

# INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICIES

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OPIT - Open institute of Technology

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# 1 Introduction

This Quality Assurance Policies handbook describes the principles, standards, and framework to assure the quality of the students' education paths. It is addressed to OPIT staff members, students and lecturers and to external stakeholders, and it contains all the information to be known about the students' lifecycle, program design and approval, learning and teaching methods, assessment and teachers' recruitment procedure, and every aspect aimed to contribute to a successful learning experience.

## 1.1 OPIT Mission

OPIT mission is:

*“We want to train the next generation of Leaders and Managers in the field of Information technology.*

*By overcoming territorial and income barriers, we aspire to democratize the access to tier-1, fully accredited, affordable and high quality online education in the field of Information Technology, that will unlock progress, employment and hope on a global scale”.*

This mission will be achieved firstly by obtaining the license and accreditation from the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority's National Qualifications Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education in order to design, research, build and deliver high quality trainings. Online trainings will be provided and assessed using the most recent tools and resources available, to guarantee our students an engaging, interactive and safe learning experience.

OPIT will always remain updated and pay attention to the real-world needs and changes, also creating durable cooperation with training sector's associations, other training institutions, private sector and public agencies.

The above mission will be carried out in a working and learning environment free and integral, where policies are defined to condemn discrimination. This will be assured also in our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Staff and lecturers will use a variety of teaching and learning methods that best serve the mission and allow students with different types of learning abilities to succeed in

their studies.

The main language used for training is English; the Institute does not exclude the possibility to offer training courses in other languages.

#### **1.1.1 Ethical standards**

OPIT will carry out its activities according to the highest ethical standards of integrity, freedom and honesty, as defined within the MFHEA guidelines, all of which will be evident both in the physical workplace and in the Virtual Learning Environment.

By offering online training to a worldwide market, diversity will characterize our student population, as well as the staff and lecturers. Our diversity standards will assure the acceptance of a variety of cultures, habits and views, eliminating all prejudice and discrimination.

We assure that our standards will be clearly understood and practiced by every person involved in the Institution: staff, lecturers and students.

## 2 Organizational chart and responsibilities

OPIT is managed by a team of professionals from the education, computer science and management sectors who desire to share their expertise, experiences and knowledge in order to develop educational programs in the Information Technology (IT) field that can train the students of the future.

OPIT management team is elected/appointed by considering aspects such as the years and quality of academic and/or relevant professional experience, distinguishments accomplished and results obtained in the academic and professional sectors

### 2.1 Organizational chart

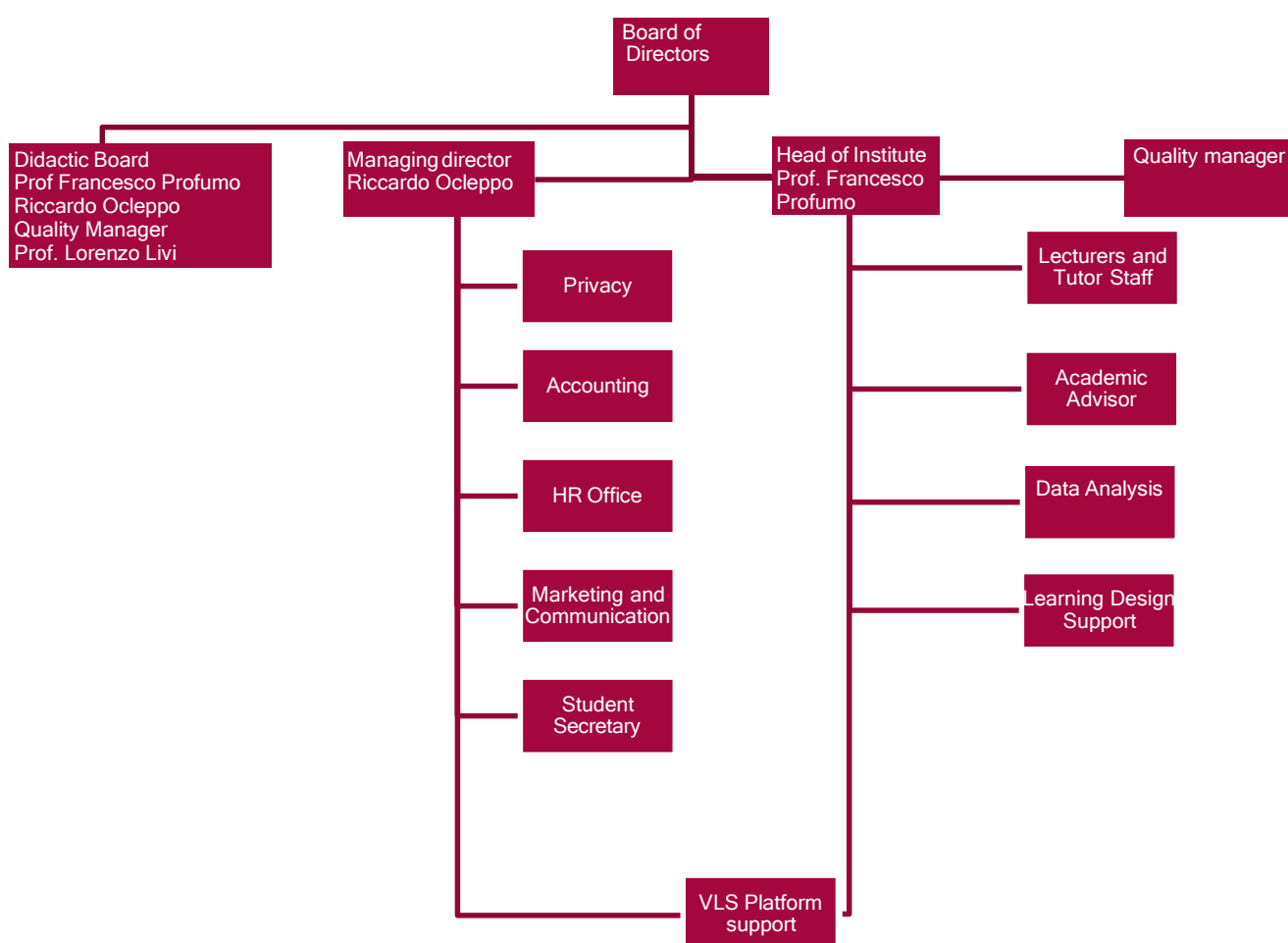


Figure 1 - Institute Organizational chart

## 2.2 Roles

### Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is the governing body of the Institute, and it will guarantee that OPIT's mission, vision and performance will be reached.

The Board will manage the annual strategic plans, goals and objectives, also being responsible for the setting of the annual budget and training fees.

In addition, it is responsible for governance processes, administration, and decisions, and it always represents and protects the OPIT interests in ethical and responsible ways.

### Didactic Board

The Didactic Board is made of the Head of Institute, the Managing Director, one teachers' representative, one students' representative and the Quality Manager.

It has a crucial role, as it oversees and controls all the policies and procedures applied by the Institute and guarantees that they are followed.

The Didactic Board organizes a meeting once a quarter that can be held online or in-person. A meeting agenda is defined by the Managing Director, on the basis of the priorities to be discussed.

In case of special needs or matters to be discussed, extraordinary meetings can be held in-person or online, and a minimum of two people must be present.

At the end of each meeting, the Board will prepare a report of the topics discussed and actions to be implemented, and people involved in the activities to be done will be contacted via email.

The Didactic Board is also in charge of overseeing and regulating the assessments and procedures pertaining to grades, to evaluate requests for transfer or Prior Trainings/Experiences, and manage complaints and appeals.

### Managing Director

The Managing Director is also a Legal Representative of the Institute and is directly responsible for the administrative and financial operations of OPIT.

His/her tasks include the development of financial and operational strategies, budgets and the control system in order to protect institute assets, all as directed by the Board of Directors.

The Managing Director is also responsible for assuring that all the institute functions and roles are respected, in line with the mission and vision, setting up activities and



initiatives to implement them.

The following teams report to the Managing Director:

- *Student Secretary Office* – it is the main link between students and OPIT, and it coordinates, manages, and carries out all the activities aimed to give support to the students. A list of tasks (but not exhaustive) includes orientation, secretariat, certificates, traineeship, dissertation, and admissions. It assures that students' journeys happen in an effective manner, from their registration to their graduation, recording their academic progress, fulfilling the policies and procedures established by the Institute. It is also responsible for the collection of feedback from students and trainers regarding the training programs offered by the Institute, during each training and at the end of each course. The Student Secretary Office also deals with new students who wish to join a training program, giving them support about the admission requirements and options, transfer opportunities and any issue related to this process. It takes care of the students' admissions in the training programs, based on the requirements defined in each program application and following the policies, procedures and methods established by OPIT.
- *HR Office* – it is the main link between employees and Institute, responsible for the employee's lifecycle, from recruitment until the eventual resignation or dismissal, guaranteeing their benefits. It will also ensure the continuous training and development of the trainers and staff. The HR Office will work in line with the policies and procedures defined by OPIT regarding the recruitment process of lecturers and their professional development, and following the requirements established in each training program.
- *Marketing and Communications* – Marketing and Communications activities are executed both internally and by third parties and will take care of the communication channels of the Institute and the advertisement activities, to build connections with potential and existing students, trainers, and stakeholders. The Marketing and Communications Office oversees event organization and will always work to advance the success of the Institute for the long term.
- *Privacy Office* – It oversees the OPIT data protection strategies and assures their implementation is in line with the up-to-date GDPR requirements. These

activities will be entrusted to third parties.

- *Accounting* - The accounting and financial duties are executed by third parties, in compliance with the national and international laws.

### Head of Institute

The Head of Institute is responsible for the overall institution activities, working closely with the Board of Directors and according to the frameworks, plans, strategies, and goals defined by it.

The role of the Head of Institute is fundamental and strategic, being the main link between the Board of Directors and the academic and administrative teams.

The Head of Institute manages these teams, leading also as an example and inspiration for them.

One of the main tasks of the Head of Institute includes assistance to the Academic Teams in the designing, planning and developing of training programs, and assuring that they are in line with the OPIT policies and procedures.

The Head of Institute also has the role of representing the Academy, in order to develop strong networks with other education sector stakeholders (private and public entities) and promoting the OPIT values, products and services, also through long term collaborations and partnerships,

The following teams report to the Head of Institute, acting in line with its plans and instructions.

- *Academic Consultant*– this role is fulfilled by third parties, and it is in charge of developing the training programmes, with the support of highly qualified lecturers, with expertise and experience in the relevant sector to the training. This role is also in charge of recruiting and selecting trainers based on the requirements of each training, established in the application program for the license. It will work under the supervision of the Head of Institute and in strict collaboration with the HR Office, respecting the policies and procedures established by OPIT.
- *Training Content Manager* – this figure will be in charge of the management and coordination of the training programs, on the basis of the requirements and procedures established by OPIT. Specifically, it takes care of the management and review of all the training contents prepared by the lecturers before they are uploaded in the VLE. This office is managed by the Content Manager. The

Content Manager manages a staff of Content Coordinators who will be assigned to each training course and will be in contact with the lectures.

- *Lecturers and Tutor Staff* – It includes professors, lecturers, and tutors who will train the students, following the policies and guidelines of this handbook. Lecturers will be also responsible of the content creation, based on their program accreditation completed, and the indications received by the Learning Design Support Office.
- *Learning Design Support Office* – the role of this office is to support the development of the didactic materials (video-lessons, online lessons, resources, assessment methods) to assure that the most up-to-date e-learning and teaching methods are used to achieve the goals and uphold the procedures of OPIT. The Learning Design Support Office is also in charge of advising the lecturers to assure that the optimum teaching methods are used to reach each training's outcomes.
- *Data Analysis Office* – it analyzes the data collected through the VLE regarding the academic progress of students and their performances, in order to give support to the development of new trainings and the improvement of existing trainings. The Data Analysis Office will also analyze the feedback from students and trainers collected by the Students' Support Office and through the VLE to improve the products offered by OPIT.

