

SOME PREVIOUSLY RELEVANT ASPECTS OF ACADEMIC LIFE: *VENIA LEGENDI* AND THE STATUS OF A *PRIVATE DOCENT* AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA (1919–1944)

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Summary. The article presents the results of the research on *venia legendi* (the right to deliver lectures at the university) and the status of *private docent* at the University of Latvia (UL) until 1944. The term «*private docent*» was used worldwide in the 18th century; it is still in use in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. In Latvia, it was introduced in the 1860s at the first higher education institution established in the current territory of Latvia – Riga Polytechnicum. The terms «*private docent*» and «*venia legendi*» were used in Latvia until the end of World War II. In the present study, the author explains how these terms were used at the UL during the interwar period and during World War II considering the empirical data obtained in the course of research of archival documents and library collections. The article provides an overview of the *private docents* working at the UL from 1919 to 1944 and their activities in this period.

Keywords: *venia legendi*, status of *private docent*, habilitation, University of Latvia.

Introduction

In his research into the history of higher education in Latvia, the author has focused on the comprehensive study of academic traditions. Their origins can be traced back to the world of academia, however, the concept of «*venia legendi*», or the right to deliver lectures at a university,

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and the status of a *private docent*, are intrinsically connected with the development of the academic traditions of the European cultural space. These traditions were greatly influenced by the order established in the German universities, which also significantly affected the institutional framework of higher education in the Russian Empire and also in Latvia, including the oldest university in Latvia – Riga Polytechnicum, which was established in 1862 and is now known as Riga Technical University. The study on the emergence of the concept of *venia legendi* and the position of the *private docent* in the world and their introduction and use at Riga Polytechnicum (1862–1896) was published in the 5th issue of the journal «History of Engineering Sciences and Institutions of Higher Education» in 2021 [1]. Both these terms were commonly used in Latvia until the end of World War II. Given that these terms are often misunderstood, the author has studied their use at the UL (until 1923 – the Latvian Higher School (LHS); UL – 1923–1940; 1941–1942; the State University of Latvia (SUL) – 1940–1941; the University of Riga – 1942–1944). It may be argued that a dedicated model of the institution of the *private docent* was developed at the UL. At present in Latvia, the title «*private docent*» and the term «*venia legendi*» are used only with the reference to the activities and traditions of higher education institutions in the 19th and 20th centuries, and they are considered historical artifacts. Only a few European countries (Austria, Germany, and Switzerland) have sustained these traditions and *private docents* still make a real group of academic staff.

Private Docents at the University of Latvia: Establishment and Further Development of the Institution of Private Docents

The idea that *private docents* would be needed at the newly established national university was expressed at the meeting of the Council of the Latvian Higher School on 2 September 1919, when it was decided to single out several categories of academic staff, but no decision was made at that time [2]. In academic year 1919/1920, only *Pēteris Sniķers* (1875–1944) (Faculty of Medicine) was considered *private docent*; he had obtained this status at the University of Tartu in 1917 and had not yet begun his academic career [3]. It was not until the spring of 1920 that the issue of attracting academic staff to the university on a freelance basis was brought up again regarding the persons receiving a full salary at another employer [4].

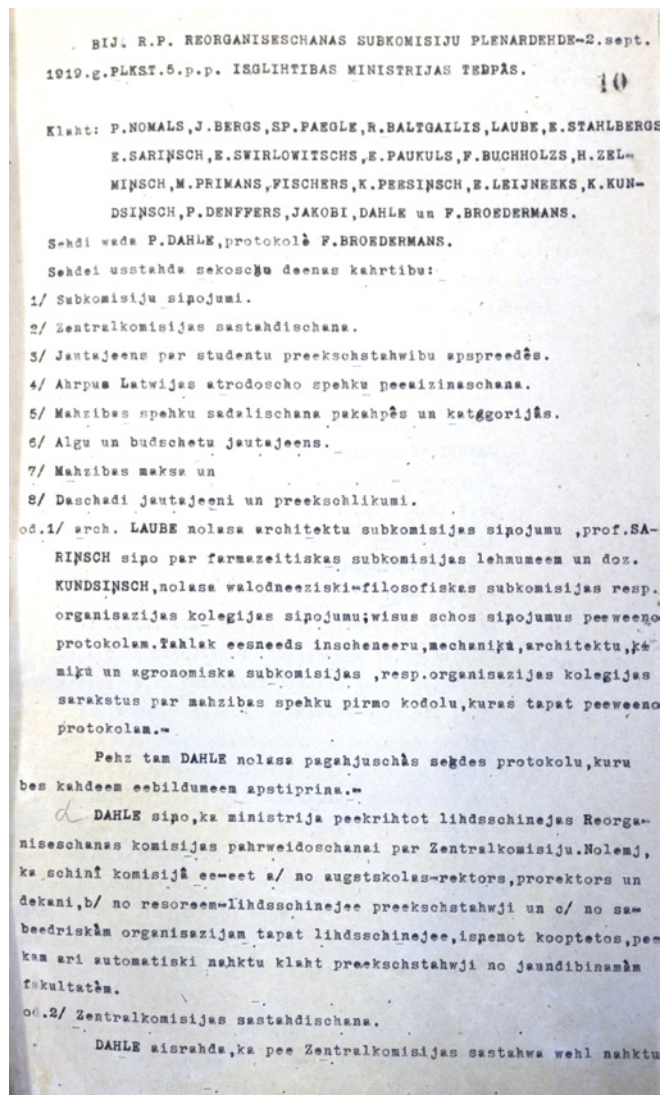


Figure 1.
Fragment of
the minutes of
the meeting of
the Council of
the LHS (2 Sep
1919).

