

Established by Regulation No 9 of 12 December 2023 of the Senate of Tallinn University of Technology
 Amended by Regulation No 5 of 20 May 2025 of the Senate of Tallinn University of Technology
 In force from: 01.08.2025

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 apply to the terms and conditions and procedure for 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 goal of APEL is to:

- 1) value lifelong learning and provide equal opportunities for assessing and recognizing individuals' knowledge and skills, irrespective of when, where, and how they were acquired;
- 2) increase educational and professional mobility of persons, including persons with special needs, and enhance opportunities for life-long learning;
- 3) ensure that learning results obtained through learning in an educational system comprised of different levels (formal education), from other organised learning activities (non-formal education) and from professional work experience, as well as from learning in daily and leisure activities (informal education) are recognized as equivalent to learning outcomes achieved through the completion of a study programme or can be deemed sufficient for meeting the admission requirements for higher education in the speciality/field when applying for a study programme ;
- 4) enable the university to respond flexibly to changes in the labour market and change of labour needs.

(3) APEL is applied:

- 1) for completing of a study programme, except in the cases specified in subsection (4);
- 2) for fulfilling the requirement of previously acquired higher education in the speciality/field set out in the admission requirements.

(4) APEL cannot be applied:

- 1) for passing a final examination or defending a graduation thesis;
- 2) to a part of a course which is credited by agreement between the student and the lecturer of the relevant course;
- 3) to internship, which shall be credited according to the internship guide;
- 4) for completing a module of a minor field of study;
- 5) in a course of a study programme specified by a dean's order, where implementation of APEL is prohibited.

(5) A graduation thesis, a final examination and an internship cannot be used for completing the courses of a study programme. The knowledge acquired from there can be applied for self-analysis included in an APEL application.

(6) Once the student has declared a course in the study information system, he/she can no longer submit an APEL application for completing the declared course based on a completed course, experiential learning or continuing education or other knowledge acquired prior to declaration of the course.

(7) If a person requests that courses already listed on a transcript of records issued with a diploma from a previous level of study be recognized as elective or optional courses, they may be credited to the extent specified in the study programme, provided that the study programme of the previous level was completed with a workload exceeding its nominal requirement. However, the courses cannot be credited as elective or optional courses in an amount greater than the excess credits completed beyond the nominal requirement of the study programme at the previous level of study. There are no volume restrictions on crediting compulsory courses. [entry into force 01.08.2025]

§ 2. Providing advice and carrying out assessment

(1) A person applying for APEL (hereinafter referred to as "applicant") receives general information on application of APEL from the specialist of the Office of Academic Affairs.

(2) Advice on APEL in a School is provided by a person/persons appointed by the dean (hereinafter referred to as "APEL adviser") and assessment in a School is carried out by a person/persons appointed by the dean (hereinafter referred to as "APEL assessor"). In cases specified in subsections 4 (7) and (8) of the Rules, the dean shall establish a committee for APEL assessment.

(3) The Vice Rector for Academic Affairs shall establish an APEL Advisory Committee comprising representatives of the Schools, the Office of Academic Affairs, the Open University and students. The student representative to the APEL Advisory Committee shall be appointed by the Student Union.

(4) The APEL Advisory Committee is responsible for ensuring a uniform level of implementation of APEL, deciding on general issues related to APEL, analysing the cases related to APEL and making proposals for amendment of the Rules.

§ 3. Submitting and processing of applications for completion of a study programme

(1) An applicant can apply for the recognition of learning gained from formal education courses, continuing education courses, professional experience or independent studies in order to complete a study programme in compliance with the application submitted by him/her (hereinafter referred to as "APEL application").

(2) An APEL application shall include:

- 1) the applicant's personal data;
- 2) the list of the courses of the study programme included in the application and the data used for completing the courses;
- 3) the list of evidence submitted to demonstrate compliance with the learning outcomes of the courses applied for.

(3) An applicant shall submit an APEL application in the study information system.

(4) A graduation thesis, a final examination and an internship cannot be used for completing the courses of a study programme. The knowledge acquired from there can be applied for self-analysis included in the APEL application.

(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, including the learning outcomes/descriptions of the completed courses;
- 2) a self-analysis and other relevant evidence of learning from professional work experience or daily and leisure activities (a job description, a professional certificate, a portfolio or reference to work completed, etc.).

(6) The applicant shall be liable for the veracity of documents and other materials submitted by him/her.

(7) Paper documents certifying formal education shall be submitted to the dean's office in the form of original documents. Evidence of qualifications acquired abroad must be accompanied by the assessment of the ENIC/NARIC centre.

(8) The rates and payment procedure of APEL fees shall be established by the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs. A fee is charged for assessment of an APEL application, unless otherwise laid down by an order of the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs (hereinafter referred to as "order") on APEL fees.

(9) After An APEL application has been submitted in the study information system, an invoice will be issued in accordance with the order to the applicant for processing the APEL application. After payment of the invoice by the applicant and receipt of the fee in TalTech's bank account, the APEL advisor will forward the application to the APEL assessor. In case of failure to pay the invoice by the due date, the APEL application will not be processed and will 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 has a right to ask the applicant to submit additional documents, to pass a test, an assessment or an examination or to have an interview. In this case, the period designated for making the assessment decision shall be extended according to the time spent on additional operations. Both in case of approval or rejection of an APEL application, the APEL assessor shall attach the assessment decision and the reasons of his or her decision to the APEL application. The APEL adviser shall mark a positive assessment decision made based on an APEL application in the study information system as completion of the study programme. For an applicant who is not a student, the assessment decision will be drawn up in the study information system.

