



# ST. FRANCIS DE SALES INSTITUTE

**QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY - 2023**

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## INSTITUTE OVERVIEW

1. The St Francis de Sales Institute is committed to ensure that its formal, non-formal and informal academic provision:
  - a) operates with the good quality standards; and
  - b) offers learners with learning opportunities of the best standards.
2. In view of its commitment to quality assurance in its educational programme, the St Francis de Sales Institute has developed and endorsed a Quality Assurance Policy. This policy is aimed at elaborating on the methodology that is applied to ensure that the standards outlined are followed rigorously and meticulously.
3. This quality assurance policy is built on and incorporates the 11 standards outlined in the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education published by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority and attributed within the ethos and aims of the St Francis De Sales Institute.
4. The implementation of this policy falls under the responsibility of all stakeholders who are part of the Institute. It is managed by the Institute's Internal Quality Assurance Manager and falls under the overall responsibility of the Head of Institute. Decisions taken on the interpretation of the policy by the Internal Quality Assurance Manager will be final.
5. The Institute upholds an integrative relationship between research, learning and teaching the in further education as this can provide valuable ways of enhancing the student learning experience. As a further education institution, we believe in bringing together the activities of 'research' and 'teaching and learning' as this offers more significance and added value to the learning community. This approach will improve the knowledge base, develop skills and improve their competences.
6. The Internal Quality Assurance Manager is entitled to give direction and oversee the full process of the assessment methods and actions taken by the Boards. The Internal Quality Assurance Manager will consider whether members of staff should absent themselves from all or part of the assessment due to possible conflict of interests.
7. The Salesians of Don Bosco in Malta established the St Francis de Sales Institute on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023 on the occasion of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. The Institute aim is to focus on the following areas of study: youth spirituality, pastoral ministry, youth work, education and pedagogy, personal development, and organisational management. It is open to cooperate with other local and foreign bodies, educational institutions and universities which have the same aim and purpose.

## **OUR VISION**

8. 'Creating and providing holistic educational experience leading to growth and fulfillment'.

## **OUR MISSION**

9. Our mission centres on the Salesian ethos built on reason, religion, and loving-kindness. These three pillars are manifested in the Institute in that it aims at nurturing a love for learning with a look for transcendence manifested in the materiality and corporeity of life.

## **OUR AIMS**

10. The aims of the Institute are to:
  - a) develop high quality academic curricula, syllabi and modules leading to certificates based on the knowledge of competences demanded in honourable academic qualifications and vocational training;
  - b) provide the highest quality training possible to students and offer courses to enable participating students to successfully develop skills easily transferable to their place of work be it paid or otherwise;
  - c) carry out and disseminate research which is valuable to society
  - d) encourage and enable professional development by providing opportunities of lifelong learning.
  - e) encourage inclusion, knowledge, creativity and innovation through its training and research, sustained by the values of dedication, commitment, as well as integrity at a person's workplace, voluntary activity and in their profession;
  - f) safeguard the principles of inclusive education by ensuring their implementation through the provision of an equitable access to all persons, respecting all diversity, and reflecting the ethos of the Institution;
  - g) enhance networking and collaboration among voluntary organisations, especially but not exclusively, those that share the Salesian ethos, through personal development;
  - h) create a consultative environment between voluntary organisations and the government by creating knowledge, awareness and discussion on various topics and issues related to the voluntary sector;
  - i) encourage people, especially young people, to nurture a culture of volunteering, to participate in volunteering activities, and to see these as aspects of personal and social development.

## **OUR VALUES**

11. Nurturing holistic development:  
We cultivate physical, emotional, moral, psychological, and spiritual well-being. We invest in the active involvement of learners in the journey of self-development and strengthening communities. We explore new and affective ways promoting change encouraging new opportunities leading to growth.
12. Academic freedom and integrity:

We create and value academic freedom and integrity within our organisation. We believe on the freedom to research, teach and learn, and the learner's rights to choose, to decide, to reject, to express and defend individual beliefs. We are also committed to keep academic integrity and honesty as its highest academic values.

13. Promoting respect and diversity:

We create an atmosphere of respect and acceptance throughout our Institute. Regardless of ethnic origin, race, ability, gender, religion or belief, everyone is to be treated equally, to be respected and to be protected from harm. Our humanity, which makes us all brothers and sisters, is at the core of the Institute's welcoming ethos. The Institute will strive to provide a safe space and a learning environment for everyone. We will apply the principle of equity is a consistent, systematic, fair, just, and impartial treatment of both educators and learners.

### **ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES**

14. The St Francis de Sales Institute provides training programmes and studies in the following areas:

- a) Youth Spirituality
- b) Pastoral Ministry
- c) Youth Work
- d) Education and Pedagogy
- e) Personal Development; and
- f) Organisational Management.

15. The Institute is recognised as a further educational institute by the Malta Further & Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) in terms of the Education Act in Maltese legislation and thereby abides by the procedures for accreditation of the framework. All governance structures of the Institute are responsible to ensure all internal auditing recommendations and meet the recommendations and stipulations of any external audit. The external audit will take place on a cyclical basis every five years or as otherwise requested by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority.

16. The Director of Studies, under the guidance of the Head of Institute, is responsible for the provision of all programmes of training and studies including the development, teaching and methods of assessment.

17. A full list of the programme of training and studies will be included on the Institute's website and updated periodically.

Students that are following a full-time programme of training or study will not be allowed to register in another full-time programme of training and studies at the Institute due to exigencies to follow the Institute's timetable.

## **ESTABLISHMENT**

18. The St Francis de Sales Institute is a service institution falling under the Don Bosco Foundation which is a registered Foundation and Voluntary Organisation (VO 1725).
19. The Office of the Institute shall be situated at 14, St. John Bosco Street Sliema SLM 1926, or at any other address in Malta as may be decided from time to time by the Board of Governors.
20. The Institute shall be a non-profit making organisation in nature so that, save for the payment of remuneration and out of pocket expenses, no part of the capital, assets, property or income of the Institute shall be available, directly or indirectly, for the personal benefit of any member, including members of the Board of Governors. The capital, assets, property and income of the Institute shall be utilised solely for the achievement of the Aims, for which the Institute is constituted.
21. The official languages of the Institute are Maltese and English, and either or both languages may be used by the administration of the Institute for official purposes.

## **LANGUAGE**

22. The St Francis de Sales Institute is an international educational institution which mainly uses the English language as its main language of instruction. Therefore, all applicants need an acceptable level of proficiency in writing English or Maltese to be able to achieve an acceptable level during the programme of training and studies. The Institute will establish the level of proficiency in English in accordance with the level of the programme of training and studies. Applicants may attach any form of qualifications that they may have in proficiency in the English language. Prospective students may be required to validate their writing proficiency in the English language. In certain cases, applicants with lower scores in English language proficiency may be admitted on condition that they attend English courses.

## **VERIFICATION OF LEARNERS**

23. The Institute shall have processes through which it establishes the identity of its learners to ensure that the same learner participates in, completes and receives the course award. Learners may be asked to present their national identity document or passport to verify their identity. Such identity verification of the learner will be implemented reasonable and appropriate safeguards to protect their privacy will prevail.

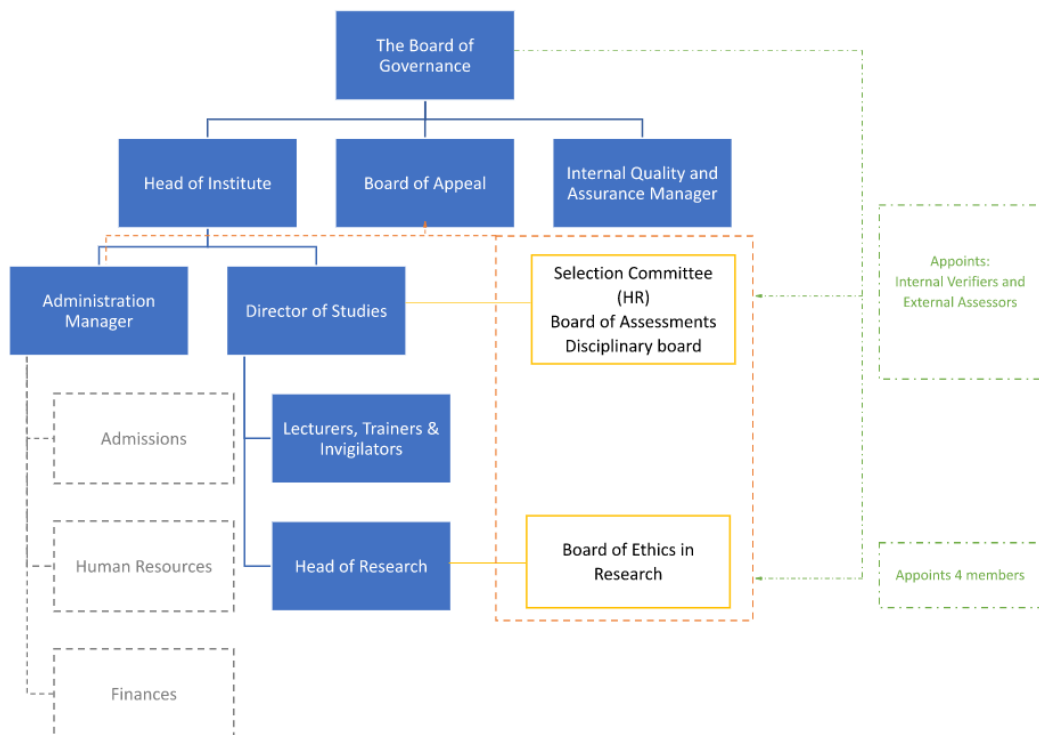
## **GOVERNING AND MANAGING BODIES OF THE INSTITUTION**

24. The governing bodies of the Institution shall be:
  - a) the Board of Governors; and
  - b) the Management Committee.
25. The principal officers of the Institution are:
  - a) the Chairman of the Foundation; and

b) the Head of Institute.

26. There may be other officers as may be established by the Board of Governors from time to time. Such officers shall be responsible to the Head of Institute for the conduct of their respective duties.

27. The Organigram



### STRUCTURE OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

28. The Institution shall be governed by a Board of Governors appointed by the Foundation.

29. The Board shall consist of the following:

- a) the Chairman of the Foundation;
- b) Head of Institute; and
- c) Three members.

30. The members of the Board of Governors are persons who have the experience and competence in training, academic and vocational learning, entrepreneurship, planning, leadership and management and have an understanding of the importance of training, formation and studies within the general socio-economic and cultural development.

31. These members can be both lay or consecrated individuals and the appointment is for a period of three years and the members shall be eligible for re-appointment after their appointment lapses.

32. In the case of any vacancy on the Board of Governors, the Foundation may appoint a suitable person to take up the vacant post of Governor and that person will continue to occupy that post up to the termination of the term of office of the person being substituted.
33. The Board of Governors will regulate its own procedures and may appoint specific committees or working groups to assist them in their aims and functions.
34. The Board of Governors shall appoint a Secretary to keep the minutes and a record of the meetings and of its decisions.
35. The Board of Governors shall meet at least once every two months.
36. The members of the Board of Governors are bound by confidentiality and treat all information, especially highly sensitive commercial communication with utmost discretion.

### **FUNCTIONS AND POWERS OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

37. The Board of Governors shall be the highest governing body of the Institute and shall have the duty to acquire, administer and control the resources, facilities and property, both movable and immovable of the Foundation for the Institute.
38. The Board shall have the following functions:
  - a) to develop the direction, strategy and representation of the Institution;
  - b) to establish Boards, Departments, Centres and other educational and training centres for the due performance of the educational and the training tasks and of interdisciplinary cooperation;
  - c) to supervise the expenditure and the administration of the Institute and to approve the annual budget proposals;
  - d) to approve any agreements with third parties in respect to activities or funding of the Institution;
  - e) to approve all policies and procedures which are followed to manage the Institution;
  - f) to make other policies, rules and other procedures in terms of the provisions of this Statute;
  - g) to ensure that proper academic and training levels are retained and improved on, and to establish and supervise internal auditing schemes to ensure the quality of education;
  - h) to do anything which it may deem necessary to be done to achieve the objectives of the Institute and to execute the powers and the functions of the Institute which have not been previously vested in another governing body;
  - i) to enrol the Institution in associations, with international organisations which share the same aims and objectives.
  - j) To establish internal quality assurances policy and procedures.
  - k) To publish an annual report on all its activities in conjunction with the Don Bosco Foundation annual report.
39. The Chairman of the Board of Governors shall be the highest officer of the Institution and shall be responsible for ensuring that the Institution complies with this statute.
40. The Board shall also review the curricula and the syllabi submitted by the Institute and, where it deems it necessary, revert back with advice about any proposed amendments.

