

External Quality Assurance Audit Report



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

Jobsplus

**Carried out between the 16th to
18th July, 2018**

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Abbreviations List

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
ERU	Employment Relations Unit
IfE	Institute for Education
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
LMAU	Labour Market Analysis Unit
LOs	Learning Outcomes
MQF	Malta Qualifications Framework
NCFHE	National Commission for Further and Higher Education
NQAF	National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education
QA audit	External Quality Assurance Audit
SAR	Self-Assessment Report
SLN	Specific Learning Needs
TDQAU	Training, Development and Quality Assurance Unit

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 judgements 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:

Dr Sandro Spiteri

External Peers:

Dr Mary Muscat

Ms Josephine Saliba

Student Peer Reviewer:

Ms Tiziana Gatt

Mr Wilbert Tabone

QA Managers (NCFHE):

Ms Angelique Grech

Mr Marius Mifsud

1.1.2 Specific Terms of Reference and Main Lines of Inquiry

Following the desk-based analysis and the scoping visit held with the provider on the 25th June 2018, the panel agreed on the areas which needed to be covered during the EQA process. Given that the provider is a state licensed institution, and the challenges and opportunities in providing training for enhanced employability and employment, the main line of enquiry of this audit was:

- Given that the entity is not primarily an educational institution, how was it ensuring the quality of learning, teaching, assessment, resources and tutor support?

Throughout the report Jobsplus is referred to as ‘the entity’.

1.2 Section B: Key Findings, Judgements and Recommendations

1.2.1 Standard 1 - Policy for Quality Assurance

Summary of Main Findings

- The Entity presented a fairly comprehensive IQA Policy. However, the document conflates the quality management system of the whole Entity with its quality assurance functions with respect to its training provision, which should be the proper focus for the IQA Policy.
- It was not clear from the documentation what the Entity considered to be already in place, and what policies and procedures it considered still needed to be developed or reviewed.
- The IQA Policy has a detailed organigram and quite detailed lists of QA functions for specific personnel, which however need to be updated. However, it does not take into account possible structural weaknesses due to decreased checks and balances inherent in the amalgamation of the Chairperson and CEO roles within the Entity.
- The Panel formed a picture of a highly compartmentalized work environment that tends to limit substantive communication and coordination between the various units to a level significantly below the potential of the Entity given the professionalism and dedication of its individual personnel. The issue is therefore not one of interpersonal relationships, but with the *de facto* institutional culture. Examples of areas where there is significant scope for enhanced structured and systematic communication and coordination are between the Training Development QA Unit (TDQAU), the Course Coordinators, the Employers' Support Unit, the Labour Market Analysis Unit and the Employment Advisors.
- This structural rigidity tends to militate against rapid institutional learning and efficient turn-around implementation times in the due diligence of aspects of course provision, notably with respect to assessment, as well as in the review of course design and offerings. This rigidity is a key impediment to further improvement in the quality of course provision and is impacting the capacity of the Entity to fulfil as efficiently and effectively as possible its strategic policy orientation.

Good Practice Identified

- The entity has a clear vision and strategy with respect to its core business and the role of training therein.

Judgment

Does not meet Standard.

Recommendations

R1.1 Conditional Recommendation: In its IQA Policy the Entity shall differentiate between the quality management system (QMS) of the whole organisation and the IQA system of its training provision and clarify the relationship between them. This needs to be in place by the end of 2019.

R1.2 Conditional Recommendation: The Entity shall review its QMS so as to instil a culture of communication, coordination and structured functional permeability between the different sections that in some way impact on training provision, indicating how this is expected to impact positively on the quality of training provision. This needs to be in place by the end of 2019.

R1.3 Conditional Recommendation: In its IQA policy the Entity shall clarify what is already in place and what is still planned for the future and include a detailed and sustainable implementation timeline for the latter. This needs to be in place by end of 2019.

R1.4 Conditional Recommendation: The function and remit of the TDQAU shall be reviewed so as to focus on the substantive monitoring, enhancement and review of high quality training provision. Course coordination and administration functions need to be separate from and subject to review by the QA Unit. The entity needs to develop a structure that would verify the quality of training provision by the Entity, this needs to be in place by end of 2019.

R1.5 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a Multicultural policy that addresses how best to serve its growing non-Maltese client base, whilst ensuring comparability in the level and quality of provision across courses.

R1.6 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a detailed non-discrimination policy and procedure.

R1.7 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a detailed Complaints policy and procedure.

R1.8 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a Specific Learning Needs (SLN) policy that affects its strategic thinking as well as training provision and assessment.

R1.9 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a Mitigation policy that is linked to the SLN policy but also addresses other categories of learners, and that includes provision for mitigation and adaptation of teaching, resources and assessment where applicable.

R1.10 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a Staff CPD policy that is fit for purpose according to the context of its different categories of staff and guarantees minimum competence.

1.2.2 Standard 2 - Institutional Probity

Summary of Main Findings

Educational institutions within the public sector are already subject to stringent national financial and administrative regulations and oversight and to national legislation that regulates the appointment of senior personnel and the selection of staff. The EQA does not seek to duplicate the national regulatory structures and procedures already in place. Thus, for educational institutions within the public sector, Standard 2 is interpreted in terms of the capacity and resources of the provider to implement effectively its internal quality assurance procedures to improve the learning experience.

Good Practice Identified

N/A

Judgment

Meets Standard.

Recommendations

N/A

1.2.3 Standard 3 - Design and Approval of Programmes

Summary of Main Findings

- All accredited courses provided by the Entity are processed through the NCFHE accreditation procedure and are thus fully compliant with this Standard as it was interpreted and using the protocols and procedures that were extant at the time.
- The design of courses as well as the approval of related course notes by the tutors is the responsibility of the TDQAU within the Department for Training and Employer Services. The TDQAU identifies the need for the review of current courses or the development of new ones through a number of ways: the staff's own experience in their respective fields that enable them to keep up-to-date with developments; processing feedback from employers through their own monitoring visits as well as liaising with the Employment Relations Unit (ERU)/ Labour Market Analysis Unit (LMAU), and feedback from jobseekers either through the QA staff's contact with trainers and /or with the jobseeker mentoring staff.
- The assessment component of such courses was not clearly defined.
- The documentation regarding course descriptions was copious, detailed and fit the legal and administrative requirements outlined for the accreditation process.
- However, the Entity as a whole did not seem to be aware of the importance of expertise in adult learning in course design.

Good Practice Identified

- The TDQAU course design capacity is positively supported by the input of ERU and the Jobseeker' Advisors.

Judgment

Meets Standard.

Recommendations

R3.1 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to revise all its courses to be in line with developing course requirements and student needs, and with latest developments in appropriate assessment practices.

R3.2 Key Recommendation: The assessment component of such revised courses need to have visible LOs, assessment criteria and rubrics.

R3.3 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to formalise its process of systematically taking into consideration stakeholders' feedback in course review and in considering the possibility for new course development.

R3.4 Key Recommendation: The QA Unit needs to have access to expertise in adult learning and assessment in course design (in the context of the recommended review of TDQAU in Standard 1).

R3.5 The ERU could maximise its opportunity for direct communication with employers to also explore training needs not currently catered for by the Entity.

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

Summary of Main Findings

- The TDQAU has established detailed administrative procedures that are fair and transparent with respect to course accreditation applications, course layout and the tracking of ongoing assessment and student progression.
- The tutors interviewed are dedicated, have a good rapport with learners, and attempt to personalise learning especially where small group numbers allow.
- All employer and the majority of student interviewees during the audit are satisfied with the courses provided.
- Part of the role of the Training Coordinators is to act as gate-keepers between the course tutors and the TDQAU. This gate-keeping role has created a bureaucracy of rigid lines of communication and delineation of roles that did not add value to the process of communication and feedback between the tutors and the TDQAU.
- Feedback by TDQAU executives is administrative rather than substantive.
- The TDQAU relies on the qualifications and past expertise of individual tutors to produce lesson notes according to TDQA requirements.
- TDQAU assessment procedures do not have sufficient checks and balances to ensure the reliability and validity of assessment; and in any case tutors were being asked to circumvent these procedures. So, what limited verification by the TDQAU was possible through the established system of the Entity was in fact being partly nullified by these instructions.

Good Practice Identified

- Tutors are dedicated, have a good rapport with learners, and attempt to personalise learning especially in smaller groups.
- Employers are very satisfied with the quality of teaching provided to their staff and effective fulfilment of course competence LOs.

- Procedures developed by the TDQAU with respect to ongoing assessment track students' progression during the longer, multi-unit courses.

Judgment

Requires improvement to meet Standard.

Recommendations

R4.1 Conditional Recommendation: The TDQAU shall undertake a comprehensive review to check the validity, reliability and fitness for purpose of all end-of-module and end-of-course assessment, including practical and portfolio assessment, and related procedures and mechanisms. This review should take into consideration the nature of the course, the characteristics of learners, and the MQF level. This needs to be concluded by the end of 2019.

R4.2 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall foster and support possibilities for tutors to meet, liaise, and/or communicate to share good practice and resources, and to norm teaching and assessment.

R4.3 Key Recommendation: The Course Notes and course assessment should be based on, and reviewed against, the course summaries provided on the Entity website.

R4.4 Key Recommendation: The assessment of portfolios needs to be systematized through the use of scoring rubrics.

R4.5 Key Recommendation: Learners should be informed of their assessment results within a set timeframe. Additionally, learners should receive timely formative feedback in an assessment-for-learning context.

R4.6 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to ensure that the language of assessment is in line with its Mitigation and its Multicultural Policies as discussed in Standard 1.

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

Summary of Main Findings

- Jobsplus employment advisors are well-trained and use procedures that are generally fit for purpose.
- The Entity offers various routes for voluntary registration for a course. It ensures that such training applicants who contact the Entity by phone are generally processed by the first person that answers, without undue bureaucracy.
- Moreover, employers can ask the Entity to deliver a course for their employees on their premises.
- Although the Entity's website lists entry requirements for courses, in the hard copy version of the prospectus these requirements were not listed.
- Registration forms require brief information about the individual including on disability, but

do not request information on specific learning needs.

- The Entity changed the admission procedures and assessment parameters for some of the learners in a particular reviewed course without notification to NCFHE, and without an in-depth understanding of the implications of such changes to the quality of provision.
- The Course Co-ordinators carry out a brief oral induction at the beginning of each course to pass on key information to students. Inductions can vary considerably from one Co-ordinator to the next. Some students complained that they did not have this information in hand.
- If the course entails a placement, one of the TDQAU executives conducts an observation visit to ensure administrative compliance. But the tutor does not visit students during their placement.
- On successful completion of the course, the students are awarded a certificate which includes information on the MQF level, number of ECTS, and a detailed list of LOs achieved.

Good Practice Identified

- The Entity's Employment Advisors are well-trained, their interview protocol is generally fit for purpose and a good gateway to training for job-seekers.
- The pathway for employers to access training for their staff is also clearly defined.
- Certificates for successfully concluded courses have detailed information on the LOs achieved.
- Training applicants who are not job-seekers and contact the Entity by phone are generally processed by the first person that answers, without undue bureaucracy.

