

Credit Recognition

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Major changes/additions since the last version was approved are indicated by a vertical line in the left hand margin.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This policy provides a broad framework and set of principles for recognising, determining and awarding credit for relevant learning achieved prior to enrolment in a course or programme at Ara Institute of Canterbury¹.

1.2 Scope and Application

- a Students in programmes covered by the Ara academic regulations may apply for credit recognition from study completed here or at another recognised institution. They also have the right to submit evidence of having achieved the same/similar learning outcomes and/or graduate profile attributes through other experience/study (referred to as Recognition of, or Assessment of, Prior Learning).
- b Ara has no imposed limit on the number of credits that can be earned via credit recognition, however credit is granted only where there is a close, verified match between the previous learning achieved and the stated learning outcomes or graduate profile.
- c This policy applies to all assessed courses and programmes covered by the Ara academic regulations or for which Ara has been given such authority by another body.
- d This policy relates primarily to SAEER Key Evaluation Questions 3, 4, 5.

1.3 Formal Delegations

- a On 17 May 2006 the Ara Council endorsed the existing schedule of Council delegations to the Chief Executive. The delegation also includes responsibility for the operation of the Academic Board, and further empowers the Chief Executive to sub-delegate to staff members/other bodies as he/she sees fit.
- b The Academic Board Terms of Reference are updated on a regular basis and submitted to Council for ratification. The current terms of reference include the following responsibilities most relevant to this policy include:
 - i Setting academic standards, including assessment policies and procedures

¹ From herein referred to as Ara

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- ii Overseeing the establishment of programme regulations (e.g. suspension of students, withdrawal, appeals, admission, special admissions, entry, awarding of qualifications, cross credits/recognition of prior learning) and regulations for release of final marks.
- c Refer Section 3 of this policy for details related to specific responsibilities and delegations.

<p>Related Ara Procedures and Forms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APP507a Application for Credit Recognition 	<p>Related Ara Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APP504 Regulations Governing Admission, Enrolment, Withdrawals, and Non-Engagement • APP505 Assessment • APP508 Moderation
<p>Related Legislation or Other Documentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NZQA ‘Supporting Learning Pathways: Credit Recognition and Transfer Policy’ (2002) • ‘Strategic Review of Pathways and Staircasing’ working paper, TEC May 2006 	
<p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ara was one of three institutions involved in setting national standards for RPL in 1991 – 1993. The Academic Board established a RPL Working Party and produced its first policy statement on RPL in 1993. In 1994 it sponsored a pilot study to investigate the implications of RPL and adopted 15 recommendations, including the appointment of a RPL Coordinator (disestablished in 1999). • In 2002, Ara set up a branch of Otago Polytechnic’s Centre for Assessment of Prior Learning (CAPL). The CAPL Reference Group reports to the Academic Board via the Academic Procedures Committee. • The 2006 version of this policy took into account definitions and processes used by our TANZ partners, as well as NZQA papers ‘Supporting Learning Pathways: Credit Recognition and Transfer’ (December 2002). NZQA noted that the terminology used in those papers is not consistent across sectors. The underlying philosophy and recommendations, however, are consistent with practices at Ara. • The 2009 version was amended to include credit recognition via “Advanced Standing”. • 2016 – new branding 	

1.4 Definitions

- a Course: Also referred to as a paper, subject or module, it is the smallest component of tuition in which a student can normally be enrolled; it consists of defined learning outcomes and requirements and (if an assessed course), a credit value and level.
- b Programme: Also referred to as a qualification, it consists of one or more courses, usually leading to an award (certificate, diploma, degree, graduate certificate, graduate diploma), has been approved by the Academic Board (and if required by the relevant external approval/accreditation body), is described in terms of level and total credit value, and is supported by an approved Graduate Profile and set of programme regulations.
- c Target qualification: The programme to which a student wishes to have credit recognition awarded.
- d Credit recognition: Over-arching term for the process of awarding credit for a student’s previous learning/achievement towards another designated course/programme (referred to as the “target qualification”). This may occur on a case-by-case basis between providers and individuals or as a structured agreement between providers.

The five/six categories of credit recognition are credit transfer, cross credit, recognition of prior learning (RPL) assessment of prior experiential learning (APL), exemption and advanced standing. Credit recognition provisions must be detailed in each programme approval document. Refer to the definitions below and relevant sections in Section 3 of this policy.

