

# Guidelines for Validation of Prior Learning at Luleå University of Technology

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## 1. Introduction

By utilising experiences and knowledge acquired through prior learning, the university can broaden recruitment and create diversity in education.

Validation of prior learning is a process that involves a structured assessment and recognition of the knowledge and skills a person possesses, regardless of how they were acquired.

The university's guidelines for prior learning are linked to the local Admission Regulations and the locally established Guidelines for Credit Transfer, which are based on the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) regarding admission and credit transfer. This means that the handling and decisions in these matters are carried out according to the respective process and follow the Vice-Chancellor's decision and delegation order on admission and credit transfer at Luleå University of Technology.

In a report published by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education in 2009, several recommendations are presented regarding the work of higher education institutions with the assessment of prior learning, one of which is the importance of guidance in the assessment process. The university's study counsellors provide support and guidance on the process before the application so that the applicant understands how to describe and substantiate their skills in an assessable manner.

There are differences in the process for validating prior learning regarding eligibility and credit transfer. This document outlines the guidelines for both processes. In addition to the guidelines, there are working routines for each process. Admissions, with the support of relevant functions within the Student Division, is responsible for ensuring that there are working routines for the eligibility process. The Reference Group for Credit Transfer is responsible for ensuring that the working routines for credit transfer are in place and known to the administration at each department that handles these matters.

## 2. Prior Learning

According to the Swedish Government Official Reports (SOU), "A National Strategy for Validation," prior learning is the comprehensive, actual competence an individual possesses, regardless of how, when, or where it has been developed. It can be formal competence or knowledge from informal and non-formal learning, as described by the report:

- Formal competence is knowledge that established organisations, such as an educational institution, an authority, or an industry organisation, have assessed and documented in formal terms through grades, certificates, diplomas, licences, etc.
- Non-formal learning is intentional and organised learning that is not regulated by laws, ordinances, or regulations. Non-formal learning takes place in, for example, study circles, labour market training, and staff training. In many industries, recognised certificates or diplomas are issued after completing non-formal learning. Quality assurance is carried out by the industry itself or by the industry's recognised organisation.
- Informal learning is often acquired through unintentional learning that is not organised or structured and takes place at the workplace, at home, during leisure time, etc.

### 3. Application Process

On the university's website about prior learning, there is a link to more information about the documents required to assess the prior learning. For example, what documentation needs to be uploaded and what the documentation should contain. There are also examples of activities that can provide prior learning.

The university's study counsellors should provide support and answer questions about the process of applying for prior learning, both for admission to education and for credit transfer.

#### 3.1 Application for Admission

An application for prior learning for admission is made in conjunction with the application for education via [antagning.se](http://antagning.se). When applying for a programme, the applicant must write a personal statement describing how the prior learning has been achieved. Documents that support the comprehensive prior learning claimed in the personal statement must be attached. These documents can be certificates from employers, organisations, study associations, or others that describe how and when the applicant's competence was achieved.

#### 3.2 Application for Credit Transfer

An application for prior learning for credit transfer in a programme must be made according to the university's Guidelines for Credit Transfer. The application can concern prior learning for an entire course or module/sub-test/element (sub-course).

### 4. Mapping Process

Mapping involves the university compiling and estimating whether there is sufficient basis to assess the applicant's merits based on the submitted documentation from the applicant. If the person mapping the application finds deficiencies in the material to be assessed, the applicant is contacted. The applicant is then given the opportunity to submit additional information.

#### 4.1 Mapping Eligibility for Admission

Mapping of eligibility for admission is carried out by administrators at the university's admissions unit. The person mapping and compiling the documents also assesses whether the material is assessable. When mapping prior learning for a subject that requires specific eligibility for admission, the admissions administrator can seek assistance from subject experts within the academy.

#### 4.2 Mapping Credit Transfer

Mapping for credit transfer is carried out by the administration at the respective department. The person mapping does not make an assessment but hands it over to the course coordinator or subject coordinator.

## 5. Assessment Process

Validation of prior learning is carried out by assessing the applicant's competence and evaluating it in relation to the objectives of the relevant education and courses. The objectives for education are outlined in the Higher Education Act, the appendix to the Higher Education Ordinance (degree ordinance), course and programme syllabi, and local regulations.

Assessment of prior learning is based on the materials submitted with the application. The assessor may request additional assessment materials if they identify deficiencies or have questions. This could include documentation, assessment interviews, and/or work samples where the applicant's knowledge and skills can be further demonstrated. A decision on prior learning is a recognition or non-recognition of the knowledge and skills an individual already possesses.

