

VALLETTA HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTE (VHEI)

Quality Assurance Policy

May 2017

The present Quality Assurance (QA) policy document sets the guidelines for the educational experience that will be offered by the Valletta Higher Education Institute (VHEI). It is intended to serve as a guide for the different units of the Institute to follow, to ensure that the quality standards are consistently being maintained and improved. It therefore provides the framework within which the separate organizational units will elaborate their internal procedures.

Contents

List of Abbreviations	3
1. Organizational Structure	5
2. Administration and Management.....	10
3. Financial Management	12
4. Academic Activities	13
5. Programmes of Study	15
6. Quality Assurance	18
7. Admissions.....	22
8. Assessments	23
9. Faculty and Recruitment	27
10. Ethical Issues	30
11. Student Support Services.....	34
12. Communication Tools.....	36
13. Data Management	37
Annex 1 Guidelines for Selecting Assessment Methods	39
Annex 2 Grading System.....	40
Annex 3 Revision of Assessment Marks	41
Annex 4 Plagiarism and Academic Fraud	43

List of Abbreviations

AA	Academic Advisor
AC	Academic Council
AD	Academic Director
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EIC	Ethical Issues Committee
EQA	External Quality Assurance
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (February 2014)
FCM	Fondazione Children Media
FRC	Faculty Recruitment Committee
FTZ	Fondazzjoni Temi Zammit
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IMC	Italian Campus Management and Coordination Committee
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
MB	Management Board
MMC	Maltese Campus Management and Coordination Committee
MQF	Malta Qualifications Framework

NCFHE National Commission for Further and Higher Education

QA Quality Assurance

QAC Quality Assurance Committee

SAPC Student Admissions and Progression Committee

SSO Student Support Officer

VHEI Valletta Higher Education Institute

1. Organizational Structure

VHEI's organizational structure is shown below. The responsibilities of each organizational or academic unit are described in the sections of this policy related to the specific unit. All organizational units fall under the responsibility of the Management Board (MB), whereas all academic units report to the Academic Council (AC).

VHEI is based in Malta, but it was set up as a result of an ongoing collaborative arrangement between Italian and Maltese partners. On the basis of the agreements made, VHEI will be controlling and assuming responsibility for the QA of the programmes offered on the Italian campus.

The list of organizational and academic units is the following:

- **VHEI Management Board (MB)**
 - Fr Patrizio Coppola, President
 - Mr Jesmond Xuereb, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
 - Dr Carlo Cuomo, Academic Director (AD)

- **Management and Coordination Committee – Maltese Campus (MMC)**
 - Mr Jesmond Xuereb, CEO
 - Dr Monica Xuereb, Principal
 - Campus Manager – Malta (selected by FTZ)

- **Management and Coordination Committee – Italian Campus (IMC)**
 - Fr Patrizio Coppola, President
 - Dr Carlo Cuomo, AD
 - Campus Manager – Italy (selected by FCM)

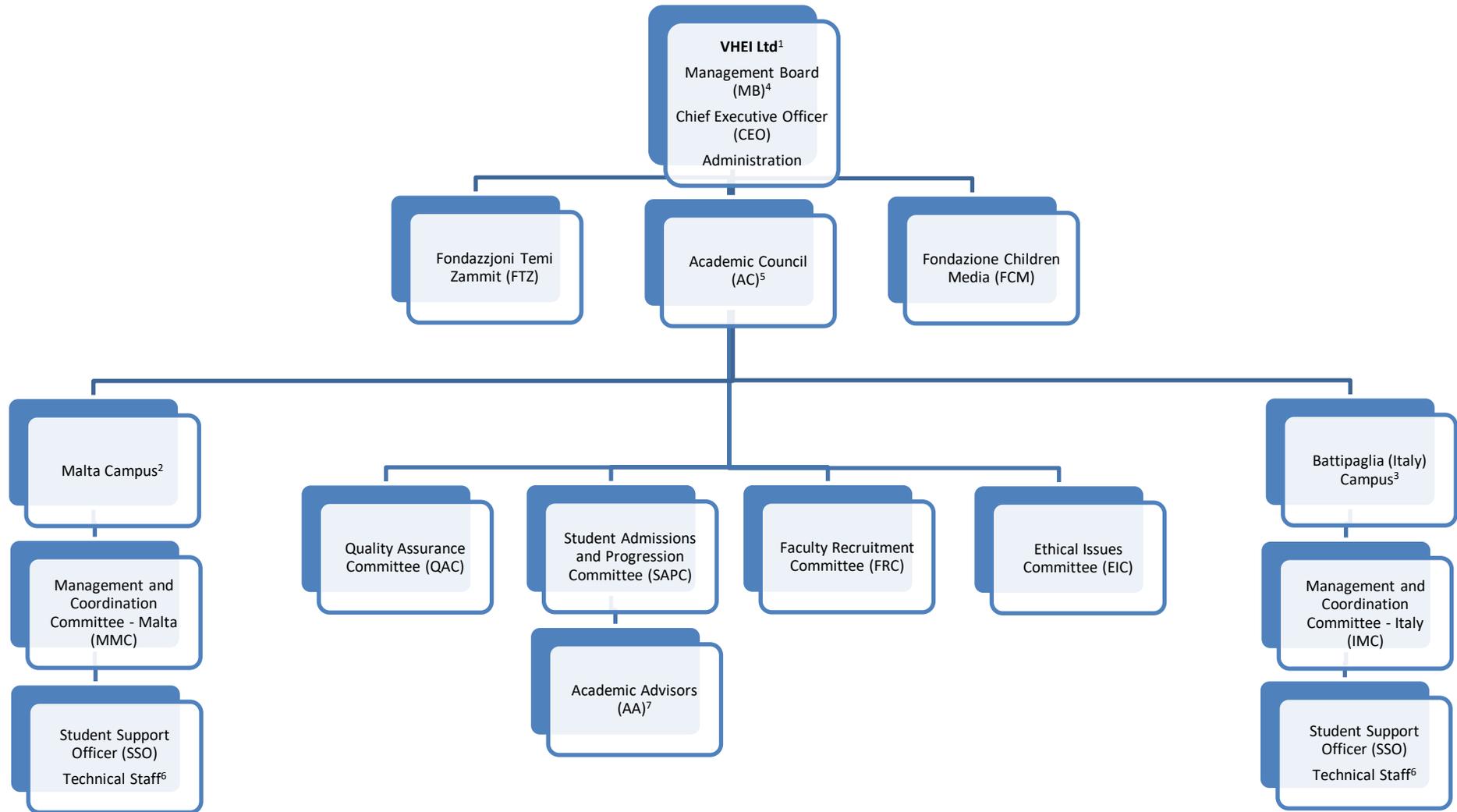
- **Academic Council (AC)**
 - Dr Monica Xuereb, Principal
 - Dr Carlo Cuomo, AD
 - Fr Patrizio Coppola, President
 - Mr Jesmond Xuereb, CEO
 - 2 representatives of the academic staff
 - 2 students' representatives
 - 1 representative of FTZ
 - 1 representative of FCM
 - 1 representative selected for each accredited programme of studies