(11) The courses that have received a positive assessment decision based on an application submitted before 30 November in the autumn semester or before 30 April in the spring semester are counted toward completion of the student's study load in 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 asks the applicant to modify or supplement the application if necessary;
- 2) submit an invoice and check payment of the invoice;
- 3) forward a duly completed APEL application to the APEL assessor;
- 4) approve and register an applicant's APEL application in the study information system if the application is partially or fully approved. The assessment decision is available to the applicant in the study information system;

(13) The assessment decision for an applicant who is not a student remains valid until the study takes place based on the version of the study programme that served as the basis for the APEL application. After matriculation as a student, the applicant submits the APEL advisor a request in writing for formalising the completion of the study programme based on the assessment decision in the study information system.

§ 4. General principles of assessment for the completion of a study programme

(1) Upon accreditation of learning gained from prior formal education, the suitability of acquired learning outcomes for completing the study programme shall be assessed. If the decision is positive, the original performance shall be recorded in the student's results. If the assessment system of the other educational institution differs from the assessment system valid at TalTech, pass/fail assessment shall be used, marking a positive result as "passed". In case of accreditation of learning gained from formal education abroad, the positive result is marked as "passed". The Office of Academic Affairs shall enter the courses passed outside TalTech (hereinafter referred to as "non-TalTech course") in the non-TalTech courses register and link them to the corresponding institution of higher education. If the institution of higher education is in a foreign country, the country shall be specified in the study information system. If the date of performance is not specified in the document annexed to the APEL application, the date of transfer of the learning results shall be deemed as the date of performance.

(2) When applying for learning from continuing education or professional experience to be credited towards completion of a study programme, compliance of the knowledge acquired with the courses suitable for completion of the study programme shall be assessed. If the decision is positive, the course suitable for completing the study programme shall be recorded in the student's results. Single courses passed in continuing education can be credited individually or the continuing education programme can be credited as a whole towards completion of a study programme. Learning gained from work experience can be used for completing the corresponding course of a study programme. The result of the assessment shall be marked as "passed", using pass/fail assessment. The date of transfer shall be marked as the assessment date.

(3) When applying for learning from continuing education to be credited towards completion of a doctoral study programme, which does not include a course corresponding to the learning, compliance of the knowledge acquired in the courses with the learning outcomes of the study programme or its module shall be assessed. The learning outcomes acquired at a training must be approved by both the PhD student's supervisor and the programme director before attending the training. If the PhD student's supervisor is also the programme director, the learning outcomes acquired at the training must be approved also by the dean. The volume, content and goal of the training must be clearly evidenced by the PhD student. The volume of the course must be expressed in ECTS credit points or it must be possible to convert it into ECTS credit points. If the decision is positive, original performance shall be recorded in the student's results; the positive result is marked as "passed".

(4) In case of a combined APEL application, it is possible to accredit courses passed in formal education and continuing education or learning gained from professional experience. It must be verified that the contents of prior learning corresponds to the learning outcomes of the course suitable for completing the study programme. If the assessment decision is positive, the course included in the study programme shall be recorded in the student's results. The result of the assessment shall be marked as "passed", using pass/fail assessment. The date of transfer shall be marked as the assessment date.

(5) When applying for accreditation of learning gained from continuing education, professional experience and from a combination of different types of APEL in order to complete a free choice courses module, compliance with the courses included in the course listing shall be assessed. The name of the APEL assessor is displayed in the study information system.

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

(7) If completion of more than 50% of the volume of a bachelor's, professional higher education, integrated bachelor's and master's or master's study programme is applied for by accreditation of learning from professional experience, independent studies or continuing education or by combined APEL, assessment shall be carried out by the APEL assessment committee established by the dean and including a representative of the Office of Academic Affairs,.

(8) If completion of more than 50% of the volume of a doctoral study programme is applied for by accreditation of learning from professional experience, independent studies or continuing education or by combined APEL, assessment shall be organised by the APEL assessment committee established by the dean and including a representative of the Research Administration Office.

(9) Courses in the volume exceeding the maximum established in the study programme can be recorded in the student's results based on an APEL application if:

- 1) the courses are taken as an exchange student at a higher education institution abroad;
- 2) the courses have been passed prior at TalTech.

(10) The process by which the assessment decision was developed must be clearly and unambiguously evident from the documents upon which the decision was based. An assessment decision shall be made based on the compliance of the applicant's knowledge and skills to the learning outcomes of a course or module.

§ 5. Applying APEL for compliance with the admission requirements upon applying for master's studies

(1) An APEL application shall include:

- 1) the applicant's personal data;
- 2) data on acquisition of the required prior professional knowledge;
- 3) evidence.

(2) Persons applying for accreditation of prior and experiential learning, whose speciality/field of higher education does not meet the requirements for admission to a master's programme, shall submit a standard application to the School's APEL adviser no later than 10 June of the current admission period. With the approval of the dean, an exception can be made so that it is possible to submit documents until the end of the admission period.

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

- 1) an APEL assessor shall review the APEL application and make a decision within 14 calendar days of receiving the application. The APEL assessor has a right to ask the applicant to submit additional documents, to have an interview or to pass a test, an assessment or an examination;
- 2) an APEL assessor shall declare that the results of prior learning either meet or do not meet the requirements for applying for a master's programme;
- 3) if the results of prior learning do not meet the requirements set for applying for the desired study programme, the APEL assessor shall, determine at the request of the applicant, which courses have to be passed before application;
- 4) the assessment decision is issued to the applicant by the dean's office of the School.

§ 6. Disputing

(1) Decisions regarding application or non-application of APEL may be disputed pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Academic Policies.

§ 7. Implementation of the Regulation

(1) The Regulation No 7 of 22.10.2019 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.