

# QUALITY ASSURANCE

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## Introduction

Saint Martin's Institute of Higher Education was set up in 1985 with the aim of providing tuition in computer studies when such programmes were non-existent in Malta. The growth of the Institute, which knows very humble beginnings, is owed to the value of quality education that the founder and the first members of staff have always fostered. Cohort after cohort of students, year after year, managed to attain exceptional results at whichever level they sat for. As from the year 2000, Saint Martin's Institute was able to provide the opportunity for students to read for a degree other than that offered by the State University by offering a variety of programmes conferred by the world renowned University of London through its recognised teaching status. Through further enactment of the Further and Higher Education legislation, the Institute was formally licensed as higher education with awarding powers at Malta Qualification Framework (MQF) level 5, 6, 7 and 8.

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

## Vision

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

## Key strategic, measurable priorities

The key strategic priorities for the institution are the following:

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

- build the Saint Martin's brand independently from that of the University of London. The institute must be seen in the eyes of the public as a seat of learning which contributes in raising the bar of learning and achievement through pedagogical creativity and researched contribution on par in quality as measured by international standards;
- increase the attraction of the Institute's educational provision both in the local market (competing effectively with the free provision of further and higher education through a high value added) as well as internationally to achieve a sustainable number of students which will allow the continued growth of the organisation.

## Decision-making and Governance Structures

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

As a parallel to the academic department, the Institute has the administration department which is led by the General Manager. It is envisaged that in future the Registrar will be constituted as a department within its own right, named as the Registrar's Office whilst the General Manager's role will be more towards the day to day operations of the organisation, its buildings and support units.

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

Chair of SAAB	The Principal
Secretary to SAAB	The Registrar
Members of SAAB	The General Manager
	The Academic Department Heads

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

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

The responsibilities of the Heads of Department are as follows: -

1. To identify and recruit the most able and suitable lecturing staff according to the needs of the department, who are qualified and motivated to lecture students according to the norms published in the Code of Ethics for academic staff in liaison with the Principal
2. To draw up a budget request which will include items such as staff salaries, capital investment requests, consumable requirements, staff development and training, and infrastructure necessities and investments.
3. To continuously monitor the academic staff to motivate and oversee the achievement of the standards as listed in the code of ethics. The head of a department is required to develop an esprit de corps amongst the academic staff of the department, to foster and maintain the passion towards the institution and its students, and simultaneously be responsible for discipline as presented in the Code of Ethics for Academic Staff, such as strict timeliness, leave of absence, sick leave, and attendance and participation to faculty and other meetings.

4. To advise and mentor the lecturing staff with respect to their academic and lecturing methodology, organising self-development programmes in Malta and possibly overseas, and monitor the adoption of such self-development programmes by the lecturers who would have attended such programmes.
5. To set up an annual plan, reviewed every three months, issued to let staff know beforehand the plans for the department and assign tangible targets to each member.
6. To identify potential developments in the portfolio of programmes including extra curricula activities of the departments.
7. To be an access point for students and their parents and resolve any problems that may emanate from such communication. This may also include the function of academic guidance for students. To oversee the well-being of the student cohort, and do the best efforts to promote the school to attract more students to entrust their education to Saint Martin's.
8. To liaise for the application and attraction of research funds and the overseeing of project management for the successful implementation of such research projects.
9. To coordinate the identification and compilation of adequate learning resources such as library books, journals, etc. required for the full development of academia and students alike.
10. To encourage the participation in national and international forums, organisations and committees by the head of department as well as department members.
11. To organise and chair a department staff meeting at least once every calendar month, which meetings shall be minuted and designed to inform, communicate, brainstorm and take decisions. The department head will hold ad hoc meetings wherever these are deemed necessary, even on a one to one basis.
12. To liaise with the Principal and take any necessary disciplinary action as required, as well as action to congratulate subordinates. It is the duty of the head of department to oversee that the code of ethics for academic staff, plus the rules and procedures of the Institute are always upheld.
13. To be a member of the Saint Martin's Admissions and Advisory Board, under the Chairmanship of the Principal.
14. To uphold through example, the professionalism and strong moral and ethical culture cultivated by the Institute's founders. The head of department is expected to walk the extra mile for the sake of the Institute's name and the wellbeing of its students.
15. To control at all times the quality aspects of the department, putting in place the necessary processes to monitor all that is going on in the department in the provision of a top-class educational service. This will include at least one reported personal peer visit to each academic every academic year.
16. To forfeit self-interest for the good of the department, forfeiting time to ascertain that agreed deadlines and needs of the department are met without comment. This post is of a managerial post and the individual must have the interest of St Martin's above all else.
17. To teach three study units and assist whenever and wherever this is deemed to be necessary, with the intention of keeping the widest contact possible with the student body.

