International Health Research Institute

Internal Quality Assurance

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The IQA

1.0 Quality Policy

The Institute's Internal Quality Assurance System scope extends to all programmes and associated activities governed by the Institute's licence as a Higher Education institution under the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority.

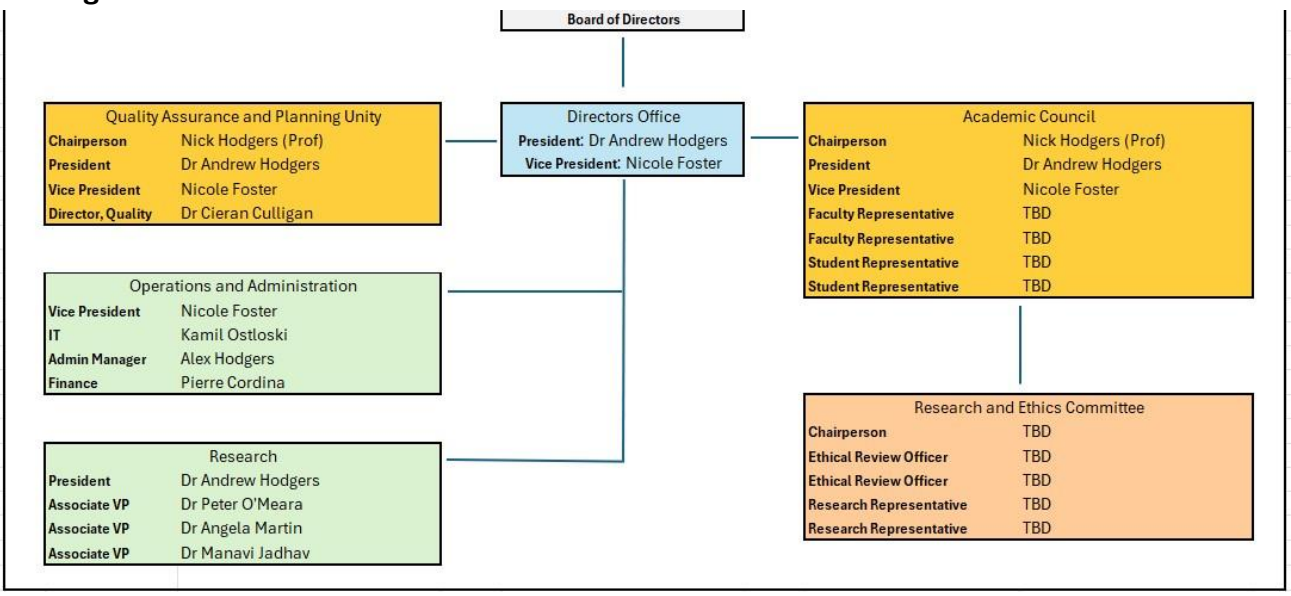
The IQA is an evolving system, and the Institute is committed to its continuous review and updating to ensure continuous quality improvement. The Institute is committed to engaging with all stakeholders on constant improvement and welcomes the contributions of all bodies in this regard.

Our quality assurance policy defines:

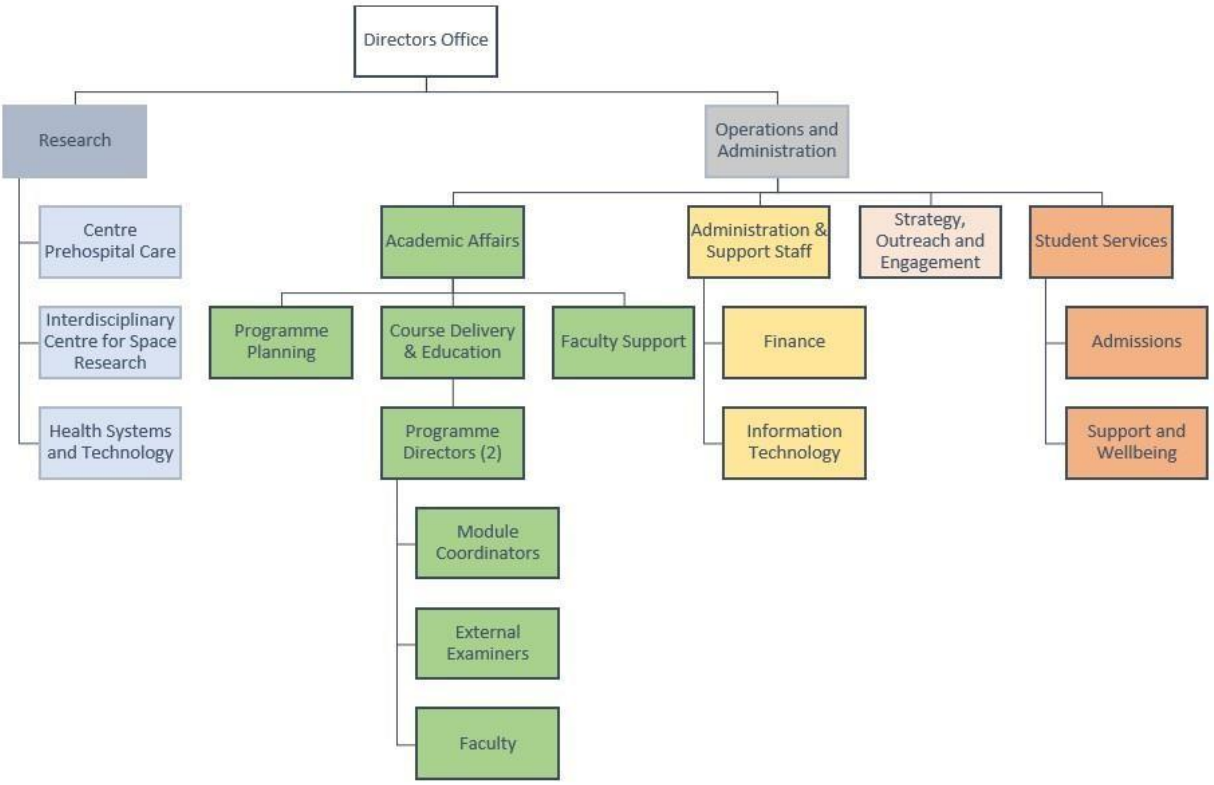
- Quality monitoring and improvement processes
- Governance structure
- Financial probity
- Design and approval of degree courses
- Student-centred teaching methods and assessments
- Student admission
- Staffing policy
- Learning support and online support systems
- Information management policy
- Public information policy
- Internal monitoring and program adjustments
- External quality assurance

The International Health Research Institute, a body corporate registered in Malta, was founded in 2022 as a private applied research institute. Its primary mission is the development of innovative solutions to global healthcare problems through leading-edge practitioner research and evidence-based training. As a licensed, accredited Maltese Higher education institution, IHRI is committed to a culture of quality in all aspects of its operations. It is a fundamental tenet of the Institute that all stakeholders are actively involved in developing and maintaining a structured quality management system following the Malta National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education.

Organisational Chart – Overall.



Organisational Chart – Detail.



1.1 IHRI Vision, Mission & Core Values

1.2 Vision

To be a trusted partner for applied research and innovation that changes the healthcare world. To build an ecosystem where science meets practice.

1.3 Mission

To develop innovative solutions to complex healthcare problems through online education, research & innovation. We are preparing a new generation of practitioner researchers[1] to develop and implement novel evidence-based approaches, in an environment where all researchers feel supported and empowered to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity.

1.4 Core Values

Teamwork, Creativity, Innovation, Knowledge, Expertise, and Diversity.

IHRI is a diverse community of practitioner-scholars[2] who believe that collaborations based on trust, openness and diverse thinking contribute to our role in solving complex problems faced by healthcare globally. We strive to partner with experts who supply knowledge, expertise and experience that steers us towards our goal. Our activities are conducted in an open, principled, and unbiased environment.

The institution is committed to ensuring academic integrity, freedom and equal treatment of management, academic and administrative staff and students and has procedures for ensuring intolerance of any kind or discrimination against staff and students.

Reference Policies:

DOC021 Student - Academic Integrity (Academic Fraud)
DOC022 Student - Code of Conduct (Discrimination and Procedure)
DOC004 Administration - Equality Policy

[1] [1] In the context of the International Health Research Institute, a practitioner-researcher is a professional who is actively engaged in their field of practice (e.g., health practitioners/clinicians, healthcare management, public health leadership, etc.) and concurrently involved in conducting research related to that practice. They bridge the gap between theory and practice by using research methodologies to investigate real-world problems and challenges within their professional domain. They are not only a consumer of research but also a producer of it, using research as a tool to improve practice and advance their field. They embody the Institute's focus on real-world application and impact.

[2] [2] In the context of IHRI a practitioner-scholar is recognised as an expert in their field who not only uses research to inform their practice but also actively contributes to the body of knowledge and shapes the future direction of their profession. They embody a higher level of research engagement and leadership compared to a practitioner-researcher. Experts/Practitioner-scholars at the Institute are individuals who possess both advanced academic qualifications (a doctoral degree) and substantial practical experience 10+ years, in their respective fields. They bridge the gap between theory and practice, bringing real-world insights into the learning environment.

1.5 Aims and Objectives

IHRI exists to promote research and innovation, academic excellence, and the development of a practitioner-scholar ecosystem that aims to develop solutions to challenging healthcare problems through the integration of leading-edge research and learning at the postgraduate/doctoral level (MQF/EQF Levels 7, 8). The learning activities at IHRI are about building 21st-century competencies for dynamic, uncertain environments.

