

---

# QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

---

*La Houppette*

October 2017

## **Table of Contents**

<u>Aim</u> .....	3
<u>The Policy</u> .....	3
<u>Responsibilities and requirements</u> .....	5
<u>Institutional integrity</u> .....	6
<u>Design and approval of programs</u> .....	7
<u>Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment</u> .....	9
<u>Student admission, progression, recognition and certification</u> .....	12
<u>Teaching staff</u> .....	13
<u>Learning resources and student support</u> .....	14
<u>Information management</u> .....	15
<u>Public Information</u> .....	16
<u>On-going monitoring and periodic review of programs</u> .....	17
<u>Cyclical external quality assurance</u> .....	18

## **Aim**

The aim of this Quality Assurance Policy is to affirm *La Houppette*'s (“**the Entity**”) commitment to maintain a high standard of quality in the way it works, the services it delivers, its relationships with staff and stakeholders and ensure continuous improvement.

“Quality Assurance” is what the Company and its stakeholders enjoy if quality control has been effectively applied in the work of the organization. “Quality control” is the operational techniques, procedures and objectives that are used to fulfil the requirements of quality. The overall aim is to deliver the best service possible and to ensure continuous improvement.

The quality assurance policies and procedures contained herein are founded on The National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education (“**NCFHE**”) policies and directions.

## **The Policy**

The Entity's policy is to maintain an effective and efficient quality assurance process planned and developed in conjunction with all management and staff functions and stakeholders, outlined in a series of policies and procedures which are designed to eliminate deficiencies and inaccuracies and to ensure high quality standards. The assurance of quality is fundamental for all work undertaken by the Entity and should be implemented by all staff in its employ.

Initially the educational organization will be owned and administered by Elysia Farrugia who is also the founder. Particularly, the roles shall be to Run and administer the setup, to set courses' content and timetables and to provide lectures. Should there be the need to recruit more staff, it shall be endeavored to remain abiding by these policies. In the case of new recruits, the roles will be as educators or as secretaries in the office to keep student database up to date, their responsibilities and duties shall abide to the entity's quality assurance policy.

To that effect, the Company shall:

- i. Maintain consistency in work method throughout in accordance with set policies, procedures, regulations and codes of practice and without significant deviation.

- ii. Ensure that all policies, procedures, relevant regulations and codes of practice are implemented and systematically reviewed to reflect the Company's values.
- iii. Regularly monitor and measure the quality of its work methods, outputs and outcomes with a view to ensuring high quality standards, best value and continuous improvement.

The IQA process and mechanisms will be reflected in official policies.

The institution expects all students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Disciplinary action shall be taken against students (and future additional staff) found guilty of dishonesty. As actions particularly viewed as dishonest by the institution are: plagiarism, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. It is recognized that the institution, administrators and instructors themselves have also responsibilities for academic integrity and the necessary precautions, including careful administration shall be priority. The institution shall make use of online plagiarism checkers to assess that any information handed out to students is not plagiarised. Any material used by educators/teaching staff found to be plagiarised will be confiscated and action against the party involved shall be taken accordingly. Any plagiarised material will be confiscated and the offender will be requested to provide new original material, otherwise their role in the institution will be disqualified.

This notwithstanding, in the light of the fact that the courses/modules shall not require any research papers, assignments or tests it is believed that potential for academic integrity within the institution shall be further safeguarded.

The institution shall be committed towards ensuring an environment which manifests high levels of respect for individuals' values, conduct and professionalism. In this respect, the institution shall not tolerate any discrimination or harassment based on race, gender and/or gender identity or expression, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, ethnicity, disability, veteran or military status, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, genetic information, marital status, citizenship status, or on any other legally prohibited basis is unlawful and undermines the character and purpose of the Institution. Any discrimination or harassment will be reported to the head of institution and will be taken to an independent unbiased attorney for investigation, if the harasser is found guilty he/she will no longer work at the institution.

As stakeholders, the institution will primarily recognize staff and students. There will also be the involvement of a number of product suppliers who shall conduct certain seminars and educate students about their products. This will make the sessions very practical and insightful for students. The relationship between the institution and the suppliers shall be noncommittal.

All activities shall be carried out and supported in-house and as such no subcontracted activities/training are envisaged.

### **Responsibilities and requirements**

The Company's formation will be of one teacher/educator, who will also be head of the school and owner of the school, and students. Learning will be either one to one or in small classes of six students and will be delivered either in English or in Maltese depending on the preferred language for the students. Printed notes will be in English. In addition, should the institution grow and more staff members are recruited to the team, the policy will be updated upon review of new roles and responsibility of each employee, these roles will either fall under teaching or office work and in this case the IQA document shall be updated to include their exact roles and responsibilities.

