Approved by Resolution No 25 of 27 October 2026 of the Senate of Tallinn University of Technology

In force from: 29.10.2026

Statutes of the Academic Ethics Committee

1. **Status, purpose and functions of the Committee**

1.1. The Academic Ethics Committee (hereinafter referred to as "the Committee") is a standing body established pursuant to § 14 of the Statutes of Tallinn University of Technology (hereinafter referred to as "the university").

1.2. The Committee's purpose is to promote adherence to the principles of research ethics and academic ethics and to good research practice, and to foster an ethical academic culture at the university.

1.3. In performing its duties, the Committee shall be guided by applicable laws and legislation issued thereunder, the university's Statutes, these Statutes, the TalTech Principles of Academic Ethics established by the Senate, good research practice and internationally recognised principles of research ethics.

1.4. The Committee shall:

1.4.1. assess whether research and development projects planned at the university, including studies conducted as part of those projects (hereinafter referred to as "studies"), comply with the principles of research ethics and good research practice;

1.4.2. conduct a preliminary internal assessment of suspected breaches of research ethics in accordance with the Organisation of Research and Development and Innovation Act and legislation issued thereunder. Breaches of research ethics include research misconduct, such as fabrication, falsification and plagiarism, as well as other breaches of good research practice;

1.4.3. provide advisory opinions on matters and disputes concerning academic ethics and, where necessary, submit proposals to the competent university bodies.

1.5. The Committee shall not assess the ethical aspects of a study that must, by law, be assessed by another ethics committee or competent body.

2. **Composition, election and appointment of members**

2.1. The Committee shall include one representative from each School and one from the Estonian Maritime Academy, each elected by the academic staff of their respective unit. The Rector shall appoint up to four members, taking into account the areas of expertise required for the Committee's work and proposals submitted by the Committee.

2.2. A member of the Committee must not simultaneously be a member of the University Board, the Senate or the Rector's Office. The Committee may involve experts in its work in an advisory capacity.

2.3. The Rector shall announce elections for the elected members of the Committee no later than two months before the end of the Committee's term of office. Members shall be elected at general meetings of the academic staff of the Schools and the Estonian Maritime Academy. Academic staff of Kuressaare College and Virumaa College shall participate in the election of the representative of the School of Engineering and may stand for election as the School's representative. The head of the respective unit shall organise the elections. The election results for each unit shall be recorded as a ranked list of candidates, and the candidate receiving the most votes shall be elected. The elections shall be conducted in accordance with the university's Election Rules, subject to the specific provisions of these Statutes.

2.4. The Senate shall approve the Committee's composition, which shall include both elected members and members appointed by the Rector. The Committee members shall serve a term of three years from the date specified in the Senate's decision approving the Committee's composition.

2.5. If an elected member's term of office ends early, whether because the member resigns, leaves the unit he/she was elected to represent, leaves the university or is removed from office, the member shall be replaced by the next candidate on the relevant unit's ranked list. If no candidate remains on the relevant unit's ranked list, a new election shall be held to fill the vacancy. If the term of office of a member appointed by the Rector ends early, the Rector shall appoint a new member. A replacement member's term of office shall begin on the date specified in the Senate's approval decision and continue until the end of the current Committee's term of office. The Senate shall vote on whether to remove a Committee member at the request of the Rector or at least ten per cent of the members of the Senate.

3. **Rights and obligations of members**

3.1. A member of the Committee shall be entitled to:

3.1.1. review the materials necessary to resolve the matter under consideration;

3.1.2. request further written or oral explanations from the parties concerned;

3.1.3. receive organisational and technical support from the university to carry out the Committee's work.

3.2. A Committee member shall:

3.2.1. form his/her opinion impartially, independently and objectively;

3.2.2. recuse himself/herself from discussing and deciding a matter if he/she has a conflict of interest or if any other circumstance affects his/her impartiality;

3.2.3. maintain the confidentiality of personal data, research project objectives and methodologies, and any other information protected under legislation or the university's internal regulations that comes to his/her knowledge in the course of the Committee's work.

