Australian
Qualifications Framework

AQF COUNCIL

AQF National Policy and Guidelines on Credit Arrangements

Final Draft

May 2009

Table of contents

Note: This policy document was endorsed at the AQF Council meeting on May 12, 2009 as an interim policy pending further work being undertaken by the Council during 2009.

1   Introduction

This policy forms part of the Australian Qualifications Framework and represents the progression of Ministerial objectives to support increased use of credit arrangements in Australia's education and training system, providing benefits for students and enhancing their learning pathways.

This policy sets out Australia's national policy on credit arrangements and replaces all previous relevant Ministerial Principles and AQF Policies and Guidelines addressing credit, credit transfer, articulation, cross-sector linkages and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

This policy comprises:

- overriding policy and principles to drive and guide credit arrangements
- operational guidelines that provide additional guidance to assist education and training providers[1] and other bodies involved in credit arrangements to implement the policy and principles, and
- credit terminology to support common understandings and consistent interpretation of the terminology in order to support the use of credit arrangements within the Australian context.

All sections of this policy should be used by education and training providers when developing new and/or revised credit arrangements and when providing information on credit to students.

A single, consolidated policy that encompasses existing policies, operational guidelines and common credit terminology provides more effective and useful policy guidance to education and training providers and other bodies involved in developing, determining and supporting credit arrangements. As such, this policy incorporates and replaces the following documents:

1. MCEETYA: Good Practice Principles for Credit Transfer and Articulation (May 2005)
2. MCEETYA: Principles for Good Practice Information Provision on Credit Transfer from Vocational Education and Training to Higher Education (July 2006)
3. AQF COUNCIL: AQF National Guidelines on Cross-Sector Qualification Linkages (2002; 2004)
4. AQF COUNCIL: AQF National Principles and Operational Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (2004)

The fundamental principles and operational guidance in each of the four previous policy documents have been maintained, but the language has been modified to reflect the agreed common terminology on credit.

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[1] In the context of this policy, the term education and training provider is intended to include all providers of Australian Qualifications Framework qualifications. These include universities, self-accrediting and non self-accrediting higher education providers, vocational education training providers and schools providing the Senior Secondary Certificate of Education.

Terms and definitions have been developed to provide a common and consistent language across all education and training sectors to support credit arrangements within the Australian context. They form part of the policy and further details are set out in Appendix 2: *Agreed credit terminology*. This section should be referred to when reading and interpreting this policy document and the operational guidelines.

The principal users of this policy will be Australia's education and training providers issuing AQF qualifications. It is designed to guide and facilitate their credit arrangements.

However, this policy and guidelines should not impinge upon or replace the academic integrity of courses of study or the autonomy of individual education and training providers in making decisions on admission, prerequisites for ongoing study, and the levels and amounts of credit conferred in their courses of study.

Individual students may also find this policy of use in gaining an increased understanding of credit arrangements and in guiding their discussions and negotiations with education and training providers about potential credit.

Other bodies involved in the development, accreditation or recognition of qualifications will find this policy relevant to their general understanding of the role of credit in developing learning pathways and outcomes.

2   Intent and purpose

Credit arrangements are an essential feature of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). They are defined as those processes that provide the means to translate different types of learning into credit outcomes towards a qualification offered by Australia's recognised education and training providers.

Effective credit arrangements provide the basis for a cohesive national qualifications system and supporting multi-directional pathways between the senior secondary school, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education sectors.

Enhancing credit arrangements can contribute to a more accessible and effective education and training system for students and employers. An increase in availability of credit can provide efficiencies in terms of time and costs for students, education and training providers and governments.

Clear and effective credit arrangements and information about the processes are key components of a qualifications system and provide support for lifelong learning. Lifelong learning encompasses all formal, non-formal and informal learning people undertake throughout their lives. The provision of credit for these activities both enables and encourages individuals to enter into, and/or continue with, formal education or training by giving recognition to, and avoiding duplication of, relevant previous learning. It also supports equity and fairness in access to, and participation in, education and training.

The benefits of credit arrangements

For students, the benefits of credit arrangements are that new or further formal learning:

* is built on existing skills and knowledge;
* focuses on developing new skills and knowledge;
* reduces real costs and opportunity costs associated with gaining qualifications;
* encourages students with limited or no experience of post-compulsory formal education or training to undertake qualifications; and
* supports learner transfer and progression into and between qualifications.

In addition, credit arrangements:

* enable pathways into and between qualifications to facilitate the different needs of students throughout their lives;
* increase opportunities for students to access education and training and improve student mobility between sectors and institutions;
* provide a currency that converts the value of any learning towards formal qualifications; and
* provide students with assurance of education and training pathways that give credit for their knowledge and skills gained through previous work and study.

For education and training providers, the benefits of credit arrangements include:

- increasing their responsiveness to students' education or training needs;
- facilitating access to qualifications;
- support in designing more coherent pathways for students;
- more effective use of teaching resources; and
- building new or improved relationships and collaborative opportunities with other education and training providers and sectors.

For industry and employers, the main benefit of credit arrangements is:

- addressing regional, community and industry needs for a skilled and knowledgeable workforce by formally recognising the existing skills and knowledge of workers.

3   Policy

All education and training providers who offer AQF qualifications will develop systems and processes to implement credit arrangements.

The principles and operational guidelines in this document will inform the credit arrangement processes of education and training providers.

