

# Credit for Prior Learning Policy

## Section 1 - Purpose and Context

(1) This policy outlines the principles that underpin the University's approach to granting students Credit for Prior Learning (Credit) in coursework undergraduate, postgraduate and Honours programs, and the Master of Research. It also sets out the procedures to be followed by staff in considering applications for Credit for Prior Learning and the procedures to be followed by students in applying.

(2) The policy applies to all applications for, and granting of, Credit, including Credit covered by articulation pathways arrangements with Australian and overseas higher education providers.

(3) This policy does not cover Credit for the Master of Philosophy, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Professional Doctorates, as Credit is not available for those programs. The general provisions of the policy also do not apply to the Professional Entry Medical Program, as explained in Section 4 of the policy.

## Section 2 - Definitions

(4) The following definitions apply for the purpose of this policy:

- a. Credentialed Learning means relevant programs, including programs undertaken within the workplace, professional organisations or other training contexts, where appropriate certification is provided.
- b. Credit For Prior Learning (Credit) means credit granted expressed in the form of a specified number of credit points, towards an award program, granted based on previous, successfully completed studies or prior learning. Types of Credit include Entry Level Credit, Unspecified Credit, Specified Credit, Internal Credit and Transfer Credit.
- c. Director, Academic Program (DAP) means the academic program leadership role, which includes the Director, Academic Program for online programs or Academic Director/Program Convenor at a partner provider.
- d. Entry Level Credit means Credit awarded to an applicant at entry to a Masters program if they have completed previous study in a related discipline. Such Credit is noted on the student's record for the credit points they do not have to study.
- e. Equivalent Subject means subjects that are considered substantially the same in content and learning outcomes between programs of the University.
- f. Exemption means a student can be granted permission to substitute a compulsory or core subject in a program for another approved subject, as they have already completed the requirements for the exempted subject elsewhere. Exemptions are usually given when a student has already received the maximum allowable Credit for their program.
- g. External Credit means Credit, expressed in the form of a specified number of credit points, towards an award program, granted on the basis of previous, successfully completed studies or prior learning from an external institution.
- h. Formal Learning means completed studies at a recognised university, higher education institution, TAFE or registered training organisation in Australia and recognised international institutions.
- i. Informal Learning means demonstrable skills and learning gained from work or life experience, including

programs undertaken in the workplace, with professional organisations or other training contexts.

- j. Internal Credit means Credit expressed in the form of a specified number of credit points towards an award program, automatically recognised for previous successfully completed studies at Western Sydney University. Internal Credit is not counted towards maximum limits for Credit.
- k. Nested Program Sequence means an articulated sequence of programs such as Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma and Masters program.
- l. Non-Award Subjects means subjects of study offered by the University that students register in, independently of one of the University's award programs.
- m. Shortened Duration Masters Program means a Masters program that has a reduced volume of learning for students who meet the relevant criteria based on their prior studies and in line with the volume of learning requirements under the [Australian Qualifications Framework \(AQF\)](#).
- n. Specified Credit means Credit granted in the form of individual named subjects against a student's record. The University may grant Specified Credit where prior learning satisfies the learning outcomes of a particular subject taught in the University.
- o. Transfer Credit means Credit granted for formal learning for whole subjects studied at an institution other than Western Sydney University.
- p. Unspecified Credit means Credit granted in the form of credit points only, not relating to individual subjects. The University may grant Unspecified Credit where the relevant previous learning is broadly consistent with the expected outcomes of the University's program the student intends to take, but may not be directly equivalent to the learning outcomes of any specific subject in the program.
- q. University means Western Sydney University including Western Sydney University - The College (The College) and University partner providers.

## Section 3 - Policy Statement

### Principles

(5) This policy:

- a. is consistent with the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#);
- b. will be applied fairly and consistently;
- c. seeks to ensure that students have the necessary academic preparation to participate in their intended field of study, while not impeding their progression and completion.

(6) Students granted Credit will not be disadvantaged in achieving the expected learning outcomes for their program of study or qualification.

(7) The granting of Credit will not diminish the integrity of the program of study and the qualification awarded.

### Facilitating Student Pathways

(8) The University aims to ensure that students complete their programs in the shortest duration of study possible, consistent with program requirements and giving formal recognition for any relevant, previously achieved learning.

(9) The granting of Credit for previously achieved learning is an acknowledgement by the University that students have gained the knowledge, understanding and skills equivalent to the stated learning outcomes of related programs and subjects of study offered.

(10) The University recognises that learning takes place in a broad range of contexts - in formal study, in the workplace and in life experience. The granting of Credit for previous learning ensures that students commence study

at a level that appropriately recognises that learning and ensures that they are not required to repeat successful learning activities in any program of the University.

