

LEAF Accreditation

Non-Formal Award in the
Learning about Ecosystems
and Forests (LEAF) Programme



LEARNING
ABOUT
ECOSYSTEMS
AND FORESTS

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Introduction:

The Learning about Ecosystems and Forests (LEAF) programme is now an accredited programme. The programme is accredited by the Accreditation Unit within the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) at three levels, namely at MQF level 1, MQF level 2 and MQF level 3.

Each level carries 2 ECTS (2 credits), where each ECTS is equivalent to 25 hours of direct contact time as LEAF Forest Team members within the four-step pedagogical cycle (Look and observe – Explore – Analyse – Function and flourish).

Choice of levels:

The levels of the LEAF accreditation correspond to the different phases of schooling as indicated below:

MQF level 1 – focus at Primary level

MQF level 2 – focus at Middle school ages (11-13 years)

MQF level 3 – focus at Secondary year groups (13-16 years)

Students who are committee members in primary schools, middle schools and secondary schools can obtain one certificate in each of the different levels. Students in middle schools or secondary schools do not need to start at level 1. They can directly obtain certification at levels 2 or 3, depending on the competencies they have reached and learning objectives they have attained.

Accumulated hours can be carried forward from Primary to Middle School and from Middle School to Secondary school on a case-by-case basis in liaison with the LEAF link educators from feeder schools.

Students can be accredited in the calendar year in which the school submits its LEAF portfolio, usually by the end of November. The initial year of accreditation will be effective as from scholastic year 2024-2025.

Competencies:

Below is a list of competencies for each level which the students are expected to obtain before certification:

MQF Level 1	MQF level 2	MQF level 3
<p>1. Ecological Awareness and Understanding: Understand and recognize that trees and natural habitats provide oxygen, shelter, and food for many species.</p>	<p>1. Ecological Awareness and Understanding: Describe the roles of forests and habitats in maintaining biodiversity, preventing climate change, and supporting local and global ecosystems.</p>	<p>1. Ecological Awareness and Understanding: In a classroom environment analyse how human activities impact forests and ecosystems, evaluating the consequences of deforestation, pollution, invasive alien species (IAS) and habitat loss on biodiversity and the climate.</p>
<p>2. Scientific Enquiry and Critical Thinking: Use simple observation and exploration techniques to identify basic features of ecosystems (e.g., types of leaves, presence of insects, or signs of animal activity).</p>	<p>2. Scientific Enquiry and Critical Thinking: Conduct structured investigations, such as measuring tree growth, testing soil quality, or monitoring biodiversity, to understand how habitats function.</p>	<p>2. Scientific Enquiry and Critical Thinking: Under mentorship apply scientific methods to investigate environmental challenges affecting ecosystems and forests (e.g., climate change impacts, deforestation trends), interpreting results to draw conclusions and propose solutions.</p>
<p>3. Sustainable Decision Making and Problem Solving: Develop simple pro-environmental intents and behaviours (e.g., planting trees, recycling, reducing paper use, avoiding palm oil products) and make small sustainable choices.</p>	<p>3. Sustainable Decision Making and Problem Solving: Evaluate the sustainability of everyday actions (e.g., the impact of palm oil, paper production, and deforestation) and propose school-wide initiatives to reduce negative impacts.</p>	<p>3. Sustainable Decision Making and Problem Solving: Develop and advocate for sustainable action plans addressing forest/ecosystems-related challenges, integrating knowledge from multiple disciplines (science, ethics, social studies) and collaborating with stakeholders to meet national and international targets.</p>

<p>4. Connection to Nature and Well-Being: Engage in outdoor activities that encourage sensory experiences, such as listening to birds, touching tree bark, or exploring different senses in the outdoors.</p>	<p>4. Connection to Nature and Well-Being: Reflect on how spending time in nature benefits mental and physical well-being, creating personal journals or group discussions about acquired experiences.</p>	<p>4. Connection to Nature and Well-Being: Advocate for time in nature as part of a healthy lifestyle and with the help of educators lead outdoor education activities, promoting the benefits of green spaces for mental health and environmental awareness.</p>
<p>5. Community Engagement and Collaboration: Participate in simple group activities such as tree planting or litter clean-ups, learning the importance of teamwork in protecting nature.</p>	<p>5. Community Engagement and Collaboration: Collaborate with classmates and/or local organizations to develop and implement an environmental project related to biodiversity conservation.</p>	<p>5. Community Engagement and Collaboration: Under guidance engage in leadership roles within the school or community to coordinate environmental initiatives (e.g., reforestation campaigns, biodiversity monitoring programs) and present findings to decision-makers.</p>
<p>6. Environmental Advocacy and Communication: Share what they have learned about forests and ecosystems through drawings, simple presentations, or storytelling.</p>	<p>6. Environmental Advocacy and Communication: Create informative content such as posters, videos, or social media campaigns to raise awareness about ecosystems and forests.</p>	<p>6. Environmental Advocacy and Communication: Raising awareness and inspire change for forest and ecosystem protection and climate agency by engaging with stakeholders, policy makers and the wider community.</p>

Learning Outcomes:

The learning outcomes are based on the four pillars of learning: Learning to know, Learning to do, Learning to live together and Learning to be.

