

External Quality Assurance Audit Report



National Commission for
**Further and
Higher Education**
Malta

Nefertiti Beauty

Academy

Carried out between the 2nd &
3rd December 2019.

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Abbreviations List

ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EQA audit	External Quality Assurance Audit
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
MQF	Malta Qualifications Framework
NCFHE	National Commission for Further and Higher Education
NQAF	National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Section A: Background

This report is a result of the External Quality Assurance process undertaken by an independent peer review panel. The panel evaluated the documentation submitted by the educational institution and conducted an on-site audit visit. The panel was responsible for giving judgement on Standards 1 and 3 – 11. As outlined in the External Quality Audit Manual of Procedures, the NCFHE sought external expertise to evaluate and give judgement on Standard 2. Through this report, the panel also highlighted areas of good practice, which in view of an NCFHE peer review panel, make a positive contribution to academic standards and quality and are worthy of being emulated and disseminated more widely.

1.1.1 The Peer Review Panel

The Peer Review Panel was composed of:

Chair of Panel: Ms Desiree Scicluna Bugeja

External Peers: Ms Claire Anne Gauci

Student Peer Reviewer: Ms Tiziana Gatt

QA Managers (NCFHE): Ms Sibby Xuereb & Mr Jurgen Damato

1.1.2 Specific Terms of Reference and Main Lines of Inquiry

The general terms of reference of the panel were to review the fitness of purpose and adequateness of the internal quality assurance processes implemented by the Academy against the Standards outlined in the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education.

After the initial documentation review and the preliminary meeting with the provider held on Wednesday 6th November 2019, the panel followed two main areas of inquiry namely:

- a. The quality of the teaching, learning and assessment provided by the small educational institution and the voluntary tutors at the Academy.
- b. The level of adequacy and efficiency of internal and external quality systems.

1.2 Section B: Key Findings, Judgements and Recommendations

1.2.1 Standard 1 - Policy for Quality Assurance

Summary of Main Findings

1. The Academy is run by professional voluntary tutors highly committed to support the

- development and upskilling of professionals within the beauty/fitness industry.
2. Any QA procedures and docs are solely based on the parent provider (ITEC) systems.

Good Practice Identified

1. The EQA Visit report by ITEC external examiner is taken on board by Academy Hol.

Judgment

Requires improvement to meet Standard.

Recommendations

1. Develop and formulate QA policy and procedures aligned to ITEC QA policy however tailor-made to the Academy.
2. Engage internal and external stakeholders in dialogue related to the Academy's quality objectives, systems, procedures and implementation.

1.2.2 Standard 2 - Institutional Probity

Summary of Main Findings

The Nefertiti Beauty Academy is the trade name under which the owner-manager of this training organization operates. This business was taken over in June 2018 by Ms Jessica Vella who is the principal and main tutor in the ITEC approved courses provided by same entity. Ms Vella is a qualified, INFA aesthetician, ITEC therapist and a qualified ITEC tutor.

Ms Vella is the sole employee of the company and handles the education and administrative affairs of the business, which is currently adhering to its fiscal, FSS/NIC and employment obligations in line with current legislation. The business is rendering a profit to its owner. Given the small size of the business, it is wholly dependent on the continued support in terms of finance and operational capability of the owner-manager. Hence the business' ability to deal with unprecedented and unpredictable circumstances and to continue in operation and implement its plans, is wholly dependent on the owner-manager's intentions and clout. Given the size and furthermore the unincorporated nature of the business, they did not deal with the adequacy of policies relevant to fitness as to the appointment of staff nor with those relating to the selection of staff occupying headship positions.

From a financial perspective, the business is still a small operation and is therefore inherently reliant on the continued support of its ultimate beneficial owner, that is its owner-manager. Thus, it would be advisable for the owner-manager to regularly prepare, monitor and update financial budgets for the business, which would be in turn based on a set number of targets against which to monitor actual performance.

Good Practice Identified

N/A

Judgement

Meets Standard 2.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the owner-manager prepares regular financial budgets, based on a set number of operational targets, against which to monitor performance.

1.2.3 Standard 3 - Design and Approval of Programmes

Summary of Main Findings

1. All courses offered by Nefertiti Academy are ITEC certified.
2. The course design and development are the responsibility of ITEC with minimal input from the local Academy.

Good Practice Identified

1. The HoI manages to adapt and facilitate the course content to make it relevant to the local context without infringing the course design and content.

Judgment

Meets Standard 3.

Recommendations

1. Establish systemic compilation of feedback from internal and external stakeholders regarding curriculum design and development.
2. Communicate formal feedback pertaining to curriculum design and development with parent provider ITEC.

1.2.4 Standard 4 - Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Summary of Main Findings

1. The Academy provides adequate professional training in ITEC courses by adhering to the guidelines of the course while supplementing the teaching/learning process with adequate teaching resources and assessment tools.

Good Practice Identified

1. HoI and other voluntary tutors provide excellent individual attention to all course participants.
1. Multiple assessment modes are employed by HoI/voluntary tutors to facilitate learning/understanding and achievement.
2. Learners are engaged in self and peer assessment during practical sessions against

established assessment criteria.

Judgement

Meets Standard 4.

Recommendations

1. Establish internal verification procedures for all assessment tasks.
2. Formalise internal verification processes through documented evidence.

1.2.5 Standard 5 - Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

Summary of Main Findings

1. The HoI holds one-to-one meetings with potential learners prior to admission/registration to ensure learners will benefit from the course applied for.

Good Practice Identified

1. Each interested applicant receives complete course information including the student agreement document and handbook prior to registration. This renders the process highly transparent with no hidden agendas.
2. HoI personally guides potential course applicants on an individual level, especially in cases where applicants apply for multiple courses.

Judgement

Meets Standard 5.

