APEX ACADEMY

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE DOCUMENT

February 2019 Final Version

1. Introduction

All education and training service providers are required to adhere to important quality assurance standards. These standards are defined in the European Standard Guidelines which govern the European Higher Education Area. Apex Academy (AA) has developed an internal quality assurance structure as part of its strategy with the objective of providing learners with high-quality education and training focusing mainly on Levels 4 and Level 5 of the Malta Qualifications Framework.

APEX academy aims to provide mainly short programmes, structured into awards, on various themes and fields associated with the health and care industry. With several years of experience in the field of health and social care, the idea of APEX Academy is now to upgrade its level to offer accredited short programmes.

Within this context, this internal quality assurance (IQA) document aims to define all the operational procedures, policies and processes that will govern the academy in its drive to achieve ultimate performance also on matters related to quality assurance in education.

Additionally, new policies and procedures will also be developed as the operations start. This will allow APEX academy to continue to improve its educational and training services and also serve to cyclically update the IQA document.

The IQA document is structured into eight more sections. In section 2 the mechanisms for finance and leading staff will be explained. The design, development, approval and periodic review of courses will be highlighted in section 3. The teaching staff that will be engaged are required to follow strict procedures as explain in the fourth section. Section 5 deals with matters related to public information. Student centred learning, teaching, assessment, learning resources and support will be explained in section 6. Section 7 focuses on student registry functions. Information management of the academy will be explained in the eighth and final section of this IQA document.

2.   Institutional Probity

APEX academy will be led by Mr. Aaron Axiaq. In his role as founder and CEO of the academy, Mr. Aaron Axiaq will be responsible for the following main areas of operation:

- Finance
- Registry Functions
- Information Management

In addition, APEX academy will also have a Head for Administration, Ms. Claire Xuereb, that will be directly be responsible for the following operations:

- Public Information
- Curriculum Development and Review
- Quality Assurance
- Teaching Staff
- Learning, Teaching, Assessment, Resources and Support

These leading positions will be occupied by personnel that possess the following minimum qualifications and experience:

- Degree level of education (MQF Level 6, 180 ECTS)
- 15 years experience in the health and social care field

The criteria defined above will hold true even in the eventuality of a replacement in top management positions. This will ensure that the leadership of APEX academy is fit for purpose at the initial stages but also as the academy develops further.

As defined above, financial matters and budget planning are the responsibility of the academy's Founder and CEO. In order to ensure that the academy is financially stable, a 3 year budget plan has been developed.

Over 60% of the budget allocation will be directed to learning, teaching, assessment, resources and support. 20% of the budget will be directed towards administrative functions which include public information, registry functions, information management and quality assurance. The remaining 20% will be directed towards the development of high quality curriculum development.

Annual audited accounts will be maintained, and will be made available in the public domain as is expected.

3.   Curriculum Development and Review

In order to ensure that the programmes delivered by APEX academy are of high value, a specific business process has been developed. The owner of this process is the academy's Founder and CEO, and will be supported by subject specific experts that will be engaged on a contract for service. The experts that will be engaged will satisfy the following minimum criteria:
- Minumum Level 6 qualification in respective field
- Work experience of at least 5 years in given field

Additionally, the academy's administration manager will also ensure that this process is adhered to as part of the internal quality assurance mechanism.

Step	Description of activity
1. Market Research	Specific training needs are identified by means of several activities which include business meetings, focus groups with potential students and content analysis. This will involve engaging with stakeholders which for the scope of this exercise will involve potential employers from the world of work and potential students/learners.
2. Proposal	On the basis of the market research conducted, a brief proposal is developed with the objective of defining: a. Target audience b. Programme level c. Programme duration and workload d. Programme title
3. Development	Once the proposal is approved by the academy's top management, the development of the programme is executed in alignment with NCFHE's Manual of Procedures for accreditation. By the end of this activity, the programme (apart from the parameters defined in step 2 above) will contain the following: a. Teaching methods b. Assessment methods c. Learning outcomes d. Knowledge, skills and competences e. Learning content

	f. Reading lists
	g. Credit value and distribution
4. Approval	The developed programme is then submitted to NCFHE for external approval as stipulated in the Manual of Procedures

APEX academy has also developed a programme review procedure. An important aspect of the programme review procedure will be the ongoing monitoring of programmes that will be conducted by the head of administration manager (HOA). The HOA will be collecting information directly from students and teaching staff throughout and after the implementation of the programme.