Learning to Know			
Suggested Activities	MQF Level 1	MQF Level 2	MQF Level 3
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Committee meetings 2. Debates 3. Data collection using checklists 4. Drafting of action plan 5. Research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can recall the names of some different types of trees, plants, and animals found in local habitats. • I can describe the basic functions of ecosystems (e.g., oxygen production, habitat for wildlife). • I can recall the importance of planting trees both in natural and urban settings. • I can observe and record different aspects of a tree (e.g., leaf shape, tree growth, seasonal changes in leaf colour). • I can describe how pollution and human actions can harm forests. • I can recall that an ecosystem includes all the living things (plants, animals and organisms) in a given area, interacting with each other, and with their non-living environments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can describe the interdependence between different species in different habitats. • I can conduct simple investigations on forest health (e.g., measuring tree growth, checking soil quality). • I can describe different habitats and their characteristics. • I can describe the impact of deforestation on biodiversity and climate change. • I can describe how to use data or field observations to track environmental changes in a habitat. • I can recall sustainable practices that can help conserve ecosystems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can explain the relationship between forests, carbon storage, and climate change. • I can examine the effects of industrial activities (e.g., agriculture, urbanization) on local and global forests and ecosystems. • I can explain the importance of having different indigenous habitats for a more diverse biodiversity. • I can explain the importance of outdoor learning and field studies to propose solutions for conservation of local ecosystems. • In autonomy I can explain the main characteristics of local policies and the targets they address. • I can explain to others and advocate for the conservation of local habitats and ecosystems.

Learning to Do

Suggested Activities	MQF Level 1	MQF Level 2	MQF Level 3
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carrying out environmental audits 2. Environmental activities 3. Drafting of action plan 4. Monitoring and evaluation of environmental action plan 5. Filling of LEAF portfolio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through guided observation, I can identify some of the indigenous flora and fauna found in local habitats. • I can participate in simple environmental actions such as sowing seeds, planting trees/shrubs, cleanups, etc. • I can use basic tools/equipment to collect data to observe and record details about trees and plants in their surroundings. • With assistance I can develop simple actions to implement ecosystem friendly initiatives in my school. • Through outdoor learning I can identify patterns or recurring themes in my observations of environmental issues. • Under mentoring I can develop simple actions into an action plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can design and conduct a simple investigation (e.g., measuring tree height, testing soil pH, tracking litter accumulation) and present my findings. • I can actively participate in a tree-planting or conservation activity, documenting my work and reflecting on its environmental impact. • I can assess the effectiveness of different tools and methods used in my investigation. • I can create a sustainability plan (e.g., reducing paper waste, using recycled materials, composting) and monitor its effectiveness over time. • I can conduct interviews with local experts (e.g., conservationists, farmers) to learn about sustainable ecosystem management and share my findings. • I can create a basic action plan outlining the steps needed to reach my targets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can design and implement a school or community campaign to promote conservation, using social media, presentations, or public outreach activities. • I can conduct an environmental study, analyzing data on species diversity and discuss how climate change may be affecting the ecosystem. • I can critically assess the effectiveness of investigation methods, identifying improvements. • I can design a detailed, evidence-based investigation for a solution, integrating feedback from stakeholders. • I can lead a collaborative project to communicate findings and proposed solutions to a community audience. • I can develop a comprehensive action plan that includes timelines, resources needed, and potential partnerships to address sustainability issues.

Learning to Live Together

Suggested Activities	MQF Level 1	MQF Level 2	MQF Level 3
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teamwork activities 2. Meetings with stakeholders 3. Participation in activities such as tree planting etc. 4. Outings 5. Organizing events 6. Monitoring of action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can identify and describe ways how forests and ecosystems help people live in harmony. • I can participate in a group activity (e.g. collecting seeds, planting a tree or cleanup) and understand the importance of teamwork. • I can respect others' opinions when discussing an issue. • I can listen to others' experiences in nature and compare them to my own, recognizing that people may feel differently about forests and ecosystems. • I can recall the importance of considering multiple perspectives when addressing sustainability issues. • With others I can monitor environmental actions in my school, such as setting up a plant care routine or making posters about tree protection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can research and explain how different groups (e.g., hikers, farmers, businesses, conservationists) use and depend on ecosystems and forests. • I can work in a team to create a school or community-based action plan to reduce environmental pollution, mitigate climate change and address conservation efforts in my community. • I can compare and contrast the viewpoints of different stakeholders and consider possible biases. • I can interact with a local environmental organization, stakeholder, or community leaders to understand real-world conservation efforts. • I can work with others to create a balanced report that incorporates different perspectives on the issue. • I can work with others to set-up and monitor environmental targets based on the committee's action plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can gather first-hand information from different stakeholders with differing viewpoints identifying areas of conflict and cooperation. • I can organize and lead a community event, workshop, or online campaign about the theme being addressed (e.g. bioeconomy, climate change and conservation). • I can assess the social, economic, and cultural implications of proposed solutions for different community groups. • I can negotiate with different entities (e.g., businesses, conservationists, local councils) to reach a balanced, sustainable solution. • I can reflect on how collaboration with diverse groups can improve the outcomes of sustainability projects. • I can work with others to setup and monitor environmental targets based on the committee's action plan and critically discuss the validity of these actions.