The Company will be responsible for the student's success in becoming a qualified nail technician and will also be providing hands-on experience and practice hours in the salon from where the Company operates. There will be an opportunity to practice on models. Should the student be willing (after graduating) he/she may be offered the opportunity to have some working hours doing nails in the salon. This will be a great work experience given that they are constantly working under the teacher's supervision. This will also ensure ensuring academic integrity and freedom.

Any student with the requisite requirements will be accepted to enrol for the course. This is a practical based course, however the Company believes that it is very important that the student is literate enough to understand the biological studies in nail anatomy and chemical studies about the products. Therefore, the students enrolling for the course are required to have Level 1 or 2 of education.

There will also be the chance to involve one's self in different brand/product seminars to provide the students with knowledge regarding different products available on the market. After which the students are requested to fill out a questionnaire form relating to the seminar which should give an indication understood what has been delivered to them.

### **Institutional integrity**

The entity is in the form of a self-employed entity for which there are no statutory obligations for the yearly accounts to be audited. This notwithstanding, the institution shall adopt an accounting system in terms of generally acceptable accounting principle and shall use the services of certified public accountants and auditors continuously. The entity shall find no objection in presenting its financial statements as may be requested.

The initial plan for the institution is aiming for a minimum of two courses per year with a minimum of 4 students in each class. It is forecasted that each student will pay Euro 1,500 for each course. From a total of Euro 12,000 revenue, (i) 25% will be assigned for product kits supplied to students together with notes and general supplies used during classes (such as cotton discs, tissues, couch rolls, gloves, face masks etc.), (ii) 25% will be assigned for wages (initially this will be allocated to the institute's head and founder. Eventually, this portion will be used to cover future teaching staff's remunerations. (iii) The remaining 50% will be allocated to reserves to cover for any arising expenses and potential investment. Since initially the institution will not generate immediate profits, initial investment shall be partly-financed by the nail salon activity owned by the same founder. It is envisaged that the institution shall be self-financed within 2 years of fully attended courses.

The entity hereby ensures that the persons occupying a headship position and the legal representative are fit and proper persons to deliver further education programmes. The institution's founder enjoys fifteen years experience in the nail industry with continuous education for knowledge and technique enrichment and was also graduated as a nail educator after intensive training in 2012 organised locally by foreign nail masters of Nail Harmony products. The founder of also achieved local nail awards in nail technology and is currently (2017) enrolled in University of Malta studying B.Sc.Podiatry.

## **Design and approval of programs**

The course program and lessons have all been designed in terms of ECTS.

The Course will contain 5 ECVET learning credits. This Course targets persons who are interested in pursuing their own business or interested in working as nail technicians.

The following steps shall be taken in ensuring a student-centered approach:

- Be practical – in this field in particular, students shall primarily look forward to learn practical insights.
- Divide the class into groups of maximum of 6 students. Smaller groups give more opportunity for everyone in the group to interact.
- Establish routines that allow all students in the activity to participate.
- Listen to students and rather than “teach” focus on giving “guidance”.
- Establish clear and friendly ways how to assess students’ contributions.
- At the end of each module the students will be given a quality assessment sheet/questionnaire to evaluate the module and comment on the education methods used in order to help the institution further optimise the programme.
- Whenever the institution is considering upon revising an existing module or adding new ones, through questionnaires students will be asked for feedback in order to help taking the best decisions.

The Course’s objective is to:

- (i) Instruct on nail anatomy and product chemistry,
- (ii) Impart all the necessary knowledge, skills and techniques required to maintain healthy natural nails; and
- (iii) Apply enhancements safely to natural nails.

Notwithstanding the above, it is expected that aspiring students must possess a certain level of creativity and can work under pressure.

The nail technician will have the responsibility of analysing their clients’ nails and be able to choose the right product for the right nail (whether the nature of the clients’ nails adheres better to a gel

application or an acrylic application for one example) as well as, to be able to identify nail related problem and take necessary actions thereto by referring them to the right qualified persons as applicable.

This would mean that if a client has an infected nail, the nail technician would easily realize this and refer the client to a doctor instead of applying product that may irritate the infection.

The students will also acquire knowledge on product chemistry which will be of great benefit when analysing problematic nails. The student will be able to decide which product best suits the particular client and hence will will correct or enhance the natural nail for said client.