Using the guidelines in the development of organisational policies and procedures will help ensure:

- that opportunities are created for Australians to have all their learning recognised and contribute to a qualification;
- that pathways exist that enhance lifelong learning;
- awareness and understanding of credit arrangements and how they can be used is enhanced;
- clarity, consistency and fairness in implementing credit arrangements within sectors and between sectors ;
- a means for establishing the equivalence of learning outcomes; and
- the quality, integrity and standing of Australian qualifications.

Enhancing credit arrangements within and across Australia's education and training system will support lifelong learning by:

- encouraging learner/student participation in all levels of formal learning;
- facilitating learner mobility into and between education and training sectors and providers; and
- enhancing the educational effectiveness of formal learning.

This policy forms part of the Australian Qualifications Framework and embeds the agreed credit terminology on credit arrangements and related terms into the AQF.

4   Principles

The following principles for good practice apply nationally to all credit arrangements in and between all education and training sectors.

Credit arrangements will:

1. be offered by all education and training providers that offer AQF qualifications using a systematic institutional approach with clear, accessible and transparent policies and procedures;

2. be evidence-based, equitable, transparent, consistent, inclusive, fair, valid and reliable with decisions subject to appeal and review;

3. recognise learning regardless of how, when and where it was acquired, provided that the learning is relevant and current to the learning outcomes or competencies in a subject, unit, module, course or qualification;

4. be available for all students and will not unfairly advantage or disadvantage any students who enter courses and programs of study with credit;

5. be decided in a timely way so that students' access to courses is not unnecessarily inhibited;

6. result in the same value and standing as educational outcomes achieved through formal learning and assessment;

7. allow for credit outcomes to be used to meet specified prerequisites for entry into a qualification or for the partial or complete fulfilment of a qualification;

8. be subject to the same rigour of quality assurance as other educational policies, procedures and processes of the education and training provider including external quality requirements;

9. be widely promoted and easily accessible to all prospective and existing students to enable them to make well-informed choices about study options, pathways and alternatives by taking into account the credit they can expect;

10. be continually reviewed by education and training providers to maximise the applicability to new and updated qualifications and to student and industry needs.

5   Credit terminology[2]

Credit is the principal overarching term for recognising learning. This term is supported by key terms that address the:

- inputs that form the basis for credit, that is, the different forms of learning that are recognised for credit;
- processes used by education and training providers for determining credit; and
- forms of credit, that is, the different credit outcomes.

Credit

Credit is the value assigned for the recognition of equivalence in content and learning outcomes between different types of learning and/or qualifications which reduces the amount of learning required to achieve a qualification.

Credit inputs

Formal learning refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of learning and assessment that leads to the full or partial attainment of a recognised AQF qualification or other formally recognised qualification.

Non-formal learning refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to a formally recognised qualification.

Informal learning refers to learning gained through work-related, 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.

Processes for determining credit

Articulation is a process that enables students to progress from one completed qualification to another with credit in a defined pathway.

Credit transfer is a process that provides students with agreed and consistent credit outcomes based on equivalence in content and learning outcomes between matched qualifications.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an assessment process that involves assessment of the individual's relevant prior learning to determine the credit outcomes of an individual application for credit.

Types of credit

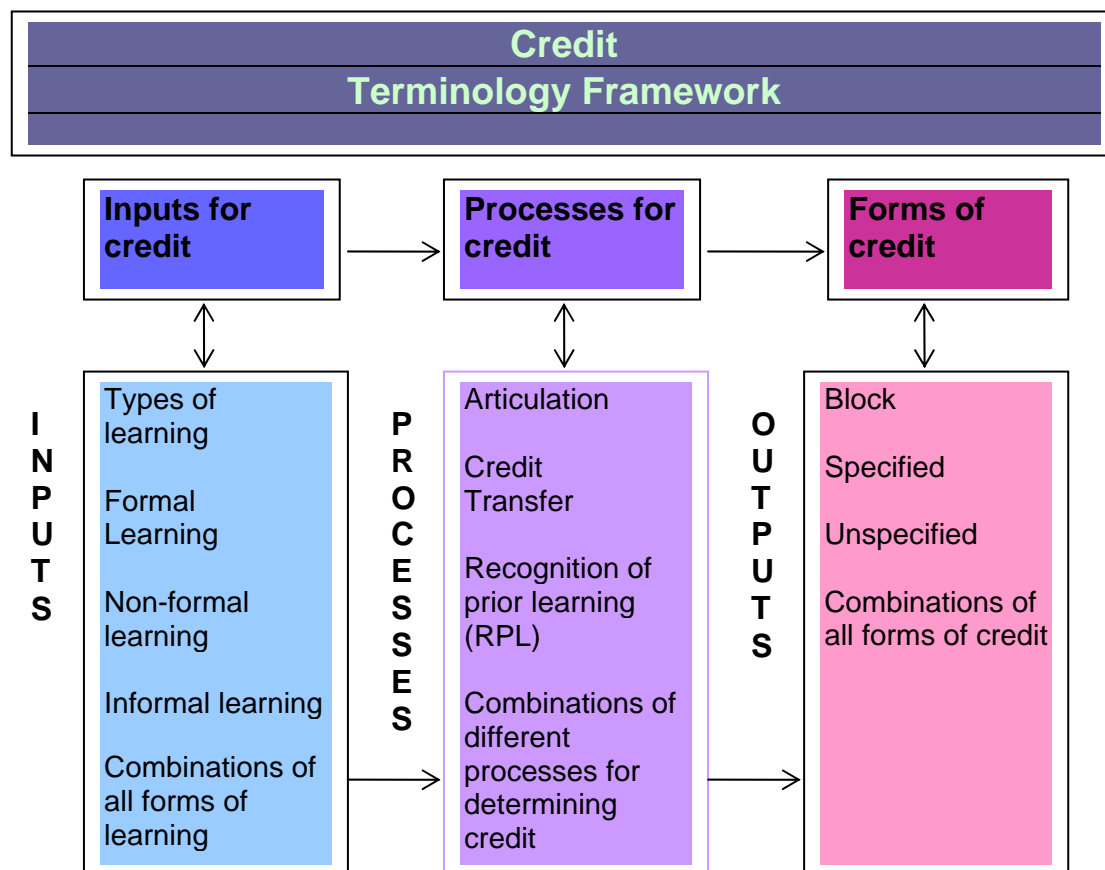Credit outcomes are expressed as block credit, specified credit or unspecified credit, as appropriate.

