



University of  
**Southern  
Queensland**

# **Valuing Experiential Learning: Unlocking RPL Potential in a Regional Australian University**

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The University of Southern Queensland acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways where the University campuses are located. Further, we acknowledge the cultural diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and pay respect to Elders past and present. Recognition of Prior Learning provides the opportunity for lived experience, knowledge, and cultural diversity to be respected and valued allowing all students to succeed based on their unique strengths.



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## Acknowledgements

### *It takes a village, time and resourcing.*

The literature identifies key challenges for the embedding of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) which includes the critical role of resourcing, succession planning, and the impact champions play. Champions raise awareness of RPL benefits, provide support and guidance to those working in the credit decision-making space, and may influence resource allocation. Additionally, champions foster a culture that values prior learning, ensuring the long-term success of RPL initiatives (Conrad, 2023; Edge & Mernagh, 2021). Addressing these challenges in a regional university involves strong engagement with a range of stakeholder groups within, and external to, the higher education sector. For academic transformation to occur in the RPL space, collaboration with institutional leaders and external industry is vital. Champions from a range of contexts is pivotal to successfully embed, maximise, and allow partnership opportunities to emerge.

The stakeholders listed below have supported and continue to influence RPL Practice at UniSQ in nuanced disciplinary ways. Each individual brought expertise and unique perspectives contributing to this organic co-creation, identifying and developing RPL processes, resources and practice tailored to the UniSQ context. All involved played a pivotal role throughout the project and whilst there was some resistance, negative perspectives towards RPL changed, and many champions emerged. The number of champions continues to grow.

#### **Executive Sponsor**

##### **Professor Lyn Alderman - Dean (Academic Transformation)**

With extensive expertise and experience in adult education and quality assurance in higher education, Professor Lyn Alderman played a pivotal role conceptualising how this strategy unfolded. The development of a program logic was led by the Executive Sponsor, and this guided our decision-making. This expert advice enabled the RPL Project Team to successfully navigate the challenges that RPL posed whilst investigating the practice at UniSQ. Communicating the benefits of RPL to industry, Professor Alderman has consistently fostered an environment to empower the RPL Project Team to think 'outside the box' in developing a framework to tailor RPL to the UniSQ landscape.

#### **Student cohorts**

A key aspect of the project was to have strong engagement from students accessing our services to navigate credit processes and RPL credit opportunities via Professional Practice Credit and Specified Course credit. Since 2020, we have engaged with, sought feedback from, and advised over 250 individual students. These students came to us in a range of ways, through

- RPL credit referrals from grievance processes and the Student Guild
- The Bachelor of Communication and Media (BCNM) pilot
- The Bachelor of Cyber Security (BCYS) pilot
- Credit applications that were rejected and being reviewed by the Associate Dean Learning and Teaching for our opinion
- The Credit and Exit team
- Iconnect (student) concierges
- In person discussions at Student Expos
- Word of mouth referrals (Students and Program Directors).

This engagement provided us with a continuous feedback cycle that influenced the design and ongoing refinement of the Professional Practice Credit Framework. Some students tapped into Professional Practice Credit, whilst others explored RPL for specified courses within their program. The student voice plays a significant and pivotal role in the Professional Practice Credit Framework and RPL resources. This engagement has resulted in an organic, co-designed approach that meets the needs of our cohorts.

## UniSQ staff cohorts

The RPL Project Team has changed and morphed over time. We would like to thank Crystal Murray and Georgi McAdam for their contributions to the project. This project would not have been successful without their contributions and buy-in from many areas of the University. Professional and Academic Staff have generously shared their opinions (openly and honestly), expertise, and time with the shared commitment to improve the credit process for future students. To everyone that we have spoken with throughout this project – a huge thanks. The list is extensive, and each contribution fed into the co-design of the Professional Practice Credit Framework and RPL credit practice and processes.

Accolades to Ben Crispin and Samara Hoffman, Learning Teaching Futures Portfolio, for their graphic design genius and guidance of the iterative Framework developments.

## The Professional Practice Credit Pilot Champions

Two specific pilots were initiated during the project to test the Professional Practice Credit Framework. The following stakeholders were instrumental to the testing of the Professional Practice Credit concept.

Pilot #1 Bachelor of Communication and Media (BCNM)

- **Professor Jill Lawrence**- Head of School and Dean (Humanities and Communication) (2022)
- **Rebecca Te'o**- Senior Lecturer (Journalism)
- **Eleanor Kiernan**- Senior Lecturer, Academic Quality Coordinator and BCNM Program Director (2022)

Pilot #2 Bachelor of Cyber Security (BCYS), a bespoke industry-based partnership:

- **Professor Linda Galligan**- Head of School and Dean (Mathematics, Physics and Computing) (2022)
- **Dr Zhaohui Tang**- Senior Lecturer (Computing)
- **Soldier On**- Industry Partner
- **DXC Technology**- Industry Partner (Represented by Professor Neil Curtis)



## Executive summary

This research article consolidates the key findings, methodologies, resources and recommendations emerging from the 2021–2022 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) project at UniSQ. A significant deliverable was the Professional Practice Credit Framework with two pilots undertaken to test this prototype and identify resources required. The pilots were conducted in two distinct contexts: the Bachelor of Communication and Media (BCNM) and the Bachelor of Cyber Security (BCYS). Whilst the project funding formally concluded, the vision remained to sustainably embed processes, training, and resources into institutional operations, transitioning from a project-based initiative to business as usual.

## Purpose and Structure

This research article serves two interconnected purposes:

**Part A:** Provides a comprehensive account of the RPL project methodology, findings, and resources developed over time and underpinned by co-design principles. It establishes a foundation for further development in this area, addressing a notable gap in the Australian higher education sector. Specifically, the RPL project highlights the importance of tailoring approaches to the unique institutional and student contexts in which they are implemented. Key factors to successfully embed RPL include institutional culture, governance alignment, and acknowledging student diversity.

**Part B:** Focuses on the Professional Practice Credit Framework, an evolving and student-centric concept informed by continuous stakeholder engagement. This section details the Professional Practice Credit Framework's development, informed by two pilot studies and student credit referrals. It includes resources and tools aimed at enhancing procedures, processes, and practices related informal and non-formal (experiential) learning.

## Key Themes Explored

- **Institutional Contexts:** The success of RPL initiatives depends on various contextual factors, including leadership attitudes, RPL literacy among credit decision-makers, staff receptiveness to RPL principles, and a student-centric approach that prioritises individual needs and experiences.
- **Student Demographics:** The importance of understanding and accommodating diverse cohorts is emphasised, including recognition of varied backgrounds, learning preferences, and accessibility requirements, with a focus on ensuring equitable processes.
- **Governance and Accreditation:** RPL processes must align with institutional policies, TEQSA guidance, and accreditation standards, with clear communication to students regarding program flexibility.

## Challenges and Opportunities

This research article identifies significant challenges to embedding RPL sustainably, including:

- A lack of formal frameworks and ambiguous policies.
- Limited evidence-based practices and continuity in RPL initiatives.
- Variability in sectoral governance structures between Vocational Education and Training (VET) and higher education sectors.
- Resource constraints for students and staff, including insufficient training and onboarding for decision-makers.

Despite these challenges, the evolving Professional Practice Credit Framework provides an opportunity to address these issues. Embedded into UniSQ's curriculum renewal initiative, The Framework allows for greater student access to gaining credit through electives. The iterative nature of The Framework enables continuous improvement and alignment with emerging needs.

## Intended Use and Impact

This research article is intended for UniSQ professional and academic staff as a roadmap for streamlining experiential learning and credit processes. It offers resources and tools to encourage sustainable and student-centred practices. Recognising and valuing the diverse life experiences UniSQ student cohorts bring to their studies will enhance inclusivity and equity within the higher education sector.

At a macro level, this research article provides all institutions with an adaptable evidenced based toolkit for embedding RPL processes into the institutional culture and practices, fostering a culture that respects and acknowledges the unique skills and knowledge students bring to their formal learning journey. It lays the groundwork for an ongoing commitment to quality, innovation, and sustainability in RPL and credit initiatives within the higher education sector.

## Recommendations

In working in the RPL space and designing the Professional Practice Credit Framework the following key recommendations are vital to sustainably embed RPL at UniSQ. For more detail refer to Part A and Part B Recommendations.

### Key Recommendations:

1. A strategic and university wide approach
2. Strong support for RPL among senior leaders through 'Champions'
3. Industry/government partnerships
4. Ongoing, long-term budget and resourcing
5. A holistic and context-specific and student-centred design of credit processes
6. Process simplification
7. Monitoring and reporting (Quality Assurance)



# Definitions and Acronyms

## Definitions

Project findings recommend the definitions used by TEQSA and the AQF. It is also recommended these terms be used in policies, procedure, rules, and/or regulations. Hence, the following definitions list acknowledges those used throughout this research article by TEQSA and those unique to UniSQ's RPL space (including voice of the authors).

Word	Definition
<b>Academic Integrity<sup>1</sup></b>	Academic Integrity, as defined by <u>TEQSA</u> , is the expectation that all members of the academic community- students, teachers, and researchers - act with honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility in their academic endeavours.
<b>Credit<sup>2</sup></b>	The number of units, up to a specified limit, granted towards a University Award on the basis of either previous formal or non-formal learning. Credit reduces the number of Courses required to complete an Award Program.
<b>Core Skillsets<sup>3</sup></b>	The Professional Practice Credit Framework core skillsets reflect the National Skills Taxonomy (Jobs and Skills Australia) and skills identified in Productivity Commission reports.
<b>Course<sup>2</sup></b>	A discrete element of a program, normally undertaken over a single Study Period, in which the student enrolls, and on completion of which the Student is awarded a grade.
<b>Course Learning Outcomes<sup>2</sup></b>	The expression of the set of knowledge, skills and the application of the knowledge and skills a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of learning.
<b>Exemption<sup>2</sup></b>	The release from the requirement to complete a specific required Course but without reducing the overall number of units required to complete the program.
<b>Experiential Learning<sup>1</sup></b>	Experiential learning is "learning by doing," where individuals actively engage in experiences, reflect on them, and apply the insights gained to deepen understanding and develop practical skills.
<b>Formal Learning<sup>1</sup></b>	Takes place through a structured program of learning that leads to the full or partial achievement of an officially accredited qualification (in order to receive credit towards a university level program the minimum level of a Certificate 4 is required).
<b>Graduate Attributes<sup>2</sup></b>	Qualities, skills and disciplinary expertise that Students should develop during their time with the University and which are valued by the University community, employers and society.
<b>Informal Learning<sup>1</sup></b>	Gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. Unlike formal or non-formal learning, informal learning is not organised or externally structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support.

<b>Non-cognate<sup>3</sup></b>	Non-cognate courses do not directly relate to a major or chosen field of study. These courses can be from any discipline and are often taken to fulfill general education requirements or to explore other areas of interest.
<b>Non-formal Learning<sup>1</sup></b>	Refers to learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to an officially accredited qualification (for example: in-house professional development programs conducted by an employer, education by professional associations, product courses and unaccredited structured training).
<b>Professional Practice Credit Framework<sup>3</sup> (referred to as The Framework in Part B)</b>	The Professional Practice Credit Framework consists of three interconnected Domains: Knowledge Implementation, Advocacy and Engagement; and, Personal and Professional Capabilities. Each Domain identifies Core Skillsets and subskill sets gained through experiential learning.
<b>Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)<sup>2</sup></b>	‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ (RPL) is defined in the Australian Qualifications Framework as a <i>process</i> through which eligibility for the award of credit is assessed, through assessment of formal, informal and non-formal learning.
<b>Specified Credit<sup>2</sup></b>	Credit granted towards particular or specific components of a qualification or program of learning, such as a Core or Elective Course.
<b>Unspecified Credit<sup>2</sup></b>	Credit granted towards elective components of a qualification or program of learning, such as an Elective Course.

1 AQF, or TEQSA Definitions

2 [UniSQ Definition Dictionary](#)

3 Authors' Definitions

## Acronyms

Acronym	Explanation
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
BCNM	Bachelor of Communication and Media
BCYS	Bachelor of Cyber Security
PCRN	Perkins Collaborative Resource Network
QCAA	Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
STARS	Students' Transitions, Achievement Retention and Success
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
UniSQ	University of Southern Queensland
VET	Vocational Education and Training

## PART A: Valuing Experiential Learning in a Regional University

Part A outlines the methodology, key findings, and resources developed throughout the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) project, all shaped through a co-design approach with students and staff. This section lays the groundwork for ongoing advancement in this field, addressing a significant gap within Australian higher education. The project underscores the need for context-specific strategies that reflect the distinct characteristics of both institutions and their student populations. Crucial elements that support effective RPL implementation include institutional culture, alignment with governance structures, and engaging with the diversity of the institution's student cohorts.

### The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Project

#### Background to the RPL Project

In June 2019, the University of Southern Queensland Academic Board adopted the Academic Quality Framework with ten recommendations<sup>1</sup>. For Recognition of Prior Learning, the recommendation stated:

*9. Value the strong enrolment pathways and Recognition of Prior Learning to:*

*9.1 Establish protocols to streamline enrolment pathways and Recognition of Prior Learning*

*9.2 Allow for cohort tracking across enrolment cohorts and Recognition of Prior Learning.*

*9.3 Determine the marketing value to USQ to celebrate how enrolment pathways and Recognition of Prior Learning accelerate student success.*

The RPL Project Team formed as an initiative through the University of Southern Queensland Strategic Priority funding round 2020 to address this recommendation. The project's main purpose was to strengthen RPL policy, procedure, and practice to align with Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) guidelines and recommendations. A budget of \$342,000 was allocated to support the establishment of the Recognition of Prior Learning Centre for an initial 12 months to determine if this initiative would offer value to the University. Additional funding brought the project's total to \$500,000.

A top-down and bottom-up stakeholder user-centric approach was adopted to ensure that all perspectives were considered to streamline the credit decision-making process. The first annual report (Quadrelli, Murray, and Cook-Watkins, 2022) documents the milestones below that informed our evidenced-based approach and will inform future publications for this project and subsequent outcomes reporting.

The second annual report (Cook-Watkins & Quadrelli, 2022) captures the April 2022 to December 2022 progress with a strong focus on data collection from student and staff interviews and focus groups. This data informed the development of RPL related resources. The RPL Staff SharePoint site provides a repository for Recognition of Prior Learning updates and informs staff of the status of the iterative RPL initiative. The site provides a space where a Community of Practice can flourish, and data findings can be shared.

#### Defining RPL in Higher Education

RPL has been around for decades yet continues to challenge both VET and Higher Education. RPL is the process used to assess an individual's prior learning to determine whether credit will be granted and

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<sup>1</sup> University of Southern Queensland (2019) Academic Quality Framework

is inclusive of formal, informal, and non-formal learning. The TEQSA Guidance note<sup>2</sup>: Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning provides definitions on these forms of learning.

**Formal learning** - Learning that takes place through a structured program of learning that leads to the full or partial achievement of an officially accredited qualification.

**Informal learning** – Learning gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. Unlike Formal or Non-Formal Learning, Informal Learning is not organised or externally structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support.

**Non-formal learning** – Learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to an officially accredited qualification. (For example: In-house professional development programs conducted by an employer, education/seminars by professional associations, product courses and unaccredited structured training).

## Curriculum Quality and Credit Team

The Curriculum Quality and Credit team initially formed as the RPL Project team. The procurement of the RPL Project Team was strategic with the appointed candidates requiring specific skillsets, experience, and niche expertise to enrich the strengths as a team in meeting project deliverables. The unique and complex nature of RPL required a mixed team with experienced student-facing professional staff, academic curriculum design, and teaching skills. The team of three brought a combined 45 years of experience, knowledge and expertise gained across the higher education sector. Each member brought well-established networks and complementary skillsets.

### RPL Project Team 2021-2023

<b>Dr Carol Quadrelli</b> Senior Lecturer	Carol has accumulated 25 years of experience in the higher education sector, holding various professional and academic roles across four prominent Queensland universities. Her current position has immersed her in the unique challenges and opportunities of a regional university, and her pedagogical expertise has been refined through numerous professional curriculum quality support roles. She has successfully completed a Doctor of Philosophy and a Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Education and achieved the status of SFHEA (Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy). Her multidisciplinary approach is underpinned by a commitment to equity and access to education for all. Her background in Education, Sociology, and Criminology informs her student-centric curricula development. In the curriculum quality and credit space, Carol aims to enhance Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) processes and practices using robust and transparent methods to document the valuable experiential learning that students bring to their formal studies.
<b>Crystal Murray*</b> Coordinating Officer (2021-2022)	Crystal holds a business and commerce degree (majoring in management and leadership). She brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role of Coordinating Officer previously working for 7 years in Senior Academic Program Support roles in the Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts at UniSQ.
<b>Clarissa Cook-Watkins</b> Support Officer	Clarissa holds a teaching degree and Graduate Certificate of Business. Of her 14 years' experience working in higher education, six of these years were student-facing experience within Domestic Recruitment and Admissions and Student Support roles. Clarissa's interest in inclusive curriculum design stems

<sup>2</sup> Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (2017). Guidance note: Credit and recognition of prior learning. Canberra: Australian government.

from her undergraduate studies, which focused on special education. With a primary education background and a Fellow Higher Education Academy (FHEA) award, Clarissa has dedicated the last decade to various roles at the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ). Her focus has consistently been on assisting students in achieving their goals. In this capacity, Clarissa strives to enhance the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) experience at UniSQ by building academic development capacity and mentoring staff. Clarissa is a strong advocate for making education available to everyone, regardless of their age or background. Her commitment to this principle shapes her approach in supporting all students on their educational path.

\*The Coordinating Officer left the team in March 2022, and the Support officer role was changed to the Senior Support Officer (Credit and Recognition).

From 2023 the RPL Project Team was incorporated into business as usual and became the Curriculum Quality and Credit team. Throughout 2024 the Senior Support Officer (Credit and Recognition) role was held by Georgi McAdam until Clarissa Cook-Watkins returned in 2025. Throughout 2024 the focus shifted from developing the Professional Practice Credit Framework further as the demand for student assistance peaked which is where Georgi's expertise in supporting students, understanding policies and procedures and her military knowledge was invaluable.

### Project Scope

Due to the iterative nature and budget of this project, the potential for scope creep<sup>3</sup> peaked at many points. As opportunities arose, the RPL Project Team tapped into the knowledge and expertise available to ensure that the project met the stakeholder needs whilst managing expectations. This project adopted an action research approach requiring flexibility and agility to ensure we explored the datasets generated by the project. Deliverables had to be managed based on the available resources.

