

# PATHFINDER

MDIA DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP

## SCHOLARSHIP Guidelines



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA  
MINISTRY FOR THE ECONOMY,  
EUROPEAN FUNDS AND LANDS



MALTA  
DIGITAL  
INNOVATION  
AUTHORITY

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship is intended to support postgraduate education in the fields of Artificial Intelligence and/or Information Security/Quantum Computing/ Machine Learning/Neural Networks and Robotics to ensure that the Maltese labour market is supplied with individuals having the necessary skills and to guarantee that it is in a better position to compete at an international level. The scheme is aimed to support those pursuing this path to succeed both at the level of education attainment as well as contributing effectively towards the economy.
- 1.2 Postgraduate education forms an increasingly important part of any country's economic and social agenda. It supplies a key element of many people's continuing professional development, and the Scheme is intended to contribute to this agenda through its support of this important sector of education.

## 2. Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The key objectives of the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship** are to:
  - Assist people to pursue further levels of academic research in Artificial Intelligence and/or Information Security/Quantum Computing/Machine Learning/Neural Networks and Robotics;
  - Reduce skills mismatches particularly within the technological economic sectors that includes Artificial Intelligence and/or Information Security/Quantum Computing/Machine Learning/Neural Networks and Robotics;
  - Support further research in science and Innovative Technologies; and
  - Increase the capacity and level of research, innovation, and development activity in Malta.

## 3. Explanatory Notes

**Academic Record** shall mean an official document issued by a Recognised Educational Institution. The document shall show the marks/grades obtained by the Applicant and where it is the norm, the final grade/classification. A **detailed** Academic Record is expected.

**Agreement** shall mean a legally binding document to be signed by the Scholarship Awardee as beneficiary of the Scholarship and a recognised representative of MDIA for the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship**. These Guidelines shall be construed as forming part of the Agreement.

**Applicant** shall mean a natural person who submits a scholarship application.

**Artificial Intelligence** as per European Commission's High-Level Expert Group on AI (2018) is explained as: designed by humans that, given a complex goal, act in the physical or digital world by perceiving their environment, interpreting the collected structured or unstructured data, reasoning on the knowledge derived from this data and deciding the best action(s) to take (according to predefined parameters) to achieve the given goal.

AI systems can also be designed to learn to adapt their behaviour by analysing how the environment is affected by their previous actions. As a scientific discipline, AI includes several approaches and techniques, such as machine learning (of which deep learning and reinforcement learning are specific examples), machine reasoning (which includes planning, scheduling, knowledge representation and reasoning, search and optimisation), and robotics (which includes control, perception, sensors and actuators, as well as the integration of all other techniques into cyber-physical systems).”

**Web source (25th May 2022):**

[https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/ai\\_hleg\\_definition\\_of\\_ai\\_18\\_december\\_1.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/ai_hleg_definition_of_ai_18_december_1.pdf)

**Awardee** shall mean a natural person who is awarded a scholarship under this scheme.

**Awarding Body** refers to an organisation recognised by the National Regulatory Authorities whose purpose is awarding accredited qualifications.

**Commencement Date** of scholarship shall mean the date as specified on the ULA being the start date of the programme/course from when the payment to Awardee will be calculated.

**Completion Date** shall mean the date when the programme/course is completed, and the final result is published.

**Course Duration** is to be established by the Recognised Educational Institution. For courses of more or less than 12 months, the allowances shall be calculated pro rata over the number of months.

**ECTS** shall mean European Credit Transfer System.

**End Date** shall mean the date as specified on the ULA and on which payments of allowances are calculated. Payments of the grant are calculated on the number of ECTSs achieved.

**Guidelines** shall be this document having the name ‘**Scholarship Guidelines – Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship**’.

**Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship**, hereinafter also referred to as ‘Scholarship’, shall mean and these Guidelines and the Agreement as well as any documents attached thereto, as administered by the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA).

**Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** shall mean a Board appointed by the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA). This Board shall be entrusted with the evaluation and ranking of Applicants for the awarding of scholarships and overseeing of the scheme.