- **Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)**
 - Dr Monica Xuereb, Principal
 - Mr Jesmond Xuereb, CEO
 - Dr Carlo Cuomo, AD
 - 2 representatives of the academic staff
 - 2 students' representatives
 - 1 representative selected for each accredited programme of studies
 - 1 industry representative (external stakeholder)
 - 1 external Quality Management expert

- **Students' Admission and Progression Committee (SAPC)**
 - Dr Monica Xuereb, Principal
 - Mr Jesmond Xuereb, CEO
 - Dr Carlo Cuomo, AD
 - 2 representatives of the academic staff
 - 2 students' representatives
 - 1 representative selected for each accredited programme of studies

- **Faculty Recruitment Committee (FRC)**
 - Dr Monica Xuereb, Principal
 - Mr Jesmond Xuereb, CEO
 - Dr Carlo Cuomo, AD
 - 2 representatives of the academic staff

- **Ethical Issues Committee (EIC)**
 - Fr Patrizio Coppola, President
 - Dr Monica Xuereb, Principal
 - Mr Jesmond Xuereb, CEO
 - Dr Carlo Cuomo, AD
 - 2 representatives of the academic staff
 - 2 non-academic staff representatives
 - 2 students' representatives



Notes

- 1 VHEI Ltd has been set up jointly by Fondazione Children Media (FCM) and Fondazzjoni Temi Zammit (FTZ).
- 2 The Malta Campus is managed by FTZ.
- 3 The Battipaglia (Italy) Campus is managed by FCM.
- 4 The MB, chaired by the President, appoints the CEO and the rest of the administration.
- 5 The AC is chaired by the Principal.
- 6 The technical staff includes the data manager, the web master, ICT officers and any others that may be recruited.
- 7 An Academic Advisor (AA) is appointed for each programme offered.

2. Administration and Management

1. The Management Board (MB) is made up of VHEI Ltd's President, CEO and Academic Director (AD).
2. It is the prerogative of the shareholders to select the company's MB members, on the basis of the skills and experience required to achieve its objectives. The MB members represent the top officials of the company, and their roles are assigned to them by the board itself.
3. The MB is chaired by the company's President, who presides over all board meetings and acts as the legal representative of the company, together with the CEO or any other official delegated to do so by the MB.
4. The MB is also responsible for establishing the selection criteria, in conjunction with the organizational units concerned, and for conducting or overseeing the selection process for any post within the organization.
5. The MB determines the composition of the Academic Council (AC) – the body responsible for all academic matters, in line with any agreements made with VHEI's partners, FCM and FTZ. The members of the AC are selected on the basis of their qualifications and experience in academic matters, as well as the requirements of the Institute. The current members include the Principal (chair), the AD, the President, the CEO, as well as representatives of the academic staff, students, FTZ, FCM, and each accredited programme of studies.
6. The AC's list of functions, communicated by the MB to the AC members in their letter of appointment, includes tasks related to the educational issues. In general, the AC oversees all academic functions and activities, develops and monitors the delivery of all programmes of study, and establishes the academic regulations. In contrast, the MB focuses on the business management and commercial aspect of the company's operations.
7. Through its regular meetings – where all decisions taken are minuted, the MB establishes the overall policy direction and governance structure, as well as the business strategy to be followed by the CEO, who in turn handles the management and day-to-day operations with the administrative staff. It is the prerogative of the shareholders to appoint and assign to the MB its role and functions, while those of the CEO are then determined by the MB.
8. The MB is to ensure that the selected CEO is fit for purpose. The latter's responsibilities reflect those of the head of the executive, administrative and management functions of an

organization offering higher educational services. The CEO establishes the policies and procedures to be applied in the day-to-day operations and management practices of the company, in line with good practices of the sector. FTZ and FCM provide the administrative staff and resources needed to manage the respective campuses in Malta and Italy.

9. The MB is responsible for taking decisions on the company's vision, mission and objectives, outlining the strategy and governance system to be deployed. This demands highly ethical behaviour by its officials, warranting financial probity and accountability in their actions.
10. The MB appoints a Management and Coordination Committee for each of its campuses, in accordance with its agreements with partners (FCM and FTZ).
11. The MB is ultimately responsible to ensure that VHEI's QA policy is fully applied to both campuses and to facilitate the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) in effecting the same controls consistently, whether in Malta or in Italy.
12. The MB meets regularly to establish policies and provide direction to the CEO, as required. Its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy aims to promote sustainable community development. In line with its vision, the ethos of the company (as well as that of FCM and FTZ) places a strong emphasis on the sustainable development of the local communities. This forms the basis of VHEI's CSR strategy – ensuring social, environmental and economic sustainability of its projects and activities, while involving and promoting the interests of the local communities. This strategy is reflected both in the selection of the programmes that VHEI decides to develop, as well as in the activities – festivals, exhibitions and other events – it organizes from time to time.
13. The MB is also responsible for the company's financial management, duly assisted by the CEO. It therefore monitors the tasks listed in the following section, and takes whatever action may be required to fulfil this role.

3. Financial Management

1. VHEI Ltd's financial year shall be from the 1st of January to the following 31st December. On the administrative and financial front, the Management Board (MB) reviews interim financial statements and approves the three-year business plan, as well as the annual report and budget plans drawn up by the CEO. Decisions on investment needs, budgetary and financial issues are taken by the MB.
2. The MB approves the annual financial statements and selects the auditor to carry out the company's financial audit for the following year, according to the provisions laid down in the relevant Maltese legislation. The auditor is completely independent from the company, and it is his/her prerogative to carry out all the checks and balances deemed necessary or desirable for him/her to issue the annual audit certificate.
3. The MB engages an accredited accounting firm to organize its accounting system and to prepare the annual set of accounts, which will then be reviewed and certified by the auditor.
4. The MB is entrusted to safeguard the organization's assets and to ensure that all corporate legal requirements and institutional obligations are being duly fulfilled.
5. The MB is also responsible to raise the investment needed for VHEI's business growth. Income derived from student fees, summer schools and other sources of funding is to be supplemented by additional capital, whenever necessary. In particular, the MB has to ensure that it allocates sufficient funds to (1) provide the resources required by the school and (2) ensure that it is in a position to complete the full cycle of academic years of every one of its programmes of study to which students have been admitted.
6. The school is to offer access to the main academic resources needed by students on campus, including hardware and software facilities, and a virtual library. Non-academic resources, such as a canteen, are also to be present.
7. Another role of the MB is that of identifying projects and opportunities which may be beneficial to the organization, allowing for its further development and expansion into relevant areas of interest. The MB selects such new projects according to the opportunities that may arise during the course of its operations or following any proposals made to it. In this context, the MB reviews any project implementation plans presented by the CEO.

