

# Academic Credit Policy

## Section 1 - Introduction

(1) The provision of academic credit meets the following guiding principles established by Academic Senate that apply to all programs offered by the University of Newcastle (University):

- a. there will be equitable access to all programs;
- b. policies and procedures encourage students to utilise learning support; and
- c. academic pathways will maximise the credit students can gain for learning already undertaken.

## Section 2 - Purpose

(2) This Policy outlines the requirements for the assessment and granting of credit and the development and approval of institutional articulation arrangements.

## Section 3 - Scope

(3) This Policy applies to credit towards coursework programs and awards created and offered by the University, including:

- a. enabling programs;
- b. undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs; and
- c. coursework programs offered by the University to students studying in Australia and offshore, including those in which students enrol through a partner institution.

## Section 4 - Definitions

(4) In the context of this Policy the following definitions apply:

- a. "Authorised Officer" means the staff member with responsibility for processing the credit applications and corresponding outcomes for students. Authorised Officers include:

Authorised Officer	Responsibility
Program Convenor	Consider and determine the outcome of credit applications on a case by case basis for specified and unspecified courses. Determine if the outcomes of a credit application may not be used as a precedent.
Assistant Dean (Education)	Consider and determine the outcome of credit applications on a case by case basis in the absence of or in place of the Program Convenor.
Chair of College Board or Pathways and Academic Learning Support Centre Board	Approve domestic and international articulation agreements. Act as the Appeal Officer for decisions made by the Program Convenor / Assistant Dean (Education).

Authorised Officer	Responsibility
Relevant Global Office, Newcastle Australia Institute of Higher Education (NAIHE) and Student Central staff	Grant credit in line with approved articulation arrangements and precedents. Grant credit for identical courses taken at the University subject to conditions listed in this Policy. Grant up to 20 units of unspecified elective credit at 1000 level and 20 units of unspecified elective credit at 2000 level for completed AQF Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas, subject to conditions listed in this Policy. Grant unspecified credit for elective courses for studies completed at an equivalent level at an Australian higher education or equivalent institution. Notify students of Program Convenor determinations. Rescind credit at the request of the student. Rescind credit where students are over-enrolled. Reject any applications that fall outside of the eligibility criteria set out in this Policy for credit, including applications for cross institutional enrolment. Record and maintain approved articulation arrangements in the credit transfer precedent database.

(5) “Appeal Officer” means an authorised officer who has delegated authority to consider and determine the outcome of an appeal of an academic decision relating to credit. Authorised appeal officers are:

Original Decision Maker	Appeal Officer
Student Central staff and Pathways and Academic Learning Support Centre staff	Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and Academic Registrar
Global Staff	Director, International
Program Convenor / Assistant Dean (Education)	Relevant College Pro Vice-Chancellor
Relevant College Pro Vice-Chancellor	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Vice President

## Section 5 - Credit Policy

(6) The key principles of credit provision are:

- a. students granted credit should not be disadvantaged in achieving the expected learning outcomes for the program;
- b. the integrity of the program and the award must be maintained;
- c. granting maximum credit for prior learning must be in line with the maximum credit listed in the relevant Awards and Programs Schedules;
- d. any dictated timeframe for acceptance of credit will be from the student's date of admission;
- e. the granting of credit must ensure a consistent and equitable approach; and
- f. credit transfer provisions must be publicly available and open to enquiry.

(7) Provisions for granting of credit within undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs are stipulated in the relevant Award and Programs Schedule (Schedule) to the [Awards and Graduation Policy](#). Individual exceptions may apply, and these will be listed in the appendix to the relevant Award and Programs Schedule or within the relevant approved program schedule.

(8) Approval for credit on admission to a program will be valid for one calendar year. Credit approval will lapse if the applicant does not accept and actively enrol in the program to which they are admitted within twelve months. Where credit approval has lapsed, the applicant may re-apply, but the original approval is not guaranteed.

(9) A time limit may apply where there is concern about the currency of the applicant's knowledge or skills, and/or where professional accreditation requirements limit the granting of credit. Such arrangements will be included in the [Program Based Credit Limits and Currency](#).

(10) Eligibility for credit will be determined based on the University's assessment of an individual's application, and information they have provided about prior study or learning.

(11) All students who are granted credit will be required to complete at least 40 units:

- a. at the 2000/3000 level in a 160-unit undergraduate program;
- b. at the 3000 level in a 240 unit undergraduate program; or
- c. at the 4000 level in a 320 unit or greater undergraduate program.

(12) A domestic student or an offshore international student may make a request in writing to Student Central to rescind credit.

