

Advanced Standing Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

The Australian Performing Arts Conservatory (APAC) Advanced Standing Policy and Procedure sets out the principles, scope, purpose, policy statements, procedures and responsibilities relating to the assessment and granting of advanced standing 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.

1.1. Purpose

The intent of this Policy and Procedure is to set out APAC's approach to assessing and granting advanced standing 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 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;
- Advanced standing is provided only where the relevant prior learning has delivered learning outcomes broadly equivalent to those of the units or parts of courses for which advanced standing is sought;
- Granting of advanced standing does not adversely affect a student's ability to make satisfactory academic progress in their course or to achieve academic success;
- Advanced standing processes and practices are consistent with relevant external accreditation or professional recognition requirements.

2. Policy Statements

2.1. Advanced Standing and Academic Standards

Advanced standing is the granting of credit towards units or parts of a course on the basis of the prior achievement of certain learning outcomes, which may be through formal, non-formal learning or informal learning. The assessment of advanced standing is evidence-based and academically defensible, taking appropriate account of the academic integrity of the course for which advanced standing is sought. Advanced standing is only granted where the relevant evidence demonstrates that the learning outcomes achieved through prior learning

are broadly equivalent to those associated with the units or parts of courses for which advanced standing is sought, and students granted credit are not disadvantaged in achieving the expected learning outcomes for the course of study or qualification.

2.2. Fairness and Consistency

The assessment of advanced standing takes full account of all relevant evidence provided in applications for advanced standing. Assessments of advanced standing are made in accordance with guidelines and processes designed to promote consistency across particular assessments, although allowing for recalibrations of judgement as a consequence of review findings and academic quality improvement. Advanced standing is premised on the avoidance of unreasonable or unfair duplication of learning balanced against the requirement that advanced standing granted in specific cases does not adversely affect a student's ability to make satisfactory academic progress in their course and does not detract from their levels of academic achievement.

2.3. Legislative and Regulatory Compliance

Advanced standing processes and practices at APAC will be compliant with education provider obligations under the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 and Standard 12 of the National Code of Practice for Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018. They also align with the principles of the AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy.

2.4. Review and Improvement

- 2.4.1. APAC's approach to advanced standing, exemplified in its processes and practice, and in the implementation of this Policy and Procedure is approved and monitored by the Academic Board. Monitoring, and resultant actions are informed by an annual evidence-based, analytic review focusing on the academic success, progress, and completion of students who have been granted advanced standing. Review findings are provided to the Learning and Teaching Committee for consideration, and as a basis for making recommendations to the Academic Board. Subsequently the Academic Board decides what adjustments, if any, are made to APAC's approach to advanced standing.
- 2.4.2. The annual review is supplemented by regular reviews, utilising feedback from prospective applicants, applicants, enrolled students, staff involved in advanced standing processes, and other stakeholders, advice from external experts, and benchmarking with standards, processes and practices at other institutions.
- 2.4.3. Compliance issues identified in the review processes, including issues concerning the proper application of this Policy and Procedure, are expeditiously addressed. Identified opportunities for improvement are considered and pursued where feasible.

3. Procedure

3.1. Application, Evidence and Assessment

3.1.1. Applying for Advanced Standing

- i. All applications for advanced standing must be made using the *Advanced Standing Application Form*, available on the APAC website, from APAC Administration, and through a link in the Student Handbook. Applications for advanced standing should be submitted with the application for admission and finalised with the offer outcome. Applications are to be received and finalised by the census date, otherwise tuition fees for the units being applied for may apply.
- ii. Comprehensive, accurate and verifiable documentation must be submitted to support the application.
- iii. Where the original supporting documentation is in a language other than English, certified English translations must be provided.
- iv. If the applicant is unsure of their eligibility and/or suitability of their prior learning, they are advised to submit an application for Advanced Standing for 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 undertaken 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 must have been undertaken 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 may be supported by evidence of each kind of prior 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 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 lecturer.
- iii. Applications will be assessed based on all the evidence and documentation provided. Advanced standing is only granted where it is clear that there is a broad equivalence between the learning outcomes of the prior learning and the learning outcomes of the units for which advanced standing is sought; and where the granting of advanced standing will not adversely impact the applicant's academic success in their intended course.
- 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 the prior learning - generally formal learning undertaken more than the 10 years before the advanced standing assessment is not taken into account;
- vi. Where the DoHE has delegated the assessment, the delegate completes the Academic Credit Recommendation in the application form and submits it to the DoHE, otherwise it is completed by the DoHE. In either case, approval is required by the DoHE before the recommendation is actioned.

3.1.4. Advanced Standing, Credit Limits and Types of Credit

- i. Advanced standing 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 provides for examples for negotiating credit agreements between institutions towards higher level AQF qualifications in the same or related discipline. These examples are included as a guide to the maximum limits for granting credit:
 - a. 50% credit for an Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree linked to a 3-year Bachelor degree (or equivalent).
 - b. 33% credit for a Diploma linked to a 3-year Bachelor's Degree (or equivalent).
- iii. Credit towards a bachelor's degree may be no greater than 50% of the credit value of that degree.
- iv. Advanced standing for units will be indicated as 'RPL- Recognised Prior Learning' on the student's Academic Transcript and captured in the Advanced Standing Register.
- v. 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 will update the applicant's file in the Student Management System and advise Recruitment who will communicate the assessment outcome to the applicant within five (5) working days. Where academic credit is granted, the notification will confirm the quantum and nature of that credit and information regarding the consequences of accepting that credit on duration of the course.
- iii. Applicants are asked to review their Advanced Standing Application Outcome Letter and indicate their acceptance by returning the letter, signed. .
- iv. Where less credit is granted than was sought, applicants are advised that they may lodge an appeal in accordance with APAC's *Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure*.

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 advanced standing 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 advanced standing is granted after the issuing of a student visa, APAC will report the changed course duration via PRISMS.
- If an international student is granted advanced standing, 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:

- Ensure 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 advanced standing assessments and to ensure that information is complete, accurate and verifiable.

5. Relevant Documents

- APAC Advanced Standing Application Form
- APAC Advanced Standing 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 recognition and granting of credit towards a unit/s or parts of a course on the basis of prior achievement of certain learning outcomes, which may be through formal, non-formal learning or informal. It reduces the number of units the student must undertake to successfully complete the course.
- **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.

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