(11) Applicants for Credit may request that their previous learning be assessed for Credit towards an undergraduate award (including the coursework component of an Honours award) or a postgraduate coursework award.

(12) The University may grant Credit on the basis of:

- a. completed studies at a recognised university, higher education institution, TAFE or registered training organisation in Australia and recognised international institutions (formal learning); or
- b. programs undertaken within the workplace, professional organisations or other training contexts, where appropriate certification is available (credentialed learning); or
- c. demonstrable skills and learning gained from work or life experience that is relevant to the program being studied (informal learning); or
- d. demonstrated capacity for learning in a formal program beyond the required minimum entry requirements.

## Conditions

(13) To protect the integrity of its awards, the University will only grant Credit for, and as, whole subjects.

(14) In general, previous learning can only be recognised once, either to meet minimum entry requirements into an award or for Credit.

(15) Previous learning deemed as equivalent to the stated learning outcomes for one subject of study cannot be used again for credit for another subject of study.

(16) Applicants must provide relevant certified documentation to support their application for Credit.

(17) Eligibility for Credit does not guarantee admission to the University.

## Quality Assurance

(18) Academic Senate's Education Committee will review annually the granting of Credit to ensure that practices across the Schools are consistent.

(19) Academic Senate may commission comparisons with other universities to ensure that the Credit granted by the University is consistent with practice in the sector.

## Appeals Against Decisions on Credit

(20) If an applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their Credit for Prior Learning Application, they should contact Data Integrity, Quality and Operations who will refer the application to the Director, Academic Program or equivalent for the relevant program or to the Graduate Research School for the Master of Research, to determine if any variance to the decision is appropriate. If the original decision was made by the Director, Academic Program or equivalent, the application will be referred to the Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching or equivalent.

(21) If, following this consultation, the student believes there has been a breach of procedure, they may apply for an appeal on the grounds and in accordance with the [Academic Appeals Procedures](#).

# Section 4 - Procedures

## Part A - General Information

(22) Credit may be granted either as Specified Credit or Unspecified Credit, or as a combination of both.

(23) Decisions on applications are implemented by Data Integrity, Quality and Operations, on the recommendation of the relevant Academic Program Advisor or Director, Academic Program or equivalent.

(24) The Director, Data Integrity, Quality and Operations, in consultation with the relevant Academic Program Advisor, Director, Academic Program or equivalent, has discretion to vary the maximum allowable Credit that can be granted.

(25) Any application for Credit for Prior Learning must be looked at in the totality of the student's application.

(26) All decisions to grant Credit should be consistently applied.

(27) To ensure equitable application of this policy, all determinations on Credit must be recorded on the student's record on the student record system.

(28) The University reserves the right to withdraw Credit where the documentation provided by the applicant proves to be incomplete, misleading, false or invalid or when an error has been made in assessing or processing the application.

## Part B - Limits on Credit

### Undergraduate Programs

(29) Generally the maximum amount of Credit given for completed awards will be in accordance with the [AQF Qualifications Pathway Policy](#):

- 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.

(30) The following maximum limits on Credit that can be granted in an undergraduate program (including double and combined degree programs), except as specified in clauses below are:

- a. 160 credit points for a 240 credit point degree (i.e. 66 % of the degree);
- b. 240 credit points for a 320 credit point degree (i.e. 75 % of the degree);
- c. 320 credit points for a 400 credit point degree (i.e. 80 % of the degree).

(31) If the Credit is to be counted towards a University undergraduate program that is of fewer than 160 credit points in value the student must complete half (that is, 50 %) of the total number of credit points for the program as an enrolled student of the University, irrespective of any Credit for which they are eligible. The exception to this is where the Credit is specified as part of an articulation pathways agreement or nested program sequence.

(32) Internal Credit is not counted toward the maximum limits on Credit, as outlined above.

(33) The maximum Unspecified Credit granted should not exceed the number of credit points available as electives or non-core subjects in the program for which the Credit is to be counted.

## **Bachelor Honours Programs**

(34) Credit will not be granted for the thesis component of the Honours award.

## **Postgraduate Programs**

(35) Students will not be granted Credit in a postgraduate award for subjects previously studied in a Bachelor award. A School may apply to Academic Senate's Academic Planning and Courses Approvals Committee (APCAC) for an exception to be made for certain postgraduate programs.

## **Entry Level Credit for Masters Programs**

(36) Entry Level Credit for shortened duration Masters programs is not treated as Credit and is not counted in the limits of allowable Credit for Masters programs.

(37) The maximum Credit that can be granted towards any postgraduate program is 50% of the total credit points for the program, except when a student is progressing through a nested program sequence.

(38) Where a student has covered more content of the postgraduate award than the maximum Credit of 50%, the relevant Academic Program Advisor or Director, Academic Program may grant an exemption for core subjects where the student can demonstrate that they would otherwise be eligible for Transfer Credit, and allow students to study a substitute subject or subjects that are relevant to the Program Learning Outcomes.

