# EDU

## A DEGREE SMARTER.

*Internal Quality Assurance Document*

Valid as of August 28th, 2019

# Contents

# PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to ensure that the academic standards of the institute of higher educaton and its programmes, maintain and enhance the overall quality of learning opportunities for our students.

Key to achieving this strategy is an effective and efficient quality assurance system for the entire institute of higher education, underpinned by quality teaching, curriculum development and student progression. EDU has designed, reviewed and evaluated the respective policies for end-to-end quality assurance to ensure full commitment towards the 11 internal quality assurance standards of the national qualifications framework of Malta.

This internal quality document will be made public to ensure complete transparency of the overall accountabilities of the EDU. Thus, continuous internal quality reviews of the EDU will take all members and students into consideration. EDU intends to create an academic "culture of quality" which makes everyone responsible for the quality across the entire student lifecycle. The operations team is jointly with our partners defining quality check-points to review the performance of our internal business processes. Additionally, the digital operations allow a transparent tracking and feedback provision which can be analysed and adapted more flexible.

Our online campus is built on the well-established platform of Candena Digital Education Ltd., which EDU has fully licensed. In all, the digital infrastructure allows to continuously monitor our operations and thus to review if the practice reflects the quality assurance system we have defined. We are a learning institution that continuously develops and appreciates feedback – and our infrastructure mirrors this fundamental aim accordingly.

# MISSION STATEMENT

*"Our education creates and fosters a diverse community, committed to the care of patients,*
*inspired to leadership in evidence-based medicine."*

## AMBITION OF THE EDU

While more than 18 million health workers will be needed by 2035 (WHO) to reach universal health coverage, traditional medical education does not scale. With the current educational capacity, we run short of almost 13 Million[1] by 2035. We have set ourselves the goal of contributing decisively to closing the gap in Europe, by establishing an outcomes oriented curriculum with a scalable teaching model and thus enabling more talented young people to study medicine.

EDU is the leading digital college in the field of medical education, dedicated to significantly increase the quality of medical education , focusing on closely monitored practical excellence. The curriculum is based on the principles of evidence-based medicine and will follow the WFME guidelines on medical education centred around the top ten causes of death worldwide.

EDU creates new opportunities for the next generation of health professionals and believes that investment in medical education will create jobs and stimulate economic growth in a sustainable manner[2][3]. It is time to improve the care that patients receive and mobilize citizens to advocate universal health coverage in Europe and to vastly improve the number of health professionals. This

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[1] http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2013/health-workforce-shortage/en/
[2] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg3
[3] http://www.who.int/hrh/resources/WHO_GSHRH_DRAFT_05Jan16.pdf?ua=1

ambition can only be achieved through our commitment to the core values of our institution, placing quality of care at the heart of medical education:

# CORE VALUES

Provide access to medical education to all who show superior skills and motivation to become medical professionals

♣

Train a generation of medical professionals who combine technical excellence with empathetic care for patients

♣

Integrate clinical expertise, patients' values and best available evidence in decision-making for patients' health care

♣

Foster empowered and engaged communities of health workers to promote innovations and use of evidence

♣

Provide an environment of lifelong learning and student development through mentoring and apprenticeship

♣

Build a curriculum based on evidence-based medicine, collaborative learning, and patient centricity

♣

Foster an inclusive community that values members for their uniqueness, and encourages open and constructive exchange

♣

Respect all individuals for their unique perspective and potential to contribute

♣

Lead responsibly with accountability and compassionately share constructive feedback

♣

## STANDARD 1: POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

EDU has implemented clear accountability for every quality element of this institution by establishing precise roles and responsibilities to ensure our end-to-end commitment to the highest standards of education.

Together with our partners, we are defining a committee structure which allows continuous feedback and will include external stakeholders as well. Selected experts will be invited to participate in committee sessions to ensure that the external perspective is considered appropriately. It is extremely important to be transparent on the resulting actions of any feedback, by students in particular, and to communicate actions accordingly. Additionally, regarding external changes and actions, we will consider the external channels of communication and differentiate carefully on the respective medium to ensure the privacy of our students while informing the public on relevant changes as well.

To ensure this, we will anchor quality assurance measures at three different levels at EDU – the responsibility in the organizational line, the introduction of behavioral codexes and a corresponding quality culture and explicit compliance processes. Specifically, this means, on the one hand, in the respective areas of responsibility of the management and in the academic field, ensuring quality assurance responsibilities, processes and structures. In addition, we will have established a feedback culture at EDU through various measures, both among students and teaching staff, as well as support and admin staff. In addition, a compliance officer will be appointed to implement and monitor compliance processes and systems throughout EDU and will be responsible for the guidance of the compliance committee.

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We provide education services in the field of digital medical education. Our online campus is built on the well-established platform of Candena Digital Education Ltd., which EDU has fully licensed. This implies that EDU takes full responsibility for all internal quality assurance related aspects, including the full availability of the digital infrastructure as well as any contribution to teaching staff and information management topics.

## POSITIONS AT THE EDU

### ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

The **Rector** is the principal academic officer of the EDU. The Rector is accountable for the overall academic quality of the institute of higher education, being the representative of the EDU to external bodies. He is also responsible for the academic development of all members of staff and oversees together with the Vice-Chancellor the strategy and operations of the institution. The Rector is vested with the legal representation of the EDU.

The **Chancellor** is the highest officer of the institute of higher education and shall be responsible to ensure that it conforms with the law. The Chancellor awards titles, degrees and certificates. He promulgates the statutes, regulations and bye-laws of the governing bodies of the institute of higher education.

The **Dean of a Faculty** is responsible for the governance of his faculty. He will install Pro-Deans to help him or her in the discharge of his duties. The Dean is responsible for the governance of the faculties and the entire collaborative online learning and practical learning programme and regulates programmes of study, methods of assessment, entry regulations, and considers student requests, among other things.

The members of the **Founding Faculty** are part of the academic environment and have long-term experience in teaching students, extensive practical and research experience and are internationally renowned. The Founding Faculty provides a sounding board for the Rector and Dean on all institute of higher education matters.

- The **Module Directors** are responsible for the quality of all learning objectives of each module and contribute to the continuous enhancement of the curriculum.

- The **Assessment Designer** is responsible for the development of a comprehensive assessment system in alignment with the curriculum. This includes the design of MCQ key feature test items and test scores, monitoring of test performances, design of workplace-based assessment protocols and management of authoring of all respective tests as well as the coordination of the delivery of student assessments.

- The **Curriculum & Course Designer** is responsible for creation and review of learning objectives as well as the evaluation and design of respective modules of a programme.

- **Tutors** at EDU are responsible to continuously deliver the learning objectives of each module and to collaborate with the community of students on a daily basis.

- **Module Clinical Teachers** are responsible for all teaching efforts during the clinical rotation phases for their respective modules and contribute to the clinical skills development of students.

- **Modules Clinical Teachers (extra-functional)** support Module Clinical Teachers in their teaching activities on selected extra-functional learning content.

- **Clinical Rotation Managers** assist (or work together with) the Dean in developing and implementing Faculty Development in teaching hospitals and support him or her in communication between EDU and the Clinical Directors and Chief Physicians regarding the implementation of the curriculum during clinical rotation. They coordinate Module

Coordinators in related teaching hospitals and are the communication link to the organisation of the clinical rotation in EDU's teaching hospitals. Depending on the cooperation partners, the managers can be employed in the teaching hospitals or at EDU.

- **Mentors** are responsible to support the personal and professional development of the students.
- **Course Planners** are responsible to coordinate the execution of our curriculum schedules.
- The **Module Coordinator** is responsible to coordinate the schedule of students in teaching hospitals and acts as contact person for clinical teachers during the clinical rotation phase.

Re-evaluating EDU's Core Curriculum on a regular basis is a cornerstone of quality assurance. Curriculum designer within the Dean's team will constantly adapt learning objectives after having received and interpreted evaluation data.

## ADMINISTRATIVE GOVERNANCE

The **Vice-Chancellor** is the principal administration officer of the institute of higher education. The Vice-Chancellor is responsible for the managerial and legal governance of the institute of higher education, leads the administration and represents the institute of higher education to all stakeholders and external bodies. The Vice-Chancellor is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the institute of higher education, the appointment and development of all members of staff and oversees together with the Rector the strategy and operations of the institute of higher education. The Vice-Chancellor will assemble a team of Directors that are individually responsible for their areas of operation.

- The **Director of Finance** is responsible for planning, implementing, managing and controlling all financial-related activities of the institute of higher education.

- The **Director of Marketing** is responsible for corporate communications and marketing towards potential applicants.

- The **Director of Digital Learning** is responsible for the end-to-end operations of the digital campus. This comprise campus management as well as support and include the project management across the current student e-learning phases. The Director of Digital Learning is as well responsible for the execution of the student support services and student administrative offices. The second major area of responsibility of the Director of Digital Learning is Platform & Technology. The Director of Digital Learning is responsible for optimizing digital applications and building a sustainable technology infrastructure. The Director of Digital Learning is responsible for the quality strategy and governance over the entire E2E process landscape and is supporting the Rector and Dean in driving new didactical approaches of collaborative & digital education.

Additionally, representations of Students and their engagement in the quality assurance process will support a method of continuous improvements on quality and standards as part of the entire student lifecycle. As soon as EDU starts operating, students will be encouraged to build faculty related **Student Councils** by electing interested students. These Student Councils are to represent all students of a respective faculty in order to communicate the needs and opinions of the student body.

# STANDARD 2: INSTITUTIONAL PROBITY

The **Director of Finance** is responsible for the financial well-being of EDU by contributing financial and accounting information, analyses and recommendations for financial operational strategies. He or she oversees and is accountable for meeting high-quality financial standards. The position requires more than 10 years professional experience in a leading position of a highly-developed organization and thereof minimum 5 years financial budget and P&L responsibility as well as signing authority with regards to financial transactions. The position requires minimum a master degree in Management at an accredited college or institute of higher education or a CPA qualification. During the initial phase of EDU's development this position will be executed in dual role with the position of Vice-Chancellor. The Director of Finance reports to the Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Finance can be appointed to the Management Board. The Vice-Chancellor is also responsible for compliance with all financial standards and processes in his or her overall corporate responsibility. The Vice-Chancellor also holds a business/economics degree and has at least 10 years of professional experience in comparable management positions. All positions in the finance department are staffed with employees who have at least 3 years of professional experience in their field or have excellent degrees in relevant courses.

## FINANCIAL STANDARDS AND PROCESSES

EDU will build up a professional accounting, controlling and internal audit department in its own finance department. EDU will contract tax specialists and/or even local tax specialists for the tax advice and filing of the income tax declaration and -if applicable -the VAT declaration. The financial management systems and processes are established with certified service providers. This also applies to the use of financial cloud systems, business intelligence systems, bookkeeping service providers or other innovative, digital financial systems and system providers. EDU sets up a monthly and annual accounting and control system with monthly and annual budget plans, key performance indicators

and periodic gaps. EDU's financial reporting will be in accordance with IFRS/Malta-GAAP standards. EDU will also conduct an annual audit of the annual report by the auditing firm in accordance with International Standards of Auditing (ISA).

## POLICIES FOR BUDGET PLANNING

We are striving for two main objectives with regard to regular budget plans:

- On the one hand, to comply with the rules on proper accounting in accordance with all relevant legislation and thus to be able to comply at all times with the necessary reporting obligations of the supervisory authorities and the EDU control bodies.
- On the other hand, the controlling department will receive the full transparency of all financial activities and will provide the management of EDU and all leading employees with decision-relevant information - both on a monthly and annual basis.

For this purpose, EDU sets up a monthly and annual accounting and controlling system with monthly and annual budget plans, a system of key performance indicators - aligned with the results and value targets of EDU – as well as periodic and content-related deviation processes.

Responsible for the entire college, budget plans are bindingly agreed between Vice-Chancellor, Director of Finance and Rector and all major decision-makers at EDU. If there are deviations from agreed budget plans, there will be systematic reconciliation and correction processes.

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# STANDARD 3: DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF PROGRAMMES

EDU will employ a two-stage approval process for new programmes to ensure the alignment of approved programmes with its vision, strategy and resource possibilities. Responsible for deciding whether to develop and submit a new accreditation programme is the **Vice-Chancellor**. He or she is supported in the decision by Director of Marketing, Director of Finance and Director of Digital Learning.

- During the first stage, the aims of the programme and the rationale for its need are being evaluated by the Vice-Chancellor. The goal is to avoid duplication of effort and ensure that the intended learning outcomes are clear and achievable. This guarantees the availability of all resources necessary to deliver of the programme to the descripted standard.
- In the second stage the Rector and Dean focus on the details of the teaching and learning methods as well as the assessment techniques to be adopted in delivering the programme. This also involves external peer review, in accordance with standards of the National Commission of Further and Higher Education, which may lead to further enhancements of the original proposal.

Based on a new proposal, the Dean together with the Rector will jointly review any potential changes on the content of a programme. Additionally, all course/programme changes will be aligned with the guidelines of the NCFHE. In case of a new programme, we will follow the formal guidelines of the programme accreditation process of the NCFHE accordingly.

Students will be asked to actively participate in developing EDU's courses by establishing a **Student**

**Council**. Elected students are invited to become members of existing committees and will be invited to be part of yearly faculty retreats.


## TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience for applying to any programme of EDU is not limited to any geographical area. This includes Malta, the EU as well as applications from outside of Europe. The language of the instruction of programmes is English (United Kingdom) and students should be at least 18 years old, but we also consider applications from age 19-30, 31-65 and 65+.

EDU selects students based on potential to become competent workers in their respected field of studies, focusing on personal as well as interpersonal skills.

# STANDARD 4: STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON DIGITAL EDUCATION

Our online campus is built on the well-established platform of Candena Digital Education Ltd., which EDU has fully licensed. This implies that EDU takes full responsibility for all internal quality assurance related aspects. All of our previous educational projects have confirmed that it is not the channel which differentiates how well students are learning, but the approach and the quality of the delivery. Collaborative learning is an important driver of academic success[4].

EDU's approach to collaborative learning is engineered to nurture human interaction by providing an online experience grounded on the pillars of project-driven learning, learning in groups, peer-feedback, and the proactive support of trained academic experts. This approach enables the community to come together in teams to tackle challenges collectively, cultivating communication skills, teaching teamwork and quantitative reasoning. Students also engage in the learning community at large, enriching their skills and knowledge while exchanging feedback with their peers.