Students will have both practical and theoretical assessments for each of the four modules in the course. Students will have practice hours in the salon attached to the class room where they can work on model clients in a real salon environment .

Minimum requirements for teaching staff is five years of full-time experience in doing nails not just working as an assistant in a nail salon.

The Entity is in line with the MQF and the Malta referencing report 2012 and subsequent updates.

All potential teachers/instructors shall be scrutinized and only ones with internationally recognized certificates in nail technology shall be accepted. Staff shall attend regular training and seminars in the field.

First – the aim is that a proposal for a change develops through informal discussions with stakeholders.

Secondly – commence drafting a formal course proposal document, with assistance from relevant support functions.

Thirdly – consult with NCFHE and request course approval.

Fourthly – once approved, work commences to promote the course, recruit students (and where necessary, staff), prepare course materials.

Fifthly – launch course and carry out assessments on a regular basis.

The courses will promote the involvement of external stakeholders, mainly sales representatives. The institutions will offer specific product knowledge seminars in which a number of products shall be discussed.

All stakeholders including students shall be involved in a consultation process for program design.

*(Entities accredited by the NCFHE shall follow the programme accreditation procedure of the NCFHE which shall be in line with this standard).*

### **Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment**

The learning course will be based on theory lessons in class, with notes for further revision reading. Additionally, demonstrations where the learner is seeing techniques done by the educator and hands on practical sessions primarily on false plastic tips will also take place.

When the students reach a level of understanding and a safe stage, students can practice on each other's nails, under supervision of the educator.

Assessors and educators working for the Company are regularly updated by attending to arising new technique seminars and product update seminars.

Assesment sheets will be given with the notes and the students will know what is expected from them as well as, how their practical work is assessed so that they will know the areas they must improve in.

Different pedagogical approach shall be achieved:

- By setting open-ended lessons in which students are provided with multiple practical solutions and not only one “good answer”.
- Students are given opportunity to express their own solutions to particular problems they may encounter.
- By ensuring group and collaborative learning.
- Using a case studies approach. Case studies are thorough descriptions of real events in real situations that can be used to examine concepts in a practical context.

The institute shall adopt an inclusive approach capable of responding to diverse needs of students and changing according to the style and rate of learning. While such approach shall suit students with special needs at the same time it will also be up to the standard of the other students. Students may request for tuition on one to one basis at an extra fee of Euro 25 per hour, this will benefit greatly students with special needs. The institution will leave this as an option and it will be strictly up to a fellow student to request such extra hours.

Students shall be asked to maintain a personal journal (diary) in which following every lesson they should reproduce in their own words and from their own perspective what would have been discussed during class. This shall be reviewed and assessed by the instructor. This method will help in assessing if the pedagogical approach being used is effective, since whatever the students write in this journal will be a strong indication of what they actually remember or learn from every lesson. This journal will be done after lesson hours so they will not be assisted to do this. It will be purely from their memory and problems with doing so will be assessed in the following lessons. When more than 50% of the students fail to produce a good journal this will be an indication for educational methods to be reviewed and this will be done by general meetings including all staff. New pedagogical approaches will be suggested or applied.

The institute shall offer full support to students and is willing to make use of any preferred communication means by the students. Means such as emails, Facebook and WhatsApp may all be used allowing communication of images as well.

Any minor or serious complaints shall be put in a formal email sent to the institution's management at [info@lahouppette.com](mailto:info@lahouppette.com) and the problem shall be tackled in a private meeting if required.

At the start of each module, students shall be provided with a course plan which shall include lessons' outlines, assessment mode and criteria in the form of a marking sheet

Owing to the very small classes, feedback shall be provided continuously as one-to-one relationships with students are expected to be set. In addition, the above mentioned marking sheet shall also allow for more formal feedback.

Initially the instructor will act as the assessor. This notwithstanding, a professional's high levels of fairness and diligence shall be applied when assessing. Primarily, the founder, as the only educator, will have to be the only assessor of students' exam works. The assessment sheet will produce very transparent markings in respect to a number of criteria, such as for example, *how consistent the length of all ten nails is*. The assessment sheet will comprise ten boxes for each criteria. For instance, with respect to the consistent length criteria mentioned above, actual nail measuring will be involved. Minor discrepancies (for example a 2mm variation) shall result in lower grading.

Every assessment sheet will be accompanied by 4 photos of the nails examined including a top view of all ten nails, a close up of each hand, front view to show thickness of free edge, and a side view to show the stress areas enforced by the product. These photos will be kept in the student data files for revision of markings..

Again as professionals, the instructors are entrusted in ensuring consistent assessment.

