

RULES

FOR ORGANIZING, CONDUCTING AND PROVIDING ELECTRONIC DISTANCE LEARNING AT THE EUROPEAN POLYTECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Section I.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Art. 1, (1) These rules regulate the organizing, conducting and financing of distance learning at the European Polytechnical University (EPU).

(2) The Rules for distance forms of learning in EPU, called shortly the Rules, have been developed in accordance with the Higher Education Act (HEA), the Ordinance on state requirements for organizing distance forms of learning in higher schools, the Criterial System for evaluation and accreditation of the Distance Forms of Learning (DFL) of the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA), as well as the normative university base for distance learning at the "Pegaso" University.

(3) The Rules regulate specific issues of DFL, which are not regulated in the Rules for structure and activity of the EPU, as well as in other internal university regulations and regulations.

Art. 2. The distance form of learning at the EPU is applied for acquiring of higher education for the educational qualification degrees "bachelor" (BSc), "master" (MSc), for raising the qualification of specialists with secondary and higher education in specialties or separate disciplines, and after respective accreditation - and for educational and scientific degree "doctor" (PhD).

Art. 3. The distance form of learning at the EPU is organized and conducted for professional fields, that have received program accreditation from the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency and specialties, which have received accreditation for distance form of learning.

Art. 4. The distance form of learning at the EPU is equal to its respective regular form of learning in terms of the curriculum content, the required number of credits for the respective specialty, the diploma for acquired educational-qualification degree and professional qualification.

Art. 5. The distance form of learning at the EPU is carried out using modern information and communication technologies.

Art. 6. The distance form of learning at the EPU is organized in accordance with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

Section II.

DISTANCE LEARNING ORGANIZATION

Art. 8. (1) The activity for planning, organization and support for conducting of distance learning at the EPU is realized through the Center for distance learning (CDL), which also carries out the technical and technological provision of the learning.

Art. 9. The CDL develops the system for management of distance learning, supports the pilot introduction and development of DFL, develops and maintains information and communication environment for DFL, organizes the qualification of lecturers from the university for distance learning, develops directories for the organization of access to information resources, technical and communication means, independently or together with the main units of the university carries out international relations in the field of distance learning.

Art. 10. For implementation of technological and technical provision of distance learning the CDL develops rules to be adopted by the Academic Council (AC) of the EPU:

- a. rules for preparation of educational documentation for distance learning at the EPU;
- b. rules for teaching materials preparation and attestation and assessment of the distance learning at the EPU;
- c. standards and procedures for design, creation and licensing of e-learning activities and resources in accordance with a methodology specific to e-learning and distance learning, and in accordance with the Copyright and Related Rights Act.

Art. 11. The teaching-methodical and content provision of the distance learning is carried out by the main unit conducting the training in the accredited specialty.

Art. 12. The main units of the university that conduct distance learning:

1. offer courses and specialties for which admission and learning in distance form will be organized depending on the degree of readiness for its provision;
2. prepare and submit for approval by the AC of educational documentation for distance form of learning;
3. prepare and submit for approval by the AC of educational-methodical materials and resources for distance learning;
4. prepare an annual schedule of the educational process for distance learning and determine the periods of consultations and examinations for the specialties in which distance learning is conducted;
5. implement all activities for organization and conducting of the training independently or jointly with CDL;
6. ensure and maintain the quality of the distance form of education in accordance with the university System for assessment and maintenance of the quality of education SAMQE;
7. independently or together with CDF promote the distance form of learning inside and outside the university.

Section III

UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT FOR DISTANCE FORM OF LEARNING

Art. 13. The information infrastructure for DFL of the EPU includes:

1. electronic educational and administrative activities;
2. repository of electronic educational courses, activities and resources, including electronic test units and tests;
3. systems for management of electronically based assessments and final tests with establishment of attempts for plagiarism and with storage of examination data and student works in electronic archive for at least 5 years;
4. system for identification of the students and control of the respective procedures - in the cases of electronic conducting of examinations and assessment;
5. software platforms for distance learning with opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous learning and remote authorized permanent access of students, teachers and administrators to activities, resources and systems under items 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Art. 14. The distance learning environment is classified into four levels:

1. first level - having functioning elements and means under art. 13, items 1, 3 and 4, as well as access to electronic training courses, activities and resources, suitable for learning, assessment, self-preparation and support of students, doctoral students and postgraduates in various forms of education;
2. second level - having functioning elements and means under art. 13, items 1 and 2 as



each specialty in distance form of education is provided by a system for management of electronically based assessments and final tests under art. 13, item 3 and item 4 and from a software platform under Art. 13, item 5;

