saint
martin's
institute of
higher education

QUALITY
ASSURANCE

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Introduction

Saint Martin's Institute of Higher Education (hereafter referred to as SMI) was set up in 1985 with the aim of providing tuition in computer studies when such programmes were non-existent in Malta. The growth of the Institute, which knows very humble beginnings, is owed to the value of quality education that the founder and the first members of staff have always fostered. Cohort after cohort of students, year after year, managed to attain exceptional results at whichever level they sat for. As from the year 2000, SMI was able to provide the opportunity for students to read for a degree other than that offered by the State University by offering a variety of programmes conferred by the world renowned University of London (hereafter referred to as UOL) through its recognised teaching status. Through further enactment of the Further and Higher Education legislation, the Institute was formally licensed as higher education with awarding powers at Malta Qualification Framework (MQF) level 5, 6 and 7.

SMI looks at the concept of quality assurance at the higher education level as how the organization manages the academic standards and the quality of students' learning opportunities. The Institute strives to embrace continuous quality enhancement processes to improve aspects of the Institute's provision.

Scope

In order to achieve our vision, SMI has developed this Quality Assurance manual which highlights the quality control systems that the Institute has in place to ensure that academic standards are maintained at all times. This is possible through the involvement of all staff members, academic and administration, who understand and engage with SMI's aims and values.

Mission Statement

SMI seeks to be a regional icon in quality education excelling in teaching and research in multi-disciplinary fields.

Vision

SMI is a private educational establishment, with the primary objective of being the advancement of student achievement through intellectual, moral and social education, unlocking the students' potential to develop academically and psychologically. Academically we aim to provide the highest quality tuition accompanied by giving close individual attention to each one of our students concurring with a student-centred philosophy of comprehensive education. We aim to assist with our students' character development and behaviour through example. Ultimately, we aim to teach by example by strict adherence to a professional attitude towards learning and code of ethics.

Objectives

We will strive continuously to become an education centre of excellence to be widely recognised in the business and academic communities for our:

- outstanding student-centred teaching that results from the faculties working together and being committed to the development of each student as an individual;
- integrated an innovative curriculum and course materials attuned to the lifelong learning needs of current and future leaders in their field;
- research that improves the profession in collaboration with other academic institutions and industry;
- action oriented graduates who embrace an enterprise perspective and lead with integrity, vision, judgement, determination and social responsibility.

To accomplish our goal, we create and sustain a collaborative environment for teaching, course development, research and programme management that builds on the inter dependencies of these activities and respects the contribution of every individual.

Key strategic, measurable priorities

The key strategic priorities for the institution are the following:

- strengthen the internal academic and administrative resources to elevate the institution from a higher education teaching institution to an organisation worthy of being considered a University within its own right in future. This will be done through a focused recruitment policy to attract people who have the teaching vocation ingrained in their psyche and aim for continuous professional development to achieve an adequate proportion of academics qualified at doctorate who will carry out publishable research as part of their function;

- develop local and overseas academic networks beyond the UOL federation of colleges and institutes;

- build the SMI brand independently from that of the UOL. The institute must be seen in the eyes of the public as a seat of learning which contributes in raising the bar of learning and achievement through pedagogical creativity and researched contribution on par in quality as measured by international standards;

- increase the attraction of the Institute's educational provision both in the local market (competing effectively with the free provision of further and higher education through a high value added) as well as internationally to achieve a sustainable number of students which will allow the continued growth of the organisation.

Our Stakeholders

Our Students: We are driven by the needs of our students. We understand our students' needs and deliver innovative services to meet these needs.

Our Employees: We respect each other. We work together as one team.

Our Community: Everywhere we do business we strive to make our community a better place to live, work, grow and prosper.

Principles

The purpose of this Quality Assurance manual is to ensure that SMI is committed to:
1. developing and, at the same time, finding ways to continuously improve the effectiveness of the quality process within the Institute;
2. ensuring that the quality manual is in line with the quality cycle followed at the Institute. This includes annual reviews of the policies in place, as well as the external audits carried out by third parties;
3. complying with the requirements and, when possible, the recommendations set by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA);
4. implementing improvements when these are deemed necessary following consultations during the respective faculty meetings and subsequent approval by the Saint Martin's Admission and Advisory Board (SAAB);
5. ensuring that the quality manual is easily accessible to all stakeholders, namely general public, students and staff so that everyone is privy of the quality cycles followed by the Institute.

