



Recognized
Prior
Learning

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The Early Childhood Education Recognition of Prior Learning Program

Policies and Procedures

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Administrative Structure

RPL Program Administrative Roles

Role of DEECD

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) is responsible for recognizing a Candidate's qualifications and, as appropriate, for granting a Level 2 Classification as an Early Childhood Educator (ECE).

DEECD designates and recognizes the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Nova Scotia (AECENS) as the RPL Program Provider for the ECE Level 2 RPL Program. DEECD accepts and recognizes as sufficient for achieving the ECE Level 2 Classification, the Letter of Completion provided by the RPL Program Provider to a Candidate who successfully completes the ECE Level 2 Recognition of Prior Learning Program (the RPL Program) assessment steps.

DEECD establishes a standards governance process and conducts periodic reviews as necessary of the ECE Level 2 Competency Profile (the Profile) and the assessment standards. This includes, but not limited to, when there have been changes to legislative or other requirements have been implemented. Revisions to the Profile and the assessment standards are developed in consultation with the RPL Program Advisory Committee (see Role of AECENS) and implemented by AECENS.

DEECD designates AECENS as the RPL Program Provider and grants permission to AECENS to use the RPL tools to administer the RPL Program to qualify Candidates to apply to DEECD for the ECE Level 2 Classification.

Role of AECENS (RPL Program Provider)

AECENS is responsible for the governance and administration of the RPL Program. AECENS provides the resources, management, and administration processes necessary for delivering and maintaining the RPL Program in Nova Scotia.

RPL Program administration includes:

- registration of Candidates,
- processing Candidate payments,
- adjudication of eligibility,
- assessments of competency,
- appeal of decisions (as required),
- management of complaints (as required), and
- coordination of activities with the Assessment Service Provider (North Pacific Inc.)

AECENS provides Candidates who successfully complete the assessment steps of the RPL Program with a Letter of Completion attesting to their success which may be presented to DEECD to obtain a Level 2 ECE Classification.

AECENS administers the RPL Program and serves as the key point of contact, information, and support for potential Candidates during their involvement with the RPL Program.

AECENS follows stringent Quality Assurance guidelines (see Quality Assurance) to ensure the program fulfills its purposes and obligations.

AECENS develops, maintains, and adheres to RPL Program Policies and Procedures. AECENS ensures that the RPL Program Policies and Procedures align with other relevant standards and guidelines for managing individual privacy and for ensuring the integrity and fairness of the assessment process. AECENS establishes processes to guard against undue bias and influence in the assessment processes.

AECENS develops and implements processes to ensure the continued interrelationship between the RPL Program assessment tools and the ECE Level 2 competency standards.

AECENS develops and implements Quality Assurance measures (see Quality Assurance) for the promotion, administration, and maintenance of the RPL Program.

AECENS develops and maintains consistent protocols and processes for gathering timely feedback from Candidates and other sector stakeholders to inform decisions regarding updating or revising the RPL Program. AECENS provides both formal (structured) and informal (responsive) feedback opportunities to receive Candidate and stakeholder feedback verbally, in writing, and through other means including surveys and / or program evaluations. Candidates and sector stakeholders have the right to provide feedback, positive or negative, about their experiences with the RPL Program, including raising concerns when they believe standards related to the assessment process or tools have not been met.

AECENS acts ethically, honestly, and transparently in responding to feedback and inputs from Candidates and sector stakeholders. AECENS ensures that feedback informs continuous improvement and communicates actions taken based on feedback provided by Candidates and sector stakeholders.

AECENS maintains an “arm’s length relationship” with any organization(s) responsible for the provision of education or training programs or courses of study that may contribute to successful participation in the RPL Program.

AECENS organizes and provides administrative supports for the activities of the RPL Program Advisory Committee (PAC) which includes representatives of DEECD and AECENS. The purpose of the PAC is to ensure effective implementation of the RPL Program as well as continuous alignment of the ECE Level 2 Competency Standards with the RPL Program assessment standards.

AECENS reviews any legislative and / or regulatory changes for their potential impact on the standards, the objectives, and the delivery of the RPL Program. When an RPL Program impact is anticipated, AECENS advises the PAC and provides recommendations for any required revision(s).

AECENS implements the recommended RPL Program changes. PAC decisions and recommendations are clearly written, transparent in their purpose and application, readily available, and provide supporting information for implementation.

AECENS periodically gathers and assesses feedback and inputs from RPL Program stakeholders to continuously reflect and evolve best practices in the management and administration of the RPL Program. Stakeholders may include past and current candidates, assessors, employers, and training providers.

Role of North Pacific Inc. (Assessment Service Provider)

North Pacific Training & Performance Inc. (NP) provides to AECENS, as requested, assessment tools and processes.

NP maintains the database of Candidate records and results related to their participation in the RPL Program and provides information to AECENS on request.

NP provides AECENS, as requested, with RPL Program examination and answer forms for conducting written examination sessions. NP receives from AECENS the completed Candidate answer forms and provides AECENS with the individual and aggregate examination scoring results.

NP manages and maintains the bank of examination items by continuously monitoring examination item performance and by conducting periodic item analysis processes to identify and implement revisions of the examination bank (in consultation with the PAC).

NP provides AECENS, as requested, with RPL Program interview materials and Assessor scoring forms for conducting situational interview assessment sessions. NP receives from

AECENS the completed Assessors scoring forms and provides AECENS with the individual and aggregate interview scoring results.

NP manages and maintains the situational interview scenarios and Assessor scoring criteria by continuously monitoring scenario and criteria performance and by conducting periodic analysis processes (including inter-rater reliability tests) to identify and implement revisions of the interview scenarios and Assessor scoring criteria (in consultation with the PAC).

NP, in consultation with AECENS, periodically plans and delivers an Assessor Moderation Workshop to provide structured feedback to Assessors regarding their comparative scoring performance and to clarify with Assessors their interpretation of the interview scoring criteria.

NP, in consultation with and as requested by AECENS, periodically plans, and delivers an Assessor Training Workshop to introduce and prepare newly recruited Assessors for their role as an Assessor.

