



# **INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY**

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## **1: Policy for Internal Quality Assurance**

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The Applied Research and Training Academy (ARTA) operates a robust internal quality assurance system to maintain consistency and accuracy of assessments. The institute's Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) is the process of ensuring that training delivery and assessment practice is monitored continuously in order to meet Maltese and European Standards. The process is fully compliant with Subsidiary Legislation 327.433 on Licensing, Accreditation and Quality Assurance and in line with guidelines issued by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA).

The institute is fully committed to the development of an internal culture which will instate the importance of quality delivery and assure the continuous quality development of programmes. It will regularly review its practices in order to continually improve the effectiveness at all levels.

This policy applies to all staff members of the institute, including the management, directors, as well as students. The implementation of this policy is monitored by the Institute Director and will remain under constant review of the management of the academy.

### **Policy Scope**

- To guarantee that assessment practices and decisions are evaluated and findings are acted upon to ensure standardisation, consistency and fairness in assessment;
- To provide a consistent check on the quality of course delivery, the fairness of marking, grading and overall assessment of students' work;
- To ensure that valid assessment decisions are reached for all students;

- To meet and act upon the requirements and standards of the Malta Further and Higher Educational Authority (MFHEA);
- To develop and implement strategies for continuous enhancement of quality.

### **Principal/Head of Institute**

The Principal/Head of Institute has the responsibility to assure that the IQA policy is being followed and that appropriate monitoring is being carried out, ensuring that all assessments are correctly judged by suitably qualified and occupationally competent staff and all processes are accurately recorded to provide a clear audit trail.

The Principal/Head of Institute shall:

- Implement the institute's development plan;
- Regulate the programme of study, the entry regulations and the methods of assessment;
- Constantly review and monitor the programme performance;
- Conduct meetings with institute staff to discuss and evaluate the team's quality assurance practices;
- Conduct performance management processes, including lesson observations;
- Monitor daily the effectiveness of the quality assurance policy;
- Review the contents of student questionnaires;
- Ensure that appropriate evidence is correctly completed and submitted;
- Carry out a risk assessment of premises for learning and assessment activities;
- Advise institute owners of any issues, developments or problems that need intervention;
- Establish procedures for ensuring academic integrity and freedom;

- Appoint new members of staff in academic and administrative positions;
- Consider student requests.

The Policy for Internal Quality Assurance will be made public and will form part of the institute's strategic management. Internal stakeholders will constantly develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes.

In addition to the Internal Quality Assurance Policy, the institute will also have in place several other policies and documentation, specifically designed to ensure proper effectiveness of programmes, such as:

- Data Protection Policy
- Enquiries and Appeals Procedures
- Complaints Procedure
- Maladministration and Malpractice Policy
- Plagiarism Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy

All the policies listed above are provided as an annex to this IQA document and are referred to in the following sections which cover all the quality assurance standards systematically.

## **2: Institutional Probity**

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ARTA is overseen by a Board of Governors, composed of governors appointed by the shareholders of the academy. Led by the President and Vice-President, one of the primary roles of the Board is to ensure that it has a sound system of internal financial management and control. In line with this, the Board shall establish annual budgetary forecasts, including capital investment planning, as well as put financial systems and regulations in place to administer and monitor its business against such forecasts and ensure that these are being followed and complied with.

The Board shall adopt the various processes and procedures of ARTA in order to ensure institutional probity, including but not limited to public disclosures, staff code of conduct, gifts and hospitality, money laundering and other aspects that ensure financial control and integrity. The Board also has the responsibility for the on-going strategic direction of ARTA, approval of major developments and the oversight of day-to-day operations of its business to be carried out in line with ARTA's strategic vision. The Board also has the responsibility of ensuring that persons engaged to occupy senior employment positions within the company, including heads of department, are fit and proper persons and are able to ensure the successful delivery of the approved educational courses.

The Principal/Head of Institute is responsible for the financial budget and accounts. Annual audited accounts will be maintained in order to ensure full regulatory compliance as is expected of education and training institutions.

All headship positions are occupied by fully qualified personnel (minimum pegged at MQF Level 7 within the Malta Qualifications Framework) and have, at least, 5 years of work experience within the sector of operation. Additionally, in order to ensure sustainability and full compliance with institutional probity standards, all new and/or replacement headship positions at ARTA will adhere to the following minimum conditions:

- a) MQF Level 7 qualification of at least 90 ECTS
- b) 8 years of work experience
- c) 5 years' experience in a management position

An organogram outlining the structure of ARTA and providing a brief description of the roles and responsibilities of key members of staff is given in Appendix 1.

The structure of the organization allows for the distribution of responsibilities associated with the quality structure as presented overleaf:

<b>Function</b>	<b>Main responsibilities</b>	<b>Alignment with Standards</b>
Strategic Management [Head of Institute, President and Vice-President]	Strategic direction Institutional Probity Legal representation	Standard 1 Standard 2
Academic Operations [Executive Secretary]	Learning, teaching and assessment Teaching staff	Standard 4 Standard 6 Standard 10

	Ongoing and periodic review of programmes	
Corporate Operations [Administrative Officer and Registrar]	Admission, progression, recognition and certification  Learning resources and student support	Standard 5  Standard 7
Knowledge Management [Director ICT, Knowledge Management and Curriculum]	Information management  Public information  Design and development of programmes	Standard 8  Standard 9  Standard 3
Internal Quality Assurance [Head of QA]	Policy for internal quality assurance  Cyclical external quality assurance  Sample process checks on operational functions (academic and corporate)	Standard 1  Standard 11  Standard 1 to 10



### 3: Design and Approval of Programmes

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The design and development of academic programmes is conducted internally under the direction of the academic head. ARTA staff are equipped with vast experience and knowledge associated within the field and provide a solid and competent team of experts.

