



Policies and Procedures

Operations Department

Design and Approval of Programmes

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Design and Approval of Programmes

1. Developing Courses that are Relevant for Today's Working Environment

The process for the design, approval and implementation of programmes involves primarily the provision of course materials which aims to support course implementation and students' interactions with course curricula, giving both the students and the educators direct access to information and various other tools for effective learning.

Within this practice, Future Focus aims to direct the learning process by providing tutors with content, structure and activities to support their preparations, and by providing students with a written resource to refer to during group activities or assignments

2. 'We ensure that the design is of good quality with a balance between theory and practice so that students are well equipped for the work place' – Future Focus Ltd.

In the light of the above-quoted motto, and with our Role of Stakeholders in Quality Assurance Policy in mind, Future Focus ensures that the procedure adopted is one whereby quality meets students' needs. As a primary source the Managing Director identifies a niche in the market, or someone informs her about a need. Research is carried out about whether the course is presently being offered by other players in Malta or abroad.

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Once the need for a particular course is identified, a course outline which sets clear aims and learning outcomes with explicitly aligned learning, teaching and assessment strategies is planned, with the objective of taking account of good practice in curriculum design. This information, once finalised, is made available, upon request, to prospective students, and is also made available to the public via our website.

When designing the programme we look for a supporting base for teaching and learning at different levels of education and for different people's needs.

Areas of study that are in demand and workplaces that are popular, are identified. This stage includes brainstorming sessions between the Director and the particular educators involved in the prospective teaching sessions, in order to collect data, which is then evaluated and summarised to formulate a course outline.

3. Designing a New Course that Appeals to the Target Audience, Whilst Involving All Stakeholders Such As Students, Employers, Lecturers and Others

The particular courses are designed in a manner that takes in full perspective what the student will require during the course. This is in line with our Policy for Student Involvement in Design of Courses. Individual sessions are often arranged according to themes or modules, with sub-sections for content, activities, summaries and assessment tasks. In cases where the course is skills-based, there will be emphasis on training apart from education.

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When structuring the course we keep at the forefront, an understanding of the context in which the course will be implemented. This is because contextual factors influence aspects of course materials development such as

- i. type and format of materials,
- ii. teaching and learning strategies
- iii. selection of activities
- iv. case studies.

Work commences on content

The next stage involves the writing of the course, modules and units in terms of learning outcomes. This places the emphasis firmly on a student-centred approach to learning, focusing clearly on what the student should be able to do on successful completion of the course, module or unit. This approach also indicates to students more clearly what they have to do to achieve a pass in the course or module. Our motto is to involve all stakeholders who will eventually participate in the course. To put this into practice we strive to establish a constant and regular Centre-educator-student rapport.

The benefits of getting to know the students of a course and the contexts in which they work/will be working (hence this includes also an evaluation and analysis of employers or, prospective employers) and the contexts in which the students learn, are not only important for the development of the course materials but they also inform curriculum design decisions and aid us in ensuring that the teaching and learning approaches are being appropriately addressed. The main objectives for undertaking this design procedure include:

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- i. making course materials more relevant to students' work and living environments and future educational and job aspirations;
- ii. encouraging stronger links between students' needs and course outcomes;
- iii. providing space for students to share experiences, expertise and knowledge; and
- iv. ensuring that students' expressed needs are being met.

Actual meetings at the students' demands provides for feedback, but the Centre also takes the initiative to understand past students' demands by preparing questionnaires which are then analysed to draw therefrom all necessary material needs or queries.

A regularly updated website offers informative guidelines as to processes and procedures and is a platform which enhances communication with students or prospective students.¹ Assessment criteria in terms of policy and procedure are made public via our website and are available to all those who may be interested (Management of Exams and External Assessment). Furthermore, the design of the course is formulated in a manner to be of an inclusive nature, taking care also of cases of distance learning as per our Distance Learning Procedure.

Our Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy ensures that there are fair access and assessment arrangements.

¹ <<http://www.futurefocus.com.mt>>

4. Approval from the Competent Authorities

Approval is sought from the competent authority. The proposed structure is sent for review whereby we open ourselves to suggestions so that the first draft on application is usually reconsidered and resent for final approval.

The initial process involves the person who will write the application; he or she is contacted and briefed. Information is gathered and discussed keeping in mind the underlying factors and requisites that should eventually shape the particular course. Once the application is written, it is submitted as a first draft to MFHEA for approval. This first draft usually comes back from MFHEA requesting amendments. Once these are effected, a second draft is submitted. This normally leads to the course in being approved.

MFHEA provides the Centre with all necessary documentation, which we then proceed to make public within the Centre itself and also via our website.² The approved course is then scheduled and marketing commences. The total duration of this procedure normally takes 12 months.

5. Course Outline, Course Description and Eligibility

The course outline is presented and defined in terms of ECVETs, as expected student workload. The learning outcomes are described and a summary of what a student should be able to do at the end of the learning period is explained.³ The parameters of the course itself give also a clear indication of the target audience. A case in point is the Certificate in the Practice of Inclusive Education in the

²<<http://nebula.wsimg.com/391f21f716f32dfab507c3a9e2578a83?AccessKeyId=A04F9395B775C78AF01B&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>>

³<<http://www.futurefocus.com.mt/learning-support-assistant-1-course---formerly-called-20-week-course-.html>>

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Classroom, Level 1 course, which may serve as a qualification in itself or, as a pre-requisite for further studies. This course was created implementing the abovementioned processes and is currently one of the most popular home-grown achievements of Future Focus Ltd.

Course description:

ECVETs are awarded upon the successful achievement of the learning outcomes at the particular levels as specified. Each learning outcome is allocated credit value and each course indicates the number of learning hours, contact hours, self-study hours, hands-on hours and assessment hours that each student must complete in order to be awarded the final grade. Details on the method of assessment and/or whether the course involves work placements are given. These descriptors give guidance on the relative demand, complexity and depth of learning and student autonomy expected. The fact that the learning outcomes are defined, gives a clear view of what it is intended that the student will have learnt, and therefore be able to do in order to successfully pass a course or module.

Eligibility:

It is not possible for a student to pass a module without achieving all of the learning outcomes, and likewise not possible to pass the course without having achieved the number of credits allocated thereto. This is a step-by-step process through which our students are guided in order to achieve and reach our main objective - that of promoting progression.

6. Updating of Course Via Feedback from Employers, Students and Lecturers

As a Centre, Future Focus strives to keep informed of relevant and current research, scholarship and professional practice. We do not retain such efforts contained, but we seek to promote student understanding of, and engagement with, the research process and its application. In addition, we encourage our educators to keep abreast with recent developments via research, seminars, classes etc. A Form is made available to all our lecturers whereby they are asked to indicate necessary information with respect to their continuing professional development.

At Future Focus, we promote student enquiry-based learning and critical thinking related to their field of study, which is up-to-date and based on academic research methodologies. Already at the initial stages, students are given the opportunity to provide feedback or suggestions in line with our Student Induction Policy. Students are also encouraged to elect amongst themselves a Student Rep to provide for an on-going communication channel. Questionnaires provide for suggestions and feedback which are followed-up to ensure progress and student/employer satisfaction.

As a policy, we strive to keep in touch with all educators and students also once the course is terminated. As a further quality assurance procedure, we keep abreast with any changes in legislation or regulations that may require the course to be altered or amended.