Recommendations

1. Courses offered by Nefertiti Beauty Academy are to be aligned to the equivalent ECTS.

1.2.6 Standard 6 - Teaching Staff

Summary of Main Findings

1. The Academy is currently run by two voluntary tutors (including the HoI).
2. Teacher monitoring is held through an observation by an external ITEC evaluator and during informal observations of voluntary tutors by HoI. However, observation of HoI does not take place.
3. No continuous professional development courses by parent provider are available. Top-up courses for ITEC tutors are currently not available.

Good Practice Identified

1. Industry experience of both voluntary tutors provides Academy learners with a strong alignment to an authentic local work context.

Judgement

Meets Standard 6.

Recommendations

1. Formal tutor observation is highly recommended (through use of checklists and adequate verbal and non-verbal feedback). This process needs to be formal, regular and consistent.
2. Professional development of tutors re pedagogy/assessment etc. is highly recommended.

1.2.7 Standard 7 - Learning Resources and Student Support

Summary of Main Findings

1. The students' access to online material available through hyperlinks in their textbooks provide learners with additional material and support.
2. The learners are individually supported by HoI throughout their course of studies.

Good Practice Identified

1. Lesson schedule is adapted to learners' availability.
2. Easy flexible payment schemes available to learners.

Judgement

Needs improvement to meet the Standard 7.

Recommendations

1. Explore ways to upgrade current available resources such as Wi-Fi availability and library access.
2. Plan future premises upgrade to ensure improved access facilities.

1.2.8 Standard 8 - Information Management

Summary of Main Findings

1. The Academy keeps the necessary records of student and assessment info.
2. No formal system to manage student feedback is in place. Current questionnaire is available yet unused so far.
3. No systemic student tracking process is in place.

Good Practice Identified

N/A

Judgement

Meets Standard 8

Recommendation

1. Establish formal ways of gathering and recording student feedback.
2. Establish formal systems for tracking student participation and progression.

1.2.9 Standard 9 - Public Information

Summary of Main Findings

1. The current Academy website includes all the relevant information, however, it needs to be revamped/redesigned to allow ongoing update.

Good Practice Identified

N/A

Judgement

Meets Standard 9.

Recommendations

1. The prompt restructuring of the current website is highly recommended.
2. Communication re course ECTS/ECVET equivalence to learners is highly recommended.

1.2.10 Standard 10 - On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes

Summary of Main Findings

1. The Academy lacks an internal systemic procedure for on-going monitoring and periodic review of course programmes.

Good Practice Identified

1. The ITEC EQA Visit report provides adequate feedback regarding strengths and areas for improvement related to the delivery of specific courses.

Judgement

Requires improvement to meet Standard 10.

Recommendation

1. Development of internal systemic procedure for on-going monitoring and periodic review of course programmes that takes on board stakeholders' feedback.

1.2.11 Standard 11 - Cyclical External Quality Assurance

Judgement

Meets Standard 11.

Recommendation

1. Establish on-going structures/systems for compilation of data relevant to the external audit to facilitate future cyclical EQA.

2. About the External Quality Audit

2.1 Introduction

The External Quality Assurance audit is a tool for both development and accountability. The QA audit shall ensure that the internal quality management system of the provider is:

- fit for purpose according to the provider's courses and service users;
- compliant with standards and regulations and contributing to the development of a national quality culture;
- contributing to the fulfilment of the broad goals of Malta's Education Strategy 2014-24;
- implemented with effectiveness, comprehensiveness and sustainability.

2.2 Reviewers

Evaluation subject	Nefertiti Beauty Academy	
Peer Panel Members	External Peers: Ms Desiree Scicluna Bugeja (Chairperson) Ms Claire Anne Gauci (Peer Reviewer) Student Peer Reviewer: Ms Tiziana Gatt QA Managers (NCFHE): Mr Jurgen Damato Ms Sibby Xuereb	
Timeline	Dates 17 th September 2019 6 th November 2019 18 th November 2019 2 nd /3 rd December 2019	Milestone Induction meeting Preliminary provider meeting Pre-audit panel meeting On-site audit visit

2.3 Institutional Context

Nefertiti Beauty Academy was founded in 1996 by three females, and at a later stage one of the founders was the sole proprietor of the Academy. In June 2018, the Academy was acquired by Ms Jessica Vella, an alumni student of the Academy. Ms. Vella is both the proprietor and the principal of the Academy - she is a qualified INFA aesthetician, ITEC therapist and a qualified and approved ITEC tutor.

The Academy's mission is to provide learners updated knowledge and techniques related to the rapidly evolving industry of beauty and well-being. Nefertiti Beauty Academy was licensed as a Further Education Institution by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) in 2014, License number: 2008-TC-005. The Academy delivers a range of ITEC accredited courses. The courses are aimed at learners who wish to upskill their competences in the field and/or who aim to start a career in the sector.

The range of ITEC accredited courses offered depends on the demand. Courses run once a year over a 9-month period extending from September/October to May/June. Each course includes a theory based and a practical component. Upon course completion learners sit for an international ITEC exam against a fee. The Diploma Courses offered by the Academy are eligible for the Training Pays Scheme, whereby applicants will be reimbursed 75% of the total payment of the course upon successfully achieving the qualification. Currently only three courses are offered at the Academy namely, Diploma in Holistic Massage, Diploma in Reflexology and Diploma in Sports Massage. The parent provider (ITEC) conducts regular external evaluation audit site visits specific to the range of courses. During the external audit visit, the External Quality Assurer verifies the assessment process, and compiles information relating to the findings from the visit, so that an EQA report will be produced.

The courses are run by two voluntary tutors (including the Head of Institution) who are highly committed and professional in their lecturing duties. The HoI also holds a number of administrative roles.

2.4 General Terms of Reference, Aims and Objectives of the EQA

Quality assurance in Malta is underpinned by six principles that determine the remit and function of the *National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education*, and the relationship between internal and external quality assurance to enhance learning outcomes.

- i. The Framework is based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and enriched by the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) perspective.
- ii. The Framework contributes to a National Culture of Quality, through:
 - increased agency, satisfaction and numbers of service users,
 - an enhanced international profile and credibility of providers in Malta,
 - the promotion of Malta as a regional provider of excellence in further and higher

education.

