

Procedure for the Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning

1. General

- 1.1. The procedure for the accreditation of prior and experiential learning (hereinafter 'APEL') is established by subsection 15 (5) of the Higher Education Act, subsection 13 (1) of the standard of higher education, and chapter 7 of the standard of vocational education.
- 1.2. This procedure regulates the submission, assessment and decision-making regarding the accreditation of APEL applications, as well as the fees associated with application processing in vocational and higher education curricula at the Estonian Aviation Academy (hereinafter 'the Academy').
- 1.3. APEL can be implemented:
 - 1.3.1. to meet the admission criteria established by the Academy;
 - 1.3.2. during the completion of the curriculum to recognise credits acquired from previous studies (except for the final thesis and examination);
 - 1.3.3. during the completion of the curriculum to award credits for the knowledge and skills acquired during in-service training, independent learning and work experience (except for the final thesis and examination);
 - 1.3.4. when finalising vocational training to recognise a prior passing result of a vocational examination as a passing result of the final vocational or professional examination.
- 1.4. Learning at work can be counted towards the completion of the subjects and modules of the curriculum or a part of the curriculum.
- 1.5. In vocational training, a subject is the topic of the module in the implementation plan.
- 1.6. In addition to the final examination or thesis, the head of the curriculum may specify subjects in the curriculum for which accreditation is not offered for prior studies and work experience.
- 1.7. The application review process and assessment are free of charge for the applicant.
- 1.8. There is no service fee for APEL credit transfers.
- 1.9. Information on APEL procedures and administration is provided by APEL advisers and the APEL coordinator appointed on the basis of the Rector's directive.

2. Application

- 2.1. A person applying for APEL (hereinafter 'the applicant') submits an APEL application in the study information system, indicating what they are applying to be accredited for as part of the completion of their curriculum (degree study subjects, in-service training, work experience). Applications may be submitted throughout the academic year. An application may be submitted for the accreditation of a subject, a group of subjects or a module.
- 2.2. The applicant must append to the application relevant documents and other materials certifying prior studies and/or work experience, unless the completion of the subject is reflected in the study information system of the Academy.
- 2.3. The documents and other materials certifying prior studies and/or work experience include certificates, transcripts of academic performance, diploma supplements, documents describing the content of studies, a document proving work experience and the content thereof.

- 2.4. When applying for accreditation of work experience and independent learning, the evidence submitted must be accompanied by an analysis of the experiential learning that meets the following criteria:
 - 2.4.1. the experience described is relevant for the subject for which accreditation is sought;
 - 2.4.2. the description includes tasks that are relevant in terms of learning outcomes;
 - 2.4.3. the analysis addresses the competencies that are relevant in terms of the subject for which accreditation is sought;
 - 2.4.4. the analysis reflects what was learnt from the experience;
 - 2.4.5. the applicant has analysed the successes and weaknesses of the activities relating to the relevant demonstrable competencies and outlined essential lessons learned from the experience;
 - 2.4.6. the analysis clearly and unambiguously demonstrates comprehension of the link between what has been learned from the experience and the learning outcomes of the relevant module.
- 2.5. The APEL coordinator, appointed by the Rector's directive, generally reviews the applications four times a year (in January, April, August and September) and forwards the properly completed applications to the APEL approval committee (hereinafter 'the committee'), approved by the Rector's directive.
- 2.6. When processing the application, the Academy has the right to ask the applicant to submit additional documents or other evidence. The applicant is given at least one week to submit additional documents.
- 2.7. The applicant is responsible for the accuracy of the data and documents submitted.
- 2.8. Prior studies are accredited without an APEL application if:
 - 2.8.1. the student is re-matriculated as a student at the Academy;
 - 2.8.2. the student applies for accreditation of previously passed subjects at the Academy;
 - 2.8.3. the student wishes to transfer credits for subjects completed at another higher education institution as an exchange student, having previously approved this with the head of the curriculum;
 - 2.8.4. recognition of studies has been agreed in the cooperation agreement between the Academy and a partner higher education institution.

3. **Assessment**

- 3.1. The applicant's prior studies and work experience is assessed and the decision is taken by the committee. The committee has the right to involve experts in the assessment.
- 3.2. The committee generally meets four times a year (in January, April, August and September) to review and assess applications. The exact dates of the assessments are published on the Academy's website at the beginning of the academic year.
- 3.3. The following principles are followed during assessment.
 - 3.3.1. The assessment must ensure that the learning outcomes assessed under the APEL procedure are not at a lower level than the learning outcomes achieved with the conventional completion of the curriculum, and that increasing the share of APEL does not devalue higher education more generally.
 - 3.3.2. The assessment is based not on the experience itself but what was learnt from the experience.