(13) An international student studying on a student visa must seek permission from the Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and Academic Registrar to rescind credit. If the request will impact on the student's visa the request is likely to be denied.

(14) Credit for exchange or cross-institutional studies cannot be rescinded.

(15) The University reserves the right to rescind credit where an error has been made or where the documentation provided by the applicant is incomplete, misleading, or invalid.

(16) All credit determinations will be utilised as a credit precedent unless designated as a non-precedent by the Program Convenor at the time of approval.

(17) Credit precedents will be stored in the University's student record system for the term of their currency and may be applied by a relevant Authorised Officer.

(18) The submission of falsified or misleading documentation in relation to applications for credit may result in actions being taken under the [Student Conduct Rule](#).

## **Credit Assessments**

(19) Credit for core/compulsory courses will be assessed and will only be granted by the Program Convenor where it is deemed that the student has met the learning outcomes and at least 80% of the content was the same.

(20) On the provision of appropriate documentation, credit may be granted for study undertaken in an AQF or a non-AQF compliant program, deemed to be at an appropriate academic level, with demonstrated comparable or equivalent:

- a. learning outcomes;
- b. volume of learning;
- c. content; and
- d. learning and assessment approaches.

(21) Credit may be granted for identical courses taken at the University that:

- a. count towards the new program, including any identified equivalent courses that form part of a Program and Course Approval Committee (PCAC) approved transition arrangement for the program;
- b. do not exceed any limitations as set out in the relevant Schedules or variances listed in the [Program-Based Credit Limits and Currency](#) of this Policy, unless the credit is for students transferring from an incomplete University of Newcastle program.

(22) The University offers pathway programs where the completion of:

- a. 40 units in an undergraduate Certificate may be used for up to 40 units of credit into a Bachelor or Bachelor (Honours) program or Diploma program;
- b. 80 units in a Diploma may be used for up to 80 units of credit into a Bachelor or Bachelor (Honours) program.

(23) Where undertaken at an appropriate academic level, credit may be granted for courses and awards completed at:

- a. recognised Australian higher education institutions;
- b. recognised overseas tertiary institutions;
- c. registered Australian private providers of accredited tertiary education courses; and
- d. registered Australian Education and Training providers.

(24) Credit may be granted for courses completed with passing grades (or equivalent). Credit will not be granted for any courses with the following results:

- a. terminating pass (or equivalent); or
- b. conceded pass (or equivalent); or
- c. incomplete, special circumstances or withdrawn without academic penalty (or equivalent); or
- d. fail grade, including withdrawn fail.

(25) Credit will not be granted for:

- a. qualifications equivalent to AQF Level 3 or below;
- b. qualifications equivalent to AQF Level 4, except where an articulation arrangement has been approved by the PCAC;
- c. Certificates of Participation or Statements of Attainment, unless undertaken in an AQF compliant or a non-AQF compliant program as per clause 20;
- d. incomplete AQF Diplomas or Advanced Diplomas which were undertaken at a VET or private provider;
- e. professional experience or employment, except where professional experience is explicitly included in an admission pathway that leads to a reduction in the volume of learning required for the postgraduate program;  
or
- f. any course that is substantially equivalent to one that the student has previously counted towards the same award.

(26) AQF Certificates at Level 4 and below provide vocational training skills below the minimum learning outcomes required for university level of study. Exceptions may be made where these qualifications form part of the volume of learning of a completed AQF Diploma or Advanced Diploma which exists as part of an articulation/credit transfer agreement.

(27) Undergraduate courses will not count as credit in postgraduate programs, except where undergraduate courses are explicitly included in the program or where the undergraduate qualification is included as an admission pathway that leads to a reduction in the volume of learning required for the postgraduate program.

(28) The relevant Program Convenor is responsible for assessing credit applications in accordance with the provisions of this Policy and including the [Program-Based Credit Limits and Currency](#) listed in this Policy, and will:

- a. determine the credit to be granted; and
- b. indicate if the credit granted should be marked as a non-precedent.

(29) Program Convenors may seek advice, as appropriate, if an application for credit relates to courses convened by another School.

### **Specified Credit**

(30) Specified credit may be granted for the successful completion of a specific course or courses where the learning outcomes are the same and there is substantial overlap of content.

(31) Where specified credit has been approved, such approval may be used as a precedent for the awarding of that credit in matching circumstances for three years.

(32) Alterations by an articulation partner to approved articulation arrangements are not permitted. Variations to an approved articulation arrangement will be treated as an independent application for credit and will be subject to the standard application procedure.

(33) For specified credit to be approved the previous knowledge and skills of an applicant must still be current in the context of the program to which the student has been admitted.

