

Internal Quality Assurance Manual

of the

European Accredited Psychotherapy Training Institute-
Gestalt Psychotherapy Training Institute Malta Network
(EAPTI-GPTIM)

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PREAMBLE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF EAPTI-GPTIM

1. Origin of GPTIM and EAPTI

As the name implies, the Higher Education Institution European Accredited Psychotherapy Training Institute - Gestalt Psychotherapy Training Institute Malta (EAPTI-GPTIM) is a complex educational reality that grew out of a particular historical context. The Gestalt Psychotherapy Institute Malta was created after the first Gestalt Institute that originally operated in Belgrade with students and lecturers from different parts of the ex-Yugoslavia, before the fratricidal wars of the Balkans in the 1990s. The Director of this original Belgrade Institute, today EAPTI-SEB, Dr Lidija Pecotic, then came to Malta in March 1994; the Gestalt Psychotherapy Training Institute Malta (GPTIM) was formally set up on the 21st of June 1996.

Through GPTIM she continued supporting her erstwhile colleagues and students throughout the successive Balkans conflicts in what were now the sundered new national realities of Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovenia and Macedonia. This personal-professional network was not only a critical human and professional lifeline for the colleagues of Dr Pecotic, but one of the few effective ways how the psychological needs of hundreds of thousands of civilians traumatised by war could be addressed. Out of this work grew the Gestalt Institutes of: Serbia (which as explained was the original Gestalt Institute and which is still led by Dr Lidija Pecotic), Macedonia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro, working closely with and under the oversight of GPTIM.

In 2005 GPTIM achieved accreditation by the European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP) and the European Association for Gestalt Psychotherapy (EAGT), the first Gestalt Institute to do so, and acquired the name EAPTI-GPTIM. The EAPTI title is given to every institute in Europe that achieves EAP and EAGT accreditation. EAPTI-GPTIM actively supported the application and process for accreditation of the ex-Yugoslav Gestalt institutes with which it was networked. Indeed, three of them have now become EAPTI: Serbia: EAPTI-Studio za edukaciju Beograd (2008); Macedonia: EAPTI-Gestalt Institute Skopje (2008), and Croatia: EAPTI-Psihika d.o.o. (2017).

As this work grew, the need was felt to formalise and ensure the recognition of training and subsequent practice of the new psychotherapists that were being trained by these institutes. Part of the challenge was that the profession was still politically and legally not clearly defined in a lot of countries. This led to the formalisation of the Network of Gestalt institutes under the guidance of EAPTI-GPTIM, into the EAPTI-GPTIM Network.

2. Relationship between EAPTI-GPTIM and the EAPTI-GPTIM Network

The unique relationship of mutual trust, friendship, respect and support between Dr Pecotic and her original group of colleagues, who are now head of the various institutes in the different countries, or their senior practitioners, explains the particular organisation of EAPTI-GPTIM and its relationship with the other Gestalt institutes within the EAPTI-GPTIM Network (hereinafter referred to as EGN), in terms of the development, implementation and QA of programmes.¹

¹ Further background information is available at: <http://www.gptim.com/history/>

The relationship between EAPTI-GPTIM and EGN is not that of a franchise or simply of local providers of courses accredited in Malta. EGN is a permanent transnational partnership in which EAPTI-GPTIM is the first amongst equals. The main function of the network is not commercial but an educational-professional one. Although the ownership of the Gestalt accredited courses belongs to EAPTI-GPTIM, each centre within the network is administratively autonomous and retains the income from the provision of identified courses so as to ensure the financial sustainability of each centre, even given the precarious financial post-war situation that each Balkan centre has emerged from and in many cases is still experiencing. EAPTI-GPTIM does not make a profit for the use of these identified courses by the other institutes in the Network. The only additional income comes from senior personnel, including the leaders of each centre and the Director of EAPTI-GPTIM herself, conducting training in each others' institutes, and they are duly remunerated for this service as with other professional providers.

