

## EXPLANATORY NOTE

# Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning in Bachelor of Nursing and Bachelor of Midwifery Programs

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## 1. PURPOSE

This explanatory note has been prepared to assist education providers within Australia in relation to assessment and recognition of prior learning and the award of credit transfer for students in an entry to practice program of nursing or midwifery study. Education providers must also comply with all relevant accreditation standards.

## 2. BACKGROUND

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) is responsible for the accreditation of all nursing and midwifery education providers and programs of study leading to registration and endorsement in Australia.

The safety and quality of care provided to people in the health care system is reliant on nurses and midwives possessing the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours and developing their capacity for critical thinking and clinical judgment. This is achieved by ensuring national consistency and quality in nursing and midwifery education through a robust assessment process using contemporary accreditation standards.

## 3. APPLICATIONS

This explanatory note applies to all education providers seeking accreditation of programs of study for nurses and midwives.

## 4. RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION

In addition to the relevant Accreditation Standards this explanatory note should be read in conjunction with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Qualifications Framework, 2013. Viewed at [www.aqf.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/AQF-2nd-Edition-January-2013.pdf](http://www.aqf.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/AQF-2nd-Edition-January-2013.pdf) on 30 March 2015.

## 5. EXPLANATORY NOTE

ANMAC supports the principles of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and credit transfer to facilitate the entry to and progression of students through nursing or midwifery qualifications by awarding credit for learning outcomes already achieved. ANMAC acknowledges that access to formal learning is broadened by enabling recognition and credit for attainment through other learning experiences.

RPL and credit transfer must be underpinned by the AQF definition of credit:

*Credit is the value assigned for the recognition of equivalence in content and learning outcomes between different types of learning and/or qualifications. Credit reduces the amount of learning required to achieve a qualification and may be through credit transfer, articulation, recognition of prior learning or advanced standing.<sup>2</sup>*

RPL and Credit Transfer must also occur in cognizance of the recency of learning and learning that has occurred in different educational sectors, across different AQF levels, with different practice standards and working towards a different scope of practice. Due to these differences, not all learning will be transferable into a new qualification.

### 5.1 CREDIT TRANSFER

Credit transfer is defined in the AQF as follows:

*Credit transfer is a process that provides students with agreed and consistent credit outcomes for components of a qualification based on identified equivalence in content and learning outcomes between matched qualifications.<sup>3</sup>*

The evidence for the process of awarding credit transfer must demonstrate:

- Mapping and evaluating the extent to which learning outcomes, discipline content and assessment requirements of the individual components of one qualification are equivalent to learning outcomes, discipline content and assessment requirements of the individual components of another qualification.
- Professional judgment regarding the credit to be assigned between the matched components of the two qualifications.

### 5.2 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process of assessment in which evidence is provided by the student to demonstrate that their current skills, knowledge and relevant prior learning already meet the learning outcomes in an academic program of nursing or midwifery study.

RPL is defined in the AQF as follows:

*Recognition of prior learning is an assessment process that involves assessment of an individual's relevant prior learning (including formal, informal and non-formal learning) to determine the credit outcomes of an individual application for credit.<sup>4</sup>*

Prior learning may include:

<sup>2</sup> AQF Credit Transfer Explanation. Viewed at [www.aqf.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Credit-Transfer-Explanation.pdf](http://www.aqf.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Credit-Transfer-Explanation.pdf) on 30 March 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> AQF Recognition of Prior Learning Explanation. Viewed at [www.aqf.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/RPL-Explanation.pdf](http://www.aqf.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/RPL-Explanation.pdf) on 30 March 2015.

- Previous formal learning, such as that which occurs through structured learning within an accredited qualification.
- Previous informal learning, such as that which may be gained through work experience.
- Previous non-formal learning, such as that which occurs through a structured program that does not lead to an officially accredited qualification.