The design of the programme is dependent on market research that is an integral part of the strategic management of the institute. Additionally, this market research is also reinforced through business meetings, conferences and fora in order to obtain feedback on the design and validity of training need.

The programme design and development process follows a step-by-step procedure, as tabulated below:

Step	Task Description
1	Determination of main design course parameters, namely: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Type of course</li> <li>b. Mode of delivery</li> <li>c. Title of qualification/award</li> <li>d. MQF Level</li> <li>e. Credit structure and distribution</li> <li>f. Course duration</li> <li>g. Course rationale</li> <li>h. Identification of target group/s</li> </ol>

2	Development of course objectives, entry requirements and associated relationship to existing occupations in the labour market
3	Formulation of teaching, learning and assessment strategies
4	Identification of fully competent teaching staff (in alignment with Standard 6) and description of minimum qualifications expected
5	Deceleration of internal quality assurance system at a programme level
6	Development of module of study content, namely: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Learning outcomes</li> <li>b. Module description</li> <li>c. Learning and assessment Hours (Credit Distribution)</li> <li>d. Teaching methods</li> <li>e. Assessment methods</li> <li>f. Reading list</li> </ol>
7	Internal review process conducted by QA manager to ensure all of the above steps have been conducted
8	Internal approval by academic head

Once the above process has been completed and the development process has been declared fit for purpose, the programme is submitted to MFHEA for accreditation and ultimately approval.

## 4: Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

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ARTA's main strength lies within the technical competence of its staff who are engaged in research projects related to diverse areas of expertise. Through a combination of learning that is work-based and traditional teaching methods, ARTA's strategy of teaching and learning is based on three main pillars:

1. Transfer of knowledge
2. State-of-the art equipment and laboratories
3. Value added research projects and tasks

Within this context, ARTA is in a strong position to apply teaching methods through an interdisciplinary approach through a combination of forms, including:

- Traditional lectures
- Supervised practical sessions in the laboratories
- Problem based learning
- Project work
- Interactive working groups

Teaching and learning are also reinforced through assessment methods which are both formative and summative. To this end, assessment at ARTA is seen as a process for learning and will take on any of the following main modes:

- Written tasks and assignments

- Practical tasks
- Presentations
- Time constrained tests

The assessments that are developed are also internally checked by the Head of QA in order to ensure that all assessments are aligned with the stipulated programme learning outcomes in the approved and accredited programmes. Additionally, the Head of QA also checks that the following criteria are checked when verified assessments before being issued to students:

- Assessment tasks are of the adequate MQF level;
- Suitable time-frame and/or duration exists for completing assessments;
- Clear tasks/questions are formulated;
- Assessments for a given module cover all the learning outcomes within the module of study;
- Overall quality of assessment is fit for purpose.

Feedback from the Head of QA is ultimately provided to respective teaching staff that have set the assessments in order to improve the quality of the assessment before being given to students.

A specific policy, titled 'Maladministration and Malpractice', also provides ARTA with a robust internal quality assurance mechanism to avoid plagiarism and cheating and is presented in Annex 7 of this IQA document.

## 5: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

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This section covers functions related to registry and falls within the responsibility of the corporate manager. ARTA follows a step-by-step procedure leading to admission and registration of students:

Step	Task Description
1	Students enquire on programme offered by ARTA
2	Information/guidance session provided to interested students
3	Students apply for programme
4	Executive Secretary/Registrar conducts check on entry requirements stipulated as per programme application
5	If entry requirements check is positive, students are informed of this check and are asked to pay a deposit on programme fee (20% of total cost)
6	Once payment is received, Executive Secretary/Registrar registers students and provides a unique code
7	Students are then provided with all information on the programme in terms of schedule and induction programme

ARTA does not apply a procedure to recognize prior learning. All students are required to satisfy entry requirements and are asked to produce evidence of their formal qualifications (including an MQRIC statement for foreign based qualifications) and employment history sheet.

Student profiles and records are kept at the ARTA operating base at the Mosta TechnoPark, Malta. A dedicated student database serves to keep student data and records in electronic form and includes the following information:

- Student details
- Qualifications
- Updated CV
- Assessment grades and records acquired during the programme at ARTA
- Corporate reports
- Student attendance rates and performance

On successful completion of all modules of study within a programme, QA manager conducts internal quality checks of the assessment grading. Students are awarded a certificate of competence by ARTA (signed by Principal and President) clearly stating the MQF level and title of qualification/award. Additionally, the total credit value (ECTS) is also stated in the certificate.

## **6: Teaching Staff**

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Teaching staff at ARTA are engaged on a contract for service basis. Contract clearly stipulates the obligations of the teaching staff member. Teaching staff are required to possess the following minimum conditions:

- At least an MQF level 7 qualification in subject related area
- 5 years of work experience within the related field
- 3 years of teaching experience

All teaching staff are expected to keep updated in their area of specialization through research activities, work practice and CPD initiatives. The latter may include formal training/upskilling programmes of study, seminars, and conferences.

ARTA plans to offer pedagogical training to its teaching staff and a dedicated induction programme to all teaching staff engaged will be conducted. The induction programme is conducted jointly by the Principal and other members of senior management and focuses on the following areas:

1. ARTA strategy and ethos
2. Teaching and learning strategies
3. Assessment methods and procedures
4. Internal Quality Assurance
5. Operational affairs



As part of the IQA structure, ARTA also monitors the delivery of teaching staff through the following methods:

- Group meetings
- Observation of lectures/sessions
- IQA checks on assessments developed
- Feedback from students



## **7: Learning Resources and Student Support**

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ARTA dedicates 10% of the budget plan towards learning resources for students to support their competency development. The resources available to students include:

- Specialised textbooks
- Access to labs and equipment under supervision
- Journals and peer reviewed articles
- Customised notes and presentations

ARTA also aims to further upgrade the learning resources for students and teaching staff by providing online access to journals, articles and e-books. A dedicated IT infrastructure will also be developed to provide online tutoring support.