Quality Assurance

Purpose

The following policies outline the principles and administrative processes for reviewing and improving the quality of the RPL Program and all components including assessment tools and processes for the benefit of all RPL Program Stakeholders.

Quality assurance guidelines ensure that the RPL Program is fulfilling the need for which it is intended, and that the program is being administered in a relevant, valid, and effective manner.

Definitions

“RPL Program Stakeholders” means:

- all individuals and organizations having contact with or interest in the management and administration of the AECENS RPL Program, and includes Candidates, prospective Candidates, RPL Program managers and administrators, Assessors, Invigilators, and employers.

AECENS Policy and Processes:

AECENS has in place clear and consistent processes for gathering regular and timely feedback from RPL Program Stakeholders to inform decisions related to improvement of the RPL Program and components (policies, procedures, assessment tools, program materials, etc.).

AECENS engages in various quality assurance and review processes for generating relevant information and dialogue with RPL Program Stakeholders to continuously improve the RPL Program. Regular quality audits ensure accuracy of information, compliance, and accountability.

AECENS is responsible for all the administrative and management processes supporting the RPL Program as well as quality assurance for the administrative functions.

AECENS is responsible for requesting and receiving candidate feedback through formal surveys and for organizing feedback to ensure continuous improvement in all business processes.

Competency Standards Review

DEECD maintains responsibility for the ECE Level 2 competency and eligibility standards.

Legislative and regulatory changes may impact ECE Level 2 competency and / or eligibility standards. There may also be an evolution of acceptable or preferred practices for early childhood education within the sector. Either of these eventualities may necessitate review and revision of the ECE Level 2 Competency Profile by DEECD. Any standards revisions may, in turn, necessitate related changes to the RPL Program assessment tools and / or to the administration processes and forms.

AECENS is a key stakeholder in the ECE Level 2 competency and eligibility standards. Changes to these standards may impact the RPL Program assessment tools and processes.

DEECD and AECENS maintain regular communication by way of the RPL Program Advisory Committee to ensure continued alignment between the ECE Level 2 competency and eligibility standards and the RPL Program.

DEECD collaborates with AECENS and with RPL Program Stakeholders in any review of the ECE Level 2 competency or eligibility standards and in planning for the implementation of any revisions to the standards.

ECE Level 2 competency and eligibility standards are reviewed by DEECD every four years as a 'best practice' for RPL Programs. The periodic review of standards serves the following purposes:

- To provide an opportunity to review currency and relevance of the standards;
- To foster ongoing improvement of the validity of the standards;

- To ensure the standards continue to be aligned with the assessment tools and processes; and
- To ensure the RPL program continues to meet intended purposes and objectives.

These regular reviews may not necessitate any substantive changes to the ECE Level 2 competency or eligibility standards.

Assessment Tools Review

AECENS conducts regular and continuous reviews of the RPL Program assessment tools and processes to ensure they are functioning as intended.

Regular reviews of the assessment tools are undertaken by NP, as Assessment Service Provider, and reported to AECENS and the Liaison Committee.

Any changes to the ECE Level 2 competency standards trigger an immediate review of the RPL Program assessment tools and processes.

Program Evaluation

AECENS will conduct RPL Program audits and evaluations as appropriate and, in any case, at least every four years, based on the following principles:

- Program evaluations are conducted by a third party with expertise in program evaluation.
- The program evaluation contractor is chosen in consultation with the RPL Program Advisory Committee;
- Program evaluations are conducted in a timely and efficient manner;
- The program evaluation report provides clear and actionable recommendations for program improvement;
- The results of the program evaluation are communicated to RPL Program Stakeholders;
- The program evaluation methodology, roles, responsibilities, and metrics are clearly documented and communicated to RPL Program Stakeholders; and
- Planning for program revisions based on the evaluation results and recommendations is conducted transparently and outcomes are reported to RPL Program Stakeholders.

Key Criteria and Measures of RPL Program Quality

AECENS ensures the monitoring of all key program quality criteria and measures (interpreted against performance targets) and takes prompt action when a result indicates an emerging, prevailing, or persistent problem with a specific program component.

The following are key program quality criteria and measures:

Candidate's Program Experience

- Candidates' general satisfaction with the RPL Program
- RPL Program administration efficiency and responsiveness
- Delays in assessment process.
- Delays in receiving assessment results
- RPL Program materials clear and understandable
- Experience of the assessments
- Fairness of passing scores required
- Perceived fairness of RPL Program eligibility criteria and assessments
- Candidate initiated complaints
- Candidate appeals of assessment results

Assessors' Program Experience

- Assessor training sufficient and appropriate?
- Assessor performance feedback clear and understandable?
- Assessor Moderation Workshop(s) effective and valuable?

Performance of Assessment Tools and Processes

- Assessment security protocols followed consistently
- Item analysis of examination questions
- Analysis of interview results
- Analysis of Assessor performance (e.g., inter-rater reliability)

Ethical Conduct

Purpose

When professionals act in accordance with ethical principles, program quality and excellence are enhanced. AECENS is responsible for setting and maintaining standards for the conduct of everyone participating in the RPL Program. AECENS staff and contractors are committed to upholding shared ethical principles for the benefit of the RPL Program, Candidates and the general public. Adherence to these ethical standards and a high degree of personal integrity ensures rigorous assessment and program quality.

The following Policies provide guidelines for the ethical conduct of AECENS staff, contractors and all Candidates involved with the RPL Program.

Definitions

“Ethics” means:

- a set of expectations, values and beliefs concerning the conduct, behaviour and decision-making of individuals. Ethical behaviour is ultimately an individual responsibility and maintaining high ethical standards requires an adherence to shared or professional values and standards.

“Integrity” means:

- the practice of showing a consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong morals, ethical principles, and values. All individuals involved in the RPL Program are expected to participate with integrity.

“RPL Program Stakeholders” means:

- all individuals and organizations having contact with or interest in the management and administration of the AECENS RPL Program, and includes Candidates, prospective Candidates, RPL Program managers and administrators, Assessors, Invigilators, and employers.

Guiding Principles

These Policies are organized around Guiding Principles for Quality RPL Practice in Canada developed by the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment. The Principles and these policies are not considered in isolation, but as a combined philosophy for ethical professional conduct in RPL programs.

