

Advanced Standing and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

The Australian Performing Arts Conservatory (APAC) Advanced Standing and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and Procedure sets out the principles, scope, purpose, policy statements, procedures and responsibilities relating to the assessment and granting of credit in APAC courses. This Policy and Procedure is designed to support academic quality, to foster good practice and to drive compliance with mandated higher education standards.

For the purposes of this policy and procedure:

- **Advanced Standing.** is a form of academic credit awarded to students based on their prior formal education, typically from recognised institutions. It allows students to bypass certain courses or units within a degree or certification program because they've already completed equivalent coursework or qualifications.
- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** -is a process that allows individuals to receive credit for skills and knowledge they have acquired outside of formal education settings. This can include work experience, community involvement, volunteer activities, training programs, or other non-formal learning experiences. RPL assessments are typically used to recognise competencies gained through these experiences, which can be applied toward formal qualifications or certifications in higher education contexts.

1.1. Purpose

The intent of this Policy and Procedure is to set out APAC's approach to assessing and granting credit via advanced standing and RPL in APAC courses and in a manner compliant with mandated higher education standards and reflective of good practice.

1.2. Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all prospective students, current students, staff, and members of decision-making bodies of APAC.

1.3. Principles

- Advanced standing and RPL practices and processes ensure that the academic quality, integrity and standing of courses is not diminished.
- The integrity of the course of study and the qualifications are maintained.
- Credit is provided only where the relevant prior skills and knowledge have delivered learning outcomes broadly equivalent to those of the units or parts of courses for which advanced standing is sought.

- Granting of credit does not adversely affect a student's ability to make satisfactory academic progress in their course or to achieve academic success.
- Advanced standing and RPL processes and practices are consistent with relevant external accreditation or professional recognition requirements.

2. Policy Statements

2.1. Granting of Credit and Academic Standards

Advanced Standing and RPL involve granting credit for units or parts of a course based on prior learning, whether formal, informal, or non-formal. Assessment is evidence-based, ensuring academic integrity and that prior learning aligns broadly with course learning outcomes. Credits are granted only when prior learning outcomes are demonstrably equivalent, and students are not disadvantaged in achieving course outcomes.

2.2. Fairness and Consistency

Advanced Standing and RPL assessments consider all relevant evidence and follow established guidelines to ensure consistency. Credits aim to prevent unnecessary duplication of learning, while also ensuring students' academic progress and achievement levels remain unaffected.

2.3. Legislative and Regulatory Compliance

APAC's Advanced Standing and RPL processes comply with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021, the National Code of Practice for Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (Standard 12), and the AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy.

2.4. Review and Improvement

2.4.1 The Academic Board approves and monitors APAC's approach to Advanced Standing and RPL, with an annual review based on data related to student success, progress, and completion rates. Findings are reviewed by the Teaching and Learning Committee who make recommendations to the Academic Board who decide what adjustments, if any are needed.

2.4.2 Additional reviews incorporate feedback from stakeholders and benchmarking with other institutions to ensure process alignment and improvement.

2.4.3 Compliance issues and improvement opportunities identified in reviews are promptly addressed and implemented where feasible.

3. Procedure

3.1. Application, Evidence and Assessment

3.1.1. Applying for Advanced Standing and/or RPL

- i. Submit applications for Advanced Standing and RPL using the forms available on the APAC website, from Administration, or in the Student Handbook. Applications should be completed with the admission application and finalised by the census date to avoid tuition fees.

- ii. Applications must include comprehensive, accurate, and verifiable documentation.
- iii. For documents in languages other than English, certified English translations are required.
- iv. If uncertain about eligibility or suitability, applicants are encouraged to submit an Advanced Standing and/or an RPL application for pre-assessment.

3.1.2. Relevant Evidence

- i. Applications relying on prior formal learning must include verifiable evidence of successful completion of units of study or courses that were completed within the last 10 years. APAC may contact the issuing institution to verify the authenticity of the documents.

Appropriate evidence includes, but is not limited to:

- official academic transcripts;
 - official testamurs or award qualifications; and
 - official handbooks, course guide or units which provide details of the content, learning outcomes, and assessment.
- ii. Applicants relying on prior informal or non-formal learning which was completed within the last 10 years must include a statutory declaration or certified evidence verifying their prior learning.

