

Recognising Prior Knowledge and Skills

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Applies From:	Immediately		

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This policy provides a framework and a set of principles for allowing credit to be awarded towards a qualification, programme, micro-credential, course, or standard, where a learner has already acquired and can demonstrate, current relevant skills and/or knowledge.

1.2 Scope and Application

- a Learners in programmes covered by the Ara Institute of Canterbury¹ academic regulations may apply for credit either from study completed at Ara, at another recognised institution, or by submitting evidence of having achieved similar learning through experience.
- b Credit is granted only where there is a close, verified match between the previous learning achieved and the stated learning outcomes.
- c This policy applies to all assessed courses and programmes covered by the Ara academic regulations or for which Ara has been given such authority by another body.

1.3 Formal Delegations

- a The Ara Academic Committee Terms of Reference are updated on a regular basis. The current terms of reference include the following responsibilities most relevant to this policy:
 - i Setting academic standards, including assessment policies and procedures.
 - ii Overseeing the establishment of programme regulations (e.g. suspension of learners, withdrawal, appeals, admission, special admissions, entry, awarding of qualifications, credit recognition) and regulations for release of final marks.
- b Refer to Section 3 of this policy for details related to specific responsibilities and delegations.

¹ From herein referred to as Ara

<p>Related Ara Procedures and Forms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APP507a Application for Credit Recognition • APP505c Reconsiderations and Appeals Flowchart • APP517a Assessment Appeal Application Form 	<p>Related Ara Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APP505 Assessment • APP508 Moderation
<p>Related Legislation or Other Documentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ara Standard Charges 2026 • Education and Training Act 2020 • NZQA Programme Approval, Recognition and Accreditation Rules 2025 • NZQA Micro-credential Approval and Accreditation Rules 2025 • NZQA Integrated Quality Assurance Framework (iQAF) 2026 (To be confirmed) • NZQA Assessment Rules for Schools, TEOs assessing against Achievement Standards and NCEA Co-requisite Standards, and Candidates 2025 • NZQA Recognising learning for credit: Guidelines for the recognition and award of credit for learning (2017) 	
<p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ara was one of three institutions involved in setting national standards for RPL in 1991 – 1993. The Academic Board established a RPL Working Party and produced its first policy statement on RPL in 1993. In 1994 it sponsored a pilot study to investigate the implications of RPL and adopted 15 recommendations, including the appointment of an RPL Coordinator (disestablished in 1999). • In 2002, Ara set up the Centre for Assessment of Prior Learning (CAPL). The CAPL Reference Group reported to the Academic Board via the Academic Procedures Committee. • The 2006 version of this policy took into account definitions and processes used by our TANZ partners, as well as NZQA papers ‘Supporting Learning Pathways: Credit Recognition and Transfer’ (December 2002). NZQA noted that the terminology used in those papers is not consistent across sectors. The underlying philosophy and recommendations, however, are consistent with practices at Ara. • The 2009 version was amended to include credit recognition via “Advanced Standing”. • 2016 – new branding • 2017 amendments provide clarity on RPL, APL and ADV, and also removes sections no longer required. Removal of section Variation to an Award – this is now in <i>APP503 Naming and Awarding Qualifications and Recognising Achievement</i>. • 2017: Minor addition regarding the Centre of Assessment for Prior Learning (CAPL) Terms and Conditions of Enrolment. (Section 3.5b). • 2018: Restructure of Te Kāhui Manukura. • 2020: NZIST changes – Academic Board becomes Ara Academic Committee; Ara Council becomes Ara Board. Changing ‘student’ to ‘learner’. • 3/2/21: Changed Infoweb to Waituhi in footer • 19/02/2026: Due to disestablishment of CAPL service removed APL provision; maximum amount of credit to be gained through RPL to be 33% of a qualification 	

1.4 Definitions

- a **Recognition of Prior Knowledge and Skills (RPKS):** Over-arching term for the process of awarding credit for a learner’s previous learning towards their chosen target qualification or award. This may occur on a case-by-case basis or as a structured agreement between providers.

The three categories of credit recognition at Ara are credit transfer (CT), cross credit (CC), and recognition of prior learning (RPL). Credit recognition provisions must be detailed in each programme approval document. Refer to the definitions below and relevant details in Section 3 of this policy.

- i CT: Credit awarded for having successfully completed the identical course or standard at Ara or another equivalent institution.
- ii CC: Credit awarded for having successfully completed a comparable (approximately 80% match) course or standard at Ara or another accredited institution.

- iii RPL: A process for assessing relevant and current knowledge and skills (gained through prior learning) to determine achievement of learning outcomes of a programme, micro-credential, course, or assessment standard leading to a qualification for the purpose of awarding credit.
- b **Standard cross credit:** Cross credit arrangements that have already been approved and published on the Cross-Credit Schedule in the Student Management System (SMS) for a particular course.
- c **Current competency:** An assessment or interview that may be required before any credit recognition is awarded. This is to ensure the learner's previously achieved learning is still current in the relevant learning areas.

2 Principles

Ara is committed to the recognition of prior knowledge and skills and recognises that learning may be general or specific and may be achieved in a variety of ways. The principles are that credit recognition should:

- a Eliminate duplication of learning and assessment.
- b Provide open, inclusive, and integrated tertiary education systems, enabling learners to transfer between institutions, both national and internationally.
- c Ensure the quality, integrity and standing of qualifications are not diminished.