Block credit is credit granted towards whole stages or components of a qualification.

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[2] Note that the full explanatory notes regarding these definitions are included in Appendix 2

Specified credit is credit granted towards particular or specific components in a qualification.

Unspecified credit is credit granted towards elective components in a qualification.

Appendix 2 includes explanatory notes for each of the terms to add clarity to these definitions.

Credit Terminology Framework		
Inputs for credit	**Processes for credit**	**Forms of credit**
INPUTS — Types of learning Formal Learning Non-formal learning Informal learning Combinations of all forms of learning	**PROCESSES** — Articulation Credit Transfer Recognition of prior learning (RPL) Combinations of different processes for determining credit	**OUTPUTS** — Block Specified Unspecified Combinations of all forms of credit

6   Operational guidelines

Credit policies and procedures should address all of the following practices:

- leadership and staffing arrangements and responsibilities for development, implementation and monitoring of the credit system;
- credit policy and associated procedures that are linked to the broader objectives and goals of the education and training provider;
- effective provision of information, communications processes, student guidance and institutional support;
- clearly defined, institution-wide models/processes for determining and updating credit, encompassing credit transfer, articulation and RPL;
- mechanisms to guide and support implementation such as: institutional coordinating committees; identified academic/administrative support staff; administrative policies and procedures; web/publications support; information and records management systems; reporting arrangements; evaluation and appeals processes;
- transparent quality assurance mechanisms governing credit processes, decisions and operations to ensure integrity and confidence in the credit decisions made by different education and training providers and sectors;
- maintenance/updating, review and monitoring processes; and
- benchmarking, statistical and evaluation mechanisms addressing aspects such as student demand for credit, the effectiveness of credit provision, the impacts on learner mobility/student transfer, student performance and student satisfaction.

Appendix 1 provides guidance for education and training providers in the development of their policies and procedures for credit.

Appendix 2 includes the definitions with their explanatory notes.

APPENDIX 1 Operational guidelines

The purpose of these sample guidelines is to provide guidance for education and training providers in the development of their policies and procedures for credit.

1   Sample operational guidelines on credit

1.1   Policies, procedures and reporting

   i. Systems, policies and procedures for determining and managing credit form part of the education and training providers' responsibilities under the AQF. The specific breadth, content and structure of credit systems are a matter for individual providers.

   ii. Credit reflects the value of any learning. Education and training providers and other parties, such as employers, should ensure that this principle is applied to students who receive credit and that any qualification partly or fully obtained through credit is held in the same regard as qualifications obtained through a course of learning and assessment.

  iii. All applications and credit decisions arising from credit transfer, articulation or RPL should be centrally recorded and reported consistently as credit.

  iv. RPL credit decisions should be collated and reviewed to establish precedent registers for formal learning not elsewhere covered by credit transfer and/or articulation agreements, and for non-formal learning that may have broader application than to a single person.

   v. To provide relevant and accurate data on implementation, reports should distinguish the basis of the credit decision as credit transfer, articulation or RPL. The forms of learning addressed in RPL credit should be identified to provide statistical information on how much non-formal and informal learning is recognised as credit.

1.2   Range of agreements

   i. The range of qualifications addressed by credit arrangements and the determination of what constitutes 'appropriate and relevant credit' will vary across different education and training providers and sectors depending on the strategic priority of credit, the level of institutional guidance and support provided for implementation, the credit models/processes in place, and the credit outcomes established.

   ii. To support greater coverage of credit transfer and/or articulation agreements, education and training providers should consider systematic credit arrangements covering all the qualifications they offer. This will

enhance internal credit arrangements between the provider's own qualifications that existing students can access as well as developing extensive arrangements for credit with other providers.

1.3 Limitations

Limitations governing appropriate and relevant credit may also apply. Credit is generally used towards meeting the partial requirements of a qualification in Higher Education and Senior Secondary Certificate of Education. In Vocational Education and Training and Adult and Community Education the full requirements of a qualification can be met through the provision of credit. Some education and training providers may also set limits on the currency of learning that can be used as evidence for credit.

