

Approved by Resolution No 24 of 22 October 2019 of the Senate of Tallinn University of Technology (entry into force 30.09.2019)

Amended by Resolution No 7 of 16 March 2021 (entry into force 18.03.2021)

In force from: 18.03.2021

## **Statute of the Academic Ethics Committee**

### **1. General provisions**

1.1 The Academic Ethics Committee (hereinafter referred to as "the Committee") is a body established under § 14 of the Statutes of Tallinn University of Technology, which settles disputes regarding the principles of academic ethics arising between the members of the university, assesses compliance of research projects with the ethics requirements and discusses other academic ethics matters.

1.2 The Committee consists of the representatives of all the Schools and the Estonian Maritime Academy and five members appointed by the Rector. The Rector shall submit the representatives elected by the Schools and the Estonian Maritime Academy and the members appointed by the Rector to the Senate for approval. When appointing the members of the Committee, the Rector takes into account the challenges facing the Committee and the gender and age balance of the members of the Committee. The term of authority of a member of the Committee is three years. [entry into force 18.03.2021]

1.3 The activities of the Committee shall be governed by law, the Statutes of the University, this Statute, the Principles of Academic Ethics and good academic practice and traditions or the expressed good practice.

### **2. Objectives and responsibilities**

2.1 The Commission's objectives are:

2.1.1 to entrench the values of academic ethics among academic staff and students in their research and teaching activities, as well as in their interaction with each other and with other staff, the public and external partners;

2.1.2 to assess compliance of research and development project proposals with the ethics requirements.

2.2 The Committee's responsibilities regarding academic ethics are:

2.2.1 to provide a reasoned and fair opinion on a dispute, question or problem referred to the Committee;

2.2.2 to contribute to resolving issues in accordance with the fundamental ethical principles:

2.2.3 if necessary, to make proposals to the Rector regarding an academic staff member or student who has committed an unethical act;

2.2.4 to assess compliance of the key elements of research and development project proposals of the university's staff with the principles of research ethics. The Committee does not assess compliance of projects related to studies on humans and animals (which may pose a risk to people's mental or physical health) with the principles of research ethics.

2.3 The Committee discusses the following cases of academic ethics:

2.3.1 violations of the principles of academic ethics and good academic conduct;

2.3.2 other matters concerning academic ethics, which it considers necessary to discuss or which the Senate or Rector consider necessary to refer to the Committee.

2.4 The Committee approves or assesses research projects in terms of ethical issues. When inconsistencies with the principles of research ethics are detected, the Committee shall submit their reasoned opinion to the applicant.

### **3. Rights and obligations of members**

3.1 A member of the Committee shall be entitled:

3.1.1 to have access to all relevant materials;

3.1.2 to ask for oral or written explanation on the circumstances from the members of the university;

3.1.3 to use public documents and information sources;

3.1.4 to receive from the university the time and resources required for performing its tasks.

3.2 A member of the Committee shall be obliged:

3.2.1 to provide an impartial, independent and objective opinion;

3.2.2 to remove himself/herself from the case in the event of a conflict of interest;

3.2.3 not to disclose personal data, the goals and methodologies of research projects or any other confidential information received in the course of a dispute or assessment.

#### **4. Rules of procedure and decisions**

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 simple majority.

4.2 The administration of the Committee shall be organised and minutes of the meetings shall be taken by the Secretary appointed by the Rector on the proposal of the Chairman of the Committee.

4.3 If necessary, the Committee shall involve in the assessment a representative of the Research Administration Office, the Legal Officer for Research and Development, the Data Protection Officer and other university staff and experts in the field.

4.4 The Committee discusses matters at a meeting or in any other form determined by the Chairman.

4.5 The meetings of the Committee shall be held behind closed doors. The Committee may decide to hold a public meeting if the matter is of public interest and it does not violate the persons' right to privacy or the obligation of confidentiality.

4.6 The Committee has a quorum, if the majority of the members participate in the hearing of the matter.

4.7 A simple majority of the members present is required to adopt an opinion or a proposal of the Committee. Minutes shall be taken of the Committee's opinions and proposals.

4.8 A member of the Committee shall remove himself/herself from the decision-making process, when matters relating to him/her or his/her research group are discussed.

4.9 As a rule, the Committee submits its opinion or assessment of a research within one month.

#### **5. Proceedings**

5.1 The university's managing body, an academic unit, an employee or a student can bring a matter before the Committee by submitting a written application.

5.2 The Committee shall hear the matter if it concerns academic ethics or ethical aspects of research and development project proposals and an application has been submitted in adherence with the Statute. Refusal to hear a matter must be justified.

5.3 The Committee shall not hear a matter if it does not fall within the Committee's competence or a matter specified in clause 2.2. has not been previously discussed at the level of the university's structural unit concerned.

5.4 In the case of a dispute related to academic affairs, the matter shall be discussed in the presence of the parties or their representatives unless the Committee decides otherwise. The Committee's opinion or proposal shall be submitted to the persons involved and, if necessary, to the management of the university.

5.5 The Chairman of the Committee shall report on their actions to the Senate or answer the questions once a year or at the request of at least ten members of the Senate.