**Full-time** studies shall mean studying full-time at a Recognised Educational Institution.

**Part-time** studies shall mean studying part-time at a Recognised Educational Institution.

**ISCED** shall mean International Standard Classification of Education.

**HEI** shall mean Higher Education Institutions.

**Innovative Technology** refers to technologies where the meaning of “innovation” is derived from REGULATION (EU) 2021/819 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 20 May 2021 on the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, Article 2 – Definitions (1), ‘innovation’ means the process, including its outcome, by which new ideas respond to societal, economic or environmental needs and demand and generate new products, processes, services, or business, organisational and social models that are successfully introduced into an existing market or that are able to create new markets and that provide value to society.

**Machine Learning/Neural Networks** refers to a subset of artificial intelligence (AI) that focuses on the development of algorithms and models that enable computer systems to learn and make predictions or decisions without being explicitly programmed. Neural networks, also known as artificial neural networks (ANNs) or simulated neural networks (SNNs), are a subset of machine learning and are at the heart of deep learning algorithms. Their name and structure are inspired by the human brain, mimicking the way that biological neurons signal to one another.

**Master’s Programme** shall mean a higher educational programme that:

- a) Leads to a Master degree level qualification at MQF Level 7 offered by a HEI or Further and Higher Education Institution (including a university) with a minimum of 60 ECTS credits (based on the Bologna Process), and

**PhD Programme** shall mean a higher educational programme that:

- a) Leads to a PhD level qualification offered by a HEI or Further and Higher Education Institution (including a university) and
- b) Leads to a full MQF Level 8 qualification on an academic level

**MQF – Malta Qualifications Framework** is a referencing tool that helps to describe and compare both national and foreign qualifications to promote quality, transparency, and mobility of qualifications in all types of education.

**MQF Level 7 Qualification** shall mean any qualification referenced at Level 7 of the Malta Qualifications Framework.

**MQF Level 8 Qualification** shall mean any qualification referenced at Level 8 of the Malta Qualifications Framework.

**MQRIC** shall mean Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre within the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority.

**MFHEA** shall mean Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

**Per Annum** shall mean a period of twelve (12) calendar months from the commencement of programme of studies.



**Quantum Computing** shall mean any kind of computational model or device that employs quantum mechanical phenomena (such as superposition and entanglement) to perform operations on data as opposed to classical digital devices built up of binary digits (bits), which may represent either 0 or 1, quantum computers manipulate quantum bits (qubits) which could exist in many states simultaneously.

**Web source (13th June 2023):**

[https://ec.europa.eu/research-and-innovation/pdf/quantum-report\\_online-version.pdf%3E](https://ec.europa.eu/research-and-innovation/pdf/quantum-report_online-version.pdf%3E)

**Recognised Educational Institution** shall mean a Higher Educational Institution, or an Awarding Body recognised by the competent authorities in the country where the institution is registered and mutually recognised by MFHEA (in the case of foreign institutions), or locally registered Educational Institution accredited by MFHEA.

**Robotics** shall mean to any the branch of engineering and computer science that involves the design, construction, control, and utilization of robots, as well as the development of new components and algorithms for their functioning.

**Web Source (13th June 2023):**

[https://ec.europa.eu/research-and-innovation/horizon-magazine/what-are-robotics\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/research-and-innovation/horizon-magazine/what-are-robotics_en)

**Study Allowance** shall mean an additional allowance to cover additional expenses incurred during the duration of the programme of studies in the MDIA Digital Pathfinder Scholarship, if applicable.

**Transcript** shall mean the same as Academic Record. A **detailed** Transcript is expected.

**Unconditional Letter of Acceptance (ULA)** shall mean a letter issued to the Applicant by the Registrar (or a delegated high authority) of the Recognised Educational Institution which shall have the following details:

A clear statement by the Recognised Educational Institution that it is **unconditionally accepting** the Applicant to follow a programme of studies.

- The Commencement Date of studies (Indicating the exact day, month, and year).
- The End Date of studies (Indicating the exact day, month and year).
- The Modality of study (that is whether it is part-time or full-time studies).
- The Number of ECTS credits pertaining to the programme of studies (if applicable).
- Any other information required by Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA).