Judgment

Requires improvement to meet Standard.

Recommendations

R5.1 Conditional Recommendation: With immediate effect, no further variations from established admission procedures and parameters that discriminate between different kinds of trainees undertaking the same course are to be considered before the appropriate QA structures that are fit for purpose as discussed in Standard 1 are in place.

R5.2 Key Recommendation: The Employment Advisors and the TDQAU are to improve and formalise ongoing communication so as to have a common understanding of literacy competence required to undertake courses with profit.

R5.3 Key Recommendation: Employment advisors need to have standardised procedures in consultation with the TDQAU so as to check for literacy and numeracy competence.

R5.4 Key Recommendation: The induction given to trainees by the Coordinators is to be standardised so as to ensure that all trainees are exposed to all key aspects.

R5.5 Key Recommendation: During the induction, Coordinators are to make available the course summary for those who request it, that would include the main LOs, assessment details, possible progression and any other relevant information.

R5.6 Key Recommendation: The application form for prospective trainees is to be further developed in order to include reference to SLN and not only to disability. Such student profiling would aid the student to have a better learning experience, especially if tutors are informed of the

various learning needs of the students *a priori*.

R5.7 The entity may consider issuing a receipt on notification of placement on course list. For example, this could be generated automatically once on-line applications are possible.

1.2.6 Standard 6 - Teaching Staff

Summary of Main Findings

- The Policy and procedures with respect to the recruitment of tutors are generally fit for purpose. However, selection of tutors does not always abide by minimum course requirements.
- However, tutors' contracts do not clearly state that hourly payments cover preparation, tuition and assessment. This was taken as given by the entity management but was raised as a point of contention by some tutors during interviews.
- Additionally, present contracts do not cater for the participation of tutors in CPD. This is a matter of concern since only a minority of tutors have teacher training.
- Tutors' contracts are of a definite nature, and recruitment occurs periodically to ensure that the most qualified trainers as available from time to time can be chosen.
- Currently the only instructions given to tutors are the Instructions for Prospective Trainers which only give basic guidelines.
- The Entity recently approached the Institute for Education (IfE) to explore the possibility of organising the award in Assessment and the Award in the Use of Effective Questioning Techniques and Development of Success Criteria during Lessons specifically for Entity trainers.

Good Practice Identified

- The Panel positively considers that the interview selection process for tutors gives importance to both qualifications and relevant experience in a way that is tailored for vocational provision.
- The Panel saw examples of good practice in collaboration between tutors for the development of resources.

Judgment

Requires improvement to meet Standard.

Recommendations

R6.1 Conditional Recommendation: With immediate effect, the Entity needs to ensure that any new course provision is in line with the minimum tutor qualification requirements as approved by the NCFHE.

R6.2 Conditional Recommendation: The tutors' contract needs to clearly state that the hourly remuneration for service is also inclusive of all preparation and assessment-related duties. This needs to be in place by the next cycle of recruitment and cover all tutor provision from that point

on.

R6.3 Key Recommendation: New tutors need to have an appropriate introductory training programme that goes beyond the present administrative induction, and that ensures that all tutors have sufficient competences with respect to key issues such as assessment, SLN and multicultural context.

R6.4 Key Recommendation: Current tutors, especially those without teacher training, are to be given core CPD on the points mentioned above. The provider needs to set up systems that ensure that tutors remain *au courant* with developments in their subject or craft.

R6.5 Key Recommendation: Given the emphasis on core and supplementary CPD in these recommendations, the Entity needs to consider what type of contractual relationship with tutors would best ensure quality of provision through CPD, given the nature of tutors' service.

R6.6 Key Recommendation: Tutors need to be actively involved in the identification of their own training needs, and in provision that capitalises on sharing of good practice, standardisation and other in-house expertise, where applicable.

R6.7 Key Recommendation: The Entity need to set up systems for the systematic sharing of good practice in assessment, andragogy and resources between tutors, especially of same subject.

R6.8 Key Recommendation: Tutors need to be given substantive feedback on spot-checks in a systematic manner, and by the revitalised TDQAU that was discussed in Standard 1.

1.2.7 Standard 7 - Learning Resources and Student Support

Summary of Main Findings

- The Entity has a variety of schemes to support further training by individual learners and to incentivise employers to encourage employees to undertake training.
- All interviewed employers considered the training provided on their premises to be very efficient, timely and fit for purpose, and would recommend it to other employers.
- If students require support during examinations such as for reading, amanuensis etc., they can submit a request supported by appropriate documentation. This support is not extended to the provision of the course itself. The Entity does not provide financial support or an equivalent in-house service for such students.
- Tutors did not feel that they had sufficient information on learners' SLN and disabilities prior to the start of a course to be able to adapt their teaching and resources accordingly.
- Tutors' requests for consumables and other instructional materials and for the upgrading of equipment were met. Training venues and resources are generally fit for purpose, although some upgrading may be required.
- The process for triggering the start of a course by the Course Coordinators is protocol-based and efficient, and there is a very good working relationship between the Coordinators and the tutors.
- The student guidelines presently available do not include student rights and obligations.
- The Entity does not have a systematic CPD policy for its administrative staff involved in services supporting training provision.

Good Practice Identified

- There are a wide variety of schemes to incentivize further training by learners and employers.
- There is a good working relationship between the course administrators and the tutors.
- Training is also provided at employers' request on their premises; they consider this service to be very efficient, timely and fit for purpose.
- Instructional materials and resources are readily available and generally updated (except for IT) as required for instructional purposes.
- TDQAU staff carry out on-site visits to confirm that employers' premises are fit for purpose as training venues.

Judgment

Requires improvement to meet Standard.

Recommendations

R7.1 Conditional Recommendation: The Entity shall itself start providing services for the identification of SLN to its learners so as to facilitate their access to learning. This needs to be in place by the end of 2019.

R7.2 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to enhance its teaching and learning provision so as to cater for SLN learners in its courses.

R7.3 Key Recommendation: In line with the review of the TDQAU in Standard 1, TDQAU executives staff are to be up-skilled, receive regular CPD and be empowered to give substantive feedback to tutors and to have effective oversight on all substantive issues related to quality from course and resource design, to provision, to assessment.

R7.4 Key Recommendation: CPD for TDQAU staff needs to include indicators on the quality of the lessons as well as administrative indicators during on-site inspections.

R7.5 Key Recommendation: Employment Advisors are to be trained in the appropriate and efficient use of standardised procedures to measure literacy competence as mentioned in Standard 5.

R7.6 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to develop a CPD policy for administrative staff supporting training provision that includes recommendations 7.3 – 7.5.

R7.7 Key Recommendation: Course notes need to be developed on the basis of the course LOs summarised in the course descriptions available on the website.

R7.8 Recommendation: Food and beverage facilities, which cater for both staff and learners, should be sustainably upgraded.

R7.9 Key Recommendation: An IT technical support service needs to be on call to service ICT break-downs in real time and minimise learning disruption.

R7.10 Key Recommendation: Wi-Fi needs to be made available for all tutors and learners, so that it can be used for preparation as well as a teaching/learning tool.

R7.11 Key Recommendation: All workshops and classrooms are to be equipped with health and safety equipment as per the applicable legislative HSE parameters.

R7.12 Key Recommendation: The student guidelines need to be enhanced as a student handbook, to include student rights and obligations.

R7.13 Key Recommendation: Tutors must have sufficient information on learners' SLN and disabilities to be able to adapt their teaching and resources accordingly.

R7.14 The Entity needs to consider the provision of popular courses in central or northern sites to accommodate learners.

R7.15 The entity needs to consider introducing air-conditioning that is fit for purpose in all indoor learning spaces.

R7.16 The Entity has to consider upgrading the computer hardware and software used by learners.

R7.17 The Entity may consider introducing student representatives in the longer courses.

R7.18 The Entity should consider informing students and employers earlier than three weeks before the start of a course as is current practice.

1.2.8 Standard 8 - Information Management

Summary of Main Findings

- The entity collects a wide range of primary data directly from jobseekers, trainees and employers, and further analyses secondary data from published sources through the different sections within LMAU.
- In the case of jobseekers, the primary data collection from applicants is coordinated by the Employment Advisors who have developed their own database. The database infrastructure is periodically updated to help the managers improve the jobseeker profile.
- The Advisors meet with jobseekers assigned to them every two to three weeks. There is also an online job matching system where the employer can match a jobseeker's or job changer's skills with demand.
- However, this data only covers 40% of the Entity's training services. The other 60% are 'walk-ins' or applicants brought forward through their employers, and thus do not go through the same data-gathering process with the Employment Advisors.
- The Entity uses the data gathered to fulfil its national and international reporting requirements. Although the Entity is aware of the need to make better strategic use of the different data streams to inform its training provision, there are currently no concrete plans for this.

Good Practice Identified

- The TDQAU has developed detailed administrative checklists for course files to ensure that all the paperwork and procedure is in place.
- The LMAU it employs are graduates in statistics, public policy and sociology.
- A wide range of data is being systematically gathered and used for reporting purposes.

Judgment

Meets Standard.

Recommendation

R8.1 Key Recommendation: The data gathered needs to be better used for strategic decision-making.

R8.2 The Entity should consider having the student feedback forms filled in on-line and in real time.

1.2.9 Standard 9 - Public Information

Summary of Main Findings

- Information both on the website and hardcopy documents is available in English. However, the Entity has recently started translating the “Guidelines for Jobsplus Trainees Manual” document from English to Maltese. Moreover, the feedback form is bilingual.
- Information can be obtained in Maltese by phone.
- Non-Maltese students as well as employers (who could both access the text in English) felt that enough information about the course was made available to them on the entity website to make an informed decision.
- A course description for each programme is available as a separate PDF on the website. This contains the details on how to apply, learning outcomes (LOs), teaching procedures, assessment procedures as well as the MQF Level and learning credits.
- Details on method of assessment and student progression are not found on the course descriptions published on the website. The Entity has recently introduced very brief and generic information about the method of assessment on each course description sheet.
- A student cannot apply for a course on a voluntary basis directly through the website.

Good Practice Identified

N/A

Judgment

Needs improvement to meet Standard.

Recommendations

R9.1 Conditional Recommendation: The Entity's core information on its website, including with respect to training, needs to be accessible also to Maltese-dominant users. This needs to be in place by the end of 2020.

R9.2 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to expand the course descriptions on its website to include information in the specific methods of assessment, the pass-mark and pass rates, and on possible progression that is available to potential applicants.

R9.3 Key Recommendation: The Entity is to systematically collect and process feedback from its stakeholders on the fitness for purpose of the website and how to improve its user experience.

R9.4 Key Recommendation: The website user experience flow need to be altered to make key information more efficiently accessible.

R9.5 Key Recommendation: The website needs to be enhanced to allow for prospective learners to register their interest through the website, especially since most are employed and so will not have Employer Advisor hand-holding.

R9.6 Key Recommendation: When applications are processed by phone or at a job centre, the Entity needs to provide information on the course, by handout or email.

