

The original document has been approved by the University of Lapland Council on 7 June 2010.
The updated document in hand was approved by the University of Lapland Board on 16 June 2014.

RECOGNITION AND ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LAPLAND

This document describes the system for recognizing prior learning at the University of Lapland. The faculties and units may have more detailed instructions concerning their RPL procedures.

This document supplements the general principles of recognition of prior learning laid down in section 44 of the Universities Act (558/2009) and in section 8 of the Degree Regulations of the University of Lapland (16.6.2014).

Concepts

Learning achieved elsewhere prior to or during studies is recognized and accredited to a student through recognition procedures.

Formal learning typically takes place in educational institutions and is proven with a diploma. The learning is systematic in terms of the learning outcomes, the time spent on learning, or the support received for studies.

Non-formal learning refers to unofficial but from the student's perspective meaningful learning that is systematic in terms of the learning outcomes, the time spent for learning, or the support received for studies. This type of learning takes place for example in adult education centres and in training at the workplace.

Informal learning refers to learning through everyday job-related, family, or free time activities.

Recognition

- The student's perspective: the student attempts to understand the achieved learning and organizes it in relation to the learning outcomes so that the student can describe and demonstrate this learning
- The university's perspective: the learning achieved previously (or elsewhere during studies) and presented by the student is assessed by the university in relation to the learning outcomes

Accrediting refers to the university's official approval of learning achieved elsewhere by the student.

1 TRANSFER OF CREDIT PERFORMED ELSEWHERE (FORMAL LEARNING)

The basic idea of credit transfer is that students need not take courses corresponding to those they already have taken in another domestic or foreign university, institute of higher education, or other educational institution. There are two ways to transfer credit:

- Studies performed elsewhere with applicable contents *substitute* for studies complying with degree requirements.
- Studies performed elsewhere, e.g. minor subject studies or studies performed at a foreign university, are *included* in a degree.

In assessing the ***substitution*** of study modules and courses, the most important criteria are the learning outcomes as well as the content, requirement level, and scope of the studies. It is possible to substitute a course or study module if the studies performed elsewhere correspond for the most part to the course or study module of the University of Lapland. Substitution may also concern a part of a course or study module.

No correspondence between studies is needed if studies are to be ***included*** in the degrees of the University of Lapland. However, the level of the studies must correspond to the curriculum-compliant studies of the university and they must contribute to fulfilling the objectives set for the degree.

General principles of credit transfer:

- Credit transfers must be included in the student's personal study plan.
- Studies performed at *universities* and *universities of applied sciences* can be used for substitution. Studies performed elsewhere, for example at institutes of vocational education, can be used for substitution only in special cases. Studies of extensive further education programmes (e.g. PD, MBA, eMBA programmes) containing parts of a university degree may be used for substitution case by case, considering the level and extent of the programme. Short further education entities can typically be used for partial substitution.
- *Only university studies*, excluding the mentioned further education studies, can be used in inclusion. In addition, so-called mobility studies – performed in another educational institute of the Lapland University Consortium or the Multidimensional Tourism Institute – can be included in a degree.
- If the student has completed a course at the University of Lapland, an identical study attainment performed elsewhere cannot be included in a degree as minor subject studies. Credit transfer concerning the curriculum-compliant studies of the University of Lapland is primarily carried out through substitution.
- Incomplete study attainments (parts of courses) are not subject to credit transfer.
- Elementary language courses performed elsewhere than in student exchange or within the Lapland University Consortium are not subject to credit transfer.
- A previous study attainment may substitute several whole courses or parts of several courses. If a previous attainment entails more credits than the course for which it substitutes, then the “remaining” credits can be separately transferred to a degree after substitution has been granted.
- Studies performed in foreign institutes of higher education primarily substitute for courses and study modules complying with the curricula of the University of Lapland. Studies can also be included in a degree as minor subject studies or as language studies performed abroad. Studies of an individual subject performed in a foreign institution of higher education (mainly in student exchange) can also be included in a degree as a *study module* under a combining title, provided that the studies form a thematic entity. If no common denominator exists, they are titled Studies Abroad. The study module can only be registered if the number of credits achieved abroad is at least 25. The name of the module is decided on by the international coordinator. The module can also be accepted as a minor subject study module.
- Credit already included in another university-level degree cannot be transferred as such to degrees awarded by the University of Lapland. However, it is possible to transfer the language,

communication, methodology, and other obligatory studies with corresponding contents that are part of a previously-completed degree. It is also possible to transfer the basic studies of the major subject although they are included in a previous degree if the studies are continued to the bachelor level. In addition, it is possible to grant credit transfer based on a degree taken at a university of applied science as decided on separately by the faculty.

