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

This document describes the system of recognizing prior learning (RPL) 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 credit transfer laid down in section 44 of the Universities Act (558/2009) and in section 8 of the Degree Regulations of the University of Lapland (22 August 2016).

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Concepts

Learning acquired elsewhere prior to or during studies is recognized, accredited, and transferred to a student through credit transfer.

Formal, i.e. official, learning typically takes place in educational institutions, and the learning is systematic and proven with a diploma 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, or everyday learning, refers to learning through daily job-related, family, or free time activities.

Recognition

1. The student's perspective: the student attempts to understand the acquired learning and to organize it in relation to the learning outcomes so that he/she can describe and demonstrate this learning
2. The university's perspective: the learning acquired earlier (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 acquired elsewhere by the student.

Credit transfer refers to the university's accreditation process. It includes both substitution and inclusion. Substitution can be made by using either studies performed elsewhere or expertise acquired in other ways. Only studies performed elsewhere can be included in a degree. The credit transfer procedures are described in more detail below.

1 TRANSFER OF CREDIT FOR STUDIES 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:

1. **SUBSTITUTION:** Curriculum-compliant studies that are part of a degree are replaced with corresponding studies achieved elsewhere (substitution).

In assessing *substitution* regarding 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 transfer an entire 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.

2. **INCLUSION:** Studies completed elsewhere are included in a degree, e.g. minor subjects or studies completed at a foreign university (inclusion).

No correspondence between studies is needed if studies are to be *included* in the courses or study modules 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 in each individual student's degree structure.

General principles of credit transfer

- Credit transfers must be included in the student's personal study plan) / doctoral study plan (PSP/DSP).
- Studies completed at *universities* and *universities of applied sciences* can be used for **substitution**. Studies completed 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.
- Studies completed at *universities* or *universities of applied sciences*, excluding the mentioned studies in further education programmes, can be used for **inclusion**.
- Credit transfer concerning the curriculum-compliant studies of the University of Lapland is primarily carried out through **substitution**. However, credit transfer shall not overlap with studies already entered into the credit record. No credit transfer will be made if the student has already completed the course for which the substitution is applied. Similarly, if a student has completed a course at the University of Lapland, an identical study attainment completed elsewhere cannot be **included** in a degree as minor subject studies.
- No double credits are to be registered within a degree. Instead the issue must be resolved through curriculum work. If the same course is part of several study modules, the curriculum is to state how a student who has performed the course will construct an individual study module in order to achieve its learning outcomes and minimum scope. If the curriculum does not contain a description of alternatives, the attainment is settled in the personal study plan.
- *Studies included in another university degree* can be used to **substitute** courses of the University of Lapland with corresponding learning outcomes. Alternatively, substitutions determined by the faculty can be granted from completed UAS degrees. Studies included in another university degree can also be **included** in a degree earned at the University of Lapland as free-choice studies, provided that the learning outcomes set for the degree are met. However, studies cannot be transferred from a (lower) degree that makes the student eligible to apply for the completion of a degree at the University of Lapland.
- Credit transfer granted by another higher education institution does not apply as such at the University of Lapland. The decisions are made based on original study attainments.
- Studies completed 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 completed abroad. Studies of an individual subject completed 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. A study module can only be included if the number of credits is at least 25. The name of the module is decided on by the Internationalisation Services Advisor. The module can also be accepted as the minor subject of a student.
- Elementary language courses completed in student exchange or outside the Lapland University Consortium are not subject to credit transfer. However, studies completed elsewhere can be used to substitute for elementary language courses that are part of the compulsory language studies of minor subjects or Master's programmes.

