Quality Assurance Manual

GC Academy

February 2021

Table of Contents

Introduction

Mission: To enable learning through digital solutions.

Vision: To help everyone to have equal chance to access and succeed through learning.

Online learning is a method of delivering educational information using the internet by which the student will learn and become competent in a particular field. This may be downloadable content, reading material, PowerPoint presentations, videos, and audio materials which can be accessed through informal lecturing to fully structured online courses that are accredited by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education Malta (NCFHE).

Online learning provides solution for education overcoming the constraints of time and space that go with face to face learning. However, Global Connect Academy (GC Academy) can also provide blended learning, which brings in the face to face characteristics of education, combined with online elements (when this will be the case accreditation will passthrough NCFHE first before offering such blended learning). Learning will be explained and documented appropriately on special programme and module templates as required by NCFHE for accreditation purposes.

Online learning does not mean replicating face to face teaching in an online environment. Therefore, the students will need access to the internet and fulfil adequate requirements as requested by the GC Academy.

The common elements of quality for the online learning environment are:

☐ Institutional support (mission, vision, planning and infrastructure)
☐ Course development
☐ Teaching and learning
☐ Course structure
☐ Student support if necessary
☐ Management support if necessary
☐ Technology
☐ Evaluation
☐ Student assessment
☐ Examination security.

GC Academy has its internal quality supervisor and is externally quality assured by NCFHE.

Standard 1 (Mission/Vision/Value)

The Quality Assurance Policy should be read in conjunction with all the other Policies and Procedures as found in Appendix 1 including the student handbook as found in Appendix 2 of the Quality Assurance Manual for a more holistic picture.

Scope: The policy of GC Academy applies to all its activities on an international level as it supports the development of a quality culture in which all stakeholders have a shared responsibility for quality assurance and quality enhancement. The policy also supports research as part of teaching and learning. Research by students is done through self-study and also through the final 5,000-word research paper while teaching will be enhanced through the students' research and also through the Lecturers research.

Policy

Principles are based on:

1) Continuous monitoring through self-reviews and student questionnaires along with management skype meetings and e-mail communication
2) QA is evidence-based
3) Seeking expert advice
4) Welcome ideas and innovations by any appropriate stakeholder including staff, students and the industry. GC Academy embraces partnership where necessary.

Approach

GC Academy uses the plan-do-check-act (PDCA) cycle to assure the quality of inputs, processes and outcomes, and to identify improvement to produce top quality competent students.

Required QA Process
GC Academy will incorporate specific input condition to support quality:
1) Qualified staff
2) Adequate IT and administration support
3) Academic freedom.

GC Academy asks, "What is GC Academy trying to do?" – QA.

1) How it is doing it?
2) Why is it doing it that way?
3) Why does it think this is the best way?
4) How does it know it works?
5) How to improve it?

Responsibilities

GC Academy is the responsibility of the directors. However, quality assurance is a shared responsibility of every stakeholder (Directors, Students, IT support, Industry).
Please note that by Industry the GC Academy understands and refers to the NCFHE, educational Institutions, conferences and seminars where QA professionals meet and also any QA external reports on websites.

The Directors are responsible for all management and financial aspects including the administration while IT support students and keep website up to date by uploading any info coming through Directors. The teaching staff are responsible to keep up to date with Industry (Educational Institutions, QA agencies, Education department/ministries, QA units or committees and even organised conferences and seminars by European or International QA bodies) and to forward any suggestions that might be taken up by management. If necessary, management will also hold meetings with the Industry. The students contribute to responsibility by attending the course as described and by contributing to feedback through students' questionnaires.

Other Educational Institutions contribute to quality both in Institutional research which can be used to enhance this QA course and even through discussions, meetings or projects.

GC Academy offers a post graduate certificate course in Quality Assurance at an MQF Level 7 with 34 ECTS. GC Academy will issue the qualification in quality assurance with an MQF level on it, logos of GC Academy and NCFHE as an accreditation agency along with the number of credits.
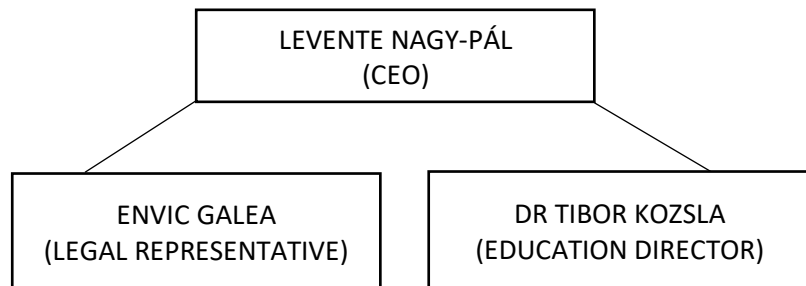
The lecturer of this qualification has a specific qualification on quality assurance along with experience in internal and external quality assurance. Different assessors are used for the final paper (5,000 words position paper) correction. The students are given a template to write down their proposal, then it will be accepted by the Tutor when it is in line with the requirements. Once accepted the student can start his research with the assistance of the Lecturer/tutor. The final paper assessors will be different from the Lecturer/tutor. The assessors are qualified at level 7 with experience. The final paper carries marks and range from Grade A 80-100%, Grade B 61-79% and Grade C 45-60%. The criteria are explained and communicated to all students through the website. The pass mark is from Grade C upwards, the same applies to the Long essay which is marked.

Financial responsibility is that of the Director and the course does not have a minimum or numerous clauses. Payment is received and shared with no fixed rates of payments in order to make the course sustainable. It is the responsibility of GC Academy to provide the platform and make sure that the course remains up to date. The responsibility of the lecturer is to deliver and oversee the learning of students. The assessor's responsibility is to make sure the stipulated learning outcomes are met. The assessors for the research paper are different from the teacher/assessor for the Pass/Fail modules. The responsibility of the student is to do all the assessments both formative and summative. Since part of the formative assessment students are required to pass comments on their colleagues work it is important that no discriminatory remarks are written or spoken. If the student is found guilty of discrimination, he will be given a written warning. Should the same student repeat the offence a second time he will be expelled.

Standard 2

GC Academy have an experienced management team which oversees the four main cost drivers of online learning:

1) Planning
2) Design and development
3) Delivering
4) Maintenance Overheads.

```
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │   LEVENTE NAGY-PÁL       │
                    │        (CEO)             │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
              ┌───────────────────┐   ┌───────────────────────┐
              │   ENVIC GALEA      │   │   DR TIBOR KOZSLA      │
              │ (LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE) │ │ (EDUCATION DIRECTOR) │
              └───────────────────┘   └───────────────────────┘
```

Mr Nagy-Pal is the chief executive officer and is technically responsible for the day operations of the online platform and keeps the website up to date along with any third parties required if any. Mr Galea is the legal representative and signs all necessary documentation while Dr Kozsla is the Education Director who sees also the day to day running plus finance and continuously communicates with CEO to make things functional and operation wise smooth. The internal quality supervisor is the lecturer of the course itself who is qualified and experienced in Quality assurance (especially since this course is about Quality Assurance itself). This quality is then overseen by the NCFHE.

In order to have a sustainable continuous management the Head should always be qualified at a minimum of EQF level 7 and having 5 years of online courses management experience. Therefore, should a vacancy for a Head arise the minimum qualifications are advertised for recruiting a new Head as stated above.

Staff time and expertise is a large cost driver but a key resource for quality online learning. The management takes the following into cost considerations:

1) Number of hours required for course development and preparation
2) Number of hours required to teach a course
3) Number of students in a course
4) Pay scale of lecturers
5) Method of course design, development and delivery
6) Pedagogy used
7) Choice of technology for delivery
8) Assessment of the course and its outcomes
9) Overhead costs (GC Academy administration costs)

GC Academy has its Director to look after the financial aspect. He already has experience in managing finances of another academy.
The income of GC Academy comes from the course and renting the GC engine software to any third parties who would use the platform for their courses: example the IJF Academy.

Yearly accounts will be presented to NCFHE on request. Yearly Financial statements will be done on a yearly calendar basis starting January and ending December.

Probity

Director: Dr Tibor KOZSLA
Assistant Director: Envic Galea (legal representative)
IT: by GC Academy outsourced IT provider
QA/Lecturer: Gino Schiavone

All above are suitably qualified to manage, administer and deliver the teaching and learning as can be evidenced from the CVs as presented to NCFHE for licensing and accreditation. Yearly accounts can be presented on demand from NCFHE.

Standard 3 - Programme Design

It is important to note that this Quality assurance course emanates from the fact that there are no European Quality assurance formal courses at EQF Level 7 and this course will start closing that gap to make Quality assurance more as a profession through such training.