So as to provide students with the best online learning experience, EDU abides by the following set of core values:

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[4] "Benefits of collaborative learning" by M. Laal and S. Ghodsi in Procedia — Social and Behavioral Sciences (2012)

- **Collaboration.** We believe that teamwork fosters cooperation and communication. By collaborating with others, students learn from each other, solve real-life problems, and develop new skills together.

- **Creativity and Innovation.** In order to stay on the cutting edge of online education, we think it necessary to continuously reinvent oneself.

- **Educational Excellence.** We strive towards high-quality education to ensure the best learning outcomes.

- **Academic and Professional Integrity.** We adhere to the highest ethical standards. Our principles are based on honesty and openness.

## EDIDACTIC CONCEPT

The following eDidactic concept has been developed over the course of more than five years in collaboration with global experts of dedicated educational projects with over 50,000 registered students.

EDU's approach is based on a unique collaborative learning programme engineered to nurture a vibrant community of learners. Its didactic approach is grounded on five pillars: (A) Online Teamwork, (B) Peer-To-Peer learning, (C) Mentoring and Tutoring, (D) Project-based Learning and (E) Expert Input [5].

### Online Teamwork

Within the framework of the online programmes, individual members of the learning community are matched together into teams to tackle challenges collectively. Team formation is done automatically

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[5] Marjan Laal, Azadeh Sadat Naseri, Mozhgan Laal, Zhina Khattami-Kermanshahi, What do we Achieve from Learning in Collaboration?, Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, Volume 93, 2013, Pages 1427-1432

based on carefully tailored team-matching criteria in a way that best utilizes the common foundations, characteristics and challenges shared by the students[6]. Each team is represented within the programme with their own unique team identity and has a shared space for working collaboratively.

This team-based process allows students to initiate and develop strong networks, as collaboration becomes integral to each team's' success. Moreover, collaboration and communication not only take place between team members, but feedback exchange on multiple levels and rich Forum discussions ensure that they also take place among teams and between teams and the rest of the learning community.

## Peer-To-Peer Learning

At the core of the programme is a peer-to-peer learning process which engages and motivates each member of the community to exchange experiences, knowledge and feedback with peers who share similar challenges. A set of feedback loops drive the interaction between programme peers on different levels, guiding them through a process of knowledge exchange where each member benefits from the experience and ideas of the community. On this foundation, a vibrant learning community emerges that empowers students to learn with and from each other and to co-create strategies to improve student achievement[7].

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[6] Based on academic studies that indicate enhancement of critical thinking including social, psychological, academic, and assessment benefits ("Benefits of collaborative learning" by M. Laal and S. Ghodsi in Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences (2012))

[6] Marjan Laal, Positive Interdependence

[7] Marjan Laal, Positive Interdependence in Collaborative Learning, Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, Volume 93, 2013, Pages 1433-1437

## Mentoring and Tutoring

The programme enables personal interaction between students and supporting staff. The staff, in the form of Mentors and Tutors, provide assistance to the community on a one-to-one or team basis, as well as one-to-$n$ through a community Forum. They help students become effective and efficient learners by helping to facilitate group work, supporting in the development of programme communications, monitoring the programme atmosphere, and supporting community engagement and motivation throughout the programme. Mentoring and Tutoring creates a stimulating learning environment and increases the effectiveness of digital learning.

## Project-based Learning

Learning is embedded in a real-world context as each Collaboration Cycle presents teams with a series of successive assignments supported by relevant, real-world cases. By tackling the assignments in a continuous process of "trial and error", learners gain hands-on practice and finish the programme having gained valuable skills and capabilities relevant to their daily lives.

## Expert Input

Experts inspire the learning community with their expertise and insights on programme topics in the form of short, inspiring, targeted video messages. These experts provide a broad spectrum of inspiration and conceptual grounding, helping the community to open their minds to new approaches. Experts also engage in forum discussions depending on their availability.

## ACADEMIC PROGRAMME

Based on the eDidactic concept, the following five steps of the academic programme ensure the high-quality delivery of the respective didactic principles, creating a unique overall student experience. Students build bonds and learn with and from each other by working together in teams. When

registering for a course, the first step of joining a learning community begins. Students learn through a collaboration cycle in a team and are not only exposed to content but have the choice to select the content which is most relevant to them within a facilitated creative solution co-design process (democratic learning). Additionally, all students have unique access to a network of experienced professionals in fields relevant to the learning objectives who advise and guide students through the programme cycles.

## 1. Building the Community

The learning community consists of multiple teams. These multiple teams interact with each other not just on the individual level, but as groups. From these bonds, a rich learning community emerges where feedback exchange and network effects form group identities. The process of building the community commences during the initial registration period, when students are invited to sign up for the course by providing some basic contact information.

Based on student information, a carefully calibrated team matching-criteria brings the newly-registered students into teams of up to six individuals who share a common foundation from which to start working together through a Collaboration Cycle.

## 2. The Collaboration Cycle

Within EDU's programmes, students work through a Collaboration Cycle in a team. During a given Collaboration Cycle, each team may choose a topic or challenge to focus on, or one is given to team.

The programme guides teams through the collaborative process of problem-solving by focusing their energies through a series of **Assignments.** Each Assignment is designed to gradually build up

students' skills and competencies. Assignments are given to teams in sequential order and are each given a deadline.
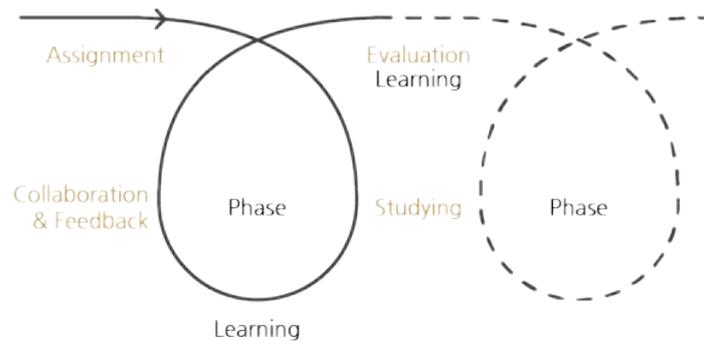


Image: From Assignment to Evaluation

To work on an Assignment, students have at their disposal helpful learning resources that provide knowledge and insight. These include expert videos, documents, and internet resources accessible in the online learning environment. Expert videos are carefully designed and produced to inspire, provide expertise, and challenge students to improve their understanding of a given topic. Teams are asked to submit one final piece of work for each assignment, called their Submission.

As teams make progress on their submissions, they can publish drafts of their work - making them public to the community and inviting other members to contribute feedback and improvement suggestions in the form of comments on the published work. This challenges teams to reflect on their work early during the teamwork process, and allows them to use new ideas and differing points of view to improve their work.

Further, after each assignment deadline, the entire community is invited to evaluate the work of their peers according to didactically pre-defined evaluation criteria. These Peer Evaluations *encourage* the

community to explore the wealth of ideas and knowledge generated and to bring *excellent* projects to the forefront.

The Collaboration Cycle consists of several assignments. In order to complete a Collaboration Cycle, teams work through the sequential assignments - each adding to the learnings of the previous assignments in order to build towards a final objective.

## 3. Democratic Learning - "From the Bottom Up"



*Image: The Learning Community*

The pillars of the programme are founded on principles of Democratic Learning - which provides the foundation to facilitate a creative solution co-design process. Democratic Learning is a methodology

which aims to empower individuals by encouraging them to take ownership of their learning experience. The programme employs a few core concepts which act as the foundation of the collaborative online learning environment, such as Pull Responsibility, Peer Accountability, Group Identification, Teachers as Supporters (instead of Instructors), Self-Assessment, and dynamic Team Matching.

The online environment provides a rich atmosphere for practicing democratic learning principles. In EDU's programmes, students are provided a space that is full of potential for learning, but they must employ and develop key reasoning and collaboration skills to attain their learning goals. On this backdrop, students develop the toolset to engage in constructive conversations around key topics, leading to the co-design of creative solutions.

For instance, at any given time in the programme, students are provided with a wide range of materials and options for students. Students must use their reasoning skills to make the best use of those materials and their ability to access the support of the community for the sake of their own learning success and goals. In the process, students necessarily learn about taking responsibility for their participation so they grow to become better equipped to participate in ways that are helpful towards better understanding the challenge they are trying to tackle and gaining the skills and knowledge necessary to solve it. This is called Pull Responsibility.

The programme uses group identification in order to strengthen bonds and a sense of self-awareness. Students are matched into teams based on specific criteria about their level of ambition, backgrounds, and areas of experience in order to create teams that are diverse but likely to share goals and develop strong bonds. The system is designed to connect peers and build group identities both within teams and between teams, individual students, and teaching staff. As students develop

a sense of community with their peers and camaraderie within their teams, a parallel sense of responsibility to this community and accountability to their peers takes hold.

Along the way, teaching staff monitor and observe the community and each team. They are able to jump in to provide input where it is productive - acting as a monitoring and supporting entity instead of an entity which enforces. Students are consistently encouraged by the programme staff to engage in reflective processes to evaluate their own participation in the course, develop their own learning goals, and establish their own personal measures of gauging improvement and success.

This system provides the framework in which students can engage in a constructive process of collaboration and fosters the motivation, sense of accountability and atmosphere conducive to such an endeavour.

## 4. Superior Student Guidance & Support System

EDU's programmes involve students in a strong support system that is orchestrated to bring out success outcomes for each individual and team. At the heart of this system is a Support (Teaching) Team that is unparalleled in the world of digital learning today. Throughout the programme, all students have unique access to a network of experienced professionals in fields relevant to the learning objectives who advise and guide students through the programme cycles. Students benefit from guidance and feedback on their teams' work, help and support towards effective and meaningful online collaboration, and dedicated facilitation for larger-scale collaboration between students and teams on the platform.

This unique support system is built out of a few specific elements which, together, create an atmosphere of meaningful support for students. Along with direct support from expert teaching staff, students are able to draw on the shared guidance and wisdom of the community via a **live**

**Community Forum**, and through engaged learning events such as **Expert Webinars ("Live Sessions") or Active Learning Forums ("flipped classroom")** and ongoing loops of peer engagement and feedback, as well as a live blog of programme updates and reminders that tend to the needs of the learning community as it grows.

A core layer of the support system develops organically between peers in the collaborative environment. The programme environment is designed to encourage peer-to-peer dependence, and peer-to-peer support flourishes as the community grows.

At the very heart of the support system is the **Mentor and Tutor.** EDU's programmes will consist of a highly skilled team of Mentors and Tutors who are experienced education practitioners and proven team leaders that share a passion for digital collaboration dynamics. Throughout the programme, each team of students benefits from Mentor and Tutor support who provide the team with procedural, technical, didactic, or even psychological guidance in a team and on one-to-one level. This allows students to share a higher order of personal identification with the teaching staff, the community and the programme as a whole. In turn, this increases the engagement, output, and overall satisfaction of programme students.

As members of the community who exclusively work directly with their teams, Mentors and Tutors have a unique overview of individual and team activity on the platform. Thus, Mentors and Tutors are perfectly situated to make important links within the community and they use this positioning to facilitate meaningful exchange within the programme between individuals, teams, and experts.

## COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Learning in small groups increases the students' motivation to learn, prepare and discuss topics. To reach that goal, we form dedicated teams to solve study-related case work[8]. This problem-based learning approach will endorse not only teamwork and communication skills, but also develop problem-solving and reflection skills.

At the core of team learning at EDU lies a superior digital learning concept which is centred around the student. EDU has designed an online medical learning environment focusing on a tailored learning experience within a collaborative atmosphere. Carefully balancing the required workload and the individual study preferences, students will be given sufficient time as well as the resources to prepare themselves individually and support each other in teams.

The teams will be accompanied by specially trained tutors throughout the entire learning process. They will provide feedback on individual student progress in addition to evaluating continuous assessments. Members of the founding faculty will participate in interviews and discussion panels to inject new ideas on a regular basis.

Additionally, dedicated mentors will promote the personal and professional development of students. All in all, students can share a first-rate learning experience that will be highly influenced by team work and collaboration, peer accountability and extensive feedback cycles.

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[8] Thistlethwaite, J. E., Davies, D., Ekeocha, S., Kidd, J. M., MacDougall, C., Matthews, P., ... & Clay, D. (2012). The effectiveness of case-based learning in health professional education. A BEME systematic review: BEME Guide No. 23. *Medical teacher*, *34*(6), e421-e444.

## PRACTICAL EXCELLENCE

The practical rotation will allow students to develop a patient-centric view and apply their knowledge, by engaging with clinical experts in the field and continuously receiving constructive feedback through work-place based assessment. Teaching hospitals must fulfil predefined quality criteria of the highest standards. They will give students a physical insight into clinical practices from the very first year of the curriculum and will complement online teaching by allowing hands-on medical experience within a hospital.

This will improve standards of quality by increasing focus on the provision of practical skills dramatically. Within a clinical rotation phase in a teaching hospital, students will work together with skilled clinicians in their field. It is their duty to supervise students and provide valuable feedback due to professional feedback rules. The teacher student ratio may be equal to 2/5. With an exceptionally high mentor/mentee coverage, each student will be assigned to a dedicated mentor with academic experience in order to reflect and work on the students individual journey throughout the whole course.

## MEDICAL CURRICULUM

The Curriculum of the EDU is based on internationally established methods and latest innovations in medicine as well as on learning catalogues of different countries and is constantly being further developed in exchange with the own teaching faculty. The Dean`s team will constantly collect and interpret evaluation and assessment data in order to potentially adapt the curriculum.

The curriculum itself goes beyond traditional medical tuition and will be conducted by focusing on the Basic Medical Education WFME Global Standards and the 60 overarching learning objectives, as

stated by the Institute for International Medical Education (IIME) Core Committee[9,10]. EDU aims to eventually provide a comprehensive medical education, covering a bachelor, master as well as a cutting-edge research programme.

Under the governance of the Rector and the Dean, a faculty of esteemed medical educators and clinicians from leading institutions globally, as well as qualified faculty from the teaching hospitals will come together to provide an in-depth and engrossing medical programme.

Furthermore, students will not only have to deal with biomedical fundamentals within their first year of the bachelor programme but will always put this into the context of the top ten causes of death in the world, as stated by the WHO. To safeguard this high quality of medical education throughout all programmes of EDU, numerous international experts have been nominated into the founding faculty of EDU.

The team on curriculum design is accountable to strictly follow the **Cycle of Kern**[11], consisting of

1. problem identification/general needs assessment,
2. targeted needs assessment,
3. goals and objectives,
4. educational strategies,
5. implementation,
6. and evaluation and feedback.

