# Internal Guidelines on the Application of RPL Policy

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| Policy Code | AP016G |
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| 2024.05 | Deputy President | 8 April 2024 | 8 April 2024 |

## 1. PURPOSE

The guidelines should be used by administrative staff in determining, in non-complex cases, the amount of prior learning to be recognised at enrolment for an applicant to an Institute course. Discipline leaders will also use the guidelines in complex cases to approve an amount of prior learning to be granted at enrolment for an applicant to an Institute course. In the interests of process transparency, the guidelines are available to all applicants, agents, intending applicants and others interested in the means by which prior learning is recognised and advanced standing awarded in Institute courses.

## 2. PRINCIPLES

The fundamental principle that guides the granting of advanced standing by the recognition of prior learning is as follows:

*Prior learning recognised in combination with the remaining course of Institute study must provide the enrolled student with an opportunity to demonstrate adequate competency in all course learning outcomes.*

It follows that the *integrity of an award* is impaired if an enrolled student is granted too much advanced standing through the recognition of RPL to the point that it is not possible for that student to demonstrate competency in all the learning outcomes of the course.

The integrity of an award is related to the *volume of learning* at the specified award level. The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) identifies and classifies all awards that registered education providers can issue. The AQF provides broad descriptors of the levels of knowledge and skills and the expected volume of learning at each award level. The integrity of an award is undermined if the recognition of prior learning reduces the volume of learning to the point where the level of knowledge and skill achievable in the remaining portion of the course combined with prior learning does not meet AQF expectations.

## 3. SCOPE

The guidelines apply to all applications made for the recognition of prior learning to all undergraduate or postgraduate courses that lead to an award issued by the Institute whether in Australia or overseas or issued under a third party arrangement.

### 4. DEFINITIONS

Definitions contained in *AP016 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy* apply to the Guidelines, and AP016 must be used in conjunction with the guidelines in determining the amount of prior learning to be recognised at enrolment.

### 5. GUIDELINES FOR RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

a)  Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) means that a student is granted credit towards a qualification in recognition of the skills and knowledge gained through work experience, life experience, informal training and formal education. This effectively means the student will be exempt from completing specific units within a course.

b)  RPL will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis on the merits of the case put forward by the student. Educational judgments concerning the equivalence of learning outcomes are based on the discipline context, content, standards and assessment in the program or course the applicant has undertaken. Critical considerations for decisions are that the integrity of the Institute's courses is upheld and that students can complete their courses with no disadvantage in achieving learning outcomes.

c)  *Specified credit* for RPL may be granted on successful completion of prior learning in relevant disciplines to achieve learning outcomes that are substantially equivalent to the Institute's comparable unit(s) or nested course(s).

d)  *Unspecified credit* may be granted where prior learning is regarded as consistent with the broad learning outcomes of units or the course being undertaken. Unspecified credit must be restricted to non-core components of a course.

e)  *Block credit* may be provided when a sequence of units undertaken at another institution is deemed sufficiently equivalent to the content and learning outcomes of a sequence of units at the Institute.

f)  The maximum credit granted in recognition of prior learning achieved in an <u>incomplete course</u> is 67% per cent of the total credit points of an Institute course. The maximum credit granted in recognition of prior learning achieved in a <u>completed course,</u> which does not substantially match any Institute nested course, is 67% per cent of the total credit points of the Institute course. Where recognition of prior learning exceeds 50% of a course, up to the maximum of 67%, special provisions contained in *AP052 Recognition of Prior Learning of more than 50% of a Course* apply, including approval from an academic discipline leader or Deputy President (Education).

g)  A special case applies where a completed course or another institution substantially matches the learning outcomes of an Institute course that is a nested course within a higher-level course. In this case, full credit is awarded for the course completed at the other institution. This special case typically applies to recognising a Master of Professional Accounting (or similarly named) course completed at another institution into the Institute's Master of Professional Accounting Services. In this case, full recognition of the MPA from another institution is appropriate because all externally accredited MPAs comply with the learning outcomes required by the professional accounting bodies and are substantially the same course across Australian institutions.

h) Where the Institute has an *articulation agreement* with another institution, the articulation agreement will state the applicable RPL arrangements. Notwithstanding anything stated in the agreement, the recognition of RPL for a student enrolled in an Institute course must be awarded in accordance with Institute RPL policy, procedures and guidelines.

i) AQF level 5 and 6 awards will be recognised as such without distinguishing whether they are obtained from a university, higher education provider, or VET provider (see Appendix B).

j) Prior learning completed within the last five years will generally be considered current learning to assess RPL. Exceptions to the five years may be approved in individual cases by the discipline leader or Deputy President (Education) (or authorised delegate).

## 6. APPLYING FOR RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

a) Students must apply for RPL by the census date of each teaching period concerning granting credit in the same teaching period. An extension may be approved by the Deputy President (Education) (or authorised delegate) in individual cases.

b) Prospective students who want to apply for RPL must indicate this intent on the Student Application Form and complete the Recognition of Prior Learning Form. These forms must be completed in full and then submitted to the Admissions Office with the following supporting documents:

   i. A certified copy of the academic transcript or a completion letter, or an equivalent document. While students may submit electronic copies of supporting documents to facilitate enrolment, credit for RPL cannot be granted without sighting original documents or certified copies.

   ii. A detailed, official unit outline for each unit in which credit is sought. The unit outline must show the:

   - unit details (institution details, unit name and number);
   - semester/year of study;
   - contact hours per week;
   - expected learning outcomes:
   - coverage of the unit, topics discussed each week;
   - assessment structure; and
   - reference and reading materials, including textbooks.