### Quality Manager

The Quality Manager has the fundamental responsibility to assure that OPIT is following the IQA policies and the up-to-date educational legislation. It is in charge of providing a consultancy and evaluation of the activities carried out by OPIT, from an academic, financial and operational point of view. This function is independent and objective, and assures that risk management, internal procedures, governance and all the activities run by all the other function of the Institute respect the policies, procedures, methods, and mission established in this handbook.

The Quality Manager is in connection and assist all the other roles of the Institute, reporting directly to the Board of Directors.

### VLE Support Office

It gives support to the students, trainers, and staff of OPIT regarding IT issues. The

VLE Support Office is in charge of supporting new students who experience issues with online procedures and access, to allow them to have the best learning experience with the VLE.

This Office is also in charge of uploading the content in the VLE for training and any resource/materials needed for online/blended training.

It guarantees that the maintenance of the VLE is carried out periodically, in order to avoid risks for OPIT.

All the activities done by these teams and roles will be supported by the Virtual Learning Environment, in line with the policies, procedures and values established in this handbook and they will be trained in order to use the VLE in the best way, to achieve the goals of OPIT.

## 2.3 Contact Details and Website

### Staff Contact Details

Managing Director	Dr. Riccardo Ocleppo	Mobile +39 335 6268045	Email riccardo@opit.com
Head of Institute	Dr. Francesco Profumo	Mobile +39 335 7129253	Email hoi@opit.com

### Address

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Malta

Operational Office:

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Sqaq Lourdes

St Julian's, SWQ 3334

Malta

### Websites

[www.opit.com](http://www.opit.com)

### 3 Institutional Probity

OPIT complies with all the regulatory legislations related to financial aspects, both national and international.

The Board of Directors is the main governing body of OPIT. The Managing Director, also a legal representative of the Institute, is the one authorized signatory.

A local representative is also indicated, resident in Malta.

The Managing Director assures that he/she and the Board of Directors will be always updated about any change/update of the Company Act, as of the key local and international legislations related to income tax and VAT. This is to assure that the accounting system and the financials of OPIT are in line with the latest developments.

The Board of Directors and Managing Director are aware of the existing laws and, to fulfill them, actions have already been taken.

Internally, the Institute has equipped itself with an accounting management system, in such a way to ensure that all its financial activities and processes are recorded, updated, and truly and faithfully reflect OPIT's activities. This system is accessible only to authorized staff within the Institute, mainly to the Managing Director who monitors and reports all the expenditures of the financial year to the Board of Directors, so that the Board can approve them.

All the financial expenditures of the Institute are checked every three months by the Managing Director with the accountants, and they will check that the reconciliations and information provided are in line with the booking of accounts.

OPIT is required to have books of accounts, explaining their activities; they must be accurate, updated, and true. To respect this law's requirement, the Board has appointed an independent auditing company.

This auditing company will prepare the annual reports showing the financial situation of the Institute, sharing it with the Board of Directors, the legal representative, and shareholders, and it will give them guidelines regarding taxation issues.

Annually, OPIT will submit these annual accounts to the Maltese Registrar of Companies (actually, Malta Business Registry), with the auditor's and director's reports.

In order to facilitate the tasks explained in the previous paragraph, the Board of Directors will prepare budget forecasts every 12 months to guide the staff in the

outlined activities for the following period. The budgets' update is carried out every 12 months in order to be in line with any changing conditions of the Institute activities. This has the aim to ensure cost effectiveness, operational efficiency, and a true picture of the real situation of OPIT. The Board of Directors also has to ensure that these budget provisions are followed and complied with.

An updated debtors' list will be maintained, and necessary actions will be taken to collect any remaining amount once the credit period ends.

Students will usually be asked to settle the balance of payments before the training starts.

Regarding the suppliers and third party service providers, the deadlines related to the settlement of the credit will be respected in order to avoid future financial risks for OPIT.

For the management of both suppliers and debtors, the Board of Directors is responsible.

Both the Board of Directors and the Managing Director have the necessary technical and practical experience in the business management field. Also, the Head of Institute was appointed through a structured selection process, choosing the right candidate in terms of qualifications, work experience in the Academic field, expertise, and knowledge of management aspects. The Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring that all the other staff involved in the Institute (both employees and collaborators) satisfy the requirements to cover their positions, in order to ensure the successful delivery of the training approved.

For this purpose, in addition to the fulfillment of the requirements defined for each working position, each applicant must sign a declaration covering the following:

- Previous convictions of offense
- Provision of false or misleading information
- Bankruptcy
- Professional or academic misconduct

Specifically, for lecturers and trainers, an updated Police Certificate of Conduct (i.e. background check) will be requested, and in case of trainings that last more than one year or a training's renewal, it will be requested every academic year.

All the procedures and measurements described will assure a long-term stability for OPIT.

## 4 Design and Approval of Programmes

The main objective of OPIT is to design a training path with high standards in order to contribute the students' optimum professional life, also guaranteeing the recognition of the qualifications within the academic and working world. Therefore, the training design process followed by OPIT for all the training programs offered is defined in this paragraph, to guarantee that a structured method is used, aiming to offer a high-quality level of the learning experience.

### 4.1 Development Process

The cyclical process showed in Figure 1 will be completed for any programme offered.



Figure 2 - Design and Approval Programme Process

#### 4.1.1 Planning

##### Needs Analysis

Every design process starts with a needs analysis of the labor market with the aim to identify the most requested skills, competencies, and knowledge.

In this way, the target of each training program is detailed and appropriated to the training developed, being also easier for the Marketing Office to promote them to the target audience established.

A key element of this step is the involvement of stakeholders, who will be consulted through one-to-one meetings (both in-person and online), studying publications/analysis, participation in sectorial conferences/events and discussing with representatives of the entrepreneurial, human resources (HR) and scientific world. Stakeholders include (but are not limited to) professional bodies, associations, companies, students (through their Students' Representative), employers, public and private entities in general.



This analysis will be executed both for new programs and for renewals and will always be completed following the national educational priorities (Malta) as well as the international educational priorities (EU, as well as the rest of the world).

The Managing Director and Head of Institute usually run this process, with the support of the Learning Design Support Office, Quality Manager and the Academic Consultant, in order to design appealing and up-to-date learning paths, aimed to cover the most current needs of the market discovered in the needs analysis.

### **Programme Development**

Once the needs analysis is complete, the training program will be defined.

The Academic Consultant is involved with this process and will collaborate with high-level lecturers from the University field who are specialized in the identified sector. This work will be completed following the results of the needs' analysis conducted by OPIT and the requirements described in this handbook.

In case of online/blended programmes, the Learning Design Support Office will also be involved, as it oversees the support regarding which digital teaching and learning methods that are necessary and suitable to reach the desired outcomes using the VLE. The Learning Design Support Office will also be essential for the modules/unit's development.

The approach used to design and plan the programmes is the learning outcomes approach, the same approved by the Malta Further and Higher Education Commission (MFHEA).

Trainings will be developed by fulfilling the requirements and policies for the accreditation programs defined by the MFHEA, ensuring that they are aligned with the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF).

Skills, abilities, knowledge, and competencies reached by the students at the end of each training are defined in detail; specifically, the following sections are described in the training application form, to be submitted at the MFHEA, in order to obtain the courses' accreditation:

- Type of course - Qualification or Award

- Mode of delivery – face-to-face, online, blended or work-based learning
- Qualification/Award Title
- Proposed MQF Level
- Hours of Total Learning - The minimum number of total learning hours for accreditation is 25 hours, of which 20% (5 hours) are contact hours or as established from time to time by the MFHEA. Total learning hours specifically include:
  - contact hours - any lectures, seminars, tutorials, participation in online forums, video-lectures, and other learning activities, all of which are under the direction and guidance of a lecture, with the aim to learn new content.
  - supervised placement and practice hours – any activity during which the students are supervised, coached, or mentored (ex. Tutorials, or practical activities).
  - self-study hours – estimated number of hours that each student needs for study and research
  - assessment hours – any examinations, presentations, group activity, projects and other assessments activities conducted during and at the end of the course.
- In case of Blended learning, the contact hours delivered online and those face-to-face will be specified.
- Total ECTS number for training competition - one ECTS is equivalent to 25 total learning hours. The ECTS number cannot be decimal.
- Attendance mode – full-time or part-time, with the indication about weeks, month, and years (where applicable).
- Target audience, specifically the age range, geographical location, and details about the type of learners to which the training is addressed.
- Language/s of Instruction of programmes
- Address/es where the programme will be delivered
- Subject area
- Relationship to occupation/s – list of the occupations for which the training prepares the students. Where possible, references to skills frameworks and/or occupational/professional standards.
- Entry requirements – specification of the requirements that students need to fulfill before joining the course, including qualifications, language and/or digital competencies.
- Overall programme description.
- Learning outcomes of the training – included the overall knowledge, skills and

competencies acquired by the students by the end of it.

- General pedagogical teaching and learning methods used during the programme's delivery.
- Selection criteria for tutors/lectures in terms of qualifications and experience.
- CVs of tutors/lectures
- General assessment methods and procedures
- Programme structure with module list and, if the programme has a duration of more than one semester, a structure of how the modules shall be divided per semester and academic year. In case of a training that has both full-time and part-time duration, the structure must be defined for both of the modes.
- Total ECTS requesting accreditation.
- Total ECTS for programme competition.
- Exit Awards/Qualifications – a programme should contain more than one exit Awards/Qualifications; in this case the following will be defined for each of them:
  - Full name;
  - MQF Level;
  - Number of ECTS;
  - List of modules leading to each Exit Award/Qualification

### **Module/Unit Development**

For each module/unit listed in the programme structure, the following information will be defined:

- Module/Unit title
- If the module/unit is compulsory or elective
- Total ECTS number for each module - one ECTS is equivalent to 25 total learning hours. ECTS number cannot be decimal.
- MQF level of each module
- Teaching methods (lecture, workshop, placement, asynchronous forums, VLE, etc.)
- Assessment mode (examination, assignment, presentation, project, reflective diary, multiple choice/open question quiz, etc.)
- Brief Description – explanation of the reason for providing each module/unit and how it fits into the overall training path. A list of the main topics faced during the module/unit also will be provided.
- Learning Outcomes

- Competencies – what the students acquire at the end of the module/unit in terms of having autonomy and responsibility to master such competencies;
  - Knowledge – what the students will be able to comprehend at the end of the programme in terms of knowledge acquisition;
  - Skills – the skills that students will acquire by the end of the programme, in addition to being able to apply knowledge and understanding of these topics;
  - Module-specific learner skills – what the students acquire by the end of the module/unit in terms of learner skills;
  - Module-specific digital skills and competencies – what the students acquire by the end of the module/unit in terms of digital skills.
- Hours of total learning – total contact hours, supervised placement and practice, self-study and assessment hours;
  - Total number of ECTS;
  - Mode of delivery – face-to-face, online, blended or work-based learning;
  - In case of Blended learning, the contact hours delivered online and those face-to-face are specified.
  - Assessment methods – description of the assessment of the module/unit, with reference to the weightings too, in case more than one assessment method is used for the same module/unit. In case of the use of digital tools, an identification and description of them will be included with an indication of the pass mark.
  - Teaching methods – identification and description of the digital learning tools used;
  - Reading List: both core and supplementary texts and resources will be provided. For courses at MQF Level 5 and above, more than one textbook/source will be used, presenting other viewpoints and perspectives as applicable, and they must be less than 10 years old (except for “classical/canonical” texts, such as the original texts by Piaget in psychology or Plato’s Republic in Philosophy). For texts/sources with different editions, the latest one will be used.