Quality Process

SMI strives to uphold the quality processes followed at the Institute with the primary goal of enhancing the quality of the Student Experience. This is possible by ensuring that:
1. everyone works cohesively to maintain the academic standards;
2. reliable, valid and accurate data is used to evaluate the current processes in place and where necessary update the quality of students' learning opportunities;
3. all the information which is published by the Institute is reliable and up to date;
4. when possible, try to include students' feedback to improve and implement new ideas which will improve the learning opportunities for our student population.

The manual encapsulates the quality assurance structures, which are explained further in the following sections of this manual. In addition to this, the manual evolved to be in line with the eleven

(11) standards outlined by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA). In order to support these structures a set of policies, procedures and operational manuals have been developed to regulate the decision making process. These policies, procedures and operational manuals are reviewed to gauge their appropriateness.

Decision Making and Governance Structures

Introduction
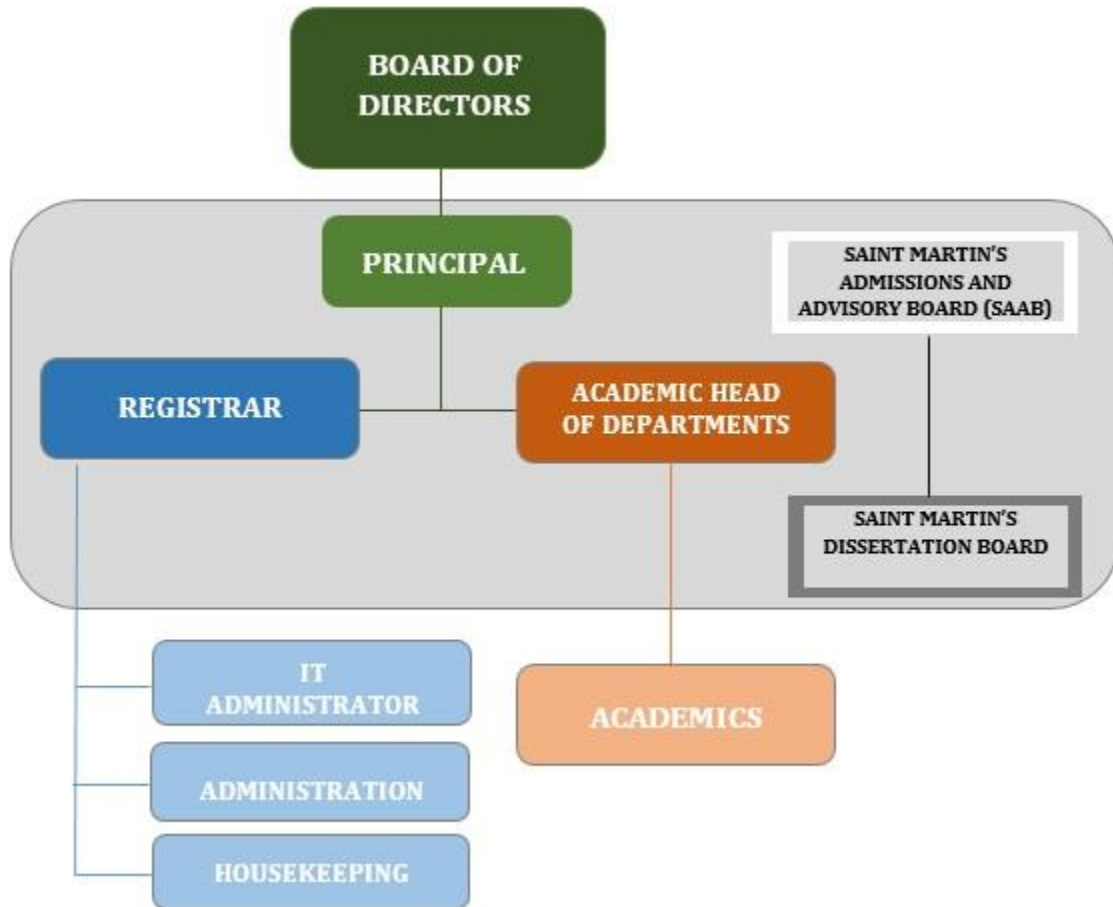
SMI's organigram presented above shows the flat hierarchy of the Institute, headed by the Principal who chairs the Saint Martin's Admissions & Advisory Board (SAAB) that is the main decision committee of the organisation that consists of the Registrar and the Academic Department Heads. Each position is held by the individuals holding the respective posts.

The Institute consists of two departments, the Department of Business Entrepreneurship and Finance and the Department of Computing.

The Institute also has the Saint Martin's student council, that is an independent student committee.

The Institute is made up of three layers of governance. The lower layer constitutes the faculties which make up each of the two departments of the Institute, led by the respective Head of the Business, Entrepreneurship and Finance Department and the Head of the Computing Department.