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9 http://wfme.org/standards

10 http://168.100.10.20/documents/objectives.htm

11 Kern, D. E. (1998). Curriculum development for medical education: a six-step approach. JHU Press.

This procedure ensures that the quality of the curriculum will continuously be enhanced and remains flexible to incorporate changes in the field of medicine as well as needs of our students.

## Evidence-Based Medicine

Medical students who have been trained at EDU are dedicated to deliver the highest possible quality of medical treatment to their patients. Therefore, we think that it is compulsory to teach the principles of evidence-based medicine from the beginning of their undergraduate studies.[12] To apply evidence based medicine successfully, students need a profound basic knowledge about statistical variables in addition to traditional medical training and foundational knowledge[13].

It is paramount that students learn how to deal with data sources according to the criteria of evidence-based medicine and leverage these insights to facilitate the best possible treatment for each individual patient[14]. This approach propels medical education based on scientific findings and accelerates the understanding of current research results[15].

## Biomedical Fundamentals

The IIME Core Committee has developed the concept of "Global Minimum Essential Requirements" (GMER) and defined a set of global minimum learning outcomes, which students of the medical schools must demonstrate at the point of graduation. The "Essentials" are grouped under seven

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[12] Aspegren, K. (1999). BEME Guide No. 2: Teaching and learning communication skills in medicine-a review with quality grading of articles. Medical teacher, 21(6), 563-570.

[13] Ahmadi, S. F., Baradaran, H. R., & Ahmadi, E. (2015). Effectiveness of teaching evidence-based medicine to undergraduate medical students: a BEME systematic review. *Medical teacher*, *37*(1), 21-30.

[14] Birden, H., Glass, N., Wilson, I., Harrison, M., Usherwood, T., & Nass, D. (2013). Teaching professionalism in medical education: a Best Evidence Medical Education (BEME) systematic review. BEME Guide No. 25. *Medical teacher*, *35*(7), e1252-e1266.

[15] Hammick, M., Freeth, D., Koppel, I., Reeves, S., & Barr, H. (2007). A best evidence systematic review of interprofessional education: BEME Guide no. 9. *Medical teacher*, *29*(8), 735-751.

broad educational domains with set of sixty learning objectives in total.[16] Biomedical Fundamentals, e.g. Anatomy, Physiology, Cell biology, Pathology, Pharmacology, etc. are integrated from early on and will be continuously reviewed throughout the course of study and linked to the content of Clinical Sciences.

## Clinical Competencies

At EDU, we have defined a set of basic practical skills that all students must learn and demonstrate. These skills will be practiced and tested longitudinally in teaching hospitals during clinical rotations. Regular feedback is intended to enable students to detect weaknesses and to improve them continuously. The basic skills were adopted in line with the Tuition project of the European Union.[17]

## Non-technical Competencies

In medicine, technical skills consist mainly of physical examinations and treatments carried out by medical personnel. Complex procedures such as operations or treatments in intensive care units can also be defined as technical skills applied to the patient. Students must understand that patient safety plays a significant role, both from the financial point of view, as well as from the perspective of patients and ultimately the society. Patients safety can only be achieved if technical and non-technical skills will be applied together at the same time[18].

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[16] http://168.100.10.20/documents/objectives.htm
[17] (Cumming, Cumming, & Ross, 2007)
[18] Aspegren, K. (1999). BEME Guide No. 2: Teaching and learning communication skills in medicine-a review with quality grading of articles. *Medical teacher*, *21*(6), 563-570.

## Link between Research, Education and Practice

Medical students who have been trained at EDU are dedicated to deliver the highest possible quality of medical treatment to their patients. Therefore, we think that it is compulsory to teach the principles of evidence-based medicine from the beginning of their undergraduate studies. To apply evidence based medicine successfully, students need a profound basic knowledge about clinical epidemiology and basic clinical statistics in addition to traditional medical training and foundational knowledge.[19]

They must be able to interpret P-values and odds ratios, to designate errors of the first and second kind and should be able to develop a study design and discuss various methods of evidence based medicine as well as the practical implementation of published clinical guidelines within their peer-groups.

It is paramount that students learn how to deal with data sources according to the criteria of evidence-based medicine and leverage these insights to facilitate the best possible treatment for each individual patient. This approach propels medical education based on scientific findings and accelerates the understanding of current research results. It is also the basis for life-long learning and excellence in patient treatment.

We are planning to implement research in medical education on several occasions e.g. group assignments, small scientific exercises during clinical rotations, Bachelor-Theses, using not only quantitative but also qualitative methods.

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[19] Ahmadi, S. F., Baradaran, H. R., & Ahmadi, E. (2015). Effectiveness of teaching evidence-based medicine to undergraduate medical students: a BEME systematic review. Medical teacher, 37(1), 21-30.

**Part-time staff** is very much welcome to participate as EDU will provide flexible working hours and home office hours. Also, job-sharing will be made possible as well as job training opportunities. With carefully reviewing required tasks and available capacity, we will include part-time staff in onboarding trainings as well as further development opportunities.

## ASSESSMENT & PERFORMANCE PRINCIPLES

EDU desires to educate medical students who are not only scientifically literate but also active and socially aware students within their healthcare ecosystem. Becoming a well-rounded medical student also requires comprehensive feedback and assessments. Therefore, students will be continuously assessed through different kinds of longitudinal[20], formative, and summative assessment. These will be supplemented with a series of specially formulated diagnostic task-based tests, as well as supplementary lectures on wider issues in medicine. The student gradebook will function as a pre-defined, goal-oriented collection of student learning activities. Mentor and mentee will use the gradebook[21] as a basis for further improvement of the student.

Based on the core values of the EDU, we want to appraise an individual's knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills. We firmly believe that high quality assessment practices are driving the learning process of our students. Thus, the assessment process represents a vital element of the student experience and the outcomes of assessment clearly influence students' future well-being.

EDU is committed to promoting good practice, consistency and rigour in assessment by ensuring numerous mechanisms to sustain the highest quality, incl. assessment is reliable, with clear and consistent processes for the setting, marking, grading and moderation of assignments, assessment

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[20] Epstein, R. M. (2007). Assessment in medical education. *N Engl J Med*, *2007*(356), 387-396.
[21] Tochel, C., Haig, A., Hesketh, A., Cadzow, A., Beggs, K., Colthart, I., & Peacock, H. (2009). The effectiveness of portfolios for post-graduate assessment and education: BEME Guide No 12. *Medical teacher*, *31*(4), 299-318.

is valid and effectively measures student attainment of the intended learning outcome, 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.

Student authentication is made based on the student's unique registration number, name and email address, and ID visual identification. All of these are reviewed both automatically through the authentication application and manually by a human.

## Assessment Authoring

Fair and secure assessment procedures commence with the exam authoring process. Quality control is central to high quality assessment. For this reason, EDU will partner with leaders in exam authoring solutions that will allow us to utilise outstanding solutions for the planning, review and approval processes of new assessments.

EDU's high-stakes exam authoring solution supports a wide range of question types, allowing us to provide rich assessments that test candidates knowledge in comprehensive ways:

- multiple choice (with variants);
- short response;
- extended response;
- shared stimulus;
- composite (multi-part) items with additional content blocks as required; using a wide variety of stimulus material and complex item numbering.

Planning, review and approval process of assessments

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Excellent review processes and real scrutiny is an essential part of any assessment development process. To ensure quality in high-stakes examinations, EDU engages in multiple review cycles for items and mark schemes, so subject experts, assessment specialists, proxy test-takers and others can all contribute their insight as exam materials move through the authoring process.

Once an item is approved it is directed onwards for pre-testing. It then appears in the item bank flagged as such, so that test compilers can easily select it to add to a pre-test.

As items move through the review cycle, rich insights are often gathered into how the item and mark scheme operates and where it might be improved. EDU allows reviewers to share their views. Reviewer's comments are ordered by review cycle, strengthening the quality of the item review process. This bank of review comments builds as items goes through the review cycle, supporting better decision making and helping the awarding body build its skills from year to year.

High- stakes Assessment Delivery and Supervision

The online assessment ecosystem is continuously evolving across the sectors. It necessitates the need for a robust assessment methodology specified for academic skills. In this regard, ensuring complete authentication and higher accuracy in the testing process is of paramount importance. To ensure flexibility for the student while keeping the integrity of any assessment untouched, the assessment delivery requires transparency, continuous quality reviews and complete documentation for audit purposes.

A credible assessing body can assure authenticity in the assessment. In the high stakes exams and certifications, online assessments powered by advanced technological capabilities allow reliable and flexible testing of the candidates. Online test delivery secured with the encryption algorithms and

security checks, empower online universities to deliver assessments remotely to students in various locations, via various devices, while ensuring that their data & intellectual property is in safe hands. This practice not only ensures a wider outreach but also ensures that a candidate is not able to cheat even when he or she is taking the test at a remote location.

Online proctored examinations in the US, UK, and Asia are growing fast. The education sector is evolving with newer learning models, particularly in medium-sized and community college markets. In this scenario, virtual or unconventional methods of learning, such as online proctoring for exams, are now an accepted norm that yields even greater results.

For this purpose, EDU employs cutting edge online testing and proctoring solutions, to provide world class flexible and secure online assessments. Moreover, EDU's rigorous assessment process integrates peer and tutor feedback at its core, to ensure a well-rounded assessment and performance review process that is not only reliable, but that gives the students the support they need to drive personal improvement towards learning goals.

Remote proctoring will allow EDU students to take high-stakes assessments at a remote location with maximum exam integrity. Online Assessment Proctoring involves synchronous remote monitoring by a human being or a video recording of a student's behaviour during the exam. Online proctoring ensures that people taking the test are what they claim to be, safeguarding against test-takers engaging in any activities that constitute cheating during examinations.

EDU will make use of online proctoring, in several ways, depending on the requirements of each examination. In particular, online assessment proctoring will be implemented in three ways:

- Live online proctoring

A qualified proctor will keep a watch on the student from a remote location through live audio-video and screen share feeds. During the entire examination, the proctor will monitor the student in real time, making use of the student's webcam, microphone and share-screen.

- Recorded proctoring

With recorded proctoring, a student will take the examination while being fully recorded. The recording of the audio-video and the screen share is stored and later reviewed for any red flags.

- Fully automated proctoring

With fully automated proctoring, along with recording, the feeds are also monitored by the system for anything suspicious with advanced analytics. Triggers like background speaking, abnormal movements or other indicators are continuously monitored and flagged. Existing tools like keyboard analysis, facial recognition, and sound recognition are being expanded to discern cheating. These rely on factors like head position or movement, facial expression, and typing rhythm. Thus, online proctoring tools provide an outstanding level of security for exams that are taken remotely.

Depending on the test in question, the appropriate form of proctoring combined with secure locations and devices will be used in order to ensure examination integrity.

## Quality Principles of Assessments

EDU is committed to promoting best practice, consistency and rigour in assessment by ensuring numerous mechanisms to sustain the highest quality, 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 outcome,

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- 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.

## Student Authentication

In order to ensure that the individual attempting to take an online assessment is authorised, EDU has thorough authentication process in place. Student authentication is made based on the student's unique registration number, name and email address, and ID visual identification. All of these items are requested and recorded at the start of an online exam and reviewed both automatically through the authentication application and manually by a human proctor.

## Assessments Policy Information

At the beginning of their studies, all students are introduced to the general Assessment Procedures, as well as the Code of Conduct, covering various topics relating to assessments, and outlining policies and procedures in the case of misconduct.

Moreover, Assessment Policies are available throughout the academic year to students and faculty on the learning platform at all times, and can be accessed as needed by students.

Additionally, any information pertaining to particular exams and assessments that is not general in nature and covered by the general Assessment Policies is outlined together with the Course Information for the respective Course (sometimes called the *Module Outline* document).

To ensure complete understanding of these topics, Mentors are available to answer student questions regarding the procedural and the Help Desk is available on ongoing basis for technical trouble-shooting.

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## Performance Feedback

The ability to receive and provide feedback is essential for further learning and skills development. In contrast to traditional education and as detailed in the section on eDidactics, EDU will explicitly train students from the first modules onwards to both give and receive feedback with both peers and faculty.[22]

Under the supervision of the Dean, the respective team of tutors and mentors are asked to continuously review the learning process. 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 EDU are comparable to those of other reputable institutions.

At the beginning of their studies, students are introduced to the general assessment procedures, as well as code of conduct for assessments. Assessment policies are generally available to students and faculty on the learning platform at all times. To ensure complete understanding of these topics, Mentors and Tech Support staff are available to answer student questions regarding the procedural and technical aspects of assessments.

Additionally, a Student Handbook will comprise all policies concerning assessment. The Student Handbook will be linked to the collaborative learning platform and will be updated regularly.

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[22] See the section on the eDidactic Concept for more details, p. 19-23.

## Formative Assessments

Formative assessment will be held within the teaching hospitals and consist of Mini-Clinical Evaluation Exercise[23] (Mini-Cex)[24] and Direct Observation of Procedural Skills (DOPS)[25] in a clinical setting. These tests have been developed to demonstrate and test both practical and communicative skills. During the tests, students will be observed by examiners while performing medical procedures[26]. The examiners will record their observations via standardized checklists. Based on these checklists, examinees receive structured and constructive feedback, to enable them work on weaknesses and improve strengths. Results will also be recorded within the student's gradebook but will not be graded as with summative tests.

## Summative Assessment

Summative assessment[27] will mainly be based on multiple-choice questions (key-feature tests) under expert supervision in licensed test centres. The questions will include high quality patient vignettes suited for testing factual knowledge and clinical decision making[28].

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[23] Alves de Lima, A., Barrero, C., Baratta, S., Castillo Costa, Y., Bortman, G., Carabajales, J., ... & Van der Vleuten, C. (2007). Validity, reliability, feasibility and satisfaction of the Mini-Clinical Evaluation Exercise (Mini-CEX) for cardiology residency training. *Medical Teacher*, *29*(8), 785-790.

[24] Norcini, J. J., Blank, L. L., Duffy, F. D., & Fortna, G. S. (2003). The mini-CEX: a method for assessing clinical skills. *Annals of internal medicine*, *138*(6), 476-481.

[25] Naeem, N. (2013). Validity, reliability, feasibility, acceptability and educational impact of direct observation of procedural skills (DOPS). *J Coll Physicians Surg Pak*, *23*(1), 77-82.

26 Barton, J. R., Corbett, S., van der Vleuten, C. P., & Programme, E. B. C. S. (2012). The validity and reliability of a Direct Observation of Procedural Skills assessment tool: assessing colonoscopic skills of senior endoscopists. Gastrointestinal endoscopy, 75(3), 591-597.