- iii. The Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) is fit for purpose.
- iv. The External Quality Assurance (QA audit) is a tool for both development and accountability. The QA audit shall ensure that the internal quality management system of the provider is:
 - fit for purpose according to the provider's courses and service users,
 - compliant with Standards and regulations and contributing to the development of a national quality culture,
 - contributing to the fulfilment of the broad goals of Malta's Education Strategy 2014-24,
 - Implemented with effectiveness, comprehensiveness and sustainability.
- v. The Quality Improvement Cycle is at the heart of the Framework.
- vi. The integrity and independence of the QA audit process is guaranteed.

The QA audit provides public assurance about the Standards of further and higher education programmes and the quality of the learning experience of students. It presents an opportunity for providers to demonstrate that they adhere to the expectations of stakeholders with regard to the programmes of study that they offer and the achievements and capabilities of students. It also provides a focus for identifying good practices and for the implementation of institutional approaches to the continuous improvement in the quality of educational provision.

NCFHE has a responsibility to ensure that a comprehensive assessment is conducted for all higher education providers in Malta. The QA audit provides an opportunity to assess the Standards and quality of higher education in Malta against the expectations and practices of provision across the European Higher Education Area, and internationally.

The QA audit examines how providers manage their own responsibilities for the quality and Standards of the programmes they offer. In particular, the following issues are addressed:

- The fitness for purpose and effectiveness of internal quality assurance processes, including an examination of the systems and procedures that have been implemented and the documentation that supports them.
- The compliance with the obligations of licence holders with established regulations and any conditions or restrictions imposed by NCFHE.
- The governance and financial sustainability of providers, including assurances about the legal status of the provider, the appropriateness of corporate structures and the competence of staff with senior management responsibilities.

The QA audit benchmarks the QA system and procedures within an institution against eleven (11) Standards:

1. Policy for quality assurance: entities shall have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management.
2. Institutional and financial probity: entities shall ensure that they have appropriate measures and procedures in place to ensure institutional and financial probity.
3. Design and approval of programmes: self-accrediting providers shall have appropriate processes for the design and approval of their programmes of study.

4. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment: entities shall ensure that programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in the learning process.
5. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification: entities shall consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student 'life-cycle'.
6. Teaching staff: entities shall assure the competence and effectiveness of their teaching staff.
7. Learning resources and student support: entities shall have appropriate funding for their learning and teaching activities and sufficient learning resources to fully support the students' learning experiences.
8. Information management: entities shall ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.
9. Public information: entities shall publish information about their activities which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible.
10. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes: entities shall implement the 'Quality Cycle' by monitoring and periodically reviewing their programmes to ensure their continuing fitness for purpose.
11. Cyclical external quality assurance: entities should undergo external quality assurance, approved by NCFHE, at least once every five years.

Peer-review panels essentially ask providers the following question about their arrangements for quality management:

'What systems and procedures are in place and what evidence is there that they are working effectively?'

The approach to quality assurance can be encapsulated in a number of key questions which providers should ask themselves about their management of quality.

- What are we trying to do?
- Why are we trying to do it?
- How are we trying to do it?
- Why are we doing it that way?
- Is this the best way of doing it?
- How do we know it works?
- Could it be done better?

Answers to these questions should form the basis of the provider's critical assessment of and response to the self-evaluation questionnaire.

The approach of QA audit is not simply about checking whether providers adhere to the regulations; it examines how providers are developing their own systems in addressing the expectations of sound management of educational Standards and the quality of their learning and teaching provision. It does not involve the routine identification and confirmation of criteria -- a 'tick-box' approach -- but a mature and reflective dialogue with providers about the ways in which they discharge their obligations for quality and the identification of existing good practices.

2.5 Specific Terms of Reference and Research Questions

Nefertiti Beauty Academy offers a range of 16 ITEC qualifications. The main lines of inquiry of this EQA were to establish the adequateness and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes implemented by the provider. Focus on the set-up and structure of the quality management system, documentation, recording and review was prioritised.

The panel discloses recommendations aligned to the different management and operations procedures of the Academy. The report puts forward a number of key recommendations that need to be implemented promptly to address the areas for improvement. The report also highlights other recommendations to facilitate further improvement and development.

3. Analysis and Findings of Panel

3.1 Standard 1: Policy for Quality Assurance

Policy for quality assurance: entities shall have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management.

Main findings

Nefertiti Beauty Academy offers ITEC approved courses that are internationally recognised. The courses offered range from beauty courses such as Diploma for Health Specialists, Diploma in Laser and IPL, Diploma in Body treatments to courses in well-being such as Diploma in Holistic Massage and Diploma in Sports Massage.

The Academy's Mission Statement (*The School's Mission is to provide students with the latest knowledge and techniques demanded by this fast and growing industry of beauty and well-being. We train students to be professional and ethical individuals and to achieve their biggest possible goals. We strive to help students prepare for real world situations, be it through the utilisation of techniques, ethical approaches and client management. All services offered by Nefertiti Beauty Academy to students are lifelong, whether they need help in the near future or in five years, we try our best to give them the help they need to succeed.*) is clear and focused. During the audit visit, the panel observed that the HoI is the only person in control of all operational and academic aspects of the Academy. Indeed, the educational functions of the Academy depend almost entirely on the HoI (and partially on one other volunteer tutor). The academy has limited personnel and largely depends on voluntary tutoring. Currently the HoI is considering long-term plans for expanding the premises and the courses offered. However, no formal business plans are in place for such development.

The panel strongly recommends that the Academy identifies contingency plans to ensure continuity in case HoI or volunteer tutor or both are unable to continue with their teaching commitment. The HoI also conducts a range of other roles from contacting students, managing Academy accounts, updating social media and other promotional material, scheduling lectures, compiling tests/mock exams, holding meetings as requested. The panel observed that the Academy set up is small, yet acknowledges the highly committed and determined service being provided by the volunteers. Indeed, the panel observed the high level of professionalism by both HoI and the other volunteer tutor. However, the panel also notes that the training across most courses should not be loaded onto one person, namely the HoI. The roles of HoI need to be distributed to other potential recruited personnel/tutors.