Fair

The RPL Program is effective only when it is managed and administered free from bias. Fairness is developed and nurtured through individual integrity and agreed ethical procedures for conduct that are just for all.

AECENS ensures that all internal systems, policies and procedures are unbiased and consistently applied with all Candidates and assessments.

AECENS administers all processes and procedures impartially and without any individual or systemic bias or pre-judgement of outcomes.

AECENS provides an appeal process for Candidates who choose to have their assessment results reviewed or recalculated. Candidates have the right to appeal their assessment

results without fear of discrimination or reprisal. Candidates have the right to be clearly informed about scoring results and criteria in accordance with RPL Program policies. To initiate an appeal, the Candidate completes an Appeal Request form and pays the Appeal Fee of \$150. If the appeal is ultimately successful, the Appeal Fee is refunded to the Candidate.

AECENS anticipates and avoids any situations or actions that may create actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

AECENS provides Accommodations (see Candidate Accommodation Policy) to Candidates with disabilities or temporary health issues.

AECENS staff and contractors place professional responsibilities ahead of personal interests in their RPL Program work.

AECENS staff and contractors comply with and abide by all applicable laws and regulations relating to professional conduct and work practices.

AECENS staff and contractors make decisions based on fair and factual assessments, regardless of internal or external pressures.

Rigorous

To maintain reliability and validity, the RPL Program must be rigorous, and be seen to be rigorous.

AECENS establishes credible and effective benchmarks for performance assessment that meet or exceed the performance requirements specified by the Nova Scotia ECE Level 2 Competency Profile.

AECENS develops and maintains robust reporting and evaluation mechanisms to ensure continued adherence to the goals of the RPL Program.

AECENS maintains a high degree of quality and consistency in the fulfillment of RPL Program mandate.

AECENS staff and contractors involved in the management and administration of the RPL Program are trained and experienced in the policies and business processes associated with their respective roles.

Accessible

To fulfill its mandate for accessibility, the RPL Program must be visible and available to prospective Candidates, as well as responsive to their needs.

AECENS provides readily available RPL Program information to all RPL Program Stakeholders by a variety of means including the AECENS website, distribution of printed materials and reports, presentations to interested groups and responses to queries (by telephone and email).

AECENS administers the RPL Program services for Candidates by the most cost-efficient means available, while maintaining the key priorities of security and confidentiality.

AECENS provides RPL Program services to Candidates as immediately and frequently as possible, while maintaining the key priorities of cost-effectiveness and rigor.

Transparent

The RPL Program must be designed and managed with purposes, policies and administrative processes that are clear, visible and actively shared with all interested parties.

AECENS provides information in explicit and plain language that is easily understood by RPL Program Stakeholders.

AECENS develops and provides Candidate Guides for each step of the Candidate's progress through the RPL Program. The Candidate Guides clearly describe the assessment method and processes and include recommendations for preparation and success.

AECENS maintains a complete set of RPL Program policies and clear procedures which are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the administrative processes and practices implemented by staff and contractors.

AECENS conducts regular evaluations of the RPL Program to gather feedback and inputs from RPL Program Stakeholders with respect to the effectiveness and efficiency of the RPL Program in meeting its purpose and objectives.

AECENS provides each Candidate with a clear set of results from each of their assessments. If unsuccessful in any assessment, the Candidate receives detailed feedback on competency gaps as well as information on re-assessment and appeal processes.

Respectful

The RPL Program must actively demonstrate respect for the intrinsic rights and dignity of all people, as respect is deemed to be the fundamental principle of all ethics.

AECENS and its staff and contractors respect the dignity, worth, equality and privacy of all persons.

AECENS develops and maintains policies and procedures that are designed to be inclusive and accommodating of cultural differences and special needs.

AECENS uses plain language and a professional tone to ensure clear and appropriate communication with RPL Program Stakeholders.

AECENS ensures that Candidates and prospective Candidates receive services in the RPL Program without any form of discrimination based on race, religion, ethnicity, political affiliation, age, sex, disability, or any other matter of personal preference.

Candidates

Candidates in the RPL Program are obligated to maintain honesty and integrity throughout all phases of the RPL Program.

Candidates represent their qualifications and experience accurately and completely, without knowingly making false or misleading statements.

Candidates maintain confidentiality regarding the assessment tools.

Candidates respect the dignity, worth, equality and privacy of all other persons within the RPL Program.

Privacy & Confidentiality

Purpose

The following policies outline the principles and administrative processes by which personal information provided to AECENS by any individual with respect to the RPL Program will be collected and managed in order to maintain the security of the information and protect the Candidate's privacy.

Definitions

"Confidential Information" means:

- personal identity information such as Social Insurance Number, personal contact information, government-issued photo identification, employment history, competency references, or medical documentation (for special accommodations), and
- personal information related to payment processing for RPL Program services,
- RPL Program information related to a specific candidate or group of candidates such as assessment results.

AECENS Policy and Procedures

AECENS is committed to ensuring that the personal information provided by Candidates in the RPL Program is secure and will be treated as Confidential Information (see Records Management Policy).

AECENS ensures that appropriate measures and safeguards are in place to protect Candidate personal information that is collected and recorded as part of the RPL Program. In order to prevent unauthorized access or disclosure, suitable physical, electronic and managerial procedures are implemented to safeguard and secure Confidential Information and protect it from misuse, interference, loss and unauthorized access, modification and disclosure.

AECENS adheres to all legislative requirements with respect to privacy of personal information - specifically the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPOP). Personal information will be collected, used, disclosed, and managed in accordance with the FOIPOP Act and the FOIPOP Act's associated regulations, to the extent that the FOIPOP Act and its regulations apply to such collection, use, disclosure, or management.

AECENS provides procedures, training and systems for staff and contractors to ensure the RPL Program incorporates privacy of Confidential Information in all its operations.

Information Collection

AECENS collects information only as it is adequate, relevant, and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purpose for which the personal information is required.

AECENS collects personal information by fair and lawful means.

AECENS makes all reasonable efforts to prevent the unauthorized collection, use, disclosure, and disposal of personal information.