27 Page, G., Bordage, G., & Allen, T. (1995). Developing key-feature problems and examinations to assess clinical decision-making skills. Academic Medicine, 70(3), 194-201.

28 Wass, V., Van der Vleuten, C., Shatzer, J., & Jones, R. (2001). Assessment of clinical competence. The Lancet, 357(9260), 945-949.

## Performance Feedback & Policies

The ability to receive and provide feedback is essential for further learning and skills development[29]. In contrast to traditional medical education, EDU will explicitly train students from the first modules onwards to both give and receive feedback with both peers and faculty[30].

Under the supervision of the Dean, the respective team of tutors and mentors are asked to continuously review the learning process. 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 EDU are comparable to those of other reputable institutions.

We have developed a longitudinal test system that provides both formative and summative feedback on the performance of students. This feedback, as well as feedback from students, module coordinators, tutors and mentors, provides information on whether the learning objectives have been addressed adequately.

In accordance with other prominent medical schools, the final exam at the end of each module will cover around 40% for the final mark of each student. For a complete pass of an overall module, students will need to obtain around 60% of all points to be awarded, consisting of group assignments, different types of quizzes and exercises, a high-stakes examination, as well as workplace-based assessements.[31]

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29 Veloski, J., Boex, J. R., Grasberger, M. J., Evans, A., & Wolfson, D. B. (2006). Systematic review of the literature on assessment, feedback and physicians' clinical performance: BEME Guide No. 7. Medical teacher, 28(2), 117-128.

30 Faux, D. (2006). Systematic Review Of The Literature On Assessment, Feedback And Physicians' Clinical Performance: Beme Guide No. 7. Education for Primary Care, 17(5), 524.

[31]This is only an indication and will be subject to change.

After each online assessment, students are presented with a short online form that they can voluntarily fill in, providing an assessment as to the difficulty level of the examination, clarity of the questions and other key aspects. Moreover, students have the opportunity to reach out to their assigned Tutor to discuss their personal assessment results.

Written high-stake exams will deliver the same amount and type of questions to all students being tested. Workplace-based assessment methods (such as, MiniCex and DOPS) have been developed to increase objectivity by using predefined checklists. A predefined horizon on expectations will ensure that essays will be graded accordingly. Two examiners (tutors) will grade essays independently to deal with interrater reliability. However, a variety of workplace-based assessment will be used throughout the study.

Examiners are introduced to the online examination procedures as part of their initial training at programme commencement. This training ensures that didactic staff is aware of the latest policies and procedures and is able to provide support to learners to the highest degree of quality. This training is repeated and updated as necessary.

We plan to implement a faculty development programme that will train Module Clinical Teachers in using Mini Clinical Examination Exercises and Direct Observations on Procedural Skills as an assessment method in a teaching hospital surrounding. Specially trained staff working within the Dean's team will be in charge for creating valid multiple-choice questions and key-feature questions.

Assessment staff within the Dean's team will constantly develop new group assignments, assessment questions, quizzes and essay tasks. All assessment questions will be stored to build a solid database. Thereby a variety of examinations can be put together instantly.

We will provide an opportunity to have additional assessment which allow to compensate for mitigating circumstances.

Moreover, to address irregularities in the stability of internet connections, exams are preloaded before they commence and progress is saved periodically. In such a case, depending on the circumstances and supervision permissions, a student can resume an examination from the last saved section.

Cheating is thoroughly defined within the Code of Conduct comprised in the Student Handbook. Moreover, all students are made aware of examinations procedures, the cheating policy and can address questions related to this topic with their respective mentors.

Thus, repeated cheating attempts can lead to expulsion from EDU. Any action taken by EDU will depend on the severity and the frequency of the attempts to cheat. The individual conditions to each examination and the permitted aids are specified on the student platform. Infringements of these specifications of any kind will be discussed by the Medical Student Committee, chaired by the Dean who may install an investigation subcommittee. Offending students will be interrogated about the incident in an investigative hearing, to which they may bring one other person of their choice for assistance. The final decision of the investigation committee will be communicated to the student in writing.

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# STANDARD 5: STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION

EDU selects students based on their potential to become leading professionals in their field of study, focusing on personal as well as interpersonal skills. Our target audience are applicants and students who are at least 18 years of age at the beginning of their studies and have a school leaving certificate which entitles them to study. EDU provides a stimulating and balanced yet challenging environment for the next-generation of professionals. Thus, the admission process is driven by fact-based selection criteria to identify those students committed to the care of patients and inspired to leadership in evidence-based medicine.

**Student admission procedures** have to be transparent and comprehensible. These procedures have to be fit for testing relevant competencies that are necessary to fulfil societies requirements the teached profession. Furthermore, all policies, processes and procedures concerning admission have to be re-evaluated on a regular basis, together with students being part of that re-evaluation process.

Age, gender and ethnicity will not have any impact on any decision made. The decision-making process will be made transparent within the Student Admissions Handbook, together with other policies and procedures. In addition to formal qualification of the candidates (qualified leaving certificate of secondary education), candidates need to demonstrate high cognitive skills, but equally if not more important highly developed social skills and team competence. Leaving grades of high school diplomas are considered baring less validity. Participation in a secured assessment centre will be mandatory for each candidate for the admission test. A policy in place will ensure admission of disabled students. Learners must hold a clean Police Conduct Certificate.

With enrollment the students of the EDU are automatically and free of charge accident insurance. This insurance protection is agreed by the EDU for students with insurances. During their clinical rotation students are additionally insured with a liability insurance for innocent behaviour. In addition, EDU does not offer any additional insurance for students, the students themselves are responsible for this.

The **admissions process** will comprise three phases:

- Phase 1

Within this phase the candidates will have to fill out a biographical questionnaire, which will then be evaluated. The candidates will have to prove that they fulfil the formal criteria for being admitted to an institution of higher education (MQF Level 4), comparable to the Matriculation Certificate (MATSEC).

- Phase 2

This part of the admission process is an online test which will be performed with rigorous identity control and strict supervision.

- Phase 3

In this section, structured (online) face to face interviews will be performed, using modern video conferencing tools. This interview will aim to assess motivation of the candidates and already existing soft skills of the candidates. Interviewers will be specifically trained for this assessment.

The application will be possible three times a year. The results of the admission process will be continuously correlated with the progression of the students during their studies in a continuous quality improvement process. Regulations and bye-laws governing all courses offered include important details concerning the programmes, among which those pertaining to progression. They are available on the Registration portal online.

**Students' workload** will be limited to a maximum of 40 hours per week. This is necessary for the consolidation of the learned content. Additionally, students may decide on their own which time of the day they would like to study as there are no scheduled learning appointments during the collaborative learning phase. Furthermore, they are enabled to create their own learning atmosphere in which they feel comfortable. EDU will try to ensure a maximum of flexibility in terms of student's time management.

## ACCESS TO LEARNING MATERIALS

Learning content is made available to students in various multi-media formats, including video and audio, but also in text form and references to publicly available online resources. Videos and audio materials are regularly accompanied by transcript. Providing a rich set of formats allows the student to seek out the method that is best suited for each individual.

These materials are primarily made available in the digital Library of each course, with important materials being labelled as Mandatory. Students may opt to download the learning materials, print out text documents or otherwise interact with these in a flexible manner.

Details regarding the modules taken are listed in the academic transcript. The transcript of records is created for each student individually and sent to the student at the end of each module in an updated version. In this transcript not only grades, but also achieved ECTS points of each module are listed. Furthermore, each module is described thematically and an average of grades obtained is calculated. The achieved MQF level for the bachelor is shown transparently.

The **pedagogy** is regularly used by Candena Digital Education Ltd. in different academic and non-academic programmes, where the student success rate is carefully monitored and measured. The current pedagogic concept has evolved through a tested quantitative approach over the course of

10+ programmes, which have reached over 100,000 students. An iterative approach allows the constant improvement. Regular feedback during each course is taken into account and integrated in the next programme iteration.

Continuous feedback during the study process of EDU's students using the digital online platform will give the opportunity to identify ongoing issues and address them directly. Subsidiary, students will be asked to fill out online evaluation sheets. Return rates will be documented and evaluation sheets will be designed using Likert scales and free text spaces. Collected data will be statistically evaluated and used for medical education research publications. Conclusions out of these data sets will be used to adapt pedagogy principles.

Every student at EDU will receive a **personal digital gradebook**, which is used to document the learning progress of the respective student. Here, the number of examinations, tests and grades obtained by a student are recorded. Each student has to ensure personally that he or she immediately checks the registered performance data and, in case of incompleteness or inaccuracy, immediately informs the course management. Both the student and the tutor have access to their regular feedback discussions.

Access to the individual student records is provided by the respective module coordinators in the teaching hospitals, the tutors and the mentors. The student has the possibility to check his or her student record at any time and to apply for changes or deletions. In principle, only those members of the faculty have access to the student records, which are currently involved in the lesson of the respective module. The respective tutor has access at all times and is committed to the highest level of confidentiality.

## CERTIFICATION AND NEXT STEPS

EDU students who have attained the bachelor's degree have acquired a solid basic medical knowledge which allows them to join the Master's degree programme at EDU in order to obtain a qualification as part of becoming a medical doctor within the EU. In addition, with the completion of the bachelor at EDU employment in various areas of the health care system is possible. If the bachelor modules mentioned here have been successfully completed, the student will receive the bachelor's degree in medicine. This degree will allow the continuation of the master's studies at EDU. Furthermore, a bachelor degree would be useful in the following professional fields: Adult nurse, Children's nurse, Healthcare Scientist, Genomics, Healthcare Scientist, Molecular Medicine, Higher education lecturer, International aid worker, international development worker, Mental health nurse, Midwife, Paramedic, Research Scientist and Science writer.

# STANDARD 6: TEACHING STAFF

The composition of teaching staff and faculty reflects EDU's utmost commitment to a modern outcomes oriented patient centric curriculum centred around the 10 main causes of death. EDU is developing its faculty and its team by recruiting candidates at all ranks who are passionate about having an impact in the world and about educating the next generation of physicians and medical workers. We will invite applications from individuals with expertise and experience in all areas relevant to our mission.

EDU is committed to an inclusive and diverse environment, and we strongly encourage women and individuals from historically underrepresented communities to apply.
EDU will be a highly dedicated medical college, which is founded to develop students as excellent physicians and medical workers, to drive positive change in medical education, and to do good throughout the world.

EDU is an Equal Opportunity Employer and will be operative in different countries. Therefore, we specifically invite applicants who can contribute to a diverse, inclusive community. Our online campus is built on the well-established platform of Candena Digital Education Ltd., which EDU has fully licensed. This implies that EDU takes full responsibility for all internal quality assurance related aspects, including the full availability of the digital infrastructure as well as any contribution to teaching staff topics.

## RECRUITING PROCESS

Towards these goals, we will have developed recruiting process and working conditions along principle rules:

- EDU respects all individuals for their unique perspective and potential to contribute.
- EDU management, teachers and faculty lead responsibly, hold ourselves accountable and compassionately share constructive feedback.
- EDU create a healthy working environment, recognizing this requires the integration of work and life.

EDU's **hiring process** has three key phases, including planning, recruitment, and employee selection.

- Firstly, we plan and review the appropriate number of additional employees and the required skill sets needed.
- In the recruitment phase of the hiring process, we try to build a potential pool of candidates through job postings, job referrals, advertisements, college campus recruitment, posts on the own website, etc.
- Candidates who respond to these quality requirements will be interviewed and assessed following a four eye principle, as appropriate given the required role description. This includes thorough background checks as well as the review of named references of the applicants.
- In the phase of the employee selection, we evaluate information about the pool of applicants generated during the recruitment phase. After carefully assessing the candidates, we decide which applicant will be offered the respective position.

The resonsibility for and the governance of the recruitment process is by the Head of Human Resources.

## STAFF FEEDBACK

Anonymous teaching evaluations will also be given in the middle and end of the module. Students will be asked to assess the strength and weaknesses of the course and their instructors, as well as what can be improved. Evaluations not only ensure internal quality control, but are also meant to provide valuable professional development opportunities for all teaching staff. We do not believe in

a "culture of blame" at any time and instead aim to facilitate professional feedback wherever possible.

Additionally, regular visits to all teaching hospitals are scheduled to continuously observe running operations as well as monitor the teaching of the students during the clinical phase.

## DEVELOPMENT OF STAFF

Once a year a faculty retreat is planned for didactical training, intense exchange between students, teaching staff, administration staff, managing staff and external stakeholders in order to learn from each other and to develop new ideas in terms of life-long learning.

To ensure the highest teaching standards, all instructors are required to engage in the introductory professional training prior to teaching students. The training primarily focuses on the use of the specific learning platform, good practices in online communication and collaboration, as well best practice approaches for various teaching and student support scenarios. A specially developed faculty development programme ensures continuous training of the lecturers.

## SELECTION CRITERIA

### Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor acts as a secretary to the Council. He or she leads the consultation to all internal as well as external stakeholders in terms of the Annual Report. Jointly together with the Rector he or she is responsible for the Strategic Plan of the EDU. He or she supports the teaching, research, and external services and deals with matters of a non-academic and administrative nature.

Responsibilities
- Non-Academic, administrative leadership of the college
- Representative of college to external and internal bodies

- Day-to-day administration of the EDU
- Day-to-day financial management of the the college

Requirements
- Business/economics degree or similar at least of EQF level 7
- Minimum of 5 years of job experience in Institute of higher education Management, and/or in Public Administration
- Thorough knowledge of the Higher Education Industry beyond Universities
- Experience in the HR sector
- A motivational leader and an ability to enthuse staff at all levels
- Project management skills
- Extensive listening and communication skills
- Track records of success in previous roles

Our minimum profile we were looking in all headship or managerial positions will be an academic degree of EQF level 7 and a minimum of 5 years of working experience in the respective field relating to their responsibilities at EDU. We will always look for personalities of entrepreneurial spirit, high-level of resilience and leadership skills and the will to contribute to an institution of highest quality standards and ambitious education targets.

## Members of the Founding Faculty

The founding faculty consists of leading international experts, committed to quality and outcomes oriented curricular development. The Founding Faculty provides a sounding board for the Rector and Dean on all medical matters.

