Academic Credit Policy

Section 1 - Introduction

(1) The development and implementation of this Policy is guided by the commitment of the University to:

a. recognise that learners take diverse pathways to achieve qualifications;
b. value students' prior learning, whether formal, informal or non-formal;
c. minimise the amount of learning students are required to repeat; and
d. facilitate student mobility between qualifications, including between higher education and vocational education, nationally and internationally.

Section 2 - Statement of Authority

(2) The authority behind this policy is the Charles Darwin University Act 2003 part 3, section 15.

Section 3 - Compliance

(3) This is a compliance requirement under the:

a. Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021;
b. Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015; and
c. National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018

Section 4 - Intent

(4) This policy sets out the University's framework for Credit within an overarching pedagogical and quality assurance perspective. It applies to applicants seeking admission to the University and enrolled students seeking course transfer or advanced standing in their current qualification.

Section 5 - Relevant Definitions

(5) In the context of this document:

a. Formal Learning means learning that takes place through a structured program of learning that leads to the full or partial achievement of an officially accredited qualification;
b. Non-Formal Learning means learning that takes place through a structured programme of learning but does not lead to an officially accredited qualification; and
c. Informal Learning means learning gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. Unlike Formal or Non-Formal Learning, Informal Learning is not organised or externally structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support.

Section 6 - Policy

Principles

(6) The University will ensure students have an opportunity to build on their prior learning, whether that learning was gained through structured qualifications or life or work experience.

(7) Credit decisions at the University will:

a. be academically defensible and take into account the students' ability to meet the learning outcomes or competencies inherent in the qualification;
b. be evidence-based, equitable and transparent;
c. be applied consistently and fairly with decisions subject to appeal and review;
d. recognise learning regardless of how, when and where it was acquired, provided that the learning is relevant and current and has a relationship to the learning outcomes or competencies of the qualification;
e. be decided in a timely way so that students' access to qualifications is not unnecessarily inhibited; and
f. be formally documented (including reasons for not giving credit, where applicable).

Types of Credit

(8) Subject to the limits set out in this Policy, the University will award the following types of credit.

Specified Credit

(9) Specified credit may be awarded based on equivalency of successfully completed prior formal learning to one or more units within a qualification, taking into account:

a. Learning Outcomes: the contemporary relevance of the knowledge, skills and competencies a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of their learning;
b. Volume of Learning: in Equivalent Full-Time Student Load (EFTSL) for Higher Education and units of competency or hours for VET;
c. Program of Study: content, discipline or subject matter, or field of education;
d. Learning and Assessment Approaches: the assessment authentication methods;
e. Level of Learning: the relative complexity and/or depth of achievement and the autonomy required to demonstrate that achievement.

(10) The Course Coordinator or delegate will determine the outcome of applications for specified credit. Once a decision has been determined, it will be entered on the Credit Register as a precedent for future applications.

(11) When approved, specified credit will be transferred to specified units within a qualification and recorded as Credit Transfer. It recognises that the student has achieved equivalent unit learning outcomes or competencies and can be used to meet pre-requisite requirements.

Unspecified Credit

(12) Unspecified credit may only be granted against electives in Higher Education qualifications on the basis of prior formal learning that is deemed to be at the right AQF level, with appropriate volume of learning and learning and assessment approaches, and with content that is deemed permissible as equivalent to an elective option, broadening the student's education but still meeting the overall course learning outcomes.

(13) The Course Coordinator or delegate will determine the outcome of applications for unspecified credit. Once a

decision has been determined, it will be entered on the Credit Register as a precedent for future applications.

(14) When approved, unspecified credit will be recorded as an Elective Exemption. It does not recognise that the student has achieved specified unit learning outcomes and cannot be used to meet pre-requisite requirements.

Block Credit

(15) Block credit may only be granted in Higher Education qualifications where there is an approved block credit arrangement detailing a pathway from an alternate (completed) qualification. The amount of block credit granted is determined as part of the arrangement and will be automatically applied at the point of entry.

(16) Unless limited by the professional accreditation requirements, approved block credit arrangements will grant the following number of unit exemptions into a Degree:

a. 4 unit exemptions for completion of a Certificate IV (40 credit points)
b. 8 unit exemptions for completion of a Diploma (80 credit points)
c. 16 unit exemptions for completion of an Advanced Diploma (160 credit points)

(17) The Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor will approve formal block credit arrangements, once endorsed by the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee. Once an arrangement has been determined, it will be entered on the Credit database and applied at the point of admission.