Programme Design is based on the requirements of knowledge, skill and competencies at national, European and international levels. The programme is designed also to be flexible in time and place of study through e-learning. The programme offers components that makes it a flexible path (modular and has mitigating circumstances options) while ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes. The learning outcomes are stipulated in the application for accreditation by NCFHE.

The programme has a fixed start and fixed finish time. A minimum of two students need to apply for a course to open. The Quality assurance course can be open for every two students that apply. This is because the students will need to comment on each other's work according to the design of assessment. However, GC Academy has a mitigating policy and procedure which allows the student more flexibility.

The Programme for the Quality Assurance course has its own eligibility and selection criteria as indicated in the Policies and Procedures.

All that enrolled will need to have their own internet and device to follow the course. The resources for the QA course are the Platform provided by GC, the website and the reading materials. The students can also buy or download further reading material if they wish so at their own initiative and expense.
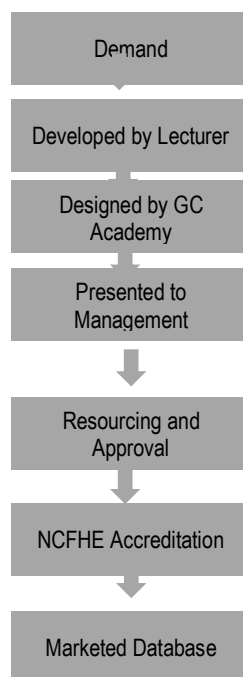
The design is built on the ECTS framework and abides by the NCFHE framework. This is evidenced in the written module templates.

Therefore, all programmes are modularly built for credit accumulation. Therefore, all modules and programmes have their learning outcome, workload measures and qualification requirements.

The programme itself has an element of research skills and participation in individual and/or group research activity, web-based research forms part of the requirements for self-study and assessment. All reading resources are indicated in the reading list as evidenced in the written

module templates. Other resources like a computer and internet must be supplied by the students themselves. Should the students wish to research other texts other than those provided they can do so to their own benefit as they are regarded as stakeholders who also make their own decisions and can invest their time and finance in specific readings.

Before designing the programme communications with professional and employees' associations regarding their needs are discussed and then evaluated in a manner to produce an effective programme for all stakeholders. Programme assessment, which is part of programme design in both formative and summative. The programme will involve students in design through the student's questionnaire and any other informal communication that takes place.

```
┌──────────────────────────┐
│         Demand           │
└──────────────────────────┘
             │
┌──────────────────────────┐
│  Developed by Lecturer    │
└──────────────────────────┘
             │
┌──────────────────────────┐
│    Designed by GC         │
│       Academy             │
└──────────────────────────┘
             │
┌──────────────────────────┐
│    Presented to           │
│    Management             │
└──────────────────────────┘
             │
┌──────────────────────────┐
│   Resourcing and          │
│     Approval              │
└──────────────────────────┘
             │
┌──────────────────────────┐
│   NCFHE Accreditation     │
└──────────────────────────┘
             │
┌──────────────────────────┐
│   Marketed Database       │
└──────────────────────────┘
```

Once there is a demand coming from any stakeholder (example-Lecturer, Industry, students) this is further developed into an award or qualification by the lecturer (see above diagram). The Course design is done by the expert Lecturer in conjunction with the CEO who takes care of the technical and media support while of course the Lecturing will be delivered by the Lecturer who also acts as a tutor. The design takes into consideration the needs of such an industry and the student's requirements to be able to be competent. The Lecturer is experienced in pedagogy and therefore in assessment methods. The assessments are designed to check that all learning outcomes have been met. The lecturer will work along GC Academy through meetings held and recorded to make it suitable for e-learning purposes. Then it is presented to management for evaluation and resourcing. The workings of the evaluation take into consideration the number of resources required per student and the financial cost of resources to make sure the course is sustainable. The management approves it to be presented to NCFHE for accreditation. Once accredited it will be marketed and the database is kept up to date. The approval also looks at how assessments has been created. The assessment has a formative element as a steppingstone to the summative assessment. The design of the assessments encourages the student to take an active role in creating the

learning especially through each other's evaluations. Therefore, assessments have been designed to meet all learning outcomes as indicated in the written module templates. The assessments for the QA course have been applied through the experience of the Lecturer and through current assessment methods that assist the student to show that the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. The Formative assessments also have a practical element like formulating a student's questionnaire and explaining relevant data required from such a questionnaire. The majority of the summative have been created as written assignments because the Quality Assurance auditors need to make written reports and therefore the design has taken both the formative and summative into consideration for a complete ideal way of assessments.

Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field (They attend conferences and seminars which help them in keeping up to date with lecturing and assessments they are required to update their CVs on a yearly basis as evidence of this);
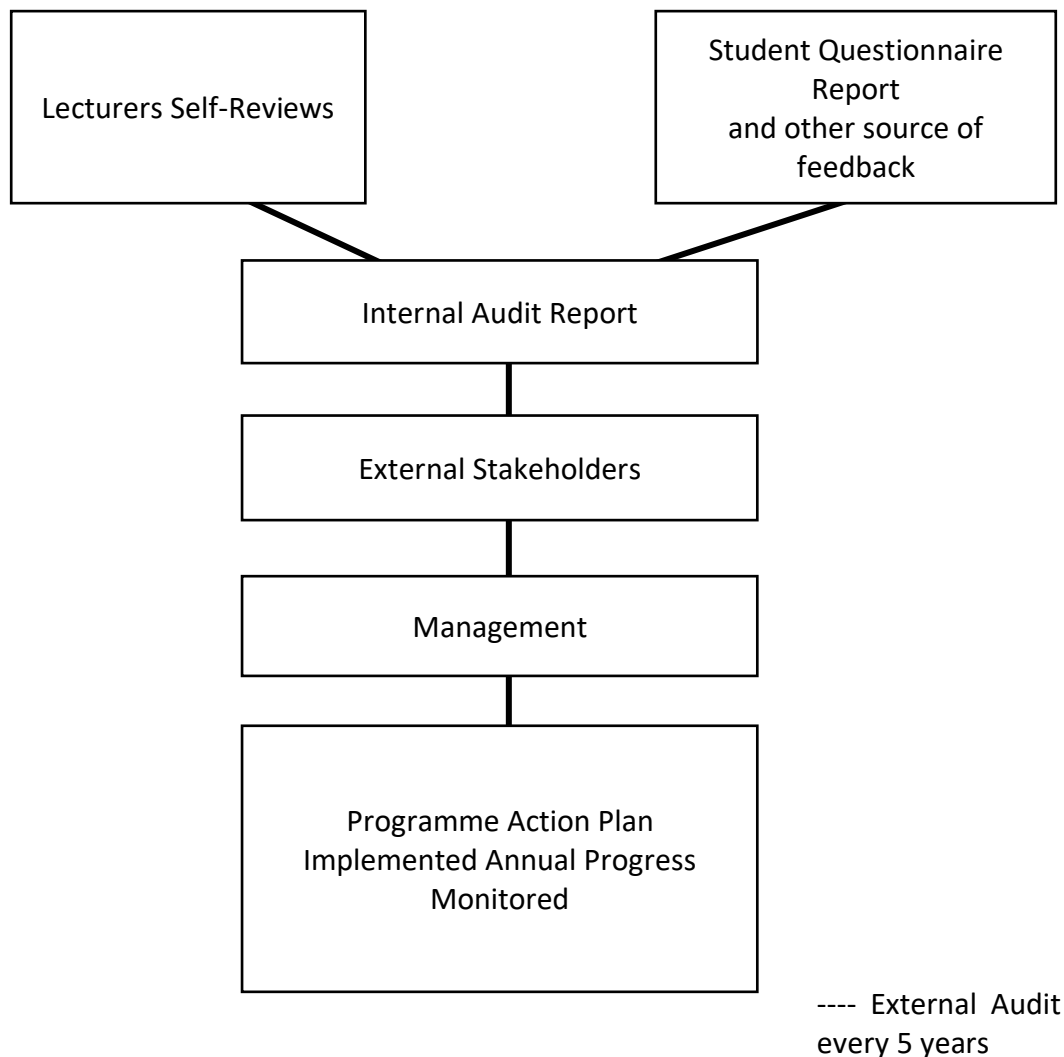
- The criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in
- advance;
- The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning
- outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to
- advice on the learning process;
- Where complaints or appeals on assessment are done it will be carried out by more than one assessor
- The regulations for assessment consider mitigating circumstances;
- Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures
- A formal procedure for student complaints and appeals is in place;

It is the policy of GC Academy to maintain Programme Quality Assurance process to be in line with the GC Academy strategy the PQA process is necessary to be transparent for all stakeholders and to provide quality learning.