Information will be collected by means of formal meetings with student, formal meetings with teaching staff and specific questionnaires that will be disseminated at the end of the programme. This information will be analysed (as will be explained in better detail in section 8 on information management) and will serve as important information in order to upgrade the quality of programmes.

In addition to feedback from students and teaching staff, APEX academy will also involve employers when conducting programme evaluation. This will be done through a dedicated focus group meeting at the end of the academic year.

APEX academy will be reviewing its programme on an annual basis for the first three years of operation. The resulting actions will be communicated to potential employers, students and teachers by means of an email communication explaining the improvements carried out on the relevant programme/s. Subsequently, programmes will be reviewed (as a general rule) after three years. This will ensure that the programmes offered by the academy contain the latest knowledge, information, techniques and learning content. Indeed, the programmes that will be reviewed will be re-submitted for re-accreditation as outlined in the Manual of Procedures issued by the NCFHE.

4.   Teaching Staff

Teaching staff that will be engaged with APEX academy will all be experts in their own field. Teaching staff will be engaged on a contract for service that will be governed by a terms of reference.

Teaching staff are expected to:

- Support in the development of the programme
- Identify learning resources for the programme
- Implement the programme effectively
- Develop valid assessments
- Support students academically
- Review and correct students work
- Support in the evaluation of the programme

The learning resources identified will be the responsibility of the respective teaching staff member. Once resources have been identified, the teaching staff will propose resource list to academy's CEO who will allocate the necessary capital to purchase such resources given they are kept within the expected budget given.

Teaching staff engaged with the academy, will be given a specific training session on teaching, learning and assessment aligned with the vision of the academy. Such training sessions will be organised on a year on year basis so as to ensure that teaching staff are updated continuously.

In order to be eligible to teach with APEX academy, all teaching staff are expected to possess at least a Degree qualification (or equivalent) in the subject area and 2 years experience in education and training.

The recruitment process will be the responsibility of the Founder and CEO. The HOA will ensure that the process moves smoothly and that contracts for services are issued to respective teaching staff engaged with the academy. The interviewing board will consist of the CEO and Head of Academy. The interview process will meet all the required standards of fairness and transperenency as a formal process will be deployed, namely:

- Eligibility check is conducted
- Eligible candidates informed with date and time for interview
- An interviewing board is assembled
- Interview is conducted
- A score sheet for each candidate is formulated and filled
- Selection process conducted on the basis of order of merit
- Participants informed

APEX academy will also induct teaching staff with a dedicated programme. This induction programme will ensure that all teaching staff are up-to-date with teaching methodologies and

with the academy's internal quality assurance processes. The programme will be structured into four parts, namely:

Part 1   Teaching methods [5 hours of total learning] Part 2   Assessment methods [5 hours of total learning] Part 3   Quality Assurance [8 hours of total learning]

Part 4   Curriculum development and evaluation [5 hours of total learning]

The observation of teaching, feedback on performance and CPDs for teaching staff on education and training will be sub-contracted to an education and training specialist. The latter will possess a minimum qualification at a Master's level and at least 15 years experience in the education and training field. Observation visits will be conducted by pre-informing tutor of such a visit. The structure of the visit will take the form of a peer observation whereby the tutor will be provided with tips and guidance on how to improve on his/her teaching and delivery.

5.   Public Information

Informative and updated data will be disseminated to students and other interested stakeholders by means of a dedicated website. Information will be kept updated and accurate as part of the responsibility of the management staff of the academy. In addition, students will be consulted on the usefulness of the information by conducting a specific meeting on data and information. In particular, the website will be maintained by the academy's HOA and will be structured into several domains to be provide clear information on the following:

Domain A   Information on programmes

All programme outcomes, MQF level, duration, method of delivery and further learning opportunities will be displayed on the academy's website. Additionally, students can also ask further specific information on the programme through a dedicated support line that will be made available.

