QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

La Houppette Academy

March 2024

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Introduction

La Houppette Academy is a subsidiary of La Houppette set up in 2017 which was founded by Elysia Farrugia. La Houppette Academy reflects the institution's structure effective from March 2023.

The mission statement of the academy is to provide and maintain high standard services to its learners through high quality training that aims to develop skills necessary to achieve both personal and intellectual growth. The academy aims to support its learners to identify and achieve career goals and advancements through which career paths are formulated.

The core values of the entity, also extended to the academy are quality, development, excellence and professionalism.

Policy Statement

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 Entity and its stakeholders enjoy if quality control has been effectively applied in the work of the organization. "Quality control" refers to the operational techniques, procedures and objectives that are used to fulfill 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 Malta Further and Higher Education Authority "MFHEA" policies and directions. The academy ensures high quality training through the implementation of policies and procedures which oversee the administration of enrolment, teaching staff and quality,

assessments and certification. All relevant policies are an integral part of this document and is supported by corresponding documentation that provides the academy with the necessary data.

Data collected is retained and archived. Such data provides the necessary information to better manage courses provided by the institution.

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 organisation 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, schedule and to deliver sessions. Effective from 2024, this will serve as the internal quality assurance policy on behalf of the entity. If more staff is recruited, they shall endeavour to remain abiding by these policies. In the case of new recruits, the roles will be as educators or as administrators in the office to keep student databases up to date, their responsibilities and duties shall abide by the entity's quality assurance policy.

To that effect, the Entity 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 Entity'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 this official policy, which will be reviewed and updated every 2 years.

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 also have 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, colour, 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.

Responsibilities and requirements

The Company's formation includes the Head of Institution (HoI) who is also the owner and administrator of the institution, educator/s and students. Learning will be either one to one or in small classes of four to 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.

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 Entity operates. There will be an opportunity to practise 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 further room for development, 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 Entity 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 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. An aptitude test may be applied should the applicant does not meet the necessary criteria.

Institutional integrity

The entity is in the form of a private company entity for which there are statutory obligations for the yearly accounts to be audited. 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 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 twenty 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 also achieved local nail awards in nail technology 2012 and 2014, graduated from University of Malta in B.Sc.Podiatry in 2020 and is expected to graduate as Doctor of Medicine and Surgery in 2025.

Design and approval of programs

The course program and lessons have all been designed in terms of ECTS. This single Course programme available to date 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-centred approach:

- Be practical – in this field in particular, students shall primarily look forward to learning practical insights.
- Divide the class into groups of maximum 6 students. As small 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 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 revising an existing module or adding new ones, through questionnaires students will be asked for feedback in order to help make the best decisions.

The Course's objectives are 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 problems 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 realise this and refer the client to a doctor instead of applying a 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 correct or enhance the natural nail for said client.

Students will be assessed through practical and theoretical exams as well as portfolios. Additionally, practice hours can be performed 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. All potential teachers/instructors shall be scrutinised and only ones with internationally recognized certificates in nail technology shall be accepted. Staff shall attend regular training and seminars in the field.

The Entity is in line with the MQF and the Malta referencing report 2016 and subsequent updates.

Review of programmes

A proposal is to be aimed towards developing change through informal discussions with stakeholders.

A formal course proposal document is to be drafted along with the necessary assistance from the relevant support functions.

An appointment from past students for Students' Representatives is to be put in place with the objective of having the said Representatives sitting on Focus Groups to put forward their recommendations in the process of updating and designing the course programme.

A consultation with MFHEA and hereinafter a request for course approval are to be carried out.

Following approval, necessary works are to commence for the adequate promotion of the course. Additionally, student recruitment, staff recruitment (if necessary) and course material preparation are all to take place.

Launching of course and carrying out regular assessment.

The courses will promote the involvement of external stakeholders, mainly sales representatives. The institutions will offer to both students and staff, 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 MFHEA shall follow the programme accreditation procedure of the MFHEA which shall be in line with this standard).

Student-centred 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 practise on each other's nails, under supervision of the educator.

Educators working for the Entity are regularly updated by attending to arising new technique seminars and product update seminars.

Assessment 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 the 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 an 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 40 per hour, this will greatly benefit 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 they should reproduce in their own words and from their own perspective what would have been discussed during class. This shall be done following lessons that involve new mediums and techniques and 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. A bad journal is a journal which has the steps of the technique completely in the wrong order. New pedagogical approaches will be suggested or applied if such a situation arises.

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 grievous complaints shall be written in a formal email that is to be sent to the Institution's management at lahouppetteacademy@gmail.com and the complaint shall be further discussed during a private meeting or otherwise, however it is deemed fit. To also make it possible for students to remain anonymous when placing their complaint, a Complaint Sheet will be

provided along with the Course Pack, which may be filled anonymously if the student chooses not to identify him/herself.