### Outside of Scope

In the original project proposal, the formal learning credit process fell outside the project scope. A full understanding of the complex nature of RPL became evident once the Project Logic was developed, the benchmarking, literature review and student referrals were progressed, and the combination of formal, informal and non-formal learning became inevitable. Students referred to our area were seeking credit from formal, informal and non-formal learning that provided rich insights into what processes and resources were required to streamline RPL practice.

The process of applying for credit from prior informal and non-formal learning against specified courses within a program was not the key focus of this project. However, to gain insight into current processes many of the student referrals were applying for specific courses as Professional Practice Credit was in its developmental stage. This exposure to how students were navigating current RPL applications gave us great insight into the pain points for students and staff. RPL applications need to be presented holistically for an assessment. If formal learning is assessed in isolation this makes it harder for the decision makers to get a holistic view of the student undermining confidence that they are granting the right credit based on that person's experience regardless of learning type. RPL cannot be a tick and flick process as this approach is inequitable and disadvantages students.

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<sup>3</sup> Due to the iterative nature of this project, the areas of need and potential challenges had yet to be fully recognised. These emerging challenges are addressed in Part A and Part B Recommendations, as well as in the Team Reflections on the RPL project and RPL section.

## Program Logic

The Program Logic workshop, facilitated by Professor Lyn Alderman, informed the Team's program of work, identifying short term, mid-term, and long-term goals (see Appendix 1). This step was essential to ensure that critical inputs, activities, resources, stakeholder' perspectives were captured, and key deliverables were met. The Stakeholder Engagement excerpt provides an overview of the engagement strategy (see Appendix 2). The Program Logic provided the roadmap that enabled the RPL Project Team to succeed in achieving short term goals, progress mid-term and recalibrate long-term goals in the first year.

The Program Logic identified the following objectives:

- Respect our students' formal, informal, and non-formal learning.
- Implement a rigorous credit process to improve students' opportunities for completion.
- Strengthen connections through articulation agreements with partners, providers and sectors (e.g., government).
- Streamline processes to enhance positive student outcomes and reduce academic workload.

Project goals:

- A holistic and detailed footprint of the project and the Professional Practice Credit Framework and resources (documenting the rigour of our approach).
- Credit awarded in a standard manner for informal and non-formal learning.
- Transparent processes explored for awarding informal and non-formal credit.
- Standardised resources to support student applications for credit.
- Credit precedents published to UniSQ website (positive and negative precedents).
- Systems capability to be developed to record, store and report credit.
- Development of an administrative view of a student transcript that illustrates credit decision making.
- Review of credit to be embedded in the Program Review process.
- Case studies generated to understand pain points for students and staff (based on student referrals).
- A suite of resources designed specifically for student cohorts and staff cohorts (based on data collection activities and literature review).
- Marketing strategy for Professional Practice Credit.

The body of work generated from the project is transitioning into and strengthening mainstream policy, practice and processes for streamlining the granting of RPL credit at UniSQ. This work will result in a robust and transparent, evidence-based approach that aligns to TEQSA and AQF requirements and the University of Southern Queensland's *Education Plan 2022-2025*<sup>4</sup>. With project closure and moving forward, the transition to business as usual will continue to focus on four main areas:

- Resources (capacity building) and publishing,
- Supporting the mainstreaming the Professional Practice Credit Framework,
- Marketing, and
- Industry/government partnerships.

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<sup>4</sup> University of Southern Queensland. (2022). Education plan 2022–2025. <https://www.unisq.edu.au/about-unisq/governance-leadership/plans-reports>



## Mapping the RPL Landscape

This section documents UniSQ's unique context, our project methodology and addresses the below aspects of the project. Activities were drawn from the Program Logic mapped to phases with some running concurrently and others ongoing.

- **Benchmarking the landscape:** To self-assess and map the RPL landscape across the Australian university context.
- **Literature review:** An initial scan of the literature was undertaken to inform the project logic development and future activities. The scan is an ongoing activity and informs an evidence-based approach to the development of resources and the publication strategy.
- **Student referrals, focus groups and interviews:** provides a summary of a range of stakeholder perspectives (students, professional, and academic staff) who were navigating the RPL processes throughout 2021-current. Pain points are identified and suggestions on what resources could strengthen and streamline current practice are included.
- **Working with students** on their RPL applications to strengthen, identify and co-create resources
- **Working with academics and professional staff** to embed the Professional Practice Credit Framework into the curriculum design.
- **Policy and Procedure:** Informing policy and procedure that aligns with TEQSA's Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning Guidance Note.

## Regulatory Bodies for RPL in Australia

All Australian universities operate within a framework of regulations and standards overseen by specific bodies to ensure quality and consistency in areas like credit transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Key regulatory bodies include:

- **TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency):** TEQSA ensures that universities meet national standards, including the management of credit transfer and RPL, which are critical for recognising previous education or professional experience.
- **AQF (Australian Qualifications Framework):** The AQF provides guidelines for the recognition of qualifications and sets criteria for RPL processes to ensure students' prior learning is accurately assessed and equitably credited.
- **QCAA (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority):** In Queensland, QCAA plays a role in maintaining the quality of education pathways, including credit arrangements at universities in this region.

These bodies recommend that credit transfer and RPL procedures across universities align with national standards, promoting fairness, transparency, and accessibility for students transitioning between institutions or utilising their prior learning experience.

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) is the independent national quality assurance and regulatory agency for higher education. Within the Australian higher education sector, universities are required to consider formal, informal, and non-formal learning when assessing for credit. TEQSA offers guidance notes that are brief documents aimed at providing high-level, principles-based advice on how to interpret and apply specific standards of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021<sup>5</sup>. These notes also highlight related standards and emphasise possible compliance risks. The project has confirmed that nationally there is slippage in terminology, inconsistency in credit decision-making practices, resources and non-transparent processes.

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<sup>5</sup> Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency. (2021). Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021. <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/how-we-regulate/higher-education-standards-framework-2021>

## UniSQ Context

The University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) is a prominent regional university in Queensland, established in 1967 to address the educational needs of the local community. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, it evolved into an autonomous college of advanced education, known as the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education (DDIAE). In 1990, it transitioned to the University College of Southern Queensland, and by 1992, it achieved full university status as The University of Southern Queensland (USQ). The student demographic is predominantly mature-aged individuals and those with multiple equity indicators, such as First in Family, First Nations, Disability, Low socioeconomic status, Regional and Remote, and English as a second language. To enhance access and retention rates, support services are tailored to these students, recognising the various barriers they may face and the necessity for targeted assistance to ensure their success. RPL suits these cohorts. The institution has consistently prioritised student-centred teaching and the delivery of employment-focused professional courses, primarily through distance education.

Historically, UniSQ students have been encouraged to apply for credit from prior study (formal learning) and prior work experience (informal learning). At the time our project began (May 2021) credit for formal learning, and some elements of informal learning, were outwardly promoted to students. Many challenges were identified by staff and students. Both perspectives shared consensus that the expectation of what was required in a credit application was vague resulting in individual interpretation and inconsistencies of credit awarded. Without this clarity, inaccurate advice and decisions around credit compounded student and staff frustration. Inconsistent recording of outcomes, or lack of detail, was evident in the student grievance referrals. Adding to the challenges, credit outcomes were often recorded internally by the school or the system but not converted into precedents. Identifying and addressing this process glitch alone has the potential to assist future students with their applications and streamlines decision-makers' workload. Another critical governance aspect is the alignment to TEQSA credit guidelines concerning transparency, consistency, rigour and an auditable footprint.

## National Benchmarking Activity: Assessing the RPL Landscape

Cook-Watkins and Murray's benchmarking report (2022), considered Credit/RPL policies, procedures and webpages of 41 Australian Universities. The benchmarking activity has been conducted since 2022 using the same methodology with the most recent being 2025. The 2022 findings identified the strongest RPL performers in the tertiary sector which were: Macquarie University, Southern Cross University, Flinders University, and RMIT, with shifts noted over time (Refer to Table 1 below). As there is growing activity in the RPL space, benchmarking will continue to influence the creation of relevant resources to build capacity for university students and staff.

*Table 1: A Comparative Snapshot: 2021 to 2025 RPL Benchmarking Findings*

	2021-2022 <i>Recognition of Prior Learning in Australian Universities: Benchmarking Overview</i> (Cook-Watkins & Murray, 2022)	2025 <i>Benchmarking in the Australian Higher Education Sector: Recognition of Prior Learning</i> , (Entwistle & Jennings, 2025)
Terminology	Inconsistent, and some institutions had created their own terms to personalise the marketing of RPL.	Growing consistency with decline in usage of 'Advanced standing' in favour of 'RPL' or 'credit'.
Policy	Policy and/or Procedures surrounding credit were vague, potentially misleading and confusing.	Continuing vague language, but incorporation of 'informal' and 'non-formal learning' in policy and procedures.

<b>Processes</b>	<p>University processes for RPL were not transparent. The student application process and the administrative processes for credit to be considered were unclear.</p> <p>Requirements on what to submit for RPL varied and were vague.</p> <p>Timeframes are commonly not clarified. Indicating the number of days however most do not have due dates which could ensure that applications aren't received during peak marking periods or too close to the teaching periods last day to enrol.</p>	<p>University processes for RPL continue to not be transparent.</p> <p>Several universities now give a list of specific requirements for credit applications. Online credit applications are also more commonly available.</p> <p>Timeframes remain unclear. Sometimes, due dates are indicated for peak periods, with applications accepted outside of these dates.</p>
<b>Accessibility</b>	<p>RPL webpages were often difficult to access:</p> <p>Not all were found under the same general topic areas (some were quite buried under multiple clicks).</p> <p>Due to the inconsistent terminology and possible firewalls, broader Google searches were more beneficial than using the search functions on the university's website.</p> <p>Some institutions have located RPL documentation behind secure areas for staff or students only.</p> <p>Formal Learning is the focus, with informal and non-formal learning having substantially less information available to students.</p>	<p>RPL webpages are mostly accessible to students.</p> <p>Broader Google searches still remain more beneficial than using search functions on university websites.</p> <p>Some universities continue to include RPL documentation behind secure areas for staff or students only.</p> <p>Inclusion of 'formal', 'informal' and 'non-formal learning' definitions in the university RPL webpages definitions.</p>
<b>Resources</b>	<p>Absence of best practice RPL resources or toolkits to help students prepare a credit application exist, they are not publicly accessible.</p>	<p>Continuing lack of RPL resources or toolkits to help students prepare a credit application. However, there is an expansion of examples for supporting evidence.</p>

## Benchmarking Findings (2021–2025)

Between 2021 and 2025, the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy landscape has remained relatively stable, with most notable updates occurring in 2023 and 2024. The most significant changes were observed in the definitions of RPL-related terms and the general application process. Notably, several universities have shifted their terminology from “advanced standing” to “RPL” or “credit,” with many updated definitions now placing greater emphasis on the concept of credit. Additionally, more institutions are aligning with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) by including definitions of formal, informal, and non-formal learning on their RPL webpages.

Changes to the application process have focused on improving accessibility and efficiency. These include allowing students to apply for credit during the university admission process, offering clearer examples of acceptable supporting evidence, and encouraging applicants to review course structures to assess alignment with learning outcomes. Furthermore, three universities have introduced online credit application forms, replacing previous reliance on mail or email submissions.

Other aspects of RPL policy showed no consistent trends across the sector during this period.

Although international policy benchmarking was outside the primary scope, insights were drawn from three UK universities and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (based on staff recommendations). These examples highlighted the benefits of nationally coordinated RPL systems. Compared to Australia's overarching regulatory approach, these international models demonstrated more mature and consistent practices, often supported by dedicated RPL teams. This structured

resourcing appears to enhance both student support and the overall credit recognition process. The resourcing and processes existing within these international institutions are impressive compared to many Australian institutions. However, the context and regulatory support required for robust RPL processes requires further development. To adopt existing resources without the resourcing and capacity building is fraught with challenges. Each institution needs to adopt resources and practices according to their cultural context.

## Literature Review

A scan of the literature was undertaken to inform the logic development and future activities. An extensive body of literature has been tagged for specific forthcoming publications. The scan is an ongoing activity and informs an evidence-based approach to the development of resources and provides understandings of the context and legacy that shapes RPL at a national and global level. In summary, the literature scan confirmed and validated benchmarking findings indicating that credit and RPL is a messy landscape to navigate with no gold standard framework to influence consistency, transparency and equitable processes. The literature confirms this and is identified in TEQSA's Recognition of Prior Learning Guidance Notes (2019<sup>6</sup> and 2023<sup>7</sup>). This method provided a robust evidence-based approach that specifically informed the revised Credit and Exemption Procedure and contributed to the creation of relevant resources and ideas for best practice to support student and staff engagement in the RPL space.

Detailed findings of the literature review will be documented in forthcoming journal articles.

## Informing the Project: UniSQ Student Referrals and Interviews

Ethics approval for the *Recognition of Prior Learning at USQ A Strategic Priority Funded Project 2021* was granted (ETH2024-0069 (HREC) and is current until June 2025. Since February 2021 we have worked with over 250 students to assist them with their applications (see Table 2).

Table 2: Student Referral Points

- RPL credit referrals from grievance processes and the Student Guild
- The Bachelor of Communication and Media (BCNM) pilot
- The Bachelor of Cyber Security (BCYS) pilot
- Credit applications that were rejected and being reviewed by the Associate Dean Learning and Teaching for our opinion
- The Credit and Exit team
- Iconnect (student) concierges
- In-person discussions at Student Expo Stalls
- Word of mouth referrals (Students and Program Directors).

Initially referrals came from the Grievance Office based on formal complaints, staff (professional and academic), and student self-referrals. We gained insight and feedback from each and every student we worked with, and we undertook eight formal student interviews to document the student experience and to ensure the project did not work in isolation of student needs. Students seeking credit from prior

<sup>6</sup> Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency. (2019). *Guidance note: Credit and recognition of prior learning*. Australian Government. <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/guides-resources/resources/guidance-notes/guidance-note-credit-and-recognition-prior-learning>

<sup>7</sup> Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency. (2023). *Guidance note: Credit and recognition of prior learning* (Version 2.0). Australian Government. <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/guides-resources/resources/guidance-notes/guidance-note-credit-and-recognition-prior-learning>

informal and non-formal learning came from multiple disciplinary and sectorial areas including Engineering, Counselling, Law, Indigenous Knowledges, Government Sector, Communication & Media, Police, Aviation, RAAF, Business, Education, and Philanthropy. The project methodology is anchored in the fundamental principles of co-design. Partnering with students provides the opportunity to move away from traditional hierarchical models of expertise and achieve reciprocal benefits<sup>8</sup>. All stakeholders are co producers of the resources that they are using, and the feedback data collection points informed our processes. The focus on reciprocity allows all partners to learn and grow to strengthen RPL practice and resources tailored to the UniSQ demographic.

The intent of working with students undertaking the grievance pathway was to document the pain points experienced by RPL applicants whilst navigating their RPL application. Detailed findings of datasets will be documented in forthcoming journal articles.

### Student Findings: Emerging Themes

The following themes emerged from this student dataset, identifying key challenges students encounter with some overlap between themes.

Table 3: Themes emerging from Students

Theme	
<b>Non transparent processes</b>	<p><b>Eligibility and application process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is unclear which UniSQ programs and courses are in scope for RPL.</li> <li>• Lack of transparency around course/program i.e., capstone courses and Credit eligibility.</li> <li>• Confusion deters a student from applying for RPL credit.</li> </ul> <p><b>Communication process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correspondence is generic and doesn't assist the student with their specific query as there is limited capacity to case manage individuals.</li> <li>• Slippage of terminology and misunderstandings: Unclear what block credit is and how this fits into programs.</li> <li>• Onus is currently on the student to chase their application up.</li> <li>• It is not clear to students (or some staff) who does what and in what order.</li> <li>• Currently students are dealing with multiple academic and professional staff members to get answers.</li> <li>• The RPL Project Team wasn't aware of what was happening once the RPL application moved to Faculty.</li> <li>• RPL complaints are not escalated in the same way across Schools.</li> </ul> <p><b>Decision making</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently the justification for decision making (in most cases) is not transparent to students.</li> </ul>
<b>Evidence and resources to support RPL</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is not clear what RPL evidence looks like at UniSQ.</li> <li>• Hard to find information on how to apply for RPL and locate resources to help.</li> <li>• Students submit the evidence and application form with what they think is right only to trigger a series of communications lacking clarity, consistency, and guidelines.</li> <li>• Students want an exemplar of what a good application looks like.</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> Dollinger, M., & D'Angelo, B. (2020). \*Co-design for student success: Engaging students as partners in learning and teaching\*. Australian Council for Educational Research.  
[https://www.acses.edu.au/app/uploads/2020/03/CoDesignHandbook\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.acses.edu.au/app/uploads/2020/03/CoDesignHandbook_FINAL.pdf)



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several prospective students could have been looking to enter Postgraduate study without an undergraduate degree due to their extensive experience in the field.</li> </ul>
<b>Timelines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timeframes are unclear and not adhered to.</li> <li>Limited options for the student to know where their application was at and difficult to get a clear answer from UniSQ in general if they did call or email through.</li> </ul>

### Student Case Study 1: RPL Applicant

The following experience is not atypical for students that engaged in the project and demonstrates the importance of having streamlined processes, practices, and resources to assess prior learning. The case study below covered an 18-month period. Lengthy time frames around credit processing time encourages students to shop around universities and move to a more attractive and timely offering elsewhere. Detailed findings of themes emerging from the student referrals will be documented in journal articles (forthcoming).

#### RPL case study 1

*“... when I first started the process, I was confident that I would get RPL and the reason I felt that way was the process to RPL with (my previous) diploma was so easy and simple.*

*I'd had over a decade of experience in the industry, was in management and a lot of HR related issues that I thought I would again have a really good experience getting RPL for work experience.*

*Putting the application together itself, was really time consuming. There was a lot of work in it. I actually decided to take that whole Semester off my uni degree as I was working, and I've got a young family to actually put my RPL application in. Because of how much was involved in it.*

*...I thought the benefit would outweigh the cost. I got rejected. Straight up, flat out rejection and I was just beyond devastated. The only way I can explain it as a mature age student is. Other than my diploma, I had not studied since high school, I was a mother for three young children, and I felt like what I've done with my career, meant absolutely nothing.*

*The fact that a diploma that I did (knocked it over to be honest, with very little care factor), in as little as eight months gave me 8 credits and a 10-year career would give me none.”*

#### Outcome

Over a 12-month period, the RPL team supported the student by providing guidance through the use of emerging project resources. This collaboration led to the submission of well-developed credit applications. As a result, the student was granted 8 units of specified RPL credit toward their Bachelor of Business degree.

