

## CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

### 1. Overview

Granting credit for prior learning ensures that students commence study at a level that appropriately recognises their prior learning experiences, be they formal or informal, and are not required to repeat equivalent learning successfully undertaken in another context.

Astra Institute of Higher Education ("ASTRA" or "the Institute") is committed to develop open and accessible guidelines to grant credit towards a course of study based on prior learning, whether from formal studies or informal learning and professional work experience.

The recognition of professional work experience acknowledges that informal learning affords students opportunities to have gained the necessary professional knowledge, skills, and attitude to personal development to succeed in formal learning.

This policy is designed to both maximise the credit students can gain for learning already undertaken and preserve the integrity of learning outcomes or discipline requirements of the award to which it applies.

This policy incorporates the best practice principles outlined in the *AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy*<sup>1</sup>.

The Institute's policy on granting credit for prior learning will:

- i. be evidence based, clear, equitable, accessible and transparent;
- ii. be applied consistently and fairly with decisions subject to review;
- iii. recognise prior learning regardless of how, when and where it was acquired, provided that the prior learning is relevant and current and has a relationship to the learning outcomes of the course and/or unit;
- iv. be academically defensible and account for students' chances of success in a course;
- v. ensure students will not be disadvantaged in achieving a course's expected learning outcomes;
- vi. ensure the integrity of the course and resulting qualification are maintained;
- vii. be decided in a timely way;
- viii. ensure that pathways into and between courses are available to all students by furthering articulation pathways with other higher education and vocational training providers and facilitating transfer between courses at the Institute; and
- ix. be formally documented for the student including any reasons for not granting credit.

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<sup>1</sup> As set out in the Australian Qualifications Framework Handbook – January 2013.

## 2. Granting credit

### 2.1 General principles

The following general principles will apply to granting credit:

- i. Entry to the Institute's courses is based on specific published entry criteria and decisions regarding student selection will be in accordance with the *Student Selection and Admissions Policy and Procedure*.
- ii. An offer of credit does not guarantee admission into a course.
- iii. Credit used for admission to a course cannot also be awarded towards course completion.
- iv. The assessment of the amount of credit to be granted in specific courses shall be determined by the Course Coordinator in accordance with this policy.
- v. The Teaching and Learning Committee will periodically audit decisions made under this policy for fairness and equity and will make recommendations for improvement as appropriate.
- vi. Credit for prior learning external to the Institute can be given in the form of block, specified, or unspecified credit and will not contribute towards a student's Grade Point Average in the course.

### 2.2 Limits on granting credit

The following limits will apply to granting credit:

- i. The benchmarks for the quantum of credit normally granted to students towards higher level AQF qualifications in the same or related discipline are as follows:
  - a. 50% credit for an Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree linked to a 3-year Bachelor Degree.
  - b. 37.5% credit for an Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree linked to a 4-year Bachelor Degree.
  - c. 33% credit for a Diploma linked to a 3-year Bachelor Degree.
  - d. 25% credit for a Diploma linked to a 4-year Bachelor Degree.
- ii. The total credit granted for prior learning external to the Institute shall not exceed 50% of the total credit points required for the course.
- iii. No more than 25% credit will be granted for learning from relevant and documented work experience.

Students may not be eligible for professional accreditation with external awarding bodies when credit for prior learning has been granted for units that are professionally accredited.

## 2.3 Credit for formal learning

The following principles will apply to granting credit for formal prior learning external to the Institute:

- i. Credit will not normally be granted for formal study completed more than 10-years prior to application unless there is evidence of continued relevance of the prior learning.
- ii. Credit may be granted for the successful completion of:
  - a. individual units which form part of an accredited course provided by a recognised higher education provider;
  - b. non-award courses offered by a recognised higher education provider;
  - c. accredited courses at AQF Level 5 and above offered by a registered vocational training provider;
  - d. professional development or professional recognition courses provided by a professional association or other similar body; or
  - e. training delivered by employers or other similar training.
- iii. Credit shall be granted on the basis of equivalence of learning outcomes of the prior formal learning and the learning outcomes for the unit(s) for which credit is claimed.
- iv. When assessing credit for formal studies the following will be accounted for:
  - a. The general educational practices and standards of the provider(s) or any accreditation obtained by such provider that may be relevant to the course under consideration.
  - b. The objectives of the specific course and the methods adopted to achieve those objectives.
  - c. The admission requirements to the course.
  - d. The duration of the course, having regard to entry requirements and course objectives.
  - e. The breadth, depth and balance in the course material involved and the intellectual effort required.
  - f. The methods of assessment.
  - g. The relative emphasis on the teaching of skills in relation to the study of the discipline.
  - h. Any arrangements for practical training and experience as part of the course.