- Studies performed at another Finnish university or university of applied sciences are transferred with their original grades. However, language studies are accepted with the grade 'pass' (excluding Swedish). Studies performed abroad are transferred with the grade 'pass'. Credit from a university of applied sciences degree is transferred with the grade 'pass'.
- Credit from prior studies may be transferred regardless of their year of completion.
- A previous study achievement may **substitute** several courses or parts of several courses. The scope of the course to be substituted will be that stated in the curriculum of the University of Lapland, not the scope of the original study attainment. As regards studies performed in student exchange and the earlier performance of studies serving as grounds for selecting transfer and open-path students to the University of Lapland, if the scope of the original study attainment exceeds the number of credits of the course to be substituted, the "residual" credits can, however, be separately transferred into the degree for instance as elective studies after the substitution has been granted.
- If the number of credits of an earlier study attainment is smaller than that of the course of the University of Lapland for which substitution is applied, the substitution may be granted in full if the learning outcomes of the attainments correspond to each other. As a rule, a one-credit deficit is acceptable. If the learning outcomes do not correlate to a sufficient degree, only a part of the course may be substituted.
- Study attainments performed elsewhere or earlier that are to be **included** in a degree are entered into the credit record with their original scopes.
- Incomplete study attainments (parts of courses) are not subject to credit transfer.
- Bachelor's, Master's and Licentiate theses as well as doctoral dissertations must be completed at the University of Lapland. A thesis or dissertation made earlier can, however, be supplemented in a manner defined by the faculty to meet the requirements set for a thesis at the University of Lapland.
- Credit transfer does not apply to maturity tests. However, it does apply to proficiency in Finnish or Swedish that a student has demonstrated in connection with a degree completed earlier.

1.1 Applying for credit transfer

It is up to the student to start the credit transfer process. Before applying for credit transfer, discuss it with your study plan supervisor and include the course to be transferred in your personal or doctoral study plan. The student is entitled to receive guidance when making a credit transfer application.

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 attending students of the Open University, students of professional specialisation education and students of the University of Lapland who study under a separate permit may apply for credit transfer. The credit transfer is to concern studies which they have a valid right to study.

Apply for credit transfer using the appropriate form that can be printed out from the university's web pages (www.ulapland.fi/rpl).

When applying for **substitution**, proceed as follows:

- Attach to the application your diploma and/or a transcript of records as well as a detailed account of the learning outcomes, content, requirement level, and scope of the study attainments (e.g. a copy of the study guide). Deliver the attachments either as originals (transcript of records) or as copies (other diplomas).
- Deliver the credit transfer 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.
- Deliver your credit transfer application concerning doctoral studies to the personal process supervisor. However, turn directly to the Graduate School when applying for credit transfer regarding their courses.

When applying for **inclusion**, proceed as follows:

- Attach to the application your diploma and/or a transcript of records as well as a detailed account of the learning outcomes, content, requirement level, and scope of the study attainments (e.g. a copy of the study guide). Also attach a transcript of records or some other certificate in English showing the official names of the performed studies. Deliver the attachments either as originals (transcript of records) or as copies (other diplomas).
- Deliver the application form to the faculty's Head of Study Affairs.

Note! When applying for credit transfer of studies performed abroad, you must supplement your credit transfer application with both a report stating the scope of these studies in credits and the applied grading scale. Deliver the credit transfer application to the university's Internationalisation Services Advisor.

An incomplete application that is not supplemented within a set period of time is typically rejected.

1.2 Decision on credit transfer

The teacher responsible for the course or study module makes the decision on **substitution**.

According to the Administrative Rules of Procedure of the University of Lapland, the dean of the faculty decides on the **inclusion** of a course or study module into a degree. In the case of studies performed in Finland, the decision-making power typically rests with the faculty's Head of Study Affairs and in the case of studies performed abroad with the Internationalisation Services Advisor.

Substitutions and inclusions concerning doctoral studies are determined by the process supervisor. However, substitutions concerning courses arranged by the Graduate School are determined by the responsible teacher.

In general, the decision on credit transfer must be made within a month from turning in the application and the appropriate appendices. Decisions on applications delivered in June or July are usually made 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 a Finnish institute of higher education. However, the recorded grade of studies performed abroad, 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 the word 'transferred'. The extended transcript also shows the name, scope, and place of the original attainment. Credit transfers are not shown in the actual degree diploma.

Primarily, the person who made the credit transfer decision informs the student of a rejected or partly rejected decision and its justification. The student may be informed via email, 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.

If the credit transfer is only granted for a part of a course or study module, the student must be informed of the way in which the remainder of the course or study module is to be completed.

Credit transfer decisions and their attachments are filed and stored in the faculty and the Language Centre at least until the end of the studies.

1.4 Rectification of a decision

If you do not agree with a 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 time 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 to which you refer and the grounds for the rectification request.