(18) Block credit exempts a student from completing a group of units – usually specified stages or components – and is recorded as an Exemption against each of those units. It does not recognise that the student has achieved specified unit learning outcomes but can be used to meet pre-requisite requirements.

(19) All block credit arrangements are published on the University's Credit Register and are subject to rigorous quality assurance.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

(20) Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the assessment of an individual's relevant prior informal and/or non-formal learning against unit or course learning outcomes or competencies. Additional formal learning may also be taken in to account when establishing RPL.

(21) In vocational education, an academic staff member qualified to assess in the relevant discipline area will determine applications for RPL. In higher education RPL assessments will usually be completed by the relevant Course Coordinator.

(22) When approved, RPL will be transferred against specified units (including electives) within the qualification and recorded as Recognition of Prior Learning. It recognises that the student has achieved equivalent unit(s) learning outcomes or competencies and can be used to meet pre-requisite requirements.

Prioritising the Awarding of Credit

(23) Credit will be applied in the following order:

a. Where a published Block Credit arrangement applies, block credit will be applied first, at the point of a student's admission.
b. Where no Block Credit arrangement applies, or where there is an opportunity for further credit, the University will then apply, in order:
    i. Specified credit to core units, then specialist electives, then general electives, then
    ii. Unspecified credit if available, then

iii. Recognition of Prior Learning.

Credit Limits

(24) The University reserves the right not to recognise part or all of a student's prior learning where it is not deemed equivalent, or where credit transfer is prohibited by qualification rules.

General Limits

(25) Credit will only be awarded for whole units. The University will not grant advanced standing for partial units.

(26) Where credit is granted on the basis of formal learning, the total value of credit granted cannot exceed the total credit value of the original units.

(27) Specified or unspecified credit will only be granted where prior formal learning is current:

a. in HE, completed within the previous seven (7) years, unless agreed by the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor;
b. in VET, recognised in a national training package.

(28) A completed Cert I, II or III cannot be used as a basis of credit towards Diplomas or Degrees, unless specified in the Training Package or accredited course documents, but can be included as part of an application for RPL.

(29) Completed undergraduate studies cannot be used as a basis of credit towards postgraduate study unless the UG units are included in the accredited PG qualification.

(30) Thesis units (Honours and Masters) that have already been counted towards a completed award cannot be used as the basis for further credit.

(31) Where a qualification is required as the basis of admission (e.g. graduate-entry Degrees) that same qualification will not usually be permitted as the basis of a credit application. However, a student may apply for credit based on additional formal learning.

(32) For double degrees, credit may not exceed two-thirds of the credit points that contribute to each single award.

Vocational Education and Training Qualifications

(33) A student may be granted one or more types of credit for all of the required components of a vocational qualification.

Higher Education Qualifications

(34) In Higher Education qualifications, students must undertake a minimum volume of learning at the University in order to qualify with a University award. A student must enrol in, undertake the learning activities of, and attain passing grades for a minimum of one-third of the award, or a minimum of one (1) year full-time equivalent, whichever is the lesser, to receive an award from the University.

(35) Note: professional accreditation requirements may further limit the volume of credit permitted in a higher education award.

(36) Where a student applies for credit based on prior formal learning, the limits below apply:

Award	Maximum amount of combined credit (specified, unspecified, block or RPL)	Minimum volume of learning to be completed at the University

HE Diploma (80 credit points)	50 credit points	30 credit points
Associate Degree (160 credit points)	100 credit points	60 credit points
Bachelor (240 credit points)	160 credit points	80 credit points
Bachelor (320 credit points)	240 credit points	80 credit points
Bachelor Honours (320 credit points)	240 credit points	80 credit points
Honours Year (80 credit points)	50 credit points	30 credit points
Graduate Certificate (40 credit points)	20 credit points	20 credit points
Graduate Diploma (80 credit points)	50 credit points	30 credit points
Masters (80 credit points)	50 credit points	30 credit points
Masters (120 credit points)	80 credit points	40 credit points
Masters (160 credit points)	100 credit points	60 credit points

Research Degrees

(37) Advanced standing for a student transferring from a Master by Research qualification into a Doctoral qualification, or from Doctoral qualification at another institution, will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Exit Awards

(38) If a student chooses to finish their studies earlier than originally planned and leave with an exit qualification, their grades, competency outcomes or notations will automatically be transferred to the exit award, and therefore credit limits will not apply.

