Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

Section 1 - Document Context

(1) The University of Newcastle (University) grants credit and recognises prior learning for students who may already have achieved learning outcomes and can demonstrate knowledge, understanding and skills gained through formal learning, non-formal learning and informal learning.

Purpose

(2) This document outlines the requirements for assessing recognition of prior learning including formal learning, non-formal learning, and informal learning; the granting of credit; and the development and approval of institutional articulation arrangements.

Scope

(3) This Policy applies to credit that may be granted 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.

Audience

(4) University staff and students.

(5) This document must be read and understood by staff responsible for administering credit applications.

(6) Staff who have a role in administering credit applications are outlined in the:

a. Recognition of Formal Learning Procedure; and
b. Recognition of Informal and Non-formal Learning Procedure.

Definitions

(7) In the context of this document:

Defined Term	Meaning
Authorised Officer	means the staff member with responsibility for processing credit applications and corresponding outcomes for students.
Appeal Officer	means a staff member who has delegated authority to consider and determine the outcome of an appeal of an academic decision relating to credit.

Defined Term	Meaning
Block Credit	Block Credit is credit granted towards whole stages or components of a program of learning leading to a qualification.

Section 2 - Principles

(8) Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) may be applied as:

a. Credit counted towards a program such that the volume of learning is reduced; or
b. Admission to a pathway within a program with a reduced volume of learning.

(9) The granting of credit or the recognition of prior learning must:

a. be evidence-based, equitable, and transparent;
b. be applied consistently and fairly;
c. recognise learning where the learning is relevant and in line with the Program Based Credit Limit and Currency;
d. take into account the student's ability to successfully meet the learning outcomes of the qualification;
e. be determined in a timely manner so that student progress and enrolment is not hindered;
f. allow for credit outcomes to be used to meet prerequisites or other specified requirements for entry into a program of study that leads to a qualification, or for the partial fulfillment of the requirements of a qualification;
g. be formally documented for the student, including any reasons for not granting credit; and
h. demonstrate that the experience is relevant and current to the industry, where recognition of prior learning is sought for a Career-Ready Placement course.

Maximum Credit

(10) Credit for a completed University of Newcastle qualification or for non-University of Newcastle studies is limited to a maximum of 50% of the program, subject to any limitations outlined in the relevant Award and Program Schedule, and the Program Based Credit Limit and Currency.

(11) Credit may exceed 50% of the program where credit is granted on the basis of an incomplete University of Newcastle qualification, subject to any limitations outlined in the relevant Award and Program Schedule, and the Program Based Credit Limit and Currency.

(12) The maximum credit provisions may be exceeded to allow for the following pathways provided by the University:

a. For a 40 unit Undergraduate Certificate completed at the University of Newcastle, up to 40 units of credit may be granted into a Diploma, Bachelor or Bachelor (Honours) program;
b. For an 80 unit Diploma completed at the University of Newcastle, up to 80 units of credit may be granted into a Bachelor or Bachelor (Honours) program; or
c. For a 40 unit Graduate Certificate completed at the University of Newcastle, up to 40 units of credit may be granted into an associated Graduate Diploma or Masters program.

Credit Limits and Currency

(13) Credit may be granted for any past studies, regardless of the currency of the studies, unless the program specifies a currency limit in the Program Based Credit Limits and Currency.

(14) The Program Based Credit Limits and Currency will be used to:

a. Apply a credit currency limit for past studies that varies from the standard set in clause 13.
b. Limit the maximum credit that can be granted for non-University of Newcastle studies or completed University of Newcastle qualifications, to vary from the standard set in clauses 10-12; or
c. Limit or prevent the granting of credit for core or compulsory courses.

(15) Approval of credit limits and currency requirements will be subject to evidence of a requirement for currency of knowledge or skill, or where necessary for professional accreditation requirements. Currency requirements must be aligned with the maximum time to the complete the program.

(16) Amendments to the Program Based Credit Limits and Currency must be submitted and approved as a major program revision in accordance with the Program Design and Management Manual.

Considerations

(17) When making a decision relating to the outcome of an application for credit or recognition of prior learning, the Program Convenor must:

a. determine that the previous knowledge and skills of an applicant is current;
b. make their determination in line with the Program Based Credit Limits and Currency;
c. be satisfied that the granting of credit or recognition of prior learning will not disadvantage the student, and that the student's ability to achieve the program learning outcomes will not be impacted;
d. ensure that the integrity of the program and qualification are maintained;
e. be satisfied that the prior learning demonstrates that the course learning outcomes for the course(s) for which credit is being sought have been met;
f. in the case of credit for formal learning, be satisfied that the prior learning assessment approaches, volume of learning, and program of study are comparable or equivalent to the relevant course(s) for which credit is being sought;
g. consider any accreditation requirements that may limit or prevent credit being granted;
h. ensure maximum credit for prior learning is in line with the maximum credit listed in the relevant Awards and Program Schedules 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.

(18) Decisions relating to the outcome of an application for credit or recognition of prior learning must be made in accordance with the Recognition of Formal Learning Procedure and Recognition of Informal and Non-Formal Learning Procedure.

(19) International students studying at the University of Newcastle under an articulation arrangement (refer to Section 4 of this policy) must complete all remaining courses at the University of Newcastle.

Section 3 - Credit Outcomes

(20) The possible outcomes of an application for credit or recognition of prior learning are:

a. if the content is relevant and the learning outcomes are achieved, credit will be granted; or
b. if the content is not relevant or the learning outcomes are not achieved, credit is not granted.

