



## **Internal Quality Assurance Documentation**

## Contents

Introduction .....	3
STANDARD 1 - POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE.....	4
Vision, Mission, Values and Objectives.....	4
1. Our Vision.....	4
2. Our Mission.....	4
3. Our Values.....	4
4. Objectives of the IQA Policy.....	5
Standard 2 - Institutional probity both financial and Institutional .....	7
The Academy Structure.....	7
Principal - Head of Institution .....	7
Lecturing Staff.....	7
Subject Expert Reviewer .....	8
Industry Stakeholders .....	8
Sales and Marketing Team.....	8
International Outreach Team .....	8
Academy Administration Staff.....	8
Financial Probity.....	10
Financial Governance and Oversight .....	10
Internal Controls and Risk Management .....	10
Financial Position .....	11
Standard 3 - Appropriate design and approval of programmes.....	12
Programme Design Process .....	16
Learning Outcomes Structure at ESSI Academy .....	18
STANDARD 4 - Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment. ....	20
STANDARD 5 - Published and consistently applied regulations for student admission, progression, recognition and certification.....	25
STANDARD 6 - Competence and effectiveness of teaching staff.....	29
STANDARD 7 – Learning Resources and Student Support.....	32
STANDARD 8 - Information Management - Collection, Analysis and Use Relevant Information .....	36
STANDARD 9 - Public Information .....	39
STANDARD 10 – Ongoing Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes.....	42
STANDARD 11 – Cyclical External Quality Assurance .....	44

## Introduction

At ESSI Academy, quality assurance is not just a regulatory requirement, it is a fundamental pillar of our philosophy. ESSI Academy is committed to offering internationally relevant, industry-aligned, and practice-oriented training programmes that empower individuals to thrive in today's dynamic job market.

Our Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) system serves as a framework that guides the continuous development, implementation, and improvement of all educational practices within the Academy. It reflects our values of integrity, innovation, and excellence, and ensures that our programmes not only meet but exceed the expectations of learners, employers, and other stakeholder such as the accreditation Authorities.

The IQA at ESSI Academy is designed to be fit-for-purpose and proportionate to the scope and nature of our training activities, in line with the standards set by Malta's Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA). It incorporates a structured approach to planning, delivering, monitoring, and reviewing the quality of our educational provision. It aligns with both the National Quality Assurance Framework and European standards such as ESG and EQAVET.

ESSI Academy focuses on three foundational pillars that shape the design and delivery of our training:

- **Standard Programmes:** All programmes, whether developed in-house or in collaboration with third-party institutions, are aligned, where possible to international frameworks or follow standard practice so as to ensure they are accessible and relevant both locally and internationally.
- **Practical Focus:** We emphasise applied learning. Our courses are developed by looking at the needs of the industry and then building programmes with content that looks at filling that void. Courses involve practical assignments and case studies, to ensure as much practical relevance as possible. Also, where possible, trainers hail from industry to further enhance the link between practice and theory.
- **Quality Education:** We are committed to maintaining high standards in our curriculum, teaching methods, and lecturer selection. Our goal is to provide learners with a robust and enriching educational experience that is recognised for its quality, relevance, and impact.

The IQA system at ESSI Academy encompasses all stages of the learning cycle from programme design and student admissions to assessment, certification, and feedback. It is developed and maintained through collaborative input from internal and external stakeholders, including students, teaching staff, industry partners, and MFHEA.

This document sets out our internal policies and mechanisms across the 11 QA Standards established by the National Quality Assurance Framework, ensuring that our commitment to quality is demonstrable, measurable, and continuously evolving. It is a reflection of our

dedication to transparency, accountability, and the creation of educational opportunities that fit the needs of learners and the labour market.

## STANDARD 1 - POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

ESSI Academy is committed to maintaining the highest standards of quality in the design, delivery, and review of its educational programmes. Our Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) policy is central to this commitment and serves as a structured framework to ensure that all academic, administrative, and strategic operations contribute to the continuous enhancement of the student learning experience.

The IQA policy is guided by the principles set out by the Malta Further & Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) and is aligned with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and EQAVET frameworks. It reflects ESSI Academy's mission to bridge the gap between education and industry by equipping students with practical, relevant, and employment-focused training. The policy is publicly available and reviewed periodically to ensure fitness-for-purpose and relevance in an evolving educational and economic landscape.

### Vision, Mission, Values and Objectives

#### 1. Our Vision

At ESSI Academy, we envision becoming a leading cross-border training hub, recognized for shaping professionals who drive innovation and excellence in their industries. By expanding our reach beyond borders, we aim to bridge skill gaps globally, supplying the market with highly competent, job-ready talent. Through strategic partnerships, cutting-edge training methodologies, and a commitment to lifelong learning, we strive to create a dynamic workforce that meets the ever-evolving demands of the global economy.

#### 2. Our Mission

At ESSI Academy, our mission is to bridge the gap between education and industry by equipping professionals with the practical skills and knowledge needed to thrive in today's evolving job market. Through hands-on learning, industry-aligned training, and expert guidance, we empower individuals to excel in their chosen fields, driving both personal growth and economic progress. Our commitment is to develop a workforce that is skilled, adaptable, and ready to meet the demands of the modern workplace

#### 3. Our Values

- Integrity: We uphold ethical behaviour, transparency, and academic honesty in all our practices, including strict enforcement of academic integrity and zero tolerance for plagiarism or misconduct.

- Relevance: All courses are designed to be up-to-date with current market trends and industry requirements to enhance student employability upon course completion.
- Non-discrimination: ESSI Academy is an inclusive institution that welcomes both local and international learners, irrespective of race, gender, age, or background. We believe that equal access to quality education is a fundamental right and a foundation for social mobility.

#### 4. Objectives of the IQA Policy

- Ensure that the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment is maintained and enhanced continuously.
- Regularly review policies and procedures based on feedback from students, staff, and industry stakeholders.
- Provide a learning environment that is inclusive, supportive, and aligned with current and future employment needs.
- Implement internal mechanisms that prepare the Academy for periodic External Quality Assurance (EQA) reviews by MFHEA.
- Promote a culture of reflection, innovation, and excellence across all academic and administrative functions.

#### Organisational Roles Supporting IQA:

- Principal (Head of Institution): Provides strategic leadership and ensures that the academy's mission and vision are reflected in all quality assurance policies and practices. The Principal has overall responsibility for implementing and maintaining the IQA policy and engaging with external bodies.
- Subject Expert Reviewer: A subject-specific expert responsible for the periodic review of course structure and material to ensure relevance and alignment with industry needs. These offer independent, critical insight into course outcomes and instructional effectiveness.
- Lecturers: Experienced professionals selected based on academic qualifications and practical industry expertise. Lecturers are responsible for delivering content, assessing student progress, participating in course reviews, and engaging in professional development.
- Industry Stakeholders: Involved in providing feedback to the academy about the needs of the industry on periodic basis. Their input helps shape the curriculum and ensuring further relevance to industry standards. Their participation may also include feedback guest lecturing.
- Sales and Marketing Team: Responsible for communicating the value of ESSI Academy's offerings to prospective students. This team ensures clarity, transparency, and alignment between promotional content and actual course outcomes.
- International Outreach Team: Promotes ESSI Academy's visibility globally and forges partnerships with international institutions and organisations. They also lead

recruitment efforts to ensure a diverse student body. Where required, such partnerships shall be communicated to and approved by MFHEA.

- Academy Administration Staff: Handles secretarial, financial, and operational duties that support the efficient day-to-day running of the Academy. They also maintain student records, manage logistics, and provide key administrative support to lecturers and students.

This document is designed to explain ESSI Academy's ongoing commitment to delivering education that is ethical, industry-relevant, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all stakeholders. It is updated periodically based on feedback and internal reviews and forms the backbone of our continuous quality enhancement process.

## Standard 2 - Institutional probity both financial and Institutional

ESSI Academy is committed to high standards of ethical governance, transparency, and professionalism in all its operations. As both a dynamic educational institution and a purpose-driven business entity, the Academy ensures that its academic and administrative frameworks are robust, accountable, and compliant with regulatory requirements.