Learning to Be			
Suggested Activities	MQF Level 1	MQF Level 2	MQF Level 3
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public speaking events 2. Research 3. LEAF activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can appreciate the time I spend in nature and describe my feelings through words/drawings/etc. • I can appreciate the importance of taking care of forests and ecosystems for the well-being of people and the planet. • I am aware that forests and ecosystems provide clean air, shelter, and food for people and animals, and I can take small actions to protect them. • I can appreciate what I have learned from investigating a sustainability issue. • I can appreciate different viewpoints in order to better understand sustainability issues. • I can appreciate my role in caring for forests and ecosystems and working with others to complete small environmental projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can reflect on my personal connection to the natural environment and discuss how these values influence the way I interact with the environment. • I can set personal sustainability goals and track my progress over time. • I can appreciate the role of local communities, conservationists, and indigenous knowledge in protecting forests and ecosystems. • I can evaluate feedback on my work, identify areas for improvement and set goals to enhance my project. • I am aware of skills I need to strengthen, support and improve my work as a global citizen. • I am aware of how my daily habits, such as paper use and food choices, have an impact at a local and global level, and I can make more sustainable decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can reflect on my personal connection to the environment and on the ethical responsibility I have towards all living creatures. • I can identify a real-world conservation challenge, analyze obstacles, and propose a step-by-step plan to overcome them. • I can critically reflect on the impact of environmental policies and consumer choices on global forests and ecosystems and develop strategies for advocacy. • I can identify skills in which I excel in and use this for future projects. • I can use self-reflection to assess how the project has contributed to my personal growth and values. • I can demonstrate resilience and adaptability by overcoming challenges in planning and implementing a sustainability project.

Student requirements for accreditation:

For students to obtain accreditation, they need to fulfil the following criteria:

1. Students need to be actively involved as LEAF Forest Team members for 30 weeks within a maximum of 1 year.
2. Students need to have experienced the implementation of the LEAF four step pedagogical cycle.
3. Given that accreditation is 2 ECTS, contact time should cover at least 80% of the required 50 hours. Contact time involves committee meetings, outdoor activities, assemblies, school outings (always calculated as 6 hours), research, etc. Sickness covered by medical certificate is considered as attendance.
4. If they have followed the four-step pedagogical cycle of the LEAF programme, students would have automatically acquired basic competences and learning outcomes associated with each level (no ticking is required).

Requirements from link-educators:

Link educators are required to keep records that are a requisite when submitting the school's LEAF portfolio. These include:

1. Student attendance for LEAF committee meetings
2. Meeting minutes
3. A visual indicating the LEAF process –
Look and observe/**E**xplore/**A**nalyse/**F**unction and flourish
4. A soft copy of the action plan
5. A copy of the Forest/Eco-Code
6. Photos from in-house activities or outings

Link educators should have this material readily available for any verifications required by the Accreditation Unit within DQSE. LEAF link teachers (from Nature Trust – FEE Malta) are to be invited to visit the school at least twice over one calendar year to discuss progress.

Applying for accreditation:

First applications for student accreditation will be received with the submission of the LEAF portfolio as from November 2025.

LEAF link educators are to list the student names and surnames who deserve accreditation and indicate at which MQF level each student will be receiving accreditation on the online [LEAF Accreditation Form](#). The form should be submitted by the end of the last week of November. Accreditation certificates will be consequently issued dated December of the same year.

A certificate for each student will be sent as soft copy to the school's official email address as the entity responsible for the validation of the student's work in attaining the accreditation (See Appendix 1).

Students attending middle/secondary schools can also have the LEAF accreditation showing on their Secondary School Certificate Profile (SSC&P). State schools should find the LEAF programme in the drop-down list under the non-formal activity section.

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Nature Trust - FEE (Malta)

This certifies that

_____ has successfully achieved
Non-Formal Award in the Learning about Ecosystems and Forests (LEAF) Programme
Accredited by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education,
Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation
at **MQF Level 1 (2 credits)**

**ECOSYSTEMS
AND FORESTS**



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ACCREDITATION UNIT
Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education
MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION, SPORT, YOUTH,
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

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