Applicant shall note that the Agreement is to be signed at a later stage (should the applicant be awarded a Scholarship).

**ALL APPLICANTS** shall be obliged to submit the **Unconditional Letter of Acceptance by, Friday 6 October 2023 by not later than 13:00 (CET)**

It is the **duty of the Applicants to ensure** that when they choose a Recognised Educational Institution, this institution is in a position to issue such a ULA with all the above details. This has to be in the form of an original letter, signed by the Registrar of the University (or delegated high authority). Scanned, PDF copies shall be accepted in terms of Clause 6.2.

## 4. Eligibility

- 4.1 In order to apply for a **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship** must satisfy both the following conditions:
- 4.1.1 an Applicant shall by the closing date of the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship** application:
- a) Be a Maltese citizen who has been residing in Malta for the past five (5) years. Provided that a Maltese citizen who has been residing outside Malta for study, health or work purposes or any other purpose which the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** may consider, will still be eligible to apply and this period of time during which the citizen was abroad will not be taken into consideration for the purpose of calculating the five (5) year requirement; or
  - b) Be a national of an EU/EEA state or a family member of such EU/EEA national (as defined in [SL460.17](#) and in [SL217.04](#) (Subsidiary Legislation) respectively for EU and EEA nationals), provided that such person has obtained permanent residence in Malta in accordance with [SL460.17](#) and in [SL217.04](#) respectively for EU and EEA nationals; or
  - c) Be a national of an EU/EEA state who is in Malta exercising his/her Treaty rights as a worker, self-employed person or person retaining such status in accordance with [SL460.17](#); or
  - d) Be a third country national that has been granted long-term residence status under [SL217.05](#)
- 4.1.2 Must be applying to follow a programme of studies:
- a) at MQF level 7 that has a minimum of 30 ECTS related to Artificial Intelligence and/or Information Security/Quantum Computing/ Machine Learning/Neural Networks and Robotics in which the research project must be related to innovative technologies that may or may not include the mentioned above fields; or  

at MQF level 8 focusing on a research area related to Artificial Intelligence and/or Information Security/Quantum Computing/ Machine Learning/Neural Networks and Robotics.
  - b) at MQF level 8 focusing on a research area related to Artificial Intelligence and/or Information Security.
- 4.2 Applicants already holding a Level 7 Master's degree or Level 8 Doctorate degree in a field that is unrelated to Artificial Intelligence and/or Information Security/Quantum Computing/ Machine Learning/Neural Networks and Robotics, are still eligible to apply for a scholarship in terms of the Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship for any subsequent studies they may undertake which studies are in line and according to the terms of these guidelines.
- 4.3 Applicants shall start their course leading to a Qualification at MQF Level 7 or 8 between the 31st of December 2022 and the 31st of December 2023.

- 4.4 Applicants who by closing date of application are still undergoing another programme of studies may still apply, provided that such programme is to be concluded and results published by **Friday 29th September 2023**, that is, before entering into the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship agreement**, if awarded the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship**.
- 4.5a) **Part 1 documents** of the Application Form shall be submitted by **Friday 28th July 2023 at 13:00 (CET)** together if available with the Part 2 documents.
- 4.5b) **Part 2 documents** of the Application Form include but not limited to the
- Detailed and official Transcript,
  - Unconditional Letter of Acceptance as detailed in the Clause 3 – Explanatory Notes and
  - MQRIC report
- The above Part 2 shall be submitted by latest **Friday 6th October 2023 at 13:00 (CET)**.
- 4.6 An Applicant who is starting a programme of studies leading to MQF Level 7, but part of the programme/course is referenced to MQF Level 6 shall NOT be eligible to apply under this scheme but shall be eligible to apply under the Malta Government Undergraduate Scheme (MGUS) / Students' Maintenance Grants'.
- 4.7 Applicants shall become ineligible for a Scholarship if they are in breach of any part of these Guidelines.