The panel notes that the Academy aligns its QA procedures to the Quality Assurance procedures of the parent provider i.e. ITEC. The ITEC QA Policy document is published on the Academy's website. Furthermore, a number of procedures and practices are merged into the Nefertiti Beauty Academy Students Charter. Indeed, the Students Charter forms a key element of the Academy's regulatory framework. The purpose of the Charter document is to promote a clear statement of the ways in which staff and students can enhance and support the learning and research experience of the Academy. The panel observes that a number of quality assurance processes are still in developmental stage. The panel considers that together with the input of the internal and external

stakeholders, inclusive Academy policies and procedures related to quality assurance still need to be developed and advanced. Indeed, the panel also points out that the documents submitted by the Academy do not refer to any procedures for internal review of QA. The panel thus recommends that internal auditing processes are introduced within the Academy to ensure that QA structures and policies are adhered to.

Good Practice Identified

1. Nefertiti Beauty Academy is run by voluntary professional practitioners from the beauty industry to nurture the next generation of professional beauty therapists.
2. The Nefertiti Beauty Academy voluntary personnel are highly committed to their students' well-being and learning.
3. The Students Charter document is highly adequate to provide learners transparent and holistic information about all procedures within the Academy.

Overall judgement for Standard

Requires improvement to meet Standard 1.

Recommendations for improvement

1. **Key Recommendation:** The Academy is expected to compile a QA policy and procedure document to ensure IQA practices are in place by the end of 2020.
2. **Key Recommendation:** The Academy is expected to engage internal and external stakeholders in IQA practices and procedures.
3. **Key Recommendation:** The Academy is expected to plan and develop a contingency plan for potential temporary or long-term absence of voluntary staff.

3.2 Standard 2: Institutional Probity

Institutional and financial probity: entities shall ensure that they have appropriate measures and procedures in place to ensure institutional and financial probity.

Main findings

The Nefertiti Beauty Academy is the trade name under which the owner-manager of this training organization operates. This business was taken over in June 2018 by Ms Jessica Vella who is the principal and main tutor in the ITEC approved courses provided by same entity. Ms Vella is a qualified INFA aesthetician, ITEC therapist and a qualified ITEC tutor.

Ms Vella is the sole employee of the company and handles the education and administrative affairs of the business, which is currently adhering to its fiscal, FSS/NIC and employment obligations in line with current legislation. The business is rendering a profit to its owner. Given the small size of the business, it is wholly dependent on the continued support in terms of finance and operational

capability of the owner-manager. Hence the business' ability to deal with unpredicted circumstances and to continue its operations and implement its plans, is wholly dependent on the owner-manager's intentions and clout. Given the size and furthermore the unincorporated nature of the business, we did not deal with the adequacy of policies relative to fitness as to the appointment of staff nor with those relating to the selection of staff occupying head positions.

From a financial perspective the business is still a small operation and is therefore inherently reliant on the continued support of its ultimate beneficial owner, that is its owner-manager. Thus it would be advisable for the owner-manager to regularly prepare, monitor and update financial budgets for the business, which would be in turn based on a set number of targets against which to monitor actual performance.

Good Practice Identified

N/A

Overall judgement for Standard

Meets Standard 2.

Recommendations for improvement

1. It is recommended that owner-manager prepares regular financial budgets, based on a set number of operational targets, against which to monitor performance.

3.3 Standard 3: Design and Approval of Programmes

Design and approval of programmes: self-accrediting providers shall have appropriate processes for the design and approval of their programmes of study.

Main findings

The Academy delivers solely ITEC courses that are designed, planned and developed by the parent provider itself. ITEC provides leading international qualifications specialising in beauty and well-being within approved centres like the Nefertiti Beauty Academy.

The course description syllabus document for each course provided by the parent provider is detailed and includes information related to Learning Outcomes, Assessment Criteria and Taught Content to be included. The content included within the Course specification document is not prescriptive or exhaustive. However, it is intended to provide helpful guidance to both tutors and learners about key areas to be covered within the course, including the kind of evidence that should be provided for each assessment objective aligned to the learning outcomes.

The HoI informed the panel that she keeps regular monitoring of any updates from the parent provider pertaining to any courses offered by Academy. Such updates are uploaded on the official ITEC website.

The HoI also stipulated that there are limited opportunities to contribute to the ITEC course development/enhancement. The HoI mentioned that she collates verbal feedback from learners and tutors and periodically forwards it by email to the parent provider. However, the audit panel notes that this practice is sporadic and limited in nature.

The audit panel reviewed communication that HoI forwarded to the parent provider following the ITEC examinations in June 2019. Amongst other points, the communication stressed that the choice of a local Maltese ITEC trainee examiner is considered unethical by the Academy as the selected person has a Beauty School of her own. This practice has been rectified by parent provider following the June 2019 exam sessions.

Notwithstanding that the course design and development is strictly conducted by ITEC personnel, the audit panel observes that the HoI and the other voluntary tutor are highly competent and professional in this area of study, thus facilitating the interpretation of ITEC Curriculum documents to suit the local industry context.

Good practice identified

N/A

Overall judgement for Standard

Meets Standard 3.

Recommendations for improvement

1. Establish systemic procedures to collate feedback regarding course design and development that engage learners and tutors and forward such feedback to the ITEC parent provider on a regular basis.
2. The Academy is to ensure that the ECTS/ECVET equivalence for each course/programme as this would provide clarity for student progression, both internally and, when progressing at other educational institutions.

3.4 Standard 4: Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment: entities shall ensure that programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in the learning process.