41. The Board of Governors shall ensure that the awards of the Institution are recognised both at a national and at an international level related to the standards of the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA).

#### **MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

42. The Management Board shall be chaired by the Head of Institute, and it shall be composed of the:

- a) Head of Institute;
- b) Director of Studies;
- c) Administration Manager;
- d) Internal Quality and Assurance Manager; and
- e) An independent non-executive member.

43. The independent non-executive member is to be appointed by the Board of Governors.

44. Members of the Management Committee compensation will be approved by the Board and can be both paid and non-paid (voluntary) vacancy.

#### **FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

45. Without prejudice to the functions and responsibilities of its members as set in the statute, the Management Committee shall operate under the direction of the Head of Institute and shall have the following functions:

- a) to ensure that the policies, strategy and decisions adopted by the Board of Governors are implemented;
- b) to ensure proper dialogue, communication, coordination and the effective and efficient functioning within the Institute;
- c) upon consultation with the Director of Studies, to develop and propose periodically to the Board of Governors the strategic development management plan of the Institution including programmes and courses to be provided by the Institute following consultation with interest stakeholders regarding the curriculum of such programmes of studies and courses;
- d) to set regulations with respect to the programmes of studies, training, research, documentation and examinations at the Institute and by regulations to establish the certificates for such candidates satisfying the prescribed conditions after following the required courses of studies and training;
- e) to establish the entry requirements to the programme of studies and courses of the Institution for the Board of Governors consideration;
- f) to propose to the Board of Governors, guidelines regarding the programme of studies and courses provided by the Institute, documentation and examinations.
- g) to establish such awards and distinctions for such candidates satisfying the applicable conditions on completion of the programmes and courses;
- h) to ensure that all necessary measures are applied, including disciplinary procedures and the auditing and quality assurance processes of all operations within the Institution;
- i) to advise to the Board of Governors on any matter related to the learning, teaching, or research conducted within the Institute or in partnership with other entities;
- j) to nominate examiners according to pre-established guidelines and procedures to the Board of Governors for its approval;

- k) to deal with all other matters pertaining to the training or research taking place within or by the Institution; and
- l) any other function may be assigned to the Management Committee by the Board of Governors.

#### **FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES OF HEAD OF INSTITUTE**

- 46. The Head of Institute, under the direction of the Board of Governors, shall be responsible for ensuring the execution of the policies and decisions of the governing bodies of the Institution.
- 47. The Head of Institute, under the direction of the Board of Governors, shall be responsible for the daily administration of the Institution, shall be the Chairman of the Management Committee and shall be vested with the legal representation of the Institution.
- 48. The Head of Institute can summon the Management Committee.
- 49. The Head of Institute shall exercise authority over the academic staff, examiners, learners, examination candidates, employees and whosoever is entrusted with rendering any service to the Institution, and they shall enforce discipline and the strict observance of this statute and of any guidelines and procedures published by the Institution.
- 50. The Head of Institute shall confer awards and distinctions of the Institution.
- 51. The Head of Institute shall ensure that, insofar as it depends on them, the governing bodies are regularly constituted and that their work is planned and coordinated, ensuring that they meet regularly as established by this statute and that the decisions of the governing bodies of the Institution are executed.
- 52. The Head of Institute shall provide the Board of Governors with regular reports on the performance and finances of the Institution, and he shall undertake any other function as directed by the Board of Governors.
- 53. The appointment and/or conferring the responsibility of appointment to the Head of Departments, of academic staff with formal and regular duties and shall be made in the grades determined by the Board of Governors, according to the qualifications and professional experience of the person being appointed. Posts may be advertised for appointments within specified grades.

#### **FUNCTION AND DUTIES OF DIRECTOR OF STUDIES**

- 54. The Director of Studies shall, under the direction of the Head of Institute, be responsible for the academic team and the academic content of the Institution, including the curriculum, the delivery of programmes and courses. To such end, the Director of Studies shall perform such functions and duties as may be requested by the Head of Institute according to the exigencies of the Institution. This position requires that the Director of Studies has a minimum qualification of MQF Level 7 with a minimum three years' experience in managerial position.

55. The Director of Studies together with the Head of Institute and as approved by the Board of Governors, shall employ or request the assistance, internally or otherwise, of other members to complete the tasks that the Director of Studies is assigned to based on economics of scale.
56. The Director of Studies shall, under the direction of the Head of Institute, have the following functions. To:
- a) oversee the education and training of the Institute;
  - b) define the teaching to be imparted, the studies, the research and the training at the Institute;
  - c) ensure the provision for the administration, dissemination and publication of the operations related to academia, training, and development of the Institute;
  - d) to assign the work needed for the activities mentioned in b and c of this article;
  - e) keep the Institution seal and also sign all awards to which it is applied;
  - f) sign the documents which certify the awards given by the Institution and keep a full record thereof;
  - g) ensure the proper safekeeping of the records of all examinations held by the Institution;
  - h) keep updated copies of the guidelines and procedures of the Institution;
  - i) set up Boards and teams that help in the executive of a fair academic experience where necessary;
  - j) be responsible for the development and evaluation of both existent and new curriculum.
  - k) consult with the academic team and other staff at the Institute in the creation of new curriculum and/or updating of existent ones.
  - l) co-ordinate assessment reviews, ensuring that the course being delivered is mirroring the established objectives and requirements.
  - m) develop relationships with outside entities, local industry and businesses which may provide apprenticeship/ work based learning.
  - n) use data gathered from student feedback to further improve the programmes being offered.
  - o) keep abreast with latest policies, training and relevant Professional Development.
  - p) keep records of the learning activities of each student; and
  - q) keep the statistics of the Institution.
57. The Director of Studies is responsible to apply for research and studies grants with other stakeholders. It is his duty to:
- a) assist in designing and implementing studies;
  - b) assist in data collection;
  - c) provides assistance in preparation of grants, manuscripts, and other reports;
  - d) may direct research assistants recruited on specific projects; and
  - e) may be required to perform independent field work and other specific duties and responsibilities tailored to meet research and project needs.
58. The Director of Studies, together with the Internal Quality Assurance Officer, will be responsible for the Academic Staff in terms of Professional Development, namely:
- a) the provision of adequate training for the Academic Staff.
  - b) identifying potential trainers and speakers on areas identified by either the Academic Staff itself and/or the Management.

- c) support the Academic Staff at classroom level including visits, professional discussions, and one-to-one meetings.
- d) provide the coaching and mentoring opportunity to the academic staff especially for NQT or NRTs.
- e) co-ordinate Induction sessions for the academic staff.
- f) co-ordinate Induction sessions for the students.
- g) monitoring the lecturers' and trainers' performance through student questionnaires and other means deemed fit by the management or the Board.

59. The Director of Studies shall perform such other duties as may be requested by the Head of Institute according to the exigencies of the Institution.

#### **FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES OF ADMINISTRATION MANAGER**

60. The Administration Manager shall assist the Head of Institute in the day to day functioning of the Institution, its employees, its daily organisation, and the Institute's finances.
61. The Administration Manager together with the Head of Institute and as approved by the Board of Governors, shall employ or request the assistance, internally or otherwise, of other members to complete the tasks that the Administration Manager is assigned to based on economics of scale.
62. The Administration Manager, under the direction of the Head of Institute shall be responsible for the administration and the day to day functioning of the Institute, its employees and all movable and immovable property.
63. The Administration Manager shall act as Registrar insofar:
- a) keep records of the education and training activities of each student; and
  - b) be responsible, after consultation with the Director of Studies, for suitable arrangements about teaching timetables.
64. The Administration Manager shall be responsible for finance insofar to manage and control all matters relating to financing of the Institute as stipulated in this Statute, including:
- a) be responsible for the collection of revenue and moneys due to the Institute;
  - b) carry out such internal auditing and control as is deemed necessary; and
  - c) in conjunction with the Head of Institute, countersign or authorise any financial documents and transactions, or commercial agreements, subject to policies and procedures set by the Board of Governors.
65. The Administration Manager shall perform such other duties as may be requested by the Head of Institute according to the exigencies of the Institution.

#### **INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OFFICER**

66. The Internal Quality Assurance Officer shall be responsible to ensure the optimum standards of the Institution and the quality assurance of the programme of studies. The Internal Quality Assurance Officer reports directly to the Head of Institute and the Board of Governors. The role and responsibilities of the Officer shall include:

- a) the implementation of the quality assurance policy of the Institution;
- b) the development and application of all procedures in the quality assurance process of the Institution;
- c) the review and revision of all policies and procedures in quality assurance according to the emerging needs of the Institution;
- d) the achievement of the highest standards of quality assurance; and
- e) the responsibility for creating audit systems to review various processes in all programmes of studies to ensure quality assurance standards are being followed.

## **BOARDS AND COMMITTEES**

### **COMMON PROVISIONS FOR ALL BOARDS & COMMITTEES OF GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT**

67. Decisions at any meeting of any governing body of the Institution shall be determined, if required, by a majority of the votes of the members present and voting, and if votes are divided equally, the presiding member shall exercise a casting vote.
68. All Boards in the Institution are to keep minutes of all meetings held and a copy of these minutes are to be kept in the office of the Head of Institute.

### **BOARDS AND COMMITTEES**

69. The St Francis de Sales Institute values ensure a fair and transparent experience to all students. In this view and with guidance from the Board of Governors, this policy is establishing Boards and Committees for fulfilment of the Institute's aims and duties.
70. These shall include:
  - a) The Board of Assessments;
  - b) The Disciplinary Board;
  - c) The Board of Ethics in Research;
  - d) The Board of Appeal; and
  - e) The Selection Committee.
71. The members of the Boards and Committees are persons who have the experience required for the execution of their respective objectives.
72. These members can be both lay or consecrated individuals and the appointment is for a period of three years and the members shall be eligible for re-appointment after their appointment lapses.
73. In the case of any vacancy on any of Boards or Committees, the Board of Governors may appoint a suitable person to take up the vacant post and that person will continue to occupy that post up to the termination of the term of office of the person being substituted.
74. Boards and Committees members shall make known any personal relationships, or other potential conflicts of interest that they may have with any candidates whom they are assessing. Any doubts in this regard should be referred to the Internal Quality Assurance Manager.
75. The Boards or Committees will be made of odd numbers so that in case that it proves necessary that a vote is taken, the decision is taken in accordance with a simple majority vote and if on any such question the votes are equally divided the member presiding shall have and exercise a casting vote.
76. All discussions and decisions reached by the Boards and Committees are to be kept confidential.

77. All Boards are to keep minutes of all meetings held and a copy of these minutes are to be kept in the Head of Institute.