3. third level - having functioning elements and means under art. 13, items 1 and 2 as each specialty in distance learning is provided by a system for management of electronically based assessments and final tests under art. 13, item 3 and item 4 and from a software platform under Article 13, item 5 with access to shared information resources, including:
 - a) student and teacher electronic registers;
 - b) repository of e-learning courses and resources for all specialties and forms of training in the professional field;
 - c) electronic archive, including documentation, good practices and results of conducted e-learning for all specialties and forms of training in the professional field;
4. fourth level - meets the requirements of item 3 for all specialties in distance learning, which use the same system for management of electronically based assessments and final tests under Article 13, item 3 and item 4, and institutional software platform under Art. 13, item 5, based on a digital archive with consistent and non-duplicated data, and means for their export to the electronic platform under Art. 75, para. b of the Higher Education Act.

Art. 15. The level of the information and technological provision degree in the implementation of distance learning is determined by the NEAA within the procedure for institutional accreditation or through an independent procedure at the request of the respective higher education institution for the term of the already granted institutional accreditation.

Section IV

ORGANIZATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS IN DISTANCE LEARNING

Art. 16. (1) The distance form of learning is a form for acquiring higher education, in which students, teachers and administrators may be divided by location, but not necessarily by time, as the created distance is compensated with technologies, methods and means of e-learning. Overcoming the distance requires modeling of the relevant learning and administrative activities such as information processes and their implementation using information and communication technologies.

(2) Distance learning uses information and communication technologies to manage the learning process with distance participation of diverse (by type and functional purpose) and different (by location, mode of participation and time of use) human, material and information resources.

Art. 17. (1) The admission of students in distance form of learning is carried out according to the HEA, the Ordinance on the state requirements for admission of students in the higher schools of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Ordinance on the state requirements for organizing distance learning in higher schools, the Rules on the EPU structure and activity, the Rules on admission of students to the EPU, in which there is a special section for distance students.

(2) The admission of students and PhD students in distance form of learning is carried out within the approved number candidates by the order of art. 9, para. 3, item 6 of the HEA.

(3) The admission in distance form of learning is carried out according to the Rules on structure and activity of EPU and the Rules on admission of students in EPU on the basis of submitted documents, successfully passed written competitive exam (if required for the respective educational degree) and inclusion in training order.

Art. 18. (1) Trainees in distance learning may be students and PhD students, studying for educational-qualification degree "bachelor" and "master" and for the educational and scientific degree

"doctor", as well as specialists for raising and updating of their qualification.

(2) The students and PhD students in distance learning have the rights and the obligations of the students and the PhD students from regular form of education.

(3) Students and PhD students in distance learning receive:

1. right of access to the information system for distance learning and electronic address for communication;
2. educational and methodical materials on paper or their electronic variants;
3. opportunity for participation in the system for quality control of the training.

(4) During the first period of attendance the person in charge of the distance form of education in the main unit shall organize an introductory course for acquainting the newly admitted students with the technology of the interactive connection between students and lecturers and the organization of access to information resources.

(5) Periodically training courses are carried out for acquaintance of lecturers and administrators with the technology for realization of the interactive connection between the students and the lecturers and the organization of the access to the information resources.

Art. 19. (1) The distance learning is conducted according to educational documentation (qualification characteristic, curriculum, study programs, required number of credits for receiving a diploma for completed educational qualification degree and professional qualification, developed on the basis of the educational documentation for the respective specialty in full-time education.

(2) The training in DFL is organized on the basis of educational documentation on a joint proposal of the main unit, leading the training, and CDL.

(3) The educational documentation for distance learning is submitted for approval by the AC of EPU according to the HEA, the Ordinance on the state requirements for admission of students in the higher schools of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Ordinance on the state requirements for organizing distance learning in higher schools and the Rules on the structure and activity of the EPU.

Art. 20. (1) In DFL the educational process is carried out through means for electronic training and electronic management, among which:

1. Electronic learning activities for creating and delivering learning content; for teaching; for individual and group work; for discussions; for self-assessment and mutual evaluation; for evaluation; to support groups or individual learners; for communications, etc.

2. Electronic administrative services for monitoring the learning process life cycle; for remote access to information; for payments; for issuing documents; to settle a student situation; to perform student duties, etc.

Art. 21. (1) The DFL is organized on the basis of an Information package, adopted by the AC upon proposal of the main unit, leading the education, supported by a reasoned opinion of CDL.

(2) The information package includes: the educational documentation under art. 39, para. 2 of the HEA; List of the team of research and teaching, administrators and technical staff; Instruction for access to electronic resources and services; Description of testing and evaluation systems; Guide for using the respective distance learning platform; Distance student guide, etc.

