

## POLICY AND PROCEDURE DOCUMENT

# RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) POLICY AND PROCEDURE

## 1. Purpose, Principles and Scope

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The Recognition of Prior Learning Policy establishes ACPE's approach for applying a consistent, equitable and transparent framework for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for the purposes of admission and/or credit transfer.

The college acknowledges that learning can take place outside of the formal education system, and that recognising formal, informal and non-formal learning supports an individual's lifelong goals.

### Principles

- The overarching principle of this Policy is to preserve the integrity of the College's awards while facilitating an applicant's access to admission and credit transfer based on learning already undertaken.
- Within this principle, the college also endeavours to:
  - Support mobility between institutions and progression through levels of qualifications
  - Support an individual's lifelong learning goals by recognising prior learning and experiences
  - Ensure consistency and transparency in the offering of admission and granting of credit transfer, and
  - Establish a framework for credit transfer arrangements in formal articulation agreements between the College and other institutions.
- This policy complies with the requirements of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA).

### Scope

- Domestic and international students enrolling in ACPE Courses.
- Student Enrolment Advisors
- CEO and Dean
- Academic staff
- This policy governs all articulation agreements.

## 2 Policy Statement

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The College encourages lifelong learning and provides the opportunity for students to have previous learning recognised for advanced standing in their courses (including formal, informal and non-formal learning). Recognition of prior learning acknowledges the skills and knowledge that students will bring to their studies at ACPE through previous education or employment experience.

The College will assess Prior Learning for the purpose of granting Credit towards an Award, provided the Prior learning is current and relevant to the Learning Outcomes of the Award.

The assessment of Prior Learning for the purposes of admission and/or credit transfer will be evidence-based, equitable and academically defensible (*TEQSA Threshold Standards*).

The precise nature of the evidence-based assessment may vary from discipline to discipline and assessments will be made on the merit of each individual case.

The College may, at its discretion, set additional requirements for the Recognition of Prior Learning, including testing, interviews and portfolio submission.

The College reserves the right to charge a service fee.

### 2.1 Currency

The previous knowledge and skills of an applicant must still be current, in the context of the course to which the student has been admitted, in order for recognition for prior learning to be approved. Prior Learning that has been attained within **ten years** of the year of application for admission will generally be considered current. Any changes to this timeframe for an Award will be determined by the Academic Board.

In addition, potential for recognition for prior learning may be governed by regulatory or professional body requirements. Applications in those disciplines where the body of knowledge and practice has changed significantly and the applicant has not maintained an appropriate level of practice within the field of study may not be approved.

### 2.2 Relevancy

Prior Learning will be considered relevant where:

- there is evidence to demonstrate that the applicant has achieved a quality and standard of learning equivalent to tertiary studies,
- the Prior Learning is of an appropriate Level, and
- the Prior Learning is assessed as equivalent in discipline content, depth and breadth to a unit of study, an area of study, or a whole stage of a course offered by the College.

## 2.3 Types of Credit

Recognition of prior learning means credit towards a course in consideration of prior learning in another award course at the College or at another institution or in other non-educational contexts in Australia or overseas. The advanced standing is expressed as credit points granted towards the award course.

Recognition of prior learning may be granted as block, specified credit, or unspecified credit:

- **Block Credit**, where the applicant's Prior Learning is assessed as meeting the stated learning outcomes for a whole stage or component of their course. Block Credit may be used towards satisfying specific requirements, including entire stages, of a course. Block credit would usually reduce the required volume of learning for a course.
- **Specific credit** where the prior learning is assessed as meeting the stated learning outcomes for a unit or units of study in their course. Specified Credit may be used towards satisfying the specific requirements, including required units, of a course.
- **Unspecified credit** where the prior learning is assessed as being at an appropriate level and standard for a component of the course and may count towards a course subject area but are not linked to specific units of study. Unspecified credit can be used towards satisfying the elective components of a course.

### 2.3.1 Credit for Formal Learning

Credit for formal learning involves the assessment of previous studies at a higher education institution towards gaining a higher education qualification at the College. The process determines whether those studies at another institution are equivalent to the learning outcomes required for units of study leading to an award of a qualification from the College.

Internal unit credit transfer (from one ACPE course to another ACPE course) will automatically be recognised where the unit code, title and credit point value, are equivalent in both courses. When changes to an accredited course results in changes to the ACPE course structure, the College will follow the transition plan that is approved by the regulatory body for granting advanced standing toward an award.

### 2.3.2 Credit for Non-Formal or Informal Learning

Credit for non-formal learning involves the assessment of a person's skills and knowledge acquired through work or life experience, where there are no formal or current qualifications as proof, which may be used to grant credit in a unit of study. Credit will be available only where it is suitable and appropriate to a specific award course and only where a student's previous non-formal or informal learning is assessed as having met the learning outcomes required for satisfactory completion of a particular unit or units of study within the relevant

course. The maximum amount of advanced standing granted for non-formal or informal learning towards a course is twenty-five percent (25%).