## 5. Tenure and Placement

- 5.1 Awards are tenable at any local or international Recognised Educational Institution for a specific programme of studies or research. Only MFHEA Recognised Educational Institutions shall be taken into consideration by the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board**.
- 5.2 It is the responsibility of the Applicants, applying for qualifications awarded by foreign or local Recognised Educational Institutions not featuring in the "List of Accredited Courses offered by Licensed Institutions" (excluding University of Malta (UM), Malta College of Arts Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS)) to produce an evaluation report on comparability of qualifications issued by the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) within the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA). Applicants not in possession of this report / receipt of an MQRIC application may still apply, provided that they submit a copy of the report or receipt to the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship** office by not later than **Friday 6th October 2023 at 13:00 (CET)**.
- 5.3 The MQRIC may be contacted as follows;

Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) / Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)  
J.Abelo Sclaro Street,  
Hamrun HMR1304

Tel. no. 153  
E-mail: [mqric@mfhea.mt](mailto:mqric@mfhea.mt)  
Website: [www.mfhea.mt](http://www.mfhea.mt)

## 6. Choice of Institution

- 6.1 Applicants are expected to identify only one (1) Recognised Educational Institutions and programmes/courses that they consider most appropriate on the Application Form. No change to the Recognised Educational Institution is accepted after the closing date of application **Friday 28th July 2023 at 13:00 (CET)**.
- 6.2 The declaration form found in **Schedule C** of the Application Form, is to be received by the Applicants where they are declaring that they intend to complete their programme of study and presentation of thesis and/or project, early enough to ensure that by the end of course the HEI or Further and Higher Education Institution /University shall be in a position to confirm that the awardee will be awarded the degree.
- 6.2.1 Applicants shall submit the Unconditional Letter of Acceptance (ULA) from a Recognised Educational Institution listed on their Application Form. The last day of submission of ULA shall be **Friday 6th October 2023 at 13:00 (CET)**.
- 6.3 Many courses have strict admission deadline and Applicants must take the necessary steps to secure admission to their preferred institution in advance of any Scholarship's application to the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board**. Applicants should note that a number of recognised educational institutions / university departments require an Applicant to demonstrate a valid Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) or Graduate Record Examination (GRE) score before an offer of admission can be made. The fees for these tests shall not be covered by the funds provided by **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship**. Applicants should check admission requirements carefully at the time of application.

## 7. Administration of Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board

- 7.1 The Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board is administered by the Malta Digital Innovation Authority. The Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board is responsible for the selection and ranking process and for overseeing the scheme.
- 7.2 All correspondence is to be addressed to:

MDIA  
Twenty20 Business Centre  
Triq l-Intornjatur, Zone 3  
Central Business District, Birkirkara  
CBD 3050, Malta

Tel. No.: +356 21828800  
E-mail: [pathfinder@mdia.gov.mt](mailto:pathfinder@mdia.gov.mt)  
Website: [www.mdia.gov.mt](http://www.mdia.gov.mt)



## 8. Application Form

8.1 Applicants are invited to apply by sending the application form and accompanying documents to [pathfinder@mdia.gov.mt](mailto:pathfinder@mdia.gov.mt). It is the responsibility of the Applicants to ensure that their application is:

- successfully submitted on time,
- to keep a printed copy of the Application Form and
- to have a copy of the acknowledgement email.

The acknowledgement email shall be the Applicants' proof that an Application is submitted on time, however, it is not a confirmation that the application was complete. It is the duty of the applicant to ensure the correctness and completion of the application at the time of submission.

### 8.2 There are two Application Forms available on the MDIA website (<https://www.mdia.gov.mt/schemes/pathfinder-digital-scholarship/>);

8.2.1 An application (Pathfinder **Masters Application Form**) to be filled in by applicants who are interested in pursuing an MQF Level 7 programme of studies,

8.2.2 An application (Pathfinder **Ph.D. Application Form**) to be filled in by applicants who are interested in pursuing an MQF Level 8 programme of studies.

8.3 The **below supporting documents must be submitted with the application form and labelled as per hereunder identification along** with other requested information;

DOC 1 – Identification Card or Passport

DOC 2 – Curriculum Vitae

DOC 3 – Appendix I (**As per Clause 8.4**)

DOC 4 – Appendix II **or** (III **and** IV) (**As applicable as per Clause 8.4**)

DOC 5 – Applicant's HEI or Further and Higher Education Institution (Including University) detailed transcripts (**if already available**)

DOC 6 – Unconditional Letter of Acceptance from the Recognised Educational Institution applied for (if already available).

