Higher Education Academic Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) Charles Darwin University ('the University', 'CDU') recognises that learners take diverse pathways to achieve qualifications and values students' prior learning, whether formal, informal or non-formal.

(2) The University is committed to maintaining high academic standards and achieving quality outcomes for graduates, and as such will carefully assess applications for advanced standing.

Section 2 - Purpose

(3) This procedure outlines how the University assesses and recognises prior formal, non-formal and informal learning for the purpose of meeting the admission criteria, and/or facilitating mobility between higher and vocational education courses and qualifications.

Section 3 - Scope

(4) This procedure applies to all students in and applicants for all higher education coursework courses of the University.

a. Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidates admissions processes are documented in the Higher Degree by Research - Admission and Enrolment Procedure.
b. Students enrolled in vocational education and training (VET) courses should refer to the VET Recognition Procedure.

Section 4 - Procedure

General rules

(5) Advanced standing will only be granted where the:

a. integrity of the CDU course and qualification is maintained;
b. Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level is equivalent;
c. student will achieve the expected learning outcomes for the course at the time of course completion; and
d. student will not be academically disadvantaged if the advanced standing is approved.

(6) When students receive a credit transfer for studies completed at another institution, the grades awarded by that institution are not transferable and will not be included on the CDU transcript or included in the GPA calculation as per

the Grading Policy.

(7) When credit has been granted through a credit transfer, no further credit may be granted in the same course on the basis of:

a. the prior learning which the credit transfer recognised; or
b. the approved credit on the student's transcript.

(8) If a student has failed a unit at CDU, advanced standing can only be granted where the nominated assessor has sighted evidence that the unit learning outcomes have been met successfully through subsequent learning.

(9) Previously granted advanced standing must be reapplied for when changing a course and will be assessed as per this procedure. Advanced standing granted previously is not a guarantee that advanced standing will be awarded in a future course.

(10) Advanced standing precedents will be recorded by CDU in a precedents database.

Types of advanced standing

(11) Subject to the limits set out in this procedure, the University will award the following types of advanced standing.

Specified credit

(12) 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;
    i. Learning outcomes must be at least 80% similar.
    ii. Integral learning outcomes are demonstrated or will be able to be demonstrated through course completion. These may include compulsory or mandatory components required for successful course completion and accreditation.
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; and
e. AQF level: the level of learning, the relative complexity and/or depth of achievement and the autonomy required to demonstrate that achievement.

(13) The nominated assessor will determine the outcome of applications for specified credit. Once a decision has been determined, it will be entered on the credit precedents database as a precedent for future applications.

(14) When approved, specified credit will be listed as 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

(15) Unspecified credit may only be granted against specialist elective units or general elective units 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.

(16) The nominated assessor will determine the outcome of applications for unspecified credit. Once a decision has been determined, it will be entered on the credit precedents database as a precedent for future applications.

(17) When approved, unspecified credit will be recorded as a certain number of Credit points (CP) of “Unspecified Credit Level X” where “X” is the equivalent year level of the units completed.

(18) Unspecified Credit does not recognise that the student has achieved specified unit learning outcomes and does not automatically meet pre-requisite requirements. Unspecified credit may be used as a basis for approving a pre-requisite exemption.

Block credit

(19) Block credit may only be granted in higher education qualifications where there is an approved block credit arrangement detailing a pathway from an alternative (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.

(20) Unless limited by 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 (CP)).
b. 8 unit exemptions for completion of a Diploma (80 Credit points (CP)).
c. 16 unit exemptions for completion of an Advanced Diploma (160 Credit points (CP)).

(21) Block credit arrangements will be approved under the Higher Education Course and Unit Accreditation Procedure and will be entered into the credit precedents database.

(22) Block credit may be applied at the point of admission.

(23) 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. Block credit can be used to meet pre-requisite requirements.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

(24) 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 into account when establishing RPL.

(25) Assessments will be made by a nominated assessor.

(26) 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.

Credit for external studies, exchange or study abroad

(27) Students who wish to study at another institution as part of their CDU course must apply for pre-approval of credit following the process outlined in this procedure. The application process and requirements for approving credit are the same.

(28) Study at an external institution may only be approved when the unit is not available at CDU or is not available within a reasonable timeframe.