Appropriate evidence includes, but is not limited to:

- employer's name and contact details;
- position title and position description;
- period of time the position was held;
- references from employers, including details of kinds of tasks undertaken whilst in their employ, and of the level of responsibilities;
- testimonials or letters from clients, supervisors, employers, contractors;
- reflective papers, journals or portfolios that relate past learning to the learning outcomes of the unit under application;
- examples of the applicant's work drawn from the workplace, social, community or other settings;
- direct demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge completion or capabilities of assessment or demonstration of capabilities relevant to the APAC course or unit;
- details of volunteering work;
- details of professional development or industry training programs completed; and

- details of not-for-credit courses or programs of study completed, such as continuing education courses.
- iii Applications of each type of prior learning must be supported by evidence specific to that learning. Applicants seeking further advice regarding evidence or documentation that may be provided in support of their application should contact APAC Admissions.

3.1.3. Assessing Applications

- i. All applications for advanced standing and RPL are assessed on a case-by-case basis and the timeline for assessment may vary based on the complexity of the application. However, applications will be finalised in a timely and transparent manner, assuming that all necessary evidence was provided with the application.
- ii. Complete applications are sent to the Director of Higher Education (DoHE) for consideration, who may delegate the assessment to the relevant Head of Discipline (HoD) or to a specialist assessor.
- iii. Applications will be assessed on all submitted evidence. Credit is granted only when prior learning outcomes broadly match the unit outcomes and will not negatively affect the applicant's academic success.
- iv. The DoHE or their delegate may request further information to assess the application or arrange a meeting with the student to discuss the application.
- v. Assessments adhere to the requirements of this Policy and Procedure, and take account of:
 - precedents in the granting of advanced standing;
 - established articulation pathways;
 - the learning outcomes of the prior learning relative to those of units or parts of courses for which credit is sought;
 - duration of the prior learning process and volume of learning;
 - how the learning outcomes were assessed in the prior learning process;
 - academic level and entry requirements for the course in which credit is sought; and
 - currency of prior learning: generally, formal learning completed over 10 years before assessment is not considered.
- vi. If assessment is delegated, the delegate completes the Academic Credit Recommendation in the application form and submits it to the DoHE for approval. Otherwise, the DoHE completes and approves it directly.

3.1.4. Credit Limits and Types of Credit

- i. Credit is granted in the form of academic credit for units. There are limits for the quantity of academic credit that may be granted.
- ii. The AQF Qualification Pathways Policy states:
 - 2.1.9 Credit agreements negotiated between issuing organisations for credit for students towards AQF qualifications at any level, vertical or horizontal, will take into account the comparability and equivalence of the:
 - learning outcomes
 - volume of learning
 - program of study, including content, and
 - learning and assessment approaches.
 - 2.1.10 Credit agreements negotiated between issuing organisations for credit for students towards higher level AQF qualifications in the same or a related discipline, having taken into account 2.1.9, should use the following as the basis of negotiations:
 - 50% credit for an Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree linked to a 3 year Bachelor Degree
 - 37.5% credit for an Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree linked to a 4 year Bachelor Degree
 - 33% credit for a Diploma linked to a 3 year Bachelor Degree
 - 25% credit for a Diploma linked to a 4 year Bachelor Degree.
 - 2.1.11 These agreements do not preclude any further institutional or individual student negotiations for additional credit
- iii. External credits - credit granted from an external provider's course work (inclusive of formal, informal and nonformal learning), credit into an award will be calculated as a percentage of the total credit points within the course and will maximally be 50%.
- iv. Internal Credits – credit granted from APAC course work will not be limited for students who have:
 - enrolled in nested qualifications or course suites,
 - or where the application of credit limits would require a student to re-complete the same or equivalent skills and knowledge that they have previously gained at APAC.
- v. Advanced standing for units will be indicated as 'RPL- Recognised Prior Learning' on the student's Academic Transcript and captured in the Advanced Standing and RPL Register
- vi. Credit may be granted as either:
 - Specified Credit, which is credit for specific units of a course;
 - Block Credit, which is credit granted towards whole stages or components of a course, such the first year of a course.

3.2. Notification of Assessment Outcomes, and Appeals

- i. Within ten (10) working days of the DoHE approving the assessment outcome, relevant documents will be provided to APAC Administration.
- ii. APAC Administration updates the applicant's Student Management System file and informs Recruitment, which notifies the applicant of the outcome within five (5) working days. If credit is granted, the notification will include the amount and type of credit and its impact on course duration.
- i. Applicants should review and sign their Advanced Standing Or RPL Application Outcome Letter to indicate acceptance.
- ii. If less credit is granted than requested, applicants may appeal following APAC's Student Complaints and Appeals Policy.