### The Academy Structure

#### Principal - Head of Institution

Leadership at ESSI Academy is entrusted to the Principal (Head of Institution), who is responsible for driving academic quality, strategic development, and institutional integrity. To ensure the effective management of the Academy, the Principal must meet the following minimum qualifications:

- Possess at least 3 years of experience in a leadership or management role.
- Hold a minimum of a Level 6 qualification (EQF/MQF) in a relevant area such as management, Human resources, education, hospitality or related field.

In addition, ESSI Academy ensures that the legal representative of the institution is a resident of Malta, in compliance with local regulatory frameworks and to facilitate communication and accountability with national authorities.

#### Lecturing Staff

Lecturers at ESSI Academy are carefully selected based on both their academic qualifications and substantial industry experience. The Academy prioritises relevance and real-world expertise, particularly in the fields of hospitality, management, and business, which have been identified as strategic areas of growth. Lecturers are expected not only to possess formal qualifications aligned with their subject area but also to have practical, hands-on experience that enhances the delivery of applied knowledge and bridges the gap between theory and practice.

To maintain the highest standards of teaching, ESSI Academy engages lecturers mostly on a part-time or freelance basis. This flexible model allows the Academy to match the most suitable professionals to each individual module and at the same time ensuring the costs are matched to revenue. This model is opposed to having full time teaching staff, at least in the beginning as otherwise courses would be designed to fill in lecturer time rather than designing programmes that match the market needs. Lecturer with industry experience help to bring specialised insights and current industry perspectives to the classroom.

### Subject Expert Reviewer

Subject Expert Reviewers are professionals with in-depth knowledge of specific disciplines. They are responsible for periodically reviewing course content to ensure alignment with current industry trends, regulatory requirements, and learning outcomes. Their feedback directly contributes to curriculum updates and the relevance of course offerings.

### Industry Stakeholders

Industry professionals play an active advisory role, offering insight into current labour market demands and future trends. Their input is vital in:

- Shaping curriculum content.
- Providing guest lectures or mentoring opportunities.

The owner of the academy has regular contact with people in different industries and this input is fed back to the academy in the form of feedback so that new programmes can be developed and others improved to meet industry demands.

### Sales and Marketing Team

This team is responsible for promoting the Academy's programmes and attracting prospective students. They develop campaigns that communicate the value of ESSI Academy's offerings while ensuring that all public information remains accurate, transparent, and up to date.

### International Outreach Team

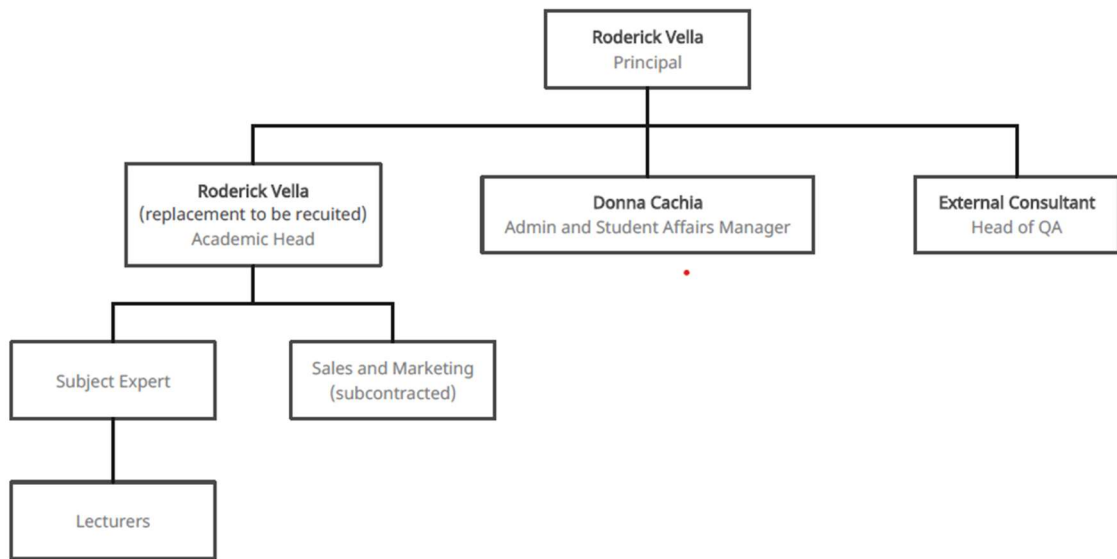
Tasked with extending the Academy's global reach, this team builds international partnerships and engages with potential students and organisations abroad. Their work enhances cross-border collaboration and promotes diversity within the student cohort.

### Academy Administration Staff

The administrative team ensures the smooth day-to-day functioning of the Academy. Their responsibilities include finance, logistics, record-keeping, secretarial support, and facilitating communication between lecturers, management, and students. They play a critical role in maintaining operational efficiency and student satisfaction.

These measures form part of a wider governance structure that safeguards institutional integrity and ensures that ESSI Academy delivers education that is both relevant and responsibly managed. All financial operations are transparent and subject to periodic review, with annual financial audits conducted once revenue exceeds €45,000 per annum. This reflects ESSI Academy's ongoing commitment to institutional probity and responsible management of its educational mission.

Below is the full organigram of the academy showing the different members of the academy and their role within the academy.



## Financial Probity

ESSI Academy upholds high standards of financial probity as a fundamental component of its institutional integrity and quality assurance framework. Recognising that sound financial management is crucial for the sustainable delivery of quality education, the Academy has established mechanisms for financial planning, monitoring, and accountability.

The Academy is committed to ensuring that all financial activities are conducted in accordance with legal, ethical, and regulatory requirements. This includes full compliance with the financial obligations outlined by the MFHEA, as well as any additional national legislation related to accounting, taxation, and data protection.

### Financial Governance and Oversight

Financial oversight is managed through a clearly defined structure. The Principal (Head of Institution), in consultation with the Shareholder of the academy, is responsible for the strategic oversight of budgeting, expenditure, and financial risk management.

Key practices include:

- **Annual Budgeting and Strategic Financial Planning:** Budgets are prepared annually based on projected student enrolments, course delivery plans, staffing needs, and capital expenditure requirements. A rolling three-year financial plan is also maintained to support long-term sustainability and growth.
- **Transparent Procurement and Cost Control:** All procurement is guided by clear procedures that promote value for money and transparency. ESSI Academy maintains detailed records of expenditures and supplier agreements to enable audit trails and ensure accountability.
- **Regular Financial Reporting:** Financial performance is monitored through monthly and quarterly reports that include variance analysis and forecasting. These are reviewed by the Principal and Shareholder.
- **Auditing and Compliance:** Once annual revenue exceeds €45,000, ESSI Academy undertakes an independent financial audit in line with MFHEA expectations. This process verifies the accuracy of financial statements and assesses internal controls.

### Internal Controls and Risk Management

ESSI Academy has in place a suite of internal controls designed to safeguard assets, prevent misappropriation of funds, and ensure accurate financial reporting. These include:

- **Access Control and Record Keeping:** Financial records, including payroll, invoices, and receipts, are securely maintained and accessible only to authorised staff members in line with GDPR requirement.

- Cash Handling and Reconciliation Procedures: The academy accepts payments both online, bank transfer and via credit card payments. This means that the academy has to perform reconciliations at least on a monthly basis to ensure that recorded balances align with actual financial positions.
- Contingency and Reserve Planning: ESSI Academy maintains a reserve fund to ensure operational continuity in case of unforeseen circumstances. This is provided by the Shareholder so as to cover any unforeseen costs.

## Financial Position

ESSI Academy maintains a stable and healthy financial position, supported by a proactive and committed shareholder structure. From its inception, the Academy has been established with a long-term vision for sustainable growth.

The Academy's financial strength is supported by direct capital contributions from its shareholder, who provides the necessary funding to support the start-up phase of operations and investment to secure the medium- and long-term success of the academy. The business is supported both in its operational needs as well as capital investment including acquisition of modern equipment, digital infrastructure, and refurbishment of academy.

To guarantee adequate liquidity and financial flexibility, the Academy has access to shareholder loans that may be drawn upon to finance major projects such as the modernisation of facilities, expansion of course offerings, or the procurement of teaching tools such as the VLE. This financial backing ensures that ESSI Academy can confidently pursue growth without compromising operational stability.

As detailed above, to ensure financial prudence and accountability, the Academy develops and monitors annual budgets that outline projected revenues, planned expenditure, and key investment areas. These budgets serve not only as operational guides but also as tools for performance monitoring and forecasting. Financial targets are aligned with strategic goals, allowing leadership to make informed decisions and take corrective action where necessary.