As a parallel to the academic department, the Institute has the administration department which is led by the Registrar.

The main executive management powers are vested in the Saint Martin's Admissions and Advisory Board (SAAB) which is constituted by members of full-time staff who occupy the following posts:

Chair of SAAB   The Principal

Secretary to SAAB   The Registrar

Members of SAAB   The Academic Department Heads

The Governing Body and legal representation is vested in the Board of Directors, chaired by an independent Chairperson, a Secretary to the Board as required by the Registrar of Partnership law, the Managing Director, an independent finance director and two directors who own minority share-holding in the limited liability company registered as St Martin's Education Services Limited with C16854 registered on the 11th October 1994.

Framework

This quality manual outlines the roles who are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the various processes in place at the Institute. SMI's framework for managing standards and quality is developed, approved and implemented through a blend of corporate and academic governance. The Saint Martin's Admissions and Advisory Board (SAAB) is responsible to ensure that the quality assurance policies and processes in place are in line with the student experience, whereas the corporate governance of the Institute lies with the Board of Directors.

Saint Martin's Admissions and Advisory Board (SAAB)

SAAB is accountable for the development, management, oversight, monitoring and quality of all the prorammes offered at the Institute. SAAB is the final decision making committee and its decision will be binding. In effect SAAB is the caretaker of the academic quality creed of the Institute, ensuring that the highest quality of learning and teaching is consistently achieved through the Code of Ethics for Academic Staff formulated and constituted by the faculty.

A decision made by SAAB is approved by the Principal, whose office has the obligation of approving decisions, but keeps the right of countermanding any of the decisions being presented for approval by a written appeal to SAAB. The Principal may countermand a decision in which case a decision is returned to SAAB for reconsideration with the arguments as presented by the Principal's office. SAAB may decide to change the original decision, or may decide to keep to the original decision. The FINAL decision in such a stalemate will be SAAB's decision and it will be final.

A SAAB decision may be countermanded through a decision by the Saint Martin's arbiter, by a mandate of Court of Law, or through a vote of no confidence by the Board of Directors of Saint Martin's Institute, in which case SAAB members will resign forthwith in writing to the Principal.
SAAB has the remit of establishing a Disciplinary Board, selecting members as it deems fit, and establishing the procedures for such hearings.

The obligations of SAAB are as follows: -
1. follow and protect the obligations as set by the Further and Higher Education Act enacted by the Government of Malta in July 2012 and any amendments thereof;
2. follow and protect the obligations as set in the License to operate and award certificates, diplomas, degrees and master degrees as per the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (hereafter referred to as MFHEA);
3. develop policy for the Institute and oversee that such policies are abided at all times by all employees and students of the Institute;
4. set up and execute adequate measures and processes in the acceptance of applicants, monitoring the qualifications presented by the applicants, abilities, and motivation of the applicant for the programme;
5. set up and execute adequate measures and processes to monitor and encourage students' progress throughout the duration of the students' studies at Saint Martin's;
6. set up and follow quality assurance measures to uphold the creed of the Institute as per the published Code of Ethics for Academic Staff published in 2009 and any updates thereon;
7. establish a Disciplinary Board, selecting members as it deems fit, as well as set up the procedures for such hearings both for members of staff and/or students.

Academic Department Heads

The respective Heads of Department are expected to lead the academic, research and development of the department, assist faculty members in delivering their lectures and pushing their students to their full potential by providing the necessary and available resources in terms of time, material, training and evaluation. The Head of Department must keep a sound and continuous relationship with the Principal, the Awarding Bodies and the academics under their leadership to ascertain that the development of Saint Martin's is ongoing, applying what procedures need to be applied and adhered to within the department.
The responsibilities of the Heads of Department are as follows: -

1. identify and recruit the ablest and suitable lecturing staff according to the needs of the department, who are qualified and motivated to lecture students according to the norms published in the Code of Ethics for academic staff in liaison with the Principal;
2. draw up a budget request which will include items such as staff salaries, capital investment requests, consumable requirements, staff development and training, and infrastructure necessities and investments;

3. continuously monitor the academic staff to motivate and oversee the achievement of the standards as listed in the code of ethics; The head of a department is required to develop an esprit de corps amongst the academic staff of the department, to foster and maintain the passion towards the institution and its students, and simultaneously be responsible for discipline as presented in the Code of Ethics for Academic Staff, such as strict timeliness, leave of absence, sick leave, and attendance and participation to faculty and other meetings;