AECENS provides a Privacy Statement as part of the collection of personal information from Candidates.

AECENS obtains the consent of Candidates to disclose any personal information as may be necessary to the administration of the RPL Program (e.g., applicants who provide employment information as part of the eligibility assessment consent to the RPL Program contacting their current and former employers for verification).

AECENS uses website cookies only as required for the operation of the RPL Program website, for analytical or site performance statistical purposes and / or to recognize returning users to the website to enable personalized content and user preferences.

AECENS cannot guarantee the security of any information that is transmitted via email or over the internet.

Information Use

AECENS may use personal information collected for any of the following purposes:

- To register a Candidate in the RPL Program, including registration for assessments;
- To keep and maintain internal records for program administrative purposes;
- To authenticate and verify a Candidate's identity for assessments;
- To provide a Candidate's assessment results to an authorized third party (e.g., Nova Scotia Department of Education)
- To provide necessary personal information to third party service providers to enable their provision of services to the RPL Program, including various contractors and service providers for information technology, assessment tools and materials, data storage, webhosting, professional advisors, and payment systems;
- To comply as required by law or in legal proceedings and as needed to detect or prevent unlawful activity; and
- To distribute surveys or conduct interviews as part of RPL Program reviews and / or evaluations.

Management of Information

AECENS retains personal information only for limited periods, as described in the Records Management Policy.

AECENS limits access to personal information to those RPL Program staff and contractors who require the information to carry out their RPL Program-related duties and processes.

AECENS ensures that any personal information used in a decision-making process affecting a Candidate in the RPL Program is as accurate, up to date and complete as possible.

AECENS protects personal information from access or use by unauthorized parties by implementing reasonable administrative, technical, and physical safeguards against such access or use. Information is processed securely and in a way that protects against unauthorized or unlawful processing and against accidental loss or damage.

Privacy Breach Protocols

The AECENS Executive Director is responsible for responding should any breach(es) of security of personal information occur. When a breach occurs, the effective management, investigation, mitigation, and resolution is ultimately the responsibility of the AECENS Executive Director.

In the event of a security breach, the AECENS Executive Director:

- takes immediate remedial action to contain or stop the breach and to protect the security of data (e.g., change passwords, change identification numbers, and / or temporarily shut down a system);
- determines whether the breach allowed unauthorized access to any personal information;
- is responsible for identifying and recording the date, time, location, length, type, and extent of the breach;
- notifies any candidates impacted by the breach to inform them that their personal information may have been stolen or disclosed;
- determines and implement any action(s) to remedy and prevent future breaches of information security; and
- contacts the appropriate law enforcement agency if any electronic device and / or paper records containing personal information was lost or stolen.

Candidate Accommodations

Purpose

The following policies outline the principles and responsibilities for the provision of accommodations within the assessment process for Candidates in the RPL Program. The purpose of providing accommodations is to offer and maintain access for all eligible Candidates during the assessment process.

Providing accommodation enables a Candidate with a medical condition or disability an alternative means of participating in the assessment process of the RPL Program.

Accommodations are not intended to:

- reduce the Candidate's responsibility to meet competency standards;
- remove or alter essential program standards and requirements;
- remove or alter the fundamental requirements for assessment and independent demonstration of competencies; or
- diminish the integrity of the RPL Program.

Fulfilling the essential competency assessment requirements for the RPL Program remains the applicant's responsibility. Providing accommodations does not lower the RPL Program standards or remove the need to demonstrate competencies.

Definitions

"Accommodation" means:

- any modification that reduces or eliminates barriers to participation that may arise for eligible Candidates in the RPL Program.

"Candidate(s) with a disability" or "disabilities" means persons participating in the RPL Program who:

- have a significant and persistent mobility, sensory, learning, or other physical or mental health impairment;
- experience functional restrictions or limitations of their ability to perform the range of life's activities; and

"Qualified practitioner" means:

- a medical doctor, registered psychologist or other health professional who is certified and / or licensed to practice their profession and who has specific training, expertise and experience in the diagnosis of the particular disability for which accommodation is requested.

"Temporary health issues" means:

- temporary medical impairments or injuries that are unrelated to a disability and are likely to be substantially resolved in less than four months (e.g.: broken leg, appendicitis, concussion, flu, infection).

"Assistive devices" means:

- equipment or methods which help a Candidate with a disability to maintain or improve their functioning, independence, and participation in the RPL Program.

AECENS Policy

AECENS provides an inclusive and welcoming environment for Candidates with disabilities and temporary health issues.

AECENS provides accommodations to Candidates in a manner that respects their dignity, privacy, and autonomy.

AECENS makes the RPL Program assessment process accessible to Candidates with disabilities and temporary health issues.

AECENS works with a Candidate to determine accessibility accommodations that are suitable to meet both the Candidate's and the RPL Program's needs.

AECENS provides reasonable accommodation to Candidates with disabilities and temporary health issues.

AECENS ensures that staff are provided relevant information and training associated with providing accommodation to Candidates with disabilities and temporary health issues.

AECENS carries out these responsibilities in accordance with the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act, and other applicable legislation.

AECENS does not accommodate examinees with language limitations unrelated to a documented disability (e.g., English as a second language, literacy) nor to provide unlimited time for the completion of exams that are designed to certify not only knowledge, but also efficiency.

Accommodations are individualized and considered by AECENS on a case-by-case basis and may include alternative examination formats (such as text-to-speech), the use of a private room, the use of proctors as readers or scribes in the examination setting, and, in some exceptional cases, additional writing time to complete the written examinations may be approved.

Assistive Devices

AECENS welcomes Candidates with disabilities and temporary health issues to use their own personal assistive devices as may be reasonably required to undertake the assessment process.

Assistive devices may include use of:

- hearing aids,
- speech or text interpreters,
- scooters, walkers or crutches to assist in mobility,
- magnifiers and canes to assist vision-impaired persons,
- service animals,
- separate testing room or extended testing time, and
- enlarged print documents.

Documentation Requirements

AECENS considers requests from Candidates for accommodation(s) individually, on a case-by-case basis.