## Responsibilities

- Participation in regular faculty board meetings
- Advisory function on research strategy
- Advisory function on curriculum strategy
- Advisory function on governance
- Providing and maintaining network

Requirements
- Are part of an academic environment
- Long-term experience in teaching students
- Have extensive clinical experience
- Long-term clinical researchers
- Long-term biomedical researchers
- Internationally situated and networked

Members of the founding faculty are proposed by the Rector. They are doctors or scientists who have earned their national or international merit in their field.
- The following minimum criteria may apply:
- Long-term (at least 10 years) clinical experience
- Long-term (at least 15 years) work experience
- Long-term (at least 10 years) research with corresponding publication records
- Leading function in their institutions
- Chair owner in their field

## Medical Faculty

### Rector

The Rector is accountable for the overall academic quality of the instutie of higher education, being the representative of EDU to external bodies. He or she is also responsible for the appointment and development of all members of academic and teaching faculty.

### Responsibilities

- Academic leadership of college
- Representative of college to external bodies
- Faculty development and recruiting faculty members
- Setting academic rules and policies

Requirements

- Medical specialist
- PhD in Medicine – at least of EQF level 8
- Fully warranted medical doctor with a licence to practice from the relevant authority
- Minimum of 10 years of relevant job experience,
- Minimum of 10 years of clinical experience
- Minimum of 10 years of teaching experience
- Minimum of 10 years of long-term research experience
- Minimum of 5 years of experience in academic administration
- A motivational leader and an ability to enthuse staff at all levels
- Project management skills
- Extensive listening and communication skills
- Track records of success in previous roles

Dean

The Dean is responsible for the governance of the faculty and the entire learning programme and regulates programmes of study, methods of assessment, entry regulations, and considers student requests, among other things. The Dean is supported by **the Pro-dean of teaching amongst others** and their colleagues in online learning and teaching methods, nonetheless ultimate responsibility for the entire study programme rests with the Dean.

Responsibilities

- Leading and coordinating medical curriculum development
- Development and implementation of student education strategy
- Responsibility for all teaching

Requirements
- Preferably a Medical specialist
- Fully warranted medical doctor with a licence to practice from the relevant authority
- PhD in Medicine – at least of EQF level 8
- a minimum of 10 years of relevant job experience,
- minimum of 10 years of clinical experience
- minimum of 10 years of teaching experience
- minimum of 10 years of long-term research experience
- minimum of 5 years of experience in academic administration
- A motivational leader and an ability to enthuse staff at all levels
- Project management skills
- Extensive listening and communication skills
- Track records of success in previous roles

The Dean is in charge for all relevant and updated learning objectives of EDU's Core Curriculum. He or she is head of the curriculum committee that is in charge for re-evaluating the curriculum on a regular basis. This will be operated by using the Cycle of Kern. The Dean supervises the teaching holistically - also in connected teaching hospitals - with various evaluation instruments and communicates with module directors, clinical rotation managers, module coordinators and module clinical teachers and tutors and mentors. The Dean is in charge for planning and designing valid assessment methods. He or she will integrate the students feedback into the Core Curriculum and into the structure of Modules respectively. The Dean ensures that students at EDU are familiar with scientific methods from the outset, which should enable them to treat patients according to the criteria of evidence-based medicine. For additional countries in which EDU students are being taught,

a coordinator will be set up at EDU, who will organize the curriculum on a country-by-country basis. The Dean takes care for that new, relevant learning contents are integrated into the Core Curriculum and coordinated with the partners involved. This also includes checking the contents of the e-book library regularly. The Dean, together with his or her team, establishes and coordinates the educational content with regard to faculty development.

The Dean is in charge of course design, content, teaching course, interacting and supporting learners.

## Module Directors

The Module Directors are responsible for the quality of all learning objectives of each module and contribute to the continuous enhancement of the medical curriculum.

Responsibilities

- Cross-checking learning objectives of each module
- Participation in curriculum committee possible
- Contribution in the regular evaluation process of the curriculum

Requirements

- minimum of 3 years of experience as a leading member of a teaching hospital
- MD/PhD in Medicine – at least of EQF level 8
- minimum of 3 years of experience as medical specialist in related area
- Fully warranted medical doctor with a licence to practice from the relevant authority
- Commitment to EDU`s core curriculum and learning objectives
- At least one module director for each module necessary (9 (bachelor) + 6 (master) = 15 module directors)

## Assessment Designer

The Assessment Designer is responsible for the development of a comprehensive assessment system in alignment with the medical curriculum. This includes the design of MCQ key feature test items and test scores, monitoring of test performances, design of workplace-based assessment protocols as well as the coordination of the delivery of student assessments.

### Responsibilities

- Design of MCQ key feature test items and test scores
- Monitor and store student test performances
- Communicate test performances with mentors
- Provide statistical test performance data
- Design workplace-based assessment protocols
- Coordinate delivery of student assessments

### Requirements

- Graduate from medical school or equivalent academic qualification (e.g. psychology), at least of EQF level 7
- Background in educational measurement

Annotation: The following exemplary degrees can apply for the position Assessment Designer: Psychologists, Sociologists, Physicians, Educationalists, Nursing Scientist, Biomedical Scientist, Master of Medical Education, Master of Public Health et cetera.

## Curriculum Designer

The Curriculum Designer is responsible for creation and review of learning objectives as well as the evaluation and design of respective modules of a programme.

### Responsibilities

- Create and review learning objectives
- Design group assignments
- Evaluate and design Modules
- Develop and manage relationships to existing partners
- Communicate goals of content delivery
- Monitor performance and content of tools
- Identifying ways to improve content and the product

Requirements
- Graduate from medical school or equivalent academic qualification (e.g. psychology), at least of EQF level 7
- Background in teaching
- Background in education
- High analytical skills, desirable experience in curriculum design

Annotation: The following exemplary degrees can apply for the position Curriculum Designer: Psychologists, Sociologists, Physicians, Educationalists, Nursing Scientist, Biomedical Scientist, Master of Medical Education, Master of Public Health et cetera.

## Teachers and Tutors

### Module Clinical Teacher

Module Clinical Teachers are responsible for all teaching efforts during the clinical rotation phases for their respective modules and contribute to the clinical skills development of students. A resident physician (intern = assistant doctor = resident) has successfully completed his medical studies with EQF level 7 or 8 and works as a physician in a respective department. Within the scope of this residency period, he will be trained for becoming a medical specialist. As a resident physician, he is already fully medically active and responsible. In order for students to be integrated and taught by resident physicians during their clinical rotation, it makes sense for them to have worked clinically for at least one year and to have familiarized themselves with their professional life to.

These Module Clinical Teachers have already successfully completed their medical studies, often they were students themselves not so long ago and are therefore able to put themselves in the mindset of the current students. Students at EDU are taught according to the learning objectives listed in the curriculum, which must be relevant for medical students. It is therefore not necessary for medical students to be taught at specialist level within the framework of clinical rotation.

Responsibilities
- Teaching during clinical rotation (CR)
- Development of clinical skills
- Possible member of EDU's mentorship programme
- Possible member of the Curriculum Committee

Requirements
- Graduation from medical school , at least of EQF level 7
- Fully warranted medical doctor with a licence to practice from the relevant authority
- Resident

- At least one-year clinical experience, specialised in the area of their responsibility
- Dedication to medical education and life-long learning, assessed in job interview
- Member of EDU´s teaching hospitals

## Module Clinical Teachers (extra-functional)

The Module Clinical Teachers (extra-functional) assist Module Clinical Teachers in developing students' factual knowledge, communication and practical skills.

Responsibilities
- Teaching during clinical rotation (CR)
- Development and facilitation of factual knowledge, communication and practical skills.
- Possible member of EDU´s mentorship programme
- Possible member of the Curriculum Committee

Requirements
- Graduation certificate (Psychology, School of Physiotherapy, School of Nursing, Paramedic School, or equivalent ), at least with EQF level 6
- At least one year clinical experience, specialised in the area of their responsibility
- Dedication to medical education and life-long learning, assessed in job interview
- Member of EDU´s teaching hospitals

## Tutors

Tutors at EDU are responsible to continuously supporting students in achieving the learning objectives of each module and to collaborate with the community on a daily basis.

Responsibilities
- Supporting students in achieving learning objectives every week per module
- Delivering, evaluating and grading of group assignments
- Delivering, evaluating and grading of quizzes, fill in the blanks, essays and other assessments

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- Moderating group discussions and providing expert feedback
- Integrating Expert Know-How

Requirements
- Existing advanced didactic knowledge
- Proficient with digital tools and technologies
- Fluent in spoken and written English
- Graduation from medical school, psychology or equivalent), at least of EQF level 7

Annotation: Tutors need a graduation certificate of either a medical school, psychology or an equivalent higher education background, at least of EQF Level 7. Tutors do not need to have any subject-specific training as they do not deliver any lessons. They serve to facilitate and moderate small group collaborative learning. EDU pursues a learner-centred approach, in which students must actively acquire knowledge and not passively follow a lecture or similar course. Tutors should have a general medical expertise and strong communication skills. The following exemplary degrees can apply for the position as a Tutor: Psychologists, Sociologists, Physicians, Educationalists, Nursing Scientist, Biomedical Scientist, Master of Medical Education, Master of Public Health et cetera.

Tutors will be hired who have a medical background. Additionally, they will be trained by colleagues who have comprehensive experience in tutoring using a collaborative learning platform. Additionally, training for tutors will be organized on a regular basis.

# Mentors and other supporting roles

## Mentors

Mentors are responsible to support the personal and professional development of the students.

## Responsibilities
- Personal → supporting learners in creating work-life balance, building confidence
- Professional development → supporting learners in networking, establishing goals
- Skill development → supporting learners with communicating, managing time, increasing clinical skills
- Academic guidance → providing guidance for learning administrative skills, understanding department values, developing relationships
- Provide inspiration as a role-model
- Provide emotional and career support
- Facilitate insight and change
- Help developing mentee`s goals

## Requirements
- Minimum of 1 year of academic experience
- Minimum of 1 year of relevant job experience
- Empathetic personality and good communication skills
- Strong digital literacy
- Graduate in higher education, at least with EQF level 6

Annotation: To name a few, Mentors can have a degree in the following exemplary subject: Medicine, Psychology, Sociology, Paedagogy, Nursing Sciences, Biomedical Sciences, Public Health, Epidemiology, Biology, Business Administration , Economy et cetera.

## Technical Support

The Technical Support is responsible for responding to learner technology-related queries, thus ensuring a smooth user experience across the platform for all learners.

Responsibilities
- Assisting learners with technical difficulties as first level support
- Assisting faculty with technical difficulties as first level support
- Reporting, tracking and communicating bugs to the technical operations team
- Supporting users with special accessibility needs

Requirements
- Minimum of 3 years of work experience in an IT- and support-related role
- High digital literacy
- Empathetic personality with good communication skills
- Graduate in higher education, at least of EQF level 6

## Media Support

The Media Support is responsible to responding to learner information-related queries, thus ensuring a smooth user experience across the platform for all learners.

Responsibilities
- Ensuring the accessibility of learning content across the platform
- Responding the learners and faculty requests for information on media-related questions
- Communicating technical requirements for the use of learning applications
- Ensuring the continuous update of course schedule
- Supporting teaching staff and mentors with the organisation of live sessions

Requirements
- Minimum of 3 years of relevant work experience
- High digital literacy

- Empathetic personality with good communication skills
- Graduate in higher education, at least of EQF level 6

## Clinical Rotation Managers

Clinical Rotation Managers assist (or work together with) the Dean in developing and implementing Faculty Development in teaching hospitals.

Responsibilities

- Support Dean in communication between EDU and the Clinical Directors and Chief Physicians regarding the implementation of the curriculum during clinical rotation
- Contact Person for Module Coordinators in teaching hospitals according to curriculum of clinical rotation and didactic approach of EDU
- Can be part of the curriculum committee
- Possible member of EDU´s mentorship programme

Requirements

- Graduation from medical school , at least of EQF level 7
- preferable a Master of Medical Education – EQF level 7
- minimum of 3 years of clinical experience
- minimum of 3 years of teaching experience
- minimum of 3 years of research experience
- Dedication to medical education and life-long learning, assessed in job interview
- Depending on the cooperation partners, the managers can be employed in the teaching hospitals or at EDU.

## Module Coordinator

The Module Coordinator is responsible to coordinate the schedule of students in teaching hospitals and acts as contact person for clinical teachers during the clinical rotation phase.

Responsibilities
- Contact Person for students in teaching hospitals
- Contact Person for Clinical Teachers in teaching hospitals
- Facilitates workplace-based Assessment at the end of Clinical Rotation
- Can be part of the curriculum committee

Requirements
- Minimum training qualification at EQF level 5
- Minimum of 3 years of work experience
- Member of a teaching hospital
- Committed to EDU`s core curriculum and learning objectives, and EDUs Quality Assurance Standards & Policies

Annotation: The following exemplary degrees can apply for the position Module Coordinator: Nurses, Paramedics, Physiotherapists, Secretary, Office Assistant et cetera.

## Appointment to a Professorship for Medicine

Associated professors and professors are appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and the Rector of EDU, after receiving recommendations from the Appointments Committee.

The comprehensively documented appointment procedure for professorship and the candidate list must be accessible from all levels of the institute of higher education hierarchy, escpecially for the Dean, the Rector and the Vice-Chancellor.

## Appointments Committee

The Appointments Committee shall be convened by the Rector, who shall be the head of this Committee. The Vice-Chancellor and the Dean are members of the Committee as co-chairmen. 4 nominated members of the teaching faculty of EDU as well as 2 internationally recognized experts from the academic field of medicine and 2 students from EDU also have their seat and in each case one vote in the Appointments Committee. An applicant shall be confirmed if he or she receives the vote of the chairman or one of the co-chairmen and another seven members of the Committee.

The Following are the **criteria** that ought to be followed by the Appointments Committee:

- Demonstrated Quality in Teaching documented by reports submitted by the Rector or Vice-Chancellor, including number of course taught, course content, creation of content intended for eLearing, students feedback, new course development, development of teaching materials, teaching effectiveness, as well as the number of undergraduates and postgraduate students for whom the candidate has responsibility

- Research Output documented in original research leading to publication in refereed national and international journals, refereed conference proceedings and books in one's academic field. As well this category may include projects in industry or community as long as such work is suitably documented, to highlight the research questions being pursued and the outcomes achieved, through peer reviewed scholarly publications or reviews of international standing.

- Commitment to EDU and society would be evidenced by the candidate's contribution to society and the Education System at large and in particular to the administration and development of the Institute of higher education, including contribution as Board Member, Examiner, Course Coordinator and other related duties and/or society through one's academic and related professional expertise.

- A research-oriented doctorate (Ph.D. or equivalent) is required for obtaining the two academic degrees.
- House appointments - future PhD graduates of the EDU - or the appointments of EDUs teachers - tutors, mentors - are not permitted.