## Standard 3 - Appropriate design and approval of programmes

ESSI Academy adopts a structured, step-by-step process to ensure that all new programmes are aligned with market needs, meet national accreditation standards set by MFHEA, and deliver value to learners and employers alike. This process ensures the development of high-quality, learner-centred, and industry-relevant training offerings.

### Step 1: Identification of Market Gaps

The process begins with a market needs analysis, which may include:

- Feedback from industry stakeholders and employers.
- Reviewing labour market reports (e.g., JobsPlus, NSO, Chamber, MEA).
- Surveys and focus groups with learners, alumni, and industry.
- Review of course offerings by other local and international institutions to identify potential gaps or innovation opportunities.

The goal is to find a gap in the market whereby the proposed course addresses real and current skills shortages or professional development needs within sectors such as hospitality, business, management, industry, or other target sectors that ESSI decides it wishes to pursue.

### Step 2: Appointment of Subject Experts

Once a viable course idea is identified, ESSI Academy appoints a Subject Expert to create the course structure and put together the course application. The individual (or team in case of diverse units) shall be tasked with:

- Defining the programme learning outcomes in line with the MQF and the Malta Referencing Report.
- Structuring the course into modules/units, ensuring clear learning outcomes, credits (ECTS/ECVET), delivery hours, and sequencing.
- Designing appropriate teaching, learning, and assessment methodologies suited to the course level, target audience, and learning mode (e.g. in-person, online, hybrid).
- Identifying the minimum lecturer qualifications and work experience required to deliver each module.
- Planning for student support services and resources (e.g. classroom setup, online platforms, equipment, and library access).

### **Step 3: Compilation and Submission of the Accreditation Application to MFHEA**

Once the course is fully developed, the internal QA and administration team compile the accreditation application pack required by MFHEA, including:

- Completed MFHEA application forms.
- Full course descriptor (programme structure, modules, outcomes, delivery, and assessment).
- Lecturer profiles or minimum qualifications.
- Details of facilities, student support, and digital platforms (if this will be used).
- Template of the intended certificate or diploma (for accreditation review only).

The application is then submitted to MFHEA's accreditation for feedback and review.

### **Step 4: Respond to MFHEA Feedback and Amend Course as Required**

MFHEA reviewers may request clarifications, improvements, or adjustments to the proposed course. ESSI Academy commits to:

- Timely and professional responses to all queries.
- Revisions to learning outcomes, assessments, or policies, as necessary.
- Providing supporting documentation or rationale for course decisions.
- Liaising with the assigned reviewer until the application satisfies all accreditation requirements.

### **Step 5: Accreditation Approval and Development of Certificate Template**

Once MFHEA grants accreditation, ESSI Academy:

- Finalises the certificate template, incorporating the MFHEA logo, MQF level, learning credits, and unique identifiers in compliance with regulatory standards and submit to MFHEA for approval. Make changes, if any, as suggested by MFHEA.
- Updates internal systems to register and track student attendance, assessments, and certification records.

### **Step 6: Publishing Course Information on the ESSI Academy Website**

The Academy ensures transparency and accessibility by:

- Publishing all approved course information online, including:



- Entry requirements
- Learning outcomes
- Course structure
- Duration and mode of delivery
- Tuition fees and funding options
- FAQs and support channels
- Ensuring all public information is up-to-date, accurate, and clear to prospective students.

### **Step 7: Course Promotion (Local and International)**

To ensure successful uptake, following accreditation of programme, the course is scheduled and ESSI Academy plans and launches promotional campaigns tailored to the course's target audience. This includes:

- Local outreach: mainly via own website, social media and online advertising.
- International outreach: through the International Outreach Team, who liaise with partner institutions, agents, and platforms targeting foreign learners.
- Promotional materials containing clear messaging around employment possibilities, industry relevance, accreditation, and student testimonials (where applicable – as initially this will not be possible).

### **Step 8: Appointment of Lecturers**

ESSI Academy recruits lecturers in line with:

- Relevant academic and professional expertise in the subject matter.
- Teaching experience and ability to engage adult learners.

Lecturers undergo an induction covering the academy's QA standards, course expectations, assessment strategy, and student support policies.

### **Step 9: Course Delivery**

With lecturers appointed and learners enrolled, course delivery commences. Key practices include:

- Use of interactive, student-centred teaching methods.
- Ongoing formative assessment and timely feedback.

- Monitoring of attendance, participation, and student satisfaction. This is normally set at 70% level unless otherwise indicated in the course accreditation documentation.
- Provision of resources, including notes and lecturer support.

### **Step 10: Student Feedback Collection**

At the end of each course, ESSI Academy collects student feedback through:

- Anonymous surveys.
- Informal feedback through direct engagement with students.

The feedback covers:

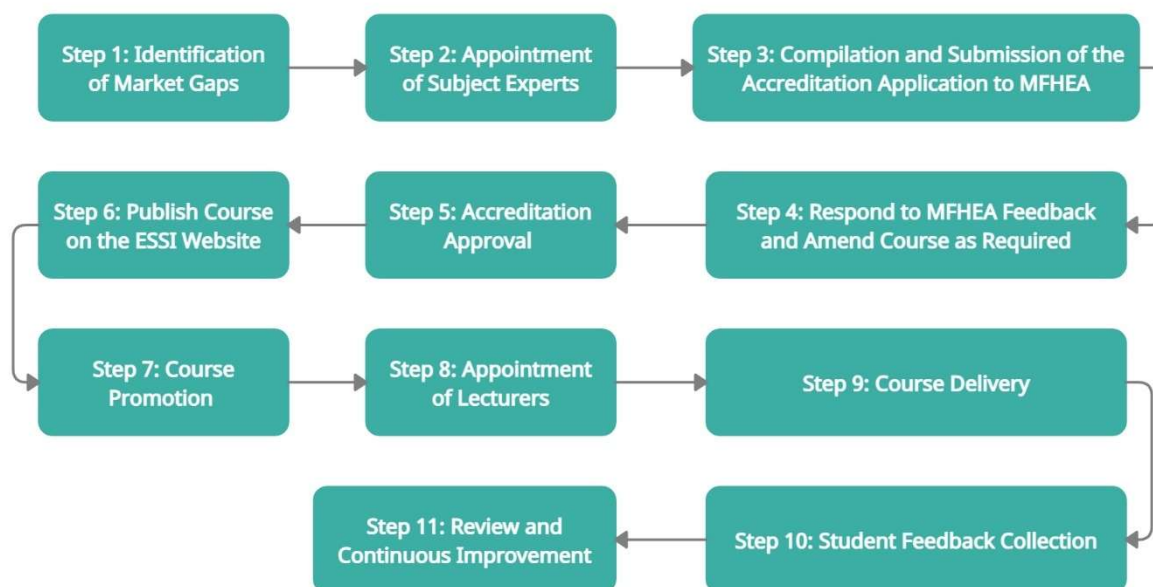
- Lecturer performance
- Course content and materials
- Learning environment
- Administration and student support

### **Step 11: Review and Continuous Improvement**

Using the feedback received, alongside insights from lecturers and industry partners, the team:

- Reviews each course annually.
- Adjust module content, teaching methods, or assessment strategies as needed.
- Report changes internally and to MFHEA when required.

This process allows ESSI Academy to ensure that all courses are developed in a structured way and in line with all requirements set forth by MFHEA.



## Programme Design Process

ESSI Academy ensures that all accredited courses meet the formal MFHEA criteria for programme design and approval through the following elements:

### ECTS/ECVET Credit Allocation and Student Workload

Each programme and module clearly defines the student workload using ECTS/ECVET credits. This includes contact hours, self-study, practical work, assessments, and tutorials. Workload estimations are carefully calculated to reflect realistic expectations at the designated MQF level.

### Target Students and Admission Criteria

Every course document includes a detailed student profile, specifying:

- The target audience (e.g. entry-level professionals, upskilling workers, school leavers).
- Minimum entry requirements and eligibility criteria.

### Learning Dynamics and Lecturer-Learner Interaction

The course delivery methods are tailored to the level and mode of study. Each programme specifies:

- Expected tutor-student interaction hours.
- Delivery modes (face-to-face). Other methods are to be offered as soon as these are authorised by MFHEA.
- Systems used to assist the student in his/her journey (e.g. learning management systems, online resources, etc). These dynamics are designed to encourage student-centred learning and foster autonomy and engagement.