## 2.4 Credit for informal learning and work experience

The following principles will apply to granting credit for informal prior learning and work experience undertaken external to the Institute:

- i. Credit will not normally be granted for informal prior learning and work experience completed more than 5-years prior to application unless there is evidence of continued relevance of the prior learning.
- ii. Credit for informal learning and work experience will normally be considered for credit towards courses at AQF Level 8 and below.
- iii. Professional knowledge, skills, and experience must be current and relevant to the course and/or unit(s) for which recognition of informal prior learning and work experience is being granted.
- iv. Credit may be granted for work experience where that learning can be documented to the satisfaction of the Course Coordinator. The onus shall be on the applicant to provide appropriate evidence or demonstrate the relevant skills, knowledge and understanding.
- v. The maximum credit that can be granted for informal prior learning and work experience is 25% of the total credit points required for the course toward which credit is sought.
- vi. Applications for informal prior learning and work experience will normally be accompanied by a portfolio of evidence including, and not limited to, the following:
  - a. A current curriculum vitae, with details of the applicant's employment history including duration and level of appointments, and summaries of responsibilities.
  - b. Certified copies of statements from employers confirming the applicant's employment history.
  - c. Examples of work produced, including any publications.
  - d. In the case of self-employment, a copy the ABN registration and a statutory declaration confirming the nature of the business and duration of self-employment in the business.
  - e. Evidence of any professional development activities or leadership roles at the community, state or national level.
  - f. Self-assessment or critical reflection of the professional knowledge and skills gained and how these contribute towards the relevant Course and Unit Learning Outcomes.
  - g. A learning and development plan identifying professional and personal learning needs and areas where additional formal learning is required to achieve all the relevant Course and Unit Learning Outcomes, and Graduate Attributes.

- h. Other written evidence as requested.
- vii. In addition to supplying a portfolio of evidence, applicants for credit for informal prior learning and work experience may:
  - a. be required to participate in an interview;
  - b. complete a challenge assessment task to validate their achievement of the relevant Course and Unit Learning Outcomes; or
  - c. provide contact details for referees who can speak to the applicants' professional knowledge and skills.

### **2.5 Internal credit transfer between courses**

The following principles will apply to internal credit transfer formal learning undertaken at the Institute:

- i. Credit granted for formal prior learning external to the Institute for one course will not automatically transfer to another course when a student transfers between courses within the Institute.
- ii. Internal credit transfer will be granted when a student has completed units while undertaking a course with the Institute and wishes to transfer to another course within the Institute and the units already completed form part of the course into which the student is transferring.
- iii. When granting internal credit transfer the marks and grades for all transferred units will also be transferred and these will contribute towards a student's Grade Point Average in the course into which the student is transferring.
- iv. There is no maximum on the amount of internal credit transfer credit that can be granted.

## **3. Applications**

An application for credit whether from formal studies or informal learning and professional work experience must be made on the appropriate form, preferably at the time of application for admission to a course. The application should be accompanied by sufficient documentary evidence to support the application.

Assessment of the application will be undertaken by the Course Coordinator who will advise the applicant in writing of the result of their application within 20 working days. Students will be given an opportunity to accept the offer of credit in writing. A record of any credit granted (including any reasons for not giving credit) and its acceptance will be maintained on the student's file.

It is the intention of this policy that students should be advised of the credit that is offered at the time they accept a place in a course.

#### **4. International students applying for credit**

The following principles will apply when the applicant is an international student applying for a study visa:

- i. Where credit is granted before the issue of a visa, the actual course duration in the CoE issued to the student will be reduced by the equivalent amount of the credit granted.
- ii. Where credit is granted after the issue of a visa, the Institute will report the change of course duration via PRISMS.

If an international student is granted credit that shortens their course, it remains a visa condition that they continue to study full-time.

International students will be provided with a written record of the decision to enable the student to accept the offer of credit once their visa has been granted. The written record of acceptance will be retained for at least two years after the international student ceases to be an accepted student.

#### **5. Articulation arrangements with other providers**

The Institute will systematically negotiate agreements with other tertiary education providers to maximise the credit available to eligible students for entry into the Institute's courses where appropriate. These agreements will provide graduates of specific courses offered by recognised providers of tertiary education agreed levels of credit for nominated units which form part of a course offered by the Institute.

When negotiating articulation agreements with other providers the Institute will take into account the comparability and equivalence of the articulating Institute's course, notably:

- i. the Course and Unit Learning Outcomes;
- ii. the volume of learning;
- iii. the content; and
- iv. learning and assessment approaches.

In order to assess the quantum of credit which may be awarded, the Institute will map the specified Course and Unit Learning Outcomes of the external provider against the Course and Unit Learning Outcomes within the relevant Institute course.

Credit will be granted in accordance with all the principles detailed in this policy.

