

QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

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QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

Of Swiss International Institute of Lausanne – SIIL Sàrl (SIIL), Switzerland

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I PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

Based on the fact that Switzerland has been a full member of the Bologna Process / European Higher Education Area (EHEA) since 1999, Swiss International Institute of Lausanne (hereafter SIIIL) defines its approach to quality assurance in compliance with EHEA criteria and strategy.

European co-operation in quality assurance has been a lasting legacy of the Bologna Declaration (1999) which put in motion the process whereby a European-wide development of comparable criteria and methodologies in the area of quality assurance was established¹. With the advent of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (2010) and the publication of the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG\)](#) (May 2015), a key goal of creating a robust quality system within the EHEA has been to develop a common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching across borders and among all stakeholders². SIIIL is committed to meeting and exceeding the standards laid out in the above-mentioned guidelines.

II DEFINITIONS

Institutional review: a review to verify the effectiveness of an institution's internal quality assurance and act as a catalyst for improvement.

Programmatic review: a provider-owned quality assurance procedure that addresses a single programme or group of related programmes (cluster).

Quality Assurance: the processes utilised to ensure that the learning environment (including teaching and research) reaches an acceptable threshold of quality. It is also used to describe the enhancement of education and training provision and the standards attained by students.

III SCOPE

The [Quality Assurance Policy](#) extends to anyone involved in the provision of third-level (tertiary) education at SIIIL, including, but not limited to: members of the Executive Bodies; staff members, students and external stakeholders including those involved in activities that are subcontracted or carried out by other parties.

This Policy is available to all staff members and all students on the SIIIL official website, as well as all activities related to quality assurance at SIIIL.

IV POLICY STATEMENT

¹ Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education (Bologna: Ministerial Conference, 19 June 1999)

² Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (Yerevan: Ministerial Conference, May 2015), p. 4.

1. Governance and Management of Quality

OUR VISION

Many people around the world do not have the opportunity to obtain a university degree, which is important for both job search and career advancement. There may be all sorts of reasons: teaching language, distance, difficulties of combining work and traditional in-person study, high learning costs. This is why we try to make our programmes accessible from all these points of view. Switzerland is a recognised centre of competence with regard to higher and continuing education. We would like everyone to profit from it and furthermore, for a reasonable price and in their mother tongue.

OUR MISSION

SIIIL's mission is to provide degree and continuing education programmes in different languages to people all over the world. And most particularly, to entrepreneurs and independent professionals who seek for tailor-made knowledge and know-how. We offer our students a unique opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for their professional freedom. We also do our best for our students to have the maximum freedom in organizing their study: the freedom to learn, to travel and to work where they want.

OUR VALUES

The real power is knowledge: Swiss teaching programmes, permanent and dynamic upgrading for each and every course provided, practice-oriented teaching, incitement of curiosity and thirst for knowledge among our students. We believe that learning is about being open to new ideas and possibilities both in what we learn and how we learn. We are committed to be an educational space which promotes creativity and innovation as a way of responding to the contemporary world.

Accessibility of knowledge for everyone: everyone can study at SIIIL no matter their location, nationality, language or workload. We recognise the diversity of our Institute's community and seek to actively promote a spirit of inclusiveness, mutual respect and equality of opportunity and access.

Freedom and independence: supporting entrepreneurs and all those who desire it by offering them the opportunity to study at their own pace and choose appropriate programmes.

Respect and dignity (respectful environment): We are committed to maintaining a hospitable, student-centred environment that recognises each student's individual learning journey, and that promotes, values and supports their personal, social and cultural development.

GOVERNANCE

SIIIL is committed to developing and maintaining a governance and organisational structure that is effective, flexible, sustainable, transparent and viable. This

commitment is outlined in the SIIIL's [General Regulations](#) and [Organisational Chart](#) whereby the following goals, in relation to governance and organisational structure, are prioritised: reviewing and monitoring on a continuous basis the effectiveness of organisational structures and processes within SIIIL; outlining and revising key areas of accountability, roles and line management functions; continuing the development of a robust quality assurance system to inform and support governance and organisational structures; and ensuring that strategic targets set for SIIIL have built-in mechanisms for monitoring their effectiveness.

The governance of SIIIL is managed by the Rectorate and other Executive Bodies in accordance with the [General Regulations](#) signed and approved in September 2019. Their role is, in an overall capacity, to provide strategic guidance and to monitor the activities and effectiveness of the management of SIIIL. The Executive Bodies constructively support the Rector and the two decision-making bodies within SIIIL, the Shareholders Board and the Academic Council.

The Rectorate is responsible for the day-to-day governing and management of SIIIL and is the primary decision-making body for all non-academic matters at the Institute. The Shareholders Board supports the Rector in the development of the characteristic spirit of the Institute in accordance with its ethos, the development and implementation of its strategy, approval of budgets and capital expenditure plans and the monitoring of corporate risks and performance. The Shareholders Board collectively makes decisions in accordance with relevant Swiss legislation and engagement with external agencies (e.g. Higher Education Authority) to progress the strategic development of SIIIL. The Rector of the Institute bears responsibility for leading and coordinating the management work. As such, the work of the Rectorate is reported by the Rector to the Shareholders Board. The Rectorate, as the highest-level management body of the Institute, is responsible for managing risks and reporting to the Shareholders Board.

The Academic Council is responsible for the governing and management of the academic affairs and is the primary decision-making body for all academic matters at SIIIL. It sets in place the academic governance framework and oversees the establishment, maintenance and development of quality assurance policies and procedures for all study programmes within the Institute. It reports to the Shareholders Board. The Academic Council conducts its work in accordance with relevant State legislation and with policies and procedures implemented in SIIIL.

MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

SIIIL is committed to maintaining and developing an organisation that can deliver its mission according to the values of the Institute. It has developed a quality assurance system that is based on these values and enhances the SIIIL's ability to meet its strategic objectives. The current QA management was initiated in September 2019.