The Registrar is responsible for students' records administration and information for students and staff.

The responsibilities of the Registrar are as follows:-

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

The General Manager oversees the administrative and daily support operations of the Institute to ensure that all activities can be carried out efficiently and effectively in the proper manner.

The main responsibilities of the General Manager are as follows:-

1. Overseeing the handling of accounts payable/receivable.
2. Monitoring of bank facilities and cash flows.
3. Overseeing the utilization of the institute's premises and resources.
4. Handling HR related matters like contracts, payroll, vacation leave and ETC records.
5. Maintaining employee records.
6. Implementing Occupational/Environmental Health and Safety provisions.
7. Administration of the St Martin's Financial Assistance scheme.
8. Managing Administration staff.
9. Compiling and managing the Administration budget.
10. Overseeing the maintenance of the premises.

## Strategy for managing academic standards and quality

The Institute has had a twenty-year induction as a 'teaching institution' of the University of London through its International Programme network which instilled a quality assurance mentality from inception. Further evidence which demonstrates the effectiveness of the quality assurance system is evidenced by two Institutional Periodic Review audits undertaken by the University of London Directorate for Quality Assurance in 2010 and 2015. In addition to these audits conducted by the University of London, the Institute also underwent an external audit which was conducted by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) in 2017 wherein the Institute was found to have surpassed expectations in relation to student centered learning, teaching and assessment methods, as well as the cyclical external quality assurance adopted by the Institute.

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

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

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

- Quality assurance should not detract from or become a substitute for quality; quality assurance operates at the departmental level, with the responsibilities that this entails (including resolving short-term breakdowns and gathering and using regular feedback on courses and programmes), within a broader context where SAAB has collective responsibility for the standard of the Institute's academic awards;
- The exercise of these departmental responsibilities should be collective, through departmental faculty committee;
- Quality assurance should be a preliminary to quality enhancement and a greater proportion of energy and resource should be devoted to the latter;



- Good quality internal evidence, including student opinion, external examiner reports and student performance data, should be used to support quality assurance and enhancement processes;
- The findings from quality assurance should be made public in such a way as to share different practices and innovations across departments and to show students that quality is taken seriously;
- Departmental teaching, learning and assessment practices should be subject to review, for example through use of teaching observation, as a means both of assuring quality, of aiding staff development and of sharing different practice;
- The Institute must be in a position to demonstrate its standards to its students and their families/sponsors.

**The processes for delivering the strategy of quality standards upkeep will be adopted by the Institute.**

- A system of initial programme approval, with input from the providers of resource-based services (including the Department Faculties, the Library, IT Services and SAAB) and including an external assessor's report;
- A system of initial course approval, with input from the providers of resource-based services and conducted by the Institute's academic bodies;
- A system of approval of major modifications to programmes and courses, conducted by the Institute's academic bodies;
- A system of central review of departmental taught provision every THREE years, informed by available evidence, including student views, the main purposes being to promote development, identify and disseminate good practice, and to flag any concerns over standards to departments, without adjudicating on them;
- A system of gaining student feedback on their teaching and learning experience in the Institute. The students' role is currently that of a 'consumer' with open channels for both positive and negative feedback.
- A review by the Institute's academic bodies of its internal Codes of Ethics for Academic Teaching;
- Due and appropriate consideration of national quality assurance requirements through the Institute's committee structures;
- Departmental arrangements in place for assuring quality and standards:

- Departmental Staff meetings involving all staff members are scheduled at least three times per academic year. Minutes should be produced and circulated to staff;
- A Teaching Committee that involves appropriate departmental staff, meets regularly before each academic year and considers all aspects of departmental learning and teaching, including new programme and course proposals. Minutes should be produced and circulated to members;
- A system for ensuring the effective participation in the Institute's annual programme monitoring exercise
- A system for considering course and programme results annually, and revising taught provision as appropriate;
- A system for considering student survey course results annually, and revising taught provision as appropriate;
- A system for considering external examiners' reports, and acting on them, on an annual basis, with the Institute having an associated responsibility to ensure that the system functions well and that any lessons learnt on both good practice and areas of concern from the reports are learnt collectively throughout the Institute.