R9.7 Key Recommendation: Signage on the Entity's premises must exclusively bear the current name of the Entity, i.e. "Jobsplus".

R9.8 Key Recommendation: Course descriptions need to be available during the course induction sessions.

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

Summary of Main Findings

- There is significant room for improvement in the mind-set and capacity of the Entity with respect to the ongoing review of its provision. The Entity may think of itself more of a provider of off-the-shelf training as adjunct to job placement, rather than a self-learning educational provider with a mindset of continuous improvement in line with the Quality Cycle principle of the National Quality Assurance Framework.
- This latter mind-set is not incompatible with the strategic orientation of the Entity; indeed, it may be more a matter of infusing this mind-set, which seems to be inherent in the terms of reference and functions of the ERU and the LMAU, into the training functions and review thereof of the Entity.
- While employer stakeholders are actively engaged, learner stakeholders are often viewed as simple recipients rather than participant stakeholders and are not systematically involved in the review process of provision.

- Whilst there is evidence of communication and some coordination between the TDQAU, the Course Coordinators, the ESU, the LMAU and the Employment Advisors, there are lacunae with respect to the review process of training provision.
- There is lack of clarity and inefficient feedback loops in the lines of communication and accountability between students, tutors, Coordinators and the TDQAU, as well as in the actual functions and remit of the TDQA Unit with respect to the Coordinators. This is hampering the capacity of the Entity to conduct ongoing reviews of its programmes.

Good Practice Identified

- The TDQAU has used the Occupational Standards published by NCFHE as a basis for the review of accredited courses.
- The Employer Relations Unit has a 96% response rate on questionnaires related to employers' training needs following on-site visits. Feedback from this data has identified needs for new courses.
- The Employment advisors have been included in the feedback loop of the TDQA Unit on the draft design of these new courses.

Judgment

Requires improvement to meet Standard.

Recommendation

R10.1 Conditional Recommendation: The Entity needs to develop a mind-set of continuous improvement as a learning provider in line with the Quality Cycle principle of the *National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education*. An integral part of this process is the overhaul of the present QA function within the TDQAU as discussed in Standard 1. This needs to be in place by the end of 2019.

R10.2 Conditional Recommendation: As part of this process, the entity shall have a 5-year plan in place to review all its courses, by the end of 2019.

R10.3 Conditional Recommendation: The Entity needs to commission external review/s of the effectiveness and fitness for purpose of its provision in view of the new policy direction as recommended in previous Standards. These review/s need to be finalised by the end of 2020.

R10.4 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to review and enhance the communication and coordination between the various sections that contribute to the review of its training provision.

R10.5 Key Recommendation: The Entity is to systematically involve all its stakeholders in course review.

R10.6 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to strengthen and shorten the feedback loop between learners, the TDQAU, tutors and Course Coordinators at end of courses.

R10.7 In the review of courses, the Entity could formalise which curriculum standards and/or

frameworks it is making reference to, taking as its starting point EQF/MQF tools, formats and frameworks.

1.2.11 Standard 11 - Cyclical External Quality Assurance

Judgment

Meets Standard

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	Jobsplus	
Peer Panel Members	External Peers: Chair: Dr Sandro Spiteri Peer Reviewers: Dr Mary Muscat, Ms Josephine Saliba Student Reviewers: Ms Tiziana Gatt, Mr Wilbert Tabone QA Managers (NCFHE): Ms Angelique Grech Mr Marius Mifsud	
Timeline	Dates	Milestone
	30 th April, 2018	Panel met to determine the specific terms of reference, aims, objective and research question of the QA process.
	25 th June, 2018	Preliminary Provider meeting
	16 th to 18 th July, 2018	On-site audit visit at Jobsplus

2.3 Institutional Context

The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) was established in August 1990. The primary functions of the Corporation were that of providing a public employment service and offering various training opportunities to persons to improve their skills to find employment. In its early years, the Corporation focused on the registration of jobseekers, the provision of guidance to them and their referral for employment opportunities. Its training function focused on the provision of training courses, the management of apprenticeship schemes, the running of Traineeship Schemes and the administration of the Trade Testing system.

Milestones on the employment front included the opening of regional job centres and the introduction of the fingerprint recognition system for registration. Major achievements in training services included the delivery of a wide range of training programmes that were attended by thousands of persons including non-jobseekers and the expansion of apprenticeship schemes (Extended Skill Training Skills (ESTS) and Technician Apprenticeship Scheme (TAS)).

Over the years the Corporation was instrumental in recommending and implementing family-friendly measures as well as other active labour market measures that led to the increase in female employment in Malta, and the highest and lowest recorded levels of persons in employment and unemployment respectively.

In 2012 with the introduction of new regulations in relation to Further and Higher Education, the Corporation re-organised its internal structure and processes with the aim of improving the quality of the training provided. In fact, in 2013, the Corporation started implementing a European Union co-funded project named “Enhancing Employability through Training (EET) – ESF 2.201”, through which the Corporation upgraded its training courses and improved its quality assurance procedures within the former Training Services Division.

In line with the introduction of standards in further and higher vocational education, the Corporation has set up its internal Training Design and Quality Assurance Unit (TDQAU). This Unit was entrusted with the responsibility of aligning the Corporation’s home-grown courses with the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF); hence persons successfully completing any of its courses would receive an accredited certification.

In June 2016, an act of Parliament brought about the change in the Corporation’s name from *‘Employment and Training Corporation’* to *‘Jobsplus’*. The change in name is not cosmetic but is part of a wider branding strategy aimed at positioning Jobsplus as an innovative and dynamic organisation that excels in meeting the labour market needs of employers, jobseekers and employees.

To date 85% of Jobsplus’ courses are accredited and are pegged between Levels 1 to 4 of the MQF. In addition to monitoring the quality of training delivery through its home-grown courses, this Unit was also entrusted with the responsibility of overlooking the courses delivered by private Contractors. Courses could be delivered both for and on behalf of the Corporation.

To better reflect the needs of a changing economy, Jobsplus has strengthened its Labour Market

Analysis Unit, which is responsible for carrying out customer satisfaction surveys amongst Jobsplus' various clients. The feedback obtained helps Jobsplus in improving its services with the ultimate aim of meeting its mission to:

“enhance accessibility to the labour market through modernised and targeted services, whilst facilitating labour mobility and promoting investment in human capital”.

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

Following the desk-based analysis and the scoping visit held with the provider on the 25th June, 2018, the panel agreed on the areas which needed to be covered during the EQA process. Given that the provider is a state-licensed institution, and the challenges and opportunities in providing training for enhanced employability and employment, the main line of enquiry of this audit was:

- Given that the entity is not primarily an educational institution, how was it ensuring the quality of learning, teaching, assessment, resources and tutor support?

The Panel decided that as part of an enhancement-led approach it would issue recommendations linked to specific Standards, but which also intersect across Standards as applicable. The report therefore distinguishes between:

- Conditional Recommendations which should be implemented by a set date as indicated in the respective recommendation;
- Key Recommendations which need to be implemented expediently by the institute to address weaknesses, and need to be effectively in place before the next EQA;
- Recommendations for improvement which are suggestions based on our analysis and observations.

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

- From its interviews with all stakeholders within the Entity during the on-site visit, the Panel formed a picture of a highly compartmentalized work environment that tends to limit substantive communication and coordination between the various units to a level significantly below the potential of the Entity, given the professionalism and dedication of its individual staff. The issue is, therefore, not one of interpersonal relationships, but with the *de facto* institutional culture. Examples of areas where there is significant scope for enhanced structured and systematic communication and coordination are between the Training, Development and Quality Assurance Unit (TDQAU), the Course Coordinators, the Employers' Support Unit, the Labour Market Analysis Unit and the Employment Advisors.
- The Panel saw evidence that this structural rigidity tends to hinder rapid institutional learning and leads to unnecessary delays in implementing changes in the due diligence of aspects of course provision. This was most noticeable with respect to assessment, as well as in the review of course design and offerings. In the opinion of the Panel, this rigidity is a key impediment to further improvement in the quality of course provision and is impacting the capacity of the Entity to fulfil as efficiently and effectively as possible its strategic policy orientation as discussed in Section 2.3. This is explained in more detail in the various Standards.
- The Entity presented a fairly comprehensive IQA Policy that is in line with the strategic policy orientation of Jobsplus as discussed in Section 2.3. However, the document combines the quality management system of the whole Entity with its quality assurance functions with respect to its training provision, which should be the proper focus for the IQA Policy. Also, it was not clear from the documentation what the Entity considered to be already in place, and what policies and procedures it considered still needed to be developed or reviewed.
- The IQA Policy has a detailed organigram and quite detailed lists of QA functions for specific personnel. However, it does not take into account possible structural weaknesses due to decreased checks and balances inherent in the amalgamation of the Chairperson and CEO roles within the Entity.
- In the IQA Policy the TDQAU functions are not sufficiently comprehensive: it has an administrative function rather than an assurance and enhancement function with respect to course quality. Also, the IQA Policy does not list an appeals and complaints function for the TDQAU, although *de facto* it does have such a function.
- Another mismatch is between the intended functions of the TDQAU, and the reality as witnessed by the Panel during the visit with respect to the roles of the Course Coordinators. In practice, the TDQAU does not have QA oversight over the administration and coordination and the courses, with the Course Coordinators acting as gate-keepers.
- The Panel saw documentary evidence that the entity's policies and procedures with respect to training needs analysis leading to the identification and design courses; course design and accreditation, and standards in relation to the use of training aids, are in fact implemented.
- The QA system used by the TDQAU for the formulation and validation of assessment is very weak and is not even adhered to systematically by the staff of the Entity – this is discussed in more detail in Standard 5. As discussed in that Standard, the TDQAU does not have the capacity to address all issues related to test construction, validation and other aspects of assessment, and it does not have access to external expertise for independent support as required.
- Policy and procedures with respect to student-centred learning, and staff CPD and oversight thereof, are very weak, as discussed in more detail in Standards 4 and 6 respectively.

- The Entity does not have a Multicultural policy that would impact its public information, course offerings, course provision and assessment; this is needed given its growing non-Maltese client base.
- Policy and procedures with respect to the recruitment of tutors are fit for purpose; however as discussed in Standard 6 these are not always congruent with the actual practices seen by the Panel.
- The QA responsibilities of trainers do not include the review of courses for improvement and the review of feedback received from students and the Entity itself.
- Detailed procedures are in place for the possibility of a revision of paper, resit of examinations, and for assessment accommodation due to dyslexia and other learning needs. However, these are not part of a comprehensive mitigation policy.
- The Entity does not have a Specific Learning Needs (SLN) policy that affects its strategic thinking as well as training provision and assessment.
- There is some evidence of policies with respect to non-discrimination and a complaints procedure, but it is sketchy and incomplete.
- Policy and procedures with respect to resources are fit for purpose.
- The Entity has detailed procedures in place for the compiling and handling of data, but not for the use of this data to inform policy and provision – this is discussed in more detail in Standard 8.
- The IQA Policy makes appropriate reference to the dissemination of public information and the cycle of course review.

