



## General principles on the recognition of prior learning (RPL)

According to Section 38 of the Degree Regulations of the University of Eastern Finland, the Rector decides on the general principles relating to the recognition of prior learning. This decision repeals the Academic Rector's earlier decisions relating to RPL practices at the University of Eastern Finland (Record no 861/12.00.00.00/2010 and 1052/12.01.02.04/2012).

### Background

The recognition of prior learning (RPL) refers to a set of practices and procedures that can be used to assess the prior learning of the student and to approve that learning as part of the student's studies.

The purpose of recognising prior learning is to ensure that the student can transfer credits from studies whose learning outcomes he or she can demonstrate to have achieved in a manner defined by the university. Prior learning may be a result of the student's earlier studies or it can have been acquired in some other manner.

The Universities Act (558/2009) and the Government Decree on University Degrees (794/2004) state the following regarding the recognition of prior learning: "In degree studies the student may count studies completed in a Finnish or foreign university or some other educational institution towards the degree and replace studies included in the degree with other studies of a corresponding level, as specified by the university. At the discretion of the university, the student may also count towards the degree and replace studies included in the degree with knowledge demonstrated in some other manner."

The Degree Regulations of the University of Eastern Finland have stipulations on credit transfer (Sections 27, 38, 51, 54). The Dean decides on the principles relating to the inclusion in the degree of studies

completed in other higher education institutions or educational institutes (UEF Administrative Regulations, Section 12; Degree Regulations, Section 38).

A committee report of the Ministry of Education (2007) states the following: "Prior learning is recommended to be assessed at two instances: when evaluating the higher education eligibility of applicants and when evaluating the prior learning of admitted students" (Ministry of Education 2007:4).

This decision pertains to the recognition of prior learning of students who have been admitted to the university. Applicable sections of the RPL principles also pertain to Open University and continuing education students.

### UEF's RPL terminology

The **recognition of prior learning** refers to a set of practices and procedures than can be used to assess the prior learning of the student and to approve that learning as part of the student's



studies. **Identification** refers to the assessment of prior learning in its different forms, and **recognition** refers to the procedures by which a course or a credit transfer is entered in the student's study register on the basis of his or her prior learning. The recognition of the student's prior learning is based on the learning outcomes of the student's pursued degree and its components (i.e. study modules, courses).

**Credit transfer** refers to the recognition of studies, training, work experience or other similar competence as part of the student's pursued degree, study module or course. Credit transfer requires that the studies completed elsewhere or prior learning

correspond to the learning outcomes set for the degree and its components (Degree Regulations, Section 38). The forms of credit transfer are inclusion and substitution.

**Inclusion** refers to the approval of courses or study modules completed in some other educational institution in the degree as such. The Dean decides on the principles relating to the inclusion of earlier studies in UEF degrees (UEF Administrative Regulations, Section 12; Degree Regulations, Section 38). If the grading scale used to evaluate a course or a study module completed earlier corresponds to the grading scale used at the UEF, the grade can also be entered in the study register as such. In other cases, it is not recommended that the grade be converted; instead, the studies to be included in the student's degree are recommended to be included using the grade "pass".

**Substitution** means that a course or a study module included in the student's curriculum is replaced with a course or a study module of corresponding learning outcomes, or on the basis of other competence. If the grading scale used to evaluate a course or a study module completed earlier corresponds to the grading scale used at UEF, the grade can also be entered in the study register as such. In other cases, it is not recommended that the grade be converted; instead, the substituting studies in the student's degree are recommended to be graded as "pass". The grading scale for written and oral skills in the second domestic language (Swedish) is "TT" (satisfactory) or "HT" (good). In addition to substitution, the student may be required to complete components of studies that were not substituted. The unit responsible for the teaching of the course in question shall decide on the substitution of the studies. The responsible unit may also delegate the decision-making to another unit.