4. advise and mentor the lecturing staff with respect to their academic and lecturing methodology, organising self-development programmes in Malta and possibly overseas, and monitor the adoption of such self-development programmes by the lecturers who would have attended such programmes;

5. set up an annual plan, reviewed every three months, issued to let staff know beforehand the plans for the department and assign tangible targets to each member;

6. identify potential developments in the portfolio of programmes including extra curricula activities of the departments;

7. be an access point for students and their parents and resolve any problems that may emanate from such communication; This may also include the function of academic guidance for students; To oversee the well-being of the student cohort, and do the best efforts to promote the school to attract more students to entrust their education to Saint Martin's;

8. liaise for the application and attraction of research funds and the overseeing of project management for the successful implementation of such research projects;

9. coordinate the identification and compilation of adequate learning resources such as library books, journals, etc; required for the full development of academia and students alike;

10. to encourage the participation in national and international forums, organisations and committees by the head of department as well as department members;

11. organise and chair a department staff meeting at least once every calendar month, which meetings shall be minuted and designed to inform, communicate, brainstorm and take decisions; The department head will hold ad hoc meetings wherever these are deemed necessary, even on a one to one basis;

12. liaise with the Principal and take any necessary disciplinary action as required, as well as action to congratulate subordinates; It is the duty of the head of department to oversee that the code of ethics for academic staff, plus the rules and procedures of the Institute are always upheld;

13. be a member of the Saint Martin's Admissions and Advisory Board, under the Chairmanship of the Principal;

14. uphold through example, the professionalism and strong moral and ethical culture cultivated by the Institute's founders; The head of department is expected to walk the extra mile for the sake of the Institute's name and the wellbeing of its students;

15. control at all times the quality aspects of the department, putting in place the necessary processes to monitor all that is going on in the department in the provision of a top-class educational service; This will include at least one reported personal peer visit to each academic every academic year;

16. forfeit self-interest for the good of the department, forfeiting time to ascertain that agreed deadlines and needs of the department are met without comment; This post is of a managerial post and the individual must have the interest of St Martin's above all else;

17. teach three study units and assist whenever and wherever this is deemed to be necessary, with the intention of keeping the widest contact possible with the student body.

Registrar

The Registrar is responsible for students' records administration, examination processes and providing information for both students and staff.

The responsibilities of the Registrar are as follows: -

1. file and maintain students' records up-to-date and available as required such as attendance, records, grades, warnings and other disciplinary actions;
2. address students' and lecturers' requests and also providing information on both internal (SMI) and external (UOL) procedures;
3. prepare the teaching timetables and administer throughout the academic year;
4. provide advice and guidance to students throughout the academic year;
5. provide guidance to international students with regards to visa advice and compliance;
6. communicate with students through official letters and notices;
7. administer the SMI official examination sessions (including scheduling and marks processing);
8. liaise with UOL regarding admissions, registrations, regulations, study materials etc;
9. monitor students' attendances and issue the monthly attendance reports;
10. maintain and monitor systems and management information (including statutory data returns);
11. act as Secretary of faculty meetings and the Saint Martin's Admissions and Advisory Board (SAAB);
12. manage the library and order books/journals as required;
13. assist in the preparations for the SMI graduation;
14. provide post-graduation support (issuance of certificates and transcripts);
15. ensure that the regulations are being adhered too and updated liaise accordingly on an annual basis.

Dissertation Board

The Dissertation Board is the entity responsible for guiding and supporting students through their dissertation process at SMI.
The responsibilities of the Dissertations Board are as follows: -

1. recommend SMI's research direction;
2. establish and safeguard the dissertation process at SMI;
3. provide students with adequate training and support during the dissertation process, particularly by the organization of seminars, viva-voce sessions and support on the SMI's Moodle
4. provide students and supervisors with advice about different research possibilities in a given area of interest without explicitly providing specific or conclusive advice on modus operandi on the project itself;
5. monitor the dissertation process and ensure that students are receiving the required support;

6. support supervisors by recommending resources or co-supervision where required;
7. discuss requests from students who wish to change their supervisor and recommend a new supervisor and co-supervisor if required;
8. provide supervisors with tools to report on the progress of their students and report any misconduct by the student'
9. support supervisors by relieving them from supervision duties where there is evidence that a student chooses to ignore the advice given by the supervisor.

Strategy for managing academic standards and quality

The Institute has had a twenty-year induction as a 'teaching institution' of the University of London through its International Programme network which instilled a quality assurance mentality from inception. Further evidence which demonstrates the effectiveness of the quality assurance system is evidenced by two Institutional Periodic Review audits undertaken by the University of London Directorate for Quality Assurance in 2010 and 2015. In addition to these audits conducted by the University of London, the Institute also underwent an external audit which was conducted by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) in 2016 wherein the Institute was found to have surpassed expectations in relation to student centered learning, teaching and assessment methods, as well as the cyclical external quality assurance adopted by the Institute.