AECENS asks Candidates to provide specific documentation describing how they are impacted by their disability / temporary health issue in order to make an informed decision about the need for and the nature of accommodation(s).

AECENS is not responsible for any costs associated with diagnostic services or documentation required.

The Candidate provides medical documentation prepared by a qualified practitioner that is:

- is current and relevant (no more than three years elapsed between the time of the assessment and the date of the initial request for accommodation);
- includes the qualified practitioner's name, contact information, and signature;
- describes the nature of the disability or temporary health issue, along with a detailed explanation of the functional impact of the disability / issue (a diagnosis alone is not sufficient to support a request for an accommodation); and
- describes the timelines for rehabilitation and recovery if the diagnosis is temporary.

Responsibilities of Candidates

Candidates with a disability or a temporary health issue who seek an accommodation have a responsibility to:

- contact AECENS to request an accommodation in a timely manner, allowing for individual arrangements to be made,
- provide the appropriate documentation,
- notify AECENS of any changes to their accommodation requirements, and
- comply with the instructions and procedures for developing and implementing the accommodation.

Candidates who are seeking accommodation, or who already have an accommodation in place, are responsible to ensure that the AECENS is kept up to date with clear, current, and credible documentation to support their accommodation.

Should a Candidate's medical situation change in any material way that could impact their accommodation (either an improvement or deterioration of status has taken place or is expected to take place), the Candidate is responsible to proactively and promptly advise AECENS of that change. AECENS may request updated medical information to ensure that the Candidate's accommodations are reasonable and appropriate in the new circumstances.

Temporary Health Issues

AECENS may request medical documentation of the temporary health issue from a qualified practitioner.

AECENS decides the appropriate accommodation based on a review of the Candidate's request and any medical documentation. AECENS informs the Candidate of the accommodation to be provided.

The Candidate complies with the instructions and procedures for developing and implementing the accommodation.

Confidentiality of Information Regarding Special Accommodations

AECENS treats any information received from a Candidate with respect to a request for accommodation(s) as confidential information.

AECENS staff and contractors sign a confidentiality agreement to maintain the privacy of Candidate information with respect to any request for accommodations.

AECENS staff and contractors are informed of the Candidate's arrangements for accommodation only to the extent needed to execute the requested accommodation.

Complaint Process

Purpose

The following policies outline the principles and administrative process(es) by which an RPL Program Stakeholder may register a complaint with respect to the conduct of any individual or the management and administration of the RPL Program. All RPL Program Stakeholders have a right to provide feedback, positive or negative, about their experiences with the RPL Program. This includes raising concerns where they believe standards in the assessment process and / or the assessment tools have not been met.

Definitions

"RPL Program Stakeholders" means:

- all individuals and organizations having contact with or interest in the management and administration of the AECENS RPL Program, and includes Candidates, prospective Candidates, RPL Program managers and administrators, Assessors, Invigilators, and employers.

"Complainant" means:

- any RPL Program Stakeholder who believes they have experienced or witnessed a conflict of interest, harassment, discrimination or bullying and chooses to register a complaint.

“Respondent” means:

- any AECENS RPL Program staff or contractor (including Assessors and Invigilators) who may be available to receive and respond to an informal (ad hoc) complaint from an RPL Program Stakeholder.

AECENS Policy

AECENS ensures all RPL Program Stakeholders are dealt with respectfully and ethically regarding the complaint process(es).

AECENS has in place clear and consistent processes for gathering regular and timely feedback from RPL Program Stakeholders to inform the decisions related to revisions to the RPL Program.

AECENS actively provides both informal (ad hoc) and formal (structured) complaint opportunities for RPL Program Stakeholders to provide feedback, either positive or negative, about their experiences with the RPL Program.

The AECENS Executive Director is responsible for maintaining a record of informal complaint resolutions and for managing the resolution of all RPL Program Stakeholder formal (written) complaints.

AECENS ensures Complaint procedures are fair, ethical, transparent, equitable, timely and result in appropriate action.

AECENS staff and contractors are professional, ethical, honest, and transparent with respect to receiving feedback from RPL Program Stakeholders.

AECENS treats any information provided by RPL Program Stakeholders as a part of the Complaint process(es) as Confidential Information.

AECENS ensures that feedback is used to inform continuous improvement and will communicate actions taken because of feedback provided by RPL Program Stakeholders.

Complaint Process

Informal (ad hoc) complaints are received verbally by a Respondent who assists the Complainant with immediate problem-solving and resolution, as appropriate, in an open manner without criticism or retaliation. Earlier and informal resolutions are often successful as the problem is less entrenched and the resolution may be immediately available.

Formal (written) complaints are submitted to the AECENS Executive Director via direct email or on paper in a sealed envelope. A Complainant may choose to register a formal complaint without first engaging in the informal complaint process with a Respondent.

The AECENS Executive Director is responsible to determine the best approach to dealing with a formal complaint. The AECENS Executive Director responds to formal complaints in a letter to the Complainant within 10 business days of receiving the complaint.

Informal Complaint Process

When an RPL Program Stakeholder has a complaint related to the RPL Program, they are encouraged to raise the matter directly and immediately with a Respondent. Discussion between the Complainant and the Respondent focuses on hearing and understanding the Complainant's concerns or observations with the goal of seeking an early resolution.

The Complainant describes the nature of the complaint including a brief outline of what occurred, when and where it took place and who was involved.

The Respondent asks questions, as required, to clarify and better understand the Complainant's concerns. Both parties are encouraged and expected to respectfully clarify their perspectives.

The Respondent outlines their understanding of the Complainant's concern to confirm the situation. The Respondent proposes alternative resolutions to the Complainant with the intention of resolving the complaint as immediately as possible. Informal (ad hoc) complaint resolution processes are necessarily limited to alternatives that are within the administrative discretion of the Respondent. If a resolution satisfactory to the Complainant is beyond the discretion of the Respondent, the Complainant may choose to register a formal (written) complaint.

The Complainant may or may not choose to accept any resolution proposed by the Respondent. They may also choose to submit a formal complaint.

Respondents who receive a complaint, whether immediately resolved or not, must complete and submit a Complaint Report form to the AECENS Executive Director, providing a description of the situation and the nature of any resolution agreed to with the Candidate.