Continuance interaction with students will be a priority and this will ensure continuous advice and guidance.

Students will be given the marking sheet and their result mark duly explained. Feedback shall be given immediately by exhibiting failing or rewarding aspects on the models' hands.

## **Student admission, progression, recognition and certification**

The admission process shall be quite straightforward since the course shall be open only for a small number of students. An initial down-payment shall be required but full refund may be given in cases of pre-cancellation or postponement.

Each student shall have a file containing forms and demographics and all assessments given.

There will not be particular section criteria, other than an at least sixteen years of age requirement. Other points have been pointed out in the 'requirements' section of the form including Level 1 or 2 knowledge in either Chemistry or Biology and basic knowledge of Physics as well as communication abilities in English or Maltese, while creativity and knowledge in arts and crafts would be considered an advantage for students. Although, at least initially, the institution will not have formal requirements for previous studies or qualifications, in certain cases whereby this cannot be proved by the applicant student, an aptitude test may be carried out to assess level of knowledge and interest and one's ability to proceed with the course.

The entity will ensure the admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner by introducing an admission form containing the named criteria and requirements after which all documents shall be copied and filed in the student data file.

All students interested in the course will be admitted in due course. Due to the small number of students in each class, after due course has been fully booked, interested students will automatically be registered to the following admissions.

Possession of the entry requirements listed will help the students to understand more what is going on in the procedures. In the case arising where any one student does not have the requirements in Chemistry, Biology or Physics, such information will be found as part of the lessons which will help students understand product chemistry, nail anatomy and the physics in product balance and stress points of the nail. This is viewed as very vital in creating the best possible nail technicians who can assess a shape of natural nail and produce the best possible artificial nail, with the best strength required by the lifestyle of the client, without causing any damage.

Upon the completion of the course, the institute shall issue an accredited certificate and backed up

by an official letter in which one's performance and achievements are outlined and applauded, including MQF level, amount of learning credits, content and status of the qualification gained, in line with NCFHE regulations.

## **Teaching staff**

All teaching staff will be required to have at least 5 years of experience and be in possession of internationally recognized certificates in the field. Prior to being accepted, prospective staff shall be subject to interviews during which they will be required to carry out small teaching sessions.

All teaching staff shall be interviewed and required to give short teaching session in order to assess their teaching capabilities. The interviewers shall use a pre-set standard interview sheet and use consistent questions.

The institute endeavors to ensure that teaching observation:

- is undertaken with professionalism, integrity and courtesy; this shall be achieved by carrying out random teaching staff observations and ensuring that teaching staff follow the institution's module programmes.
- involves objective evaluation; this shall be achieved by evaluating the students' learnings during practical hours. The students' ability to achieve high standards during practice will largely depend on the knowledge acquired by the students during the courses' lessons.
- is reported honestly and fairly; this shall be achieved by educating the teaching staff on how to appropriately use the assessment sheet prior to conducting the courses so that all criteria present are well covered.

Prior to observation, the instructors shall be clearly communicated the purpose for such observation and must be given at least 5 days' notice. During the observation notes (which would be made available to instructors as well) will be taken based on which, feedback will be given about positive aspects of the lesson and practical advice for realistic improvements. After the observation, there

shall be a meeting with the instructors during which the observer should offer well balanced and constructive criticism.

Staff will be required to regularly attend product and information seminars. In addition, the institute shall be committed to provide ongoing training including practical-client training as necessary.

Part time staff shall be equally supported and same opportunities are to be given.

### **Learning resources and student support**

Students will have access to reference books in class. These reference books and magazines are for the sole purpose of any students who wish to do further reading and learn on different nail arts. Printed notes will be given during lessons, and will contain all the information in line with the examination's content.

To allocate for a diverse student population, student support in terms of resources will mainly concern the simplification of complex subjects such as product chemistry and polymerization during theory lessons and using online visuals and resources to interact with students in different manners so as to explore different means of communicating with the student.

Students will attend seminars conducted by different brand agents to expand their intellectual horizon and broaden their understanding about different brands on the market.

Students will have practice hours included in the course, this will take place in the fully functioning nail salon. This will help them in achieving full salon experience. During salon practice hours students will be supervised by the educator who will also be there to answer any questions or assist in any problems they might experience.

The entity shall welcome a diverse student population being mature, part time, employed, international students as well as students with disabilities as long as they fit the requirements of the course.

