



# Policy: Recognition of prior and external learning

## Purpose

To set out the University's policy for the assessment and recognition of prior and external learning.

## Overview

Prior and external learning can be assessed to determine equivalence to the learning outcomes of courses or programs, in the context of lifelong learning. This policy sets out principles and limits for the assessment of formal, informal and non-formal learning (see [Procedure: Glossary – Student policies and procedures](#) for definitions of terms) that may result in admission, credit and exemptions by determining equivalence to course and program learning outcomes.

## Scope

This policy applies to coursework awards and coursework in Higher Degree Research (HDR) programs.

## Policy principles

1. The University provides recognition for prior and external learning to:
  - a. Recognise that prior and external learning can form an acceptable part of an ANU program or course;
  - b. Encourage life-long learning;
  - c. Avoid the duplication of content within students' learning;
  - d. Facilitate the movement of students between institutions and programs;
  - e. Enable students to complete programs efficiently; and
  - f. Ensure students meet all of the learning outcomes of the program to which they are admitted.
2. Prior and external learning is only considered for recognition if it is:

- a. Formal learning from completed, passed courses at an Australian University, an ANU partner institution, or an institution of equivalent institutional status and accreditation level as listed in the [Australian Department of Education's Country Education Profiles](#) or similar registers; or
  - b. Informal or non-formal learning that is mapped against the learning outcomes of a program, course or [AQF Level](#);
  - c. Relevant in content to the learning outcomes for which recognition is sought;
  - d. Current;
  - e. Equivalent in the volume of learning and in level to the formal learning for which equivalence is sought; and
  - f. Documented.
3. Assessment of prior and external learning is:
- a. Against the relevant learning outcomes of the course or program or [AQF Level](#);
  - b. Evidence-based and transparent;
  - c. Fair and consistent;
  - d. Where applicable, based on the equivalency of the quality of learning amongst Go8 universities confirmed in the [Group of Eight Credit Transfer Agreement](#); and
  - e. Academically defensible.
4. Determination of the credit and exemptions that can be awarded for prior or external learning is:

a.	Holistic and takes into account the student's individual ability to meet the learning outcomes and cover the content of the course or program successfully;
b.	<p>Mindful of the alignment of levels of learning outcomes when converting volumes of formal learning that do not align with the AQF. Unless there are academic considerations specific to the case, at the same level of learning outcomes, volume of formal learning is converted using, in descending order of priority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equivalencies specified in ANU exchange, articulation or partnership agreements with other universities;</li> <li>• Any schedule of equivalencies published by the University;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The alignment of six ANU units with 7.5 European Credit Transfer (ECTS) credits; or</li> <li>• On the basis of six ANU units being equivalent to 130 hours of learning, including time spent in scheduled classes and self-directed study.</li> </ul> <p>Unless there are academic considerations specific to the case, relevant full-time equivalent professional experience is converted using an equivalence of 15 months per six ANU units.</p>
c.	Decided in a timely way so that students' progression is not inhibited;
d.	Consistent with external accreditation requirements; and
e.	Documented for the student including any reasons for not recognising equivalence.

5. Exemptions are used rather than credit if:

- Requested by the student; or
- Warranted by only partial content equivalence; or
- The student has exhausted limits on credit; or
- The learning has been used for credit against a different program (e.g. the other programs in a double degree); or
- The prior learning is not eligible for credit towards the program.

### Limits on the recognition of prior and external learning for credit and exemptions

6. Limits on credit and exemptions in a program set by the Associate Dean (Education):

- Credit and exemptions are only granted within any program-specific restrictions approved in writing by the Associate Dean (Education) of the College managing the program.
- These limits are in force until revoked by the Associate Dean (Education) or the next program re-accreditation review.

- c. Quantitative restrictions on credit set by the Associate Dean (Education) do not apply if credit is sought as part of a program transfer for completed ANU courses that are also listed on the program orders of the new program.
7. Time limits on the eligibility of prior learning for credit and exemptions:
- a. Unless the Associate Dean (Education) has approved different program-specific periods, prior learning must have occurred within ten years (for credit towards undergraduate degrees) or seven years (for credit towards postgraduate degrees) before the first day of the first session that follows acceptance of the offer to the program.
  - b. All courses in a completed degree are eligible for consideration if the date of completion falls within the time period specified in (a).
  - c. Other formal or non-formal courses are eligible if the date of completion falls within the time period specified in (a).
8. Other limits on the eligibility of prior and external learning for credit and exemptions:
- a. Prior learning is not used for credit if it has already been used for credit towards another completed degree at ANU or at a different university, unless that previous degree is an ANU program that is nested within the program for which credit is sought. For example a Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma with complete overlap of program orders with a Masters degree that is either of the same name, or identified in a credit register. Credit is only awarded for that portion of a completed degree that was not credit for prior learning.
  - b. Credit is not granted for approved or unapproved study as part of a concurrent enrolment in a program at a different university, including during periods of approved program leave from the ANU program. Approved cross-institutional study, exchange or study abroad form part of the ANU program and are eligible for consideration.
  - c. Credit is not granted for informal or non-formal learning concurrent with program enrolment (including periods of approved program leave).
9. Limits on the use of credit:
- a. Credit for prior non-formal or informal learning does not exceed half the unit value of any sub-plan.
  - b. Credit is not granted for non-formal or informal learning of a language other than English. Exemptions and waiving of course requisites is used instead to recognise such learning.

- c. If a student has attempted and failed a course while enrolled in the program, credit or exemptions are only granted towards that course if the request is for recognition of approved external learning that happened after the failed attempt to complete the course at ANU.