4. Academic Activities

1. All academic activities by VHEI are to be undertaken through its Academic Council (AC). For each study programme, the AC appoints an Academic Advisor (AA) from among the Institute's academic staff, to advise students on academic matters and assist the Student Admissions and Progression Committee (SAPC) on progression issues. The Student Support Officer (SSO) is entrusted with the task of ensuring that the diverse needs of the students on campus are catered for. Any particular requests for specific resources are to be presented to the management for the necessary action.
2. Since VHEI only accepts a limited number of students in each of its course programmes, attention to student progression and satisfaction is of crucial importance to it. Every individual student will consequently be monitored by the study programme's AA and the SAPC. The AA will follow the academic progress of the individual students in his/her course programme and take any action that may be required to identify and resolve problems that may arise. Feedback forms submitted by students at the end of every study-unit will be collected and analysed by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).
3. Before the start of each academic year, the AC reviews the Institute's policies contained in this document and publishes any updates on the VHEI website. It also determines any specific rules and procedures (on entry, prior learning, progression, etc.) for each programme of study.
4. The AC organizes training for lecturers, tutors and other staff, in order to improve their skills in different areas. The AC chooses the topics for such Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training on the basis of any requests made to it or needs identified, such as modes of assessment. The trainers may be selected from among the Institute's internal or external academic staff, or from among experts invited according to the topic being tackled.
5. VHEI's academic members of staff are encouraged to join relevant communities of practice, to improve their professional competence and to keep abreast of new technologies. The QAC, the Ethical Issues Committee (EIC) and other units may also recommend subjects for CPD training which would benefit staff. These seminars are to be held according to needs, and their effectiveness may be gauged through the Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) audits, which should also highlight the need for any follow up sessions.

6. The AC is to ensure that all lecturers enjoy academic freedom in their roles, within the framework of the educational standards and QA policy adopted by the Institute. Any lecturer who feels that his/her academic freedom is being hampered may write to request the AC – or the Management Board (MB), if the complaint concerns the AC – to take remedial action.
7. The AA of the relevant study programme is to receive and track complaints lodged on academic issues and filed in writing, either in person or through the online complaints form. The EIC is to handle all complaints related to ethical issues (Annex 5 describes how such claims are to be tackled, and how the eventual decisions taken are to be implemented or possibly appealed until they become final). The same procedures apply to both campuses.
8. The AC is responsible to issue certificates to students reflecting their academic progress. The final documentation released upon the successful completion of the course will include a certificate and diploma supplement containing all the relevant details of the programme, such as Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) level, number of ECTS credits and learning outcomes achieved, as well as the list of study-units taken by the student, as required by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) regulations.

5. Programmes of Study

1. The Academic Council (AC) is to design and oversee all study programmes developed by VHEI, according to the Institute's own mission statement and educational philosophy combining theoretical and practical teaching, and in line with the programme accreditation procedures established by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE).
2. Courses are designed to provide educational programmes that are highly vocational. They feature both theoretical and practical approaches, including seminars, guest lectures, workshops, individual and group exercises, development of projects, screening of videos, etc. The teaching methodology for each study-unit, described in the NCFHE application for course programme accreditation, is published on the Institute's website.
3. For each programme, the AC determines the rules for student progression, recognition of relevant qualifications, periods of study and prior learning – whether formal, non-formal or informal – and procedures for carrying out assessments and exams. It is responsible to monitor the delivery of the programmes and their individual modules.
4. The development of a programme of study involves consultation – at both its design phase and during periodical reviews – with industry players and stakeholders, in order to render it as relevant as possible to the needs of the industry. It also requires the input of students, generally provided through the feedback forms collected for each module and analysed by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) at the end of each semester. This feedback is essential for reviewing each course and to ensure that the curriculum facilitates a proper progression in the student's learning experience.
5. Once the need for a specific programme has been identified, a course description and other relevant details – including its target audience, Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) level, and minimum eligibility and selection criteria for students to enrol – will be drawn up. Following the management's decision to offer a new course (upon the recommendation of the AC), a team to work on the programme will be set up by the AC. This team draws up a tentative programme and presents a report with the list of study-units that may be offered, for a final decision by the AC and the management.

6. It is the duty of the AC to ensure that representatives of external stakeholders, like the industry players, are consulted during the design and periodic review of each course programme. The feedback provided is to be integrated into the programme to ensure that the course is relevant for the labour market. Industry players may thus benefit from having access to well-trained potential employees.
7. The AC approves the individual modules or study-units that make up the programme curriculum. In each case, this includes the course outline, learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences), ECTS learning credits, teaching method (with relative breakdown of the hours in lectures, guided practice sessions or tutorials, self-study and work assignments), suggested reading lists and other resources needed, as well as the form of assessment to be adopted.
8. The team of lecturers of each study-unit defines the teaching methods (theoretical and practical) to be adopted in order to reach the learning objectives set for the respective module. It also decides on the most appropriate assessment procedures and on the range of didactic tools to use in order to deliver the unit. The proposed methodology is then reviewed by the AC, before being submitted for approval by the NCFHE evaluators appointed to accredit the programme of study.
9. No programme may therefore be offered unless it is formally approved by the AC. The latter also determines the minimum requirements for lecturers delivering each module, in terms of qualifications, academic experience and practical skills through their involvement in the industry.
10. The QAC ensures that the indicated methods are being followed. At the end of each semester, data collected through the student feedback forms, or through any surveys conducted by the QAC, is analysed and recommendations made accordingly. In line with the Institute's QA policy, such regular reviews are carried out in order to improve, whenever possible, the content and delivery of the module and the programme.
11. The AC reviews each programme following evaluation carried out by the QAC or external quality auditors, generally once in every three-year cycle, or whenever it is deemed necessary to introduce changes. Updates to the content introduced by the AC will in turn be monitored by the QAC.
12. All relevant information on the programmes offered – including that on the individual study-units – is to be uploaded on the Institute's website and disseminated through the channels that are considered to be more suitable and effective for the course in question, especially those related to the industry.

6. Quality Assurance

1. The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) is responsible for ensuring that high quality standards are maintained (1) in all VHEI courses and (2) in every aspect of the educational experience provided to students by the Institute. The focus of these standards should be on quality assurance in relation to learning and teaching, based on learning outcomes.
2. The QAC is appointed by and reports directly to the Academic Council (AC). Its members are nominated from among the academic staff and senior management, based on their qualifications or experience in the field. An expert in quality management systems is also to be appointed to support the committee.
3. VHEI's quality objectives are set by the AC, in consultation with the QAC. The present QA policy document establishes the guidelines which the different units of the Institute have to follow, and upon which they are to elaborate the required internal procedures.
4. The QAC's main responsibility is to oversee all internal policies and procedures related to the quality of the educational experience offered, to ensure that the appropriate academic standards and integrity are consistently being maintained and improved. It manages the quality management system to ascertain (1) that this is well defined, with all envisaged academic and organizational units appropriately set up and functioning properly, (2) that all the requirements of the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education in Malta are amply satisfied, and (3) that the expectations of the students and stakeholders are regularly being met.
5. The QAC is to ensure that the QA policy is:
 - accessible to all, with any updates published on VHEI's website;
 - regularly updated, in consultation with stakeholders (students, staff, industry, etc.);
 - fully implemented through the right channels and mechanisms set up by VHEI; and
 - periodically reviewed by external evaluators.
6. Through its role, the QAC confirms that the programmes offered by VHEI are relevant to the needs of society. All programmes developed should address specific needs, which may be identified through national policies, strategies, studies, surveys or other relevant reports. They should also be designed in consultation with industry. The QAC therefore checks that this crucial element of the Institute's educational ethos – offering programmes that are

relevant and useful to all stakeholders, combining theoretical and practical perspectives and bringing students closer to the opportunities of the labour market – is being respected.