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE BOARD OF ASSESSMENT

78. The Board of Assessment is set up to ensure that the grades given to students are fair, transparent and consistent in any given assessment or in any given unit.
79. The functions of the Board shall include:
- a) to ensure that the papers or assignments set by the lecturers are appropriate for the programme of training or study.
  - b) to provide for any special Access Arrangement for Assessment (AAA) that help to reduce the impact effect of a disability or a difficulty in the student's learning performance.
  - c) to make sure that all deadlines for the submission projects, essays, assignments, or other written work were respected at all times and reasons for extensions are justified.
  - d) the responsibility for the re-assessment of students who have failed the assessment. They are to ensure that students are given an appropriate assessment which reflects the knowledge gained during their programme of training or study and that they have appropriate access to be assisted in the preparing themselves for their-assessment.
  - e) to investigate any cases of alleged injustice in the assessment of students, and to ensure that such cases are dealt with fairly.
  - f) to provide for any special Access Arrangement for Assessment (AAA) that helps to reduce the impact effect of a disability or a difficulty in the student's learning performance.
80. The Boards of Assessments will be chaired by the Director of Studies and will be made up of the subject lecturers, internal verifiers, and external assessors.
81. Internal verifiers and external assessors are independent and appointed by the Board of Governors. They have an important role to contribute to the quality assurance procedures that are adopted by the Institute.
82. The Internal and External verifiers are responsible to ensure that all assessments benefit from verification endorsements and standardisation.
83. The internal verifier role is to check that the assignment reflects the learning outcomes that are set for the programme of training or study and that a fair opportunity is being given for the students to demonstrate their ability to master the learning outcomes of the unit or module that is being assessed.
84. The internal verifier is to go through all assessments and ensure equity in the assessment process.
85. The external assessor is to ensure that an appropriate representative sample of the student's assessment is reviewed.
86. Each internal verifier or external assessor is responsible to provide feedback in writing on the content and form of assignments and assessments. This will be done in consultation with the lecturer/s who set the assignment, assessment, or examination.
87. The internal verifier and external assessor have the right to check any assessment material relating to the units concerned in the programme of training and studies, such as any scripts, notes, course work, projects, reports, or any other material relating to the assessment on which the student is being assessed.
88. The external assessor is to adjudicate any disagreements noted between the lecturer correcting the assessment and the Internal verifier.
89. The internal verifier and the external assessor will sit on the Board of Assessment to clarify any issues that may have arisen.
90. The internal verifier and external assessor can make their recommendations directly to the Board of Assessments with regards to any amendments that may be required in future with respect to the process of assessment.

91. The internal verifier and the external assessor can write directly to the Internal Quality Assurance Manager regarding any concerns or apprehensions which they may encounter in the course of their work or because of irregular practices that they may have noted especially, if in their view, this goes against appropriate academic standards and quality.
92. The Board of Assessments is to make every effort to ensure that decisions are taken by consensus, taking into account any feedback provided by internal verifiers or external assessors or observations made by the office of the Internal Quality Assurance Manager.
93. The Director of Studies as Chair of the Board is to immediately report to the Internal Quality Assurance Manager any irregularities in the process of assessment that come to his or her knowledge.
94. Members of the Board may be requested to appear before an Appeals' Board or summoned by the Internal Quality Assurance Manager and in only such cases they can divulge information. When summoned before the Internal Quality Assurance Manager or a Board of Appeal, members of the Assessment Board are obliged to divulge all information and state the full truth.

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE DISCIPLINARY BOARD

95. The Institute's Disciplinary Board shall be chaired by a person selected by the Board of Governors, the Director of Studies, the Lecturer where the student is registered and two other members.
96. The function of Board shall include:
  - a) the review of misconduct claims as presented in the section "Good Behaviour and Disciplinary Procedures"; and
  - b) Determining any disciplinary sanctions as the case may require.
97. In instances where the case before the Disciplinary Board includes any of the members of the Board, that person will not partake in the decision.
98. The Chair of the Board is to immediately report to the Internal Quality Assurance Manager any acknowledge irregularities in the process of discipline.

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE BOARD OF ETHICS IN RESEARCH

99. The Board of Ethics in Research shall be chaired by the Director of Studies and four other members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors. A secretary to the Board is also appointed by the Board of Governors.
100. Members of the Board are selected with a background of the different disciplines and at least with a possession of a Masters' degree and experience in conducting research.
101. When a member of the Boards is presenting their own request for a review of a research proposal, they will not partake in the decision to be taken by the respective Boards.
102. The Board of Ethics in Research has to meet regularly to consider all requests for review of research proposals. The Board is to seek to provide the necessary feedback to the research proponent as soon as possible.
103. The Board of Ethics in Research can appoint experts to give their views on research proposals that pertains to a specific nature of research study. These experts can also be invited to attend and participate in meetings of the Board in their capacity as advisors to the Board.
104. The Board of Ethics in Research is responsible:
  - a) to promote good research practices in the field of training and education.
  - b) to advise the Head of Institute and the Board of Governors on any ethical issues regarding research and studies taking place in the Institute.
  - c) to recommend to the Head of Institute any review that may be required to the policies and procedures adopted by the St Francis de Sales Institute.
  - d) to review any research proposals and give any feedback that may be required on ethical considerations in a research proposal.

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE BOARD OF APPEAL

105. The Board of Appeal shall be chaired by the Chairman of the Board of Governors and four other members. The Chairperson of the Board of Governors may choose another Board member as a representative.
106. Members of the Board are selected with a background of the different disciplines and expertise.
107. The Board of Appeal is responsible to decide on matters as escalated to the Board relating to:
- a) Admission rejections as described in the section “Admissions Complaint Procedure”;
  - b) Rejections of Prior Certified Learning Assessments application as described in the section “Recognition of Prior Certified Learning”;
  - c) Academic dishonesty disqualification as described in the section “Disciplinary Action For Examinations And Assessments Incidents”;
  - d) Unfair grading of assessments and examinations as dictated in the sections “Requests for a Revision of Paper”; and
  - e) Ethics review for research practices as described in the sections “Ethical Consideration is Research Practices”.
108. The Appeals Board can appoint other members of staff to assist in the consideration of the case. The Appeals’ decision is to be taken within ten working days from the date of receipt of the appeal filed by the student.
109. The student has the right to be accompanied and assisted by a person of trust. It is the student’s responsibility to prove their innocence or that the disciplinary actions imposed are too punitive for the offence committed.
110. The Appeals’ Board is to immediately meet and decide the case within ten working days of the complaint’s receipt.
111. In considering any appeal of admission by an applicant, the Board may request the assistance of other competent persons.

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SELECTION COMMITTEE

112. Selection Committees shall be chaired by the Head of Institute and four other members in which one person is appointed by the Board of Governors. Two other members shall be inclusive of the employing parties and an independent party.
113. Members of the Selection Committee must preferably have sufficient knowledge, experience and understanding of the vacant position and the skills required to perform the role.
114. Members of the Selection Committee of Lecturers are to ensure that:
- a) The selection process is given high priority in order to conclude the process in an efficient and timely resolution.
  - b) The selection process is based on merit and is consistent with the principles and ethics of the Institute.
  - c) All personal information is protected and only used for the primary purpose of assessing the suitability of the candidate for the position.
  - d) All selection material containing personal information is returned to the chair of the Selection Committee at the end of the selection process.
115. The Selection Committee will meet to engage in a short-listing exercise to ensure that all applicants fulfil the eligibility criteria and decide which applicants will be interviewed. In the first meeting, the Selection Committee will also establish a set of interview questions that will assess the key selection criteria.
116. The Chairman of the Selection Committee will coordinate the setting of the date and time for the interviews to be held. Each candidate will be asked the same questions that were prepared

- by the Selection Committee. During the interview, the Selection Committee will verify the authenticity of any required qualifications. At the end of the interview process, evaluate the applicants and rank them applying consistent criteria.
117. The decision of the Selection Committee should ideally be unanimous. Where there is disagreement, the decision will be reached by majority vote.
  118. Reference checks are an integral part of the selection process and must be conducted for any preferred candidates. Reference checks can be conducted at any time during the recruitment process and can be written or verbal.
  119. Reference checks are to be made by a member of the Selection Committee who will contact the nominated referees and ask each referee the same core set of questions to provide a consistent basis for comparison.
  120. Only referees who have been nominated by the candidate may be contacted. Where the Selection Committee wishes to consult other persons, the applicant must be informed who they are and provide consent before that person/s is contacted.
  121. At the end of the recruitment process, the Selection Committee members must ensure that:
    - a) copies of all applications are either returned to the Administration Manager and duplicates are securely destroyed.
    - b) all hard-copy interview forms, notes and referee reports are provided to the Administration Manager.
    - c) Once an applicant is selected as an employee, the Administration Manager will maintain a recruitment file for each recruitment activity and will ensure that:
      - i. all records relating to the successful candidate are retained for two years;
      - ii. all records relating to the unsuccessful candidates are securely destroyed after six months; and
      - iii. information relating to the recruitment activity should not be included in any personnel files.

#### **Learner's Involvement External Stakeholders**

122. The Institute will encourage and facilitate the participation and active involvement of learners and external stakeholders in the quality assurance. External stakeholders such as employers, experts or academics in the field of study, representatives from interested sectors, and leaders within the community may be invited to contribute in the review and updating of courses and programmes. The purpose of this consultation will be to note developments in the field of study, new literature and research related to the topic under review, and changes in practices which may be taken place in the field of work or practice. The voice of the learners is also given its due weight and consideration in reviews. Representatives of the learners are consulted, and recommendations are integral to the evaluative process. The evaluation of learners during and at the end of the course will also be elicited and given due consideration.

## **FINANCING AND CONTROL OF THE INSTITUTE FINANCES**

123. The Institute shall during each financial year ensure the preparation and adoption of a budget of its revenue and expenditure for the following year.
124. The Institute shall ensure the proper keeping of accounts and other records concerning its operations and transactions and shall ensure that a relative statement of accounts is prepared for each financial year.

125. The Institute accounts shall be reviewed by an auditor appointed by the Board of Governors from time to time.
126. The Institute shall, not later than six months after the termination of each financial year ensure that a copy of its audited statement of accounts, together with a report of its activities during that year, is sent to the Foundation after approval by the Board of Governors, together with a copy of the report made by the auditor or auditors about that statement.

## **LEARNERS' WELLBEING AND LEARNING RESOURCES**

127. Learning resources and support services for the learners are crucial in achieving an accessible and inclusive learning environment. The Institute shall endeavour to provide its learners with all resources they need for learning and achieving learning outcomes as established in their course.
128. The Institute is committed to provide:
  - a) comfortable learning spaces which are equipped with all necessary learning aids.
  - b) accessibility for all Learners.
  - c) access to the following reading resources for its students.

A library is also available for staff and learners in our educational premises in Sliema and free internet connection is provided on our educational premises. All learners shall be informed about resources that are at their disposal by lecturers and in the course handbooks.

129. The Institute upholds the policy on 'Data Protection' and 'Integrity in Ministry - Ensuring the Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People in Salesian Settings' of the Salesians of Don Bosco. These policies are set to provide for the protection and wellbeing of the learning community within our Institute.
130. The Director of Studies is responsible to ensure the wellbeing and safeguarding of the learners. He facilitates student support services, including any additional support to learning support that may be required, career guidance, additional opportunities for learners and their holistic development. Furthermore, the Director of Studies is also responsible for updating learners about any information related to the Institute, the learning resources and support services.

## **DESIGNING PROGRAMMES OF TRAINING AND STUDIES**

128. The planning and developing of programmes of training and studies fall under the responsibility of the Director of Studies.
129. All programmes at the Institute are recognised to the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) since all programmes of training and studies are accredited by the MFHEA. The workload for each programme of training and studies is in ECTS or ECVET.