Our learning approach focuses on being highly engaging and learner-centred. Our founders and faculty team are all experienced world of work experts/practitioner-scholars[3] with the requisite qualifications and experiences to supervise research and teach at the highest academic levels. To accommodate and fulfill its goal to be a leading research institute and online provider of quality postgraduate/doctoral degrees, the Institute strives to find and partner with other experts who will provide knowledge, expertise and experience that steer us towards our goal. The institution uses integrated online learning technologies and methodologies to improve learners' learning experiences and outcomes continuously. The faculty team is experienced in online teaching and learning technologies and didactic methods. The Institute in delivering MQF level 7 and 8 programs to an international audience, is also committed to ensuring and enhancing the quality of its programs and services. External benchmarking is a critical component of our quality assurance framework. The External Benchmarking Policy and Procedure for Quality Assurance DOC074 outlines the institute's commitment to external benchmarking and the procedures for conducting benchmarking activities.

1.6 Research at the Institute

The institute is deeply committed to fostering a vibrant research culture within its programmes. It believes high-quality research is essential for advancing knowledge, addressing complex health challenges, and preparing students for academia, industry, and healthcare leadership roles. To support this commitment and guide

students through their research endeavours, the institute provides a comprehensive research infrastructure, resources, and mentorship.

1.6.1 Strategic Research Priorities

The institute's research priorities align with its mission to develop innovative solutions to problems in targeted areas. The institute focuses on research that has the potential to significantly impact people, systems, and technology.

Key research areas include:

- **Health Science:** Research focusing on digital health, prehospital care, and global and public health to improve people's health, communities, and systems.
- **Health Leadership, Technology & Management**: Research focuses on leadership and change management in technology adoption, the impact of technology on healthcare workforce development, and ethical considerations in developing and deploying healthcare technologies.
- **Space Science and Human Systems:** Research in this area may focus on astronaut health, human factors in spaceflight, and the development of countermeasures to mitigate the adverse effects of space travel.

1.6.2 Funding Opportunities and Research Grants

The institute is dedicated to supporting postgraduate students in securing funding for their research projects. The Institute provides guidance and resources to help students identify and apply for funding opportunities from various sources:

- **Internal Funding**: The institute offers several zero-fee scholarships to support research projects undertaken by postgraduate students. These scholarships are competitively awarded based on the quality and potential impact of the proposed research projects.
- **External Funding**: The institute actively assists students in identifying and applying for external research grants from government agencies, foundations, and other organisations that support health research. The institute provides mentorship and resources to help students navigate the grant application process and increase their chances of success.
- **Industry Partnerships**: The institute collaborates with industry partners to create research opportunities and funding pathways for doctoral students. These partnerships may involve collaborative research projects, internships, or fellowships that provide students with valuable experience and financial support.

1.6.3 Budget Allocation for Research Activities

The institute recognises the importance of investing in research to advance its mission and contribute to health sciences, space science, human systems, health leadership, management and technology. The institute allocates a significant portion (40% – 60%) of its annual budget to support research activities, including doctoral research. The specific percentage of the budget allocated to research may vary from year to year within this range, depending on the institute's overall financial resources and strategic priorities. However, the institute is committed to maintaining a substantial investment in research to ensure that postgraduate students have the necessary resources to conduct high-quality research and contribute to advancing knowledge.

1.6.4 Human Resources and Research Staff Support

The institute provides doctoral students access to a dedicated team of professionals who offer support and guidance throughout the research process. This support encompasses:

- **Research Supervisors**: Each doctoral student is assigned an experienced research supervisor who provides expert advice, feedback, and mentorship. Supervisors are critical in helping students develop their research questions, design their studies, collect and analyse data, and disseminate their findings.
- **Research Staff**: The institute has research staff with expertise in various research methodologies and data analysis techniques. These staff members are available to support and consult doctoral students on research design, data management, statistical analysis, and other research-related tasks.
    - **Library and Technology Support**: The institute provides access to a comprehensive online library, research databases, and technology resources to support students' research activities. The institute's Faculty and Student Hub offer training and guidance on conducting literature reviews, accessing relevant research articles, and utilising online research tools.

1.6.5 Research Ethics and Integrity Guidelines

The institute is committed to upholding the highest research ethics and integrity standards. All doctoral research at the institute must comply with relevant ethical guidelines, regulations, and institutional policies. The institute provides comprehensive training and resources to ensure doctoral students understand and adhere to ethical research practices. This includes giving clear guidelines on plagiarism and the responsible use of AI tools in research.

1.7 Plagiarism

The institute has a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism, as found in the Academic Integrity Policy. All research work submitted by all students must be original and properly attributed. Students are expected to understand and adhere to the institute's academic integrity policy, which outlines the definition of plagiarism, its consequences, and the procedures for reporting and addressing plagiarism cases.

- **Maximum Allowed Percentage:** The institute utilises plagiarism detection software to ensure academic integrity. Any similarity report indicating a detection rate exceeding 25% will be flagged as Amber. This amber flag will trigger an investigation to determine if the detected similarities result from unattributed sources. While the maximum allowed similarity percentage may vary depending on the assessment and program, a detection rate above 25% necessitates further scrutiny. Students are reminded that any unattributed copying or paraphrasing, regardless of the overall similarity percentage, will be addressed appropriately. The institute utilises plagiarism detection software, such as Plagramme, to identify potential plagiarism in student work.
- **Software Used for Detection:** The institute uses "**Plagramme**" to detect plagiarism in student submissions. This software compares student work against a vast database of scholarly and online resources and 'real-time search technology,' which identifies similarities with papers published as recently as 10 minutes prior to checking.

1.8 Ethical Use of AI Tools

The institute recognises the potential benefits of using AI tools in research but acknowledges the ethical considerations associated with their use. The institute guides students on the ethical use of AI tools in their research, emphasising the importance of transparency, accountability, and responsible use.

- **Transparency:** Students are expected to be transparent about using AI tools in their research, clearly acknowledging the tools used and their role in the research process.
- **Accountability:** Students remain accountable for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of their research work, even when using AI tools. AI tools should support and enhance the research process, not replace the student's critical thinking and analysis.
- **Responsible Use:** Students are encouraged to use AI tools responsibly, considering their potential biases and limitations and ensuring that their use does not compromise the ethical principles of research.

Reference Policies:

Strategic Development Plan 2025 - 2030
DOC004 Administration - Equality Policy
DOC005 Administration - External Peer Review Policy and Procedure
DOC006 Administration - IHRI AI Policy
DOC007 Administration - Learning, Teaching & Assessment
DOC011 Administration - QA Policy and Standards for Online Teaching and Learning
DOC019 Research - Research at IHRI
DOC021 Student - Academic Integrity
DOC022 Student - Code of Conduct
DOC025 Student - Programme Regulations – Doctorate (MQF8)
DOC026 Student - Programme Regulations (MQF7) Space Health and Human Factors
DOC074 Administration - External Benchmarking Policy and Procedure for Quality Assurance
DOC076 Administration - Budget Policy
DOC085 Administration - Policy Development and Review
DOC091 Student – Admissions Policy

2.0 Institutional Probity

The International Health Research Institute was founded as a body corporate registered in Malta in 2022 as a private applied research/higher education institution. Its primary mission is the development of innovative solutions to healthcare problems through leading-edge research and online education programmes responsive to the needs of healthcare practitioners globally.

As a licensed, accredited Maltese Higher education institution, IHRI is committed to a culture of quality in all aspects of its operations. It is a fundamental tenet of the Institute that all stakeholders are actively involved in developing and maintaining a structured quality management system following the Malta National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education.

2.1 Internal Governance

The internal governance of the Institute consists of

1. The Board of Directors

Chaired by: Rotating chair.

Frequency of Meetings: Bi-annual

Reports to: N/A

Responsibilities:

- Overseeing the overall structure and direction of the Institute
- Ensuring that strategic plans are consistent with the current mission and objectives.

2. A President – Head of Institute
3. An Academic Council

Comprised of experienced practitioner scholars[4]. This governance structure is central to the Institute's effectiveness as a high-quality research and online postgraduate education provider. The Institute's board of directors and academic Council form a framework that ensures the implementation, monitoring, review and evaluation of all Quality Assurance and Enhancement measures.

2.2 Research & Academic Council

Chaired by: Nominated individual

Frequency of Meetings: Quarterly

Reports to: Board of Directors
Responsibilities:

- Planning, coordinating, developing, and overseeing the educational work of the Institute and protecting, maintaining, and developing the academic standards of the programmes and activities of the Institute.
- To design, develop and assist in implementing study programmes consistent with the Institute's functions.
- To make recommendations to the President for establishing appropriate structures to implement the study programmes under MFHEA.
- To make recommendations to the President on programmes for research and development work
- Be responsible, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors, for making the academic regulations of the Institute.

2.3 Membership of the Academic Council

The Board of Directors, through the President, shall provide for the membership and terms of office of the Academic Council. Most members shall be holders of contract academic appointments within the Institute, and at least one member shall be a registered student at the Institute. Academic Council members shall hold office for a period of two years and shall be eligible for reappointment. The President and

Chairperson shall be ex officio members of the Academic Council. The Chair is an appointed position approved by the Institute Board of Directors.

2.3.1 Academic Council Membership

1.x Chair (ex officio)

1 x President *(ex officio)*

1 x Vice President

2 x Lecturer from the faculty*

2 x Student representative*

* Ballot organised by the institution will elect representatives from the lecturer's body and the student body.

An ex-officio member of the Academic Council shall retain their membership until such a point where they cease to hold the relevant office. For all other members, the term of office shall be two years. All terms of office are renewable with the approval of the Board of Directors.

2.4 Financial Probity

The Institute's governance structure as a body corporate is critical to its effective fiscal management and cost optimisation. The Institute prepares and reports annually a set of Accounts under its structural statutory obligations. The fiscal management and budgeting sit with the Board of Directors. Three to five-year Budget Plans and operating budgets are constructed with inputs from both internal and external stakeholders. The Institute recognises the importance of growth and providing quality services to students whilst consistently optimising for cost reductions where possible and without compromising the quality and delivery of services. In this regard, the Institute has adopted the U.S Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) best practices in its budgeting model, a set of steps to develop a budget that best aligns resources with student achievement goals.