Programme quality assurance is based on:
1) Mission and vision
2) Strategy
3) Collective stakeholder feedback and decision-making
4) Internal and external audits.

Standard 3 and 10

```
┌──────────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────────┐
│                          │        │  Student Questionnaire   │
│  Lecturers Self-Reviews  │        │         Report           │
│                          │        │   and other source of    │
│                          │        │        feedback          │
└──────────────────────────┘        └──────────────────────────┘
                    \                    /
                ┌──────────────────────────┐
                │   Internal Audit Report   │
                └──────────────────────────┘
                            │
                ┌──────────────────────────┐
                │   External Stakeholders   │
                └──────────────────────────┘
                            │
                ┌──────────────────────────┐
                │        Management         │
                └──────────────────────────┘
                            │
                ┌──────────────────────────┐
                │                          │
                │   Programme Action Plan   │
                │ Implemented Annual Progress│
                │        Monitored          │
                │                          │
                └──────────────────────────┘
```

---- External Audit every 5 years

The lecturers and students give their feedback. This feedback is presented into an internal audit report. The internet audit report is shared with stakeholders. An action plan is designed and starts to be implemented.

The internal audit is done to consider how well the programme is meeting its goals and GC Academy goals. The inquiry framework is based on:
a) Quality management (if lecturers, students and industry are involved).
b) Programme goals (are the graduates being employed or taking part in NGO's or serving as CPD's)
c) Educational design (are students achieving the intended learning outcomes)
d) Programme resources (are there enough resources to meet the programme goals)
e) Strengths and weaknesses of the programme.

It is of paramount importance to Global Connect Academy that the programme is finally accredited by an external agency which is the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) Malta. This gives more transparency and value to the Programme.

Standard 4

Student-Centred, Teaching and Assessments
The assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning to develop students' knowledge and assess that the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. The assessment is in alignment with the specific QA programme and ensures that GCA students can learn through participating and through participation of research for the long essay. This is reached through discussions, critical enquiry and making connections across the modules. The students are engaged in learning and teaching each other as they are also obliged to pass a minimum of two peer review comments and /or criticism on the discussion board.
Students are exposed to formative assessments, peer reviews and other feedback opportunities to be well prepared for their summative assessments.

Assessment types: as stipulated in the module templates which are available to students on the website once they are enrolled can be:
1) Written assignments
2) Participation in entire discussion (discussion platform)
3) Inquiry based questions
4) Collaborative assignment work/case studies
5) Research Paper

All assessments are published in advance with the criteria for assessment. Modules 1 to 9 carry the percentage system that is judged with the criteria for the Research paper which is given a mark according to the established criteria as underneath, also found in the student handbook.

The research Paper is given marks and assessed according to the underneath criteria:

Grade A 80-100%

- Excellent identification of the problem, in its real-world context.
- Highly relevant examples or evidence to illustrate the problem.
- Excellent grasp of research, concepts and theories relevant to the problem.
- Excellent critique of how far the theory or research used explains the problem.
- Strong integration of disparate evidence, concepts and theories.
- Highly persuasive and actionable proposals to address the problem.
- Excellent logical structure and very well written.
- Correctly cited references.

Grade B 61-79%

- Good, clear identification of the problem, in its real-world context.
- Relevant examples or evidence to illustrate the problem.
- Good grasp of research, concepts and theories relevant to the problem.
- No critique of how far the theory or research used explains the problem.

- Good use of disparate evidence, concepts and theories, but no integration.
- Plausible and actionable proposals to address the problem.
- Good logical structure and well written.
- Correctly cited references.

Grade C 45-60%

- Narrow or vague identification of the problem and its context.
- Limited relevance of examples or evidence to illustrate the problem.
- Limited but not misguided grasp of research, concepts or theories relevant to the problem.
- No critique of how far the theory or research used explains the problem.
- Very limited use of disparate evidence, concepts or theories, and no integration.
- Barely plausible but not unworkable proposals to address the problem.
- Acceptable logical structure and quality of writing.
- Correctly cited references but may contain minor errors.

Before enrolment the students can see the Overall course Learning outcomes and once they are enrolled, they can see all specific learning outcomes through the written module templates. The criteria for assessment and markings are published in advance once the student is enrolled. The student has access to the full written module templates.

Examination or assessment security and authenticity is of outmost importance. The GC Academy platform takes identification through camera snapshots. However, for the Quality assurance course the written assignments and final paper is submitted through the Plagiarism software.

Feedback is given collectively but sometimes is also given individually. Feedback can be given on the discussion board or e mails or even skype depending on the nature required for feedback. When there is a fail, confidential feedback will be given to the individual while if all students pass, a collective feedback can be given on the discussion board. Feedback is both synchronous and asynchronous. The student can use any modern technology like skype, what's app, messenger etc with the lecturer after agreeing together what time and day this will happen in order to give any assistance required. The Lecturer/Tutor can always remain as first contact. Should the assistance required by the student need other managerial staff to deal with then the lecturer will pass on the request and inform the student accordingly by any technological means that the student prefers.

Plagiarism

GC Academy has a Plagiarism Policy and procedure as found on the website. The students are informed through the website (Policies and Procedures) about Plagiarism and through the student handbook and welcome e-mail. Moreover, the Long essay is submitted through the Plagiarism software to make sure that students do not plagiarise. Students are not allowed to copy material. The only copied material is that used for reference and must be indicated properly.

Community building – so the strategy to encourage participation is through the discussion board where students are obliged to comment on each other's work. The interaction depends on the subject level of course, preference and style of lecturer, types of studies and purpose of interactivity.

Teaching in online learning is facilitating this learning to take place and the online teacher still needs to share warmth and be curious about the students and encourage them to learn in various ways. Teachers can also send separate additional study material apart the online reading list to assist the student. The teacher creates a learning environment that allows the student to translate theory into practice. Teachers provide instant feedback through e-mails, integrated chat and forum discussions. Teacher keeps the students up to date with their progress and performance on assessments. All students are treated politely and with respect and are available according to the given schedule by the teachers. Any students who have difficulties are supported by the Lecturer/Tutor either by extra readings or by e-mails or skype calls depending on the nature of difficulty. Difficulties that attribute to mitigating circumstances are dealt with as in the Mitigating Policy and procedure.

Assessment is carried out by one assessor. However, oversight of the assessment is done by the Management and also by engaging external assessors who take samples of the work and provide a written report directly to Management. The students also serve as oversight since they are stakeholders by filling in the student's questionnaire and giving it directly to Management. The management will then make a report on assessment after every course is terminated, and inform necessary stakeholders, example the lecturer himself about the findings. Any action necessary will be carried out and followed through by Management. In case of a complaint on assessment – another assessor can be engaged. The student can always appeal a result according to the Policy and procedures of Complaints and Appeals. The assessors attend Continuous professional development like seminars and conferences or carry out research to keep up to date so that the assessment marking is fair and up to the current standards.

Formative and Summative assessments feedback is an integral part of the assessment process in order to:
a) Help students evaluate their work.
b) Help students achieve short- and long-term goals.
c) Help students apply previous feedback to do better in summative assessment.
d) Include peer to peer comments and teacher student dialogue.
e) Serve as a motivation for all students.
f) Develop student's assessment literacy.
g) Be timely, so that feedback can inform future learning.

The student is always able to retake a module or re submit an assessment if they fail. The student can also decide to continue the other modules before he retakes the failed module. This will be decided between the student and the lecturer/Tutor as to when best to retake as GC Academy values the student as a stakeholder. There are also Mitigating circumstances like a student would need a break from his studies. This is also possible and should be communicated by the student by a written e mail and the response given to the student by e mail. A break from studies is possible and needs to be negotiated between student and Lecturer for the best interest of the student. Therefore, the students have this flexibility to make it more of a student-centred approach.

The GCA has the right to make reasonable adjustments to learning, teaching and assessment to support students with divers needs so long as the intended learning outcomes to be assessed remain the same.

Student-centred learning tries to relate information or tasks to her/his own experience, makes links with other bodies of knowledge, restructures information for her/his own personal meaning. Synthesises, likes to work from the complete context, searches for underlying structure, purpose and meaning, uses knowledge intuitively, uses analogies and metaphors and tends to be independent and creative. Project work/(any research assessment) and open-ended assessment tend to promote this orientation to learning.

The teaching needs for the online quality assurance qualification is based on webinars and power points and feedback to the students work. The lecturers are responsive to students' queries through e-mails and or by Skype if necessary

The effectiveness of teaching is based on declared learning outcomes, which are found in the written module templates and accredited as a qualification by NCFHE.