1.4 Consistency

i. Education and training providers and other parties involved in credit arrangements should aim to support consistency of credit for the same or similar qualifications towards a destination qualification, as this provides fairness and equity in credit outcomes.

ii. Credit may be awarded on the basis of a combination of credit transfer plus an individual RPL assessment for additional learning. Once credit has been awarded on the basis of RPL, subsequent credit transfer based on these learning outcomes should not include revisiting the RPL assessment but should be based on credit transfer or articulation or other arrangements between providers.

iii. Where education and training providers provide credit to international students, care should be taken to ensure Australian students have access to similar credit outcomes for similar learning achievement.

iv. Education and training providers with both overseas and local credit transfer or articulation arrangements need to ensure that credit granted for qualifications or units of similar complexity and/or content equivalence is of similar value, irrespective of the qualification source, and that this is transparent to all persons.

1.5 Equivalence

i. General equivalence is based on establishing broad relativities between different qualifications in the AQF. The degree of common and differing levels of complexity between various qualification titles can be decided using the AQF Qualifications Guidelines.

ii. Credit is the value assigned for recognising equivalence in content and learning outcomes between the learning an individual has and the learning set out in the qualification to be undertaken. Such equivalences in content may be specific and/or general. Specific equivalences are determined by using any of the three identified credit processes and can be established for any form of learning. General equivalence applies to formal learning only;

therefore it has application only to credit transfer and articulation.

1.6 Linkages

i. Linkages between qualifications are generally based on content or outcome relationships in which parts of one qualification are recognised as having equivalence with, or are integrated into, another qualification.

ii. Some linkages may also be based on acceptance of agreed relativities between different qualifications in the AQF. The following table outlines relativities that are identified as a guide in developing articulation arrangements and dual award qualifications in the same fields between Diploma and Bachelor qualifications, noting that general equivalences and credit values have not been determined for every AQF title. Depending on the particular nature of the awards being linked, actual credit levels may be greater or less than the recommended levels. Education and training providers are encouraged to use these levels as a minimum base for determining credit in credit transfer and/or articulation arrangements involving these awards, with the provision of additional credit for any related awards and identified equivalence in specific content.

TABLE 1: General credit values based on qualification relativities

AQF qualification	Credit value
any AQF award to SSCE	up to 40%
Diploma linked to:	
Bachelor degree (three years)	33%
Bachelor degree (four years)	25%
Advanced Diploma linked to:	
Bachelor degree (three years)	50%
Bachelor degree (four years)	37.5%

1.7 Type of credit

The determination of whether credit is granted as block, specified or unspecified will depend on the process used to determine credit and its outcomes. Generally, credit based on the acceptance of general qualification relativities and/or through articulation is granted as block credit and/or unspecified credit, while credit arising from credit transfer is more likely to be granted as specified credit relating to the matched components.

2 Sample operational guidelines on information provision and processing of credit

2.1 Information and promotion

i. Education and training providers should widely promote their credit systems and current credit outcomes to potential students, employers,

schools and relevant government agencies to ensure wide understanding of the benefits and role in providing access to learning.

ii. Publicly available information should be generated through a single, searchable electronic source, such as a web portal, that is easy to follow, user-friendly, regularly maintained and kept up to date, with links to other sites and documents, as appropriate.

iii. All information that is used as the means of communication must be kept up to date.

iv. Information portals should be readily accessible to users through specific links on the provider's home page, search tools, or indexes that use 'credit' as the key word.

v. Publicly available information on a provider's credit system should include:
- relevant policies and procedures;
- information on operational systems and relevant institutional contacts;
- details of all current credit transfer and articulation arrangements/agreements in place and their defined credit outcomes as set out in a database or register;
- details of the education or training provider's credit and RPL processes; and
- details of the application process, including: how to apply; fees; closing dates and options for lodgments; expected processing time; appeal processes and contact details of relevant officers for assistance in completing an application.

vi. Education and training providers need to ensure that coordinated and consistent information about credit is provided across the whole institution, including any faculty/organization/institution websites, between partner institutions, at all campuses, and in any promotional or guidance information that may be provided through State and Territory Admissions Centres.

vii. All prospective students should be informed of the availability of potential credit as part of any offer for admission as well as when information about the education or training provider and its courses is sought.

2.2   Terminology

All documentation on credit should use standardised terminology that is clearly explained. This terminology should reflect the agreed terms and definitions set out in this policy. Information should be written in clear, accessible language that takes into account the literacy skills and the cultural and educational backgrounds and experiences of students and potential students.

2.3   Forms and application procedures

i. All individuals should be provided with access to credit application forms as part of, or prior to, enrolment processes. Credit applications should also be widely available online and in hard copy. Examples are available on various institutions' websites.

ii. Credit application forms should be user-friendly and simple to complete, with relevant instructions provided for credit transfer, articulation and RPL applications.

iii. Credit application forms should include definitions and explanations of relevant terms used in the forms as well as explanations of the process and evidence that the applicant will need to submit and the reasons for these evidence requirements (e.g. to assure academic integrity/to verify informal learning).

iv. Where formal credit transfer and articulation arrangements exist between institutions, information relevant to an individual's application should be verified through institutional systems wherever possible within a short but administratively reasonable timeframe to enable the credit to be granted as soon as possible.

v. Appropriate and reasonable timeframes for the lodgment and processing of applications should be set out in the application forms, and applicants should be able to check progress of their applications with relevant contact officers.

