

Quality assurance at Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS)

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 MALTA

Timeline



ID number 37574

Background

The Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) is Malta's main tourism and hospitality education institution and the second leading provider of vocational education and training at further and higher education.

The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) (name changed in 2021 to Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)) is responsible for the quality assurance (QA) audits of licensed providers of further and higher education and other forms of External quality assurance (EQA) to support the continuous improvement of the sector, to ensure compliance with regulations and to monitor the fulfilment of national education targets.

In 2015, the EQA reviewed the internal QA system of the ITS, for the first time, and assessed it against 11 standards. The report concluded that the provider required improvements in almost all the standards and provided a number of recommendations about how to improve them and promote good practice.

The panel pointed out that the EQA review of ITS took place under exceptional circumstances. At the time of the review the institute had found itself in a transient phase and was about to reinvent itself in almost all aspects of its operations. Practically all key academic and administrative leadership positions were being recruited and new strategic plans for the ensuing years were still being negotiated.

The staff members expressed their commitment to contributing to a brighter future of ITS and endorsed the change proposals and recommendations.

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Objectives

To implement plans for action to carry out the recommended improvements and ensure that:

- (a) all vacant senior and middle management positions within ITS are reviewed for fitness for purpose and filled in;
- (b) the Internal Quality Assurance Committee (IQAC) or equivalent becomes a statutory entity with dedicated financial and human resources;
- (c) the statutory relationship between the board of governors, the board of studies, the programme quality validation board and the IQAC or equivalent is clarified to ensure fitness for purposes, appropriate governance and due process;
- (d) ITS develops effective communication systems between all structures, levels and stakeholders of the institution.

ITS develops effective financial management procedures and structures to ensure that its budget is properly used.

Description

The QA procedures in ITS have undergone significant changes since 2015 when the first external audit took place. A law revising ITS regulation, coming into force in 2017, contributed to the review of the quality procedures. ITS reviewed its QA manual three times. This third version recognises the responsibility of the institute according to the new legislation and broadens the provision for engagement with external partners and industrial professionals. The processes in this QA manual are designed to inform each other by providing a body of evidence which is updated and deliberated through academic teams, committees and any other working groups as deemed necessary.

Its reviewed quality assurance strategic framework delineates the implementation of the following 11 quality standards as specified by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE):

- (a) policies and practices, that include the quality assurance policy and the level of engagement with industry;
- (b) institutional probity;
- (c) design and approval of study programmes according to industry requirements;
- (d) learner-centred learning, teaching and assessment;

- (e) learner admission, progression, recognition and certification;
- (f) recruitment, competence and continuous development of teaching staff;
- (g) learning resources and learner support;
- (h) information management;
- (i) public information;
- (j) continuous monitoring and periodic review of programmes;
- (k) cyclical external quality assurance.

The QA policy envisages putting in place an IQAC by the board of governors 'to establish internal quality assurance schemes as required by this act or by any regulation made thereunder and required auditing procedures for the operations of the institute' (L.N. Chapter 566, functions and power of board of governors, art. 10 (15)). The IQAC serves both the purpose of internal auditing and ensures that ITS meets the recommendations and stipulations as required by an external audit.

The IQAC is responsible for institutional audits, based on 11 standards, with special focus on the attainment of the mission and vision of the institution, the system capacity and the ITS programmes. It has to forward monthly reports of its findings and observations to the board of governors and chief executive officer.

2015 Implementation

In May 2015, NCFHE's QA committee carried out its first external audit of the Institute of Tourism Studies in line with the requirements of the National QA framework.

2016 Implementation

ITS became regulated by a new Law: Chapter 566, Institute of Tourism Studies Act, enacted in November 2016. The new Law affected QA procedures.

2017 Implementation

Discussions between NCFHE and ITS in preparation for the full, second self-assessment report that ITS submitted to the NCFHE in 2018.

2018 Implementation

Implementation started.

2019 Implementation

In March 2019, ITS published the third version of its QA manual that recognises the responsibility of the institute according to the new legislation and broadens the provision for engagement with external partners and industrial professionals. An internal quality assurance committee (IQAC) is put in place by the board of governors. The IQAC or equivalent becomes a statutory entity with dedicated financial and human resources.

2020 Implementation

During 2020, the Institute of Tourism Studies quality assurance manual, Version 3, was revamped with the objective of publishing the fourth edition of the manual in 2021. The new edition recognises the responsibility of the Institute according to the Institute of Tourism Act Cap. 566 of the Laws of Malta and broadens the provision for engagement with external partners and industrial professionals.

2021 Implementation

In February 2021, version 4 of the quality assurance manual was published. This revision aimed to further align the Institute's QA processes with legislative

requirements and to enhance collaboration with external stakeholders.

2022 Implementation

The measure was operational and ran as regular practice.

2023 Implementation

In 2023, ITS was subject to two external quality assurance audits by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA). A quality audit was undertaken in July 2023, this being a comprehensive audit examining the overall quality assurance mechanisms at ITS, as well as a programme audit in November, which evaluated specific programmes offered by ITS.

2024 Implementation

In 2024, the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) in Malta has attained self-accrediting status up to level seven of the European/Maltese Qualifications Framework (EQF/MQF), allowing it to independently accredit its own bachelor's and master's degree programmes. This achievement elevates ITS's previous self-accrediting authority from MQF level five to level seven.

2025 Implementation

In 2025, ITS expanded its self-accreditation rights up to Master's level under the Maltese qualifications framework, and in line with the new national accreditation requirements by MFHEA. Throughout this year, active internal quality systems were in place.

Bodies responsible

- Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS)
- Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)
- National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) (until 2021)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Adult learners

Education professionals

Teachers
Trainers
School leaders

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Further developing national quality assurance systems

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Laws of Malta.\(2016\).Institute of Tourism Studies Act](#)

[Laws of Malta. \(2012\).Further and Higher Education \(Licensing, Accreditation and Quality Assurance\) Regulations](#)

[Malta Further and Higher Education Authority.\(n.d.\).External quality assurance](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) international cooperation in further and higher education

The rationale for ITS international collaboration efforts and activities is that the cooperation with top international universities and institutions provides students with the possibility to graduate from a reputable institute and also get the opportunity to study for a period of time within the

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Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

The National quality assurance framework

The National quality assurance framework for further and higher education was launched in 2015, covering upper secondary and higher VET (IVET) including work-based learning (WBL), CVET as well as other types of further, higher and adult formal education offered by State and private providers.

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Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

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