The existence of a credit agreement does not preclude an individual student applying for additional credit under this policy.

The Academic Board will approve all articulation arrangements after evidence of the mapping of the learning outcomes of the external course against the Institute course underpinning the proposed credit arrangements has been considered.

Once approved by the Academic Board the articulation arrangement will be set out in a formal credit agreement, signed by both parties and recorded in a register of approved articulation agreements.

The Institute will make publicly available details of all current credit agreements in accordance with the *AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy*.

## 6. Review of decision

A student may request a Review of Decision on the granting of credit. The grounds for a review are that the decision is inconsistent with this policy. Requests for a review must be made in writing and lodged with the Dean within 10 working days of the student receiving written notification of the decision. The Dean will respond to the request within twenty working days and may confirm or vary the decision. All decisions of the Dean in relation to reviews under this policy will be reported to the Teaching and Learning Committee.

If a student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their request for Review of Decision regarding the granting of credit, they may lodge a formal grievance in writing to the Registrar: [registrar@astra.edu.au](mailto:registrar@astra.edu.au) within 20 working days, in accordance with the Institute’s *Student Grievance Handling Policy and Procedure*.

## 7. Definitions

Term	Definition
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework.
Block Credit	A form of credit granted towards multiple whole components of a course. Block credit reduces the amount of learning required to be undertaken to complete the requirements for a course.
Course	A structured sequence of study leading to the award of a degree, or other recognized qualification, which when successfully completed is conferred on the graduand by the Board of Directors of Astra Institute of Higher Education.

<i>Credit</i>	The credit point value granted for the recognition of equivalence in learning outcomes between different types of learning and/or qualifications and courses. Credit reduces the amount of learning required to be undertaken to complete the requirements for a course.
<i>Formal learning</i>	Learning that takes place through a structured program that leads to the full or partial attainment of a course.
<i>Informal learning</i>	Learning gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. Unlike formal learning, informal learning is not organised or externally structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support.
<i>(the) Institute</i>	Astra Institute of Higher Education.
<i>Internal credit transfer</i>	The process by which a student's progress in one course at the Institute, including marks and grades, is transferred to another course at the Institute. Internal credit transfer reduces the amount of learning required to be undertaken to complete the requirements for a course.
<i>International student</i>	A holder of a student visa, who is not a citizen of Australia or New Zealand, or who is not an Australian permanent resident, or who is a temporary resident of Australia.
<i>Qualification</i>	Includes degrees, diplomas, certificates, professional titles and professional standing that an individual acquires through recognised study or experience. Also includes the outcomes of an assessment and validation process obtained when an accredited authority determines that an individual has achieved relevant learning outcomes to given standards and/or processes the necessary competence in a specific area(s) of study.
<i>Specified credit</i>	A form of credit granted towards specific identified components of a course. Specified credit reduces the amount of learning required to be undertaken to complete the requirements for a course.
<i>Unit</i>	A unit of study in a higher education course or a unit of study, module and/or unit of competency in a vocational education and training course.
<i>Unspecified credit</i>	A form of credit granted towards non-specific components of a course. Unspecified credit reduces the amount of learning required to be undertaken to complete the requirements for a course.



## 8. Related documents

- Student Grievance Handling Policy and Procedure
- Student Selection and Admissions Policy and Procedure

## 9. Version history

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Details
1.0	Academic Board	12 October 2021	Document creation
1.1	Academic Board	12 July 2022	Addition of 'Appendix 1: Procedures for assessing an applicant's credit for prior learning'
1.2	Academic Board	31 May 2023	Amendments to '2.2 Limits on granting credit'
1.3	Academic Board	29 June 2023	Amendments to '6. Review of decision'

Document owner: Dean

Listed: Public document

## Appendix 1: Procedures for assessing an applicant's credit for prior learning

### Course Coordinator

#### Completed Application Form and associated documentation are received

Includes:

- Completed *Application For Credit For Prior Learning*
- Cover/application letter outlining what the student is applying for and the evidence they are using
- Relevant supporting documentation
- Certified copies of Diplomas/Certificates and Official Transcripts

### Course Coordinator

#### Assessment of application

- Check application and supporting documentation is complete
  - Request any documentation outstanding from applicant
- When application is deemed complete ...
- Confirm any credit for prior learning already granted to the student
  - Assess application against requirements as specified
  - Verify documentation where appropriate
  - Grant credit in accordance with specified limits for course Level
  - Advise the student of the outcome and invite them to accept
  - Record outcome on the student's record in the Student Management System

### Dean

#### Review of decision

- Review original decision of the Course Coordinator for consistency with Policy
- Confirm or vary original decision as warranted
- Advise student of outcome and invite them to utilise the *Student Grievance Handling Policy and Procedure* as appropriate
- Report review decision to the Teaching and Learning Committee