### 5.3 APPLICATION OF CREDIT

The AQF describes indicative maximum amounts of credit that may be given for lower AQF levels articulating into higher AQF levels once the equivalence of learning outcomes, the volume of learning and the learning and assessment approaches have been considered.<sup>5</sup>

Specifically, the AQF Qualifications Pathway Policy lists the following as a basis for applying credit across programs in the same discipline:

- 50% credit for an AQF level 6 program linked to a 3 year Bachelor Degree
- 37.5% credit for an AQF level 6 program linked to a 4 year Bachelor Degree
- 33% credit for an AQF level 5 program linked to a 3 year Bachelor Degree
- 25% credit for an AQF level 5 program linked to a 4 year Bachelor Degree.

The application of credit applies equally to the clinical and theory content of a program. Where clinical learning occurs within a unit of study, the theory and practice components are considered to be inseparable and RPL should not be given to one part only.

The amount of credit to be granted will be dependent on the equivalence of learning. It is important that, in addition to consideration of the learning objectives, the volume of learning and the level of learning that the educational and professional context of learning is considered in determining the application of credit.

### 5.4 ENTRY PATHWAYS

An education provider may wish to provide a formal entry pathway into the program for cohorts of students with attributes closely and significantly related to nursing or midwifery.

Where this is the case, the education provider must demonstrate that RPL and Credit Transfer principles are fully applied and that the educational and professional context of prior learning is considered. It is an expectation that the education provider will:

- describe the cohort attributes that are relevant to undertaking an entry to practice nursing or midwifery program in a higher education environment
- carefully map the program against the achievements or attributes of the cohort
- demonstrate adequate procedures for assessing the suitability of applicants
- identify processes that cater for variations or exceptions to a standard pathway

### 5.5 EVIDENCE TO SATISFY THE ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

The current Registered Nurse Accreditation Standards for the accreditation of programs leading to registration require education providers to ensure that:

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<sup>5</sup> AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy, 2013. Viewed at [www.aqf.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/AQF\\_pathways\\_jan2013.pdf](http://www.aqf.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/AQF_pathways_jan2013.pdf) on 30 March 2015.

*Policies relating to credit transfer or the recognition of prior learning that are consistent with AQF national principles and the graduate's ability to meet the National Competency Standards for professional registration.*<sup>6</sup>

This intent is articulated in all other Accreditation Standards:

*That credit transfer or the recognition of prior learning (RPL) is consistent with both AQF national principles and the expected outcomes of regulatory authorities for practice.*<sup>7</sup>

ANMAC requires education providers to demonstrate the following:

- Governance, policy and documentation for assessing a student for RPL and credit transfer that is equitable, flexible, reliable and valid.
- Evidence that the prior learning is relevant and applicable to the learning outcomes of the nursing or midwifery program.
- Evidence the RPL assessment is undertaken by academic (higher education) or teaching (Vocational Education and Training) staff with expertise in the nursing or midwifery program content, as well as knowledge of, and expertise in, RPL assessment.<sup>8</sup>
- Evidence provided by the student is valid, authentic, current and sufficient.
- Each application for RPL and credit transfer is assessed on individual merit.
- Formal pathways for specific student cohorts into a program are thoroughly mapped against the achievements and attributes of applicants
- The integrity of qualification outcomes is maintained.

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<sup>6</sup> Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council Registered Nurse Accreditation Standards 2012. Viewed at [www.anmac.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/ANMAC\\_RN\\_Accreditation\\_Standards\\_2012.pdf](http://www.anmac.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/ANMAC_RN_Accreditation_Standards_2012.pdf) on 30 March 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council, Standards and Criteria for the Accreditation of Nursing and Midwifery Courses Leading to Registration and Endorsement in Australia. Viewed at <http://anmac.org.au/accreditation-standards> on 30 March 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council Explanatory note: Qualifications of Academic Staff Teaching into Nursing. Viewed at <http://anmac.org.au/document/explanatory-note-qualifications-teaching-staff> on 30 March 2015.

**Table 1: Table of Amendments**

Version numbers	Date	Short description of amendment
1.1	10/08/2015	Inclusion of statements regarding formal pathways Expanded AQF policy and definitions for credit transfer and RPL Credit transfer and RPL linked explicitly with the professional cognate of nursing and midwifery Reference updates

**Date of ANMAC Board Determination:**

8 April 2013

**Date for Review:**

3 April 2017

**Responsible Director:**

Executive Director of Accreditation Services