Both Programme and Module/Unit development are defined following the formal process for the planning and approval of a programme based on the MFHEA requirements.

In case of non-accredited courses provided by OPIT, the same programme and Module/Unit development procedures will be followed to guarantee a high standard of learning path.

#### **4.1.2 Implementation**

##### **Approval**

After the design stage, a draft of the programme and of each module/unit will be obtained.

The Didactic Board reviews the training plan to ensure that it will meet all the criteria, policies, and procedures of OPIT.

If the training requires an accreditation, it will be forwarded to MFHEA together with the documents necessary. In this case, the training will not be delivered to students until the result of the accreditation process is delivered.

In case of not accredited programmes, the training will be developed by the lecturer/s assigned to the programme and module/unit details will be approved by the Didactic Board.

##### **Launch**

Before the launch of any programme, all training contents and resources, and any material that will be used by the lecturers during the course, will be checked by the Training Content Manager, and specifically by the Training Content Coordinators assigned to the specific programme.

In case of online/blended programmes, all the materials and resources necessary to deliver lessons will be uploaded on the VLE of OPIT by the VLS Support Office.

Following this process, the course begins and will be implemented for its designated duration.

#### **4.1.3 Evaluation**

After the first edition of a programme, both accredited and not, an evaluation process is necessary to review the programme and its modules/units and evaluate if the programme will be re-launched or not.

This process will be carried out by the Head of Institute and the Managing Director and the following criteria will be considered:

- Number of students who attended the programme;

- Students' feedbacks collected during and at the end of the programme. For this activity the procedure established in paragraph 16 will be followed;
- Need and relevance of the specific skills provided;
- Offer of other training providers;
- Marketing channels report (ex. Social media channels);
- The economic advantage of running the course; for these aspects also the strategies and budgets defined by the Board of Directors will be taken into consideration;
- Possibility to cover the tuition fees with national or EU funding schemes;
- Relevant stakeholders' feedback;
- Data analysis report developed by the Data Analysis Office.

Specifically, the Data Analysis Office will analyze the following information, in order to develop a report about the students' training progress, using the data available on the VLE:

- Interactions between students and between students and lecturers;
- Self-study tracing – it includes the use of the resources made available on the VLE (ex. slides, video-lessons);
- Feedback from the students collected through the survey in the VLE;
- Students' participation and their progress marks at the assessment during and at the end of the programme.

For the Evaluation, the Kirkpatrick Model will be used.

This Training Evaluation Model has four evaluation levels:

- Level 4: Results – the degree to which targeted outcomes occur as a result of the training, support, and accountability;
- Level 3: Behavior - the degree to which participants apply what they learned from the training when they are back on the job;
- Level 2: Learning - the degree to which participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills, attitudes, confidence, and commitment based on their participation in the training
- Level 1: Reaction - the degree to which participants find the training favorable, engaging, and relevant to their jobs.

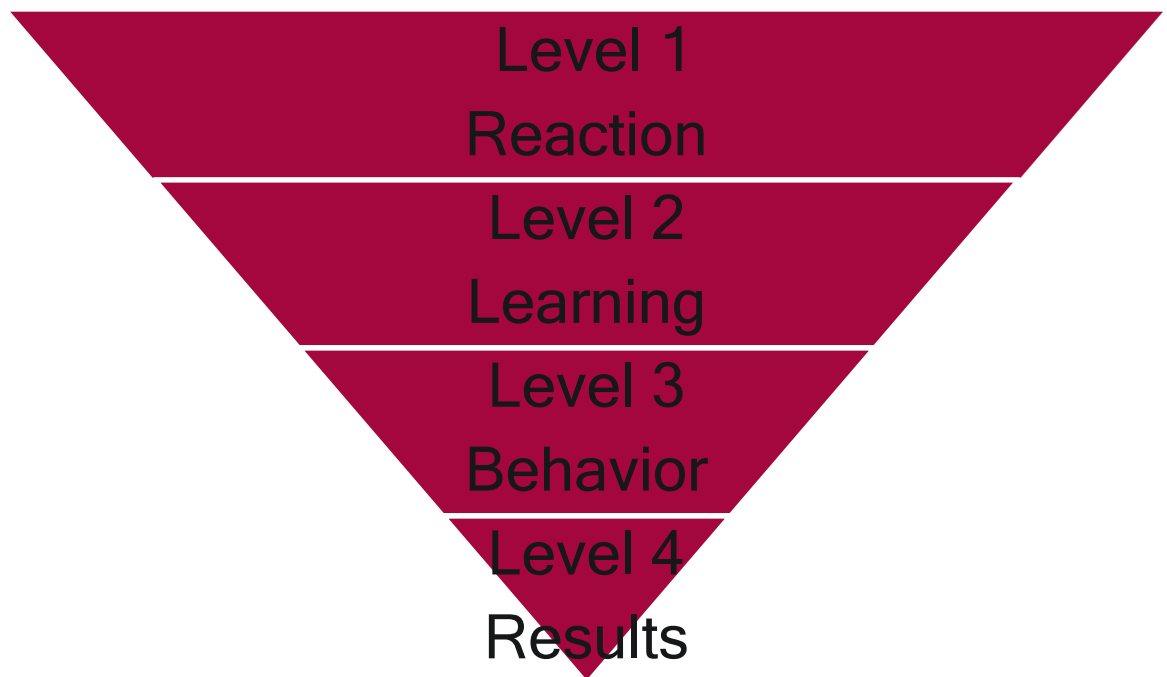


Figure 3 - Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model Levels

#### **4.1.4 Review**

Once these criteria have been evaluated, a report will be prepared and, as explained in details in the paragraph 16 (Quality Assurance), the report will be presented to the Board of Directors. The Board will analyze, discuss, and decide if the programme will be re-launched and if any improvements need to be implemented in order to assure the best outcomes for the students.

In case of improvements needed, the programme and modules/units development procedure will be followed.

Thereby completing the cyclical process of planning, implementation, evaluation, and review.

## **4.2 The Accreditation Process**

OPIT is mainly committed to offer accredited training paths, and in order to obtain them, it will submit the application to the MFHEA.

Proceeding in this way, the institute will fulfill all the rules, regulations and directives that are issued by the MFHEA regarding students' engagement, quality assurance and training provisions, assuring high standard trainings for its students and a high quality work place for its employees.

Specifically, the training will be in line with the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and, consequently, with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), offering trainings that are comparable with other European learning systems. Therefore, as explained in the previous paragraph of this handbook, the training programmes are built on the basis of the learning outcomes methods, that is at the basis of the MQF.

OPIT will also update the communication and marketing methods, following the latest communications of the MFHEA in order to respect all the parameters set in terms of advertising material/communication (website, social media channels, mailshots, newsletters, training programme brochures, and any material used to promote the training courses).

In case of changes to the Website/social media channels used to promote the training offered, OPIT will update the MFHEA.



## 5. Teaching methods

OPIT's mission is aimed to provide online trainings, using a Virtual Learning Environment specifically customized based on the needs, policies, and procedures of the Institute.

### 5.1 Digital Pedagogical Teaching methods

E-learning does not mean to simply transform a traditional learning path into an online version of the same.

There is the necessity to know the latest modes of online teaching and learning to provide to the students a learning experience that, even online, will assure a student-centered learning approach.

To comply with this, the Learning Design Support Office is a key figure in the training development, as it assures that the latest digital and technological tools are included in the training programme, in order to support new learning and teaching methods and add value to the students' learning experience.

This Office will supervise and direct each training programme from the design stage, and will give the support necessary for the development of the didactic materials (video lessons, online lessons, resources, assessment methods) to ensure that the most up-to-date e-learning and teaching methods are used to achieve the goals and guarantee the procedures of the Institute. The Learning Design Support Office is also in charge of advising the Lecturers to ensure that the optimal teaching methods are used to reach each training outcome.

Referring to the pedagogical methods used by OPIT, this is a core activity of OPIT and cannot be applied in the same way to all courses; this is why it was decided to leave plenty of room for choice to Lecturers and, as such, an appropriate mix of teaching and learning methods will be used. It is necessary as there are students with different learning styles and abilities, and all of them must be given the opportunity to achieve the best in their learning paths.

As the programmes offered by the Institute are online, the most suitable modes of delivery will be updated/integrated case by case with the support and advice of the Learning Design Support Office. The digital methods chosen must always demonstrate that they are equivalent or superior to non-digital ones and will also be evaluated (and, in case, reviewed) in the evaluation process, using feedback received by the students

An appropriate variety of teaching and learning methods will be used: this is necessary as students with different learning styles and abilities must be allowed to achieve the best results in their learning paths. Two primary methods are identified, depending on if the training/module is asynchronous or synchronous.

In case of asynchronous courses/modules, the main pedagogical delivery method used is a video lesson; specifically, short video pills, each lasting no more than 30 minutes. Each module/unit will include a number of video-pills, depending of the overall contact hours for each of them.

At the end of each video the student can verify his/her competencies, abilities, knowledge, and skills using a quiz and exercises. These assessment modes are defined for each individual training, on the basis of the learning outcomes of each module designed and they are described in details in the paragraph 6 (Assessments).

In case of synchronous courses/modules, the main pedagogical delivery method used is the live lesson; it will allow the students to have a direct connection and interaction with the lecturer and the other students.

The choice between the method/s used will be discussed during the Design stage of each training programme. However, in order to guarantee a high training quality, OPIT will assure that both synchronous and asynchronous pedagogical methods that will be used in the training programme are in line with the required percentages as it was accredited by the MFHEA.

## **5.2 Student-centered Learning**

OPIT is student centered, as the training programmes are designed to provide students a high-level experience, with an immediate impact on their lives.

The pedagogical methods used by the Institute are identified to meet the necessities and preferences of individual students, including diversity and special needs.

The high flexibility of the methods used ensure that the learning outcomes defined for each training programme are achieved by all the students, included those with special needs.

In addition, both part-time and full-time training courses are offered, also allowing students who work to fit the learning experience in their life.

The learning process of the student is always at the center, his/her learning experience is maximized, and each lecture will be focused on each specific topic, helping the students to achieve their learning objectives in a fluid manner.

The VLE used has a multiplicity of functions that allow OPIT to use student-centered learning methods even in the digital training provided, assuring the students' participation at every level, guaranteeing a co-operative learning between the student and the lecturers, and between the student and the other students of the same training path.

Some of the learning methods used involve (but are not limited to) the activities described below.

Students can check their progress lesson by lesson, having the time necessary to review some of the topics and/or ask for support from the tutors/lecturers.

Both the real-time and asynchronous interaction between students and lecturers/tutors and between students are guaranteed for all the duration of the training, thanks to different tools included in the VLE (e.g. forums, chat, video-conference) as well as to external tools made available to students, and it is encouraged throughout the overall learning process.

Students can intervene at any point of the video modules to leave a comment, a question or to highlight any doubts, and the lecturer/tutor can respond with specific feedback. In this way, it is simple for the lecturer/tutor to identify the topic of the question, and for the students to interact when doubts/questions arise about topics faced during the video-lesson.

There will be the opportunity for one-to-one didactics activity if the students need additional support.

Other learning methods used include group exercises, videos, presentations, discussions, case studies, and practical examples.

Lecturers have the capabilities and knowledge about the best pedagogy practices, being able to manage students from different cultures, studying in their second language, classroom management and diversity.

Lecturers and/tutors support the students during the overall learning path, giving them the necessary assistance in:

- Assessment methods and criteria, including support for the final dissertation, if applicable;

- Any topic of the modules, through one-to-one tutoring, focused on specific topics and questions done by the students, also through the VLE, starting from lessons' inputs;
- Feedback through chat, forums, video meeting;

Lecturers are always supported by the Learning Online Design Office regarding the digital pedagogical learning methods to be used in the modules that they teach.