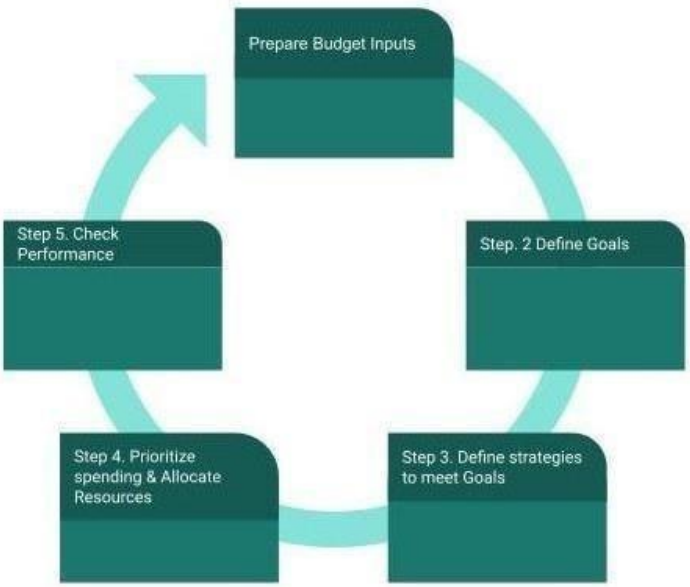


Figure 1. GFOA Budgeting Model

Following the GFOA budget model above, the Institute forecasted the budget planning process, analyses and reports on

- Revenue calculations (Net Revenue) and forecasts/per student metrics (Cost per Student)
- Operational costs (Salaries, staffing costs, ancillary expenses, etc.) and allocation of funds.
- Monthly management accounts (actual financial status)
- Up-to-date monthly management accounts, including per-student metrics.
- Enrolment estimates per department and programme.
- Tuition Rates
- Tuition and fee revenue per department/programme
- Tuition fee trends
- Staffing (per department & function, any new positions that are required)
- Ancillary expenses
- Compensation & Benefits
- Institute Academic achievements

The Institute aims to follow best practices in all financial and budgeting to ensure financial responsibility is legally and ethically maintained in all its activities. In this regard, a Maltese professional services firm are engaged and tasked with ensuring the institutes;

1. Internal accounting system is fit for purpose
2. The preparation of management and annual audited accounts is prepared according to the requisite International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)/General Accounting Principles for Smaller Entities (GAPSME).

3. The Institute follows defined best practices in all financial and budgeting matters

Reference Policies:
DOC076 Administration - Budget Policy DOC077

Administration - Budget Request Form

3.0 Design & Approval of Programmes

All degree programs presented for accreditation will include the following program characteristics and information:

- The student target audience
- The minimum student selection criteria
- The minimum qualifications and competencies of the teaching staff for each program
- The structure of the curriculum of the program
- ECTS learning credits at program and modular levels.
- Compliance with the program objectives and learning outcomes with corresponding MQF and EQF qualification levels in knowledge, skills, autonomy, and responsibility for each program level
- Clear and consistent assessment forms and criteria for each module and the final study assignment
- Didactic approaches are based on a tutorial teaching approach that supports student-centred teaching and learning approaches.
- Assigns to each program-specific teaching staff for academic, technical, and personal student support.
- The institution offers secure and user-friendly access to digital learning resources and a professional learning platform that complies with European standards for privacy and data security standards.

All programmes developed at the Institute are done through a collaborative process (faculty, students, world of work experts and others) by which proposals for new programmes are conceptualised, considered, determined, and approved. This collaborative programme development process is achieved through the constitution of a committee which serves as a platform where different views of the stakeholders

are solicited and collated. The size of the committee is key and experience recommends a committee size of five (5) is recommended with members as follows (1 x faculty, 1 x students/practitioners, 3 x world of work experts. The input of world of work experts and extensive engagement around real-world needs is critical, as it allows key stakeholders, the future employers of graduates, to make adequate input to programme development and ensures world of work stakeholder ownership of the resultant development processes. This process applies to all new programme proposals for accreditation and ECTS credits on the Maltese Qualifications Framework under the Institute MFHEA licence.

3.1 Identifying Need / Conceptualisation

This process aims to determine the proposed programmes' viability, appropriateness, and quality within a reasonable timeframe. At this point, the original idea for a programme is brainstormed and refined. Programme ideas should come from several diverse sources, faculty, learners, industry, national body, etc.

Several questions require addressing by stakeholders.

- Is there a perceived demand for such a programme?
- Does such a programme fit with the institution's mission and strategy?
- Does this type of programme already exist in the field, and if yes, how does our programme compare?
- What are the Educational and skills requirements for a programme?
- Are the requisite resources (faculty, teaching & learning resources) available to support this programme development?
- Are there any Unique Features of the Programme?
- Does the programme require a Work/Clinical placement?
- What are the employment opportunities offered for graduates of the programme?

On completing the above proposal process, a programme proposal is generated and sent to the Academic Council for review, where the proposal is evaluated, and a recommendation for approval/request for further information or a recommendation not to approve is determined. Following a review and approval of a proposal, the programme design phase can commence.

The Institute has chosen to utilise two frameworks in its online programme design to establish best practices.

- ADDIE
- 7C's Learning Design Toolkit

Validation

In the design for accreditation of any institute programme with MFHEA, the MFHEA step-by-step guide to programme accreditation must be followed. This will determine

- Overall Course Description
- Programme Structure, Learning Outcomes, Delivery method, total hours, etc.
- Programme modules as above

Until the validation process is complete, i.e., notification has been received from MFHEA that the programme is validated, no reference to the programme should be made on the institute's social media or publications.

3.2 Programme Delivery

Full-Time/Part-Time Programme and Mode of Delivery

IHRI ensures compliance with the MFHEA's mandatory contact hour requirements through a structured approach integrating synchronous and asynchronous learning. The institution follows an Oxford-style tutorial model, where students engage in intensive academic discussions, receive formative feedback, and participate in interactive learning activities. Contact hours are met through a combination of live virtual sessions, guided research supervision, faculty-led discussions, and interactive online learning components.

The design and development of online programs follow sound pedagogical practices using appropriate resources to ensure a structured approach that enhances learning outcomes. Course delivery includes a mix of scheduled tutorials, independent study, and practice-based learning, ensuring that students meet the expected contact hours while benefiting from a flexible and research-driven learning experience.

To maintain accountability and continuous quality improvement, IHRI implements a structured evaluation process that includes faculty and student feedback. Course revisions occur on a bi-annual schedule, with additional modifications made based on student and stakeholder evaluations, course failure rates, or changes in external standards. This iterative approach ensures that programs remain relevant, effective, and aligned with regulatory requirements.

IHRI also employs student analytics tools to track engagement levels and monitor contact hour fulfilment. The Academic Council conducts quarterly reviews to ensure compliance with contact hour regulations and that students receive adequate support throughout their studies. Additionally, feedback from students, faculty, and

industry partners informs decisions on necessary program adjustments and the development of new courses.

3.3 Transparency for Professions with Legal Requirements:

IHRI does not offer programmes that lead to warrants or professional/legal status in Malta or elsewhere. However, should IHRI introduce such programmes in the future, the following measures will be implemented to ensure transparency and informed decision-making for students:

- *Clear Information on Professional Requirements:* Program descriptions on the website and promotional materials will explicitly state if a program prepares students for professions with legal requirements (in Malta or elsewhere), specifying the necessary qualifications or certifications needed for professional practice.
- *Accreditation and Recognition:* Information on relevant accreditation or recognition by professional bodies will be prominently displayed in program materials and on the institution's website, enabling students to verify the program's alignment with professional standards.

Reference Policies:

DOC074 Administration - External Benchmarking Policy and Procedure for Quality Assurance

DOC075 Administration - Quality Management System (QMS) Procedure and Manual

DOC003 Administration - Academic Progression Policy

DOC005 Administration - External Peer Review Policy and Procedure

DOC007 Administration - Learning, Teaching and Assessment

DOC011 Administration - QA Policy and Standards for Online Teaching and Learning

4.0 Student-Centred Learning Teaching & Assessment- Learning Resources & Student Support

The Institute aims to develop innovative solutions to global healthcare problems through leading-edge practitioner research and evidence-based training. In this regard, the Institute provides accredited programmes at the doctoral and master's levels in health education to students and professionals worldwide through its online approach. Developing practitioner-scholars through the fusion of theory with practice is a key focus. The Institute's degree programs also support students in

developing their personal and professional competencies in responsibility and autonomy. The MQF and EQF indicators that the institution seeks to achieve for doctoral and master's courses are indicated below.

Doctoral degree courses: Level 8

- Knowledge: knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and the interface between fields
- Skills: The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice
- Competencies: Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity, and sustained commitment to the development of innovative ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts, including research

Master's degree courses: Level 7

- Knowledge: Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research; Critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields.
- Skills: Specialised critical thinking skills required in research and/or innovation to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields
- Competencies: Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches; Take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams

Diversity and Equal Opportunities - General Principles

IHRI is committed to the provision of equality of opportunity for all students. In the provision of equal opportunities, IHRI realises and accepts its responsibilities under the law with regard to unfair discrimination and is committed to fostering a discrimination-free environment within which individuals will feel free to disclose relevant circumstances. IHRI staff and faculty have a legal responsibility for the practical application of this policy.

Discrimination on account of ethnicity, gender, language, age, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability, thinking styles, experience or education will not be shown against any person in determining whether they are eligible to be admitted as the student, or during their studies. Every possible step will be taken to ensure equality of opportunity. When choices are made regarding admission to programmes, staff and faculty associated with making admissions decisions will admit on merit.

Applicants are admitted to academic programmes principally for reasons of academic ability, professional and personal experience and their individual motivation. Issues relating to practical implications of a disability are dealt with subsequently, and support is available via Student Services if required by the student. IHRI considers that diversity of backgrounds brings a range of qualities and experience to individual programmes and reflects the broader community in which staff and students operate.

