

## UNISER TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM STANDARDS

### 1. A general presentation of the hosting partner on the first day of activity:

'Checkin' is a Youth Faith Tourism project, founded and supported by the Maltese National Federation of the Past Pupils and Friends of Don Bosco. 'Checkin' focuses on creating opportunities and facilitating experiences for young people to embark on a journey of self-exploration and engagement with nature, culture, and travel.

'Checkin' welcomes young people and educators to learn about the Maltese culture and heritage, but also offers non-formal educational opportunities to explore further one's abilities and skills. 'Checkin' offers a variety of products which will help young people and educators to explore the Maltese islands from a fun and spiritual point of view.

For this training course there will be two dedicated trainers who will support the participants throughout the training course from beginning to end. These trainers are part of the Checkin organisation and are involved in the creation of this training course. Both trainers have delivered this training course.

### 2. Training course summary:

This training course will assist educators and educational support staff who are interested in using the outdoors, especially Blue Spaces, to help students and colleagues who are experiencing challenges related to stress, anxiety, loneliness and depression. It adopts a hands-on methodology that combines practical engagement with interactive discussions and the sharing of personal experiences. This is a 5-day course focusing on using blue spaces to support students and educators in dealing with stress, anxiety and depression

**Day 1 - Setting the Scene:** Introductions and sharing of experiences. Experiential workshop: understanding water and its impact on how we experience ourselves, others and the world.

**In touch with Water:** Appreciating the impact of Blue Spaces and experiencing activities on the water in the open sea.

**Day 2 - A Culture Built on Water:** Encountering the sunrise and the sea at first light, accompanied by personal reflection and mindfulness.

**Establishing common grounds and Theoretical foundations:** How we relate to water and how this can influence our pedagogical approach. Exploring the rhythms of the sea and nature through a music workshop.

**Day 3 - Mental health and the learning process.** How Blue Spaces support learning and wellbeing. Evaluation of the experience and meeting Maltese culture that is crafted by the sea.

**Day 4 - Full Immersion:** Experiencing how breathing and meditation can enhance the mind-body connection that can heal anxiety, stress and loneliness especially when fully immersed in water. Supported by experienced, professional free-diving instructors, the participants experience the full power of being immersed in water.

**Day 5 - Internalizing the experience:** Participants will understand and evaluate the learning experience, explore how it can be beneficial in a school environment, highlight the key competences that were encountered, and create networks for future collaboration.

### 3. Training course learning outcomes:

The participants will be able to:

- a) Develop **practical skills**: Participants will acquire hands-on skills related to implementing and facilitating outdoor activities, especially those within the context of Blue Spaces, including planning, organising, and adapting activities to meet the needs of individuals or groups.
- b) Enhance **empathy and communication**: Through discussions and sharing of experiences, participants will develop a deeper understanding of the emotional experiences of young individuals facing various challenges, enhancing their empathy and communication skills.
- c) Apply **theoretical frameworks**: Participants will explore relevant theoretical frameworks and concepts that underpin the use of outdoor environments for therapeutic purposes, and learn how to apply these frameworks in practical contexts.
- d) Reflect on **personal experiences**: The course will encourage participants to reflect on their own experiences and perspectives, helping them gain insights into their own emotions, strengths, and limitations when addressing issues faced by young people.
- e) **Collaborate and networking**: Participants will have opportunities to collaborate with peers, exchange ideas, and build a network of professionals interested in utilising outdoor environments for therapeutic purposes.
- f) Create **tailored intervention plan/s**: Participants will be able to develop customised intervention plans and strategies utilising outdoor environments, especially those within the context of Blue Spaces, to address specific challenges faced by young people, considering their unique needs and circumstances. The participants will also learn:
  - Gain insights into loneliness, grief, and anxiety, defining and understanding them.
  - Explore how outdoor spaces positively impact mental health, addressing these challenges.
  - Identify causes, models, and effective strategies.
  - Discover suitable outdoor activities, particularly in Blue Spaces, to address the specific issues.

### 4. Participants requirements:

It is suggested that teachers are to find accommodation in the centre of Malta (St. Julians, Sliema, Gzira, San Gwann) as most sessions will take place in Sliema. Transport will not be provided to the training centre but will be provided if the session takes place in another location. Participants will be contacted if any changes are done.

### 5. Validation:

This training course combines practical engagement with interactive discussions and presentations. Participants will have the opportunity to actively engage in various activities, especially within the context of Blue Spaces and participate in discussions and exchange of experiences. The course provides a blended learning approach that integrates hands-on experiences with reflective dialogue, creating a dynamic learning environment.

By incorporating a blend of teaching methods, the programme aims to provide a comprehensive and experiential learning experience, equipping learners with the necessary tools to effectively address loneliness, depression, and anxiety in practical contexts mainly through:

a) Face to face sessions whereby learners will be introduced to various theories, philosophies, procedures and practices revolving around loneliness, depression and anxiety.

b) Engaging, outdoor hands-on activities, processing, and reflective journaling. Learners will actively participate in practical experiences in outdoor environments, allowing them to directly engage with the concepts and strategies related to addressing loneliness, grief, and anxiety.

c) Through fieldwork, participants will have the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills in real-world settings, further enhancing their understanding and practical abilities. The processing and debriefing stage will involve group discussions and reflections, enabling learners to analyse and interpret their experiences, share insights, and learn from one another.

To deepen their understanding and promote self-reflection, participants will be encouraged to keep reflective journals. This practice will allow them to document their thoughts, emotions, and observations, facilitating personal growth and a deeper integration of the course material. Tutors will be evaluating both the process and final presentation of the journals with participants.

All participants will be awarded with Course Attendance Certificate and Europass Mobility Certificate (if needed). Participants who complete an optional reflective journal assignment will be able to receive an award equivalent to 4 ECTS.