At the initiative of the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine *Roberts Krimbergs* (1874–1941), on 4 October 1920, the Deans' Council discussed the possibility of entrusting delivery of some study courses to *private docents* who would receive remuneration without taking positions of the heads of departments. In turn, *Kārlis Kundziņš* (1883–1967) suggested introducing a clause that this status should necessarily imply the granting of *venia legendi*. At the next meeting on 11 October, it was additionally stipulated that candidates should deliver two demonstration lectures [5; pp. 85–89]. The first *private docents* were

elected in 1920/1921, in addition, a number of candidates who had been nominated by the faculty for the position of *private docents* (such as Philipp Schweinfurt (1887–1954), an art historian) were approved by the Council of the LHS as assistant professors. It should be emphasized that until the spring of 1923, most persons who had acquired the right of a *private docent* were freelance academic staff who taught only a few hours a week.

In the Constitution of the University of Latvia approved by the *Saeima* on 23 March 1923, four articles of Chapter IV «Teaching Staff and Additional Scientific and Pedagogical Staff» were dedicated to the status of the *private docent* [6]:

- «67. In addition to the teaching staff, who are directly employed by the University, *private docents* may be allowed to deliver lectures upon request.
68. Candidates for the demonstration lecture shall be selected by the faculty: the election takes place at the University Council with more than half of the votes of the present members. The requirements regarding the necessary degrees provided for in Articles 60 and 61 shall apply to *private docents*.
69. Faculty may also entrust the delivery of the compulsory courses provided in the curriculum to the *private docents*. In that case, they shall receive appropriate remuneration from the University.
70. *Private docents* who have not delivered lectures for 2 semesters, except in case of illness and scientific business trips, lose the title of the *private docent*».

Changes in the practice of employing *private docents* were initiated by Rector (1923–1925) *Jānis Ruberts* (1874–1934) at the meeting of the Deans' Council on 1 October 1923. *J. Ruberts* suggested paying more attention to the institution of *private docents* in connection with assistants – «the procedure would be as follows: an assistant who has been declared worthy of promotion should submit an article *pro venia legendi* to the faculty. If the faculty accepts the article, the assistant will be awarded the title of a *private docent* after conducting one or two demonstration lectures (one on a topic of their choice, the other – on the topic assigned by the faculty at its own discretion). [...] If the candidate demonstrates the required pedagogical abilities, then, when the vacancy opens, after a certain period one can be elected an assistant professor, and then professor» [7; pp. 118–119]. A few weeks later, *Alfrēds Petrikalns* (1887–1948), a lecturer and assistant at the Faculty of Chemistry, was appointed a *private docent* by the University Council. In the course of discussion of such a procedure for nominating *private docents* at the University Council in early 1924, a representative of the Faculty

of Mechanics supported it in principle with regard to the lecturers delivering the theoretical courses and the promotion of existing assistants, but at the same time emphasized that the candidates with the long-term practical experience in the respective industry should have been elected to deliver specialised courses [8; pp. 179–184].

The first report on the UL activities, which covered five academic years (until the end of academic year 1923/1924), contained the regulations on the habilitation procedure of only two faculties (Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences and Faculty of Mechanics), while the requirements for obtaining a doctorate were laid down for most faculties, although application of these requirements was less relevant than the granting of the status of a *private docent*. The regulations of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences emphasized that the habilitation paper must «demonstrate the inherent features of independent research» and present «new research results or application of new methods», therefore, neither surveys or reviews of the previous works nor textbooks could be submitted unless they contained the original author's data. In these regulations, it was specified that the topics of both demonstration lectures should have been suggested by the applicant, whereas the faculty would inform the applicant which of them would be delivered 15 minutes before the meeting. Moreover, if the lecture had been considered not sufficiently good, the applicant should have repeatedly proposed two new topics [9; pp. 221–261].

The Faculty of Mechanics required the habilitation paper be independent in nature, allowing it to be a fully developed project in case the candidate was to be elected to deliver technical subjects. In this case, however, the candidate should have met an additional condition for obtaining the status of a *private docent* – to have at least five years of successful work experience in the field of specialisation. No formal examinations were required, but an option for the selection board to examine the candidates in the form of a colloquium was reserved [9; pp. 83–119]. The report of the Faculty of Medicine, on the other hand, comprised a brief explanation that only the persons holding *Dr. med.* degree could have obtained the status of a *private docent*. The candidates had to submit their research papers for evaluation (rather than a specific habilitation paper) and deliver two demonstration lectures [9; pp. 176–209].

Prior to the adoption of the joint regulation, many cases involving the awarding of the title of a *private docent* had to be considered individually. For example, in the autumn of 1925, *Jānis Miķelsons* (1888–1952), a Senior Assistant at the Faculty of Medicine, applied for the status of a *private docent*, requesting that his recently defended doctoral dissertation be considered a *venia legendi* paper [7; pp. 231–233]. Although the

decision was made in favour of *J. Miķelsons*, it was agreed that a separate regulation on habilitation papers was needed to rule such a possibility out in future. In the autumn of 1925, the Deans' Council suggested that «the titles of professors, assistant professors, and *private docents* in Latvia may be used only by the persons who have actually held or are holding these positions in the Latvian state higher education institutions» [7; pp. 234–236]. In practice, however, some individuals, including a neurologist *Dr. med. Hermanis Īdelsons* (1869–1944) and a historian of philosophy *Marks Vaintrobs* (1895–1941), used the title of the *private docent* obtained at the Russian universities in signing their publications.

The draft Regulation on Habilitation was developed by the lecturers of the Faculty of Chemistry, it was sent for consideration to the other faculties in December 1925 [7; pp. 237–239]. In order to reconcile the differing opinions on the document, the Conciliation Committee was established on 17 January 1927. The Committee included *Roberts Akmentiņš* (1880–1956), Paul von Denffer (1871–1959) and *Ludvigs Kundziņš* (1855–1940) and was chaired by *R. Krimbergs* [7; pp. 279–280]. Habilitation Regulation was approved by the University Council on 4 May 1927 [8; pp. 23–27].