3 Associated Procedures for Ara Academic Policy on Credit Recognition

Contents:	3.1	Credit Recognition: General Provisions
	3.2	Credit Transfer: Specific Provisions
	3.3	Cross Credit: Specific Provisions
	3.4	Recognition of Prior Learning: Specific Provisions
	3.5	Assessment of Prior Learning: Specific Provisions
	3.6	Advanced Standing: Specific Provisions

3.1 Credit Recognition (General Provisions)

- a Application for credit recognition may include courses completed at Ara, another equivalent institution in New Zealand or overseas, or learning achieved by other means.
- b Credit via the Ara credit recognition provisions can be awarded for courses or modules within a qualification and for specific standards.
- c Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) applications will only be considered and awarded for up to 33% of credits leading to a qualification. Some national and consortium developed qualifications may impose their own credit limits. Formal articulation agreements with other institutions may also specify credit limits and conditions for recognition (see programme document for details). Information about credit recognition, the process for applying for it, the prescribed application fee and likely additional fees if further assessment is required, is available to learners from the Ara website and individual faculties.
- d An overview of credit recognition and articulation is required as part of programme approval and is therefore subject to scrutiny by the Portfolio and Assurance Committee on behalf of the Ara Academic Committee.
- e An annual schedule of standard charges is approved by the Director, Corporate Services on the recommendation from the Head of Student Administration Services. This includes fees related to credit recognition. The annual schedule of charges is published on the Ara website.
- f Credit recognition is awarded only to enrolled Ara learners. Applications may be made on the standard *APP507a Application for Credit Recognition* form. The faculty responsible for the delivery of the learning area has the authority to approve the credit recognition, delegated to the relevant Portfolio Manager. In the case of 'service delivery' such as communications, mathematics or Māori language, the faculty delivering the course normally oversees credit recognition applications, not the faculty responsible for the target qualification itself.
- g Each learner is responsible for providing sufficient, verified documentary evidence of previous learning so that a decision about appropriate credit recognition can be made. If learning was completed outside Ara, an original transcript, including a record of all credit achieved, or other formal evidence must be sighted and attached (or a summary of evidence attached) to the credit recognition application.
- h The faculty is responsible for determining the following and informing the learner of the outcome:
 - i What charge will be levied for evaluation of the credit recognition application, based on the standard charges.
 - ii Whether any further evidence is required before credit is awarded.
 - iii Whether there is an additional charge to cover any further assessment.
 - iv Whether any credit is to be awarded following the assessment process.

- i The learner’s formal academic transcript includes a record of all credit achieved, regardless of the process used to validate that credit. A grade of ‘P’ (ungraded pass) will be awarded for all RPL credit. Cross credits will use a grade of ‘CC’ and Credit transfers will use a grade of ‘CT’ unless specified in the programme regulation.
- j Reconsiderations and appeals against credit recognition decisions are handled according to the processes governing any other assessment decision (refer *APP505 Assessment*).
- k Situations not covered by this policy are referred to the Ara Academic Committee. The Ara Academic Committee has the power to vary the procedures set out in this policy if it is deemed appropriate to do so.

3.2 Credit Transfer (Specific Provisions)

- a The learner applying for credit transfer must provide the original or verified copy of the result notice for each completed course if the course was not completed at Ara or if the course is not shown on their NZQA Record of Learning.
- b Application fee applies (refer to *APP507a Application for Credit Recognition* form for more details).
- c Where students have previously gained credit through a Unit, Achievement or Skill Standard, a credit recognition fee will not be charged.

3.3 Cross Credit (Specific Provisions)

- a If cross credit for the particular or equivalent course has not been awarded in the target qualification before, the faculty requires sufficient information about that course in order to determine the following:
 - i Equivalency of course level, credit value and content (usually at least 80% equivalence) is required to award cross credit.
 - ii Current relevance to the target qualification, especially in areas of changing technology or standards.
 - iii Ratio of theory to practical work (if relevant) and amount of independent learning required of the learner.
- b If the cross credit is from a course completed at Ara, no further documentation is required.

3.4 Recognition of Prior Learning (Specific Provisions)

- a The NZQA states that “credit should be awarded for current and relevant skills, knowledge, attitudes and values achieved, without regard for the length, place or method of learning (e.g. workplace, life experience, hobbies, self-directed study)”. Ara endorses this stance and therefore acknowledges such learning as part of the credit recognition provisions.
- b As with cross credit and credit transfer, successful RPL applications result in credit being awarded for previous learning, not merely an exemption with alternative courses required (i.e. the learner is not required to enrol in that course of the target qualification nor substitute any further course to meet the overall requirements).
- c Faculties must maintain full records of the assessments undertaken to verify credit via RPL. This also includes records of appropriate moderation, as for any assessment activity.

Ara must:

 - i be accredited for the scope of the assessment undertaken, and
 - ii adhere to moderation plans and procedures. (Refer to *APP508 Moderation*.)

- d The Tertiary Education Commission currently stipulates that EFTS cannot be claimed for RPL assessment. Applicants must therefore pay a fee that covers staff time. The fee is based on the faculties estimate of the time a particular type of assessment is likely to take (e.g. challenge test, portfolio, attestation or combination), as well as the breadth of the application (e.g. one course or standard, a set of courses or standards). A standard charge per 'nominal hour' is set annually, including a non-refundable application fee. It is acknowledged that some applications will require less than the estimated time, and some will require more time - but the fee based on the estimated nominal hours is charged regardless. This is so learners can be informed of the cost before lodging the full application. Note that the total fee charged cannot exceed that which the learner would pay if enrolled in the relevant course/s.

- e If a current Ara staff member applies for credit via RPL, due to potential conflicts of interest the assessment undertaken must include either input from a qualified person external to Ara or undergo a full moderation exercise prior to credit being confirmed. In some cases, assessment or moderation by an Ara staff member external to the applicant's faculty or division is acceptable. This must be endorsed by the Dean of the awarding faculty or delegate prior to the assessment being undertaken.