

PATHWAYS, CREDIT TRANSFER AND RPL

The information in this fact sheet is primarily for post-school leavers to understand how institutions structure pathways, assess credit transfers and recognise prior learning.



What are pathways?

A pathway is a term in higher education to mean an alternative admission route to achieve qualifications between high school and entry to university courses. Pathways provide other options you can take to continue learning. Whether you are a Year 12 student or returning to learning, you can use pathways to better prepare and transition into higher education courses.

A common way that institutions structure pathways is to offer nested programs that allow you to progress through different qualification levels without having to repeat studies. For example, you may complete a Certificate II, III or IV and then enrol in the Diploma in the same field with credit applied for the studies already completed.

Depending on their policies, institutions may require you to apply for the lowest qualification first and progress to the next level when it is complete, or enrol in the highest level qualification and then exit when your desired qualification level has been completed.

Every institution is different and offers different credit for different courses. Some institutions offer higher credit programs for studies within their institution – that is, you may receive more credit if you complete the Diploma at the same institution that you then apply to for a Bachelor Degree.

To better understand which pathway could be right for you, speak to the institution directly. Many institutions have a dedicated webpage where they explain their pathways.

An example of a Pathway may be as follows:



This pathway is an example of a Certificate course, which articulates into a Diploma, and then articulates into a Bachelor degree. In this case, you would receive one year of credit for a three year Bachelor degree. Based on full-time study, going through this pathway would only take six months longer than the original degree. The benefits of pathways are that they are often more flexible than a 3 or 4 year course and can allow you to experiment within your chosen field without necessarily committing to the time and financial cost of a university degree.

Each institution lists information on their pathways programs on the VTAC website at: www.vtac.edu.au/institutions/pathways

Who are pathways for?

Year 12

Pathways can be for all types of learners. They can be for year 12 students who want to continue learning but may not be interested in university as a next step. These pathways are typically structured as certificates, diplomas or foundation years to prepare students exiting school for a degree later down the track. VTAC recommends adding pathways into your preference list even if you feel ready for university, as they can be a great alternative option should you not receive an offer to your dream course this year.

Post-school

Pathways can be a wonderful option for those returning to learning who want a more guided transition into tertiary education. Mature-age students can choose pathways that balance with their work schedule, build the foundation for a career change or allows them to return to study during a later life stage. Post-school applicants may also receive credit for prior learning or work experience. See the Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL) section below.

International students

Pathways are especially beneficial for international students who do not currently meet the entry criteria (such as English language requirements) of their desired course and need to build up their achievements to be admitted. These preparatory programs are often called “bridging courses” and they are designed to help you meet the requirements prior to tertiary study.

Credit transfer

Credit transfer is when an institution recognises any previous education or training you have completed in a similar field or course and allows you to use it to count towards the completion of your current education or training.

Credit transfer may reduce the number of subjects you have to do to get the qualification, and can be a pathway. Generally you will need to provide statements of academic achievement to support your credit transfer request.

There are national credit transfer guidelines, set by Universities Australia, which state that holders of a Diploma or an Advanced Diploma are eligible for a certain amount of credit.

	Three year degree	Four year degree
Diploma	Up to 33% credit	Up to 25% credit
Advanced Diploma	Up to 50% credit	Up to 37.5% credit

Credit agreements negotiated between issuing organisations for credit for students towards higher level AQF qualifications in the same or related discipline. Refer to the Australian Qualifications Framework: www.aqf.edu.au/

The Australian Qualifications Framework takes into consideration the equivalence of learning outcomes, volume of learning, program of study (including content) and learning and assessment processes.

If you're applying for credit transfer when you enrol, provide your transcripts from previous study to the institution.

If you're applying for credit transfer after you have already enrolled, most institutions have an online form that you can download and complete to be submitted with transcripts of your results.

Glossary

Articulation

An arrangement that allows you to transition through a VET (Vocational Education and Training) qualification into another VET or higher education program.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

Framework that defines all Australian qualifications nationally in post-compulsory education and training.

Credit Transfer

An administrative process to formally recognise your competency in courses that you have been awarded at another TAFE institute or Registered Training Organisation (RTO).

Pathways

A way of getting into the qualification you want that provides different entry and exit points. It can include the linking of existing qualifications such as using your TAFE or training qualification as a pathway to higher education at university.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

An assessment process which may give you entry, or credit for TAFE courses, based on skills or knowledge you have gained through a non-accredited training facility.

Registered Training Organisation (RTO)

A training provider registered by a state or territory government, which provides and assesses nationally recognised qualifications. RTOs may include TAFEs, schools, companies, industry associations and community organisations.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is when an institution formally assesses skills or knowledge you have within the area you are studying.

RPL means that you're not repeating coursework that you've learnt elsewhere, but that you will be learning new and challenging topics.

RPL may shorten the qualification length, and formally recognise that you have completed parts of the training in a different format.

RPL takes into consideration any of the following that are relevant to your qualification:

- Previous training (non-accredited training, such as a short course)
- Volunteering
- Community activities
- Work experience
- Family or carer duties
- Attending or participating in seminars, conferences, workshops
- Life experiences that have given you competencies that match the courses you're applying for.

Each institution's approach to RPL is slightly different and it is best to check their RPL policy, which is often easily accessible on their website.

Institutions list their Credit Transfer and RPL statements on the VTAC website.

Visit: www.vtac.edu.au/institutions/credit-transfer