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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, or 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.

Exemption refers to a situation where you do not have to complete certain mandatory parts of a degree. Unlike credit transfer, exemption does not increase the number of credits. The exemption procedure partly follows the principles of credit transfer and is therefore described in this document.

## 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).

The most important criteria for **substituting** study modules and courses 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, for example, minor subjects or studies completed at a foreign university.

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. In addition, 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 module can also be accepted as the minor subject of a student.

- Elementary language courses are not subject to credit transfer (this does not concern studies completed at the LUC universities, in the Giellagas Institute, or in student exchange.) 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). Swedish is evaluated using the grades satisfactory/good. 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 and included in 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, Licentiate, and doctoral theses 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, you are recommended to discuss it with your MyTeacher/process supervisor and include the course to be transferred in your personal study plan or doctoral study plan. You are 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 through the eRPL functionality in Peppi.

When applying for credit transfer, 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 of the year when the attainment was completed).
- As regards courses and/or study modules, you are to specify in the application the official course code, Finnish title, and English title of the attainment. Attachments are included in the eRPL application in electronic format. A link to My Studyinfo may also serve as an attachment.
- Deliver the eRPL application to the RPL processor of the faculty/unit that the credit transfer application concerns. The processors are listed on [www.ulapland.fi/RPL](http://www.ulapland.fi/RPL).

**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.

An incomplete application is typically rejected if it is not supplemented upon request within a two-week period.

## 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 practice, the decision-making power rests on the head of study affairs in all four faculties.

Substitutions and inclusions concerning doctoral studies are determined by the process supervisor. However, substitutions concerning courses arranged by the Doctoral 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 attachments. Decisions on applications delivered in June or July are typically made by the end of August.

### 1.3 Notification, registering, and storing of credit transfer

An approved credit transfer is stored in the credit record. The credit record contains the name (in Finnish and English), place, time, scope, and grade of the original attainment. The date of the credit transfer entry is the decision date of the eRPL application, while the original date of the attainment is written in the credit transfer's explanatory note in the credit record. 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 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 'replaced' or 'included', while the title, scope, and place of completion of the attainment are shown in the footnote of the credit transfer's explanatory note.

The student is informed of a rejection and its grounds through the eRPL functionality of the Peppi system. The rejection decision is available in Peppi or it is delivered to the student by email if the student requests it after learning that the decision has been entered into Peppi. The decision includes the name of the decision maker and instructions for requesting rectification of a decision.

If the credit transfer is only partially accepted, an agreement concerning the part that remains to be completed is entered into Peppi for the student. The credit transfer or attainment is not entered into the credit record until the student has completed the assignment defined in the agreement. When the terms of the agreement are fulfilled, partially accepted studies are entered as attainments if the transferred part covers up to half of the overall scope of the study entity and as credit transfers if the transferred part covers more than half of the overall scope.

Credit transfer decisions and their attachments are filed and stored in the Peppi system.

### 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, for example, unofficial non-formal, learning (further education, short programmes at the workplace, adult education training, etc.) or informal 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, you are recommended to discuss it with your MyTeacher/process supervisor and include the course to be transferred in your personal study plan or doctoral study plan. You are 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 through the eRPL functionality in the Peppi system (using the "Add previously acquired competence" function). Describe at least the following in the application:

- 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 only to hand in mere documents but also to use the documents to present a picture of your skills in relation to the objectives of your studies.

Deliver the eRPL application to the RPL processor of the faculty/unit that the credit transfer application concerns. The processors are listed on [www.ulapland.fi/RPL](http://www.ulapland.fi/RPL). If needed, the faculties, the Language Centre and the Doctoral School provide further instructions on the documentation and the necessary attachments.

An incomplete application is typically rejected if it is not supplemented upon request within a two-week period.

## **2.2 Decision on credit transfer**

Your application is processed by the teacher responsible for the course or study module. Based on the application, a decision is made either (1) to grant you credit transfer to study modules, courses, or their parts, (2) to require you to present an additional demonstration of your skills, or (3) to reject the application. If credit transfer is granted for a part of the course or if you are required to present an additional demonstration, an agreement concerning the additional demonstration or the part that remains to be completed is entered into Peppi for you. 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 or as otherwise agreed. 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 your 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 (studies in Swedish are graded 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 attachments. Decisions on applications delivered in June or July are usually made by the end of August. If you are granted partial substitution or an additional demonstration is required, an agreement concerning the required performance or demonstration is entered into Peppi for you. The final decision is made within a month from the additional demonstration.