The academic staff will comment on the assessment in the self-review module report after every module has been completed and assessed while the student can make his comments in the student's questionnaire.

Diversity and Inclusion

GC Academy management is in favour of diversity and inclusion through its admission policy and procedure, treating students equally and with equity, irrespective of any grounds such as sex, race, colour etc. GC Academy management enhances this through its policies and procedures about discrimination which is against any form of online bullying or harassment. Any breach must be reported to the GC Academy Management by e-mail. After the investigation of the situation, necessary actions are taken.

Diversity is found in the teaching methods. The quality assurance post graduate certificate includes webinars, discussions, power points, skype meetings and feedback through chat and e-mails. Online Discussions are held through the online discussion board on an individual basis or by appointments through skype. The diverse methods are written on the module templates which the enrolled students can access.

Fairness and consistency in assessments are secured through accreditation by NCFHE in the programme application, the lecturer's feedback, and this is evaluated through students' questionnaires. The assessments are made available to the student beforehand and the criteria is publicly published on the website. These two elements make it fair. If the student feels it is not fair there are the complaints and appeals procedures. The student can also indicate this in the student's questionnaire.

The students are informed by e mail when they pass or fail. In the case of a fail they can retake the failed module after having discussed with the lecturer.

Standard 5

Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

Admission requirements – a first degree at EQF Level 6 and mature students over 21 years of age and have C1 English language level and basic IT skills to follow the programme online. The Admission criteria is public knowledge. Should the student not be accepted the student will be informed by an e mail stating why. If the student does not feel it is transparent or correct, he can complain and also appeal through the Contact us or student handbook found on the website. Should there be an appeal the appeals committee is composed of external members who write a recommendation report to the Education Director for any desired action. The student must also have internet connection. The student must either possess a degree or apply through Recognised Prior Learning. GC academy also gives weight for entry to all those working in educational institutions and are interested in diversifying their career to Quality Assurance. A CV complete with working experience is required in this case to be evaluated by GC management. The GC Management will evaluate the CV against experience gained and can also ask for referees' statements to ensure transparency.

Once all modules including the research essay are fully obtained by the student, he will receive the postgraduate certificate entitled "Post Graduate Certificate in Quality Assurance EQF level 7" with 34 credits. Should the student desire to take a break from his studies all he needs to do is write an official e mail why he needs the break and the Management will send its response of a decision by e-mail. Flexibility exists so long it is for the benefit of the student. The students need to present an identification document with photo and fill in the application along with the fees. Once the student is enrolled, he is fully informed of his duties.

There is no progression, there is an amalgamation of modules to obtain the postgraduate certificate. The post-graduate certificate is accredited by NCFHE and awarded by Global Connect Academy. The student progression is collected by keeping a physical and online file of the students work and his passes/fails while the long essay is given marks and kept in a physical file. The student will be given his certificate/ award accordingly when graduated, with a copy in his file.

An induction is done through webinars and the website itself and an e-mail communication. Data is collected through the application forms and are documented and stored by the Data Collector according to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The qualification is given upon successful completion of all modules. The qualification will include the level, credits and title of module/award. Those who do not complete the qualification are given an award with the achieved successful pass in the modules they would have passed.

The contracted company follows the ISO 27001 certificate standards and is also compliant with GDPR.

The records will hold details of students, passes and fails according to GDPR.

The student records are stored in the server for up to 40 years with a company contracted by GC Academy to provide the online service of GC Academy.

Standard 6

CPD's: The following key areas for professional development are for encouraging lecturers to keep up to date. They will need to present on a yearly basis an add on in their CV's their CPD's which can also include:

1) Developing methodologies to promote interactive learning experiences
2) Developing instructional materials
3) New technological development and mix of technologies
4) Marketing of online courses
5) Strategies for evaluation of the process and outcomes of online learning
6) Opportunities for feedback and mentoring
7) Online student support services.
8) Conferences, seminars etc
9) Any other CPD which has value about the knowledge content or teaching

The Lecturers are also required to make a self-review of all modules taught by them and present it to GC Academy management. The student questionnaire also contains questions about the lecturers as part of the way Lecturers are observed. The questionnaires are received by the GC academy management directly from students. The feedback is provided in a written format to the students and Lecturers for transparency.

The GC academy encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research through CPDs undertaken by the lecturers which can be in the form of conferences and seminars. Moreover, the Long essay itself serves as a contribution to enhance the knowledge base and research which in turn is of benefit to the Lecturer who can further use these long essays for the benefit of the content and for any further research that can be done by the Lecturer himself.

The Lecturers are hand-picked, but this is also fair and transparent by making sure that the qualifications required for such a course and Level are honoured. Should the Management find it difficult to handpick then an advert with the necessary qualifications is issued and interviews carried out by the management for selection purposes.

GC Academy Management keeps ongoing monitoring of its Lecturers through the Lecturers self-review report (which includes but not limited to number of students, pass and fail rates, difficulties encountered, adequate resources etc) and this is benchmarked against the replies on the student's questionnaire. The Mechanism also includes the complaints and appeals procedure which can be targeted towards Lecturers making the system fairer for ongoing monitoring of Lecturers.

The Lecturers competence is overseen by the Management and the reports from external assessors who will take samples to check the online feedback given by Lecturers, any tutorials and any other request by the management. The student questionnaire is also evidence of oversight of the lecturer's competence. The Management will make an appraisal report during a meeting with the lecturer after reading the external assessors reports and student

questionnaire at hand. The appraisal will be documented. Any action required will be followed up by the Management

Standard 7

Learning resources and Student Support

Online learning is constructed through a process of co-production between the learner and the learning environment. Quality factors include:
1) Provision of tutorial support using a diverse range of media for communication like e-mails and skype by the Lecturer.
2) Technical standards
3) Cost-value and expectations students bring to a course (students need to perceive that the learning experience and benefits are adequate in terms of the costs of the online course
4) The structure of the course and flexibility provided
5) The programme has all written module templates available to the student.

The content as a learning resource and the platform has:
a) Consistent layout and design
b) Clear organisation and presentation of information
c) Consistent and easy to use navigation
d) Aesthetically pleasing design and graphics.

Student support is given through the information about GC Academy, the course, the reading materials and tutorials. The student support is information given on the platform before they embark in the course so that students can make an informed choice. Steps to get setup for study are found online and in some courses a sample unit is provided so that students get a taste of online learning.

Moreover, a Lecturer acting as Tutor is available as a student support for academic purposes. All students whether full time, part time and those with any kind of disability will have total support from the Lecturer/Tutor at first instance. Should the student in question need any further support the Lecturer/Tutor will advise the Management accordingly. The student can always complain and appeal if he does not feel he is getting the support to make him successful in achieving what he was promised.

Learning resources are determined by management, the lecturer and through students' questionnaires. The management will discuss the modules self-reviews by the Lecturer, the results of the student questionnaire and any other means like talks with other QA professionals to determine the resources have the final say due to financial connotations.

All necessary books, texts etc are available through readings links given specifically for the course. However, there is also Dropbox serving as a library where more e books are found for research purposes. Further online research can be done through the internet where there are open resources available to the students regarding the topic of Quality assurance examples: https://www.jisc.ac.uk/full-guide/learning-space-toolkit-case-studies

https://elkanacenter.ceu.edu/ergp-evaluation
https://scholar.google.com/
https://archive.org/
EURASHE
ZLibrary

The students are also indicated the following (below) reliable journals which they can purchase at their expense or may have access through other partnerships

Academy of Management Journal,
Academy of Management Review,
Administrative Science Quarterly,
Journal of Management,
Journal of Management Studies,
Management Science,
Organizational Science, and
Strategic Management Journal

Any technical support is given by the CEO who currently is Mr Levente NAGY-PÁL. The GC Academy has automated procedures to ensure continuity of service in case of failure of their equipment/software. There is a backup system.

Standard 8

Information and Management

The Information Management is entirely online work supplemented through e-mails. As GC engine is an LMS online solution, a protected server system is provided where all information data is stored in the database featured by MYSQL system.

The MySQL database system is the most developed currently in the Word. The GC Academy has IOS 9001 and ISO 27001 standards where the necessary solutions and procedure are guaranteed through the established Disaster Recovery Plan (DPR) and Business Continuity Plan (BCP).

We consider the privacy and the protection of the data we use as a very important matter, and we do our best to comply with the regulations of the EU commission in this field. The processing of personal data, such as the name, address, e-mail address, or telephone number of a data subject shall always be in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The GC Academy archives the student records in Malta (both online and in physical files) and ensures that its contents are available for 40 years as required by NCFHE through its Provider Audit Manual of Procedures. Further information is included in the Privacy Policy document posted in the GC Academy platform.