Every staff member in the Institute has a role in quality assurance. All activities of SIIIL are guided by its mission and the guidelines for the activities of SIIIL are enumerated in its policies and procedures (see section [Documented Approach to Quality](#)

[Assurance](#)). SIIIL policies and procedures inform staff and students as well as other stakeholders as to what they can expect of SIIIL.

Policies and procedures are implemented through the relevant offices. SIIIL evaluates the management of quality assurance systems annually through staff workshops, feedback on specific policies and through the regular meetings of the Institute's various offices.

EMBEDDING A QUALITY CULTURE

SIIIL is committed to developing and embedding a quality culture in all its endeavours: a culture that embodies planning, defining, encouraging, assessing and improving practice. As such, the Institute is committed to empowering all stakeholders to participate in the development, maintenance and improvement of a robust and fit-for-purpose quality assurance system. Students, staff and external stakeholders of SIIIL are the pivotal actors in the process of embedding a quality culture to ensure that the 'twin purposes' of quality assurance activities, accountability and enhancement, are upheld to create trust in SIIIL's institutional performance.

Student Engagement in Quality Assurance

SIIIL seeks to build an Institute community based on a culture of mutual respect, support for professional development, a student-centred focus and a commitment to quality and excellence in all that we do. Students are at the heart of SIIIL's vision, mission and values. Their engagement in the quality culture of the Institute centres on education and participation and is facilitated by the Head of Quality Assurance Office in conjunction with the Head of Student Office. Students have an active on-going role in providing feedback to academic programmes and in the daily life of SIIIL.

Staff Engagement in Quality Assurance

SIIIL is committed to developing and promoting the Institute as a welcoming, friendly, hospitable and inclusive place for all staff, creating a working environment that is based on mutual respect, transparency, timely communication, collaboration, continual quality improvement, equitable practices, effective leadership and clear accountability. To achieve these aims, the offices and departments within the Institute complete an *Annual Report* that allows for the offices and departments to reflect on the objectives they set the previous academic year, document quality enhancement projects throughout the academic year and set objectives for the next academic year. These reports are submitted to the Quality Assurance Office in May, the identified objectives are then collated and all reports are submitted to the Rectorate for approval. The Rectorate also assesses the identified objectives contained in the reports and those objectives that are cross-functional will be progressed; once completed, this is submitted to the Academic Council for approval.

SIIIL recognises that engagement by staff is vital in providing input and feedback on strategic developments. To assist with embedding a quality culture, there are two staff workshops held at the beginning and end of the academic year to inform, review and consult with staff to determine areas for improvement and build on areas of strength.

These workshops, underpinned by inclusivity, reflection and collaboration, provide bases for immediate, intermediate and long-term strategic planning.

External Stakeholder Engagement in Quality Assurance

SIIIL is committed to involving external stakeholders at the local, regional, national and international level to support the continuous improvement and enhancement of our quality assurance methods. External stakeholders are intimately involved in programme development and cyclical reviews, for example, by serving on independent panels or participating in quality surveys. The Institute also actively engages with employers of graduates to ascertain the benefits of having our graduates on their workforce and determine what steps are needed to improve the professional skills of our graduates.

2. Documented Approach to Quality Assurance

SIIIL is committed to providing a comprehensive and documented approach to quality assurance to ensure that policies and associated documents are both effective and fit-for-purpose. Cognisant that SIIIL policies and associated documents should be easily accessible to both internal and/or external parties, SIIIL publishes policies and associated documents on its website; quality assurance related policies and associated documents are found under the [Quality Assurance Office webpage](#). Office-specific policies and associated documents are found under the relevant office webpages. All staff members as well as students can access policies and associated documents.

DOCUMENTED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

To comply with the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG\)](#) (May 2015) and to encourage a more comprehensive quality system, all new policies created and approved by either the Shareholders Board and/or Academic Council will adhere to the [Policy Management Framework](#), which contains, among other documents listed below, a [Policy Template](#). In compliance with changing legislative requirements at the national level, evolving best practice at the international level and changing circumstances within the Institute, policies and associated documents are continually self-monitored by the relevant policy owner.

A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

As stated above in section [EMBEDDING A QUALITY CULTURE](#), SIIIL strives to embed quality assurance in all areas and at all levels. To achieve this objective, each policy created must not only embody and support the mission, values and strategic aim of SIIIL, but the policy owner should, during the drafting stages of the policy, actively engage with the principal parties affected by the policy to create a document that is fit-for-purpose and effective.

The procedural framework for developing policies and associated documents follow five key stages: initiation, development, approval, implementation and monitoring and review. Once the process for drafting a policy has been initiated, a responsible body

within the SIIIL will begin the development stage of the process. After a period of robust consultation with potential stakeholders affected by the proposed policy, the policy is submitted to either the Rectorate and/or Academic Council for consultation and approval. The Policy Owner is responsible for monitoring the policy and ensuring that all associated documentation is updated as required. All policies at SIIIL will be reviewed every three-five years from the date of approval; unless changes are required owing to legal, statutory and/or organisational reasons. Once a policy has completed its first three or five-year review cycle, it will be reviewed every five years from the date of approval.

3. Programme of Education

SIIIL is committed to social inclusion and equality of access to higher education whilst maintaining the highest levels of academic attainment and achievement, focusing on the individual learner's education, professional and personal development. At the core of this commitment are our study (degree and training) programmes, built on the values of: accessible knowledge; responsibility and dignity; equal rights and equal treatment; freedom and independence; creativity and innovation.

All study programmes at SIIIL reflect the core mission of our Institute and align with the current [Strategic Plan 2022-2026](#). Our programmes also conform to international and national standards regarding the provision of education, notably the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG\)](#) (May 2015).