130. The programmes are learning outcomes based and each programme of training and studies description includes specific and defined knowledge, skills, and competences that the course participant would gain after the successful completion of the programme. The process of learning will be both tutor-learner as well as peer-learning interaction in accordance with the course level and content. When designing courses, student progression from one level to the other is highly considered to ensure a smooth progression in the learner's achievement in their studies.
131. Each programme of training or study will define the target audience, eligibility for admission and the requirements for entry to each programme of training or study will be published on the Institute's website.
132. The Director of Studies will be responsible to initiate the procedures for the accreditation and approval of any of the programmes of training or studies.
133. The Director of Studies, under the direction of the Head of Institute, may appoint a team of experts who will devise the framework for any new programmes of training and studies which will be undertaken by the Institute. The team of experts will provide the Director of Studies with the proposal and necessary information which is required by the Malta Further & Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) for the accreditation of a programme of training and studies in line with the accreditation requirements of such programmes of training or study. The involvement of students will be part of the process undertaken when designing and reviewing courses by the Institute. In designing courses, the Institute is committed to involve external stakeholders from different sector to ensure that the courses are relevant to the practices of the world of work and the community.
134. The Director of Studies may also opt to consider a peer review of the application for accreditation for a new programme of training and studies. The peer review is aimed at improving the standards of academic achievement that will be required for a new course to be delivered by the St Francis de Sales Institute.
135. The Institute may also opt to consider entering into partnership with other academic institutes, professional bodies or reputable institutions in providing programmes of studies and training. Before entering into such agreements, the Director of Studies shall review the proposed programme of training or studies. Such partnership programmes must be accredited by the necessary relevant authorities as the case may be.
136. The Institute may have accredited programmes of training and study held for a particular organisation without a public call for registration.
137. The application for the accreditation of programmes of training and studies will be reviewed and approved by the Head of Institute prior to being presented to the Board of Governors and submitted to the MFHEA.
138. To ensure clear and transparent information to the public, the Institute is committed to keep its sources of information updated and include all the information required for the public to understand what the Institute is offering in fulfilling its mission and objectives. This information will be sufficient for prospective learners to make an informed choice about the

commitment they are taking and what the Institute is offering in its courses and research. For this reason, The Institute will make all the available information of courses including:

- a) The learning outcomes and admission criteria for all its courses.
- b) The number of ECTS/ECVET credits for each course, the MQF/EQF level and the award to be received at the successful completion of the course.
- c) The teaching and learning resources, and assessment procedures to be employed.
- d) The minimum requirements of qualifications and competences for teaching staff;
- e) they indicate the person/s responsible for: course design and content development; technical and media support; teaching courses and interacting and supporting learners;
- f) Any further learning or study progression that courses may lead to in the future.
- g) Provide any information and guidance that the learner may require to understand how such courses can assist them in employment or career opportunities if they successfully complete the course and attain the qualification.

To ensure good accessibility of information to the public, the St. Francis de Sales Institute will publish information to the public on its website. The Institute will abide with communication 09/2021 published by MFHEA.

## **MONITORING OF COURSES**

139. All courses undergo a periodic review to ensure the validity, significance, and relevance of the course in light of developments on the subject matter and its related practice, as well as the pedagogical approach applied in the teaching. This exercise of course appraisal allows the Institute to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and the method of assessment. The purpose to monitor regularly courses is to ensure that the learning outcomes are being reached, to update any content of the courses and to respond to the changes happening in the field especially in relation to the changing needs of learners and the community.
140. The Director of Studies is responsible to ensure that the reviews are conducted with the involvement of the lecturing staff, learners, external stakeholders, and alumni of the courses. The review should also take in consideration the world of work through requesting feedback from the relative employment sector and the community. These course reviews will take place every three years and its report must be provided to the Head of Institute. However, at the end of the first cycle of a new course, a review takes place to ensure that the design of this new courses meets all the requirements. This review enhances the quality assurance of the Institute and safeguard that the courses remain of optimum quality, good academic value and applicable to the society's needs.

## STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING AND TEACHING

141. The St Francis de Sales puts the learner at the centre of all learning and teaching. The relationship between the learner and the lecturer are central and vital in learning processes adopted by the Institute. The Institute recognises that the learner is always in the centre of the cycle of course development including the planning, the delivery, the evaluation and improvements. The Institute aims to attend to the diversity of learners and their needs as its main focus as stated in our values. We aim to respect and attend to the diversity of learners and their individual needs by offering them flexible learning paths and use diverse pedagogies as part of its education system.
142. The Institute encourages learners to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of learners also reflects this approach. The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching shall:
- a. Promote the Salesian Preventive Approach based on respect, reason and loving-kindness;
  - b. encourage a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and mentoring;
  - c. provide the learners with adequate provision and care from all staff;
  - d. promote mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship.

### Student Services Officer

143. The Institute will appoint a Student Services Officer to support and accompany students during their journey of studies from the enrolment to the graduation. support the educational journey of the student when issues/concerns crop up including but not limited to:
- a) issues with teaching and learning
  - b) issues with lecturers or trainers.
  - c) issues with assessment modes and feedback.
  - d) communication difficulties with either the lecturing staff and/or the Institute.
  - e) use of technology (e.g. platform and/or portal, e-mails etc)
  - f) managing complaints (from their intake to the action plan and solution)
  - g) ongoing feedback from students.

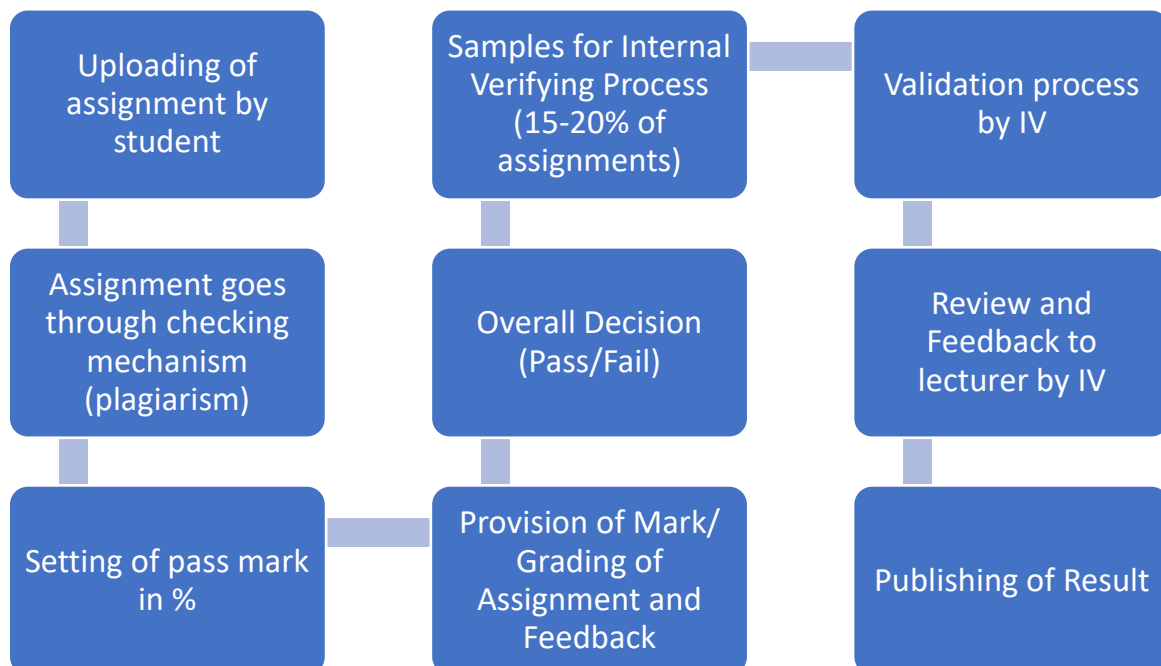
The Student Service Officer should assist the academic staff to accompany students in different ways such as holding feedback sessions, tutorials, progress meetings. The Student Services Officer should also support students who at one point or another of their studies might be experiencing personal difficulties such as illnesses, bereavement, relationship issues, financial difficulties and so on. The Student Services Officer will report to the Director of Studies.

## The Role of the Internal Verifier

144. The role of the Internal Verifier is aimed at supporting lecturing staff in the assessment area by:
- a) ensuring that lecturers understand the basic principles underpinning the National Standards in relation to assessment.
  - b) ensuring the validity, reliability, practicality, and equity procedures in student assessments.
  - c) checking assessment approaches whilst ensuring accuracy and consistency throughout the process.
  - d) ensuring that marking is fair and in line with the established criteria on the marking scheme.
  - e) ensuring that meaningful feedback is provided to the student using a constructive approach, highlighting both the strengths and areas for improvement.
  - f) ensuring that valid assessments are used for each qualification.
  - g) ensuring that lecturers are consistent in their judgement for the same qualification for all students.
  - h) ensuring consistency of assessment among lecturers at the Institute.
  - i) providing constructive feedback to the lecturing staff as deemed appropriate.

The Internal Verifier will be qualified in accordance with the guidance issued by the MFHEA.

The following diagram shows the standard operating procedures in reference to the role and responsibilities of the Internal Verifier:



## The Role of the Lecturer/Trainer

145. The lecturer/trainer is responsible for:

- a) the design, development, and delivery of material for a given course.
- b) the course material to be used.
- c) other resources needed for the delivery of the course.
- d) lesson and session planning.
- e) engagement with students in terms of instilling passion and motivation to learning.
- f) using a variety of teaching methods to respond to students' diversity.
- g) using various modes of assessment to ensure a fair and reliable assessment of students' progress.
- h) making use of both summative and formative modes of assessment.
- i) monitoring and recording students' progress whilst keeping the Institute updated with such information.
- j) supporting students in groups and/or individually as deemed necessary from time to time.
- k) grading material in such a way that all students are catered for.
- l) collaborating with fellow academic staff in the possibility to join forces and engage in co-teaching.
- m) collaborating with other staff in maximising learning opportunities for the students, both locally and abroad (e.g. provision of fieldwork, project based learning)
- n) leading on and contributing to the production of research outputs and research outcomes.
- o) liaising with Quality Assurance Officer to give and receive feedback on a regular period.
- p) providing recommendation to the Quality Assurance Manager on course planning, delivery and evaluation.
- q) evaluating and grading students' work/assignments
- r) Providing quality feedback to the students.
- s) providing recommendations on Assessment Criteria in Marking Schemes.
- t) participates in Professional Development Sessions organised by the Institute and/or other institutions.
- u) answering queries by the students.
- v) providing adequate guidance to students on the particular mode of assessment (e.g. writing a good assignment, tips on good presentation).
- w) ensuring that the marking of assessment (e.g. assignment) is aligned with the assessment criteria.
- x) ensuring the reliability and validity of an assignment including authenticity (without plagiarism) of an assignment.
- y) consulting with Management and/or QA when in doubt over a particular assignment.

The lecturer and/or trainer will be qualified in accordance with the guidance issued by the MFHEA.

## RECORDS MAINTENANCE

146. The Institute's records are part of its corporate assets. They are important sources of administrative, evidential and historical information, and are vital to the Institute in its current and future operations. Records also provide part of the corporate memory of the Institute and give awareness and understanding of its history and procedures. For this reason, the student's records will be kept for 40 years, and the archives of Institute will be kept for future prosperity respecting the data protection of persons.
147. The St Francis de Sales Institute seeks to manage its records in an effective and efficient manner, and is obliged to create, maintain, preserve, and dispose of records in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation to protect the privacy of individuals. These procedures provide for the management of the Institute's records' management system and outline the responsibilities to create, maintain and dispose of the students' records. These procedures also outline the requirement of preserving records in the Institute's archives.
148. Information that will be kept shall include:
- a) Student's records including admission, student details, and proof of assessment;
  - b) Information related to the profiling of the student population including details on the prevalence of vulnerable groups and other relevant statistical data.
  - c) The participation rates in courses, retention rates and success rates.
  - d) Evaluation and feedback of the students and staff in respect to their course programmes.
149. Records Management System is the organisation of all information, whether it is held on paper or electronically. Records Management aims to govern the creation, distribution, filing, retention, storage, and disposal of records. Statistical data requested by relevant Public Authorities will also be kept as sources of information in the field of further education and other fields.

## **STUDENTS' REGISTRATION AND ADMISSION**

### **REGISTRATION**

150. The Students' registration, admission and record management fall under the responsibility of the Administration Manager.
151. The Administration Manager, in the management of its records abides by the legislation as prescribed in the General Data Protection Act and its subsidiary legislation.
152. Prospective students are to fill in the registration form to apply for a training or studies programme that is offered on the website of the Institute and ensure that all required documents are submitted by the appropriate deadlines. Incomplete application may cause delays in processing and may lead to the application being cancelled.
153. The Administration Manager will review all registrations in accordance to the established criteria for admission into the course. Students will be informed whether they have been accepted or not into a programme of training or studies.
154. Applicants are notified of the receipt of their application and status by email. The email address must be provided in the application. If an email address is not provided, the applicant will not be notified of receipt of application.
155. If a student is offered a place to follow a programme of training or studies, the Administration Manager will also send a student's agreement which lays down the general conditions of acceptance. The student has to return the signed student's agreement within the stipulated period as established by the Institute.
156. Students are normally allowed to only register for one ongoing programme of training or studies at one time. If an applicant wishes to register for a different programme of training or studies, the preference for which programme of training or studies the student wishes to follow must be indicated.
157. If an applicant has begun the registration process but wishes to withdraw, the Administration Manager must be immediately notified in writing.
158. A learner who has withdrawn from a programme of training or studies but wishes to be reinstated in subsequent programmes the registration form must be submitted to the Administration Manager again.
159. Learners who are dismissed from the Institute are not allowed to re-apply for a programme of training or studies.