The information includes:

1) Admission records, students' details proof of assessment.
2) Profile of the student population.
3) Course participation, retention and success rates.
4) Students' satisfaction with the program.

The information is collected online through online applications. The rates of success are also collected and recorded. After every cohort there will be a discussion to see how this can feedback in improving the course and effective management of a course.

Students and staff both contribute in providing and analysing information. The provision comes through the student questionnaires and the Lecturers Modules self-reviews. Both are reviewed by Management and any desired action is communicated giving responsibility for the action and a timeline. The Management will follow up the activities to ensure the results are achieved.

Standard 9

Public Information

The GC Academy informs the general public through:

1) The platform link: https://Globalconnectacademy.com/
2) Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn

Both the platform and the social media are the responsibility of GC Academy. The CEO is responsible to keep the website up to date while the other staff have the responsibility to inform the CEO of any required changes as necessary. The CEO is also responsible for ensuring the information dissemination on the social media.

The Quality Assurance post graduate certificate is found on the website and advertised on social media. The platform and social media give information about the level of the programme; the credits allocated to the programme and the post-graduate certificate is accredited by NCFHE and awarded by Global connect academy.

The modules are made known to the students once they are enrolled. However, the student is guided to make a choice for joining or not through the information provided. The student can also e-mail or chat for guidance through the platform.

(Platform features news, courses, testimonials, FAQ's, partners and a contact us button).

The GC Academy platform covers:
1) Admission criteria
2) Overall Learning outcomes of the post-graduate certificate
3) MQF/EQF level and number of ECTS
4) Teaching, learning and assessment procedures
5) Pass rates are disseminated upon request through the contact us button.

    The Pass marks are made known – for modules 1 to 10 it is a Pass/Fail system while the Long Essay is marked out of 100. The Pass mark both in modules and the Long Essay is a Grade C (45 to 60 out of 100)
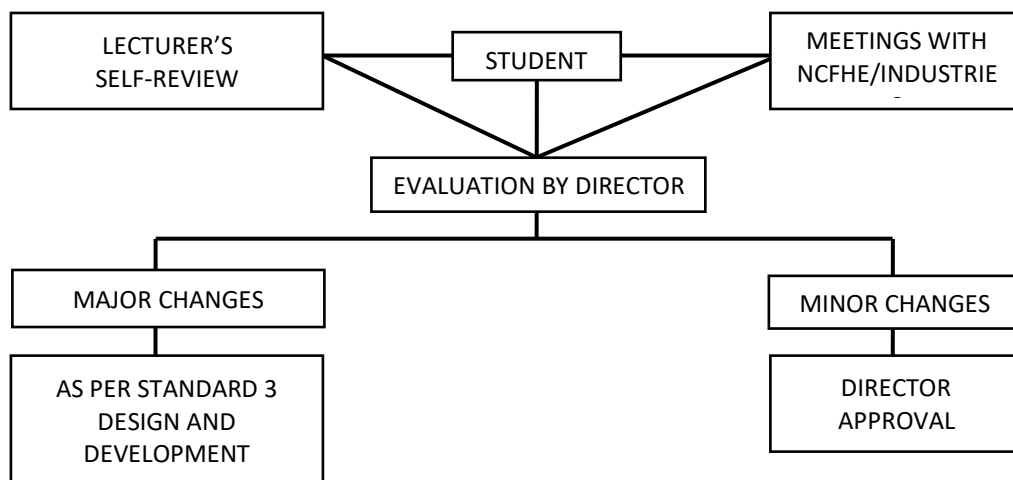
The Pass/Fail modules use same criteria as the Long essay but are not marked. So, there is consistency in marking.

All the listed elements are included in the Student Handbook, available on the GC Academy platform. The website is kept up to date by the CEO currently Mr Levente NAGY-PÁL. The CEO will co-ordinate will all staff in order to keep website up to date.

There are no further learning opportunities on the platform, but career paths are stated.

Standard 10

Curriculum Review Process

```
┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
│  LECTURER'S  │      │ STUDENT  │      │  MEETINGS WITH   │
│ SELF-REVIEW  │      │          │      │ NCFHE/INDUSTRIE  │
└──────────────┘      └──────────┘      └──────────────────┘
              \           │            /
               \          │           /
              ┌────────────────────────┐
              │  EVALUATION BY DIRECTOR │
              └────────────────────────┘
              /                         \
┌──────────────┐                   ┌──────────────┐
│ MAJOR CHANGES│                   │ MINOR CHANGES│
└──────────────┘                   └──────────────┘
┌──────────────┐                   ┌──────────────┐
│ AS PER       │                   │  DIRECTOR    │
│ STANDARD 3   │                   │  APPROVAL    │
│ DESIGN AND   │                   └──────────────┘
│ DEVELOPMENT  │
└──────────────┘
```

The Director and the lecturer along with the IT support service company (VTL Design LTD, Budapest) carry out meetings after every module to keep up to date on the operations and the success of students. The meetings are recorded in minutes.

Ongoing monitoring includes the lecturers' self-review, student questionnaire responses and any meeting carried out with NCFHE or any other educational stakeholder so that all is evaluated by the Director. The Director will inform all stakeholders of any minor or major changes required. Any minor changes will require Director approval and dissemination of the changes. If there are Major Changes these will have to pass through NCFHE for accreditation purposes. Programmes will be reviewed in the light of the latest research/practice in the sector to ensure they are up to date. This is done through Lecturers CPDs like attending conferences and seminars and keeping up to date with NCFHE. The Lecturer will attend NCFHE meetings regarding Quality Assurance, any international conferences and seminars to keep up to date and be able to monitor the situation and make recommendations to the GC Academy Management.

The results of the Review will be communicated to all necessary stakeholders by an e-mail.

All Policies and Procedures will be reviewed every Calendar year in December.

Standard 11

External Review

The Global Connect Academy will submit itself to an external audit every five years by applying to the National Commission for Further and Higher Education. This will ensure transparency when an external audit is carried out. The report of the external audit will be published on the NCFHE website for all stakeholders to see.

Appendix 1.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

1. Admission Policy

The GC Academy Management admits qualified applicants as per guidelines for the qualification offered. Students will be informed by an e-mail when accepted to follow the course.

Admission Procedure

Admission for the Quality Assurance Postgraduate Certificate.

The student should be mature and over 21 years of age with good skills in basic IT skills to be able to follow online. The student must possess an EQF Level 6 or equivalent. The student must have an internet connection. In the English language students have to meet minimum C1 Level (IELT 6.5 and 7.5) to follow the QA Postgraduate certificate.

The student can also apply through the Maturity clause (student being 21 years and over) but must meet the English language requirement along with the other requirements for application.

For the application to the QA Postgraduate Certificate the student needs to submit a CV, any identification document with his/her photo along with the required fees before accessing the course content. This procedure needs to be done through the website from the sign up and sign in buttons from the student handbook.

The above requirements are applied consistently and in a transparent manner as records are well kept for auditing purposes.

No refunds are given after payment for admissions unless the candidate is not enrolled into the course because he is not qualified or there are Mitigating circumstances (See Mitigating Policy and Procedure) that do not allow him to start the course. A 10% administration fee is charged before any refunds are given.

2. Academic Calendar Policy

GC Academy Management provides clear, accurate and timely information to its stakeholders about key academic dates and deadlines.

Academic Calendar Procedures

GC Academy Management will issue the academic calendar on the website and send an e-mail to students about the academic calendar years.

3. International Policy

GC Academy Management develops, markets and delivers modules, awards and programmes according to the strategy of GC Academy to meet the requirements of international students.

International Procedure

All modules, awards and programmes have an international flair added to them and this is done through the standard 3 of design development keeping in mind the educational needs, resource needs and any applicable fees.

4. Module/Award/Programme Viability Assessment Policy

The GC Academy Management continuously monitors the modules/awards/programmes in tandem with the lecturers and students.

Module/Award/Programme Viability Assessment Procedure

The GC Academy Management will review every 5 years the modules/awards/programmes through:

1. Employment rates (by asking Alumni)

2. Student online questionnaires

3. Other relevant information for ongoing monitoring like feedback from the lecturer

The GC Academy Management will make a review and take any action as necessary after having gone through the above 3 points.

5. New Modules/Awards/Programmes Policy

The GC Academy Management will accept new modules/awards/programmes where appropriate according to the strategy of GC Academy.

New Modules/Awards/Programme Procedure

See Standard 3 table in Quality Assurance Manual

6. Plagiarism Policy

GC Academy Management is against plagiarism and conducts a procedure in place for the long essay.