The following are the criteria outlining the **requirements for promotions** for academics to the indicated level within the teaching faculty:

Associate Professor

Awarded following a sustained record of excellent academic work normally carried out on a Senior lecturer level, including solid contributions to knowledge and to College affairs in general.

An applicant for promotion to Associate Professor should

- posses a solid track record in teaching;
- have published at least 15 peer-reviewed papers throughout his or her academic career;
- achieved international recognition in mainstream academic circles for accomplishment in his or her field of specialization;
- have a academic track record in the creation of online course content and eLearning, which is highly welcome and shall also be taken into consideration;
- make it possible to request a peer evaluation of the applicant's research performance from other universities or technical colleges.

The direct contribution to EDU, the society, culture or economy in large and its service to the international community, is also considered, and, if this is largely enough in the discretion of the Appointments Committee, to compensate other criteria in part.

Professor

Awarded for distinction and excellence of academic and professional achievement that is recognised at the international level.

An applicant for promotion as Professor would normally

- have served at least for five years as associate professor at EDU or as Professor of another medical institute of higher education of medical college ;
- demonstrate to the satisfaction of Vice-Chancellor and Rector excellent scholarship, mentoring and leadership;
- require a sustained record of peer reviewed papers;
- make it possible to request a peer evaluation of the applicant's research performance from other universities or technical colleges.

The direct contribution to EDU, the society, culture or economy in large and its service to the international community, is also considered, and, if this is largely enough in the discretion of the Appointments Committee, to compensate other criteria in part.

# STANDARD 7: LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

## ACADEMIC RESOURCES

The academic resources of the EDU comprise numerous monographs, extensive runs of journal literature, and covers a wide range of electronic resources to provide a comprehensive coverage of literature for each student.

Students gain full access to an expanding digital library. EDU's digital library is the key pillar for information retrieval and supports the teaching and research programmes of EDU through services which include excellent reference facilities, library and information literacy instruction, bibliographical consultancy, online compilations of bibliographical guides, overseas document supply, online searching, and a dynamic web portal – all in a digital, easy to access format.

It is paramount to note that the academic resources will follow the student wherever he or she decides to focus on the given learning material. A complete and comprehensive digital library will provide maximum flexibility yet does not compromise on the quality of the resources available. In responsibility to our environment, we recommend working with online material where possible. This can be seen as the foundation of learning in addition to critical thinking and note-taking by the students. The respective student access to all academic resources is managed by the student administration office as well as the technical support team.

All services will respect the EU guidelines to prevent violation of copyright regulations and students will be informed on their rights to access, download and use digital material as appropriate.

## STUDENT SUPPORT

There are various support structures in place at EDU aimed at helping students with their individual problems. These structures have been reviewed carefully and all information about them can be found on EDU's website. A student with a problem can refer to one of the structures below depending on the nature of their problem. Students are informed about the available resources actively during their induction week. Moreover, this information is available and accessible to students in the "Programme Information" section which students can access anytime on the learning platform. Additionally, Tutors and Mentors will remind students of these resources when adequate, on a case-by-case basis.

## Mentoring

Students receive active support and assistance to ensure they get the most of their learning experience. Mentors engage with students to motivate and to learn the needs of the individual student and to improve their respective learning path.

## Students Advisory Centre

Students who have problems related to their academic courses can make use of the services of the Student Advisory Centre.

## Disability support help desk

Students experiencing problems due to physical or cognitive problems can seek help via this help desk. Students with a disability or a chronic illness need an individual consultation. Students are encouraged to make immediate contact with the employees of the Dean. This is necessary in order

to assist these students in the planning of their studies so that applications for disadvantage compensation can be processed and integration assistance can be made available. Individual consultations can be arranged at any time and will be communicated directly with the respective Tutor, Mentor and Module Coordinator. Initial contact can be made via a specially created section of the Digital Learning Platform.

## Misconduct Committee

Students who are experiencing sexual harassment, be it verbal or physical, can seek help from the Misconduct Committee, which is directly overseen by the Dean. Sexual harassment as well as unprofessional behaviour of employees or students at EDU and their partners can be reported at any time. This includes all forms of discrimination, which can also take place within the scope of e-learning, but also in the context of practical phases. Complaints of any kind can be communicated at any time to the employees of the Dean's team. The corresponding contacts are presented on the internal learning platform. Each case will be addressed strictly confidential. Misconduct and harassment against students must be corrected. Repeated misconduct will lead to far-reaching consequences, which prohibit direct contact with students, up to the termination of the employment contract.

## Counselling Services

Personal counselling is provided for students experiencing problems of a more personal nature. Dedicated mentors are available to directly support students onsite.

## Technical Hotline

Students have access to a technical support 24/7 to ensure a professional working environment and get instant technical assistance when needed.

## Dean

If a student has not found help from any of the above bodies, they can get in contact with the Dean directly.

## IT Services

EDU IT Services is part of the Director of Digital Learning's organisation and responsible for the internal IT infrastructure, offering a range of facilities and services to assist members of staff and students with their IT-related needs. This includes agreements with major software providers as well as innovative technology offerings.

The student learning platform connects the students to each other as well as to EDU. It provides access to learning materials such as library access, online journals and periodicals and the electronic Student Information Management System.

## Collaboration, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer

EDU has invested significantly in its learning infrastructure and in the technical expertise to support it. Through continuous exchange with various innovative technology as well as education related start-ups, EDU strives to apply the latest and most efficient technology towards better education.

The founding faculty of EDU is continuously collaborating with the leading, international institutions to ensure that teaching as well as latest research results can be transferred and considered for potential integration into the curriculum.

The rigorous setup of its quality assurance system will enable EDU to empower students to speak up, to provide constructive feedback and to benefit from an open, respectful transfer of knowledge and experiences.

These outlined procedures aim to affect every member of the student and do not stop on the student level. Regular exchanges beyond faculty meetings and input from selected experts will help to nurture a vibrant and stimulating overall atmosphere at the EDU.

# STANDARD 8: INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Our online campus is built on the well-established platform of Candena Digital Education Ltd., which EDU has fully licensed, or otherwise integrates with this platform. This implies that EDU takes full responsibility for all internal quality assurance related aspects, including the full availability of the digital infrastructure as well as any contribution to teaching staff and information management topics.

## STUDENT LIFECYCLE – CORE PROCESSES

EDU's User Management and Information System (UMIS) is being developed as a solution designed specifically for the operation of collaborative online learning environments and programmes. The system will be built around common, defined data structures, corresponding workflows and strict role-based access. This structure is at the core of empowering the key processes needed for a well-rounded digital institute of higher education experience:

1. Marketing
2. Admissions and Enrolment
3. Student Management System
4. Course Selection
5. Assessments, Examination and Grades
6. Financial Management
7. Granting of Degrees
8. Alumni Management
9. Faculty Management

All functional modules will be built on top of the learning platform controls ensuring high-level of data security, event auditability and consistency.

## 1. Marketing

The Marketing core processes are designed to enable the efficient and effective programme promotion activities for the purpose of creating awareness among potential candidates. To support the effective

course or programme delivery the platform provides marketing capabilities which can be used in all stages. The functionality includes the segmentation, referral tracking, marketing campaign tracking, communication engagement and reporting.

## 2. Admissions and Enrolment

The Admissions and Enrolment management modules optimize user registration, the enrolment process and the user on-boarding process by providing thorough module functionality, as well as predefined and easy to modify process templates. The enrolment records are maintained throughout the students' lifecycle, providing semi-automated enrolment status management and automatic event recording of all activities related to the enrolment.

The procedural steps in the Admissions and Enrolment commence with application management. The following steps are taken within the Admissions and Enrolment process:

- As a first step, the student goes through the online application process, creating a record in our Applicant Data Management System. This online tool offers functionality for the Applicant ID Management and the creation of the required credentials for each applicant. A check for completeness of the uploaded documents is carried out and payment of the application fee is concluded;
- The Documents uploaded are validated in accordance with documented standard procedures;
- One or several feedback loops are conducted with the applicant in accordance with documented procedure;
- The application process for an applicant is either completed, keeping the applicant idle for the next application period or the process is terminated;
- The application is documented in accordance with record keeping procedures;
- The application records are transferred to application evaluation;
- For the evaluation of applications, the six-eye-principle is used to validate the completed records;

- The completed records are ranked according to published criteria, which depend on the academic programme offered;

- Starting from the top of the list, records are "admitted";

- The status of the application is communication to the student, namely whether they have been admitted, short-listed or not accepted;

- The students who have been admitted confirm their place of study by digital signature, thus reserving their study place;

- The admissions data and records are documented in accordance with record keeping procedures;

- The Matriculation process commences with the receipt of the data from the admissions process;

- Admitted applicants hand in the rest of their personal information required for matriculation:

- The admitted applicants carry out the payment of the inscription fee, as well as first semester tuition;

- The Student ID as well as credentials for the online learning platform are issued;

- The data and records generated in the matriculation process are documented in accordance with record keeping procedures.

## 3. Student Management System

The Student Data and Study Record (Student Management System) module facilitates access and management of all critical student data and records. It helps course administrators and teaching staff to obtain 360-degree students view and monitoring. The module provides management of:

- Identity verification
- Credentials
- Documents
- Payment and fees

- Administrative contact

- Attendance and resource allocation

- Assessment and examination results

- Grades and reports

The processes around the Student Management System are as follows:

- The Student Management Systems received the data and records generated during the matriculation process;

- The Core Student Data record is established and maintained as well as rights managements;

- Academic Achievement and Examination Data records are established, as well as the rights managements that control accessibility to this information;

- Documented record keeping procedures are carried out, ensuring that all changes as well as the authors' identity are recorded and backed-up.

## 4. Course Selection

The procedural steps behind the Course Selection process are set out as follows:

- The information from the Student Management System is received;

- The eligibility of a student to select particular courses is established;

- The student selects the courses he is eligible for in a managed process:

- The student is in inscribed in a particular course;

- The student selection is recorded in the Student Management System;

- A grading requirement is created for the particular course.

## 5. Assessment, Examination and Grades

The learning platform integrates with selected partners offering assessment authoring and examination solutions. The support includes assessment and examination results archival for auditing purposes. The **Gradebook** offers input and multi-role approval of the activity (either on assignment, examination, test or other inter-course activity).

Procedurally, the Platform covers the following steps in the Assessment, Examination and Grading process:

- The Academic Teacher receives records from the Course level, qualifying a student for one or several examinations;
- The student completes the necessary online examinations;
- The Academic Teacher reviews the examination results as well as other assessments and approves the final grade for the course;
- The Academic Teacher digitally signs for the grade;
- The individual student data is transferred to the Student Management System, recorded, locked and secured;
- Documented record keeping procedures are carried out, ensuring that all changes as well as the authors' identity are recorded and backed-up.

Within the examination process, EDU makes use of Exam Authoring solutions and proctored online examination delivery, outlined below:

## 5. a. Assessment Authoring

Fair and secure assessment procedures commence with the exam authoring process. Quality control is central to high quality assessment. For this reason, EDU will partner with leaders in exam authoring

providers, like GradeMaker, that allow us to utilise outstanding solutions for the planning, review and approval processes of new assessments.

EDU's exam authoring solution will support a wide range of question types, allowing us to provide rich assessments that test candidates knowledge in comprehensive ways:

- multiple choice (with variants)
- short response
- extended response
- shared stimulus
- composite (multi-part) items with additional content blocks as required, using a

wide variety of stimulus material and complex item numbering

In practice, EDU exam authors will have the following **capabilities** at their disposal:

- Instant item preview

Authors can instantly preview the items they are working on, in print or onscreen delivery format. This reduces the need for further changes downstream.

- The mark scheme is created in parallel with the item

Item authors create mark schemes alongside the item, ensuring tight coupling of these two critical documents. This makes item review and test construction more efficient and easier to do. Users have mark scheme layout options, making it straightforward for an exam body to introduce tabular mark schemes.

- Tools to link items directly to the syllabus

Our solution allows the mapping of items to the syllabus, an essential feature of well-planned test production. Each item can easily be linked to four different tables of syllabus content, with 'primary' and 'secondary' mappings to every table. This significantly increases the exam boards' control over test coverage planning.

- Author tracking

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Our solution automatically tracks author names, making it easier to identify authors by results (through data downloads), and supporting better author quality review.

- Adding additional documents

Some tests require authors to prepare 'additional documents', like formula sheets or pages of graphing papers. EDU allows authors to upload the required additional material and hold them against the relevant item or paper so reviewers can check everything is ready.

- Full copyright management

EDU tracks the copyright status of every piece of artwork, providing an overview of artwork status for subject officers at every stage of test production. An item cannot be approved until copyright permission has been cleared, eliminating the risk of copyright breaches.

## 5. b. Online Assessment and Proctoring

Remote proctoring will allow EDU students to take an assessment at a remote location with maximum exam integrity. Online Assessment Proctoring involves synchronous remote monitoring by a human being or a video recording of a student's behaviour during the exam. Online proctoring ensures that people taking the test are what they claim to be, safeguarding against test-takers engaging in any activities that constitute cheating during examinations.

EDU will make use of online proctoring, in several ways, depending on the requirements of each examination. In particular, online assessment proctoring will be implemented in three ways:

- Live online proctoring

A qualified proctor will keep watch on the student from a remote location through live audio-video and screen share feeds. During the entire examination, the proctor will monitor the student in real time, making use of the students' webcam, microphone and share-screen.

- Recorded proctoring

With recorded proctoring, a student will take the examination while being fully recorded. The recording of the audio-video and the screen share is stored and later reviewed for any red flags.

- Fully automated proctoring

With fully automated proctoring, along with recording, the feeds are also monitored by the system for anything suspicious with advanced analytics. Triggers like background speaking, abnormal movements or other indicator are continuously monitored and flagged. Existing tools like keyboard analysis, facial recognition, and sound recognition are being expanded to discern cheating. These rely on factors like head position or movement, facial expression, and typing rhythm. Thus, online proctoring tools provide an outstanding level of security for exams that are taken remotely.

Depending on the test in question, the appropriate form of proctoring combined with secure locations and devices will be used in order to ensure examination integrity.

However, for online proctoring to be successful, it needs to sit on a robust platform. It is necessary to maintain standards of excellence and deploy complex logistics. To ensure maximum security, EDU's online proctoring solutions will provide the following key features:

- Secure Authentication

The proctoring system verifies test-takers using a secure identification process. These systems help in securing candidate authentication using advanced techniques of facial recognition or biometric scanning. From the student perspective, on beginning the exam, the application assesses the computer and webcam. The student must confirm his or her identity by holding up their ID to the camera. The student identity can also be verified through facial recognition. Further still, students might be asked to type a short phrase so that their keystrokes are analysed and compared to previous samples.

