

PROCEDURES FOR THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING AND WORK EXPERIENCE

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. This document establishes the procedure for submitting, evaluating and recognising applications for prior learning and work experience (hereinafter referred to as APEL) within the Master's, applied higher education and vocational training curricula at the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences (hereinafter referred to as the Academy). This procedure also applies to continuing education curricula unless otherwise specified in the Academy's continuing education regulations.
2. The implementation of APEL follows the objectives and principles outlined in the higher education and vocational education standards.
3. The Academy may recognise degree-level studies or continuing education completed at various educational and training institutions, as well as independent learning acquired through work experience, daily activities and informal education.
4. Final theses, including Master's theses and final examinations, cannot be recognised as prior learning or work experience.
5. Applications for APEL concerning the topic of a subject or module are not submitted in the study information system; recognition is agreed upon between the student and the lecturer teaching the subject or module. The agreement is recorded by the lecturer in the study information system under the course-teacher pair as an interim result for the student. Interim results may include the name of the recognised subject/module part, the percentage or points awarded, or both fields may be left at zero. For vocational students, the agreement result is recorded in the module or topic diary.
6. Modules, subjects and practical components that cannot be recognised under APEL are determined by the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs via directive.
7. When transferring elective modules and subjects, the principle applies that the completed component must be at the same or higher educational level, including international webinars/e-courses. Continuing education and work experience cannot be used to fulfil the volume of elective subjects in the general module of applied higher education.
8. The recognition of prior learning and work experience cannot be based on studies or experience previously transferred under APEL.
9. If the prior learning transferred under APEL is smaller in scope than the subject or module in the current curriculum, the student must select additional elective subjects or modules to meet the curriculum requirements.
10. The review and evaluation of applications is free of charge for applicants. No tuition fees are charged for the subjects and modules transferred under APEL.
11. The academic affairs department maintains records, collects statistics on APEL applications and decisions, ensures the continuous development of the APEL process and monitors its compliance with the procedure outlined here.

12. APEL applications, decisions and attachments are stored in the study information system.
13. APEL application and evaluation guidelines are available on the Academy's website.

II. APPLICATION PROCESS

14. Submitting an APEL application is voluntary and based on the student's initiative. Applications may also be submitted during an academic leave.
15. APEL applications must be submitted electronically in the study information system, and they may be submitted at any time. In exceptional cases, the director of a college may impose a restricted application period if necessary for the organisation of studies. Applications must be submitted at least two weeks before the start of the subject, module or practical component to be recognised, except immediately at the beginning of studies. Applications can also be made for subjects, modules and practical components not declared in the upcoming semester.
16. Applicants must attach supporting materials that verify their competencies, such as documents demonstrating prior learning and/or work experience. For work experience and independently acquired learning, an analysis of the learning outcomes must also be submitted.
17. Applicants must submit and confirm a properly completed application in the study information system within the application period. Applicants are responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the submitted information and documents. The burden of proof for prior learning and work experience lies with the student. If the application is incomplete, a deadline is set for rectifying deficiencies. If the deficiencies are not rectified by the deadline, the committee will not review the application.
18. Recognition of prior learning is not required if a student wishes to transfer modules and subjects completed as a visiting student at another institution and previously coordinated with the Academy or if a student is re-enrolled after addressing any academic debts.
19. Applicants are informed about the APEL conditions and deadlines and are advised on questions related to application preparation by the academic coordinator. For curriculum- or field-specific APEL matters, applicants may seek advice from the lecturer of the respective subject, the curriculum head or a member of the APEL committee. For general APEL information or issues, students may contact the academic affairs department.

III. EVALUATION AND DECISION-MAKING

20. APEL applications are evaluated in the study information system by the APEL committee, established by the rector's directive upon the recommendation of the college director or institute head. The committee comprises representatives of academic staff, non-academic staff (if necessary) and a representative from the academic affairs department. The committee is chaired by the head of the college or curriculum. Based on the applications received, committee members may involve experts in the evaluation process.
21. A committee member participates in the evaluation of a specific application if it includes subjects, modules or practical components relevant to their area of teaching. The APEL committee is considered quorate if the chair, a representative of the academic affairs department and the person responsible for the module, practical component or subject in question are present during the evaluation.

22. Various assessment methods are used to evaluate prior learning or skills acquired through work experience, such as interviews, demonstrations and observations. Depending on the learning outcomes, the committee may request additional supporting materials or employ alternative assessment methods (e.g. task simulations or performance monitoring). Deadlines for fulfilling these requirements are set by the committee.
23. Based on the APEL committee's recommendations, the chair makes the decision on the application, either approving or rejecting it in the study information system within 30 days of receiving the application or the end of a restricted application period, excluding the summer period. The committee may request additional documents to verify competencies. In such cases, the committee may extend the review period by an additional 30 days.
24. For a subject, module or practical component to be recognised under APEL, all its learning outcomes must be achieved. Partial recognition is possible if the student has only partially achieved the learning outcomes. In such cases, the decision must specify which learning outcomes have been achieved and what the student must still complete to achieve all learning outcomes.
25. Prior learning or acquired competencies are evaluated comprehensively, regardless of how the outcomes were achieved. Minor differences in the scope or content of prior learning, as well as variations in assessment forms, components or methods, are not decisive for a positive decision. In justified cases, the time spent on learning may also be considered in the evaluation.
26. The evaluation is based on the alignment of the applicant's acquired competencies with the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the module, practical component or subject.
27. Prior assessment results are not altered during the recognition process. If the learning outcomes were not distinctly assessed during prior studies, non-differentiated assessment will be applied. This approach is also used if prior assessments were conducted in an incomparable grading system. For partial APEL, the result is recorded as a non-differentiated assessment.
28. Any decision to partially approve or reject an application must include a justification.

IV. SIMPLIFIED APEL APPLICATION PROCESS

29. Simplified APEL refers to cases where the APEL committee has previously compared learning outcomes and formally decided, through a protocol, to approved applications for the transfer of recurring subjects or modules. These may include studies completed at a different educational level, professional training, officially recognised valid certificates or professional qualifications.
30. In the simplified APEL process, the student submits the application via the study information system in accordance with the comparison of subjects, practical components, or modules outlined in the formal decision and attaches supporting materials. In this case, the application is not sent to the committee for evaluation; instead, it is approved by the committee secretary if it is properly completed.

V. APPEALS

29. Appeals regarding APEL decisions follow the same process as appeals of other academic management decisions, as outlined in the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences Regulation of Studies.