

Established by Regulation No 9 of 12 December 2023 of the Senate of Tallinn University of Technology (entry into force 14 December 2023)

Amended by Regulation No 5 of 20 May 2025 of the Senate of Tallinn University of Technology (entry into force 1 August 2025)

Amended by Regulation No 8 of 16 June 2026 of the Senate of Tallinn University of Technology (entry into force 1 August 2026)

In force from: 01.08.2026

Rules for Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning

This Regulation is established on the basis of clause 5 (3) 1) of the Tallinn University of Technology Act.

§ 1. General provisions

(1) These Rules set out the conditions and procedure for the accreditation of prior and experiential learning (hereinafter referred to as "APEL") at Tallinn University of Technology (hereinafter referred to as "TalTech" or "the university").

(2) The objectives of APEL are to:

- 1) value lifelong learning and provide equal opportunities for assessing and recognising individuals' knowledge and skills, irrespective of when, where, and how they were acquired;
- 2) increase the educational and professional mobility of persons, including those with special needs, and enhance opportunities for lifelong learning;
- 3) ensure that learning outcomes acquired through education within a system comprising different levels (formal education), other organised learning activities (non-formal education), professional work experience, and learning through everyday and leisure activities (informal education) are recognised as equivalent to the learning outcomes achieved by completing a study programme or as sufficient to meet the admission requirements for a higher education programme in the relevant speciality or field of study ;
- 4) enable the university to respond flexibly to changes in the labour market and change of workforce needs.

(3) APEL is applied:

- 1) to complete a study programme, except in the cases specified in subsection (4);
- 2) to meet the admission requirement for prior higher education in the relevant speciality or field of study.

(4) APEL cannot be applied:

- 1) to pass a final examination or defend a graduation thesis;
- 2) to a part of a course that is recognised by agreement between the student and the lecturer responsible for the course;
- 3) to an internship, which shall be recognised in accordance with the internship guide;
- 4) to complete a module of a minor field of study;
- 5) to a course for which APEL is prohibited by an order of the dean.

(5) A graduation thesis, a final examination or an internship cannot be recognised as fulfilling the requirements of courses within a study programme. However, the knowledge acquired through these activities may be used in self-analysis.

(6) Once a student has declared a course in the study information system, he/she may no longer apply for APEL for that course on the basis of courses completed, experiential learning, continuing education or other knowledge acquired before the course was declared.

(7) Courses listed on the transcript of records accompanying a diploma awarded at a previous level of study may be recognised as elective or optional courses to the extent permitted by the study programme, provided that the workload completed at the previous level exceeded the programme's nominal workload. However, the number of credits recognised as elective or optional courses shall not exceed the number of credits completed beyond the nominal workload of the study programme at the previous level of study. There is no limit on the number of credits that may be recognised towards compulsory courses. [entry into force 01.08.2025]

§ 2. Advice and assessment

- (1) A person applying for APEL shall receive general information on APEL from a specialist in the Office of Academic Affairs.
- (2) Advice on APEL in a School or regional College shall be provided by one or more persons appointed by the dean (hereinafter referred to as "APEL advisers") and assessment in a School or regional College shall be carried out by one or more persons appointed by the dean (hereinafter referred to as "APEL assessor"). In the cases specified in subsections 4 (7) and (8) of the Rules, the dean shall establish an APEL assessment committee. [entry into force 01.08.2026]
- (3) The Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs shall establish an APEL Advisory Committee comprising representatives of the Schools, the regional Colleges, the Office of Academic Affairs, the Open University and the student body. The student representative on the APEL Advisory Committee shall be appointed by the Student Union. [entry into force 01.08.2026]
- (4) The APEL Advisory Committee shall be responsible for ensuring consistent implementation of APEL, deciding on general matters relating to APEL, analysing APEL cases and making proposals to amend the Rules.

