

<b>Policy Hierarchy link</b>	<b>Recognition of Prior Learning Policy</b> <b>Admissions Policy</b>		
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students)		
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Director, Student and Academic Services		
<b>Superseded Documents</b>			
<b>File Number</b>	2013/18135		
<b>Associated Documents</b>	Recognition of Prior Learning Policy Admissions Policy Admission to Coursework Programs Procedure Admission to Higher Degree Research Programs Procedure Structure of Postgraduate Programs – Policy Structure of Postgraduate Programs – Procedure Structure of Undergraduate Programs – Policy Structure of Undergraduate Programs - Procedure		
<b>Version</b>	<b>Authorised by</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>
1.0	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	5 November 2013	5 November 2013

## Contents

1.	Purpose and Scope.....	1
2.	Definitions.....	1
3.	Procedure.....	2
3.1	RPL for entry into a program.....	2
3.2	RPL for progression through a program.....	3
3.3	Responsibilities for RPL.....	3
3.4	Assessing RPL.....	4
3.4.1	Evidence for RPL.....	5
3.5	Outcome of Applications for Credit.....	5
3.6	Appeals.....	5
4.	Review & History.....	5

## 1. Purpose and Scope

The *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy* outlines the principles and values that form the basis of UNSW's approach to recognising prior learning for admission into and/or credit toward programs of study.

The RPL procedure has been developed to support Faculties in ensuring a level of coherence and consistency in practices at UNSW regarding:

- RPL for entry into a program;
- RPL for progression through a program;
- Responsibilities for RPL;
- Outcome of RPL; and
- Appeals.

The RPL Procedure applies across the University to undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs. It can be used as the basis for Faculty RPL procedures.

## 2. Definitions

All terms are defined in the RPL Policy or explained in this document.

### 3. Procedure

Prior learning can be assessed for equivalence with UNSW study, or assessed as equivalent to the pre-requisite qualification for admission to a program, following the procedure outlined below.

#### 3.1 RPL for entry into a program

Admission to any undergraduate or postgraduate coursework program requires assessment of a student's previous learning to ensure that admission criteria have been met. Typically, admission requirements are met through formal learning leading to qualifications (such as the HSC for bachelor degree programs or a bachelor degree for postgraduate degree programs). The *Admissions Policy* and Procedure referred to elsewhere in this document specify many of the general rules and principles regarding admission criteria.

An individual's prior learning will be assessed in relation to the admission requirements for a program. If applicable, the methods of demonstrating the equivalent learning outcomes from prior learning may include assessment of:

**Formal learning** – learning that takes place through a structured program of study that is delivered by education or training providers, and which leads to the full or partial achievement of an officially accredited qualification.

Articulation arrangements between UNSW and other tertiary education providers can be used to provide automatic admission into one qualification from another, for example where:

- a) the completion of requirements in one program contributes to the satisfaction of program requirements of another program;
- b) admission to the subsequent program may be dependent and possibly guaranteed, upon satisfactory completion of the prior program at a specified level;
- c) credit for study completed in one program which is to be recognised for the requirements of a subsequent program is approved as part of an agreement with an external provider, or as part of a UNSW program structure in cases where only UNSW programs are involved.

Where articulation arrangements are established, the agreed credit outcomes and the defined pathway between the linked qualifications will be documented and made publicly available.

The credit agreed by UNSW in an articulation arrangement will be applied automatically to any student on successful completion or partial completion of the previous qualification.

Where a precedent has been set, assessment of RPL for formal learning will be delegated to the Admissions Office.

**Non-formal learning** – learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to an officially accredited qualification.

**Informal learning** – learning that takes place through life and work experience. Unlike formal or non-formal learning, it is not organised or externally structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. RPL requirements for informal learning, including demonstrable expertise, relevant work experience and professional development activities and informal learning acquired through life experience will be specified as part of the entry requirements and/or academic rules for the relevant program.

In cases of non-formal and informal learning and where there is no formal articulation agreement, RPL assessment procedures require applicants to demonstrate how admission requirements for the program have been met.

RPL for informal learning will be assessed by the relevant Program Authority.

Once RPL is established and recognized for admission into a program, the applicant may be given credit for courses in the program.

### 3.2 RPL for progression through a program

An individual's formal, non-formal and/or informal learning in relation to courses may be used to grant credit and expedite progression through a program. Credit can be granted as advanced standing or an exemption.

**Advanced standing** - Credit aimed at optimizing student progression through award programs by recognising prior learning as the basis for satisfying requirements for some courses in that program. Advanced standing may be based on formal, non-formal and/or informal learning and may be granted in the form of specified or unspecified credit.

- **Specified credit** – Credit granted when a UNSW Program Authority accepts that an exact or near exact equivalence to one or more courses studied either at UNSW or at another tertiary provider can be demonstrated. Once agreed, this recognition becomes a precedent for other students. How the credit is used towards the award is covered by the program rules.
- **Unspecified credit** – Credit granted when an exact or near exact course equivalence cannot be demonstrated. Unspecified credit is most often granted when the prior learning is deemed to be equivalent in amount and in academic value to one or more of the courses comprising the elective requirement of a program.

**Exemption** – Where students are exempted from a specified course, but they are not granted a reduction in the amount of learning required to achieve a qualification.

- **Substitution** – Substitution is a type of exemption whereby students are exempted from a specified compulsory course, yet are still required to complete, or substitute, an equivalent course to the same unit of credit value.