Main findings

The course programmes stipulated by ITEC contribute to the quality assurance of the teaching and learning process. Indeed, the Programme Unit Specification document for each course identifies specific learning outcomes assessment criteria and detailed taught content. The content included within the Unit Specification is not prescribed or exhaustive, however, it provides helpful guidance to both tutor/s and learners, specifying key areas to be covered within

the unit. It also relates to the evidence that should be provided for each assessment objective specific to the unit learning outcomes. Lecturers are ITEC approved. Both HoI and the voluntary tutor prepare related lesson plans and all relevant teaching resources on the basis of the Unit Specification document. The HoI mentioned that a brief quiz is used after each lecture to summarize the lecture content/concepts. The course delivery and assessment are aligned to set ITEC standards. The HoI and voluntary tutor facilitate student participation and engagement through the preparation of power point presentations and student notes. Both lecturers also seek to gauge learners' understanding through adequate questioning and use of case studies. Since the learners are often mature adults (potentially already working in the beauty industry), lecturers seek every opportunity to relate to their previous or current work experiences. This consolidates understanding of taught content. Each unit comprises a theoretical and a practical component. During the practical sessions, learners are provided with the opportunity to practice what they have learned during the theoretical lectures. Interviews with learners confirmed that the teaching approach and resources employed during course delivery provide adequate guidance. Interviewed learners often cited the integration of theory concepts with authentic practice as highly valid and efficient to learn/comprehend both knowledge and the necessary practical skills. The interviewed learners favour the distribution of notes forwarded on a weekly basis by HoI, as the Unit tutor. The learners also mentioned favourably the opportunity to write additional personal notes to supplement the information provided. The HoI highlighted the use of videos in her lectures - this is viewed as a highly valid tool to explain and display practical procedures and skills.

The use of on-site visits related to a number of units such as Sports Massage was also mentioned by the voluntary tutor as a positive practice to facilitate learning in an authentic context. In such cases the learners visit Sport Clubs and conduct the practical session with athletes. This strengthens the integration of theory to real-life work scenarios. Both learners and tutors mentioned that verbal and written feedback is ongoing. During the practical sessions, learners are also engaged in self and peer reflection about the procedures entailed. Both lecturers and learners confirmed the use of worksheets, multiple choice tests and mock exams to facilitate the learners' learning process and performance in the final exam set by ITEC. The learners explained that such worksheets/multiple choice tests and mock exams support their learning and understanding, while serving as a guide for their preparation for the final assessment in May. The HoI also explained that each worksheet is scored individually with tailor-made feedback while a class revision is also held collectively with students to cover the general difficulties. The individual scores allocated for tests are formally recorded by HoI. The questions featuring in the tests and/or mock exams are carefully selected from a specific website (namely Health & Beauty pages) and from ITEC released questions. The compilation of these assessment procedures is the sole responsibility of the HoI. No internal verification practices are in place. However, the questions of these tests/mock exams are reviewed by the external ITEC examiners. Indeed, the EQA report by ITEC includes positive feedback about this. ITEC scoring criteria are used for the mock practical exams. These criteria are available to learners. Indeed, the HoI clearly stated that she encourages and requests learners to download these criteria from the ITEC website and to keep them handy during the practical mock exams.

The interviewed learners stressed the individual attention, small class environment and professional tutor experiences as main advantages of furthering their studies within this beauty school. Learners are advised to purchase textbooks related to the unit/s at the start of the

course. The textbooks have online access to further information that supplements the lectures and practical sessions. Learners register for the final ITEC exam against a fee. An external ITEC examiner is present during the final exam.

The learners interviewed by the panel did not experience any reason to formally complain or appeal. This was also confirmed by the HoI. The learners emphasised that they have open communication channels with the HoI and feel comfortable to discuss any matter of concern prior to escalation. The panel confirmed that the institution has a feedback form to gain learners' feedback and comments regarding course structure and delivery, however, the form is not used regularly. The panel strongly recommends that such forms are distributed regularly and recorded/filed for future reference/review purposes. The interviewed learners mentioned that they received adequate support and professional guidance throughout their course and that these contributed to a positive course experience. The friendly caring climate provided by the institution is considered by the learners as an asset for further studies in the field of beauty.

Good practice identified

1. Learners are provided multiple assessment tasks to gauge their learning and understanding prior to the final ITEC exam.
2. Learners are engaged in self and peer assessment practices during the practical sessions.
3. Regular verbal and written feedback is provided by tutor/s to each learner in a tailor-made manner.
4. Learners are provided opportunities to conduct practical sessions in authentic work contexts.

Overall judgement for Standard

Meets Standard 4.

Recommendations for improvement

1. **Key Recommendation:** A process of internal verification needs to be in place to ensure validity and reliability of all assessment procedures.
2. **Key Recommendation:** Documented evidence of internal verification process needs to be established.
3. **Key Recommendation:** Regular student feedback re course delivery needs to be held and recorded.

3.5 Standard 5: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

Student admission, progression, recognition and certification: entities shall consistently apply pre- defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student 'life-cycle'.

Main findings

Prior to applying for any of the courses offered by the Academy, apart from availing themselves of the information on the official website and Facebook page, learners have the possibility to put forward any concerns regarding the course choices they are interested in to the HoI via telephone, email or face-to-face meeting. Moreover, before commencing the course, during the course and on completion of the course, learners are informed of the progression routes and the various course options offered by the Academy.

The HoI recognises prior learning and experience as the courses are of a vocational nature, and most of the applicants are mature working adults. However, for two particular courses, learners are subject to a set of pre-requisites. These particular pre-requisites are not set by ITEC but are considered necessary by the HoI. The HoI's vast experience leads her to be fully aware of the prospective learners' needs specific skills and knowledge in furthering their studies in these two particular courses.

Learners keen to pursue a course at the Academy receive a *student agreement* and *student handbook/student charter*, that includes all the necessary information, learning objectives and other information required to make an informed decision about the course that they would like to follow. The MQF level and ECTS value for each course were not available to the Academy at the time of the audit. The panel noted this and verbally indicated that this information is important especially for learners who would in future seek to progress to other courses, or for ease of RPL. The HoI committed itself to seeking the MQF level and ECTS information and forward it to learners.

