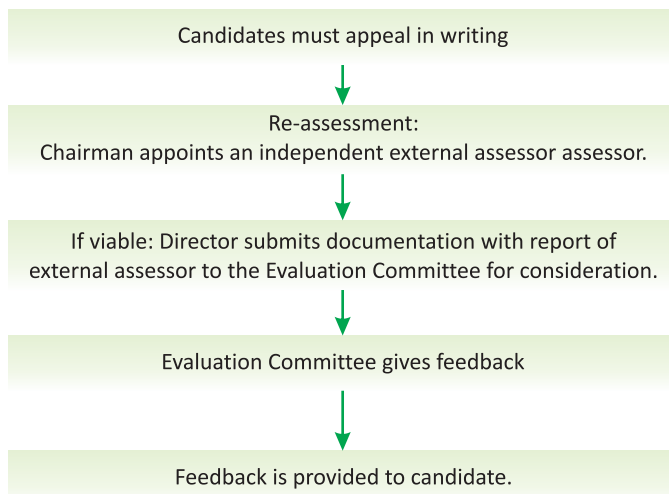
### Step 8: Post-assessment Support

Post assessment Facilitators should provide assistance to candidates by advising them on possible areas for development, learning gaps and training and development paths. Candidates should be advised to bridge the gap between non-formal learning and formal learning.

## Appeal Process

Candidates who are unsuccessful in the assessment process can submit an appeal to the Chairman of National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) within 30 working days, if he/she is not satisfied with the decision taken.

The following process will apply:



Information about appeal mechanisms will be provided at the commencement of RPL procedures. If the applicant wish to appeal the assessment decision s/he must follow the learner appeal procedure as mentioned above.

In a globalized economy, a large pool of skilled workers is indispensable for attracting foreign direct investment. India's transition to a knowledge-based economy requires a new generation of educated and skilled people. Its competitive edge will be determined by its people's ability to create, share and use knowledge effectively. A knowledge economy requires India to develop knowledge workers and knowledge technologists - who are flexible and analytical and who can be the driving force for innovation and growth.



A large part of the 18-24 years age group in India has never been able to get college education. Appropriate skill-development and vocational training can facilitate entrepreneurial opportunities, as self employment and small business continues to play a vital role.

With about 12 million persons expected to join the workforce every year and an existing skill development capacity of about 3.4 million, it is imperative that we need to enhance the skilling and technical education

capacity to about **15 million** (considering that even sections of the existing workforce would have to be trained). India has set a huge target of training 500 million people by 2022 which requires programs that are scalable, replicable and accessible. A large portion of the employment would occur in the lower portions of the skill pyramid. There is a large demand and supply gap where the current supply is unable to meet the ever growing labour demands both in quality and numbers.

The unorganised sector today contributes more than 60 per cent share to the GDP of the country. Skilling of the existing workforce and new entrants is required to improve the production in micro and small enterprises, particularly those which are part of the unorganized sector. Such skilling would address two interlinked issues first, the quality of goods or services provided by that enterprise sector would improve. Second, the occupational status of workers would get strengthened.

It is, therefore, necessary to promote main employment generation activities like (a) agriculture, (b) labour intensive manufacturing sector, such as food processing, leather products, textiles (c) services sectors: trade, restaurants and hotels, tourism, construction and information technology, etc. and (d) small and medium enterprises. Therefore, employment needs to be generated in all the sectors, namely primary, secondary, and tertiary.

Today, in a complex and fast-changing world, it is necessary for individuals to acquire and adapt competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) through all forms of learning to cope with various challenges. However, qualifications system still focuses on recognition of competencies acquired through the formal system of education. As a result, a large number of individuals' who have acquired learning through informal or non-formal learning modes remain unrecognized. This leads to a huge underutilization of human talent and resources in society. Therefore, the learning outcomes that young people and adults acquire in the course of their life in non-formal and informal settings need to be assessed and recognized to motivate them for lifelong learning and to enhance their productivity.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment that considers whether the candidates can meet the assessment requirements for a competency or a set of competencies that they already possess.

The Recognition, Validation and Accreditation (RVA) of non-formal and informal learning is a key lever in making lifelong learning a reality. Valuing and recognising the learning outcomes may significantly improve individuals' self-esteem and well-being, motivate them to further learning, and strengthen their labour market opportunities.



India's Vocational Education and Training (VET) system has almost no system where the prior learning of an individual who worked in the unorganized sector for decades is recognized and certified. The Government of India has also initiated the action on Recognition of Prior Learning as a part of National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF). The NVEQF supports the attainment of qualifications through diverse routes, including the recognition of prior learning. The recognition of prior learning will assess the competencies acquired by the learner through prior learning experiences and support NVEQF awards. *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)* is the formal assessment

certification and recognition of the skills and knowledge a person has regardless of how or where the competencies may have been attained.

The need for RPL in India arises from the national objective of moving towards a lifelong learning society, in which learners will be enabled to take up learning opportunities at chosen stages throughout their lives.

The purpose of the RPL policy and procedure will be to recognize competencies acquired through formal or informal training and to allow vertical mobility in education and placement. Some potential benefits of RPL are to provide access or alternative admission to formal studies, give certification for unrecognized skills, empower nature and adult learner, award credits for such learning that needs the requirements of a learning programme.