### **ADMISSION AND ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS**

160. Registration to a specified programme of training or study may be publicly announced by the Institute prior to the beginning of a programme of training and study.

161. Each programme of training or study will include a clear description of the value of credits that are required to obtain the qualification and at what level. Each unit will have its learning outcomes, reading list, and mode of assessment.
162. To be eligible for admission to a programme of training or study at the St Francis de Sales Institute, a student must satisfy the entry requirements as specified in the course description.
163. The St Francis de Sales Institute may consider other local or foreign certifications and/or experience as sufficient for admission into particular programmes of training or study in conformity with the recognition of such qualifications as established by the Malta Qualification Information Centre (MQRIC). It is the responsibility of the learner to provide the Institute with all the details required to ascertain that such certification or experience are of benefit in view of the admission to that particular programme of training or study.
164. Mature applicants who do not satisfy the entry criteria into that particular programme of training or study may also be considered as eligible for admission. The applicant has to provide satisfactory evidence of their ability to pursue such a programme of training or study for which they are applying. The Institute reserves the right to ask such applicants to sit for assessment or to follow qualifier routes before entry into a programme of training and study.
165. Upon admission into a programme of training or study, students are automatically obliged to comply with all policies and procedures, rules and regulations that are published by the St Francis de Sales Institute.
166. Every learner upon admission will be provided with an induction to the Institute, the course and the resources at the learner's disposal.

#### **RECOGNITION OF PRIOR CERTIFIED LEARNING**

167. The St Francis de Sales Institute acknowledges the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The RPL is where credit is awarded for learning which has already been formally assessed and certified as part of a completed or partly completed course or qualification either with the Institute or other Institutes. In such cases, the Institute will follow guidelines of the Malta Further and Higher Educational Authority and apply for such recognition.

#### **ADMISSIONS COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

168. The St Francis de Sales Institute is committed to ensure a fair and transparent admission process and to safeguard equity between candidates. The Institute believes that no applicant should be disadvantaged in the way that the admission procedures have been followed. In view of this, the Institute accepts a formal complaint filed by the applicant that is to be made to the Institute.
169. If a student feels aggrieved for not being accepted into a programme of training or studies, the student can write directly to the Director of Studies requesting the reasons for refusal and/or making the case for reconsideration of their application. The complaint must be submitted within five working days of the official refusal of entry. The complaint is to be

made in a written letter or email addressed to the Director of Studies who shall give a formal written reply within ten working days from the receipt of the complaint.

170. If the applicant is still not satisfied with the reply given by the Director of Studies, the applicant may officially submit his or her grievances in relation to the refusal of admission into the programme of training and studies.

171. The complaint is to be addressed to the Board of Appeal. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide the Board with all the necessary details and evidence to substantiate the complaint and proof eligibility of admission. The complaint should include all copies of previous correspondence with the Institute in relation to the admission; the reasons for his dissatisfaction of the reply given by the Institute; and any recommendations to resolve the concern at stake.

172. Upon reaching their decision, the Appeals Board are to immediately inform the Director of Studies and the complainant of their decisions and the reasons thereof.

#### **FRAUDULENT INFORMATION OR DOCUMENTATION USED FOR ENTRY TO A PROGRAMME OF TRAINING OR STUDY**

173. When considering all applications, the Institute reserves the right to check the information and qualifications submitted by the applicant with the relative institutions. If the Institute finds out that any applicant has provided it with any spurious qualification or false information with the intent to be admitted into a programme of training or studies, the application will be cancelled. The Institute may refuse any future application by the applicant who provided it with fraudulent information.

174. Any student who has been accepted into a programme of training or studies, and knowingly or otherwise, it is found out that made false statements or presented false evidence of any kind at the time of application, at registration, or at any other time after the enrolment are dismissed from the Institute. The St Francis de Sales Institute reserves the right to take any appropriate legal action against the student who provided it with false information and will not be held responsible for any liability that the student may suffer.

175. Any fraudulent information or documentation that is used to gain admission to a programme of training or study at the St Francis de Sales Institute will result in the immediate withdrawal of any offer in place even if the student has started the programme of training and study.

176. Fraudulent information includes the use of fraudulent documentation, or any untrue or misleading statement or one which omits pertinent facts on an application or enrolment form or made at interview or over the phone during the admission process.

177. The Administration Manager is to immediately exclude the student or applicant from the programme of training or study. The Administration Manager is to inform the Director of Studies of his or her decision and thereof inform the applicant/student in writing.

178. If the student has achieved any credits at the Institute, or any qualification that was awarded, is withdrawn by the Institute.
179. The applicant or student who is excluded upon fraudulent information or documentation on admission has no right to ask for any reimbursement of any fees paid or expenses incurred.
180. Following legal advice, the St Francis de Sales Institute receives every right to take any further legal action against the applicant or student as provided by national legislation. The Institute also reserves the right to inform any professional body, relevant authorities, or inquiry about the fraud that it encountered.

## **ATTENDANCE**

181. Students are expected to attend all lectures and other learning activities as specified in the description of the programme of training and studies. Students who fail to attend 80% of their programme of training and study will not be awarded the qualification at the end of their programme.
182. Attendance for each lesson shall be taken by the lecturer.
183. Attendance registers are kept for all programmes of training and study as a proof of the attendance and absences for the programme of training and study. Students have to make sure that they register their attendance for every part of the programme of training and studies as stipulated in the practice of the Institute's registration of attendance.
184. Course participants shall respect the time of commencement and ending of sessions as established by the Institute.
185. Lecturers shall not accept course participants in class when the latter turn up later than 10 minutes after the session would have started unless the reason behind being late is retained valid by the lecturer. It must be ensured that this is kept to a minimum.
186. If a student fails from a course/study unit due to any absence they may apply to take a whole course/study unit again during the year following the end of their course or when the course/study is offered again by the Institute. Students will be required to follow the whole module and an assessment needs to be undertaken.
187. Reapplying for the same course/study unit is space permitting, and provided permission from the Board of Assessment is obtained beforehand. Registration fees may be applicable. If permission is granted there shall be no grade penalty.
188. Attendance registers are to be kept by the Administration Manager who is responsible to hold such registers of attendance in a safe and secure place, kept up to date and immediately available upon the request for inspection at any time as requested by the Internal Quality Assurance Manager or an external verifier.

### **STUDIES EXTENSION AND BREAK-IN-STUDY**

189. The Institute recognises during the course of the studies a student may experience extenuating circumstances which impair their ability to complete the studies. In such instances the student may request an extension or a break-in-study.
190. The Institute will only extend the duration or allow a break-in-study to a student's where it is clear that the student will not complete the course within the expected time frame due to:
- a) Extenuating circumstances in line with this section;
  - b) The Institute has implemented a designated intervention strategy for students who are at risk of not meeting satisfactory progress for a specific reason; and
  - c) An approved leave of absence.

191. In such cases, the student must notify the Lecturer immediately by filling an extenuating circumstance form and submit appropriate documentary evidence to sustain the claim.
192. The Lecturer will consult with the Director of Studies before a decision is communicated in writing to the student.
193. The evidence has to show that the circumstances:

<b>Extenuating Circumstances</b>	<b>Example of Evidence</b>
Illness/injury/hospitalisation	A medical certificate signed by a registered doctor.
Illness of a dependant / close relative	A medical certificate signed by a registered doctor verifying the illness or other appropriate signed medical evidence.
Bereavement	A letter from the family doctor.
Victim of a crime	Police/crime report or signed statement from a professional counsellor/doctor.
Other serious circumstances	In these cases, the student should provide to the institute all available specific facts and documentation.

194. When a student is granted a break in study, this will not automatically mean that the Institute assumes responsibility that, in future, there will be the continuation of the current training and study programme that the student is following. Hence, it is important that students understand that when they take a break in their programme of training or study, if they are readmitted, their programme cannot be guaranteed to resume or to resume in the same format as if there was no break in their study or training.

#### **RESIGNATION FROM OR RETURN TO PROGRAMME OF TRAINING OR STUDY**

195. A student who wishes to resign before completion from a programme of training and study is to officially write to the Director of Studies.
196. Students may request any certification for which they are eligible for partial fulfilling the programme of training or study.
197. There shall be no refund of any fees or payments made if such withdrawal takes place before the end of the programme of training or study.
198. If a student wishes to return to his or her programme of training or study after resigning from the said course, he or she shall write to the Director of Studies to seek confirmation whether he or she can be readmitted into the programme of training and study.
199. The student must also satisfy any conditions laid down by the Institute that may be required before re-entering the programme of training or study. These conditions may

include repeating certain programme units, payment of fees, sitting again for assessments, etc. The Director of Studies will give in writing the conditions of return to the student before being re-admitted into a programme of training or study.

## **COURSE ASSESSMENTS**

### **GENERAL REGULATIONS**

200. The Institute is committed to providing high quality teaching, learning and assessment to enable all course participants to achieve their full potential. This will be achieved through; high quality teaching and learning opportunities, rigorous assessment and feedback and the sharing of good practice. All assessments are consistent, fairly applied to all learners and carried out in accordance with these procedures.
201. These procedures apply for all teaching and lecturing staff as well as students who are following a programme of training or study at the St Francis de Sales Institute. These procedures will be published on the website of the Institute and apply to all programmes of training and studies that are delivered by the Institute unless otherwise stated.
202. All assignments shall keep to the learning outcomes as prescribed in the programme of training or study of that course. No additional learning outcomes can be assessed during a programme of training or studies which are not included in the course description. Learners will be given feedback on the learning process.
203. The Director of Studies through the Board of Assessments is responsible for the assessment of all students and ensures that the assessors responsible for managing the assessment is familiar with assessment methods of the course programme. For every course, the method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are made available to the learners well in advance. Where possible and practical, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner.
204. The interpretation of these regulations is only given in writing by the Director of Studies. All staff members and students are to seek clarification if any queries arise from the regulations mentioned below.

### **ACCESS ARRANGEMENT FOR ASSESSMENT**

205. Students have different abilities and inabilities, and some might acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills during courses but are prevented from demonstrating their attainment due to an impairment, learning difficulty or other obstacles.
206. The Director of Studies and the lecturer must make sure that the students are always assisted when they need to understand learning outcomes from the curriculum during or after the course, especially if the student has an impairment or learning difficulties.
207. The Institute recognises the need for accessibility that the programme needs to provide for various students. This means that a student is not necessarily defined as a person with a disability to be eligible for AAA, but if there are learning tools or facilities that can assist a student to undergo a fair and equitable assessment then he or she may be eligible for such support.
208. Students with these conditions are listed below:

- Mobility impairment
- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia or dyspraxia
- Mental health problems
- Medical conditions such as M.E., epilepsy, diabetes
- Injury resulting from an accident
- A condition resulting from an acute illness
- Language barriers.
- Severe Social and Physiological Neglect

This list is not exhaustive, meaning that the St Francis de Sales Institute will consider students with other recognised impairments and conditions.

209. The following accessibility measures give the opportunity to students to express their acquired knowledge and skills through different techniques of assessment.

a) Venues for Assessment:

The assessment may be conducted outside the school premises in exceptional circumstances where, for example, the student is in hospital or homebound.

b) Time allowance:

i. Supervised rest breaks

ii. Extra time.

iii. Settling down period not exceeding 25% of the time allocated for assessment.

c) Project Work:

i. Extension of deadlines, within a reasonable timeframe, may be allowed as long as the deadline does not compromise the publication of results at the agreed time.

d) Reader: When a student has a severe impairment, he/she may request a reader to read instructions, questions and sentences as set in the examination/test paper without explanation, translation and clarification.

e) Scribe: In exceptional circumstances, the student who is unable to physically write can be assisted by a dedicated scribe.

f) For students with visual impairment:

i. Large prints of assessment papers

ii. The trainer to score the assessment in large print.

g) For students with dyslexia or dyspraxia:

i. The use of word processors may be allowed where appropriate.

h) For students with ADHD:

i. A prompter can be assigned to draw the student's attention back to the assessment task when the student loses focus.