### **2.3.3 Credit Restriction**

Previous learning can only be recognised once in an ACPE course; i.e. previous learning deemed equivalent to a unit cannot be used again for credit towards another unit in the same course.

### **2.3.4 Cross-Institutional Studies**

Students may apply for credit for cross-institutional studies whereby they complete one or more units at another higher education institution while enrolled at the College and have the unit/s credited toward their currently-enrolled ACPE course. Cross-institutional study must be approved by the relevant Head of Department prior to enrolment in the other institution.

### **2.3.5 Credit for Vocational Education and Training (VET) Studies**

To determine credit for VET studies, the College conducts a mapping analysis comparing the VET qualification obtained from an RTO, or units of competency from a VET qualification, to the learning outcomes and units of the College's HE qualification. This process identifies the criteria of 80% similarity in content, duration of study and degree of difficulty and conversely identifies 'gaps' in knowledge and skill.

To ensure that the award of credit maintains the integrity and level of the course of study, including being consistent with the requirements of the AQF for that level of study, the College will not grant credit for studies undertaken at a level lower than AQF Diploma level.

## **2.4 Quality Assurance**

The College will safeguard the quality of its awards by ensuring that:

- The assessment of Prior Learning for admission to an Award is evidence-based and questions the applicant's competency and readiness for tertiary study
- The assessment of Prior Learning for credit transfer is evidence-based, and ensures that the learning outcomes have been met
- Credit on the basis of prior Formal Learning is only granted for completed units where the final grade is a Pass, or equivalent grade, and higher. Grades of 'concessional pass', 'terminating pass' or equivalent, from another higher education institution, will not be deemed to be successful completion for the purpose of credit, unless supported by additional information and approved on a case-by-case basis.
- Credit granted by another institution on the basis of Prior Learning is not transferable to ACPE.

- Standards for the assessment of Prior Learning are regularly reviewed and monitored by the Learning and Teaching Committee and Academic Board.

Regardless of the nature or amount of advanced standing recognised, any specific requirements of an award course must be fulfilled, including conditions associated with the professional recognition of the award (e.g. online study restrictions or a requirement to complete a certain number of practical hours).

## 2.5 Appeals

A student may appeal a decision regarding the assessment of Prior Learning for the purpose of admission and/or credit transfer. Grounds for an appeal are limited to procedural error or breach of procedural fairness. Appeals will be managed through the Academic Appeals Committee, and are to be made in accordance with the Grievances, Complaints and Appeals Policy, and within the ambit of the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy, the Australian Qualifications Framework, the Higher Education Standards Framework, and the ESOS National Code and the ESOS legislative framework.

## 2.6 Credit Limitations and Minimum Requirements

Notwithstanding any credit granted on the basis of previous formal, non-formal or informal learning, in order to qualify for an award a student must complete a minimum of the equivalent of **fifty percent (50%)** of the award course at the College. Within this context, it is normally expected that students applying for credit will complete at least 50% of the final year of the course. These requirements may be varied where the work was completed as part of an embedded program at the College or as part of an award course approved by the College in an approved conjoint venture with another institution.

Credit for non-formal or informal learning must not exceed twenty-five percent (25%) of the qualification requirements for a course.

Where approval of a course is dependent on meeting regulatory or professional body requirements regarding quality, content and/or delivery mode, the College reserves the right to uphold these requirements by limiting conferral of advanced standing.

The minimum requirements and their application are shown on the table below:

ACPE Award Length	Minimum requirement	Application
4 years Full Time	The student must complete a minimum of the equivalent of 2 years full time of the award at ACPE	Student must complete at least 96 credit points at ACPE
3 years Full Time	The student must complete a minimum of the equivalent of 1.5 years full time of the award at ACPE	Student must complete at least 72 credit points of the award at ACPE
2 years Full Time	The student must complete a minimum of the equivalent of 1 year full time of the award at ACPE	Student must complete at least 48 credit points of the award at ACPE
1 year Full Time	The student must complete a minimum of the equivalent of 1 semester full time of the award at ACPE	Student must complete at least 24 credit points of the award at ACPE

Credit will be granted at lower levels first and the majority of the credit will be applied at the 100 level.

Credit agreements negotiated between ACPE and other organisations for credit for students towards AQF qualifications at any level will take into account the comparability and equivalence of the:

- learning outcomes
- volume of learning
- course , including content, and
- learning and assessment approaches.