Furthermore, the first lecture of each course is used as an induction meeting to verbally explain details pertaining to the course.

In instances where learners expressed an interest to follow more than one course simultaneously, a one-to-one meeting with the HoI is held to ensure that the student is capable to follow and perform optimally in both courses.

Each course offered at the Academy includes mock and official assessments, both written and practical based. The mock assessments apart from helping the learners to prepare well for the official examinations, aid to decipher any discrepancies in the final official examinations. Although the official assessments are performed by ITEC external examiners, records of marks are also retained by the HoI. The certificates are issued by ITEC.

Good practice identified

1. HoI discusses course adequacy with potential applicants on an individual level prior to course registration.
2. All info related to courses is disseminated to potential course applicants prior to registration in a highly transparent manner.

Overall judgement for Standard

Meets Standard 5.

Recommendations for improvement

1. The panel recommends that the Academy issues diploma supplements to reflect the national ECTS weighting in order to facilitate validity and potential transferability of course content.

3.6 Standard 6: Teaching Staff

Teaching staff: entities shall assure the competence and effectiveness of their teaching staff.

Main findings

The Academy does not employ full-time or part-time tutors. The tutors are on a voluntary basis. However, the tutors are ITEC approved (following recommendations by Academy and recognition/acceptance by parent provider) thus implying that they are competent to deliver the ITEC courses. No formal recruitment interviews take place but the HoI mentioned that if the Academy extension plans take place and more personnel are necessary, recruitment will take place in a more formal manner. Any future recruited tutors still need to be approved by ITEC.

The panel observes that the HoI and other voluntary tutor are both equipped with vast professional competency and experience in the Beauty/Well-being industry. This enhances the teaching/learning process. The learners interviewed mentioned that the tutors facilitate learning and understanding by linking the purely theoretical concepts to valid and relevant work practices/context.

The HoI conducts unannounced observations of the other voluntary tutor - she conducts the observations in an informal manner without the use of an appraisal checklist. Any feedback is discussed informally. No systemic procedure and/or records of the observations are in place. Furthermore, the panel observes that no formal observation of the HoI (by other voluntary tutor) in her role as tutor takes place. The panel acknowledges that the informal tutor appraisal process is taking place however recommends that the process is systemic through the use of specific tutor appraisal criteria and recorded in an official/formal manner. The formal documented records of the process will facilitate any necessary follow-up action by both appraiser and appraisee. The panel notes that both voluntary tutors are observed by an external ITEC external evaluator during the EQA visit conducted by ITEC. The external evaluator puts forward the feedback to each tutor.

Both the HoI and the other voluntary tutor mentioned that CPD opportunities specifically related to the Beauty/Well-being industry are limited on a national level. Furthermore, top-up courses for ITEC tutors are currently not available. The voluntary tutor mentioned that he seeks CPD opportunities through his main job/ role as a school assistant head. The panel recommends that the HoI and other voluntary tutor explore beauty-specific training offered by recognised institutions with recognised

programmes.

Good practice identified

1. The professional experience of both voluntary tutors is highly adequate to facilitate alignment between the theoretical concepts and authentic work environment.
2. Collaborative teaching practices are in place. These are evident in the collaboration between the main academy tutor, i.e. the HoI and volunteers, in preparation of course material and delivery. A schedule for the learning of theory and practical sessions is coordinated between the course tutors and the HoI.

Overall judgement for Standard

Meets Standard 6.

Recommendations for improvement

1. **Key Recommendation:** Develop formal tutor appraisal procedures, including peer and student observation, and keep documented records of it. Feedback is to be discussed during staff meetings for continuous improvement purposes.
2. Explore CPD opportunities to further the pedagogical upskilling of both voluntary tutors.

3.7 Standard 7: Learning Resources and Student Support

Learning resources and student support: entities shall have appropriate funding for their learning and teaching activities and sufficient learning resources to fully support the students' learning experiences.

Main findings

The interviewed learners informed the panel that they are updated about all the resources and support by the HoI in an individual transparent manner prior to registration. The learners interviewed appreciate the fact that any resources (products and equipment costs) related to the practical sessions are provided by the Academy and are covered by course fee. The panel notes that the info sheet forwarded to prospective learners (particularly applicants to the ITEC Level 2 Diploma in Beauty Specialist) specifically mentions that learners do not need to purchase any kits however learners need to purchase the personal Nefertiti Beauty Academy polo-shirt (amounting to Euro 15) and own set of white towels – this facilitates uniformity. Learners are also encouraged to purchase a textbook; however, this decision is at their own discretion. The HoI explained to the panel that whenever learners want to buy extra products they are offered the possibility of purchasing such items at advantageous prices from supplier/s.

The Academy has the essential salon learning resources and set-up, that includes the couches and other relevant equipment, necessary for the practical hands on course component. The premises

also include a front room that is used as a lecture room for the theory-based lectures. The room is slightly small however can accommodate the small class sizes. The premises lack Wi-Fi access. Furthermore, the panel observes that no proper in-house library is in place, however the learners can make use/borrow the books available in a cupboard in the main lecture room. The panel notes that the learners receive the lecture notes/case studies that the course tutor compiles and forwards to each learner.

The learners are informed about course fee and extra ITEC examination and registration fees prior to course enrolment. Learners are offered the possibility to choose easy Payment schemes through instalments. The Nefertiti Beauty Academy Students Charter specifically informs learners that the course fees are non-refundable nor transferable. Learners pay the extra examination and registration fees in March. Learners are informed that the Academy qualifies for the Training Pays Scheme and consequently learners can apply for a 75% refund of total course fee and examination fee, once they complete the course successfully.

The HoI informed the audit panel that any learners with specific learning difficulties are supported on an individual level, however, to date such instances were uncommon. The Students Charter specifically mentions that applicants with disabilities (such as dyslexia) will discuss matter with the HoI to identify the areas of support to facilitate access to teaching/learning and assessment.