Considering its status under the Further and Higher Education Act of 2012 enacted by the Government of Malta of an awarding body, the Institute must be in a position to assure the standards of its self-awarding programmes whilst allowing for differences in the design of quality assurance to respect different departmental cultures and academic histories.

SMI was the first to introduce the concept of an access route to Maltese & international students who did not possess qualifications deemed as a benchmark for entry to higher education through the introduction of the Diploma route being offered by the University of London which accepted students who did not hold an MQF Level 4 qualification. These students were, in 2011, given the opportunity to embark on the degree programme through the Diploma of Entrepreneurship route and following successful completion of the Diploma were eligible to progress to the second level of the respective degree. Following the success of this programme, the Institute embarked on a mission to provide the same opportunity to others who were seeking to pursue their studies in other disciplines other than entrepreneurship and is currently offering various areas of studies in the business and the computing field.

The Institute believes that the following principles should inform its approach to quality assurance:

• Quality assurance should not detract from or become a substitute for quality; quality assurance operates at the departmental level, with the responsibilities that this entails (including resolving short-term breakdowns and gathering and using regular feedback on courses and programmes), within a broader context where SAAB has collective responsibility for the standard of the Institute's academic awards;

• The exercise of these departmental responsibilities should be collective, through departmental faculty committee;

• Quality assurance should be a preliminary to quality enhancement and a greater proportion of energy and resource should be devoted to the latter;

- Good quality internal evidence, including student opinion, external examiner reports and student performance data, should be used to support quality assurance and enhancement processes;

- The findings from quality assurance should be made public in such a way as to share different practices and innovations across departments and to show students that quality is taken seriously;

- Departmental teaching, learning and assessment practices should be subject to review, for example through use of teaching observation, as a means both of assuring quality, of aiding staff development and of sharing different practice;

- The Institute must be in a position to demonstrate its standards to its students and their families/sponsors.

Quality Assurance Procedures and Best Practice Guidelines

Programme Approval

A draft proposal for a new programme needs to be presented to SAAB by the Heads of Department. When reviewing the documentation submitted SAAB will take into account whether the proposal is financially viable, if the new programme matches the Institute's portfolio and whether there is a local, and possibly international opportunities and employment market demand.

Once the proposal is approved, the faculties then need to provide comprehensive and detailed documentation that will explain how the qualification will be structured, the combination of assessments methods for every study unit, as well as the learning outcomes that the qualification aims for students to achieve. The proposal must also include the Malta Qualification Framework (MQF) that the qualification is pitched for, as well as the entry qualifications for the students to read for the qualification. The entry qualifications need to be in line with the SMI Admissions policy. The documentation needs to be forwarded to the Registrar in order to attain the Saint Martin's Admission and Advisory Board (SAAB) approval. Once this is approved by SAAB, the Registrar will commence the process to obtain accreditation from the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA).

External assessors from peer institutions may be requested to review new programme proposals. The external assessor's role is to comment on the appropriateness and rigour of the programme, including its curriculum, mode of delivery, mode of assessment, methodology and learning outcomes. External assessors are also required to comment on the standard of the programme in relation to relevant quality assurance publicly renowned benchmarks, prior to the submission of the programme documentation for MFHEA accreditation.

Admissions

SMI is committed to fair, transparent and consistent admissions practices. Furthermore, SMI is committed to equality in education. The selection of students is based on their individual merits, abilities and aptitudes.

SMI's website (www.stmartins.edu) and prospectus both include details regarding the general entry requirements for the programmes offered at the Institute. The Registrar's Office is responsible for implementing and reviewing admissions practices and policies, which are then approved by SAAB. The Registrar's Office must ensure that the policies and procedures relating to student recruitment and admissions are handled fairly and consistently.

SMI provides an equal opportunities settings and is therefore committed to ensuring that the programmes being offered are available to a wide range of students. SMI is committed to supporting,

guiding, assisting and recognising the achievement of all registered students irrespective of their social and cultural backgrounds, as well as their learning abilities.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment

The Institute is well aware of its role to develop students academically and psychologically to qualify successfully from the degree that they would have registered for. The Institute is very much aware of the role it plays in the development of the human resources. Our students possessing mixed abilities garnered from their compulsory school education years need to be assisted to form the basis of their careers as productive citizens. The actual value added of the Institute is to make this development happen and it is the responsibility of all academics to support students in their studies as well as offer guidance and counselling in matters concerning their academic progression.

