
Educational Pathways Policy – Higher Education

Policy Code: ACA-001

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Purpose:

This Policy is intended to provide a broad framework, set of principles and minimal requirements for determining and granting advanced standing and to promote understanding by all students of educational pathways they may use to access the College's higher education courses.

Definition of “College” – *In the higher education sector, the Australian College of Natural Medicine Pty Ltd (ACNM) trades as Endeavour College of Natural Health, and Wellnation. For the purpose of this Policy, any reference to ‘College’ or ‘the College’ should be considered a reference to each or any of these respective trading names.*

Scope:

- All campuses
- All higher education courses
- All students seeking advanced standing or exemption from specified subjects within a particular higher education course
- All staff, decision-making bodies, agents and partners of the College

Acronyms:

AQF: Australian Qualifications Framework - The national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training. It incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications framework.

GPA: Grade Point Average - A grade point average on a scale of 0 - 7 is calculated once the student has completed all subjects for a course, and it is placed on the course transcript.

$$\text{GPA} = \frac{\text{Sum of (subject grade point X subject credit points)}}{\text{Total credit points}}$$

Total credit points attempted

HE: Higher Education – at the College, the term ‘higher education’ refers to education at AQF level 5 or above (usually level 7, Bachelor degree level or above, however some Diplomas and Associate Degrees are offered at higher education level also).

RPL: Recognition of Prior Learning - The assessment of a person's skills and knowledge acquired through work or life experience, where there are no formal or current qualifications as proof, which may be used to grant status or credit in a subject.

RTO: Registered Training Organisation - A registered provider and assessor of nationally recognised training under the VET scheme.

VET: Vocational Education and Training - Formal, accredited post compulsory education designed to develop knowledge, skills and attributes of a vocational nature. Training is provided by registered training organisations.

Policy Statement:

The College encourages lifelong learning and provides the opportunity for students to have previous learning recognised for advanced standing (see definition) in their courses (including formal, informal and non-formal learning). The provision of advanced standing 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. Previous learning must be assessed as equivalent to the College's subjects for advanced standing to be granted. Assessment of advanced standing will take into account the learning outcomes, units of study, units of competency, volume of learning, program of study, including content, and the learning and assessment approaches of the previous learning and / or work and life experience.

The College has established an Educational Pathways Office to oversee all processes relating to pathways, led by the National Educational Pathways Manager. The Educational Pathways Office will liaise closely with the Director of Education and relevant academic staff

specific to fields of study (where necessary) to ensure offers to students of advanced standing are appropriate.

Course requirements

Regardless of the nature or amount of advanced standing recognised, any specific requirements of an award course must be fulfilled, including conditions associated with the professional recognition of the award (e.g.: online / distance study restrictions or a requirement to complete a certain number of practical hours).

Current Skills and Knowledge

The previous knowledge and skills of an applicant must still be current, in the context of the course and College to which the student has been admitted, in order for advanced standing recognition to be approved. Only previous learning that has been obtained within the past eight years has the potential under this Policy to be recognised for advanced standing. Exceptions to the currency of learning timeframes outlined above will remain at the discretion of the National Educational Pathways Manager.

In addition, potential for advanced standing may be governed by regulatory or professional body requirements. Applications in those disciplines where the body of knowledge and practice has changed significantly and the applicant has not maintained an appropriate level of practice within the field of study may be rejected by the Pathway Assessor.

Knowledge and Skill Assessment

The *Educational Pathways Policy – Higher Education* aims to optimise student progression through higher education courses by recognising prior learning outcomes and units of competency as the basis for satisfying some course requirements. Advanced standing may be assessed on formal, non-formal and / or informal learning.

The College Council may, at its discretion but subject to the requirements of any formal advanced standing recognition arrangements, set additional requirements, such as application interview, equivalency testing or portfolio submission, for the process of recognising advanced standing for a particular course or subject.