Plagiarism Procedure

Staff and students are made aware that plagiarism is not accepted through a Welcome e mail with reference to the Policy and Procedure on the website. In the case the GC Academy Management and the lecturer find evidence that students work has been plagiarized then the student will be informed by an e mail. In the first instance, the student is given a chance to resubmit without capping marks. In the second instance, the student is given a chance, but his pass mark will be capped at 60%. In the third instance, the student will not get his award or qualification.

7. Credentials Policy

GC Academy Management is to ensure that the credentials and credits are in line with the National Commission for Further and Higher Education Malta.

Credentials Procedure

The GC Academy credentials and credits are verified through a procedure by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education Malta.

Quality assurance course has modules with credits allocated. The qualification has to be completed in less than 1 year and is of an EQF Level 7. The total Postgraduate certificate carries 34 credits (ECTS).

8. Student Online Performance and Behaviour Policy

The GC Academy Management support students online with rules and regulations in the student handbook to assist them in their studies and behaviour.

Student Online Performance and Behaviour Procedure

See student handbook link.

9. Mitigating Circumstance Policy

GC Academy Management support students who have issues related to their lifestyle or medical problems.

A mitigating circumstance is an unforeseen or unpreventable situation which hinders the student from performing according to the academic calendar. The following are examples but not limited to:

Death in family

Long term sickness including Hospitalisation.

Work travel hindering meeting deadlines

Family problems like divorcing

Mental Health issues

Mitigating Circumstances Procedure

If the student decides to take a break from his studies, he will need to write an e mail to the management who in turn will inform the student by an e mail the decision taken in best interest of the student. The student must inform GC Academy Management through e-mail about such circumstances. The GC Academy Management will take a decision within 5 working days and inform the student by e mail accordingly about the decision taken.

10. ICT Policy

The GC Academy Management invests in the latest affordable technology for the benefit of teaching and learning.

ICT Procedure

The GC Academy Management reviews the ICT infrastructure on an ongoing basis to make sure students, staff and management can make use of it in a friendly manner.

Students can access the course content using their registered personal email and the password they have provided during the registration procedure. They are provided with a virtual learning environment.

The computer device is the ownership and supplied by the student him- or herself for teaching and learning.

GC Academy Management provides online help as part of the ICT procedure to abide by the policy.

Each student will be communicated with the e-mail address as given during the registration procedure, which must be the personal e-mail of the student.

11. Long Essay Policy

The GC Academy Management values research as part of learning and the long essay is a research module on quality assurance at EQF level 7.

Long Essay Procedure

The students can access information on Research Methods on the website and can ask other information through emails and integrated chat and forum discussion panels.

Students are requested to propose a title for their research and are assisted by their lecturers for feedback. A proper template is circulated to all students to submit the title and additional information (see template). An assessor is assigned to every student to assess the long essay. The long essay marking scheme is also found on the website as the long essay is not just a pass/fail module but is assigned marks/percentage with assessor's feedback. Research by students is done through self-study to produce a final 5,000-6,000 research paper. These papers will also contribute to teaching material

and so will any Lecturers research. This creates a relationship between research, teaching and learning.

The long essay should be between 5,000 – 6,000 words. Appendices, bibliography and other references do not count as part of the word count.

Students exceeding the above parameters will be penalised 5% of the marks.

The final mark will be communicated to the students with a maximum of two months after submission.

12. Ethics Policy

GC Academy Management believes in freedom of expression. However, the written word sometimes seems harsher than the spoken word in a face to face environment where facial expressions give meaning to the communication. Therefore, for ethical purposes, the lecturer and students should be careful how to express themselves in e-mails, chat or forum discussion panels. The aim of e-mails, chat or forum discussion panels is for learning from each other to contribute to the acquisition of the Postgraduate Certificate in Quality Assurance. Students need to exchange ideas through discussion by respecting each other and recognizing their responsibilities to other individuals.

All stakeholders must abide by the policies and procedures as part of ethics. Anyone can raise an ethics breach through the Contact us button.

Ethics Procedure

If ethics are breached the GC Academy Management have the right to enforce disciplinary procedures, which include the setup of three persons as an autonomous board to investigate and recommend any action necessary to the Director. The Director will decide upon the recommendations, act accordingly and inform the person who has breached ethics by e mail within two weeks.

13. Discrimination Policy

The Policy of the GC Academy is to ensure that employees, lecturers and students treat each other with dignity and without any discrimination. The policy is to comply with the Human rights Chapter 319 of the laws of Malta and to require that all employees and students understand and act in accordance with that legislation.

Discrimination is the unfavourable treatment of a person due to one of his personal traits.

Discrimination Procedure

It is the responsibility of the GC Academy Director to oversee that there is no discrimination and that the Human Rights legislation is observed. Anyone being discriminated or anyone noticing discrimination can write a direct e-mail (through Contact us button) to the GC Academy Director. The Director will look into the case within 10 working days of receiving the complaint. Action will be taken as deemed necessary after facts have been established. It is the responsibility of the student or any other stakeholder making a discrimination claim to provide enough evidence of discrimination against him. Evidence is key. Since GC Academy is registered in Malta the student can take up the appeal to the ombudsman in this particular case of Discrimination (https://www.ombudsman.org.mt/).

If the student is found guilty of discrimination, he will be given a written warning. Should the same student repeat the offence a second time he will be expelled without any refund.

14. Equal Opportunities Policy

Further to the Discrimination Policy and procedure, the GC Academy, as a Maltese registered academy, follows Chapter 413 Equal Opportunities of the Laws of Malta including persons with disability.

Equal opportunity is about giving and getting a fair go. It does not assume everyone is the same and it does not mean treating everyone the same. That is why GC Academy has a Mitigating Policy and procedure to support the Equal Opportunities policy.

Equal Opportunities procedure

It is the responsibility of the GC Academy Director to oversee that there is an equal opportunity and that the legislation Chapter 413 is observed. Anyone who does not get an equal opportunity can write a direct e-mail to the GC Academy Director. The Director will consider the case within 10 working days of receiving the complaint. Action will be taken as deemed necessary after facts have been established. Since GC Academy is registered in Malta the student can take up the appeal to the ombudsman also for the equal opportunities (https://www.ombudsman.org.mt/)

15. Recruitment Policy

The GC Academy is a business venture and believes in recruiting the most qualified and experienced staff. (Recruitment of students fall under the Admissions Policy and procedure).

Recruitment procedure

The GC Academy handpicks its staff by looking at the CV, the qualifications which need to be with specific knowledge for the job and the years of experience plus reputation. All this is still consolidated by an interview after which an agreement is signed.

16. Academic Integrity and Freedom Policy

GC Academy maintains a high academic standard in its courses and expects students to conduct themselves in a manner which is fair, honest and consistent with the principles of academic integrity especially when undertaking assessment and research. This Policy is supplemented by the Plagiarism policy and procedure. Lecturers are to abide professionally with students by being fair in their approach and being fair in assessment as required through the written module templates and criteria marking as well as honest in their feedback and be consistent throughout. Should the lecturers not uphold the correct Professional conduct they will be reprimanded at first instance by Management and should it happen the second time the Lecturer in question will not be engaged again by GC Academy.

Academic Integrity and Freedom Procedure

Written and online material is provided to the students outlining the assessment tasks. The students are also requested to exercise freedom of speech by commenting on each other's work.

17. Appeals on assessment Policy

Students who are dissatisfied with an assessment of any kind have a right to complain and then also appeal.

Appeals on assessment Procedure

Students will write a complaint (through the Contact Us button) to the GC Academy Director. The Director will reply after having considered all facts within 10 working days. If an appeal on the decision is received by the GC Director, then the GC Director will appoint a new committee to discuss the appeal. The Appeals committee will be made of 3 external members to decide on the case and make

a final decision which will be communicated to the Director who in turn communicates with who made the appeal. The Appeals committee will have the final decision.

18. Recognised Prior Learning (RPL)

Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) is the recognition by the Academy that the student has through formal, non-formal or informal methods learnt the necessary learning outcomes and therefore does not need to repeat them and can progress to the next level.

Informal Learning:

Knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes (as confirmed by employers) the learner has acquired through life and work experience as demonstrated through various methods like one-portfolio, performance assessment at work, demonstration, any external evaluation.

Non-formal learning:

Knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes acquired from non-credit courses, on the job training, professional workshops which can be evidenced through exams, interviews, e-portfolios and any other evidence fit for purpose.

RPL Procedure

1. Any learner must submit the Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) information to GC Academy by email when applying.

2. Non-formal and informal learning can be used to apply for the GC Academy QA course if their learning is sufficient and includes a minimum of 2 years at a workplace experience.

3. GC Academy holds the right to judge which non-formal and informal learning can be accepted for enrolling in the QA course.

4. The competences demonstrated from non-formal and informal learning must be a minimum 50% of those required before following the QA course.