### **Teaching Resources and Assessment Methods**

Programme documents outline:

- The resources required for effective delivery (suggested reading lists, core textbooks and other tools and equipment that might be needed for the programme).
- The student will be presented with the assessment methods that align with learning outcomes, such as presentations, practical assignments, written exams, multiple choice assessment etc. Assessment criteria are transparent, published in advance, and include clear marking rubrics.

### **Lecturer Requirements**

All lecturers delivering accredited courses must meet minimum qualification and competence requirements:

- An minimum qualification required (EQF Level or equivalent).
- Proven industry experience.
- Combination of the above

### **MQF Alignment and Referencing**

All programmes are mapped to an appropriate MQF level using the Malta Referencing Report and MQF Level Descriptors. Each module's outcomes are aligned to the complexity, autonomy, and responsibility expected at that level.

### **Stakeholder Engagement in Programme Design**

Programme development is not done in isolation. ESSI Academy ensures that the design and review processes involve:

- External stakeholders who benefit from the course (e.g. industry partners mainly). This shall be done by interviewing / discussing with stakeholder such as potential employers / chamber of commerce / unions to identify gaps in the market that shall be addressed via new course / module developments.
- Students, both current and prospective, through surveys and consultation meetings.

### **Progression and Articulation**

Courses are designed to allow for smooth learner progression, whether within the same academic stream or toward further study. Clear pathways are established for:

- Progression from one award to the next. Each programme is designed with a micro credit system in mind whereby students are awarded a certificate after each module so that they can build up their full diploma step by step. This is subject to approval by MFHEA during course accreditation process.
- Entry to employment, where courses are job-focused.

### Learning Outcomes Structure at ESSI Academy

In accordance with the Malta Qualifications Framework and the accreditation standards of MFHEA, all accredited courses at ESSI Academy are designed around clear, measurable learning outcomes. These outcomes form the foundation of each module and are used to guide teaching, assessment, and quality assurance processes.

Each module includes three types of learning outcomes:

#### **Knowledge Outcomes**

Definition: These outcomes describe what the learner is expected to know and understand upon completion of the module. Knowledge is theoretical and factual, and forms the basis of academic and conceptual understanding.

Purpose:

- To ensure students acquire the relevant principles, theories, and frameworks needed for the subject area.
- To provide students with a foundation that supports higher-level thinking and the ability to contextualise practical applications.

Example:

"The learner will be able to explain the core principles of digital marketing strategy and distinguish between different online advertising models."

#### **Skills Outcomes**

Definition: Skills outcomes refer to what learners are able to do, both in terms of cognitive skills (e.g. problem-solving, critical thinking) and practical skills (e.g. using tools, carrying out procedures).

Purpose:

- To develop the student's ability to apply knowledge in real-life and simulated contexts.
- To ensure learners can perform specific tasks, analyse problems, and use technology or techniques relevant to the profession.

Example:

"The learner will be able to design and implement a basic email marketing campaign using appropriate tools and segmentation strategies."

### Competence Outcomes

Definition: Competence outcomes reflect the learner's ability to apply knowledge and skills autonomously, responsibly, and appropriately in a real-world context, often involving interpersonal or professional behaviours.

Purpose:

- To promote accountability, decision-making, ethical awareness, adaptability, and the integration of learning into professional settings.
- To ensure students are not only able to carry out tasks but do so with sound judgement, responsibility, and respect for others and the environment.

Example:

"The learner will be able to work independently and collaboratively to present a marketing proposal that meets client expectations and complies with industry standards."

### Holistic Learning Approach

By using this structure, ESSI Academy ensures a balanced and holistic educational experience that:

- Builds a solid theoretical foundation (knowledge)
- Equips students with practical, hands-on abilities (skills)
- Encourages responsible professional behaviour and critical thinking (competence)

This approach ensures that each learner is not only academically prepared but also professionally equipped to meet the expectations of today's workplaces, particularly in employment-driven sectors such as hospitality, business, management, and technology.

Each set of outcomes is aligned with the level descriptors of the MQF, ensuring that the complexity, depth, and independence expected of learners matches the level at which the qualification is awarded (e.g. MQF Level 2, 3, 4, etc.).

## STANDARD 4 - Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment.

ESSI Academy adopts a student-centred pedagogy as the foundation of its teaching and learning strategy, embedding it into every stage of course design and delivery. This approach recognises students as active participants in the educational process, co-creators of knowledge rather than passive recipients of information. In alignment with this approach and MFHEA's standards for student-centred learning and assessment, ESSI aims to create transformative, inclusive, and engaging learning experiences that prepare learners for both professional life and lifelong personal development.

### Philosophical Foundations of Student-Centred Learning

ESSI Academy's approach to student-centred learning is grounded in contemporary educational theory, which recognises learners as "active constructors of their own knowledge, guided by their interests and prior experiences" (Hoidn et al., 2020)<sup>1</sup>. This pedagogical perspective emphasises autonomy, collaboration, and reflection, enabling students to take ownership of their educational journey while the lecturer acts as a facilitator rather than a transmitter of information. The Academy integrates these principles by designing learning environments that promote active engagement, critical thinking, and the co-construction of knowledge across diverse learning contexts.

This philosophy is underpinned by three core tenets:

- 1. Experience Based Learning:** Learners are immersed in experiences that stimulate critical thinking, collaboration, and practical application. Through activities such as project-based learning, problem-solving tasks, reflective practice, and guided case discussions, students engage in meaningful learning that connects theoretical concepts to real-world industry contexts. The learning process is dynamic and participatory, inviting students to contribute their insights, explore alternative solutions, and reflect on their evolving understanding.
- 2. Competency Based Learning:** Instructional strategies are designed not around the transmission of content but around clearly defined learning outcomes. Each module's outcomes focus on what the learner is expected to achieve, fostering competency-based education that prioritises depth over breadth. Students are encouraged to make sense of knowledge in a way that is relevant to their context and professional aspirations, reinforcing long-term understanding rather than surface memorisation.
- 3. Shared Responsibility:** Echoing the principles of learner autonomy, students are treated as responsible individuals capable of self-directing their learning journeys. They are expected to take initiative, manage their time, engage with content, and seek clarification when needed. Support mechanisms are

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<sup>1</sup> Hoidn, Sabine & Reusser, Kurt. (2020). Foundations of student-centered learning and teaching.

available, but the emphasis is on the student’s role as the primary agent in their development. This approach cultivates discipline, ownership, and resilience—skills that are vital in both education and the workplace.

This approach has been shown to foster greater learner engagement, deeper understanding, and higher levels of motivation and confidence.

### **Curriculum Design and Modular Progression**

In line with our student-centred model, all programmes at ESSI Academy are modular and practical in nature, while still grounded in sound theoretical frameworks. Each module is designed with clearly defined learning outcomes, which articulate what the student will be able to do upon successful completion. These outcomes guide the content, delivery methods, and assessment criteria, ensuring alignment and clarity.

- Problem-Based Learning is embedded throughout the curriculum. Students are presented with real-world challenges that require the integration of knowledge and critical thinking.
- Programmes include multiple exit routes that allow students to gain recognition for completed components and re-enter the learning pathway at a later date.
- Courses cater to multiple learning preferences using the VARK framework: visual content (charts, diagrams, video), auditory methods (discussion and presentations), reading/writing (textbooks, summaries), and kinesthetic learning (practical tasks).

The curriculum is also regularly reviewed and updated through stakeholder engagement, including student feedback, industry consultation, and academic review.

### **Support for Learning and Accessibility**

While ESSI Academy does not specialise in disability support services, we shall collaborate with national agencies such as FITA (where needed) to ensure students with special requirements can access alternative formats or tools where needed. Adjustments to teaching methods, assessment formats, or additional support sessions can be arranged upon request.

Students who struggle with course content are encouraged to proactively reach out to their trainers or administrative staff. The Academy is committed to offering additional guidance, mentoring, or academic assistance to support learner success.

## The Role of Teaching Staff

At the core of the student-centred model is the responsibility of teaching staff to create and maintain an environment conducive to learning. Lecturers at ESSI Academy are selected based on both academic qualifications and industry experience, ensuring that learners benefit from professionals who understand real-world demands.