Students requiring non-academic support are required to make a request to the Principal. Although ARTA for the time being does not have full-time staff specifically dedicated to support functions related to counselling and other psycho-social domains, ARTA is fully committed to facilitate this service to students that require this service by facilitating the process with external advisors and/or professionals in the field. As part of the institutes policy, ARTA is guided by and Equality and Diversity policy which is presented in Annex 5 of this document.

ARTA is also guided by a complaints procedure policy (Annex 2) and an enquires and appeals policy (Annex 4) to handle effectively student complaints, grievances and appeals. Additionally, the Head of QA also monitors and reviews the procedures associated with student support to ensure full compliance with quality standards are met.

## **8: Information Management**

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ARTA's data and information are managed by the Director ICT, Knowledge Management and Curriculum and are guided by a Data Protection Policy (Annex 3). The following data is collected and compiled:

- Students' data and profile (upon admission and registration)
- Attendance rates (during the programme delivery)
- Performance rates (by the end of programme delivery)
- Student satisfaction feedback (at the end of the programme delivery)
- Tracer studies (1 year after completing the programme)

ARTA's top management are responsible to analyse the data being collected and compiled through dedicated quarterly meetings. The analysis exercise provides the basis for an internal report, defining key recommendations for improvement. This report will be compiled on an annual basis and will form a central part of ARTA's IQA structure.

## **9: Public Information**

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ARTA's website, which is maintained by the Director ICT, Knowledge Management and Curriculum, is the main tool to provide updated and clear information in the public domain. The corporate manager ensures that ARTA's website is maintained and updated regularly (on a monthly basis) with the following main information:

- Strategic objectives;
- Programme information (title and level; duration and schedule; programme learning outcomes; assessment and teaching methods; further opportunities for learning; pass rates);
- Application process and forms;
- Current research activities;
- Learning venue and facilities;
- Other information such as contact details and student support line.

## 10: Ongoing Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes

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ARTA's Head of QA will be responsible for the ongoing monitoring and periodic review of all learning/academic and corporate activity. The main monitoring activity includes:

- Teaching delivery and implementation
- Student feedback and support mechanisms
- Management meetings
- Meetings with teaching staff
- Checking of information management
- Review of public information
- Quality check on assessment development

ARTA shall constantly monitor the development of the courses offered and all the changes in requirements for the delivery of the programme. It will constantly adapt its strategy to the standards and regulations of the accreditation bodies and will contribute to the development of a national culture focused on quality provision.

ARTA shall ensure that all provided courses and allocated resources are fit for the purpose, are functioning effectively and are sustainable according to the Maltese and European education strategies.

The programmes and teaching staff shall undergo period reviews and evaluations, as an important part of the quality assurance procedures, which will serve as an assurance that the



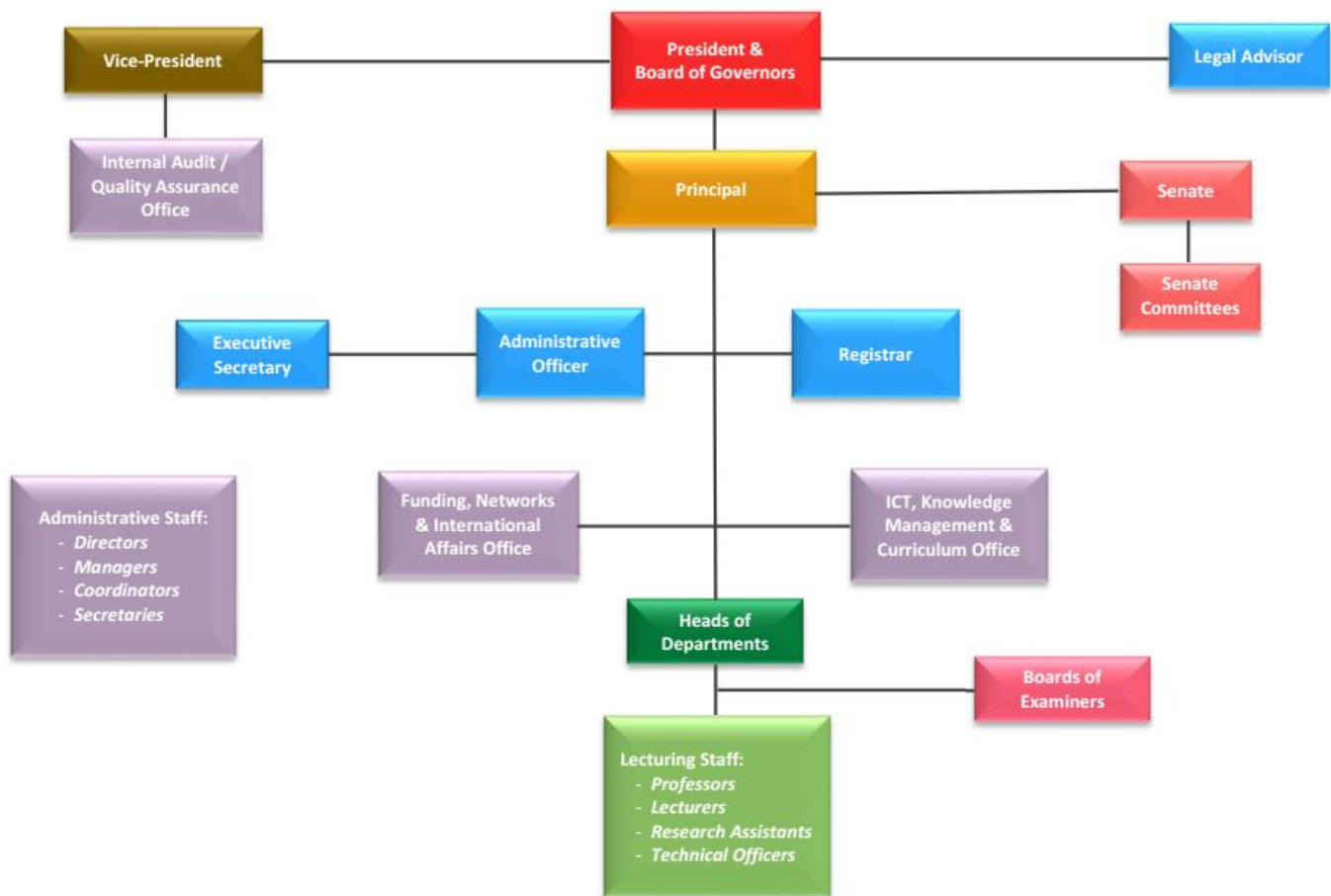
programmes offered are of constant and improved quality, of appropriate academic standard but will also contribute to the ever-changing needs of the society.