Each institute, including EAPTI-GPTIM, is individually accredited according the requirements of its hosting country, and can develop and deliver its own courses independently of EAPTI-GPTIM or EGN. Apart from EAPTI-GPTIM, the other institutes are independently recognised and accredited by the European Association for Gestalt Therapy² (EAGT) and the European Association of Psychotherapy³ (EAP), or in the process of achieving this.

Thus, EGN exists only in function of the provision of courses accredited by EAPTI-GPTIM, accredited by NCFHE and delivered *tale quale* throughout the Network.

Apart from strong collaboration in provision, the institutes in EGN collaborate to ensure that training and professional practice is maintained at EAGT and EAP standards. As first among equals within the Network and in the context of an ongoing collaborative dialogue with the EGN partners, EAPTI-GPTIM has overall responsibility for ensuring that teaching and training standards are maintained, and final say on all substantive matters pertaining to the development, implementation and review of the Gestalt courses accredited by NCFHE. Thus, for the purposes of the maintaining of standards and for interfacing on all QA matters, EAPTI-GPTIM is the contact point for the NCFHE.

² Further information is available at: <http://www.eagt.org/joomla/index.php/2016-02-25-22-21-15/list-of-members/accredited-training-institutes>

³ Further information is available at: <http://www.europsyche.org/eapti>

1. STANDARD 1 - STANDARDS FOR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE - POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

1.1. EAPTI-GPTIM's Mission, commitments and values

EAPTI-GPTIM's mission is to provide our students with high-quality higher education level professional training of the theory and methodology of Gestalt Psychotherapy and its application in practice, by educating them in the fundamental concepts, knowledge and skills necessary for becoming a contemporary psychotherapist, obtaining the professional qualification of Gestalt Psychotherapy and providing programmes to further specialize in specific areas of interest within the gestalt psychotherapy field.

Academic freedom and integrity - EAPTI-GPTIM is committed to provide and cherish the atmosphere of academic freedom which includes, among others, freedom to research, teach and learn, and student's rights to choose, to decide, to reject, to express and defend individual beliefs. EAPTI-GPTIM is also committed to keep academic integrity and honesty as its highest academic values.

Quality of our programmes, the values behind them and ways of their delivery - In line with the latest NCFHE strategies and policies for 2015 to 2024⁴, our programmes have each been tailored around a rich, specialised and innovative content and programme design that is based on units of learning outcomes through ECTS. In developing our programmes we carefully consider how to increase participation and attainment, provide dialogic and student-centred learning, reduce gender differences and improve accessibility for the participation of members with special needs. We also strive to sustain a realistic level of flexibility and to provide online information and participation through our website and through the use of video conferencing, in order to facilitate our academic community's adequate life-work-family balance in circumstances where this becomes compromised. We put effort into facilitating a process whereby today's students become the much needed future experts in the field of psychotherapy, offering services, research and products with high levels of professionalism and integrity.

Our first priority is to maintain and constantly improve the quality of education provided. We strive to offer contemporary, state-of-the-art knowledge and skills while improving theory, practice and professionalism within Gestalt Psychotherapy and the wider social community.

Our programmes are supported by transparency measures and tools that ensure a robust internal and external quality assurance framework, which is pivotal to monitoring and reviewing our programme's learning process and outcomes. Transparency is achieved through the public availability of our programmes to potential students, potential employers, and other stakeholders. Also representatives of different stakeholders are included in the process of periodic review of the programmes.

⁴ National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) & Ministry for Education and Employment (2015) *Higher Education Strategy for Malta within the context of the Further and higher Education Strategy 2020 (NCFHE, 2009) and the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2015-2024*. Malta

Further details of all these procedures are given further down in this document.