3.3. International Students Applying for Advanced Standing

If the applicant is an international student applying for a student visa the following process is followed:

- Where credit is granted before the issue of a visa, the course duration in the eCoE issued to the applicant is reduced to reflect the amended duration of the course in accordance with the granting of the credit.
- Where credit is granted after the issuing of a student visa, APAC will report the changed course duration via PRISMS.
- If an international student is granted credit, APAC will provide a written record of the advanced standing decision to the international student to accept and retain the written record of acceptance for two years after the international student ceases to be an accepted student.

4. Responsibilities

4.1. The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is responsible for:

- ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and regulatory requirements through the oversight of APAC activities and the development, monitoring and review of policies and practices and initiating prompt action where compliance is deemed to have lapsed.

4.2. The Academic Board

The Academic Board is responsible for:

- approving the academic parameters within which advanced standing is managed;
- monitoring the effectiveness of APAC's approach to advanced standing, its alignment with academic standards, and its impact on indicators of student success, including progression, grades achieved, and completion;
- considering, and taking actions based on, the findings of reviews of the implementation of this Policy and Procedure and all aspects of APAC's approach to advanced standing.

4.3. The Learning and Teaching Committee

The Learning and Teaching Committee is responsible for:

- considering, and recommending actions based on, the findings of reviews of the appropriateness of admissions requirements and of the effectiveness of the system for managing advanced standing.

4.4. The Director of Higher Education

The Director of Higher Education is responsible for:

- implementing this Policy and Procedure;
- conducting an annual evidence-based analysis of the appropriateness of advanced standing outcomes and processes, and producing a report, with relevant recommendations, for the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Academic Board.
- coordinating the regular review of the system for managing advanced standing, and producing a report, with relevant recommendations, for the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Academic Board.

4.5. Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- effectively carrying out the roles and tasks assigned to them, and the processes specified, in this Policy and Procedure;
- seeking advice where required on matters relevant to their responsibilities.
- Admissions Staff are responsible for updating the Advanced Standing Register.

4.6. Applicants

Applicants are responsible for:

- providing the information required by APAC to make credit assessments and to ensure that information is complete, accurate and verifiable.

5. Relevant Documents

- APAC Advanced Standing and RPL Application Form
- APAC Advanced Standing and RPL Register
- APAC Admissions Policy and Procedure
- APAC Student Appeals Form
- APAC Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure
- AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy
- Australian Qualifications Framework 2013
- Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000
- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
- National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018
- Student Handbook

6. Definitions

- **Advanced Standing** is the formal recognition of previously completed education, typically from a different institution, that meets the requirements of a program of study within the current institution.
- **ECoE** is electronically issued confirmation of enrolment with an education provider..
- **Formal Learning** is learning that takes place through a structured program of learning that leads to the full or partial achievement of an officially accredited qualification.
- **Informal Learning** is learning gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. Unlike formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not organised or externally structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support.
- **International Student** is a student who holds an Australian student visa which provides approval to study in an APAC course. It refers to a student who is not an Australian citizen (including Australian citizens with dual citizenship), a New Zealand citizen, a permanent humanitarian visa holder or a holder of a permanent visa other than a permanent humanitarian visa.
- **Non-Formal Learning** is learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to an officially accredited qualification.
- **PRISMS** is the Provider Registration and International Student Management System, used in relation to the management of Australian student visas and to comply with the ESOS Act.
- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Assessment Process** evaluates a student's informal or non-formal prior learning to determine whether it meets the learning outcomes of a specific course or module.

Version Control and Document Owner

Policy Category	Academic	Approval Date	30 October 2024	
Document Owner	Director of Higher Education	Approval Authority	Academic Board	
Audience	Staff and Students	Review Date	October 2027	
Revision History				
Version	Author	Change Summary	Date Approved	Date Effective
1.0	APAC	New Admissions and Onboarding Policy.	18 February 2022	
1.1	APAC	Minor changes to add withdrawals and orientation to the Admissions and Onboarding Policy.	2 March 2022	
2.0	DVE Business Solutions Pty Ltd	Review and update of policy and procedure. The Admissions and Onboarding Policy has been separated out into the Advanced Standing Policy and Procedure.	18 November 2022	
2.1	DVE Business Solutions Pty Ltd	Additional Principle added under s1.3; Update to S2.1; Minor admin updates to Procedures s3.1.1, s3.1.2, and s3.1.4; Update to 3.2iii to capture student acceptance.		6 June 2023
3.0	APAC	Change of Title. Added meanings of Advanced Standing and RPL under section 1. Added 3.1.4 ii, iii, iv	30 October 2024	30 October 2024