# Student Life Cycle

## Admission Process

All students wishing to pursue their studies at SMI are admitted from a Diploma programmes (MQF Level 5) and upon successful completion progressing their way into the respective Degree programmes (MQF Level 6) conferred by SMI and/or UOL.

## Entrance Requirements

Applicants must normally be at least 16 years of age on or before the SMI Autumn Semester examination session, which normally takes place in December, in the year of registration and must be in possession of:

- A minimum of four ordinary level passes, including Mathematics and English at SEC grades 1 to 5 or grades A to C in the case of GCE/GCSE or equivalent. Successful completion of ECDL will be treated as an ordinary level. Students wishing to progress to the UOL MQF Level 6 degree programmes in Accounting / Banking & Finance, Business & Management or Economics & Management must possess the equivalent of six ordinary level passes, including Mathematics and English.
- International equivalents to the above requirements will be considered and the decision taken at the discretion of SMI.
- All applicants are required to attend an interview with the Admissions Panel and attempt the English Placement Test (and / or any other subject matter that SMI may decide to include from time to time), which is normally scheduled during a period which coincides with the start of the programme of studies.
- Applicants who do not hold an ordinary level qualification in the English Language must provide proof of competence in English, such as a recognised test of proficiency, which is acceptable to the Institute. SMI normally accepts IELTS with an overall grade of 5.0.

## Maturity Clause

Applicants who are 21 years and over and do not hold the minimum entry requirements, may apply for the MQF Level 5 diploma subject to having passed a recognised MQF Level 3 qualification and have at least two years relevant uninterrupted full-time work employment. In addition to this students must successfully complete the Mathematics Admission and English placement test with a minimum grade of 50%, during the Autumn Semester Examinations in order to be eligible to continue their studies.

## Process

Applicants are required to submit the completed SMI application form and settle the one-time non-refundable application fee of €125.00. The application form includes personal details, education

history, desired programme of studies and a brief write-up by the student highlighting the reasons for choosing the programme. In addition to this, applicants are required to submit copies of the academic certificates, after the original ones have been verified by an authorised Member of Administration, clear copy of the identity card or passport, as well as two passport size photos. Administration will register the student's details on our intranet system whereby each student is provided with a unique SMI identification number. At this stage, students will not have access to the intranet system.

The application form, together with the respective documents, are handed to the Registrar's Office. These are vetted and approved by the Registrar. All applicants are required to complete a questionnaire which is aimed specifically for students to spend time in assessing their potential for the programmes we offer. The scope of the questions is to align the students' expectations with what is required at SMI. There are no right or wrong answers since the questions are only intended to help the Admissions Panel to get to know the student better, so that they may guide and support the student achieve what he / she is aspiring for. The completed questionnaire is forwarded to the Admissions Panel, which is normally made up of two academics from the respective department, and same is discussed during a scheduled twenty-minute interview with the applicant. The Admissions Panel will recommend whether the applicant should be accepted onto the programme.

### Registration

The Registrar's Office will then issue the letter confirming that the student has been accepted onto the programme. Applicants are considered as being registered students with SMI, as soon as settlement of the non-refundable registration fee is effected and received by SMI in conjunction with the submission of the registration form, from which time rules and regulations established by SMI will apply.

New registered students will receive a detailed email from the Registrar's Office, including the following information pertaining to their studies at SMI depending on their mode of studies:

- Details regarding the English Placement test, including sample examination paper and model answer
- Academic Calendar
- Details of the subjects the student is registered for
- Diploma regulations
- Details regarding the Get Qualified application
- Details regarding the Malta Government Undergraduate Scheme (MGUS) (applicable only to full-time students)

All new registered students are expected to attend Freshers Event, which is normally scheduled two days prior to the start of the academic year, wherein essential information is provided to students, including distribution of timetables.