The students are guaranteed the access to the VLE 24/7, allowing them to study whenever and from wherever they wish.

This is important, as the market targeted by the Institute is international, and in some case of working people/professionals, some will choose the training programs offered by OPIT for their high level of flexibility.

The majority of the courses are designed and facilitated in the English language, in order to reach both the international and local market.

### **5.3 Students with Diverse Needs**

OPIT is a firm believer in inclusion, eliminating learning barriers for those with Disabilities or Special Needs, and facilitating students' participation and involvement in the Institute training paths.

The Institute is aware that there are students with different learning needs, depending on personal, health, social, cultural or economic points of view. The Institute pays particular attention to the groups of learners that are usually at risk of marginalization, exclusion, or underachievement.

OPIT believes that just one type of learning and/or one teaching method cannot be used effectively for all students.

Best practices demonstrate that an inclusive system is necessary for ideal results to be attained.

Therefore, it guarantees that special procedures, ad hoc customized and tailor-made, will be put in place to support students, respecting the diversity of students and allowing them to attend the training paths with all the support they need.

From the initial stages of development, the course designers are always considering the potential necessities to maintain an inclusive learning environment, using tools and procedures to allow students with diverse learning needs to achieve the same

learning outcomes as the other students, and providing resources and materials that are tailor made.

The support from the VLE is guaranteed for all students with special needs or disabilities.

The following is a list, not exhaustive, of the needs and disabilities for which the Institute provides advice, guidance, information, and support:

- Autism Spectrum Disorders/Asperger's Syndrome
- Dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties
- Mental health
- Mobility impairments
- Sensory impairments
- Unseen disabilities like Epilepsy/HIV/AIDS/Chronic Fatigue and other chronic conditions or illnesses.

### **5.3.1. Support and Procedure**

OPIT policies and procedures have been defined in order to guarantee the necessary support to them and they are continuously updated to always ensure the accessibility to the learning paths offered to the students with special needs.

The support and procedures applied can vary based on the specific needs of the students, which will be analyzed by the Institute after a first online meeting with him/her and/or his/her guardians to identify the best solution possible.

The Didactic Board takes care of the specific requests submitted by students, before, during, and after the training course.

OPIT strongly recommends to students with a known disability and/or specific learning difficulties, and/or their guardians to communicate it to the Student Support Office before starting the course.

This will give the Institute the opportunity and time to arrange the necessary arrangements and assess student's needs, which allows the student the best opportunity to follow their chosen training path from the beginning with minimal difficulties.

If students do not disclose their needs and/or disabilities, it will be difficult for the Institute to provide the support necessary to help them achieve the defined learning

outcomes in the training.

Arrangements needed will be applied not only to the course, but also to assessment and examinations, on the basis of the Reasonable Accommodation as enshrined in the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act 2000 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Admission procedure, as explained in the paragraph 9 (Students' Lifecycle), with the online form has been tailored to make the Institute training paths more accessible.

Any information that the Institute will receive about the student's disability and/or difficulty will be treated in strict confidence and made available only to relevant members of the staff with prior student's or guardians' consent, as per general procedure established about the data protection management.

Specific training will be provided during orientation for all the lecturers, staff and tutors, in order to be able to teach/serve students with special needs or disabilities. The Didactic Board will also update them about other trainings and conferences to offered so lecturers, staff, and tutors can remain up-to-date about the topic and new teaching methods introduced in the educational sector.

### **5.3.2. VLE Pedagogical Support**

In order to give support to students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties of Special Needs, a user-friendly and adapted virtual environment has been designed.

Firstly, the fact that the Institute offers online training paths is an advantageous support for these students, thus allowing them to follow the courses from the comfort of their home.

The asynchronous method is also very useful, as video lessons already have the audio included, useful for students with visual disabilities.

On the other hand, there are other specific cases that need to be considered as students can experience issues when following an online training, such as:

- Sensory and mobility impairments can be a problem to use graphics, visual and audio media, and texts.
- Unseen disabilities can be a challenge, as students might not disclose their disability to the instructor because of the impersonal nature of the online environment.

- Any disability can be an issue in the online discussions, both synchronous and asynchronous, and it may influence the knowledge and skills of the students.

In order to avoid problems that may compromise the students' learning path, specific pedagogical approaches will be implemented in order to make the VLE accessible also to students with special needs and/or disabilities.

Some examples, but not limited to the following, are:

- Use of different tools for the information shared on the website, using for example an audio to explain the training details;
- Allow students to study and follow the training in a VLE with more privacy, specifically in the case of synchronous modules, in order to put them in a position to not have difficulties to disclose their needs/disabilities;
- Extra time for assessments;
- Use of highly readable font;
- Caption tools that are able to transcribe the audio of the video-lessons (in case of asynchronous modules), translating it in different languages;
- Offer the opportunity to choose from different types of assignments to demonstrate the knowledge acquired and the reach of the training's learning outcomes;
- Include subtitles in the asynchronous video lessons, in order to accommodate the needs of the students with audio disabilities;
- Possibility to use the Institute website and resources with assistive technologies (alternative keyboards, text-to-speech software and screen magnifiers);

The VLE designed for the training offered by OPIT support the procedures described above.

The VLE functions allow the choice between different types of assignments or the possibility to give to some students more time; these functions are easy to be used and to be set.

The pedagogical methods used are the object of adjustments following the evaluation process of each training described in paragraph 4. (Design and Approval of Programmes).

In case a student needs any support for the VLE use, they should contact the VLE Support Office.



## 6. Assessments

All the training paths offered by OPIT are assessed during the training and at the end of each course to guarantee a transparent learning progression process.

Different types of assessment methods can be used, for example: examinations, coursework, and presentations, as described in the following paragraph. The most suitable assessment method for each training/module is defined during the design process of the training and reviewed during the evaluation phase.

This guarantees that the Institute training paths are assessed using up-to-date methods and tools that are in line with the learning outcomes to be verified for each training/module.

Students will be informed about the assessments to be done and their mark range before the start of each training, through the website and the VLE of OPIT.

Students are allowed three attempts to pass a module, meaning the first time and another two attempts in case of failure; in case of reassessment students must pay an extra fee established by the Institute at that point in time.

The results and attempts done by each student are recorded through the VLE functions, which allow the Institute to have at any time an updated view of the progress of each student; this is fundamental to guarantee a high quality support, allowing the Institute to intervene in case of necessity.

### 6.1. Assessment Types

All the assessments are to be completed remotely, using the VLE of the Institute which, thanks to its functions, guarantees that all the examinations are conducted in a coherent and transparent way. Assessments' appeal procedure is defined in Section "Appeals and Complaints" below.

Each module needs to be assessed using the most suitable way; this is defined in the design process of each training programme.

The following list includes, but is not limited to only these, the most common and used assessment methods used by OPIT.

#### Questionnaire

A questionnaire including multiple choice and open-ended questions will be used, mostly to assess students' progress through the learning path.

The self-assessment questionnaires may be at the end of each lesson or group of lessons. Training by training, in the design phase of the course the frequency of these questionnaires will be defined, based on the learning experience offered and the learning outcomes to be assessed. The self-assessments questionnaires have the aim to give the student an overview of the abilities and knowledge attained and the topics to be reviewed, providing feedback in case of any topic that needs to be reviewed.

This questionnaire is not binding to continue to the following lessons.

In case of negative results, the student will be offered feedback/advice regarding the topics to be reviewed and he/she will be invited to re-take the test after the review.

The results are also saved in the system and made available to the lecturers/tutors, allowing them to give support to the students to assist in the learning progress of all students.

This assessment method assures that all the topics covered are understood by the students step by step, guaranteeing that the learning outcomes are reached module by module.

The results obtained at these questionnaires, in some specific cases, can be used as part of the final grade. It will be specified training by training. The weight on the final grade, if applicable, can change training by training. Students will be informed about it before the start of the training.

### **Entry Test**

Questionnaires are used for some training paths (such as degree programs), also as a method to assess the initial competencies of the students.

There are some degree courses for which basic competencies and knowledge in specific areas are necessary to be able to follow the chosen degree path with less difficulty.

The entry test does not have a mark, as it is not binding for the access to the training. At the end of the test, the student receives a report with advice regarding extra modules/lessons or resources to be consulted to cover the missing topics, if applicable. The student must do and pass the modules suggested in order to fulfill his/her gaps, following the modalities established by the Institute.

A separate English test will be completed for those who do not fulfill the language requirement of the training (i.e. an official certificate) to check if the student has the necessary language proficiency to succeed in the course. If necessary, the English

module/lessons will be required by the student. If the minimum English level required (usually B2) is not satisfied, the student is not able to proceed with the training chosen. The same is applied in the case of training offered in other Languages.

The modules/lessons indicated to the students will be compulsory and the student will do another test after following them, in order to certify that he/she has fulfilled the gaps.

Both the entry test and the language test will help both the students and the Institute to reach a high-quality learning path, despite the different entry competencies of the students.

### **Numerical Exercises**

In case of scientific learning paths or trainings that involve scientific modules, it is necessary to verify the technical and scientific competencies with ad hoc on-line exercises. The result is given immediately and if the student does not pass it, he/she has to review the topics and re-take the test in order to go on with the following module.

### **Examinations**

Some trainings are assessed through examinations to guarantee a more consistent assessment for all the students.

They can access the examinations only if a score of 80% has been reached for all the multiple choice questionnaires present during the training path.

The examinations calendar is defined time by time and shared with the students at the latest one month before the start of the examination's sessions; it is communicated via the VLE. In this way it is assured that all the students know the dates in time to organize their work and study time and that all of them have the same amount of time to prepare for them.

Most examinations will be written; in case of oral exams, a minimum of two proctors will be used to evaluate the exam.

During the examination time, all the students must follow the instruction of the proctors who will share instructions at the starting of each examination.

If one of the following situations occurs during the examination time, they are considered an offense and the student will be marked as 0 and must re-sit for the exam:

- Communication between the students;

- Use of books, notes, scrap papers, mobile, laptops, e-watch and any other tools that can store notes and can allow communication with other students or people outside the exam room;
- Disturbing other students.

### **Coursework**

In case of coursework, students must submit it electronically through the VLE to the lecture of reference of the module/course.

### **Dissertation**

Dissertations policies will be defined based on the specificity of each programme

### **Practical Activity**

In some degree paths, a practical component is included to guarantee that students also engage in practical experience that is directly linked to the degree chosen and that prepare them to enter the working world.

Practical activities' policies will be defined based on the specificity of each programme

## **6.2 Assessment Grading System**

Grading criteria are established and applied to all the assessment methods to guarantee that all students are evaluated in a transparent way. This scheme is shared with the students before the start of the training programme.

The actual grading scheme for each programme will be defined based on the specificity of each programme.

### **6.2.1 Final Grade**

This grading scheme is applied for each assessment through the learning path of the student.

The final grade, received after the competition of all the training, is calculated as an average mark of all the assessments completed.

The actual final grading policies for each programme will be defined based on the specificity of each programme

### **6.2.2 Feedback to students**

The students' assessment feedback will be given by the lecturer of the respective module and exclusively through the Institute VLE.

The feedback is provided to ensure that the learning objectives are reached for each module as they were established in the training programme.

Feedback must be given in a timely manner to the student with detailed comments. The lecture must specify what are the strengths and weaknesses and indicate in which area the student needs improvement. In addition, a grade will be given by the lecturer.

Before the feedback and marks are officially given, students have the possibility to speak with the lecturer/tutor during the module to ask for advice and guidance before submitting the assignments.

Students can use the grading scheme defined in paragraph 6.2 as a form of checklist before assignment submissions.