210. To be eligible for an Access Arrangement for Assessment (AAA) the student must make a request through the lecturer. The request must be referred to the Director of Studies who will include it in the Board of Assessment agenda for a decision to be taken. Any supporting documentation (medical and psychological reports) that may help in deciding what are the best access arrangements should be submitted when requesting such arrangements.

211. Students, lecturers, and the parents/guardians of students need to be informed and made aware of access arrangements.

212. It should be noted that access arrangements are granted for certain units; it may not be granted for others.
213. Submitting a false claim when applying for access arrangements will be subject to disciplinary procedures as the St Francis de Sales Institute will consider the claim as an attempt for unfair advantage. This may involve cancelling assessment results which would have been conducted with access arrangements.
214. Following the endorsement of the Board of Assessment, the Director of Studies is responsible for finalising the assessment reports which are to be forwarded to the Administration Manager for official publication.
215. The Administration Manager is to keep a copy of all results and copies of the student's assessment for any possible verification process that may take place in the future.

## **ASSESSMENTS**

216. During the course offered by the Institute, students will be asked to submit a number of different formats of assignments which may include essays, portfolios, reflective journals, projects or other types of coursework to be completed either individually or in group.
217. The Director of Studies has the overall responsibility of issues pertaining to the management of the internal and external examinations that take place. They are to ensure that all Departments follow strict adherence to all the rules and regulations that govern the assessment or examination processes. They are also responsible for any regulations pertaining to partner or external awarding bodies which the Institute may be affiliated to.
218. The Director of Studies is also responsible that all students receive adequate notice of the details of assessment arrangements.
219. Before an assignment is submitted by a lecturer, the assignment is to be vetted by an internal verifier as appointed by the Board of Governors.
220. If a student happens to be absent when the assignment is issued, it is the students' responsibility to ensure that all information to fulfil the requirements to submit the assignment on time is gathered.
221. Deadlines that are set for assignments cannot be changed unless authorised by the Lecturer and if there is a valid and pertinent reason to do so.
222. All assignments are to be handed in on the date of submission as prescribed, if students are unable to attend the Institute on such date, they are to make sure to make the necessary arrangements to submit their assignment prior to the date of submission.
223. It is important that students shall make and retain a photocopy of their assignment before submitting their work to the lecturer. The Institute may request a student to submit a copy of their work.

224. Lecturers are to ensure they hold an appropriate record of all assignments received. Such records may be requested at any time by the Internal Quality Assurance Officer or the Board of Assessment for any review, investigation or quality audit that may take place.
225. Students who are absent on the date when the assignments are distributed back to the students are responsible to contact their lecturer at the earliest possibility to collect their assignment. It is only the student who can collect his or her work.

#### **CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MAY MITIGATE THE ASSESSMENT OR ASSIGNMENT**

226. The Institute understands that students may find themselves in particular situations that may require adaptation to these rules and regulations governing assignments and assessments. It is the Institute's policy to try to assist students in completing their studies but the Institute has to also assure a fair, transparent and equitable procedure.
227. If students feel that they cannot submit their assignment on the date of submission they are to officially write to the Lecturer requesting an extension. Students are to give the reasons why they are requesting the extension and when they intend to submit their work. Such a request to the Lecturer should preferably be submitted three days prior to the date of submission unless the reason occurs within the last three days prior to the date of submission. It is also the student's responsibility to present any evidence of the reason for requesting such an extension. The Lecturer will write a reply to the student about their request at the earliest possibility.

#### **GENERAL RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS**

228. Students are expected to strictly follow the following rules and regulations which apply for all examinations and assessments which are set as part of the quality assurance policy.
229. The terms 'assessment' and 'examinations' refer to all kinds of formal assessment that are set for the respective training programmes and studies.
230. It is the responsibility of every student that is sitting for an assessment or examination to find out the governing rules and regulations pertaining to that assessment or examination as well as be familiar with these General Rules.
231. Students who require access arrangements or special concessions in accordance with the policy and procedures of the Institute are to ensure that such requests are submitted in the appropriate time prior to the date of assessment or examination. If the student fails to follow the established procedures, he or she is not entitled to any access arrangements during the assessment or examination.
232. Students are to ensure that they follow instructions in respect to access arrangements and any misapplication will lead to disciplinary action as stipulated in any regulations governing assessments and examinations.
233. In case of a fixed-time assessment:

- a) students should always be punctual for the start of the examination or assessment. Preferably students should arrive at the place of assessment or examination at least fifteen minutes before the official starting time. Students who arrive more than fifteen minutes late from the official start of the examination will not be allowed to sit in that assessment or examination session.
- b) Assessment or Examination invigilators may give specific instructions before or during the sessions. Such instructions are to be followed by all students sitting for that assessment or examination session.
- c) Students should adhere to the Examination code of behaviour as presented hereunder.

234. Students shall always uphold academic integrity with citing works of others. Students are to be familiar with the procedures on plagiarism. Detailed procedures are found in this policy.

### **ASSESSMENT OR EXAMINATIONS CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

235. Students are not permitted to communicate or attempt to communicate with any other candidates during the assessment or examination session.

236. All answers returned on the student's examination or assessment document must be his or her work completed during the examination or assessment session.

237. Any form of plagiarism and copying are intolerable and such misconduct leads to automatic disqualification from the assessment or examination session. Students who are suspended from the assessment or examination session will receive no marks or grades for the part prior to being caught in such misconduct.

238. It is strictly forbidden to use any answer book, writing paper or graph paper other than that provided by the invigilator during the assessment or examination. Invigilators will only allow concessions if there is special provision for using material permitted by the examiners.

239. Mobile Phones and PDAs are to be switched off during examinations or assessments. Any disturbance occurring from such devices may lead to suspension from the examination or assessment.

240. All Electronic devices, such as electronic dictionaries, radios and personal audio equipment are not permitted in the assessment or examination room. If such equipment is required during the examination or assessment, instructions for the use of such devices will be written on the examination or assessment paper.

241. All material (including examination manuscripts, graph paper, information sheets, etc.) supplied during the examination session has to be returned to the invigilators at the end of the examination.

242. If required, rough paper will be provided by the Institute during examinations and assessment. Students are not allowed to bring with them any paper to write on during the examination or assessment.

243. If a student wants to leave the assessment or examination room, the student has to seek the invigilator's permission. Students are allowed to leave the examination room after the first half hour of the examination.
244. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that he or she hands in all the material for the assessment and examination of the Institute.
245. A student who feels sick during the assessment and examination session may request to postpone the assessment or examination. The student may also request to leave the room, with the invigilator's/lecturer's permission. However, no extra time for such absence will be allowed. The invigilator may also limit the movement of the student during the time of absence from the examination or assessment room.
246. When a candidate cannot complete the assessment or examination paper because he or she is taken seriously ill and decided to postpone the examination or assessment session, he/she should inform the invigilator so that the incomplete examination or assessment work can be handed in. It is advisable that the student presents a medical certificate to the Board of Assessments at the earliest possible time following that examination or assessment.
247. Students cannot return part of or the whole examination paper after they leave their examination room.
248. Students shall not directly and/or indirectly offer or seek to offer assistance to, or seek to obtain and/or accept assistance from, any other assessment/examination candidate. Such behaviour will disqualify the candidate from that assessment/examination and his/her script will not be corrected.
249. No food is allowed in the examination hall. Students are only allowed to have a bottle of water to drink.
250. Invigilators are responsible to regulate the behaviour of students during assessment or examinations. Invigilators are to report any form of unacceptable conduct during assessment or examinations, including cheating, copying and disturbing others, to the Director of Studies.
251. In case of serious uncontrolled behaviour or persistent defiance of regulations governing the assessment and examination, the invigilator is authorised to suspend the student from the examination rooms. Such cases will be immediately reported in writing to the Director of Studies within 24 hours of the incident.

#### **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND PLAGIARISM**

252. As a community of learning the St Francis de Sales Institute is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment that upholds the highest form of integrity. The integrity of the work conducted at the Institute is essential to ensure the success of its training, studies and research programmes.
253. To achieve the high level of academic integrity, the Institute gives a high profile to the quality of the students' work during their programme of training or studies. The Institute

believes that students should be able to create and produce their own work and attribute their learning to appropriate sources.

254. Therefore, academic dishonesty and plagiarism is highly denounced, unaccepted and reprimanded. These include, but not limited to:

- a) Plagiarism - defined as: *“to take and use another person's ideas and or manner of expressing them and to pass them off as one's own by failing to give appropriate acknowledgement, including the use of material from any source, staff, students or the Internet, published and unpublished works.”* Specifically it occurs when:
  - i. other people's work and/or ideas are paraphrased and presented without a reference;
  - ii. other people's work is copied either in whole or in part without making any reference;
  - iii. inventing statistical data and figures to support the student's work;
  - iv. working with another student on an assignment and presenting the same piece of work;
  - v. a student presents a piece of work that it is not his or her own effort but the work of another person;
  - vi. phrases and passages are used verbatim without quotation marks and/or without a reference to the author or a web page; or
  - vii. lecture notes are reproduced without due acknowledgement.
- b) Cheating - the use or attempt to use unauthorised materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
- c) Fabrication - the falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
- d) Obtaining or giving aid in an examination.
- e) Presenting another's work as one's own or doing work for another student.
- f) Having unauthorised prior knowledge of an examination.

255. The principles of integrity require that a student:

- a) Always acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, or words of others.
- b) Appropriately acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work.
- c) Make sure that all work submitted is produced with legitimately acceptable material or acquired permission.
- d) Obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with his or her interpretation or conclusions.
- e) Treat all other students in an ethical manner, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress.

256. If a student repeats the offence, the case is referred to the Board of Assessments through the Director of Studies who may suspend the student from his or her programme of studies.

## **DISCIPLINARY ACTION FOR EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS INCIDENTS**

257. When a lecturer, any other member of staff or a student becomes aware of a suspected case of plagiarism, they are to immediately report it to the Director of Studies which will in turn escalate the concern to the Board of Assessment.
258. The lecturer, other members of staff or the student are to be requested to put in writing the suspicions. If a student refuses or retracts to put in writing the suspicion, the Lecturer is to write a report which puts down the details which were reported by the student.
259. It is the lecturer's responsibility to prove that the student committed an act of academic dishonesty.
260. When a case regarding suspected exam cheating is reported to the Director of Studies, the student will be informed that the assessment will not be assessed while the case is being investigated.
261. The Board of Assessment will decide upon the disciplinary actions that are to be taken. Decisions are to be taken within eight working days from the receipt of the report by the Director of Studies. The Board of Assessment is to put their decision in writing and give it to the student concerned. This should include:
- a) a copy of the report;
  - b) a copy of the assessment with the indication of where there is a suspicion of cheating; and
  - c) a copy of the sources.
262. The learner will be allowed to present acceptable reasons for the shortcoming if plagiarism is evident in the work. Depending on the intensity of plagiarism, the lecturer will take the necessary disciplinary action and a record is kept in the student's file.
263. Learners who are proven to have plagiarised their work, can have the following disciplinary actions taken against them:
- a) Learners can be given a verbal warning if a very minor form of plagiarism takes place.
  - b) Learners can be given a written warning which a copy of such written warning is kept in the student's file.
  - c) An assignment is not marked as if it has not been submitted. In such cases, the student loses the right to obtain a higher grade and he or she is only entitled to obtain a pass mark on the presentation of their new assignment.
  - d) An assignment may be marked with a pass mark being the highest grade that can be obtained. In such a case, the learner cannot re-sit the assignment in order to improve his grade.
  - e) A suspension from the programme for a definite period of time.
  - f) Suspension from the programme of training or study that the learner is enrolled in.
264. Learners may appeal from the decision of the Board of Assessments to the Appeals Board. Learners are to file their appeal within five working days from the publication of the decision taken by the Director of Studies.