The institute shall adopt a more practical-based approach. Rather than having libraries and resources of written material, students will be continuously encourage to practice in the Salon using actually products and sometimes working on actual clients. During practice hours, students shall be continuously observed and assisted. Resources in the form of multimedia such as videos shall also be made available for students who profit more through visualised learning rather then further reading.

Students who encounter difficulties in their studies will be observed and attended to their specific needs, such as slow learning or easily distracted individuals. Further demonstrations and practice will be scheduled as required.

Information regarding available resources and support shall be given as part of the course plan. Information such as different brand agents available in the country, online resources for products or further study opportunities that may arise in the future will not be in writing on course program but will be communciated uring the courses.

The institute shall provide the necessary teaching material and will continuously recommend and promote opportunities for professional development.

### **Information management**

The Institute shall be using a database management system to keep track of the student profiles.

The institute shall have in place a database management system in which all staff and student records and documentation shall be maintained. While the system is largely electronic, hard copies of demographies, progression, attendance, certifications, achievements, and curriculum vitaes for staff members shall also be kept in a proper filing manner.

Information shall be made available to the authorized personnel generally responsible for decision making. Files shall be stored safely in the founder's office. In addition to the founder,

by authorised personnel the institution will comprise auditors assigned on routine checks. Initially this information will be available only to the founder, who is the owner and sole head of entity, as well as the primary decision taker regarding student information and assessments. Whenever this situation changes the IQA shall be updated possibly with details about computerized password access methods to be applied to the database to safeguard any unauthorized access.

Students' participation retention and success rates shall be duly recorded in attendance sheets, records and assessments scores.

At the end of each course each student is given a questionnaire to review the course and possibly suggest any recommendations. All requests are taken upon consideration towards improvement. Staff members to be recruited will be involved in analysing student participation and reporting to the institution's head with attendance sheets and a comments section (commenting on participation rate and behaviour) next to each student subsequent to each lesson. Cases of suspected poor learning abilities will be tackled separately while cases of poor attendance may result in disciplinary action being taken such as dismissal or not being eligible for free extra practice hours or supervision.

### **Public Information**

Course information will be publicly available on the salons website [www.lahouppette.eu](http://www.lahouppette.eu). This information will include selection criteria for the course. The website will be continuously updated upon any changes made to any module or program.

Our intended learning outcomes will be listed in this information as well as the qualifications MQF level 5 and that the course has 5 ECVET credits. This information will include course requirements and the option to conduct an induction test if Level 1 is not an achievement in hand. Through the website the students can learn course fees and the hours to be dedicated for such program as well as information such as products kit and notes. Seminars conducted by chosen brand representatives will also be mentioned. Besides the institution's website courses and seminars will be advertised through various social media such as facebook.

Contact numbers, address and other details will be available on the website and interested students may also choose to contact the head of the institution directly through the 'Contact Us' tab in the website.

All this information shall be provided to students on a printed booklet including kit contents, course program, pass rates and assessment procedures.

### **On-going monitoring and periodic review of programs**

The Company is willing to implement the Quality Cycle by monitoring and periodically reviewing their programmes in terms of their IQA policy and standards, to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society.

Reviewing of programmes could include;

- new techniques discovered through experience or enhancement courses attended by staff,
- addition of modules if new systems and techniques other than gel or acrylic are launched onto the market,
- different teaching methods that can be used instead of current ones.

Such reviews shall include input from students (through end of module questionnaires) and, where applicable, input from EQA reports. These reviews shall lead to continuous improvement of the programmes. Any action planned or taken as a result, shall be communicated to all those concerned, recorded in databases and filed for future reference.

To further improve quality of education, students' views are highly appreciated, at the end of the course, students shall be asked to fill in a questionnaire reviewing the course and asking for suggestions to improve. This shall be carefully considered and action taken in case of feasible suggestions. Actions taken involve reviewing the teaching methods being used and discussing new methods to conduct the lessons or techniques.

All information gathered shall be closely scrutinized.

Educators shall be included in the review process to set new objectives when required and to review content of the program or adapt to changing needs of the students and society. This will be done

through staff meetings and discussions held regarding any new additions or changes to a programme.

Representatives from other institutions would be more than welcome to be included in the review process of programmes, however this is not widely available to the entity being that there are no such entities that perform such intensive programmes on nail technology on the island. Whenever any foreign guest Nail Masters are established they will be invited to the entity for programme review and criticism. This will be of great advantage to the entity and will always be welcomed and their suggestions will be recorded, signed and filed for the auditors to assess.

### **Cyclical external quality assurance**

The entity undergoes external quality assurance by or with approval of the NCFHE on a cyclical basis according to NCFHE guidelines, once every five years.