4.1 Student-Centred Approach

All programmes designed by the Institute will follow the Malta Further & Higher Education standard for Accreditation template with design inputs from current practitioner-scholars and delivered in a manner that.

- Encourages active student participation, encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning.
- Faculty/teachers encourage elevated levels of engagement and have some prior understanding of students' backgrounds and experiences.
- Attention to students' diverse needs.
- Direct feedback is provided to students regularly as they progress through each module.
- A direct focus on the learning process.

IHRI also recognises that the learning environment is an ecosystem of more than just the delivery and provision of knowledge and courses. It is a social community of faculty, staff, learners and support structures enabled through an online interaction mechanism to support students and knowledge delivery. The administrative and learning activities are supported by tutors and assigned faculty, specialist practitioner experts who support students in a peer-to-peer type engagement role.

Each programme has a nominated lead tutor who serves as a practitioner subject expert, mentor, and support to faculty and students. This implies that the key role of tutors and world-of-work experts supporting delivery is to help and guide students in their learning process during the entire study program by providing students with an overview of seminal works and theories, insights on changes in the theoretical and practitioner landscapes based on their own professional experiences.

4.2 Oxford-Style Tutorials

The core pedagogical method used in our degree courses at MQF/EQF levels 7 and 8 consists of the Oxford tutorial system modified for online use by recent research at Edinburgh University. i.e. primarily an Asynchronous model. This tutorial model is a system where the lead tutor engages with a small group of learners in the tutorial, i.e., scholars engage students in a dynamic academic discourse around course

readings but without trying to replicate the class-based exercise in an online setting. This type of tutorial supports a teaching model that is not bound to a fixed class time. It is a place where students can exchange ideas, get different perspectives, evaluate new arguments, and gain valuable, constructive criticism to push their thinking further.

Learner interaction plays a vital role in the organisation of each tutorial meeting. For each thematic block of the course, core readings (journal articles or book chapters) are added to the classroom collaborative space. These are accompanied by a written commentary to link the pieces together and to the broader module and course theme. Critical Prompts (questions that encourage discussion around theory, methods, practice, and personal experience) are also placed in the readings to nurture collaborative conversation via the weekly discussion boards. Fortnightly, there is a synchronous group discussion/commentary by the tutor on the works/submissions for the previous period. Students are encouraged to attend, and the session is recorded for those who cannot. Using this type of tutorial system using digital methods the engagement is not bound to timetabled hours that can often constrain student engagement or attendance. It is the opposite, as students with competing demands on their time and resources can participate and engage in the activity flexibly. Another advantage is the creation of a living artefact, , a digital (always available) critical commentary in response to the posted readings that lives beyond the end of the tutorial and module period. Students can return to this artefact at any point through their programme to refresh, reflect and evolve their understanding and thinking of the topic(s). This digital tutorial model encourages ebbs and flows as students dip into the tutorial as their other work and life commitments allow. The students also receive written feedback on their submitted work and associated discussions.

Tutorials are built with design input from the tutor/lecturer and/or a current practitioner-scholar and delivered in a manner that;

- Provides formative feedback throughout each programme module.
- Encourages ongoing reflection processes, e.g., Gibbs & Kolb reflective cycles.
- Provides direct feedback to students regularly as they progress through each module stage.
- Asynchronous and (synchronous) online activities (reflective diaries, learning journals, online group discussions, faculty-directed as well as peer-to-peer.
- Discussion groups are also supported by subject matter experts in a peer-to-peer online environment.

At the doctoral level, the Institute specifies additional responsibilities of the doctoral student in engaging with their programme of study vis-à-vis direct ‘Transformational’

tutorials. The student is required to maintain direct contact at least twice every four months with the module tutor for a transformational tutorial where the tutor-student are engaged in a “learning” by “guiding” relationship around the primary role and creating a learning-guiding doctoral community which influences students value perspectives by leading by example, stimulates their high-level needs, appropriately guides their research directions, provides students with the guidance and support in research and life and work, enhances intrinsic motivation, stimulates their intellect and thinking, and ultimately achieves the team’s shared goals, i.e. a successful doctoral outcome.

Appointments are scheduled directly with the tutor via the online appointment scheduler. The student will produce a record of the meeting and forward it to their tutor for agreement. This record is an essential part of the Institute’s quality assurance and enhancement process and will include the following:

- Date of the meeting
- Any specific issues/problems identified
- Action points
- Agreed outcomes
- Reflections
- Insights

The institute tutors are senior world of work experts in higher education and professional practice domains. Some are also experts in digital technologies and learning and were early pioneers of online learning research and consulted with technology companies and HEIs on the development and use of digital technologies in higher education teaching & learning. The choice of digital tools and their representation is carefully considered from their respective international experiences to provide an effective, simple, easy-to-use and support, cloud-based solution capable of expansion and, most importantly, a highly engaging student experience at the postgraduate level. Its choice of digital technology is the Google Workspace for Education suite, OpenSIS, and AI research tools, R Discovery, Scholarcy, ChatPDF, SciSpace and Mendeley.

Students entering a higher education programme in a flipped mode where the learning mode is online must adapt to such an approach, and requisite supporting structures must be in place. The Institute recognises the need to help students and faculty in academic and non-academic settings. In terms of academic support, all faculty are provided with an induction. This gives faculty the relevant skill sets to successfully deliver programmes, support students in their educational journey, and maximise engagement.

Faculty and administrative staff are charged with a sequence of ongoing support activities in all aspects of their engagement, including online meetings and tutorials, email and messaging platforms, virtual classrooms, breakout rooms, live streaming,

synchronous and asynchronous question and answer sessions, live polling, attendance tracking, recordings etc.

The institution uses an appropriate mix of teaching and learning methods that allow learners with different learning styles and abilities to complete our degree courses successfully. The institution aims to offer interactive and student-centred teaching and learning methods that promote the active participation of students. The didactic approach is based on a tutorial teaching and learning approach, which is highly fit for student-centred learning.

The Institute's student body is a key stakeholder in developing a learning environment conducive to personal and professional growth. The tutor-student partnership and the commitment of the academic staff, who are also senior world of work 'practitioners' in their respective domains, further strengthen the bond between faculty and students.

4.2.1 Engagement and Absence

Active participation is crucial in the online learning environment. While the flexible system allows students with competing demands to engage flexibly, online attendance is monitored and measured through engagement with discussion boards, submission of assignments, and participation in synchronous sessions.

To ensure clarity, "absence" is defined differently for Master's and Doctoral students:

- **For master's students:** Absence constitutes a consistent pattern of disengagement, including failure to contribute to discussions, non-submission of assignments, lack of engagement with readings, inactivity on the online platform, non-attendance at synchronous sessions, and failure to respond to tutor communications. A pattern of absence exceeding 20% of total module activities may result in academic intervention.
- **For Doctoral students:** Absence refers to a consistent pattern of disengagement that hinders research progress, including failure to attend transformational tutorials, non-submission of meeting records, missed deadlines, lack of research progress, and lack of engagement with tutors and administrators.

For both Master's and Doctoral students, individual cases of absence will be assessed considering both quantitative and qualitative measures of engagement, with consideration given to extenuating circumstances. For Doctoral students, the emphasis is on the quality of engagement and research progress, with mandatory participation in transformational tutorials.

4.3 Supervised Placement and Practice Hours

IHRI recognises the crucial role of supervised placement and practice hours in bridging academic learning with real-world application. Each program integrates structured practice elements tailored to its specific learning outcomes and professional relevance.

Furthermore, IHRI acknowledges that student access to traditional research settings may vary depending on their location and available resources. To ensure equitable research opportunities for all students, regardless of their locale, IHRI provides comprehensive support and resources to enable research to be undertaken remotely and in diverse settings. This includes access to virtual labs, online research databases, mentorship from experienced researchers, and guidance on conducting research in non-traditional environments.

IHRI provides flexible pathways for completing these hours, catering to the diverse needs of our students, including those with existing professional roles and those seeking to gain practical experience.

4.3.1 Pathways for Completing Practice Hours

- **Workplace-Based Practice**

  Primarily for part-time students who are working professionals, this pathway allows them to leverage their current workplace to fulfill practice hour requirements.

  Benefits:

  - Direct application of learning to their professional roles.
  - Potential for integrating doctoral research within their workplace.
  - Opportunity to establish formal agreements between the employer, student, and IHRI for quality assurance.

- **Alternative Practice Options**

Designed primarily for full-time students who may not have a relevant workplace, this pathway offers diverse options:

- **Mentoring for Research Dissemination:** Guidance on publishing, presenting at conferences, and developing academic materials.
- **Research Placements:** Opportunities to gain practical experience in healthcare or research institutions (if feasible).
- **Other Practice Activities:**

- Simulated healthcare scenarios to develop clinical reasoning and decision-making skills.
- Data analysis and interpretation using advanced research tools.
- Virtual laboratory experiences to conduct research, analyse data, and simulate practical scenarios

4.3.1.1 Virtual Labs as Research Environments

Virtual labs are an integral part of IHRI's approach to empowering students as active researchers globally. Our students engage in hands-on scientific exploration and experimentation from any location with an internet connection, utilising cutting-edge virtual lab environments. This approach fosters deep understanding, critical thinking, and practical skill development, transcending geographical limitations and traditional learning constraints.

Through IHRI's virtual labs, students actively participate in:

- **Data collection and analysis:** Conducting experiments, gathering data, and analysing results.
- **Collaborative research projects:** Working with peers and faculty on research projects, regardless of physical location.
- **Access to advanced equipment:** Utilizing sophisticated virtual instruments and tools.
- **Development of research skills:** Honing essential research skills, such as experimental design, data interpretation, and scientific communication.

4.3.2 Program-Specific Examples

Doctor of Health Science:

- Includes 170 supervised placement and practice hours.
- Offers both workplace-based practice and alternative practice options to accommodate diverse student needs.
- Virtual laboratory simulations are utilised to supplement placement hours, enhancing the development of practical skills.