7. The QAC's role is vital to guarantee that the students are satisfied with their learning experience throughout the delivery of the course. The course structure and methods of delivery need to place the student at the centre of the teaching environment, focusing on learning by doing and giving students an autonomous and active role in the pedagogical process. Quality audits evaluate the methods of delivery and pedagogical results obtained, thus leading to the strengthening of the educational experience and facilitating a wider diversification of learning paths.
8. The QAC fulfils its role by developing and implementing VHEI's Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) mechanisms. These include professional peer review, consultation of stakeholders and experts, gathering of feedback from students, staff and industry partners on standardized templates, surveys related to the study-units and programmes, analysis of data on student progression, examiners' recommendations, reports on corrective measures taken, external ad hoc reviews, and similar actions.
9. The QAC reviews every educational programme through a full quality audit, according to the established procedures and under the guidance of experts in quality management systems, in every three-year cycle. This takes into account the data collected throughout the period from all stakeholders concerned, as well as the analysis of such data and the institutional policies in force. The appointed experts guide the QAC in the application of the most suitable mechanisms, in order for the review to be as effective as possible.
10. During the IQA cycle, all stakeholders will be asked to provide their feedback. On every study-unit delivered, feedback may be given on the specific forms collected at the end of the semester, or as the students deem appropriate. The QAC is to gather and analyse such information, and eventually put forward recommendations for the AC to consider and implement.
11. The QAC also monitors the quality of all other academic and related activities, such as internships, as well as the student support services offered on or off campus. It regularly gathers the necessary feedback from students, staff, industry partners and other external stakeholders identified. Surveys conducted through interviews or the distribution of questionnaires are envisaged to gauge respondents' satisfaction.
12. In addition, the QAC oversees all aspects related to the learning environment and the organisation itself, including governance and research carried out through the Institute. The

QA exercises should confirm that the set learning objectives are being satisfied, and that the learning experience meets the expectations of the stakeholders.

13. The QAC is to seek input from industry partners to ensure that the content of VHEI's programmes is regularly updated in terms of new research or practical developments in the business by addressing the changing scenario of the industry and the corresponding transformations in society. Its quality audits should assess the study programmes' relevance in such fast-evolving sectors, in order to keep the students' educational and training experience as current as possible, taking into account both research results as well as the latest industry practices.
14. The IQA exercises are to involve all faculty, students and enterprises offering internships or otherwise participating in the educational activities. The response received is analysed by the QAC, with the support of experts in the specific topics, and recommendations are then drawn up for the AC to consider and eventually implement. The relevant unit and representatives of the stakeholders concerned (students, staff, host organisations, etc.) are to be consulted during the analysis of the data gathered and invited to provide their suggestions.
15. In consultation with the QAC and the relevant units, the AC implements any improvements recommended at the end of an IQA cycle. Such changes are to be brought to the attention of all concerned through the appropriate channels, and updated information is also to be posted on the website. Subsequent quality audits will then highlight the effectiveness or otherwise of the measures introduced.
16. The QAC may also review the responsibilities of each unit or official of the Institute, with respect to the quality cycle. If its quality monitoring exercises indicate that it might be more beneficial for certain functions to be handled by a different unit – existing or to be set up – or for the unit to take up additional tasks or duties, the QAC will liaise with the parties involved and draw up proper recommendations. All interested parties are to be informed of the outcome of such consultations.
17. The QA system applies to all parties involved in VHEI's activities, including visiting lecturers and entities commissioned to carry out tasks or actions for the Institute which in some way contribute to its academic programme, whether in Malta or in Italy. These external parties (such as companies hosting interns or putting up events) are to be informed in the written instructions given to them prior to their engagement that they may be required to follow the Institute's QA policies, depending on the nature of their activities. The QAC applies the same controls and quality screening procedures to all lecturers.

18. The QA practices adopted by VHEI apply to the two campuses, and the QAC needs to ensure that the Institute's policy is being adequately followed in both. The Italian campus is run jointly with FCM, while FTZ co-manages the Maltese campus, in line with the policies of the Institute. The same level of control is to be consistently effected on the two campuses, and QA exercises are therefore to involve the stakeholders of both, including companies offering internships to the students of each campus.
19. VHEI is to commission External Quality Assurance (EQA) audits at least every five years, to review the IQA results. These audits provide the Institute with both a developmental and an accountability perspective. Before embarking on an EQA audit, the QAC is to seek the approval of the NCFHE to ensure that it is in line with the national authority's guidelines on QA matters.
20. The QAC ensures that recommendations put forward by EQA auditors are applied, whenever possible. The AC is ultimately responsible to implement such recommendations, while the QAC monitors how the new procedures are being applied and reports to the AC accordingly.
21. The QAC may add to the present document further detailed QA procedures, based on the latest version of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and reflecting Maltese legislation in the field, whenever necessary.

7. Admissions

1. The Student Admissions and Progression Committee (SAPC) reports directly to the Academic Council (AC). Its members are selected from among the academic staff and senior management, on the basis of individual experience and the requirements of the Institute.
2. The SAPC's role concerns the processes for both student admissions and progression, which it is responsible to oversee. It draws up procedures for the selection of students applying to enrol in one of the Institute's programmes. Moreover, it assists the AC in establishing the admission criteria for new programmes and makes recommendations on this subject and related matters, which then need to be endorsed and adopted or discussed further by the AC.
3. The SAPC ensures that the website contains sufficient information for prospective students to make informed choices before enrolling.
4. The SAPC is also responsible for induction activities for new students, including open days and freshers' week, and for preparing programmes of activities before any student intake (generally, prior to the commencement of the academic year). These programmes include activities for both local and foreign students, such as informal meetings for students and staff, meetings for the parents, interviews by the Academic Advisor (AA), tutor or support officer, and leisure activities. Student organizations may contribute directly to these programmes.
5. All students are to have access to an online handbook containing information on their course and other related matters.
6. The outcome of the student admissions process is to be published online within one week from completion of the selection, or within the stated timeframe, respecting any applicable data protection conditions.

8. Assessments

1. Assessments are intended to ascertain that the envisaged objectives and learning outcomes of the study-unit or programme in question have been achieved by the students, while measuring the extent to which such outcomes have been attained. They aim to improve the students' learning experience by providing them with feedback, while establishing clear and consistent criteria for progression decisions by the Student Admissions and Progression Committee (SAPC) and indicating the effectiveness of the teaching and delivery of the module.
2. This assessment policy concerns both the setting of the assessment method, as well as the marking of the examination papers or assignments and grading of the students. It is intended to ensure that evaluations are conducted in a fair, transparent, consistent, rigorous and reliable manner – that is, they need to produce the same outcome in the case of a re-assessment.
3. Lecturers are to see that assessments are clearly defined and explained to students, in terms of both procedures and criteria, at the start of the semester. They are to develop appropriate ways of assessing the students and publish the details of the assessment method on the website, along with the relevant information for each study-unit, prior to the start of the academic year. External examiners are to be made aware of the instructions given to the students.
4. In selecting the assessment method to apply for their study-unit, lecturers need to consider a variety of options and exercises which take into account the different abilities of disadvantaged students, like those with specific learning difficulties (e.g., dyslexia). A lecturer may therefore also supplement a written exam with other assessment methods to avoid penalizing a student who may have difficulty with a specific exam methodology. This adds flexibility and helps to address the diverse needs and learning abilities of the students. It will also enhance the learner-teacher relationship and render more effective the guiding role of lecturers and tutors. Through the different assessment methods adopted, students can be assessed not just on the theoretical knowledge gathered, but also on the practical work produced throughout the course.