ARTA's accredited programmes will also be reviewed at least every three years. The review process will follow the full process as stipulated in section 3 to ensure that the programme objectives, strategies and content is fully updated with changing training needs. This effectively means that ARTA is committed to submit its programmes to MFHEA for programme (re) accreditation.

## Annexes

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### Annex 1: Organogram and Position/Office Descriptions





## **President**

The President is the ceremonial head of the academy, whose primary role is to ensure that the board has a strategic focus and represents the best interests of the academy. The incumbent confers with the Board of Governors to formulate strategies and programmes concerning organisational, operational and academic functions of the academy, and oversees their execution.

The President should preferably be in possession of a qualification at EQF Level 8 and have at least 10 years' experience in the of field educational leadership. The incumbent is appointed by the shareholders of the academy.

## **Board of Governors**

The Board of Governors has a strategic focus on the academy's performance, by working with the President in developing and overseeing the academy's priorities and strategic plans. The Board of Governors is also tasked to represent and protect the long-term best interests of the academy, as well as to foster ethical and responsible decision making, appropriate oversight of administration and best practices in governance.

Members of the Board of Governors are trustworthy persons, appointed by the shareholders of the academy.



## **Senate and Senate Committees**

The Senate is responsible for regulating and directing the academic work of the academy. Acting in an advisory capacity to the Board of Governors, the Senate is responsible for overseeing all academic matters, including the approval of new courses and the supervision and discipline of students. It also has responsibility to direct, regulate and promote research. Other specific duties of the Senate include the approval of the conferment of degrees by the academy. Senate may delegate its work to a series of sub-committees chaired by senior academic staff.

Chaired by the Principal, Senate's membership comprises the Administration Officer, Heads of academic departments, elected members of academic staff and representatives of the student body. In attendance for Senate meetings are also the Executive Secretary and the Registrar.

## **Principal**

The Principal is the head of the academy with responsibility for its overall activities, in accordance with the strategy, framework and requirements determined by the Board of Governors. The Principal reports to the Board of Governors and is the primary link between the board and other academic and administrative staff members. Among the many responsibilities of the position, the Principal oversees academic planning, academic programme review and curriculum development. The incumbent is also responsible for developing a professional and quality-oriented management throughout the organisation, as well as developing a positive and inclusive organisational culture and a good working environment for students, fellows, researchers and staff. Principal is also tasked with providing leadership in creating and maintaining academic standards and policies. The incumbent provides executive leadership in assisting other top



management members in the overall planning, organising and controlling of the academic programme areas and administrative functions; and is also tasked with being an inspiration and driving force that manages change processes, strategic development and implementation. The Principal is also responsible for overseeing the building of networks with central partners in the educational sector, business and industry, as well as public authorities.

The Principal should be in possession of a qualification at EQF Level 8 and have at least 10 years' experience working within an academic institution, preferably in a leadership role.

### **Administrative Officer**

The Administrative Officer (AO) is directly responsible for all administrative operations encompassed within the academy's research and academic missions. In partnership with the Board of Governors, the incumbent is responsible for developing short and long-range planning of administrative and financial goals and objectives. The AO coordinates and implements all academy functions and carries out strategic support initiatives and other special projects, as directed by the Board.

The Administrative Officer should be in possession of a qualification at EQF Level 7 in management or a related subject area and have 10 years' experience working within a management or other administrative post.

## **Registrar**

The Registrar's primary mission is to assist students in achieving their educational goals by maintaining and providing accurate records, by providing an effective process, from registration to graduation, and by evaluating students' academic progress according to established curricular requirements in compliance with academic policies. The Registrar is also tasked to collaborate with other members of top management in the planning and delivery of services and programmes and collaborating with administrators, academics and other members of staff to facilitate and improve services to students, while protecting the integrity and security of student academic data.

The Registrar should be in possession of a qualification at EQF Level 7 in management or a related subject area and have at least 5 years' experience working within a management or other administrative post, with a record of successful supervisory experience in a people-oriented environment.

## **Internal Auditor / Head Quality Assurance**

The Internal Audit Office serves as an independent appraisal function for the academy. This function is responsible for providing an independent appraisal of the academy's activities, not only financial and operative, but also where academic and research activities are concerned. Its mission is to provide independent, objective assurance and consulting services that evaluate the effectiveness of risk management, internal control and governance processes, thus adding value and improving the operations of the academy. The Office serves as a central point for the

coordination of and oversight for activities that promote accountability, integrity and efficiency for the academy.

The Internal Audit Office reports to the President and Board of Governors. It assists all levels of administration and academia in the achievement of goals and objectives and has extensive liaison with and provision of advice to the Quality Assurance Office. It is also crucial to ensuring the academy's compliance with educational legislation.

The Internal Auditor/Head Quality Assurance should be in possession of a qualification at EQF Level 7, as well as relevant Internal Auditor certification. They should also have at least 10 years' experience working within a management or other administrative post. Experience in an academic setting would also be considered an asset.

