Dear students,

We have started to receive questions about the Practice module from some of you. One recurrent question is the following: "Can I count work experience obtained prior to enrolling in this Masters program in lieu of the Practice module listed in my curriculum?"

From 2015, we will put in place explicit rules to deal with this question. The principles are as follows.

1. If you register to the courses MTAT.03.206 (Practical Training in Information Technology) and/or MTAT.03.237 (Practical Training in Informatics), you must complete a professional practice DURING your Masters program. In other words, if you register to these courses, you cannot count work experience obtained before officially enrolling in the Masters program. Also, you must achieve the three milestones of these courses, which are: (i) submitting your signed practice plan; and (ii) submitting your signed practice report; and (iii) give an oral presentation (practice defense). The amount of work completed must be equal to at least 160 hours per 6 ECTS, so if you are completing 12 ECTS this means 320 hours, and if completing 18 ECTS this means 480 hours. The practice may have started (or even completed) before the semester when you registered to MTAT.03.206 and/or MTAT.03.237, but in any case the practice must take place DURING your period of enrollment in the Masters program.

2. If you have at least several years of relevant professional experience obtained BEFORE your enrollment in the Masters program, you may apply for "Recognition of Prior Learning" and obtain the credits for MTAT.03.206 (12 ECTS) and/or MTAT.03.237 (6 ECTS) without registering to these courses. The form for requesting recognition of prior learning (RPL) is available here: http://www.ut.ee/en/RPL

The RPL form must be submitted to the Dean’s office, together with documentary evidence of your previous experience, covering at least three years. The RPL form will go through a procedure and you will normally be notified within a couple of weeks if it is approved. The main point that will be checked is whether you have at least two years experience if you are claiming MTAT.03.206, or one year experience if you are claiming MTAT.03.237, or three years experience if you are claiming both.

Very important: if you ask for RPL for MTAT.03.206 and your request is approved, you should not register to the course MTAT.03.206 (and same for MTAT.03.237). In other words, obtaining RPL for a course means you get the credit-points without registering for that course. Conversely, if you register to a course and start it, you cannot claim RPL for that course in the middle of the semester.

To make the ideas clearer, let me give you some scenarios:
- Prior to enrolling in the Masters program, Mark had 4 years part-time experience (50%) as a software engineer at a company called WorkingMouse in London. This is equivalent to 2 years of full-time experience. Mark can request RPL for MTAT.03.206 by submitting the RPL form and a letter from WorkingMouse certifying his experience, the duration of the experience, and whether it was full-time or part-time. If his RPL request is approved, he would obtain 12 ECTS for his prior experience. But he still has to complete another 6 ECTS worth of courses listed under the "Practice Module" of his Masters curriculum. For example, he could complete the "Software Project" course (6
ECTS) in the autumn semester of 2015.
- Prior to enrolling in the Masters program, Tiina had one year full-time experience as a software tester at WorkingMouse in London. Tiina can request RPL for MTAT.03.237 by submitting the RPL form and a letter from WorkingMouse certifying her experience. If his RPL is approved, he would still have to complete another 12 ECTS worth of courses listed under the "Practice Module" of his Masters curriculum. For example, he could complete the "Software Entrepreneurship Project" course (12 ECTS) or she could complete an internship of 320 hours in a company during her Masters program and enroll in MTAT.03.206.
- Helen enrolled in the Masters program in September 2014. She had 9 months experience as an analyst in a company prior to enrolling in the Masters program. Helen cannot obtain RPL for neither MTAT.03.237 nor for MTAT.03.206. Later on, between April and August 2015, Helen did a software development internship at a company in Tartu called FabulousSoftware. She did not register neither to MTAT.03.206 nor to MTAT.03.237 in the spring semester of 2015 because at the time when registrations were open, she did not know she would get an internship at FabulousSoftware. She worked in total 500 hours at FabulousSoftware during 2015. Helen can register to MTAT.03.206 and MTAT.03.237 in the autumn semester of 2015, submit a practice plan and a practice report and defend her practice whenever the lecturer of MTAT.03.206/237 organizes a practice defense session. If she successfully defends her practice, she will get the 18 ECTS for these courses.

More information about the Practical Training courses, including requirements for practice plans, reports and defenses are available in the corresponding course web site:
https://courses.cs.ut.ee/2015/praktika/spring/Main/Lectures

We understand the rules are a bit complicated, especially for those who have worked part-time in the past. In the doubt, please schedule an appointment with the coordinator of the practice course (Vambola Leping), to clear up your questions.

In any case, if you plan to ask for RPL for professional practice, PLEASE do so as soon as possible. Do not leave it to the second or third semester because if your RPL request is rejected, it would be difficult for you to find alternative arrangements in the fourth semester...

All the best

Marlon Dumas and Vambola Leping