Master's in Space Health & Human Factors:

Integrates simulated practice, mentoring, and optional workplace-based placements. Offers tailored activities, including:

- **Simulated Space Missions:** Utilizing human performance modeling software and interactive virtual laboratories to simulate physiological effects and conduct in-depth analyses

- **Remote Healthcare Simulations:** Participating in telemedicine and remote diagnostics exercises. including the use of virtual simulations and remote data analysis within virtual laboratories
- **Spaceflight Analogue Missions:** Contributing to research and data collection in simulated space missions (where available).
- **Online Tutorials & Mentoring:** Receiving personalized guidance from experienced space health practitioners.
- **Optional Workplace-Based Practice:** Undertaking internships or placements in space industry settings.

4.4 Quality Assurance of Practice Component

IHRI implements a robust quality assurance framework for the practice-based components of its programmes. Key measures include:

- **Monitoring Student Progress:** Engagement is tracked via online dashboards and periodic progress reports.
- **Practice Hours Evaluation:** Effectiveness is assessed through student surveys, feedback sessions, and structured performance assessments.
- **Faculty Review:** Faculty conduct peer reviews, participate in evaluation meetings, and provide structured feedback on practice-based learning.
- **Internal and External Audits:** IHRI conducts periodic audits to ensure compliance with quality standards and identify areas for improvement.
- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Metrics such as student satisfaction, learning outcomes achievement, and employer feedback are used to assess quality.
- **Multiple Assessors for Evaluations:** To maintain fairness and rigor, practice-based assessments involve both internal faculty members and external subject matter experts.

4.5 Assessment Processes

All programmes developed under licence from MFHEA must be structured around measuring the achievement of learning outcomes. This implies that fair and transparent assessment criteria encourage the student to take responsibility for their learning, where faculty are facilitators and assessment modes that can accurately measure the student's progress towards the prescribed learning outcomes. IHRI is committed to transparent, fair, and effective assessment using formative and summative methods. Assessment criteria, represented by assessment marking rubrics, supervision logbooks and progression reports are published and available to students at the start of each semester. The various modes of assessment are also

published at the start of each semester, found in the Google Classroom and the subject outlines.

4.5.1 Formative assessment

Formative assessment is used to provide feedback on a student's learning and performance. Feedback is delivered online through the VLE classroom, chat and video calls. At level 8 doctoral level, this is supplemented through 1-2-1 transformational tutorials between the tutor and student. Faculty encourage the use of reflective practices coupled with critical reflection and self-assessment. It is envisaged that formative assessment (where the tutor provides detailed feedback, coupled with engagement of the student in critical reflection and self-assessment) provides a model of good practice which encourages active learning leading to a level of a deeper understanding of both theory and practice as well as both the student and tutors self-development as they both learn from the reflections in and on the action/interactions.

4.5.2 Summative Assessment

Summative assessments will evaluate student learning, knowledge, proficiency, or success after an instructional period, and various approaches, depending on the nature of the module/course/programme being taught, will be used, e.g.

- Multiple Choice testing
- Instructor created exams.
- Essays/Assignments
- Reports
- Final projects/dissertations

IHRI faculty members all have experience in education delivery and assessments. IHRI degree programmes are built around modules. Modules are divided into topics, the subject of each discussion, and the students must analyse and review the prescribed readings and seminal works relating to each module subject. Tutors provide feedback on students understanding through discussion groups and weekly asynchronous/bi-weekly synchronous tutorials. Each module is evaluated by a summative assessment in the form of an examination, assignment, or project. All students receive written feedback on submissions at discussions, tutorials, and summative assessments. The marking of all summative work is through a primary and secondary assessor. All assessments are subject to final ratification at the quarterly academic council meeting. This ensures both faculty and students a fair and professional evaluation. Pairs of examiners will conduct all summative assessments. This way, the lecturers and students will provide a fair and professional evaluation of examinations.

All requirements for course progression are applied uniformly, stated in the course description, and students must acknowledge their understanding of the course

description and its requirements before enrolling in the module and include a statement on cheating and plagiarism. All courses state the minimum grades required for progression, and all grades reflect the stated marking criteria and grade descriptors. Students will be informed about their grades within an agreed time for each module. Student records, including the official transcipt of completed modules and grades, are stored digitally in the IHRI digital platform based on strict privacy regulations.

Procedures are in place to verify student identity, prevent fraud, and detect cheating in online assessments. Student documentation, assessments and records are stored in the Cloud-based OpenSIS system, where data are fully mirrored and saved in backups. Student records will be downloaded monthly and stored at the Malta Institute office. Students who complete a course of study receive a degree course certificate and access to a copy of their transcript. Certificates and transcripts provide contextual information on the credit earned, including the Malta Qualifications Framework, the European Qualifications Framework, and the course level learning outcomes in line with the MFHEA regulations stipulated in the Communication MFHEA/03/2021.

Reference Policies:
DOC003 Administration - Academic Progression Policy
DOC004 Administration - Equality Policy
DOC005 Administration - External Peer Review Policy and Procedure
DOC007 Administration - Learning, Teaching and Assessment
DOC011 Administration - QA Policy and Standards for Online Teaching and Learning
DOC019 Research - Research at IHRI
DOC020 Research - Research programme VIVA
DOC021 Student - Academic Integrity
DOC022 Student - Code of Conduct
DOC023 Student - Digital Experience Policy
DOC025 Student - Programme Regulations – Doctorate (MQF8)
DOC026 Student - Programme Regulations (MQF7) Space Health and Human Factors
DOC028 Student - Student Complaint Policy and Procedure
DOC089 Administration - Refund Policy
DOC091 Student – Admissions Policy

5.0 Student admission, progression, recognition, and certification

IHRI welcomes applications for admission to its qualification programmes at levels 7 & 8 from potential students worldwide. The Institute is an equal-opportunity higher education provider. Equal opportunity for admission is offered without regard to gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age,

disability, race, ethnic or national origin, social background, or political affiliations. A student who requires special accommodations (physical or otherwise) must inform IHRI at the time of enrolment. In addition, any student claiming learning disabilities (dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia) will be required to provide documented proof of the same prior to commencement of the course.

5.1 Admission Processes and Criteria

5.1.1 Admissions and Entry Requirements

IHRI is committed to a student-centred and transparent admissions process. We welcome applications from diverse backgrounds and strive to provide clear and predictable admission criteria. All admissions are direct entry; Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is not available for Level 7 and Level 8 programmes.

5.1.2 Application and Selection Process

Application Process:
Prospective students apply online via the Admissions Portal, uploading:

- Copy of ID/passport
- Academic transcripts (if applicable)
- Any other relevant credentials

Selection Process:
Applications are evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Meeting Entry Requirements: Applicants must fulfill the specific entry requirements for their chosen program (detailed below).
- Verification of Qualifications: Prior degree certifications are verified through the MQRIC (Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre) process. Applicants must provide a Statement of Comparability or Equivalency issued by MQRIC.
- Suitability and Motivation: An interview assesses the applicant's suitability for the program and their motivation for pursuing it.

Admission Decision:

- Acceptance: Candidates meeting all criteria receive an official offer letter. To secure their place, they must formally accept and submit a non-refundable registration fee.
- Rejection: Applications may be rejected for the following reasons:
  - Not meeting the entry requirements for the chosen program.
  - Failure to provide valid or verifiable documentation.
  - Unsuitability for the program based on the interview assessment.
  - Insufficient capacity in the program.
- Transparency: Throughout the process, applicants receive clear communication regarding program details, payment procedures, and enrolment.

Entry-Level Requirements

Level 7 master's Courses:

- Academic Entry Requirement: An appropriate MQF/EQF Level 6 degree or equivalent and three years of work experience.
- Basic digital competencies to work with the institution's digital learning platform.
- Non-native English-speaking applicants: IELTS score of 7 or more (exemptions available for certain qualifications).

Level 8 Doctoral Degree Courses:

- Academic Entry Requirement: Relevant MQF/EQF Level 7 degree or equivalent, minimum 5+ years of work experience in an allied health area or other professional areas at a mid-senior level. Interview with the course coordinator or nominee.
- Non-native English-speaking applicants: IELTS score of 7 or more (exemptions available for certain qualifications).
- Basic digital competencies.

5.2 Appealing an Admission Decision

Right to Appeal: Applicants denied admission can appeal the decision by submitting a written request to student services within 10 working days.

Appeal Content: The appeal should include:

- Applicant Information
- Clear Grounds for Appeal (new information, extenuating circumstances, procedural concerns).

Appeal Process:

- Acknowledgement within five working days.
- Review by a committee.
- Optional virtual meeting.
- Final decision communicated in writing within 15 working days.

IHRI is committed to ensuring fair treatment and equitable evaluation for all applicants.

5.3 Induction

All students will be part of an individual onboarding. The process will include an introduction to:

- The institutional vision and values
- The course content
- The learning methods

- The usage of the online learning platform
- Introduction to the Faculty team and fellow students

Successful completion of a programme of study at the Institute will lead to.

- Masters in Space, Microgravity and Human Factors MQF L7
- Doctorate in Health Science MQF L8

The Institute reserves the right to refuse admission, or re-admission, to any applicant if, in the opinion of the Institute, the admission, or re-admission, is not in the best interests of the applicant or the Institute.

5.4 Student information on progression, recognition, and certification

All requirements for course progression are applied uniformly, stated in the course description, and students must acknowledge their understanding of the course description and its requirements before enrolling in the course; this includes a statement on cheating and plagiarism. All courses state the minimum grades required for progression, and all grades reflect the stated marking criteria and grade descriptors.

Student information, written and oral assignments are collected and stored in the cloud-based online Google Workspace for Education learning platform and OpenSIS. Information on grades and study certificates is collected and stored online in the cloud-based OpenSIS system. Gradings and certifications are printed quarterly and stored physically at a secure place in Malta.