- 3.3.3. The assessment is comprehensive, taking into account formal, informal and non-formal learning in the completion of the component of the curriculum for which accreditation is sought.
- 3.3.4. The assessment considers the relevance of what was learnt in relation to the learning outcomes of the subjects or modules for which accreditation is sought.
- 3.3.5. Insignificant differences in the workload and components of prior studies, including in applications for the accreditation of a complete module, do not serve as a reason for the non-accreditation of a subject or subjects or a complete module. A difference is considered insignificant when it constitutes up to 30% of the volume of the subject against which accreditation is sought, taking into account the principles of comprehensive assessment.
- 3.3.6. Learning has to comply with the relevant level of higher education as described in the qualification framework and the standard of higher education.
- 3.3.7. The assessment takes into account how current the content learnt was. The application is not approved if, following comprehensive assessment, the prior competencies can be considered outdated and therefore unsuitable in the context of the learning outcomes of the subject or module.
- 3.3.8. When accrediting subjects completed in an unaccredited curriculum or at an unaccredited educational institution, the quality of teaching of the particular course, not the accreditation, is taken into account and the assessment will consider the competencies acquired by the applicant.
- 3.3.9. To ensure impartiality, any contact between the applicant and the assessor must be avoided until the final assessment. A meeting is allowed in cases where this is unavoidable (a need to interview the applicant or discuss options for obtaining additional information).
- 3.4. Similar to prior studies, in-service training may be accredited as a part of admission criteria and the curriculum if the training was completed with an assessment of the learning outcomes. Both individual subjects (topics) and the entire in-service training programme (content) can be accredited. If learning outcomes were not assessed upon completion of the in-service training, the accreditation may be possible in a manner similar to the accreditation of work experience.
- 3.5. When assessing work experience, the choice of the appropriate assessment tool and the portfolio of evidence is based on the specifics of the profession and work experience. It is recommended to hold an interview with the applicant, the assessment of which must be documented.
- 3.6. If the portfolio of evidence is not sufficient, additional evidence may be requested during the assessment process, while additional assessment tools may also be added, including a conversation or interview with the applicant, conducting an additional test, a test assignment or examination, etc.
- 3.7. If, in the course of prior studies, the achievement of learning outcomes has not been assessed, then the prior studies are accredited based on undifferentiated assessment.
- 3.8. If, in the course of prior studies, the achievement of learning outcomes has been assessed using a grading system that is valid in Estonia at the time of making the accreditation decision regarding the prior studies, then the result of the assessment of learning outcomes is not changed when accrediting the prior studies. If the achievement of learning outcomes has been assessed using another grading system, undifferentiated assessment will be used for the transfer of grades.
- 3.9. If the application is for the accreditation of subjects from the previous level of higher education, they can be accredited as optional courses in accordance with the workload prescribed in the curriculum only if the curriculum of the previous level of higher education has been completed

with a larger workload than the full-time workload of the curriculum. Furthermore, subjects are not accredited as optional courses for a workload larger than the part exceeding the full-time workload of the curriculum of the previous level of higher education. There are no restrictions regarding workload for the calculation of compulsory subjects and elective courses.

- 3.10. The decision of the committee is disclosed to the applicant in the study information system no later than within 10 working days from the assessment. If the application is rejected in whole or in part, the decision must state the reasons.
- 3.11. Decisions of the committee may be contested in accordance with the procedure provided for in the regulation of the organisation of studies.

4. APEL quality assurance

- 4.1. The quality of APEL is assured as part of the overall quality assurance of the education at the Academy, taking into account the following:
 - 4.1.1. the principles and procedures of APEL are transparent, clear and fair, and are applied consistently;
 - 4.1.2. the information provided to applicants, advisers and the committee is clear and accessible;
 - 4.1.3. the roles of applicants, advisers and the committee are clearly defined;
 - 4.1.4. all applicants are provided with the necessary assistance;
 - 4.1.5. the principles and procedures are regularly reviewed and compliance with them is monitored.
- 4.2. To meet the principles outlined in clause 4.1, the APEL coordinator does the following:
 - 4.2.1. compiles a summary of APEL decisions by 20 June of each year and presents this to the Vice Rector of Studies;
 - 4.2.2. analyses the activities of the committee in the previous academic year and, at random, the decisions the committee took in the previous academic year in order to propose ways to ensure a uniform application of the APEL procedure;
 - 4.2.3. regularly reviews and analyses the existing documentation and procedures and, if necessary, proposes ways to improve or harmonise APEL procedures.
- 4.3. To meet the principles outlined in clause 4.1, the Vice Rector for Studies does the following:
 - 4.3.1. ensures the organisation of regular APEL training and informational events and training for advisers and assessors;
 - 4.3.2. based on the coordinator's reports and proposals, evaluates issues related to APEL at the Academy and ensures the implementation of relevant proposals.

5. Implementation provisions

- 5.1. Upon the entry into force of this procedure, the "Procedure for the Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning" approved by the decision of the Council of the Academy on 15.12.2008 (Minutes No. 1-4/11) (amendments approved by the decisions of the Council from 31.08.2010 (Minutes No. 1-4/5), 18.10.2011 (Minutes No. 1-4/11), 08.02.2013 (Minutes No. 1-4/2), 31.08.2017 (Minutes No. 1-4/10), 26.01.2018 (Minutes No. 1-4/28), 29.04.2020 (Minutes No. 1-4/28)) is repealed.
- 5.2. This procedure enters into force on 1 September 2021.