2.4 Evidence

i. Requirements for credit applications should state clearly that the applicant is responsible for providing relevant documentation in support of a claim for credit.

ii. There should be similar requirements for supporting evidence across faculties and/or departments, unless variations are approved by the institution.

iii. Where a credit application involves a credit transfer or an articulation arrangement, evidence will include copies of the qualifications, testamurs, or Statement/s of Attainment to verify achievement of the relevant formal learning for which credit is available. This evidence should be verified through institutional systems wherever possible.

iv. Where the credit application involves RPL, the evidence generated by the assessor and the learner will be evaluated by the assessor, using verification from third party sources as appropriate. Guidance should be provided on the forms of evidence that will be deemed appropriate.

2.5 Decision-making and appeal processes

i. The formal decision of any credit is made by the education or training provider issuing the qualification. Such decisions must be transparent and

subject to institutional accountability.

    ii. The credit decision will reflect the credit process and evidence submitted. The applicant should be notified in writing of the outcome of his/her application.

    iii. Decisions on credit should be confidential.

    iv. Where a claim for credit is rejected, the reasons should be clearly set out in writing with further information on alternatives, where applicable, as well as the grounds for appeal and the procedures to be followed in lodging an appeal.

2.6 Admission

Admission is a process separate from credit transfer, articulation and RPL. Receipt of credit may not guarantee automatic admission to specific courses and programs. However, admission can and should be considered when developing any of these credit processes. In the case of articulation arrangements, admission should be included as part of the agreed pathway from one qualification to the next. In the case of RPL, credit outcomes should incorporate consideration of whether admissions requirements are satisfied.

2.7 Support for students

    i. Where a claim for credit is granted, the learner should be advised in writing of the impact on the overall workload still required to meet the qualification requirements, unit/subject choices and options, timing of the credit provision (e.g. 1st year or 2nd semester), and/or any fee implications.

    ii. Students moving to a new education or training institution with credit should be offered transition support by the new institution, particularly if their credit enables them to move into studies at a later point in the course structure. Additional support such as individual orientation and additional guidance on study methods will enable these students to transition to their new environment on an equitable basis to other students.

3 Sample operational guidelines on credit processes

3.1 General

    i. While sectors and education and training providers will have different needs and requirements, using all three processes for credit will ensure that all students have enabling access to credit. The widespread availability of credit transfer and or articulation agreements for qualifications will widely benefit students with relevant formal learning. The availability of RPL will

benefit students with formal learning who fall outside these specific arrangements to have their learning recognised for credit.

ii. Distinctions should not be made between credit derived from a credit transfer or articulation agreement and credit granted through RPL assessment. Each process is based on the critical evaluation and judgment of evidence, supported by effective quality assurance. All learning, no matter what its basis, should hold the same value for assigning credit where the learning outcomes and assessment requirements have been demonstrated.

iii. Clear and transparent quality assurance mechanisms are essential for ensuring confidence in the credit decisions made by different education and training providers and sectors. These mechanisms should underpin any negotiations between providers within and across sectors about credit arrangements.

iv. Individual providers are expected to demonstrate through their regular internal and external quality audits that their policies and practices for all types of credit arrangements support these agreed principles and guidelines.

v. Measuring the uptake and impact of this policy will be through key performance indicators by education and training providers. Indicators of systematic implementation of credit arrangements may include:
   - implementation of review systems, including benchmarking processes to compare credit outcomes and to evaluate implementation outcomes;
   - targets and numbers of dedicated staff and/or committees or groups with specific responsibilities for development, implementation and monitoring of all arrangements;
   - targets and numbers of cross-provider institutional arrangements;
   - targets and numbers of successful RPL applications;
   - establishment of specific goals/targets for increasing the number of credit transfer and/or articulation agreements and/or students granted credit;
   - a timetable for the development of new credit transfer and/or articulation agreements;
   - targets and numbers of staff involved in professional development programs to develop their knowledge of credit;
   - the opportunities for joint staffing in credit articulation arrangements between providers; and
   - use of triggers or catalysts for developing new or revised credit transfer and/or articulation arrangements such as the development, review or implementation of a Training Package, accredited qualification, course or program.

3.2 Credit transfer and articulation

i. Credit transfer arrangements made between education and training providers may be formed through an institution acting as a central agent

and/or with one or multiple partner education or training providers. Broader arrangements with application across a number of providers are to be encouraged as a means of widening the availability of credit that has general applicability for all eligible students.

ii.   Credit transfer arrangements can be developed for qualifications with the same AQF level of complexity and between qualifications of different complexity. This may be between sequential qualifications as well as between non-proximate qualifications.

iii.   Articulation commonly, but not always, involves vertical credit by linking qualifications of increasing complexity, usually sequentially.

iv.   Articulation can be structured in a number of different ways to suit the circumstances. These may include matching one qualification against another, with the aim to support a structured pathway for students to transfer into a further qualification, knowing in advance the credit they can expect to receive for the next qualification through completion of the lower qualification.

v.   Individuals receiving credit on the basis of a credit transfer and/or articulation arrangement are entitled to receive the same form and quantum of credit, as set out in the public register or database of these arrangements, in respect of each qualification component for which they can supply official evidence. However, the total quantum of credit granted will vary from individual to individual for a specific or part qualification, based on whether the individual applicant has completed the qualification and based on the specific combinations of qualification components completed.

vi.   Education and training providers need to ensure they place emphasis on forging local and/or national arrangements while also establishing credit transfer agreements with overseas partners.