The methods used to recognise and validate student assignments and assessments apply specifically to online learning and include the capture of data on the submission of weekly or final assignments, attendance at tutorial meetings, written feedback and gradings and the accumulation of relevant grades with an average meeting the stated requirement for successful course completion. Student records, including the official transcript of completed modules and grades, are stored digitally.

At the end of the course program, students will receive detailed digital certificates and access to a copy of the transcript aligned with MFHEA regulations, including supporting evidence of the context and content of the program and individual modules, achieved programmatic learning outcomes, the equivalent MQF study program level, the total number of ECTS obtained by the program and by each module and average qualification of the program and qualification per module.

5.4.1 Recognition of Prior Learning

For transparency, IHRI wishes to inform prospective students that Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is not currently implemented for Level 7 & 8 programs. This decision aligns with our current Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) framework. However, IHRI is committed to ongoing development and will keep RPL under

consideration for future implementation. Should RPL be adopted, the Institute will fully adhere to the MFHEA RPL Policy to ensure compliance with all accreditation standards and regulatory requirements.

Reference policies

DOC003 Administration - Academic Progression Policy
DOC004 Administration - Equality Policy
DOC007 Administration - Learning, Teaching and Assessment
DOC021 Student - Academic Integrity
DOC022 Student - Code of Conduct
DOC026 Student - Programme Regulations (MQF7) Space Health and Human Factors
DOC025 Student - Programme Regulations – Doctorate (MQF8)
DOC028 Student - Student Complaint Policy and Procedure
DOC091 Student – Admissions Policy

6.0 Teaching Staff

IHRI, as a provider of high-quality online postgraduate educational programmes, recognises that the quality and experience of its faculty are the Institute's most valuable resource. Recruiting and retaining highly engaged people is mission-critical to the Institute's success in delivering innovative online education opportunities to its students.

As a policy, the Institute only recruits academic staff who are currently recognised/licensed qualified practitioners in their fields, possess the required appropriate MQF/EQF level qualifications and MQRIC recognition to teach at the requisite programme levels, are prepared to engage and share the best practices in a teacher/student/peer environment.

In the first instance, the Institute seeks to identify candidates who typically hold a doctorate or equivalent and have 10+ years of experience in their professional area and online teaching experience. The Institute will consider support/associate faculty candidates with a master's degree and 15+ years' experience in their professional area and online teaching experience. Candidates employed by or associated with a university/College other than IHRI and whose qualifications and experience allow them to participate in teaching and research activities will also be considered. Faculty on appointment will receive an induction in the Institute's digital systems tools in use.

All teaching is under the authority and oversight of a senior faculty member – including instructional design, tutorial meetings, and lectures. All teaching staff will

seek continuous professional development in content and learning. The quality and performance of Faculty staff will be monitored through the analysis of academic KPIs, including alignment of the academic module content with the overall program, contact hours and student satisfaction. There will be an annual performance evaluation with the Head of the Institution and the institute head of quality.

6.1 Teaching Staff, Recruitment and Selection Criteria at the Institute

IHRI is committed to a clear, fair, transparent lecturer recruitment process. The process will include

1. Identification of Needs: The process begins with identifying the need for new lecturers, considering factors such as programme growth, new programme development, and faculty departures.
2. Position Announcement: Open lecturer positions are advertised widely through various channels, including the institute's website, online job boards, professional networks, and academic associations. The announcement includes a detailed description of the position, its qualifications, and application instructions.
3. Application Review: A selection committee, composed of the President, the Head of Quality, the Head of Centres and administrators, reviews applications to assess candidates' qualifications, experience, and alignment with the institute's values and mission.
4. Interviews: Shortlisted candidates are invited to participate, which may include individual, or panel interviews conducted online or in person. Interviews assess candidates' teaching experience, subject matter expertise, communication skills, and commitment to online education.
5. Reference Checks: References are contacted to gather additional information about candidates' qualifications and experience.
6. Background Checks: Background checks may be conducted to verify candidates' credentials and ensure suitability for the position.
7. Decision and Offer: The selection committee makes a final decision based on the candidates' qualifications and interview performance. The selected candidate receives a formal offer of employment.
8. Onboarding: Upon acceptance of the offer, the new faculty member undergoes an onboarding process that includes orientation to the institute's policies, procedures, and online learning platform.

The faculty recruitment process is designed to attract and select highly qualified individuals passionate about online teaching and committed to student success. The transparent and rigorous process ensures that the faculty members possess the necessary expertise, experience, and dedication to provide students with a high-quality online education.

6.2 Faculty/Staff Professional Development at IHRI

IHRI is committed to continuous professional development (CPD) for its faculty and staff to enhance teaching quality and keep pace with advancements in their fields.

CPD Development

- Mandatory CPD Hours: Faculty must complete a minimum number of CPD hours annually through activities like conferences, workshops, online courses, and research.
- Focus on Innovation: CPD activities will cover subject-specific developments, innovative teaching methods, and emerging technologies.
- Individualised CPD Plans: Faculty will tailor their CPD to align with teaching responsibilities and career growth.

Access to Resources

- Faculty will have full access to the institute's online library, databases, journal subscriptions, and professional memberships to stay updated with the latest research.
- Internal communication channels (Faculty Hub, newsletters, social media groups) will keep staff informed about development opportunities.

Peer Learning & Collaboration

- Communities of Practice: Faculty will engage in peer discussions and best-practice sharing.
- Mentoring & Peer Observation: Experienced faculty will guide others through structured mentoring and feedback.
- Collaborative Research: Part-time faculty will be encouraged to participate in research projects alongside full-time staff.

Performance Evaluation & Feedback

- Regular Reviews: Faculty performance will be assessed through structured evaluations.
- Student Feedback: Systematic collection of student feedback will inform teaching improvements.
- Professional Development Goals: Faculty will set and review CPD goals as part of performance assessments.

6.3 Academic Roles and Responsibilities

IHRI recognises the crucial roles of both Practitioner-Scholars and Lecturers in providing a high-quality learning experience for students.

6.3.1 Practitioner-Scholars

Definition: Experts in their field who not only use research to inform their practice but also actively contribute to the body of knowledge and shape the future direction of their profession. They bridge the gap between theory and practice, bringing real-world insights into the learning environment.

Qualifications: Possess a doctoral degree, 10+ years of practical experience in their field, and online teaching experience.

Roles:

- Integrate theory and practice through Mode 2 research.
- Contribute to curriculum development and quality assurance.
- Mentor and guide students, particularly in advanced programs.
- Provide leadership and oversight in academic matters.

6.3.2 Lecturers

Definition: Qualified academics who deliver course content, facilitate student learning, and provide research guidance.

Qualifications: Possess a doctorate degree or equivalent, relevant teaching experience, and expertise in their subject area.

Roles:

- Deliver high-quality course content in an engaging manner.
- Guide students in their research endeavours.
- Ensure students achieve learning outcomes.
- Facilitate student learning through structured engagement.

6.3.3 Shared Responsibility for Academic Quality

The academic quality of teaching at IHRI is a shared responsibility:

Senior Faculty Oversight: All teaching activities are overseen by senior faculty members, including Practitioner-Scholars, who ensure alignment with program objectives and quality standards.

Academic Council: Oversees broader aspects of curriculum design and quality assurance. Head of Institution and Head of Quality: Responsible for overall faculty performance evaluation, including monitoring of academic KPIs, student satisfaction, and alignment of module content with program goals.

Continuous Professional Development: All teaching staff engage in continuous professional development.

Reference Policies

DOC004 Administration - Equality Policy
DOC011 Administration - QA Policy and Standards for Online Teaching and Learning
DOC014 Faculty - Complaints Procedure Staff
DOC015 Faculty - Lecturer Performance Appraisal Procedure
DOC016 Faculty - Recruitment and Selection
DOC017 Faculty - Staff Code of Conduct
DOC018 Faculty - Staff Professional Development
DOC021 Student - Academic Integrity
DOC025 Student - Programme Regulations – Doctorate (MQF8)
DOC026 Student - Programme Regulations (MQF7) Space Health and Human Factors
DOC086 Administration - Internal Verification Policy

7.0 Learning Resources and Student Support

7.1 Student support

IHRI operates online learning programmes at levels 7&8 on the MQF/EQF. All programmes designed by the Institute will follow the Malta Further & Higher Education standard for Accreditation template with design inputs from current practitioner-scholars and delivered in a manner that.

- Encourages active student participation, encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning.
- Faculty/teachers encourage elevated levels of engagement and have some prior understanding of students' backgrounds and experiences.
- Attention to students' diverse needs.
- Direct feedback is provided to students regularly as they progress through each module.
- A direct focus on the learning process

IHRI also recognises that the learning environment is an ecosystem of more than just the delivery and provision of knowledge and courses. It is a social community of faculty, staff, learners and support structures enabled through an online interaction mechanism to support students and knowledge delivery. Programme leads and assigned faculty support the administrative and learning activities, specialist practitioner experts who support students in a peer-to-peer type engagement role.

Each programme has a nominated lead faculty member who also serves as a practitioner subject expert, mentor, and support to faculty and students. The programme heads are responsible for conducting needs analyses in conjunction with the lead faculty to determine what additional learning resources are required to deliver and support a programme. This should be done by applying different means of obtaining this information, e.g., surveys, group interviews, student suggestions and complaints, as well as obtaining the opinion of students and other relevant certifying external organisations.

The Oxford tutorial learning methods - with small student groups and intensive tutor-student contact - allow for highly individualised student support in terms of the adequate and flexible planning of meetings, resources, and other forms of individualised student support. The faculty staff will continuously be encouraged to enhance their academic and technical competencies to improve student performance and satisfaction. For students who require assistive technologies to support their learning the Institute recommends and supports a range of educational assistive technology supplemental to the assistive technology and service support provided by its Google Workspace i.e.