Article 3 of the Regulation stipulates that the habilitation paper must demonstrate the features of an independent research (in technical disciplines, a scientific and technical project or a work of art accompanied by a theoretical explanation may also be recognized as *pro venia legendi*). A committee consisting of three persons should have been established to evaluate the paper submitted to the faculty and it should have provided its opinion on the applicant within three months (Article 4). After getting acquainted with the Committee's report, the Faculty Council should have voted whether the work could be considered sufficient *pro venia legendi* (Article 5), thus, the viva voce of the thesis (as opposed to the doctoral dissertation) was not envisaged. In case of a positive vote, the faculty determined the time and topic of the applicant's demonstration lecture (Article 6), which should have taken place within two weeks. The lecture was supposed to last 45 minutes, after that the participants in the lecture could ask questions about both the lecture and the habilitation paper (Article 7). If the Faculty Council deemed it necessary, it could request the applicant to deliver the second lecture on the topic of their choice at the next meeting. The decision on granting the right to the title of the *private docent* was made by the faculty by secret ballot by a simple majority of votes.

Although most *private docents* delivered non-compulsory study courses, in many cases, due to the excessive workload of the senior lecturers of the faculty, they were also asked to teach important basic

courses that made an essential core of the entire study process. For example, the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences planned that in academic year 1928/1929, *Kārlis Ābele* (1896–1961), *Pauls Galenieks* (1891–1962), *Marģeris Gūtmanis* (1885–1959), *Arvīds Lūsis* (1900–1969), *Marija Tīlmane* (1889–1975), Nikolai von Transehe (1886–1969), and *Aleksandrs Zāmelis* (1897–1943) would teach compulsory study courses receiving remuneration according to the assistant professor rate [10; pp. 125–131].

By analogy with the Russian and German universities, *private docents* of the UL were not considered full-fledged members of the faculty, since only full-time professors and assistant professors were considered the members of permanent staff [10; pp. 196–201]. However, the Constitution of the UL provided for the representation of freelance lecturers (including *private docents*) both at the University Council (one person from all freelance professors, assistant professors, *private docents* and lecturers) and at the faculty councils (one delegate from freelance lecturers and assistants, if the total number was from 1 to 10 and two if their number exceeded 10) [6].

Remuneration for the academic work performed by the *private docents* to a large extent depended on the financial capacity of the university, therefore, it decreased sharply during the economic crisis (from 1929 to 1933). On the other hand, when the economic situation in the country improved, 18 000 lats of the university budget were allocated for covering the expenses of the study courses delivered by the *private docents* in academic year 1936/1937. The money was supposed to be distributed to the faculties in accordance with the following principles – «To cover expenses of the compulsory and elective courses, but in some cases also of the non-compulsory courses, the expediency of which is sufficiently motivated. Specific proposals shall be considered at the beginning of the following semester based on the same allocation principle, so that each faculty would be able to fund one such course delivered by the *private docent*, determining the amount of remuneration according to the rates of assistant professors or assistants depending on the material condition of the candidate [11; pp. 33–39].

At the end of 1939, when the amount of available funds decreased due to World War II, it was decided to stop paying compensation for the optional courses delivered by the *private docents* in both semesters of 1940. The courses delivered by the psychiatrist *Verners Kraulis* (1904–1944) and *Fricis Blumbahs* (1864–1949) (see Table 1; pp. 19–21), for whom the money he earned at the university was an essential source of subsistence, were an exception [12; pp. 134–141].

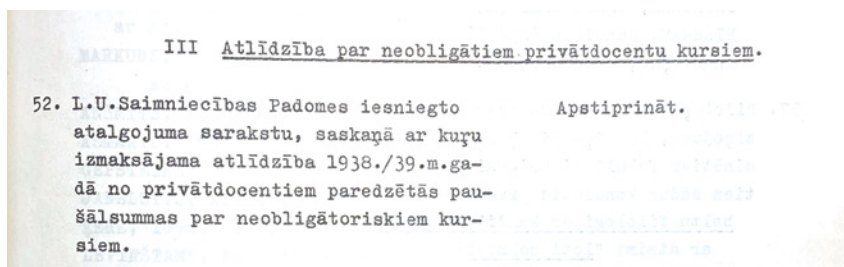
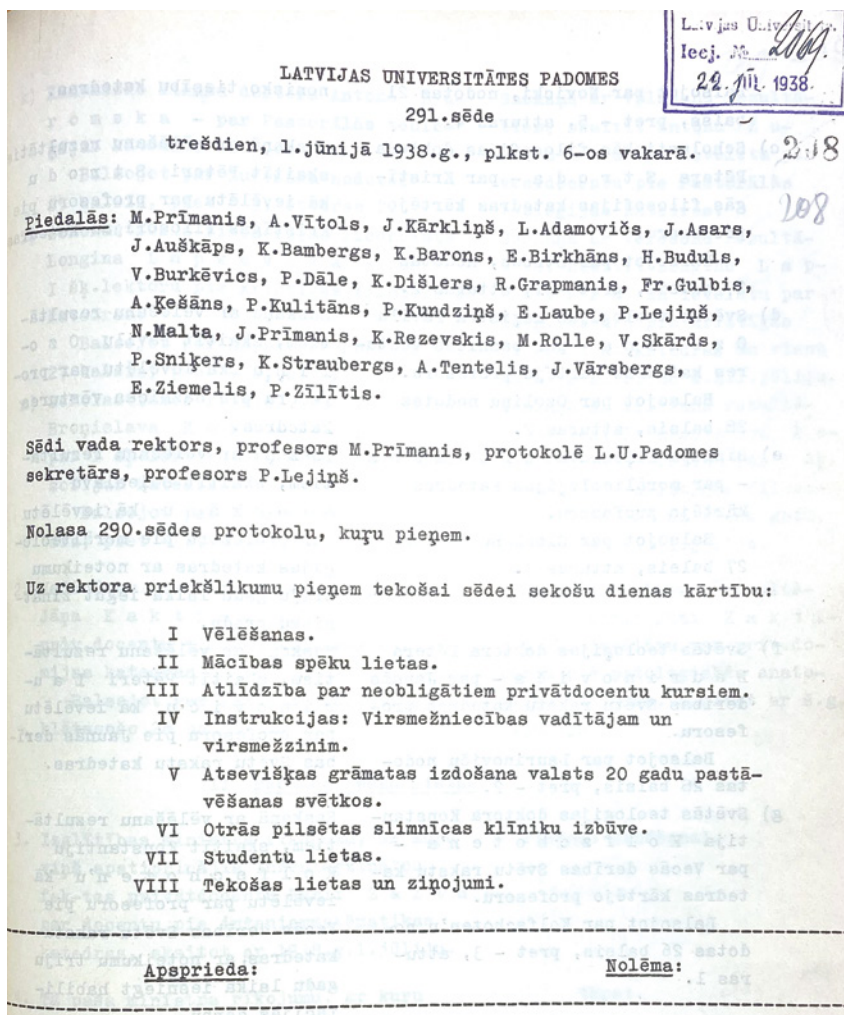