DOC 7 – MQRIC evaluation report as per Clauses 5.2 (**if required**).

DOC 8 – Permanent Residence permit (**where applicable**).

DOC 9 – Visa approval (**if applicable**).

DOC 10 – Evidence of commencement of programme of studies (**if applicable**)

- a) Detailed Transcripts or
- b) Letter from University

8.4 The **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** shall give considerable weight to the contents of these Sections in the application form:

- Appendix I: The relevance of the course / research to the Artificial Intelligence and/or Information Security/Quantum Computing/ Machine Learning/Neural Networks and Robotics regarding the development of Malta.
- Appendix II: Details about the course or research
- Appendix III: Course co-ordinator confirmation letter on research project
- Appendix IV: PhD proposal details on research project

8.4.1 **Thus, the Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board reserves the right to penalise Applicants who fail to submit the required Appendices with the respective Application Form.**

**Appendix I:** Applicants applying to read for an **MQF Level 7 or 8 qualification** shall submit a clear overview of the relevance of how the programme of studies/course/research is related to Artificial Intelligence and/or Information Security/Quantum Computing/ Machine Learning/ Neural Networks and Robotics and how this study/research can impact the development of Malta, in not more than three hundred (300) words. The word count does not include references, bibliographies, or footnotes

**Appendix II:** Applicants applying to read for an **MQF Level 7** shall submit the list of units in their course or research, clearly identifying the unit/s in their course or research that are related to Artificial Intelligence and/or Information Security/Quantum Computing/ Machine Learning/Neural Networks and Robotics. The latter should amount to a minimum of 30 ECTS. Additional to this, students are to focus their research/thesis on innovative technologies that may or may not include Artificial Intelligence and/or Information Security.

**Appendix III:** Applicants applying to read for an **MQF Level 8 qualification** shall submit a letter from the course coordinator/ studies' supervisor providing identification and confirmation of the topic of the research.

**Appendix IV:** Applicants applying to read for an **MQF Level 8 qualification** shall submit a PhD proposal detailing their research project in relation to Artificial Intelligence and/or Information Security/Quantum Computing/ Machine Learning/Neural Networks and Robotics.

8.5 The Applications' deadline is **Friday 28th July 2023 at 13:00 (CET)**. Only in the case of the Part 2 documents referenced in each respective application i.e., Masters or PhD, the date of submission is extended to **Friday 6th October 2023 at 13:00 (CET)**.

8.6 Late and incomplete applications shall not be considered by the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board**. Applicants are strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit their application. MDIA cannot be held responsible for any delay due to technical difficulties, or otherwise, that may hinder applicants' submission.

8.7 No written (hard copy) applications will be accepted. **The Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** shall not consider any petitions stating that the Application Form was submitted, without tangible and valid proof as evidence.

8.8 Application must be filled in, in its entirety. Incomplete / Incorrect applications shall be considered disqualified. No changes to the application are permitted after the

deadline of the **28th of July 2023**.

- 8.9 **Every applicant shall submit one (1) application form for either MQF level 7 or MQF level 8.**

## **9. Eligibility, Selection Process and Procedure**

- 9.1 The Malta Digital Innovation Authority has set up the Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board to operate the process of selection. This Board shall be responsible for all matters concerning selection according to pre-established criteria identified in [Clause 10.1](#) and determination of appropriate awards according to the terms of these guidelines.
- 9.2 Eligible Applicants shall be called for an interview. It is the responsibility of the Applicant to make sure to be available on the date and time communicated to him/her for the interview. No alternative arrangements shall be made to change the date and time of the interview unless there are exceptional circumstances (supported by written proof) that warrant the change of such date and time. The aforementioned exceptional circumstances shall be examined, and such alternative date and time may be chosen by the Board, at the Board's discretion.

9.2.1 Interviews are expected to be scheduled in **August during weekdays from Monday to Friday**. Applicants who do not turn up for their interview or are late of more than 5 - 10 minutes to the interview will be considered as no longer having an interest in the scholarship and thus they will be considered ineligible by the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board**.