Teaching involves a process of passing on knowledge, but the academic's role also involves the ramping up of secondary skills which are necessary in developing the skills and capabilities of the student. Saint Martin's does not teach for the examination. The creed of the Institute is to develop a student to the maximum possible competence in the subject matter and passing an exam will be an automatic extension of this sound preparation. Passing the exam is the ultimate certification illustrating the achievement of the required standard as set by the examining body. Such a student centred process requires a process of continuous feedback and improvement.

SMI places emphasis on the quality of learning, teaching and assessment. The implementation of the strategies adopted by the Institute is monitored by the Heads of Department. Recommendations to improve the quality of these three properties are discussed regularly during the monthly Faculty meetings and forwarded to SAAB for approval.

Student Support and Learning Resources

The Registrar's Office is responsible for coordinating student support services, namely wellbeing, safeguarding, any additional learning support required, careers, student opportunities and personal development. Furthermore, the Registrar's Office is also responsible for informing students about any of these matters via the official communication method (SMI email).

The Registrar's Office and the Heads of Department are jointly responsible for the provision of learning resources including, but not limited to, the SMI Moodle (virtual learning environment), Discord, SMI Intranet and the library.   Heads of Department and the Registrar are also jointly responsible to make sure that all registered students have access to individual academic support, academic and career guidance, feedback and academic records.

Student Engagement

Student Council

The Student Council President acts as the figurehead of the Student Council. The Student Council is responsible for ensuring that the students' views are represented and any issues / concerns / feedback are brought forward to the Principal's attention.

Student Feedback

A system of gaining student feedback on their teaching and learning experience at the Institute is carried out. The students' role is that of a 'consumer' with open channels for both positive and negative feedback. The feedback system is both formal, through an online intranet based feedback system which is opened three times during the academic year, and informal through the low power distance between staff and students cultivated at the Institute.
The results are viewed by the Principal and the necessary changes or improvements will be made, when possible.

Assessment Policies and Practices

In higher education, 'assessment' refers to any of the processes that appraise an individual's knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills. High quality assessment practices are an important element of the student experience and the outcomes of assessment clearly influence students' future wellbeing. Hence, the Institute is committed to promoting good practice, consistency and rigour in assessing students by ensuring that:

- assessment is reliable, with clear and consistent processes for the setting, marking, grading and moderation of assignments;
- assessment is valid and effectively measures student attainment of the intended learning outcomes;
- assessment is inclusive and equitable, ensuring that tasks and procedures do not put into a disadvantage any group or individual;
- assessment procedures are transparent, and criteria and methods by which students' work is being judged are made clear to students, staff and external examiners;
- the amount of assessed work is manageable;
- each programme includes a variety of assessment types, in order to promote effective learning and allow a range of learning outcomes to be appropriately addressed.

The Institute has a rigorous methodology of assessment and ascertaining that the assessment of students' achievements is consistent across the Institute.
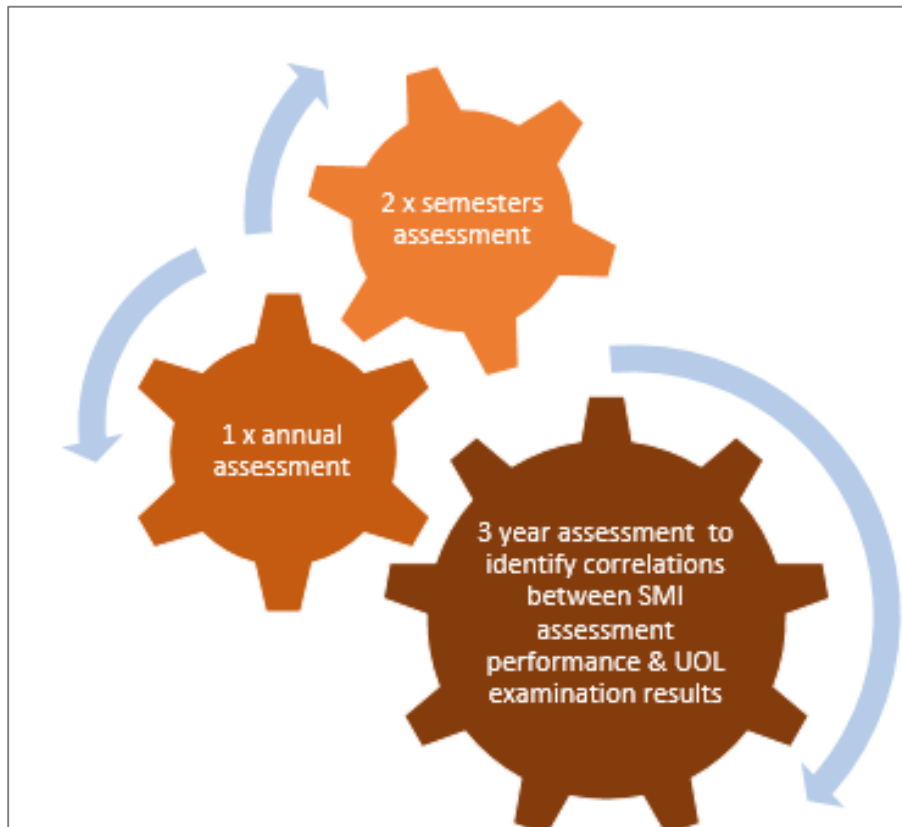
SMI requires a range of assessment methods to be used but most importantly such assessments must be appropriate to the level of the programme and study unit as accredited by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA).