In summary, the learnings from the student datasets have highlighted some of the UniSQ processes, practice, and resources that need to change. This is a shifting landscape - a work in progress with short term and long-term changes in progress.

### Findings from Engaging with Professional and Academic Staff

The project methodology included focus groups and individual interviews to gain perspectives on RPL, and the challenges identified by staff in credit decision-making roles.

**Focus groups** for both professional and academic staff were facilitated by the RPL project team, occurring in Phase 1 of the project (see Appendix 2 for Phases).

Table 4: Stakeholder Focus groups

Area	Professional staff (14)	Academic Staff (1)
Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts (BELA)	6	-
Faculty of Health, Engineering and Sciences (HES)	3	-
Centre for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research (CISER)	1	1
International Admissions	1	-
Student Support	3	-

**Interviews** were undertaken with a range of stakeholders and occurred organically across the project throughout Phases 1-3 (see Appendix 2 for Phases).

Table 5: Stakeholder Interviews

<b>Professional Staff (15)</b>	10 Professional staff were interviewed across different Faculty/School Support roles, Student Support, Domestic and International Admissions, Student Grievance Resolution team, College for First Nations, Policy, Academic Transformation Portfolio, and the Student Guild (Independent of UniSQ).
<b>Academic Staff (18)</b>	18 Academic staff were interviewed covering Psychology, Business, Law, First Nations, Engineering, Surveying, Humanities, and Education.

Engagement with Iconnect staff<sup>9</sup> consisted of frequent attendance by the RPL project team at their fortnightly meetings to discuss RPL queries.

The RPL team also engaged in meetings and regular discussions with the Credit and Exit team.

Engagement with professional and academic staff revealed gaps and challenges in current practice that mirrored concerns raised by students (see Table 6 below).

Table 6: Emerging themes from staff

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No clear examples for staff around what informal and non-formal learning can be considered at the University of Southern Queensland to gain credit. Unclear what they can approve.</li> <li>No clear template or instruction to apply for RPL based on informal and non-formal learning</li> <li>Mixed and inconsistent communication from iconnect, Student Support, Admission and Faculty.</li> <li>Lack of onboarding and training for those making the credit decisions.</li> <li>Workload pressures to turn around credit applications to comply with timelines during busy periods for examples (start of teaching period or marking).</li> </ul>
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<sup>9</sup> Iconnect are current students that provide a first point of contact through chat, phone, email and face to face. They receive specialised training to support and redirect students to the appropriate area.



In summary a key driver for this funded project was to make current RPL practices transparent, improve RPL understandings, strengthen best RPL practice, and align relevant credit policy and practice to external governance guidelines.

## Policy and Procedure Review: The Project Drivers

A key driver for this funded project was to ensure alignment of relevant UniSQ credit policy and practice to TEQSA, the external governance body for Australian universities. The RPL Project Team contributed to the review of the Credit and Exemption Procedure<sup>10</sup> providing guidance around the terminology and requirements for informal and non-formal learning. This version was released in May 2022 (and repealed 4 April 2025). The current version has reduced mechanisms for feedback and review of an unsuccessful credit decision with students directed to the Grievance pathway.

## Environmental Scan of Frameworks, Policy and Procedures

Using an evidence-based approach drawing on literature, theory, practice, policy, and RPL governance structures, a scan was undertaken of existing frameworks, policy and procedures to inform the Professional Practice Credit Framework concept (see Table 7). This policy borrowing approach informed the Professional Practice Credit Framework drawing specifically on the policy implementation experiences in other educational contexts. The national and global transfer of educational best practices allows local policymakers a better understanding and context of their setting. Benefits of policy borrowing include raising the quality of educational policies and encouraging the application of practices and ideas in specific environments<sup>11</sup>. Complemented with higher education and employability skills' grey literature, an organic bespoke Professional Practice Credit Framework emerged that was designed for UniSQ's unique institutional demographics. After formalising the Professional Practice Credit Framework, it was then piloted in two programs offered at UniSQ, the Bachelor of Communication and Media (BCNM) and the Bachelor of Cyber Security (BCYS).

Table 7: Documents reviewed for policy borrowing and framework formulation

Frameworks, Policy and Procedures Reviewed	
<b>Global</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Bloom's taxonomy</u> (Bloom, 1956)</li> <li>• <u>DigComp into Action. Get Inspired Make it Happen</u> (Punie et al., 2018)</li> <li>• <u>Employability Skills Framework</u> (PCRN, United States Department of Education, n.d.)</li> <li>• <u>European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework</u> (2019)</li> <li>• <u>EntreComp into Action. Get inspired make it happen: A user guide</u> (2018)</li> <li>• <u>Higher Education Academy resources</u> (Advance HE The UK Professional Standards Framework (2011)</li> <li>• <u>Recognition for Adult Educators (REAL) Competency Framework</u> (n.d. Scotland).</li> <li>• <u>SEEC Credit Level Descriptors</u> (SEEC, 2019)</li> <li>• <u>VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education), the Association of American Colleges &amp; Universities</u> (AAC&amp;U, 2008)</li> <li>• <u>VALUE Discover Abroad Study: Abroad Digital Story Rubric</u> (AAC&amp;U ,n.d.)</li> </ul>
<b>National documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>21<sup>st</sup> century skills - Position paper</u> (QCAA, 2022)</li> <li>• <u>21<sup>st</sup> century skills – Associated skills</u> (QCAA, 2023)</li> <li>• <u>Australian Professional Standards for Teachers</u> (2020)</li> <li>• <u>Australian Qualifications Framework</u> (2013)</li> <li>• <u>Australian Skills Classification</u> (2022)</li> <li>• <u>Core skills for Work Developmental Framework</u> (2013)</li> <li>• <u>Credit Where Credit is Due (ACU Veterans project unpublished resources)</u></li> <li>• <u>Employability Skills: At a Glance</u> (NCVER, Wibrow, 2011)</li> <li>• <u>First Nations' Cultural Framework</u> (AES, Golan &amp; Stacey, 2021)</li> </ul>

<sup>10</sup> UniSQ, Credit and Exemption Procedure 2022

<sup>11</sup> Alderman, G. (2014) *From policy borrowing to implementation: an illuminative evaluation of learning and teaching in higher education in Australia (2002 to 2008)*. [Unpublished Doctoral thesis]. Queensland University of Technology; Nir, A. (2019). Professional political and contextual considerations of policy borrowing. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.731>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>An interdisciplinary model and resources for culturally competent service-learning in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (2021, DESE)</i></li> <li>• <u><i>Guidance Note: credit and recognition of prior learning (TEQSA)</i></u></li> <li>• <i>Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015; 2021</i></li> <li>• <i>Indigenous online cultural teaching and sharing: Kinship Project. Department of Education and Training.</i></li> <li>• <i>Indigenous Cultural Competency for Legal Academics Program (2019, DESE)</i></li> <li>• <i>Indigenous knowledges, Indigenous educators and culturally safe pedagogies (2020, DESE)</i></li> <li>• <i>Quality Achievement Matrix (QAM).</i></li> <li>• <i>Researcher Skills Development Framework (2008)</i></li> <li>• <i>Chp 3: Future skills and work Shifting the Dial: a 5-year productivity review (Productivity Commission, 2017)</i></li> <li>• <i>Skills urgency: Transforming Australia's workplaces (CET, April 2021)</i></li> <li>• <i>The Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO).</i></li> <li>• <i>Working with Aboriginal Families (SA Health).</i></li> </ul>
<b>UniSQ</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Academic Plan 2019-2022</i></li> <li>• <i>Education Plan 2022-2025</i></li> <li>• <i>Careers and Employability Learning (CEL) Framework</i></li> <li>• <i>Credit and Exemption Procedure (2022)</i></li> <li>• <i>Education Plan 2022-2025</i></li> <li>• <i>Embedding ePortfolio assessment into courses and programs (TechDem ePortfolio)</i></li> <li>• <i>First Nations Blueprint</i></li> <li>• <i>Graduate Attributes Guide</i></li> <li>• <i>Graduate Attributes Policy</i></li> <li>• <i>Strategic Plan 2021-2025</i></li> <li>• <i>Work Integrated Learning Placement Manual PWE3000 Professional Work Experience PWE3001 Learning Integrated Work (Nov. 2021)</i></li> </ul>

## Key Deliverables

A significant deliverable of the project was the development and piloting of the Professional Practice Credit Framework (Part B) with the documents above informing the Framework. The Framework, conceptually structured into three Domains and underpinned by UniSQ's six core Graduate Attributes and other employability frameworks provides students with the opportunity to gain credit from their experiential learning from a non-cognate field.

Whilst the focus of the project was to develop a new way for students to access RPL, our co-design approach with students led us to assisting many students struggling at different credit touchpoints including:

- using the existing application form
- minimal instructions on how to submit
- no student guides on what evidence is required and
- limited access to support or help with application process and inconsistent advice.

Students came to us via the grievance pathway, or through referrals seeking clarity in understanding RPL and on what to include for their application to be strong enough to be reconsidered for credit. This engagement led to resources being developed that were co-produced by students. The Specified Credit Template (see Appendix 3) and the Specified Credit Student Guide (see Appendix 4) continued to be refined throughout the project lifecycle resulting in students co-designing resources for students.

## Part A Recommendations

The following recommendations will guide at both a national and institutional level to effectively implement and promote Recognition of Prior Learning in Higher Education.

### National Level RPL Recommendations

1. **Funding:** Consider learning and teaching funding opportunities for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) initiatives and leverage Accord goals.
2. **Collaboration:** Collaborate with other Regional Universities Network (RUN) universities to maximise RPL initiatives, share resources, and strategies to achieve the Australian Universities Accord goals for 2030.
3. **Uniform Approach:** Develop a more uniform approach to RPL across universities to address the challenge of making general statements about RPL on a national scale.
4. **Stronger Relationships:** Foster stronger working relationships with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC). Strengthen industry/government networks to meet workforce demands.

### Institutional Level RPL Recommendations\*

\*These are context-specific recommendations for the UniSQ however, some may relate to other similar institutions more broadly.

5. **Vision and Leadership:**
  - a) Establish a **top-down vision** from senior executives and leaders to champion RPL.
  - b) **Promote RPL** as a means to increase participation, particularly for marginalised groups, and **build a reputation** for supporting mature-aged students and career changers.
  - c) Develop a **long-term vision** for RPL and integrate it into education plans and institutional values.
6. **Institutional Contexts:**
  - a) Recognise that the success of **RPL initiatives depends on various contextual factors**, including leadership attitudes, RPL literacy among credit decision-makers, staff receptiveness to RPL principles, and a student-centric approach that prioritises individual needs and experiences.

## 7. Governance and Accreditation:

- a) Create **RPL policies** that reflect good practice, ensure transparency and consistency, and align with TEQSA and AQF standards.
- b) Ensure **RPL processes** align with institutional policies, TEQSA guidance, and accreditation standards.
- c) **Clearly communicate accreditation requirements** and a program's ability or inability to grant credit towards particular components of the program.

## 8. Cultural Context and Readiness:

- a) Understand the institution's **cultural context, appetite for change, and readiness** for RPL.
- b) Address concerns of those resistant to RPL through open discussions and establishing **a community of practice and RPL champions**.
- c) Promote a **culture where RPL is seen as a legitimate and supported pathway**, not a shortcut or last resort.
- d) Encourage staff to view **RPL as part of a broader student success strategy**, not just an administrative task.

## 9. Investment and Resourcing:

- a) **Invest in building RPL literacy** among academic and professional staff. Particularly new staff and Program Directors.
- b) Create a Central RPL Team or allocate workload to a similar **team consisting of academic and professional staff with an education or similar background**. This will ensure **student-centric resources** to alleviate queries and ensure transparency in the application process.
- c) Review the **workload allocation** for academics who provide credit decisions and work in the promotion of RPL in their programs.

## 10. Inclusive Practices

- a) Ensure that **policies are communicated clearly to all stakeholders**, including students, professional and academic staff.
- b) Increase **awareness of RPL opportunities** among diverse student cohorts, including those from varied backgrounds, learning preferences, and accessibility requirements
- c) **Provide tailored resources** and support to help student cohorts understand and navigate the RPL process.
- d) Adopt a **student-centric approach** that prioritises individual needs and experiences.
- e) Use **diverse assessment methods** to recognise all types of learning (formal, informal, and non-formal). For example, alternative assessment, interviews, observation or the acceptance of short films or portfolios to help the student present their prior experiences.

- f) Ensure that **assessment methods are fair** and do not disadvantage any group of students.

## 11. Holistic RPL Assessment and Support Framework

- a) Think of RPL as a **conversation starter** rather than just a credit-granting mechanism- explore the student's motivations, challenges, and future plans.
- b) **Early Engagement with decision makers-** Proactively inform and engage with students about RPL opportunities and processes during orientation and by providing insight into credit options within their program.
- c) **Setting Expectations-** Provide clear, accessible resources (e.g., guides, workshops, peer stories) to demystify the RPL process and set realistic expectations.
- d) **Integrated Support Triggers-** Treat mid-program RPL applications as potential indicators of deeper issues such as:
  - Misalignment with the chosen program or level.
  - Student disengagement or burnout.
  - Misunderstanding of program requirements or career goals.
- e) **Collaborative Assessment Process-** Involve academic staff, student support services, and career advisors in the RPL assessment process to ensure a well-rounded understanding of the student's needs and goals.

## 12. Processes:

- a) **Simplify the credit application process** to consider all three types of learning (formal, informal, and non-formal) within the one submission allowing students to present a holistic picture of themselves and to identify how all three types contribute to meeting CLO's.
- b) Establish **clear timelines** for credit application submissions to avoid clashes with busy periods and ensure a smooth start to the study period.
- c) Provide pre-emptive **program specific information** about which courses can and cannot be credited. Explain the reasons to set student expectations.
- d) Provide **detailed feedback on rejected credit applications** to help students understand and improve their submissions.

## 13. Governance, Monitoring and Reporting:

- a) **Track outcomes** of students who apply for RPL (particularly mid-program) to identify patterns and improve early intervention strategies.
- b) Collect **feedback from students** on their RPL experience to refine communication and support mechanisms.
- c) **Ensure transparency in precedents** (positive and negative) and list them on programs to guide students in seeking credit.
- d) **Regularly monitor and report on RPL outcomes** to identify and address any disparities.
- e) Record RPL achievements and **key areas to improve in annual reporting**.

- f) Use **data to inform continuous improvement of RPL processes** and ensure they remain equitable.

#### **14. Student Demographics:**

- a) Understand and **accommodate diverse cohorts**, recognising varied backgrounds, learning preferences, and accessibility requirements, with a focus on ensuring equitable processes.
- b) **Building the capacity of all staff** who have interactions with prospective mature-aged students. The Central RPL Team (**see Recommendation 9b**) can provide this training to ensure credit options are discussed with students prior to their admission to inform their decision-making.



## PART B: Unlocking RPL Potential

Part B explores the development and evolution of the *Professional Practice Credit Framework* (henceforth referred to as The Framework)—an adaptable, student-centred RPL credit model shaped through sustained stakeholder collaboration. Drawing on insights from two pilot studies, this section outlines The Framework's design, iterative refinement, and the co-design principles that underpin its identity. It highlights The Framework's value for students, universities, and the broader community, positioning it as a distinctive approach to recognising credit for informal and non-formal learning. A curated set of resources and practical tools is included to support future initiatives and strengthen systems for credit recognition.

### The Professional Practice Credit Framework

The Framework is a unique initiative developed by the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) to formally recognise students' prior informal and non-formal learning experiences. The Framework allows eligible students to gain academic credit towards programs that include elective space by documenting and reflecting on their existing knowledge and skills. It is particularly designed to support UniSQ's diverse student population, many of whom are mature-aged and bring with them a rich blend of professional, volunteer, and life experiences. The Framework acknowledges the value of experiential learning and promotes flexible, inclusive pathways to higher education.

### Context for the *Professional Practice Credit Framework*

Traditionally, the boundaries for RPL have been set around retrospective experiential learnings. There are unique elements specific to The Framework that positions UniSQ as a leading university in the Credit and RPL space. Benchmarking and the UniSQ student referral datasets confirm an inequality for mature aged students who bring with them large amounts of informal and non-formal learning that has not been previously recognised. For example, a completed Diploma can be awarded up to 8 units of credit (1 year of full-time study) where electives are available. This does not need to be discipline specific to be granted. However, a student who is a manager with 5-10+ years of work experience must map their prior experience to the Course Learning Outcomes (CLO's) which are discipline specific. If students do not have the discipline specific knowledge this hinders their access to gain unspecified credit (electives). Whilst a Program Director can grant unspecified credit this requires students to first match their unrelated life experience with the CLO's in order to be assessed. Another compounding factor is the lack of resources to assist students in how to submit a strong application.

The current process is time consuming for the student and the decision-maker. The Framework is a rework of the traditional approach and through a suite of resources to support The Framework, details how a student can use their prior informal and non-formal learning to gain credit towards a range of programs at UniSQ. The purpose of Professional Practice Credit is to complement and extend the current process that matches prior experience with the Course Learning Outcomes (CLO's) for a particular course. The Framework provides students with a stronger opportunity to have their prior learning recognised as they are being assessed against the three Domains in The Framework rather than specific CLO's.

The first iteration of The Framework was based on the six core Graduate Attributes that underpin all UniSQ Courses. Over time, The Framework matured with a stronger identity that was articulated through three Domains: Knowledge Implementation, Advocacy and Engagement, and Personal and Professional Capabilities. The Domains continue to encompass the six Graduate Attributes and align with current industry skill requirements.

The Domains are purposefully generic (non-cognate), and evident in a range of situations including workplaces, and contexts involving social, family, hobby or leisure activities or experiences. Another advantage of The Framework is that students can address skill gaps in a specific Domain as they

progress through their formal learning and strengthen these to consolidate their credit prior to graduation.

### Professional Practice Credit as a Point of Difference

A central focus in streamlining the RPL process at UniSQ has been developing a nuanced understanding of our student demographics and the experiential learning they bring to formal study. A significant proportion of UniSQ students are mature-aged, entering university with a wealth of life and professional experience.

This cohort often exhibits distinct learning preferences. Mature-aged students are typically highly motivated, goal-oriented, and value practical, real-world applications of knowledge. They also benefit from flexible learning options and personalised support services, such as academic advising and counselling. Their lived experiences contribute to the academic environment through enhanced critical thinking and problem-solving capabilities. However, this experiential learning is often under-recognised in traditional academic frameworks.