3.3   Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

i.   The availability of RPL provides all potential students with access to credit opportunities. RPL sits alongside credit transfer and articulation processes as a means to broaden access into formal learning and as a potential source of credit based on learner achievement though various forms of structured and unstructured learning.

ii.   To ensure consistency, fairness and transparency, RPL should operate through a relevant provider-wide, systematic model that addresses areas such as: the rationale for RPL; extent of coverage; policies and procedures governing implementation; and fees and funding.

iii.   As with all assessment, RPL assessment should be undertaken by academic or teaching staff with expertise in the subject, content or skills area, as well as knowledge of and expertise in RPL assessment policies and procedures.
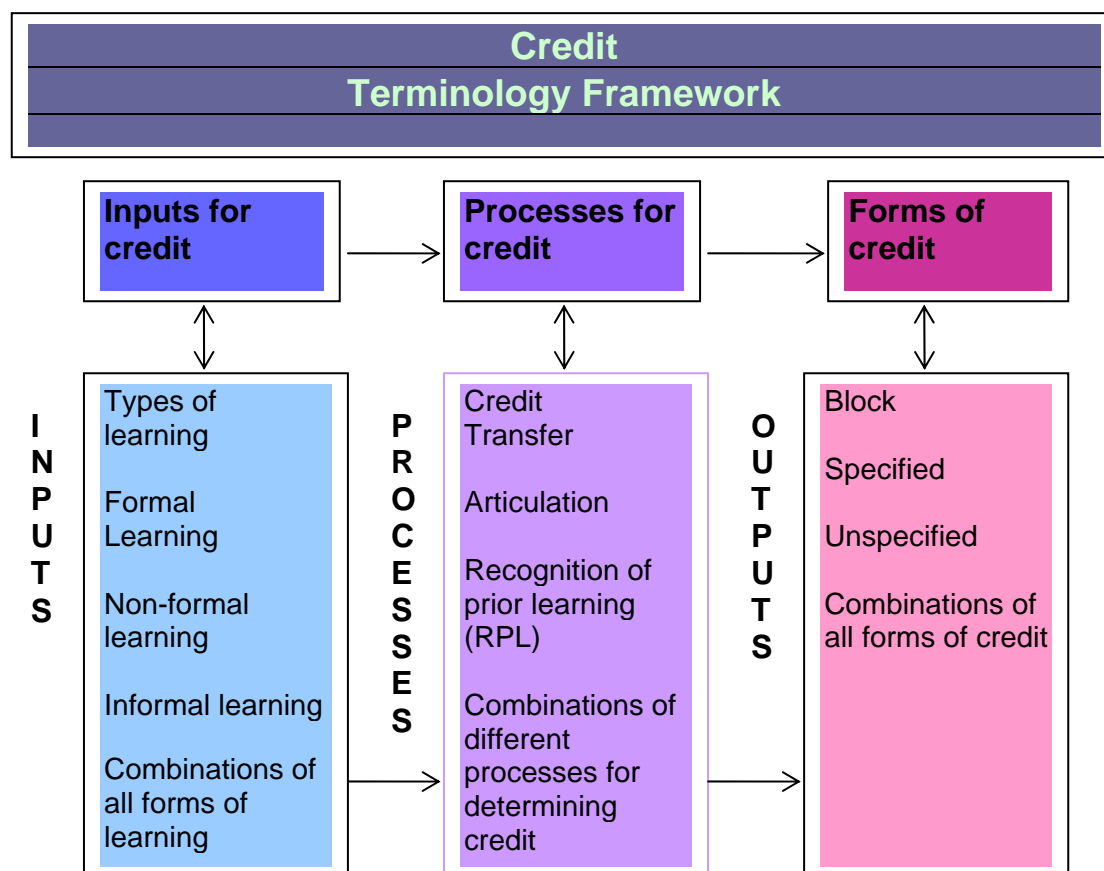
iv. RPL assessment should be to the same standard as other assessment for the relevant qualification components.

v. RPL assessment methods should accommodate the literacy levels, cultural background and experiences of students, and it should not be proxy for the assessment of skills such as literacy except where these are intrinsic to the learning outcomes of the qualification component.

vi. The RPL assessment process may consist of the following stages:
   - establishing the purpose of the assessment
   - identifying the evidence required
   - using appropriate evidence-gathering (assessment) methods and tools
   - interpreting the evidence and making a judgment
   - recording the outcome, and
   - reporting to key internal and external stakeholders.

vii. Individuals should be provided with advice about the assessment methods and the sorts of evidence the provider will consider in assessing their RPL application. Individuals should be provided with sufficient information to enable them to prepare their evidence to meet the standard required for the RPL assessment process.

viii. Assessment methods should address the specific evidence required to demonstrate prior achievement of the learning outcomes and assessment requirements of the particular qualification components for which credit is sought.

ix. Assessment methods should provide a range of ways for individuals to demonstrate that they have met the required outcomes and can be granted credit. These might include:
   - mapping of learning outcomes from prior formal or non-formal learning to the relevant qualification components
   - questioning (oral or written)
   - observation of performance in work based and/or simulated environments, and
   - consideration of third party reports and/or other documentation such as documentation such as articles, reports, project material, papers, testimonials or other products prepared by the RPL applicant that relate to the learning outcomes of the relevant qualification component
   - consideration of a portfolio and review of contents
   - participation in structured assessment activities the individual would normally be required to undertake if they were enrolled in the qualification component/s.