**An RPL demonstration** is a way for the student to demonstrate his or her prior learning in a manner than can be evaluated. An RPL demonstration is used when credit transfer by direct substitution is not possible, or when the recognition of the student's prior learning otherwise calls for a separate evaluation, i.e. demonstration of prior learning. An RPL demonstration may involve a written report on the student's prior learning (a portfolio including the student's work and school certificates), an interview, a test, or other evaluation of learning. The grading scale referred to in Section 32 of the Degree Regulations is applied to RPL demonstrations. As the result of an approved RPL demonstration, the course or part of it can be entered in the student's study register under the date of the demonstration. The evaluation of an RPL demonstration is the responsibility of the unit responsible for the teaching of the course.

**RPL process**



The RPL process (Appendix: process description) is initiated by the student. The process relating to credit transfer is initiated by a written application made by the student. By a decision of the unit, the student may also submit his or her application by using the UEF student email (email address form: [xx.xx@student.uef.fi](mailto:xx.xx@student.uef.fi)) or an electronic application form. As regards the Open University and continuing education, the recognition of prior learning can be applied for by a student who has a valid study right for the studies the application pertains to. The student has the right to appeal against the decision (Degree Regulations, Section 51).

### **Recognition of prior learning – level and extent**

The recognition of prior learning is based on the correspondence between the student's skills and the learning outcomes of the pursued degree, or parts of it. However, it is not possible to award an entire degree through credit transfer. When recognising prior learning, it must be ensured that the professional qualification given by the degree is not compromised. As regards the level and extent of recognising prior learning, the units in charge of teaching are recommended to observe the national and international practices as well as the field- and discipline-specific recommendations and principles.

Prior learning and studies completed by the student as part of his or her earlier degrees can be recognised if the level of the learning corresponds to the learning outcomes of the student's pursued degree. However, credits completed as part of a lower university degree (i.e. a Bachelor's degree) cannot be transferred towards a higher university degree, except in the event of a Bachelor's degree completed in accordance with the old Government Decree on University Degrees.

### **Expiry of recognised studies**

In accordance with the Degree Regulations, Section 23, the Faculty Council shall decide on the grounds for the expiry of studies completed by students. Language studies completed earlier in accordance with the degree requirements shall not expire.

### **Decision, entry in the study register, appeal and student counselling**

An approved RPL demonstration is entered in the study register as a study attainment. A decision on credit transfer is made and communicated to the student within one month, and on the basis of this decision, the credit transfer is entered in the study register either as inclusion or substitution. At the consent of the student, the decision can be sent for the information of the student electronically. In connection with the decision, the student is notified of his or her right to make an appeal against the decision, as referred to in Section 51 of the Degree Regulations. Student and Learning Services gives further instructions on the entry in the study register.

The student has the right to get counselling relating to the recognition of his or her prior learning. The RPL process is required to be linked to student counselling (e.g. PSP) so that the effects of the decision on the student's studies can be taken into consideration.

### **Credit transfer relating to studies completed in open learning environment (e.g. Massive Open Online Courses - MOOCs)**



If the skills obtained by the student in open learning environments correspond to the learning outcomes of the pursued degree or parts of it, the recognition of prior learning can be realised as credit transfer. When necessary, the student may be required to perform an RPL demonstration.

The person evaluating the student's skills and the person making the decision must have an opportunity to learn about the implementation, content and level of the studies to be recognised prior to making the decision. It is also recommended that students ensure the correspondence or the studies with their pursued degree in advance.

### **Archiving of RPL applications and decisions**

In accordance with the archives formation plan of the University of Eastern Finland, the faculties are responsible for archiving decisions of the Dean pertaining to inclusion. Decisions of the Dean relating to the principles of inclusion shall be public.

Decisions relating to the recognition of prior learning are archived in the paper format or electronically, and stored for a period of ten (10) years at the faculty or unit. Comparable to study attainments, applications and decisions relating to the recognition of prior learning are confidential (basic level of confidentiality).

### **Development of guidelines and RPL practices**

Student and Learning Services, the faculties and units giving teaching may issue further instructions on the application and principles relating to the recognition of prior learning. Student and Learning Services is responsible for the unification and development of the processes, and can make technical changes to these principles when necessary.

This decision shall enter into force on 1 August 2016.

Further information can be obtained from Senior Coordinator Tommi Haapaniemi,  
tommi.haapaniemi@uef.fi

Jaakko Puhakka  
Academic Rector

APPENDIX 1: RPL process of the University of Eastern Finland



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