§ 3. Submission and processing of applications for recognition towards completion of a study programme

- (1) An applicant may apply for recognition of learning acquired through formal education courses, continuing education courses, professional experience or independent study towards completion of a study programme by submitting an application (hereinafter referred to as "APEL application").
- (2) An APEL application shall include:
 - 1) the applicant's personal data;
 - 2) a list of the courses within the study programme for which recognition is sought and details of the prior learning to be recognised towards their completion;
 - 3) a list of the evidence submitted to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes of those courses.
- (3) A student shall submit an APEL application via the study information system.
- (4) A graduation thesis, a final examination or an internship cannot be recognised as fulfilling the requirements of courses within a study programme. However, the knowledge acquired through these activities may be used in self-analysis.
- (5) A list of evidence can include:
 - 1) a diploma, a diploma supplement, a certificate or other documents certifying prior studies, including continuing education courses, together with the learning outcomes or descriptions of the completed courses;
 - 2) a self-analysis and other relevant evidence of learning acquired through professional experience or everyday and leisure activities (a job description, a professional certificate, a portfolio or references to work completed, etc.).
- (6) The applicant shall be responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the documents and other materials submitted by him/her.
- (7) Where documents certifying formal education are submitted on paper, the originals shall be presented to the dean's office. Evidence of qualifications acquired abroad shall be accompanied by the assessment from the ENIC/NARIC centre.
- (8) The APEL fee rates and payment procedure shall be established by the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs. A fee shall be charged for the assessment of an APEL application unless the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs' order on APEL fees (hereinafter referred to as "the order") provides otherwise.
- (9) Once an APEL application has been submitted via the study information system, an invoice shall be issued to the applicant for processing the application in accordance with the order. Once the applicant has paid the invoice and the payment has been received in TalTech's bank account, the APEL adviser shall forward the application to the APEL assessor. If the invoice is not paid by the due date, the APEL application shall not be processed and shall be deemed invalid.
- (10) An APEL assessor shall review the APEL application and make an assessment decision within 30 calendar days of receiving the application. The APEL assessor may require the applicant to submit additional documents, pass a test, assessment or examination, or attend an interview. The deadline for

making the assessment decision shall be extended by the time required for these additional assessment activities. Whether the APEL application is approved or rejected, the APEL assessor shall attach the assessment decision and the reasons for it to the APEL application. The APEL adviser shall record a positive assessment decision in the study information system as fulfilment of the relevant study programme requirements. For an applicant who is not a student, the assessment decision shall be recorded in the study information system.

(11) Courses recognised following a positive assessment decision on an application submitted before 30 November in the autumn semester or before 30 April in the spring semester shall count towards the student's study load for the current semester. These deadlines do not apply to courses taken during a semester as a visiting student, while studying abroad or at TalTech Open University.

(12) The APEL adviser shall:

- 1) check the submitted APEL application and ask the applicant to revise or supplement it if necessary;
- 2) issue an invoice and verify that it has been paid;
- 3) forward a duly completed APEL application to the APEL assessor;
- 4) approve and register the applicant's APEL application in the study information system if the application is approved in part or in full. The assessment decision shall be available to the applicant in the study information system;

(13) The assessment decision for an applicant who is not a student shall remain valid for as long as studies are conducted under the study programme version on which the APEL application was based. After matriculation, the applicant shall submit a written request to the APEL adviser to record fulfilment of the relevant study programme requirements in the study information system on the basis of the assessment decision.

§ 4. General principles for assessing prior learning towards completion of a study programme

(1) When recognising learning acquired through prior formal education, the extent to which the acquired learning outcomes meet the requirements of the study programme shall be assessed. If the decision is positive, the original grade or assessment result shall be recorded in the student's academic record. If the assessment system of the other educational institution differs from that used at TalTech, pass/fail assessment shall be used, with a positive result recorded as "passed". When recognising learning acquired through formal education abroad, a positive result shall be recorded as "passed". The Office of Academic Affairs shall enter courses completed outside TalTech (hereinafter referred to as "non-TalTech courses") in the non-TalTech courses register and link them to the corresponding higher education institution. If the higher education institution is located abroad, the country shall be specified in the study information system. If the completion date is not specified in the document attached to the APEL application, the date on which the learning results are transferred shall be deemed to be the completion date.

(2) When recognition of learning acquired through continuing education or professional experience is sought towards completion of a study programme, the extent to which the acquired knowledge meets the requirements of the relevant courses shall be assessed. If the decision is positive, the corresponding course within the study programme shall be recorded in the student's academic record. Individual courses completed through continuing education may be recognised separately, or the continuing education programme may be recognised as a whole, towards completion of a study programme. Learning acquired through professional experience may be recognised towards completion of the corresponding course within a study programme. The assessment result shall be recorded as "passed", using pass/fail assessment. The date on which the learning results are transferred shall be recorded as the completion date.