## **Internal Credit Arrangements**

(39) Where a student applies to study at the University and has previously undertaken study at the University in the 10 years prior, any previous successfully completed subjects that are part of the new program's structure will be recognised and will count towards the new program. Students do not need to apply to have the previously completed subjects count towards the new program.

(40) Previous marks and grades will only be recognised in the new program for subjects that were successfully completed.

(41) If a student does not wish to have previously completed subjects recognised in their new program, students must apply for those previously completed subjects to be excluded from their new program.

## **Program Variation**

(42) A student who has varied their program (e.g. transferred from a double to a single degree, or a standard to advanced program) will have their successfully completed subjects recognised in the new program. Students do not need to apply to have the subjects recognised in the new program.

## **Credit towards a Professional Entry Medical Program**

(43) Applications for Credit towards a Professional Entry Medical Program will only be considered in very exceptional circumstances by the Dean of the School of Medicine. Those exceptional circumstances are where a student in another [Australian Medical Council](#) accredited medical program is accepted by the Dean of Medicine for transfer into the Professional Entry Medical Program.

## **Credit towards Professionally Accredited Programs**

(44) Credit for subjects in certain professionally accredited programs (e.g. Law, Nursing) can only be given for subjects that are considered to be equivalent in a program at another accredited institution.

## **Time Limits for Currency of Previous Studies**

(45) Credit in specified subjects is not normally granted for studies completed 10 years or more prior to application. Where Internal Credit and/or Transfer Credit is being sought for studies completed 10 years or earlier, the Academic Program Advisor, Director, Academic Program or equivalent may require an assessment of the currency of an applicant's knowledge. The University will determine the method of assessment.

## **Part C - Applying for Credit**

### **Timelines for Applications and Notifications of Credit**

(46) Students eligible for Internal Credit will have the Credit applied to their record automatically. An application is not required.

(47) Applications for Credit should be submitted before the student commences their first term of study in a particular program at the University. Applications submitted after this date may not be finalised prior to the census date of that term, which may impact on the Credit that can be granted.

(48) The University will not grant Credit where an application has been made after the approved census date when a student is registered in the subject in that term.

### **Grades Issued for Credit**

(49) Credit will be allocated the Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) grade. Academic marks and grades are not allocated for subjects for which Credit is given, with the exception of the clauses below.

(50) A student wishing to have successfully completed Non-Award subjects transferred to a program in which they are enrolled will be granted equivalent Internal Credit. If the Non-Award subjects have been completed at the University, the grades achieved will be transferred when the student's enrolment in an award program is confirmed. These subjects will count towards Grade Point Average (GPA) calculation in the award program.

(51) Postgraduate students progressing through a nested award will have marks and grades automatically recognised in the new program.

(52) Marks and grades will be transferred across to the student's new program where they are required to transition into a replacement program, or if they are transferring from a double degree to a single degree program.

(53) A student who is eligible to receive Internal Credit for previous successfully completed subjects at Western Sydney University.

### **Relinquishing Credit**

(54) If a student can demonstrate valid academic reasons for relinquishing the Credit that has been granted, they may apply to Data Integrity, Quality and Operations, providing details of the academic reasons for the request. Requests to relinquish Credit on the basis of visa/immigration requirements are not considered valid academic reasons.

(55) Variations in Credit for international students may impact upon their visa status.

## **Section 5 - Guidelines**

### **Related Policies and Procedures**

(56) [Academic Appeals Procedures](#)

- (57) [Academic Senate Standing Committees Web Page](#)
- (58) [Program Transfer Policy](#)
- (59) [Curriculum Design and Approvals Procedures - Honours](#)
- (60) [Credit for Prior Learning webpage](#)

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Historic
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## Glossary Terms and Definitions

**"Core Subject"** - Mandatory subject required for the theoretical and practical knowledge and skills needed to achieve program outcomes.

**"Volume of Learning"** - (As defined in the AQF) The volume of learning is a dimension of the complexity of a qualification. It is used with the level criteria and qualification type descriptor to determine the depth and breadth of the learning outcomes of a qualification. The 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.

**"Program"** - A program of study consisting of at least four subjects or 40 credit points leading to an award of the University (Foundation Studies Program, Undergraduate Preparation Program, Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Undergraduate Certificate, Associate Degree, Bachelor Degree, Bachelor Honours Degree, Graduate Certificate, Postgraduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Postgraduate Diploma and Masters by Coursework Degree) which when successfully completed is conferred on the graduand by the Board of Trustees.

**"Subject"** - The subject of study in a program in which a student enrolls.

**"Term"** - A session at the University that runs for a set length of time during which teaching and assessments occur.