265. The decision taken by the Appeal's Board will be final.
266. The Appeals Board will put in writing the appeals' decision and give a copy to the Director of Studies.
267. If a sanction is imposed, the learners' participation in the exam may be declared invalid and will be awarded an F.
268. If the report on suspected exam cheating is rejected or if the sanction is a warning, and the student has participated in re-examination in the intervening period, they will retain the highest exam result.
269. If a sanction has been imposed against the learner for cheating, they can, when the sanction has been carried out, continue all study-related activities on equal terms with the other course participants at the Institute. Consequently, no special measures will be taken to mitigate the circumstances, and they will not be under enhanced supervision during future exams. Cases regarding exam cheating are confidential, and the Institute's staff is pledged to secrecy.
270. Possible sanctions and penalties range from a warning to permanent expulsion from the course and are imposed on the basis of an overall assessment of the gravity of the offence in the specific case.

#### **ASSESSMENT GRADING**

271. All lecturers are to ensure that deadlines for the submission projects, essays, assignments, or other written work are respected at all times. Extensions to deadlines can only be approved by the Board of Assessment upon a written request by a student stating the reasons for the delay in submitting his or her work for assessment.
272. Lecturers have to mark the assignment within three weeks from the prescribed submission date. Any feedback is also given to the students following the publication of results. Lecturers may comment on the achievements and the area of failures. They may also guide students on points of development especially for those students who failed their first attempt.
273. All late work shall not be accepted and will not be corrected. When failing to present their first assessment on the stipulated date, students are forfeiting the opportunity of their first attempt as well as the opportunity to receive the lecturer's feedback and the second chance to re-submit their assignment. Students can submit their work on the date stipulated for the re-submission of that assessment.
274. Learners who submit their assignment after the official date, their work will only be considered as part of their second attempt. Students can re-submit their work for the second attempt if they wish to do so or consider their work for the first attempt which was presented late as their work for the assessment of their assignment on the second attempt.
275. Late submission of an assignment presented on the second attempt will not be corrected and considered as failed.

276. In case of group assignment all students are to make their utmost to participate actively in the formulation of such an assignment as they are all equally responsible for the work to be submitted.
277. Learners have to submit a declaration stating how the work was conducted and by whom it was performed. This statement is to be signed by all students in the group. The lecturer may still question students on their participation in the work.
278. In case of a group assessment, irrespective of the collective effort in presenting the assignment, the students are assessed separately and may obtain different marks according to their involvement and level of work that has been submitted. Each student is responsible both for the individual work submitted and also for the collective work.
279. All assignments are graded according:

A	85 -100
B	70 – 84
C	51 – 69
D	46 – 50
E	40 – 45
F	(marks under 39) Fail

280. Learners who failed their first attempt at their assignment will be allowed to sit for a second attempt. Each student can request their lecturer for feedback regarding the first attempt.
281. Second attempts are the final attempts by students for that particular assignment. Learners who present their work on the second attempt may only receive a grade D, grade E or F for failure.
282. Internal verifiers can change grades as required.
283. The Lecturer is responsible to provide written feedback to the Board of Assessment for each assessment that is undertaken by the student whether in the form of assignments, projects, or formal assessments.
284. All grades, marks, and certification will be kept by the Administration Manager in their main office in Malta. Each programme of training and study will be awarded a qualification certificate and a supplement certificate. The supplement certificate will also contain details with the course description, MQF level, amount of learning credit, learning outcomes and status of the qualification gained, in line with MFHEA. The Institute will follow the guidance issued in communication 04/2021 by the MFHEA.

## REQUEST FOR A REVISION OF PAPER

285. Within five working days of the publication of an assessment result, a student may request to contest the grade obtained. The student will first meet with the lecturer through an appointment with the aim to try and discuss the matter and possibly resolve the issue satisfactorily. The student shall be entitled to see and discuss the marked script or assessed work.
286. If, following this meeting, the student wishes to lodge an official appeal, the student is to write to the Appeals Board within ten working days from the publication of the result.
287. The student will be informed in writing of the outcome of the appeals within fifteen working days of the filing of the appeal.
288. The appeal can be submitted on the basis of:
- a) Error/s in the assessment or grading of the work submitted by the student;
  - b) the assignment, assessment or examination have not been conducted fairly or in accordance with the set procedures of the Institute;
  - c) any administrative error, misdirection or irregularity;
  - d) the department was not aware of any issues which may have had a bearing on the student's results;
  - e) any form of discrimination that may have taken place in the conduct of the assessment.
289. For appeals to be considered they must be submitted within the timeframe established in this procedure.

## GOOD BEHAVIOUR & DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

290. The St Francis de Sales Institute seeks to respect the dignity of every person, promotes inclusion, and believes in the democratic rights of individuals. Unbecoming conduct and discrimination are prohibited, and such behaviour is considered as intolerable, unacceptable, and deplorable.
291. Students and staff are expected to learn and work in an environment in which they feel safe, comfortable, secure, and assured. The Institute believes that such an environment is conducive to ensure a learning atmosphere and a friendly environment. Students are to act:
- a) Safely, and with regard for the safety of others;
  - b) With civility, consideration and respect for others at the Institute; and
  - c) In accordance with all Institute's policies, rules and regulations and all applicable laws.
292. These regulations apply whether on the premises of the Institute or in any other activity related with the Institute outside the Institute's premises.
293. The purpose of this policy is to provide students and staff with a fair and prompt way to resolve a grievance that may have arisen through the use of both informal procedure and, if necessary, through the formal grievance process.
294. Students are expected to behave respectfully towards other students, the Institute's staff and any visitor and provides behaviour guidelines to students and their parents and/or guardians, with regards to its expectations:
- a) Students are expected to be polite, respectful and use appropriate language at all times with staff, other students and visitors;
  - b) Students are expected to cooperate and comply with staff requests and instructions at all times;
  - c) Students are expected to engage positively in all sessions, completing set work and requesting support appropriately;
  - d) Students are expected to achieve their potential and apply themselves across all aspects of the curriculum;
  - e) Students are expected to cooperate and comply with Health and Safety requirements;
  - f) Students are expected to cooperate and comply with the dress code;
  - g) Students are expected to cooperate and comply with Institute's policies and procedures on mobile phones, smoking, the use of the internet, dangerous objects, alcohol and drugs;
  - h) Students are expected to uphold the good reputation of St Francis de Sales;
  - i) Students are expected to behave appropriately and engage with staff and the active positively during unstructured times of the day, and educational visits;
  - j) Students are expected to refrain from any acts of intimidation, threats or acts of aggression towards other students, visitors, members of the public and staff;
  - k) Students are expected to cooperate and comply with the Equality Act 2015, which stipulates that all members of the St Francis de Sales Institute respect religious faith and beliefs, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender and immigration status.

295. Minor grievances which may result from misunderstandings or mix-ups may be dealt with through the informal procedure. Students should find ways of trying to resolve such minor issues within the remit and place where the incident occurred.
296. Students who participate in petty misconduct which are considered as minor offences will be dealt with by members of the staff who are directly in contact and responsible for the students.
297. All verbal warnings may be recorded in the student's file and a copy can be requested by the said student. If the behaviour of the student improves, the Director of Studies may remove the said warning after three months from the date of the incident. The student may also request for the report to be removed, if, after three months from the verbal warning, no further report of misbehaviour has been filed in the student's personal file.
298. Repeated instances of minor misbehaviour may be followed by an official warning by the Lecturer. The written warning shall make it clear that if the student's misbehaviour persists this shall lead to disciplinary action as outlined in these procedures. The student will also be informed of the consequences of his or her behaviour in line with these procedures.
299. If the student's behaviour is persistent and other minor breaches of misconduct are reported, the student can be called in by the Director of Studies to attend a disciplinary hearing following the latest reported incident. The Director of Studies will be assisted by two other members of staff which were not involved in the incidents reported.
300. If students are of minority age, the Institute reserves the right to inform parents and/or legal guardians. Parents and legal guardians may also attend any disciplinary hearings.
301. A student may be allowed to bring forward any evidence or witnesses to defend his case before the Disciplinary Board.
302. The Disciplinary Board may decide to hear any other person who may assist in giving the case a fair and transparent hearing.

#### **PROCEDURE FOR SERIOUS MISCONDUCT**

303. Cases of serious misconduct include, but not only:
- a) all kinds of bullying, harassment or discrimination against another person, including the use of discriminatory language;
  - b) Physical, written, or verbal abuse or intimidation against another person, including in communications via email, social media and the virtual learning environment all forms of victimisation.
  - c) Sexual harassment, violence or abuse;
  - d) Any act which brings or threatens to bring the Institute's reputation into disrepute;
  - e) Damage to or theft of property from the Institute or members of staff or students;
  - f) Reckless or malicious allegations against other students, staff or members of the public;

- g) Persistent failure to respond to or comply with formal disciplinary sanctions imposed under the disciplinary procedures or other Institute's policies and procedures;
- h) Criminal or other activities that have a bearing on the student's participation at the Institute or provide a risk to the well-being of other students, staff or other users of the Institute's services;
- i) Misuse of alcohol and drugs.

304. Such cases will be reported by the Institute's staff to the Director of Studies by writing a report within five days of the incident occurring. Students are also encouraged to speak out and report any serious incidents.

305. Students who wish to register a formal grievance complaint are to put their request in writing to the Director of Studies and include all details of the incident as well as any supporting evidence that may be available. The Director of Studies shall discuss the complaint with the Disciplinary Board who will appoint an Investigating Officer/s.

306. Any grievances that pertain to the Director of Studies and their immediate staff shall be addressed directly to the Head of Institute.

307. A student that acts with serious misconduct will be summoned by the Institute's Disciplinary Board under the chairmanship of the Director of Studies.

308. The Disciplinary Board is convened within five working days of the incident occurring and will be decided within ten working days from the first hearing. The student will receive in writing the decision reached by the Disciplinary Board.

309. The student will appear before the Board to give his or her version of events. He may also present any proof of evidence in his or her defence or request for persons to appear before the Disciplinary Board.

310. During the process of hearing, the student may be suspended from attending the Institute depending on the seriousness of the case concerned.

311. Suspensions and exclusion shall be handed in writing to the student following the authorisation of the Head of Institute.

312. Parents of students under a minority age will also be informed of the action being undertaken. They may also attend for any hearings undertaken by the Disciplinary Board.

313. Copies of all correspondence, communication and proof of evidence is always kept in the student's file.

314. The Disciplinary Board may decide that the case may be resolved by the Lecturer through the informal procedure mentioned above.

315. If a student wishes to appeal the Disciplinary Board's decision, he or she is to write to the Appeals Board within five working days from the date the decision from the Disciplinary Board was received. The student is to explain clearly the grounds for the appeal and present all the correspondence or proof of evidence.

316. The Appeal's Board may appoint any other person, also known as Investigator Officers, to assist in considering the appeal lodged by the student and will reach his or her decision of appeal within ten working days for receipt of the appeal by the student.
317. The Investigating Officers will commence their investigations within eight working days of the receipt of the grievance complaint and may communicate with the persons involved in the alleged grievance.
318. The Investigating Officers shall try to conclude their investigation within ten working days of the start of their investigation and present their report with recommendations to the Appeals Board. If the Investigating Officers require more time to conclude their work, they are to write to the Board to request an extension to their investigation and specify the reasons why they are requesting an additional definite period of investigation.
319. A formal meeting may be arranged by the Investigating Officer/s between all stakeholders. During the hearing, every effort is to be made to seek solutions and reconcile the grievances that may have taken place.
320. In cases where the Investigating Officer/s feels that the student's return to the Institute may further jeopardise the student's situation, the Investigating Officer/s is entitled to take the necessary remedial action to prevent the interests of the student concerned.
321. At every step of the formal grievance procedure, a student can choose to be accompanied by a person of their fiduciary. It is the student who is responsible to inform his or her fiduciary to attend at any stages of the process. The student shall inform the Investigating Officer/s that such a fiduciary person will be attending any of the meetings in the formal complaint procedure.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN RESEARCH PRACTICE**

322. The St Francis de Sales Institute upholds an extensive policy on the highest ethical standards in all research exercises that take place in the Institute. As a research and education institution, the Institute carries the responsibility toward society to ensure that all research conducted is of the highest ethical standards and to ensure that staff and students are seen as positive role models in society. The Institute is committed to protecting the rights, dignity, health, safety and privacy of all individuals, any research subjects, and the protection of the environment.
323. These procedures apply to all Institute's staff and students, full time, part time, visiting lecturers, who host, conduct, participate in or disseminate the results of research. The same applies for any research projects which the Institute performs in relation to other institutions or bodies.
324. All research proposals are subjected to an ethical review which will ensure compliance with current ethical guidelines and any other legislative framework which apply to research.
325. These procedures may be updated by the Institute from time to time and any changes will appear on the Institute's website. It is the responsibility of the Head of Research and Studies to ensure the high standards of implementation of these procedures.
326. To ensure a thorough review of all research undertaken at the Institute, the St Francis de Sales Institute has a Board of Ethics in Research which regulates the review of ethical considerations of all research conducted in the Institute.