9.2.2 In the case of applicants who are unable to attend on the given date and time for the interview due to being abroad, such interviews shall take place via video call at the given date and time. In exceptional cases, an alternative date for interview may be given by the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** depending on the circumstances which led to the failure of such an interview.

## **10. Selection Criteria**

- 10.1 Applications are considered on the basis of the following selection criteria:

- a) Academic merit of the Applicant (40%) – Only qualifications at MQF Level 5 or higher will be taken into consideration.
- b) How study / research is related to the Artificial Intelligence and/or Information Security/Quantum Computing/ Machine Learning/Neural Networks and Robotics and development of Malta and details about the courses/ programme applied for – Appendix I, II, IV (30%).
- c) The outcome of the interview (30%)

- 10.2 Applicants and applications shall be deemed to be ineligible for a scholarship by the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** if they do not achieve at least a pass mark of fifty percent (50%) in each of the selection criteria listed in Clause 10.1.

10.3 The applicants will be ranked according to the marks obtained from the criteria found in Clause 10.1. Funding will be made available to the applicants according to the relative rank they have achieved. Therefore, the fund will first be made available to the highest ranked applicant, and funds will subsequently continue to be made available to the other applicants according to their rank until the fund is exhausted.

## 11. Types of Scholarships

11.1 Applicants must be applying to read for a programme of studies leading to a qualification at MQF Level 7 or 8.

Level of Programme	Max Duration of Programme	Value of Scholarship Grant
MQF Level 7	Up to and not more than <b>three (3) years</b> (thirty-six (36) months)	<b>Full-time Basis:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>80%</b> of the tuition fees</li> <li>• <b>100%</b> of bench fees</li> <li>• Study allowance amounting to <b>€3,600 per annum</b></li> <li>• Notwithstanding the above, the total of grant must not exceed <b>€10,000</b> over the duration of the course.</li> </ul>
MQF Level 8	Up to and not more than <b>six (6) years</b> (seventy-two (72) months)	<b>Part-time Basis:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>80%</b> of the tuition fees</li> <li>• <b>100%</b> of bench fees</li> <li>• Notwithstanding the above, the total of grant must not exceed <b>€10,000</b> over the duration of the course.</li> </ul>

11.2 Applicants awarded a scholarship shall be available to commence / or have commenced their programme/course leading to a qualification at MQF Level 7 or 8 between the **31st of December 2022 and the 31st of December 2023**.

11.3 Programmes / courses eligible under this scheme and value of awards are included in the table below for ease of reference:

## 12. Value of Awards and Payments

### 12.1 Programmes / Courses at MQF Level 7 and 8:

For programmes/courses provided by a Recognised Educational Institution through full-time/part-time, the value of the scholarship grant is up to €10,000 over the duration of the course. This amount shall cover 80% of the tuition fees and 100% bench fees and a study allowance for students reading for a programme/course on a full-time basis is to be provided amounting to €3,600 per annum.

12.2 The **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** may consider extension for completion of studies. **ONLY** one Extension beyond the completion date indicated on the Scholarship Grant Agreement may be considered by **Pathfinder MDIA**



**Digital Scholarship Board.** Any request for extensions is to be addressed to the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** supported by the approval of the Recognised Educational Institution. Any request for extension is at the discretion of the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** to approve or otherwise. No funds will be allocated or paid for this extension if approved by the Board.

12.3 Payments of Scholarships grant are affected as follows:

***Programmes / Courses at MQF Level 7 and 8:***

Tuition fees and/or bench fees are to be paid by the Scholarships' Awardees directly to the Recognised Educational Institution. The fees paid by the student shall then be reimbursed to the awardee on presentation of invoice/s and the original official receipt/s of payment/s or equivalent (i.e., receipted invoice where applicable) issued by the receiving Recognised Educational Institution. Payments of Scholarships grant are affected as follows:

12.3.1 For full-time and part-time programmes, the payment for tuition fees and/or bench fees shall be split into payments in the form of 'once Per Annum' to the Awardee's Bank Account, provided that the Awardee presents all the necessary invoice/s and official fiscal receipts. Notwithstanding the above, payment processing may take up to 30 (thirty) working days.