The role of the RPL awarding body will be to accredit the assessors for assessing the competencies of the candidates as per the procedures of recognition of prior learning and facilitate learner's progression. Awarding bodies must ensure that a database of learners' achievement and award of individual competencies and qualifications is maintained. The people involved in the assessment and recognition process will include mentors, assessors and external authenticators. Registration of Assessing Organizations or Assessors will be done to ensure standards and quality of assessment. Assessing organizations wishing to carry out RPL must follow the norms and guidelines prepared by the NIOS.

Participants in RPL will need support and guidance to make an application for the recognition of prior learning for either entry to programme, exemptions or for awards. A mentor or facilitator will be the key support for learners in the facilitation of the recognition of prior learning process. Assessors will be required to assess or judge the learner's evidence against the performance criteria as outlined in the national occupation standards. The assessor will make recommendations for either an award, or entry to a programme, or an exemption to the candidate/learner. RPL can only be granted by qualified assessors working with or on behalf of the accredited training providers. To ensure the quality of assessment, only subject matter experts and trained assessors will be recruited for the assessment. The assessor is, therefore, central to the implementation of RPL. In order to facilitate RPL, assessors will need to be trained in their specific field and in assessment requirement for the award. The process of assessment of a candidate's evidence will include external authentication to ensure consistency and compliance with national standards.

An RPL strategy requires a holistic and flexible assessment approach. It should recognize the diversity of knowledge and learning styles that mature learners bring into the assessment. All assessments should meet the assessment criteria of quality and credible assessment, namely: open, fair, valid, transparent and reliable.

An applicant is considered eligible for assessment when he/she demonstrates the skills and knowledge or provides evidence as specified in the competency standards. Suitable unit of competency or competency standards that have been developed by a recognized Sector Skill Council or the Awarding and Certification body will have to be provided to all the stakeholders. For each unit there are a number of performance criteria/indicators that specify the required level of performance. The critical aspect of evidence usually reflects the performance criteria. Evidence is anything that supports the claim of the applicant that he/she is competent on a recognized learning outcome/ performance.

A variety of assessment methods will have to be used for assessment of the candidate's competency against unit of competency. The assessment for RPL should be appropriate, fair, manageable, integrated with work and /or learning, systemic, open and consistent.

The applicant seeking RPL will contact the Mentor and the Assessor accredited by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) for guidance on how to go about to obtain recognition for prior learning.

When the participant in the RPL process successfully meets all the requirements for a nationally recognized qualification in his/her occupation, a record of the units of competency that have been attained by him/her will be sent to the certifying agency for issuance of Competency based Certificate for RPL.

If the candidate does not meet all the assessment requirements, he/she will receive a Statement of Attainment (partial qualification) mentioning the units of competency attained by him/her. He/she can then come back at a later stage to be reassessed and gain full qualification.

An effective means of appeal should be established by awarding body in relation to RPL decisions.

It may be conclude by mentioning that the various steps of the RPL process include: **Application, Pre-Assessment, Screening of Applications, Portfolio Workshop, Assessment, Evaluation and Moderation, Feedback to Candidates, Post-assessment Support, Appeal Process.**

Recognition of Prior Learning should be an integrated feature of the assessment polices of the vocational education. This will help address the principles of equity, access and redress that emerge as an explicit translation of practice. The framework for RPL provides direction and support for an evolving system on RPL that will be able to set the required standards to meet the challenges of social economic and human development. At the same time, it will contribute the overall quality and integrity of standards and qualifications mentioned in the NVEQF. This will ensure the principle of life long learning along with development and improvement of skills.



### PART B: (Training)

In the space below please enter particulars of certificates, diplomas, etc. which you have received for formal courses, in-service training etc. Attach certified copies of your certificates/diplomas.

Name of Certificate/Diploma	Awarding Institution	Duration; From: (Date) to: (Date)

### PART C (Experience)

In the space below please enter particulars of your experience in the field you are interested in.

Job title/Occupation	Institution	Years
What is the name of the organization with which you are currently /were most recently employed? Also indicate if you are self-employed or unemployed.		
Do you have a mentor/supervisor? (If, so, please specify the name) Name:		Contact Telephone Number:

**PART D: (Personal Goals)**

In the following space, please answer the following questions:

1. What are your greatest personal strengths as regards to a particular vocation as a learner/student?  
 .....  
 .....
2. What are your personal goals?  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....
3. What are the most important skills you have learnt from your own experience / prior learning?  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....
4. What do you want to study? Briefly mention answer in not more than 2 sentences.  
 .....  
 .....

**PART E: (Further Details)**

In order to complete your application, we also require your latest CV: which includes a job description of your present position, stipulating your tasks and duties.

To ensure that your application is complete, please use the checklist below and follow the detailed instructions for each item.

1. CV	
2. Application Form	
3. Copies of Certificates/diplomas	
4. Others (Please specify)	

Signature of Applicant.....

Date.....

Received by.....

Date.....



**Official use**

Recommended/not recommended by approval committee) ..... Date .....

Reasons, if not recommended .....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Approved/not approved ( ) ..... Date .....

Reasons if not approved .....  
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**CONTACT DETAILS**

**RPL CELL**

**NIOS A-24/25, Sector 62 Institutional Area, NOIDA , UP**

## List of the participants for the Workshop on “Development of Framework for the Recognition of Prior Learning”

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# **National Institute of Open Schooling**

(An autonomous Institution under MHRD, Govt. of India)

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