

# RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

## PART A - POLICY

### 1. Introduction

Australian Catholic University (ACU National) supports an approach which values all learning, however achieved, through an open and transparent approach to assessment. It acknowledges that learning may be achieved through either non-formal or informal pathways, and that provision should exist for recognition of these. Accordingly, this policy for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) provides for:

- opportunities for non-formal and informal learning to be recognised for purposes of entry to a course or obtaining credit towards an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification;
- recognition of diverse and inclusive pathways to lifelong learning;
- assuring the quality, integrity and standing of ACU National qualifications.

### 2. Definitions

In this policy and procedures the following meanings apply:

**RPL:** An assessment process for recognizing relevant non-formal and informal learning by collecting evidence and making judgments on the extent to which an individual has achieved the required learning outcomes, competency outcomes or standards for entry to and/or partial or total completion of a qualification.

**Assessment:** A process that identifies the purpose and the evidence required, provides a range of ways for students to demonstrate that they have achieved the required outcomes, makes judgments based on the evidence provided and records and reports the assessment findings.

**Formal Learning:** The attainment of formal qualifications or part thereof for study undertaken at an accredited education provider within the Australian Qualifications Framework.

**Non-Formal learning:** Relevant skills, knowledge or competencies that have been acquired through non-accredited study with a provider other than a university or accredited education provider. It includes education or training provided through employer-based programs and professional bodies.

**Informal Learning:** Learning acquired in an informal context, such as through work and/or life experiences.

**Learning or competency outcomes:** A learning or competency outcome that a learner should know and/or be able to do as a result of being involved in a learning process. The learning should indicate a conceptual as well as a practical grasp of the knowledge or competency required and be applicable outside the environment in which it was acquired.

### 3. Applicability of Academic Regulations

This policy and procedures will be applied subject to the Academic Regulations.

#### **4. Purposes for which RPL may be used**

RPL may be used:

- (a) to gain entry to a course or qualification, as an alternative to having undertaken and completed the prerequisites for entry based on formal education and training; and/or
- (b) to gain credit towards a course or qualification.

It is necessary to compare the non-formal or informal learning the individual has achieved against the learning outcomes or performance criteria required for:

- (a) entry to a course or qualification; and/or
- (b) credit to be granted for partial or full completion of requirements for a course or qualification.

#### **5. Availability of advice on RPL**

- 5.1 Heads of School will nominate a member/s of academic staff such as a Course Coordinator (hereafter referred to as the RPL Advisor) to provide applicants with advice on RPL processes and the formulation of their application.
- 5.2 The specific responsibilities of the RPL Advisor in this regard are to:
  - (a) assist applicants to understand the RPL assessment process;
  - (b) assist applicants to reflect on and identify the learning or competency outcomes associated with their experience and identify areas where claims might be formulated;
  - (c) assist applicants to identify the relevant units/course/qualification most suited to their needs;
  - (d) following preliminary assessment, provide advice on the learning or competency outcomes against which students will be assessed;
  - (e) advise on gathering valid, current, sufficient and reliable evidence, the authentication required and the format of applications;
  - (f) provide information about the administrative procedures for receiving RPL applications, administering assessment, fees, recording RPL assessment outcomes and advising students regarding such decisions and appeal processes.
- 5.3 An applicant may be provided with an initial consultation of up to one hour to assist in the preparation of an application. If the consultation needs to be extended, this will attract an hourly charge.

## **6. Principles for assessment of applications for RPL**

- 6.1 Assessment for RPL will:
- (a) be evidence- and outcome-based
  - (b) be equitable, culturally inclusive, transparent and accountable
  - (c) involve assessment processes of a comparable standard and integrity to those used to assess the relevant unit/course/qualification
  - (d) be subject to quality assurance practices comparable to other assessment practices within the University.
- 6.2 The processes for RPL are designed to:
- (a) identify what the applicant knows and can do;
  - (b) match the applicant's skills, knowledge and experiences to specific professional requirements and unit/course/qualification and learning and competency outcomes;
  - (c) assess the applicant's attainments against those requirements and outcomes;
  - (d) where appropriate, credit the applicant for their skills, knowledge, understanding and experience;
  - (e) record the outcome; and
  - (f) provide advice of the outcome to the applicant and other relevant persons.
- 6.3 The criteria to be employed when assessing prior non-formal or informal learning will ensure that consistent standards are maintained across the University.
- 6.4 If credit is granted on the basis of RPL, it may take the form of specified credit, block credit or unspecified credit, in accordance with the Academic Regulations.
- 6.5 Eligibility for credit does not guarantee a place in any course for which credit may be granted.

## **7. Time limit**

Unless the Head of School otherwise approves on the basis of evidence of subsequent development and life or work experience in the discipline, credit granted will lapse if the program is not completed within the following timespan, calculated from the date of completion of the study or learning on the basis of which credit is granted –

- (a) for an undergraduate course, one year more than twice the minimum duration of the course; or
- (b) for a postgraduate course, four times the minimum duration of the course.

## PART B – PROCEDURES

### 8. Applications for RPL – format and timing

8.1 Applications for entry/admission that involve consideration of RPL should be submitted in accordance with standard procedures applicable to that particular course and mode of entry. Further information is available from the website <http://www.acu.edu.au/courses/>

8.2 Applications for RPL for credit purposes, lodged after admission, should be submitted in accordance with standard procedures (see <http://my.acu.edu.au>).