(29) External institution processes and timelines may cause delays that would make a student ineligible to undertake an external opportunity.

(30) If a student needs to change their enrolment at the host institution, they must obtain approval for the new unit. Approval is not guaranteed.

(31) To receive credit after completing the unit students must submit acceptable evidence compliant with the requirements of this procedure. Unofficial academic records will not be accepted.

(32) Credit for studies completed during intermission or deferment is granted at the discretion of the nominated assessor unless the student has obtained prior approval for this study.

Credit precedents

(33) Once a decision has been determined, it will be entered on the credit precedents database as a precedent for future applications.

Prioritising the awarding of credit

(34) 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 elective units, then general elective units; then
    ii. Unspecified credit if available; then
    iii. Recognition of Prior Learning.

Advanced standing limits

(35) 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

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

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

(38) Specified or unspecified credit transfer will only be granted where prior formal learning is current, meaning:

a. in HE, completed no more than seven (7) years prior to the date of application, unless agreed in writing by the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC);
b. in VET, recognised in a national training package.

(39) A completed Certificate I, II or III cannot be used as a basis of credit transfer 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.

(40) Completed undergraduate (UG) studies cannot be used as a basis of credit transfer towards postgraduate (PG)

study unless the UG units are included in the accredited PG qualification.

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

(42) 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 an advanced standing application. However, a student may apply for advanced standing based on additional formal learning.

(43) For double degrees, advanced standing may not exceed two-thirds of the Credit points (CP) that contribute to each single award.

Vocational education and training qualifications

(44) A student may be granted one or more types of credit towards a higher education coursework course for all of the required components of a vocational qualification.

Higher education qualifications

(45) In higher education qualifications, students must undertake a minimum volume of learning at the University in order to qualify with a University award, as outlined in Table 1.

a. 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.
b. Professional accreditation requirements may further limit the volume of advanced standing permitted in a higher education award.

(46) Credit will not be awarded:

a. on the basis of partially completed unit(s);
b. where the applicant has received a fail or conceded pass (or equivalent) for the prior learning; or
c. for prior learning on whose basis advanced standing has already been awarded towards a course through credit transfer.

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

Table 1: Volume of learning (VOL) limits for advanced standing

Total VOL in the award	Maximum amount of advanced standing (including all credit transfer and RPL)	Minimum VOL completed at the University	Minimum VOL completed under the award
40 Credit points (CP)	20 credit points (CP)	20 credit points (CP)	10 credit points (CP)
80 credit points (CP)	50 credit points (CP)	30 credit points (CP)	20 credit points (CP)
120 credit points (CP)	80 credit points (CP)	40 credit points (CP)	30 credit points (CP)
160 credit points (CP)	100 credit points (CP)	60 credit points (CP)	50 credit points (CP)
240 credit points (CP)	160 credit points (CP)	80 credit points (CP)	70 credit points (CP)
320 credit points (CP)	240 credit points (CP)	80 credit points (CP)	70 credit points (CP)

Exceeding advanced standing limits

(48) The Faculty PVC may approve, in writing, advanced standing beyond the volume of learning limits prescribed in Table 1, providing there is an academic rationale consistent with the principles of the Academic Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy. This includes instances where another provider ceases to deliver a qualification and the University agrees to teach those students to completion.

Exit awards, course transfers and transitions

Exit awards

(49) A student may apply for an exit award if it exists in their course and if their completed unit enrolments satisfy the requirements of such an award.

(50) A student's grades, competency outcomes or notations will be automatically transferred to the exit award, and therefore advanced standing limits will not apply.

Course transfer

(51) Current students transferring courses will have credit automatically assessed as part of the transfer.

(52) Where a student has advanced standing approved whilst enrolled in one course and then transfers to a different course, advanced standing for equivalent units will:

a. be automatically transferred for VET enrolments.
b. not be automatically transferred for HE enrolments, however students will receive an outline of what credit they are eligible for and may select what credit they receive.

Course transitions

(53) A student who has had credit approved whilst enrolled in one version of a course and then transitions to a newer version of the course will have their credit automatically mapped and applied against the units of the newer qualification, minimising any loss of Credit points (CP) or competencies.

Supporting documentation and evidence

(54) Students must provide supporting documentation and evidence for the University to assess their advanced standing application.

(55) 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.