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL

SIIIL places excellence in teaching and learning at the heart of programme design. All programmes are developed in accordance with a strong commitment to a student-centred ethos. SIIIL recognises that higher education has a responsibility to respond to the challenges and opportunities of national, cultural, social and economic trends. Consequently, SIIIL programme development and approval is informed by current market research; contact with employers, policy makers, service providers and service users, as well as with other education providers, public bodies, professional and cultural institutions, relevant government reports, policies and regulatory initiatives.

All programmes at SIIIL, regardless of whether they are a new programme or a programme seeking revalidation, are required to be completed in line with SIIIL quality assurance standards and the above mentioned international and national standards regarding the provision of education. The [Policy Management Framework](#) outlines the process for establishing and management of policies.

STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION AND RECOGNITION

SIIIL is committed to ensuring that pre-defined and published regulations are consistently applied covering all phases of the student 'life cycle', e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification. The purpose of these policies

and procedures is to ensure clarity, transparency, accountability, efficacy and equity in relation to student admission, progression and recognition at SIIIL.

Student Admission

The [Rules of Admission to Bachelor Programmes](#), [Rules of Admission to Master Programmes](#) as well as [Study Regulations for Bachelor Programmes](#) and [Study Regulations for Master Programmes](#) at SIIIL serve to ensure that prospective and/or admitted students:

- are substantially and accurately informed regarding SIIIL, the study programmes and associated pathways we offer, and the learning environment and experience we provide;
- are at an appropriate stage in their learning development to be admitted to their specified study programmes;
- have appropriate recognition of education and training qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning; and
- are assisted and supported in their introduction and transition to third level education.

In keeping with our student-centred ethos, following admission, students are orientated and inducted to SIIIL and their academic programme of choice at each stage of their studies.

Student Progression

The recognition of student achievement is signalled through progression and completion of study programmes. Student progression is subject to the achievement of prescribed learning outcomes, measured via a range of assessment modes and is conducted on a modular and stage basis (see section [Assessment of Students](#)). Minimum standards of achievement are set for student progression to a higher stage of a study programme. At each annual stage during this journey, student achievement is assessed, and feedback is provided to students.

Student Certification

Student achievement at progression stage is recognised through the publication of assessment results and at award stage is recognised through the provision of certification awards. Graduates of SIIIL are conferred with their degree parchment and provided with academic transcripts and their European Diploma Supplement.

Student Support

SIIIL places substantial emphasis on its student-centred approach to education. The effective support of students throughout the student life-cycle is considered an important aspect of its duty of care. This duty of care, while held by the Student Office, is recognised throughout all functions of SIIIL and is evident in the cross-function collaborative initiatives engaged in by staff (see section [Supports for Students](#)).

PROGRAMME MONITORING AND REVIEW

Study programmes at SILL are monitored, reviewed and, when appropriate, revised on a regular basis to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students, society, labour market and industry.

The study programme monitoring and review system is outlined in detail in [Study Programme Review Procedures](#) and includes:

- regular annual internal monitoring and reviewing routine,
- regular cyclical in-depth programmatic audits including both internal (SAR) and external reviewers (a team of expert examiners),
- extraordinary reviews conducted by external expert auditors (accreditation commissions etc.)

Mechanisms for regular annual monitoring and reviewing programmes include:

- at least 2 Programme Board meetings,
- student feedback,
- graduates (alumni) feedback,
- teaching staff feedback,
- employers' feedback,
- annual programme monitoring reports,
- annual programme review reports.

The rigorous monitoring process allows for the adaptation of programme elements to ensure that programmes remain relevant and effective. Monitoring provides the opportunity to reflect on current practice, to propose new changes to improve the delivery systems, thus, enhancing the learning experience.

The evidence generated through the regular annual monitoring process forms an integral part of the cyclical in-depth programmatic audit process conducted every 1-3-5 years, depending on development speed of a given industry sector, social, economic and other variables.

Programme Feedback

Programme Boards

The Programme Board meets at least twice (or more if needed) each academic year with a primary function to oversee: operational control and programme monitoring; student feedback; programme planning and development. These meetings are important for highlighting issues as they develop during the delivery of any programme or module. The remit of the Programme Board includes monitoring: student enrolment data; attrition and completion data; graduate progression to employment or other study programmes; and evaluations of the programme by students and teaching staff. Decisions and/or recommendations made by the Programme Boards are referred initially to the Academic Office and subsequently to the Academic Council.

Student Feedback

In order to ensure that all programmes continue to provide an effective learning experience, it is essential to have a multi-faceted approach to gathering/collating feedback from our students. There are three primary avenues through which students contribute to the ongoing monitoring of programmes:

- students are given the opportunity to comment on the delivery of modules on programmes through an [Student Satisfaction Form](#). Recent graduates are asked to complete a *Graduate Survey*;
- students may approach their Academic Assistant in order to highlight specific problems relevant to that particular year or module of study. The issue can then be raised by the Academic Assistant at the Programme Board level and be considered at higher levels (e.g. the Academic Office and/or Academic Council);
- all programmes have an elected student representative for each stage on their respective Programme Board. The student representative can raise student matters for consideration at the Programme Board level, which can also be brought to the attention of the Academic Council.

Teaching Staff Feedback

In order to ensure that all programmes continue to provide an effective learning experience the teaching staff is also given the opportunity to comment on the delivery of modules or programmes. Teachers contribute to the ongoing monitoring of programmes in the following ways:

- through participating in surveys and filling out a [Teaching Staff Satisfaction Form](#),
- through participating in SIIIL Teaching Center's activities and other informal teaching staff meetings,
- all programmes have an elected teaching staff representative for each stage on their respective Programme Board. The teachers' representative can raise teaching matters for consideration at the Programme Board level, which can also be brought to the attention of the Academic Council.

