

**Erasmus Policy Statement:
Overall Statement for Saint Martin's Institute of Higher Education**

Saint Martin's Institute of Higher Education has been affiliated with the University of London International Programmes since the year 2000. From the very beginning, we relied on the guidance and mentorship of the University Of London Lead Colleges, namely the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) for our social science undergraduate degrees, and Goldsmiths College for our computer science undergraduate degrees. All our students since 2000 have been conferred their honours degrees through the University of London. This was a constraint upon our institutions, since although we were a licensed education institution, the Further and Higher Education Act of Malta was only enacted in the summer of 2012 and Saint Martin's Institute of Higher Education was awarded the official license as a Higher Education institution with awarding powers at MQF level 5, 6, 7 & 8 for a period of five years, in December 2012. Owing to a lack of a legal framework in Malta, Saint Martin's Institute did not possess awarding powers since such powers were reserved solely to State Institutions. Thus the Institute was barred from participating effectively in previous Erasmus initiatives.

Saint Martin's Institute used the experience it has gained over the past decade to develop the first 'home grown' qualifications, namely the MQF level 5 Diploma in Entrepreneurship which has been successfully programmed for two consecutive years, and the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (MQF level 6) which has been run once over a two year span. Further programmes at MQF level 5, 6 and 7 are under development in computer games development (MQF level 5), and information systems engineering and accounting & finance (at MQF level 7).

The Institute uses three main criteria in selecting international partners. Primarily, the partner institution must be a fully licensed institution in its home Country, and must be able to portray a high standard of academic achievement. Secondly, we work with partners who have the same or similar specialisations and interests, and thirdly we choose Institutions which will be more or less of the same mentality and possess a culture based on open dialogue and cooperation.

Our aim is to build a network, starting from the European Nations, encompassing institutions from the developed Countries yet building relationships with institutions from Countries which may not be as developed as Malta. We are also seeking to build relationships with Institutions which are closer to our home, namely Mediterranean Countries, both in the EU and outside the EU such as the EuroMed regions.

Apart from UK based academic institutions, Saint Martin's has built relationships with Colleges outside the UK which are part of the University of London International network, namely HKU SPACE in Hong Kong, Singapore Institute of Management, and the School of Business & Computer Science of Trinidad, the West Indies. Independently of the University of London institutions network, we have built relationships with the Birmingham Ormiston Academy (BOA) in the UK, the University of Groningen of the Netherlands, the Copenhagen Institute of Technology in Denmark and further afield we have signed cooperation agreements with Guangdong Peizheng College; Huali College, Guangdong University of Technology; Guangzhou Huali Science and Technology Vocational College; Guangdong Ocean University Cunjin College and Jiangsu Rugao Vocational Education Centre from the P.R.of China.

The most important objective that we have in joining Erasmus+ is to expose our students to further their knowledge by attending semesters in other Universities and colleges. This will give them the opportunity to mix with students from different culture and learn how to be independent learners. In the case of academics, we hope that through these exchanges, our academics will be able to share their knowledge, and in some case come out of their predisposed inferiority complex mainly emanating from the insulator of a small Nation Island State.

The Institute is yet to embark on any joint programmes with other colleges or universities, mainly because the Institute attained its awarded powers only in December 2012, and also because there is still some road ahead to develop our academic knowledge base to be able to initiate such partnerships, although we have developed programmes which have been accepted both by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education of Malta and the University of London as Accredited Prior Learning programmes.

The Institute therefore aims at gaining further European experiences through its academic and administrative staff, as well as all cycles of the student body, to muster the scholarly reputation to embark on postgraduate programmes based upon research, jointly with other reputable Universities. We are already working on such possibilities with both the Birmingham Ormiston Academy and the University of Groningen.

The strategy of Saint Martin's Institute is two-fold under the Erasmus+ programme. Primarily we aim to have the opportunity for scholarly interaction between European and non-European institutions, through student exchange and the exchange of academics. Our Institute is also seeking opportunities to develop research capabilities

beyond undergraduate, and possibilities of joint post-graduate programmes with international universities and academic institutions. We aim to strengthen our specialisation through further participation in international scholarly fora, invest further in the development of our academic staff to achieve doctoral status, and encourage those who have already attained their PhD to seek post-doctoral research opportunities through international and national networks.

Participating in the Erasmus+ will allow us to strengthen our strategic partnerships which will build long-term vertical and horizontal academic cooperation, with other higher education institutions especially those not deemed to be common partners for Maltese academia. The programme will also allow us the freedom to explore and strengthen the relationships we have with small and medium sized enterprises in other European Countries, with the specific aim to achieve the modernisation of our Institution according to EU objectives. Our Students Union will also benefit from our Erasmus+ participation, allowing them to build networks with other youth organisations.

Already, the Computing Department is establishing knowledge alliances with other higher education institutions and enterprises promoting creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship by offering the relevant learning opportunities in areas such as digital computer games development, animation and transmedia. The opportunities offered through the Erasmus+ structure will enhance the possibilities to further cooperation and capacity building both at Saint Martin's as also at the partnering Higher Education Institutions.

Saint Martin's Institute of Higher Education provides opportunities for students to read for level 5 diploma and level 6 degrees in a portfolio of social science and computer science including creative computing. The Institute offers its programmes for full time students, and also to those who opt to study in the evening due to employment commitments. The Institute specialises in the provision of degrees which tie sometimes disparate disciplines, and thus manages to attract a broader cross section of society into higher education. Saint Martin's has managed to assist and develop students who otherwise did not have the opportunity to read for higher education.

The Institute also has a very high reputation in undergraduate research.

Saint Martin's graduates are sought after by employers, with a close to 100% employment record even before finishing their studies. This is due to the programmes being extremely relevant, not solely from a local (Maltese) perspective, but from a global perspective. The Institute has developed an academy with a major international software developer established in Germany and Malta, and is seeking to develop further such academies to assist in the tailoring of its higher education programmes to be even more relevant, thus implementing a continuous modernisation environment for our current and future portfolio of programmes.

Saint Martin's Institute is a pioneer in introducing the concept that all academic staff must possess pedagogical training if they expect to be involved in lecturing. The Institute has successfully developed a Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education, a 30 ECTS postgraduate certificate, focusing on the challenges and merits of lecturing emerging young adults and adults following life-long learning. The programme spans two academic years and is read on a part-time basis, interspersed with actual practicum carried out by academics from other Universities sitting in class and offering feedback to the academic upon the various aspects of lecturing taught during the PGCHE lectures and workshops. This aspect of our expectations for academic staff at the Institute is the key to ensure the right competence level and continued motivation of the Institute's academia and envisaged to offer continuous professional development programmes to PGCHE alumni to share experiences with colleagues and external experts. The Erasmus+ programme will be a great help in achieving this process.