(3) When recognition of learning acquired through continuing education is sought towards completion of a doctoral study programme that does not include a corresponding course, the extent to which the acquired knowledge meets the learning outcomes of the programme or the relevant module shall be assessed. The intended learning outcomes of the training shall be approved by both the doctoral student's supervisor and the programme director before the student attends the training. If the doctoral student's supervisor and the programme director are the same person, the intended learning outcomes shall also be approved by the dean. The doctoral student shall provide clear evidence of the workload, content and objectives of the training. The workload of the training shall be expressed in ECTS credits or be convertible into ECTS credits. If the decision is positive, the original course or training shall be recorded in the student's academic record, with the result recorded as "passed".

(4) A combined APEL application may include a request for recognition of courses completed through formal or continuing education, learning acquired through professional experience. The extent to which the prior learning meets the learning outcomes of the relevant course within the study programme shall be verified. If the assessment decision is positive, the corresponding course within the study programme shall be recorded in the student's academic record. The assessment result shall be recorded as "passed", using pass/fail assessment. The date on which the learning results are transferred shall be recorded as the completion date.

(5) When recognition of learning acquired through continuing education, professional experience or a combination of different types of prior learning is sought towards completion of a free-choice courses module, its correspondence with the courses in the course catalogue shall be assessed. The name of the APEL assessor shall be displayed in the study information system.

(6) If necessary, the APEL assessor may involve an academic staff member from the relevant field in the assessment process. In this case, the name and opinion of the academic staff member involved shall also be recorded in the APEL application.

(7) If recognition of learning acquired through professional experience, independent study or continuing education, or through combined APEL, is sought for more than 50% of the workload of a bachelor's, professional higher education, integrated bachelor's and master's or master's study programme, the assessment shall be organised by an APEL assessment committee established by the dean and including a representative of the Office of Academic Affairs.

(8) If recognition of learning acquired through professional experience, independent study or continuing education, or through combined APEL, is sought for more than 50% of the workload of a doctoral study programme, the assessment shall be organised by an APEL assessment committee established by the dean and including a representative of the Research Administration Office.

(9) Courses with a total workload exceeding the maximum specified in the study programme may be recorded in the student's academic record on the basis of an APEL application if:

- 1) the courses are taken at a foreign higher education institution as an exchange student;
- 2) the courses have previously been completed at TalTech.

(10) The documents supporting the assessment decision shall clearly and unambiguously show how the decision was reached. An assessment decision shall be based on the extent to which the applicant's knowledge and skills meet the learning outcomes of a course or module.

§ 5. Applying for APEL to meet the admission requirements for master's studies

(1) An APEL application shall include:

- 1) the applicant's personal data;
- 2) details of how the required prior subject-specific knowledge was acquired;
- 3) supporting evidence.

(2) Applicants whose previous higher education is in a speciality or field that does not meet the admission requirements for a master's programme shall submit an APEL application using the prescribed form to the School's or regional College's APEL adviser by 10 June of the current admission period. With the dean's approval, applicants may exceptionally submit documents until the end of the admission period. [entry into force 01.08.2026]

(3) APEL assessment shall be carried out as follows:

- 1) the APEL assessor shall review the APEL application and make a decision within 14 calendar days of receiving the application. the APEL assessor may require the applicant to submit additional documents, attend an interview or pass a test, assessment or examination;
- 2) the APEL assessor shall determine whether the prior learning outcomes meet the admission requirements for the master's programme;
- 3) if the prior learning outcomes do not meet the admission requirements for the intended study programme, the APEL assessor shall, at the applicant's request, specify which courses must be completed before applying;
- 4) the assessment decision shall be issued to the applicant by the dean's office of the School or regional College. [entry into force 01.08.2026]

§ 6. Challenging decisions

(1) Decisions on whether to apply APEL may be challenged in accordance with the procedure set out in the Academic Policies.

§ 7. Implementation of the Regulation

(1) Regulation No 7 of 21.03.2017 of the Senate of Tallinn University of Technology "The Procedure and Terms and Conditions for Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning" is repealed.

(2) The Regulation shall enter into force upon signature.

(3) The directors of Kuressaare College and Virumaa College shall exercise the powers and perform the duties of a dean within the structural units they manage, to the extent provided for in this Regulation.

[entry into force 01.08.2026]