### **6.3 Mitigating Circumstances**

Mitigating circumstances refer to any unforeseen and unpreventable circumstances that result in one of the following:

- Late or non-submission of an assessment.
- Non-attendance at an examination(s).
- Poor performance.

Cases of long-term medical issues are excluded; the Institute applies the adjustments necessary before the assessment for these. In order to consider the claim complete by the students, it must be completed within the deadline established for each assignment.

The claim made needs to have documented evidence that demonstrate that the situation occurred:

- Has affected the student's performance or will do so;
- Was unforeseen;
- Was out of the student's control and so it could not have been prevented;
- Relates directly to the timing of the assessment affected.

Any decision related to a mitigating circumstance claim is taken by Didactic Board and the lecture of the assessment of reference.

In case the claim is accepted, the student is offered another opportunity to re-sit for the assessment, with no penalties applied, within a defined deadline.

## 7. Academic Integrity and Freedom

OPIT is committed to high standards of fairness, transparency, integrity and freedom. The following are the policies that define the staff, lecturers' and students' responsibilities, and the actions that will be taken in case of plagiarism and dishonesty during assignments.

### 7.1 Staff Responsibilities

All the staff and lecturers working with the Institute are expected to lead as an example, working with a high standard of integrity. All are committed to educate the students by practicing honesty in their work.

Specifically, staff and lecturers' responsibilities are the following:

- Design assessment, minimizing the opportunities for breaches of academic integrity;
- Develop original assignments on the basis of the module learning outcomes to be verified;
- Share detailed information about the assignments of each module, dedicating a lesson to explain them in detail to the students, and being available to support any doubts that students raise about them;
- Teach students how to reference their sources;
- Transfer to the students also the importance of not incurring plagiarism.
- Oversee the feedback release and the grading process, following the policies and schemes of the institute;
- Check the plagiarism report and take actions in case of plagiarism cases;
- Assure that the students' progress is recorded, using exclusively the VLE of the institute and following its procedure and policies.

Any debates among students and between students and trainers must be led by the staff/lecturers in an open and challenging way.

### 7.2 Students Responsibilities

Students are always required to study and complete assignments with honesty and integrity, and they accept this in the Terms and Conditions when they register for any training provided by the Institute.

Specifically, during assignments, students are expected to:

- Complete all the assignments of the chosen training path, following the guidelines shared by the Institute before the beginning of the training and from the lecture of each module.
- Work in a transparent and fair way, submitting assignments within the deadlines established for each training module.
- Complete all the assignments alone, otherwise acknowledging collaboration.
- Be honest, without copying from previous work.

### 7.3 Plagiarism Policy

Any form of plagiarism is considered a case of academic dishonesty and will be punished.

Plagiarism occurs if a student submits work that is not his/her own work, using the work of someone else, copying it and not just as support for the analysis done (in this case it has been referenced well).

For any coursework submitted by the students, the use onlinetools (such as Turnitin or equivalent) is mandatory, in order to verify if the work submitted by the student is authentic.

This check is also completed for any draft submitted, in order to give advice and guidelines to the student.

To have a fairness check, the lecturer has to exclude from the plagiarism check any part of the assignment that is not the analysis of the student (ex. Assignment question, bibliography, template, references).

Only after this, the assignment can be checked.

In case of unauthentic assignments, the student must be penalized as indicated below, on the basis of the plagiarism level:

- 10-12% - grade penalties up to 10;
- 12-15% - grade penalties up to 20;
- over 15% - the student is not graded and has to re-sit for the module, based on the Institute policies.

The Institution's policy on unauthentic assignment is listed on OPIT website, in the course syllabi and will be shared with the students prior to the beginning of each course and/or

programme.

## 7.4 Cheating

Any form of cheating is not tolerated by the Institute. Possession of notes, documents and any non-authorized material during assessments (such as examinations, questionnaires, entry test) is considered an offense.

Cases of falsification and unfair collaboration are also considered dishonesty cases and the following measures are applied.

In these cases, the student is automatically considered failed for the module and must re-take the exam.

A record of all the cases occurred for each student is kept, together with the details of the actions taken by the Student Secretary Office, for any future reference.

Because the assessments completed online, the Institute has put in place different tools that allow lecturers to verify the student's identity and reduce the risk of cheating.

Each student can access the assessment only through the VLE, using the username and password provided.

During the assessments, Lock Down Settings for browsers are activated, in order to prohibit students from browsing the web.

Recording can be activated, and thanks to the web cam activations, specific software can track and check if the student makes specific movements during the assessment, such as to copy from notes.

Proctorio or tools similar to this will be used to guarantee a verified online assessment environment.



## 8. Appeals and Complaints

OPIT is committed to give students a positive and high standard learning experience; however, cases can occur in which students may feel the need to appeal against or complain about the Institute's decisions.

Appeal refers to a student's request to formally review a decision taken by the Institute; usually it may occur regarding an assessment.

Complaint refers to a student that raises concerns about the quality or delivery of service received from the Institute. A complaint may be about an Institute service, programmes' information, teaching, resources and tools, and staff and student's behavior.

The students have the right both to appeal and complaint, and any of them will be kept by the Institute management very confidently.

### 8.1 Appeals Procedure

In case of appeals, the student is invited to solve it firstly with the Institute, which is committed to do this as fairly and effectively possible. First, students are invited to solve the matter informally with the tutor or staff person with which the problem occurred, trying to find an amicable settlement to the problem raised.

Only if the student is not satisfied with the informal method applied, then a formal appeal process starts.

This process includes that the student must send a formal letter, attaching all the relevant documents necessary for the evaluation of the case, to the Didactic Board. This letter must be sent via email within 15 days of the receipt of the assessment results. Once received, it will be taken into consideration and assessed.

The Didactic Board will notify the tutor and/or any other office/staff involved in writing, sharing a copy of the student's letter with them. An official meeting will be set involving all parties. They must deal with it within 30 days of the receipt of the letter. Their consideration and assessment must be as fair and transparent as possible, and in order to do so, an external evaluator/s will be involved in this process. A report of the case, with a decision and recommendations will be shared with the Secretary Office, that will be in charge to send it to the student via email.

### 8.2 Complaints Procedure

All complaints submitted by students will be treated in confidence by the Institute and they are used as students' feedback to improve the learning paths offered.

Any complaints must be submitted to the Secretary Office; this office is directly

involved, that the complaints must be shared with the Managing Director.

As appeals, the first approach to solve it will be an informal discussion with the student.

In cases in which this is not enough, a report of the complaint will be forwarded to the Head of Institute by email.

## 9. Student's Life Cycle

The student's Life Cycle at OPIT is defined in detail in this paragraph. The Institute establishes the principles and policies to manage the learning experience of each student from the admission until the graduation or achievement of the training programme.

Transparency, fairness and consistency are the principles at the basis of this procedure.

No one will be discriminated against by the Institute, which will accept all requests and registrations received from interested students.

The students' lifecycle involves different steps that are common for all students, and during which each student can be identified in a different way on the basis of their specific phase.

The following definitions and diagram defines the overall process.

### Definitions

*Applicant* – it is the person who applies for a specific training through the OPIT website, or through other channels, filling in the registration form.

*Accepted Student* – it is the applicant who has been accepted by the Institute for the training chosen.

*Registered Student* – it is the applicant who has been accepted by the Institute and has signed the student's agreement, who therefore has been registered for the training chosen.

*Enrolled Student* – it is the applicant who has been accepted by the Institute, signed the student's agreement and settled the first fee, so has been enrolled to the training chosen.

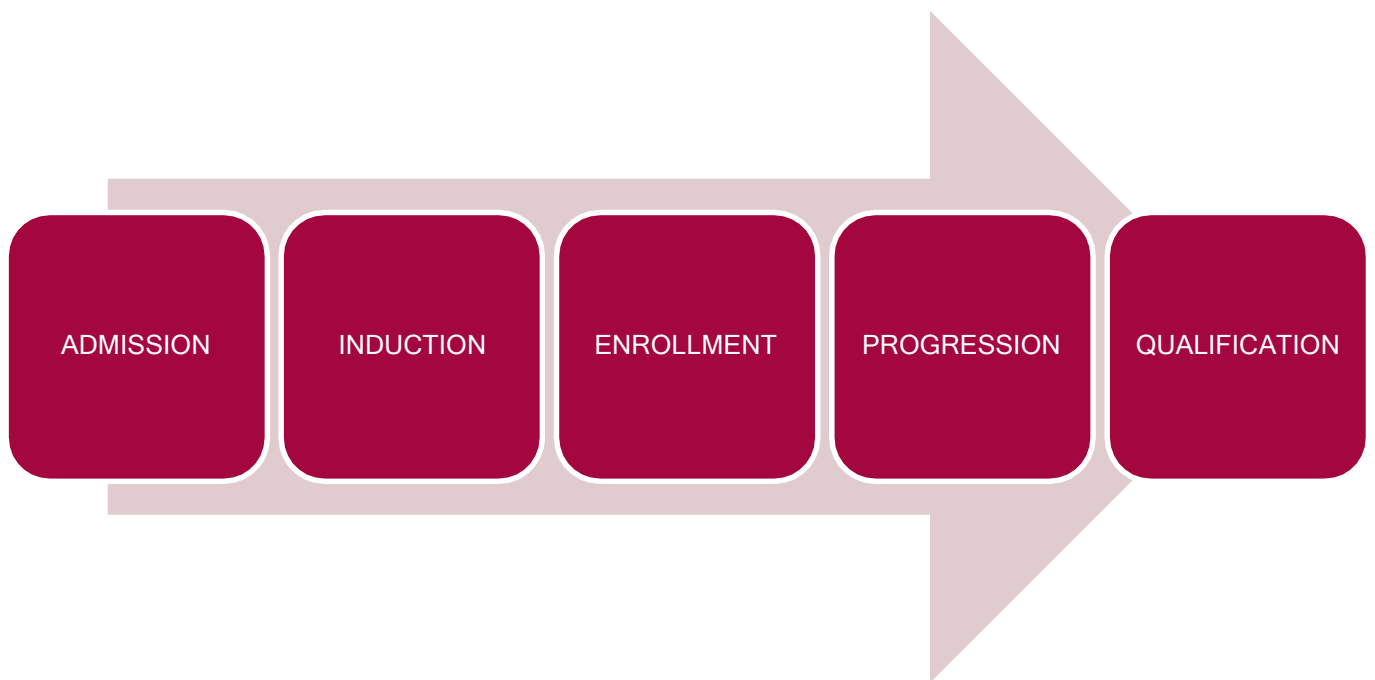


Figure 4 - Student's Lifecycle

## 9.1 Admission process

The admission process starts when an applicant sends the request for a learning path offered by OPIT. They can proceed online, through the online registration form present on the website page of the training chosen.

Each training webpage contains the information relating to it, such as admission requirements, learning outcomes, assessment procedures, plagiarism policies, training programme and all the information that the applicants need to know (updated time by time based on the requirements of the MFHEA). In this way, they have access to the information about the training prior the starting of the registration process. Deadlines about the registration acceptance are also shared. In a case that the training's registration deadline has passed, the applicant can still request information through the registration form.

This admission process is completed with consistency and transparency. Applicants fill in the registration form with personal information (name, surname, address, gender, birth date, email address, phone number etc.); they cannot proceed if they have not read and accepted the general terms and conditions of the Institute.

The applicants are responsible for the following:

- Providing real information when they fill in the website registration form

- Providing all the documents required by the Students Secretary Office to identify the applicant and check the requirements
- Completing an interview
- Replying to the Institute requests in a timely manner
- Updating any information changes to the Students Secretary Office

The requests from new applicants are received by the Students Secretary Office, which will then contact the applicant via email to ask him/her for the following documents:

- Copy of the highest qualification; for foreign qualifications, and MQRIC statement;
- Copy of a valid ID document (front and back);
- Updated CV in English;
- For non-mother tongue speakers, an English Certificate is required; in case of training held in other languages, the one of the language of the course;
- Others documents necessary to verify the requirements of the specific training selected.