Trainers are required to:

- Plan sessions that encourage participation and interaction
- Use varied pedagogical approaches to reach learners of different styles and backgrounds
- Provide clear feedback and respond promptly to queries
- Monitor student progress and flag any concerns early on
- Participate in continuous professional development, including workshops on pedagogy, digital tools, and assessment design

Where possible the academy engages lectures who already have experience teaching so that the students can benefit from trained lecturers who can delivery an excellent study experience..

## Assessment Framework

Assessment at ESSI Academy is integral to the learning process. It is designed to be fair, transparent, aligned with learning outcomes, and supportive of student development. Assessments are used not just as tools for measurement, but as opportunities for reflection, growth, and mastery.

Key principles include:

- **Alignment with learning outcomes:** All assessments are explicitly linked to the module learning outcomes. Each task is mapped to specific skills, knowledge, or competences expected of the learner.
- **Transparency:** Students are informed in advance about the type of assessments, marking criteria, deadlines, and expectations. This is also done via the production of an assessment Rubric which is designed to show the students the level of expected achievement and the corresponding outcome.
- **Formative and Summative Assessment:** Formative assessments such as in class exercises, discussions, or project drafts offer opportunities for feedback and improvement before final grading. Summative assessments determine the final achievement of learning outcomes.

- **Feedback and resits:** Constructive feedback is given for all graded work. Students are provided with an opportunity to resit failed components in accordance with internal regulations.
- **Accessibility and adaptability:** Assessment methods are reviewed to ensure that they accommodate a diverse student population. Extensions, alternative formats, or postponements may be granted in cases of documented personal, health, or family-related circumstances.
- **Multiple methods:** Assessments include exams, assignments, presentations, portfolios, group work, and practical demonstrations. Wherever possible, assessments are contextualised to real-life or industry scenarios. The assessment methodology shall following those approved by MFHEA during course accreditation process.
- **Moderation and fairness:** Assessments are subject to internal moderation and review. Where feasible, more than one assessor reviews the work to ensure reliability and objectivity.
- **Security and academic integrity:** All assessments are stored securely and monitored for potential misconduct. Plagiarism detection tools are used such as Grammelly and TextGuard, and assessment offences such as cheating or misrepresentation are treated with utmost seriousness. Students will also be told and taught about the use of AI assistive tools such as ChatGPT. These tools are allowed as assistive tool but should not be used to produce whole student work but rather should be used to help generate ideas. Typically the amount of plagiarism allow should not exceed 15%.

## Student Responsibilities and Academic Integrity

Student-centred learning comes with student-centred responsibility. Learners are expected to:

- Actively participate in all learning activities and assessments
- Take ownership of their preparation and progress
- Seek help when challenges arise
- Respect deadlines, integrity protocols, and group dynamics

Where a student is identified as struggling through ongoing performance reviews, intervention meetings are held to provide personalised support and guidance. However, students must be fully engaged and willing to act on this support.

Assessment offences such as plagiarism or cheating are taken seriously. Any allegations are formally reviewed by an independent person. Disciplinary measures range from resubmission requirements to disqualification or award revocation, depending on the severity and context of the offence.

## Management of Assessment

Assessment management is coordinated by both the individual lecturer and the Subject Lead, who ensures alignment across different modules and monitors assessment practices for consistency. The Subject Lead also contributes to academic review processes and supports lecturers in upholding academic standards.

Lecturers are encouraged to:

- Attend internal and external workshops on assessment design
- Share strategies and challenges through peer learning
- Engage with technological tools for digital assessment and feedback delivery

As part of continuous improvement, ESSI Academy explores innovations such as online assessment platforms, adaptive testing, and digital portfolios to enhance the efficiency and impact of assessment processes. These shall all be subject to MFHEA approval.

## STANDARD 5 - Published and consistently applied regulations for student admission, progression, recognition and certification

At ESSI Academy, we understand that supporting students throughout their educational journey requires more than just quality teaching—it requires clear, fair, and structured systems that cover each phase of the student life cycle: from admission, to progression, to recognition, and certification. In line with the standards set by the MFHEA, ESSI Academy is committed to ensuring that all these phases are governed by well-defined policies and transparent processes that are consistently applied and publicly available.

### Student Admission Process

ESSI Academy operates a fully transparent and equitable admissions policy. Each accredited programme includes a publicly accessible information datasheet detailing the minimum entry requirements, which are aligned with the standards submitted during course accreditation with MFHEA or the requirements of the foreign awarding body, where applicable. These are published clearly on our website, ensuring that applicants understand the qualifications, age, language proficiency, and documentation required for each course.

Entry criteria are designed to maximise the student's potential for success by ensuring that applicants possess the foundational knowledge and competencies needed to meet the course's learning outcomes. At this point in time, ESSI does not conduct RPL however it is actively considering applying with MFHEA in the near future to be able to provide RPL in line with MFHEA Communication 05/2021, allowing informal and non-formal learning to be assessed as part of the admissions process.

With regards to the application process, students may apply online via a link on the website under each respective course, via email to [applications@essi.academy](mailto:applications@essi.academy) or in person, and are required to provide documentation that includes:

- Full name and surname
- Date of birth
- Valid email and contact number
- Postal address
- ID card or passport
- Proof of qualifications or other prerequisites

The website and its contents will follow MFHEA guidelines as published from time to time. Students are also required to pay an application deposit. For short programmes, the full course fee may be requested upon application. Refund policies are outlined transparently on the website, with force majeure cases assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Head of Institution.

Applications are screened for accuracy and completeness. The administrative team verifies all documentation, and reserves the right to request a personal meeting with the applicant if

further validation is needed. In the case of foreign qualifications not accredited by MFHEA, students are required to present an MQRIC recognition statement. If an applicant fails to meet the entry requirements or submits incorrect documentation, the Academy retains the right to refuse admission. In case of refusal, the student shall be given the right to appeal by submitting a formal request to [applicationappeals@essi.acedmy](mailto:applicationappeals@essi.acedmy).

### **Induction to the Institution and Programme**

Upon successful enrolment, students are given access to a comprehensive induction programme. This includes:

- A video induction that shall be sent to each student individually, outlining institutional policies, academic expectations, student support services, and an overview of the programme.
- A face-to-face induction session on the first day of class covering health and safety protocols (e.g. fire exits, emergency contacts), use of facilities, introduction to staff, and information about digital learning tools.
- Student resources presentation, demonstrating how students can access course materials, submit assignments, communicate with lecturers, and track their progress.

This induction ensures that students feel informed and confident about the expectations of their chosen course and the tools available to support them.

### **Student Progression**

Student progression is carefully monitored through structured mechanisms aimed at helping learners advance through their programmes effectively. Each course is divided into modules, with clear minimum pass marks and assessment strategies indicated in advance. These are communicated on course documentation and reinforced during induction. Where programmes are designed with multiple levels (e.g. foundational to advanced), the Academy advises students on how to transition smoothly through each stage as well as different exit routes available to the student..

The following data is collected and monitored throughout the academic journey:

- Attendance and participation data
- Module and course grades
- Assignment and assessment scores

This data is stored in a secure Student Information System (SIS) and used to identify students who may be at risk of falling behind. The system flags such students for academic follow-up by both the teaching and administrative teams. Regular progress reports are reviewed to support individualised guidance and ensure that students remain on track.

Progression pathways are also clearly indicated online for each programme. Where possible, ESSI Academy ensures that qualifications are stackable, enabling students to progress from a lower to a higher MQF level, either within the same field or into related disciplines.

## Recognition of Prior Learning and External Qualifications

ESSI Academy recognises the value of **non-formal and informal learning** and is committed to recognising prior learning wherever possible, in accordance with national standards. As detailed previously, the academy is interested in pursuing the application to provide RPL services for its programmes but this shall be initiated once the academy is up and running and has an initial cohort of registered students.

The aim is to eventually have Applicants with work experience, unaccredited training, or other learning achievements enrolling onto programmes and provide evidence of non formal / informal learning to gain access to the Academy's programmes. This ensures fair access to education and supports lifelong learning.

Furthermore, ESSI honours relevant qualifications that are accredited or recognised by MFHEA. Where a qualification originates from outside Malta and is not yet accredited, the applicant must submit an MQRIC statement as proof of equivalency before admission.