Domain B   Application process and Fees

The application process (explained in section 7 of this IQA) and associated programme fees will be made available online.

Domain C   Administrative information

Aspects of administrative information such as structure of the academy, support services, information management will be made public available on the website.

Domain D   Quality Assurance

APEX academy's adherence to quality assurance as determined by the National Quality Assurance Framework will also be made available on the public domain.

The following information will be made publicly available:

- Selection criteria
- Learning outcomes of the courses offered
- Qualification level and number of credits
- Processes for teaching, learning and assessment
- Pass rates
- Further learning opportunities

6. Learning, Teaching, Assessment, Resources and Support

This section is subdivided into three further sub-sections (Delivery and Assessment, Resources and Student Support) in order to provide clear information on the intended activity which fall under the responsibility of the academy's Founder and CEO.

6.1 Delivery and Assessment

Teaching staff at APEX academy will be responsible for the delivery and assessment of programmes. This is specified in their terms of reference. Nevertheless, the academy's CEO and Founder will monitor the delivery and assessment of programmes. This monitoring process will be done through observation visits in agreement with the teaching staff. All assessment will be forwarded for an internal quality check to make sure that all the established criteria as defined in the programme accreditation form are met. This internal quality check will be conducted by an external expert and will be based on a sample basis, representing 30% of the total assessments undertaken for every module of study.

A variety of teaching methods will be utilized by APEX academy including formal lectures, workshops, group-work, flipped classroom techniques and video conferencing. Similarly, various assessment methods will be deployed by APEX academy in order to meet the diversity of learning needs and styles. Typical assessment methods will be include portfolio development, written assignments, projects and standard examinations. Assessments will be graded on the basis of assessment criteria defined for each learning outcome and weighted over a percentage mark according to the table below:

Percentage Mark	Grade
85 - 100	A
70 - 84	B
55 - 69	C
45 - 54	D
0 - 44	Fail

Assessment criteria for each module of study that will be assessed will be developed and made available to all students before the start of the programme. In addition, tutors will provide feedback to all assessments by formulating a rubric. This effectively means that all assessment criteria will have feedback for students to review their performance on the assessment undertaken.

6.2   Resources

Learning resources are managed by the academy's Founder and CEO. Teaching staff are required to identify the respective learning resources need for the effective deployment of programmes. These learning resources are then made available to teaching staff and students subject that the cost of the identified resources remains with the budget established for each programme.

Learning resources will include specialised textbooks, notes, booklets, presentations, access to online articles and journals.

6.3   Student Support

Academic support to students will be provided by respective teaching staff members. In addition, students with special needs or require some form of guidance/counselling will also be offered dedicated services on a one-to-one basis. Such services will be outsourced to professionals within the field according to the exigencies of students. This outsourcing will ensure that true professionals in the field are engaged in order to ensure that students are supported in the best possible manner. Professionals will therefore possess a minimum level 6 qualification and 8 years experience working in this field. This information will also be provided to students during an induction session.

Students will also have the possibility to log a complaint on any issue related to their learning at APEX Academy. Such issues are to be reported to the Head of Administration who will look into the respective cases and proceed with corrective actions if required. Students can also appeal any decision by writing directly to the academy's Founder and CEO. The latter will address any issues on a case by case basis. Information related to student case will also be kept in dedicated student records/profiles as outlined in section 8 of this IQA document.

7.   Registry Functions

The Head of Administration is responsible for all registry functions which include:

1.   Student information and application process
2.   Acceptance and payment
3.   Data storage and monitoring
4.   Performance in programme assessment
5.   Certification

Information on programmes of APEX academy will be disseminated in the public domain on the website and through social media. Interested students will be given all the information pertaining to the programme (as explained in section 5 - public information) before they apply by means of an online application.