Employers' Survey Data

Employers and industry partners are regularly approach to give their feedback on SIIIL's current study programmes, evaluate the employability of graduates and the alignment of programmes' curricula with industry needs.

Additionally, information regarding SIIIL graduates' employment is obtained through the *Graduate Survey*, which is analysed by the Marketing & Communication department within the Operations Office. Recommendations made by the Operations Office are then referred to the Quality Assurance Office and then transferred to the Academic Office.

Programme Review and Audit

Every study programme is formally reviewed and submitted for revalidation to the Academic Council on a regular annual basis. The programme revalidation approach follows a similar process to programme development and approval (see section

[PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL](#)). However, in addition, the formal review is reinforced by a periodic 1-3-5-year in-depth audit conducted with the participation of external reviewers (expert examiners). The audit draws on the evidence generated through all of the review mechanisms outlined above and united in a Self-Assessment Report (SAR) that is analysed by the External Review Team. It also takes into consideration: specific revision to programme content vis-à-vis current research in the relevant discipline; the needs of contemporary society and labour market; emerging trends in teaching, learning and assessment; the ever-changing teaching-learning environment, in particular, in distance learning. The study programme review system is outlined in detail in [Study Programme Review Procedures](#).

4. Staff Recruitment, Management and Development

SIIIL is committed to employing and retaining talented people with the relevant/appropriate skills and experience whilst at the same time complying with recommended best practices and legal requirements. The Institute believes that organisations must strive to recruit and retain the highest calibre of employees to meet the needs of its students and this is done by recruiting and retaining lecturers and professional support services employees who believe in delivering educational excellence in accordance with our [Strategic Plan 2022-2026](#), which incorporates our core vision, mission, values and goals. For a complete guide to employment at SIIIL, please see the [HR Recruitment Policy](#).

STAFF RECRUITMENT

In order to attract, develop and retain a highly talented workforce, SIIIL, being an employer of choice with a strong and diverse workforce, strong leadership skills, opportunities for career growth and development, a commitment to work/life balance, provides its employees with the opportunity to add value to their roles and positions.

SIIIL invests considerable time and financial resources into the recruitment process, ensuring a satisfactory result for both the candidate and the Institute. SIIIL believes that all recruitment activities should provide fairness, effectiveness, transparency and equality for all involved during the recruitment process. In filling any vacancy, both Line Managers and staff members are required to follow a systematic process designed to ensure the most cost-effective deployment of the SIIIL current and potential employees. SIIIL's [HR Recruitment Policy](#) provides comprehensive information, steps and guidelines to all involved throughout the recruitment process, ensuring clear instruction, hence facilitating the Institute in appointing suitably qualified staff members to deliver its vision, mission and ethos, thus providing a centre of educational excellence for its students.

STAFF COMMUNICATION

SIIIL believes that open, effective communication is essential to producing an efficient and motivating work environment of mutual understanding and confidence. SIIIL endeavours to keep all employees informed on all relevant issues and encourages

employees to participate in the communication process, thus ensuring that communication is a two-way process, with important information cascading correctly throughout the organisation. We believe that every employee has a responsibility to ensure they play their part in developing effective communications practice. SIIIL continuously welcomes suggestions and ideas from its employees as it provides a space and forum for employees to contribute effectively and positively to continuous improvement of SIIIL business activities (see Section 1: [Governance and Management of Quality](#)).

SIIIL succeeds in achieving this through many different streams and methods, staff meetings, staff consultation through our Quality Assurance System, email communications from Line Managers, staff representation, focus groups, regular communication from HR and the provision of an open-door policy where all employees can channel their thoughts, ideas and concerns.

SIIIL believes that regular and ongoing communication provides for better working relationships, which fosters a positive culture for change, thus maintaining a progressive and positive working and learning environment. Creating an atmosphere where everyone is involved and responsible for good communication promotes a mutual and supportive environment where everyone feels included, informed and consulted, is always at the forefront of the SIIIL's communication approach.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

SIIIL strives to provide an environment where all employees understand the impact their contributions have on the achievement of the SIIIL's strategic plan, vision, mission and goals. The Institute continuously supports employees who are eager to develop professionally and provides the opportunity for ongoing professional growth. SIIIL and its [Staff Development Procedures](#) ensures that the work performance and learning of every employee is managed effectively and fairly. This is done through regular one-to-one ongoing feedback between the relevant Line Managers and their teams including the annual review/appraisal which provides goals for Line Managers and employees that emanate from the department/function and overall SIIIL strategic plans.

SIIIL is committed to supporting new staff members and ensuring their smooth transition into their new positions. Prior to starting their employment, the new staff member meets with their Line Manager who will make sure that there is total clarity around responsibilities and procedures. If the new employee is replacing a previous employee, the Line Manager should ensure that the necessary documents, emails, contacts etc. are handed over; all necessary introductions should also be made. A mentor will be identified, who may be the Line Manager, but can also be a member of staff with whom the new employee will be working. The mentor will be available to answer day-to-day queries and provide guidance and support. To further support new employees, the Institute ensures they receive essential training in Data Protection, IT Security, SIIIL systems and Human Resources policies and systems. Specific training on the functioning and use of the SIIIL online learning Platform is organised by the IT support unit for new staff members.

SIIIL strives to achieve high standards of performance and service at all times. It is our goal to train and support all employees to carry out their roles to a high standard and to help them achieve and work to the best of their ability. It is essential that employees are engaged and have a rewarding role in SIIIL with opportunities to develop their potential and use their abilities to maximise their contributions. Continuous development is necessary to grow our capability at both Institute and individual level to operate successfully in a dynamic and changing environment.

We recognise that the key to achieving our mission successfully lies in developing and harnessing the talents and energies of our employees. We recognise the unique contribution of individual employees and are committed to providing the necessary supports to enable employees to contribute effectively to our strategic development whilst fulfilling their personal career aspirations and goals.