3.3. A member's service on the Committee shall count towards his/her academic assessment as professional activity, activity in his/her field of expertise and a contribution to the organisation of research and education.

4. **Rules of procedure**

4.1. The Committee shall be chaired and its work shall be organised by a chairman elected by the members of the Committee from among themselves by a simple majority. The Committee may elect up to two vice-chairmen in the same manner to act in place of the chairman when the chairman is absent or otherwise unable to perform his/her duties.

4.2. The Committee's administrative affairs shall be managed and the minutes of its meetings taken by a secretary who is not a member of the Committee. The secretary's duties shall be performed by a member of the university's administrative and support staff appointed by the Rector on the recommendation of the chairman of the Committee.

4.3. The Committee may involve the university's Data Protection Officer, Legal Officer and, where necessary, other experts in its work.

4.4. The Committee shall make assessments and formulate positions at its meetings or through other means that enable its members to participate, in accordance with its rules of procedure.

4.5. The Committee's meetings shall be held in private. The Committee may decide to hold a public meeting if the matter is of wider public interest and doing so would not infringe persons' right to privacy or breach any duty of confidentiality.

4.6. The Committee shall have a quorum if more than half of its members attend the meeting. A member who has recused himself/herself shall not be counted among the members participating in the decision on the matter.

4.7. A simple majority of the Committee members who took part in the discussion of the matter is required to adopt an assessment or position. A Committee member may append a written dissenting opinion to the minutes. Assessments and positions shall be recorded in the minutes and signed by the chairman.

4.8. The Committee shall adopt rules of procedure setting out the procedural and organisational arrangements necessary to implement these Statutes, including procedures for processing applications and providing services.

4.9. A fee may be charged for the ethical review of studies. The Rector shall determine the amount of the fee and the payment arrangements.

5. **Providing assessments and opinions on ethical matters**

5.1. A member of the university may submit a written application to the Committee for the ethical review of a study or a written submission concerning an academic ethics issue, a dispute or a suspected breach of research ethics. A submission may also be made by a governing body or structural unit of the university.

5.2. The Committee may decline to consider an application or submission if:

5.2.1. the matter does not fall within the Committee's competence;

5.2.2. the application or submission does not meet the requirements set out in the rules of procedure or contains insufficient information for an assessment, and the deficiencies have not been remedied by the specified deadline;

5.2.3. the Committee has already resolved the same matter and no new facts have been presented;

5.2.4. the matter has not first been discussed within the relevant structural unit or under another procedure prescribed by the university's legislation.

The Committee shall give written reasons for declining to consider an application or submission and, where necessary, refer the applicant to the competent body.

5.3. The requirement for prior discussion set out in clause 5.2.4 shall not apply to applications for the ethical review of studies, cases involving a suspected breach of research ethics, cases where internal discussion is not possible or cannot be impartial, or cases where the person conducting a conciliation procedure requests the Committee's opinion.

5.4. Following an ethical review, the Committee shall determine whether the study complies with, conditionally complies with or contravenes the principles of research ethics and good research practice. Where the Committee issues a conditional assessment, the chairman may, after verifying that the conditions set by the Committee have been met, finalise the assessment without further discussion or a vote, provided that the Committee has authorised the chairman to do so.

5.5. The Committee's assessment or position shall not replace any other procedure prescribed by law or a decision by the competent body

5.6. The Committee and the university shall, in accordance with applicable law, protect the confidentiality of the identity of anyone who reports a suspected breach of research ethics or refers an academic ethics issue or dispute to the Committee. Personal data may be disclosed only with the person's written consent or on another lawful basis.

5.7. As a general rule, the Committee shall issue an assessment or formulate a position within 30 calendar days of receiving an application or submission that meets the applicable requirements. The Committee may extend this period if there is good reason to do so.

5.8. The Committee's assessment or position shall state the reasons on which it is based, including the relevant material facts and considerations. In an academic dispute, the Committee shall give the parties concerned an opportunity to submit explanations and objections. The assessment or position shall be communicated to the parties concerned and, where necessary, to the competent body of the university.

6. **Reporting on the Committee's activities**

The chairman of the Committee shall report on the Committee's activities to the Senate at least once a year.