12.3.2 For full-time programmes, the payment of the study allowance shall be split into payments in the form of 'once Per Annum' to the Awardee's Bank Account. Notwithstanding the above, payment processing may take up to 30 (thirty) working days.

Should an Awardee's programme of studies entail part of "Per Annum", the study allowance for that particular partial year shall be given on a pro rata basis.

## **13. General Conditions of Award**

13.1 The general conditions in this section apply to all Applicants under the scheme and to all Scholarship Awardees.

### **APPLICATION STAGE**

13.2 Applicants shall be expected to seek prior visa approval (where applicable) for any proposed studies abroad. It is the applicant's responsibility to seek visa approval where applicable for any proposed studies abroad.

13.3 **No supplementary scholarship awards/grants for the same course/ programme of studies are allowed in addition to the Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship.** Should the candidate seek to obtain supplementary Scholarship awards or supplementary grants from any other source additional to **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship** for the same course or programme it shall be deemed to be in breach of the agreement. As a result, cancellation of award and refund of all funds granted to Awardee by then shall be required by the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board**. The Board considers this as fraud and may proceed with a criminal liability suit against such Awardees. Please refer also to Clause 14.

## PROVISIONAL AWARD STAGE

- 13.4 Applicants will be notified of their acceptance by the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board**.
- 13.5 The Awardee shall be given a draft Agreement that stipulates the terms and conditions of such Award. **The Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** reserves the right to review and cancel the provisional award if new information reveals any change in information or conditions which renders the provisional Awardee ineligible for the Scholarship Award.
- 13.6 The Awardee shall conclude and sign the Agreement by not later than one (1) week from receipt of awardee notice, whichever comes last unless otherwise justified. Failure to present signed Agreement by the prescribed date shall lead to the award being awarded to others according to their respective ranking. As part of the signing of Agreement, the Awardee shall be required to fill any required forms that may be communicated by the Project Leader at MDIA.
- 13.7 Should any conflict arise between the interpretation of clauses in these guidelines and the Agreement, the terms of these guidelines shall prevail.
- 13.8 Should the programme of studies have not already commenced at the time of the application; the Awardee shall be expected to take up the Scholarship award from the date stated by the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** on the Grant Agreement. If for any reason, Applicants cannot commence their studies on the date inserted in the Scholarship Grant Agreement or requires a different start date they are duty bound to inform the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board prior to signing the Scholarship agreement**. The **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** reserves the right, on notification of such intention, to review the start date or else to cancel the Scholarship should the changes imply postponing the start date in breach of [Clause 11.2](#).
- 13.8.1 Should the programme of studies have commenced at the time of the application, the Awardee shall provide unto the Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board, the commencement date as well as evidence showing that he/she has commenced the said programme of studies.

## CONTRACTED AWARD STAGE

- 13.9 Scholarships cannot be extended to enable the Awardee to complete an additional or higher qualification other than that for which the selection was made.
- 13.10 On award of a Scholarship, MDIA may make the information obtained from the applicants, available to public authorities for the purpose of quality assurance and transparency.
- 13.11 Awardees who are found to have given false information or who have in any manner withheld information that would have influenced the awarding of the Scholarship and/or any grants in accordance with these guidelines, shall be immediately disqualified and shall be asked to reimburse any expenses and money granted to them or on their behalf. **MDIA** may proceed with a criminal liability suit, without prejudice to any civil action for damages, against such Awardees.

