SOUTHERN ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

# Southern Academy of Higher Education (SAHE)

# Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure

# Effective Date: 7 August 2026

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## 1. Policy Statement

The Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure provides the framework by which the Southern Academy of Higher Education (SAHE) assesses an applicant's prior learning to determine the granting of credit towards a course of study at SAHE. SAHE determines, based on approved unit content and academic judgement, whether prior learning is identical or equivalent to current study offered at SAHE.

This Policy has been developed to ensure:

- a clear process and framework for the recognition of prior learning across all SAHE award programs;
- consistency with SAHE's other policies, the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and the AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy;
- a fair and equitable means of recognising a student's education, skills and experience; and
- transparency, so that academic integrity and standards are maintained.

This Policy has been informed by, and is intended to be read concurrently with, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency's (TEQSA) Guidance Note: Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning (v2.0, 7 July 2023). Where this Policy uses terms defined in that Guidance Note or the AQF Glossary of Terminology, those definitions apply.

## 2. Scope

This Policy applies to all current and future students of SAHE, across all award programs, whether the request for recognition of prior learning is made at the time of application, on enrolment, or during a course of study.

## 3. What This Policy Covers

Credit is a recognition of equivalence in content and learning outcomes between different types of learning and/or qualifications. It reduces the amount of learning a student is required to undertake to complete a qualification. For the purposes of this Policy, credit is interpreted broadly and may be granted through:

- credit transfer - credit granted of an assessed equivalence between the units or qualifications completed at another institution and units offered by SAHE;
- articulation - a defined pathway by which completion of one SAHE (or partner) qualification leads to entry, with credit, into another;
- recognition of prior learning (RPL) - an assessment of an individual's formal, informal or non-formal learning to determine whether credit will be granted; or
- advanced standing - credit granted toward a specific SAHE course of study based on an individual assessment of an applicant's prior learning, however gained.

Consistent with the AQF Glossary of Terminology:

- formal learning is learning that takes place through a structured program of learning that leads to full or partial achievement of an officially accredited qualification;
- non-formal learning is learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to an officially accredited qualification; and

- informal learning is learning gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experience, and is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support.

Credit may be granted as part of a standing arrangement between SAHE and another provider (a standing credit transfer arrangement), or on a case-by-case basis following an individual application. Every decision to grant or refuse credit must be grounded in evidence and academic judgement about the equivalence of learning.

## 4. Policy Principles

- SAHE is committed to a consistent and equitable approach to granting credit, referenced to the AQF level of the relevant course of study.
- SAHE ensures that students have the necessary academic foundations to be eligible for credit, without this impeding their progression and completion of the course.
- Credit is granted only where: (a) the student will not be disadvantaged in achieving the expected learning outcomes for their course of study or qualification; and (b) the integrity of the course of study and the qualification is maintained.
- Decisions on credit are evidence-based and academically defensible, considering the applicant's demonstrated ability to meet the learning outcomes or competencies inherent in the qualification. Credit will not be granted for the purpose of improving recruitment, without regard to whether doing so would disadvantage the student.
- Credit applications are dealt with equitably, transparently, and by staff with the academic or professional expertise needed to make an informed decision.
- Credit is applied consistently and fairly, with decisions subject to review and appeal.
- Credit decisions are made in a timely way so that a student's access to their qualification is not unnecessarily delayed.
- Credit decisions, including the reasons for refusing credit, are formally documented - particularly where a decision departs from the parameters set out in this Policy.
- In determining the amount of credit to grant for short-form or non-accredited credentials, SAHE has regard to the length and intensity of the learning undertaken, not merely the title of the unit or credential presented.

## 5. Procedures

### 5.1 Application

Applicants are required to submit a formal application:

- at the time of applying for admission, but prior to the commencement of the first teaching period; or
- after enrolment, but prior to the end of the second teaching period of study.

Applicants must submit:

- a certified copy of their academic transcript;
- where relevant, unit guides or equivalent documentation showing the learning outcomes and assessment tasks for the units for which credit is sought; and
- any other information that has been requested.

