



THE 'RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING' PROCESS FOR MASTER INSTALLATION ELECTRICIANS

DO you have many years of experience working on electrical installations in hazardous areas? Have you previously considered the criteria for registration as set out by the Department of Labour but you don't have an N6 Certificate? Then Option 4 of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process is a possible route that you could follow in order to become registered as a Master Installation Electrician (MIE).

The RPL is a process where a person who does not have a 'formal certificate' is assessed in order to establish whether they have the relevant skills, knowledge and practical abilities required for a particular occupation. If they are found to be competent they will receive the formal recognition. However, if the RPL assessment identifies gaps in the applicant's knowledge, skills or experience,

they will be advised to attend programmes, courses or interventions that would close those gaps. Once the applicant has 'closed the gaps' they can apply for another assessment.

RPL is not a new activity – we've been doing it for many years and, in the past, experienced persons were allowed to write a trade test under section 28 of the Manpower Training Act when this Act was in force.

Registration criteria

Before we review the criteria for Option 4, it must be emphasised that we have not 'lost' Options 1, 2 and 3 as previously found in the registration criteria. Option 4 has been added to the master installation registration criteria.

This option was put forward by The South African Flameproof Association to the Department of Labour as a result of the petrochemical industry experiencing a decline in the available number of Master Installation Electricians (MIE) over the past number of years, particularly after the introduction of the Minimum Theoretical Qualification requirement of the National N6 Certificate.

Companies with hazardous areas and contractors working for these companies are required by legislation to appoint MIEs to ensure a safe operating environment. The OHS Act requires, under Electrical Installation Regulations Section 5.4 that "a registered person shall exercise general control over all electrical installation work being carried out, and no person may allow such work without such control". The OHS Act also requires under Electrical Installation Regulations Section 6.4 (b) that all contractors must have a full time registered person employed in hazardous areas and that this person must be an MIE.

According to The South African Flameproof Association, the hazardous areas industry makes use of contractors to assist with new installations and to also do maintenance work in hazardous locations. The resource scarcity continues to present a serious threat to safety of personnel and is crippling the Ex industry. For this reason, The South African Flameproof Association approached the Department of Labour and, after many months and numerous discussions, Option 4 was developed.

Below is an extract from the Department of Labour brochure (OHS 3/1/5/7/9 Revised March 2014):

Option 4

3.4 A candidate must:

3.4.1 Practical Qualification

a. Be registered as an Installation Electrician for two years.

b. Submit proof of five year's practical experience in hazardous locations.

c. Submit documentary proof of successful completed unit standards on inspection, testing and certification of specialised electrical installations in hazardous locations as prescribed by the EWSETA.

d. Submit documentary proof of the RPL competence declaration from the South African Flameproof Association (SAFA) MIE Group.

3.4.2 Minimum theoretical qualification

National N3 Certificate with the following compulsory subjects: Mathematics; engineering science or industrial electronics; electrical trade theory or electro-technology.

Or

Grade 12 (Standard 10) certificate; mathematics; science; technica – electrical or equivalent subject that may include an N3 subject.

Note 1: The candidate must pass each subject with a minimum of 40%.

Note 2: These minimum theoretical subjects could be a combination of Grade 12 and N3 subjects.

3.3.4 Knowledge of statutory requirements

Proof of knowledge on the legislation and relevant health and safety standards applicable to electrical installations by having passed the subject 'Specialised Codes' as administered by the Department of Higher Education and Training.

As previously indicated, Option 4 is an additional option for persons with five years and more experience in hazardous locations.

Regarding Section 3.4.1 (d) which requires that candidates submit documentary proof of the RPL competence declaration from the South African Flameproof Association (SAFA) MIE Group, candidates would need to visit the South African Flameproof Association website www.flp.co.za and download the application form. The process will require you to provide proof of the practical experience as well as attend an interview with the South African Flameproof Association MIE Group.

It must be noted that Option 4 is not a degrading of the other criteria; it will be used by applicants who have the knowledge, skills and years of experience and who require their experience to be recognised through a Recognition of Prior Learning process.

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