Good Practice Identified

- The entity has a clear vision and strategy with respect to its core business and the role of training therein.

Overall judgment for Standard

Does not meet Standard.

Recommendations for improvement

R1.1 Conditional Recommendation: In its IQA Policy the Entity shall differentiate between the quality management system (QMS) of the whole organisation and the IQA system of its training provision and clarify the relationship between them. This needs to be in place by the end of 2019.

R1.2 Conditional Recommendation: The Entity shall review its QMS so as to instil a culture of communication, coordination and structured functional permeability between the different sections that in some way impact on training provision, indicating how this is expected to impact positively on the quality of training provision. This needs to be in place by the end of 2019.

R1.3 Conditional Recommendation: In its IQA policy the Entity shall clarify what is already in place and what is still planned for the future and include a detailed and sustainable implementation timeline for the latter. This needs to be in place by end of 2019.

R1.4 Conditional Recommendation: The function and remit of the TDQAU shall be reviewed so as to focus on the substantive monitoring, enhancement and review of high quality training

provision. Course coordination and administration functions need to be separate from and subject to review by the QA Unit. The entity needs to develop a structure that would verify the quality of training provision by the Entity, this needs to be in place by end of 2019.

R1.5 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a Multicultural policy that addresses how best to serve its growing non-Maltese client base, whilst ensuring comparability in the level and quality of provision across courses.

R1.6 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a detailed Non-discrimination policy and procedure.

R1.7 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a detailed Complaints policy and procedure.

R1.8 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a Specific Learning Needs (SLN) policy that affects its strategic thinking as well as training provision and assessment.

R1.9 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a Mitigation policy that is linked to the SLN policy but also addresses other categories of learners, and that includes provision for mitigation and adaptation of teaching, resources and assessment where applicable.

R1.10 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a Staff CPD policy that is fit for purpose according to the context of its different categories of staff and guarantees minimum competence.

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

- Educational institutions within the public sector are already subject to stringent national financial and administrative regulations and oversight and to national legislation that regulates the appointment of senior personnel and the selection of staff. The EQA does not seek to duplicate the national regulatory structures and procedures already in place. Thus, for educational institutions within the public sector, Standard 2 is interpreted in terms of the capacity and resources of the provider to implement effectively its internal quality assurance procedures to improve the learning experience.

Good Practice Identified

N/A

Overall judgment for Standard

Meets Standard.

Recommendations for improvement

N/A

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

- All accredited courses provided by Jobsplus are processed through the NCFHE accreditation procedure and are thus fully compliant with this Standard as it was interpreted and using the protocols and procedures that were extant at the time.
- The design of courses as well as the approval of related course notes by the tutors is the responsibility of the Training, Design and QA Unit (TDQAU) within the Department for Training and Employer Services. The TDQAU is composed of one Senior Executive, who was appointed relatively recently, and three executives. The Panel considered the three executives to be very competent in their respective subject specialisations.
- The TDQAU has developed its own set of procedures for the development of new courses that are an elaboration of NCFHE procedures (including occupational standards) as well as the Legal Notice governing accreditation (SL 327.433). The Panel saw evidence in the perusal of course files that these procedures are followed closely by TDQAU staff.
- The TDQAU identifies the need for the review of current courses or the development of new ones through a number of ways: the staff's own experience in their respective fields that enable them to keep up-to-date with developments; processing feedback from employers through their own monitoring visits as well as liaising with the ERU/LMAU, and feedback from jobseekers either through the QA staff's contact with trainers and /or with the jobseeker mentoring staff.
- There is evidence, however, that the assessment component of such courses is not clearly defined for both tutors and students. There were examples where tutors took the initiative to develop their own criteria, but this practice needs to be adopted by the Entity itself first.
- The Panel did come across an example of a rubric developed by an instructor of his own initiative which is a good practice that needs to be adopted throughout all courses through the initiation and direction of the QA unit.
- In developing new courses, the TDQAU undertakes initial desk-based research from authoritative sources, typically within the EU and the English-speaking domain, with respect to provision similar to the ones being planned or upgraded. This is further supplemented through recourse to NCFHE's Occupational Standards.
- The documentation regarding course descriptions shown to the Panel was copious, detailed and fit the legal and administrative requirements outlined for the accreditation process. However, during the interviewing process the Panel could discern gaps in the TDQAU's knowledge and appreciation of translating adult learning principles into action, such as with respect to specific andragogical and assessment requirements. Indeed, the planned

collaboration with the Institute for Education as per the Entity's SAR Report would help to address the need to have access to adult learning expertise.

- The Panel did not come across evidence, through the SAR and interviews with TDQA personnel, that the Entity as a whole was aware of how crucial expertise in adult learning could be in the sustainability of the TDQAU as well as of the role of the Entity as a major learning provider. There was therefore no evidence of a structural intention to invest in or acquire access to expertise in adult learning.
- The mechanism for reviewing courses and for developing new ones lacks systematic input from the stakeholders, i.e. learners and tutors, as well as employers through the Employer Relations Unit's direct communication.

Good practice identified

- The TDQAU course design capacity is positively supported by the input of ERU and the Jobseeker' Advisors.

Overall judgment for Standard

Meets Standard.

Recommendations for improvement

R3.1 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to revise all its courses to be in line with developing course requirements and student needs, and with latest developments in appropriate assessment practices.

R3.2 Key Recommendation: The assessment component of such revised courses need to have visible LOs, assessment criteria and rubrics.

R3.3 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to formalise its process of systematically taking into consideration stakeholders' feedback in course review and in considering the possibility for new course development.

R3.4 Key Recommendation: The QA Unit needs to have access to expertise in adult learning and assessment in course design (in the context of the recommended review of TDQAU in Standard 1).

R3.5 The ERU could maximise its opportunity for direct communication with employers to also explore training needs not currently catered for by the Entity.

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 administrative aspects regarding Learning, Teaching and Assessment are covered in the IQA Policy of the Entity. However, during its on-site visit the Panel found difficulty in distinguishing between intended and actually enacted policies and practices.
- The Panel reviewed documentary evidence showing that the TDQAU has established detailed administrative procedures that are fair and transparent with respect to course accreditation applications, course layout and the tracking of ongoing assessment and student progression during the longer, multi-unit courses.
- These administrative procedures are communicated to trainers and trainees through two documents, respectively the Instructions for Prospective Trainers and Guidelines for Trainees. The former document is given to trainers in written form whilst the latter is only communicated to trainees verbally.
- The Panel noted that the tutors interviewed are dedicated, have a good rapport with learners, and attempt to personalise learning especially where small group numbers allow. The Panel also observed that some tutors collaborate unofficially to devise similar course content. However, there are no specific guidelines to standardise how this happens.
- Part of the role of the Training Coordinators is to act as an intermediary between the course tutors and the TDQAU. The Panel saw evidence of email strings, and heard similar evidence from stakeholders, that this gate-keeping role created a bureaucracy of rigid lines of communication and delineation of roles that did not add value to the process of communication and feedback between the tutors and the TDQAU with respect to review and identification of new courses, and indeed slowed down and may have impeded this process.
- Evidence from course files and as confirmed by the TDQAU staff indicate that their feedback is administrative rather than substantive. The checklists used by TDQAU staff relate to the correct documentation in tutors' files, the use of course notes, the layout of PowerPoint presentations as well as administrative records of assessment such as portfolios and grading.
- The TDQAU relies on the qualifications and past expertise of individual tutors to produce such notes according to TDQAU requirements. There was no standardised mechanism to regularly update these notes. During Audit, TDQAU staff repeatedly emphasised that since tutors are considered the experts in their field, decisions on course content and its assessment are their responsibility.
- This checking carried out by the TDQAU also entails checking for compliance with the LOs of the course in question; however it was not clear to the Panel how this compliance check is carried out.
- All employers and the majority of student interviewees during the audit were satisfied with the courses provided. This also generally emerges from the document *Trainee Feedback on Courses 2016*, as well as from the NCFHE student audit questionnaire.
- The basic guidelines provided in the document Instructions for Prospective Trainers do not include issues related to the quality of andragogy and assessment. They require tutors to use a mix of mostly traditional modes of delivery mainly through PowerPoint presentations and Course Notes, balanced by discussions and hands-on practice where relevant.
- Nevertheless, tutors and students who were interviewed by the Panel confirmed that tutors, in general, try to interpret and develop course content and notes in ways that respect and attend to students' needs. This is done in the way tutors explain course content and course notes and during presentations and discussion. The Panel also saw evidence that well-established courses such as trades and literacy are delivered by experienced tutors versed in student-centred learning delivery.

- Current course notes are only available in English but not in Maltese. Course notes are also not available online, on an online platform or disseminated through email.
- There is no SLN policy, therefore only those students with an assessment from an education psychologist can receive LSE support and this only during end-of-unit examinations.
- Assessment design follows the available course descriptions which are essentially a summary of the LOs on the Entity's Accreditation Application. The Entity does not adopt standardised weighting of marks or the use of LO-based marking schemes and rubrics. The Entity also does not have measures ensuring internal and external verification of assessment. During interviews with TDQAU Management, Executives, Co-ordinators and tutors, a lack of knowledge regarding the purpose and design of the actual assessment tools according to the National Quality Assurance Framework emerged. The Panel observed that there is no formal structured QA policy/procedure for the standardisation of transparency in assessment. An analysis of course documentation including examples of questions and sample papers provided showed there is also an inconsistency or inadequate weighting between what is in the Course Content and what is assessed. The TDQAU staff confirmed that they do not have or follow formal guidelines or mechanisms to check for this.
- Evidence from interviews with administration, QA staff and tutors generally echoed written procedures that indicated that tutors are requested to provide a pool of question items, enough to cover one or two cycles of examinations and also resits (evidence was mixed), from which the QA Unit build end-of-module tests or end-of-course examinations. It was not clear if this is done once when a tutor is employed, or every year or number of years – again, evidence was mixed.
- The fitness for purpose of the exam items submitted by the tutors, as well as the fitness for purpose of exam papers as a whole, was supposedly checked against the LOs of the course in question. However, this checking was carried out against the Competence LOs, which in the accredited course applications are very generic and in any case not intended for such an exercise. The Knowledge and Skills LOs, which would have been much more appropriate for this exercise, were not used. This supposed checking was carried out by QA staff and vetted by the TDQAU Senior Executive. The Panel saw evidence that the TDQAU did not have the expertise and competence to undertake this task effectively.
- The format of the exam papers was dictated by the tutors themselves. Apart from the specific subject area expertise of the three QA executives, the TDQAU does not have sufficient expertise in exam design and assessment in general in terms of content validity and level of difficulty and does not seem to recognise the need for such expertise.
- The TDQAU considers that it is ensuring that trainees are fairly assessed by comparing a random sample of their answers to the model answers previously submitted by trainers for the Unit's evaluation and approval. This means that the oversight role of the TDQAU is either ineffective in terms of the LOs are just described, or else circulatory because it relies solely on documentation provided by the tutors themselves. In effect, the TDQAU does not have an effective independent means of determining the fitness for purpose and to quality assure the due process of the Entity's assessment procedures.
- However, the Panel learnt (from the tutors, and then confirmed with other personnel) that recently tutors were being asked to prepare the examination paper themselves which was presented tale quale to the TDQAU for approval. When the Panel asked for a detailed breakdown of how many tutors were asked to do this, it transpired that this was applicable for 27% of reviewed assessments. It was not clear whether this change of procedure from that

established by the Entity, was driven by the TDQAU or the Course Coordinators. The Panel found no evidence that this change from established procedure was formally approved, so, what limited verification by the TDQAU was possible through the established system of the Entity were in fact being partly nullified by this practice.