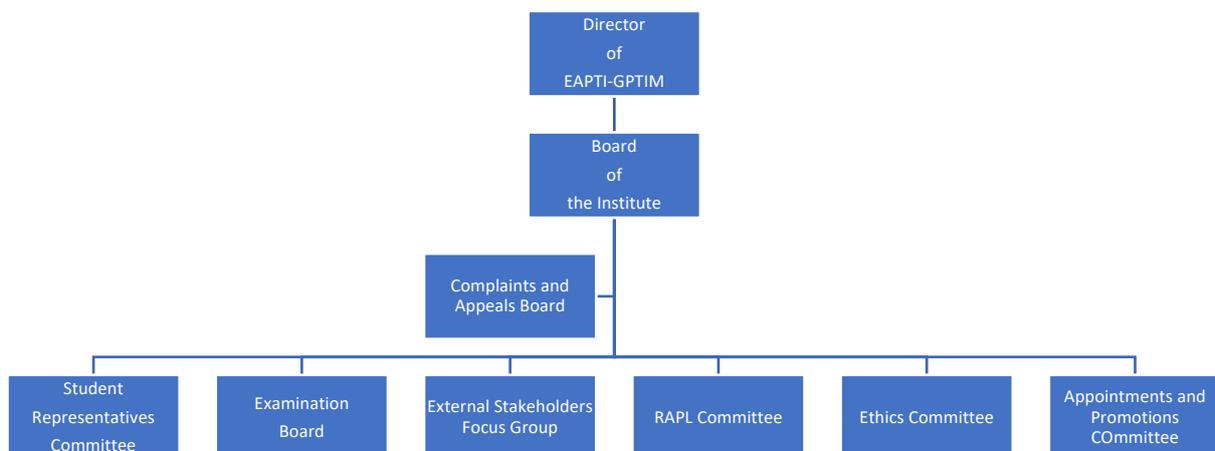
Internal quality assurance - EAPTI-GPTIM is committed to ensure a standardized approach to internal quality assurance practice that is well documented and systematically reviewed regularly. The internal quality assurance procedures must be open, fair and free from bias and have accurate and detailed recording of internal quality assurance decisions.

EAPTI-GPTIM is an accredited founding member of the European Accredited Psychotherapy Training Institute - Gestalt Psychotherapy Training Institute Malta Network (EGN). It is thus party to the IQA policies and procedures of the EGN with respect to NCFHE-accredited courses within the remit of the EGN. Additionally, the EGN IQA procedures are also in line with the quality requirements of the EAGT and the EAP. This IQA Manual provides general guidance and procedures for quality assurance within EAPTI-GPTIM that are informed by and consistent with the EGN Quality Charter. Specific procedures and forms that form a crucial part of internal quality assurance processes made available online on at: <https://www.eapti-gptim.com/>

The Maltese National level of Quality Assurance for higher education is defined by the [Subsidiary Legislation 327.433](#) and by the [National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education \(NCFHE, July, 2015\)](#). This IQA Manual is consistent with all the quality assurance requirements defined by these documents.

1.2. EAPTI-GPTIM organogram and structure

In order to further understand how EAPTI-GPTIM is organised, the following organogram graphically presents the bodies, participants, and their roles and responsibilities and how these relate to maintaining good QA mechanisms.



2. STANDARD 2 - FINANCIAL PROBITY

For the Institute, maintaining institutional probity goes beyond simply avoiding dishonest conduct, applying higher educational values such as impartiality, accountability and transparency. Financial probity within the Institute is in line with such values and it carries out all necessary procedures in order to ensure it.

3. STANDARD 3 - DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF PROGRAMMES

All programmes delivered at the Institute that are intended for accreditation have to be approved and accredited by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE).

4. STANDARD 4 - STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

Student-centred learning is a method of learning (and teaching) that puts a learner in the centre of that process. This approach has many implications for the design and flexibility of the curriculum, course content, and interactivity of the learning process (ESU & EI, 2010)⁵.