Text to Speech & Literary Support tools:

1. Balabolka for Windows
2. Kurzweil Read the Web
3. Voice Over for Mac.

Writing Support Tools:

1. Google Voice Typing
2. Windows Voice Recognition
3. Voice Control for MAC

Grammar/Spell Checkers

1. Ginger Grammar and Spell Checker
2. Hemingway Editor
3. Grammarly

Mind Mapping/Brainstorming Tools

1. Poppet

2. Mindmeister

Accessible Screen Readers

1. NVDA
2. Web Anywhere

7.2 Online Library Resources

The institute provides students with access to the IHRI Integrated Library System (ILS) built with Librarika. These library resources support higher education studies and doctoral research. This includes subscriptions to a comprehensive digital library of e-books, academic journals, research articles, and other scholarly materials, accessible 24/7 and access to specialised databases and research tools carefully selected to align with the institution's programs of study. These resources are seamlessly integrated and accessible through the institute's online platform, ensuring a user-friendly experience.

7.3 Learning resources

The base programmes of the Institute, the Doctorate in Health Science and the Master's in Space Health and Human Factors, are built on the foundation of the Institute and support its research activities in these key areas. Resource allocation for programmes and respective support services follows a clear three-step structure of;

Step 1: Assessment of current situation: Collecting and analysing relevant data, such as student performance, enrolment, attendance, satisfaction, engagement, diversity, and achievement gaps; program quality, alignment, coherence, and impact; resource availability, utilisation, efficiency, and equity; and external factors, such as policies, regulations, trends, and best practices. This assessment is intended to inform the academic council and board of programme strengths and weaknesses, gaps and opportunities for improvement, and any future challenges.

Step 2: Setting SMART goals for desired outcomes: Aligned with the institute's vision and mission, curriculum and standards, the needs and interests of the students, and the expectations and feedback of the stakeholders.

Step 3 Programme prioritisation: On completion of steps 1 and 2 above, a prioritisation process is followed based on programme impact and value for students and stakeholders. Prioritisation also determines resource allocation, ensuring all programs receive adequate and fair resources. Resources are then allocated according to their availability and suitability. i.e. distributing funds, staff, time, and materials among the programs based on their needs and goals, their costs

and benefits, their quality and quantity, and their flexibility and adaptability. Thus, optimising their allocation.

All degree courses at the institute are in English and include a combination of recommended scientific books, articles, and studies from professional journals and publications. Where possible, Open-Source, peer-reviewed publications, such as PubMed, will be used. The lecturers offer learning content, assignments, and literature through the learning platform. To facilitate students' free access to scientific resources and support research activities, IHRI utilises a range of AI support apps and libraries. i.e. R discovery, Open Research Library, Unpaywall, Mendeley, Sci Space, Scholarcy ChatPDF, Lateral, Consensus and Evidence Hunt. The institution will also seek an institutional licence to an internationally renowned digital scientific database or library.

7.4 Student Accommodation

As an online education provider, the Institute's programs are delivered entirely online. Therefore, student accommodation is not a core requirement for program participation.

The Institute will schedule optional conferences and workshops in Malta. These events are typically short and held during off-peak times to maximize accommodation availability and potentially offer more affordable options for students. For these optional events, students are responsible for arranging their own lodging. The Institute will provide suggestions, resources, and support to assist students in this process, such as recommendations, links to hotel booking websites and information on local transportation e.g. VisitMalta.com

7.5 Online support systems

The Institute will fund the learning resources and support systems. The Institute uses Google Workspace for teaching and learning, OpenSIS for student administration and a range of AI academically validated apps to support students and ensure best practices in delivering services and programmes.

All systems and support apps are highly user-friendly for staff and students and accessible through any device. An important consideration for both faculty and students in operating an online approach with enterprise-grade leading technology is the initial learning curve; Faculty need to be fluent in the design and delivery of programmes in an online format through technology, particularly the provision of innovative technologies. An introduction and basic training in using the Institute's platforms will be part of the induction program for new staff and students.

The continuity of the learning processes is guaranteed using the cloud-based professional services of renowned digital providers, i.e., Google and OpenSIS. Such providers ensure business continuity and accessibility for staff and students. Both

Google and OpenSIS services include real-time mirroring of data and backups and allow IHRI to download and print selected data to store at the Institute's physical location in Malta.

Coupled with its Cloud operating suite Google Workspace for Education, and OpenSIS, IHRI uses an integrated student analytics model as a cornerstone of its operations. Built on best practices and an adaption of the Deloitte Analytics model, the integrated analytics model will provide personalised and initiative-taking services to students on their pre- and post-learning journey and provide the Institute with a robust Student Analytics Solution.

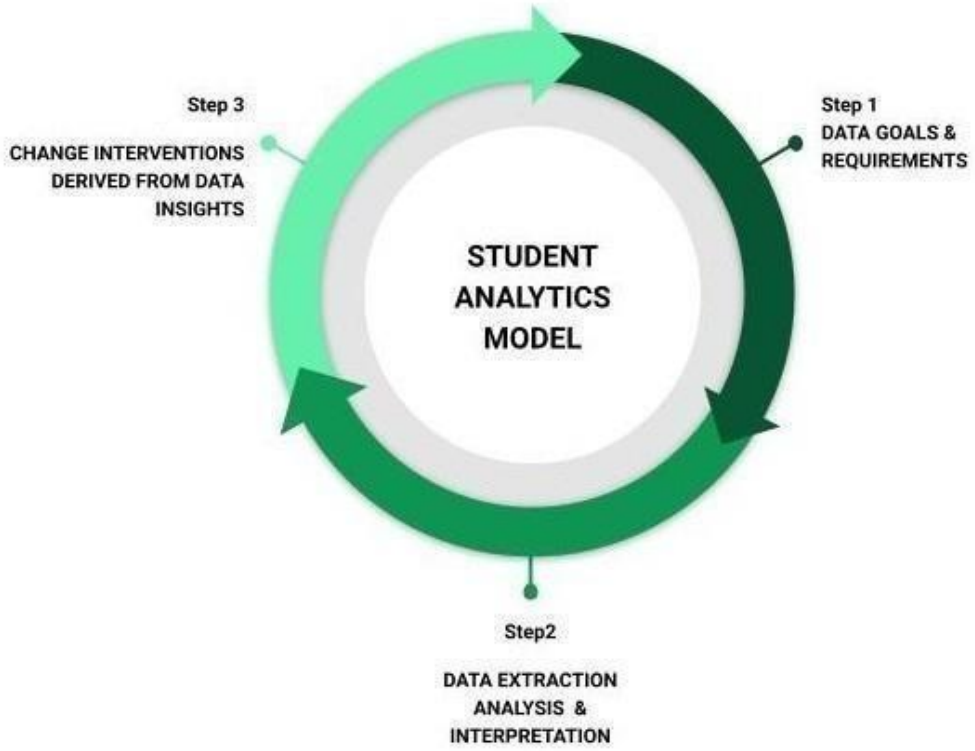


Figure 2. Integrated Analytics Model

The student analytics model provides a framework to manage programmes effectively and enables the delivery of evidence-based services to students. The dynamic higher education landscape and the shift to online learning mandate accurate systems and services to support students who presently operate with a click-and-move-on mindset. Retention is the key to success, which mandates an operating model focusing on best practices. The Institute tracks each student's journey from enquiry to graduation, providing administrative, tutorial and staff personal support to ensure elevated levels of satisfaction and completion. Data is collected at each stage of the student journey, analysed, and reported on at the academic council meeting.

Step 1 Data Goals and Requirements

Data Goals and requirements are reviewed and set each academic year during the budgetary/operations management review process with the involvement of the President's office and
the Academic Council. A data requirements plan is set and distributed to all staff.

Step 2 Data Extraction Analysis and Interpretation

The office of the President conducts a quarterly analysis and interpretation review of crucial data (see below) reported at the Academic Council.

Key Data

- The student population
- Learner demographics
- Learner occupation
- The purpose of taking the course
- Learner participation in class, forums etc.
- Learner retention statistics and trends
- Learner success rates at programme and module level
- Learner satisfaction at the programme and module level, including feedback on faculty satisfaction
- Learner post-graduation career success is also monitored.

Step 3 Change Interventions Required from Data Insights.

The Academic Council conducts a quarterly data review and identifies the interventions/actions (with staff & students) required to ensure consistent service delivery and effective programme management. All data collected by the Institute is stored in Cloud servers located in the EU and fully compliant with GDPR and other data protection/storage requirements.

Reference Policies

DOC004 Administration - Equality Policy
DOC007 Administration - Learning, Teaching & Assessment
DOC011 Administration - QA Policy and Standards for Online Teaching and Learning
DOC019 Research - Research at IHRI
DOC021 Student - Academic Integrity
DOC022 Student - Code of Conduct
DOC023 Student - Digital Experience Policy
DOC025 Student - Programme Regulations – Doctorate (MQF8)
DOC026 Student - Programme Regulations (MQF7) Space Health and Human Factors
DOC028 Student - Student Complaint Policy and Procedure
DOC090 Student - Scholarship Policy

8.0 Information management

The institute's data management strategy is guided by a cyclical process, ensuring alignment with institutional goals and continuous improvement. This includes collecting data on the student population profile, including information about vulnerable groups such as students with disabilities, students from underrepresented backgrounds, and students facing financial hardship. This data ensures inclusivity and provides targeted support to these students.
The following data categories are collected and maintained:

- **Student Level**: Admission records, student details, assessment records.
- **Faculty Level:** Student, cohort, module records, student details, and assessment results.
- **Programme Level**: Student population profile, including the prevalence of vulnerable groups.
- **Module Level**: Course data, mentoring and conference participation, retention and success rates.
- **System Level:** Student satisfaction with programmes, modules, courses, mentorships, conferences, clubs, cohorts, and supervisors; employment rates and career development paths after graduation.