## Certification and Recognition of Learning

Upon successful completion of a programme, ESSI Academy provides students with a certificate that meets MFHEA's certification requirements, including the full guidelines outlined in Communication MFHEA/03/2021. Certificates include the following information:

- Full name and surname of the awardee
- Title of the programme
- Name of the awarding body (ESSI or foreign partner)
- MQF/EQF level
- Number of ECTS (where applicable)
- Length of programme
- Date of award

For MFHEA-accredited programmes, the Academy ensures that certification templates comply fully with official formats. Students are also provided with a certificate supplement that details:

- Programme description and objectives
- Achieved learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and competences)
- Teaching, learning, and assessment methods used
- Entry requirements and access routes for further education

This supplement allows students and employers to understand the nature and scope of the qualification and facilitates international recognition and mobility.

## Data Collection and Monitoring of Progression

The Academy implements secure and comprehensive data monitoring tools to track student progression, performance, and academic standing. The systems used include:

- **Student Database**, storing personal and registration data
- **Academic Notes**, documented interventions and support sessions

These tools are maintained in compliance with GDPR and are hosted on secure servers. Access is restricted to authorised staff only, and data is updated regularly to reflect real-time progression.

Regular reports are generated and used by the Academy to inform strategic decisions about course improvements, student support mechanisms, and institutional development.

## STANDARD 6 - Competence and effectiveness of teaching staff

At ESSI Academy, the quality of our teaching staff is fundamental to the successful delivery of our mission and vision: to equip learners with practical skills and industry-relevant knowledge that position them for success in a fast-evolving job market. As a licensed education provider under the MFHEA, the Academy adopts a transparent, equitable, and rigorous approach to the recruitment, engagement, and development of its teaching staff.

Our staff are not only subject experts but also professionals with direct experience in their industries. This dual perspective allows them to bridge the gap between academic content and real-world application, which is at the heart of the learning experience at ESSI Academy.

### **Recruitment Process: Fair and Transparent Practices**

The recruitment of lecturers at ESSI Academy follows a clearly defined process that is rooted in fairness, consistency, and compliance with the academy's policies. The recruitment process comprises the following steps:

- 1. Identification of Needs:**  
Programme coordinators, assess upcoming courses and identify the need for new teaching staff based on subject areas, student intake, and programme updates.
- 2. Preparation of Role Description and Criteria:**  
A detailed role description is drafted for each lecturer position. This includes the MQF level being taught, required qualifications (in line with MFHEA requirements), industry experience expectations, and preferred teaching experience. The criteria are aligned with both course accreditation guidelines and internal quality standards.
- 3. Public Call for Applications:**  
When positions become available, the Academy publishes a call for applications on its website and professional platforms. This includes a clear outline of the job role, selection criteria, required documentation (e.g. CV, qualifications, cover letter), and deadlines. Where relevant, vacancies are also promoted through industry networks and professional associations.
- 4. Screening and Shortlisting:**  
Applications are screened by the recruitment team, comprising members from the academic and administrative teams. Shortlisting is based strictly on qualifications, experience, and alignment with the Academy's ethos and course requirements.
- 5. Interview and Evaluation:**  
Shortlisted candidates are invited for interviews where they may be asked to deliver a short teaching demonstration or participate in a panel discussion. The interview assesses pedagogical approach, industry knowledge, interpersonal skills, and enthusiasm for teaching.

#### 6. **Appointment and Onboarding:**

Successful candidates are offered contracts based on the scope of work which typically includes either part-time or freelance. New lecturers undergo an induction programme that introduces them to ESSI's academic policies, student engagement expectations, and assessment procedures.

To ensure that the recruitment process is fair and transparent, the Academy implements the following safeguards:

- **Objective Selection Criteria:** Clearly defined, role-specific criteria are applied uniformly to all applicants.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Candidates may request feedback on their application post-selection, fostering openness and accountability.
- **Equal Opportunities Policy:** Recruitment decisions are made without discrimination on the basis of race, gender, disability, religion, age, nationality, or any other protected characteristic, in accordance with the Constitution of Malta and the Academy's internal policies.

#### **Competency and Development**

ESSI Academy is committed to ensuring that all lecturers meet the minimum qualification and competence requirements for the courses they deliver. As a rule, lecturers must hold a recognised qualification at least one MQF level above the course they are teaching. In addition, lecturers are expected to have significant industry experience, which reinforces the Academy's focus on employability and applied learning.

Where candidates have limited prior teaching experience, they may be paired with experienced lecturers to undergo peer shadowing. Teaching ability is nurtured through feedback from students and course coordinators, and ongoing support is provided to help new lecturers develop effective instructional practices.

Lecturers are also encouraged to pursue continuous professional development (CPD). The Academy shares information about funded training opportunities through entities such as Jobsplus and may offer direct financial support for courses, workshops, or conferences that enhance a lecturer's subject knowledge or teaching ability. Allocation of training funds is managed through a fair and transparent application process, with criteria communicated to all eligible teaching staff. The academy shall also organise workshops for lecturers to enhance their teaching skills.

#### **Monitoring Teaching Effectiveness**

To ensure the continued competence and effectiveness of teaching staff, ESSI Academy monitors performance through the following mechanisms:

- **Student Feedback:**  
Collected at multiple stages throughout the programme, student surveys assess

teaching quality, clarity of explanation, responsiveness, and overall satisfaction. Results are shared with lecturers to encourage reflection and improvement.

- **Employer and Industry Feedback:**

Employers who hire ESSI graduates are surveyed to assess the practical readiness of students. This feedback helps gauge whether lecturers are effectively aligning their instruction with real-world expectations.

### **Commitment to Innovation and Excellence**

ESSI Academy promotes innovation in teaching, particularly within the context of vocational and applied learning. Lecturers are encouraged to explore a range of delivery modes—including face-to-face, online, and blended learning—and to adopt teaching aids such as simulations, case-based learning, and interactive media. These practices align with the Academy’s pedagogical vision of creating a dynamic and supportive learning environment.

## STANDARD 7 – Learning Resources and Student Support

At ESSI Academy, the provision of appropriate, inclusive, and well-resourced learning environments is central to the mission of bridging the gap between education and industry. In alignment with the requirements set by MFHEA, the Academy ensures that all students, regardless of their background, status, or mode of study, have access to fit-for-purpose learning resources and robust support systems throughout their academic journey. The Academy's commitment to excellence is highlighted by continuous investment in infrastructure, human resources, and technology, creating an educational environment that supports diverse learning styles and meets the expectations of student-centred education.

### Learning Resources

ESSI Academy maintains a wide and growing inventory of learning resources tailored to the level, nature, and intended outcomes of each accredited course. The Academy actively invests in both digital and physical resources to ensure that all students benefit from equal access to quality educational materials.

Before the start of each course Students are provided with a repository of virtual learning resources as well as contact information so that they can engage with lecturers, and receive administrative support where needed. The following information is provided to each student:

- **Reading Lists** for each module, clearly outlining recommended and required texts, journal articles, case studies, and other academic materials.
- **Lecture Notes** and slides are provided in advance whenever possible, supporting students in preparing for lessons and enabling them to focus on the in-class experience rather than transcription.
- **Supplementary Resources**, such as industry reports, academic journals, and professional publications, are provided via direct links or downloadable files to enrich students' understanding of the subject matter.
- **Useful Website Links**, including industry-specific sites, and professional bodies' portals, help students stay informed of the latest trends and developments in their chosen fields.

In addition to digital resources, ESSI Academy recognises the importance of traditional academic materials. Therefore, the Academy operates a Student Library Service, where two physical copies of each required textbook are made available for in-house reading. These copies can be accessed on a shared basis during opening hours, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to consult the course materials at no additional cost. This initiative is part of the Academy's ongoing strategy to reduce financial barriers to education and promote resource equity among learners.

Lecturers at ESSI Academy are also supported in the delivery of engaging and impactful instruction. The Academy actively encourages all lecturers to communicate their resource

needs, whether that be software, printed materials, specialist equipment, or access to subject-specific journals. Where these requests are seen to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, the Academy commits to sourcing and providing the required resources. This open communication channel fosters collaboration between academic and administrative staff and ensures that learning delivery remains current and innovative.

### Support for Diverse Student Needs

ESSI Academy is aware of the varied profiles of its student population. Programmes are open to local and international learners, including mature students, part-time students, employed individuals, and those with specific learning needs or disabilities. This diversity requires a flexible, responsive approach to resource allocation and support services.