The Institute is oriented on co-creating a student-centred learning atmosphere together with its students. We want to ensure that our programmes are delivered in this way in order to achieve the best possible outcomes and career paths for all our students.

a) *General information for students*

Each new generation of students is informed through a welcome meeting about important information concerning their studies. In the case of Student-Centred Learning (SCL) this includes:

- Informing students that all important information about their study programme can be found in the Student Handbooks⁶. This information will also be summarized on the website, to meet the needs of prospective students and the general public.
- Students are informed about the format in which the teaching takes place and how each smaller class/group forms part of the whole Institute. Students are supported to feel part of the whole Institute, to adopt a collaborative relationship with other students and are encouraged to reach out to teaching staff throughout the course.
- Although it is a part of the enrolment procedures, students who have special needs for learning and/or assessment are invited to inform the Programme Coordinator of their Course with their requests if not already outlined. It is the Programme Coordinator's duty to

⁵ ESU & EI (2010) *Student-Centred Learning: An Insight into Theory and Practice*, Brussels: European Students' Union and Education International.

⁶ Student Handbooks are provided to students as soon as they are accepted for participation in a programme. An example of such a Handbook, for the Masters in Gestalt Psychotherapy, is being submitted for the consideration of the NCFHE with this IQA Manual.

inform all teachers about these requests and to support them in adapting their teaching-learning and assessment methods for those students;

5. STANDARD 5 - STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION

Students' admission requirements are defined in each of the programme's documentation, accredited by the NCFHE. Those admission requirements are publicly available on the Institute's website, and will not be changed between the NCFHE two cycles of (re)accreditation.

5.1 Minimum Admission Requirements

The minimum admission requirements are as follows:

a) *Certificate in Gestalt Psychotherapy*

Entry requirements:

- An MQF/EQF1 L6 degree, OR
- A relevant MQF/EQF L5 award of at least 30 ECTS plus a portfolio evidencing at least two years of relevant work experience.

b) *Diploma in Gestalt Psychotherapy*

Entry requirements to commence psychotherapy training include:

- having obtained a first bachelors' degree, or equivalent or relevant professional training in a human science, or social science (such as psychology, sociology etc.), or professional training related to other disciplines such as, but not exclusively, medicine, pedagogy, philosophy, management, communication studies or theology;
- AND
- having the appropriate social, educational and literary capacities and the appropriate legal status.

c) *Masters in Gestalt Psychotherapy*

Entry requirements to commence psychotherapy training include:

- having obtained a first bachelors' degree, or equivalent or relevant professional training in a human science, or social science (such as psychology, sociology etc.), or professional training related to other disciplines such as, but not exclusively, medicine, pedagogy, philosophy, management, communication studies or theology.
- AND
- having the appropriate social, educational and literary capacities and the appropriate legal status.

d) *Upgrade from Diploma in Gestalt Psychotherapy to Masters in Gestalt Psychotherapy*

- having obtained a first bachelors' degree, or equivalent or relevant professional training in a human science, or social science (such as psychology, sociology etc.), or professional training related to other disciplines such as, but not exclusively, medicine, pedagogy, philosophy, management, communication studies or theology;
- AND

- having the appropriate social, educational and literary capacities and the appropriate legal status;
 - AND
 - Diploma in Gestalt Psychotherapy
- e) *Doctorate in Gestalt Psychotherapy*

Applicants are expected to present evidence of the following criteria:

- MQF Level 7 qualification of a Master in Gestalt Psychotherapy (128 ECTS)
- To be registered with the relevant national council/board
- To be active practitioners in Gestalt psychotherapy for a minimum of 1 year since graduating with a Master Degree
- To have undergone the Master in Gestalt Programme's Research Module or the equivalent in RAPL; to have participated in writing research articles; past or ongoing involvement in research in the field of psychotherapy
- To have engaged in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as required by the regulating national board.

5.2 Induction to the Institution and the Programme

- a) Any individuals, including prospective students, who are interested in having further information about the Institute as an institution or about its programmes, are free to contact the Institute by email or phone. Official contacts are available on the Institute's official website.
- b) Prior to the commencement of a programme, an initial induction meeting is held on premises of the EAPTI-GPTIM, during which relevant information and materials are given and any queries are answered. During this induction meeting the Institute staff is introduced to potential students. The Director or other selected representative introduces the Institute as an institution, and presents its history, and educational and professional activities;
- c) Once prospective students have confirmed their intention to commence studies, they receive a hard copy of the relevant Student Handbook. Student Handbooks contain all relevant information about the institution, studying, programmes, finances, entry requirements, different procedures, values, ethics etc. Handbooks also contain application forms and studying contracts;