## **2.3 Notification, registering, and storing of credit transfer**

An approved credit transfer is stored in the credit record. The credit transfer's explanatory note in the credit record will state the application-based grounds for the transfer (for instance, work practice). The date of the credit transfer entry is the decision date, while the original date is written in the credit transfer's explanatory note.

The student is informed of a rejection and its grounds through the eRPL functionality of the Peppi system. The rejection decision can be accessed through Peppi or it is delivered to the student by email if the student requests it after learning that the decision has been entered into Peppi. The decision includes the name of the decision maker and instructions for requesting rectification of a decision.



If the credit transfer is only partially accepted, an agreement concerning the part that remains to be completed is entered into Peppi for the student. The credit transfer or attainment is not entered into the credit record until the student has completed the assignment defined in the agreement. When the terms of the agreement are fulfilled, partially accepted studies are entered as attainments if the transferred part covers up to half of the overall scope of the study entity and as credit transfers if the transferred part covers more than half of the overall scope.

Credit transfer decisions and their attachments are filed and stored in the Peppi system.

## **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 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 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).

## **3 EXEMPTION**

You may, on certain grounds, also apply for exemption from mandatory studies that are part of your degree or study right. Applying for and granting exemption from certain studies corresponds to the credit transfer process to some extent. Unlike credit transfer, exemption does not increase the number of credits. In other words, you have to complete other studies that give you a corresponding number of credits to fulfil the minimum scope of your degree. Exemption means that you are exempted from completing certain mandatory courses or study modules based on your educational background, personal traits, previous studies, or previously acquired skills. Exemptions are granted mainly in language studies and in studies required to supplement a lower degree when you are studying for a master's degree only.

### 3.1 Applying for exemption

It is up to the student to start the exemption application process. Before applying for exemption, you are recommended to discuss it with your MyTeacher /process supervisor. You are entitled to receive guidance when making an exemption application.

The eRPL functionality of the Peppi system is used in applying for exemption.

When applying for **exemption**, you are to proceed as follows:

- Attach to the application your diploma and/or 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) based on which you apply for the exemption OR
- Provide an account of the acquired skills based on which you apply for exemption and, to enable assessment of exemption, 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 acquired OR
- Attach certificates of having completed your school education in a language other than Finnish or Swedish or having received your school education abroad (481/2003, section 20 and 794/2004, section 6). This usually exempts you from some mandatory language and communication studies OR
- Attach other certificates, such as medical certificates, based on which you are applying for exemption. Note, however, that instead of storing a medical certificate in the eRPL system, you must send it to the RPL processor via secure email.

Deliver the eRPL application to the RPL processor of your faculty. The processors are listed on [www.ulapland.fi/RPL](http://www.ulapland.fi/RPL).

### 3.2 Decision on exemption

The decision on granting exemption is made by the faculty dean based on the proposal of the head of study affairs. If you are applying for exemption based on previous studies or other skills, the head of study affairs uses the eRPL system to request, when needed, the approval of the teacher or the Language Centre to grant the exemption.

Exemption is granted based on school education or other specific reason if the grounds stated in the application are sufficient and fulfil the statutory requirements (see the Government Decree on University Degrees 794/2004, section 6 and the Government decree on demonstrating skills in Finnish and Swedish in state organisations 481/2003, section 20).

Exemptions based on previous studies or previously acquired skills can be granted in studies required to supplement a lower degree when you are studying for a master's degree only. Exemptions may be granted if your skills are deemed sufficient and enable a smooth transition to master-level studies. Compared to credit transfer, the criteria for granting exemptions based on previous studies or previously acquired skills are lower and build on an overall assessment of your skills. As for studies other than the supplementary ones mentioned above, exemptions based on previous studies or previously acquired skills can only be granted in language studies (see 481/2003, sections 15–17).

Exemptions do not increase the number of credits. When making the decision, it is therefore imperative to make sure that the minimum scope of the degree is achieved by means of other studies.

In general, the decision on exemption must be made within a month from turning in the application and the appropriate attachments. Decisions on applications delivered in June or July are typically made by the end of August.

### **3.3 Notification, registering, and storing of exemption**

An approved exemption is stored in the credit record, where the completion date of the course is the date of the exemption decision and the grounds for the exemption are in the explanatory note. The student is notified of the exemption decision via Peppi, where the student sees the decision maker's contact information for further inquiries and instructions for requesting rectification of a decision.

When making the decision, an agreement is entered into Peppi concerning other degree studies that the student may have to complete in place of the exemption.

### **3.4 Rectification of a decision**

If you do not agree with an exemption 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 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 person who made the 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 exemption 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).