The procedure noted above also applies to those students who progress from one year to another (referred to as continuing students). Following the release of the examination results, continuing students will be invited to register for the following academic year. They must submit a completed

registration form every year and once submitted an email is sent by the Registrar's Office highlighting the subjects they will be registered for the following academic year.

Those students following UOL programmes are also required to complete their continuing registration on a yearly basis and can do so once confirmation is sent by the Registrar's Office.

### **Registered students following Saint Martin's Institute of Higher Education programmes**

SMI students are assessed summatively and officially three times during the academic year, once at the end of the Autumn Semester in December, once at the end of the Winter Semester scheduled towards the end of March and finally during the Spring Semester scheduled towards the end of May and beginning of June. Following the publication of exam results for the Autumn and Winter Semester examinations, students have the opportunity to view their marked examination scripts, to receive their feedback forms and to discuss the examination paper and any difficulties with their lecturers and ask for further guidance. Due to the rigorous process ensured by SMI during the Spring Semester examination sessions, students are not permitted to view their examination scripts however in the eventuality that they do not successfully complete the subject a detailed feedback form is forwarded to the student to assist with the preparation for the resit examinations. The feedback form normally includes further information on the areas where the student should focus on in order to achieve a passing grade.

In addition to these examinations, students are also set a number of assignments throughout the academic year, which the lecturers mark and provide feedback to students in an effort to help the students master a better understanding of the content and to improve their argumentative writing skills or quantitative skills as the case may be. The marks achieved contribute towards the final overall grade at the end of their studies. It is expected – and the norm – that students research substantially to develop these pieces of work.

### **Registered students following University of London programmes**

SMI students are assessed formatively and officially twice during the academic year, once at the end of the Autumn Semester in December, and a second time during the Winter Semester scheduled towards the end of March. These two diets of examinations are set under strict examination conditions and mimic real examination settings which will take place in May/June of every year. Following the publication of exam results, students have the opportunity to view their marked examination scripts, to receive their feedback forms and to discuss the examination paper and any difficulties with their lecturers and ask for further guidance.

Further to the two formative examinations, students are set a number of assignments throughout the academic year, which the lecturers mark and provide feedback to students in an effort to help the students master a better understanding of the content and to improve their argumentative writing skills or quantitative skills as the case may be. It is expected – and the norm – that students research substantially to develop these pieces of work.

To ascertain impartiality, SMI students following the UOL programmes sit for their annual examinations as set by the UOL examination boards, with students sitting for unseen written papers organised and invigilated by the Registrar of examinations of the Ministry of Education, Malta. These final examinations are set, marked and moderated by the UOL examination boards independent from the teaching institution, which is responsible for the academic preparation of the student even through semester examinations as set by the Institute. At no time, are the academics at the institute involved in the examination process that determines the mark awarded for the examination and the classification of the degree for the UOL programmes.

### **Progression**

SMI students are eligible for automatic recognition of prior learning (RPL) from UOL and this allows them to progress automatically into Level 2 of the respective degree programme offered by UOL. This is allowed since the Diplomas offered by SMI have covered a similar syllabus at the same level, depth and breadth offered by UOL.