Forms of Advanced Standing

Advanced standing outcomes are expressed in the AQF as block, specified or unspecified credit. The College mainly issues specified credit towards core subjects or specific modality electives and must match those electives. The College may issue unspecified credit toward modality electives on a case by case basis only (as determined by the National Educational Pathways Manager in liaison with the Director of Education).

Advanced Standing for Exemptions

Advanced standing will only be given for subjects for which a grade of Exempt has been noted on a previously-awarded transcript when sufficient evidence has been supplied of relevant study towards that exemption, and that the relevant study is still within eight year limit of current skills and knowledge.

Advanced Standing for Pass Conceded Grades

Advanced standing will not be given for subjects for which a grade of Pass Conceded has been achieved.

Automatic Advanced Standing Recognition

Internal Course Transfer

Internal subject credit transfer within the College will automatically be recognised where the subject code, title and credit point value, are identical in each course. In this case the grade will be published on the course transcript and it will contribute to the student's GPA. Internal course transfer incurs significant administrative time and attracts a fee (see [Fees Policy – HE](#) or [Fees Policy - International](#)).

Cross-Institutional Credit

Students may apply for cross-institutional credit whereby they complete one or more subjects at another higher education institution while enrolled at the College and have that subject/s credited toward their currently-enrolled course. Cross-institutional study must be approved by the Director of Education prior to any study being undertaken. Specific cross-institutional credit arrangements may be in place between the College and other external institutions, and will be advertised where relevant.

In order for a subject undertaken at another institution to count as part of their current enrolled qualification, the student must gain the approval of the Director of Education **PRIOR** to their enrolment in the subject at the other institution.

The Director of Education, in consultation with the National Educational Pathways Manager, has the authority to determine any conditions applying to cross-institutional study for credit purposes.

Transition

When changes to an accredited course result in changes to subjects, the College will follow the published Transition Plan that is approved by the regulatory body for granting advanced standing toward an award. Normally, the grade for the subject will appear on the transcript. However, if two or more subjects have been combined in the new version of the course, the subject grade will not be recorded and an 'EX' (Exempt) will be listed against the new subject.

In all other cases, recognition of advanced standing is not automatic and an application for advanced standing recognition must be made. If advanced standing is subsequently recognised, no grade will be recorded for the subject and therefore will not contribute to the student's GPA.

Clinical and Practical Subjects (including external placement)

Due to the difficulty of validating clinical practice or external placement as a substitute for clinical / practical skills and practicum subjects, no RPL will be given for private practice or practical experience. Clinical and practical placement subject advanced standing may be available through credit transfer and articulation, and applications will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Pathways Defined

Type of Learning Undertaken	HE Pathway Application
<i>Non formal and / or Informal Learning</i>	RPL
<i>Formal Learning - VET</i>	Articulation
<i>Formal Learning - HE</i>	Credit Transfer HE to HE

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

RPL is the assessment of a person's skills and knowledge acquired through work or life experience, where there are no formal or current qualifications as proof, which may be used to grant status or credit in a subject. RPL will be available only where it is suitable and appropriate to a specific award course and only where a student's previous non-formal or informal learning has taken place within the last eight years, and is assessed as having met the learning outcomes required for satisfactory completion of a particular subject/s within the relevant course.

This process as outlined in the [RPL Procedure - HE](#), is individualised to reflect specific student needs / experiences. The student must supply appropriate documentation as outlined in the [HE RPL Application Kit](#) on the College's website.

Credit Transfer HE to HE

Applications for advanced standing based solely on formal education must be within a timeframe such that the content of the credit is current. Therefore credit transfer will only be granted for study within the past eight years calculated from first study period at the former institution.

Applications in those disciplines where the body of knowledge and practice has changed significantly and the applicant has not maintained an appropriate level of practice within the field of study may be rejected by the Pathway Assessor.