The Framework has been designed to address this gap by making experiential learning both visible and assessable in alignment with Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) standards. While students with prior formal study can often be granted credit with relative ease, those without such credentials—particularly career changers—may struggle to have their extensive experience acknowledged.

In the post-COVID landscape, where online delivery has become standard across Australian universities, UniSQ's Framework stands out as a key differentiator. Grounded in Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) principles, The Framework offers a holistic approach that integrates a student's past experiences, current learning, and future development goals. Unlike traditional RPL, which is typically assessed at the point of entry and based solely on prior learning, The Framework allows students to build and submit credit claims progressively throughout their studies. This approach is supported by ongoing guidance and monitoring to ensure alignment with their chosen major or minor.

While the literature acknowledges the challenges associated with RPL in both vocational education and higher education contexts, it also highlights the significant benefits of investing in robust RPL processes. Our project has identified several key advantages for both students and UniSQ in dedicating time and resources to the development of The Framework, including increased student engagement, improved retention, and enhanced recognition of diverse learning pathways.

Our project has identified the following benefits for students, UniSQ, and society more broadly for investing time and resources in developing RPL processes to address these challenges.

The benefits for UniSQ students include:

- Saves time: Fast tracking for students who have no formal learning but have equivalent life experiences.
- Saves money: Economic advantages that can lead to better job prospects and career advancement.
- Validation of real-world experiences and knowledge that students bring to their formal education pathway.
- Flexibility to work towards RPL for future credit.
- Connectivity through sharing their experience with peers and feeling a valued part of the UniSQ community.
- Equity levelling to ensure all students have fair access and support, no matter their background.
- Inclusive of diversity across student experience and recognising the diverse skills and life experiences of each individual.

The benefits for UniSQ include:

- Aligning to TEQSA and AQF requirements.
- Reflecting UniSQ Values, Mission, and Vision.
- By embedding and valuing principles of lifelong learning the university builds stronger networks with students potentially leading to further study.
- Tailoring RPL to UniSQ's mature-aged professional cohort can boost retention and attract new students through positive word-of-mouth.
- Increased staff awareness and organisational knowledge of RPL credit and impact for students, the institution, and industry connections.
- Complementing Curriculum renewal at UniSQ.
- Potential for increased completion rates.

Benefits for society include:

- Promoting inclusivity by recognising diverse learning experiences and backgrounds.
- Validating prior learning motivates individuals to pursue further education and professional development.
- Economic Growth: RPL reduces the time and cost associated with obtaining qualifications, benefiting both individuals and the economy and assists in developing a skilled workforce.
- Validation of employees' skills and knowledge enhances workplace productivity.

Overall, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) supports a more adaptable and inclusive education system by aligning academic outcomes with real-world skills and experiences. However, embedding RPL effectively within higher education requires thoughtful planning, adequate resourcing, and sustained effort. Despite these challenges, the long-term benefits for students, institutions, and society significantly outweigh the complexities of implementation.

## Developmental Phases of the Professional Practice Credit Framework

The rationale for the iterative curriculum design structure was to accommodate several stages and address challenges as they emerged. As the pilots' progressed the design strengthened further. The Graduate Attributes at UniSQ inform curriculum development and prepare graduates to contribute meaningfully to their workplaces, their communities, and society more broadly. The development of The Framework between 2021 and 2025 was characterised by a progressive refinement of its visual representation. This process involved iterative design, stakeholder consultation, and practical trials to ensure its relevance and applicability. The successive iterations of The Framework are depicted in Figures 1–4 below.

### Original Concept of Professional Practice Credit 2021

The infrastructure is informed by UniSQ's Graduate Attributes. These generic attributes underpin all curricula and align approaches and strategies for their development and assurance as part of course and program planning, design, implementation and evaluation.

Figure 1: Original Concept of Professional Practice Credit 2021

The original concept aimed to broaden access to informal and non-formal credit by developing a Professional Practice shell. This structure enabled students to receive recognition for a Major, Minor, or individual units based on their prior learning. From this foundational shell, successive versions of The Framework were developed, trialled, and refined.



### Professional Practice Credit Framework Domains 2022-2024

The Professional Practice Credit Framework provides a structured approach for students pursuing a Professional Practice Major, Minor, or individual courses. It is built around three interconnected and equally important Domains: **Knowledge Implementation, Advocacy and Engagement**, and **Personal and Professional Capabilities**. These Domains support students in demonstrating their skills and knowledge in a flexible and holistic manner, allowing for overlap and integration across areas.

The design of the Framework is intentionally fluid, encouraging students to present their learning and experiences across multiple Domains. Its development was informed by the frameworks, policies, and

procedures outlined in Table 7. In particular, the **PCRN Employability Skills**<sup>12</sup>, and **JobSkills Australia**<sup>13</sup> resources played a key role in shaping the Domains and aligning them with the **UniSQ Graduate Attributes**. Additionally, the **EntreComp**<sup>14</sup> resources influenced the mapping process, ensuring a comprehensive and relevant structure.

Figure 2: Professional Practice Credit Framework 2022-2024

The foundational structure of The Framework was informed by the documentation outlined in Table 7 (Part A), which articulates the three Domains central to The Framework's intent.

However, the emphasis on the Graduate Attributes in the visual representation (Figure 2) led to some misinterpretation. Specifically, there was a tendency among some stakeholders to focus solely on the Graduate Attributes, without recognising the integral role of The Framework Domains. This misalignment highlighted the need for clearer integration and communication of both elements in future iterations of The Framework's presentation.



<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. (n.d.). *Employability skills framework*. <https://cte.ed.gov/initiatives/employability-skills-framework>

<sup>13</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia. (2023, October 4). *Towards a national jobs and skills roadmap*. <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/publications/towards-national-jobs-and-skills-roadmap>

<sup>14</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, (2019). *EntreComp: the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework*, Publications Office.

<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2767/88978>; European Commission, Joint Research Centre, McCallum, E., McMullan, L., Weicht, R. (2018). *EntreComp into action: get inspired, make it happen*, (W,O'Keeffe, editor,M,Bacigalupo,editor) Publications Office. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/574864>

Professional Practice Credit Framework 2025

The Framework design and resources were refined to strengthen the visual and conceptual identity of the Domains and their connection to Professional Practice to mitigate any misinterpretation. This version also allowed the update of the UniSQ rebranding.

This led to the development of a more mature and clearly structured Framework architecture, enhancing clarity and alignment with the project’s objectives

Figure 3: Professional Practice Credit Framework 2025

As part of refining the student resources aligned with The Framework, Core Skills were clearly defined within each Domain, enhancing clarity and relevance.

To further support student understanding and application, each Core Skill was also broken down into associated Subskills (Table 8), offering a more detailed and structured guide for skill development across the Domains.

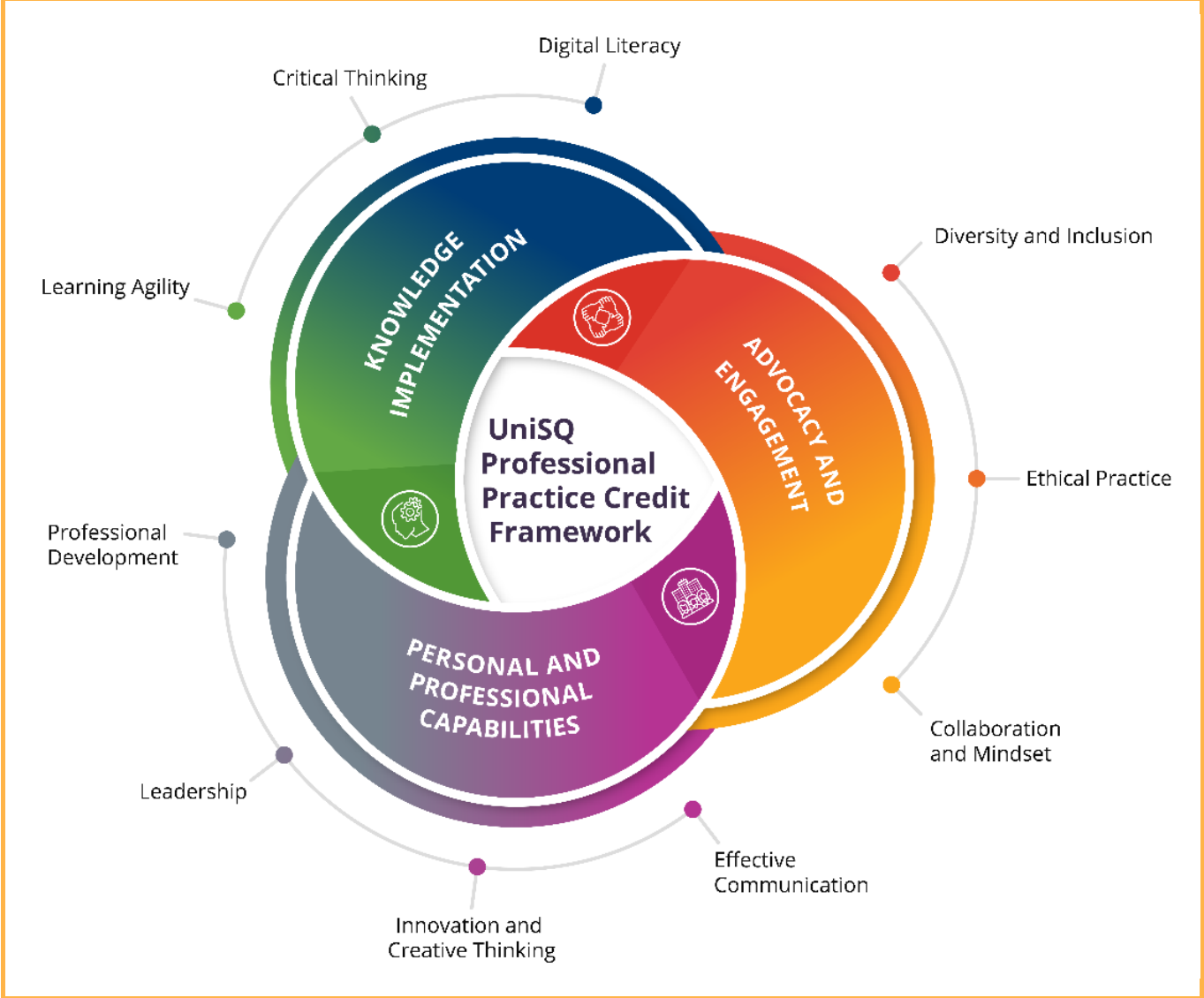


Table 8 below provides the detail of the Subskills that underpin each Domain.



Table 8 Professional Practice Credit Framework Core Skillsets and Subskill sets (2025)

## Knowledge Implementation

Core Skillsets	Sub Skills
Learning Agility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Approach to learning:</b> Techniques used to understand a new concept or approach.</li> <li>• <b>Agility:</b> Ability to rapidly learn, adapt, apply new knowledge and skills in various situations.</li> <li>• <b>Adaptability:</b> Adjusting knowledge and techniques to fit different situations and challenges.</li> <li>• <b>Continuous Learning:</b> Desire to learn new skills or knowledges to add to what you already understand.</li> <li>• <b>Self-Reflection:</b> learning from experiences both successes and failures. Identifying transferable skills and applying these in different settings.</li> </ul>
Critical Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Analytical Skills:</b> The ability to break down complex information into smaller, understandable parts.</li> <li>• <b>Objectivity:</b> Evaluating information without bias or personal influence.</li> <li>• <b>Problem-Solving:</b> Identifying problems and developing effective solutions.</li> <li>• <b>Logical Reasoning:</b> Making decisions based on sound reasoning and evidence.</li> <li>• <b>Attention to Detail:</b> Noticing and considering all relevant details.</li> <li>• <b>Open-Mindedness:</b> Being willing to consider different perspectives and new ideas.</li> <li>• <b>Questioning:</b> Questioning assumptions and seeking evidence before accepting conclusions.</li> <li>• <b>Reflection:</b> Thinking about your own perspective, engaging with other perspectives and adjusting as needed.</li> </ul>
Digital Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Information Literacy:</b> The ability to find, evaluate, and use information from digital sources.</li> <li>• <b>Technical Proficiency:</b> Understanding and effectively using digital tools and technologies.</li> <li>• <b>Communication Skills:</b> Using digital platforms to communicate clearly and effectively.</li> <li>• <b>Adaptability:</b> Staying current with new technologies and digital trends. For example, Artificial Intelligence.</li> <li>• <b>Privacy and Security Awareness:</b> Understanding how to protect personal information and maintain digital security.</li> <li>• <b>Ethical Use:</b> Using digital resources responsibly and ethically.</li> <li>• <b>Problem-Solving:</b> Leveraging digital tools to solve problems and complete tasks efficiently.</li> <li>• <b>Collaboration:</b> Working effectively with others using digital platforms.</li> <li>• <b>Creativity:</b> Using digital tools to create new content and ideas.</li> </ul>



## Advocacy and Engagement:

Core Skillsets	Sub Skills
Diversity and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Respect:</b> Valuing and appreciating the differences in others, including their backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences without prejudice.</li> <li>• <b>Cultural Awareness:</b> Recognising and respecting cultural differences and being aware of one's own cultural biases.</li> <li>• <b>Commitment to Learning:</b> Continuously educating oneself about diversity and inclusion issues and best practices.</li> <li>• <b>Inclusive approaches:</b> Adapting to diverse needs and perspectives in various situations. For example, making space for everyone to be heard, removing barriers to engagement, tailoring support for participation and having culturally safe processes and practices.</li> <li>• <b>Empathy:</b> Understanding and sharing the feelings of others, which helps in creating a supportive and inclusive environment.</li> <li>• <b>Fairness:</b> Ensuring equitable opportunities and treatment for everyone, regardless of their background.</li> <li>• <b>Collaboration:</b> Working effectively with people from diverse backgrounds and fostering a safe team environment where everyone feels valued.</li> <li>• <b>Communication:</b> Clearly and respectfully convey culturally appropriate messages, actively listen to others, and communicate in appropriate ways to accommodate diverse groups.</li> <li>• <b>Advocacy:</b> Supporting and promoting the rights and inclusion of marginalised groups.</li> </ul>
Ethical Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Self-Awareness:</b> Having a clear perception of your own personality, including strengths and weaknesses, thoughts, beliefs, motivations and emotions.</li> <li>• <b>Integrity:</b> Acting honestly and with strong moral principles.</li> <li>• <b>Confidentiality:</b> Protecting sensitive information and respecting privacy.</li> <li>• <b>Transparency:</b> Being open and honest in communications and actions.</li> <li>• <b>Respect for Laws and Regulations:</b> Adhering to all relevant laws, policies, and guidelines.</li> <li>• <b>Responsibility:</b> Making decisions that consider the well-being of others and the broader community.</li> <li>• <b>Ethical Decision-Making:</b> Evaluating the ethical implications of actions and choices.</li> <li>• <b>Conflict Resolution:</b> Addressing conflicts in a fair and constructive manner.</li> <li>• <b>Social Responsibility:</b> Contributing positively to society and the environment. For example, Volunteerism, proactively ensuring that your actions are appropriate.</li> </ul>
Collaboration and Mindset	<p><b>Collaboration- Your approach to collaborating:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Shared Goals:</b> Aligning individual efforts with the team's objectives.</li> <li>• <b>Teamwork:</b> Working effectively with others towards a common goal.</li> <li>• <b>Communication:</b> Sharing information and ideas openly and clearly.</li> </ul>

- **Respect:** Valuing and appreciating the contributions of all team members.
- **Problem-Solving:** Collaboratively finding solutions to challenges.
- **Dependability:** Being reliable and consistent in fulfilling commitments.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Addressing and resolving disagreements constructively.
- **Supportiveness:** Encouraging and assisting team members to achieve their best.
- **Relationship Building:** Developing and maintaining meaningful connections over time.

**Mindset- How you show up for your team and contribute positively:**

- **Optimism:** Maintaining a hopeful and positive outlook, even in challenging situations.
- **Resilience:** Bouncing back from setbacks and maintaining a positive demeanour.
- **Enthusiasm:** Approaching tasks with energy and excitement.
- **Gratitude:** Appreciating and acknowledging the good aspects of situations and people.
- **Empathy:** Understanding and sharing the feelings of others, fostering a supportive environment.
- **Open-Mindedness:** Being receptive to new ideas and perspectives.
- **Confidence:** Believing in one's abilities and maintaining a positive self-image.
- **Flexibility:** Adapting to changes with a positive mindset.