IHRI will use two critical digital platforms to secure transparent and efficient student information management to manage our programmes and all other activities (for example, MFHEA yearly statistics).

The courses will use the generic and integrated learning platform Google Workspace. This platform is the latest service developed by Google to support education programs. It builds on standard Google tools such as Email, Shared Drive and Meet and add-on features to support, including secured long- term student data storage and secure email services. IHRI will make use of the solution of OpenSIS a secure student administration system. This system offers flexible and highly secure cloud-based solutions for student administration.

Student and faculty records start with verifying identity and credentials. The identity of the student and faculty member is thereafter continuously confirmed using (1) a private password and other digital gatekeepers and (2) regular confirmation through face-to-face video conference calls, which are central to the personalised education provided. Digital student records are stored in the OpenSIS IHRI cloud, the IHRI digital platform, and regular backups are archived in Malta to guarantee the availability of the content.

The information is analysed by the head of the institution and the Academic Council to formulate improvements in quality on the following key performance indicators:

- Up-to-date and transparent degree course and curriculum information.

- Up-to-date and transparent degree qualifications and potential labour opportunities
- Up-to-date course and examination time planning tables
- Efficient, dependable, and secure online student grading information
- Effective and efficient student information
- Adequate and transparent student information material

All data collected by the institute is stored on secure cloud servers within the EU, in full compliance with the GDPR and other relevant data protection and storage regulations. The Institute employs robust security measures, including access controls, encryption, and regular security audits, to protect data from unauthorised access, use, or disclosure.

8.1 Data Management

The institute prioritises data security and the proper management of student records. The institute employs a secure online platform with access controls and encryption to protect student data from unauthorised access, use, or disclosure. It has established data protection policies and procedures to ensure compliance with relevant regulations. Regular security audits are conducted to identify and address potential vulnerabilities. These practices are designed to ensure the accuracy, confidentiality, and security of student information while complying with all applicable data protection regulations.

For digital record archiving, the institute utilises a third-party ISP, whose service includes hardware, software, online availability, and redundancy systems. The institute further enhances data security and redundancy by maintaining databases, files, and code backups.

8.2 Long-Term Record Retention

The institute will digitally maintain and archive student data for 40 years. Only students' first and last names and academic records shall be kept in long-term record retention to issue transcripts or certificates as requested. All other student data will be anonymised following the GDPR retention period of four years from the date of graduation.

Data retention is achieved by creating digital copies of records and securely storing them via cloud storage services or an institutional server with appropriate security protocols. Data protection measures include access controls, encryption, and regular backups.

If the institute ceases operations, student records will be transferred to another reputable educational institution or organisation in Malta or to a trusted third-party entity or archival institution. This designated custodian will ensure the continued safekeeping of these records. Students, alumni, and other stakeholders will be notified of the institute's operational suspension and the procedures for securing their records. Clear instructions regarding record access and transfer requests to another institution or custodian will be provided.

Reference policies

DOC002 Administration - ICT Acceptable Use Policy and Procedure
DOC004 Administration - Equality Policy
DOC008 Administration - Privacy Policy
DOC010 Administration - Protection of Personal Data in Email and Electronic Communications
DOC084 Administration - Record Retention

9.0 Public information

The institute is committed to transparent communication and provides readily accessible information about its activities and programs through various channels:

1. Website: The institute's website (Https://ihri.eu) serves as a central hub for comprehensive information regarding the institute, its mission, vision, values, programs, faculty, and research activities. Website content is regularly reviewed and updated to maintain accuracy and currency. Each program has a dedicated section detailing the qualification, curriculum, learning outcomes, EQF/MQF levels, ECTS credits, teaching and assessment procedures, further learning opportunities, entry requirements, fees, and application process. To ensure transparency, each program's website section clearly indicates whether the program prepares students for professions with legal requirements, such as licensure or certification. If applicable, the section also specifies whether the program is accredited or recognised by relevant professional bodies, providing links to further information about those bodies. This allows prospective students to make informed decisions about their educational pathways and career goals.

2. IQA Publication: The institute's Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) document and procedures are published on the website, demonstrating a commitment to transparency and quality assurance.

3. Student Feedback: The institute actively solicits and incorporates student feedback on the website's usability and content to ensure its effectiveness.

4. Professional Recognition: Each program page on the website clearly indicates whether the program prepares students for professions with legal requirements and specifies any relevant accreditation or recognition by professional bodies.

5. Prospectus: The institute publishes a detailed prospectus annually, providing comprehensive program information. The prospectus is available in print and digital formats.

6. Social media: The institute utilises social media platforms to share news, updates, and events.

7. Online Events: The institute organises online events for prospective students and stakeholders to interact with faculty and staff.

The institute supports students in career and professional advancement through dialogue with expert faculty and the provision of relevant information. All promotional materials are subject to approval by the Academic Council. The institute maintains a program review cycle to ensure the currency and relevance of its offerings.

10.0 Programme Monitoring & Review

Higher education is a dynamic field fueled by numerous changes, including legislation, technology, new requirements, and climate change. IHRI is an online research and teaching institute in health education and research. In this regard and to remain current with the dynamic uncertainty, the Institute requires inputs from a range of stakeholders, particularly learners, in determining the higher education needs of its constituent sector and practitioners. Feedback from learners and faculty is deemed particularly important in this regard, and the Institute encourages active participation in and acceptance of feedback from its participants. Feedback and monitoring reports are referred to the Academic Council for review and action.

Programme monitoring and review is also an essential agenda item reviewed.

- Annually at the Board AGM
- Quarterly at the Academic Council

Learners shall be supported in their ability to give and receive feedback, to situate their feedback within the context of the module and the programme, and to be constructive in their observations and recommendations. At the beginning of the academic year, learners shall be informed of the ongoing opportunities to provide feedback.

- Learners shall be canvassed regarding a variety of aspects of their experience. These can include overall programme structure, content, learning outcomes, delivery, and assessment once per academic year.
- Learners shall be canvassed regarding module delivery once per quarter.
- Learners shall be canvassed regarding their learning environment, including digital tools, once per quarter
- Learners shall be provided with the opportunity to provide feedback anonymously and informally.

The means of gathering learner feedback shall vary, and feedback measures shall endeavour to be clear and relevant; all formal learner feedback shall be recorded.

- Learner feedback gathered through surveys shall be analysed and made available to staff as relevant within a timeframe enabling appropriate action.
- Learner feedback shall be communicated to concerned parties by staff as relevant within a timeframe that enables appropriate action to be taken as far as possible for the benefit of the current cohort.
- Learner feedback and any resultant action shall be incorporated into ongoing review processes and inform programme developments.

Evidence of the actions taken based on learner feedback should be made explicit to learners as soon as possible. If learner feedback has not resulted in an action, this should also be made clear as appropriate. Learner feedback shall be used to enhance the quality of the learner's learning experience and the standards achieved by learners.

It is policy to encourage learners to have access to lecturing staff to discuss their experiences and give feedback on any aspect of their learning experience. There is also learner participation and representation on the Academic Council.

Each member of the teaching staff is required to complete a module feedback form at the end of module delivery to provide an evaluation of the module's content and learning outcomes.

10.1 World of Work Practitioner Scholars

All staff are leading world of work practitioners in their respective fields and bring professional and scholarly currency in terms of professional activity and review. Identifying changes to the environmental landscape and pertinent issues that may necessitate changes in the needs of both students and society.
The Academic Council also, as part of its remit, is tasked with formal programme reviews to ensure aims and objectives are being achieved. The Institute also conducts an annual review from at least two identified and recognised external expert practitioners to determine the relevance and achievement of its aims.

10.2 Programme review

Each MFHEA-accredited programme is subject to a full licensor periodic review; coupled with this, the Institute will conduct an annual review of its accredited programmes and prepare an annual report for quality assurance and budgeting purposes. This report is prepared by the Academic Council and distributed for dissemination and discussion amongst the faculty. It is important to note that learner representation is mandatory at the Academic Council.

10.3 Faculty review

Faculty Reviews occur each year at year-end to inform planning for the next academic year. These review meetings allow faculty and institute management to identify, evaluate and address any issues surrounding the successful running of the faculty.

10.4 Implementation of findings

MFHEA, the accrediting body, periodically issues updates impacting the Institute IQA and operations. These updates are typically given as guidelines before becoming legislation. The Institute will incorporate these published guidelines into the IQA through an internal update. The Institute has an open and transparent policy regarding information pertinent to the delivery of its services and encourages a self-service model by staff and learners. The IQA is hosted on the intranet and is available for viewing by faculty, learners, and others on any device.

11.0 Cyclical External Quality Assurance

IHRI, through the President's office, affirms its commitment to the standards and guidelines laid down by MFHEA and as represented in the Institute's Internal Quality Assurance System. Each staff member confirms their commitment to the policies and procedures outlined by the Institute internally and MFHEA. The provision of excellence in the delivery of services is paramount to the internal operation of the Institute and its mission. The Institute recognises that as a licensed, accredited MFHEA Higher Education institution, it is obligated to operate an approved Internal Quality Assurance System subject to external review.

"In line with the National Quality Assurance Framework, the EQA process applies to all accredited further and higher education providers that are corporate entities. The practice of EQA means that it is not enough that the entity has IQA systems on paper or simply a statutory setup. The EQA needs to check that these systems are fit for purpose, are functioning and effective, and are sustainable."
https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/services/Pages/All%20Services/qa.aspx

The Institute is committed to a culture of quality and a structured Quality Management System. All programmes are designed per Malta Further and Higher Education Authority guidelines, with the involvement of staff, students, and external stakeholders and by incorporating the requirements of MFHEA. The Institute is committed to continuous improvement and developing best practices in all its dealings with learners and external stakeholders and welcomes recommendations in this regard. The timely completion of any action plan recommended by an external audit is an institutional priority.

Appendix 1

Master List of Policy and Procedure

Link to the IHRI Master List of Policy and Procedure - 2025