In other cases, a password known only by the proctor is used to begin the test. It makes it possible for the proctor to gain control of the student's computer to enter the password. During the exam, a lockdown mechanism may be used to bar students from opening other web browsers.

- Secure Delivery

The proctoring system takes virtual control of candidate's computers, transforming remote assessment locales into secure workstations.

Hence, students have the ability to take the exam wherever they choose, be it in a residence hall or apartment.

However, depending on the examination, EDU may choose to conduct the assessment in a given location that has been assessed as appropriate for such purposes.

- Live Video Monitoring

Test takers are monitored live via the remote proctoring system. This output is relayed to a human proctor in real time. The proctor is then able to observe the student's eye movements or other behaviours that amount to signs of cheating. A report is compiled afterwards.

- Behavioural Alerts

The proctoring system automatically alerts examiners to suspicious user behaviour, saving time in the review process and significantly reducing the rate of human error. These instances are reviewed by the faculty later. These practices allow remote proctoring to flag suspicious behaviours.

- Session Review

Entire test sessions are recorded and can be reviewed, complete with annotations and automatically flagged activities. The real-time video and audio feeds recorded during the test can be easily used for future references.

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# 6. Financial Management

The Financial Management module allows the creation of predefined fee structures, pricing schemes, individual payment plans and provides financial charges handling. The functionality includes the payment collection, dunning and handing of the late receivables. A variety of the payment methods is supported, including SEPA payment, PayPal, and credit card payment.

Financial Management processes run in accordance with the following steps:

- Semester Tuition fees for students are issued;
- The receipt of payment is checked;
- The status of the payment is issued as "in good standing" or "not in good standing";The status of the payment is communicated to the student.

# 7. Granting of Degrees

The process of granting degrees runs as follows:

a. All records from the Student Management System are received, including underlying data;

b. The Six-Eye-Principle is used to validate each student record;

c. The final invoice is issued;

d. The status of the final invoice is checked and if found "in good standing", the degree granting process proceeds to the following step;

e. The Degree is issued and underlying transcripts are documented in accordance with documented standard procedure, ensuring that all changes are back-up in a redundant, secure system;

## 8. Alumni Management

The Alumni Management process ensures that records from the degree granting process are received and stored in accordance to documented procedures.

## 9. Faculty Management

The Human Resource Management module capabilities include the organizational design, contact management and workflows for other user roles recognized by the learning platform. The functionality includes organizational directory, time off management, and reporting.

## Support Modules

The core functionality of EDU's User Management and Information System revolves around continuous process improvements and its automation using workflows, standardization via checklists and effortless audit trail preservation.

The learning platform enables automatic monitoring of the processes for proactive notification and alerting. The system automatically tracks the attributes associated with the individual process instances and detects violations. All events are recorded and immutable, preventing the unauthorized tampering of the process event history.

### 1. Course and study programme management

The module provides tools for design, implementation, delivery and monitoring of the learning environments. It streamlines the information flow from all accompanying functional modules and directly interacts with EDU's Online Course Management System.

### 2. Documents

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All documents managed within the learning platform are handled by the Document Management Module. It is used to track, manage and store documents, maintain the access control, history tracking and control the document/record workflow. The functionality includes:

- Metadata management both for manual entering and automated generation
- Form design, data capture and processing
- Security via digital signatures, access control and alteration protection
- Rule-based document workflow
- On-demand, long term and archival grade storage
- Full-text search (for predefined data types)
- Versioning

3. Digital Assets

The Digital Assets (including documents) used within the online learning environment are enriched according to their user types, tracked for the activity and engagement. The module encapsulates the integration with the major internet platforms to provide the extended metadata retrieval, analytics and delivery. For content with the restricted access the predefined rules are available to respect the licensing details.

4. Multi-channel communication

Effective communication for online courses and programme is realized using multiple channels. It includes one-to-one messaging and contact management, group conversation between multiple recipients, automated notification delivery, newsletter distribution and ticket-based problem resolution.

5. Reporting, Analytics and Alerts

The learning platform utilises many tools to the allow tracking and analysing of the learning course/programme to draw insights into the process. Predefined ad-hoc and on-demand reporting is available for all processes, and it's easy to customize to extend. Analytics functionality is available for all predefined processes.

6. Offline Event, Training and Course Integration

The module provides the functionality to integrate offline events, training and courses via activity definition, scheduling, attendance and communication. Each offline resource can be attached to a specific course or individual assignments.

Learning Platform

The **key design elements** of the learning Platform used by the EDU are:

- Automation to reduce the operative and administrative overhead associated with operating learning environments scaling from dozens to thousands of participating users, while reducing the need to manually process data managed by the platform (hence reducing the surface for possible data misuse and/or modification).
- Role-based access provides strictly controlled logical separation of access permissions based on the least amount of privileges needed for the individual roles. The roles can be adjusted granularly to address specific requirements, reviewed easily and changes are audited.
- Transparency and audit to maintain confidence in Platform services and data processing. Under all circumstances it is possible to review how data is used, for what purpose, to what extent, and by whom.

While implementing and operating these solutions, EDU works together with partners or customers to ensure the following areas of interest are always well addressed:

- Responsibility definition between EDU and the customer pertaining to data security and privacy. EDU proactively supports the customer to help identify all the data assets, classify them in terms of importance, specifying ownership and acceptable use.
- Security awareness is promoted throughout all stages of the learning platform implementation and operation.

The specific URL for each didactic programme offered by the EDU will be specified separately.

# TECHNICAL QUALITY REVIEW AND SUPPORT ELEMENTS

## Description of Controls

Internal control is a process that will be thoroughly implemented by EDU management and adhered by all employees. It consists of the policies and procedures that can be summarized in four interrelated areas:

## Control Environment

EDU or platform operation partners use a functional organization structure which provides a framework for operational effectiveness, appropriate segregation of duties, including the separation of the planning, execution and business operations.

EDU or platform operation partners have formalized hiring practices to determine whatever new, re-hired or transferred employees are qualified to perform their individual job functions and responsibilities. Job functions and employee performance is periodically reviewed.

## Risk Management

EDU has processes in place for the on-going identification and management of current business risks. Risks are identified and managed through prudent business practices that include a high standard of ethics, standardized personnel practices, watchful contract review.

## Monitoring

EDU or platform operation partners maintain a formal, documented, institution-wide information security programme which aligns with industry standard security policies, standards and procedures. Periodic internal audits of the processes and controls are in place.

EDU or platform operation partners utilize various automated systems and 3rd party services to monitor the availability, performance, operational data and security of all the deployments of the learning platform, used infrastructure and systems. Alert notifications are generated and corrective actions are initiated, as appropriate, when such events are triggered. Documented escalation policies and procedures provide guidelines in the event of security breaches, non-security incidents, and service outages. Automated monitoring systems are supplemented with manual log and access reviews. Performance and availability reports are produced and reviewed monthly by the management team.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

EDU or platform operation have documented internal communication policies and procedures to ensure all employees understand their individual roles and responsibilities concerning controls and to ensure that significant events are communicated in a timely manner. EDU or platform operation partners perform periodic security trainings.

EDU or platform operation partners have an internal support policy that defines the procedures and guidelines in the event of system failures. EDU has an on-call team that provides 24/7 monitoring and support for production systems.

## General Information System Controls

EDU or platform operation partners are developing and documenting formal policies and procedures for its operational areas including: data center usage, development, project management, production management, technical operations, quality engineering, security operations, hiring and terminations.

## Change Management

Changes implemented to the learning Platform and individual production instances are subjected to a change management process. To provide assurance, all changes are authorized, tested, properly

implemented and documented. Base component of the change management within EDU is the Product roadmap, the document that reflect the business objectives of EDU. The roadmap is updated every 3 months to embrace changing business requirements.

Requests for change are collected, categorized, and prioritized using project management tools. All planning, in-progress and implemented changes are audited and periodically reviewed. Change management framework is in place, as well as proper segregation of duties for the initiation, solution design and implementation, testing, approval and verification of changes.

Operating system changes, upgrades, patches and security fixes released by the operating system vendor are evaluated by systems administrator to determine critical changes for the production environment. Once a set of patches has been identified by the system administrators, they are tested in a pre-production environment before being released into the production system. The changes to the production environment can be implemented only by authorized members of the operations team.

## Incident Management

EDU or platform operation partners have formal escalation policies and procedures that address when incidents should be escalated and who should be notified in order to support the production service delivery. All incidents are tracked, reviewed and analysed.

## Backup and recovery

EDU or platform operation utilize the combination of real-time mirroring, online replication and off-site storage to protect data.

- For the availability and redundancy all the operational data is mirrored:

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- On the local machine using RAID
- To the physically separated environment for the purpose of instant fail-over
- At least 4 "hot" snapshots are performed daily for immediate recovery in case both primary and hot-standby database servers would fail.
- Daily backup is encrypted and stored using object storage for a minimum of 7 days.
- Weekly backup is encrypted and stored using object storage for minimum of 4 weeks.
- Monthly backup (conducted at month end) is encrypted and stored for 1 year.
- Yearly backup (conducted at year end), is conducted and stored for a minimum of 3 years.

To guarantee the backup consistency/validity the following procedures are in place:

- Daily backup is automatically tested.
- Weekly backups are based on daily backups for any given time frame.
- At least on a semi-annual basis the backup archives are tested for validity (exercising both decryption and data consistency).

All backups are stored in a ISO27001 and PCI DSS certified data centre within the Republic of Malta.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Production instances of the learning Platform are implemented and operated on top of state-of-the-art hosting services. EDU ensures the collection, monitoring and storage of student data and progression within optimal security conditions within Europe and Malta.

Providing a safe environment for user and customer data is a top priority at EDU. Our focus is to deliver a highly-available solution while ensuring that customer data remains protected and is processed in a trustworthy manner. Because we understand there's no single solution to guarantee the security,

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availability and high-levels of performance, we are constantly designing a well-architected solution where every layer provides guarantee the data is secure.

The learning platform has been subjected annually to the internal audits, security reviews and penetration testing from our customers to ensure it meets the highest industry standards.

## EU Data Protection Directive

As part of our rigorous privacy and compliance standards and commitment to our customers, we work with providers which are certified under the EU-U.S. Privacy Shield Framework.

## Networking and Firewalls

The learning platform servers are connected using an internal-only network, supplemented by instance level firewalls. Internet access is only permitted on explicitly opened ports/services/subset of specified hosts.

Users can access the learning platform instances via the internet protected by Transport Layer Security (TLS), preventing traffic from passive eavesdropping, active tampering and forgery.

## Customer Support

EDU also provides ongoing Customer Support to help the students and faculty leverage the full value of the service. Through EDU's and our partners' support, clients receive:

- Assistance with the learning platform and services
- Assistance with operational aspects of the service
- Assistance with identification and verification of the causes of suspected errors

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Support levels

- **Level 1** establishes the customer satisfaction, problem verification and ongoing communication. Activities include initial contact, establishing problems logs and tracking, resolving common inquiries, providing "how to" support, maintaining basic operational knowledge about the programme.

- **Level 2** for course implementation, operational requests and troubleshooting. Activities include the offering of product, subject and technical expertise, providing internal problem determination, prioritization and verification, supplying and testing product fixes or workarounds.

- **Level 3** represents EDU's and partners' internal R&D to address overall service development, change management and defect handling.

The learning platform will be operated as a fully hosted and managed solution. The minimum committed availability of the platform for a given year is 99% of the total number of covered minutes for a given year. As part of the regular service level weekday hours between 9am - 5pm CET are covered.

## EMPLOYEE LIFE-CYCLE

EDU is establishing formal policies and procedures to outline the minimum standards for logical access to the platform used by EDU and all its assets. The policies also identify functional responsibilities of all roles. A standard employee or contractor account with minimum privileges is provisioned by default. Access to the specific resources is subjected to individual approval.

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Following processes are in place:

- The employee account provisioning
- Period account review
- Timely access removal
- Password policy
- Adherence to the Information Security Policy
- Security Awareness and Secure Data Handling Training

The access to the production environment (which includes the possibility to access the customer data) is limited to the Site Reliability Engineers only. The access is granted individually, only after passing the extended probation period or under special circumstances in supervised manner if needed.

## COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA FOR CONTINOUS PROGRAMME IMPROVEMENT

Ongoing programme evaluation will play a vital role in the overall success of the programme. Participant data and feedback will be systematically collected on multiple levels, analysed, and used to improve the programme on an ongoing basis. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be measured and analysed throughout the programme. It will be utilized for programme improvement, with selected insights being published, as regulated by the Public Information Policy.

Quantitative data is generated both via course participant surveys, conducted once at the beginning of the programme modules and at dedicated performance milestones throughout the programme, and via the platform traffic and interaction tracking data collected on an ongoing basis, both for ongoing courses, but also for longer time frames.

This data allows EDU to gauge initial and ongoing module success by means of primary performance indicators such as the Number of Students, Retention Rate (calculate as percentage of students who

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remain enrolled within the course related to the initial course enrolment number at the course commencement), Completion Rate (calculated as the ratio of students who finish the course with a pass grade, reported to the total number of enrolled students at the course commencement), Number of Resources developed, and User Satisfaction. Special attention shall be directed towards reviewing the retention and success rates of vulnerable groups as compared to the overall student population to ensure timely pro-action in providing support and guidance services.

Moreover, EDU calculates the Yearly Retention Rate for the given year (x) as the proportion of students commencing in given year (x) who re-enrol at the institution in the following year (x+1). It does not identify as retained in the system those students who defer their study or transfer to another institute of higher education. Students enrolled in non-award and enabling course are excluded from the derivation.

Moreover, demographic data on the student population is collected during admissions, study period and post-graduation, analysed and reported publicly, as specified in the Public Information policy. These student statistics shall include:

- Number of applicants for programmes offered, broken down by gender and nationality groups, including prevalence of vulnerable groups;
- Number of applicants admitted to each programme, award and module offered, broken down by gender and nationality groups, including prevalence of vulnerable groups;
- Number of students passing each programme, award and module offered, broken down by gender and nationality groups;
- Employment rates after graduation and distribution of career paths.

Qualitative data is generated to gauge success on an even deeper level based on one-on-one interactions. This information is collected through ongoing exchange with students, fostered by the close Participant-Mentor relationship. Furthermore, in-depth interviews on programme performance will be conducted with

a subset of the community of students that will be conducted by Mentors during the middle of each Collaboration Cycle. This qualitative feedback gathering opportunity allows to receive context-rich, specific information about the value of the programme for each participant which is unique in the online education market due to EDU College's collaborative concept.