5. In general, every study-unit assessment is to include one or more of the following, depending on the content and learning outcome that is to be assessed:
 - Ongoing assessment – of work presented throughout the course of the module, possibly including tests taken at indicated intervals;
 - Oral examination – in the form of an interview to assess the student’s knowledge, held at the indicated venue, on a set date;
 - Assignment – an essay of a specific length or other exercises (e.g., programming) to be submitted by a set date;
 - Portfolio – a systematic and representative collection of the student's work, documenting his/her progress over the given period;
 - Practical – work of a practical nature carried out under supervision at a set venue (laboratory, workshop, etc.);
 - Presentation – addressed at the class and delivered by an individual or group of students; generally followed by a discussion to improve the students’ communication skills;
 - Project – a collaborative or individual work which may involve different production tasks or activities;
 - Written test or examination – consisting of essays, multiple-choice questions or other exercises; it is held under supervision at the indicated venue, on a set date.
6. Lecturers are to follow the guidelines (see Annex 1) drawn up by the Institute for selecting the most appropriate assessment method/s for their study-unit.
7. The Institute is to engage experts to assist its academic staff in selecting or adapting assessment methodologies for students with learning difficulties, when this is needed. Furthermore, private professionals – generally medical doctors, psychologists or others, depending on the nature of the student’s difficulty – may recommend (in writing) the application of support measures, such as extra time during written exams, for individuals with a history of learning difficulties. Such cases will be considered by the expert engaged by the Institute, who will indicate the course of action to be taken by the examiner/s.
8. At the start of the study-unit, lecturers are to advise students of their criteria for the assessment and marking, which will generally take into account the work carried out in class, the improvement shown between the beginning and end of the course, the projects developed at home, and other factors considered by the lecturer at his/her own discretion, depending on the subject.

9. The level of difficulty of the exam and the evaluation criteria vary depending on whether the subject is a core or elective unit. The lecturer will give due weight to the student's interest in the topic – whether he/she will be specializing in it or not, and may also take into account any mitigating circumstances when marking exam papers or carrying out assessments.
10. Lecturers are to ensure that their assessment is consistent and fair, in line with the aim of comparing the actual learning outcomes to those the teaching was intended to achieve. For this purpose, they are to follow the grading system indicated by the Institute (see Annex 2). In this way, students can be given feedback which helps to improve the learning process.
11. In the case of oral tests, two examiners will be present to evaluate the students' knowledge, while for written exams or assessment of practical work, marks assigned will be reviewed by the co-lecturer, tutor, or other member of the faculty. Generally, an oral exam will be conducted by the lecturer and co-lecturer. Alternatively, another faculty member will replace one of the two.
12. All members of the academic staff may serve as additional examiners alongside the lecturer and co-lecturer or tutor of a particular study-unit. Moreover, as part of the internal quality audits, the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) may engage external examiners – selected from among the academic and professional networks of the Institute – to participate in the assessment exercises carried out for a number of study-units. This will provide students, on the one hand, with an additional, independent evaluation of their work, and lecturers, on the other, with an external, qualified opinion of the effectiveness of their teaching and assessment methods. It will also enable the Academic Council (AC) to compare the Institute's educational standards to those of other universities offering degree programmes in related disciplines. All recommendations put forward by the external examiners will be considered by the AC, which will then report to the Management Board (MB) on action taken to address any issues raised.
13. Assessment grades are to be published online via a dedicated confidential section of the website to which students will have access, within one month from the date of the exam.
14. With regards to assessment results, students may request a revision of the paper in the case of written exams or tests, or a review of their projects, portfolios or assignments submitted for evaluation, within one week from the publication of the grades (see Annex 3). In such cases, another faculty member (not involved in the original assessment) will be appointed to review the work and issue a report, taking into account VHEI's policies for correcting and grading the learner.

15. The AC determines the rules for student progression for each individual programme of studies offered by the Institute. Such rules are to be published on the website, together with any updates that may be introduced prior to the commencement of every academic year.
16. The SAPC is to be assisted by the Academic Advisor (AA) appointed for each programme to monitor the students' performance and facilitate their smooth progression through the course of studies.
17. Examination grades are to be listed on the final diploma supplement, in order to highlight the level of the learning outcome achieved by the student.

9. Faculty and Recruitment

1. The Academic Council (AC) appoints the Faculty Recruitment Committee (FRC), which advises the Council on the recruitment of lecturing staff and other academic positions. The AC has to endorse and adopt, or discuss further, any recommendations made to it by the FRC.
2. All FRC members are selected from among the academic staff and senior management, on the basis of individual experience and the requirements of the Institute.
3. With regards to faculty recruitment, the FRC shall ensure that the best candidates are selected in a fair and transparent process, in line with the established criteria.
4. Whenever a vacancy for an academic post arises, the FRC shall draw up a short description of the post, including minimum requirements candidates would need to have, and select the interviewing panel. A call for applications will be published on the website and possibly through other channels, and shortlisted candidates will be interviewed and ranked by the interviewing board (based on points awarded according to the published criteria – qualifications, experience, aptitude, etc.). Once the FRC's recommendations for selection are endorsed by the AC, the applicants will be individually notified in writing of the outcome of the interviews.
5. The name of the candidate selected through a recruitment process shall be published – within the limits of the provisions of the national data protection legislation – on the website of the Institute, by not later than one week after completion of the procedure.
6. New teachers will initially be recruited on a part-time basis and, when possible, they will first serve as co-lecturers on related topics. They will also be provided with guidelines on the Institute's established procedures.
7. All teaching staff holding the post of Lecturer or higher need to have the following minimum requirements:
 - i) an academic qualification equivalent to Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) level 7, in the case of those lecturing in Bachelor degree programmes, or one level higher than that of the programme of study in question, in other cases;
 - ii) at least three years of teaching, irrespective of the educational level (secondary, tertiary, etc.) where such experience was obtained;