### **RESEARCH REVIEW PROPOSALS**

327. All research proposals falling under the remit of the St Francis de Sales Institute are to be sent in by the researcher for their review and approval by the Board of Ethics in Research.
328. All researchers will be informed in writing on the decision and any recommendations taken by the Board of Ethics in Research. The Board of Ethics in research will try to provide feedback within three weeks from the date when the researcher submitted the research proposal to the Board. The Board of Ethics in research shall always provide reasons for any changes that they may request the researcher to undertake in his research project.
329. If, following the approval, the researcher will be undertaking major changes to the research project which affects the proposal and ethical consideration, then the researcher must inform the Board of Ethics in Research to ensure that the necessary clearance from the Board is obtained.
330. If the researcher disagrees with the decisions reached and/or the recommendations made by the Board of Ethics in Research, then the researcher may opt to present the disagreement with the Appeals' Board. The researcher is to present in writing the objections to the Appeals' Board within 10 working days of the receipt of the Board of Ethics in Research stating the reasons of disagreement and justify the claims why the stand is justifiable.

331. All researchers are to ensure that their research project proposal contains all the information required for the Board of Ethics in Research to consider their research proposal. It is the responsibility of the researcher to give clear information on the methodology and the ethical considerations that will be undertaken in the research study. The research proposal must contain all the provisions for the adequate protection of the rights and welfare of research participants and ensure that the Institute's regulations and any pertinent legislation are being strictly followed.
332. It is highly recommended that researchers when presenting their research project proposal should also include the following documents:
- a) a sample of the research method that is to be used by the researcher such as questionnaire, survey, case study, narrative analysis, etc.
  - b) a copy of the invitation to research participants informing them about the research project and their rights;
  - c) a copy of the consent form to be duly filled in by research participants;
  - d) in the case of research projects which will have minors as research participants, a copy of the consent form to be duly filled in by parents or legal guardians
  - e) any institutional approval that may be required if the research proponent requires access to research data or participants;
  - f) any other information or approvals that are required as the case may be.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCHER TOWARDS RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

333. Researchers must ensure that when they obtain informed consent this is acquired through the voluntary and free will of the participant without any duress. The consent form must state clearly who will be conducting the research, the subject of the research, how the research data will be collected and how it will be processed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.
334. Research participants should be informed that they have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time during the research exercise. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the research participant has understood all the rights in participating in the research project.
335. Researchers are to ensure that a copy of all consent forms are to be safely kept until the research is concluded and published.
336. When the research involves vulnerable young people or adults as well as children, the researcher is to make sure that additional safeguards have been taken to ensure that ethical considerations are undertaken. In such cases, the researcher has also to make sure that the necessary action has been taken to ensure that the exact and right responses representing the research participant have been recorded faithfully and authentically.
337. Researchers must consider any risks to the research participant that might take place during the research exercise. Researchers should be responsible to take the necessary steps to minimise the harmful effect that the research project may have on the participants.

338. Researchers are to comply with the General Data Protection Act and other legislation emanating from this Act as stipulated in the Laws of Malta.
339. Participants' anonymity should always be protected unless the research participant gives specific permission to be identified. The Researcher has to be absolutely sure that the research participant has understood the decision to forego their anonymity and the consequences that may arise.
340. It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that when the work is published, or any part of the work is published, does not lead to a breach of agreed confidentiality or anonymity with the research participant.
341. If during the research, participants disclose abuse or unethical behaviour which is leading to serious self-harm or harm to others, the researcher is obliged to take necessary action to ensure the protection of the vulnerable persons involved. Hence, the researcher may be obliged to break confidentiality to ensure the protection of the person who is in a vulnerable situation. It is important that the researcher always informs the research participant on the boundaries of confidentiality.
342. Researchers must be sensitive that research participants may require debriefing at the end of a research exercise. Researchers have also to pay attention that they are not to provide any advice and should always refer their research participants to suitably qualified and appropriate professionals who may assist the research participants.
343. When research involves the study of animals or the environment, the researcher has to make sure to take all the necessary protection of the environment and respect animal rights. No animal suffering of any kind can be undertaken in research and the highest care to animals is to be provided by the researcher. All research ensure an environmental care approach and an impact assessment may be required prior to conducting such research. Any negative impact on the natural environment and animal welfare as a result of a research study is to be avoided.
344. It is encouraged that all research is published and made publicly available for the benefit of the community and society. Researchers are urged to disseminate the outcomes of their research studies for the benefit of further research, professionals working in the field, policy makers and a wider public understanding of research is to be provided.

## **RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCEDURES FOR LECTURING STAFF**

345. The St Francis de Sales Institute intends to attract and recruit people who can advance its aims and strategic vision, either paid or on a voluntary basis. Appointments are made on the basis of merit, experience and achievement, and adhering to the principles of equity and equal opportunity employment.
346. These procedures outline the basic requirements to ensure that recruitment and ongoing support is provided in a fair and transparent manner to the benefit of the Institute and its students. The Institute will follow all legislative and national employment procedures as established in Malta.
347. The Director of Studies is responsible to establish the requirements of recruitment that is required for the implementation of each programme of training and studies that is on offer. The Director of Studies is to discuss with the Head of Institute or any other member of staff that can assist in identifying the requirements of every lecturing position.
348. The requirements of every position that becomes available or vacant will be documented in detail and accurately classified taking into account the functions and the responsibilities that the vacancy brings with it.
349. The Director of Studies is to present the human resource requirements in the Management Committee to ensure that all administrative and financial obligations are approved.
350. Once a vacant lecturing position is approved by the Management Committee, it is recommended that such position is advertised in the appropriate media. Every vacant position has to be at least open for advertising for at least two weeks unless there is a valid and compelling reason to decide otherwise. Every vacancy has to be advertised on the Institute's website.
351. Lecturing positions are advertised on a fixed term position and each position depends on the hours of service that is required in accordance to workload that is required for such a position.
352. The management of the Institute will ensure that every application undergoes a rigorous and appropriate screening process in the employment and promotion of staff.
353. For every position of a lecturing post, the Director of Studies, in consultation with the Head of Institute, appoints a selection committee which will be responsible for the interviews, the award of marks for each applicant, and the publication of the results of the interviews.
354. All new staff are required to follow an induction programme which will help them to orient themselves with the Institute's operations, policy and procedures and ethics. The induction programme may also afford a mentoring service where a new employee will be

linked with another employee or manager to help them understand their role and responsibilities.

355. During their employment, staff will be required to follow an appraisal programme that they can meet the goals and objectives of the position that they have been employed to undertake and are the best fit for the Institute.

## CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

353. The St Francis de Sales Institute will assist to create a confident staff who will perform to high standards, expertly using new technology to provide the best possible service. The continuous professional development priorities are:

- a) to enhance staff's knowledge, skills and ability as teachers, researchers, managers, technicians, and administrators, as relevant to the requirements of their posts;
- b) to enable staff to carry out their roles and responsibilities in the most effective manner and adapt to ongoing changes; and
- c) to assure and enhance the quality of training, learning, teaching, and research to develop a centre of excellence.

354. The Institute recognises that its members of staff are the key in achieving the Institute's vision and implementation plan and is committed to supporting its staff in their professional development.

355. The St Francis de Sales Institute is committed to attracting, retaining, and developing high quality, innovative and creative staff, to meet the students' constantly changing training and educational needs. The Institute is committed to Lifelong Learning and the staff is encouraged to see their development as continuing and ongoing. It will encourage continuous professional development to achieve this aim.

356. Continuous professional development is to be undertaken by all the Institute's lecturing, management, and support staff. Continuous professional development can be tailor made according to the needs of the staff as identified in purposeful evaluations and observations.

357. It is also encouraged that continuous professional development activities have the necessary accreditation as according to the national standards or legislation where appropriate. The continuous professional development activity will be undertaken by attending formal training courses and conferences and undertaking qualifications. Continuous professional development activity may also take the form of different methods such as mentoring, coaching, self-directed study, experiential exchanges, industrial updating, and online training. Staff who attend continuous professional development training or activity are to make sure that they inform the Administration Manager so that the necessary records and copy of any certificates are kept in the personnel file of the staff member.

358. The Internal Quality Assurance Manager may propose to the Management Committee any identified theme that is required for the continuous professional development training or activity.

359. The Director of Studies will be responsible to conduct a professional review of the lecturing staff in order to identify any areas which the lecturer may need to attend as part of their continuous professional development needs.

360. Support staff is to also follow a training review session with their direct manager at least once a year to identify any possible training needs that may be required at the place of work.

361. Continuous Professional Development activity or training is to be approved by the respective Heads. Heads are to make sure that before approving such training or activity, they obtain the necessary clearance from the Administration Manager for any expenditure related to continuous professional development.

362. Where a staff member has received financial support from the Institute towards training and development and leaves the Institute within two years of the completion of the activity or training, or before it is completed, the financial support may be reclaimed by the Institute.

363. All staff must complete any mandatory training that is provided by the Institute. Such training may also be provided online and staff must complete such training.

## STUDENTS' AGREEMENTS

364. The St Francis de Sales Institute believes in the rights and duties of every student and to ensure that a healthy relationship promotes the signing of an agreement on the acceptance to a programme of training or studies. This agreement provides students with information on what they are expected to receive from the Institute and what they are obliged to give to participate in the programme of training or studies that they have been enrolled in.

365. Students duties include:

- a) Engage actively in the learning process and participate according to assessment requirements.
- b) Provide considered, honest and timely feedback to the Institute and its staff on the quality of teaching and other services.
- c) Complete assessment tasks diligently and honestly to provide evidence of learning outcomes.
- d) Meet assessment requirements as specified in the course outline, including submission of work by due date.
- e) Consult the Director of Studies as early as possible about any disability issues.
- f) Discuss any concerns they have regarding their progress in coursework and assessment as early as possible with relevant lecturers, and/or the Director of Studies.
- g) Consult with the lecturer (in the first instance) and the Director of Studies if personal circumstances are affecting participation or performance in assessment.
- h) Raise any concerns they may have regarding the marks for each assessment task promptly, rather than wait until the final grade is awarded in the unit.
- i) Access and abide by all policies, procedures and regulations relating to assessment and seek clarification, where necessary.

366. Students' agreements fall under the responsibility of the office of the Head of Institute. Following registration by the student, the Institute presents its students with a copy of the Students' Agreement as a sign of acceptance of the student into the particular programme of training or studies. As a confirmation of the acceptance to follow the programme of training and studies, the student will sign the agreement and present it to the office of the Head of Institute within any stipulated deadline that the Institute may oblige.

367. Students are to be given two copies of the students' agreement to be signed. One copy is retained by the student and the other copy sent to the office of the Head of Institute as a sign of acceptance.

368. The Students' Agreement will include all the requirements as specified in the Subsidiary Legislation 433 'Further and Higher Education – Licencing, Accreditation and Quality Assurance Regulations' of Chapter 327 The Education Act and the communication 04/2022 of Malta Further and Higher Education Authority.

369. In the agreement, students will be informed of all the fees and/or grants that they are awarded by the Institute for the duration of their training or studies.

370. The Students' Agreement will also refer to the written policies and procedures of the St Francis de Sales Institute as part of the students' agreement.

371. A copy of the template of the student's agreement is attached to these procedures.