SIIIL encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research by making available each year five days of post-doctoral (pro-rata for part-time staff) leave for academic staff members to pursue research interests externally, e.g. visit libraries and archives, meet with publishers or collaborators, attend committee meetings of professional associations etc.

SIIIL recognises that the process for attending high-profile conferences and presenting academic papers is at the core of good academic teaching and research practice. These presentations are seen to enhance both the reputation of academic staff and SIIIL. Wherever possible, members of academic staff will be facilitated to attend conferences where they have been invited to make a presentation of their work. Financial support is available to such staff to enable them to attend and present at both national and international conferences.

5. Teaching And Learning

Teaching and learning at SIIIL is rooted in a holistic vision of education, which promotes the professional development of learners and staff, including their aesthetic, intellectual, cultural, emotional, creative, moral, social, political and spiritual development.

Informed by the Bologna Process and emerging international trends, SIIIL has responded to these new initiatives in the area of teaching and learning by actively encouraging and supporting staff members to pursue postgraduate education and qualifications in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Moreover, SIIIL has a dedicated [Staff Development Procedures](#) placed at the core of our academic programmes.

PROMOTION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

SILL is committed to ensuring that teaching and learning practices within the Institute promote enquiry and critical evaluation and encourage students to take an active role in the classroom. This student-centred approach to teaching and learning plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. Our commitment to creating a student-centred teaching and learning environment is reflected in the following principles:

1. The provision of study programmes which are appropriate to, and consistent with, the standards set-out under the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area: SILL ensures that these standards are incorporated into the relevant programmes.
2. The need for ongoing measurement and evaluation to continuous improvement in the learning experience and outcome. We will develop and implement an institution-wide evaluation process to inform our practice and identify areas for ongoing investment.
3. The ongoing development and enhancement of pedagogical practice. We are committed to the development and delivery of a teaching strategy informed by current developments in the field and directed towards the fullest utilising of the advantages of small group practice and individual training.
4. The diverse nature of our student body and the growing requirement for promoting inclusiveness in the design and delivery of study programmes at third level. We look forward to responding to this need through the development of flexible progression pathways and the use of a variety of delivery channels.
5. The provision of a teaching and learning experience which is student-centred, research-led and research-informed. For example, we look forward to supporting the individual learning journey of each of our learners, maintain a high ratio of fulltime faculty qualified at doctoral level, and encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research.
6. The role of third level education in developing individual capacity for autonomous learning and critical engagement with the world. For example, our degree programmes are designed to require and support for students to develop these capacities.
7. The importance of technology in enabling new modes of instruction, assessment, and of educational pathways. We are committed to ongoing investment in our IT infrastructure and in requiring students to develop an enhanced IT literacy. Being an online teaching Institute, this point is our priority.
8. The importance and impact of the functionality and use of the built environment and infrastructure of the SILL.
9. The value of ongoing staff development and research engagement. We will provide support for staff in the development of their teaching practice and in maintaining a research engagement with their disciplinary communities.
10. The nature and promotion of the staff and student body as a collegial community of learning. As a collegial community of learning we value the

personal and professional development of both learners and staff and seek to foster an open community that values critical reflection and engagement. For example, we express this in our teaching methodologies, an openness to inter- and multidisciplinary discourses, and in staff-learner relationships characterised by respect.

INCLUSIVENESS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

SIIIL is committed to ensuring that our academic programmes promote inclusive strategies that support all students, including students with ‘hidden disabilities’ (such as learners with learning differences and/or mental health conditions). Academic staff work collaboratively with the Academic Office and Student Office to ensure that all students have equitable access to the learning environment (see sections [Assessment of Students](#) and [Supports for Students](#)).

6. Assessment of Students

SIIIL recognises that the assessment of students is one of the most important elements of higher education. Assessment is a ‘potent strategic tool for educators allowing them to spell out the types of learning that will be rewarded and thus guide learners into effective approaches to study’³.

SIIIL is committed to a teaching and learning approach that fosters active learning and allows students to take ownership of their learning. This approach encourages students to actively understand their subject, interact with the content and link new knowledge with already known concepts and principles. Our policies on assessment reflect this approach.

PROVISION OF INFORMATION ON ASSESSMENT TO STUDENTS

SIIIL ensures that clear information on assessment components and procedures is made easily available via SIIIL website and other public resources to assist prospective learners in making informed choices about programmes and modules: [Learning Outcomes Assessment Policy](#), [Study Regulations for Bachelor Programmes](#), [Study Regulations for Master Programmes](#)).

Students enrolled in SIIIL study programmes have easy access to assessment information via their Personal Account on SIIIL e-learning platform as well as on the SIIIL website. This information will include scheduling of assessments, proportion of marks carried by each assessment component, marking criteria for different types of assessment, past examination papers and any other relevant details. For a complete guide to all assessment regulations and standards, see the [Learning Outcomes Assessment Policy](#), [Study Regulations for Bachelor Programmes](#), [Study Regulations for Master Programmes](#); these documents are regularly monitored and revised by the Academic Council.

³ R. James and C. McInnis, *Assessing Learning in Australian Universities* (Victoria: Centre for the Study of Higher Education University of Melbourne, 2002), retrieved from <http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/assessinglearning/docs/AssessingLearning.pdf>.

Programme and module coordinators will make sure that students are regularly reminded of the relevant assessment regulations and of their obligations and entitlements. In particular, students are made aware of the consequences of late or missed assignments and failure to present themselves for examination.

BEST PRACTICE IN ASSESSMENT

SIIIL ensures by means of annual review and monitoring of our programmes that assessment of students is carried out professionally. The Academic Council plays a key role in these processes. This Council includes student representation to ensure that students are involved in the review of assessment procedures.