Formal Complaint Processes

A Complainant who is not satisfied with the resolution(s) to their informal complaint proposed by the Respondent may choose, within 20 business days, to submit a formal written complaint to the AECENS Executive Director.

The AECENS Executive Director reviews the information provided by the Candidate and determines a resolution or course of action with respect to the complaint. The AECENS Executive Director's determination is described in a letter sent to the Candidate within 20 business days of receiving the formal written complaint.

The resolution or course of action determined by the AECENS Executive Director may be a matter of immediate action or a matter of gathering further information in anticipation of actions to be taken in future.

AECENS reserves the right to not respond to a formal written complaint that is anonymous or based on hearsay, or contains insufficient or incomplete information, or is made more than 20 business days after the incident which led to the complaint, or where no response is received from the complainant within 20 business days of receipt of correspondence regarding the determination of the AECENS Executive Director.

Appeal Process

Purpose

The following policies outline the principles and administrative process(es) by which a Candidate may exercise their right to appeal any of their assessment results.

Definitions

"AECENS RPL Program Committee" means:

- a sub-committee of the AECENS Board of Directors whose responsibilities include oversight of the operations of the RPL Program and liaison with the AECENS Executive Director with respect to matters related to the RPL Program.

AECENS Policy

AECENS is committed to a fair, transparent, and timely approach to reviewing and adjudicating Candidate appeals of the decisions and practices that contribute to their assessment results and their standing in the RPL Program.

The AECENS Executive Director is responsible for managing the administration and resolution of a Candidate's appeal.

Grounds for Appeal

A Candidate's appeal must fit within one or more of the following grounds for appeal:

- A significant error in the assessment, scoring, determination and / or calculation of the Candidate's assessment result,
- A credible claim of Assessor or Invigilator bias or discrimination,
- Failure by the Assessor or Invigilator to follow the established assessment procedures, and
- Extenuating circumstances, beyond the Candidate's control, that impacted the Candidate's performance or made it impossible for the Candidate to be fairly assessed. Candidates are expected to provide evidence to support a claim for any extenuating circumstances.

Where reasonable grounds for appeal are not evident, the Executive Director denies the Candidate's appeal.

Appeal Process

Candidates who choose to appeal the results for any of the RPL Program assessments may initiate the appeal process by completing and submitting an Appeal Request form accompanied by the Appeal Fee of \$150.00 within 5 business days of receiving their assessment result.

A Candidate whose appeal results in any change to their assessment outcomes is refunded the full amount of the Appeal Fee.

The Candidate's Appeal Request form must be fully completed and must clearly and concisely state the grounds for the appeal. Additional relevant information and documentation may be attached and submitted with the Appeal Request form.

Within 10 business days of receiving the completed Appeal Request form, the AECENS Executive Director will review the information provided by the Candidate and make a decision with respect to the appeal. The AECENS Executive Director's decision is provided in a letter addressed to the Candidate and includes an explanation of the rationale for the decision. Should the AECENS Executive Director's review require longer than 10 business days, the Candidate is notified, in writing, that an extension is required (to a maximum of an additional 10 business days).

If the matter is not resolved by the AECENS Executive Director's decision, the Candidate may request an escalation of the appeal result to the AECENS RPL Program Committee for further review. The request for escalation must be submitted in writing in an envelope addressed to

the AECENS RPL Program Committee, including the basis for the request for a review of the AECENS Executive Director's decision. The request for escalation must be submitted within 10 business days of receiving the AECENS Executive Director's written decision on the initial appeal (or the expiry of the time allowed for a decision) and must be accompanied by an additional Appeal Fee of \$250.00.

Within 20 business days of receiving the request for escalation of appeal, the AECENS RPL Program Committee will review the information provided by the Candidate and make a decision with respect to the escalated appeal. The AECENS Program Committee's decision is provided in a letter addressed to the Candidate and includes an explanation of the rationale for their decision. Should the AECENS Program Committee's review require longer than 20 business days, the Candidate is notified, in writing, that an extension is required (to a maximum of an additional 10 business days).

A Candidate whose escalated appeal results in any change to their assessment outcomes is refunded the full amount of the Appeal Fees.

Assessment Tool Security

Purpose

The following policies outline the principles and administrative process(es) by which the security and confidentiality of the assessment tools and processes are maintained. The validity of score inferences for assessments rests on the assumption that all Candidates have the same right of access to assessment information and materials, and do not have advance knowledge of specific assessment contents.

Definitions

"Cheating" means:

- any attempt by a Candidate (or Candidates) to improve their score on an interview, examination, or other assessment by fraudulent means.

"Assessment theft" means:

- any attempt to steal or record assessment content (examination questions, interview scenarios, etc.) before, during or after its intended use for any assessment.

“Assessment fraud” means:

- any attempt by a Candidate to hide their identify or to impersonate another individual for any purpose related to participation in the RPL Program, or
- any attempt by an individual (or individuals) to intentionally misrepresent a Candidate’s employment history, periods of employment, or the nature of their job duties for the purpose of establishing eligibility for the RPL Program.

AECENS Policy

AECENS establishes processes and protocols for assessment management and administration that ensure the security and integrity of the RPL Program assessment tools and processes are not compromised.

AECENS takes all appropriate steps to prevent and detect assessment fraud, cheating and assessment theft or any other acts of malfeasance that could compromise the security and integrity of the RPL Program assessment tools and processes.

NP conducts regular forensic analysis of assessment results to identify aberrant patterns in the examination and interview scoring to help detect cheating, collusion, or other procedural problems.

AECENS ensures an appropriate physical assessment environment and actively trains Invigilators to oversee the security of the assessment processes.

AECENS actively encourages Candidates to prepare for and participate in their assessment honestly - in fairness to themselves, other examinees, and to the individuals and institutions responsible for making appropriate decisions based on assessment results. Candidates do not disclose assessment content to others.

AECENS informs Candidates, in advance, of the security protocols and requirements for the assessments, including the consequences for breaking security rules. Candidates who do not agree to the security protocols and requirements are not allowed to participate in the assessment.