### **Unspecified Credit**

(34) Unspecified credit may be granted for the successful completion of a specific course or courses deemed to be at an appropriate level. The credit will be applied to courses on a course list, or electives.

(35) The relevant Authorised Officer may grant up to 20 units of unspecified elective credit at 1000 level and 20 units of unspecified elective credit at 2000 level for completed AQF Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas, subject to the relevant Awards and Programs Schedule and the College approved variances listed in the [Program-Based Credit Limits and Currency](#) in this Policy.

(36) The relevant Authorised Officer may grant unspecified credit for elective courses for studies completed at an equivalent level at an Australian higher education or equivalent institution.

### **Credit for Combined Programs**

(37) Credit for combined programs may be granted in accordance with the [Program Management Manual - Coursework](#). Credit may be limited depending on the structure of the combined program.

### **Program-Based Credit Limits and Currency**

(38) The [Program-Based Credit Limits and Currency](#), appended to this Policy must be approved as part of a major program revision.

(39) [Program-Based Credit Limits and Currency](#) may include:

- a. provisions relating to the currency of courses which should be no greater than the maximum duration of the program;
- b. limitation on the granting of credit for particular programs; or
- c. limitation on the granting of credit for core, compulsory, and courses on a course list.

### **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

(40) RPL is a pathway for seeking admission to a postgraduate program that may result in a reduction in the required volume of learning.

(41) RPL is not available to applicants seeking admission to an undergraduate program.

(42) RPL will only be granted where supporting documentation demonstrates the applicant meets the requirements for the relevant admission pathway into the postgraduate program.

(43) The assessment of an application for RPL does not guarantee admission to a postgraduate program at the University.

(44) RPL can be awarded as specified credit or unspecified credit to reduce the volume of learning for the applicable program, unless explicitly included in an admission pathway that leads to a reduction in the volume of learning required for a postgraduate program.

## **Articulation Arrangements and Credit Transfer**

(45) The University may enter into formal articulation arrangements with another education provider to provide formal pathways for students.

(46) The University may consider the completion of units of study at another education institution, and the credit for these units may be transferred upon determination of equivalency of content. These arrangements are known as credit transfers.

(47) International students on articulation arrangements must complete all remaining courses at the University.

(48) The relevant Chair of College Board or Chair of PALSC Board may approve articulation arrangements with recognised overseas tertiary institutions, registered private providers of accredited tertiary education courses, and Australian registered providers in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, subject to:

- a. the volume of credit to be awarded is commensurate with (or less than) the maximum credit listed in the relevant Schedule; and
- b. the students will meet the relevant admission criteria.

(49) The College Pro Vice-Chancellor will report to Academic Senate via College Board on program articulation arrangements within their College.

(50) Domestic private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and private VET Colleges wishing to have credit articulation arrangements with the University are required to lodge an application through the Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and Academic Registrar.

(51) The Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and Academic Registrar will refer all such applications to the relevant College Pro Vice-Chancellor to make a determination and advise the RTO of the outcome.

(52) Where articulation arrangements have been approved, they may be applied by the relevant Authorised Officer, without additional approval.

(53) All new credit transfer and articulation agreements must be developed following the AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy (Australian Qualifications Framework - [Qualifications Pathways Policy](#) January 2013, section 2.1.9) using the following as the basis of negotiations for qualifications in the same or related discipline:

- a. up to a maximum of 120 units credit for a completed AQF level 6 qualification into a 3-year Bachelor Degree or a 4 year Bachelor or Bachelor (Honours) Degree; or
- b. up to a maximum of 80 units credit for a completed AQF level 5 qualification into a 3-year Bachelor Degree or 4-year Bachelor or Bachelor (Honours) Degree.

(54) Existing credit transfer and articulation agreements will be honoured for the life of those agreements.

(55) Articulation arrangements are reviewed on expiry and must be renegotiated by the relevant College when a program undergoes a major or minor program revision or in response to the outcomes of an external program review. Agreements with:

- a. Australian providers expire after seven years;
- b. international providers, memoranda of understanding, letters of credit and pathway arrangements are valid until the agreement expires. The duration of individual arrangements may vary.

## **Cross-Institutional Credit**

(56) Students must apply, pay any applicable fees, and receive formal written permission from the University before enrolling at another institution.

(57) Cross-institutional credit may be granted to undergraduate and postgraduate students who have successfully completed a minimum of 40 units of their program.

(58) Assessment for cross-institutional credit may be approved by the relevant Program Convenor. Students cannot exceed the maximum credit provisions as listed in the relevant Schedule by undertaking cross-institutional study. This means that where a student has commenced study at the University and has been granted maximum credit they will be ineligible to undertake cross-institutional study.