Figure 2. Title page and Paragraph 52 of the Minutes of the 291st meeting of the Council of the UL (1938).

Table 1

Titular (special) *private docents* at the University of Latvia

No.	Name, Surname	Faculty	Field or delivered course	Date of election	Notes
1.	<i>Pēteris Sņiķers</i> (1875–1944)	Medicine	Did not deliver lectures, participated in the establishment of the Faculty of Medicine	Was a member of the Sub-Committee of the Faculty from 28 Aug 1919	Status was determined in acad. year 1919/1920 based on the title of the <i>Private Docent</i> obtained from the University of Dorpat in 1917; <i>Private Docent</i> until 1921, then Assistant Professor, since 1923 – Professor.
2.	Karl von Loewis of Menar (1855–1930)	Philology and Philosophy	Archaeology, auxiliary disciplines of history	5 Oct 1921	A person without completed academic education, but a recognised researcher, worked until 1 Jul 1925.
3.	<i>Andrejs Skuja</i> (1866–1950)	Medicine	«Internal Diseases»	12 Oct 1921	Due to the lack of teaching staff, he was offered the position in his capacity of the Head of the Department of Riga 1st City Hospital, worked until the end of 1938; in 15 May 1925, his <i>pro venia legendi</i> paper «Septic Diseases and their Treatment» was accepted.
4.	Kurt Hach (1881–1964)	Medicine	«Internal Diseases»	12 Oct 1921	Due to the lack of teaching staff, he was offered the position in his capacity of the Head of the Department of Riga 1st City Hospital; delivered lectures only in acad. year 1921/1922, was formally considered a member of academic staff until the end of 1922.
5.	Ivan Ostromislensky (Иван Остромысленский; 1880–1939)	Chemistry	«Chemotherapeutic Preparations» and «Synthesis of Rubber»	16 Nov 1921	Member of academic staff at several Moscow universities; delivered lectures without remuneration, released on 1 Jul 1922 (moved to the USA).

6.	Nikolai von Ozmidoff (1850–1938)	Mechanics	«Theoretical Foundations of Electrical Engineering» (optional course)	22 Dec 1922	Retired RPI Professor; there is no evidence that he actually delivered lectures. He was nominated to teach in Russian for three years, but he was over 70 years old and it was necessary to find out whether the position of a <i>Private Docent</i> was considered public service.
7.	<i>Gustavs Reinhardts</i> (1868–1937)	Medicine	Special courses on various eye diseases	17 Jan 1923	Worked in the Sub-Committee of the Faculty and in the Council of the LHS; until then, he was an Assistant Professor delivering classes on ophthalmology. When <i>J. Ruberts</i> moved and was appointed the Head of the Department, there were no other vacancies for a professor or assistant professor; election as a <i>Private Docent</i> defined his status at the UL.
8.	Anatoly Ugrjumov (<i>Анатолий Узрюмов</i> ; 1872–1929)	National Economics and Law	«Military Criminal Law»	17 Oct 1923	From 1920 to 1923, he worked in the Latvian Military Courts Administration, then at the Ministry of Justice; received remuneration acc. to the rate of the junior assistant professor; delivered lectures until his demise on 25 Sept 1929.
9.	Nikolajs Kohanovskis (<i>Николай Кохановский</i> ; 1870–1966)	National Economics and Law	«National Economic Theory» and «History of the National Economics»	23 Jan 1924	Former Professor at the University of the Far East; remuneration acc. to the professor's rate; delivered lectures until the spring of 1929, not re-elected because of the inability to switch to lecturing in the state language.