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- i Credit transfer: Credit awarded for having successfully completed the identical course/unit standard (at Ara or another equivalent institution), prior to enrolment in the course/qualification for which credit recognition is sought.
 - ii Cross credit: Credit awarded for having successfully completed a similar course to the required standard (at Ara or another equivalent institution), prior to enrolment in the qualification for which credit recognition is sought.
 - iii Recognition of (or Assessment of) prior learning: Credit awarded after evaluation of assembled evidence of the student's relevant skills and knowledge related to all or part of a course, programme or unit standard/s for which credit recognition is sought. This evidence can be from employment or other experience and/or past study (usually gained outside a formal institution).
 - iv Advanced Standing: Candidate entry into a programme at an advanced level. Advanced standing is awarded when it is evident that a student can enter a programme at an advanced level following an assessment of prior learning or qualification equivalence.
 - v Exemption: Recognition of having successfully completed (at Ara or an equivalent institution) a substantially equivalent learning to one prescribed in the student's 'target qualification', but for which an alternative course must be completed in order to meet the overall credit requirements.
- e Graduate profile: The outline of the knowledge, skills and attributes a graduate can demonstrate as a result of achievement of the qualification.
 - f Assessment against a profile. The holistic assessment of a candidate against the graduate profile within a qualification – either in full or against the profile outlined for a specific year or specific area.
 - g CAPL: Centre for the Assessment of Prior Learning,
 - h Standard cross credit: Cross credit arrangements that already have been approved and published (on the Cross Credit Schedule in Jasper) for a particular course.
 - i Current competency: An additional step (eg an assessment, interview) that is may be required before any credit recognition is awarded. This is to ensure that the student's previously achieved learning still constitutes "competency" in the most significant/essential of the relevant learning outcomes.
 - j Pathway: Linking of qualifications across, upwards, downwards, within and between tertiary education organisations to ensure learners have access to flexible, transparent and clear learning paths [from 'Strategic Review of Pathways & Staircasing', working paper, TEC, May 2006].
 - k Staircasing: A sub-set or pathway (see above), referring specifically to upwards linking/progression from one qualification to another [from 'Strategic Review of Pathways & Staircasing', working paper, TEC, May 2006].
 - l Variation to programme: Variation to the requirements of a particular programme or course/s within a programme, approved by the Academic Board, for specified student/s in circumstances as set out in this policy (refer Section 3.7).

2 Principles

Ara is committed to the recognition of prior learning and recognises that learning may be general or specific and may be achieved in a variety of ways. The principles are that credit recognition should:

- a Eliminate duplication of learning and assessment

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- b Provide open, inclusive and integrated tertiary education systems, enabling students to transfer between institutions, both national and internationally.
- c Ensure that the quality, integrity and standing of qualifications are not diminished.

3 Associated Procedures for Ara Academic Policy on: Credit Recognition

Contents:	3.1	Credit Recognition: General provisions
	3.2	Credit Transfer: Specific provisions
	3.3	Cross Credit: Specific provisions
	3.4	Assessment of/ Recognition of Prior Learning: Specific provisions
	3.5	Advanced Standing
	3.6	Exemption
	3.7	Variation to Programme (including 'exemptions')