## Personal and Professional Capabilities:

Core Skillsets	Sub Skills
Effective Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Active Listening:</b> Paying full attention to the speaker, understanding their message, and responding thoughtfully with empathy.</li> <li>• <b>Feedback:</b> Providing constructive feedback and being open to receiving it. Proactively requesting feedback to evaluate effectiveness.</li> <li>• <b>Clarity:</b> Conveying messages in a clear and straightforward manner to avoid misunderstandings.</li> <li>• <b>Conciseness:</b> Keeping messages brief and to the point, avoiding unnecessary details.</li> <li>• <b>Nonverbal Communication:</b> Using body language, facial expressions, and eye contact to reinforce verbal messages.</li> <li>• <b>Adaptability:</b> Adjusting communication style based on the audience and context.</li> <li>• <b>Conflict Resolution:</b> Addressing and resolving disagreements constructively.</li> </ul>
Innovation and Creative Thinking	<p><b>Innovation- ability to generate new ideas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Curiosity:</b> A strong desire to explore and a drive to learn new things.</li> <li>• <b>Vision:</b> Having a clear idea of what you want to achieve and how to get there.</li> <li>• <b>Risk-Taking:</b> Being willing to take risks and experiment with new approaches.</li> <li>• <b>Adaptability:</b> Being flexible and open to change.</li> <li>• <b>Strategic Thinking:</b> Planning and executing innovative ideas with a long-term perspective.</li> <li>• <b>Problem-Solving:</b> Finding effective solutions to business challenges.</li> </ul> <p><b>Creative Thinking- thinking outside the box (novel ideas or solutions):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Imagination:</b> The ability to think of new and original ideas.</li> <li>• <b>Flexibility:</b> Adapting to new situations and thinking in unconventional ways.</li> <li>• <b>Divergent Thinking:</b> Generating multiple solutions to a problem.</li> <li>• <b>Playfulness:</b> Approaching problems with a sense of fun and experimentation.</li> </ul>
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Visionary Thinking:</b> Setting a clear direction and inspiring others to follow.</li> <li>• <b>Decision-Making:</b> Making informed and timely decisions.</li> <li>• <b>Delegation:</b> Trusting others with responsibilities and empowering them to succeed.</li> <li>• <b>Leading change:</b> Leading effectively in changing circumstances.</li> <li>• <b>Conflict Resolution:</b> Addressing and resolving conflicts in a constructive manner.</li> <li>• <b>Relationship Building:</b> Developing and maintaining meaningful connections over time.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Empathy:</b> Understanding and valuing the perspectives and feelings of team members.</li> <li>• <b>Integrity:</b> Acting with honesty and strong moral principles.</li> <li>• <b>Motivation:</b> Inspiring and motivating others to achieve their best.</li> <li>• <b>Positive Attitude:</b> Viewing change as an opportunity rather than a threat.</li> <li>• <b>Proactiveness:</b> Anticipating changes and preparing for them in advance.</li> <li>• <b>Emotional Intelligence:</b> Managing emotions effectively to stay focused and productive.</li> <li>• <b>Support-Seeking:</b> Reaching out for help and support when needed.</li> <li>• <b>Stress Management:</b> Handling stress in a healthy and productive manner.</li> </ul>
<b>Professional Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Self-Awareness:</b> Understanding your values, strengths, and professional goals.</li> <li>• <b>Proactive Goal Setting:</b> Establishing clear, achievable objectives for professional growth.</li> <li>• <b>Feedback Seeking:</b> Actively seeking constructive feedback to identify areas for improvement.</li> <li>• <b>Reflective Practice:</b> Thinking critically about past experiences to learn and grow.</li> <li>• <b>Proactiveness:</b> Taking initiative to seek growth opportunities.</li> <li>• <b>Continuous Learning:</b> Pursuing ongoing education and skill development to stay current in your field.</li> <li>• <b>Networking:</b> Building and maintaining professional relationships that can provide support, advice, and opportunities.</li> <li>• <b>Mentor/Mentee:</b> Seeking guidance from experienced professionals and giving back by mentoring others.</li> </ul>

## Assessing Competency Levels using the AQF

Assessing Professional Practice Credit draws on a hybrid of competency based developmental assessment frameworks and is context dependent and mapped to AQF levels. Skills acquisition models proposed by Dreyfus (2004) and more recently Rousse & Dreyfus, (2021) provide a strong platform for mapping skill levels to AQF levels and influenced the development of the Professional Practice Credit assessment rationale and terminology used.

### Mapping Core Skillsets to Domains

The process of mapping life experiences to core skills and Domains is outlined in Appendix 5. The Framework supports students in aligning their experiential learning with the expectations of the Professional Practice Credit structure.

#### Identifying Experiential Learning

During the development of resources to support students in recognising and mapping their experiential learning, it became evident that many students struggled to identify and articulate the skillsets gained through informal and non-formal experiences. This challenge was consistent with findings in the literature and echoed in student feedback.

To address this, a suite of tailored resources was developed to guide students through the process of unpacking their life experiences. These tools were designed to help students reflect on their personal and professional journeys, identify transferable skills, and align them with the three Domains that are academic and industry relevant.

#### Assessment Rubric

The rubric used to assess the awarding of Professional Practice Credit was specifically designed for the two pilot programs and is detailed in Appendix 6. This rubric ensures that the assessment of experiential learning is rigorous, transparent, and aligned with academic standards.

## Resources

### Reflective Writing and Its Role

To be eligible for credit, students must include reflective posts in their portfolio addressing each Core Skillset and the three Domains. Reflective writing can be challenging, especially for students unfamiliar with introspective or subjective analysis. However, it fosters critical thinking, self-awareness, and the ability to articulate personal growth—skills valued in both academic and professional settings.

Resources to support reflective writing were developed through the BCNM and BCYS pilot studies (see Appendix 7).

### Why Reflection Matters

Reflection enhances learning by helping students:

- Recognise strengths and areas for growth
- Link theory to practice
- Build critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Develop self-awareness
- Become more independent learners

This reflective process transforms passive learning into an active, meaningful journey, enabling students to see the relevance of their experiences in academic and professional contexts.

### Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy is a simple way for students to self-assess their AQF levels. The taxonomy models assist students to gauge how their Portfolio creation is mapping to the AQF levels: Remembering and Understanding maps to AQF level 5, Applying and Analysing to AQF 6 and Evaluating and Creating to

AQF level 7 (see Appendix 8). There are several versions provided as this catered for students' learning preferences and how they process information.

### **Portfolio**

A range of resources were reviewed to inform the suite of Portfolio resources to support both students and staff (academic and professional). A comprehensive list of resources can be found here [Create website](#)<sup>15</sup> .

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<sup>15</sup> Swetha, (n.d) [The Complete Guide To Student Digital Portfolios | CampusPress](#)

## Piloting the *Professional Practice Credit Framework*

This section outlines the two pilot programs that tested The Framework. Both pilots embraced co-production and co-design principles to ensure that all participant voices influenced the development of The Framework. We emphasised the role of students as active contributors in recognising and validating their prior informal and non-formal learning experiences. Insights and key takeaways from these pilots are explored in the Final Reflections section.

### Pilot 1: Bachelor of Communication and Media (BCNM)

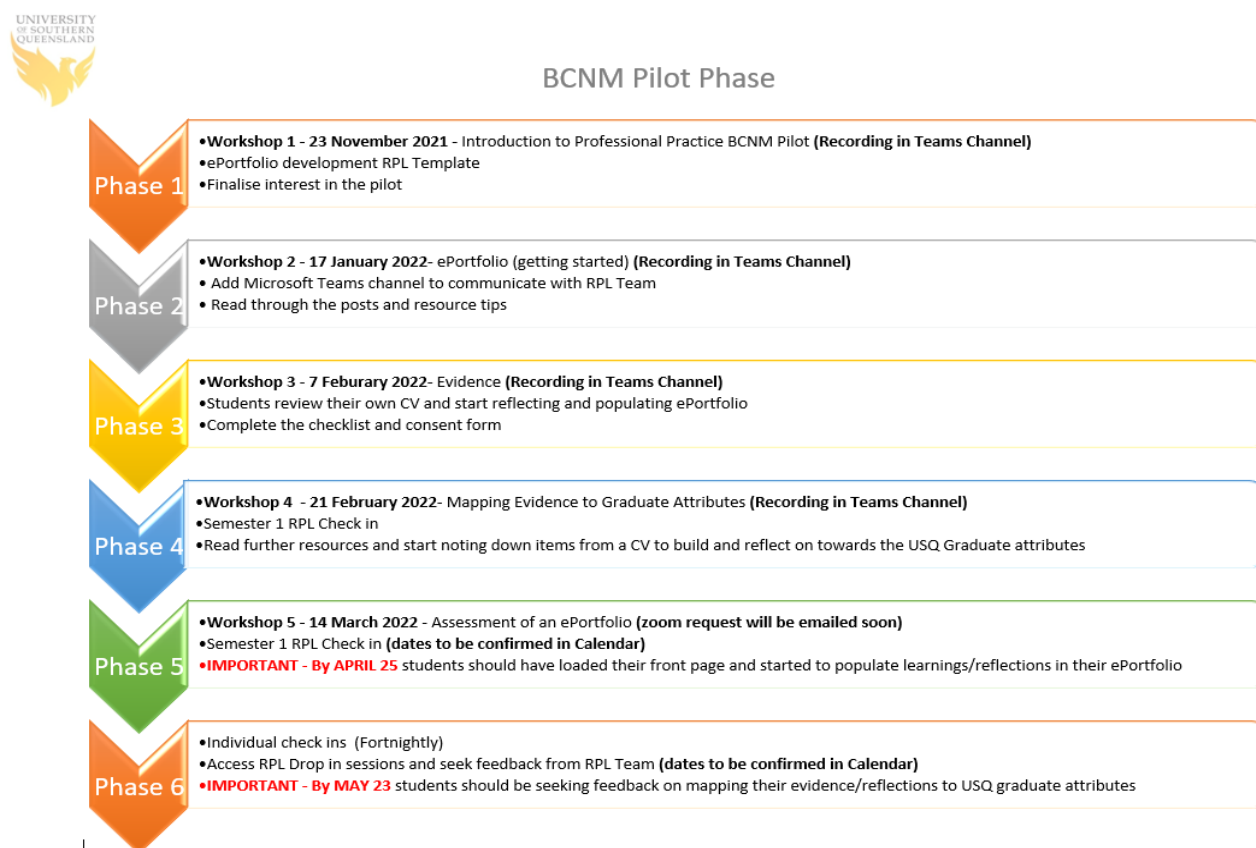
Seven students secured a place in the BCNM pilot. Five workshops were developed with a focus on information around:

- the proposed RPL and Professional Practice Credit project at the University of Southern Queensland (Workshop 1)
- ePortfolio (Workshop 2)
- What is evidence? (Workshop 3)
- How to map this evidence to the Graduate Attributes (Workshop 4) and
- Assessing ePortfolio (Workshop 5).

The Marking Rubric was trialled in the pilots. Workshops were accessible to staff and students in an internal Recognition SharePoint site. The **sixth phase** consisted of individual meetings to gauge progress (Figure 4).

A UniSQ 'Teams for Teaching Pilot' enabled us to implement a trial of Teams as a collaborative platform for BCNM Pilot participants. This provided Pilot students with access to all resources and updates. The BCNM pilot also tapped into a WordPress pilot for ePortfolio enabling students to create a portfolio to collate their evidence to be assessed for credit.

Figure 4 BCNM Pilot Phases- original timeline





Feedback from staff and students indicated that the workshops:

- were helpful for students,
- informed a suite of generic resources to be developed to assist future students with their RPL portfolio,
- provided a footprint for future iterations and improvements and,
- resources were useful for generic RPL applications for specified credit submissions.

## Pilot 2: The Bachelor of Cyber Security (BCYS)

The Bachelor of Cyber Security (BCYS) pilot program commenced in July 2022 with an initial cohort of 19 students. Specifically designed to support Veterans and their spouses transitioning from Defence into the Cyber Security sector, the program culminated in each successful participant being awarded a Bachelor of Cyber Security upon completion of a one-year industry internship.

The pilot served as a proof of concept, demonstrating the viability of creating a sustainable pipeline of skilled Veterans and spouses entering the Cyber Security workforce. It also contributed to positive student outcomes and completions for the University, reinforcing the program's value and potential for long-term impact. Importantly, the program serves as a model for how Professional Practice Credit can be integrated into academic structures—clearly showing prospective students how their prior life and work experiences are valued and formally recognised.

Figure 5 BCYS program design

USQ Bachelor of Cyber Security (24 units) Bespoke Program		
<b>Cyber Security Core</b> 8 units	Competency based learning is negotiated between USQ academic lead, DXC supervisor and student intern (capstone two x 4 unit courses) Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level 7	<b>DXC Internship 12 months</b> Students are employed by DXC with USQ assessment of outcomes (12,000 words industry focused) <b>Formal learning</b>
<b>Professional Practice Major</b> 8 units	Individual veteran's experience is assessed through an ePortfolio against USQ Graduate Attributes (8 x 1 unit courses) Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level 5, 6, 7	<b>Veterans' Service Recognition</b> USQ assessment of outcomes from 5-10 years military (or other) experience <b>Informal learning</b>
<b>Cyber Security Technical</b> 8 units	An agreed suite of Industry Certification (two x 4 unit courses) Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Level 5	<b>Soldier On Industry Skills</b> USQ articulation agreement with <b>Soldier On</b> to recognise industry certifications <b>Non formal learning</b>

The BCYS program integrates multiple elements to support student success:

- Industry Certifications: Provided by Soldier On, fulfilling eight technical units.
- Structured Internships: Offered by DXC Technology, providing paid, real-world experience.
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): Includes formal, informal, and non-formal learning. This is awarded by way of Professional Practice Credit through the creation of a portfolio. Students who are interested in the program require suitability screening at the interview phase to ensure that they have sufficient life experience to create a portfolio with sufficient evidence and examples.
- No On-Campus Requirement: All components are delivered remotely.

- Industry Integration: Students form professional networks and adapt directly to their new work environments.

This model not only supports a smoother transition for Veterans and their families but also strengthens industry-university collaboration. By recognising diverse forms of learning and experience, UniSQ is leading a shift toward more inclusive and responsive higher education pathways.

## Why Assess Professional Practice Credit using Portfolio?

Research identifies the long-term advantages and benefits for graduates using a portfolio in their higher education studies and beyond. Portfolios provide a student with a focussed tool and the autonomy to curate artefacts, demonstrate and share a blend of academic and professional development that reflects formal, informal and non-formal experiential learning over time<sup>16</sup>. A portfolio complements the unique and often complex nature of documenting and assessing the validity of experiential learning. Portfolios, enable students to: identify and articulate their own skills; experiences, and knowledge as well as enhance their marketability in the workforce<sup>17</sup>. The Professional Practice Credit portfolio allows the student the creative space to collect, select, reflect and connect their prior learnings to the three Domains, encourages reflection and transparency of their emergent professional identity, and core employability skills. A significant advantage for students engaging with portfolio reflective practice is the blending of RPL with principles of lifelong learning. WordPress is the chosen portfolio tool for its relative ease of use, blogging (reflection) capability, and efficient modular construct for management of themes, pages, and posts. RPL applicants are tasked with reflecting on their identity as learners, citizens, and their previous, current and future professional identities by creating an online representation of their narrative opening pathways to authentic assessment, and recognition<sup>18</sup>.

Assessing the Professional Practice Credit pilots highlighted key challenges in assessing Professional Practice Credit, particularly around transparency, consistency, integrity, and robustness. To address these, WordPress was adopted as the platform for students to develop digital portfolios.

These portfolios enabled students to:

- Curate and present formal, informal, and non-formal learning aligned with relevant Domains.
- Articulate their skills and experiences, enhancing employability.
- Connect prior learning to Graduate Attributes, accreditation standards, and professional competencies.
- Engage in reflective practice that supports lifelong learning and ethical development.
- Demonstrate academic integrity through authentic, verifiable evidence of learning.

Integrating RPL portfolios into these pilots fostered a culture of integrity and supported students in ethically documenting their professional growth.

<sup>16</sup> Ciesielkiewicz (2019). *The use of e-portfolios in higher education: From the students' perspective. Issues in Educational Research*, 29(3), 649–667. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ122267>

<sup>17</sup> Stuart, Haskins & Adelino. (2020). Do students use their ePortfolios after graduation? A pilot study of undergraduate and graduate students. *AAEEBL ePortfolio Review (AePR)*, 4(1), <https://unistars.org/papers/STARS2022/08A.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Nguyen, (2013). *The ePortfolio as a living portal: A medium for student learning, identity, and assessment. International Journal of ePortfolio*, 3(2), 135–148. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1107805.pdf>; Schrand, Jones, & Hanson. (2018). "Reflecting on reflections:" Curating ePortfolios for integrative learning and identity development in a general education senior capstone. *International Journal of ePortfolio*, 8(1), 1–12. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1177612.pdf>

## PART B Recommendations

The following recommendations will assist in sustainably implementing, maintaining and reviewing the Professional Practice Credit Framework at UniSQ.

### 15. Institutional Commitment and Leadership

- a) **Establish a Clear Institutional Stance on Professional Practice Credit:** UniSQ should articulate a university-wide position on the value and purpose of Professional Practice Credit.
- b) **Executive Endorsement:** Senior leaders must actively champion Professional Practice Credit, embedding it in strategic planning and public messaging to signal its importance.
- c) **Workload Recognition:** Review and adjust workload models to ensure staff involved in Professional Practice Credit promotion, assessment and support are adequately resourced.

### 16. Governance and Policy Integration

- a) **Policy Alignment:** Ensure Professional Practice Credit, along with RPL concepts are incorporated into UniSQ policies and procedures.
- b) **Quality assurance framework:** to be established.
- c) **External governance compliance:** that will impact credit and exemption reporting, and curriculum design practice.

### 17. Capacity Building and Resourcing

- a) **Centralised RPL Support Team:** Use the Central RPL Team (**Recommendation 9b**) to coordinate policy updates, training, and case management of students undertaking Professional Practice Credit across schools.
- b) **Professional Development:** Launch a Professional Practice Credit Framework aligned training initiative to build RPL literacy among academic and professional staff, including First Nations support teams and career advisors.
- c) **Onboarding Integration:** Embed RPL training into staff induction processes to ensure early engagement and understanding.
- d) **Orientation for New Program Directors:** Include RPL philosophy and UniSQ's Professional Practice Credit Framework approach in onboarding and leadership development programs.

### 18. Community of Practice

- a) **Leverage Emerging Champions:** Formalise a community of practice among Program Directors and staff already using Professional Practice Credit Framework to share insights, tools, and success stories.
- b) **Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration:** Encourage knowledge exchange across disciplinary areas to broaden the application of RPL.

## 19. Industry and Government Engagement

- a) **Strategic Partnerships:** Strengthen ties with industry and government to align RPL pathways with workforce needs and promote lifelong learning.
- b) **Advisory Panels:** Involve external stakeholders in the design and review of the Professional Practice Credit Framework to ensure relevance and responsiveness.
- c) **Bespoke industry programs:** can benefit greatly from the inclusion of Professional Practice Credit to assist in shortening the time it takes to upskill employees in the workforce.

## 20. Marketing and Outreach

- a) **Promote UniSQ's Point of Difference:** Highlight UniSQ's unique position as the only university currently offering Professional Practice Credit in marketing campaigns.
- b) **Targeted Outreach Strategy:** Develop a communications plan to attract prospective students through RPL pathways, especially those with significant prior life experience.

## Reflections on the Project and RPL

Striving towards a more streamlined RPL space at a regional university has been both a rewarding and challenging journey. The project team's experience underscores that successful RPL integration requires a strategic and university-wide approach informed by a team with the right skillsets and expertise, adequate time, and sustained resourcing—it truly takes a village!

Framed within the broader context of adult education, lifelong learning, access, and social justice, the UniSQ RPL project recognised the value of formal, informal, and non-formal learning. Through a user-centric, co-design and evidence-based research methodology, the project has made a meaningful contribution to the RPL field.

### Key Achievements

- **Cultivating RPL Champions:** The project fostered a network of RPL advocates across academic and professional areas, culminating in a 2023 end-of-year symposium (See Appendix 9) that celebrated collaboration and shared learning.
- **Pilot Programs:** Two successful pilots tested the Professional Practice Credit Framework in distinct programs. These pilots demonstrated The Framework's adaptability and effectiveness in recognising students experiential learning. The Framework is now at a point where interested Program Directors can build this option into their program structure.
- **Industry Relationships:** The Framework has assisted in industry agreements for internship programs by using the rubric to evaluate specific internship programs and to award credit for those who complete their internship successfully.
- **Student-Centred Co-Design:** By valuing student voices and partnering with them in resource development, the project ensured that tools were responsive to diverse needs and learning preferences.
- **Scholarly Contribution:** A publishing strategy is underway to share our student-centric, evidence-informed approach with the broader RPL and higher education community.
- **Tailored Resources:** The pilots revealed that different cohorts engage with resources in varied ways, particularly visual tools, depending on their discipline and learning styles. Work on these resources has begun and many new ideas are being considered for future improvements.