10.	Boris Vipper (<i>Борис Виппер</i> ; 1888–1967)	Architecture / Philology and Philosophy	Taught various courses in art history and art theory	08 Oct 1924	Former member of academic staff at Moscow University; since 1924 he also taught at the Latvian Academy of Arts; at the same time he delivered lectures at the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy, which he joined in 1930. Since 1931 – Assistant Professor at the UL, since 1932 – Professor.
11.	Alexander Kruglevsky (<i>Александр Круглевский</i> ; 1886–1964)	National Economics and Law	Delivered courses in criminal policy and criminal law theory	22 Oct 1924	Former Professor at Tomsk University; remuneration acc. to the rate of a freelance professor; <i>Private Docent</i> until 1940, as well as from 1941 to 1944; Professor in acad. year 1940/1941 and from 1944 to 1948.
12.	Adam Oehrlein (1892–1935)	Medicine	Delivered various courses in orthodontics and dental prosthetics	05 Nov 1925	<i>Private Docent</i> at the University of Heidelberg, invited to the UL after feedback on the works; delivered lectures until his demise on 11 August 1935.
13.	Eugen Weber (1875–1947)	Medicine	Radiology	14 Dec 1927	Former Professor at Kiev University; taught compulsory course on radiology as <i>a Private Docent</i> until 1939, from 1940 to 1944 – Professor.
14.	Pauls Sakss (1878–1966)	Theology	Orthodox church music and singing	02 Feb 1938	Professor of the Latvian Conservatory; invited to deliver lectures in acad. year 1937/1938 in the newly opened Department of Orthodox Theology of the Faculty of Theology.
15.	Fricis Blumbahs (1864–1949)	Mathematics and Natural Sciences	Special and elective courses in physics	24.05.1939	After returning from the United Kingdom in the spring of 1939, confirmed with four paid lecture hours per week; <i>Private Docent</i> until 1944, then – Professor of the SUL from 1944 to 1949.

The traditions established during the period of the Russian Empire still influenced the awarding of the status of the *private docent* at various faculties, therefore, at several, i. e. the «old» faculties of the university (especially the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy and the Faculty of National Economics and Law), many difficult examinations were envisioned for the candidates for habilitation, which were at least partially comparable to the examinations of Master's degree candidates. Such traditions were less strictly observed at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, where the main attention was paid to the novelty of the submitted work, as well as at the technical faculties. The Faculty of Medicine, on the other hand, adhered to the same procedure as in the Tsarist times, requesting that only persons holding a doctoral degree who had previously passed difficult and prolonged examinations could have become *private docents* [13].

The Faculty of National Economics and Law decided that starting from academic year 1938/1939, the title of the *private docent* would be awarded only to the applicants who both had submitted a paper *pro venia legendi* and passed the oral doctoral examinations, while persons who had already passed the examinations required for habilitation would not be required to repeat them before obtaining a doctoral degree [11; pp. 208–217]. This decision eliminated the need for double examinations, but created a situation when the habilitation paper accepted by the faculty alone did not allow the applicant to become a *private docent*. Therefore, the number of habilitation theses accepted at this faculty exceeded the number of persons who obtained the status of the *private docent* [14].

For a long time, the UL did not have a procedure for storing *pro venia legendi* papers, many of which were handwritten in some copies, at the library making them available to all interested parties. By analogy with the requirements for doctoral dissertations of 1937 [15], on the initiative of the Rector, the University Council ruled on 26 April 1939 that the habilitation theses should be submitted in four copies, one of which should have remained at the faculty library (the other three should have been sent to the reviewers), and it should have been available at the Faculty Registry Office 14 days before the decision of the faculty council [12; pp. 37–43].

From the point of view of spelling, the question how to properly abbreviate the long word «*private docent*» in the press or encyclopaedic publications was discussed several times in the linguistic circles. Professor *Jānis Endzelīns* pointed out that the common abbreviation *priv. doc.* was misleading from a linguistic point of view, as it suggests that the full form consists of two words rather than a compound word (in Latvian) [16]. He recommended using *privdoc.* or *priv.-doc.*, however,

from the point of view of the modern language practice, this type of hyphenation is not desirable, therefore, *privdoc.* or even *privātdoc.* (in Latvian) should be used.

Some Previously Relevant Aspects of Academic Life: *Venia Legendi* and the Status of a *Private Docent* at the University of Latvia (1919–1944)

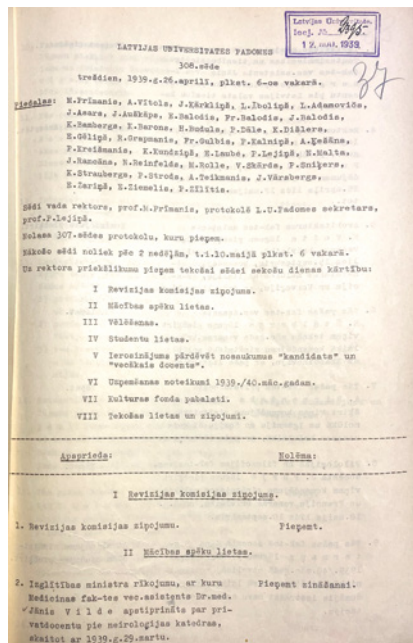


Figure 3. Title page and Paragraph 42 of the Minutes of the 308th meeting of the Council of the UL (1939).

Dynamics of the Number of *Private Docents* and Groups

Although the title of the persons who had acquired the right for *venia legendi* was the same, the group of persons holding this title was quite heterogeneous both in terms of their real academic workload and remuneration, and in terms of legal ties with the university. According to their type of activity, it has already been proposed to classify *private docents* into two groups [13]:

- 1) classical *private docents* (they could be considered real freelance lecturers, but such a designation would be inaccurate, because in addition to these *private docents* there were some freelance professors and assistant professors, as well as lecturers, assistants and instructors), who worked in other, often well-paid places. Their only connection with the university was the fact that they were delivering certain (more often elective) lecture courses, so they

corresponded most closely to the *private docents* of the German or Russian Empire by the nature of their activities;

- 2) *private docents*, who at the time of habilitation were also staff assistants and, among other duties, had acquired the right to deliver an elective lecture course in their specialty. Habilitation procedure was the only aspect these persons had in common with classical *private docents*, as their main place of work was university. In order not to confuse them with the first group, both components should be mentioned in the description of their academic status, such as *private docent* and Senior Assistant *Eduards Rencis* (1898–1962). If a vacancy of a senior lecturer opened, these persons were most often the main candidates for the position of an assistant professor or professor.