5.3 Recognition and Accreditation of Prior Learning (RAPL)

- a) All students have the right to apply for the Recognition and Accreditation of Prior Learning (RAPL), before enrolment and during their studies. Details about the Institute's policy available within the **Policy of recognition and accreditation of prior learning.**

5.4 Students' progression

- a) The decisions about students' progression are made by the Board on recommendation of the respective Examination Panel.
- b) Students should be made aware of the impact of their academic performance on their ability to progress and complete the programme. Every student's mentor is obliged to inform his assigned students of these requirements.

- c) Special circumstances are to be taken into consideration through the Mitigation Policy, when deciding about students' progression. They include documented illness, accidents, close bereavement, closely related compassionate events etc. that have affected the student's performance in assessment/examination or which caused him/her to be absent from an assessment/examination.

5.5 Students' certification

- a) On successful completion of the course, the respective Examination Panel shall make its positive recommendation to the Board of the Institute, who confirm this recommendation. Successful students will receive documentation in the form of a Diploma Supplement explaining the context, Malta Qualification Framework (MQF), amount of learning credit, content and status of the qualification gained, and specific learning outcomes gained, in line with the NCFHE regulations.

6. STANDARD 6 - TEACHING STAFF

The Institute has three categories of academic staff:

- Teachers, who contribute to the delivery and/or assessment of a particular unit. Teachers can also function as mentors;
- Leading teachers, who have primary responsibility for the design, delivery and assessment of a particular unit. Leading teachers can also function as mentors;
- Programme Coordinators, who have overall academic and administrative responsibility for a particular programme. Programme Coordinators can also function as mentors.

6.1 Minimal eligibility criteria for teaching staff

These are defined by NCFHE:

- a) Courses at MQF Level 7 require teachers who have full relevant qualifications, at least one Level up from the course being provided. Degrees and other courses at Level 7 need to have course/module coordinators with a full relevant qualification at Level 8. Such courses may include input from teachers that have a full relevant qualification at Level 7 and at least 10 years of relevant high level/executive experience in the field, which needs to be specified in the application. The academic/theoretical aspects of such degrees still require input from tutors with a full relevant qualification at Level 8.
- b) Also, the majority of our teachers (except those on units that have no connections to psychotherapy) need to have: Psychotherapeutic license and minimum of 6-8 years of practical experience in psychotherapy.

7. STANDARD 7 - LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

7.1 Learning resources

- a) The Institute shall ensure that our students have all resources they need for learning and achieving learning outputs, during their studies:
- working spaces (conference rooms and classrooms) are equipped with all necessary additional equipment (projectors, loudspeaker systems, Internet etc.);
 - the Institute uses spaces stated in the institution's accreditation;
 - the Institute ensures accessibility to learning spaces for students with disability;
 - the Institute provides access to the following reading resources for its students:
 - an e-library of over 500 papers and books referenced in the Doctorate and Master programmes and available online, curated by the academic staff of the Institute;
 - access to the British Gestalt Journal, the European Association of Psychotherapists (EAP) Journal and Scribd;
 - Its peer-reviewed journal 'Gestalt Today Malta', available from the Institute website;
 - A small graduate-level library that includes key texts, past students' case studies and theses, and as well as copies of the peer-reviewed journal 'Gestalt Review' produced by the partner Gestalt Institute in Belgrade or any other Gestalt Journals published by other EGN Institutes;
- b) All students shall be informed about resources that are at their disposal by teachers and in the student Handbooks.