All the applicants are asked to do an online interview, in order to identify them and discuss about clarifications they may need. The questions asked during the interview are simple and standardized to guarantee consistency.

In the case that an applicant does not reply within 3 working days, the Office will contact him/her by phone.

Once all the requested documents are received, the Office checks if the requirements are satisfied and consequently there will be four options:

1. Applicant accepted - the applicant satisfies all the requirements established for the training chosen;
2. Applicant accepted with specific conditions – this case applies if the applicant satisfies all the requirements but must sit for an entry test and/or language test. If the test is passed, he/she will automatically have access to the course; the enrolled student may receive advice regarding some extra modules to be followed (see paragraph 6.1 for more details about the entry tests);
3. Applicant with language problem - the applicant does not fulfill the language requirement. In this case he/she has to sit for the language test (see paragraph 6.1 for more details);

4. Applicant not accepted – this is the case if the applicant does not satisfy all the requirements to access the training.

In case the Applicant is not accepted and wants to appeal such a decision, he/she must send a formal letter, attaching all the relevant documents necessary for the evaluation of the case, to the Didactic Board. This letter must be sent via email within 15 days of the receipt of the assessment results. Once received, it will be taken into consideration and assessed.

The Didactic Board will notify the office/staff involved in writing, sharing a copy of the applicant's letter with them. An official meeting will be set involving all parties. They must deal with it within 30 days of the receipt of the letter. Their consideration and assessment must be as fair and transparent as possible, and in order to do so an external evaluator/s will be involved in this process, and a report of the case with a decision and recommendations will be shared with the Secretary Office, that will be in charge to send it to the applicant via email.

Some training paths could be with limited access, established and shared by the Institute, especially in case of online synchronous training; this guarantees to the students that the trainers can attend and follow the needs of each of them, even if online.

Applicants that would like to register for a programme that is full will be informed by email about the next intake of the training.

Once the requirements are satisfied, the Students Secretary Office will communicate it officially to the applicant by email, inviting him/her to sign the student agreement (containing all the details of the training chosen) and to settle the first payment on the basis of the fee scheme and deadlines of the course selected.

The accepted student will not receive access to the VLE platform until the agreement is signed by him/her and the Institute and the first payment is settled.

In all the other cases, the applicant will be informed by email by the Students Secretary Office, which will explain to him/her the reasons related to the specific case; and if applicable, an alternative learning path can be proposed to the applicant.

### **9.1.1 Requirements**

The requirements to access each training are published on the website, on any brochure prepared by the Institute and shared with the student via email after the

receipt of the form registration. They are valid for all the students who are admitted to the training paths on a first come-first basis to guarantee consistency, fairness and transparency.

There are some requirements that are in common to specific learning paths:

### **English Language**

For the Accepted Students who are not English mother-tongue, it is required to demonstrate English knowledge, submitting a formal certificate.

Usually the students are requested to demonstrate an IELTS level of 5.5 or an equivalent certificate.

In case in which they do not have it, they can sit for an English Entry Test (see paragraph 6 – Assessments).

### **Qualifications**

To be admitted to a bachelor's degree programme, the applicant must have the required entry requirements of the programme as it was accredited by the MFHEA.

In the case of an application for standard trainings, the applicant must submit the Higher Qualification that owns. The specific requirements for areas to be covered are specific to each training and are specified in the information webpage.

In the case of foreign Qualification, also a recognition Statement issued by the MQRIC is required.

## **9.1.2 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

OPIT does not recognize prior learning.

## **9.2 Induction Module**

All the enrolled students will follow an Induction Module before the beginning of the chosen training.

This will explain to the student all the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook, and specific information related to the training, such as learning outcomes and expectations. Study Guidelines will also be shared.

Induction will also include a handbook and/or a tutorial lesson related to the different functionalities of the VLE and how to use it.

If students have any specific requirements or needs, they should inform the Students Support Office.

### 9.3 Enrollment

Students are enrolled only if both the student's agreement is signed, and the first payment fee is settled.

Once enrolled, each student receives the credentials to access the OPIT VLE (Canvas). The credentials will be sent to each enrolled student by, where the student will be invited to set-up a new password after the first access to the VLE.

In the email with the credentials, the student will also receive a video-tutorial on how to register to the Institute's VLE.

### 9.4 Progression

Enrolled students' progression is tracked through the Institute VLE. Students can access it anytime to check their progression, status, and assessment results.

The OPIT VLE system registers all the achievements done by the students, the lessons followed, and tracks all the ECTS's achieved.

Students' progression statistical reports are automatically generated, being useful not only for the student, but also for the Institute to monitor the student's progress in every moment, the activities completed and, in case it is necessary, to intervene to support the student.

In case of a study programme is composed of more than one module, students can continue to the following module only if they achieve the minimum mark in the last module's assessment.

For some trainings a minimum percentage of lessons' attendance may be required. This is defined in the design phase of the course and can vary according to the type of training and the learning experience offered. If present, it is communicated to the students before the start of the course.

Lesson tracking is also recorded by the VLE system automatically.

Different progression conditions can be set for a specific case; in this case they will be shared with the enrolled students in the training webpage and during the induction programme.

### 9.5 Qualification

Only students who meet all the requirements about the training competition can obtain the final qualification.

The students must also complete the fees payment in order to obtain their qualification.



In the Certificate provided by the Institute, there will be information about:

- Training title
- Student Name and Surname
- MQF level, if applicable
- ECTS number, if applicable
- Start and End date of study
- Logos of the Institute, MFHEA if applicable, and other relevant collaborating institutions
- Identification code
- Head of Institute and Managing Director signature

The Certificate template will be approved by the MFHEA.

In case the student needs it, he/she can ask to the Students Secretary Office for the Diploma Supplement. It is a more detailed, official document released from the Institute upon request, with information related to the training path done, modules, number of ECTS for each training and the marks obtained.

## 9.6 Students Data

All the data and documents received are treated with confidentiality by all the staff involved and in line with the latest provisions of the GDPR EU laws and national laws.

They, together with all the information about admission process, Didactic Board decisions, old qualifications and past experiences, students' progression, obtained qualifications, are managed and stored in Malta.

The Institute uses an internal management software to manage all the activities and information related to applicants and students. The software's database is hosted by a Maltese provider.

No data will be shared with third parties, unless approved by the student. The Students Support Office communicates only with the applicant, unless he/she has given written permission by email to communicate with a third party on his/her behalf.

## 9.7 Identity Verification

OPIT is committed to verify the identity of all the applicants and students, all over

their lifecycle at the Institute.

Different procedures and tolls are used to guarantee it.

At the beginning, each applicant will be interviewed during a video-call and the identity of the applicant is verified in the first stage.

Tools and IT procedures are also used to verify the identity of the student during the online activities carried out once enrolled at the Institute.

All the works, assessments and any didactic material submitted online by the student is completed via the secured log in system. The log in can only be done once the students are provided with the credentials (username and password).

## 10. Teaching Staff

The teaching staff, together with support and administrative staff from the foundation of OPIT, is committed to follow the procedure described in this paragraph for their selection. The choice of qualified staff is a critical factor in order to guarantee to the students the best learning experience.

### 10.1 Recruitment

The Institute takes advantage of the support of the Academic Consultant, who oversees the recruitment of the teaching staff necessary for each training. The Academic Consultant works under the supervision of the Didactic Boards and according with the general criteria established in this handbook and the specific ones defined for each training to be developed.

General selection criteria are:

- Qualifications – in case of foreign title, also a MQRIC statement is required – each lecturer must have a qualification of a higher level than the program taught.
- Key skills and competencies
- Background experience in the area
- Publications
- Teaching experience
- Updated English CV

All the criteria will be specified for each training and must be satisfied and proven with documentation.

Lecturer's roles at OPIT will be made available through a public call, in order to make the Lecturers' recruiting process fair, clear and transparent.

All the candidates for a Lecturer role at OPIT will be submitted to the Didactic Board for the final evaluation and approval.

Teaching staff will be appointed directly by OPIT, specifically through the HR Office. Once the teaching staff of a training is approved by the Didactic Board, the HR Office will be put in contact directly with him/her to officially collect the documents related to the qualifications and experiences and a valid ID document (front and back); an updated police conduct (background check) is also requested.

An interview with each teacher candidate will be conducted by the HR Office to verify

the identity.

Resident or international teachers can be appointed irrespective of their nationality, gender, age, race, religion, pregnancy or potential pregnancy.

Employment contract will be completed in line with the Employment Act; in case of freelancer or self-employment, the agreement will always be done following the national and EU laws in act.

All the documents and data collected will be treated with confidentiality by the Institute staff and in line with the GDPR EU laws.

This process, conditions of employment and professional development of the staff will be carried on in a clear, fair and transparent manner.

The same procedure will be adopted for the recruitment of tutors; they both support the lecturers, and the students in case of need and topics not clear, to help coordinate group activities or moderate a forum discussion. Tutors appointed by OPIT can be assigned to more than one training path, depending on their expertise, if there is the need.

The lectures will be asked to provide a recorded video lesson of their teaching in order to allow the Didactic Board to observe and assess their teaching skills. Feedback will be given via email or video-call.

Each teacher will have a personal access to the VLE platform as lecture; he/she will receive by email the credentials, with an invitation to set a new password after the first access. A video tutorial about how to register to the VLE is shared in this email.

## **10.2 Professional Development**

All the staff at OPIT is encouraged to develop its competencies through Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses and Staff's CPD activities will be monitored by the provider.

New teaching staff has to follow a mandatory induction process, that will be provided by the Institute in asynchronous way on the VLE.

Following a list, not exhaustive, of the topics faced:

- E-learning basic principles
- How to use the VLE
- Institute policies and procedures referred to in this handbook
- Assessment criteria

- Teaching methods
- Special needs support
- Digital and virtual tools to be used

OPIT guarantees other activities done every year, to endure that the staff members will continue to develop their competencies and be updated regarding new tools, policies, and procedures in place.

The Institute will regularly organize updates and training with the teaching staff, in order to guarantee their updates about new and updated modes of delivery and pedagogical methods. The ones proposed are the result of new tools/methods or feedback collected by students and teachers about previous trainings.

At the end of the training/module, each teacher will receive a report from the Data Analysis Office, detailing the feedback collected by the students who completed his/her module/training. The main criteria evaluated are communication, audience control, presentation skills, expertise in the fields, ability to use digital tools, management of class activities, and the ability to engage students' attention.

There may be lecturers involved part-time; in this case the Institute guarantees that such staff is continuously updated about their sector developments, pedagogical methods, and digital tools. The induction programme is compulsory also for them, and they will be involved in all the competencies' development activities that are organized by the Institute.

Support and administrative staff also have a crucial role in the student's lifecycle. The Institute carries out the same procedure to select them, and the same criteria are followed.

Dedicated trainings are provided to these staff, to guarantee that it is updated and ready to assist the students in the best way possible.

### **10.3 Research**

Research is a highly-regarded academic activity at OPIT and an integral part of its academics. As such, the Institution will actively promote the link between research and education.

Encourage research-based teaching: Lecturers can integrate their research into the classroom by teaching their students about their research, using research as a case study for course content, and engaging students in research projects.

Provide research opportunities for students: depending on each programme's nature, students can participate in research in order to develop hands-on experience and exposure to the research process.

Support faculty research: The Institution can provide funding and resources to support faculty research, such as research grants, research facilities, and access to research databases.

Foster collaboration between academia and industry: Collaboration between academia and industry can lead to research that is relevant and applicable to real-world problems. The Institution can establish partnerships with industry to provide opportunities for research and innovation.