5. It is solely the learner's responsibility to provide satisfactory documentation for the non-formal and informal learning.

6. Those applying through RPL also need to pass the first two modules successfully before moving on to the other modules. This is to prove their capability to follow the course successfully. Failure to do so will eliminate them from following the course and will be required to apply again when they have all requirements.

Dr Tibor KOZSLA, Education Director of GC Academy is responsible for the RPL selection criteria and enrolment of such students. They will inform the learner within a month of application submission whether they have been accepted or not.

The student can appeal a negative decision. In this case a separate committee will be appointed by Dr Tibor KOZSLA.

The final decision given by this separate appeals committee will stand. The appeal must be carried out within 10 working days.

Those applying through RPL will be requested to pay 200 Euros before processing their request

Appendix 2.

STUDENT HANDBOOK

We are happy to support you with any kind of difficulty while using GC Academy courses. Please send your support request explaining your difficulty to edu@globalconnect.academy

The GC Academy Management will get in touch with you in 24 hours during the business hours.

LANGUAGE OF DAILY COMMUNICATION
The language of daily communication with GC Academy management and staff is ENGLISH. Please, use the google translate service to manage the communication in your language.

ACADEMIC PROGRESS
The students of GC Academy Courses have the opportunity to monitor their study progress at any the time. The Platform includes the feature "Online Result" in the profile "My Courses" section of every student. This feature can be accessed only after the student has signed in.

The "Online Result" feature generates a PDF document that shows the achieved result/grades of the student. The generated information provides the period of the semester, title, date and the result of the subject. In this PDF document, the Platform provides the best result that the student has achieved during the tests (if applicable).

The students can also monitor the results of the relevant Tests. This information is available in the "Test Details" feature.

If the student has any doubt or missing information, the GC Academy Management can provide them explanation requested by the student. Such request has to be sent to edu@globalconnecct.academy

SIGN-UP PROCEDURE
The interested students have to complete the signup and payment procedure before starting the course.

The students must use their personal email address to access the GC Academy platform. NO email address of any company or organisation is accepted; it is highly recommended to set up a GMAIL address for this course (https://accounts.google.com/signup).

Follow the guide hereunder that helps the sign-up procedure.

SIGN-IN PROCEDURE
Registered students must click on the "Sign in" button in the top right corner of the Platform. Type in your username, which is the email address used during "Sign-up" and the password, then click on "Sign in"

HOW TO MANAGE THE FORGOT PASSWORD CASE
If the student has forgotten the password that was given during sign-up, the following steps to follow:

1. Go to sign in and scroll down to the username and password window.
2. Under these windows, you will see the function titled "Forgot password?" and click on it.
3. Add your email address, click on "Send" and check your email account.
4. Follow the instructions of the email to change your password.

TUTORSHIP AND PROCEDURE

Every GC Academy Course may have one or more assigned instructor/lecturer/tutor. The name and the picture of the instructors/lecturers/tutors are available in the Course side. The students can also receive information about the instructor/lecturer/tutor by reviewing the profile.

The GC Academy platform provides different features of communication between the students and the instructor/lecturer/tutor.

The **Forum** post is available for every student to submit any question or query that is related to each module/subject. The Forum post feature provides the discussion for all the students enrolled in the same course at the same time. The instructor/lecturer/tutor provide guidance and explanation for the students answering the questions or query submitted by a student.

Translation device of the Forum post provides flexibility for the students to submit their question in the language they speak.

The students also can **contact** the instructor/lecturer/tutor directly.

The **chat** features of the Forum serve this possibility. Students can also send a personal email message to the instructor/lecturer/tutor directly. The email address of the instructor/lecturer/tutor is available in the course site of the platform.

The subject of the Forum post and the direct email messages can cover questions and queries included but not limited to issues of guidance in study skills, finding resources and counselling.

Meeting between a student and the instructor/lecturer/tutor can be scheduled on an individual basis. Since the students of GC Academy are coming from all over the world and live in different time zones, such a meeting must be scheduled carefully.

The GC Academy platform provides the feature of a live session via the Wowza feature that is embedded in the Platform.

FEEDBACK AND PROCEDURE

The students of GC Academy Course can provide their feedback after the Course is completed.

Every GC Academy Course has a specific online questionnaire where the students can express their opinion online anonymously. The feedback form can be completed up to 4 weeks after the Course concluded. This deadline is indicated in the invitation for the questionnaire.

The students receive an invitation for the questionnaire by email, where they can use the link that connects to the online form. The survey has mandatory and free questions. Every section of the poll also includes the possibility where the student can express their notes and proposals.

The GC Academy Management evaluated the completed feedback forms and stored in the database. The highlighted summary of the results is presented in a PowerPoint format and circulated among the instructors/tutors of the course for review. The GC Academy Management highlights the findings that require attention for the instructors/lecturers/tutors. The GC Academy Management hold a meeting for the discussion of the results and find the solution if necessary.

COMPLAINTS AND APPEAL PROCEDURE

The students of GC Academy have the possibility to complain and appeal against any decision taken by the GC Academy Management including the results of tests, assignment and practical scores if applicable. Any complain or appeal shall be submitted to the platform, using the "Contact us" link that

is available on the main page. The students shall select the "General Complaint" or "Appeal" in "Select topic" drop-down menu. A detailed description shall be posted and sent to the GC Academy Management. This email will automatically be sent to the edu@globalconnect.academy address.

The submitted message of complaint or appeal will be handled by the GC Academy Management. The proposal of solution regarding the submitted complaint or appeal of the students is circulated among the instructor/lecturer/tutor and the GC Academy Education Director for final approval of the decision. In case of an appeal the GC Director will inform three (3) external member committee to decide on the case. The appeals committee decision is a final decision.

The GC Academic Education Director will send the final decision of the submitted appeal and handles the appropriate administration if necessary, in the database of the student who submitted the appeal.

TAKING A BREAK IN THE COURSE

The GC Academy Courses are designed in the way that students can study using the online platform anywhere and anytime. If students face scheduling difficulty in completing the course within the timeframe of the given semester (if applicable), they can request the completion of the missing Tests during the upcoming scheduled semester (if available).

It is important that every student must finish the GC Academy course(s) within 12 months from the date of their sign-up/registration. After the 12 months, the course results will expire, and the student has to start all over again from the very beginning of the course.

Students must send a letter to edu@globalconnect.academy to submit such intention.

TERMINATING THE COURSE

Students must send a letter to edu@globalconnect.academy if they intend terminate the course.

DEVICES THAT CAN ACCESS THE GC ACADEMY PLATFORM

The platform is designed for desktop computers, laptops, tablets and mobile phones.

INTERNET ACCESS PROBLEM FOR COURSE TESTS

The tests and assignment uploads can only be completed online. The period for these tests is available from the date when the trial opens until the end of the Semester. This flexibility will provide a comfortable choice when the test is completed during the given period. The period for the assignment uploads is indicated in the space where the upload to be completed.

INTERNET ACCESS PROBLEM FOR COURSE LECTURES

Every lecture includes learning material for download. The students can download the suggested content that can be used offline. The list of the downloadable content is available in every module page of the Platform.

THE USE OF CAMERA TEST OPTION

Some courses do require to activate the web camera of the used devices. Although the camera option works for tablet and mobile devices only on the Android platform, above version 4.0. The test

application requiring web camera works on desktop computers (internal or external camera) and laptops with web camera. It is recommended to use the CHROME browser for the use of the camera test option.

When a Video Test option is active, the students have to allow their laptop and/or desktop computers to access the camera.

SYSTEM OF CERTIFICATE DELIVERY

The GC Academy course certificates are delivered directly to the students only by email in PDF format. The certificates are only delivered if the student has completed all the necessary requirements of course completion.

Students can also find the copy of your certificate(s) in the Profile section where they can download it any time.

SYSTEM OF TRANSCRIPT DELIVERY

The transcript can be downloaded in the Profile section from "My Courses" using the "Final Results" feature in the Platform if applicable.

Title of Qualification - Postgraduate certificate in Internal Quality Assurance for Higher Education
Level of Qualification - Level 7 - EQF
Hours of Total Learning - 850
Contact Hours - 120
Self-Study Hours - 510
Assessment Hours - 220
Number of ECTS - 34
Course duration: 6 months (Full-time) - 1 year (Part-time)
Course type: Full-time/Part-time

TARGET GROUP

The Level 7 Postgraduate Certificate in Quality Assurance course aspires to prepare students who are interested in developing a career in quality Assurance or who are already working in an educational institution and want to further their academic and practical knowledge to a Level 7 in this field.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

- An EQF Level 6 or equivalent or

- Mature student over 21 years of age or

- Through Recognised Prior Learning (RPL).