Lecturers and tutors receive training in best practice in assessment to ensure that the assessments they set support the principles for assessment according to the ESG criteria. This ensures that assessments are set and marked by people who understand the relationship between assessment and student's achievement of knowledge and skills.

Module and programme design teams make certain that assessment components are explicitly linked with intended learning outcomes and appropriate for their purpose, whether diagnostic formative or summative. They also ensure that overall assessment workloads are reasonable and are as varied as possible.

Following current best practice in assessment, students on SIIIL programmes experience as many different types of assessment as possible. There is a balance between formative and summative assessment. Assessment starts right from the beginning of the first-year modules to provide opportunities for early feedback to learners about their learning progress and information to teaching staff about what types of learning support might be needed by individual learners.

The purpose of different assessment components will be explained to students, in particular their 'real world' application. Students are encouraged to become active participants in the assessment process and are given opportunities for self-review and/or peer review.

Lecturers and tutors exploit the benefits of technology to enhance formative and summative assessment and feedback.

GUARANTEEING CONSISTENCY AND FAIRNESS

SIIIL policies ensure that assessment is fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures. All assessments are criterion-based and grading criteria are made available to students in advance via their Personal Account and on the SIIIL website, in curricula for every study programme available and their module syllabi.

All assessments are marked in a timely fashion so that students can track their progress and feedback can be effectively acted upon.

There are clear, fair and consistent guidelines for dealing with absence from assessments and late submission of written work. There are also clear fair and consistent guidelines for dealing with mitigating circumstances and for learner appeals (see [Learning Outcomes Assessment Policy](#), [Study Regulations for Bachelor Programmes](#), [Study Regulations for Master Programmes](#)).

GUARANTEEING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Assessment is fully documented and subject to checks within the quality monitoring process. Assessments are conducted securely in accordance with the guidelines and procedures. There are regular administrative verification checks to ensure accuracy and there are clear guidelines on plagiarism and penalties for it ([Learning Outcomes Assessment Policy](#), [Study Regulations for Bachelor Programmes](#), [Study Regulations for Master Programmes](#)).

INCLUSIVENESS IN ASSESSMENT

Lecturers and tutors are encouraged to use inclusive approaches to assessment which value, promote and take account of diversity.

7. Supports for Students

SIIIL endeavours to support our students' academic success by providing a variety of resources, professional services and supports which enhance the learner experience and assist our learners in meeting the demands of their academic goals, professional aspirations and personal commitments (for more information, see [Student Services webpage](#)). SIIIL recognises its responsibility to support students to complete their studies. For a vast majority of students, progression to completion of their studies is uneventful with little or no need for additional supports. This is not always the case however. In certain circumstances there is a need for a formalised coordinated response to support a student in distress. In this case the Academic Council can meet the student in distress in order to put in place the specific support program in cooperation with relevant Offices. This procedure is expressly intended to be supportive of individual learners who may be in distress or difficulty whilst also recognising the right of the wider SIIIL community to study, work and live free of undue distress caused by others.

Throughout their studies, SIIIL students are never left alone with their distance learning issues if they happen to face them. Once enrolled, they can address any inquiry concerning any aspect of their studies and academic path to their Academic Assistant through a chat box available from their Personal Account on the e-learning platform my.siiil.ch. The Academic Assistant is a single-window support service that deals with the whole range of questions SIIIL students may encounter during their learning process. Its main function consists of processing student requests and connecting them with the corresponding faculty members and services. Another important feature of the Academic Assistant is a personal dimension: each assistant is a real person our students are in contact with from the beginning of their programme until its completion.

Student resources and supports play a vital role in fostering a positive, warm and nurturing learning environment which supports the well-being and integration of diverse student groups into our Institute community. We strive to ensure that the supports offered enable our learners to 'settle, stay and succeed' in their studies at SIIIL.

QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES

Quality assurance processes are in operation to ensure that our services and supports are fit-for-purpose, accessible and that our students are aware of the resources that exist. Information about the range of services available is communicated to our students through:

- *Pre-admission activities:* SIIIL website and Prospectus (digital presentation), call centre managers and advisors.
- *Learner materials:* Student handbooks, induction materials, SIIIL website and Personal Account on the e-learning platform my.siiil.ch.
- *Staff communication:* Resources and supports are actively promoted to academic, administrative and support staff via start-of-year meetings and regular emails sent to institute staff throughout the year.
- *Follow-up student communication:* Follow-up emails sent to students advising them of the services and supports available, designated Student Services pages, SIIIL events, information campaigns through SIIIL social media channels and workshop schedules.

The student follow-up focus is integral to the Student Office reporting system where each service reviews the achievements of the previous year and identifies goals and measurements for the next academic year which contribute to these themes.

From induction to graduation, we monitor our students' perspectives on the quality of resources and student supports through students feedback surveys. These assist our understanding of our students' needs and allow us to continue to develop and improve the services and supports we offer. Evaluations and any arising recommendations are considered on a cyclical basis and are reported through the SIIIL strategic management processes.

Student representation is actively sought, encouraged, valued and influential. Student representation is evident at all levels within the Academic Council and associated sub-committees (when applicable). SIIIL also operates Programme Boards which include two student representatives. Programme Boards typically meet two (or more, if needed) times per year and students are invited to meetings and encouraged to participate. Feedback from students is a standing agenda item and offers an opportunity for student representatives to give their opinions on programmes and to bring forward any concerns their classes might have for discussion.

8. Information and Data Management

SIIIL recognises that information and data are important assets, which comprise evidence of our activities, and facilitate informed decision-making and strategic planning.

At present, learner information is recorded through our online Student Records Management System (SRMS) being an integral part of the SIIIL LMS which captures application, registration and generation of student records. Our SRMS is a comprehensive cloud-based student information system that captures student data, which allows SIIIL to generate reports required for both internal purposes, such as internal quality management and improvement, decision-making and forward planning, and external purposes such as reports that can be required by regulatory and professional bodies.