When setting credit limits for a student with an AQF qualification towards a higher level AQF qualification in the same or related discipline, the College will take into account the relevant points above and the AQF guidelines below:

- 50% credit for an Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree linked to a 3 year Bachelor Degree
- 37.5% credit for an Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree linked to a 4 year Bachelor Degree
- 33% credit for a Diploma linked to a 3 year Bachelor Degree
- 25% credit for a Diploma linked to a 4 year Bachelor Degree.

## 2.7 Timeframe for Applications

Applications for credit must be made at least 20 days prior to the census date of the relevant unit's teaching period to permit processing, decision making and communication of the result to the student. In general students are advised to make an application for recognition of prior learning as part of their admissions process.

## 2.8 Outcomes of Applications

All successful applicants will be advised in writing of the outcome of their application and have 'RPL' applied to the relevant unit on their academic transcript on receipt of a signed acceptance from the student of the outcome. If an application for credit is not approved, the Registrar must provide a response stating the grounds on which advanced standing for the particular unit was not approved.

## 2.9 Procedure for assessment or reassessment of RPL applications

This section outlines the responsibilities and actions required for the assessment or reassessment of applications for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for the purpose of admission and/or credit transfer

### 2.9.1 Student / Prospective Student

Prospective and current students may apply for Recognition of Prior Learning either:

- as part of an Application for Admission or
- during their course candidature.

Applicants must submit the Application for Recognition of Prior Learning Form and supply evidence to support the application. Evidence of the student's prior formal, informal or non-formal learning must demonstrate attainment of learning outcomes required for admission to the specified ACPE degree program and/or achievement of the specific learning outcomes of the unit(s) for which credit is sought.

Applicants whose request for assessment or reassessment of RPL is not approved may appeal through the College's Academic Appeals process. Refer *Section 2.10* of this Policy.

### 2.9.2 Student Enrolment Advisors

Student enrolment advisors who receive a complete application for RPL (with the required evidence) as part of the admission application should:

- a. Check the application against the unit precedents recorded in the Credit Transfer Register or the arrangements recorded in the Articulations Register and note this on the appropriate section in the *RPL Application Form*
- b. Forward the complete application form to the Registrar's Office for processing.

### 2.9.3 Registrar's Office

The Registrar's office will record the details of the application in the RPL applications register and conduct an initial assessment of evidence as meeting the minimum documentation requirements (certified copies of academic transcript, unit outlines of units completed at other

institutions, etc.). Overseas Qualifications will be assessed by the Registrar's office using the NOOSR database to identify the equivalent Australian AQF level.

- a. If the documentation provided is complete, forward the application and evidence to the appropriate Head of Department for assessment against the appropriate ACPE units / Courses.
- b. If the documentation provided is not complete, inform the applicant that the evidence provided is insufficient for RPL consideration.

If credit is approved by the assessor,

- a. Determine the student's total eligible credit is in accordance with the RPL Policy and the Minimum Requirements,
- b. Where a precedent is approved, record the outcome in the relevant registers or schedules.
- c. Inform the student of the outcome and on receipt of the student's signed acceptance, enter the credit for the relevant unit/s on the student's record.
- d. Under section 19 of the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act, if the successful applicant is an international student, and the course credit reduces the length of a student's course:
  - If this occurs before the visa grant, the actual course duration must be indicated in the Confirmation of Enrolment (COE).
  - If this occurs after the visa grant, the change in course duration is reported via Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS).

If credit is not approved, notify the student of the outcome and the reason the request was not approved, and any specific advice provided by the assessor.

#### **2.9.4 Heads of Department**

- a. When approving a unit equivalency, the Academic Department / College may determine whether the approved equivalency is to be recorded as a precedent and published on the Credit Transfer Register to enable it to be applied to other students requesting the same credit. Such recommendations are to be reported to the Learning and Teaching Committee.
- b. Approval of block credit is by the Academic Department that teaches the program for which the student is seeking admission or credit. The process of defining block credit requires that the Academic Department/ College:
  - Consider how the prior learning has contributed to achievement of the program learning outcomes of the ACPE course.

- Determine what portion of the ACPE course is required to allow the student to build upon the prior learning to meet the ACPE course learning outcomes taking into account the credit limitations and minimum requirements.