(3) The information package is available for students in electronic format.

Art. 22. (1) The educational materials and resources for providing the distance learning is developed according to rules for preparation and attestation of educational-methodical materials and assessment in distance learning at EPU.

1. Not less than 50% of the elective courses are available in a distance learning platform;

2. Not less than 50% of the main information sources to the curriculum of a compulsory

subject curriculum are available through or in a distance learning platform.

Art. 23. The DFL is organized and conducted by a team, which includes:

1. Scientific-teaching staff, determined in accordance with the requirements of art. 48 and art. 52 of the HEA and the Ordinance on the state requirements for acquiring higher education qualification degrees "bachelor" and "master", and educational and scientific degree "doctor", adopted by Decree № 162 of the Ministerial Council since 2002 and with proven competencies in the field of e-learning.

2. Administrators responsible for the logistical provision of the DFL, incl. for the operational functioning of electronic administrative procedures.

3. Technical team responsible for the communication connectivity, maintenance, operation and information security of the respective distance learning platform, as well as for the personal data processed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 and the Personal Data Protection Act.

Art. 24. (1) The organization of the DFL of students, doctoral students and postgraduates may also include attendance periods, when this corresponds to the specifics of the specialty and to the needs of the trainees.

(2) The attendance periods under para 1 is held in the main units of the higher school, established under the conditions and the order of the Law for higher education.

(3) The present periods of training may not exceed 15% of the total number of hours of employment of the trainees according to the curriculum.

(4) The absent part of the classes, provided in the plan for regular form of education, in case of distance learning is conducted in the form of self-preparation, synchronous and asynchronous communication with holders and assistants from the teaching team, taking tests, preparation of course works, projects, etc.

(5) The synchronous communication with the students is carried out according to a schedule prepared in advance by the department for consultations with each lecturer.

Art. 25. (1) CDL prepare and propose for approval a system of rules for planning, formation and reporting of the workload of the academic staff, participating in the organization, conducting and providing of a DFL. This system is adopted by the AC of the EPU.

(2) The classroom employment of the academic staff in distance learning includes activities such as:

1. teaching in an auditorium and a virtual classroom;
2. synchronously during the participation of lecturers and students in electronic learning activities according to the curriculum;

3. work in an electronic learning environment to support students and PhD students with feedback.

(3) Outside the classroom employment consists in designing, developing and updating e-learning courses and resources.

(4) The reporting of the workload of the academic staff in distance learning, as well as of the participation of trainees in electronic learning activities, is based on electronic means and analysis of the learning process.

(5) Analysis of the training process is performed by an extract from the systems for synchronous and asynchronous conducting of the training by the head of departments and the director of CDL.

Art. 26. (1) The organization of the studentses knowledge and skills examination is carried out in accordance with the Law for the higher education, the Rles on the structure and the activity

of EPU and is determined in rules for preparation and attestation of educational-methodical materials and assessment at distance learning in EPU.

(2) The conduct of semester and state examinations and videoconference defense of diploma theses in DFL is conducted depending on the level of the environment, determined by the NEAA.

(3) In case of electronic conducting of current assessment and examinations, sufficient guarantees is provided for the presence of the respective student and ensuring transparency of the examination procedures.

Art. 27. The training in DFL ends with the defense of a diploma thesis (DT) or a state exam (SE) by the order of the Rules on the structure and activity of the EPU.

Section V

DISTANCE LEARNING FINANCING

Art. 28. Distance learning is financed by:

1. revenues from tuition fees;
2. funds of the founder;
3. own funds of the university;
4. funds from different types of programs or projects;
5. donations;
6. other legal means.

Art. 29. Each main unit conducting distance learning obligatorily prepares a financial plan, providing self-sufficiency of the training.

Art. 30. Fees for distance learning are determined annually and are adopted by the Board of Trustees.

Art. 31. The expenses for preparation, organization and conducting of distance learning is paid in accordance with the rules of the EPU and the methodology adopted by the Board of Trustees for distribution of the funds from distance learning fees.

Art. 32. The workload of the teaching staff during the conduct of distance learning is reported under the Rules for teaching and (or) research employment, part "Distance learning".

Section VI.

TRANSITIONAL AND FINAL PROVISIONS

§1. These rules have been created on the basis of and in accordance with the following laws and normative acts: Law on Higher Education (amended and supplemented, SG No. 17/25.02.2020), Ordinance on state requirements for the organization of distance learning in higher schools (SG. issue 21/12 March 2021), Rules on the structure and activity of the EPU.

§2. These Rules were adopted by the AC on 29.12.2020 and shall enter into force on the date of its adoption.