10. There are no limits beyond (six)-(nine) on the eligibility for consideration for credit of the following types of learning:

- a. Completed ANU courses within the same career level and not used for a completed degree;
- b. Completed ANU programs that are nested in the program towards which credit is sought and identified in the credit information published for that degree; and
- c. ANU microcredentials.

11. Credit for other types of prior learning than those specified in (ten), or for external learning, including but not limited to prior study at a different university, completed degrees, professional experience, cross-institutional study, study abroad, and exchange, is only granted to the following maximum limits:

a.	Towards a three year (144 unit) Bachelors pass program, to a maximum of 96 units in a single degree, and a maximum of 60 units in a double degree combination.
b.	Towards a four year (192 unit) Bachelors pass program, to a maximum of 144 units in a single degree, and a maximum of 108 units in a double degree combination.
c.	Towards a one-year (48 unit) honours program if the corresponding Bachelor degree was undertaken at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the ANU, to a maximum of 24 units for honours-level courses;.</li> </ul> another university, no credit must be awarded.
d.	Towards a four year (192 unit) degree Bachelor with integrated honours, to a maximum of 120 units in a single degree, and a maximum of 60 units in a double degree combination.

e.	Towards a Graduate Certificate, a maximum of 12 units for prior formal learning at AQF Level 8 or 9.
f.	Towards a Graduate Diploma, a maximum of 24 units for prior formal learning at AQF level 8 or 9, or non-formal and informal learning assessed against AQF level 8 only.
g.	Towards a 48 unit Masters program, a maximum of 24 units for courses completed towards an incomplete AQF level 9 or above qualification only. In 1+1 double masters, this limit applies to each degree separately.
h.	Towards a 72 unit Masters program, a maximum of 24 units;
i.	<p>Towards a 96 unit Masters program, a maximum of 48 units overall, with the following sub-limits, a maximum of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 48 units for any kind of prior learning at AQF level 8 or 9;</li> <li>• 24 units for any kind of prior learning at AQF Level 7 (8 for degrees with a compulsory honours level entry requirement), including but not limited to a prior undergraduate degree, or prior formal or non-formal learning assessed against AQF level 7 (8 for degrees with a compulsory honours level entry requirement); and</li> <li>• 24 units for prior non-formal and informal learning, whether assessed against AQF Level 7, 8 or 9.</li> </ul>
j.	<p>Towards a 144 unit Masters program, a maximum of 72 units overall, with the following sub-limits, a maximum of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 72 units for any kind of prior study at AQF level 8 or 9;</li> <li>• 36 units for any kind of prior learning at AQF Level 7 (8 for degrees with a compulsory honours level entry requirement), including but not limited to a prior undergraduate degree, or prior formal or non-formal learning assessed against AQF level 7 (8 for degrees with a compulsory honours level entry requirement); and</li> <li>• 36 units for prior non-formal and informal learning, whether assessed</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• against AQF Level 7, 8 or 9.</li> </ul>
k.	<p>Towards a 192 unit Masters program, a maximum of 96 units overall, with the following sub-limits, a maximum of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 96 units for any kind of prior study at AQF level 8 or 9;</li> <li>• 48 units for any kind of prior learning at AQF Level 7 (8 for degrees with a compulsory honours level entry requirement), including but not limited to a prior undergraduate degree, or prior formal or non-formal learning assessed against AQF level 7 (8 for degrees with a compulsory honours level entry requirement); and</li> <li>• 48 units for prior non-formal and informal learning, whether assessed against AQF Level 7, 8 or 9.</li> </ul>

### Alignment of non-formal and informal learning with learning outcomes for admission and credit

12. Unless otherwise specified in accordance with a University procedure, applications for the recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning include a statement of no more than 1000 words on how the prior non-formal or informal learning addresses the following learning outcomes:

a.	<p>For admission to postgraduate degrees to which applicants with a pass Bachelor degree are eligible for admission; or for credit towards the same degree if no credit is sought for prior undergraduate study, the statement addresses the following AQF Level 7 attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduates at this level have broad and coherent knowledge and skills for professional work and/or further learning;</li> <li>• Graduates at this level have broad and coherent theoretical and technical knowledge with depth in one or more disciplines or areas of practice;</li> <li>• Graduates at this level have well-developed cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply methods and technologies to: analyse and evaluate information to complete a range of activities;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analyse, generate and transmit solutions to unpredictable and sometimes complex problems; transmit knowledge, skills and ideas to others;</li> <li>• Graduates at this level can apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, well-developed judgement and responsibility: in contexts that require self-directed work and learning; within broad parameters to provide specialist advice and functions.</li> </ul>
b.	<p>For admission to postgraduate degrees to which applicants with a Bachelors are only eligible for admission if they have also completed a Honours program, or for credit towards the same degree if no credit is sought for prior undergraduate study, the statement addresses the following AQF Level 8 attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduates at this level have advanced knowledge and skills for professional or highly skilled work and/or further learning.</li> <li>• Graduates at this level have advanced theoretical and technical knowledge in one or more disciplines or areas of practice</li> <li>• Graduates at this level have advanced cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply methods and technologies to: analyse critically, evaluate and transform information to complete a range of activities; analyse, generate and transmit solutions to complex problems; transmit knowledge, skills and ideas to others;</li> <li>• Graduates at this level can apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, well-developed judgement, adaptability and responsibility as a practitioner or learner.</li> </ul>
c.	<p>In all other cases, the statement addresses the learning outcomes of the degree towards which admission or credit is sought.</p>



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