How Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) works
What is RPL?

RPL means the comparison of the previous learning and experience of a learner howsoever obtained against the learning outcomes required for a specified qualification, and acceptance for purposes of qualification of that which meets the requirements.

RPL entails that the learner is assessed to prove his/her competence against a chosen qualification.

Who performs RPL?

Because RPL is invariably referred to as an assessment, it is normally performed by the following:

- Institutions/Training Providers/workplaces in conjunction with Training Providers/employment centres.
- These organisations will have differing strategies to implement RPL.
- Registered assessors/moderators etc.

Resources required for RPL:

- RPL centers on collecting evidence. A lot of Person hours are required to complete this exercise. It is time consuming to put together e.g. RPL evidence, Portfolios of Evidences etc.
- Infrastructure to support candidates.
- Plans and roll outs.
- Costs. The candidate or his employer will have to pay for the exercise
- Who will conduct the RPL? (Expertise needed).

What type of assessment tools may be used?

Examples:

- Interviews.
- Debate.
- Presentation.
- Performance testing.
- Examination (oral/written).
- Essay writing, and examples of work done/PoE/Reports
What type of evidence may a learner provide for RPL purposes? (e.g.)

- Any certificates from previous courses attended.
- Licenses related to the outcomes of a qualification.
- Professional registration with a professional body.
- Products such as publications etc.
- Samples of completed work.
- Employment related documents such as:
  - Resumes/ Performance appraisals/Ref/Test.
  - Statutory declarations outlining work.

How long does RPL take? (Guidelines)
This depends on the type of unit standard/qualification and the credits it bears.

Example of RPL process:
- Candidate applies.
- RPL facilitator meets candidate to conduct pre-screening.
- Pre-assessment stage (POE etc).
- Assessment stage.
- Judgment stage.
- Moderation stage.
- Feedback stage.
- Credits awarded/not-awarded/appeal/post assessment support.

Points to remember:
- RPL is not meant to be “an easy way of getting a qualification”
- RPL can only take place against a SAQA registered qualification and unit standards.
- RPL is time consuming.
- RPL can be quite costly.
- Very often only portions of qualifications can be obtained via RPL.
- Candidates may still be required to complete certain sections of qualifications to be awarded the entire qualification.