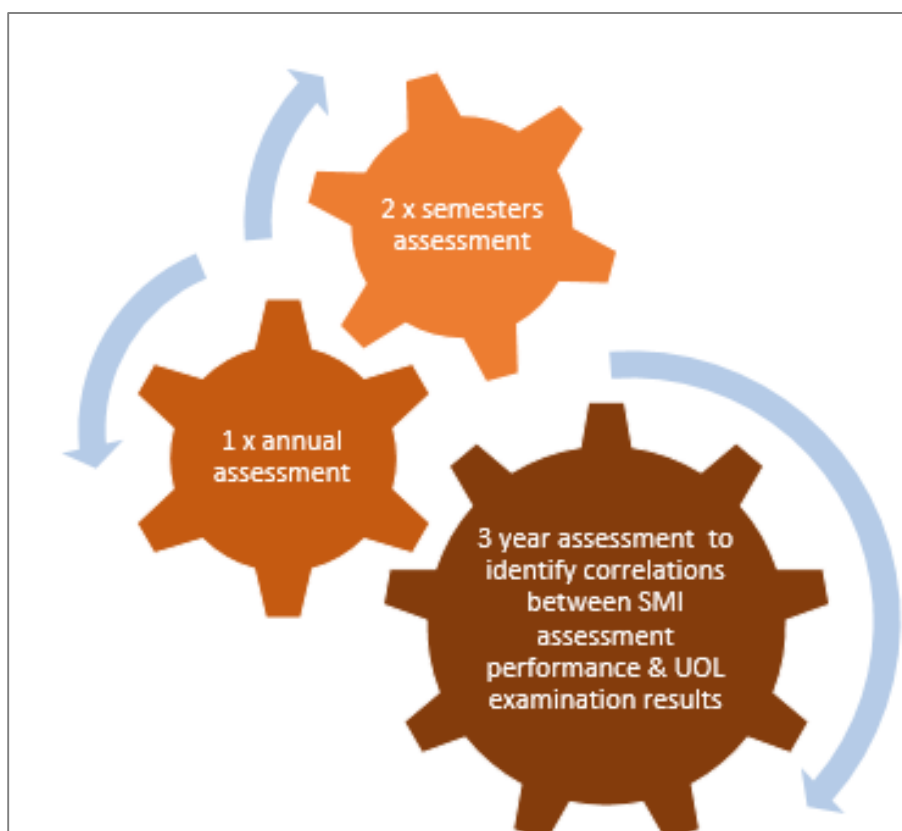
SMI students who successfully complete any of the degree programmes conferred by SMI or UOL are eligible to progress into an MQF Level 7 programme.

## Assessment Processes

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

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

The Institute has a rigorous methodology of assessment and ascertaining that the assessment of students' achievements is consistent across the Institute.



## Examination Sessions

There are **FOUR** official examinations held annually by SMI:-

- Autumn Semester examinations which are normally scheduled in the second and third week of December;
- Winter Semester examinations which are normally scheduled in the third and fourth week of March;
- Spring Semester examinations which are normally scheduled in the last week of May / beginning of June;
- Summer Semester examinations which are normally scheduled in the third week of July.

The calendaring of the Official Examinations dates shall be set in the Academic Calendar by the Registrar before the start of the academic year and same is uploaded on the SMI intranet system and circulated to all students. The timetable for the respective examination sessions are published on intranet one month before commencement of the examinations. Students receive an online admission notice two weeks prior to the respective examination session. The online notice includes the student's index number, examination schedule, location and regulations. Students are not



allowed to write their details (including name, surname or SM number) on any of the answer sheets in order to ensure that scripts remain anonymous.

### Verification System

All examination documents (examination paper, model answer and marking scheme) prepared by SMI academics must be verified by a moderator assigned by the respective Heads of Department. This ensures that the examination papers being published are verified internally by another academic proficient in the respective field. The list of moderators is prepared by the respective Heads of Department at the start of the academic year. For each examination session, the main examiner is required to provide a feedback form for each examination script. These together with the completed result sheet are handed to the Registrar's Office by the stipulated deadline. A number of scripts are selected randomly including one of the best, average and worst marks and same are handed to the assigned moderator for verification. Normally 10% of the total number of scripts is passed on for verification and the selection of scripts is carried out by the Registrar's Office. For groups of less than ten (10) students, three (3) scripts will be verified and for groups of less than five (5) students, ALL papers will be passed on for verification. The respective moderators submit a verification report following corrections. Any discrepancies are discussed between the examiner and moderator and the respective details are noted on the report.

In the case of the Spring Semester examination session, all examination scripts are double marked by the assigned moderator. At the end of the process, both markers (main and second) are required to input their respective grades into the system and those grades with a discrepancy of ten marks or over are discussed in the presence of the respective Heads of Department. A grade agreement document is completed which provides a detailed reason for the amendment in grades and same is forwarded to the Registrar's Office. These documents are reviewed by the External Examiner.

### External Examiner System

SMI places high priority on the external examiner system, to ensure that standards of awards and the quality of students' learning opportunities are second to none in global terms. Independent external examiners (not having any direct relationship with the Institute and may be Maltese or from other nationalities, members of universities) are asked to participate in the Spring Semester examinations of all self-awarded programmes offered by the Institute. In addition to providing students with an independent and external assessment of their work, this practice helps to ensure that the standards and quality of the qualifications awarded by the Institute are comparable to those of other reputable institutions. The Spring Semester examination documents (examination paper, model answer and marking scheme) are normally sent to the respective External Examiner for review and evaluation prior to the respective examination session for feedback and comments.

