

The National quality assurance framework



Timeline



ID number 28420

Background

In accordance with the Legal Notice No 296 of 2012, the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) (name changed in 2021 to Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)) acts as the external verifier for VET providers.

Objectives

To provide guidance to education institutions that adopt internal and external quality assurance (QA) in order to enhance the learning outcomes provided through their educational programmes.

Description

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. The framework implements legal provisions on internal quality assurance and periodic external quality audits (every five years) and provides the conceptual context for this work. It is based on the European standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the quality cycle and the European quality assurance in vocational education and training (EQAVET) indicators.

- (a) the NCFHE ensures that all further and higher academic and VET institutions have a clear internal quality assurance system in place and self-assess their performance periodically. Accreditation, initial and follow-up external quality audits of providers and programmes by NCFHE are mandatory requirements for licensing;
- (b) guidelines and quality standards at VET provider level are used to promote a culture of continuous improvement. As a result, quality culture in Malta is a combination of internal QA mechanisms and an external QA system adapted to national and stakeholder needs;
- (c) the same principles that apply to IVET on evaluation and review of VET providers are also applicable to CVET;

- (d) the national approach to quality assurance in VET includes a system that collects information on IVET graduates. In the official manual for quality assurance at VET provider level, one of the indicators follows up students and their transition to work. Information is collected by VET providers who forward their data to the NCFHE. VET providers use the information to introduce new VET programmes that tackle skills gaps identified by the industry. The NCFHE also collects information through the graduate tracer study, the employee skills survey (which collects evidence about the number of employees in different sectors);
- (e) the Education Act empowers the NCFHE to collect data both from public and private education providers.

2015 Approved/Agreed

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

Also, in 2015, Jobsplus carried out the employability index study (which identifies students that may be at a risk of underemployment due to mismatch between their educational attainment and current occupation).

2018 Implementation

In 2018, following the adoption of the proposal to establish regular graduate tracking in Europe, the European Commission commissioned the EUROGRADUATE pilot project.

2019 Implementation

Every year the NCFHE collects the annual student headcount statistics from further and higher education providers in Malta. This data collection provides insights into student enrolments in further and higher education in addition to providing added data on graduates who complete their studies in that year.

The EUROGRADUATE pilot project, seeks to investigate the feasibility of establishing a European graduate tracking survey. The pilot study was conducted in eight countries: Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Malta and Norway. The NCFHE is responsible for implementing the study in Malta.

2020 Implementation

In September 2020 the NCFHE completed the EUROGRADUATE report for Malta.

The NCFHE has been nominated as national expert for the EC funded project for capacity building for a European graduate tracking initiative in higher education (EAC-2020-0312).

The overall objective of this project is to support the European Commission's effort in designing, coordinating, implementing, monitoring and helping the EU and European Economic Area countries to build their capacities to prepare the ground for a European graduate tracking mechanism in higher education.

This capacity building intends to contribute to achieving the objectives of the Council recommendation on tracking graduates, and will be implemented in close cooperation with the countries concerned. The contract has several key tasks:

- (a) Task 1: Provide a baseline analysis of capacity shortages in individual countries (July-September 2020);
- (b) Task 2: Produce tailor-made strategic roadmaps for meeting capacity requirements in individual countries (September-December 2020);
- (c) Task 3: Implement the roadmaps in beneficiary countries (January-December 2021);

(d) Task 4: Final assessment of the state of readiness for a European graduate tracking mechanism (January-April 2022).

From January 2021 the NCFHE is participating in the project with its new name (i.e. as Malta's Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)).

2021 Implementation

Further to the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority's (MFHEA) participation in the Eurograduate pilot project, in 2021 it also committed to participated in the second phase of the European pilot survey of higher education graduates, the Eurograduate project, with its new name [i.e. as Malta's Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)].

In June 2021, MFHEA published the *Guidelines for external quality assurance audits of further education institutions and further education centres*, intended to support such entities in preparing for the external quality assurance (EQA) audits conducted by the MFHEA.