An induction session will be organised and students will be provided with all the necessary information by means of a specific induction booklet that will contain:

- The Academy's policies and procedures
- Programme structure, level and credits
- Modules of study
- Assessment methods and dates
- Important information on conduct, rules and regulations

The HOA will conduct all the necessary checks on the student application in order to ensure that they possess the required entry criteria as established in the programme accreditation process. The use of established criteria, which will be communicated in advance, will ensure that the checks conducted by the HOA are fair and transparent. Students who fail to possess these entry criteria will be informed by means of an electronic mail of this result. Student who have the necessary entry requirements, will be informed of this result and are asked to conduct the necessary payments.

Students who pay their fees, will admitted to the programme they have applied for. Student information will be safely kept in main business office of APEX academy and will be registered in student database. Within the database, details of students will be maintained and updated throughout their learning journey at APEX academy.
As students progress in their programme, the results of the assessments undertaken will be stored as part of the registry database. Certification is awarded to students who successfully reach all the assessment criteria as established in the respective programme. The certificate will contain:

- Context of qualification
- MQF level,
- amount of learning credit,
- content and status of qualification gained, and
- the learning outcomes

8. Information Management

APEX academy will develop an information management system that is student-centred. For each student registered with APEX academy, a dedicated student profile will be maintained which will have the following information:

- Student details
- Programmes enrolled in
- Attendance rates
- Assessment performance
- Issues/Cases
- Student reports
- Lecturer's feedback
- Student evaluation and feedback

All this data will be collected by the Head of Administration at different stages of the learning life cycle. Such profiles will serve as important information for in-depth analysis by the teaching staff at the academy. Dedicated meetings will be conducted specifically to monitor and analyse the performance of the students. Such meetings will be led and facilitated by the academy's Founder and CEO, with the support of the Head of Administration.

All records will be stored at the main business address of the academy in Malta and will also be available in electronic format for easy access of the academy's top management. Once students complete their programme, data on their career paths will be maintained by communicating with the students 6 months following completion.

After the delivery and implementation of each programme, dedicated information management and analysis sessions will be conducted. In this context, specific meetings (at least once every quarter) will be called by the academy's CEO and will involve teaching staff and a student representative. As explained in section 3, the ongoing and periodic review of programmes will require important information and data coming from students, teaching staff and employers to be collected and evaluated in order to continuously improve the quality of programmes offered by APEX academy.

9. IQA Policy

The internal quality policy of **APEX ACADEMY** aims to provide an overarching framework for the effective operation of the academy. Indeed, this manual serves to provide a platform across all quality standards as defined in the National quality Assurance Framework.

AA will operate with a policy of no discrimination and intolerance across all its students and staff, both academic and administrative. This is indeed encompassed in our core principles as a group and is defined in the framework described below.

Our Mission is Focused:
We aim to exceed our client's expectations in all aspects, holistically.

- Respect, Trust and Loyalty
- Exceed Expectations, through services and relationships
- Following companies standards, policies and procedures

Respect for Individual:
- Rights
- Opinions
- Wishes
- Experience
- Competence

- We work to bring out the best abilities in all team members
- Motivation to achieve set goals

- Allowing individual to expand skills
- Sharing existing skills
- Creating a positive environment

- Everyone matters
- A Sense of belonging
- Commitment

Professionalism · Respect For All · Team Work · A Sense of Community · Leadership

APEX ACADEMY
Core Values

In addition, AA will operate a policy of zero tolerance to academic fraud. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any circumstance, and students caught with plagiarism will be penalised by obtaining a failing in their respective module. If repeated, students will be withdrawn from the programme. This information will be made available to students and staff during the induction session and will be made publicly available.

AA will treat issues of discrimination and/or academic fraud very seriously. Once the Head of the Institution is alerted of any possible issue on this matter, the HOI will intervene personally by conducting an investigation into the matter. The result of such an investigation may lead to individual being expelled from the academy and/or programme.

In order to achieve our mission, AA will work closely with stakeholders in the world of work. This essentially means that stakeholders including child care centres, health entities and corporations. Their role, as part of an integrative IQA policy, will also reflect client's requirements and needs for education and training of value in terms of curriculum development, implementation and evaluation as outlined in this IQA manual.