AECENS requires anyone who has access to the assessment materials (examination questions, scoring rubrics, or other confidential / proprietary content) to sign a non-disclosure agreement. This policy applies to subject-matter experts who contribute to the development of the exam, Invigilators who monitor the on-site assessment processes, and any staff or contractors who handle test materials or results.

AECENS implements a Chain-of-Custody (CoC) protocol including procedures that specify how secure assessment materials are distributed, collected, returned, and destroyed. Each

individual responsible for possessing or handling assessment materials (examination question booklets, completed examination answer forms, Candidate handouts with interview scenarios, and Assessors' scoring and comment forms) is responsible for following the security procedures. The CoC procedures include recording dates, times, and locations for each hand-off of assessment materials, with signatures from each person involved in the CoC. The CoC records are collected and archived by the AECENS Executive Director as part of the permanent assessment record.

AECENS stores all digital assessment materials on secure servers with password protection. Any electronic transmission of assessment materials is likewise conducted via secure means with password protection.

Assessment Environment

AECENS conducts assessments in appropriate and professional physical environments where distractions are minimized and where security protocols are more easily implemented. Assessment site location, lighting, room temperature, ventilation, test site security, sight lines, and Candidate individual workspaces are monitored and planned to meet the requirements of the assessment processes.

For written examinations, numbered workspaces are allocated to each Candidate by the Invigilator(s). Assignment of the various forms of the examination to specific Candidates is organized so that Candidates are not seated near others with the same examination form.

Recording devices, including cameras, cell phones, tablet or laptop computers, or papers not associated with the assessment process are not permitted for Candidates in the assessment room. Candidates are encouraged not to bring recording devices with them to the assessment as they will be required to leave them outside the assessment room during the assessment.

AECENS Invigilators may permit a Candidate to leave the assessment room during the assessment, if requested. When a Candidate chooses to leave the assessment room, no extra time is provided to complete the assessment, or any portion of the assessment. Candidates who leave the assessment room are warned not to engage in any activities that may compromise exam security - including accessing a communication or recording device of any kind and / or communicating with other Candidates.

Assessment Invigilation

AECENS Invigilators follow all assessment administration protocols and procedures, as directed by the AECENS Executive Director.

AECENS Invigilators are unbiased and have no actual or perceived conflicts of interest with respect to any individual Candidate's assessment results.

AECENS Invigilators actively monitor Candidates during examinations and maintain an unobstructed view of each Candidate during the test.

AECENS Invigilators are trained to observe and identify any incidents of cheating, assessment theft and / or assessment fraud.

Candidates register in advance with the RPL Program Administrator for any assessment session. The AECENS Invigilator confirms the identity of each Candidate by viewing their government-issued photo identification card or document and by observing and verifying their signature to the on-site registration sheet. If the AECENS Invigilator is unable, for any reason, to verify the identity of any Candidate, that Candidate is not allowed to participate in the assessment.

As a part of the on-site registration process, AECENS Invigilators provide Candidates with a verbal briefing (individually and / or as a group) before the assessment process begins. AECENS Invigilators respond to Candidate questions about the process of the assessment, but do not discuss the content of the assessment.

The AECENS Invigilator actively reminds Candidates of the consequences for violating any of the assessment security protocols or procedures. Security measures are described to Candidates as a means of deterring breaches of protocols.

The AECENS Invigilator provides each Candidate for the written examination with a specifically allocated (and numbered) examination booklet and answer sheet, and the location of their pre-assigned workspace in the assessment room.

The AECENS Invigilator ensures that all examination question booklets (and all pages of each booklet) and all interview scenario descriptions are returned to them before the Candidate can leave the assessment room. As soon as possible after the assessment session, the AECENS Invigilator appropriately destroys all examination question booklets and interview scenario descriptions. The AECENS Invigilator collects all Candidate response forms or Assessor scoring sheets and seals them in an envelope which is then delivered as soon as possible to the AECENS Executive Director.

Security Breach Protocols

AECENS Invigilators observe, identify, and appropriately confront Candidates who are observed to breach examination security protocols. In such cases, the Invigilator sends an incident report to the AECENS Executive Director within 24 hours, describing the specific details of the security breach and the actions taken by the Invigilator.

AECENS Invigilators document all attempts or instances of cheating, assessment theft or assessment fraud to the AECENS Executive Director.

AECENS Invigilators intervene immediately when they observe and confirm any Candidate activities that breach the assessment security protocols. Candidates are initially cautioned to desist and told the incident will be reported to the AECENS Executive Director. Candidates who are subsequently observed and confirmed to be in breach of assessment security protocols or procedures are asked by the AECENS Invigilator to immediately return the assessment materials and to leave the assessment room.

The AECENS Executive Director invalidates any assessment scores shown to be inaccurate as a result of cheating or assessment fraud. Candidates whose scores are invalidated are immediately contacted and informed of the outcome.

Candidates found to have breached assessment security protocols or procedures may be barred, at the discretion of the AECENS Executive Director, from further participation in the RPL Program.

The AECENS Executive Director thoroughly investigates any security breach to determine its pervasiveness and the extent of any damage to or compromise of the security of the assessment tools. Such investigations may involve interviews with persons alleged to be involved or bystanders, data forensic analyses to determine the extent of effects on assessment results, and internet monitoring to check the range of any assessment content disclosure.

The AECENS Executive Director, in consultation with NP staff, will implement a plan for resolving the impact(s) of any security breach as quickly as possible. Depending on the extent of the damage caused by any breach, additional actions, including civil or criminal legal actions, may be initiated by the AECENS Executive Director.

After any significant breach and subsequent investigation(s), the AECENS Executive Director, in consultation with NP, conducts a review of existing assessment security protocols and procedures in order to determine if revisions may be necessary and, if so, to plan for their implementation as soon as possible.