   Note: a unit outline is not required for an RPL application for a unit of the same name at the same AQF level if the unit is accredited by a professional body or a statutory body as meeting that professional or statutory body's required learning outcomes. A unit outline is not necessary if the unit can be found in the list of accredited courses provided by CPAA or CAANZ.

c) Where an applicant seeks credit for prior learning for a course or unit completed at the Institute to meet another Institute course requirement, the Admissions Office may process the application without the supporting documents specified above.

d) Where considered necessary, an interview conducted by the relevant discipline leader or Deputy President (or an authorised delegate) will be held with the student to clarify aspects of prior learning.

e) Supporting documents and evidence of studies taken overseas in a language other than English must be accompanied by a translation from a National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) qualified person or agency. Such a person or agency must be accredited to at least 'translator' status. All translated documents must display the official NAATI stamp.

f) Prospective students shall be informed of the results of their RPL applications in the Offer Letter and, where necessary, fees adjusted accordingly. Students will also be notified in writing of the outcome of their RPL application within three weeks of formally applying. Any conditions of the RPL approval shall be stated in the Offer Letter. In the case of international students, a Confirmation of Enrolment shall be issued subject to the consideration and approval of any RPL application.

g) Any credit granted for RPL shall be recorded in the student data system as part of the applicant's study progression. Records of Results documentation will show credit granted through RPL.

h) When an error has been made in assessing an application or where the documentation provided by the applicant is incomplete, misleading, false or invalid, the Institute reserves the right to withdraw RPL credit.

i) If the Institute grants an overseas student RPL or course credit that reduces the overseas student's course length, The Admission office must:

   i. inform the student of the reduced course duration following granting of RPL and ensure the confirmation of enrolment (CoE) is issued only for the reduced duration of the course; and

   ii. report any change in course duration in PRISMS if RPL or course credit is granted after the overseas student's visa is granted.

7. Refer to *Appendix C: General Processes of RPL Application* for step-by-step guidance on processing applications for RPL.**RELATED DOCUMENTS**

*AP016 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy*
*AP016 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Procedure*
*AP052 Recognition of Prior Learning of more than 50% of a Course*
*Recognition of Prior Learning Form*

**Version Control**

| Historical Version | Approved by | Approval Date |
|---|---|---|
| 2019.11. | Admissions | 16 November 2019 |
| 2024.04 | Provost | 17 May 2021 |

## Appendix A

### RPL Internal Practices Confirmed by the Provost in Response to Specific Issues

*Issue: Unit Outlines: To what extent can the RPL assessment team waive unit outline requirements when students use overseas qualifications for RPL assessment? For example, other universities have granted RPL without a unit outline requirement. It is then quite difficult for us to ask students to provide unit outlines when requesting an RPL transfer.*

**Provost Response: For units with clear titles (e.g. Accounting Principles, Macroeconomics, Corporate Finance) unit outlines are not essential. With complex or unclear unit titles, unit outlines are needed.**

*Issue: Benchmarking: Our RPL assessments should be based on source documents, and we do not rely on any other institution's assessment of the amount of RPL to award. We must have the source documents behind another institution's assessment to make our own assessment. Being a Go8 makes no difference. Is that correct?*

**Provost Response: We can certainly take into account what universities are doing with respect to offering RPL in situations where we are not matching the same level of RPL. However, we cannot go beyond the scope of our Policy and approved Guidelines. The benchmark comparisons may give us fresh insight into the right level of RPL and specific credits, and we may change our initial assessment, but not go beyond our own rules. If you do notice a systematic problem with our rules and guidelines, then we can re-examine them.**

**However, we did examine them last year, and we noticed that some universities are offering unjustifiable levels of RPL. We cannot match that, of course.**

*Issue: VET awards: We have more students using their VET Advanced Diploma degree to apply for credit in our undergraduate courses. Shall we design an internal practice guide for this kind of student?*

**Provost Response: Our present guidelines approved by CAC extend RPL to 50% of the comparable award at the Institute. So a completed Diploma (1.0 years) can get up to 4 Institute units credit/exemptions made up of specified and unspecified credits (with unspecified credits being against electives). An Advanced Diploma (1.5 years) can get up to 6 Institute units credit/exemptions made up of specific units and unspecified electives.**

**As for making a pre-determination for specific awards such as Diploma in Accounting or Diploma in Business, we found that to be an impossible task as some Diplomas have electives, so we cannot be sure what each Diploma contains until we look at the transcript. All students are different.**

*Issue: TTEC602: Will the students who complete the Master of Commerce at USYD with completed units in big data or similar get exemption from TTEC602 Big Data in Business?*

**Provost Response: To get RPL toward the IT competency area for both PG and UG courses, units like Big Data, Data Analytics and Data Science will count. It does not**

**have to be exactly the same as our unit but have enough IT in it to justify giving RPL toward this competency area.**

*Issue: Credit for a unit in another course: If a student completes the MBA (12-unit) course, can units completed in that course be credited toward the completion of a specialised MBA, such as the MBA (Fintech Management)? Does an RPL limit apply?*

**Deputy President (Management) (formerly Provost) response:  Units completed in an award course can be credited to those same units in another award course without reference to any maximum RPL. However, units completed in an award course cannot be used as unspecified credit toward electives in another course. This means that the only permissible cross-crediting is where the IMC unit code and unit name match across the two award courses.**

***Note: Further additions to Appendix B will be made as new situations arise and guidance issued.***