Heads of Department are to provide an outcome of the application to the Registrar's office within 10 business days on receipt of the application and which clearly provides the reasons for any approval and/or rejection of an application. Learning

### 3 Definitions

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- **Academic Transcript** is a record of all learning leading to an AQF qualification or an accredited unit in which a student is enrolled and is issued by an authorised issuing organisation. In Australia this may be called a 'transcript of results', 'academic transcript', 'record of achievement' or 'statement of results'
- **Accredited Unit** is a single component of a qualification, or a stand-alone unit, that has been accredited by the same process as for a whole AQF qualification. In Australia an accredited unit may be called a 'module', 'subject', 'unit of competency' or 'unit'
- **Advance Standing** is a form of credit for any previous learning. See also articulation arrangements, credit transfer, recognition of prior learning
- **Applicant** is an individual who is making an application for RPL under this policy.
- **AQF qualification** is the result of an accredited complete course of learning that leads to formal certification that a graduate has achieved learning outcomes as described in the AQF (Australian Qualifications Framework).
- **Articulation:** a process that enables students to progress from a completed Award to another Award with predetermined admission and/or Credit arrangements. Articulation is formalised by an approved institutional agreement.
- **Award:** the qualification resulting from successful completion of a specific course.
- **Block Credit:** credit granted towards entire stages or components of a course.
- **Credit:** the value assigned for the recognition of equivalence in content and learning outcomes between different types of learning and/or Awards. Credit may reduce the volume of learning required to achieve a qualification.
- **Credit transfer:** a process that provides students with consistent Credit outcomes for units, components or entire stages of a course based on identified equivalence in content and learning outcomes.
- **Formal Learning:** learning that takes place through a structured program of learning that leads to the full or partial achievement of an officially accredited qualification (*AQF Glossary of Terminology*).

- **Informal Learning:** learning gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. Unlike Formal or Non-Formal Learning, Informal Learning is not organised or externally structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. (*AQF Glossary of Terminology*).
- **Learning Outcomes:** the expression of the set of knowledge, skills and the application of the knowledge and skills a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of learning (*AQF Glossary of Terminology*).
- **Level:** the level of an Award reflects the relative complexity and/or depth of its program Learning Outcomes, and is expressed according to the various AQF levels (*AQF Glossary of Terminology*). The level at which a unit is taught indicates the amount of prior knowledge required to study it successfully.
- **Nested Award:** a set of ACPE Awards approved by TEQSA that forms stages within the highest Award, where each stage may operate as an entry and/or exit point. Nested Awards are designed to allow full credit transfer between the College awards.
- **Non-formal Learning:** learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to an officially accredited qualification (*AQF Glossary of Terminology*).
- **Prior Learning:** learning that is Formal, Informal and/or Non-Formal and which is evidenced, current and relevant, and has taken place:
  - outside of the College, and/or
  - within a completed or incomplete College Award.
- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** a process that involves assessment of an individual's relevant Prior Learning (including Formal, Informal and Non-Formal learning) to determine eligibility for admission to an Award and/or the granting of Credit.
- **Specified Credit:** Credit granted towards specific units or components of a course.
- **Student** – is an individual person who is formally enrolled to study at the College. The individual person is that who appears on the College's documents such as enrolment, admission and payment documents, and who is assigned an individual student ID.
- **Subject** - A subject refers to a 15 – 16 week unit of study centred around a specific theme or topic.
- **Unspecified Credit:** Credit granted towards elective components or components at a particular level of a course. Unspecified Credit may be granted with, or without, subject area designation.
- **Undergraduate Course** at the College means any higher education Course offered at levels 5 to 7 on the AQF. The following higher education Courses are considered to be undergraduate by the College:
  - Diploma (Level 5)

- Associate Degree (Level 6)
- Advanced Diploma (Level 6)
- Bachelor Degree (Level 7)
- **Volume of Learning:** a measure which identifies the notional duration of all activities required for the achievement of the Learning Outcomes specified for a course. Volume of Learning is expressed in equivalent full-time years.

## 4 Related Documents

- Admissions Policy
- Fees Policy
- Grievances, Complaints and Appeals Policy
- RPL Application Form

### **Related Legislation:**

- Higher Education Standards Framework 2015
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011
- Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Second Edition January 2013
- National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018

## 5 Policy Administration

<b>Policy Name &amp; Code:</b>			Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure (POL-24)
<b>Policy Owner:</b>			CEO and Dean
<b>Approval Authority:</b>			Academic Board
<b>Next Review:</b>			September 2023
<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Summary of changes</b>
28 May 19	29 May 19	1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21 March 2019 – new policy developed and implemented from previous <i>Educational Pathways Policy, Higher Education (SGA)</i>, in line with new <i>ACPE template for Policies and Procedures</i>.</li> <li>• Procedures embedded into policy.</li> <li>• Content reviewed to ensure compliance with the HESF 2015, Key Standards: 1.2.1 and 1.2.2; the National Code 2018 Key Standard: 2.3, and the Australian Qualifications Framework.</li> <li>• Key Stakeholder Consultation: CEO and Dean, Registrars, Learning and Teaching Committee.</li> <li>• Document updated (minor amendments).</li> </ul>

\* Unless otherwise indicated, this policy will still apply beyond the review date.