Records Management

Purpose

Records management policy is designed to:

- Ensure that the RPL Program records are created, managed, retained, and disposed of in a consistent, effective manner

- Facilitate the efficient management of RPL Program records
- Ensure preservation of the RPL Program’s records of permanent value, and
- Support both protection of privacy and freedom of information services throughout the AECENS organization

Definitions

“Confidential Information” means:

- personal identity information such as Social Insurance Number, personal contact information, employment history and employer verification, competency references, or medical documentation (for special accommodations),
- personal information related to payment processing for RPL Program services,
- verbal or written complaints,
- RPL Program information related to a specific candidate or group of candidates such as assessment results, and
- RPL Program assessment tool specific content such as examination questions or answers, interview questions or scenarios, scoring rubrics and weighting of assessment criteria

“Sensitive Information” means:

- RPL Program or research data that does not contain personal information
- agendas, minutes or notes from RPL Program and AECENS staff meetings
- AECENS internal program planning, business strategy or administration systems records or notes

“Public Information” means:

- business contact information of RPL Program and AECENS staff
- ECE Level 2 competency standards
- RPL Program processes, timelines, and fees
- the process to file an Appeal or Formal Complaint
- AECENS and RPL Program confidentiality and privacy standards

“Disposition” is the action taken to dispose of records, which can involve:

- the physical destruction by means of burning, pulping, shredding, or recycling of paper-based records,
- the secure deletion and erasure of electronic records,
- the physical destruction of electronic storage media containing records, or
- the transfer of records to archival storage for selective or full retention

“Record” means:

- recorded information, regardless of medium or characteristics, which AECENS may create, receive, or maintain in connection with the conduct of the RPL Program.

Records serve as evidence of AECENS or the RPL Program's functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, organization, and other activities. Records also serve as historical resources. Most records serve as evidence of what happened and who was involved in a decision-making process. They also show what recommendations or instructions were given, or the order in which events and decisions were made.

"Records Management" mean:

- efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use, disposition, and destruction of records used in the administration and operation of RPL Program activities.

"Transitory Records" are:

- records which are required for a limited time to complete a routine action, are used in the preparation of final records, or are retained as information or convenience copies by offices or individuals who do not have primary responsibility for them. Examples include working documents such as drafts or preliminary versions used in preparation for final documents, copies of records retained when original copies are sent elsewhere, electronic files retained when a printed copy is filed as the Official Record, and routine email exchanges.

"Official Records" are:

- records that must be retained and filed, stored, and managed in accordance with RPL Program standards and practices. These are records that have ongoing RPL Program or business value, are required to support administration or business operations, provide evidence of compliance or diligence or other business requirements, and have future administrative, financial, legal, research, or archival value.

"Archival Records" are:

- Official Records which illustrate and detail how AECENS and the RPL Program are organized or managed. These records are Official Records, with ongoing administration or business value, that may be required to support operations or provide evidence of compliance or diligence. Archival Records are identified by the AECENS Executive Director for retention beyond their disposition date. Archival Records may include, for example:
 - Financial or audit reports, program evaluation and planning documents;
 - Minutes of various AECENS and RPL Program decision-making meetings;
 - Contracts and other agreement documents;
 - Operational records of a summary or overview nature;
 - Employment-related documents for AECENS staff and positions;
 - Progressive versions of policy and procedures documents; and

- Correspondence related to important decisions or events.

AECENS Policy and Procedures

All RPL Program records are the property of AECENS and subject to its overall control. AECENS will manage all records subject to applicable federal and provincial laws and organizational policies.

All records are retained for as long as they are required to meet legal, administrative, operational, and other requirements of AECENS and the RPL Program.

Appropriate security measures are observed for maintaining records containing candidates' personal or other confidential information.

Records disposition ensures that any personal or confidential information to be destroyed is handled in a permanent and secure manner.

Operational responsibility for Records Management rests with the Executive Director of AECENS.

Records that are transmitted between individuals within AECENS or the RPL Program (e.g., candidate assessment results, or medical documentation for accommodations) are treated as Confidential Information to ensure that only the intended individuals can gain access to these records.

AECENS follows a risk-based approach to records management. The overall aim is to implement and retain a reasonable level of records control that reflects the probability and impacts of any potential security breach.

Progressively more extensive safeguards are used for records containing larger volumes of Confidential Information, especially information that could be used to commit identity fraud or otherwise harm the reputation of an individual.

Records Retention and Disposition

Official Records are retained only until they have met their specific retention requirements. Official Records may be retained and securely stored beyond their retention dates only at the direction of the AECENS Executive Director, as advised by the RPL Program Governance Committee.

Transitory Records are retained until no longer needed. Transitory Records containing Confidential and Sensitive Information are disposed of as soon as the final version or the Official Record is created.

Confidential and Sensitive Records are retained for seven years.

The document disposition process is the same for both Official and Transitory Records. Records retention policy applies only to Official Records.

Records Accessibility

All Official and Transitory Records are assets of AECENS and the RPL Program and they are readily accessible for the entire period of their retention.

Access to Official Records is determined by decision of the AECENS Board of Directors and managed by the AECENS Executive Director.

Only assigned individuals, designated by the AECENS Executive Director, have access to Official Records.

Only assigned individuals, designated by the AECENS Executive Director, are authorized to delete, destroy, or modify Official Records.

Access to Official Records is retained securely, by appropriate means determined by the AECENS Executive Director, including via keys, fobs, electronic cards, codes, and passwords.

Records Management Protocols

	Transitory Records	Official Records
Retention Period	When deemed no longer needed	After 7 Years
Disposition Authority	AECENS RPL Program staff members are responsible to appropriately dispose of records they handle.	AECENS Executive Director directly oversees the disposal / destruction of records older than 7 years
Method of destruction for <i>Confidential</i> and <i>Sensitive</i> records	Paper records are cross-cut shredded. Electronic records are permanently deleted.	

	Transitory Records	Official Records
Method of disposition for <i>Public</i> (non-sensitive) records	Paper records are recycled. Electronic records are deleted.	
Storage of <i>Confidential</i> and <i>Sensitive</i> records	Paper records are locked in a file cabinet within lock-protected storage areas. Only staff specifically assigned by the AECENS Executive Director have access to the records storage areas. Electronic records are password-protected on a secure server.	
Storage of <i>Public</i> (non-sensitive) information	Records are stored in desks and shared file cabinets / shelves. Electronic records are saved on local disks.	Records are stored in desks and shared file cabinets / shelves. Electronic records are saved on shared network drives.