x. Policies and procedures implemented by jurisdictions and education and training providers to improve cost efficiency and remove financial disincentives in the implementation of RPL may include:
   - working with groups of students from industries, enterprises or occupational areas to achieve economies of scale, ensuring that the integrity of assessment of each individual's skills is maintained
   - fee charges where applicable that are no higher than students would

normally be required to pay if they were undertaking formal study towards the qualification

- incorporating RPL duties into workloads for teaching and administrative staff, and
- funding specific RPL subjects or modules to assist students who are preparing RPL applications, which can then be credited towards the qualification.

xi. Institutional policy frameworks and strategies to implement RPL should be developed to encourage implementation of internal funding arrangements and allocations.

APPENDIX 2 Agreed credit terminology

Credit		
Terminology Framework		

Inputs for credit	→	**Processes for credit**	→	**Forms of credit**

| I N P U T S | Types of learning

Formal Learning

Non-formal learning

Informal learning

Combinations of all forms of learning | P R O C E S S E S | Credit Transfer

Articulation

Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

Combinations of different processes for determining credit | O U T P U T S | Block

Specified

Unspecified

Combinations of all forms of credit |

Each definition is followed by explanatory notes to add clarity to the definition.

Credit

Credit is the value assigned for the recognition of equivalence in content and learning outcomes between different types of learning and/or qualifications which reduces the amount of learning required to achieve a qualification.

Explanatory notes:

1. For the purposes of this common terminology, *qualification* includes awards as well as courses and programs that are used as the basis for implementing qualifications. *Qualification* is defined in the AQF Implementation Handbook[3].

2. The phrase *equivalence in content and learning outcomes* does not mean the content or learning outcomes are exactly the same; rather, the scope and focus of the learning is agreed as being sufficiently similar or comparable to support credit.

3. *Equivalence in content and learning outcomes* between different types of learning and qualifications may relate to:

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[3] Qualification is defined as formal certification, issued by a relevant approved body, in recognition that a person has achieved learning outcomes or competencies relevant to identified individual, professional, industry or community needs (p.v)

- the equivalence between the specific content or learning outcomes of matched *qualification components* expressed as the learning outcomes and assessment requirements, and/or
- general equivalence based on agreed relativities between different qualifications, expressed as a credit value of one qualification to another, and/or
- the evidence of non-formal and informal learning and its relationship to the learning outcomes and assessment requirements of qualification components.

4. The term *types of learning* refers to the three internationally recognised categories of learning (formal, non-formal and informal) as defined in this terminology.

5. The term *qualification components* refers to the design structure of the qualification which may comprise units, subjects, modules, units of competency and/or the education or training outcomes of a time period of learning such as a semester. This structure varies within and between education and training providers and sectors.

6. The minimum level for determining and granting a credit is the relevant and agreed qualification component, i.e. credit is for a unit, a subject etc.

Formal learning

Formal learning refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of learning and assessment that leads to the full or partial attainment of a recognised AQF qualification or other formally recognised qualification.

Explanatory notes:

1. Formal learning may lead to recognition and certification of an AQF qualification, Statement/s of Attainment or statement/s of results relating to AQF qualifications.

2. Formal learning includes any overseas qualification that forms part of a coherent qualifications system and which is recognised by an education or training institution in Australia for the purposes of credit and/or admission.

3. Formal learning may lead directly to full or partial achievement of one qualification and may also be recognised towards achievement of other qualifications through credit.

Non-formal learning

Non-formal learning refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to a formally recognised qualification.

Explanatory notes:

1. Examples of non-formal learning include: education and training activities in the workplace that are not linked to the attainment of a formally recognised qualification; training by professional/employer associations, the voluntary sector and trade unions; and the adult and community education sector.

2. Non-formal learning may include assessment, but not necessarily.

3. Recognition of non-formal learning may include some form of product/institutional certification, but not necessarily.

4. Non-formal learning does not lead directly to a formally recognised qualification but may be recognised for credit towards a qualification through a RPL process.

Informal learning

Informal learning refers to learning that occurs through experience of work-related, social, family, hobby or leisure activities. Unlike formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not organised or externally structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support.

Explanatory notes:

1. Informal learning is often seen as learning gained through and from life and work experiences and activities.

2. In informal learning, individual goals or objectives may be self identified but these are not translated to any externally developed learning, e.g. improving a golf handicap through practice.

3. Informal learning does not lead directly to a formally recognised qualification but may be recognised for credit towards a qualification through a RPL process

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Articulation

Articulation is a process that enables students to progress from one completed qualification to another with credit in a defined pathway.

Explanatory notes:

1. This process involves education and training providers:
   - linking one qualification to another *higher level qualification* to establish *content relationships and equivalence* between them as the basis for credit and to identify an agreed pathway for students progressing from the first qualification to the next qualification in the articulation arrangement
   - making a judgment of the credit outcomes between the linked qualifications
   - setting out the agreed credit outcomes and the defined pathway between the linked qualifications in a documented agreement
   - determining separately whether, and on what basis, admission forms part of the articulation process and outcomes, and
   - publicising the outcomes of the articulation agreement.

2. *Content relationships and equivalence* between the linked qualifications may address the general content and agreed relativities between the linked qualifications in the articulation agreement. This will include the credit value of the initial qualification in the qualification pathway, as well as the specific credit for the components of the initial qualification.