### **Legal Advisor**

The Legal Advisor oversees and coordinates of the academy's legal services. S/he supports the teaching, research and service missions of the academy by providing legal advice and representation to the Board of Governors, senior administrators, faculty and staff on matters relating to the performance of their institutional responsibilities. The Legal Advisor assists in analysing and advising on the legal implications of policy decisions, including regulatory and governance matters, compliance with government laws, employment law and employee matters, as well as student matters, particularly in light of recent development where General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements are concerned.

The Legal Advisor should be in possession of a recognised degree in law (EQF Level 7) and at least 5 years' legal experience in a private practice or legal department. External professionals from private law firms may also be appointed as special counsel, as and when required.

### **Executive Secretary**

The Executive Secretary's main responsibility is to interact and provide administrative support to other high-level officials within the academy. The incumbent is responsible for protecting the academy's confidential information, communication and information management, managing resources, coordinating meetings, preparing reports and training other administrative staff.

The Executive Secretary should ideally be in possession of a qualification at EQF Level 7 and have 10 years' experience working as administrative support staff. Excellent communication, organisational, interpersonal and administrative skills are also required.

### **Administrative Staff**

The academy's various administrative offices, as indicated in the following sections, are essential to supporting the operations and mission of the academy. They deal with a diverse range of issues including human resources, financial activities, quality assurance management, curriculum administration and student affairs. Academic administration employees are one of the academy's most valuable resources and are responsible for the maintenance and supervision of the academy. They are separate from the academics, although some personnel may have joint responsibilities.

There are several administrative positions within the various offices, offering a variety of roles and responsibilities, including directors, managers, secretaries, as well as coordinators for many specialist projects. All are highly professional individuals possessing strong organisational skills, as well as holding the following qualifications according to their position:

- **Director:** In possession of a qualification at EQF Level 7 in a relevant field of expertise, as well as a minimum of 5 years' related work experience.
- **Manager/Officer:** In possession of a qualification at EQF Level 6 in a relevant field of expertise, as well as a minimum of 5 years' related work experience.
- **Coordinator:** In possession of a qualification at EQF Level 5 in a relevant field of expertise, as well as a minimum of 3 years' related work experience.
- **Secretary:** In possession of suitable qualifications at EQF Level 4, as well as a minimum of 2 years' related work experience.

### **ICT, Knowledge Management and Curriculum Office**

The mission of the ICT, Knowledge Management and Curriculum Office is to work holistically and collaboratively with various other departments to promote a collaborative and integrative approach to the creation, capture, organisation, access, dissemination and use of information assets, including the tacit, uncaptured knowledge of people. It is responsible to provide IT resources for the work and activities of the academy and is committed to delivering quality customer service and technical solutions in the academic and administrative environment of the academy by ensuring that all users have access to information via a system which is reliable, fast, centre-wide and fully integrated with the external information world. The Office will have a

strategic input into ICT planning, budgets and projects, together with responsibility for shaping the strategic direction of the academy's technology initiatives by contributing professionally to a variety of initiatives, new developments and projects.

Another primary objective is to facilitate research, publication, community outreach and skills building, also through the organisation of a number of events such as seminars, conferences and workshops on a wide-range of issues. The Office is also responsible for putting in place a variety of inclusive platforms to promote dialogue, professional deliberations and knowledge and experience sharing, thus creating an invaluable opportunity for academicians, students and professionals to share their research findings and experiences with their counterparts. The KM Office is also responsible for managing the academy's centre and electronic library resources, including its databases, electronic journals, ebooks, etc.

Where Curriculum development is concerned, the Office's primary responsibility is that of coordinating curricula across the academy's academic components. Its role is to ensure that curriculum represents a diversity of programmes to meet student needs within a unified whole that requires coordination among academic components. The Office also coordinates the review of new programmes, changes and additions to existing courses and distance learning applications for courses. Additionally, it maintains the general course catalogue and publishes periodic detailed curricula reports.

Staff members working within the ICT, Knowledge Management and Curriculum Office should be in possession of an appropriate qualification in ICT, computer science, knowledge management, education or other comparable professional certifications, as well as a minimum of 3 years' related work experience. The person heading the Office should be in possession of a relevant qualification at EQF Level 7 and have at least 10 years' experience working within the industry,

as well as extensive knowledge of developments in the ICT field within the educational sector and proven ability to use this knowledge to support the longer-term strategic development of the academy's systems.

### **Funding, Networks and International Affairs Office**

The Funding, Networks and International Affairs Office is responsible for providing centralised support for the academy's international initiatives, where it is tasked to oversee international student and scholar services, as well as campus internationalisation, networking with other institutions and funding opportunities. The Office works in tandem with other departments to support international student recruitment, international partnerships and student mobility. Its primary aim is to help international candidates find the programmes that fit their educational and career goals, as well as to facilitate meaningful intercultural experiences for all students and to engage the entire community in globally-focused experiences and dialogue.

Personnel engaged at various ranks within the Funding, Networks and International Affairs Office should be in possession of an appropriate qualification at EQF Level 7 in management, communications, public policy and other relevant subject areas, as well as the required relevant work experience.

### **Quality Assurance Office**

The Quality Assurance (QA) Office is responsible for efficiently and effectively facilitating the assessment of the various academic programmes offered by the academy, ensuring that they

meet international, regional and national quality standards. It is also tasked to develop and implement an integrated quality assurance system to facilitate the accreditation and/or certification of academic programmes under relevant international and local agencies. The QA Office undertakes to develop a quality assurance system for maintaining, monitoring, improving and enhancing the overall academic standards of the various programmes delivered, in order to produce quality graduates, meet stakeholders' expectations and support student mobility and international cooperation.

Personnel engaged at various ranks within the Quality Assurance Office should be in possession of an appropriate qualification in management, administration, quality assurance management and other relevant subject areas, as well as the required relevant work experience.