Sometimes the status of a *private docent* could change, most often if the person resigned from the position of an assistant, preserving the rights of a *private docent*, therefore the affiliation to one or another group can be determined more precisely by the relationship with the university at the time of habilitation. In relative terms, most *private docents* in the classical understanding of the term worked at the faculties (Philology and Philosophy, Theology), where the list of staff provided for a very small number of assistants. At the Faculty of Medicine, on the other hand, a part of the classical *private docents* were its former assistants, who had temporarily stopped working at the university after obtaining a doctoral degree. At the technical faculties, there were relatively few *private docents* who were involved in teaching only certain study courses for a long time. Among them were *Jānis Leimanis* (1881–1967), a railway construction specialist at the Faculty of Engineering, who worked as a *private docent* from 1925 to 1944 (in academic year 1940/1941 as an assistant professor on an hourly basis docents), and *Arturs Dinbergs* (1887–1969), rubber production technologist at the Faculty of Chemistry (taught from 1939 to 1944), *Ādolfs Vickopfs* (1878–1967), wood processing technologist at the Faculty of Mechanics (taught from 1935 to 1944).

The distribution of all UL *private docents* according to their affiliation with the faculty and compliance with one of the groups is summarized in Table 2 (pp. 25–27), which contains information on 259 persons. The table presents information on the persons who acquired this status after the spring of 1939 and about whom no information can be found in the twentieth anniversary edition of the UL. It can be seen that this number is significantly higher than the number of persons who acquired *venia legendi* (177) indicated by *L. Adamovičs* by the spring of 1939 [17].

Table 2

Private docents at the University of Latvia

Faculty	Classic private docents	Assistants with the right of a private docents	Titular private docents	Total
Architecture	-	3 (including Jānis Rutmanis who became private docent in acad. year 1943/1944)	1 (meaning art historian Boriss Vipers, who was attached to this faculty from 1924 to 1930, and then to the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy)	4
Philology and Philosophy	23 (including Valdis Ģinters, Edīte Hauzenberga-Šturma and Kārlis Plukšs who became private docents in acad. year 1941/1942; and Lūcija Bērziņa who became private docent in acad. year 1943/1944)	1	1	25
Engineering	5 (including Jānis Kurzens and Pēteris Stakle who became private docents in acad. year 1939/1940)	14 (including Jānis Ātrēns, Jūlijs Baumanis and Viktors Freijs who became private docents in acad. year 1939/1940; and Alfrēds Jumiķis who became private docent in acad. year 1941/1942)	-	19
Chemistry	3	18 (including Valdemārs Stālis who became private docent in acad. year 1942/1943; and Laimonis Bofjārs who became private docent in acad. year 1943/1944)	1	22

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Agricultural (until the establishment of JAA)	3	23	-	26 ¹
Mathematics and Natural Sciences	10 (including <i>Kārlis Princis</i> who became <i>private docent</i> in acad. year 1939/1940; and <i>Jānis Vitiņš</i> who became <i>private docent</i> in acad. year 1941/1942)	29 (including <i>Arvids Apinis</i> and <i>Nikolajs Brāzma</i> who became <i>private docents</i> in acad. year 1939/1940; <i>Aleksis Dreimanis</i> and <i>Valdemārs Murevskis</i> who became <i>private docents</i> in acad. year 1941/1942; <i>Ludvigs Jansons</i> , <i>Anna Krogē</i> and <i>Jānis Rutkis</i> who became <i>private docents</i> in acad. year 1942/1943)	1	40
Medicine	18 (including <i>Jānis Alfrēds Skuja</i> , <i>Nikolajs Vētra</i> and <i>Teodors Vītols</i> who became <i>private docents</i> in acad. year 1939/1940; <i>Osvālds Mačs</i> who became <i>private docent</i> in acad. year 1941/1942; <i>Viktors Kalniņš</i> , <i>Raimunds Pavašars</i> who became <i>private docents</i> in acad. year 1942/1943; and <i>Jēkabs Nīmanis</i> who became <i>private docent</i> in acad. year 1943/1944)	27 (including <i>Jānis Āboliņš</i> , <i>Arveds Alksnis</i> and <i>Marta Vīgante</i> who became <i>private docents</i> in acad. year 1939/1940; <i>Jānis Arnolds Eglītis</i> , <i>Teodors Upners</i> and <i>Pēteris Vegers</i> who became <i>private docents</i> in acad. year 1941/1942)	6	51

¹ From the autumn of 1939 to the summer of 1944, at least nine other lecturers underwent habilitation at Jelgava Academy of Agriculture (JAA).

Mechanics	5	21 (including <i>Jānis Bubenko</i> and <i>Jānis Inveiss</i> who became <i>private docents</i> in acad. year 1939/1940; <i>Jānis Muižnieks</i> who became <i>private docent</i> in acad. year 1942/1943)	1	27
National Economics and Law	7 (including <i>Hugo Vitols</i> who became <i>private docent</i> in acad. year 1942/1943)	12 (including <i>Jānis Pagasts</i> who became <i>private docent</i> in acad. year 1939/1940; and <i>Kārlis Zīverts</i> who became <i>private docent</i> in acad. year 1943/1944)	3	22
Veterinary medicine	1	8 (including <i>Aleksejs Iļukēvičs</i> , who possibly became <i>private docent</i> in acad. year 1942/1943)	-	9
Theology	10 (including <i>Haralds Biezais</i> who became <i>private docent</i> in acad. year 1939/1940; <i>Edmunds Šmits</i> who became <i>private docent</i> in acad. year 1943/1944)	2	1	13
Roman Catholic Theology	1	-	-	1
	87	157	15	259