Credit transfer in HE involves the assessment of previous or concurrent formal studies by a student in HE at another institution towards gaining a HE qualification at the College. The process determines whether those studies at another institution are equivalent to, the learning outcomes required for award of a qualification from the College, and whether any aspects of those studies may be credited towards completion of the course that leads to the award of that qualification. Credit transfer may be available in conjunction with RPL.

This process is outlined in the [Credit Transfer Procedure - HE to HE](#). The process is initiated by the student and credit transfer evaluation is conducted by a Pathway Assessor on an individual basis. The student must supply appropriate documentation as outlined in the [Credit Transfer Application Form - HE to HE](#) on the College's website.

Articulation

To determine an Educational Pathway for articulation (in order to provide advanced standing from a VET qualification to a HE qualification), the College conducts a mapping analysis

comparing the VET qualification obtained from an RTO, or units of competency from a VET qualification, to the HE learning outcomes and subjects of the College qualification. This process identifies the criteria of 80% similarity in content, duration of study and degree of difficulty and conversely identifies 'gaps' in knowledge and skill. From this analysis appropriate advanced standing guidelines are generated as a basis for evaluating informal and formal articulation pathways.

Informal Articulation

Informal articulation is the process of granting advanced standing to a student for a VET qualification obtained from an RTO, or units of competency from a VET qualification, that are comparable to specific subject/s within a College HE qualification. Mapping and analysis of curriculum from a specific RTO are undertaken where the College anticipates a number of students with qualifications from the same institution may be applying for advanced standing. This process is undertaken according to the [Curriculum Mapping Procedure](#) and [Curriculum Mapping Guidelines](#). An 'Articulation Pathway' document is then generated for students holding that VET qualification to clarify which subjects they must undertake to complete their HE award. If informal articulation mapping has not been previously undertaken, this process is directed by the College on a case by case basis, as queries are raised by students. All informal articulation pathway arrangements will be placed in the [Articulation Abacus](#), a central register which is publicly available via the College's website.

All applicants for informal articulation are to complete the required documentation outlined on the Educational Pathways page on the College's website.

Formal Articulation

Formal articulation is the process of developing a formal, written and published agreement that identifies a VET qualification obtained from a RTO, or units of competency from a VET qualification that are comparable to, or acceptable in lieu of, specific subject/s within a College qualification. This process is applicable between VET RTOs and HE providers. Any formal Articulation Pathways are published on the College's website for the information of prospective students. Successful completion of an articulated course, subject or unit of competency assures the student and the College that the student has received the necessary instruction and preparation to enable progression to the next level of learning. All formal articulation arrangements will be placed in the [Articulation Abacus](#), a central register which is publicly available via the College's website.

Advanced Standing Recognition Limits

Advanced standing arrangements for students towards AQF qualifications at any level will take into account the comparability and equivalence of the:

- units of competency or subjects
- learning outcomes
- volume of learning
- program of study, including content
- learning and assessment approaches

When setting advanced standing recognition limits for a student with an AQF qualification towards a higher level AQF qualification in the same or related discipline, the College will take into account the relevant points above and the AQF guidelines below:

- 50% advanced standing for an Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree linked to a three year Bachelor Degree
- 37.5% advanced standing for an Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree linked to a four year Bachelor Degree
- 33% advanced standing for a Diploma linked to a three year Bachelor Degree
- 25% advanced standing for a Diploma linked to a four year Bachelor Degree

It should be noted that the above guidelines will be a starting point for advanced standing consideration only, and less or more advanced standing may be granted subject to assessment of the application by the Pathway Assessor.

With regards to RPL for informal learning the College will grant advanced standing for no more than 25% of a HE award. Formal learning completed outside of eight years with current skills and knowledge will be deemed RPL and applications will be assessed on individual merit. At no time for any type of application will the College confer advanced standing for more than 67% of a HE qualification.

Where approval of a course is dependent on meeting regulatory or professional body requirements regarding quality, content and / or delivery mode, the College reserves the right to uphold these requirements by limiting conferral of advanced standing.