(21) Further evidence may be requested from the student to enable a final determination (refer to the Application and Supporting Documentation sections of the Recognition of Formal Learning Procedure and the Recognition of Informal and Non-formal Learning Procedure).

(22) For an application seeking recognition of prior learning for a placement component in a Career-ready Placement course, where course learning outcomes have not been met, see the Student Placement Sourcing Procedure.

Specified Credit

(23) Specified credit may be granted:

a. on the basis of successful completion of a specific course or courses where the learning outcomes are equivalent and there is substantial overlap of content; or
b. where the student provides evidence of relevant informal learning or non-formal learning that demonstrates that the student meets the learning outcomes.

(24) Where specified or unspecified credit is granted, this decision may be used as a precedent to grant credit in equivalent circumstances. This precedent may be used for three years from the date of the original approval. The Program Convenor may determine that a decision should not be used as a precedent.

Unspecified Credit

(25) Unspecified credit may be granted:

a. on the basis of successful completion of a specific course or courses deemed to be at an appropriate level; or
b. for Informal learning or non-formal learning.

(26) Unspecified credit will be applied to courses on a course list, or electives.

Block Credit

(27) Block credit may be granted to enable students to start at an advanced point in a program (for instance, to allow students to commence in second year). Block credit can be granted as specified credit, unspecified credit, or a combination of both specified and unspecified credits.

Rescinding Credit

(28) The University reserves the right to rescind credit where:

a. an error has been made;
b. where the documentation provided by the applicant is found to be incomplete, inaccurate or false; or
c. the student has over-enrolled.

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

(30) An international student studying on a student visa must seek permission from the Academic Division General Manager and Academic Registrar to rescind credit. The request may be denied if the request will impact on the student's visa.

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

Section 4 - Credit Transfer and Articulation

Arrangements

Principles

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

(33) As part of formal articulation arrangements, the University may consider the completion of units of study at the education provider, and the credit for these units may be transferred upon determination of equivalency of content. These arrangements are known as credit transfers.

(34) The relevant Chair of College Board or Chair of Pathways and Academic Learning Support Centre 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, in accordance with delegations of authority (see Delegations Register).

(35) All credit transfer and articulation agreements must be developed following the AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy (Australian Qualifications Framework – Qualifications Pathways Policy January 2013, section 2.1.10) 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 240 unit Bachelor Degree or a 320 unit Bachelor or Bachelor (Honours) Degree; or
b. up to a maximum of 80 units credit for a completed AQF level 5 qualification into a 240 unit Bachelor Degree or 320 unit Bachelor or Bachelor (Honours) Degree.

Revision and Expiry

(36) 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.

(37) 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.

Reporting

(38) The College Pro Vice-Chancellor or Director, Pathways and Academic Learning Support Centre will report to Academic Senate via College Board/Pathways and Academic Learning Support Centre Board on program articulation arrangements within their College.

(39) The progression of students admitted with credit or on an articulation arrangement will be monitored to compare their performance against students admitted without credit, and will be reported annually to the Academic Senate by the College Board or Pathways and Academic Learning Support Centre Board.

(40) The College Board or Pathways and Academic Learning Support Centre Board will provide an annual report to the Academic Senate of all active articulation arrangements.

Section 5 - Record Keeping

(41) Credit granted by the University in accordance with this policy will be recorded on the student's official academic record.

(42) Records relating to the application for and granting of credit must be managed in accordance with the Records & Information Management Policy.

Section 6 - Appeals

(43) An appeal of a decision concerning a credit application must be made within five working days of notice of the determination of credit.

(44) Appeals must be made and determined in accordance with the Academic Appeals Policy.

(45) Appeal Officers in the context of this Policy are:

Original Decision Maker	Appeal Officer
Global staff	Director, Future Students International
Student Central staff / Pathways and Academic Learning Support Centre staff / Course Co-ordinator / Program Convenor / Associate Dean (Education)	Relevant College Pro Vice-Chancellor, Head of Domestic Programs (PALSC)
Relevant College Pro Vice-Chancellor	Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Global)

Section 7 - Relaxing Provision

(46) To provide for exceptional circumstances arising in any case, the President Academic Senate on the recommendation of a College Pro Vice-Chancellor, may relax a provision of this Policy provided that the relaxation:

a. does not compromise compliance with external obligations (including but not limited to contractual, legislative or accreditation requirements);
b. does not override a decision made under a formal delegation of authority;
c. does not replace a decision that is subject to a formal delegation of authority; and
d. gives due consideration to the principles of procedural fairness.

Section 8 - Reporting

(47) The Academic Division General Manager and Academic Registrar will report annually to Academic Senate through the Teaching and Learning Committee on the number and outcomes of applications made for credit under this policy and its procedures.

Section 9 - Appendices

(48) Program-Based Credit Limits and Currency

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	12th November 2025
Review Date	22nd February 2027
Approval Authority	President Academic Senate
Approval Date	11th November 2025
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Belinda Yourn Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Global)
Enquiries Contact	John Radvan Senior Manager, Academic Governance & Compliance 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.

"Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)" - Means an assessment of an individual’s prior learning to determine where credit will be granted. RPL includes formal, informal, and non-formal learning.

"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.

"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.

"formal learning" - Learning that takes place through a structured program of learning that leads to full or partial achievement of an officially accredited qualification, course, or program.

"Informal learning" - Learning gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time, or learning support.

"non-formal learning" - Learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to an officially accredited qualification.