External examiners' reports are forwarded to the Principal who then passes these on to the respective Heads of Department for consideration by the respective faculty. The report includes comments made regarding the academic standards in relation to the academic standards with respect to student performance and standard achieved. The report will also include comments on the integrity and rigour of SMI's assessment processes. It is expected that due consideration is given

to any concerns/recommendations for improvement highlighted in these reports when faculty is reviewing the respective programmes.

## Attendance

At SMI we believe that attendance is an essential component to a student's academic success and this belief is reflected in the excellent results achieved by students who comply by this in their final examinations. Records are kept for each student and attendance is recorded on an hourly basis. Attendance is also recorded for any extracurricular activities organised by SMI. We believe that the scheduling of such activities, in addition to the daily lectures, will add value to our students' experience.

Students who have missed lectures due to illness must submit a medical certificate to the Registrar's Office when s/he returns to the Institute. The certificate will be stamped with the date received and records are updated by the Registrar's Office on the SMI intranet system. The following reasons will normally justify a student's absence from lectures:-

- Death in the family
- Medical appointments (must be confirmed with a note from the medical doctor)
- Court proceedings (statement from court required)
- Religious observances (must be approved one week in advance by the respective Heads of Department)
- Emergencies (must be approved by the respective Heads of Department / Registrar)

If the reason for an absence does not fall within these guidelines, the reason must be approved by the Registrar in advance.

Attendance is recorded daily by the respective lecturers before commencement of every lecture. These are recorded on the SMI intranet system and may be viewed by the students. Attendance reports are issued during the first week of every month by the Registrar's Office. These reports are checked thoroughly, and respective warning notes are noted on the report if a student did not have regular attendance records for the previous month. Furthermore, the absenteeism percentage for the previous month is recorded in an excel sheet and is forwarded to the respective Heads of Department and the Principal. The Heads of Department monitor these closely and approach those students who are not complying with this policy.

Students who do not satisfy the attendance requirement, may be barred from attempting the final examinations scheduled in May / June.

### Monthly Hourly Report

An hourly report is prepared on a monthly basis by the Registrar which includes the number of hours being taught by the respective departments. The report is split into full-time and part-time subjects and highlights the following essential information:

- Expected number of hours meant to be delivered during the respective month
- Actual number of hours delivered during the respective month
- Any discrepancies

This report gives us a clear indication of whether SMI is in line with the number of contact hours stipulated per subject according to the number of ECTSs. The report also includes the number of hours which are missed due to illness or emergency leave. Whenever possible these are replaced by the respective academics. This report is forwarded to the Principal for review and any action deemed necessary.

### Annual Programme Monitoring

The Institute's departments are expected to produce an annual monitoring report about their respective programmes. The purpose of this report is to provide a 'health check' and allows the respective departments to look at the currency and validity of the programmes in light of developments in the relevant disciplines and practice in its application as well as the teaching methods and pedagogy for the programmes. This reporting exercise allows the departments to look at the effectiveness of the curriculum and the method of assessment in order to prove that students achieve the programmes intended learning outcomes. It is primarily a process whereby academics appraise their own performance at the end of the academic year. The departmental report will follow the template as provided in 'Saint Martin's Institute of Higher Education Annual Review Report' and completed normally by 30th September of every year. The report must be provided to the Principal and Registrar as Secretary to the Saint Martin's Admissions and Advisory Board (SAAB).

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

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

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

## Design and Approval of New Programmes

Saint Martin's Institute of Higher Education is a higher education awarding body licensed by the National Commission for Further & Higher Education (NCFHE) with number 196. This allows the Institute to develop new programmes at MQF levels 5, 6, 7 and 8 and teach these programmes according to the requirements as set by the NCFHE in the Referencing Report, 4th Revised Edition, published in February 2016 or any subsequent guidelines.

The Institute is a recognised teaching institution for the University of London and consequently is authorised to provide the teaching for qualifications conferred by the University of London. The Institute has ascertained that all such programmes have been vetted at appropriately levelled according to MQRIC within the NCFHE.

