


Aalto University policy on credit transfer (in force until 31.7.2021)

[Suomeksi](#) | [På svenska](#)

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Under the Universities Act (558/2009, section 44) and the Aalto University General Regulations on Teaching and Studying (section 36), Aalto University issues the following policy on credit transfer:

1 Purpose and scope of application

The purpose of the policy is to allow the *identification* and *recognition* of student learning gained elsewhere towards a degree and thus to facilitate the student's completion of the degree and acquisition of new knowledge. The policy guidelines apply to credit transfer and accreditation of learning demonstrated in some other manner towards Aalto University degrees.

The policy guidelines do not apply to teaching that Aalto University may arrange with, or procure from, another university or university of applied sciences ('*opetusyhdistyö*' (teaching collaboration) as used in the Universities Act (558/2009)) (see section 4.1 below). The policy is not applicable to joint or double-degree studies in a curriculum confirmed by Aalto University and is applicable only to a limited extent to studies completed at Aalto University (see section 4.4 below).

2 Definitions related to credit transfer

Credit transfer refers to the recognition of studies, work placement, work experience or learning as part of a degree or a course, either as obligatory or elective studies (Higher Education Glossary 2005).

Identification of learning refers to the method of establishing the level of the student's learning and capacity to meet the learning outcomes on the basis of the documents and other possible evidence provided by the student.

Recognition of prior learning refers to the method whereby learning the [student](#) gained and demonstrated elsewhere is either [included in, or substituted for elements in](#), the student's degree.

Substitution means that studies completed *elsewhere* or learning *demonstrated otherwise than through formal education* compensate for studies included in the degree requirements. Substitution requires that the contents and level of the studies or *other learning* correspond to those of the studies substituted for.

Inclusion means that studies completed or *learning gained elsewhere or learning demonstrated otherwise than through formal education* is included in the degree as elective studies, for instance. Inclusion does not require that the contents of the learning correspond exactly to the contents of specific degree requirements. However, inclusion does require that the included studies or *other learning* fulfil the learning outcomes of the degree and correspond to the level of the degree requirements.

Accreditation of learning demonstrated in some other manner means, in these policy guidelines, recognising learning gained outside formal education either as credits towards the degree or in some other form.

In these general policy guidelines, credit transfer refers to both substitution and inclusion unless otherwise specified.

3 General principles of credit transfer

A precondition for credit transfer are competence-based degree requirements and curricula that provide adequately detailed descriptions of the learning outcomes of the degrees, degree programmes, study modules and courses.

The process of preparing the personal study plan of the student (HOPS) includes the identification of any relevant and demonstrable prior learning of the student that could be counted towards his or her Aalto University degree. Students are instructed to apply for credit transfer in cases where they would otherwise have to repeat learning that they have already demonstrated.

Credit transfer always requires that the prior learning be in line with the learning outcomes set for the degree and for the component towards which credit transfer is sought, such as a course. Credit transfer cannot be sought for learning that has already been demonstrated for the degree or counted towards it as transfer credits. The student must be able to provide evidence for his or her learning in a form that is suitable for assessment. Whether the learning was already included in some other degree is unimportant from a credit transfer standpoint.

For the purposes of credit transfer, studies or learning demonstrated in some other manner are regarded as having the same period of validity as that defined for the student's Aalto degree studies (in the relevant degree regulations). However, for special reasons, credits for older studies or older learning demonstrated in some other manner may also be transferred to the degree.

As a rule, the awarding of a degree by Aalto University requires that at least half of the studies counted towards a bachelor's or master's degree, including the thesis and the maturity essay, has been completed in accordance with the curriculum of the degree programme of the student. For licentiate and doctoral degrees, however, the scope of the thesis or dissertation may actually account for more than half of the studies; therefore, the portion of transfer credits for theory studies at that level is not limited.

An exception to the general rule are transfer students, for whom the portion of transfer credits in the degree may also account for more than half of the total, but no credit transfer is possible for earlier theses or maturity essays (inasmuch as the essay is evaluated for demonstrating conversancy with the thesis topic). The previous studies of transfer students are transferred for credit to the maximum extent allowed by the structure and learning outcomes of the degree.