3. The agreed credit outcomes focus on block credit but may include specified or unspecified credit. The quantum and forms of credit as agreed by the institutions in an articulation process will be applied automatically to any individual with the first qualification in the articulation pathway. Credit and progression into the next qualification is based on successful completion by the learner of the previous qualification in the articulation agreement.

4. Examples of articulation arrangements may include:

   - nested or embedded qualifications involving lower qualifications that are embedded completely in the next qualification with multiple exit and entry points (an articulated suite of qualifications), or
   - partially nested qualifications that include some qualification components of the lower level qualification nested into the linked qualification, or
   - arrangements wherein two separately designed qualifications are linked to each other to form a defined qualification linkage and credit pathway.

6. The process is applicable within and between schools, Vocational Education and Training registered training organisations and Higher Education providers.

Credit transfer

Credit transfer is a process that provides students with agreed and consistent credit outcomes based on identified equivalence in content and learning outcomes between matched qualifications

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Explanatory notes:

1. This process involves education and training providers:

   - mapping, comparing and evaluating the extent to which the content, defined as the *learning outcomes and assessment requirements* of the individual *components of one qualification* are equivalent to the learning outcomes and assessment requirements of the individual components of another qualification, and
   - making a judgment of the credit outcomes to be assigned between the matched components of the two qualifications.

2. *Learning outcomes and assessment requirements* may vary in definitional approach between schools, Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education institutions. In VET, learning outcomes are expressed as competency standards.

3. *Qualifications components* refers to the design structure of the qualification, which may include units, subjects, modules, and/or the education or/training outcomes of a time period of learning such as a semester. These also vary between institutions.

4. Credit transfer may be applied to two qualifications of the same level of complexity as defined by the AQF title (or any other qualifications framework comprising qualifications of increasing complexity) or between two qualifications of differing levels of complexity as defined by the AQF title (or other qualifications framework).

5. Credit transfer agreements/arrangements are made typically within and between education and training providers issuing formal qualifications. In some instances, coordination may be handled by other bodies but decisions on

credit rest with the individual institutions involved in the credit transfer process (as set out in 1 above).

6. The agreed credit outcomes may include any form of credit. The quantum and forms of credit as agreed by the institutions in a credit transfer process will be applied upon request to any individual with relevant certification in the initial matched qualification. The individual does not have to have completed the initial matched qualification for the credit outcomes to be applied towards the destination matched qualification, ie credit is for the formal learning achieved, not only for a qualification achieved.

7. The process is applicable within and between: schools; Vocational Education and Training registered training organisations; and higher education providers.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

RPL is an assessment process that involves assessment of the individual's relevant prior learning to determine the credit outcomes of an individual application for credit.

Explanatory notes:

1. This process involves education and training providers undertaking an assessment of each individual to determine the extent to which their prior learning is equivalent to the learning outcomes and assessment requirements of individual components of the destination qualification.

2. The parties in RPL assessment are the individual and the education and training institution.

3. If a relevant credit transfer agreement exists that addresses the formal learning held by the individual, this should be accessed first and credit granted for this learning. The RPL assessment process that follows would identify credit to the individual for any other formal and/or non-formal and informal learning.

4. RPL assessment must ensure that evidence is valid, authentic, current and sufficient and that the process is fair, flexible reliable and valid.

5. Assessment of formal learning within a RPL process may encompass a similar mapping, comparability and evaluation process by the assessor as used in the development of credit transfer arrangements.

6. The agreed credit outcomes of the assessment of formal learning in a RPL process are specific to the individual. They may establish a precedent, however, which can be used for other RPL assessments of the same formal learning and potentially as the basis for a future credit transfer arrangement.

7. The agreed credit outcomes for assessment of informal and non-formal learning are always specific to the individual.

8. The agreed credit outcomes may include any form of credit and partial credit in the form of an exemption.

9. Admission may or may not be an outcome of RPL assessment.

10. The process is applicable within all sectors – Schools, Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education providers.

Block credit
Block credit is credit granted towards whole stages or components of a qualification.

Explanatory notes:

1. Block credit means the individual is not required to undertake a block of qualification components such as a block of units, subjects, modules, or a time period of learning such as semester or a whole year or more of the qualification.

2. The quantum of the block will depend on the outcomes of the credit process.

3. Block credit can be applied for any or a combination of: agreed equivalence between qualification components; general content equivalence and agreed relativities between qualifications; and/or RPL outcomes.

Specified credit
Specified credit is credit granted towards core and/or specific components in a qualification.

Explanatory notes:

1. Specified credit recognises that the individual has already achieved the required learning outcomes and assessment requirements of the specific *qualification components*.

2. The term *qualification components* refers to the design structure of the qualification which may include units, subjects, modules, units of competency and/or the education or training outcomes of a time period of learning such as a semester.

Unspecified credit
Unspecified credit is credit granted towards elective components in a qualification.

Explanatory notes:

1. Unspecified credit is based on an agreed general equivalence between qualification components and/or a general equivalence between qualifications and/or RPL outcomes.

2. The qualification *components* refers to the design structure of the qualification which may include units, subjects, modules, and/or the education or training outcomes of a time period of learning such as a semester.

3. General equivalence between qualifications expresses the agreed credit value of one qualification to another based on agreed relativities.