Recognising learning for credit

Skills and knowledge can be gained in many ways. From formal learning, independent study, work, and life experience.

Recognition of learning for credit is where your existing skills and knowledge (gained through your prior learning) can be assessed for credit, for example, toward a qualification.

Recognising learning for credit enables learners to progress more easily in their education and career, taking their formal and non-formal skills and knowledge along with them, and not having to repeat training for what they already know or can do.

To help learners better access this recognition and tertiary education organisations provide it, NZQA has developed some resources.

Guidelines for tertiary education organisations

Guidelines for the recognition and award of learning for credit

Taking your learning with you - a student's guide to recognition of learning

The purpose of this guide is to help you better understand how your formal and non-formal learning can be recognised for credit towards a qualification.
Recognition of learning for credit can help you to progress further and faster in your education and career, and to move more easily between tertiary providers.

What is recognition of learning for credit?

Skills and knowledge can be gained in many ways. For example, this could be from formal learning toward a qualification or informal learning, independent study, work, and life experience.

Recognition of learning for credit is a process where your existing skills and knowledge (your learning) are evaluated against the outcomes of a qualification, programme, course, module or assessment standard.

If your skills and knowledge meet some or all the outcomes, these can be recognised by the award of credit towards a qualification, programme, course, module or assessment standard. This means that you may not have to repeat learning that you already know, and can achieve your qualification faster.

What terms describe recognition of learning for credit?

There are many terms used to describe the recognition of learning.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority uses the terms credit recognition and transfer (CRT) and recognition of prior learning (RPL). CRT generally describes credit from formal, credentialed learning that can be transferred to another institution, while RPL generally describes credit from learning that has not been formally recognised.

Tertiary education organisations may use these or other terms. Check with your student handbook or ask your provider about their terminology and policies.

What is CRT?

CRT is where credit you gained towards a qualification is recognised by another institution. CRT generally describes credit from formal learning that has been provided and credentialed by a tertiary provider.

For example, if you have partially completed study toward one diploma qualification or to another qualification, you may be able to transfer some or all of the credit you have already earned to your new provider or qualification. This means that you may not have to repeat material you have already studied.
What is RPL?

RPL is where existing skills and knowledge, usually gained through work, independent study, informal learning and life experience, are recognised as being equivalent to those taught in a formal education setting for the purposes of awarding credit toward a qualification.

For example, if you have skills and knowledge of coaching sports gained through significant experience, you may be able to be credited some or all of a sport and recreation qualification through RPL.

How to obtain CRT and RPL?

Your provider should have information regarding CRT and RPL policies and procedures on their website, brochures, or your student handbook.

The information should contain:

- a clear description of how credit can be awarded
- indicative timeframes
- fees for credit
- an outline of what you will be required to do in providing documentation, evidence and assessment requirements
- the identification of further work that may be required to complete your desired qualification.

When can I get CRT or RPL?

CRT and RPL should generally be sought at the point of application and enrolment so that your existing skills and knowledge can be assessed as early as possible. That way your programme of study can be adjusted accordingly.

However, you may also request CRT or RPL later on.

Please discuss CRT and RPL with your provider during application and enrolment because if you are able to be awarded a significant amount of credit, it may affect your eligibility for student loans and allowances. You may also wish to discuss CRT and RPL with StudyLink.
How do I find out if my skills and knowledge can get me credit?

To understand what learning you may be able to obtain credit for, you will need to reflect on your learning, and the skills and knowledge you have gained.

Your provider can work with you to:

• discover and evaluate your skills and knowledge
• assess your skills and knowledge against the outcomes of the qualification you seek
• assist you to identify and fill gaps in your learning towards achieving your qualification.

How much credit can I get?

This depends on your previous learning, the type and extent of evidence you have, and how much credit you would like to be awarded.

For example, you may be able to receive more credit through CRT if you are transferring from one business-related qualification at one provider to a similar business-related qualification at another provider, but may receive less credit if transferring to a performing arts qualification.

Similarly, if you are a chef with experience in running a kitchen and restaurant, you may be eligible for most or all of the credit toward culinary arts qualification through RPL, but may be eligible for only some credit toward a qualification in business majoring in hospitality management.

What evidence and documents do I need for CRT or RPL?

This depends on your learning and the credit you are seeking.

For example, if you have completed or undertaken formal study at a tertiary provider, it is likely that you will be required to provide an official academic transcript detailing your achievement.

For RPL, you may be asked to produce a portfolio of evidence to show what you have learned and are able to do. Your provider should advise what documents and evidence are needed.
How is my previous learning going to be assessed?

The purpose of assessment is to determine if you have the skills and knowledge to meet the outcome of the qualification, programme, course and assessment standard for which you are seeking credit.

In the case of CRT, an assessor usually evaluates your verified official academic record/transcript and/or your New Zealand Record of Achievement to identify qualifications, programmes, components and assessment standards achieved. The assessor determines if the outcomes achieved are partly or wholly equivalent to the outcomes for which you are seeking credit.

In the case of RPL, an assessor will evaluate your existing skills and knowledge against the outcomes the qualification, programme, course and assessment standard for which you are seeking credit. The assessor is likely to work alongside subject matter experts and/or a panel.

Depending on the credit sought and the nature of your previous study or experience, the assessment for RPL may include:

- challenge test
- practical assessment
- professional conversation or interview with the assessor(s)
- presentation of and a review of the portfolio of evidence with the assessor(s)
- further work may be required if there are gaps in your knowledge in relation to the qualification you are seeking.

For some qualifications, especially at the higher levels, there may be multiple assessments over time.

How is the credit going to be recorded?

Credit awarded from recognition of learning is recorded on your official academic transcript.

If the credit is based on a CRT application, the grade you have achieved from your previous learning is likely to be recorded and transferred at the same value.

What should I do if I do not get the credit I am seeking?

If your provider has not awarded you some or all of the credit you are seeking, it is likely because the assessment of your skills and knowledge has not met the outcomes of the qualification, programme, course and assessment standard for which you are seeking credit.
Your assessors should discuss any gaps you may have and how you may fill these with additional new learning to complete your qualification.

You should discuss with your provider the reasons for their decision. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you may be able to use their review and appeals process.