Transferring to a Different Qualification

(39) If a student has had credit approved whilst enrolled in one qualification and then transfers to a different qualification, credit for equivalent units:

a. will automatically transfer for VET enrolments.
b. will not automatically transfer for HE enrolments, however students can apply to have their prior credit recognised.

Transitioning to a Newer Version of the Qualification

(40) If a student has had credit approved whilst enrolled in one version of a qualification and then transitions to a newer version of the qualification (VET or HE), their credit will automatically be mapped and applied against the units of the newer qualification, minimising any loss of credit points or competencies.

Exceeding Credit Limits

(41) The Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor may approve credit beyond the limits prescribed here, providing there is an academic rationale consistent with the principles of this Policy. This includes instances where another provider ceases to deliver a qualification and the University agrees to teach those students to completion.

Deadlines for Applying for Credit

(42) Prospective students can apply for credit alongside their application for admission. Current students are

encouraged to submit applications as early as possible (preferably by the week before each term commences) to enable subsequent unit enrolment decisions to take effect for that term, but credit applications will be accepted up to the end of the second week of teaching.

(43) Students will be advised of the outcome of their application within ten (10) working days of their application. If a credit application is rejected, the notification to the student will include the reasons for not awarding credit.

Evidence Required for Credit Applications

Specified or Unspecified Credit

(44) Students (or applicants) are responsible for providing evidence of their prior formal learning with their credit application. Evidence must be sufficient to assess equivalence in terms of learning outcomes, volume of learning, program of study (including content) as well as learning and assessment approaches, and must include:

a. an AQF qualification testamur issued by an accredited institution; or
b. an official academic transcript issued by an accredited institution; or
c. a statement of attainment issued by an accredited institution; or
d. an overseas qualification issued by an institution listed in the AEI NOOSR Country Education Profiles; and
e. a syllabus copy detailing the learning outcomes and assessments of the unit(s) undertaken.

(45) All supporting documents must be in English and be certified copies unless the University sights the original.

Block Credit

(46) Block credit will be granted based on verification that the student has completed the qualification listed in the block credit arrangement. No further evidence is required.

Recognition of Prior Learning

(47) Students applying for RPL are responsible for providing detailed evidence of their capability and may be required to undergo an evaluation against unit competencies or learning outcomes. Evidence supplied must be valid, sufficient and authentic, and the University may require references to assist in authenticating claims. Evidence may include:

a. a curriculum vitae;
b. letters or references from employers (on business letterhead);
c. references or testimonials from clients (that are not family members or friends);
d. work documents that describe roles, tasks, achievements, job descriptions;
e. evidence of performance review;
f. evidence of responsibilities within defined processes;
g. portfolios containing samples of work;
h. certificates from non-award qualifications, professional development, short courses;
i. documentation of recognition of merit;
j. documentation covering industry roles (committees, representatives), industry awards;
k. other corroborating evidence supporting claims of competency; and/or
l. other documentation or evidence asked for by the assessor.

(48) All supporting documents must be in English and be certified copies unless the University sights the original.

(49) In addition to the portfolio of evidence, RPL assessments may also include a formal evaluation such as an interview, presentation, challenge exam or practical demonstration.

Rescinding Advanced Standing

(50) Credit granted to a student may be rescinded:

a. at the request of the student;
b. where an error has been made in assessing the application; or
c. where the documentation provided by the applicant has been shown to be incomplete, misleading or invalid (in which case the relevant misconduct policy may apply).

Appealing a Credit Decision

(51) Students can appeal credit decisions in accordance with the Complaints Policy - Students.

Monitoring and Review of Credit Decisions

(52) Credit decisions will be periodically reviewed to ensure they do not academically disadvantage students, that they meet the intended aims of this Policy, and remain current.

Section 7 - Non-Compliance

(53) Non-compliance with Governance Documents is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct – Staff or the Code of Conduct – Students, as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures outlined in the Charles Darwin University and Union Enterprise Agreement 2022 and the Code of Conduct – Students.

(54) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the Complaints Procedure - Staff and Complaints Policy - Students.

(55) All staff members have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or corruption in accordance with the Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Whistleblower Reporting (Improper Conduct) Procedure.

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	15th January 2022
Review Date	22nd September 2022
Approval Authority	Academic Board
Approval Date	25th September 2019
Expiry Date	19th February 2024
Responsible Executive	Louise King Provost
Implementation Officer	Lisa-Marie Stones Director Student and Academic Services
Enquiries Contact	Lisa-Marie Stones Director Student and Academic Services