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 educator will act as the assessor. As the Institution grows in terms of staff members, assessments will be performed by two unbiased individuals who make part of the Academy's Staff who are to be appointed by the Institution. It is necessary for these individuals to have sufficient experience in the nail industry. Their average scores shall be considered as their final scores.

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 10 or 5 marks for each criteria (depending on the assessment; if assessed on 5 nails, each criteria will hold a maximum of 5 marks). For instance, with respect to the consistent length criteria mentioned above, actual nail measuring will be involved. Minor discrepancies (for example more than 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. At the end of every cohort, the educator shall review course material and student progress and respectively present a report to the head of institution with findings. Again, as professionals, the educators/assessors 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. Any students who obtain failing marks (less than 50%), are able to discuss with the head of institution for a retake of the examination following revision sessions which are to be provided at the prior mentioned rate.

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 40% down-payment shall be required but full refund may be given in cases of pre-cancellation or postponement proposed by the Entity. No refund will be given if a student changes his/her mind less than 10 days before the commencement of the course or decides to drop out in the middle of the course.

Each student shall have a file containing forms and demographics and all assessments given. All material provided will be introduced to the learners as they progress through studies. Every session shall have an introduction which sets the scene for the planned session.

There will not be particular selection criteria, other than an at least fifteen years of age requirement. Other points have been pointed out in the 'requirements' section of the admissions 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 the due course has been fully booked, interested students will automatically be registered for 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 to the natural nail.

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 MFHEA regulations.

Relevant data to produce respective certification will be retained for 40 years as stated by the referencing report 2016. Data will be processed in adherence with the Data Management and retention policy.

Teaching staff

All teaching staff will be required to have at least 5 years of experience and be in possession of internationally recognised certificates in the field. Prior to being accepted, prospective staff shall be subject to interviews which will entail a pre-set interview sheet as well as a standard set of questions. In Addition to such interviews they will be required to carry out concise teaching

training sessions which will be observed by the HoI for a more complete assessment of the individual's competence, teaching skills and capabilities. When educators are appointed, regular observation sessions will be performed by the HoI for confirmation of consistency.

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.

The institute endeavours 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 criterias present are well covered.

Staff will be required to attend product and information seminars as part of their continuous professional development. 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 or be inspired by different nail art designs. 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 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. Further than having libraries and resources of written material, students will be continuously encouraged to practise in the Salon using actual 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 than 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 programs but will be communicated during 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 demographics, progression, attendance, certifications, achievements, and curriculum vitaes for staff members shall also be kept in a proper filing manner secured under lock and key. Any electronic data is password protected.

Information shall be made available to the authorised personnel generally responsible for decision making. Files shall be stored safely in the founder's office under lock and key. 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 the 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 computerised password access methods to be applied to the database to safeguard any unauthorised access.

Students' participation retention and success rates shall be duly recorded in attendance sheets, records and assessments scores. All data collected will be processed in accordance with GDPR regulations.

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. Action will be taken for students missing more than 20% of the contact hours.

The academy may opt to retain communication with the student both to inform him/her of new courses and opportunities for further study but also to collate data that may be required by the competent authorities or for the purpose of conducting a tracer study. Communication will be kept with the consent of the student and the right to opt out will be available to pursue. Tracer studies are planned to be held every three years to monitor student progress and market changes.

Public Information

Course information will be made publicly available on the Academy's website www.lahouppette.eu. , including selection criteria for the course. Also, this IQA Document shall be similarly made publicly available to ensure accessibility and transparency, along with the Academy's assured conformity which in turn serves as a re-assurance to prospective students. The website will be continuously updated to reflect any changes made to any module or program. Additionally, a printed version is to be made available upon students' requests.

Our intended learning outcomes will be listed in this information as well as the qualifications MQF level and number of ECVET credits. This information will include course requirements and the option to conduct an aptitude 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 a program as well as information on product kits. 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 Instagram and 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 periodic reviews shall include input from students (through end of module questionnaires) and, where applicable, input from IQA and EQA reports. The practice that shall be considered for the purpose of establishing a proper periodic review is to set feedback forms that are expected to be filled by all students, educators and stakeholders who are potential employers for newly graduates.

These periodic reviews shall lead to continuous improvement of the programmes and are planned to be carried out every 5 years from date of approval. 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 the 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 teaching techniques.

Furthermore, annual communication with Alumni will gain further information pertaining to employment of certified students for better insight of the institution's performance with regards to student's confidence within areas of practice.

All information gathered shall be closely scrutinised.

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. Alongside, the internal quality assurer, will also contribute to this process.

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 MFHEA on a cyclical basis according to MFHEA guidelines, once every five years.