- As a rule, theses (Bachelor's and Master's) must be accomplished at the University of Lapland. In special cases the University may approve a previously published research as a thesis, provided that it complies with the applicable requirements. However, a study that has already been approved as a thesis cannot be transferred as such.
- Studies performed at another university or university of applied sciences are accepted with their original grades. However, language studies are accepted with the grade 'pass' (excluding Swedish). Credits for a university of applied sciences degree are accepted with the grade 'pass'.
- Prior studies may be transferred regardless of their year of completion.
- Credit transfer decided on by another higher education institution does not apply as such at the University of Lapland. The decisions are made based on original study attainments.

1.1 Applying for credit transfer

Before applying for credit transfer, discuss it with your study plan supervisor and include the course to be transferred in your personal study plan. Apply for credit transfer well before the studies in question begin. In practice, you should apply for all credit transfers at the beginning of studies. Also Open University students and those studying at the University of Lapland with a separate permit may apply for credit transfer from the faculties. These persons must be registered as attending students, and the credit transfer is to concern the parts of study modules which they have a valid right to study.

Apply for credit transfer using the appropriate form that can be printed out from the Internet pages of the faculties and the Language Centre. Attach your diploma and/or a transcript of your prior studies and, when applying for **credit substitution**, also detailed descriptions of the learning outcomes, content, requirement level, and scope of the studies (e.g. a copy of the study guide). When applying for **credit inclusion**, attach a transcript of your prior studies in English or some other diploma showing the official English names of the performed studies. Deliver attachments either as originals (transcripts) or as copies (other diplomas). When applying for credit transfer concerning **studies performed abroad**, you must supplement the credit transfer application with a report stating the scope of your studies abroad in credits and the scale of evaluation.

When applying for **credit substitution**, deliver the application to the faculty's teacher responsible for the course or study module. The responsible teachers are listed in the study guide. As for language and communication studies, bring the credit transfer application to the office of the Language Centre. The secretary registers the application and delivers it to the responsible teacher for processing. When applying for the **inclusion** of studies into a degree, deliver the credit transfer application to the faculty's head of study affairs. As for studies performed abroad, deliver the credit transfer application to the international coordinator.

An incomplete application that is not supplemented by an issued deadline is typically rejected.

1.2 Decision on credit transfer

Responsible teachers decide on the **substitution** of studies.

According to the rules and regulations of the University of Lapland, the dean of the faculty decides on the *inclusion* of studies in a degree. In practice, in domestic studies the decision-making power rests with the faculty's head of study affairs and in foreign studies with the international coordinator.

In general, the decision on credit transfer must be made within a month from turning in the application and the appropriate attachments. An application delivered in June or July is normally decided on by the end of August.

1.3 Notification, registering, and storing of credit transfer

An approved or partly approved credit transfer is stored in the credit record. The credit record contains the name, place, time, scope, and grade of the original attainment. The recorded date of the attainment is that of the original attainment. The recorded grade is that of the original attainment, provided that the studies were performed in an institute of higher education. However, the recorded grade of language studies and of substitutions granted on the basis of a degree from a university of applied sciences is 'pass' (excluding Swedish). Also substitutions granted on the basis of studies performed in other educational institutions than universities are recorded with the grade 'pass'. On a credit record transcript, the transferred courses and study modules are indicated with a *compensated*-sign. The extended transcript also shows the name, scope, and place of the original attainment. Credit transfers are not shown in the actual degree diploma.

The person who has rejected or partly rejected a credit transfer informs the student about the decision and its grounds. The student may be informed by e-mail, if the student has allowed it in the credit transfer application. The decision contains the decision-maker's contact information for further inquiries and the rectification instructions.

Credit transfer decisions and their attachments are filed in the faculty and the Language Centre at least until the student's graduation.