Good practice identified

1. The direct personal communication with each applicant and learner and the dissemination of all course information prior to application are highly commendable.
2. The professional support provided by the HoI and voluntary tutor on both individual and class levels is laudable.

Overall judgement for Standard

Needs improvement to meet Standard 7.

Recommendations for improvement

1. **Key Recommendation:** Explore ways to upgrade current available resources, specifically Wi-fi access and library facilities.
2. Develop plans for premises upgrade and/or extension in a concrete manner with a detailed business plan.

3.8 Standard 8: Information Management

Information management: entities shall ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

Main findings

The Academy maintains and retains various information pertaining to learners, including learner registration details, attendance, and assessment (mock and formal). Such data is retained electronically and in printed format.

Feedback questionnaires have been circulated among learners to gain insight on their satisfaction with regards to any potential courses that learners aim to follow. Such feedback forms are in the process of being amended to acquire a better understanding of the needs, wants and demands of learners in terms of the courses offered.

No formalised compilation system is in place with regards to data about the Academy's staff.

Notwithstanding the fact that no formal tracer study is compiled, the Academy developed a positive relationship with its alumni, and consequently, the Academy is familiar with the career and academic path/s that the learners pursue.

Good Practice identified

1. The Academy HoI constantly seeks feedback from both its staff and learners. Although the feedback process mainly takes place in a verbal manner rather than in formal ways. The Academy takes up the suggestions proposed to enhance its *modus operandi*.

Overall judgement for Standard

Meets Standard 8.

Recommendations for improvement

1. **Key Recommendation:** The panel recommends that the Academy develops a more systematic formal arrangement for tracking student participation and progression.
2. **Key Recommendation:** The panel recommends regular, formal and systemic compilation of feedback regarding learners' satisfaction with course delivery.

3.9 Standard 9: Public Information

Public information: entities shall publish information about their activities which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible.

Main findings

All relevant course information is available on the Academy's website and Facebook page. The potential applicants also have the opportunity to contact the HoI to clarify further queries and concerns. The interested applicants receive, via email, the *student agreement* and *student charter*. These documents provide a complete picture of the course the prospective learners would be registering for. Indeed, the *student charter* document includes the link to the ITEC website where

further information about the courses can be found.

The audit panel notes that the initial information given to prospective learners lacks the schedule of courses. This information is not readily available as the HoI seeks to develop course timetables in a flexible manner to accommodate learners' availability.

The panel also notes that the initial information lacks the indicative teaching, learning and assessment procedures.

The HoI expressed that although the official Academy website is functional, it needs a revamp in terms of its backend system and visual appearance. Indeed, the HoI mentioned plans to develop a new website shortly; this website modernisation and development is also necessary as the course descriptions listed lack the MQF level and the relevant ECTS value.

Good practice identified

N/A

Overall judgement for Standard

Meets Standard 9.

Recommendations for improvement

1. The panel recommends prompt restructuring of the official Academy website to be more student - friendly and coherent.
2. The panel recommends that each course displays the ECTS equivalence together with the course description.

3.10 Standard 10: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes

Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes: entities shall implement the 'Quality Cycle' by monitoring and periodically reviewing their programmes to ensure their continuing fitness for purpose.

Main findings

The Academy is subject to External QA procedures related to specific course delivery and implementation. The panel reviewed such EQA Visit report (dated January 2019). The detailed report includes specific recommendations for further follow-up visits (the next visit is scheduled for June 2020).

The panel noted that the periodic review of programmes is conducted by the parent provider (ITEC)

with minimal input from the Academy. Indeed, the parent provider does not formally request any type of feedback from the Academy. During the audit and desk-based analysis the panel observed that policy documents related to monitoring and review of programmes are lacking. Any review is conducted in a sporadic and informal manner.

Although formal structures are not in place, the panel also noted that the Academy sought NCFHE accreditation of the ITEC courses offered. Furthermore, the HoI ensures that the ITEC courses offered by the Academy are reviewed informally to reflect the prevalent local beauty industry requirements and relevant practices. The panel suggests that the Academy still formalizes the programme review process and forwards valid feedback and comments to the parent provider on a regular basis. Indeed, ITEC has specific evaluators for programme review. Thus, the panel suggests that the Academy develops ongoing communication with ITEC to strengthen programme review and development. It is recommended that the Academy engages all internal stakeholders (particularly the students and voluntary tutors) as well as potential external stakeholders (such as potential employers) in the on-going monitoring and periodic formal review of programmes.

The panel appreciates the fact that the HoI has recently taken up this role without awareness of the necessity of the audit process. Notwithstanding this, the panel further comments that the HoI is highly committed to strengthen and consolidate the evaluation process through systemic ongoing implementation of analysis and recording.

Good practice identified

1. ITEC provides the EQA Visit report - that highlights both strengths and areas for improvement.

Overall judgement for Standard

Needs improvement to meet Standard 10.

Recommendations for improvement

1. **Key Recommendation** Establish a structured systemic process for monitoring programmes through cyclical review of all courses involving internal and external stakeholders.
2. **Key Recommendation** Develop effective communication with parent company re outcomes the consistent monitoring and cyclical review of programmes.

3.11 Standard 11: Cyclical External Quality Assurance

Entities should undergo external quality assurance by, or with the approval of, the NCFHE on a cyclical basis, according to NCFHE guidelines, once every five years.

Main findings

This is the first NCFHE cyclical EQA for Nefertiti Beauty Academy. The experience provided a learning experience to the HoI and valid recommendations for better planning for future audit cycles.

Overall judgement for Standard

Meet Standard 11.

Recommendations for improvement

1. The Academy is encouraged to seek compilation and recording of necessary documents to facilitate future EQAs.

4. Response by the Provider

1. Preamble

These past few months have been a big challenge for Nefertiti Beauty Academy, particularly to the HoI - Jessica Vella, to undergo this EQA Audit whilst also having to run the academy and also giving the best of service to teach and educate the current student population of the 2019/20 scholastic year.