### **Heads of Departments**

The Heads of Departments are appointed post-holders who have responsibility for the strategic and academic management of the academy's various departments. The prime role of a Head of Department is to provide strong academic leadership, where the incumbent is required to lead, manage and develop the department to ensure it achieves the highest possible standards of excellence in all its activities. Heads should also demonstrate vision and empower others in order to deliver the agreed departmental strategy. The methods by which the Heads of Departments carry out their duties and the extent of delegation will depend on factors such as the size and nature of the departments.



Heads of Departments should be members of academic staff, preferably of Professorial or Senior Lecturer status, in possession of a credible track record of high-quality academic work. They should also have experience of effectively managing individual members of staff and teams.

### **Lecturing Staff**

The high-quality level of all academic programmes offered by the academy is provided by excellent members of academic staff, who are given the opportunity to innovate and improve the education they provide. The academy pays extra attention to the professionalization of its academic staff, where one initiative involves extending lecturing career training through to the level of professorships. Academic staff members share their best practices with each other and actively contribute to improving the programmes where necessary, so as to ensure that the academy is at the forefront of educational innovation and creates challenging programmes for extra-talented and motivated students.

There are several academic positions within the various departments. All members hold a high-level degree in their field of specialisation, where many members are professionals or instructors involved with other notable institutions and universities. Hence, such members of staff are engaged on a Visiting Lectureship or Professorship basis. Academic staff members must be in possession of the following qualifications, according to their position:

- **Assistant Lecturer:** In possession of a post-graduate qualification (EQF Level 7) and at least 5 years' professional experience in a position of responsibility related to the subject matter they are engaged to teach.

- **Lecturer:** In possession of a post-graduate qualification (EQF Level 7) and at least 10 years' professional experience in a position of position of responsibility related to the subject matter they are engaged to teach; or in possession of a PhD degree (EQF Level 8).
- **Senior Lecturer:** In possession of a post-graduate qualification (EQF Level 7) and at least 15 years' professional experience in a position of responsibility related to the subject matter they are engaged to teach; or in possession of a PhD degree (EQF Level 8) and at least 5 years' professional experience.
- **Associate Professor:** Professorial title reflects recognised leadership and substantial reputation in research and teaching in an academic discipline. In addition to the qualifications and experience required for appointment to Senior Lecturer grade, Associate Professors must be able to demonstrate expertise in the subject area and that significant work has been done in research, teaching, community service, etc. Publication of original research in professional journals, prominent academic presence, professional certification/acknowledgement, as well as substantial industry experience can all demonstrate subject area expertise.
- **Professor:** Full Professors are considered to be authorities in their field. The main difference from Associate Professors involves the level of recognition, where full Professors are nationally or internationally known and have earned significant notoriety. Promotion to full Professor is based on achievement, where candidates should have made additional substantial contributions that have had a significant impact in the field.

Other members of staff working within the various academic departments include the following:

- **Research Assistant:** Such personnel are academic student employees hired by the academy to assist in carrying out a particular research agenda. Candidates should have

demonstrated satisfactory academic progress, as defined by the supervisor, as well as sufficient work experience related to the field of research.

- **Technical Officer:** The primary role of such employees is to provide the necessary support to other academic staff members and coordinate various activities required for the successful delivery of various academic programmes. They should possess strong technical, analytical and problem-solving skills, as well as be in possession of suitable qualifications, at least at EQF Level 5.

### **Boards of Examiners**

Each Academic Department of the academy has a Board of Examiners, the members of which are appointed by the Senate. The Boards of Examiners are responsible for the effective organisation and quality assurance of all examinations and other modes of assessment within the various departments and determine whether students have acquired the knowledge and skills required for the awarding of their degree. The role of the Boards of Examiners is to ensure that study programmes adhere to their course and examination regulations.

Chairs of the Boards of Examiners are also appointed by the Senate. Each Board of Examiners shall appoint a secretary who shall be responsible for keeping a record of all decisions reached by the board, as well as for ensuring that all members of the board (including external examiners) are informed of meetings, etc.

## **Annex 2: Complaints Procedure Policy**

The Applied Research and Training Academy (ARTA) is committed to providing a quality service and products to all customers. The aim of this procedure is to ensure a consistent and open approach to addressing complaints and in a manner which facilitates conciliation and a timely resolution.

Please note where the complaint is in effect dissatisfaction with the process of assessment marking, the Enquiries and Appeals Procedures Policy should be followed. Where the complaint relates to alleged malpractice or maladministration, the learner should follow the process communicated through the Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

Where the complaint is about the promotion, delivery or quality assurance of courses, the Complaints Procedure Policy should be followed.

### **Procedure**

The learner should raise his/her concern in the first instance with the person involved or the school's administrator, as soon as possible after the incident.

The administrator will make every reasonable effort to resolve the issue within 5 working days of being made aware it.

If the learner wishes to make a formal complaint, a written communication should be sent via email or post. In the written communication should be included:

- name, address and telephone number of the person raising the complaint
- a clear description of the complaint
- copies of any relevant correspondence
- any other relevant information

No complaints will be accepted if submitted by other learners, by family members or other third parties. All complaints will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

### **Possible Outcomes**

- The complaint is not upheld:
  - If a complaint is not upheld, this procedure is officially closed. The school may wish to return to a process of informal discussion regarding any outstanding issues
- The complaint is upheld:
  - If a complaint is upheld then the school will take appropriate action, but will not discuss with the complainant any disciplinary action in which it may engage with school' staff or associates or sanctions it has taken.

### **Annex 3: Data Protection Policy**

The Applied Research and Training Academy (ARTA) is fully compliant with the Data Protection Act. The school will follow procedures aiming to ensure that all employees, contractors, partners or other servants of the school who have access to any personal data held by or on behalf of ARTA, are fully aware of and abide by their duties and responsibilities under the Act.