Responsibilities

College Council is responsible for ensuring this Policy is consistent with sectoral norms and requirements, and for approval of any major amendments to this Policy.

The Director of Education is responsible for ensuring implementation of this Policy and its associated procedures and guidelines within the relevant Departments. The National Educational Pathways Manager may also liaise with them on specific educational pathways matters.

The National Educational Pathways Manager is ensuring and overseeing the development of procedures or guidelines consistent with this Policy, including determining the maximum amount of advanced standing that may be granted for specific educational pathway (advanced standing) processes, ensuring that relevant documents are compliant with legislative requirements, and validating and monitoring assessment process and outcomes related to such pathways. The National Educational Pathways Manager will also develop mapping and related documents for internal use in the College and make final decisions on conferral of educational pathways to individual applicants for advanced standing, ensuring liaison with relevant academic experts and external parties is conducted where required.

Pathway Assessors are responsible for conducting the evaluation of all applications for advanced standing under this Policy. The assessors are assigned by the National Educational Pathways Manager and must have expertise in the subject, content or skills area, as well as knowledge of and expertise in advanced standing assessment and the Educational Pathways policies and procedures.

Students are responsible for obtaining the appropriate forms from the website, and for filling them out correctly, and collecting, organising and applying the appropriate documentary evidence as outlined in the appropriate application directions. Additionally, if academic transcripts or other evidence are supplied in a previous name, students must supply certified copies of documentary evidence of change of name.

Timeframe for Applications

Application for HE educational pathway advanced standing must be made at least 20 days prior to census date of the relevant subject to permit processing, decision making and communication of the result to the student. In general students are advised to make an advanced standing application as part of their Admissions process.

Successful Application

All successful educational pathway applicants will be advised in writing of the outcome of their application and have 'EX' (Exempt) applied to the relevant subject on their transcript on receipt of a signed acceptance from the student of the outcome. The transcript does not differentiate between methods of achieving advanced standing.

Unsuccessful Application

If an application for an educational pathway advanced standing is rejected, the Pathway Assessor must provide a response stating the grounds on which advanced standing for the particular subject was not approved. Grounds for rejection may include the following:

1. Application does not meet one or more of the criteria outlined above;
2. The qualification is not recognised;
3. The subject, unit/s of study, unit/s of competency or VET qualification was completed outside the required timeframes outlined in this Policy.

Unsuccessful educational pathway applicants will be notified in writing of the reason why advanced standing was not granted. If an application for advanced standing has been rejected the student may access the [Grievance Policy - Domestic Students - Higher Education](#) or [Complaints and Appeals Policy - International](#) to appeal the decision.

Review and Quality Improvement

The College will measure the impact of this Policy through key performance indicators (KPI's) which may include:

- implementation of review systems, including benchmarking processes to compare advanced standing outcomes;
- targets and numbers of cross provider institutional arrangements;
- targets and numbers of successful Educational Pathway applications;
- establishment of specific goals / targets for increasing the numbers of students granted advanced standing.

This Policy will be continually reviewed to maximise the applicability to new and updated qualifications and to student and industry needs. A formal review of this Policy will be conducted every two years in line with the College's [Policy Development and Review Policy](#).

Definitions: **Advanced Standing** – Advanced standing is a form of credit for any previous learning. See also articulation, credit transfer, recognition of prior learning.

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

Articulation Pathway – a documented study pathway for a student to undertake after assessment of credit. The document outlines the specific study requirements for completion of a qualification. The pathway provides for maximum advanced standing and is predetermined.

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

Course – a structural program of learning built around a range of specific learning outcomes or units of competency, usually delivered in or by an educational training institution through an approved curriculum.

Credit transfer – is a process that provides students with agreed and consistent credit outcomes based on identified equivalence in content learning outcomes, skills, knowledge and assessment criteria between matched qualifications.