In the development of qualifications, the Institute makes a clear distinction between a course which will materialise into an award or a certificate, or be part of a full programme, and a programme which signifies a minimum of 60 ECTS or the equivalent of one full year of study. To date, the Institute has developed a total of twenty-five qualifications between levels 5 and 7, as shown below:

MQF Level	Name of Qualification	Year
5	Diploma in Entrepreneurship	2013
6	Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education	2013
6	BSc (Hons) Commerce	2015
5	Diploma in Finance	2016
5	Diploma in Management & Leadership	2016
7	Postgraduate Certificate in Information Systems Engineering	2016
7	Postgraduate Diploma in Information Systems Engineering	2016
7	MSc in Information Systems Engineering	2016
5	Diploma in Computing	2017
5	Diploma in Computing with Finance	2017
5	Diploma in Computing and Finance	2017
5	Diploma in Computing with Games Design and Development	2017
5	Diploma in Computing with Information Systems	2017
5	Diploma in Computing with User Experience	2017

5	Diploma in Computing with eBusiness and Digital Marketing	2017
5	Diploma in Computing with Web Development	2017
<b>MQF Level</b>	<b>Name of Qualification</b>	<b>Year</b>
6	B.Sc (Hons) Computing	2017
6	B.Sc. (Hons) Computing and Finance	2017
6	B.Sc. (Hons) Computing with Marketing	2017
6	B.Sc. (Hons) Computing with User Experience	2017
6	B.Sc. (Hons) Computing with Information Systems	2017
6	B.Sc. (Hons) Computing with Web Design and Development	2017
6	B.Sc. (Hons) Computing with Games Design and Development	2017
5	Diploma in Computing with Security and Cryptography	2020
6	B.Sc. (Hons) Computing with Security and Cryptography	2020

The Institute has based these qualifications from knowledge gathered from its status as recognised teaching institution for the University of London, especially since the Institute aimed to attain automatic Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for the MQF level 5 diplomas for students to progress to the degree programmes conferred by the University.

Due to the nature of computing, the Computing Department treated the development of their programmes following the University of London syllabus and following consultations with the industry. The exception to the above is the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education which is a programme developed by Saint Martin's Institute to train its own internal member of academic staff with the necessary pedagogical competences to perform better in their job.

New course proposals set out how the course will be taught, the types of assessment students will need to complete and the learning outcomes they will achieve. These will be in accordance to NCFHE regulations and as per approval by the Saint Martin's Admissions and Advisory Board (SAAB). Furthermore, an external system of assessors is employed to review proposals and comment on the appropriateness and rigour of the programme.

The programme approval process considers the following:

- At what level is the curriculum being designed/evaluated?
- What are the intended learning outcomes for the programme (including the distinction between knowledge, skills and competences)?
- How will the programme be structured in terms of teaching and assessment?

- Does the programme promote progression so that the demands on the learner increase over time in terms of intellectual challenge, skills, knowledge and learning autonomy?
- What is the level of the course/programme on the framework?
- What are the core and essential reading list requirements?



## Student Feedback

Students' evaluation of their learning experience is an integral and necessary component of any quality assurance system as adopted by universities as it allows the institution to evaluate how its service provision is viewed by its most important group of stakeholders. Besides providing them with an opportunity to comment on the quality of courses, feedback ensures that lecturers are made aware of problems perceived or encountered by students and affords an opportunity for tutors to conduct self-evaluation and introspection for improvement.

The feedback system is both formal through an online intranet-based feedback system which is opened three times during the academic year and informal feedback through the low power distance between staff and students cultivated at the Institute. All the lecturers (full and part-time) may view the comments made by the students and this enables them to take immediate action. The feedback is reviewed by the respective Heads of Department who will immediately flag important concerns / issues when necessary with the academic involved. In addition to this, the respective Heads of Department will take note of well-founded comments made by the students and same are discussed during the yearly performance review. The comments made in respect of the school environment are tackled directly by the Principal and the General Manager.

### Staff recruitment strategy

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

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

The groups which have already taken root are the digital computer games group, the information systems group, and the mathematics group.

Saint Martin's Institute of Higher Education is an organisation whose success relies on the competences of its people. The Institute is fully aware of its obligation to offer students the very best possible education experience.