# 11. Students Support and Learning Resources

OPIT guarantees support to the students during their entire training path.

## 11.1 Students Support

Students may face unexpected difficulties during their learning experience. The Students Secretary Office is available anytime through the VLE or by email, to ask for support. This Office is frequently in contact with the trainers and students to guarantee that all the students have the necessary support.

Each training course has also a tutor assigned, who has the expertise and experience to support students facing difficulties. They can be related to studying skills, or challenging topics, or life changes.

In some cases, the lecturer can be appointed also as tutor. In any case, to the students the tutor's name and contact will be communicated during the induction programme. The support offered by the tutors is targeted on the basis of the student's necessity and has the aim to improve the understanding of the contents faced during the training.

Different tools and functions characterize the VLE, that allow a strong relationship between lecturer-tutor-student.

The student can leave a comment at any point of a video pills (for the asynchronous training), as he/she is asking a question to the lecturer.

The lecturer and the tutor will automatically receive a notification via the VLE and/or via email, about the question. They can answer the student directly, or if an in-depth discussion about the topic is necessary, they can agree about a video call, to be held also in the VLE of the Institute.

In order to provide the optimal experience both to Lecturers and to Students, during synchronous lessons, students can interact directly with the Lecturer/s by leaving comments and opinions in the chat, asking for clarification and providing their point of view. Lecturer/s and admin/s will be able to mute/unmute students' microphones in order to best manage the live interaction.

At any time, the students can contact the tutor or lecturer through the VLE, asking for support, as they are the main figures that will accompany each student during all their individual learning experiences.

Tutor's support is also related to the assessment's preparation, dissertation choice, discussion about future careers and study plan.

The e-learning platform is accessible on a 24/7 basis to all the students, tutors, lecturers, administrative staff, and each of them can access from everywhere, using their own credentials (username and password).

For any IT problem, the VLE Support Office can be reached through the VLE or via email.

## 11.2 Learning Resources

In order to assist and allow students to proceed in their learning path, a number of resources are available. Some are common for all the students, some others are commensurate to the type and level of the training.

The first and main resource available to all the students of OPIT is the Institute' Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) platform that can be accessed from the following link:

<https://shieldhe.instructure.com/login/canvas>

Resources available in the VLE are of different types: video-lessons, chat, forum, ppt, presentations, documents, exercise sheets and games, online quizzes, access to online library/ies.

Material and didactic resources are made available for each training so the students enrolled in the training can download them.

The VLE offers different tools and functions that improve the student's experience, both for synchronous and asynchronous lessons.

A high level of interactivity is guaranteed between student-student, lecture-student, tutor-student, in real time (chat, forums).

Online laboratories will be available for specific training, when practical activities are necessary in order to allow students to practically see how topics and knowledge learnt are applied in the real world.

All these resources can be accessed by the students through the VLE, where they can enter using their own credentials.

Information about all the resources available will be shared with all the enrolled students from the beginning, during the induction process and, during the training,



through the VLE, the Students Secretary Office, emails and VLE notifications.

In case of students with different needs or disabilities, their resources will be also accessible via the VLE and the e-learning platform will be adjusted based on the needs agreed with the Didactic Board, case by case.

### **11.3 VLE**

The VLE of OPIT is Canvas LMS by Instructure.

It is designed and developed to satisfy the needs of online training providers. Below are some of the main features that guarantee service continuity and backup systems:

- Data center and network systems are fully redundant and maintainable without impact to operations;
- Platform is accessible on a 24/7 basis,
- Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) units are available, so in case of electrical failure the service is guaranteed;
- Data centers use generators to provide backup power for the overall facility;
- All the data are replicated in near real-time and backed up on a daily basis;
- Daily offsite database backups of data and content are created (such as course contents, student submissions, student-created contents, analytics, rubrics, learning outcomes and metadata);
- Data are stored redundantly, in multiple data centers and multiple geographical locations;
- All the applications, media, file storage and databases are independently redundant;
- Cache servers are constantly monitored and if one fails, a new one is provisioned and deployed.

## 12. Information Management

All the information about students and staff are periodically collected, analyzed, and evaluated through the Institute's VLE functions and tools.

The Institute uses an internal management software to manage all the activities and information related to applicants and students. The software's database is hosted by a Maltese provider.

This is because all the interactions and activities completed with and inside the e-learning environment are recorded.

All the activities done on the VLE are tracked and collected in statistical reports that are analyzed by the Data Analysis Office. They are important also to track the students' progress and the feedback and support given by lectures, tutors, and staff.

This information is very useful for the Institute because in any moment they can analyze a single student case, checking if he/she is keeping up with the lectures, if there are specific problems related to an assessment, and support the student to solve any problems. The tutor of the training has a crucial role, being the first one to give support to the students. He/she has access to this data in order to identify students who are struggling with a specific lesson or assessments.

A particular attention will be given to data progression related to students with special needs or disabilities.

Data about the students' attendance to the lessons are important, as it is in most of the training paths offered by OPIT a criterion to access to the final assessment.

The general terms and conditions about the use of the data are accepted by the students, who can read them, when he/she does the registration online on the website.

Privacy policies are also present in the students' agreement, which are related to all the data that will be collected during the lifecycle of the student.

In case of statistical data related to the overall group of students at the Institute or of a specific training, each student has an encrypted serial number and this information is used by the Institute to analyze the overall progression of the class, in order to do evaluations that are useful for the review of the programmes.

Examples of data that can be used are, but not limited to, the following:

- Average mark of a specific module
- Average annual number of ECTS obtained by each student
- Number of students leaving the course after 6 months
- Number of inactive students
- Self-assessment progressions
- Average mark of the entry test
- Number of students doing the English entry test
- Participation rate of vulnerable groups

Feedback surveys will be provided to the students at the end of each module and at the end of the training, to collect information regarding their personal feedback and experience at the Institute.

This data is collected and analyzed by the Data Analysis Office in order to share with the Didactic Board important information regarding the students' participation, retentions and success, to be used for the review process of the trainings.

OPIT assures that all the data are collected, analyzed and archived, with the only aim to improve the quality of the training programmes offered.

The Institute is responsible for the management, access and dissemination of this information in line with the Maltese Education Act and Privacy Act, as well as with the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The OPIT Students Support Office staff is responsible for the students' records and maintain them. All the students' records are archived electronically.

To ensure this, the Institute uses the best of its storage space, both through the VLE and the internal management software system.

The Institute is committed to keep the data for as long as necessary to meet the

business objectives and law requirements, and ensure that enough information is available to answer to any complaints or legal appeals.

The retention period is at least 40 years, and once that is reached, data will be destroyed as quickly and securely as possible.

## **12.1 Access to data**

An enrolled student of the Institute has the right to inspect and review his/her student's records.

He/she can ask information about him/her-self and all the requests must be sent to the Students Support Office via email.

Access to documents must be given within a reasonable time, but no later than 30 days from when the request is received.

Students may be denied access to the act, but they can appeal this decision to the Didactic Board. If the Didactic Board confirms, it has to explain the reasons for the denial with a written statement sent to the student within 10 days from the appeal receipt.

If the student asks for access to documents that the MFHEA consider as pedagogical documents to which the student may have access, then the documents must be provided to the student.

Applicants have the opportunity to review and update data submitted in the registration form, making request to the Students Support Office.

## **12.2 Disclosure of Information to Third Party**

All the personal information identifiable from the students' records may not be disclosed to third parties without the student's prior written consent.

There are some exceptions and they are limited to the followings:

1. Disclosure pursuant to Judicial Order or Law – personal identifiable information may be released to comply with a judicial order or a lawfully issued subpoena. As permitted by the law, reasonable attempts will be made to notify the student of the judicial order or subpoena in advanced of compliance.
2. Disclosure to Institute Officials - personal identifiable information may be disclosed to OPIT Official who has a legitimate educational interest in the records. They can be released only on a need to know basis.

3. Disclosure to Officials of Another Institute – personal identifiable information may be disclosed to another institute where the student would like to enroll, or where the student was already enrolled, if the disclosure is related to a student's transfer.
4. Disclosure pursuant to Requests for Financial Aid – personal identifiable information may be disclosed if it is needed to determine the eligibility, or the amount or conditions of the aid.
5. Disclosure to national authorities – information may be disclosed if they are part of an audit or evaluation of a government-funded programme, in order to check the compliance with the legal requirements.
6. Disclosure pursuant to Student's obligations on Payments – personal identifiable information may be disclosed in order to collect student's financial obligations to the Institute
7. Disclosure to Accrediting and Professional Associations – the Institute may be affiliated to accrediting and professional associations and they may have access to personal identifiable information if necessary to fulfill obligations related to accreditation or affiliation with that entity.
8. Disclosure pursuant to Litigation against the Institute – personal identifiable information may be disclosed to the Institute's lawyers if they are necessary for the Institute's defense in a suit filed by a student.
9. Disclosure pursuant to OPIT Obligations to support study and research – personally identifiable information may be disclosed to an organization conducting studies for on the behalf of the Institute. In this specific case, the request of access to students' records must be approved by the Didactic Board and it will be fulfilled in compliance with the Maltese law and the EU GDPR about data protection, preventing the student's identification from the information disclosed.
10. Disclosure to protect the health and safety of a student – personal identifiable information may be disclosed to a parent of an eligible student, or to another individual, if the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of that student. The disclosures made must be recorded by the Institute, indicating also the parties to whom the information was disclosed.
11. Disclosure of results of a disciplinary procedure – personal identifiable information may be disclosed if the Institute demonstrates that the student is a perpetrator of a violent crime or a sex offense and that is a violation of the Institute's rules and policies.

No information will be disclosed by the Institute for commercial purposes.

### **12.3 Final Certificate**

Any Certificate achieved at the end of the training will be sent to the student from the Students Support Office via email.

This service is free of charge. In case the student needs a duplicate or a replacement, it must be required to the Students Support Office via email and fees are applied to this service.

### **12.4 Diploma Supplement**

The Diploma Supplement is a more detailed official document released from the Institute upon request, with information related to the training path done, modules, number of ECTS for each of them and marks obtained.

The Diploma Supplement is released in English. In order to obtain it, the student must send a request by email to the Students' Support Office.

## 13. Public Information

Public information is the first information that all the potential students and applicants will see. It is necessary that it is complete in order to share everything that students need to know before applying for a training path.

The website is the first source of information for new students, and for every stakeholder who would like information about the Institute and any offered training.

Potential students and applicants will at least find the information listed below about OPIT:

- License number
- Institute's policies and procedures
- Students' contract
- General rules

Specifically for each training course, the following information is provided:

- Type of Course
- Mode of Delivery
- Title of the Course
- MQF Level (is applicable)
- Total Learning hours
- Delivery Mode
- ECTS number (if applicable)
- Course Duration
- Attendance type
- Target
- Course Language
- Subject Area
- Entry Requirements
- Course Description
- Learning Outcomes
- Teaching Methods
- Lectures
- Occupation Relationships
- Assessments Methods and Criteria



- Study Plan (modules and ECTS of each module, if applicable)
- Fees and terms of Payments
- Registration Deadlines
- Further learning opportunity
- IQA policy manual

For each module:

- Module Title
- ECTS Number, if applicable
- Teaching methods
- Assessment methods and criteria
- Description
- Learning outcomes
- Total learning hours
- Delivery Mode
- Syllabus
- Lecture/s

The student will find all this information also in the student agreement that he/she will sign to be registered in the course.

Information is uploaded on the website when the training is accredited by MFHEA, in case of accreditation process in place.

In case of information updates or programme reviews, the website and student's agreement will be updated, in line with the changes done.

In this way, OPIT guarantees that everyone looking through the Institute website can have a clear and transparent idea of the training provided, allowing applicants to make informed decisions.

The Students Secretary Office is always available to receive any request of information and will share the website page of the relevant training with the interested new students.