- iii) at least three years of experience in the industry, in a sector related to the module being taught, as well as a good knowledge of the software utilized in the field;
 - iv) a good language proficiency level – English or Italian, depending on the campus where the lecturer is teaching. Candidates applying for any academic post at the Institute need to demonstrate that they are proficient in English. The interviewing board needs to ascertain that the selected applicant has a professional working knowledge of the language equivalent to level C of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The same applies for Italian in the case of lecturers at the Battipaglia campus.
8. The conditions of employment of the teaching staff should respect all legislation in force and be broadly comparable (making allowance for some initial adjustments) to similar academic positions in the higher education sector of the two host countries. The Managing Board (MB) shall review such conditions following recommendations by the FRC (generally every three years), in order to ensure equity of treatment and to allow for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of the faculty.
9. All academic staff are encouraged to carry out research, community outreach and other activities of benefit to the Institute and its stakeholders. This will be done through three main incentives, namely:
- i) Specific resources, financial or otherwise, will be provided for such activities. The allocation of resources will be decided by the AC in the case of research, and the MB in all other cases, following the receipt of a request describing the proposed initiative/research activity and the resources needed. This may also include a reduction of teaching duties to allow the lecturer to carry out the research or other approved activity.
 - ii) These activities will be positively considered when interested lecturers apply for a promotion to a higher academic post, whenever there is a vacancy for such a position.
 - iii) Lecturers will be assisted through the assignment of internal or external human resources, to apply for participation in European funded projects, such as Horizon 2020, COST, Erasmus+ and others.
10. Initially, the Institute shall rely on European programmes to which it has access, especially Horizon 2020, to fund its research activities. Through its partners and staff, the Institute has considerable experience in EU-funded research projects and industry networks, which it will

leverage to kickstart its participation in European projects and to embark upon research activities in its fields of interest.

11. The AC shall strive to promote innovation as a cornerstone of the Institute's activities, including in the teaching methods of its staff. It needs to ensure that all teaching staff stays abreast of the latest developments in the industry, and it shall therefore organize specific CPD seminars for such purposes.
12. The AC may also invite experts or specialists in their field to serve as visiting lecturers. All external parties contributing to the Institute's academic programme – visiting lecturers or companies hosting students on internships – are to be informed, through the written instructions given to them prior to their engagement, that they are required to follow the Institute's QA policies.

10. Ethical Issues

1. The Ethical Issues Committee (EIC) is appointed by and reports to the Academic Council (AC), which may endorse and adopt any recommendations put forward by the EIC or choose to discuss them further.
2. All members of the EIC are selected from among the academic staff and senior management, on the basis of individual experience and the requirements of the Institute.
3. The EIC is responsible for all ethical issues and the proper conduct of students and staff. In particular, its role is to:
 - guard against intolerance, bullying, harassment, any form of discrimination (based on ethnicity, gender, religion, etc.), or other forms of improper behaviour in the relationship between students, staff and administration;
 - investigate and take action on reported cases of suspected academic fraud, such as plagiarism or copying in work assignments or exams;
 - ensure that no ethical issues are concerned in any research activities conducted for dissertations or other studies undertaken by the Institute;
 - consider and decide on cases brought before it by any individual who feels that the desired ethical standards have not been upheld by any officer or unit of the organization; and
 - constitute a board of appeal on ethical issues arising at the Institute, where the committee has not already been directly involved; in cases which concern the EIC's own actions, the AC shall act as the board of appeal.
4. The Institute shall promote mutual respect and ethical behaviour in the interactions between officials, students and other members of its community, both on and off campus.
5. The services offered by the Institute are available to all students and no form of discrimination whatsoever will be tolerated. Likewise, the Institute ensures that its operations are fair, promote equal opportunities, and do not discriminate against any of its staff members.
6. Members of staff of the Institute are free to join any trade or professional union, and may take action to safeguard health and safety or employment conditions as permitted by law.

7. Any action which is likely to result in a less favourable treatment of a person or specific group than others in similar circumstances is deemed to be discriminatory. Intolerance on grounds of race or nationality, religious or political beliefs, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital or family status, disability, or other reasons, is strongly condemned by the Institute.
8. Discrimination may also result from omissions, not just actions, and may even be implicit. However, affirmative action purposely designed and openly promoted by the Institute to assist a particular group considered to be disadvantaged does not constitute an unacceptable form of discrimination.
9. The EIC is responsible to act upon any reports of unethical behaviour brought forward by students or staff. The committee is expected to take the appropriate action in a timely and confidential manner to address issues of discrimination, harassment, bullying, abuse of power, cheating or academic fraud in assessment procedures, and failure to declare or manage a conflict of interest, amongst other forms of unethical behaviour.
10. Any offensive or generally objectionable behaviour by a staff member or student towards another member of the educational community, deemed to be intimidating or humiliating, or involving verbal, physical or psychological abuse, constitutes harassment. This usually consists of a series of minor incidents, but it may also result through a single, significant episode.
11. Bullying (including cyberbullying) constitutes a generally persistent form of personal harassment, causing the victim to suffer stress and loss of self-confidence. Such action should be adequately disciplined by the EIC, depending on the gravity of the situation.
12. Officials of the Institute should be careful not to exceed the normal authority associated to their position when exercising their role, to avoid situations which may give rise to an abuse of power. Their actions should not be influenced by considerations which are irrelevant to the decisions they are tasked to take.
13. Staff members should avoid entering into intimate relationships with students, as these may constitute unethical or inappropriate behaviour and may give rise to conflicts of interest. Moreover, employees need to be careful not to enter into relationships with other staff members if such relations are perceived to generate potential conflicts of interest.
14. Members of staff should not play any role in the assessment of students with whom they have a personal or family relationship.
15. A situation where an individual's personal interests – academic, financial or otherwise – could improperly affect the carrying out of duties within the Institute may be deemed to constitute a conflict of interest. Staff members are required to disclose information on any

potential conflict of interest that they may be involved in, whether this consists in a relationship, an activity or a particular situation. Should they fail to do so, they may be liable to disciplinary action by the Institute, through the EIC.

16. If a staff member becomes aware of any situation which may give rise to a conflict of interest, he/she needs to report the case in writing to the EIC. It is the prerogative of the EIC to make arrangements for the removal or the management of the potential conflict in a transparent manner and with the involvement of the staff member concerned, and to inform all parties affected by any measures taken. The EIC shall continue to monitor the situation directly or make arrangements for the case to be properly followed up.
17. Any student who feels aggrieved by the behaviour of another student, academic, employee, or third party associated with the Institute, may (1) consult the Student Support Officer (SSO), who will provide advice and support while guiding the student to take the most appropriate action; and (2) submit a formal complaint to the EIC on the prescribed form.
18. When a formal complaint has been lodged, the EIC decides on how to investigate the claim. It may ask the complainant to attend an interview, appoint a person to carry out an investigation of the case, and take any other action it deems necessary (including suspension of persons involved in the case until it has been concluded).
19. In case of an investigation, the EIC is to ensure adequate confidentiality of the proceedings, subject to any legal requirements. Anyone involved in an investigation may request the right to be accompanied to the hearing by a person of his/her trust.
20. The person about whom the complaint has been made has the right to be advised of the complaint, to allow him/her to provide an explanation and make representations as necessary. If the EIC decides that there is a prima facie case to be investigated, it is to send a registered letter informing the person concerned of the complaint, together with (1) the basic details of the case, (2) the process to be followed in the investigation, and (3) the right of the individual to seek the assistance of a person of his/her trust.
21. The EIC is to ensure that the principles of natural justice are respected in the investigation of the case, which should be conducted with impartiality. Once the case is decided, the persons involved will be notified of the conclusions reached and any penalty imposed, and they will be advised of their right to appeal in writing to the Management Board (MB) within a week from the communication of the findings, following which the decision becomes final.
22. The EIC is to ensure that any student or member of staff who is involved in an investigation (having lodged or being the subject of a complaint, or being identified as a witness), is adequately protected from retributory action while the case is being heard, as well as after

its conclusion. Appropriate arrangements are therefore to be made by the EIC to prevent the creation of a hostile environment.