### Challenges Encountered

Despite these successes, the project faced several challenges, many of which have been identified within existing literature:

- **Misunderstanding of RPL:** There is a widespread lack of understanding and clarity around what RPL entails, how it is assessed, and its potential to enhance both student experience and staff workload efficiency.
- **Resource Constraints:** Limited staffing and funding, which is common across the sector, impacted the rollout, compounded by job insecurity. This highlights the importance of 'readiness' when implementing change in the RPL space.
- The increasing demand to **support students** using outdated resources significantly diverted attention and capacity away from the development of new, contemporary learning materials, building capacity activities and marketing/promotion.
- **Cultural Resistance:** Some areas and academics resisted change due to entrenched practices and perceptions of RPL's value and validity. It is also worth noting that frequently,

credit was either put in the too-hard basket or other priorities cropped up that had more significant and visible consequences if not handled immediately. More recently, the culture and appetite for change need to be reconsidered with workload and changes impacting staff, resulting in a reluctance to engage in this space.

- **Equity and Access Issues:** A concern is the equity gap that emerges when awareness of RPL opportunities is uneven. Students who learn about RPL through informal networks or word of mouth often have a distinct advantage over those who are unaware or uncertain about their eligibility. This disparity can lead to inconsistent outcomes and perceptions of unfairness, particularly when students receive credit rejections they perceive as unjust or poorly explained.
- **Training Needs:** There was a strong demand for professional development in RPL assessment and awareness.

## Conclusion

RPL holds significant potential to enhance access, equity, and flexibility within higher education. While it remains a concept that is often misunderstood, growing awareness and institutional engagement are paving the way for more effective and consistent implementation. A nationally aligned approach to RPL would further strengthen its impact, particularly as universities adapt to an increasingly dynamic and complex educational landscape.

The establishment of the RPL team represented a strategic initiative to address persistent challenges and enhance the RPL experience for students and staff. In 2024, efforts were concentrated on streamlining existing RPL credit processes and supporting learners through the implementation of the Professional Practice Credit Framework. This period also witnessed a notable increase in student engagement, indicating growing awareness and demand for recognition of prior learning. While this surge in interest placed additional strain on available resources, it also highlighted the critical role of RPL in catering to diverse learner needs.

Currently, The Framework is available within the Bachelor of Communication and Media (BCNM) and the Bachelor of Cyber Security (BCYS) programs, with other disciplines actively exploring its adoption. However, recent organisational changes have shifted responsibility to individual schools, raising concerns about the capacity to effectively support the integration of Professional Practice Credit across programs.

Despite operational and cultural challenges—including workload pressures, organisational change, and varying levels of staff readiness—there is clear momentum for change. The experiences of 2024 have highlighted the need for streamlined systems, clearer communication, and stronger institutional alignment. Importantly, they have also revealed a growing appetite for innovation and improvement in this space.

To fully realise the benefits of RPL, it must be embedded within the university's strategic vision and aligned with national frameworks such as TEQSA guidance and the Australian Universities Accord. Quality assurance in RPL should be a continuously evolving process that requires agility, resourcing, and a culture of ongoing improvement.

This report represents a reflective pause in the evolution of the RPL initiative, coinciding with broader institutional restructuring and the conclusion of the RPL Team. The insights and lessons captured here provide a valuable foundation for future development, offering a platform for renewed commitment, innovation, and sector-wide collaboration in advancing RPL.



## Appendix 1: Program Logic <sup>19</sup>

### USQ Credit Program Logic

8 June 2021

Professor Lyn Alderman

**Under the USQ Strategic Academic Plan and TEQSA Guidance Note: Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning, the Credit Program objectives are:**

- Respect our students' formal, informal and non-formal learning (veterans, police academy, government)
- Implement a rigorous credit process to improve students' opportunities for completion
- Make better connections through articulation agreements with partners, providers and sectors (e.g. government)
- Streamline process to enhance positive student outcomes and reduce academic workload

#### Program of Work

##### INPUTS

- Student applications
- Academic decision-making
- Frontline staff
- Recruitment
- Admission
- Funding system
- Funding RPL team
- Marketing
- Student engagement

##### ACTIVITIES

- Governance through policy, Procedures and Guidelines
- Student and staff capability: shared terminology, understanding and access to precedents
- Systems capability to centrally record credit

##### OUTPUTS

- Credit is awarded in a standard manner for formal, informal and non-formal learning
- Document processes for awarding formal and informal credit
- Develop standardised resources for student applications for credit
- Publish credit precedents on USQ website
- Develop the systems capability to record, store and report credit
- An administrative view of a student transcript that illustrates credit decision making
- Embed review of credit through the Program Review process
- Case studies prepared
- Marketing to students

##### RESOURCES

- Admission applications (International, Direct and QTAC)
- Omega System (I)
- PeopleSoft work centre (online and paper)
- RPL team (3)
- Academic Quality Unit
- ePortfolio available
- Reportable data available

##### PARTICIPANTS

- Students
- Academic executive
- Student Portfolio (Admissions)
- Academic Division (Academic and Program support staff)
- VC's Portfolio (International and Marketing)

##### Assumptions

USQ leadership invested in this space  
Credit is designed into the curriculum  
Timely completions meet industry needs  
Curriculum Management System (2023)

##### External drivers for change

Government, TEQSA and AQF requirements remain stable  
Professional bodies recognise formal and informal credit

#### Short Term (2021)

##### OUTCOMES

- Produce policy, procedures and guidelines are published
- Where credit is out of scope this is published
- Standard resources support credit applications (evidence guides, glossary of terms and tools)
- Precedents reduce academic workload
- Report on credit decisions

##### MEASURES

- Credits awarded (formal, informal, non-formal)
- Unsuccessful applications are reduced
- Processes documented

#### Mid Term (2022-23)

##### OUTCOMES

- Review policy, procedures, guidelines and discipline case studies
- Consolidate practice and reduce duplication
- Celebrate graduate outcomes
- Showcase the range of engaged disciplines
- Single system/process
- Articulations reduce academic workload
- Transparent decision-making

##### MEASURES

- Monitor credit bearing students
- Unsuccessful applications continue to be reduced
- Streamline management of credit information

#### Long Term (2024-25)

##### OUTCOMES

- USQ leading the way in credit and recognition
- Robust, streamlined systems with one single process
- High level of confidence in credit decision-making
- Credit decisions are embedded in Program Reviews
- Academic workload is valued and recognised
- Publications

##### MEASURES

- Monitor credit bearing students
- Reduced administrative workload for credit
- Increased opportunities for student completions

#### USQ Academic Quality Framework (Academic Quality Unit)

- Report annually to Academic Board
- Build reporting to follow credit at University, program, major, course and student level
- Enable reporting to follow student/s through a program and major

#### EVALUATION ACTIVITIES (Academic Quality Unit)

Year 1: Conduct a process evaluation to ensure implementation meets program objectives  
Year 2-3: Pilot a program and conduct an environmental scan and literature review on credit  
Year 4-5: Implement an impact evaluation to determine the sustainability of credit at USQ

<sup>19</sup> Alderman, (2021) USQ Credit Program Logic



## Appendix 2: Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (Methodology)

The below contains excerpts adapted from the *Recognition of Prior Learning at UniSQ: Stakeholder Engagement report* Quadrelli, McAdam & Cook-Watkins (2024)

Recognition of Prior Learning at UniSQ: A Strategic Priority Funded Project 2021  
Ethics ETH2021-0142 (HREC): Dr Carol Quadrelli, Mrs Clarissa Cook-Watkins

### *Stakeholder engagement report (excerpts)*

#### Overview

This project was an initiative supported through University of Southern Queensland Strategic Priority funding to strengthen RPL policy, procedure and practice to align with Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) guidelines and recommendations.

#### Summary

The focus of the project was to streamline RPL credit processes to support and improve the experience of UniSQ students navigating the credit application process. A key driver was TEQSA's credit guidance note recommending all universities adopt a robust, transparent and consistent credit assessment methodology. The three-phase approach ensured an authentic experience documented that was reflective of key stakeholder groups. Changes in policy, resources, process and practice emerged over the course of the project.

The Professional Practice (PP) minor/major was a significant deliverable trialled in two pilots: the BCNM and the BCYS. The PP CreditF framework provides UniSQ with a unique point of difference and alleviates many barriers students face when applying for credit and the challenges Program Directors face when assessing RPL credit applications. The project provides a case study of the current frustrations and bottlenecks experienced by UniSQ students, professional and academic staff that is contextualised within the broader RPL landscape. Resources were tailored to UniSQ's specific context and identified needs.

A suite of resources developed include annual reports to capture the footprint of the project; a staff RPL SharePoint site; *Applying for RPL: A student guide*; Proposed new credit template; Professional staff RPL guide; Academic staff RPL guide; Professional Practice resources (i.e. portfolio guides, addressing Domains; assessment and moderation resources).

The foci for 2024 are on Resourcing, Marketing and Industry. Publications generated from the project are in progress and will position UniSQ as a leader in the RPL domain. The rich 3.5-year datasets provide the leverage to address several absences in the literature: the student voice and credit experiences; perspectives on RPL; and a case study of RPL in an Australian regional University. These perspectives identify the 'look and feel' of RPL at the University of Southern Queensland and inform the development and sequencing of future resources and capacity-building activities to achieve embedded and sustainable best practice.

## Methodology: Action Research Approach

This project adopted an **organic, co-design approach**, informed by **stakeholder feedback**, **empirical research**, and **policy benchmarking**.

This report presents the systematic development and refinement of RPL at UniSQ through an action research methodology, ensuring stakeholder engagement, policy refinement, and resource development.

Three Phases
Phase 1: Mapping the RPL Landscape (2021)
Phase 2: Designing RPL Artefacts (2022-2023)
Phase 3: Trialling Resources (2024-2025)

Phase 1: Mapping the RPL Landscape (2021)

Key Activities & Outcomes

Activity	Outcome
Stakeholder Identification & Engagement	Identified <b>academic staff</b> , <b>professional staff</b> , <b>students</b> , and <b>support services</b>
Literature Review & Benchmarking	Conducted <b>national and global institutional benchmarking</b> to assess RPL strengths and weaknesses
Policy Alignment & Credit Framework Review	Findings contributed to adjustments in <b>Credit and Exemption Procedure</b>
Individual Interviews (Ongoing, Ethics Extended to 2025)	<b>11 professional staff</b> , <b>18 academic staff</b> , and <b>6 students</b> provided key insights
Student Case Studies	<b>32 case studies</b> ensuring alignment with lived student experiences
Focus Groups (9 Groups, 45 Participants)	Provided stakeholder feedback on RPL improvements
Community of Practice	Strengthened UniSQ's <b>internal networks</b> for collaboration
Publication Strategy	Identified research <b>dissemination strategies</b> , informed by project datasets

## Phase 2: Designing RPL Artefacts (2022-2023)

### Key Project Activities & Outcomes:

Activity	Outcome
Policy Change	Adjusted <b>Credit and Exemption Procedure</b> to recognise <b>Informal and Non-formal Learning</b>
Resource Development	Developed <b>SharePoint site, RPL Student Guide, and RPL Credit Form</b>
Bachelor of Communication and Media Pilot	Implemented <b>Professional Practice Framework, Assessment Rubric, Moderation Guidelines, 5 Student Workshops, and Professional Practice Portfolio</b>
Bachelor of Cyber Security Pilot	Designed <b>BCYS Portfolio</b> for structured assessment

## Phase 3: Trialling Resources (2024-2025)

### Refinement & Implementation

Activity	Outcome
Critique RPL Frameworks	Refinement of <b>UniSQ's RPL model</b>
Development of Support Resources	<b>Professional Practice Framework, Assessment Rubric, and Student Guides</b>
Student Feedback & Trials	<b>Co-designed student resources</b> , informed by iterative feedback
Symposium (Nov 2024)	<b>4-hour online event</b> showcasing RPL integration into curriculum

Stakeholder engagement has been ongoing and led to continual refinement of the RPL student guide and the RPL credit application template. There continues to be ongoing challenges experienced by staff and students with the current work experience credit template available to students.

The examples below demonstrate the difficulties UniSQ students currently experience when applying for RPL. UniSQ expectations are not explicit regarding structure, what is a good example and how much detail is sufficient. This creates one of several RPL bottlenecks. Support is not available for students trying to complete an application resulting in weak applications resulting in rejected credit or more information requested thus impacting workloads and timeframes that could hinder student progression. There is no dedicated RPL staff team to provide one on one tailored advice to students and in the current climate, staffing and infrastructure is unlikely to grow. This places pressure on professional staff to advise as best they can with outdated information and credit template often resulting in multiple queries taking place prior to the credit application reaching the academic. This prolonged inconsistent process creates a negative experience and places additional pressures on staff and students. Applications need to demonstrate knowledge, experience and skills required of the CLO's. The current UniSQ template structure disadvantages a student submitting a strong and successful application.

Key project findings indicate:

- Two key themes emerging from **student interviews** were:
  - The need for specific guidance, a better form, and someone to talk with as queries arose; and,
  - A faster turnaround time (some students waiting weeks for an outcome and then taking the grievance pathway or moving to another university who has responded sooner).
- Three key themes emerging from **Academic interviews** were:

- i. A resistance to grant credit based on the lack of depth in CLO responses (too broad with limited mapping to the specificity of course content and AQF level) leading students to underestimate the level of understanding they require/ would receive from the course.
- ii. A second reservation was creating a precedence.
- iii. The number of learning outcomes in one course can make it difficult for the program director to assess whether a student is at the equivalent level and would not be disadvantaged if credit was granted. Interviews with program directors indicated inconsistent depth in how the CLO's were addressed overall.

The Professional Practice resources, the RPL student guide and RPL credit template have been developed based on student feedback on their needs. The resources enable students to gain potential credit in a streamlined, consistent, robust and auditable method. The guidance resources provided to students benefits them by reducing the time it takes to complete with the RPL process and activities validates experiential learning and strengthens professional identity.

## Moving forward: 2024 Embedding RPL Resources

### Foci

Refinement of UniSQ existing resources and information to ensure consistent credit terminology, accurate credit recoding, and compliance with TEQSA auditing requirements. Resources need to be student centric with ongoing student co-design principles to underpin the development of all resources. As the *Australian Universities Accord* impacts the Higher Education sector, changes in our approaches will need to be agile to support students. UniSQ's credit resources and practice will need to recalibrate to meet the complex and diverse needs of future student cohorts.

### Resources

- Develop narratives to reflect consistent terminology for use by staff, marketing and industry
- Refine Professional Practice Handbook which will include resources for staff and students
- Use, gain feedback and refine the WordPress Portfolio Professional Practice template
- Develop an evidence booklet mapped to program logic to assist in external evaluation (due approx. 2 years from now)
- Facilitate capacity building workshops for iconnect, Progression and Completions team, Program Directors
- Contribute to development of credit website information and resources
- Develop pre-recorded resources (24/7 access) for students pursuing Professional Practice and RPL

### Marketing

- Marketing campaign to promote RPL and Professional Practice (website, Partnership team, School visit people, micro credentials)
- Build reputation of UniSQ in the RPL space
- Design and deliver a credit symposium
- Publish to document intellectual property
- Credit thermometer on website (indication of positive credit outcomes)

### Industry

- Engage with articulation agreements process to ensure RPL is considered and to explore future opportunities
- Work with academic leads to explore industry opportunities
- Work with accreditation boards to explore potential of RPL in light of labour shortages (i.e. teachers)

## Appendix 3: Specified Credit Template

### Recognition of Prior Learning Application Checklist

Student to complete coversheet and submit with Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) credit application template

**Please note:**

- A separate submission is required for each course you are applying for RPL credit.
- Submitting an incomplete application will result in a delay in the processing of your application.
- The list below has been developed to address factors that can delay the processing time. The following areas assist the Program Director in their RPL credit decision-making.
- Addressing the areas below will streamline the turnaround time.

I have:	Student Y or N	UniSQ admin
applied for credit for this course previously		
read the RPL Guide sheet		
addressed each Learning Outcome associated with this course using the current course specification (not outdated version)		
provided a range of explicit specific examples to address each of the Learning Outcomes		
provided a current CV		
provided copies of my previous qualifications/ certificates		
provided position descriptions of role/s held (where available)		
provided a signed and dated letter on letterhead <b>or</b> a statutory declaration from a previous manager/supervisor		
read the <u>UniSQ Credit and Exemption procedure</u> and understand the maximum credit limits for my program		

## Recognition of Prior Learning Credit Template

### Student Details

Name	
USQ Student ID	
USQ Program	
Date of Application	

### Work Experience Summary (Delete or insert employer sections as required)

Name of Employer	Macquarie Bank
Employment Position	Senior Finance Officer
Duration of Employment	2018-2023
Employer Verification Letter	Attached

Name of Employer	Avco finance
Employment Position	Senior Administrative Officer
Duration of Employment	2015-2017
Employer Verification Letter	Attached

Name of Employer	Rosies' Friends on the Street
Employment Position	Volunteer
Duration of Employment	2022 – current
Employer Verification Letter	Attached

### USQ Program Summary (UniSQ to complete)

Courses completed at USQ	
Credit granted	
Number of courses remaining	
Maximum credit allowable in program	

**Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) Assessment**

**ANZSCO Skill Level**

**AQF degree equivalence**



## Course Learning Outcomes (Review RPL guide for students)

UniSQ Course Code and Name: insert course code and hyperlink

Learning Outcome from current Course Specification	Demonstration of achievement	Specific projects or examples to support demonstration
<p><b>LO 1</b> -insert the specific LO here.</p>	<p>i) (Provide a brief overview here of the depth and breadth of your career/life experiences)</p> <p>ii) (Then provide any relevant detail you can in the following areas)</p> <p><b>Formal / Informal / Non-formal evidence</b></p> <p><b>Formal:</b> learning that takes place through a structured program of learning that leads to full or partial achievement of an officially accredited course. (E.G. TAFE, Uni courses/units completed that relate to this LO – include grade)</p> <p>2022 ABC1001 Communication for Professionals Grade: Credit</p> <p><b>Informal:</b> learning gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. It is</p>	<p>(Provide nitty gritty examples of how you have demonstrated this specific Learning outcome. Review your CV and pick a range of examples to demonstrate your expertise, knowledge and skills relating to this specific LO.)</p> <p><b>Example 1</b> Role: Senior Finance Officer Context: Macquarie bank In my current role as .... My core duties included dealing with complaints ..... what did you bring to this role, knowledge gained through this experience what impact have you had in this space re: processes practices, policy</p> <p><b>Example 2</b> Senior Administrative Officer Avco In this role I was responsible for xyz</p> <p><b>Example 3</b></p>

not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support.