Some Previously Relevant Aspects of Academic Life: *Venia Legendi* and the Status of a *Private Docent* at the University of Latvia (1919–1944)

In many cases, the institute of *private docent* and the related habilitation were considered as a logical next stage after the scholarship holder was allowed to remain at the faculty to start scientific work [18]. Not all faculties considered the selection of scholarship holders to be the most successful model, therefore, at the Faculty of Engineering and Agriculture, the first step to academic work was the status of a sub-assistant at a certain department already during their studies. As Professor *Gustavs Klaustiņš* (1880–1937) emphasized in the discussions of the second half of the 1930s, there was no shortage of promising lecturers in the technical fields, there was a typical professional advancement of the teaching staff from a sub-assistant to an assistant, then a senior assistant and a *private docent* to an assistant professor or professor [19].

In contrast, at the faculties, including the Faculty of National Economics and Law and the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy, where there were already few assistantships on the staff lists, scholarships were more widely used. The uncertainty of positions and careers of the *private docents* as described by Max Weber was characterised in the student press of academic year 1940/1941, where the conversation of the head of the department with his student was reported [20], «You are now receiving the Morberg Foundation scholarship .., but what will you do when you have obtained the title of the *private docent* and lose the right to receive a scholarship?». An economist *Benjamiņš Treijs* (1914–2002) also reflected upon this episode, describing it as part of his personal experience in some other words [21].

Thus, it can be stated with certainty that the model established by the UL, which was based on the gradual advancement of assistants to the position of *private docents*, was quite different from the prevailing order in the German or Russian universities, where most representatives of this group of university staff really worked only on the freelance basis. Respectively, they were classical *private docents*. Such differences can be explained both by the material difficulties of the society after World War I, which prevented the formation of a large group of classical *private docents*, with the exception of gymnasium teachers, who delivered individual courses at the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy and the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, and a small number of experienced doctors holding a doctorate, and with limited career opportunities in a small country with one university.

In addition to the two groups of *private docents* already discussed, Table 2 (pp. 25–27) highlights the third group, which the author proposes to call «titular (or special) *private docents*». It was formed by quite different persons in terms of age, academic experience and involvement in the study work at the UL, who had a common title of a

private docent and were united by a special status related to certain privileges, as well as different election and remuneration procedures. Most of these titles had been awarded at the stage of university formation, but in some cases they were granted also later, most often when a new department had to be established or a field of study had to be strengthened with the previously unexplored field of science. A total of 15 people can be included in this group, most of whom were affiliated with the Faculty of Medicine and National Economics and Law. It is worth discussing this group in more detail, so its comprehensive description can be found in Table 1 (pp. 19–21).

Analysing the number of *private docents*, two aspects should be clearly distinguished, namely, how many active *private docents* worked at the university in each academic year, distinguishing *private docents* who were also staff assistants from others, and how many persons had acquired this status in the given academic year. Answering the first question, the news in the anniversary editions of the UL may be analysed, which indicate that the number of *private docents* working at the same time was increasing: from 10 (academic year 1920/1921) to 37 (academic year 1938/1939), steadily exceeding 30 throughout 1930s [17]. On the other hand, in the 1920s, the status of the *private docent* was acquired by an average of about 10 people, but in the 1930s, it increased to 15, reaching the highest number (23) in academic year 1938/1939. Active changes were also happening in academic year 1939/1940, when after emigration of the Baltic-Germans, several faculties had to significantly reorganize their curricula and attract new lecturers.

Another interesting issue is the persons who had applied for the status of the *private docent* but did not obtain it. Due to the limited number of surviving minutes of the meetings of the faculty councils (preferably the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy, Medicine, National Economics and Law, as well as the Faculty of Mechanics), it is difficult to get a comprehensive picture of the habilitation papers rejected by reviewers at the application stage. The Faculty of National Economics and Law seems to have been the most severe, as its minutes from 16 February 1928 to 23 February 1939 [22] contain information on three habilitation papers in economics and nine in law that were rejected as non-compliant. Taking into account that in this period 13 persons (six at the Department of National Economics, seven at the Department of Law) became *private docents* and nine more *pro venia legendi* papers were accepted, but the process of habilitation of applicants had not been completed yet, the proportion of rejected works was very high. In comparison, at a similar stage, 10 persons obtained the status of the *private docent* at the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy and one

habilitation was rejected [23], while at the Faculty of Mechanics – 18 papers were accepted and four were rejected [24].

In some cases, when the habilitation paper was accepted, demonstration lectures were positively evaluated and elections were held at the faculty council, the candidate for the status of a *private docent* was not approved by the University Council. Thus, *Teodors Hermanovskis* (1883–1964), a candidate who applied for delivery of the course on traffic policy at the Faculty of Engineering, was not elected in 1921. *Jānis Straubergs* (1886–1952), who was supposed to deliver an elective course «Aviation», was not elected by the Faculty of Mechanics in 1926. The voting for the status of the *private docent* for the engineering mathematician *Nikolajs Bomovskis* (1880–1942) was negative at the University Council in both the spring and autumn of 1929, he only obtained this status at the third attempt in the autumn of 1932.

UL *Private Docents* after the Loss of State Independence

In the autumn of 1940, when the university was reorganized to adapt to the Soviet system, the status of all remaining *private docents* was changed. In the absence of opportunities to be an assistant and a senior assistant professor at the same time, most of the academic staff with this status were appointed as assistant professors or acting assistant professors from 1 October 1940. On the other hand, the question of the adequacy of habilitation papers and the possible individual compliance with the degree system of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was not raised at that time.