(56) Evidence supplied must be current, valid, sufficient and authentic, and the University may require references to assist in authenticating claims.

(57) Students will be advised of any additional documentary evidence required for the application to be assessed.

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

Specified and unspecified credit

(59) When requesting assessment of formal prior learning, the minimum requirements of supporting documentation and evidence for each unit are:

a. Unit outline or syllabus copy detailing unit content including:

i. AQF level or equivalent assessed under the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) published assessments or as documented in current Country Education Profiles issued by Australian Education International, UK National Information Centre (ENIC) or grades awarded under the European Credit Transfer System for completed courses;
ii. equivalent full-time study load or Credit points (CP);
iii. unit description;
iv. learning outcomes; and
v. the unit assessments undertaken.

b. Evidence of successful completion:
i. an AQF qualification testamur issued by an accredited institution; or
ii. an official academic transcript issued by an accredited institution; or
iii. a statement of attainment issued by an accredited institution; or
iv. an overseas qualification issued by an institution listed in the AEI NOOSR Country Education Profiles.

(60) Pass Conceded (PC) or equivalent grades will not be accepted as they do not indicate successful completion of the unit.

a. Students may apply for RPL on the basis of PC grades and other relevant learning.

(61) The University may request additional details to determine unit equivalence. Specific details of what is required will be provided by CDU when additional information is requested.

Block credit

(62) 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

(63) Students applying for RPL are responsible for providing detailed evidence demonstrating how the learning outcomes have been achieved and their capability.

(64) When requesting Recognition of Prior Learning, the minimum requirements of supporting documentation and evidence for each unit are:

a. Completion of the HE Recognition of Prior Learning form;
b. Resume or curriculum vitae;
c. work documents that describe roles, tasks, achievements which may include:
i. position descriptions
ii. evidence of responsibilities within defined processes;
iii. evidence of performance review;
iv. documentation of recognition of merit;
v. documentation covering industry roles (committees, representatives), industry awards;
vi. portfolios containing samples of work;
d. At least two references which may include:
i. letters or references from employers (on business letterhead);
ii. references or testimonials from clients (that are not family members or friends);
e. certificates from non-award qualifications, professional development, short courses;

f. other corroborating evidence supporting claims of competency; and/or
g. other documentation or evidence asked for by the assessor.

(65) The faculty may require additional evidence which may include:

a. a portfolio
b. completion of an assessment task.

(66) A student may be required to undergo an evaluation against unit competencies or learning outcomes. RPL assessments may also include a formal evaluation such as an interview, presentation, challenge exam or practical demonstration.

Application process

(67) Up to date application information will be provided on the CDU website and in the student admission letter.

(68) Current CDU students transferring courses will have credit automatically assessed as part of the transfer.

(69) International students will have their advanced standing assessed at time of admission.

(70) Applications may take up to 20 days to process. Processing time is counted from the first working day following receipt of all documentation or the receipt of additional evidence where requested.

a. The University will contact applicants where a processing deadline will not be met and will provide personalised enrolment advise to minimise disruption to studies.
b. Unit withdrawals or refunds will not be provided for an application processed within the standard processing times.

(71) Students may submit an application at any time, however they accept responsibility for impacts to their enrolment due to late submissions.

(72) Students should note that the granting or rescinding of advanced standing may affect a student's Study Plan or enrolment and will not be accepted as a reason for granting refunds or approving late enrolment changes.

Assessment of advanced standing applications

(73) Student Administration will check the student has completed the application form and provided the minimum supporting evidence. They may request further input or evidence from students.

a. Student Administration may reject an application if the application does not meet:
    i. the minimum requirements set out in this procedure; or
    ii. the requirements of a delegated decision. For example, an application for recognition of non-formal learning where only formal learning may be used as credit in a course due to external accreditation requirements.

(74) Student Administration will forward the application form and supporting evidence to the nominated assessor within 5 working days.

a. During peak times, delays may be expected. Peak times include Orientation and Week 1 of Semester 1, Semester 2 and Summer Semester.

(75) Where a precedent exists, Student Administration will apply the credit.