To accommodate different learning styles and personal circumstances, students are provided with options for digital and printed notes. While the Academy promotes the use of digital materials for environmental reasons, printed copies are available on request for students who require or prefer physical documents. This practice supports inclusivity, particularly for learners who face challenges with screen-based content. The Academy will also engage with FITA (Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility ) where it feel the need to consult a professional body with regards to provision of content for disabled students.

Students with declared disabilities or learning difficulties are supported through reasonable adjustments. This may include extended assignment deadlines, assistive technology, or alternative assessment formats. The Academy treats such accommodations as part of its broader commitment to accessibility and equal opportunity.

### Communication and Student Interaction

Effective communication is at the heart of student support at ESSI Academy. The website of the academy ([www.essi.academy](http://www.essi.academy)) and the digital repository provide to each student provides the key contact points for academic staff and administrative personnel. This includes information such as:

- **Contact details of lecturing staff:** This includes their academy's email address (no personal private contact details are provided). Lecturers are expected to respond within two business days.
- **Email of the administrative team:** This is provided to assist with academic, technical, and personal support queries.
- **Contact Number of the Academy:** The contact telephone number is provided to help students access an admin support individual during office hours especially for urgent matters.

These channels are structured to ensure that students receive timely, professional responses and that all concerns are logged and followed up appropriately.

### Role of Administrative and Support Staff

The success of the learning environment at ESSI Academy also depends on the dedication and professionalism of its administrative and support staff. These individuals play a critical role in facilitating the day-to-day operations of the Academy and are often the first point of contact for students in need of assistance.

To ensure that administrative staff are well-equipped for their roles, the Academy has established the following recruitment and development standards:

- Staff are selected based on strong communication, time management, and digital skills, as well as a demonstrated capacity for customer service.
- Induction training is mandatory for all new administrative personnel, ensuring familiarity with Academy systems, student engagement practices, and data protection protocols.
- Ongoing professional development is encouraged through attendance at workshops, seminars, and relevant training sessions, particularly in areas such as GDPR compliance, student welfare, and educational technology.

### **Future Improvements and Investment**

ESSI Academy is continuously exploring ways to enhance its support systems and learning resource base. Planned developments include the expansion of the mini-library which shall be available from initial operations and shall have printed text with more materials added as the list of courses grow, further investment in a Virtual Learning Environment as well as applying to eventually start delivery online courses to support students via flexible learning requirements.

Feedback from students is a primary driver of these improvements. The Academy shall conduct regular surveys to gather insights into students' experiences with available resources and support services. Data from these activities is reviewed and used to inform decisions about resource planning, upgrades, and strategic initiatives.



## STANDARD 8 - Information Management - Collection, Analysis and Use Relevant Information

At ESSI Academy, robust and responsible information management is recognised as a critical component of the academy's effectiveness, educational quality, and regulatory compliance. In line with the requirements of the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA), the Academy is committed to the systematic collection, analysis, and use of relevant data to support the efficient and effective management of its academic programmes, student services, and institutional operations.

The Academy's information management practices are founded on principles of data accuracy, transparency, security, and purposeful use. These practices enable the institution to make evidence-based decisions that reflect current realities and anticipate future needs, both in terms of learner expectations and industry demands.

Data collected by ESSI Academy falls into multiple key categories:

- profile of the student population;
- participation, retention, and success rates;
- student satisfaction with their programmes; and
- post-course employment rates and career pathways (where applicable)

All data is processed and reported in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act (Cap 586 of the Laws of Malta).

### **Student Data and Population Profiling**

The Academy collects personal and academic data from all prospective and enrolled students through application and enrolment processes. This includes information such as full name, date of birth, contact details, national ID or passport number, gender, course preferences, and any disclosed disabilities or medical conditions that the academy needs to know about and that may impact their learning experience. Additionally, ESSI gathers data on nationality where applicable to better understand its student demographic.

Given the Academy's inclusive values, this information enables the institution to build a clear profile of the student population. For instance, students with declared learning difficulties or impairments are noted in the system (with consent) to ensure that reasonable adjustments are provided. The data also informs how student support services are deployed and improved.

The data collected during admission and enrolment is stored securely within the Academy's student information system, accessible only to authorised personnel. The system is equipped with encrypted storage and access controls. All data handling policies are communicated to students upon enrolment, and consent is obtained where necessary.

## **Participation, Retention, and Success Rates**

In order to monitor and improve the performance of its courses, ESSI Academy collects and reviews participation, retention, and academic success data across all programmes.

Participation is tracked through attendance records, which are monitored daily. Trends in absenteeism may prompt academic follow-ups. Data on withdrawals and deferrals are also collected and categorised according to reasons (academic difficulty, personal issues, relocation, etc.).

Success rates are analysed at both module and programme levels. Assessment results and course completion rates are collated and analysed per cohort. The data helps the Academy identify modules with higher failure rates, which may indicate issues with curriculum design, assessment methods, or teaching strategies. This feeds into the ongoing course review process described under Standard 10, ensuring that outcomes are reviewed holistically and improvements are grounded in reliable evidence.

These analytics are anonymised and reported internally for planning purposes. Where necessary, they also form part of the documentation required by MFHEA during periodic external quality audits.

## **Student Satisfaction and Feedback**

ESSI Academy is strongly committed to incorporating the student voice in institutional decision-making. To this end, feedback is collected using structured online surveys at different stages of the learning journey, mainly mid-programme and upon completion of the full course. These surveys solicit feedback on teaching quality, course content, assessment clarity, student support, and overall learning experience.

All feedback is collected anonymously unless students voluntarily choose to disclose their identity. The anonymity of this process encourages honesty and helps the institution gather more actionable insights. Results are compiled and shared in summary form with course coordinators and lecturers, who are asked to respond with action plans where consistent concerns are identified. Feedback is also shared with students in the form of general communication and update of Academy activities.

## **Graduate Employment and Career Tracking**

In fulfilment of its mission to enhance student employability, ESSI Academy collects information on graduate outcomes, specifically employment status and career progression post-graduation. Six to twelve months after completing their programme, graduates are invited to complete an online employment survey (voluntary). This asks questions regarding current job status, relevance of the course to their job, salary band, and any further education undertaken.

To ensure data protection compliance, all responses are anonymised and aggregated. The information is used for internal review and external reporting, particularly in demonstrating programme effectiveness and employability impact.

## **Data Governance, Rights and Safeguards**

ESSI Academy upholds rigorous data governance principles to ensure that all personal data is processed fairly and transparently. The Academy processes student and staff data based on lawful grounds, primarily for the performance of a legal obligation, legitimate interest, or contractual necessity. All data collected is limited to what is strictly necessary, used only for specified purposes, and stored for the legally required period of 40 years where applicable.

Data subjects (students and staff) are informed of their rights in line with GDPR. These include the right to access their data, request correction, object to processing, restrict processing, and, where applicable, request erasure. The Academy also recognises the right to data portability and the right to object to automated decision-making. However, it is noted that these rights are not absolute. For example, the right to erasure does not apply when data is required to comply with legal obligations or for the defence of legal claims.

All data breaches, should they occur, are reported in accordance with GDPR within 72 hours of becoming aware of the incident. Internal procedures for breach detection, reporting, and rectification are documented and reviewed periodically.

## **Use of Data for Quality Enhancement and Decision Making**

Beyond compliance, the overarching goal of ESSI Academy's information management is quality enhancement. Data is not collected for its own sake but is actively analysed and used to inform decisions at every level of the institution, from course design and curriculum adjustments to student support and marketing strategies.

Reports are compiled at least twice per year and reviewed by senior management. Actionable findings are discussed during internal quality assurance meetings and reflected in updates to policies, operational plans, and programme delivery. Furthermore, anonymised data is used to benchmark ESSI's performance from time to time.

All reports involving personal data for internal use are anonymised, and access to identifiable records is limited to designated data controllers. Reports intended for external stakeholders (e.g. MFHEA or NSO) are compiled in full adherence to confidentiality and data protection standard

## STANDARD 9 - Public Information

ESSI Academy is committed to ensuring that all public information related to its educational services is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date, and readily accessible. In line with Standard 9 of the National Quality Assurance Framework, the Academy recognises its responsibility to empower prospective students, current learners, employers, and other stakeholders with the necessary information to make informed decisions regarding course enrolment, progression, and employment pathways.