Events, online seminars and webinars may be organized by the Institute to promote

the learning paths offered and share information about them. On these occasions, if brochures are distributed/shared, they will contain the same information listed above.

## 14. Equality and Diversity Policy

Principles of equality, fairness and transparency are the beating heart of OPIT. The Institute aims to create an environment where the diversity of anyone (staff, lectures or students) is respected so that students are enabled to reach their full potential.

OPIT is committed to promote equal opportunities in the education and employment fields.

### 14.1 Definitions

*Age discrimination* - unfair treatment of a person based on their age or age group.

*Bullying* - refers to the definition of Workplace bullying or harassment.

*Disability* – the physical, mental, or sensory impairment, total or partial, of a person, that may hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with the others.

*Discrimination* – treating an individual and/or a group less favorably, because of prejudice. It can be direct or indirect, conscious, or unconscious, in the employment or education environment.

*Diversity* – differences in race, gender, ethnic, or cultural background, physical or mental ability, age, religion, sexual orientation.

### 14.2 Principles

OPIT is committed to be an equal opportunity organization. The Institute works to recruit employees and students that come from different backgrounds and promote inclusivity.

The following are the core principles of OPIT:

- Provide a learning, working and social environment that is equal and inclusive, where each person feels that he/she has equal opportunities and can work to achieve their full potential

- Provide a learning, working and social environment that is based on merit and is free from bias
- Work to prevent that case of discrimination, harassment, and bullying happens, providing training programmes to students and staff, and implementing procedures and policies to avoid it
- Define and assure that policies and procedures are followed to guarantee that everyone would like to work or study at the Institute is treated fairly, with respect and will not face any discrimination
- Promote equal opportunities for everyone
- Work to build strong relationships between the groups (lecture, staff, students, governance, tutors)
- Work hard to face situations that support these policies and continuously work to develop and update policies to avoid it
- Take actions as soon as discrimination or inequality situations occur.

All the staff, lectures, tutors, governance and students of OPIT are responsible to ensure that these policies are respected. They are shared during the induction programme and periodically meeting with the different groups are organized.

## 15. Ethos

OPIT has defined in this handbook clear procedures and policies to be followed, and actions will be taken in any case of failure or general incidents, that are not in line with the OPIT Ethos.

- Each member of the staff of the Institute has the responsibility to act in case of any failures related to procedures or policies, in order to rectify the matter in a timely and confidential way.
- In case, responsibility is upon the same staff member involved in the failure, the Managing Director is responsible for the matter that occurred.
- In case the actions taken do not bring results, the Managing Director of the Head of Institute must intervene.
- If any person feels he/she has not been treated fairly, he/she can complain to the Didactic Board.

Any kind of accident occurring at the Institute needs the proper intervention.

Accidents include any kind of insulting, such as sexist jokes or references to people with disabilities, humiliation, offense or distress, and anything that can create an unpleasant working environment.

No one of these accidents or behaviors is tolerated by OPIT.

If the accident is made by a student, the staff who has seen it has to deal with the accident. If it does not reach a sufficient result, the matter must be referred to the Didactic Board.

Equal Opportunities must be always guaranteed by the Institute and its staff, through the overall training delivery.

## 16. Quality Assurance

OPIT is committed to the highest standards, and for this purpose the following policies and procedures are defined. All the learning experiences, the methodologies used, and the knowledge shared are periodically checked and improved in order to offer a high quality service to the Institute's students.

OPIT follows a specific self-assessment procedure, explained in details below, thanks to which is assured that the programmes' contents are updated, the teaching methods are reviewed, and the overall learning experience is always built around the students' needs.

To carry out this procedure, all the dates and statistics collected through the VLE, the feedback and staff are used and analyzed. Feedback from external stakeholders is also collected, presenting them those data in order to also have external feedback about the training programmes offered.

This process is the OPIT's Quality Assurance Policy, and it is defined on the basis of the overall Quality Cycle standards defined by the MFHEA.

It assures that the programmes are updated in line with:

- national standards and laws;
- academic field;
- technical aspects;
- teaching methods;
- digital tools;
- respect of the Institute policies and procedures;
- assessments procedures;
- any External Quality Assurance Report;
- new stakeholders' needs.

The main objectives of the implementation of this cycle are:

- ensure the achievement of the objectives set for each training;
- review the programmes' contents, on the basis of the up-to-date needs of the sector of reference;

- satisfy new needs arising from the society and students, always guaranteeing a student-centered method.

The Quality Assurance Policy Cycle is characterized by mainly four steps:

1. Planning
2. Implementation
3. Evaluation
4. Review

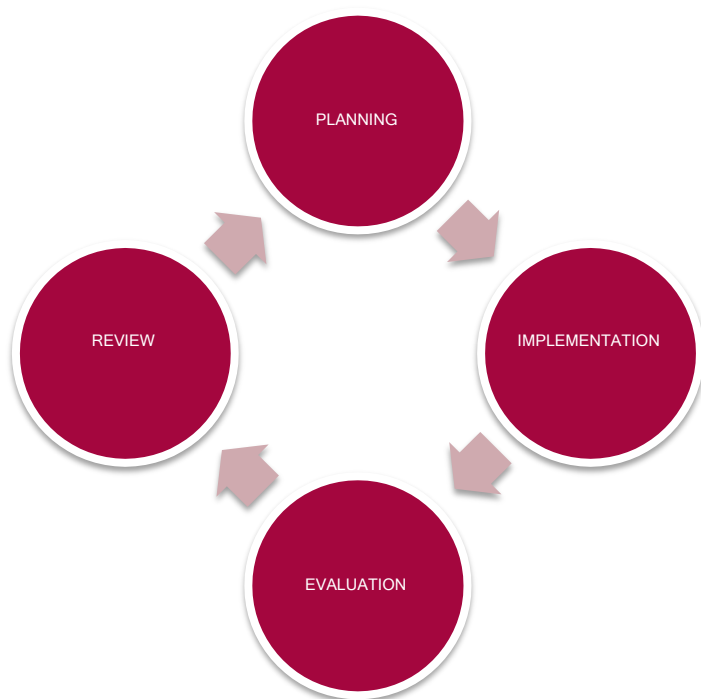


Figure 5 - Quality Assurance Cycle

## PLAN

The first planning is when the Institute plans each training, after a consultation with the lecturers.

This stage is typical of any training programme and it is characterized by the definition of the objectives to be reached for each training offered by the Institute. The goals are set, and key indicators are established to evaluate the programme success.

In this stage, any action to be taken is planned, too.

## IMPLEMENTATION

All the changes proposed in the planning step must be implemented. Usually changes can be related to:

- Contents –the review of specific units' contents is necessary, updating them based on the new developments in the area of study

- Learning outcomes – it is necessary to review the learning outcomes of the overall training, because of the real-world needs. In this case, contents' review is also required.
- Assessments – it is necessary to change assessments' methods or criteria.
- Structure – it is necessary to review the overall structure of the training, the MQF Level, the delivery mode, or the teaching methods.

## **EVALUATE**

All the information generated during a training must be collected and analyzed.

The collection is in charge of the Data Analysis Office, and most of the information is generated through the VLE.

The scope of this evaluation has the scope of analyzing this information them critically.

## **REVIEW**

This stage aims to verify if the goals defined in the first step (planning) have been reached. Any changes can be proposed in order to achieve them.

After this, the cycle starts again from the planning of the actions to be done, following the review that have been made.

Thanks to this cyclical process, programmes are always monitored in terms of quality and learning outcomes, in order to make sure that they are in line with the real-world needs.

Usually, each programme is reviewed after the end of the first intake; after it, with minimum cadence of three years. In case there is a specific need, the programme can be reviewed before this term.

Feedback from students, stakeholders, lecturers, staff, any complaints or appeals, and students' progress reports are considered as useful information when following the review cycle described.

## **16.1 Responsibilities**

The Didactic Board is responsible for the oversight of the Quality Plan Cycle, and it will work closely with the Data Analysis Office that provides statistical data reports.

The Students' Support Office is responsible to inform the Didactic Board about the



training programmes to be reviewed every year, based on the deadlines explained before.

The Didactic Board generates an evaluation report for every programme checked, where it proposes changes to be applied, justifying them and explaining the solutions proposed. The timeframe within which to implement the actions is also defined in this report, together with indications about the people responsible for each implementation proposed.

The Students Support Office will contact the people involved via email or VLE, and online meetings are organized in order to plan the actions to be taken.

When these changes are applied, if the training is accredited, a new application must be presented to the MFHEA, to review and/or update the training programme.

In case of big changes in the training programme, they will be applied from the next upcoming intake of the course.

The final changes proposed must be approved by the Didactic Board in order to proceed.

Once the modification has been approved and a new programme has been submitted and approved by the MFHEA, all the communication materials must be updated, in order to share the correct information with the new students.

Trainers are responsible for their own knowledge and skills, being up-to-date in their area of expertise and following training and conferences in order to guarantee their continued professional development.

The Didactic Board is responsible for guiding the lecturers, recommending specific training and conferences relevant for their sector or generally for the trainers' expertise.

## **16.2 Feedbacks Collection**

Feedback is crucial information in the programme reviews. Specifically, the following tools are used to collect information.

A feedback survey is shown to each student after the completion of each training through the VLE, and they are asked to fill it in. In case of longer training path (e.g. Degree), a feedback survey will be collected at the end of each module or term. This form is aimed to collect information about the lecturers' performances, the relevance of the educational content provided and their quality, the usefulness of the preliminary information provided to students before the start of the training, the quality of the support received by the Institute, the VLE's functionalities and tools, the quality of the support received by lecturers and tutors, the quality, usefulness and completeness of the information available on the website. Empty spaces are available for the student to leave any additional feedback or suggestions.

A feedback survey is also submitted by the lecturers, in order to collect information about the overall class progression and achievement, the support received from the Institute's team and the VLE functions and tools used. Also in this case, lecturers are able to offer any comments or suggestions in an empty space provided in the survey form.

Once a year, the staff of the Institute is asked to fill in a questionnaire in order to collect feedback about the organization and the overall delivery of the education paths.

All the information is used as indicated in the Quality Assurance Cycle.

### **16.3 External Stakeholders Involvement**

External Stakeholders are crucial in all the stage of the quality assurance development and implantation, and also for the learning programmes review process. OPIT builds strong relationships with public and private stakeholders, both nationally and internationally, active in the education field and in the main business sectors in which the Institute offers trainings.

The main public external stakeholder is the MFHEA, with which the Institute is in contact for accreditation processes and programmes.

Malta Enterprise is another key stakeholder that manages the applications for the Get Qualifies Scheme.

Generally, the Institute will hold regular meetings with representatives from the Malta Chamber of Commerce and other external experts in order to discuss the main

topics and areas covered by the training offered. In case of training or training paths (e.g. Degrees) that will award students with qualifications for regulated professions (e.g. Medicine, Engineering or others), the respective awarding bodies will also be involved

The network with the private sector is also strong, in order to allow OPIT to offer training that satisfies the needs of specific areas, tailored on the basis of the industry's needs.

External stakeholders are involved in all the stages related to quality assurance, before planning a new training, and specifically when the needs' analysis is conducted, as well as after them, to discuss the feedback received.

## **16.4 Cyclical External Quality Assurance**

OPIT follows an external quality assurance process, with the MFHEA approval and following its regulations, once every five years, to guarantee that the learning paths offered are always up-to-date and of high quality standards.

## 17. Disclaimer

The Institute has developed this handbook, ensuring that the information contained is true and correct at the time of the publication.

OPIT will make every reasonable effort to ensure that the information will be up-to-date, accurate, however the educational services provided may change from time to time.

Any updates will be communicated to the MFHEA and the latest information about the training programmes offered will be shared on the online webpages.