The programme and study unit descriptions provided on the prospectuses and study units also include the learning outcomes, assessment methods and marking scheme criteria.

Verification and Double Marking

SMI follows a policy of peer review for term examinations, whereby examination documents are reviewed and verified by another academic, before the respective examination sessions, to ensure that the examination paper is up to standards set by the Institute and is fair to the students. This process is carried out again whereby the second examiner is provided with a sample of the corrected scripts to ensure that corrections are in line with the marking schemes and model answers provided by the first examiner.

In the case of final examinations, a double marking process is followed whereby all the scripts are corrected by the first and second examiner.

External Examiner System

SMI places high priority on the external examiner system, to ensure that standards of awards and the quality of students' learning opportunities are second to none in global terms. Independent external examiners are engaged by SMI to review the Spring Semester examinations of all self-awarded programmes offered by the Institute. In addition to providing students with an independent and external assessment of their work, this practice helps to ensure that the standards and quality of the qualifications awarded by the Institute are comparable to those of other reputable institutions.

The external examiner will review the examination documents and submit a report. The report will include comments regarding the academic standards compared with student performance and standard achieved. The report will also include comments on the integrity and rigour of SMI's assessment processes. It is expected that due consideration is given to any concerns/recommendations for improvement highlighted in these reports when faculty is reviewing the respective programmes.

Annual Programme Monitoring

The faculties are expected to produce an annual monitoring report about their respective programmes. The purpose of this report is to provide a 'health check' and allows the departments to look at the currency and validity of the programmes in light of developments in the relevant disciplines and practice in its application as well as the teaching methods and pedagogy for the programmes. This reporting exercise allows the departments to look at the effectiveness of the curriculum and the method of assessment in order to prove that students achieve the programmes intended learning outcomes. It is primarily a process whereby academics appraise their own performance at the end of the academic year. The report must be provided to the Principal and Registrar as Secretary to the Saint Martin's Admissions and Advisory Board (SAAB).

The departmental heads and faculty members are encouraged to fraternise with industry and attain up to date industry feedback regarding the programmes taught at the Institute added with the research carried by the faculty members. Departments are empowered to take corrective action where evidence underpins the necessity.

The Institute maintains a relationship with the alumni of the Institute to gauge the preparation of the graduates for their chosen career.

All departments and other academic entities within the Institute, which provide teaching services are required to undertake a Periodic Programme Review (PPR), which essentially involves an evaluation of the complete portfolio of programmes on offer at the Institute. This process is an important aspect of the Institute's quality assurance procedures and serves to ensure that programmes on offer are and remain of acceptable quality, appropriate academic standard and relevant to the needs of society.

Gender Equality and Diversity Policy

SMI staff members have a responsibility to adhere and implement the organisation's gender equality and diversity policy and to ensure that it is known and adhered to by everyone.

Diversity is about recognising and valuing the contribution that individuals from different backgrounds, race and cultures can make in the workplace, and enabling them to make this contribution without unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation. Diversity enables individuals to maximise their contribution and, as a result, help to make the organisation a high quality academic seat of learning, a source of knowledge emanating from diverse viewpoints, and as a result a successful business.

Staff recruitment strategy

SMI's strategy is based upon a clear differentiation of the Institute from all other further and higher education institutions resident in Malta, including the State Institutions. To achieve this differentiation, the Institute works hard to build staff competences which will inherently set the organisation apart for all the good reasons. Thus the long term aim is to build formidable departments with academics who research, inter-relate with their peers in industry and academic institutions, yet always stay in touch with their student cohorts to foster a community of learning and knowledge propagation. The Institute has a published Code of Ethics for Academic Staff, which code was developed by academic staff in 2009, and all academic staff is bound by the guidelines set in this code.