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 decision, you may appeal against it to the Academic Appeals Committee of the University of Lapland. You can appeal against the rectification decision within 14 days from being informed about it. Deliver the appeal to the University Registry. The Academic Appeals Committee is subject to the provisions of the Administrative Rules of Procedure of the University of Lapland. No appeal may be lodged against the ruling of the Academic Appeals Committee (Universities Act, Section 84).

2 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (RPEL)

You may also use skills achieved through non-formal education to **substitute** degree studies. You may have achieved skills through e.g. unofficial, i.e. non-formal, learning (further education, short programs at the workplace, adult education training, etc.) or informal, i.e. everyday, 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 earned through it.

Recognition of prior experiential learning is based on the learning outcomes of courses and study modules. The knowledge and skills you have achieved are compared with the learning outcomes of the courses and/or study modules to be replaced. 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 your skills may be required.

2.1 Applying for credit transfer

It is up to the student to start the credit transfer process. Before applying for credit transfer, discuss it with your study plan supervisor and include the course to be transferred in your personal or doctoral study plan. The student is entitled to receive guidance when making a credit transfer application.

Apply for credit transfer well before the studies in question begin. In practice, you should apply for all credit transfers at the beginning of the studies. Also attending students of the Open University, students of professional specialisation education and students of the University of Lapland who study under a separate permit may apply for credit transfer. The credit transfer is to concern studies for which they have a valid right to study.

Apply for credit transfer using the appropriate form that can be printed out from the university's web pages (www.ulapland.fi/rpl). Describe at least the following:

- how much and what type of experience you have
- what types of skills you have acquired through experience
- how the skills correspond to the learning outcomes of the courses and/or study modules proposed to be replaced
- which courses and/or study modules the skills-based credit transfer concerns.

To enable assessment of the RPEL, you must include the appropriate 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. 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 objectives of your studies.

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

An incomplete application that is not supplemented within a set period of time is typically rejected.

2.2 Decision on credit transfer

The material on prior learning (the form, portfolio, and other attachments) delivered by the student is processed by the responsible teachers of the academic subject. Based on the material, a decision is made by the subject representative and the RPL responsible 1) to grant credit transfer 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. The skills may also be demonstrated by taking an RPL exam that is arranged in the electronic exam service, on a general examination day or on the Language Centre's make-up exam day. The RPL 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 RPL procedure and its decision, and thereby permission to demonstrate one's skills through the exam. The RPL exam can only be taken once, and registration is done according to the normal registration procedure.

Credit transfer based on prior experiential learning is graded on the scale pass/fail (however, mandatory studies in Swedish are graded fail/satisfactory/good). The grade 'pass' may be given if the skills acquired through prior learning can be seen to correspond to the minimum target skill level set for the courses and/or study modules to be replaced.

In general, the decision on credit transfer is made within a month from turning in the application and the appropriate appendices. Decisions on applications delivered in June or July are usually made by the end of August. In the decision, the possible additional demonstrations that are needed and a deadline for them are stated. The final decision is made within a month from the additional demonstration.

2.3 Notification, registering, and storing of credit transfer

The student will get a copy of the decision on credit transfer and the grounds for it. The decision contains rectification instructions and the decision-makers' contact information for further inquiries.

An approved or partly approved credit transfer is stored in the credit record. The credit record will indicate that the credit transfer has been made through the RPL procedure. The date of the study attainment is that of the RPL decision. The additional details of a course or study module contains a short description of the skills based on which credit transfer has been approved and the part of the course to be taken in the case of a partly approved credit transfer. On a credit record transcript, the transferred courses and study modules are indicated with a 'transferred' sign and they are graded as 'pass' (excluding Swedish). However, additional demonstrations/ attainments are entered as normal study attainments. Credit transfers are not shown in the actual degree diploma.

Credit transfer decisions are kept in the faculty and at the Language Centre at least until the end of the studies.

2.4 Rectification of a decision

If you do not agree with a credit transfer 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 time you were informed about the decision. Deliver the request to the Head of Study Affairs. Describe very clearly the part of the decision to which you refer and the grounds for the rectification request.

The person who made the RPL 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 rectification decision, you may appeal against it to the Academic Appeals Committee of the University of Lapland. You can appeal against the rectification decision within 14 days from being informed about it. Deliver the appeal to the University Registry. The Academic Appeals Committee is subject to the provisions of the Administrative Rules of Procedure of the University of Lapland. No appeal may be lodged against the ruling of the Academic Appeals Committee (Universities Act, Section 84).