For undergraduate programs, applicants who are admitted to the University after completing, or partially completing, the requirements of another degree or award of another tertiary institution, must complete a program of study deemed to be no less than that required of students in full-time attendance in the final year of the program concerned.

For post-graduate coursework programs, RPL cannot be counted for credit toward more than 50% of a UNSW qualification, except where faculties have formal articulation arrangements.

### 3.3 Responsibilities for RPL

Faculty Standing Committees are responsible for RPL, including ensuring that:

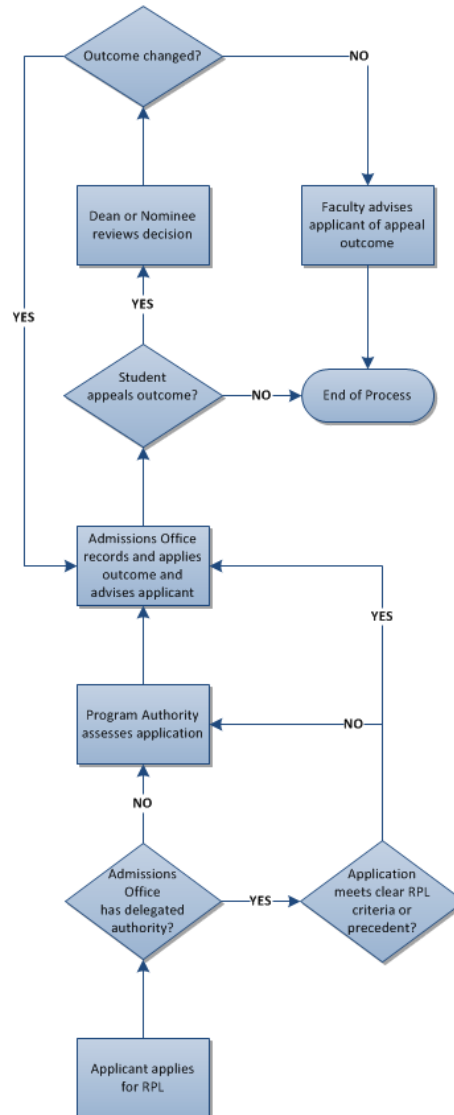
- Processes and procedures are streamlined and documented according to RPL Policy and Procedure as well as the UNSW *Admissions Policy* and Procedure;
- Applications for admission or credit are judged against the learning outcomes attained, content and volume of learning, using the assessment standards for the specific qualification;
- Processes are evidence-based, transparent and accountable, and RPL decisions are subject to appeal;
- Once procedures for RPL are established, they are made publicly available, and are easily locatable, for example on an appropriate faculty or School website with links to the University Handbook.

Where Faculties and/or Programs have particular requirements for RPL, additional to that stated in the *Admissions Policy*, *Admission to Coursework Programs Procedure*; RPL Policy and Procedures, Faculty Program Authorities are responsible for providing the Admissions Office with these requirements and for providing applicants with specific guidelines as required.

The Admissions Office is responsible for assessing RPL where a precedent and pre-agreed criteria are established and where academic judgments are not required.

Where judgments are required in assessing individual applications for RPL, these are undertaken by academics or teaching staff with expertise in the area.

### Flowchart of the RPL process



### 3.4 Assessing RPL

Assessment of RPL requires judgment about:

- whether the prior learning meets the admission criteria specified for the program;
- how accurately the prior learning demonstrated in the application matches the learning outcomes of the UNSW program or courses;
- the units of credit to be conceded in the form of one or more courses;
- the type of "credit" (for example, specified credit for a block of courses in a program).

RPL assessment methods should:

- Address the specific evidence required to demonstrate prior achievement of the learning outcomes and assessment requirements of the particular qualification for which credit is sought;

- Provide a range of ways for individuals to demonstrate that they have met the required outcomes.

### 3.4.1 Evidence for RPL

The types of evidence required to demonstrate prior learning include but are not limited to:

- Certificates of completion or partial completion of formal learning qualifications;
- Records of assessment activities which relate to the learning outcomes of the course or program;
- Examples of the applicant's work from workplace, social, community or other contexts which demonstrate relevant skills, knowledge or competencies;
- Membership of professional organizations that require members to meet entry qualifications that are equivalent to all or part of the course or program;
- Testimonials of skills, knowledge or competencies from workplace supervisors that demonstrate relevant prior learning;
- Reflective pieces where applicants relate past learning and/or experience to the learning outcomes of the course or program.

### 3.5 Outcome of Applications for Credit

In normal circumstances, Faculties should endeavour to assess applications within a ten [10] working day period.

### 3.6 Appeals

An enrolled UNSW student may appeal the decision of the Program Authority by forwarding a written notice of appeal to the Presiding Member of the relevant Faculty Standing Committee, normally within ten [10] working days of receiving the decision.

The notice of appeal must state the grounds on which the applicant is seeking the appeal.

An appeal will normally be based on the following grounds:

- Procedural irregularity;
- New evidence.

The Presiding Member of the Faculty Standing Committee [or nominee] will consider the appeal and may consult with any relevant academic staff. The applicant may also be consulted.

The normal timeframe for assessing an appeal will be within ten [10] working days of the receipt of the appeal.

## 4. Review & History

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students) is responsible for review of this procedure.

Version	Authorised by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Sections modified
1.0	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	5 November 2013	5 November 2013	This is a new procedure