4 Transfer of credits for formal education

Aalto University degree students may transfer credits towards their degrees for studies *completed at other Finnish or foreign higher education institutions or educational establishments*, provided the studies meet the learning outcomes of the degree and programme pursued.

The studies for which credits are sought have to be at a sufficiently high level and relevant in the light of the degree requirements and curricula.

Credits towards the minor are transferred in accordance with the curriculum of the relevant Aalto school. As a general rule, the studies included in the minor have to be modules already prepared or otherwise approved by a higher education institution in Finland or abroad.

Substitution requires that the substitute course meets the learning outcomes of the course it substitutes for and is, as a rule, equal or greater in scope than the latter. However, the substitute course may be up to one credit less in scope than the Aalto course if it meets the Aalto learning outcomes. Credits for the Aalto course being substituted for are entered into the student register (student information system) with the scope defined in the degree requirements and marked as transfer credits. One may also apply for a substitution in which several courses completed elsewhere compensate for a single Aalto course. In such cases as well, the Aalto course that is being substituted for is entered into the system with the number of credits indicated in the Aalto degree requirements.

Partial substitution for a course is also possible. The end result of the processing of a credit transfer application may be that it is not possible to substitute for a course in its entirety, but that some additional test or demonstration as arranged with the teacher is still needed in order for the student to receive the full credits. The demonstration of learning may be an oral or written test, for example, or an essay, portfolio or assignment. Partial credit transfer is not marked as transfer credit in the student register; the student receives a regular course completion mark instead. Study attainments of this kind are not counted as credit-transfer studies and they do not bring the total number of credits transferred nearer to the maximum allowed amount.

4.1 Credit transfer for studies completed at a university of applied sciences

Credit transfer may be sought for studies completed at a university of applied sciences (UAS) if the learning outcomes are met. UAS studies may, as a rule, be included in the elective studies of bachelor's and master's degrees.

A completed UAS module may be included as a minor in an Aalto bachelor's degree. The only UAS modules that may be included as minors in a master's degree are advanced studies completed at the master's degree level. Bachelor's level modules completed at a UAS may not, however, be included as minors in a master's degree.

4.2 Transfer of credits from degrees granting eligibility to pursue a master's degree

In cases where a student has earned the right to study towards a master's degree on the basis of previous studies or a previous degree, credits may be transferred only if the master's degree was completed without a separable bachelor's degree. In such cases, credits may be transferred for the master's level studies. Studies outside of the degree that was used as the basis for eligibility, but that were taken into account in a suitability assessment, may be transferred for credit in most cases.

4.3 Credit transfer for compulsory language studies

'Compulsory language studies' refers to the proficiency required in Finland's national languages and in at least one foreign language, pursuant to section 6 of the Government Decree on University Degrees (794/2004 as amended).

The requirement under section 6 regarding learning outcomes as applied to specific fields of education at Aalto (business, art and technology) refers primarily to students' proficiency to operate and communicate as experts in their field. The language studies for credit transfer do not have to be completed in the same field of education.

4.4 Transfer of credit for studies completed at another Aalto degree programme

Studies completed at another Aalto University degree programme may usually be counted towards the degree without a credit transfer procedure.

Studies are counted towards the degree without a credit transfer procedure in accordance with an approved personal study plan (HOPS) in cases where the student:

- completes individual courses or a minor at another Aalto University school or unit (e.g. at Aalto University Open University, or with a right to study permitting internal student mobility)
- changes to a different study option or degree programme within the field of technology before finishing his or her bachelor's degree
- changes to a different study option or degree programme within the field of technology through an entrance examination.

Prior studies are counted towards the Aalto University degree through a credit transfer procedure in cases where the student:

- has been admitted as a transfer student from a different field of education at Aalto University (credit transfer is required because the studies lead to a different degree)
- has already completed a degree at Aalto University and is now pursuing another (e.g. has a prior Bachelor of Science (Economics and Business Administration) degree and is pursuing a Bachelor of Science (Technology) degree; Bachelor of Science (Technology)-> Bachelor of Science (Technology) degree)
- is simultaneously pursuing two different degrees at Aalto University (e.g. an MSc (Tech) and an MSc (Econ. & Bus. Admin) degree).