After the change of occupation power in the summer of 1941, all transfers in the previous academic year were revoked and the situation as of the spring of 1940 was restored. In order to expand the range of lecturers, several lecturers from the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy and the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences were approved as *private docents* in the autumn of 1941, they were joined by several doctors in 1942 (see notes in Table 2, pp. 25–27). *Viktors Freijs* (1906–1998) and *Alfreds Jumīkis* (1907–1989), two lecturers of the Faculty of Engineering, obtained the title of the *private docent* in the spring of 1942. In 1943, *Jānis Muižnieks* (1911–1990), a specialist in aviation engines at the Faculty of Mechanics, and *Voldemārs Štāls* (1889–1979) at the Faculty of Chemistry obtained the status of the *private docent*. In 1944, *Laimonis Bajārs* (1908–1996) and *Jānis Rutmanis* (1894–1978) obtained the status of the *private docent* at the Faculty of Architecture. It is believed that the small number of representatives of technical faculties who became *private docents* during the German occupation (six out of 27 in total) was

due to the intensive habilitation of representatives of these fields in the late 1930s, so there was a lack of the candidates capable to develop more comprehensive papers.

During the war, the number of young *private docents* decreased every year due to wartime difficulties and uncertainties about the future of several research areas (such as the Latvian law or history), as well as the objections of the occupation authorities against certain candidates. As the then Vice-Rector (1940) of the UL *Kārlis Straubergs* (1890–1962) wrote in his memoirs, it was planned to deprive the university of the right to grant habilitation [25], therefore, in the last two academic years this case had to be discussed separately at the Dean's Council. In order not to differ significantly from the German universities, the issue whether the doctoral degree or at least a doctoral examination should have been required from all applicants was discussed again, however, in most cases it was decided to stick to the procedure that was in place at that time.

The fate of the *private docents* who remained in their homeland and their academic activities after the second Soviet occupation is a topic worth of special research. At least in some cases, for example, the habilitation papers of a physicist *Ludvigs Jansons* (1909–1958) and a mathematician *Nikolajs Brāzma* (1913–1981) became the basis for the USSR Supreme Attestation Commission to award them both the degree of the Candidate of Science and the scientific title of the Assistant Professor.

Evaluation of the UL Institution of *Private Docents*

In the publications on the history of the UL, the issue of the institution of the *private docent* is mostly discussed in connection with the training of new lecturers. *Jānis Hugo Inveiss* (1896–1981) acknowledged that the procedure for training lecturers established by the UL, which provided for habilitation and the acquisition of the right for the title of a *private docent*, is one of the biggest advantages of a democratically managed (self-regulating) university compared to the administrative bureaucratic universities of the USA [26]. It can be stated that he saw a successful synthesis of the career models of the German and American lecturers described by M. Weber in the UL practice (*J. H. Inveiss* underwent habilitation at the Faculty of Mechanics of the UL in the spring of 1940 after obtaining a doctorate). *Edgars Dunsdorfs* (1904–2002) also acknowledged that the requirements of the UL for new teachers were generally stricter than in the Anglo-Saxon countries [27]. *Nikolajs Balabkins* also wrote about the acquisition of *venia legendi* as an essential element of the European higher education system, considering

its absence to be a significant shortcoming in the higher education institutions of the USA [28]. At the end of his life, *Benjamiņš Treijs* (1914–2002) also praised the institution of the *private docents* as a logical stage on the way to an academic career. He had the opportunity to compare the advantages and disadvantages of the UL and the Soviet system [29]. Thus, it can be assumed that the model of the institution of the *private docent* in Latvia in the interwar period was appropriate for its time and sufficiently effective to ensure the change of the academic staff.

Conclusions

In the interwar period, the UL developed a peculiar model of the institution of the *private docents*, which at many faculties was created as a way for professional advancement for the junior academic staff.

Most of the *private docents* at the UL were junior members of academic staff, in contrast to the prevailing principles of employing *private docents* at the German and Russian universities, which focused on attracting persons working outside the university to academic work.

In the course of further research, it is necessary to collect information about the habilitation papers of all *private docents* of the UL (and applicants for this status) and their availability in the libraries.

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SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. Latvijas Augstskolas Organizācijas padomes sēdes protokola fragments. 02.09.1919. LNA LVVA 7427. f., 6. apr., 1. l., 10. lp.

Figure 2. Latvijas Universitātes Padomes sēžu protokoli, 1938. g. LNA LVVA 7427. f., 6. apr., 5. l., 208. lp.

Figure 3. Latvijas Universitātes Padomes sēžu protokoli, 1939. g. LNA LVVA 7427. f., 6. apr., 6. l., 37. lp.



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Daži agrāk aktuāli akadēmiskās dzīves aspekti: *venia legendi* un privātdocenta statuss Latvijas Universitātē (1919–1944)

Rakstā atspoguļoti autora pētījuma par *venia legendi* (tiesības lasīt lekcijas augstskolā) un privātdocenta statusu Latvijas Universitātē (LU) rezultāti. Jēdzienu «privātdocents» pasaulē lietoja jau 18. gadsimtā, un tas joprojām sastopams Vācijā, Austrijā un Šveicē. Latvijā tas tika ieviests 19. gadsimta 60. gados pirmajā augstskolā – Rīgas Politehnikumā. Apzīmējumu «privātdocents» un jēdzienu «*venia legendi*» Latvijā lietoja līdz Otrā pasaules kara beigām. Pētījumā autors ar piemēriem skaidrojis to lietošanu LU starpkaru laikā un Otrā pasaules kara laikā, balstoties arhīva dokumentu un bibliotēku krājumu izpētē. Tajā sniegts pārskats par augstskolas privātdocentiem un to darbību no 1919. līdz 1944. gadam.

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