3.1 Credit Recognition (General Provisions)

- a Credit via the Ara credit recognition provisions can be awarded for full qualifications, for courses/modules within a qualification and for unit standards. In line with the rationale for the Centre for Assessment of Prior Learning (CAPL), the underlying philosophy of unit standards and the institute's commitment to acknowledging previous achievement, Ara does not specify a maximum percentage of the total credit value of a qualification that can be awarded via credit recognition (some national/consortium developed qualifications may do).
- b Information about credit recognition, the process for applying for it, the prescribed application fee and likely additional fees if further assessment is required, is available to students, in writing, on request. An overview of credit recognition and articulation is required as part of programme approval and is therefore subject to scrutiny by the Programme Approval Committee on behalf of the Academic Board.
- c An annual schedule of standard charges is approved by Management Team on the recommendation from the Academic Procedures Committee. This includes fees related to credit recognition.
- d Credit recognition is available only to enrolled Ara students and CAPL clients. Applications are made on the standard Application for Credit Recognition form (see attached), prior to the last withdrawal date (LWD) of the specified 'target qualification'. The school which is responsible for the delivery of the particular course for which credit recognition is sought, has the authority to approve the cross credit/credit transfer/RPL (i.e. in the case of 'service delivery' such as communications, mathematics or Māori language, the school delivering the course normally oversees credit recognition applications, not the school responsible for the 'target qualification' itself).
- e Application for credit recognition may include courses completed at Ara, another equivalent institution in New Zealand or overseas, or learning achieved by other means (Recognition of Prior Learning) (RPL).
- f Partial credit for a specified course can be awarded at the discretion of the relevant Department, but it must be made clear to the student in writing what additional work is required to obtain full credit and what the 'pro rata' course fee would be. In most cases, partial credit is an option only when the total credit awarded equates to at least half of the total credit value of that course/unit standard. Because of the educational and administrative implications of awarding partial credit, applications must be endorsed by the Dean or specified delegate.
- g Each student is responsible for providing sufficient, verified documentary evidence of previous achievement so that a decision about appropriate credit recognition can be

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made. If the course/s were completed outside Ara, an original transcript or other formal evidence must be sighted. A copy will be kept on file by the Department awarding the credit.

- h The Department (or in some cases CAPL) is responsible for determining the following and informing the student in writing of the outcome:
 - i What charge, if any, will be levied for consideration of the credit recognition application.
 - ii Whether any further evidence is required before credit is awarded (e.g., whether additional information regarding 'current competency' of one or more aspects is needed or additional assessment in an area where there was insufficient evidence of comparable learning).
 - iii Whether there is an additional charge to cover any further assessment.
 - iv Once the application has been processed, whether any credit is to be awarded and, if so, whether it is full or partial credit; also whether a grade is to be assigned.
- i The student's formal academic transcript includes a record of all credit achieved, regardless of the process used to validate that credit.
- j Reconsiderations and appeals against credit recognition decisions are handled according to the processes governing any other assessment decision (refer *APP505 Assessment Policy*).
- k Situations not covered by this policy are referred to the Academic Board, which will consider recommendations from the Department Board of Studies or Head of Department. The Academic Board has the power to vary the procedures set out in this policy if it is deemed appropriate to do so. A sub-group, operating under delegation from the Academic Board, can approve a 'variation to programme' for individual student/s, on application from the Programme Manager/Leader and Head of Department.

3.2 Credit Transfer (Specific Provisions)

- a Refer to 1.4 (Definitions) and 3.1 (General Provisions), covering all credit recognition applications.
- b The student applying for credit transfer must provide the original or certified copy of the result notice for the completed course/s, if the course/s was not completed at Ara. Ara does not charge for credit transfer however, an external body may do e.g. NZQA for some qualifications.
- c If credit is awarded, the student is not required to enrol in that course of the 'target qualification' nor substitute any further course/s to meet the overall requirements.

3.3 Cross Credit (Specific Provisions)

- a Refer to 1.4 (Definitions) and 3.1 (General Provisions), covering all credit recognition applications.
- b If cross credit for the particular or very similar course has not been awarded in the 'target qualification' before, the Department requires sufficient information about that course in order to determine the following:
 - i Equivalency of course content (usually at least 80% equivalence is required to award cross credit), level and standard required for successful completion and/or the specified grade.

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- ii Current relevance to the 'target qualification', especially in areas of changing technology or standards.
 - iii Ratio of theory to practical work (if relevant) and amount of independent learning required of the student.
- c If a 'standard cross credit' applies (i.e. the above analysis has already been completed for previous credit recognition applications) or the cross credit is from a course completed at Ara, no further documentation is required. Ara does not charge for 'standard cross credit' however, an external body may do e.g. NZQA for some qualifications.
 - d If credit is awarded, the student is not required to enrol in that course of the 'target qualification', nor substitute any further course/s to meet the overall requirements.