In addition, the MFHEA published the *National action plan for quality assurance development in Malta*, further to the Erasmus+ project *Supporting European QA agencies in meeting the ESG* (ESG stands for Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA).

2022 Implementation

Data collection for the Eurograduate 2022 project started in November 2022. Given that the number of annual graduates in Malta is under 30 000, it was feasible to carry out Eurograduate 2022 in the form of a census among graduates.

In December 2022, the MFHEA published a report on the *Implementation of quality assurance in VET institutions - a manual for VET providers*. This document was a result of the process initiated by the MFHEA on the updating of the 2013 *Implementation of quality assurance in VET institutions manual*, which was produced as a result of the EQAVET Malta project *Quality assurance tool for VET*.

2023 Implementation

Data collection for Eurograduate 2022 continued in 2023.

Further to MFHEA's participation in the Erasmus+ project *Support to the European quality assurance in VET (EQAVET) national reference points (NRPs)*, the *National handbook for VET providers* was published. The main aim of this handbook is to guide VET institutions on how to improve their quality assurance system (QAS) and enhance a quality culture in their organisations as well as to support them in carrying out internal assessments and evaluations as self-assessment, internal quality assurance audit, and collecting feedback from their stakeholders on a regular basis.

In August 2023, MFHEA also published the *Statistics and analysis of licensed providers in Malta* based on EQAVET indicators, with the reference academic year 2020/21.

In November 2023, MFHEA released the *Employer survey analysis* report. This report is the result of an MFHEA-initiated research project, as part of the National VET team-Annual activity planning co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme. The research was aimed at collecting and analysing data from employers to identify key challenges faced by businesses. Employers provided information on skills gaps, skills shortages and other issues in the labour market, what action they are taking to address these, and the need for upskilling and reskilling in various sectors of the national workforce and in their own entities, along with measures instituted to ensure quality in work-based learning. Employers also gave their views on current education provision, including vocational education and training, work-based learning and ways to strengthen collaboration between the MFHEA, education providers and employers to promote a mindset of lifelong learning, enhance quality in education and work-based

learning, and shape courses based on real market needs.

Finally, the MFHEA published its *Quality Assurance development plan*, thereby outlining the goals and objectives for development for 2023 up to 2025.

2024 Implementation

In March 2024, the Eurograduate 2022 country report on Malta was published.

2025 Implementation

A new round of the project, EUROGRADUATE 2026, has started in September 2025

Bodies responsible

- Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)
- National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) (until 2021)

Target group

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Further developing national quality assurance systems

Establishing and developing skills intelligence systems

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[MFHEA legislation](#)

[MFHEA website external audits webpage](#)

[Annual statistics webpage](#)

[EUROGRADUATE report: Malta](#)

[The National quality assurance framework for further and higher education \(2015\)](#)

[Guidelines for external quality assurance audits of further education institutions and further education centres](#)

[National action plan for quality assurance development in Malta](#)

[Eurograduate 2022: Country report on Malta](#)

[Implementation of QA in VET institutions - a manual for VET providers](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Quality assurance at Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS)

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.

 MALTA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2021 Completed

Establishing the learning outcomes approach in curricula

The compulsory education system has reviewed all its curricula in terms of learning outcomes and will be introducing them as from the academic year 2019-20.

 MALTA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

2025 Implementation

The National Skills Council (NSC)

In November 2016, a National Skills Council (NSC) was set up to establish the institutional framework for the anticipation of skills needs in Malta. The NSC is made up of representatives from:

 MALTA

Type of development

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2017 Completed

National employee skills survey

The NCFHE, together with Jobsplus (the successor to the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC)) and Malta Enterprise, embarked on a 2014-16 research project funded by Erasmus+ on skill needs and supply and the demand for workers in the labour market in Malta.

 MALTA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) internal quality review

MCAST internal quality reviews follow NCFHE's internal QA standards and the National qualifications framework (NQF). MCAST also participates in all data collection processes carried out by NCFHE.

 MALTA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). The National quality assurance framework: Malta. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28420>