- During interviews the Entity's management stated that it had considered uploading sample assessments; however, the Panel saw no evidence of this or of other plans towards making course material or sample assessment available in such ways.
- In one particular course the students had been divided into two groups who were doing parallel sessions of the same course. Some tutors took it upon themselves to 'lighten' the level of difficulty for one of the groups, made up of non-Maltese students. Although this was presumably done in good faith, it leads to unequal and potentially unfair assessment practices for the same course.
- The interviews indicate that although students have access to the course descriptions, they are not clear about the LOs they are being assessed on, or how marks are assigned.
- There is no standardisation for the provision of feedback. Interviewed students confirmed that ongoing feedback is given at the discretion of individual tutors. Some portfolios viewed by the Panel did not include feedback in the section provided for such purpose.
- After the final assessment, students are not given formal feedback about their performance but only receive their final official result. These results sometimes took quite long to be received by the students, who were not informed of a set timeframe for this. This was confirmed by all interviewed parties.
- As regards invigilation of final assessment, the Entity's IQA Policy and Instructions to Prospective Trainers clearly outline assessment invigilation procedures, which are generally satisfactory to students. The Panel considered these procedures to be fit for purpose.
- During the Audit, the Panel observed that Training Co-ordinators alerted students that their high rate of absenteeism risked triggering course failure in terms of Jobsplus regulations. This helps students to take timely corrective action.

Good practice identified

- Tutors are dedicated, have a good rapport with learners, and attempt to personalise learning especially in smaller groups.
- Employers are very satisfied with the quality of teaching provided to their staff and effective fulfilment of course competence LOs.
- Procedures developed by the TDQAU with respect to ongoing assessment track students' progression during the longer, multi-unit courses.

Overall judgment for Standard

Requires improvement to meet Standard.

Recommendations for improvement

R4.1 Conditional Recommendation: The TDQAU shall undertake a comprehensive review to check the validity, reliability and fitness for purpose of all end-of-module and end-of-course assessment, including practical and portfolio assessment, and related procedures and mechanisms. This review should take into consideration the nature of the course, the characteristics of learners,

and the MQF level. This needs to be concluded by the end of 2019.

R4.2 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall foster and support possibilities for tutors to meet, liaise, and/or communicate to share good practice and resources.

R4.3 Key Recommendation: The Course Notes and course assessment should be based on, and reviewed against, the course summaries provided on the Entity website.

R4.4 Key Recommendation: The assessment of portfolios needs to be systematized through the use of scoring rubrics.

R4.5 Key Recommendation: Learners should be informed of their assessment results within a set timeframe. Additionally, learners should receive timely formative feedback in an assessment-for-learning context.

R4.6 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to ensure that the language of assessment is in line with its Mitigation and its Multicultural Policies as discussed in Standard 1.

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

- Anyone registering for work is directed by the Jobsplus employment advisors to appropriate training if applicable. The Panel saw evidence that the employment advisors are well-trained. For the individuals registering for work, failure to register and attend for the course/s indicated can lead to the person being removed from the Employment Register.
- Jobsplus offers various routes for voluntary registration for a course, such as via email or telephone, or through a Jobsplus service centre. Moreover, employers can ask the Entity to deliver a course for their employees. The Entity ensures that such 'voluntary' training applicants who contact the Entity by phone are generally processed by the first person that answers, without undue bureaucracy. This was confirmed by a Mystery Shopper exercise conducted by the Panel members.
- Employment advisors have an SOP in the form of a checklist and interview protocol which guides them to direct the potential student appropriately. The Panel saw evidence that this is generally fit for purpose and a good gateway to training for job-seekers.
- However, one aspect that the Panel did not deem to be fit for purpose was the use of reading texts by the Employment Advisors to determine the literacy competence of applicants. The Panel ascertained that the Advisors make their own judgement as to the literacy competence of applicants without guidance or training from the TDQAU on how to do so with validity and reliability. The advisors and the TDQAU do not communicate so as to ensure that there is an agreed understanding on the use of standard texts, and of the literacy competence required to undertake particular courses with profit.

- Although the Entity's website lists entry requirements for courses, in the paper/hard copy prospectus these requirements were not listed. Entity management informed the Panel that this is due to the fact that the booklet was published before the updating of the information on the website.
- Registration forms for courses can be downloaded from the Entity's website and are available in Maltese and English. The current forms require brief details about the individual such as providing information about special needs. It was noted that this form does not request information on specific learning needs (SLN). Entity management informed the Panel that they felt that the 'disability' information request covered SLN. However, the Panel feels that the common understanding of the term 'disability' does not include SLN, and that therefore the application form may not be sufficiently inclusive.
- The Panel did not see evidence that a receipt is issued to applicants on notification of placement on the course list.
- The Panel saw evidence that trainees undertaking the same course were subject to variations in admission procedures and assessment parameters from those established in the NCFHE-accredited course descriptions. When asked to justify this practice, the Entity administration explained that this decision took into consideration the different language competences of Maltese and non-Maltese students who were grouped as two separate cohorts undertaking the same course. Whilst the Panel appreciated the human considerations behind this decision, it noted that the Entity did not appreciate the potential complications that could arise from this unilateral decision, for which prior NCFHE approval should have been sought as per standard NCFHE procedures.
- During the audit, the panel was informed that the administrative information pertaining to the course in terms of schedule, transportation, etc. is sent to students three weeks prior to commencement of course. The Panel deems this period to be too brief for the students to prepare themselves adequately. Examples were given of how some students struggled to make arrangements in order to avail themselves of state-supported childcare as this process for this access normally takes one-month to be concluded.
- The Course Co-ordinators carry out a brief induction at the beginning of each course to pass on key information to students. However, from the interviews conducted, the Panel gathered that the information provided during induction can vary considerably from one Co-ordinator to another with some giving more detailed information than others.
- Also, the information during the pre-course induction is presented orally; students are not provided with a handout of key information. Entity administrators informed the Panel that in the past booklets containing course summary, assessment details, and other relevant information used to be disseminated to all students, who often discarded them. The entity had therefore decided the continued production of such booklets was a wasteful exercise. Some students did complain during the interviews conducted by the Panel that they did not have this information in hand.
- If the course entails a placement, one of the QA staff will notify the students when an observation visit will take place at the work placement. The QA staff use checklists to analyse the session, which are primarily based on LOs. However, they do not grade the student. At no point does the tutor visit the students during their placement.
- On successful completion of the course, the students are awarded a certificate which includes information on the MQF level, number of ECTS, and a detailed list of LOs achieved.

- The Entity's Employment Advisors are well-trained, their interview protocol is generally fit for purpose and a good gateway to training for job-seekers.
- The pathway for employers to access training for their staff is also clearly defined.
- Certificates for successfully concluded courses have detailed information on the LOs achieved.
- Training applicants who are not job-seekers and contact the Entity by phone are generally processed by the first person that answers, without undue bureaucracy.

Overall judgment for Standard

Requires improvement to meet Standard.

Recommendations for improvement

R5.1 Conditional Recommendation: With immediate effect, no further variations from established admission procedures and parameters that discriminate between different kinds of trainees undertaking the same course are to be considered before the appropriate QA structures that are fit for purpose as discussed in Standard 1 are in place.

R5.2 Key Recommendation: The Employment Advisors and the TDQAU are to improve and formalise ongoing communication so as to have a common understanding of literacy competence required to undertake courses with profit.

R5.3 Key Recommendation: Employment advisors need to have standardised procedures in consultation with the TDQAU so as to check for literacy and numeracy competence.

R5.4 Key Recommendation: The induction given to trainees by the Coordinators is to be standardised so as to ensure that all trainees are exposed to all key aspects.

R5.5 Key Recommendation: During the induction, Coordinators are to make available the course summary for those who request it, that would include the main LOs, assessment details, possible progression and any other relevant information.

R5.6 Key Recommendation: The application form for prospective trainees is to be further developed in order to include reference to SLN and not only to disability. Such student profiling would aid the student to have a better learning experience, especially if tutors are informed of the various learning needs of the students *a priori*.

R5.7 The entity may consider issuing a receipt on notification of placement on the course list. For example, this could be generated automatically once on-line applications are possible.

3.6 Standard 6: Teaching Staff

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

Main findings

- The Panel considered that the Policy and procedures with respect to the recruitment of tutors are generally fit for purpose, as described in Standard 1. The Entity also provides appropriate conditions of employment for all staff as confirmed from the Panel's perusal of Staff Personal Files and by from interviews with the TDQAU Manager and tutors. HR files also evidence that appropriate arrangements for part-time and sessional teaching staff are generally consistent with expectations for casual, part-time staff contracts.
- However, the contracts do not clearly state that hourly payments cover preparation, tuition and assessment. This was taken as given by the entity management but was raised as a point of contention by some tutors during interviews.
- Additionally, present contracts do not cater for the participation of tutors in CPD. This is a matter of concern considering that only 20% of tutors have a teaching warrant. Additionally, the Panel recognises that due to developments in warranting requirements over the years, not all teaching warrant holders may, in fact, have sufficient teacher training and/or experience. In turn, this means that the need for CPD may be even greater than this figure indicates.
- Clear, fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and conditions of employment are delineated in the QA Policy and in the QA Vetting of Trainers' CV Checklist as well as confirmed by the Staff Personal Files obtained from the HR department of the Entity. All necessary documentation provided, and the Checklist used during interviews indicate that, generally speaking, the most eligible and highly qualified/experienced applicants are chosen in a transparent manner.
- However, the Panel saw evidence that the matching of tutors to courses was not always in line with the minimum requirements in the accredited applications as approved by NCFHE.
- The IQA Report shows that the Entity encourages trainers to take the initiative and to further enhance their skills and knowledge with regards to the different teaching methods as well as their technical knowledge. Indeed, during recruitment interviews applicants are allocated additional marks for proof of such professional enhancement.
- Tutors' contracts are of a definite nature, and regular recruitment occurs periodically to ensure that the most qualified trainers as available from time to time can be chosen.
- On the other hand, the TDQAU Management used the fact that only the most qualified tutors are recruited to justify that the TDQAU relies exclusively on their expertise in matters related to teaching, instruction and assessment design and delivery. The Panel confirmed that the Entity does not provide internal CPD opportunities to recruited staff.
- Currently the only instructions given to tutors are the Instructions for Prospective Trainers which only give basic guidelines on course notes and handouts, PowerPoint presentations and other training aids in line with the current considerable administrative focus of the entity, as discussed in Standard 4.
- The Entity was not utilising the expertise already available in its tutors for in-house CPD training through the sharing of good practice between tutors. The Panel saw examples of good practice in collaboration between tutors for the development of resources.
- The IQA report states that the Entity recently approached the Institute for Education (IfE) to explore the possibility of organising the award in Assessment and the Award in the Use of Effective Questioning Techniques and Development of Success Criteria during Lessons specifically for Jobsplus trainers. No reply has been received as yet and the proposal is still at the stage of enquiry. The Panel confirmed this in interviews with TDQAU management.