Where RPL is sought for non-credentialed, informal or non-formal learning, SAHE requires appropriate evidence that the relevant learning outcomes for the units and/or key learning areas have been achieved. The applicant may be required to:

- supply certified copies of statements from employers;
- present a portfolio; and/or
- attend an interview with the relevant Course Director.

## 5.2 Assessment of Applications

SAHE uses the parameters below to determine and assess credit from cognate disciplines, with regard to prior study in Business related to the Hospitality, Information Systems and Accounting majors, and in Information Technology.

When assessing an application, the relevant Course Director considers:

- the learning outcomes of the unit;
- the content of study;
- the volume of learning;
- the level of the learning;
- the credit point weighting; and
- the grade attained in the unit.

When assessing applications for credit based on prior formal study, the assessor considers only:

- study completed in the last ten years; and
- study in a field the same as, or similar to, the relevant SAHE field of study.

When assessing applications for credit based on work or other non-credentialed or informal experience, the assessor considers:

- relevant professional or industry practice gained in the last ten years;
- relevance to the learning outcomes of the unit and/or course level;
- evidence of the skills and knowledge that are prerequisites for later units; and
- where relevant, the requirements of a professional accreditation body.

## 5.3 Notification of Outcome

- Applications are processed, and applicants are normally notified of the outcome in writing within ten working days.
- Applicants requesting credit prior to admission will be informed of the amount granted in their Letter of Offer and Written Agreement, where all necessary information has been provided in time for a prompt decision. Where additional time is needed, the offer letter is issued first, and the credit outcome follows in an updated offer letter.
- Where an applicant is required to provide further evidence or undertake additional assessment, the application will be processed within five working days of receipt of that further evidence.
- Where there is a delay in the outcome of an application, students should attend classes as normal until advised otherwise.

## 6. Conditions and Limitations

### 6.1 Basis for Granting Credit

SAHE may grant credit based on:

- completed studies at a recognised university, higher education institution, TAFE or registered training organisation in Australia, or a recognised international institution;
- programs or courses undertaken in the workplace, through professional organisations, or in other training contexts, where appropriate certification is available; or
- demonstrable skills and learning gained from work or other professional experience that is relevant to the course of study.

### 6.2 General Conditions

- The granting of credit is consistent with successful completion of the appropriate AQF level for the award of the qualification.
- SAHE grants credit only for, and as, whole units of study.
- Credit may not be granted more than once for the same prior study, that is, no credit will be granted on credit already granted.

### 6.3 Limitations

- Credit is not offered for the capstone unit of a course of study.
- Eligibility for credit does not guarantee a prospective student's automatic entry into a course of study at SAHE.
- The granting of credit does not guarantee that a student will meet the requirements to graduate from the course.
- Credit is only available for learning completed less than ten years prior to the application

## 7. Types of Credit

- Specified credit is granted for a unit or course deemed to be substantially similar in content and learning outcomes to that for which credit is sought.
- Unspecified credit is granted in the form of credit points, where there is no directly equivalent unit, but the prior learning is assessed as reducing the volume of learning required.
- Exemption is granted where a student is not required to undertake a unit, without a substitute unit or credit points being applied.
- Credit transfer and articulation, as described at section 3 of this Policy, may also apply where a standing arrangement exists between SAHE and another provider.

## 8. Maximum Credit or Advanced Standing

- Students must complete at least 50 per cent of the credit point value of their course of study at SAHE. This constraint applies regardless of prior learning; it preserves the integrity of the course's learning outcomes and discipline requirements, and safeguards compliance with professional accreditation standards.
- The table below indicates the maximum credit that normally applies for prior study assessed as comparable and equivalent to the course. Actual credit granted may be less than the maximum if the prior study does not match core units or is not assessed as comparable and equivalent. Prior study at, or below, Certificate IV level is not considered comparable and equivalent.