3.4 Recognition of/Assessment of Prior Learning (Specific Provisions)

- a Refer to 1.4 (Definitions) and 3.1 (General Provisions), covering all credit recognition applications.
- b The NZQA states that "credit should be awarded for current and relevant skills, knowledge, attitudes and values achieved, without regard for the length, place or method of learning (e.g. workplace, life experience, hobbies, self-directed study)". Ara endorses this stance and therefore acknowledges such learning as part of the RPL provisions.
- c As with cross credit and credit transfer, successful RPL applications result in credit being awarded for previous achievement, not merely an exemption with alternative course/s required (i.e. the student is not required to enrol in that course of the 'target qualification' nor substitute any further course/s to meet the overall requirements).
- d Departments must maintain full records of the assessments undertaken to verify credit via RPL. This also includes records of appropriate moderation, as for any assessment activity. This is determined on a case by case basis by the relevant Department Board of Studies, designated subcommittee or in consultation with the CAPL Coordinator.
- e If unit standards are assessed by RPL and results sent to NZQA, the usual credit fees apply. As is the case for all other NZQA owned qualifications, Ara must (i) be accredited for the scope of the assessment undertaken and (ii) adhere to the Moderation Action Plan and moderation procedures.
- f The Tertiary Education Commission currently stipulates that EFTS cannot be claimed for RPL/APL assessment. Applicants must therefore pay a fee that covers staff time (and in the case of CAPL applications, overheads and operating costs as well). The fee is based on the Department's estimate of the time a particular type of assessment is likely to take (e.g. challenge test, portfolio, attestation or combination), as well as the breadth of the application (e.g. entire qualification, one course/unit standard, a set of courses/units). A standard charge per 'nominal hour' is set annually, including a non-refundable application fee. It is acknowledged that some applications will require less than the estimated time, and some will require more time - but the fee based on the estimated nominal hours is charged regardless. This is so students can be informed of the cost before lodging the full application. Note that the total fee charged cannot exceed that which the student would pay if enrolled in the relevant course/s.
- g RPL applications for more than half of a qualification are handled by the Centre for Assessment of Prior Learning (CAPL), according to the approved procedures published by the Centre.
- h If a current Ara staff member applies for credit via RPL, the assessment undertaken must include either input from qualified person/s external to Ara and/or full external

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moderation before credit is confirmed. In some cases, assessment or moderation by a Ara staff member external to the particular Department is acceptable. This must be endorsed by the Academic Director prior to the assessment being undertaken.

3.5 Advanced Standing

As a consequence of being awarded cross credit and/or credit transfer and/or Recognition of/Assessment of Prior Learning, an applicant may be given advanced standing into a programme. Advanced standing may be awarded against the graduate profile or individual courses. Advanced standing provisions must be detailed in each programme approval document.

3.6 Exemption

- a Refer to 1.4 (Definitions) and 3.1 (General Provisions), covering all credit recognition applications. Refer also Section 3.7 (Variation to Programme) for details regarding the process for approving exemptions or other variations.
- b Students awarded an exemption for a prescribed core or elective course for either of the two reasons given in (c) below are not awarded actual credit for that course. They are given the opportunity to complete an approved alternative course of the same or higher credit value at the same or higher level via approval of a 'variation to programme' – refer Section 3.7.
- c Exemption provisions for programmes provision may be used in the following situations:
 - i Credit transfer, cross credit and RPL are not available for the particular qualification (as in the case where regulations governed by an external body do not include this provision), but the student can provide evidence of having completed a substantially equivalent course.
 - ii The student is unable to complete all requirements of a prescribed course due to a disability or other acceptable reason, and there is an alternative course that if completed would enable the student to achieve the most important aspects of the graduate profile.

3.7 Variation to Programme for programmes including “exemptions”

- a Variation to a programme is approved only rarely, on a case by case basis. The most common reason arises from the provisions covering exemptions (refer 3.5 above). There may be other circumstances, however, for which a variation is appropriate. In all cases, a variation is approved only if the most important aspects of the graduate profile for the programme in which the student is enrolled would still be achieved.
- b Applications for a 'variation to a programme' are submitted to the Academic Board by the relevant Programme Leader and Head of Department, both of whom must endorse the variation.
- c Approval of the variation is via a sub-group, operating under delegation of the Academic Board, and consisting of two members of the Programme Approval Committee (PAC) and two additional members of the Academic Board who are not members of the PAC. All decisions are reported to the Academic Board and a central file maintained by the Academic Services Division.
- d No more than 25% of the total credit value of any programme can be exempt or varied (equivalent to one standard 15 credit course in a 60 credit qualification). If multiple applications are received for students in the same programme, this can signal a need for the programme and/or the entry criteria to be reviewed.

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