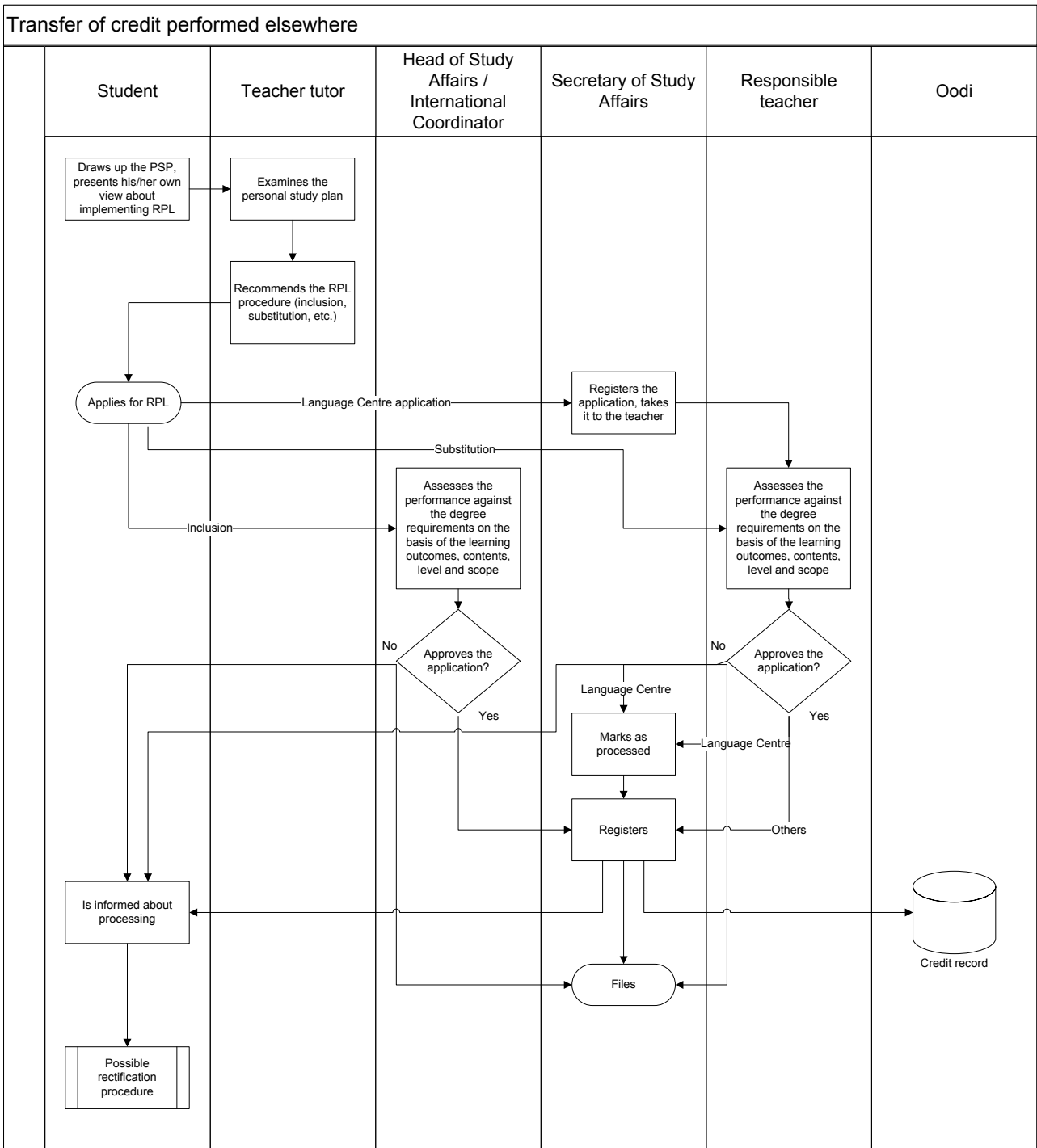
1.4 Rectification of a decision

If you do not agree with the credit transfer decision, you may request orally or in writing a rectification from the teacher/administrator who made the decision. You must make the rectification request within 14 days from the moment you were informed about the decision. Deliver the request directly to the person who made the decision. Describe very clearly the part of the decision you are referring to and the grounds for the rectification.

The teacher/administrator who made the credit transfer decision must provide a decision on the rectification request within a month after it was sent in. The decision must be made in writing.

If you do not agree with the credit transfer rectification decision, you may ask for an appeal from the appellate committee of the University of Lapland. You can ask for an appeal within 14 days from being informed about the rectification decision. Deliver the form of appeal to the University Registry. The appellate committee is subject to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the University of Lapland. No appeal may be lodged against the ruling of the appellate committee (Universities Act, Section 84).

1.5 Credit transfer process chart



2 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (RPEL)

You may also use skills achieved through other than formal education to substitute degree studies. You may have achieved skills through e.g. non-formal learning (further education, short programs at the workplace, adult education training, etc.) or informal learning (work practice, positions of trust, learning through free time activities, etc.). The focus is not on experience as such but on the knowledge and skills achieved through it.