(76) The nominated assessor will review the evidence on a case by case basis and provide a decision within 10 working days.

a. Where a longer timeframe is required, the faculty will advise Student Administration in writing with the reason and an expected date for their response.
b. Longer periods may be required during peak times, where no precedent exists or for recognition of prior learning applications.
c. Where a satisfactory response has not been communicated within this timeframe, it will be escalated to the Faculty PVC.

(77) When assessing the application and evidence provided the nominated assessor may request more evidence through Student Administration

(78) When a decision is reached, the nominated assessor will:

a. send one consolidated response for all units in the student's application;
b. advise Student Administration to update the credit precedents database; and
c. clearly explain the evidence-based reasons for the approval or non-approval decision in student-friendly language with explicit reasons such as:
    i. there is/is not sufficient evidence on which to base the decision;
    ii. the unit is/is not substantially similar;
    iii. the prior learning is applicable/is no longer applicable due to changes to the course content since prior learning was completed;
    iv. granting credit would academically disadvantage student as they would miss key learning;
    v. granting credit would/would not maintain coherence to the award; and/or
    vi. any other detailed reason explaining how the granting of credit would not maintain the principles of the Academic Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy or the general rules of this procedure.

(79) Student Administration will:

a. forward the response from the faculty to the student containing:
    i. the reasons their application was or was not approved;
    ii. implications of the decision;
    iii. the student's updated Study Plan; and
b. record approved precedents in the credit precedents database; and
c. update the student record.

Amendment to advanced standing

(80) Advanced standing 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).

Monitoring and reporting

(81) Each Faculty is required to review the credit precedents database and advise Student Administration of updates:

a. a minimum of every 5 years; and
b. when a unit or course has changed significantly and the precedent is no longer relevant.

Complaints

(82) A student can submit a complaint in accordance with step 2 of the Complaints Policy – Students.

Section 5 - Non-Compliance

(83) Non-compliance with governance documents is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct - Employees 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 2025 and the Code of Conduct - Students.

(84) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the Complaints and Grievance Policy and Procedure - Employees and Complaints Policy - Students.

(85) 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	26th August 2025
Review Date	26th August 2028
Approval Authority	Academic Board
Approval Date	25th August 2025
Expiry Date	30th October 2025
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 --- Student and Academic Services

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Advanced standing" - A form of credit for any previous learning, including credit transfer based upon previous formal study, articulation arrangements or recognition of prior learning (RPL).

"Faculty" - An organisational and academic unit in the University that delivers courses and conducts research.

"Credit points (CP)" - An indication of the estimated student study load to meet learning outcomes. CP are used in calculating a student's Grade Point Average. Unit study loads and course study loads are both measured by CP.

"Core unit" - A unit that is compulsory for a course. Higher education core units collectively directly address the field of study and all associated learning outcomes of an award course. Core units should address the University's graduate attributes. Vocational education and training core units are compulsory for attaining the qualification as specified in the Training Package or Accredited Course documentation.

"General elective unit" - A unit that is not compulsory for an award but contributes to the credit point requirement for that award. General elective units are designed to provide an opportunity for breadth of learning.

"Pre-requisite" - A unit that a student must successfully complete in order to enrol in another specified unit.

"Specialist elective unit" - A unit that is compulsory for a major, minor, or specialisation within an award course. Specialist elective units directly address the course learning outcomes and should address the University's graduate attributes.

"University" - Charles Darwin University, a body corporate established under section 4 of the Charles Darwin University Act 2003. The University is comprised of the various faculties, CDU TAFE, organisational units, and formal committees, including the governing University Council and Academic Board.

"Exit award" - A lower-level qualification a student may graduate from, prior to completing the full requirements of the course they were admitted to. See also the glossary definitions for "course nest", "integrated course", and "nested course".

"Governance document" - means policy or procedure published in the Governance Document Library. Policies and

procedures are collectively called ‘governance documents’ and are often referred to as ‘policy’ or ‘University policy’.

"Higher education coursework course" - Higher education coursework courses include award courses, which lead to a qualification recognised by the AQF, and accredited non-award courses, including enabling, foundation, preparatory, bridging, study abroad, international exchange, and other types of accredited non-award courses.

"Nominated assessor" - The academic staff member who assesses applications for credit and recognition of prior learning (RPL). In vocational education, this will usually be an academic staff member qualified to assess in the relevant discipline area. In higher education, RPL assessments will usually be completed by the relevant Course Coordinator.