(E.G. P&C committee member, voluntary roles or committee roles, fundraising, associations membership)

**Non-formal:**

learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to an officially accredited qualification.

(E.G. Micro credential, LinkedIn, inhouse training -annual compliance training, seminars, industry events ie conferences, presentations you have delivered)

**Testimonials / recognition**

(E.G. Emails from satisfied clients/managers/ certificates of appreciation recognising your skills and contributions)

- My work with (Rosies Friends on the Street) has enabled me to expand my range of communication skills .....

- **2019 – 2020 P&C committee**

As a member of the Mayfield P&C Kindergarten committee member I was Treasurer (2019) and fete convenor (2020). This involved .... **tease out skills and activities you undertook.**

- **Volunteer reading support role**

**LO 2**-insert the specific LO here.

i) [Provide a brief overview here of the depth and breadth of your career/life experiences]

ii) [Then provide any relevant detail you can in the following areas]

	<p><b>Formal / Informal / Non-formal evidence</b></p> <p><b>Formal:</b></p> <p>learning that takes place through a structured program of learning that leads to full or partial achievement of an officially accredited course. (E.G. TAFE, Uni courses)</p> <p><b>Informal:</b></p> <p>learning gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support.</p> <p>(E.G. P&amp;C committee member, voluntary roles or committee roles, fundraising, associations membership, sports coach)</p> <p><b>Non-formal:</b></p> <p>learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to an officially accredited qualification.</p> <p>(E.G. Micro credential, LinkedIn, inhouse training - annual compliance training, seminars, industry events i.e. conferences, presentations you have delivered)</p> <p><b>Testimonials / recognition (awards)</b></p>	
--	--	--

	(E.G. Emails from satisfied clients/managers/ certificates of appreciation recognising your skills and contributions)	
--	---	--

<b>LO 3</b>	<b>Follow the above structure for each Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Follow the above structure for each Learning Outcome</b>
<b>LO 4</b>	<b>Follow the above structure for each Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Follow the above structure for each Learning Outcome</b>
<b>LO 5</b>	<b>Follow the above structure for each Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Follow the above structure for each Learning Outcome</b>
<b>LO 6</b>	<b>Follow the above structure for each Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Follow the above structure for each Learning Outcome</b>

### How to submit your RPL application:

- Upload your application via you student portal
- [Instruction link](#)
- Plan well in advance and allow time for your RPL credit application to be processed.  
Some applications can be more complex than others.  
Peak admission periods may also delay processing of submissions.

## Appendix 4: RPL Guide for Students

### Student Guide: Applying for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)



#### What is RPL?

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an assessment of an individual's prior learning to determine whether credit will be granted. RPL includes formal, informal, and non-formal learning. The Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) Glossary of Terminology provides definitions on these forms of learning.

**Formal learning** - Learning that takes place through a structured program of learning that leads to the full or partial achievement of an officially accredited qualification.

**Informal learning** – Learning gained through work, social, family, hobby or leisure activities and experiences. Unlike Formal or Non-Formal Learning, Informal Learning is not organised or externally structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. No assessment

**Non-formal learning** – Learning that takes place through a structured program of learning but does not lead to an officially accredited qualification. (For example: In-house professional development programs conducted by an employer, education/seminars by professional associations, product courses and unaccredited structured training).

#### UniSQ policy on granting credit

Students **must** complete a minimum number of units within their program at the University to be awarded a qualification from the University. Please refer to the [UniSQ Credit and Exemption Procedure](#) which specifies the maximum credit applicable into UniSQ degree programs.

#### To complete your application, you need to:

- Reflect on your previous experiences (last 10 years);
- Identify the learning (competencies and skills) gained from these experiences and;
- Produce evidence, with examples, of the learning attained.
- Engage with your roles and responsibilities on the [National Skills Commission](#) site

#### How to submit your RPL application:

- Upload your application via you student portal
- [Instruction link](#)
- Plan well in advance and allow time for your RPL credit application to be processed. Some applications can be more complex than others. Peak admission periods may also delay processing of submissions.

## Criteria for Informal and Non-Formal Learning

In determining an application based on prior learning the Program Director will evaluate the material presented against the following criteria:

**Validity** - prior learning should be relevant to the Course Learning Outcomes. The knowledge and skills obtained in prior learning should still be current when compared to the content of the relevant Course; and,

**Achievement** - the Student's level of achievement in the prior learning should be consistent with the qualification level and type specified for the relevant Unit or Course; and

**Sufficiency** - the evidence of prior learning must be sufficient as to reliably verify that there is equivalence in Learning Outcomes of the prior learning when compared to the relevant course; and

**Authenticity** - the prior learning claimed by the Student and the standard of achievement must be verifiable.

**Currency** – prior learning experiences attained within ten years of the date of application for credit will generally be considered current.

## Evidence



Draw on any formal qualifications (especially Credit and distinction levels) that have aspects relating to CLOs.

Have a supporting Evidence file to support your application (include Position Descriptions where you can) and cross refer to these to support your statements.

When seeking a letter from an employer, send them a copy of the course specification and ask them to focus on the CLO so they can refer to the skills and knowledge you have relating to the CLOs and course information. They could even state they have reviewed the course specification for xyz2001 and can attest to your expertise in these areas. The letter should be on letterhead, employer's position within company, signed and dated.

### What if I am self-employed?

A letter from accountant/tax agent  
Testimonials from clients

Link to website/LinkedIn/Facebook  
Portfolio of work samples

### What if my work experience includes volunteering?

There are many benefits associated with volunteering. It provides real-world career experience, provides the opportunity to gain new skills and knowledge, refines soft skills, and broadens your perspective. These prior learning experiences enhance your formal studies. Volunteering might look like meals on wheels, classroom reading, hospice work, RSPCA shifts, SES etc.

**Fundraising example:** Fundraisers usually have a committee. A support letter from the committee would be evidence. It could include information such as:

**Details of group:** (e.g. Blue Sky Mums, a grass roots philanthropic group of 10 women raising funds for xyz. Hold regular fundraising events (or annual event) with all proceeds going to Kids Cancer Foundation).

If they have a website presence insert the weblink (or Facebook / LinkedIn).

Signed and dated by the President /leader of group / or Secretary. Letterhead is desirable however if it is a grass roots, informal group this might not be possible. The event would have been advertised somewhere to verify the group's work. Alternatively, one of the group members could write a Stat Dec.

**Type of event** (audience ie School fete / cancer fundraiser / multicultural event).

**Purpose:** to create promotional material

**Scale/frequency of event:** 1 day? 2 days? a week long campaign? Is this the first time student has done this work or it occurs every year?

**Role of the student:** (i.e. taking photos/ staging for photo shoot/ promotional material developed/ newsletter/magazine)

A letter / testimonial could address elements of the Course Learning Outcomes and cover the specific skillsets demonstrated by the student (i.e. Communication, Organisational skills, Professionalism, Technical skills, Creativity, Problem solving).

## Examples of supporting evidence: informal and non-formal

### Informal evidence:

- Portfolios containing samples of work (project briefs, reports, publications, presentations, demonstrations, budgets, memos, spreadsheets and estimate etc.)
- Work documents that describe roles, tasks, achievements and evidence of performance review
- Position description
- Documentation covering industry roles, committees, representatives, interviews, and examinations.
- References or testimonials from clients / colleagues (that are not family members or friends)
- Practice related learning
- Industry awards or documentation of recognition of merit
- Evidence of responsibilities within a specific activity (social, family, leisure, or hobby etc.)
- Samples, photographs or videos of your work, or awards that are related to course/unit Learning outcomes recognition is sought
- Evidence from social media (Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Newsletters and Blogs etc.)
- Independent research and/or self-publishing
- Other corroborating evidence supporting claims of competency
- Other documentation or evidence asked for by the assessor.
- Curriculum Vitae (CV) or professional LinkedIn profile which includes:
  - organisation name
  - position title
  - start and end dates of employment for each position
  - type of employment (full-time, part-time or casual)
  - key duties, responsibilities, and achievements.
  - names, position and contact details of referees (employers or supervisors) who will be able to verify the nature of your work.



- **A letter from your employer/s:**
  - written on official company letterhead (dated, signed)
  - position title
  - include position details (or similar position description)
  - start and end dates of employment for each position
  - type of employment (full-time, part-time, volunteer, or casual)
  - key duties, responsibilities and achievements (align these to Course Learning Outcomes where relevant).

### **Non-formal evidence:**

- Badge, certificate or evidence of satisfactory completion of the study offered by a professional body, enterprise, or other provider. This may include non-award courses, vocational courses, professional development, short courses and workplace training.
- A statement of the objectives, learning outcomes, content of the course and of any assessment completed.
- Details of the contact hours of the course and information on the course presenter/s and their qualifications.

### **Consider the following when preparing and deciding what evidence to include in your application:**

- Are there any accreditation/industry requirements that preclude RPL credit for specific courses? (e.g. Queensland College of Teachers QCT; Engineering Australia EA; Paramedicine Board of Australia; Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency AHPRA).
- How current is the evidence?
- How valid and relevant is the evidence?
- What is the frequency over time and the complexity of task/s?
- Do your prior learning/experiences align to the Course or Program of Study for which you are seeking RPL?
- Have you matched the evidence and/or skills gained to specific Learning Outcomes?



**Bringing your application together**

### **Consider the assessor**

As discipline expert, the Program Director will provide the outcome of your credit assessment to ensure:

- any industry accreditation requirements are met;

- confirm the work experience is at a level consistent with AQF expectations; and,
- is compliant with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) guidance on Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning.

Program Directors have complex workloads.

Your application needs to be:

- complete with the detail requested (be succinct and focused);
- address the specific Course Learning Outcomes; and
- be easy to follow.

## What are Course Learning Outcomes?



Course Learning Outcomes are the expression of the set of knowledge, skills and the application of the knowledge and skills a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of completing a Course.

### How do I address them?

To get started in developing specific examples, think of each Course Learning Outcome as an interview question. Use the STARR format to gather all the relevant information about a specific course learning outcome and

**Situation** (context, audience, issue identified)

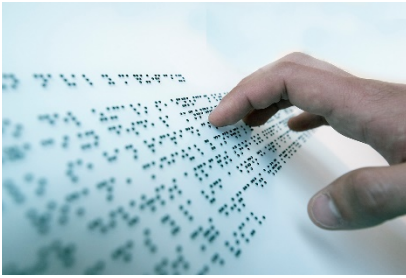
**Task** (level of complexity)

**Action** (strategies developed)

**Result** (Impact of action/initiative)

**Reflection** (change of practice? Insights)

## Use of relevant disciplinary Terminology / Concepts



The Course Topics, Overview and Assessment tasks in the course specification document provides you with a dictionary of words/terms/concepts to use to demonstrate the depth of knowledge and experience when addressing the Learning Outcomes.

The assessment tasks are indicators of the skills required. Reflect these skills in the examples you give when addressing the Course Learning Outcomes (STARR model above). Address the elements in your specific examples - you need granular detail to demonstrate your knowledge, skills, and experience to each of the CLOs.

### Industry links

Draw on industry Guidelines, Codes of Conduct, Ethics and Standards and Accreditation requirements where relevant to the CLO to demonstrate your knowledge and how these inform your professional and ethical practice in your work context.

Some examples:

- Psychology: Australian Community workers Association (ACWA)
- Health: National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- Engineering: Engineering Australia Frameworks
- Education: Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
- Cyber Security: Australian Frameworks / Cyber Security Regulations Australia

**Final step:** Review the template below (PP.8-11) to understand how to populate your Recognition of Prior Learning form. Remember, each student brings a diverse range of skills, experience, and knowledge to their formal studies. Reflect on your life experiences and include the strongest evidence (specific examples) to support your application.

## Appendix 5: Mapping Table

Mapping Prior Learning from artifacts (CV, position descriptions, experiences) to the three domains

In each of the columns note down key words or examples that describe you when looking through artifacts that you have collected about your past experiences. For example, in your CV you may have a list of your key strengths. When you read each strength, map it to the relevant domain and core skillset where that may be able to provide you with a good example of your skills. When reading through your artifacts you may recall key events or tasks you were involved in that fit well in more than one area. The goal is to have a good spread of examples so if it can go in more than one area decide where you have more gaps and reflect on that scenario in that way. It is important to check currency as you go, evidence and prior experience must be within the last 10 years.

Determinants of AQF levels and evidence:			
Audience	Context	Level of complexity (novice to expert e.g., attending training as participant vs training facilitator)	
Currency	Frequency		
Domain: Knowledge Implementation			
Learning Agility	Critical Thinking	Digital Literacy	
E.g.	E.g.	E.g.	
Domain: Advocacy and Engagement			
Diversity and Inclusion	Ethical Practice	Collaboration and Mindset	
E.g.	E.g.	E.g.	
Domain: Personal and Professional Capabilities			
Effective Communication	Innovation and Creative Thinking	Leadership	Professional Development
E.g.	E.g.	E.g.	E.g.

## Appendix 6: Marking Rubric

<b>Student Name:</b>			<b>Student Number:</b>		
<b>Reviewer:</b>					
<b>Date:</b>			<b>Credit being sought:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Audience</li><li>• Context</li><li>• Currency</li><li>• Frequency</li><li>• Level of complexity (novice to expert e.g., attending training as participant vs training facilitator)</li></ul>					
<b>Knowledge Implementation</b>		<b>Advocacy and Engagement</b>		<b>Personal and Professional Capabilities</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learning Agility</li><li>• Critical Thinking</li><li>• Digital Literacy</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Diversity and Inclusion</li><li>• Ethical Practice</li><li>• Collaboration and Mindset</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Professional Development</li><li>• Leadership</li><li>• Innovation and Creative Thinking</li><li>• Effective Communication</li></ul>	

AQF Level 5 (Introductory)	AQF Level 6 (Intermediate)	AQF Level 7 (Advanced)
Graduates at this level will have specialised knowledge and skills for skilled/paraprofessional work and/or further learning.	Graduates at this level will have broad knowledge and skills for paraprofessional/highly skilled work and/or further learning.	Graduates at this level will have broad and coherent knowledge and skills for professional work and/or further learning.
<b>Knowledge</b> Graduates at this level will have technical and theoretical knowledge in a specific area or a broad field of work and learning.	<b>Knowledge</b> Graduates at this level will have broad theoretical and technical knowledge of a specific area or a broad field of work and learning.	<b>Knowledge</b> Graduates at this level will have broad and coherent theoretical and technical knowledge with depth in one or more disciplines or areas of practice.
<b>Skills</b> Graduates at this level will have a broad range of cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply methods and technologies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>analyse information to complete a range of activities</li> <li>provide and transmit solutions to sometimes complex problems</li> <li>transmit information and skills to others</li> </ul>	<b>Skills</b> Graduates at this level will have a broad range of cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply methods and technologies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>analyse information to complete a range of activities</li> <li>interpret and transmit solutions to unpredictable and sometimes complex problems</li> <li>transmit information and skills to others</li> </ul>	<b>Skills</b> Graduates at this level will have well-developed cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply methods and technologies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>analyse and evaluate information to complete a range of activities</li> <li>analyse, generate and transmit solutions to unpredictable and sometimes complex problems</li> <li>transmit knowledge, skills and ideas to others</li> </ul>
<b>Application of knowledge and skills</b> Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, judgement and defined responsibility in known or changing contexts and within broad but established parameters.	<b>Application of knowledge and skills</b> Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, judgement and defined responsibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in contexts that are subject to change within broad parameters to provide specialist advice and functions</li> </ul>	<b>Application of knowledge and skills</b> Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, well-developed judgement and responsibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in contexts that require self-directed work and learning within broad parameters to provide specialist advice and functions</li> </ul>

## Feedback section:

Knowledge Implementation	Advocacy and Engagement	Personal and Professional Capabilities
<b>Feedback on Portfolio Evidence</b>  <b>Introductory</b> (AQF 5) <b>Intermediate</b> (AQF 6) <b>Advanced</b> (AQF 7)  Enter feedback here	<b>Feedback on Portfolio Evidence</b>  <b>Introductory</b> (AQF 5) <b>Intermediate</b> (AQF 6) <b>Advanced</b> (AQF 7)  Enter feedback here	<b>Feedback on Portfolio Evidence</b>  <b>Introductory</b> (AQF 5) <b>Intermediate</b> (AQF 6) <b>Advanced</b> (AQF 7)  Enter feedback here
<b>Feedback on Final Reflection</b>  <b>Introductory</b> (AQF 5) <b>Intermediate</b> (AQF 6) <b>Advanced</b> (AQF 7)  Enter feedback here	<b>Feedback on Final Reflection</b>  <b>Introductory</b> (AQF 5) <b>Intermediate</b> (AQF 6) <b>Advanced</b> (AQF 7)  Enter feedback here	<b>Feedback on Final Reflection</b>  <b>Introductory</b> (AQF 5) <b>Intermediate</b> (AQF 6) <b>Advanced</b> (AQF 7)  Enter feedback here



## Appendix 7: Example Reflections and Guidance

### Example Reflections and Guidance

There are two types of reflections required in the Professional Practice Credit Portfolio: Emerging reflections (approx. 10 reflections) and Final reflections (3 reflections, 1 for each Domain).

### What are Emerging Reflections?

Emerging reflections focus on specific examples that demonstrate how you react /handle situations, the impact you have, and how you learn from those situations. Reflections do not have to have positive endings. It is about challenge/issue, action taken, impact, and next steps moving forward to improve practice.

**Word Count (per reflection):** Approx. 300 words (it is about quality of reflection - not how many words you provide - and how it addresses the dot points below).

**How many reflections:** You are encouraged to have a minimum of one reflection that addresses each core skillset within a Domain. Sub-skill sets within each core skill are a guide only – you do not need to address every subskill. Having breadth across all core skillsets will help to provide multiple examples based on your experience. There is no enforced maximum number however start with your strongest examples and continue adding until a holistic picture emerges of your approach and experience. This will be different for every applicant. It is less about the wordcount and more about the quality and detail of your reflections.