The publication of reliable and transparent public information is not only a legal and ethical requirement but also an integral part of the Academy's commitment to student-centred learning, inclusivity, and institutional integrity.

### Transparency in Programme Information

All programme-related information is published on the official ESSI Academy website, as well as in downloadable course brochures and prospectuses. This information is reviewed regularly to ensure accuracy and currency. When updates are made, such as changes to intake dates, assessment procedures, or programme structures, they are promptly reflected across all public channels.

For each course, ESSI Academy publishes a comprehensive set of details that include the following:

- **Programme and Course List:** A full catalogue of all programmes and short courses currently offered, clearly indicating which are accredited by MFHEA or other awarding bodies. Foreign awarded courses shall be passed on to MFHEA for recognition and if recognised, update to the list of accredited courses provided by the academy.
- **Modules and Content:** Each programme is broken down into its constituent modules, including a description of each unit, its credit weighting, intended learning outcomes, and relevance to the broader qualification.
- **Intended Learning Outcomes:** For every course, the key knowledge, skills, and competences that students are expected to achieve by the end of the programme are clearly articulated.
- **Study Approach:** Each course specifies whether it is delivered on a full-time or part-time as approved by MFHEA during the course accreditation process. This enables prospective students to assess which delivery model best suits their personal and professional commitments.
- **Programme Duration:** The length of each programme is clearly stated, whether in months or academic semesters, along with total learning hours (including contact hours, self-study, and assessment preparation).

- **Entry Requirements:** Minimum entry criteria are explicitly outlined, including academic qualifications, language proficiency and/or work experience (where applicable) in accordance with MFHEA course accreditation.
- **Assessment Methodology:** Details on how students will be assessed are provided, including the balance between formative and summative assessments, use of projects, exams, assignments, and presentations. Assessment timelines, grading criteria, and re-sit policies are also published.
- **Accrediting Body and Accreditation Status:** Where applicable, the name of the awarding body (e.g., MFHEA or a foreign institution), and the course's accreditation status, MQF/EQF level, and number of ECTS/ECVET credits are clearly displayed. Courses that are awaiting accreditation are labelled accordingly, and their status is updated as changes occur.
- **Programme Qualification Name:** Each programme clearly states the full title of the qualification awarded upon successful completion.
- **Programme Structure and Semester Breakdown:** Prospective learners can review how courses are structured over time, including the semester distribution, module sequencing, and interdependencies between units.
- **Mode of Delivery and Location:** Programmes indicate the primary mode of delivery (face-to-face), including the geographic location (which training location as approved by MFHEA) where face-to-face sessions will be held.
- **Target Audience and Language:** A profile of the intended learner is provided for each programme, including whether the course is geared towards school leavers, working professionals, or upskilling adults. The language of instruction is clearly stated.
- **Grading System and Pass Rates:** The grading rubric is detailed, including how pass marks are calculated, what constitutes distinction or merit, and the historical pass rates (aggregated anonymously) for each programme, when available and relevant.
- **Course Intakes and Fees:** Each course page includes upcoming intake dates, tuition fees, payment plans, and refund policies. For international students, visa information and requirements as per Identity Malta guidelines are also provided.
- **Further Learning and Employment Pathways:** Public information includes guidance on progression opportunities, such as access to higher-level programmes, professional certifications, or employment sectors. This supports students in visualising the pathway beyond graduation.
- **Contact Information and Provider Credentials:** Each course and policy document includes:
  - The full name of the educational provider (ESSI Academy)
  - The MFHEA license number and category

- A dedicated contact email, telephone number, and physical address
- Office hours for walk-in enquiries or appointments

This broad set of information ensures that all prospective applicants can make an informed choice regarding whether a particular course matches their career objectives, learning preferences, and personal commitments.

### **Ensuring Information Accuracy and Timeliness**

ESSI Academy has established internal procedures to ensure that all public information remains accurate and up to date. This includes:

- A semi annual content review cycle
- A designated admin responsible for checking consistency across platforms (website, printed materials, social media)

Any changes to programme specifications, accreditation status, entry requirements, or policies are communicated promptly online. In case of changes in policies, these shall be communicated to all students and lecturers in writing via email.

### **Accessibility and Inclusivity**

ESSI Academy ensures that public information is accessible to a diverse audience by:

- Publishing all materials in plain English
- Providing downloadable PDF versions of course descriptions and policies
- Designing the website to be mobile-friendly and compatible with screen readers for users with visual impairments
- Making hard-copy brochures available upon request

For individuals with limited internet access or digital literacy, printed materials are available at the reception desk or can be mailed on request.

## STANDARD 10 – Ongoing Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes

ESSI Academy is committed to ensuring that its programmes remain current, relevant, and effective in fulfilling the Academy’s mission of bridging the gap between education and industry. In line with the the MFHEA, ESSI systematically monitors and periodically reviews all accredited courses to assess their effectiveness, maintain alignment with national and European standards, and enhance the overall learner experience.

Monitoring and review activities are embedded into the Academy’s Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) policy and are aligned with the Quality Cycle. These processes are designed to ensure that courses continuously meet their intended objectives, respond to changing student and labour market needs, and reflect technological, social, and pedagogical developments. Reviews involve feedback and contributions from students, lecturers, administrative staff, industry stakeholders, and where relevant, recommendations from External Quality Assurance (EQA) reports that are mandatory to implement.

Each programme undergoes a comprehensive review every three years. This is different from the ongoing review that takes place annually following collection of feedback. The comprehensive review includes:

- An evaluation of the programme’s learning outcomes against student performance and feedback;
- Benchmarking of course content and delivery methods against comparable programmes locally and internationally;
- Consultation with industry stakeholders to ensure the continued relevance of the curriculum to real-world job demands;
- Review of assessment practices to ensure consistency, fairness, and alignment with intended learning outcomes;
- Identification of gaps or areas of improvement in teaching materials, resources, or support systems.

The process is overseen by the Head of Institution and the director. Students are actively involved through surveys and interviews. Data is also gathered from student satisfaction scores, progression and completion rates, and where applicable, post-graduation employment data.

Should the review identify the need for minor updates, such as refinements in teaching materials or assessment tasks, these are actioned internally and reported to the quality assurance team. These shall be submitted to MFHEA for approval as part of the documentation shared with the authority. Where more significant changes are proposed, such as the addition or removal of modules, changes to learning outcomes, or shifts in the MQF level, these are submitted to the MFHEA for approval in accordance with accreditation procedures.

Programme reviews also take into account emerging modes of delivery, including blended and online learning, and ensure that any such approaches are pedagogically sound, accessible, and technologically supported. These approaches are still being considered as ESSI is not accredited to deliver blended learning but it is actively studying these approaches. All revisions are documented and published on the ESSI Academy website, ensuring transparency and clear communication with current and prospective students.

Where a programme is found to be no longer viable—due to low enrolment, outdated content, or poor alignment with industry needs ESSI Academy may choose to discontinue the programme and replace it with a newly designed, market-relevant alternative.

To maintain the quality of delivery between major reviews, ongoing monitoring is conducted periodically. This includes lecturer self-evaluation and immediate post-course feedback from students. Lecturers are required to review and update their course materials regularly, with support from the academic team, to ensure that every cohort receives current and engaging instruction.

This structured and inclusive approach ensures that ESSI Academy's programmes remain dynamic, industry-relevant, and aligned with both student aspirations and evolving societal needs. It reflects the Academy's ongoing commitment to integrity, relevance, non-discrimination, and academic excellence.

## STANDARD 11 – Cyclical External Quality Assurance

As a licensed educational institution under the MFHEA, ESSI Academy is subject to periodic EQA audits in line with national regulatory requirements. These audits serve as a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of the Academy’s internal quality assurance systems and ensure that all programmes and services meet the standards outlined in the National Quality Assurance Framework. ESSI Academy is committed to full cooperation with MFHEA throughout the audit process. This includes the timely and transparent provision of all requested documentation, participation in meetings and interviews, and facilitation of the site visit process. Following the audit, the Academy will carefully review the recommendations and suggestions made by the peer review panel. Where recommendation for changes are made, it shall integrate the feedback into its internal policies, practices, and academic procedures to enhance the overall quality of its educational offering.