

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This Policy specifies the Australian Catholic University (ACU) requirements for the granting of credit to students for their prior learning, including the types of learning that may be recognised, the procedures for recognition and the types of credit that may be granted.

Section 2 - Policy Scope

(2) This Policy applies to all ACU undergraduate and postgraduate award courses.

(3) This Policy will be applied subject to the [Academic Regulations](#), which specifies:

- a. the types of credit which can be granted;
- b. the maximum allowable credit;
- c. the minimum level of studies required for an award of ACU; and
- d. limits on credit for recognised prior learning.

Section 3 - Principles

(4) Learning may be achieved through formal, non-formal or informal pathways, and may be recognised for purposes of entry to a course or obtaining credit towards an undergraduate or postgraduate award.

(5) Within the context of recognising prior learning, ACU is responsible for ensuring:

- a. the quality and integrity of ACU qualifications;
- b. the applicants' likely success in a course; and
- c. that external accreditation/registration requirements are met.

(6) Any assessment of prior learning will:

- a. be evidence-based, equitable and transparent; and
- b. facilitate students' movement between institutions and between courses.

Section 4 - Definitions

(7) Terms used in this Policy and associated [Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure](#) are consistent with the [Glossary of Student and Course Terms](#). The following specific definitions also apply:

Term	Definition
Formal Learning	The learning that takes place through a structured program of learning undertaken at an accredited education provider that leads to the full or partial achievement of an Australian Qualification Framework qualification, or microcredentials and other officially accredited qualifications recognised by ACU.
Informal Learning	The learning gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. Unlike formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not organised or externally structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support.
Learning or competency outcomes	A learning or competency outcome that a learner should be able to demonstrate as a result of being involved in a learning process. The learning should indicate a conceptual as well as a practical understanding of the knowledge or competency required and should be applicable outside the environment in which it was acquired.
Non-Formal learning	The learning that takes place though a structured program of learning but which does not lead to an officially accredited qualification.

Section 5 - Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

(8) RPL may be used for the purpose of:

- a. gaining entry to an academic program at ACU; and/or
- b. gaining credit for units in a course.

(9) The authority for approving recognition of prior learning for coursework students are subject to the [Delegations of Authority Policy and Register](#).

(10) The relevant Course Adviser will:

- a. assist applicants to identify the learning or competency outcomes associated with their prior learning and identify areas where claims for credit might be made; and
- b. make decisions on applications for credit consistent with the [Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure](#).

(11) Any assessment for RPL will:

- a. be evidence and outcome-based;
- b. be equitable, transparent and accountable; and
- c. be subject to quality assurance comparable to the relevant assessment practices and standards at ACU; and
- d. ensure that discipline requirements are maintained, including the requirements of accreditation/registration bodies.

(12) The processes for assessing RPL are designed to:

- a. match an applicant's skills, knowledge and experiences to specific admissions requirements, professional requirements and/or unit or course learning and competency outcomes; and
- b. assess an applicant's attainments against those requirements and outcomes.

Section 6 - Pathways and Articulation

(13) Internal pathways are listed in Schedule 7 of the [Admission to Coursework Programs Policy](#). Completion of a pathway program may:

- a. constitute one of the entry requirements for nominated course(s); or
- b. provide guaranteed entry to nominated course(s); and
- c. result in credit for students entering via the pathway where specified in the relevant course rules.

(14) Microcredentials may be aggregated for credit against ACU units and/or award courses in accordance with the [Structuring Coursework Programs Policy](#).

(15) Any formal arrangement for recognising credit from an external institution towards an ACU course must be:

- a. specified in an agreement in accordance with the [Educational Partnerships Policy](#); and
- b. registered in the ACU Educational Partnership Register.

Section 7 - Entry

(16) Where eligibility for entry to a course on the basis of RPL is approved, the approval will relate to that specific course only and will not automatically be transferable to any other course.

(17) Eligibility for credit does not guarantee a place in any course for which credit may be granted.

Section 8 - Credit

(18) Credit granted on the basis of RPL, will take the form of specified credit, block credit or unspecified credit, in accordance with the [Academic Regulations](#).

(19) Specified Credit:

- a. is credit granted for one or more units of a program; and
- b. may be granted where there is equivalence of learning outcomes and discipline content measured by the volume, depth and breadth of content and assessment approaches between the previous successfully completed unit and the unit(s) for which credit is sought and the unit can be used to meet pre-requisite requirements; or
- c. may be granted where informal learning matches the learning outcomes of the credited unit, and any relevant accreditation or competency requirements have been met through that informal learning in exceptional circumstances where approved by the Head of School.

(20) Block Credit:

- a. is credit granted for complete sections of the program, equivalent to at least one semester;
- b. will be applied automatically to students with the agreed completed qualification in an articulation pathway;
- c. may be granted where an applicant has completed whole semesters(s) of study in a similar program at a similar level of study; and
- d. must be granted against a combination of specified and unspecified (elective) units of programs.

(21) Unspecified Credit:

- a. is credit granted for elective components of programs where previous study does not correspond precisely with specified components of the program; and
- b. cannot be granted in programs which do not contain electives.

(22) The maximum credit limit which may be granted towards any course or program at ACU will be determined by Academic Board and be defined in the [Academic Regulations](#).

(23) Credit granted on the basis of formal, non-formal or informal learning will be subject to the time limit as defined in the Credit for previous study or learning section of the [Academic Regulations](#).

(24) Where credit towards a course on the basis of RPL is approved, the approval will relate to that specific course only and will not automatically be transferable to any other unit or course.

Section 9 - Application for Review of or Appeal Against a Decision

(25) Any student wishing to apply for review of or to appeal a decision relating to RPL, or the granting of credit, must do so in accordance with the [Student Appeals Policy](#).

Section 10 - Revisions to this Policy

(26) The revision table includes revisions up until this document was migrated into the current policy platform. Any later changes will show in the Status and Details tab.

Date	Major, Minor or Editorial	Description of Revision(s)
30 November 2016	Major	A scheduled review resulted in revisions to the Policy and refinements to separate policy statements and procedural matters
11 July 2018	Minor	A new clause (5.2) of the Procedures requires that the assessment of any application for RPL must be initiated within 10 working days of receipt of the application
16 September 2020	Major	Reviewed under the Academic Board Policy Development and Review Schedule
1 March 2023	Minor	Minor procedural changes to reflect the adoption of the credit management system
14 September 2023	Minor	Minor procedural changes to reflect current processes
23 July 2025	Minor	Changes to Clause (19) approval circumstances and authority for specified credit

Section 11 - Associated Information

(27) For related legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines and any supporting resources, please refer to the Associated Information tab.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	23rd July 2025
Review Date	1st November 2028
Approval Authority	Academic Board
Approval Date	9th July 2025
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Helen Murnane Academic Registrar
Responsible Manager	Gerard Goodwin-Moore National Manager, Student Policy and Appeals
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