Good practice identified

- The Panel positively considers that the interview selection process for tutors gives importance to both qualifications and relevant experience in a way that is tailored for vocational provision.
- The Panel saw examples of good practice in collaboration between tutors for the development of resources.

Overall judgment for Standard

Requires improvement to meet Standard.

Recommendations for improvement

R6.1 Conditional Recommendation: With immediate effect, the Entity needs to ensure that any new course provision is in line with the minimum tutor qualification requirements as approved by the NCFHE.

R6.2 Conditional Recommendation: The tutors' contract needs to clearly state that the hourly remuneration for service is also inclusive of all preparation and assessment-related duties. This needs to be in place by the next cycle of recruitment and cover all tutor provision from that point on.

R6.3 Key Recommendation: New tutors need to have an appropriate introductory training programme that goes beyond the present administrative induction, and that ensures that all tutors have sufficient competences with respect to key issues such as assessment, SLN and multicultural context.

R6.4 Key Recommendation: Current tutors, especially those without teacher training, are to be given core CPD on the points mentioned above. The provider needs to set up systems that ensure that tutors remain au courant with developments in their subject or craft.

R6.5 Key Recommendation: Given the emphasis on core and supplementary CPD in these recommendations, the Entity needs to consider what type of contractual relationship with tutors would best ensure quality of provision through CPD, given the nature of tutors' service.

R6.6 Key Recommendation: Tutors need to be actively involved in the identification of their own training needs, and in provision that capitalises on sharing of good practice, standardisation and other in-house expertise where applicable.

R6.7 Key Recommendation: The Entity need to set up systems for the systematic sharing of good practice in assessment, andragogy and resources between tutors, especially of same subject.

R6.8 Key Recommendation: Tutors need to be given substantive feedback on spot-checks in a systematic manner, and by the revitalised TDQAU that was discussed in Standard 1.

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 Entity has a variety of schemes to support further training by individual learners and to incentivise employers to encourage employees to undertake training. These relate to childcare, subsidies to cover up to 75% of eligible training costs, and allowances to top up low weekly wages.
- Training is also provided at employers' request on their premises; all the employers who were interviewed by the Panel considered this service to be very efficient, timely and fit for purpose, and would recommend it to other employers.
- When such training outside the Entity's training premises is provided, executives within the TDQAU unit carry out on-site visits to confirm that employers' premises are fit for purpose as training venues.
- If students require support during examinations such as for reading, amanuensis etc., they can submit a request to the respective Course Coordinator with the relevant background documentation, typically a recent report by an educational psychologist.
- However, in interviews with students the Panel noted that such reports can be quite expensive and can be a significant financial strain to low- or no-income course participants. In practice, this procedure can impede access to learning for vulnerable students. The Entity does not have mechanisms to provide financial support or an equivalent in-house service for such students.
- This support is not extended to the provision of the course itself. The Panel was informed by tutors that they did not have sufficient information on learners' SLN and disabilities prior to the start of a course to be able to adapt their teaching and resources accordingly.
- Tutors confirmed that their requests for consumables and other instructional materials and for the upgrading of equipment were always met. The Panel noted that the exception is the software used by ECDL students; however, this was deemed fit for purpose in the ECDL audit of 2017.
- The Panel was informed that prior to the start of a course, the Entity's technical support staff check that the machines and resources at the Hal Far Training Centre are fit for purpose according to tutors' request. However, this does not include the IT equipment used by students, since this is available through a contractual arrangement that also caters for maintenance and repairs. The Panel heard that in case of break-downs the time lapse for repair or replacement can lead to disruption in learning.
- The Course Coordinators are responsible for triggering the start of a course once there are sufficient applicants, through booking by Employment Advisors or through individual or employer-based requests. Coordinators have a number of courses under their responsibility, and a list of tutors they could call, who would have been selected as described in Standard 6. The Panel saw evidence that this process is protocol-based and efficient, and that there is a very good working relationship between the Coordinators and the tutors.
- The coordinators also have a good relationship with 'their' students. They conduct the induction discussed in Standard 5 and are the first port of call for administrative issues.
- Some students complained that they did not receive notice of the start of course (typically three weeks before) in time to make all the necessary arrangements, such as for childcare and with their employers.
- The Panel was informed that previously, during induction students would be provided with a

booklet with course information; however, these were often discarded by students, so the practice was discontinued. Whilst the Panel appreciated the environmental-friendly perspective of this decision, it was felt that the Coordinators should still have in hand a number of handouts, in both Maltese and English, with the summarized LOs as they appear on the website and with information on assessment. These would be available on request during induction.

- The student guidelines presently available do not include student rights and obligations.
- The Panel was informed that the TDQAU checked the fitness for purpose of the course notes proposed by tutors against the competence LOs. The Panel deemed this to be insufficient (for the same reasons as for the checks for fitness for purpose of assessment described in Standard 4) especially when the Entity had already available LOs summarised in the course descriptions available on the website.
- Apart from on-site training, as requested by some employers, training takes place in a purpose-built training centre within the Entity. When it was built it was a state-of-the-art. However, both students and tutors felt that Wi-Fi should now be available for preparation as well as a teaching/learning tool. The panel noticed that some of the air-conditioning system is quite old and noisy contributing to a disruptive learning environment.
- The Panel observed that not all training spaces seemed to be equipped with appropriate health and safety equipment.
- The Panel was informed that a canteen which used to service both staff and students was closed since it did not generate enough turnover. Food and beverage is being provided through vending machines, but these often break down, which caused inconvenience to students on full-day courses since there were no other options for refreshments within walking distance.
- Both students and tutors mentioned the inconvenience of attending training at the entity since it is not centrally located. This was especially highlighted by students who live in the central and northern parts of the island.
- In interviews with TDQAU Executives, the Panel noted that due to the lack of clarity on the role and functions of executives as discussed in Standard 1 and the *modus operandi* developed with the Course Coordinators, the former did not feel empowered to undertake effective oversight of substantive feedback to tutors and to have effective oversight on all substantive issues related to the quality including course and resource design, provision and assessment.
- The Entity does not have a systematic CPD policy for its administrative staff involved in services supporting training provision. For example, from interviews with TDQAU staff the panel got to know that the staff had not received CPD to be able to give appropriate substantive feedback to tutors during class observation visits, or to have effective oversight on all substantive issues related to quality.
- From interviews with Employment Advisors, it transpires that they had not received training to make appropriate and efficient use of the standard literacy texts and tests mentioned in Standard 5.
- The Panel interviewed students who attended some of the longer courses. It became clear that the course-wide issues that were being raised by the students could be better handled through a student representative system to give more voice to students in their learning process.

Good practice identified

- There are a wide variety of schemes to incentivize further training by learners and employers.
- There is a good working relationship between the course administrators and the tutors.

- Training is also provided at employers' request on their premises; they consider this service to be very efficient, timely and fit for purpose.
- Instructional materials and resources are readily available and generally updated (except for IT) as required for instructional purposes.
- TDQAU staff carry out on-site visits to confirm that employers' premises are fit for purpose as training venues.

Overall judgment for Standard

Requires improvement to meet Standard

Recommendations for improvement

R7.1 Conditional Recommendation: The Entity shall itself start providing services for the identification of SLN to its learners so as to facilitate their access to learning. This needs to be in place by the end of 2019.

R7.2 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to enhance its teaching and learning provision so as to cater for SLN learners in its courses.

R7.3 Key Recommendation: In line with the review of the TDQAU in Standard 1, TDQAU executives staff are to be up-skilled, receive regular CPD and be empowered to give substantive feedback to tutors and to have effective oversight on all substantive issues related to quality from course and resource design, to provision, to assessment.

R7.4 Key Recommendation: CPD for TDQAU staff needs to include indicators on the quality of the lessons as well as administrative indicators during on-site inspections.

R7.5 Key Recommendation: Employment Advisors are to be trained in the appropriate and efficient use of standardised procedures to measure literacy competence as mentioned in Standard 5.

R7.6 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to develop a CPD policy for administrative staff supporting training provision that includes recommendations 7.3 – 7.5.

R7.7 Key Recommendation: Course notes need to be developed on the basis of the course LOs summarised in the course descriptions available on the website.

R7.8 Recommendation: Food and beverage facilities, which cater for both staff and learners, should be sustainably upgraded.

R7.9 Key Recommendation: An IT technical support service needs to be on call to service ICT break-downs in real time and minimise learning disruption.

R7.10 Key Recommendation: Wi-Fi needs to be made available for all tutors and learners, so that it can be used for preparation as well as a teaching/learning tool.

R7.11 Key Recommendation: All workshops and classrooms are to be equipped with health and safety equipment as per the applicable legislative HSE parameters.

R7.12 Key Recommendation: The student guidelines need to be enhanced as a student handbook, to include student rights and obligations.

R7.13 Key Recommendation: Tutors must have sufficient information on learners' SLN and disabilities to be able to adapt their teaching and resources accordingly.

R7.14 The Entity needs to consider the provision of popular courses in central or northern sites to accommodate learners.

R7.15 The entity needs to consider introducing air-conditioning that is fit for purpose in all indoor learning spaces.

R7.16 The Entity has to consider upgrading the computer hardware and software used by learners.

R7.17 The Entity may consider introducing student representatives in the longer courses.

R7.18 The Entity should consider informing students and employers earlier than three weeks before the start of a course as is current practice.

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 entity collects primary data directly from jobseekers, trainees and employers, and further analyses secondary data from published sources through the different sections within LMAU, which is essentially labour market demand driven. A mix of data templates is used, some developed in-house, and others sourced from EU obligations that are used *tale quale*.
- In the case of jobseekers, the primary data collection from applicants is coordinated by the Employment Advisors who have developed their own database. This was originally designed through a twinning agreement with the Irish equivalent of the Entity. The database infrastructure is periodically updated to help the managers improve the jobseeker profile. Only claims backed up by appropriate certification are accepted.
- The Advisors meet with jobseekers assigned to them every two to three weeks. There is also an online job matching system where the employer can match a jobseeker's or job changer's skills with demand. This body of data is not erased due to the legal obligation of keeping information related to the 'work book' record of employees. This data is quite detailed and feeds back into the system; however, it only covers 40% of the Entity's training services. The other 60% are 'walk-ins' or applicants brought forward through their employers, and thus do not go through the same data-gathering process with the Employment Advisors.
- The Training Unit staff, in particular the clerks, process the feedback forms filled in by trainees. The forms are completed by participants at least once in the case of short courses and twice (beginning and end) with regards to the longer courses. This information is then passed on to the Training Unit. The Training Unit also collects feedback forms from its trainers and processes them internally. The Panel was informed that trainee feedback is acted upon

immediately by the Training Unit and informs the TDQAU's inquiry into the surprise visits and trainer observation exercise. The feedback form was last revised in 2017.