## PROGRESS AND COMPLETION

- 13.12 For **Masters (MQF Level 7)** applicants, with the completion of a study unit the Awardee must submit the official result achieved by that study unit **within two (2) weeks** of receipt of result.  
For PhD (MQF Level 8) applicants, the Awardee must submit a progress report signed by the awardee's supervisor every 6 months from the start of the course till the end.
- 13.13 On completion of the studies, the below documentation shall be submitted to the MDIA within **three (3) months** from the award of the qualification:
- 13.13.1 Final confirmation (directly from the institution via email) where the University confirms that the student has obtained the award.
- 13.13.2 Soft copy of title and contents pages of thesis/dissertation/research work/project
- 13.13.3 Transcript and/or the Official Certificate awarding the Degree.
- Soft Copy documentation shall be forwarded to the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship** office in **PDF format** by email to [pathfinder@mdia.gov.mt](mailto:pathfinder@mdia.gov.mt)
- 13.14 MDIA reserves the right to organise Public Relations events in relation to this **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship**. MDIA also reserves the right to invite any awardee to attend and/or to speak at such event. If such an invitation is received by an awardee, said awardee is hereby accepting such invitation **a priori**. Said acceptance shall be valid for the duration of their course and for **two (2) years** following the completion of their course.
- 13.15 Awardees may be contacted for PR collaboration from the PR office at MDIA.

## 14. Termination prior to completion of programme

- 14.1 Scholarship Awardees who for any reason discontinue their studies shall inform the MDIA in writing immediately.
- 14.2 The **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** shall on thirty (30) days written notice terminate the award if:
- a) the Applicant's progress is deemed unsatisfactory by the Recognised Institution.
  - b) the Applicant discontinues the studies; and/or
  - c) an Applicant is in breach of any provision of these Guidelines and does not remedy the breach within thirty (30) days of receipt of written notice requiring him/her to do so.
- 14.3 When an Awardee has the scholarship award terminated under conditions stipulated in [Clause 14.2](#), the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** shall determine the amount to be reimbursed. The refund must be made within **three (3) months** of from the awardee's declaration in terms of [Clause 14.1](#).

- 14.4 Awardees shall not be deemed to be in breach of these guidelines **ONLY** in case of serious illness and demise of the awardee. In case of serious illness, the awardee needs to provide medical certificates and testimonials to the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board**. Thus, awardees who cannot pursue further studies due to serious illness might be required to refund grants on a pro-rata basis as approved by and at the discretion **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board**.
- 14.5 In such situations, the Scholarship Awardee shall provide justifiable explanation as to why the course was not completed or why the Scholarship Awardee failed to obtain the qualification. Documented evidence, medical certificates and testimonials must accompany each claim. **The Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** shall in no way be bound to waiver all claims put forward. **The Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** reserves the right to appoint its own expert, be it medical or otherwise, to advise and assess the case of the claimant.
- 14.6 The Awardee/Candidate/Applicant hereby binds himself to fully indemnify MDIA and to hold MDIA, the MDIA Digital Pathfinder Scholarship Board and its members free from any responsibility should the Awardee/Candidate/Applicant, MDIA, the MDIA Digital Pathfinder Scholarship Board or any third party suffer any form of damages as a result of this Scholarship. The Awardee/Candidate/Applicant shall reimburse MDIA for any expenses MDIA may incur due to the fact that it may have to defend itself, legally or otherwise, from any claim made against it as a result of this Scholarship. Said expenses include but are not limited to, court expenses, legal fees, consultant expenses and ancillary expenses. Indemnity in terms of this Scholarship shall be immediately due upon any request to this effect made by MDIA to the Awardee/Candidate/Applicant. Such indemnity shall be deemed to be certain, liquidated and due in terms of Maltese Law, and shall not be subject to any abatement or reduction by any adjudicating body be it the Maltese Courts or otherwise. Furthermore, the Awardee/Candidate/Applicant agrees that the MDIA and the MDIA Digital Pathfinder Scholarship Board, nor its members, shall not be held liable nor responsible for any act or omission by the Awardee/Candidate/Applicant in furtherance of this Scholarship.

## 15. Information

- 15.1 For further queries and information please contact:  
**Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship** office:

MDIA  
Twenty20 Business Centre  
Triq l-Intornjatur, Zone 3  
Central Business District, Birkirkara  
CBD 3050, Malta

Tel. No.: +356 21828800  
E-mail: [pathfinder@mdia.gov.mt](mailto:pathfinder@mdia.gov.mt)  
Website: [www.mdia.gov.mt](http://www.mdia.gov.mt)

- 15.2 Please note that the official website of **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship** is found on <https://www.mdia.gov.mt/schemes/pathfinder-digital-scholarship/>. **The Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Board** shall not assume any responsibility for any incorrect information found on other websites as regards to the **Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship**.