The department of Business, Entrepreneurship and Finance and Computing are constituted of a number of academic groups which are slowly forming into core knowledge centres which hopefully will emerge as centres of excellence and evolve into institutes in their own right.

SMI is an organisation whose success relies on the competences of its people. The Institute is fully aware of its obligation to offer students the very best possible education experience.

Academic staff development

The Institute treats the development of academic staff as a process which spans a period of five years, during which the academic is hand held and closely monitored during the first academic year. During these first five years of an academic career individuals are expected to show interest in their own career, illustrate initiatives in preparation for the delivery of lectures, build a portfolio of teaching aids, set up and establish an up to date VLE presence, and build healthy relationships with peers at SMI and also with the student cohort in their care.

Employees are expected to participate in self-development opportunities that may arise from time to time either organised by the Institute or publicly available.

As a recognised teaching centre offering tuition for UOL, SMI focuses on its academic provision through an arsenal of internal quality assurance processes which are meant to give early signs of issues arising in the provision of teaching.

The following twenty quality processes are set in place to ensure compliance to the teaching philosophy of the Institute:

- Recruitment of Academics QA process, including responding to a questionnaire and reading and discussion of Code of Ethics
- Mentoring of Junior or Assistant Academics by Head of Department and by an established Saint Martin's Institute lecturer
- Peer Review
- Head of Department staff review
- Appraisal Review of Academic Performance
- Continuous Professional Development through seminars, workshops, conferences and MOOC
- Attendance and timeliness of lectures through weekly and monthly reporting
- Monthly faculty meeting
- SMI VLE review
- Industry networking to keep abreast of career requirements
- Flexible, family friendly culture fostering team building in the departments
- Departmental and inter faculty best practice meetings
- Encouragement and support for formal postgraduate studies
- Periodic online student feedback (three times annually - November, February and June) for academics and administration
- Hands on management with heads and principal active as lecturers
- Annual review of marks attained for SMI and UOL examinations and documented commentary
- SMI internal examination papers reviewed by Department Head and Peer Lecturer appointed as verifier before the exam and after marking
- IP agreement signed and teaching aids and material developed are jointly owned to guarantee continuity when academics resign their post
- CCTV footage available in every classroom and/or computer laboratory

Student Complaints

Saint Martin's Institute of Higher Education

Students must follow these steps in the event that they are dissatisfied with the service provided by Saint Martin's Institute of Higher Education:

Step 1 – refer the issue / concern to the respective Study Tutor. The matter will be immediately referred to the respective Heads of Department.

Step 2 – if the student feels that the issue / concern has not been resolved, the student may request a meeting with the respective Heads of Department. The request must be made in writing to the

Registrar, who will make the necessary arrangements to schedule the meeting. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the respective Heads of Department may decide to refer the matter to the Principal or the Saint Martin's Admissions and Advisory Board (SAAB) for guidance and advice.

Step 3 – if the student still feels that the issue / concern has not been resolved, the student may request the intervention of the SMI Arbitrator in writing on arbitror@stmartins.edu. The decision taken by the SMI Arbitrator will be final.

Students registered with Saint Martin's Institute **do not** have a legislative right to make formal complaints directly to the national authorities, namely the Education Ombudsman under the jurisdiction of the National Ombudsman Office. Alternatively, however students may lodge a complaint against the Institute with the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) regarding matters related to the educational services provided by the licensed institute. They may lodge a complaint with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability in cases related to accessibility issues, as well as other statutory organisations that are set by law to safeguard individuals from errant behaviour by representatives of the organisation.

University of London

The following link provides further details regarding the Complaints and Academic Appeals procedure adopted by UOL: http://www.londoninternational.ac.uk/sites/default/files/complaints-procedure.pdf

Public Information

SAAB governs the process for authoring, approving and publishing content to SMI's designated public information outlets (including, but not limited to, the website, Moodle, SMI intranet, Discord and social media platforms).

Information pertaining to courses offered by the Institute is publicly available through the website www.stmartins.edu. Students may also attain information about the UOL degree programmes taught by the Institute on http://www.londoninternational.ac.uk/.

The information available under each of the individual searches is as follows:
- Title of the qualification
- Level of the qualification
- Duration and mode of study
- Course overview
- Learning outcomes of the programme
- Details of career opportunities and access to further studies
- Target audience
- Admission requirements
- Programme of Studies including a description for all study-units

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