| Award Level | Basis for Credit (Australian equivalent qualification) | Maximum Credit |
|---|---|---|
| **Bachelor Degree AQF 7** | Completed Certificate IV in a cognate field of study | 1-4 units |
| | Completed Undergraduate Certificate in a cognate field of study (0.5 EFTSL higher education award, AQF 5-7) | 2-4 units |
| | Completed Diploma in a cognate field of study (May include completed Certificate IV Qualifications) | 4-8 units |
| | Advanced Diploma in a cognate field of study (May include completed Diploma and/or Certificate IV Qualifications) | 2-10 units |
| | Associate degree units in a cognate field of study (Assessed per unit for AQF 7 level units) | 8-10 units |
| | Bachelor Degree units in a cognate field of study (Assessed per unit for AQF 7 level units) | 8-12 units |
| **Graduate Certificate Degree AQF 8** | Completed VET Graduate Certificate in a cognate field of study | 1-2 units |
| | Completed VET Graduate Diploma in a cognate field of study | 1-2 units |
| | Higher Education Graduate Certificate units in a cognate field of study (Assessed per unit for AQF 8 or AQF 9 level units) | 1-2 units |
| | Higher Education Graduate Diploma units in a cognate field of study (Assessed per unit for AQF 8 or AQF 9 level units) | 1-2 units |
| | Master Degree in a cognate field of study (Assessed per unit for AQF 8 or AQF 9 level units) | 1-2 units |
| **Master Degree AQF 9** | Completed VET Graduate Certificate in a cognate field of study | 1-4 units |
| | Completed VET Graduate Diploma in a cognate field of study | 1-8 units |
| | Higher Education Graduate Certificate units in a cognate field of study (Assessed per unit for AQF 8 or AQF 9 level units) | 1-4 units |
| | Higher Education Graduate Diploma units in a cognate field of study (Assessed per unit for AQF 8 or AQF 9 level units) | 1-8 units |
| | Master Degree in a cognate field of study (Assessed per unit for AQF 8 or AQF 9 level units) | 1-8 units |

## 9. Withdrawal of Credit

- Both the student and SAHE may withdraw credit that has been granted.
- SAHE reserves the right to withdraw credit where an error was made in assessing the application, or where documentation provided by the applicant is found to be false or invalid.
- Where withdrawal is based on false or invalid information or documentation, SAHE may refuse admission or, if an offer has already been made, revoke that offer.
- Where a change is made to a provision of this Policy, or a precedent or articulation arrangement is reviewed and changed, credit already granted will not be withdrawn as a result. Changes to this policy will only apply to new applications for enrolment.
- A student may apply to withdraw credit previously granted to them - often to meet a professional or other accreditation requirement.

## 10. Effect of Granting Credit

When approved and accepted, credit is transferred to specified units within the qualification and recorded as such on the student's file. Credit recognises that a student has achieved equivalent unit learning outcomes and may be used to meet prerequisite requirements for other units of study.

## 11. Public Information and Representation

- SAHE publishes accurate, current information on its RPL and credit policies and processes, including standing credit transfer arrangements, so that prospective and current students can make informed decisions about their studies.
- Where SAHE offers a unit of study separately from a course of study and represents that unit as eligible to gain credit toward a course or qualification, SAHE explains to the applicant or student: the course or qualification to which the unit will contribute; and the terms on which credit will be granted or recognised.

## 12. Recording of Credit

Where credit is granted, it is identified on the student's record of results and, where an Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS) is issued, in that statement.

## 13. International Students - Compliance with the National Code

Any grant of credit to an international student must comply with the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (National Code) and the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act):

- prior to accepting an overseas student's enrolment, SAHE makes the student aware of any course credit that would apply to them;
- SAHE's decisions to assess prior learning or grant credit are made under this documented Policy and process, and preserve the integrity of the award to which they apply;

- where SAHE grants credit to, or recognises the prior learning of, an overseas student, SAHE provides the student a written record of the outcome for the student to accept and retain, and retains its own record for at least two years after the student ceases to be an accepted student, in accordance with sections 21(2B)-21(3) of the ESOS Act; and
- where credit results in a reduction of an overseas student's course length, SAHE informs the student and ensures the Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) is issued for the reduced duration.
- If a student applies for and receives credit as part of the admission process, the course duration is adjusted in the Letter of Offer and Written Agreement, and the CoE reflects the shortened period of study.
- If a student applies for and receives credit after obtaining a Letter of Offer and Written Agreement but before the course starts, the student receives a new Letter of Offer and Written Agreement, and the CoE reflects the changed duration.
- If a student starts the course and then applies for and receives credit, any resulting change to visa duration is communicated to the student, who must agree to the change before the credit is added to their record. A CoE revision fee may apply.