8.3 All applications for RPL, whether for entry or credit purposes, must be supported by relevant documentary evidence (see section 8 below).

8.4 Applications for RPL for credit purposes should be submitted as early as possible and normally at least 4 weeks before commencement of any semester\*.

\* Note: If applications are received later than this, students may not know the outcome of the decision before commencement of the semester.

In any event, applications for RPL for credit purposes should normally be submitted no later than the census date in the first semester of the student's enrolment in the course.

8.5 An international student seeking to apply for RPL should apply directly to the ACU National International Education Office at the time of applying for admission.

8.6 Decisions concerning international student applications will normally be made prior to the student's first enrolment at ACU National. Normally, credit, advanced standing or exemptions will not be granted after the student's first semester of enrolment. (Note: International students who are on a student visa are reminded of the necessity to maintain a full-time load in order to comply with visa conditions.)

### 9. Information to be provided in RPL application (for entry or credit purposes)

9.1 An application for RPL must include a detailed description of the learning upon which the application is based and identify the specific purpose for which RPL is sought (eg acceptance of the learning for entry purposes, or exemption from a unit or course requirement or credit towards a course).

9.2 An application should be accompanied by supporting documentation which includes material or evidence which clearly identifies the applicant's learning, indicating the knowledge, skills and experience acquired and the time at which they were acquired.

*Example: Sources of evidence and supporting documentation could include:*

- (a) *a detailed curriculum vitae and a letter of support from an appropriate person/organisation who/which can verify relevant details;*
- (b) *certificates, reports, testimonials or affidavits relating to the applicant's learning, skill or competency;*
- (c) *certified supporting statements from employers;*

- (d) *if the applicant has been self-employed, a copy of the ABN registration and a letter from an accountant or solicitor certifying the nature of the business and the period during which the applicant has been engaged in the business;*
- (e) *in the case of prior non-formal learning –*
  - (i) *a certified copy of a statement of satisfactory completion of the study offered by a professional body, enterprise, private educational institution or other provider;*
  - (ii) *a statement of the objectives, learning outcomes and content of the course;*
  - (iii) *details of the contact hours of the course;*
  - (iv) *information on the course presenter/s and their qualifications;*
- (f) *examples of the student’s work drawn from the workplace, social, community or other settings in which the student applies their learning, skill or competency;*
- (g) *reflective papers, journals, portfolio or a statement that relate/s the applicant’s prior learning to the learning or competency outcomes for which recognition is sought.*

## **10. Assessment by RPL Advisor**

- 10.1 The RPL Advisor will undertake an assessment of the application based on the current information provided in regard to the specific professional requirements and learning and competency outcomes needed for entry or for credit to be granted for the particular units/course/qualification.
- 10.2 The RPL Advisor may invite the applicant for interview and/or may seek further information from the applicant about any aspect of the application and supporting documentary evidence.
- 10.3 A student may be required to undertake an examination or practical assessment to determine the achievement of the learning or competency outcomes.

Note: Care should be taken that the examination is not tied to particular case studies which the student might not have had the opportunity to study (an alternative might be to examine the student on a case study topic agreed to by the student, or based on the student’s background); and the examination may have a scope greater than the normal final examination for the subject if aspects of the content of that subject are assessed by methods other than the final examination.

## **11. Approval of RPL to be course specific**

In any case in which eligibility for entry to or 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.

**12. Notification of RPL decision on application for entry**

Applicants will be advised of the outcome of an application for entry in accordance with standard admission processes and timelines.

**13. Notification and recording of RPL decision on the granting of credit**

13.1 The RPL Advisor will advise the applicant in writing of the decision.

13.2 In any case in which the application is not approved in some or all of its aspects, the applicant will be advised in writing of the reasons for the decision.

13.3 The decision on any application for RPL will be recorded on a student's academic record.

13.4 Decisions on RPL will be maintained in School records and notified to the Faculty (as for Credit Granted for formal learning).

**14. Appeals – applications for entry on the basis of RPL**

An applicant who is dissatisfied with a decision on an application for entry to a course based on RPL may appeal against that decision in accordance with the Policy for Appeal and Review on Administrative Matters.

**15. Appeals – applications for credit on the basis of RPL**

15.1 An applicant may ask the Head of School responsible for a course to review an RPL decision. The request must be in writing and be received within 10 working days of receipt<sup>1</sup> by the applicant of notification of the decision. A review may only be requested on grounds that the published University policy or procedures have not been observed.

15.2 The Head of School or nominee will conduct the review and in doing so may invite the applicant for interview.

15.3 The Head of School or nominee will determine the matter and will advise the applicant in writing within 20 working days of lodgement of the request for review of the decision. The advice from the Head of School will specify the

- outcome of the review;
- processes undertaken during the review; and
- reasons for the decision.

15.4 An applicant dissatisfied with the decision of the Head of School may submit a written appeal to the relevant Dean in accordance with the Academic Regulations.

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<sup>1</sup> See Academic Regulations.

Title: Policy for Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Transfer	Approved By: Academic Board
No: 6.3	Date: 15 May 2007
Officer Responsible: PVC (Academic Affairs)	Pages: 7
	Contact Officer: PVC (Academic Affairs)