When transferring credits for courses that are already in the Aalto University student register, the transfer credits are not entered into the system a second time with the same course code, but counted towards another appropriate course in the degree.

4.5 Transfer credits in double and joint degrees

As the present guidelines on credit transfer are inapplicable to studies towards double and joint degree programmes completed at another university or higher education institution in accordance with the curriculum of the degree programme, such studies may account for more than one half of the credits of the degree.

The credit transfer procedure will, however, be used as applicable in cases where students wish to have studies counted towards their degree that are not part of their degree programme's curriculum.

5 Accreditation of learning gained outside formal education

Aalto University degree students may transfer to their degrees credits for learning that was gained outside formal education, provided it meets the learning outcomes of the degree and programme pursued.

Learning that may be accredited towards a degree may be gained outside formal education, for instance, through independent study, positions of responsibility, hobbies or work. It should be noted that, when assessing prior learning, the focus is on the knowledge and skills gained rather than the experience itself.

Prior learning may be evidenced through certificates, exams, portfolios, essays, interviews or other applicable procedures as deemed appropriate by the assessor of the prior learning. The methods used for assessing learning gained outside formal education may also be used to complement the assessment of transfer credits for formal education.

As a rule, prior learning gained outside formal education is identified in two alternative ways at Aalto University:

1. Students may apply for credit transfer when they identify that they have attained the learning outcomes of an Aalto course through learning outside formal education. In such cases, the prior learning of the student is compared to the learning outcomes of the courses towards which transfer credits are claimed. The student may be required to provide additional evidence of his or her learning through, for example, as an oral or written test, an essay, portfolio or assignment.
Where the prior learning meets the course learning outcomes only partially and the student is required to provide the course teacher-in-charge with supplementary evidence of his or her learning to complete the course, the course credits are not considered transfer credits (and are therefore not bound by the rule that no more than 50% of the degree may be earned through credit transfer).
2. Aalto University acknowledges some established means of gaining learning outside formal education (e.g. Aalto University positions of responsibility, work placements). This type of learning is recognised in the form of courses specifically set up for the purpose of claiming credits for prior experience in an agreed-upon manner. Another way of accrediting learning demonstrated in some other manner towards the degree is entering the credits with a course code for 'a course with varying contents'. In such cases, the learning of the student is assessed against the learning outcomes of his or her degree programme or degree. This procedure allows any learning gained elsewhere that is relevant to the degree to be accredited towards the degree by decision of the director of the degree programme. This process does not constitute credit transfer.

6 Credit transfer procedure

Attending degree students may apply for credit transfer in writing from their Aalto school when they have completed the studies or gained the learning demonstrated in some other manner for which credit transfer is sought.

Credit transfer applications of transfer students are processed in connection with the application for student admissions. Similarly, the processing of applications of students going on a student exchange or planning to pursue studies elsewhere may be started before the studies have been completed, provided the credit transfer is based on an accepted plan.

The preparation and decision-making process for credit transfer applications complies with the guidelines given on the presentation procedure for matters of public administration at Aalto University (28 November 2011). The decision on credit transfer is made by a relevant member of the Aalto academic staff. Decision-making may be delegated to Learning Services staff if there is a precedent or guideline on credit transfer that is relevant to the case. Guidelines and expert opinions on credit transfer for language courses are given by the Language Centre. Learning Services is responsible for the introduction and maintenance of a databank of credit transfer precedents and guidelines.

The credits transferred for studies or learning demonstrated in some other manner are marked in the student register so that the origin of the credits or prior learning is visible. A favourable decision on credit transfer must indicate the scope of the credit transfer in credits, the grade assigned, the studies it substitutes for or the module the studies have been included in. Studies completed or other than formal learning gained outside Aalto University are graded Pass when credits are transferred.

Students dissatisfied with their credit transfer decision may appeal against it as provided in the Universities Act (558/2009).

7 Entry into force and transitional provisions

This policy enters into force on 1 August 2018. Credit transfer applications submitted prior to 1 August 2018 are processed in accordance with the credit transfer guidelines in force at the time of application.