23. The MB may also carry out investigations of its own if it deems any case of which it becomes aware to be of a very serious nature. If there is a suspicion that the alleged behaviour constitutes a criminal act, it may report the matter to the Police or, in other cases, to the competent national authority.
24. In the case of research activities, participants will be expected to compile a section in their proposal on any ethical issues that may be involved. This is required when submitting European research project proposals, such as through the Horizon 2020 programme, to ensure that ethical issues are adequately addressed. Initially, research activities carried out at the Institute will be limited to projects approved and funded under this or similar European programmes, but the EIC will be adopting a specific procedure based on the Horizon 2020 guidelines on ethical issues for other research activities that the Institute may undertake in future.

11. Student Support Services

1. For each campus, the Management Board (MB) shall appoint a Student Support Officer (SSO), who will report to the CEO, to assist students in different situations where they may require help or advice.
2. The officer would ideally be in possession of a Master's degree in Psychology, Counselling or related topics, as well as two years' experience in a post involving advisory services to students in an educational institution, preferably in an academic setting. The officer would then receive further training on the relevant topics and issues.
3. The duties of this official include:
 - Assistance to international students enrolled in one of VHEI's courses or, eventually, visiting on a student exchange programme;
 - Support on accessibility issues on campus or other facilities of the Institute;
 - Counselling, both on academic and practical matters, when a student asks for assistance; the support officer would however be expected to refer the student to a professional figure in cases where such intervention may be advisable;
 - Monitoring facilities on campus and other premises designated for student use (such as study areas or the canteen).
4. Student exchange programmes are expected to be drawn up after the signing of specific agreements or ad hoc arrangements for exchanges of students and/or staff.
5. The Academic Council (AC) appoints an Academic Advisor (AA) for every programme, as well as additional tutors if necessary, in order to assist students individually on all academic matters, including research activities.
6. The AC shall make arrangements for the provision of a virtual library, extending subscriptions to all enrolled students and staff. All support services available to students are to be listed on VHEI's website.
7. The CEO shall appoint an officer or commission an organization to set up, service and maintain in good order the technical equipment and ICT infrastructure, both hardware and software, on each campus, and to help students with minor problems they may encounter on their laptops, tablets, smart phones or similar devices (used for carrying out the practical work assigned to them throughout the course). The appointed officer/company is to ensure

that all campus equipment used for learning purposes is operating well and installed with the latest software packages indicated.

12. Communication Tools

1. The web master is responsible for the proper upkeep of VHEI's web and social media sites. The officer is to ensure that all online media are regularly updated in terms of content, and that the public information available through the website is accurate.
2. The content is to be supplied by the organization's unit responsible for the section in question. Thus, all text and material related to academic issues – programmes, regulations or activities – need to be vetted and approved by the Academic Council (AC), or the committee/officer that it would have delegated earlier to handle the matter, prior to upload.
3. VHEI's website is to include details of all educational programmes offered by the Institute, as well as information on the support services available for students.
4. Every programme is to be introduced by a brief overall description, list of entry requirements, expected learning outcomes, qualifications awarded and corresponding European/Maltese Qualifications Framework (EQF/MQF) level, course structure and organization, duration, specializations available, as well as all the basic details of its curriculum, core and elective study-units.
5. In turn, the information on every study-unit is to contain an outline of the topic, teaching method, mode of assessment, reading list and other useful resources, approximate breakdown of the hours of learning, number of ECTS credits assigned, as well as an indication of the knowledge, skills and competences that are expected to be learnt upon unit completion. Eventually, the information given will also include the pass rates and further learning opportunities available for students.

13. Data Management

1. The CEO is to appoint a data manager to set up and maintain a data management system. The officer is responsible for the ICT system, creating adequate digital archiving and back-up facilities, as well as carrying out data protection duties.
2. The officer ensures that all data being kept by the organization complies with the requirements established by the national data protection legislation. Should any complaint on data protection issues be lodged, the officer will carry out an investigation and report back on the matter to the CEO.
3. Students, staff and external stakeholders shall whenever possible be involved in the data analysis and follow-up activities to ensure that their contribution is not limited to the provision of the information. The results of any surveys or data collection exercises are to be discussed with the stakeholders concerned, or their representatives. The feedback received will then be taken into consideration when recommendations or follow-up actions are drawn up.
4. The data manager is to liaise with each organizational unit to draw up the most suitable system for the collection of data required to satisfy the unit's needs. The analysis of the data thus collected by each unit will be used to elaborate the information needed for the management of its area of competence.
5. The data manager is to see that all information related to student progression throughout the programme is collected and properly managed. The data collected is to include information to fulfil legal obligations or satisfy the requests made by the national educational authorities.
6. On the basis of such data, the management shall each year produce a profile of the student population, highlighting specific characteristics like nationality and prevalence of groups considered vulnerable. This profile is to be built on:
 - (a) data collected upon enrolment, from the registration forms and interviews, in the case of specific characteristics like nationality; and
 - (b) qualitative assessments/reports drawn up by the Student Support Officer (SSO), in consultation with the relevant professionals when necessary, to address issues where students may be deemed to be vulnerable for a number of reasons. Such

reports/assessments may be triggered by specific requests by the students themselves or by persons close to them (prior to or following enrolment), or by situations which may arise requiring action by the management, lecturers and academic staff, or other staff or external service providers, to support the student.

7. Both quantitative – course participation, retention and success rates – and qualitative data – students' satisfaction and evaluation of different aspects of each study-unit – will provide the statistics and objective values needed for each programme offered.
8. Tracer studies are also to be periodically conducted, generally every three years, to collect information on employment rates and career paths of graduates. The data is to be collected through surveys carried out with graduates, contacted by email or other channels. The relevant statistics are to be published on the website after ensuring that the information complies to the national and European data protection regulations.

Annex 1 Guidelines for Selecting Assessment Methods

Different assessment methods may be used to test different skills. Lecturers are encouraged to select one or more methods, bearing in mind whether the study-unit is a compulsory or optional module, whether it is fundamental for later learning or for developing the professional skills required for the industry, and similar factors.

1. Focus on and address all the learning outcomes that the programme / module was intended to produce.
2. Select assessment methods which maximise the benefits for students, by generating a higher interest and allowing for better feedback to be given to them.
3. Consider the reliability (in terms of potential repeatability) of the assessment method.
4. Ensure consistency in marking and moderation of the assessment exercise.
5. Ensure that the assessment scheme does not penalise disadvantaged individuals, and consider also the needs of the various groups (e.g., international or mature students). If necessary, consult experts on inclusion and diversity matters, and make arrangements to provide support for students with accessibility or other special needs.
6. Consider the efficiency of the assessment method, in terms of use of resources and time of the staff and students; keep the method manageable, bearing in mind practical matters (venue, facilities, time available, number of students, ease of marking, etc.).
7. Minimise unnecessary duplication of efforts by taking into account assessment schemes being applied for other study-units, avoiding over-testing of the same learning outcomes.
8. Minimise the possibility of plagiarism and other forms of cheating.
9. Disseminate information to the students on the assessment method to be applied, the evaluation criteria, and the grade descriptors; ensure that any instructions are clear, communicated in time, and do not leave room for ambiguous interpretation.
10. Allow students to provide feedback on the selected assessment method, and take their views into account to introduce any improvements.