The university should adopt a flexible, fair, and generous approach. This means that the university should consider the overall objectives of the education or course in the validation process, i.e., make a holistic assessment.

### 5.1 Assessing Eligibility for Admission

The assessment is carried out by admissions officers at the admissions unit of Luleå University of Technology. The crucial factor in validating prior learning for eligibility for admission should be the student's ability to commence an education and ensure that it is possible for the applicant to achieve the degree objectives.

#### 5.1.1 Assessing Basic Eligibility

An applicant achieves prior learning for basic eligibility if they have equivalent knowledge to those who meet the formal requirements for basic eligibility. Information about basic eligibility can be found on [antagning.se](http://antagning.se). The University and Higher Education Council's Assessment Handbook also contains information on the assessment of basic eligibility.

The university follows the recommendation of the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (SUHF) for the assessment of general prior learning for basic eligibility. According to the recommendation, applicants are considered to meet the basic eligibility if they fulfil the following criteria:

- At least a grade of Pass or E in:
  - Swedish/Swedish as a Second Language A + B or Swedish/Swedish as a Second Language 1, 2, and 3
  - English A or English 5 and 6
  - Mathematics A or Mathematics 1a, b, or c
  - Social Studies A or Social Studies 1b or 1a1 + 1a2
- And three years of work experience at least half-time after the age of 19

After the assessment, a decision is formulated, and the applicant receives the decision in the admission notice.

### 5.1.2 Assessing Specific Eligibility

When assessing prior learning for specific eligibility, the applicant's knowledge is tested against the learning objectives of the qualifying course(s) based on established course and programme syllabi. Knowledge and skills should mainly correspond to the formal eligibility requirements. The assessment, carried out by admissions officers at Luleå University of Technology, is based on the written and oral materials provided by the applicant in the application. If support is needed to assess the requirement for specific eligibility, the admissions officer contacts the programme director for the education.

After the assessment, a decision is formulated, and the applicant receives the decision in the admission notice.

### 5.2 Assessing Credit Transfer

A student who is admitted to and pursuing higher education at the university should be given the opportunity to have their accumulated knowledge and competencies assessed based on their prior learning to shorten the duration of their studies.

Assessment of prior learning for credit transfer should be based on the objectives for education at the undergraduate and advanced levels according to the Higher Education Act, Chapter 1, Sections 8 and 9, as well as the specific objectives in the current course syllabus. The assessment can be made against an entire course or module/sub-test/element (sub-course). A decision on credit transfer thus constitutes a recognition of the knowledge and skills an individual already possesses in relation to the content and objectives of the module/sub-test/element (sub-course) to which the application pertains. The crucial factor in the assessment should be the student's ability to complete the subsequent courses in the programme and ensure that the programme's degree objectives are met. In applying these provisions, the university should not act too restrictively.

According to the Vice-Chancellor's decision and delegation order at Luleå University of Technology, the head of each department is responsible for decisions on credit transfer at the undergraduate and advanced levels. The head of the department can delegate the task further to the main programme director, programme director, or subject representative. Assessment of prior learning for credit transfer is carried out by subject experts or examiners for the relevant course, in accordance with the department's working routines for this task.

The relevant department communicates the decision on credit transfer to the student.

Credit transfers based on prior learning are not graded. Documentation in Ladok and degree certificates is the same for credit transfers, regardless of whether it is formal or prior learning that has been credited.

## 6. Selection for Admission after Assessment of Prior Learning

Applicants who are granted prior learning for basic or specific eligibility need a merit rating to compete for study places. A merit rating is given to those who have a final or leaving certificate from upper secondary school, adult education, or an assessment from a folk high school. They participate in the respective selection group with the merit rating that the grade/assessment provides.

Another way to compete for study places is for the applicant to have a valid result from a higher education entrance examination. Valid results from the higher education entrance examination are registered on [Antagning.se](http://Antagning.se). If there is a valid result from a higher education entrance examination, the

applicant will automatically be included in the selection group for the higher education entrance examination (HP).

If there is no valid higher education entrance examination result or merit rating from a final or leaving certificate, the applicant will be placed in the selection group for other applicants (ÖS).

The assessment of prior learning does not affect the merit rating.

## 7. Appeal

In the event of a rejection of eligibility for education or credit transfer, the student has the right to appeal the decision. See more in Luleå University of Technology's decided Guidelines for Appeals.

Decisions by the Appeals Board cannot be appealed.