7.2 Student support

- a) The Institute's student population is diverse and we give attention to every student need; This includes:
- Lectures, workshops and other activities are mostly organised after working hours or in weekends;
 - Adequate workload for part-time students;
 - Accommodating learning, teaching and assessing conditions for students with special needs;
- b) Students who have special needs for learning and/or assessment shall be encouraged from the outset to inform the Institute of their needs in terms of the Mitigation Policy, which will also be included in their Handbook. Programme Coordinators should discuss with these students the best possible way to meet their requests. It is the Programme Coordinator's duty to inform all teachers about these requirements and to support them in adapting their teaching, learning and assessment methods for those students;
- c) Each student shall be assigned with a teacher/mentor at the very beginning of their studies:
- Assigned mentor will be one of the main teachers from the first year course if not decided otherwise;
 - It is the mentor's duty to guide the student through his/her studies by giving advice and the necessary information on the student's request;
 - The student should consult his/her mentor before making any major decision considering studies;
 - It is the mentor's duty to work in the student's best interest;
 - The mentor is obliged to know the basics of all the important procedures that may be of benefit for the student Such as:
 - The Policy for Suspension of studies
 - The Policy for the extension of studies
 - Complaints and appeals procedure

- Every student's mentor is obliged to inform his assigned students of the requirements for progression to succeeding years of studies and impact of their grades and academic achievement on progression and completing their studies;
- If student is dissatisfied with the assigned mentor he/she can place a complaint.

8. STANDARD 8 - INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The Institute collects, analyses and uses relevant information for the effective management of its programmes and other activities. This information shall include:

- Profile of the student population, including prevalence of vulnerable groups;
- Course participation, retention and success rates;
- Students' satisfaction with their programmes;
- Employment rates and career paths.

8.1 Sources of Data

Specifically, the sources of data are the following:

- a) Each student at the Institute has its own student file with data that are relevant for his/her studies;
- b) On registration for every Course/Programme, students submit an application form, together with a number of other documents that, among others, includes copies of previous qualifications obtained;
- c) Application form includes requested information such as: date of birth, I.D. Card/Passport number, home address, contact information, special learning needs and other useful information, related to the profiling of the student population;
- d) The Institute also gathers student feedback through oral feedback at the end of each-semester. The Institute also circulates e-questionnaires at the end of each academic year on such issues as the quality of teaching, assessment, venue and resources.
- e) Two years after the conclusion of each programme of study, the Institute shall send out an invitation to the particular alumni cohort to fill in a short questionnaire related to their career pathways and future CPD needs.

8.2 Analysis of data

The Programme leader/coordinator analyses all the data for the respective programme, and presents a yearly oral report to the Board of these findings, with proposals for improvements, which is duly minuted. The Board may discuss these findings with the Student Representatives Committee and the External Stakeholders Forum to inform its thinking and decide on a way forward.

The Institute records and archives its data according to its Policy for Recording and Archiving Data.

9. STANDARD 9 - PUBLIC INFORMATION

9.1 General principles

- a) The Institute has the obligation to publish clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible information about all activities including programmes and modules/units.
- b) All published information is discussed with students' representatives to achieve maximum usefulness for targeted population.

10. STANDARD 10 - ONGOING MONITORING AND PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE PROGRAMMES

All Institute programmes intended for accreditation were designed and approved according to the NCFHE guidelines and have recently been accredited by the NCFHE. These programmes need to be periodically reviewed with feedback from the Student Representatives Committee and the External Stakeholders Focus Group, and attuned to contemporary theory, science and research development and to societal needs and students' needs.

- a) At least once every five years, on the initiative of Programme coordinator and in cooperation with Institute Director, a series of meetings of School Board and teaching staff with the Student Representatives Committee and the External Stakeholders Focus Group are initiated. Other external stakeholders may be invited, such as representatives from interested and/or important community sectors and potential employers in order to review the need for updating programmes and/or specific syllabi. These meetings take the following into consideration:
 - Theoretical developments in the field;
 - New literature in the field;
 - Results of scientific research in the field;
 - Changes in society (e.g. new requests from the practice, requests from employers, new legislation, new requests from professional organizations etc.);
 - Students' representatives' suggestions and suggestions made during students' evaluations.
- b) The Programme coordinator shall take note of all reflections, suggestions and considerations, and ensure that they inform the review process. S/he shall ensure that all suggested changes and new proposals are in line with NCFHE requirements.