Educational Pathway – allows students to move between two cognate courses, and throughout qualification levels with full or partial recognition of the qualifications and / or learning outcomes and / or units of competency they have achieved.

Equivalency test – is a test to measure the extent to which a person's existing knowledge or skills satisfy the requirements of an education or training program.

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.

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.

Learning Outcomes – statements that specify what students will know, be able to do or be able to demonstrate when they have completed or participated in a subject and / or course. Outcomes are usually expressed as knowledge, skills, attitudes or values.

Mapping – an operation that associates each element of a given set of information with one or more elements of a second set of information.

Module – is a self-contained block of learning which can be completed on its own or as part of a course and which may also result in the attainment of one or more units of competency.

Non-formal learning – learning that takes place through a program of instruction but does not usually lead to the attainment of a formal qualification or award, for example, in-house professional development programs conducted in the workplace.

Qualification – formal certification, issued by approved body, in recognition that a person has achieved learning outcomes or competencies.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) - the assessment of a person's skills and knowledge acquired through work or life experience, where there are no formal or current qualifications as proof, which may be used to grant status or credit in a subject.

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

Student – is an individual person who is formally enrolled to study at the College. The individual person is that who appears on the College's documents such as enrolment, admission and payment documents, and who is assigned an individual student ID.

Unit of Competency - is the specification of knowledge and skill, and the application of that knowledge and skill, to the standard of performance expected in the workplace. A unit of competency is the smallest unit that can be assessed and recognised.

Unit of Study – is the combination of two or more units of competency combined in to one learning program.

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

Related Procedures:

[Credit Transfer Procedure - HE to HE](#)

[Curriculum Mapping Procedure](#)

[Informal Articulation Procedure](#)

[RPL Procedure - HE](#)

Further Information:

Related [Complaints and Appeals Policy - International](#)

Policies: [Fees Policy - HE](#)

[Fees Policy - International](#)

[Grievance Policy - Domestic Students - Higher Education](#)

[Policy Development and Review Policy](#)

Benchmarking: AQF Qualifications Pathway Policy
Southern School of Natural Therapies
RMIT University

Supporting [Analysis of the AQF National Policy and Guidelines on Credit](#)
Research **and** [Arrangements – Final draft May 2009](#)

Analysis: [Building Better Connected Learning Through Improved Student Pathways](#)
[– Pathways Project Report – November 2009](#)

[Student pathways: Aspects of data collection – A report prepared for the](#)
[Pathways Project – October 2009](#)

[Impact Analysis of the proposed strengthened Australian Qualifications Framework - Conducted for the Australian Qualifications Framework Council \(AQFC\) – October 2010](#)

[Funding for Tertiary Education and Training – Impacts on Student Movement between the Sectors – A report for the Pathways Project, Monash University - October 2009](#)

[Langworthy A, & Johns S 2012, Research and Development in Higher Education: Connections in Higher Education Volume 35 HERDSA](#)

[Wheelahan L 2009, Programs and Pathways – A report prepared for the Pathways Project – School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University](#)

Related

[Articulation Abacus](#)

Documents:

[Credit Transfer Application Form - HE to HE](#)

[Fees and Payment Options](#)

[Articulation Application Form - VET to HE](#)

[HE RPL Application Kit](#)

Related

[Australian Quality Framework \(AQF\) First Edition July 2011](#)

Legislation:

Guidelines:

[Curriculum Mapping Guidelines](#)

Policy Author:	National Educational Pathways Manager
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Policy Status:	Revised
Responsibilities for Implementation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Director of Education</i> • <i>Educational Pathways Office</i> • <i>Senior Academic staff</i> • <i>Student Advisers, Student Services</i>
Key Stakeholders:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>College Council</i> • <i>National Educational Pathways Manager</i> • <i>Student Advisers, Student Services</i> • <i>Senior Academic staff</i> • <i>Students</i>