SAHE notifies the Department of Education (or its successor) through the Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS) of any changes affecting the end date of a CoE.

## 14. Implementation and Monitoring

- The Teaching and Learning Committee completes an annual review of, and reports to the Academic Board on, the granting of credit, to ensure consistency in the practice and implementation of this Policy in accordance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (HESF).
- Credit decisions are periodically reviewed. General reviews assess whether decisions academically disadvantage students, meet the intended aims of this Policy, and remain current. Specific reviews track the progress of students granted credit, to assess whether their progress is comparable to that of other students, including monitoring for elevated attrition or failure rates among students granted credit. These reviews are presented to the Academic Board annually.
- The Teaching and Learning Committee benchmarks SAHE's approach against other higher education providers to ensure its practices remain consistent with the sector.
- Where a change to course design is proposed, the Teaching and Learning Committee considers and plans for its potential impact on students who have already been granted credit under the affected course.
- The Academic Board reviews all periodic reports from relevant committees and staff, in accordance with the Governance Calendar, together with relevant student complaints, staff-raised concerns, and instances of student or staff misconduct. The Academic Board reports to the Governing Council and ensures findings are considered in SAHE’s admissions processes, and in planning, quality assurance and improvement activities generally.

## 15. Record Keeping

SAHE is committed to maintaining accurate records of RPL and credit decisions made for each student. SAHE retains a record of any decision to grant credit for a period of at least two years after the student ceases to be an accepted student. Records are kept in accordance with the Records Management Policy.

## 16. Appeals

Applicants who are dissatisfied with the outcome of a credit application may request a review of the decision in accordance with the Student Grievance Management Policy.

## Version Control

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|---|---|
| **Version** | 3.0 |
| **Category** | Academic |
| **Approving Body** | Academic Board |
| **Approval Date** | 07/08/2026 |
| **Policy Owner** | Dean |
| **Details of Changes** | This version renames and consolidates the Policy, previously titled the Advanced Standing Policy, as the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure. The rewrite is informed by TEQSA's Guidance Note: Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning (v2.0, 7 July 2023) and includes:<br>• a clear statement of what credit and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) encompass, consistent with the AQF Glossary definitions of formal, informal and non-formal learning, and the forms credit may take (specified and unspecified credit, exemptions, advanced standing, credit transfer, articulation and substitute learning);<br>• expanded Policy Principles addressing evidence-based decision making, appropriately qualified decision-makers, timely and documented decisions (including reasons for refusal), and a principle against granting credit for recruitment purposes, reflecting issues identified by TEQSA;<br>• a new section on Public Information and Representation, addressing HESF Standards 7.1.3 and 7.2.2, including the requirement to publish RPL and credit policies and standing credit transfer arrangements, and to explain to students the course/qualification to which credit will contribute and the terms on which it is granted;<br>• a new section on Recording of Credit, addressing HESF Standards 1.5.7(b) and 1.5.8, confirming that credit granted is identified in a student's record of results and, where issued, their Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement;<br>• expanded International Students provisions addressing the National Code (clauses 2.1.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and Standard 8) and sections 21(2B)-(3) of the ESOS Act, including the two-year record retention requirement; and<br>• expanded Implementation and Monitoring provisions addressing cohort monitoring of students granted credit, in line with HESF Standard 5.3. |

## Version History

| Version | Approved by | Approval date | Revision notes | Next review |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.4 | Governing Council | 4 May 2023 | Approved original version (as the Advanced Standing Policy). | |
| 2.0 | Governing Council | September 2023 | Added detail to fill gaps and clarify language. Corrected errors and typos. Reviewed to bring the Policy into compliance with the draft TEQSA Governance Guidance Note. | |
| 3.0 | Academic Board | 07/08/2026 | Renamed as the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure. Rewritten to be informed by TEQSA's Guidance Note: Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning (v2.0). Added provisions on public information, recording of credit, and expanded international student and monitoring requirements. Realigned against HESF Standards 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.4, 3.1, 5.3, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3. | July 2027 |