#### **Statement of Policy**

- In order to operate efficiently, the school has to collect and use information about everyone it works with. These may include learners and prospective learners, past and prospective employees, clients, customers, and suppliers. In addition, it may be required by law to collect and use information in order to comply with accreditation requirement. This personal information must be handled and dealt with properly, however it is collected, recorded and used.
- The school regards the lawful and correct treatment of personal information as very important to its successful operations. It will ensure that it treats personal information lawfully and correctly.
- Article 7 of the Act lists the requirements for processing, where the main purpose of these principles is to protect the interest of the individuals about whom personal data is processed. To ensure compliance with the Act, the school shall ensure that:
  1. Personal data is processed fairly and lawfully
  2. Personal data is always processed in accordance with good practice

3. Personal data is only collected for specific, explicitly stated and legitimate purposes
4. Personal data is not processed for any purpose that is incompatible with that for which the information is collected
5. Personal data that is processed is adequate and relevant in relation to the purposes of the processing
6. No more personal data is processed than is necessary having regard to the purposes of the processing
7. Personal data that is processed is correct and, if necessary, up to date
8. All reasonable measures are taken to complete, correct, block or erase data to the extent that such data is incomplete or incorrect, having regard to the purposes for which they are processed
9. Personal data is not kept for a period longer than is necessary, having regard to the purposes for which they are processed

## Annex 4: Enquiries and Appeals Procedures Policy

The outcomes of ARTA’s assessment decisions are based on impartial, reliable, fair and valid judgements and aim to ensure that the decisions affecting learners are processed according to stated standards. Nevertheless, there may be occasions when a school’s decision is questioned. To allow learners to enquire about or appeal to ARTA against quality assurance outcomes or other decisions, we have clear procedures for the appellant to follow. These include:

- An **Enquiry**, which can be made when a learner contests the assessment marking of the lecturer and can prove that assessment’ decision has not met the unit standard. The enquiry is dealt with by the internal verifier of the specific module.
- An **Appeal**, which can be made by a learner against a school’s decision regarding his/her enquiry. It is dealt with by the Principal/Programme Manager.

The enquiries and appeals procedures are intended to ensure that any communication received by ARTA under this policy is dealt with quickly, fairly and effectively. The academy aims to resolve issues promptly. However, these matters can be complex and may require scrutiny of extensive documentation. The academy will aim to reach its final conclusion within the published timescales outlined below.

ARTA will only consider an enquiry if the following conditions have been met:

- the enquiry is submitted in writing to the academy’s administrator within 10 working days of the receipt of the assessment marking by the learner
- the enquiry includes the grounds for the appeal and any supporting documentation



- the academy does not accept enquiries from other learners, from family members or other third parties

ARTA shall review the enquiry and communicate an outcome within 5 working days from receipt of the enquiry.

In case the learner is not satisfied with the outcome, he may submit an appeal directly to the Principapl/Programme Manager, following the same procedure stated above.

The Principal/Programme Manager shall review the appeal and communicate an outcome within 7 working days from receipt of the appeal. This stage is the final step in the appeals process and a final decision will be made regarding the outcome of the initial enquiry.

## **Annex 5: Equality and Diversity Policy**

Equality of opportunity is a fundamental principle of ARTA's provision. This policy statement describes how ARTA will adhere to the diversity and equality legislation and ensure equal opportunities in terms of access to its qualifications and assessment.

The academy is committed to equal opportunities both as an employer, when carrying out all of its regulated functions and in the wider context of education and training.

As an awarding organization, ARTA wishes to ensure that there is no discrimination against learners because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnerships, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or beliefs, sex, sexual orientation and/or political opinion or persuasion.

In order to meet this commitment, the academy shall guarantee that:

- All employees and lecturers will ensure all barriers to entry, studying, assessment are mitigated
- All ARTA's personnel is made aware of the content of this policy and receive relevant training
- Learners will be fully informed about the equality and diversity policy
- The policy is constantly reviewed and update according to the current equal opportunities legislation
- All processes concerned with assessment are carried out in a fair and objective manner
- All written units and assignments comply with the equality and diversity policy



Learners who have issues regarding access to learning and assessment will in the first instance normally contact their programme administrator. If concerns persist, a learner can also contact the Principi directly.

## **Annex 6: Fire and Safety Procedure**

This procedure describes the steps to follow in event of a fire or fire drill, for the evacuation of the academy personnel and students from the site in a safe and timely manner.

ARTA has trained employees who are part of an emergency response team. The lecturers shall be deemed to be an extension to such team insofar as managing the safe and efficient evacuation of students from the premises in case of fire or general emergency.

Before each lecture starts, the lecturers will take 5 minutes and remind students of the emergency evacuation drill. A summary of this procedure will be displayed at the auditorium exit door.

Various alarm points are found in the building, which will be used to alert the staff in case of a fire or emergency situation, including any uncontained leaks. Upon hearing the alarm go on and maintained for more than 10 seconds (meaning it is not a drill), students and lecturers are to calmly stop what they are doing and proceed to the nearest exit.

The lecturer will gather the students and make their way to the Assembly Point number 4 situated outside the building, making sure all doors and windows are closed behind.

Everyone shall exit in a quiet and orderly fashion by the safest and quickest route. The fire warden shall check the toilets and store areas on their way out of the building.

Once at the assembly point, the lecturer shall conduct a call roll of the students.



In case of a real emergency, the Emergency Response Team members shall move the staff and students from the assembly point and further away from the factory grounds.

No staff member or student shall leave the assembly point or return to the building until clearance is given by the emergency response team leader.

Attendance sheet: It is important to note the function of the attendance sheet. It helps lecturers get a quick view of who is in the academy's premises.

It is of utmost importance that the lifts are NOT used during an emergency evacuation. Use the stairs and follow the emergency exit signs.