SIIIL has a [Data Protection Policy](#) and [IT Security Policy](#) that meets our legislative requirements. We also have suite of IT policies to help and secure information through technology. Our [IT Security Policy](#) and referenced policies, covering specific computing areas, is to provide direction, coordination, management and protection of all IT computing resources and services within SIIIL. Furthermore, our IT policies such as [Cloud Policy](#), [Cookie Policy](#), [Policy on Social Networking and Social Media](#) as well as [Data Breach Procedural Guidelines](#), which are developed to form governance and direction of how SIIIL technological systems should be used to facilitate good records management and align with quality assurance and regulatory requirements.

The IT Services & Support Office and Data Protection Office work together to create and implement a comprehensive records, information and data management system, to ensure the better integrity, protection, management and confidentiality of all information and data in the control of the Institute ([Records Management Policy](#)). The system comprises a series of policies, procedures and measures to ensure:

- the creation and capture of required information and data in the recordkeeping system;
- appropriate management and maintenance of information and records;
- effective security and access management controls, both for manual and digital records;
- identification of vital records and implementation of disaster recovery measures to help mitigate risk of loss of critical data and information;
- timely, authorised and secure disposal of expired records;
- the identification and protection of records which require permanent retention as archives;
- reporting and analytical tools to measure key performance indicators to assist with important decision-making;
- that information in digital systems is accessible for as long as it is required.

Together, the SMRS and the wider recordkeeping system increases efficiency which ensures that SIIIL meets its reporting obligations, while also enhancing transparency and accountability to promote confidence in how SIIIL goes about its business. Staff are provided with ongoing training and awareness workshops to familiarise

themselves with efficient data management in line with policies that have been designed for this purpose.

9. Public Information and Communication

SIIIL recognises that public information and communication are an essential means by which the Institute mediates its message to prospective and current students as well as for graduates, other stakeholders in education and the public. SIIIL acknowledges that institutional visibility and public awareness are vital in maintaining public confidence in the Institute. Accordingly, SIIIL publishes and disseminates information about itself through multiple modern media platforms. SIIIL sustains a public profile through its website and through several publications.

SIIIL is committed to appropriate and effective communication with all stakeholders, both internally and externally. SIIIL has developed a robust [Policy on Social Networking and Social Media](#) as well as the [External Communication Policy](#) with associated procedures to ensure that all stakeholder communication is appropriate, timely and relevant. The Institute regularly publishes and disseminates information owned by, or relating to, SIIIL through multiple communication channels.

Surveys play an important role in SIIIL's communication with current students and graduates. All SIIIL surveys are carried out online. The Marketing & Communication department manages college surveys and its role in the survey process is to prepare and issue the survey; once complete, the results are then issued to the relevant staff member for processing. Ad hoc surveys, which are not annual, must be approved by the Student Office before being sent to the Marketing & Communication department for circulation.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

SIIIL regards its website (www.siiil.ch) as a primary and essential point of contact with our stakeholders and the main resource for public information. The Marketing & Communication department as well as the IT Services & Support Office are responsible for developing and maintaining the SIIIL website, along with official SIIIL social media accounts including Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube. Moreover, the Marketing & Communication department, in collaboration with Student Office, is responsible for the production of the annual SIIIL Prospectus (digital presentation).

STUDENT INFORMATION

SIIIL is committed to providing prospective and current students with up-to-date and accurate information on all activities of the Institute; especially as it relates to our study programmes and student services. Prospective students, other stakeholders in education and the public, can obtain the SIIIL Prospectus (digital presentation) and the SIIIL Handbook. The Prospectus provides information documenting all aspects of SIIIL (i.e. programme-specific information, admission requirements, information detailing fees, available student services). The Prospectus/Handbook is a first step introducing

to the Institute, with more detailed information available on SIIL website. As an institution of higher education that strives to be a student-centred institution, SIIL provides information to its current students through its e-learning platform. Although the academic imperative is at the heart of the process, it does not operate in isolation from other Institute's functions which offer support-related guidance and advice to its students.

Throughout the academic year, the e-learning platform is used for the dissemination of information to current students via their Personal Account, and also provides a means of gathering information on student activity and satisfaction through surveys and questionnaires. This platform (my.siiil.ch) together with the official SIIL website (www.siiil.ch) contains all students policies/procedures, study programme and module specific information including module syllabi, programme handbooks, academic timetables, assessment dates/requirements and other academic resources.

PUBLICATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE EVALUATION REPORTS

The Quality Assurance Office at SIIL has a dedicated profile on the SIIL website where it publishes the current version of SIIL [Quality Assurance Policy](#), external quality assurance feedback and reports from institutional reviews and programmatic reviews and revalidations. Institutional policies and procedures are currently published on the SIIL website and its e-learning platform.

10. Other Parties Involved in Education and Training

SIIL understands and welcomes that being part of Swiss educational system and of the European Higher Education quality assurance system, with mutual recognition of qualifications in Europe confers substantial benefits to SIIL and to our students. Accordingly, where the Institute works with other parties involved in education and training it does so within the context of national and international frameworks and processes of quality assurance and mutual recognition of qualifications. Similarly, SIIL recognises its responsibility as part of a system of education with multiple levels of learning, the proper functioning of which is dependent on the quality assurance procedures related to student progression between levels. Accordingly, SIIL operates and maintains the quality assurance procedures required to ensure that the appropriate progression of students into the Institute and out of the Institute is achieved.

PEER RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE BROADER EDUCATION COMMUNITY

SIIL provides study programmes designed and structured on the basis of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Currently, we provide study programmes leading to the Bachelor and Master degrees. In our entry, progression and transfer arrangements we recognise the standing of the awards of all other institutions operating with the same quality assurance and award level system. Where applicants for entry hold qualifications under other systems, procedures are in place to ensure careful articulation of qualifications between systems.

EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS AND SECOND PROVIDERS

In all cases where SIIIL enters into engagements with external partners or second providers, quality assurance procedures are in place to ensure our students receive the appropriate learning opportunities and that our students are safe and protected.

SIIIL's approach for engaging with international institutions/organisations is to:

- inform, enrich and enhance the teaching and learning experience of all students by increasing the diversity of the student body;
- provide SIIIL staff with increased educational linkages that inform and lead teaching and research activities.

Through its inter-institutional partnerships, SIIIL remains cognisant of all legislative requirements underpinning the various strands of collaboration it is engaged in.

11. Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

SIIIL is committed to having a robust, fit-for-purpose quality system that enhances the learning experience of its students. The Quality Assurance Office is responsible for the development and maintenance of the [Quality Assurance Policy](#) at SIIIL by ensuring that this Policy is compliant with both national and international benchmarks. Nationally, the Office will ensure that the [Quality Assurance Policy](#) is compliant with the Swiss legislation. Internationally, this Office will ensure that the [Quality Assurance Policy](#) is compliant with the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG\)](#) (May 2015). In addition to the [Quality Assurance Policy](#), the Quality Assurance Office is responsible for the development/implementation of quality processes and quality assurance/quality improvement activities across academic and administrative areas of the Institute. Moreover, this Office is responsible for reviewing the Annual Report, in particular the Quality assurance chapter ahead of it being sent to the Academic Council for approval.

SIIIL is committed to developing and embedding a quality culture in all its endeavours: a culture that embodies planning, defining, encouraging, assessing and improving practice. All reports as part of the external programme review and institutional review are published on the SIIIL website and any recommendations emanating from the reviews are implemented and monitored.

PROGRAMME MONITORING, REVIEW AND REVALIDATION

Study programmes at SIIIL are monitored, reviewed and, when appropriate, revised on a regular basis to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students, society, labour market and industry.

The study programme monitoring and review system is outlined in detail in [Study Programme Review Procedures](#) and includes: (1) regular annual internal monitoring and reviewing routine; (2) regular cyclical in-depth programmatic audits including both internal (SAR) and external reviewers (a team of expert examiners); (3) extraordinary reviews conducted by external expert auditors (accreditation commissions etc.)

Mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing study programmes include: Programme Board meetings, students' graduates', teaching staff and feedback, employers' reports, annual programme monitoring and review reports, as well as cross-programme audit reports (see section [Programme of Education](#), subsection *Programme Monitoring and Review*). The rigorous monitoring process allows for the adaptation of programme elements to ensure that study programmes remain relevant and effective. Monitoring provides the opportunity to reflect on current practice and, in doing so, propose new changes to improve the delivery systems, thus, enhancing the learning experience.

The evidence generated through the regular annual monitoring process forms an integral part of the cyclical in-depth programmatic audit process conducted every 1-3-5 years, depending on development speed of a given industry sector, social, economic and other variables.

Additionally, regular annual review is reinforced by a periodic 1-3-5-year in-depth audit conducted with the participation of external reviewers (expert examiners). The audit draws on the evidence generated through all of the review mechanisms outlined above and united in a Self-Assessment Report (SAR) that is analysed by the External Review Team. It also takes into consideration: specific revision to programme content vis-à-vis current research in the relevant discipline; the needs of contemporary society and labour market; emerging trends in teaching, learning and assessment; the ever-changing teaching-learning environment, in particular, in distance learning. The programme revalidation approach follows a similar process to study programme development and approval (see section [PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL](#)).

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEWS

Being a higher education institution operating in Switzerland, SII undergoes an external cyclical five-year institutional review. Institutional reviews are important as they verify the effectiveness of an institution's internal quality assurance and act as a catalyst for improvement. As such, the purposes of institutional reviews are:

- to encourage a quality assurance culture and enhancement of the student learning environment and experience within institutions;
- to provide feedback to institutions about institution-wide quality and the impact of mission, strategy, governance and management on quality and the overall effectiveness of their quality assurance;
- to improve public confidence in the quality of institutions by promoting transparency and public awareness;
- to support systems-level improvement of the quality of higher education;
- to encourage quality by using evidence-based, objective methods and advice.

Institutional reviews will audit the following main purposes:

- an institutional self-evaluation report;
- an external assessment and site visit by a team of reviewers;
- the publication of a review report including findings and recommendations;
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken.

V ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES. OBJECTIVES

The Quality Assurance Office director, working with the Management, all executive bodies and Academic Council, has the principal role and responsibility for ensuring that the [Quality Assurance Policy](#) is robust and fit-for-purpose. This involves monitoring and reviewing the Policy and working on quality assurance development/enhancement throughout the Institute.

Quality assurance extends to all aspects of SIIL functioning. As such, all staff members and students have a responsibility to inform themselves, and adhere to, current quality assurance dispositions.

VI ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTATION

All associated documentation related to the [Quality Assurance Policy](#) are found in the document titled *Master List of Policies*. All policies and associated documents mentioned in the Master List and Quality Assurance Policy can be found on SIIL website (section [Policies](#) of the Quality Assurance Office page) for external individuals/agencies as well as for the staff members and students.

VII MONITORING AND REVIEW

The [Quality Assurance Policy](#) is approved by the Shareholders Board, Rectorate and Academic Council. The Quality Assurance Office, acting as an integral part of the internal quality assurance system, will monitor, prepare for and coordinate review of this Policy every 5 years or more often, if needed. All stakeholders (teaching staff, the Management, Service and Administrative units, students and employers) are implicated in the review process, under the coordination of the Quality Assurance Office. Any changes made to the Policy will follow the formal policy development and approval process mandated by the [Policy Management Framework Guidelines](#). The associated documentation will be continuously updated and published on SIIL website under section *Policies*.

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