Both types of data, quantitative and qualitative, are used to continuously reflect upon and make informed improvements to the programme on the level of didactic materials and approach, including learning environment, communication and interaction logics, as well as user support, among others.

## STUDENT RECORD MANAGEMENT

The following common **objectives** apply to the management of all student and applicant records and associated information:

- to maintain accurate, up to date, and comprehensive records for each applicant, student, and alumni to meet EDU's operational and evidential needs;

- to maintain an accurate audit trail of the service provided to each student and applicant as evidence of fair and consistent practice;

- to promote consistency and reduce the duplication of information across systems;

- to control access to and use of confidential personal information on a "need to know" basis, to protect the privacy of individuals and manage institutional risk;

- to maintain records in a format and structure appropriate to EDU's operational, legal admissibility and preservation requirements;

- to allow all relevant information about an individual to be retrieved readily to meet EDU's needs, to facilitate the individual's rights of access to their own personal information under the European Data Protection Directive and other privacy legislation and to comply with the requirements of the Maltese Office and other external audit and accreditation requirements;

- to follow consistent policies to retain records only as long as they are required for business purposes, destroy time-expired records as soon as they are no longer needed and ensure that records of permanent archival value are promptly transferred to the EDU storage/archives facilities;
- to archive records in a format appropriate to their long term access and preservation. EDU retains a core record of each student for a minimum of 40 years as evidence of their attendance and attainment.

EDU protects the rights of students with respect to their education records and data. Education records generally include any personally identifiable records maintained about a student by EDU, including academic, disciplinary, and administrative records. The EDU must:

- regulate access to education records in accordance with law and policy,
- maintain records as required by law and policy;
- provide students with the right to request amendment to their education records and the right to a hearing concerning their education records;

## INFORMATION SECURITY

EDU is required to maintain appropriate technical and organisational measures to comply with the European Data Protection Directive and equivalent legislation in other jurisdictions in which EDU operates. These laws set out specific obligations for EDU and all agents, contractors and partners who process personal data on its behalf to:

- protect student and applicant records and personal data from unauthorized or unlawful access, use or disclosure, and against accidental loss or destruction;
- process information about EDU's students and applicants in accordance with their rights as data subjects under the European Data Protection Directive and other privacy laws, and EDU's duty of care and service standards.

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In order to achieve this, staff, contractors and agents must:

- have access only to such student and applicant records and related personal data as is necessary for them to fulfil their duties;
- complete basic online data protection training, supplemented as appropriate by procedures and guidance relevant to their specific roles;
- follow the security standards for the management of student and applicant personal data set out in the procedures supporting this policy and the Institute of higher education's information security policies and procedures.

## Access to Student Records

EDU officials may have access to student information if their responsibilities reasonably require access to that information for educational, administrative, or research purposes in order to perform their job duties. EDU employees who have access to student education records are obligated to carefully protect them and will be held accountable for safeguarding them. Policy or procedure violations may result in disciplinary action, including possible termination of employment, and applicable civil and criminal sanctions.

## Distributing Grades

The posting of grades or examination results with personally-identifiable information (i.e., student ID number, student name) is prohibited. Examinations, papers, blue books, or any other graded materials that contain personally-identifiable student information (i.e., name, student ID number) should be accessible directly to students in a manner that ensures the privacy of each student's grade.

## Student Right to Review

Students are entitled to review portions of their records at EDU and to request amendments of such records if the student believes they are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of the student.

## Disclosure of Student Records

Personally-identifiable student information may only be released under special circumstances outlined by European law or with the written permission of the student. When a student provides a valid authorization to release student records to a third party, all records that are legally covered by the authorization must be released as requested by the student. Units responding to external requests for information must ensure that the response includes all requested information that exists at EDU.

## Records Retention

EDU will retain records only as long as they are required for business purposes, destroy time-expired records as soon as they are no longer needed, and ensure that records of permanent archival value are promptly transferred to EDU. Moreover, EDU shall archive in a format appropriate to their long term access and preservation. EDU retains a core record of each student for a minimum of 40 years as evidence of their attendance and attainment.

## User Data Handling Description

The EDU platform and its components are used for data collection, processing, and analysis. This document describes the basic principles of how user data is handled throughout its lifecycle. As the platform and all provided services are offered as a "vanilla" solution (i.e. delivered in the name of the

contracted organization), this document does not represent a substitute for the Privacy Policy, nor the Information Security Policies of the EDU's clients.

Definitions:

- "learning platform" used by EDU describes the set of the server machines, the collection of services and operational processes used to deliver the online learning environment.
- "Course Provider" - the entity responsible for the course/programme.
- "Data Handler" - delegated person by the Course Provider, who uses the learning platform for the delivery of the online learning environments, and is delegated to work with user data.
- "Data Subject" - individual to whom the processed personal data relates and who participates within the online course/programme.

## Data Categorization

Within the learning platform, three types of user data are recognized:

1. Personal identifiable data related directly to the Data Subject;

2. Student data related to formal participation of the Data Subject within the course/programme;

3. Application data created as part of the Data Subject's usage of the learning platform.

The learning platform is designed in such a way that most data processing is done anonymously using only student and application data, without direct identification of the Data Subject. In order to participate in the course/programme, a limited subset of the personal data, which is considered public within the learning environment (defined by the Course Provider's Privacy Policy), is used to create a Data Subject user profile and can be viewed by other participating Data Subjects.

## Data Input

All personal data used by the platform needs to be entered with the consent of the Data Subjects. In cases when the data is not entered directly by the Data Subject, it is the responsibility of the Data Handler to verify that the consent has been obtained - both for manual and automated data input.

## Data Use

The personal data is used only in legitimate use cases with strict adherence to the permission level granted to Data Handlers. All operations with the data are recorded for auditing purposes.

## Data Maintenance

Within EDU and partners, access to data is limited only to the core operational personnel. Such access is mandated only for legitimate operational purposes and for the least possible time. Suitable maintenance controls and tools are provided to ensure that user data never leaves the production environment.

In limited cases where the need arises to transfer the platform data (or its part) for additional analysis - the personal data is always anonymized and obfuscated to prevent the identification of the Data Subject. The data integration of the student data is set in a way such that it is not possible to be updated during the maintenance without a proper change management procedure. All maintenance operations are logged and audited.

## Data Storage

All platform data is encrypted at rest by default. To maintain a robust recovery strategy, periodic backups are retained at geographically different locations. All backups are encrypted in-transit and at-rest during their lifetime. All operations with the backup archives are audited. All platform data is maintained (including backups) only for the necessary time. Secure procedures for data disposal are in place.

## Application Access

All types of data within the learning platform may only be accessed through the application layer. User access controls are in place which limit access to user data only to the authorized users and personnel. As such, EDU or partners do not provide direct access to any of the underlying database systems.

The architecture of the learning platform relies on a centralized authentication and authorization security framework to control access to the data and services. The user roles are used for easier control enforcement, management and auditing.

# STANDARD 9: PUBLIC INFORMATION

EDU establishes an **Information Policy** to specify the key principles which underpin how public information is managed at EDU within the scope given below. It is acknowledged that all departments (academic and services) and faculties across EDU are responsible for publishing materials, which form part of the public information, all managed under the governance of the Marketing Director .

EDU seeks to publish information that is: accurate, fit for purpose, trustworthy, transparent and open, timely and up to date, accessible, legally compliant.

Scope of the policy

This policy covers information published in electronic or printed form which refers to any of the following:

- Academic programmes;
- Collaborative partnerships;
- College policies;
- College services.

Information published in electronic or printed form includes, but are not limited to:

- The EDU website;
- Information on other websites managed by EDU;
- Ad-hoc marketing materials, including brochures and leaflets;
- Social media channels managed by EDU;
- Advertisements managed by EDU and our partners;

## GENERAL INFORMATION POLICY

EDU follows the following Information Guidelines:

1. Information must be published in a manner that adequately meets the standards required by legislation, awarding bodies, regulatory bodies and stakeholder requirements.

2. All documents will be checked for grammar, punctuation, spelling and format prior to publication.

3. Public information provided will be in accordance with EDU's values, i.e. be transparent and processed in an open and honest manner.

4. All staff should ensure that all information provided, including information on the website, intranet and through social media channels, complies with college policies meets EDU's standards of quality, is accurate, timely, up to date, reliable and fit for purpose.

5. Responsibility for the management and publication of public information resides across all departments (academic and services) and faculties across EDU. The Chief Marketing Officer has the responsibility to ensure that procedures are in place to enable EDU to manage its responsibilities in relation to public information. He or she will also meet external expectations and internal requirements, as well as sets the standards for communication materials across all channels.

6. Under the guidance of the Marketing Director, public information provided on the corporate website, including the Student Handbook and the Faculty Handbook, published policies and other general guidelines and information will be reviewed and updated once per year. Course related information, key dates will be reviewed and updated prior to each admissions cycle and out-of-date course information will be taken out of circulation.

7. Information will be provided in accessible formats. EDU to meet the requests of individuals where this is deemed reasonable.

8. Information will meet any applicable legal obligations, e.g. in relation to copyright and the requirements of the data protection.

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9. Public information produced and published by a third party with whom EDU has a contractual relationship with be supervised as follows:

- Any materials produced by a third party must be checked and approved by relevant personnel at EDU prior to publication.
- It is the responsibility of the third party to forward all draft promotional materials to EDU in either electronic or hard copy format for approval prior to publication.
- EDU will request the immediate withdrawal of public information published by a third party that does not comply with EDU's corporate identity and/or includes inappropriate and/or misleading information.

## Admissions and Course Information

EDU recognizes the importance of accurate, transparent and up-to-date information as a basis for allowing prospective students to make important decisions, as well as existing students to make the best of their learning experience. With this in mind, EDU resolves to make the following materials available on the EDU website as well as other suitable channels:

- Informational brochures for prospective students;
- Transparent admissions criteria and admissions process guidelines;
- Academic principles and didactic methodology;
- Teaching, learning and assessment methods, principles and guidelines;
- Curriculum overview, including learning objectives and course syllabi, specification of ECTS/ECVET learning points associated with each module, as well as EQF/MQF level;
- Further learning opportunities and career prospects of graduates;
- Statistics on pass rates and student success.

Special focus will be placed on ensuring that the learning outcomes of the study programmes offered are adequately communicated, allowing prospective students to judge the knowledge, skills and competences

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they are likely to acquire on successful completion of the programme. Moreover, EDU will accommodate reasonable requests for further information.

# STANDARD 10: ONGOING MONITORING AND PERIODIC REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES

## STUDENT FEEDBACK PROCESS

EDU believes that listening to students is vital not only to respond, but more importantly, to fully understand what can be improved further. Hence, EDU has set mechanisms in place to empower students to speak up and enables multiple points of contact, at the respective teaching hospitals as well as during online sessions, to embrace feedback.

Students' evaluation of their learning experience is an integral and necessary component of any quality assurance system as adopted by any institute of higher education. It allows EDU to evaluate how its service provision is viewed by its only relevant customer, namely, its students. 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.

Traditionally, each semester, towards the end of class in selected modules, students are invited by an email to complete an online questionnaire, on an anonymous basis. At EDU more intuitive feedback functionality is integrated in the modern, digital learning setting.

Under the governance of the Dean, EDU is providing transparency to faculty as well as students regarding the feedback received and the resulting actions that EDU has taken accordingly. It is paramount to monitor feedback together with the appropriate action to facilitate change and continuous quality improvements.

Additionally, tutors at EDU do not only help the students with their learning objectives and study plans, but also provide feedback to the respective students. EDU wants to create a balanced and stimulating yet challenging environment to foster growth and commitment to quality of care.

Students can forward a complaint via the following paths:

- Directly reported to the assigned Tutor, as a first level when relating to procedural issues, team-related challenges or other miscellaneous topics;
- Directly reported to the assigned Tutor, especially when related to didactic-topic questions, examination results and other concerns;
- Via the helpdesk on the platform, when relating to technical difficulties;
- Anonymously, via a feedback survey conducted at the end of every course;
- All complaints can be escalated by students to EDU's administration level when a satisfactory solution does not come from first level support.

At the end of each Module, this feedback is collected, analysed and grouped into meaningful categories by the Tutor team, including:

- Learning platform ideas;
- Learning content ideas;
- Miscellaneous.

These ideas are then communicated to the respective groups responsible for implementation and priorities as necessary to be included in the next platform update, didactic content update, staff training programme, etc.

## PRINCIPLES OF ONGOING MONITORING AND REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES

The **Cycle of Kern** has been developed for curriculum planning reasons and consists of 6 individual steps that are run through one after the other:

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- Step 1: Problem Identification and Needs Assessment

  This step begins with the identification and critical analysis of a health care need or other problem.

- Step 2: Targeted Needs Assessment

  This step involves assessing the needs of one's targeted group of learners and their medical institution/learning environment, which may be different from the needs of learners and medical institutions in general.

- Step 3: Goals and objectives

  Once the needs of targeted learners have been identified, goals and objectives for the curriculum can be written, starting with broad or general goals and then moving to specific, measurable objectives. Objectives may include cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitudinal), or psychomotor (skill and behavioral) objectives for the learner.

- Step 4: Educational Strategies

  Once objectives have been clarified, curriculum content is chosen and educational methods are selected that will most likely achieve the educational objectives.

- Step 5: Implementation

  Implementation of a curriculum has several components: obtaining political support; identifying and procuring resources; identifying and addressing barriers to implementation; introducing the curriculum, administering the curriculum; and refining the curriculum over successive cycles.

- Step 6: Evaluation and feedback

  This step has several components. It usually is desirable to assess the performance of both individuals (individual assessment) and the curriculum (called "programme evaluation"). The purpose of evaluation may be formative (to provide ongoing feedback so that the learners or curriculum can improve) or summative (to provide a final "grade" or evaluation of the performance of the learner or curriculum).

In practice, curriculum development does not usually proceed in sequence, one step at a time. Rather, it is a dynamic, interactive process. Progress is often made on two or more steps simultaneously.

A closer look at the Cycle of Kern reveals that, like the PDCA cycle, it can be used in the sense of quality assurance for a curriculum. Kern and colleagues have further developed the PDCA cycle specifically for the development of medical curricula and named it as a the Cycle of Kern.

Staff within the Dean's team elaborate changes to the curriculum and inform the members of the curriculum committee. This is done via the internal area of the Digital Learning Platform. After approval by the committee, the learning objectives and content will be made transparent on the learning platform and examination questions will be adapted to the changed learning objectives/contents of the curriculum. In addition, students are informed about the changes made via the learning platform.