

AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY

Senescence in Course Credit

In the context of course credit, senescence refers to the reduction over time of the relevance of previous study or prior learning to be the basis for credit at enrolment in a new course of similar content.

The following regulation was passed by the Coursework Awards Board at its August 2008 meeting:
That credit be granted in a unit of an ACT award if the study on which the application is based occurred no more than ten years before the commencement of the ACT award and the applicant has demonstrated the previous study may be regarded as having satisfied the objectives and the assessment requirements of the unit in the ACT award. (emphasis added)

The undergirding philosophy behind senescence is currency of knowledge. Progression through levels of study assumes prior understanding of issues and concepts, an understanding that can over time become lost or inaccurate.

The Senescence Policy does not apply when credit is being sought into the undergraduate diplomas or advanced diplomas of the college, as there is currently no candidature limit on them.

What follows are examples to show the implications of senescence for students enrolling in 2012:

Prior study	Implication
Completed ACT ThDip or ThL (old regulations) and wishing to go on to degree study	No credit available as all units are more than 10 years old.
Completed GradDipDiv in 2003 and wishing to go on to MDiv. Student started the GradDip in 2001.	Credit only available for units completed from 2002 onwards.
Completed ACT DipTh in 2006 with a GPA of 2.3 and wishing to go on to degree study. Student started the diploma in 2000	Consideration can only be given to those units completed from 2002 onwards. For the purpose of credit transfer the diploma would have to be considered as “incomplete” and credit granted accordingly.
Incomplete non-ACT theological degree at an accredited institution, studying from 2006 to 2008, and wishing to transfer to an ACT degree	Up to one third credit available as long as the student can demonstrate they have met the objectives and assessment requirements of the ACT degree units for which credit is being claimed.
Incomplete ACT Bachelor of Christian Studies (40cps) and wishing to transfer to the BTh. Study was undertaken from 2001 to 2007.	Credit only available for units completed from 2002 onwards. Normally units done in the non-theological component of the course cannot be credited towards the BTh regardless of the age of the units completed.
Completed ACT BMin in 1997 and a couple of diploma units completed in 1998. Student enquires about completing the combined BMin/AdvDipMin	The diploma units will still count towards any of the ACT diplomas currently being offered as there is no time limit on those awards. Credit from the completed BMin would also be granted to the diploma, since there is no time limit on diplomas.
Incomplete non-ACT BTh from 1992. Student enquires about credit into an ACT Diploma	Credit is available, as the senescence policy does not apply when gaining credit into ACT diplomas, for as long as the ACT does not place time limits on the diplomas.

One other example is worth mentioning here. A student completes the ACT's BTh in 1980 and wishes now to go on to the MA(Th). While our regulations do not place a time limit on when a graduate can apply for entry to further study, the MA program does assume prior knowledge that could have been lost in the intervening years. Such students should demonstrate that they have kept their theological knowledge current since graduation.

Time limits

Being granted credit towards an ACT award will affect the amount of time allowed to complete that award (with the exception of diplomas). The student's candidature will be reduced by the percentage of the award granted as credit or RPL. For example, if a student is granted 32cps credit into a BTh (33% of the award), which normally has a 9 year candidature, that student's candidature will be reduced by 3 years.

Recognised Prior Learning

The senescence rule does not negate the possibility of students applying for Recognised Prior Learning. However, the undergirding philosophy of currency of knowledge must still be applied. The student needs to demonstrate they have met the objectives and assessment requirements of the ACT degree units for which credit is being claimed. If it can be shown that the knowledge obtained in their prior study done more than ten years ago has been kept current through further research, publications, practical application, etc, then consideration could be given to granting credit transfer. However, prior study alone will not be sufficient if units were taken more than ten years ago. Students are eligible to apply for up to one third of their ACT award as credit transfer or RPL.

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