- This feedback is done manually rather than electronically or online. Thus, the process is unnecessarily laborious for the clerks and consumes time and resources. The process needs updating to be in line with GDPR requirements in terms of ensuring safety of storage and prevention of loss of data. Real-time electronic inputting would simultaneously maintain the current high response rate by course participants, facilitate its processing by the TDQAU, as well as address the strategic planning needs of the LMAU.
- The LMI unit collects data from a number of internal sources and passes it on to the LMAU every month. Such data includes the number of courses organised, literacy assessments conducted, drop-out numbers, successful completions and eventual successful employment. There are several group listings, which are quite detailed – to mention just one example, the vulnerable category includes clusters such as former inmates. Since the LMAU is in charge of data cleaning and data validation, it employs graduates in statistics, public policy and sociology.
- The ERU meets employers face-to-face and gathers primary data related to satisfaction feedback and skills training. This is further processed and fed into Training and the other sections of LMAU.
- The Entity also collects exit questionnaires from both employers and students who are following any one of the work placement schemes offered by the Entity.
- There are other forms of information that are used internally and are filtered, organised and accessed according to the different stages of course planning and design. For example, the Human Resources Unit keeps detailed logs of trainer applications that are accessible to the Training Unit, and checklists have been developed for the Course Coordinators and trainers.
- The Entity uses the data gathered to fulfil its national and international reporting requirements. However, although the Panel was informed that the Entity is aware of the need to make better strategic use of the different data streams to inform its training provision, there are currently no concrete plans for this.

Good Practice identified

- The TDQAU has developed detailed administrative checklists for course files to ensure that all the paperwork and procedure is in place.
- The LMAU employs graduates in statistics, public policy and sociology.
- A wide range of data is being systematically gathered and used for reporting purposes.

Overall judgment for Standard

Meets Standard.

Recommendations for improvement

R8.1 Key Recommendation: The data gathered needs to be better used for strategic decision-making.

R8.2 The Entity should consider having the student feedback forms filled in on-line and in real time.

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

- Public information on the website can be updated in liaison with the IT sub-contractor. This means that content updates are not instantaneous and could take some time to be executed.
- Course information is available on both the website and in an abridged format on a hardcopy booklet.
- Information both on the website and hardcopy documents, as well as application forms are available exclusively in English. Only the feedback form is bilingual. The Panel was informed that the Entity has recently started translating the “Guidelines for Jobsplus Trainees Manual” document from English to Maltese.
- Students are not consulted in the updating of public information.
- Information can be obtained in Maltese by phone. For example, the representative would translate the main points of a course description to the caller on request.
- Students are given a sheet of paper on the first day of the course explaining the transport arrangements and a timetable. This is printed exclusively in English.
- During interviews with the Panel, non-Maltese students as well as employers (who could both access the text in English) said that the website contains all the information required, and they can obtain the necessary information from it. They felt that enough information about the course was made available to them to make an informed decision. Furthermore, these students and employers felt that the website was easy to use.
- However, Panel members, who explored the website extensively, confirm that the website flow and amount of content makes it relatively difficult for the average Jobsplus service user to obtain information in an efficient manner.
- A course description for each programme is available as a separate PDF on the website. This contains the details on how to apply, learning outcomes (LOs), teaching procedures, assessment procedures as well as the MQF Level and learning credits.
- Details on method of assessment and student progression are not found on the course descriptions published on the website. The Entity has recently introduced very brief and generic information about the method of assessment on each course description sheet. However, details on student progression are still missing. Entity management explained that this is not really required since most students do a single course and stop there.
- A student cannot apply for a course on a voluntary basis directly through the website. Whilst the sub-contractor’s site states that this functionality is included, the Entity stated that they do not have this function and are working on creating this feature for ease of access.
- Both students who were contacted by phone to attend a course and students who self-applied at job centres stated that they were not given any briefing information on what to expect from the course before the first lesson.
- Some of the students who phoned or emailed for information about a course for which they wished to apply stated that they had not been given an overview on what to expect in the course.
- Course pass marks and pass rates were not found on the website or the printed “training courses” booklet.

- A considerable amount of notices around the premises still bear the 'ETC' logo.

Good practice identified

N/A

Overall judgment for Standard

Requires improvement to meet Standard.

Recommendations for improvement

R9.1 Conditional Recommendation: The Entity's core information on its website, including with respect to training, needs to be accessible also to Maltese-dominant users. This needs to be in place by the end of 2020.

R9.2 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to expand the course descriptions on its website to include information in the specific methods of assessment, the pass-mark and pass rates, and on possible progression that is available to potential applicants.

R9.3 Key Recommendation: The Entity is to systematically collect and process feedback from its stakeholders on the fitness for purpose of the website and how to improve its user experience.

R9.4 Key Recommendation: The website user experience flow need to be altered to make key information more efficiently accessible.

R9.5 Key Recommendation: The website needs to be enhanced to allow for prospective learners to register their interest through the website, especially since most are employed and so will not have Employer Advisor hand-holding.

R9.6 Key Recommendation: When applications are processed by phone or at a job centre, the Entity needs to provide information on the course, by handout or email.

R9.7 Key Recommendation: Signage on the Entity's premises must exclusively bear the current name of the Entity, i.e. "Jobsplus".

R9.8 Key Recommendation: Course descriptions need to be available during the course induction sessions.

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 Panel found important elements of capacity for internal review. In recent years the Entity has set up two units, the ERU and the LMAU to enhance its capacity to respond to employers' training needs, and to gather and analyse stakeholders' feedback. The ERU systematically meets employers to explain the Entity's training offer and related schemes and how these can be accessed, and to assist them in filling in the Employers' Satisfaction Survey, discussed in the next point. The Panel was informed that by the EQA over 500 employer meetings had been conducted, resulting in a 96% response rate for the survey. However, the ERU does not make use of these face-to-face meetings to explore what new training needs may be serviced by the Entity, and it does not meet the TDQAU systematically to maximise the learning potential of these meetings for the purposes of reviewing and updating the training provision of the Entity. However, the Panel was informed that feedback from the survey itself has been used to identify the need for new courses.
- The LMAU gathers attitudinal data with respect to employers and trainees from surveys. The first Employers' Satisfaction Survey was carried out in 2016 and the report published in 2017. A second report on 2017 data was being finalised. In 2017 the LMAU conducted its first Student Satisfaction Survey; the report was to be issued later on in 2018. Management explained that one of the objectives of this second survey was to provide further perspective on the post-course questionnaire data gathered by the Entity. As yet the LMAU does not communicate systematically with the TDQA Unit to maximise the learning potential of this research for the purposes of reviewing the updating the training provision of the Entity.
- The Panel viewed the 2017 Test Centre Audit Report for ECDL provision by the Entity. The Entity was deemed to have met requirements for the ECDL QA standards, with some minor recommendations for improvement.
- The TDQA Officers informed the Panel that they had made use of the Occupational Standards published by NCFHE as a basis for the review of accredited courses. However in the interviews and review of documentation with respect to the review of courses, it was not always clear to the Panel which curriculum standards and/or frameworks were being referred.
- The Panel saw evidence that the Employment Advisors were currently in the process of responding to a request for feedback from the TDQA Unit on the draft design of a number of courses.
- However, there is significant room for improvement in the mind-set and capacity of the Entity with respect to the ongoing review of its provision, especially considering the institutional nature of the Entity. In the Entity's own documentation including its SAR as well as in interviews, the Panel saw evidence that the Entity may think of itself more of a provider of off-the-shelf training as adjunct to job placement, rather than a self-learning educational provider with a mind-set of continuous improvement in line with the Quality Cycle principle of the National Quality Assurance Framework. This latter mind-set is not incompatible with the strategic orientation of the Entity as discussed in Section 2.3; indeed, it may be more a matter of infusing this mind-set, which seems to be inherent in the terms of reference and functions of the ERU and the LMAU, into the training functions and review thereof of the Entity.
- While employer stakeholders are actively engaged, learner stakeholders are often viewed as simple recipients rather than participant stakeholders and are not systematically involved in the review process of provision.
- Whilst there is evidence of communication and some coordination between the TDQAU, the Course Coordinators, the ERU, the LMAU and the Employment Advisors, the Panel also found many lacunae with respect to the review process of training provision. Some, as between the

TDQAU and the ESU and LMAU as discussed above, can be easily addressed since the latter units are still new and growing into their role. Enhanced and systematic coordination for review with the Employment Advisors can also easily build on the current instances of good practice mentioned earlier.

- With respect to the TDQAU and the Course Coordinators, the Panel saw evidence in its interviews of unutilised potential inherent in their physical and structural proximity for real-time, flexible, and targeted communication and coordination for ongoing and systemic course review. One example is the inefficient feedback loops from students and tutors at end of course to the TDQAU via the Course Coordinators, as discussed in Standards 6 and 8. Also, the TDQAU, Course Coordinators and tutors do not have frequent and systematic meetings to enhance institutional learning for the purpose of course review.
- This was at least partly due to lack of clarity in the lines of communication and accountability between students, tutors, Coordinators and the TDQAU, as well as in the actual functions and remit of the TDQAU with respect to the Coordinators.
- The Entity is aware that almost all its courses were accredited under the old accreditation regime of the NCFHE and need to be revised due to changing labour requirements and stakeholder feedback. However, although some *ad hoc* changes have been made, it does not have in place a strategy for the systematic review of its courses, and did not show evidence in its SAR and in interviews that it was aware of this need.

Good practice identified

- The TDQAU has used the Occupational Standards published by NCFHE as a basis for the review of accredited courses.
- The Employer Relations Unit has a 96% response rate on questionnaires related to employers' training needs following on-site visits. Feedback from this data has identified needs for new courses.
- The Employment advisors have been included in the feedback loop of the TDQA Unit on the draft design of these new courses.

Overall judgment for Standard

Requires improvement to meet Standard.

Recommendations for improvement

R10.1 Conditional Recommendation: The Entity needs to develop a mind-set of continuous improvement as a learning provider in line with the Quality Cycle principle of the *National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education*. An integral part of this process is the overhaul of the present QA function within the TDQAU as discussed in Standard 1. This needs to be in place by the end of 2019.

R10.2 Conditional Recommendation: As part of this process, the entity shall have a 5-year plan in place to review all its courses, by the end of 2019.

R10.3 Conditional Recommendation: The Entity needs to commission external review/s of the effectiveness and fitness for purpose of its provision in view of the new policy direction as recommended in previous Standards. These review/s need to be finalised by the end of 2020.

R10.4 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to review and enhance the communication and coordination between the various sections that contribute to the review of its training provision.