(59) A maximum of 40 units of cross-institutional credit may be approved, including a maximum of 10 units at the 3000 level within a 240 unit program; or 4000 level within a 320 unit program. The relevant College Pro Vice-Chancellor is authorised to approve cross-institutional study exceeding the 10 unit maximum in circumstances where the student would be significantly disadvantaged.

(60) For combined degree programs a maximum of 10 units at the highest level may be applied to each of the individual program components.

(61) International students on articulation arrangements will not be permitted to undertake any cross-institutional study.

(62) Other limitations may apply in the [Program-Based Credit Limits and Currency](#) in this Policy.

(63) The provisions listed in clauses 58 and 59 do not apply to students on study abroad or exchange. However, students must apply for credit as outlined in the [Outbound Student Mobility Procedure](#).

## **Section 6 - Appealing Credit Decisions**

(64) The University offers the right of appeal against credit decisions. An appeal of a decision concerning a credit application must be made within five working days of notice of the determination of credit.

(65) Appeals must be made and determined in accordance with the [Academic Appeals Policy](#).

(66) An appeal on the grounds of outcome alone will not be considered.

(67) The determination of the Appeal Officer is final and there is no further avenue of appeal within the University.

(68) The student may have the right to further appeal outside the University.

## **Section 7 - Relaxing Provision**

(69) To provide for exceptional circumstances arising in any particular case (for an individual student or student cohort), the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Vice President and President Academic Senate in a joint capacity and on the recommendation of a Pro Vice-Chancellor, may relax a provision of this Policy except for clauses relating to the determination of appeals against credit outcomes.

## **Section 8 - Appendices**

(70) [Program-Based Credit Limits and Currency](#)



## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Historic
<b>Effective Date</b>	8th November 2022
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<b>Responsible Executive</b>	Mark Hoffman Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Vice President
<b>Enquiries Contact</b>	John Radvan Senior Manager, Academic Governance & Compliance <hr/> Student and Academic Administration

## Glossary Terms and Definitions

**"Enabling program"** - A tertiary preparation program offered to domestic students.

**"University"** - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

**"Working day"** - Any day other than Saturday, Sunday, or a public holiday in Newcastle, on which business may be conducted.

**"Applicant"** - Where referring to a student, an applicant is an individual seeking entry to a program or course offered by the University or its partner organisation/s. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

**"Award"** - When referring to a University qualification, this term means an academic qualification approved by Academic Senate that is conferred when a student has met the relevant program requirements. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

**"Course"** - When referring to a course offered by the University, a course is a set of learning activities or learning opportunities with defined, assessed and recorded learning outcomes. A course will be identified by an alphanumeric course code and course title. Course types include core courses, compulsory courses, directed courses, capstone courses and electives. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

**"Credit"** - When referring to course credit, credit is the recognition of equivalence in content and learning outcomes between different types of learning and/or qualifications. Credit can reduce the amount of learning required to achieve a qualification. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

**"Student"** - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

**"Specified credit"** - Is credit granted towards specific courses of a program of study.

**"Unspecified credit"** - Is credit granted towards directed or elective courses of a program of study.

**"Volume of learning"** - Identifies the notional duration of all activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes specified for a particular AQF qualification type. It is expressed in equivalent full-time years.

**"Learning outcome"** - In accordance with the AQF definitions, the expression of a 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.

**"Postgraduate"** - Any qualification being at the level of Graduate Certificate or above.

**"Program"** - When referring to learning, a program is a sequence of approved learning, usually leading to an Award. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

**"Program Convenor"** - The academic staff member with overall responsibility for the management and quality of a program.

**"School"** - An organisational unit forming part of a College or Division, responsible for offering a particular course.

**"Staff"** - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

**"Undergraduate"** - Refers to any qualification up to and including the level of a Bachelor Honours degree.

**"Unit"** - When referring to an academic unit, unit means the proportional amount of academic credit allotted to a course. This term is used to define the requirements for a program award of the University and indicate a student's enrolment load. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

**"Domestic student"** - A student (as defined by the University) who is an Australian citizen, Australian Permanent Humanitarian visa holder, Australian Permanent Resident or New Zealand citizen (or dual citizenship holders of either Australia or New Zealand).

**"International student"** - A student (as defined by the University) who is not an Australian citizen, Australian Permanent Resident or New Zealand citizen (or dual citizenship holders of either Australia or New Zealand). This includes students who will be studying offshore and those who will be studying onshore and have a student visa, provisional residency, temporary residency, bridging visa, or any other category of non-permanent visa for Australia.

**"College"** - An organisational unit established within the University by the Council.