The recognition of skills achieved through experience is based on the learning outcomes of courses and study modules. The skills achieved are compared with the learning outcomes of the courses and/or study modules to be compensated. If the skills and the learning outcomes correspond to each other, then full or partial substitution may be granted. Besides documentation, an additional demonstration of the student's skills may be required.

2.1 Applying for RPEL

Before applying for credit transfer, discuss it with your study plan supervisor (teacher tutor) and include the course to be transferred in your personal study plan. Apply for RPEL well before the studies in question begin. In practice, you should apply for all recognitions at the beginning of studies. Also Open University students and those studying at the University of Lapland with a separate permit may apply for RPEL from the faculties. These persons must be registered as attending students, and the RPEL is to concern the parts of study modules which they have a valid right to study.

Apply for RPEL using the appropriate form that can be printed out on the Internet pages of the faculties and Language Centre. Describe at least the following:

- how much and what type of experience you have
- what kinds of skills you have achieved through your experience
- how the skills correspond to the learning outcomes of the courses and/or study modules proposed to be substituted
- which courses and study modules the skills-based recognition concerns.

To enable assessment of the RPEL, your form must include a sufficient number of attachments, for example diplomas, letters of reference, portfolios, learning diaries, publications and other written reports, or other documented demonstrations of the skills you have achieved. However, the main thing is not to hand in mere documents but to use the documents to present a picture of your skills in relation to the learning outcomes of the studies in question.

Deliver the form and its attachments to the RPL responsible of the faculty or the Language Centre. If needed, the faculties and the Language Centre provide further instructions on the documentation and the necessary attachments.

An incomplete application that is not supplemented by an issued deadline is typically rejected.

2.2 Decision on RPEL

The material on prior experiential learning (the form, portfolio, and other attachments) delivered by the student is handled in a subject/field-specific meeting, in which also the RPL responsible of the faculty or the Language Centre is present. Based on the material, a decision is made by the subject representative and the RPL responsible 1) to grant recognition to study modules, courses, or their parts,

or 2) to require the student to present an additional demonstration of his/her skills, or 3) to reject the application. The additional demonstration may be e.g. a demonstration examination, an interview, an oral portfolio presentation, or a written report. Skills may also be demonstrated by taking an RPEL exam that is arranged on a general examination day or on the Language Centre's make-up exam day. The RPEL exam is used to find out whether the student already has the skills stated in the learning outcomes of a course (or a study module). The exam centres solely on the learning outcomes, not on course literature. Taking the exam requires the above-mentioned RPEL procedure and its decision, and thereby permission to demonstrate one's skills through the exam. The RPEL exam can only be taken once, and registration is done according to the normal registration procedure.

Recognition based on skills achieved through other than formal education is graded on the scale pass/fail. The grade 'pass' may be given if the skills achieved through prior experiential learning can be seen to correspond to the minimum target skill level set for the courses and/or study modules to be substituted.

The RPEL decision is, as a rule, made within a month from turning in the application and the appropriate attachments. An application delivered in June or July is normally decided on by the end of August. The decision shows the possible additional demonstrations that are needed and sets a deadline for them. The final decision is made within a month from the additional demonstration.

2.3 Notification, registering, and storing of RPEL

The student will get a copy of the RPEL decision, including the grounds for it. The decision contains the decision-maker's contact information for further inquiries and the rectification instructions.

An approved or partly approved recognition is stored in the credit record. The credit record will indicate that the recognition has been made through the RPEL procedure. The recorded date of the attainment is that of the RPEL decision. A short description on the following is registered in the additional details of a course or study module: the skills on the basis of which recognition has been approved and the part of the course to be taken in the case of a partly approved recognition. On a credit record transcript the recognized courses and study modules are indicated with a *compensated-sign* and with the grade 'pass'. RPEL is not shown in the actual degree diploma.

RPEL decisions are filed in the faculty and the Language Centre at least until the student's graduation.

2.4 Rectification of a decision

If you do not agree with the RPEL decision, you may request orally or in writing a rectification from the person who made the decision. You must make the rectification request within 14 days from the moment you were informed about the decision. Deliver the request to the head of study affairs. Describe very clearly the part of the decision you are referring to and the grounds for the rectification.

The person who made the decision must provide a decision on the rectification request within one month after it was sent in. The rectification decision must be made in writing.

If you do not agree with the RPEL rectification decision, you may ask for an appeal from the appellate committee of the University of Lapland. You can ask for an appeal within 14 days from being informed about the rectification decision. Deliver the form of appeal to the University Registry. The appellate

committee is subject to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the University of Lapland. No appeal may be lodged against the ruling of the appellate committee (Universities Act, Section 84).

2.5. RPEL process chart