As you have already been notified by the HoI during the Audit, the handover of Nefertiti Beauty Academy was appalling and obnoxious. The academy was in a very poor condition in June 2018 and it left the HoI with next to no time in the run up to the new scholastic term. Whilst undergoing the Audit, Nefertiti Beauty Academy was recuperating, and it still is. The HoI estimates that for the Academy it will take a minimum of two years for the Academy get back on its feet,

Despite the tough challenges the Audit presented, it has served a great purpose. The HoI believes that the academy will grow stronger and significantly improve with the help of this Audit. The Audit was very enlightening, educative, and informative.

Our sincere appreciation goes to all staff involved in the EQA Audit for their kind help and co-operation in supporting this audit.

2. Response to comments and proposals made by the Peer Review Panel in connection with Standards where the judgment was "Standard met or surpassed".

Answering to your Recommendations:

1.2.2

Rec 1: Fully agree. We will be working on it as soon as possible.

1.2.3

Rec 1 and 2: iTEC are still getting their feet back on the ground. Communication with iTEC has improved, and still is. At this very moment we have 3 meetings scheduled with the iTEC support system; Quality Administration of Bookings; and the Quality Leader of Examinations. There is still room of improvement but unfortunately, Nefertiti as one of many iTEC centres all over the world does not have control over this matter. We are doing our best to improve our communication with iTEC, however, the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly affected communication.

1.2.4

Rec 1: Agreed, however if possible, kindly give examples.

1.2.5

Rec 1: Fully agree. Kindly advise how to obtain such information since whenever we have been in contact we never got any answers as they reply saying that they do not know the ECTS of such courses and that we have to find those out.

1.2.6

Summary findings point 1 – The Academy is run by one owner; Ms Jessica Vella not two and she is not doing the work voluntarily. She is the main tutor for all courses apart from one of the courses where Mr Daniel Spiteri, voluntarily helps sometimes in practical lectures. Kindly also note that Mr Dylan Abela is no longer the administrator and that there are no funds to employ an administrator yet. Ms Jessica Vella is doing all the admin work.

Rec 1: We will do our best to find someone qualified to observe the HoI's work. Since we are financially tight this is an even bigger problem, but we will hopefully sort this matter out soon.

1.2.7

Rec 1: Fully agree; trying to get there slowly.

Rec 2: Currently doing so.

1.2.8

Rec 1: This is considered to be of utmost importance; we are trying to work on it.

Rec 2: This is stored in our system including: students' marks of all assessments including homework, tests, practical assessments and in the end their examination marks.

1.2.9

Rec 1 and 2: Fully agree; that is on our long to-do list.

1.2.11

Rec 1: Noted, will do so.

3. Response to comments and proposals made by the Peer Review Panel in connection with Standards for which the Peer Review Panel decided "Improvement is required".

Answering to your Recommendations:

1.2.1

Rec 1: This is all listed in the Student's Charter that every student is required to read prior to registering for the course. The iTEC's QA report is published on the iTEC website. The students are requested to be familiar with the iTEC website and this obligation is listed in the Student's Charter and Student's Agreement which the students sign up upon registration.

Rec 2: Noted, will prioritize to engaging internal and external stakeholders in dialogue related to the Academy's quality objectives, systems, procedures and implementation.

1.2.10

Acknowledged. We will do try to create an internal systemic procedure for on-going monitoring and periodic review of course programmes that takes on board stakeholders' feedback.

4. Response to comments and proposals made by the Peer Review Panel in connection with Standards for which the Peer Review Panel decided "Does not meet Standard".

N/A

Annex: Review Panel Bio Notes

In the setting up of the review panel for **Nefertiti Beauty Academy**, the NCFHE sought to maintain a high degree of diligence in the process of selection of the members of Peer Review Panel. The Panel sought to be composed of specialists in quality assurance to act as External Peers, professionals and practitioners of quality assurance frameworks, as well as students who, prior to the audits, attended professional Training Seminars organised by the NCFHE.

The following bio notes present the profiles of the members of Peer Review Panel. The bio notes are correct as at the time of when the QA audit was carried out on **2nd and 3rd December 2019**.

Head of Review Panel/External Peer:

Ms Desiree Scicluna Bugeja currently holds the position of Assistant Director within the Directorate for Learning & Assessment Programmes (MEDE). She is responsible for STEM subjects and coordinates a team of seventeen curriculum leaders in the field of STEM education. Together with a highly committed team, Ms Scicluna Bugeja ensures quality STEM education across primary and secondary sectors. She is the national coordinator of a number of European projects including Scientix, Teach-UP, SYSTEMIC and CDG4E. Ms Scicluna Bugeja has a keen interest in educational assessment and evaluation and has often lectured undergraduate and qualified educators regarding quality and standards in educational practices. Further to the initial degree in teacher education, Ms Scicluna Bugeja attained a postgraduate diploma in Youth Studies, and a Masters in Educational Evaluation & Assessment.

Peer Reviewer:

Ms Claire Anne Gauci has worked in business development upon attaining a degree in management from the University of Malta. A teaching qualification led her to pursue a career in education, working with local and foreign vocational and higher educational institutions. For the past 17 years, she has been an adult and young adult educator on various local and foreign accredited programmes. Since 2003, she has been working as an internal verifier for units delivered by MCAST and presently coordinates learning programmes within the same institution. In 2014 she graduated with a MSc in Logistics and Supply Chain Management from Cranfield University, UK. Recently she formed part of syllabi panels on a national basis for Applied and VET subjects which will be introduced in secondary schools. Subsequently she has been involved in VET educator training. She is also a qualified teacher mentor and is presently assigned mentoring duties by the University of Malta.

Student Peer Reviewer:

Ms Tiziana Gatt is a University of Malta student reading for the Master of Arts in Health, Medicine and Society. She graduated with a Diploma in Management Studies and furthered her academic knowledge through a B.Sc.