## **Annex 7: Maladministration and Malpractice Policy**

Suspicion of malpractice or maladministration may arise from a variety of sources of information for example during the assessment of learner work, analysing plagiarism reports or assessment records.

The policy sets out the principles on how the school should deal with such cases and the steps which must be followed when reporting suspected or actual cases of malpractice and maladministration.

### **Definitions of Malpractice**

For the purposes of this policy, 'Malpractice' is defined as:

'Non-compliance with the regulations pertaining to the assessment process, which may adversely affect the integrity of a qualification, its assessment and the validity of learner certificates'.

Malpractice may include a range of issues from failure to maintain appropriate records or systems to the deliberate falsification of records in order to claim certificates.

Examples of institute malpractice:

- repeated short-notice cancellation of external verifier
- continued failure to meet school's requirements regarding assessment and internal verification

- using threatening or abusive behaviour towards staff or lecturers, either in person or via email or telephone
- inventing or changing judgements for internally assessed work, without following agreed internal policies and processes
- repeated incidences of insufficient evidence of the learners' achievements to justify the marks given or assessment decisions made etc.

#### Examples of learner malpractice:

- Cheating – including:
  - o communicating with or copying the work of another learner during an examination
  - o introducing written or printed material into an examination room (when prohibited)
  - o possession of any materials not permitted in the room, such as electronic devices including mobile phones, personal organisers, books, dictionaries or calculators (when prohibited)
- Collusion - when a learner submits work as their own, when in reality it is done in collaboration with another person. It also applies to a learner that permits another learner to copy all or part of their work and submits it as an original piece of work
- Falsifying Data - This could take place in research projects when learners gather and use primary data to support an argument
- Ghosting - This occurs when a learner submits work as their own although it has been produced in whole or part by another person on their behalf or has been bought from the internet
- Plagiarism - the presentation of work by learners as their own etc.

## **Definition of Maladministration**

For the purposes of this policy, 'Maladministration' is defined as:

'Any activity, neglect, default or other practices that result in the school not complying with the set requirements for delivery and assessment of qualifications'.

Examples of maladministration:

- Delay in issuing certificates
- Inadequate record keeping
- Intentionally making misleading affirmations
- Unreasonable delays in responding to requests etc.

## **Process**

An annual register of malpractice and maladministration cases should be kept, which will also include the cases that were found not proven. This will help ensure that procedures are applied properly and fairly.

The policy will be constantly reviewed as to ensure that followed procedures are consistent to the accreditation requirements.



In all cases, until an investigation has been completed and the allegation or suspicion proved, the school shall use the terms ‘alleged malpractice or maladministration’ or ‘suspected malpractice or maladministration’, in relation to the case.

Allegations should be made in writing. They should include:

- Learner’s full name, address and student ID number
- Details of affected qualification or service
- Nature of the suspected malpractice or maladministration
- Details of any previous mitigation, if occurred
- Name and role of persons involved in the allegation

### **Procedures to be Followed**

These procedures are put in place in order to cover a wide range of circumstances related to:

- The subject of the allegation
- The person making the allegation
- The nature and gravity of the allegation

#### **1. *Alleged Malpractice by Learners***

ARTA shall first make an investigation of incidents. Following this, the academy shall:

- inform the learner in writing of the nature of the alleged or suspected malpractice, of the procedures that will be followed, and the possible penalties if malpractice is proved
- investigate the allegation or suspicion
- allow the learner to contest or refute the allegation or suspicion, in writing or at a hearing with the Programme Manager/Head of School
- allow the learner to be accompanied by a friend at the hearing
- make a decision based on the investigation and/or hearing
- inform the learner of the outcome in writing
- keep a full record of the case, including:
  - o details of the facts
  - o names of all people involved in the case and their roles
  - o copies of all written statements
  - o details of the investigation
  - o records of hearing, if occurred
  - o copy of the work which is subject to the allegation
  - o record of the decision taken
  - o record of confirmed penalty

The following penalties may be imposed, depending on the nature and gravity of the malpractice:

- a written warning
- not completing the module unit
- not achieving the qualification
- disqualification from the qualification concerned
- a combination of two or more of the above
- other actions

## ***2. Alleged Malpractice or Maladministration by ARTA's Employees***

Upon receipt of the written allegation or suspicion, ARTA will conduct an investigation; will determine the outcome and the penalty and will take appropriate measures, as per the school's procedures and employment regulations.

Where the malpractice or maladministration appears to involve a criminal offence, ARTA shall report the case to the police.

At all times the school will ensure that the personnel assigned to the investigation have the appropriate level of training and competence and they have had no previous involvement or personal interest in the matter.

During the investigation the employee(s) may be suspended or moved to other duties until the investigation is complete.

If the investigation confirms that malpractice or maladministration has taken place, the school shall take any actions necessary to:

- safeguard the integrity, validity or reliability of any assessment process and/or the validity of any certificates
- to protect the interests of learners
- to maintain public confidence in the school
- to maintain the school's status as an awarding organization

The actions will include amendments as appropriate concerning:

- aspects of the employee qualification development
- delivery of the modules
- awarding arrangements
- assessment and/or monitoring arrangements
- internal operational procedures
- staff recruitment and training

in order to prevent any similar issues from recurring.

### **Appeals against Sanctions**

When an employee or learner wishes to appeal against the decision, they can appeal by writing to the Programme Manager/Principal. The appeal must be made within 5 working days of the notification of the outcome and sanctions.

In the appeal should be included:

- The reason/s why the employee/learner believes the original decision and sanctions were not justified
- Any further information to support the appeal

ARTA shall review the original response received by employee/learner. If the matter has been fully addressed and there is no further information the appeal will be closed. If the initial response did not deal with all areas of the additional information presented, the appeal will be reviewed.



A written response from the Programme Manager/Principapl will be received within 10 working days of the acknowledgment of the complaint. The Programme Manager/Principapl's decision is final.



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