Each emerging reflection should include the following information to ensure that the assessor has a holistic picture to assess your reflections:

- Audience- who was involved and who made the decisions (diversity and audience size)
- Context- where did your experience occur- remote/regional/city, large/small organisation, non-for profit. What makes it unique?
- Currency- When did this experience occur (Credit can be granted for prior learning within the last 10 years)
- Frequency- Was your role a one-off event or is it a regular role you hold? (for example: weekly, fortnightly, monthly)

Level of complexity- How many moving parts are there? (Are you the novice or expert e.g., attending training as participant vs training facilitator)

#### Tips

- Write using first person in your reflection and be sure to emphasise the role that you played rather than focussing on the team's effort.
- Your reflections must be supported by evidence included in your Portfolio.
- Link to evidence (housed in the 'about me' section of your Portfolio) in your reflections rather than include it within the reflection itself. (e.g. if you are reflecting on your commitment to ongoing professional development link to the training you have undertaken, or a testimonial) This linkage will strengthen your reflection and make it less descriptive allowing more words for your reflection.
- Some reflections may include more than one core skillset. Be sure to identify this in the title of your post and discuss both within the reflection.
- Categorise your posts in your Portfolio to the relevant Domain. These Categories have already been prepopulated.
- **Before submitting your Portfolio, check that you have covered the above five dot points (above) in each emerging reflection.**

Using the STARR model, consider the following components to structure an Emerging reflection.

<b>Situation</b>	Setting the scene/context	Describe your context (remote/regional/city, large/small organisation, non-for profit. What makes it unique?)
<b>Task</b>	Problem / challenge/ activity	Was there a trigger? Work directive?
<b>Action</b>	Action/s undertaken	Identify existing skills used, needed, and what needs to occur to fix the problem
<b>Result</b>	Impact of action/s taken	Led to further action to resolve problem? Resulted in change of practice? In what ways?
<b>Reflection</b>	Lessons learned	What worked for you? Or others? What would you do differently? What impact did this have on your development and self-awareness? What were your feelings, ideas and questions about the experience? How will it inform your professional practice moving forward?

## Personal and Professional Capabilities Domain- Effective Communication

**Situation:** In my previous role as a customer service representative working for Fabulous Bargains chain (2018-2020), I handled a complaint from an unhappy customer who received a damaged product. My team (4 members) handle approx. 500 calls per day, and we have approx. 300 staff across the organisation. This was my first experience working in this type of role and I felt like I had been thrown in the deep end.

**Task:** My task was to resolve the customer's issue and ensure their satisfaction while maintaining the company's reputation.

**Action:** Using the HEAT method that I learnt during my induction, I listened carefully to the customer's complaint, empathised with their frustration, and assured them that I would resolve the issue promptly. I coordinated with the logistics team to expedite a replacement product and offered a discount to this customer on their next purchase as a goodwill gesture.

**Result:** The customer was very appreciative of the quick resolution and the extra effort to make amends. They not only accepted the replacement but also left a positive review about my customer service. My supervisor commended me on my approach and asked me to share with team members.

**Reflection:** This experience reinforced the importance of active listening and empathy in customer service. By genuinely understanding the customer's perspective, I was able to address their concerns effectively and turn a negative experience into a positive one. I also learned the value of taking ownership of issues and proactively seeking solutions. This approach has since helped me build

stronger relationships with customers and improve overall satisfaction rates (if you have evidence of this you would link it here). This result gave me great satisfaction and made me realise I am effective at resolving conflict and look forward to doing more training in this space to develop my skills further.

## Feedback

- Audience- *one to one customer interaction that required liaising with other colleagues to resolve the situation.*
- Context- *workplace, detailed the size of the team and business. Good coverage in this emerging reflection*
- Currency- *occurred during 2018-2020, within the last 10 years.*
- Frequency- *Scenario was a one of event and reflection demonstrates how student continued to use and strengthen this approach for a further 2-3 years. The evidence provided here could be deidentified feedback from happy customers that you have helped, or a letter from an employer. Additionally, you could write a follow up reflection of a different but similar situation that demonstrates growth.*
- Level of complexity- *This situation was a common customer interaction; they used a strategy from training they undertook and proactively determined how to rectify the problem within their control. If this person had moved into a different business or into a more senior role a secondary reflection or an update to this reflection can show growth.*

*This emerging reflection provides a detailed insight into the specific skills and strategies learned. It highlights personal growth and how the experience has influenced future behaviour. The reflection notes specific actions taken and the positive outcomes, demonstrating a clear understanding of the impact of those actions. This strong reflection shows a deeper understanding of the situation and how it contributed to personal and professional development.*

## What are Final Reflections?

**Word Count (per reflection):** approx. 500

**How many reflections:** You need to write 3 final reflections – one for each Domain.

The final reflections are at a broader level than the emerging reflections and will bring together the learnings from the combined Emerging Reflections for a particular Domain and create a holistic picture of your identity. It's more about looking at the individual emerging examples and then making observations that when this occurs a context specific strategy is used based on previous experiences.

Each final reflection should include the following information whilst focussing on the Domain that you are addressing:

- **Audience:** Across your life experience (detailed in your emerging reflections) summarise the people that you influence and in what way. Include how others have influenced you and your decisions.
- **Context:** Where do you make a difference? Across time where have you created efficiencies or build relationships (range of settings)- how has this impacted your decisions along the way.
- **Currency:** Keeping your experience within the last 10 years is ideal however you may need to touch on experiences that fall outside of the 10-year range. Including these (with a clear timeframe) can help to explain where your skills developed, came from and were influenced. It can be important at this bigger picture level to include pivotal moments that explain why you think the way you do.
- **Frequency:** How long have you been performing at your current level? Talk about milestones or moments where you have stepped up so your impact can clearly be seen across time.

- **Level of Complexity:** Include an overview of the significant projects or impacts you have made (from the emerging reflections) and reflect on how they have shaped you and your approach.

### Tips

- Final Reflections should not bring in further specific examples of situations and approaches and be highly reflective of your skillsets relating to each Domain.
- Build on emerging reflections and your Portfolio evidence to demonstrate your approach, how you show up for a team, highlight your values and how you conduct yourself in a workplace or volunteer role.
- These final reflections require you to consider your growth over time: how you approach problems now and reflect on how you might look at future situations differently into the future.
- Reflect on your formal studies and how this knowledge, coupled with your life experiences, has shaped your practice.
- What impact has completing this Professional Practice Portfolio held for you?
- Demonstrate a self-awareness of the skillsets you have, and skills you may need, to ensure that what is important to you can be prioritised

## Final Reflection Structure

No two portfolio reflections will be the same. The following is a formula that you may choose to adopt however this is a suggestion only. You are welcome to be as creative as you would like. The language used does not need to be formal, it can be written in a way that suits your communication style.

### Domain: Personal and Professional Capabilities Final Reflection

#### Professional Development:

- Opening sentence around this subskill and your experience.
- Address the Audience, Context, Currency, Frequency and Level of complexity points as outlined in the above information.
- Either list or weave into the section links to the emerging reflections and evidence from other parts of your Portfolio. This final reflection should direct those assessing your Portfolio to any relevant evidence that supports your broader claims in this section.
- Closing Statement around how your perception has changed in undertaking this portfolio process.

#### Leadership:

- Opening sentence around this subskill and your experience.
- Address the Audience, Context, Currency, Frequency and Level of complexity points as outlined in the above information.
- Either list or weave into the section links to the emerging reflections and evidence from other parts of your Portfolio. This final reflection should direct those assessing your Portfolio to any relevant evidence that supports your broader claims in this section.
- Closing Statement around how your perception has changed in undertaking this portfolio process.

#### Innovation and Creative Thinking:

- Opening sentence around this subskill and your experience.
- Address the Audience, Context, Currency, Frequency and Level of complexity points as outlined in the above information.

- Either list or weave into the section links to the emerging reflections and evidence from other parts of your Portfolio. This final reflection should direct those assessing your Portfolio to any relevant evidence that supports your broader claims in this section.
- Closing Statement around how your perception has changed in undertaking this portfolio process.

**Effective Communication:**

- Opening sentence around this subskill and your experience.
- Address the Audience, Context, Currency, Frequency and Level of complexity points as outlined in the above information.
- Either list or weave into the section links to the emerging reflections and evidence from other parts of your Portfolio. This final reflection should direct those assessing your Portfolio to any relevant evidence that supports your broader claims in this section.
- Closing Statement around how your perception has changed in undertaking this portfolio process.









## Appendix 8: Bloom's Taxonomy

Blooms Taxonomy is a simple way for students to self-assess their AQF levels. This is not their responsibility however many may wish to check in to see how their Portfolio creation is mapping to the AQF levels. Remembering and Understanding maps to AQF level 5, Applying and Analysing to AQF 6 and Evaluating and Creating map to AQF level 7. Blooms taxonomy provides you with guidance on the terminology used to describe.



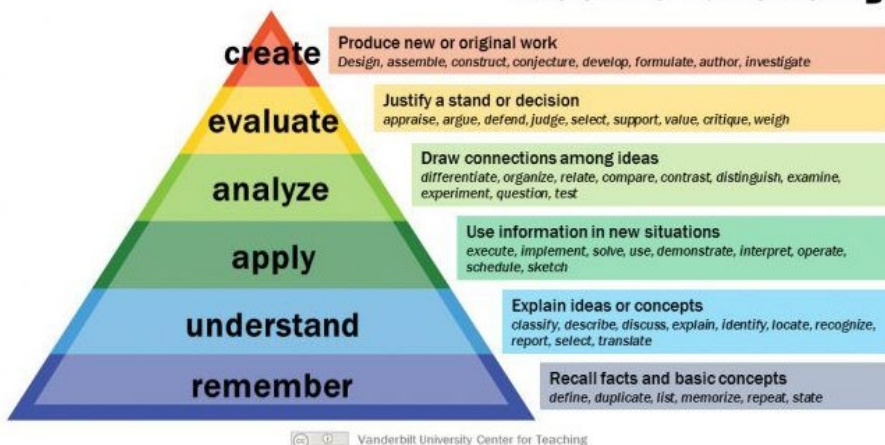
## Digital focus using Blooms

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY DIGITAL PLANNING VERBS					
REMEMBERING	UNDERSTANDING	APPLYING	ANALYZING	EVALUATING	CREATING
					
Copying Defining Finding Locating Quoting Listening Googling Repeating Retrieving Outlining Highlighting Memorizing Networking Searching Identifying Selecting Tabulating Duplicating Matching Bookmarking Bullet-pointing	Annotating Tweeting Associating Tagging Summarizing Relating Categorizing Paraphrasing Predicting Comparing Contrasting Commenting Journaling Interpreting Grouping Inferring Estimating Extending Gathering Exemplifying Expressing	Acting out Articulate Reenact Loading Choosing Determining Displaying Judging Executing Examining Implementing Sketching Experimenting Hacking Interviewing Painting Preparing Playing Integrating Presenting Charting	Calculating Categorizing Breaking Down Correlating Deconstructing Linking Mashing Mind-Mapping Organizing Appraising Advertising Dividing Deducing Distinguishing Illustrating Questioning Structuring Integrating Attributing Estimating Explaining	Arguing Validating Testing Scoring Assessing Criticizing Commenting Debating Defending Detecting Experimenting Grading Hypothesizing Measuring Moderating Posting Predicting Rating Reflecting Reviewing Editorializing	Blogging Building Animating Adapting Collaborating Composing Directing Devising Podcasting Wiki Building Writing Filming Programming Simulating Role Playing Solving Mixing Facilitating Managing Negotiating Leading

<https://www.teachthought.com/learning/what-is-blooms-taxonomy/>

<https://bloomstaxonomy.net/> .

## Bloom's Taxonomy

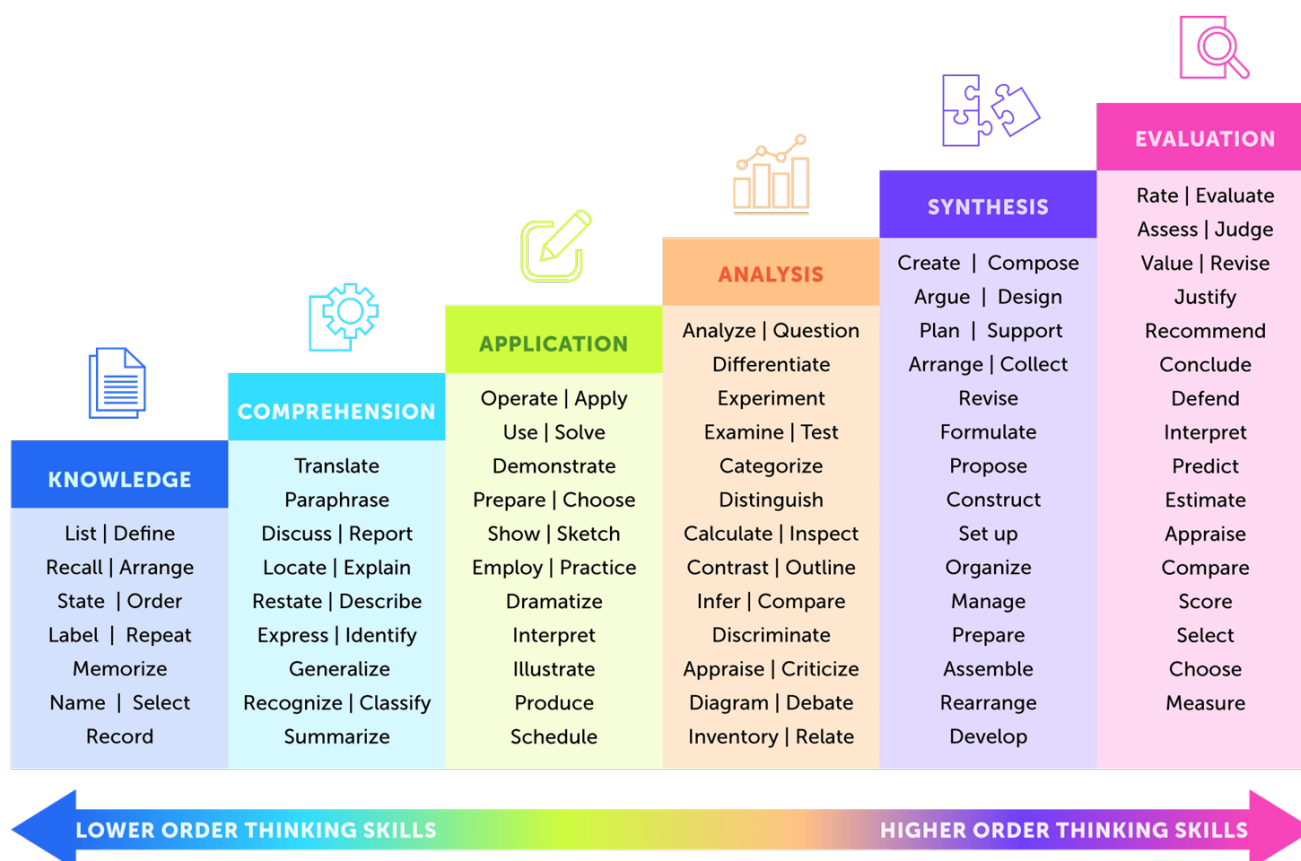




This diagram shows the level of complexity, starting with a basic skill to remember through to creating original work.

This could guide applicants in AQF 5 (remember and understand), AQF 6 (apply and analyse) and AQF7 (evaluate and create).

<https://www.valamis.com/hub/blooms-taxonomy>



## Appendix 9: RPL - End of Year Event Summary (2023)

**Event Title:** *A Celebration of UniSQ's Achievements in Recognition of Prior Learning*

**Date:** 16 November 2023

**Format:** Online

The 2023 end-of-year event marked a significant milestone in UniSQ's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) project. This event served as a platform to reflect on progress, celebrate achievements, and set the stage for future innovation in credit recognition and Professional Practice.

### Key Outcomes of the Event:

- **Showcased Achievements:** Highlighted the progress and milestones reached throughout the RPL project.
- **Launched Resources and Framework:** Officially unveiled the Professional Practice Credit Framework and associated resources.
- **Shared Good Practice:** Presented disciplinary examples of effective RPL implementation and innovation.
- **Fostered a Community of Practice:** Encouraged collaboration across professional, academic, and disciplinary boundaries.
- **Demonstrated Impact:** Emphasised the value and benefits of RPL for stakeholders, including current and prospective students, academic staff, and professional teams.

### Additional Highlights:

- The event featured presentations from discipline champions and outlined strategic directions for positioning UniSQ as a national and global leader in RPL.
- All sessions were recorded and made available as resources for staff development, promotional activities, award submissions, marketing, and training purposes.

This celebration not only acknowledged the collective efforts of UniSQ staff but also reinforced the university's commitment to innovation and excellence in recognition of prior learning.

### Agenda

The proceedings of this UniSQ event will run as proposed below. Each session will be recorded.

**Zoom Meeting:** <https://unisq.zoom.us/j/84069426983>

**Meeting Time:** 0930 – 13:00

Time	Speaker	Details
09:30	Professor Lyn Alderman (Dean Academic Transformation)	Introductions
09:35 – 09:45	Professor Ben Wilson (Head of College for First Nations)	Acknowledgment of Country
09:50 – 10:15 + Q&A	Dr Carol Quadrelli Miss Georgi McAdam	Project Update
10:20 – 10:40 + Q&A	Professor Ben Wilson (Head of College for First Nations) Dr Cally Jetta (Senior Lecturer) College for First Nations	RPL and impact for First Nations cohort
10:45 – 11:05 + Q&A	Dr Toni Brackin Dr Fiona Russo	Business / Accounting RPL

<b>11:10 – 11:25 +Q&amp;A</b>	Professor Pauline Collins Andrew Johnson	<u>Military Connected Student Support</u>
<b>11:30 – 11: 40</b>	TEA BREAK	
<b>11:40 – 11:55 + Q&amp;A</b>	Justine Baillie	PENS-E2
<b>11:30 – 11:45 5 MINUTES Q&amp;A</b>	Jill Lawrence (Head of School and Dean Humanities and Communication)	H&C Personal perspectives on RPL
<b>11:55 – 12:15 + Q&amp;A</b>	Progression and Completion Team Presenter: Helen Lisle  Michael Rickwood, Mrs Jessica Schasser	Intro, functions & credit outcomes of PC Team.
<b>12:20 – 12:45 + Final reflections/comments</b>	Professor Lyn Alderman & Dr Carol Quadrelli	Close

## References

- Advance HE. (2011) *The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education*. <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/uk-professional-standards-framework-ukpsf>
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