- The students have to meet minimum C1 Level (IELT 6.5 and 7.5) in English.

OVERALL COURSE OBJECTIVES
The Learner will be able to:

- Comprehend knowledge about Quality assurance, Quality enhancement, the quality cycle and policies and procedures.

- Comprehend the ENQA standards and added standards of Probity and Internationalisation for Internal Quality Assurance

- Comprehend theories as basis to standards and how this forms the basis of developing and applying ideas.

- Apply the Theory to practice by using a toolkit, but also creating original questions for internal audit purposes.

- Apply the theory to practice by demonstrating mastery of knowledge and skills in managing people and projects.

- Communicate to specialist and non-specialist (including the general public) audiences through reports and discussions.

- Perform critical evaluations and analysis to come to his own judgement and assume his position on the standards and other work of his peers

- Research and carry out a final piece of research as a position paper on any topic related to Internal Quality assurance

- Develop new skills in auditing with response to the ENQA standards and the newly added Probity and Internationalisation in a way to demonstrate the leadership skills required for report writing and its defence.

- Audit an Educational Institution and its programmes through his research.

- Manage an Educational Institution at various leadership roles in different cultural contexts or Manage an Internal quality assurance Unit.

- Demonstrate autonomy by researching on the standards and come to a personal position in auditing.

- Learn skills to allow him to continue studying and go onto other related programmes or for work purposes.

COURSE RATIONALE

This is a unique course in Quality Assurance since it combines the Academic element with hands-on practical elements. The course is being offered to contribute to the professionalisation of Quality Assurance as a subject.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning outcomes for communication skills for the whole course:

Communicating questions adequately and writing a self-assessment report to be understood by the general public.

Learning outcomes for learning skills for the whole course:

1. Pursue further education in Quality Assurance.

2. Comply with gathering information interpreting and implementing data in the field to be used for enhancement purposes.

3. Apply and use information and communication as required in this area of study.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Assessments

1. Each module will be assessed according to the written module template.

2. Each module is a Pass or Fail with the exception of the 10th module which is the Long Essay and is assessed with marks out of 100.

3. The overall mark is a Pass in all modules and students must achieve 50% in the long Essay for the full qualification to be given.

4. Students failing to obtain a Pass have the chance to repeat the module at the next available opportunity. Failure in the Long Essay will be as above.

Assignments/Tasks

1. All assignments (questions, discussion boards etc) must be submitted per deadlines as disseminated to the students before the start of the course.

2. Students who for some reason or other who cannot hand their assignments on time have the Mitigating policy and Procedure to abide by.

3. Any student who does not agree with the result can apply the Complaint Policy and Procedure. After the result which may not be satisfactory to the student, the Appeals Policy and Procedure can be applied.

Long Essay

1. The long Essay must be uploaded on the plagiarism software. A soft copy of the Long Essay is to be provided to an external examiner.

2. Students who have to re-do the Long Essay will be charged € 100. The fee can vary along the years and each year this fee is revised.

3. Students are not assisted by a tutor for the Long Essay but can ask for assistance from the lecturer since the lecturer is not the examiner.

4. All Long Essays are corrected by external examiners having an EQF level 7 certificate or above.

GENERAL PEDAGOGICAL GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

This online course uses recorded webinars, power point presentations, inquiry-based questions and discussion boards. Reflective thinking and planning will also be added to the overall learning objectives in order to encourage critical thinking as part of effective experiential learning.

ASSESSMENT TYPES USED IN THE COURSE

Types of assessment which will be used

- Long Essay
- Reports
- Questions
- Discussion
- Critical analysis
- Creating toolkit questions

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION

Hello and welcome to the Quality Assurance Postgraduate Certificate. My name is Gino Schiavone and I am the Head of Internal Quality assurance office in a Maltese Educational Institution. I am also an external quality assurance auditor.

This Quality Assurance Postgraduate Certificate is made up of 10 modules. Each module can be completed online in three/ two weeks except the 10th module which takes longer, because it is the module for the long essay.

The modules are:

1. Strategy, policies and procedures
2. Probity and internationalization
3. Design and approval of programmes
4. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
5. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
6. Competence of teaching staff
7. Learning resources and student support
8. Information management and on-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes
9. Public information
10. Long-essay

Why should you apply?

This programme is ideal for all those who want to work or are already working in quality Assurance and also for managers or heads of departments, schools, institutions, faculties and universities. Employers and employees in education need to be highly competent in Quality Assurance in today's world. You will learn how to audit an educational institution against the European standards and more. This course is also ideal for Management.

If you are interested in Quality Assurance, we have this course to help you achieve the knowledge, skills and competencies.

What is Quality Assurance?

Quality Assurance is a way of improving the internal environment and processes such that the effectiveness of learning and teaching can be ensured to achieve the planned goals. You will be able to make sure through your work that the education services satisfy the needs of stakeholders and are accountable to the public. Your professional job will be exactly this by ensuring that the aims, content, practices and outcomes of education are fit for purpose and for the future of new generations.

This Quality Assurance course will give you exactly that; the professional ability to quality assure education.

LONG ESSAY

The GC Academy Management values research as part of learning and the long essay is a research module on quality assurance at EQF level 7.

Long Essay Procedure

The students can access information on Research Methods on the website and can ask other information through emails and integrated chat and forum discussion panels.

Students are requested to propose a title for their research and are assisted by their lecturers for feedback. A proper template is circulated to all students to submit the title and additional information (see template). An assessor is assigned to every student to assess the long essay. The long essay marking scheme is also found on the website as the long essay is not just a pass/fail module but is assigned marks/percentage with assessor's feedback.

The long essay should be between 5,000 – 6,000 words. Appendices, bibliography and other references do not count as part of the word count.

Students exceeding the above parameters will be penalised 5% of the marks.

The final mark will be communicated to the students with a maximum of two months after submission.

GC Academy Management is against plagiarism and conducts a procedure in place for the long essay.

Staff and students are made aware that plagiarism is not accepted through a Welcome email with reference to the Policy and Procedure on the website. In the case the GC Academy Management and the lecturer find evidence that students work has been plagiarized then the student will be informed by an email. In the first instance, the student is given a chance to resubmit without capping marks. In the second instance, the student is given a chance, but his pass mark will be capped at 60%. In the third instance, the student will not get his award or qualification.

The Long Essay in Quality Assurance (Education) will be formally graded

In all cases we will use the Global Connect Academy grading scheme (below), with reference to criteria devised (below):

Grade A 80-100%

- Excellent identification of the problem, in its real-world context
- Highly relevant examples or evidence to illustrate the problem
- Excellent grasp of research, concepts and theories relevant to the problem
- Excellent critique of how far the theory or research used explains the problem
- Strong integration of disparate evidence, concepts and theories
- Highly persuasive and actionable proposals to address the problem
- Excellent logical structure and very well written
- Correctly cited references.

Grade B 61-79%

- Good, clear identification of the problem, in its real-world context
- Relevant examples or evidence to illustrate the problem
- Good grasp of research, concepts and theories relevant to the problem
- No critique of how far the theory or research used explains the problem
- Good use of disparate evidence, concepts and theories, but no integration
- Plausible and actionable proposals to address the problem
- Good logical structure and well written
- Correctly cited references.

Grade C 45-60%

- Limited relevance of examples or evidence to illustrate the problem
- Limited but not misguided grasp of research, concepts or theories relevant to the problem
- No critique of how far the theory or research used explains the problem
- Very limited use of disparate evidence, concepts or theories, and no integration
- Barely plausible but not unworkable proposals to address the problem
- Acceptable logical structure and quality of writing
- Correctly cited references but may contain minor errors.

The Essay will be evaluated by qualified external assessors. The external assessors are all qualified at a minimum of Level 7 and experienced in Quality assurance or equivalent like ISO auditors.

ESSAY TOPIC PROPOSAL

Dear Students,

Please, the GC Academy Management will send you the Form in WORD document for the Topic Proposal. After you have completed the form, please send it back to Mr Gino SCHIAVONE by email to ginoschiavone@yahoo.com.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Minimum full qualification pegged at MQF Level 7, together with 5 years of experience in teaching in a related area and minimum of 5 years working in Quality Assurance. Experience of online tutoring is recommended.
OR
Minimum full qualification pegged at MQF Level 6, together with 10 years of experience teaching in a related area and a minimum of 5 years working in Quality Assurance. Experience of online tutoring is recommended.
N.B: This is an up and coming discipline with no Internal Quality Assurance formal courses in Europe delivered in English (with 34 ECTS). Therefore, Lecturers have to be selected with experience in Quality Assurance for content delivery.