Annex 2 Grading System

The Institute follows both the ECTS credit and grading systems. It awards ECTS credits for each of its study-units, in order to facilitate credit transfer, and uses the ECTS grading system to make its grades more easily comparable. This system – to be applied for classes having at least ten students – is based on the class percentile, indicating how a student performed when compared to the rest of the class. In other words, the grading is relative to the group performance.

The results are first – before evaluation and grading takes place – divided into “pass” and “fail”, thus keeping them independent of the number of students who failed the course. Grades are then assigned as follows:

A	Best 10%
B	Next 25%
C	Next 30%
D	Next 25%
E	Next 10%
F	Fail

The grades awarded will be listed on the final diploma supplement and transcript of records.

Where classes consist of less than ten students, the examiners may adopt a more flexible grading approach.

Annex 3 Revision of Assessment Marks

Students who feel that there may have been an error in the award of marks for their assessment consisting, in whole or in part, of (1) a written exam or test, (2) a project, (3) a portfolio, or (4) an assignment, may request to have a revision of the paper or work submitted for evaluation. If it is found that an error had indeed been made, the review will remedy the situation. If on the other hand no error is found, it will serve to reassure the individual that the award of marks had been correct.

For a student to request a revision of assessment marks, the following procedure applies:

1. The student should fill in and submit the online form (uploaded to the section reserved for course participants) requesting a revision of the mark allocated for the full assessment or part thereof, within one week from the publication of the grades.
2. An administrative fee of the amount indicated on the online form is to be paid for the review, but this will be reimbursed to the student if his/her grade were to be improved as a result of the revision.
3. A faculty member who had not been involved in the marking of the work submitted for assessment will be appointed by the Academic Council (AC) to review the paper or assignment of a different nature (project/portfolio), and issue a report, taking into account VHEI's policies for correcting and grading the learner.
4. On the basis of the reviewer's report submitted to it, the AC considers whether there are objective reasons for altering the assessment result. If necessary, it may consult the original examiners or other academics before taking a final decision.
5. The student is then notified of the outcome of the review and, if a recommendation to change the awarded grade is upheld by the AC, the relevant records are revised accordingly.

In the case of final dissertations or theses, the student who would like to request a review of his/her marks would need to fill in the specific online form which requires a written justification why a higher mark is deemed to be merited. An additional academic would in this case be invited by the AC to join the Examiners' Board, in order to review the dissertation or thesis and contribute to the evaluation of the work and to the final revised mark awarded to the student.

Annex 4 Plagiarism and Academic Fraud

1. The Institute will not tolerate cheating – plagiarism, collusion or any other form of academic fraud – in assessments. If there is a suspicion that such actions have been committed, the case should be reported to the lecturer and/or examiner responsible for the study-unit concerned, who will investigate the matter in line with these guidelines. The lecturer will also report the case to the Ethical Issues Committee (EIC), through the prescribed form, for any further action that may be required. Individuals accused of cheating will be given the opportunity to clarify their behaviour, before any disciplinary action is taken.
2. Plagiarism may be defined as the unacknowledged use of another individual's work, presented as one's own. Depending on the nature of the cheating or the extent of the plagiarism, the lecturer and/or the EIC decides on the relative penalty to be imposed, which may range from a failing grade or reduction of the mark awarded in the assessment concerned, to expulsion of the individual from the Institute in the most serious of cases.
3. A distinction needs to be made between forms of plagiarism classified as major (significant copying of text, material or ideas, presented as one's own) or minor ones (for cases of less significant unacknowledged borrowing or academic incompetence rather than intentional cheating). Academic incompetence may consist in reference list errors, missing or incomplete in-line citation, or an inconsistent style of citation, all of which prevent the reader from identifying the sources.
4. The lack of acknowledgement of the source is crucial to determine whether any reported case should be penalised for plagiarism, but it is also important to include between quotation marks any text lifted from an acknowledged source.
5. At the start of every programme of studies, students will be given instructions on how to reference their work and how to acknowledge and quote their sources, to avoid unintentionally finding themselves exposed to accusations of plagiarism. The Academic Council (AC) will indicate the referencing systems to be used by students (APA, Harvard, etc.).
6. In the first semester, an allowance will be made for students to learn referencing skills before penalties for plagiarism start being applied. In these initial months, undergraduates will be taught legitimate forms of paraphrasing and acknowledging from a source text, the

correct use of referencing systems, and how to identify “common knowledge” which does not require citation.

7. The Institute will provide access to text matching software (such as Turnitin) for students to check their text-based work, and for lecturing staff to detect and deter plagiarism. Lecturers will be trained in the use of such software and will inform students how to upload their work in the plagiarism checker to generate an originality report, before submitting the final version for assessment. This will allow the lecturer to ensure, as far as possible, that the work is original.
8. Apart from text, the lecturer will also monitor the use of any unacknowledged copying of images, artwork, computer programmes or other material.
9. Even buying or commissioning of work from third parties to be passed on as one’s own will be considered as a major infringement, to be disciplined severely.
10. In the case of suspected collusion involving two or more students (who produce the work together when such collaboration is not allowed), the lecturer/examiner should investigate and report the matter to the EIC, which will take action as suggested in these guidelines for cases of plagiarism.
11. Alleged cases of plagiarism or other forms of academic fraud may be reported (by a tutor or other person who becomes aware of the case) to the lecturer and/or examiner responsible for the module concerned. The examiner and lecturing staff of a study-unit (if not the same person) may also investigate cases which they themselves notice at any stage of an assessment process.
12. If the lecturer/examiner concludes that:
 - (1) No plagiarism occurred, whoever reported the case will be informed of the result of the investigation and no further action will be taken.
 - (2) Minor plagiarism or academic incompetence is verified, the marks awarded for the assessment concerned will be reduced by an amount which reflects the extent of the infringement, and the student may be reprimanded and reported to the EIC. If the student has already been cautioned and reported to the EIC for similar offences, the severity of the penalty will be increased.
 - (3) A case of major plagiarism is confirmed, the EIC will be informed and the lecturer will penalise the student by issuing an F (fail) grade for the module in question. Further action, including expulsion from the Institute, may be recommended by the EIC to the AC if the seriousness of the case merits an additional punishment.

13. As indicated above, a more severe penalty may be applied to a case of minor plagiarism if the EIC notes that the student has a history of repeated instances of such irregularities.
14. The student has a right to appeal to the EIC to have the penalty handed down by the lecturer/examiner reviewed. In this case, the student will be invited to present submissions and any witnesses who may testify in his/her own defence. The final decision will either confirm or review the original penalty.