## Academic Staff development

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

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

As an academic institution offering teaching for the University of London, Saint Martin's Institute focuses on its academic provision through an arsenal of internal quality assurance processes which are meant to give early signs of issues arising in the provision of teaching.

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

- Recruitment of Academics QA process, including responding to a questionnaire and reading and discussion of Code of Ethics
- Mentoring of Junior or Assistant Academics by Head of Department and by an established Saint Martin's Institute lecturer
- Peer Review
- Head of Department staff review
- Appraisal Review of Academic Performance
- Continuous Professional Development through seminars, workshops, conferences, MOOC and including qualifying for the Saint Martin's Institute PGCHE
- Attendance and Timeliness of lectures through weekly and monthly reporting
- Monthly two-hour faculty meeting
- Saint Martin's Institute VLE review
- Industry networking to keep abreast of career requirements
- Flexible, family friendly culture fostering team building in the departments
- Departmental and inter faculty best practice meetings
- Encouragement and support for formal postgraduate studies
- Periodic online student feedback (three times annually - November, February and June) for academics and administration
- Hands on management with heads and principal active as lecturers
- Annual review of marks attained for the Saint Martin's Institute and University of London examinations and documented commentary

- Saint Martin's Institute internal examination papers reviewed by Department Head and Peer Lecturer appointed as verifier before the exam and after marking
- IP agreement signed and teaching aids and material developed are jointly owned to guarantee continuity when academics resign their post
- CCTV footage available in every classroom and/or computer laboratory

## Public Information

Information pertaining to courses offered by the Institute is publicly available through the website [www.stmartins.edu](http://www.stmartins.edu) and prospectuses are available on <https://issuu.com/stmartinsedu>. Students may also attain information about the University of London degree programmes taught by the Institute on <http://www.londoninternational.ac.uk/>, which allows individuals to select from a drop-down menu, the areas of study which are of interest to them, and this will in turn lead the user to courses which are relevant to the search criteria.

The information available under each of the individual searches is as follows:

- Title of the qualification
- Level of the qualification
- Duration and mode of study
- Course overview
- Learning outcomes of the programme
- Details of career opportunities and access to further studies
- Target audience
- Admission requirements
- Programme of Studies including a description for all study-units

## Student Support

There are various support structures in place at both Saint Martin's Institute of Higher Education and the University of London as the conferring body aimed at helping students with problems. A student facing academic problems may seek assistance from their Study Mentor, the respective Head of Department and the Principal respectively. Any administrative problems are to be channelled through the Registrar's office ([registrar@stmartins.edu](mailto:registrar@stmartins.edu)). Any issues concerning fees are to be addressed to [accounts@stmartins.edu](mailto:accounts@stmartins.edu).

### Students with Specific Requirements

Students experiencing problems due to physical or cognitive problems may seek assistance from the Registrar's office.

### Principal as a last resort source for student support

If a student has not found help from any of the above bodies, they may request to schedule an appointment with the Principal.

### E-learning and IT Services

The Institute's IT Services is responsible for the IT infrastructure and offers a range of facilities and services to assist members of staff and students with their IT-related needs.

The campus network connects together into one virtual campus all offices, laboratories, buildings and wireless hotspots that are located across the area in Hamrun. The intranet provides access to the Internet, Library online periodical, SMIVLE and the SMIIntranet. Other services that are provided to the community include e-learning, videoconferencing, academic software site licences and training.

### Library Services

The library offers just under one thousand five hundred titles for short term lending, as an extension to the extensive online library of the University of London. The online library includes numerous journal literature, as well as a wide range of electronic resources through a dynamic web portal.

## Student Complaints and Appeals

### **Saint Martin's Institute of Higher Education students**

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

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

**Step 2** – if the student feels that the issue / concern has not been resolved, the student may request a meeting with the respective Heads of Department. The request must be made in writing to the Registrar, who will make the necessary arrangements to schedule the meeting. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the respective Heads of Department may decide to refer the matter to the Principal or the Saint Martin's Admissions and Advisory Board (SAAB) for guidance and advice.

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

### **University of London students**

Please refer to the following link to view the Complaints and Academic Appeals procedure adopted by the University of London: <http://www.londoninternational.ac.uk/sites/default/files/complaints-procedure.pdf>