R10.5 Key Recommendation: The Entity is to systematically involve all its stakeholders in course review.

R10.6 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to strengthen and shorten the feedback loop between learners, the TDQAU, tutors and Course Coordinators at end of courses.

R10.7 In the review of courses, the Entity could formalise which curriculum standards and/or frameworks it is making reference to, taking as its starting point EQF/MQF tools, formats and frameworks.

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

The entity met this Standard by virtue of its hosting of this first External Quality Audit (EQA) by the NCFHE. It co-operated with the EQA process, both with respect to the submission of the various phrases of documentation, as well with the organisation of the on-site visit and cooperation with the Panel during this visit.

Overall judgment for Standard

Meets Standard.

4. Response by the Provider

1. Preamble

Jobsplus runs a range of courses, which are aimed at helping people (including unemployed, inactive and employed persons) improving their educational attainment and acquire the required knowledge, skills and competences to enhance their employability. Courses range from Employability Skills courses (which are mostly aimed at unemployed and inactive persons) to Accounting courses, Business Skills courses, Courses for Care Workers, Clerical courses, Health, Safety and Security courses, Hospitality and Customer Service; ICT courses; Language and Numeracy courses, Technical and Trade courses.

In 2012 with the introduction of new regulations in relation to Further and Higher Education, the Corporation has re-organised its internal structure and processes with the aim of improving the quality of the training provided. In fact, in 2013, the Corporation started implementing a European Union co-funded project named “Enhancing Employability through Training (EET) – ESF 2.201”, through which the Corporation upgraded its training courses, as well as improved its quality assurance procedures within the former Training Services Division. In line with the introduction of standards in further and higher vocational education, the Corporation has set its internal Training Design and Quality Assurance Unit. This Unit was entrusted with the responsibility of aligning the Corporation’s home-grown courses with the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF); hence persons successfully completing any of its courses would receive an accredited certification. To date 85% of Jobsplus’ courses are accredited and are pegged between levels 1 to 4 of the MQF. In addition to monitoring the quality of training delivery through its home-grown courses, this Unit was also entrusted the responsibility of overlooking the courses delivered by private contractors. Courses could be delivered both for and on behalf of the Corporation.

In line with its mission statement, the list of courses has experienced numerous changes. As a result of the changing labour market, some courses are no longer on offer, while others have been revised or are offered on a more regular basis. In the past couple of years, Jobsplus designed and obtained the accreditation of new courses, which were introduced following feedback received from employers and trainees alike. The changes in the type of courses offered as well as the frequency with which they are offered are influenced by the labour market demands and the demands coming from trainees who express their wish in attending a course.

The first External Quality Assurance Audit was carried out in July 2018. Jobsplus always aims for continuous improvement and believes that an external audit can be fundamental towards achieving such objective. The report of this audit was received by Jobsplus in March 2020. The Corporation commits itself to enhancing aspects which require improvement or do not meet the Standard according to the report. Jobsplus is also pleased to note that it is on track on other Standards, albeit not ranked as ‘Standard met’. As explained in the responses provided to NCFHE, some of the recommendations suggested were either actioned following the audit or were already in place.

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

Standard 3: Design and Approval of Programmes	
Comments/proposals	Jobsplus comment
<p>Assessment component of such courses is not clearly defined for both tutors and students. There were examples where tutors took the initiative to develop their own criteria.</p>	<p>Tutors are not encouraged to develop their own criteria with regards to assessment. QA defines the criteria and assessment papers are designed or reviewed and approved by QA. Jobsplus welcomes suggestions put forward by tutors, and any disagreements are sorted through discussions between the tutor and QA with the involvement of the coordinator.</p>
<p>The Panel did come across an example of a rubric developed by an instructor of his own initiative which is a good practice that needs to be adopted throughout all courses through the initiation and direction of the QA unit.</p>	<p>Jobsplus welcomes suggestions put forward. Such suggestions are analysed and discussed. Where a proposal is deemed necessary or beneficial for the Corporation, the required steps are taken to adjust accordingly (in line with the Corporations' priorities, mission and resources). As an example of the continuous updates, last year Jobsplus added an oral component to the assessment for the English literacy courses. While for the care courses' assessments, where trainees are requested to write a long answer, Jobsplus included a description of the allocation of marks. This was introduced to also serve as a guideline for trainers when correcting papers.</p>
<p>During the interviewing process the Panel could discern gaps in the TDQAU's knowledge and appreciation of translating adult learning principles into action, such as with respect to specific andragogical and assessment requirements.</p>	<p>Notwithstanding the fact that Jobsplus has been involved in adult learning for several years, it is acknowledged that skills development in this area, as in other areas is continuous; such as updating delivery and assessment requirements that are deemed more appropriate for adult learners. To this effect, throughout 2019, QA staff followed and successfully completed the following Awards: Award in Summative Assessment and Award in the use of effective questioning techniques and development of success criteria. One needs to point out that Jobsplus tutors have vast experience in delivering training and this is one of the main requirements for trainers' eligibility in the recruitment process. In subject areas like trade it is very unlikely to find a qualified teacher to teach the subject.</p>
<p>The mechanism for reviewing courses and for developing new ones lacks systematic input</p>	<p>This recommendation is already in place. During the audit Jobsplus informed the panel</p>

<p>from the stakeholders, i.e. learners and tutors, as well as employers through the Employer Relations Unit's direct communication.</p>	<p>that it intended to design new courses that were suggested by employers. In 2019 seven new courses were designed and submitted for accreditation following feedback by employers as well as Jobsplus' Jobseekers' Advisory Department. These courses are: Award in Customer Handling and Customer Service Skills, Award in Effective Team Working, Award in Communication Skills, Award in Planning and Organisational Skills, Award in Interpersonal Skills, Award in Work Ethics and Award in English for Business. Other courses such as the business accounting were re-designed following request from tutors. With regards to areas where the National Occupational Standards have been published, the respective courses were re-designed to mirror these occupational standards. As an example Jobsplus re-visited its childcare course twice.</p>
<p>R3.1 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to revise all its courses to be in line with developing course requirements and student needs, and with latest developments in appropriate assessment practices.</p>	<p>As per above examples, this is already being done and is an ongoing process.</p>
<p>R3.2 Key Recommendation: The assessment component of such revised courses needs to have visible LOs, assessment criteria and rubrics.</p>	<p>Jobsplus plans to update the information uploaded on the website of all courses to have the already visible LOs structured per module, assessment criteria and rubrics. The target completion period of this project is Q4 2020.</p>
<p>R3.3 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to formalise its process of systematically taking into consideration stakeholders' feedback in course review and in considering the possibility for new course development.</p>	<p>This is already in place and Jobsplus also has a standard operating procedure for this process (Doc 1).</p>
<p>R3.4 Key Recommendation: The QA Unit needs to have access to expertise in adult learning and assessment in course design (in the context of the recommended review of</p>	<p>Jobsplus shall design a mechanism of seeking external feedback on its assessment. This is expected to be in place by Q4 2021. There will be some exceptions such as ECDL where</p>

TDQAU in Standard 1).	assessment is done online.
R3.5 The ERU could maximise its opportunity for direct communication with employers to also explore training needs not currently catered for by the Entity.	This is an ongoing process, that is already in place. Jobsplus also invested in a very valuable tool which is the Occupational Handbook and is very useful in the process of designing new courses or re-designing existing courses. The information detailed in this handbook was obtained by means of desk-based research, online questionnaires and consultation meetings with various sectorial stakeholders (the state, educational institutions, private enterprise and other social partners).

Standard 8: Information Management	
Comments/proposals	Jobsplus comment
R8.1 Key Recommendation: The data gathered needs to be better used for strategic decision-making.	Data collation gathered by the different units within Jobsplus has been intensified and shall continue to be used for strategic decision-making.
R8.2 The Entity should consider having the student feedback forms filled in on-line and in real time.	Note is being taken. Presently feedback forms are filled by the trainee at the end of the last session. Jobsplus also conducts satisfaction surveys amongst course participants. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this method secures better response rates than the online forms.

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 or Does not meet Standard”

Standard 1: Policy for Quality Assurance	
Comments/proposals	Jobsplus comment
The Panel formed a picture of a highly compartmentalized work environment that tends to limit substantive communication and coordination between the various units to a level significantly below the potential of the	The Training Services Unit and the QA work closely to ensure that initiatives are implemented and that services are offered in a timely manner. However, in view of this

<p>Entity, given the professionalism and dedication of its individual staff.</p> <p>The Panel saw evidence that this structural rigidity tends to hinder rapid institutional learning and leads to unnecessary delays in implementing changes in the due diligence of aspects of course provision. This was most noticeable with respect to assessment, as well as in the review of course design and offerings. In the opinion of the Panel this rigidity is a key impediment to further improvement in the quality of course provision and is impacting the capacity of the Entity to fulfil as efficiently and effectively as possible its strategic policy orientation as discussed in Section 2.3.</p>	<p>comment and the impression given to the panel which is different to actual situation, management will be taking stock of the situation and adopting any measures deemed necessary.</p>
<p>The QA system used by the TDQAU for the formulation and validation of assessment is very weak and is not even adhered to systematically by the staff of the Entity. As discussed in that Standard, the TDQAU does not have the capacity to address all issues related to test construction, validation and other aspects of assessment, and it does not have access to external expertise for independent support as required.</p>	<p>The QA unit designs or validates the assessment against the learning outcomes of the respective course/module. All staff members within the QA unit adhere to this procedure and the team members have a very good working relationship with each other. Furthermore, all members of staff follow a standard mode of operating. In the past months this team followed two training courses, both of which were very relevant to the unit's operations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award in Summative Assessment • Award in the use of Effective questioning Techniques and Development of Success Criteria <p>The Award in Assessment was postponed.</p>
<p>R1.1 Conditional Recommendation: In its IQA Policy the Entity shall differentiate between the quality management system (QMS) of the whole organisation and the IQA system of its training provision and clarify the relationship between them. This needs to be in place by the end of 2019.</p>	<p>The IQA report attached for reference (DOC 2) focused on the QA processes of the department and not of the whole entity. By Q4 of 2020 the IQA report and the respective policies will be reviewed and updated.</p>
<p>R1.2 Conditional Recommendation: The Entity shall review its QMS so as to instil a culture of communication, coordination and structured functional permeability between the different sections that in some way impact</p>	<p>Note is being taken. Jobsplus continuously strives to improve the communication and coordination between colleagues and departments. With regards to the present situation, no particular communication</p>

<p>on training provision, indicating how this is expected to impact positively on the quality of training provision. This needs to be in place by the end of 2019.</p>	<p>barriers between colleagues within the same or different departments are observed. Notwithstanding, the Department will continue to focus its efforts to ensure that communication is strengthened.</p>
<p>R1.3 Conditional Recommendation: In its IQA policy the Entity shall clarify what is already in place and what is still planned for the future and include a detailed and sustainable implementation timeline for the latter. This needs to be in place by end of 2019.</p>	<p>Note for action on this recommendation is being taken. The procedures included in the current IQA report (Doc 2) are those that are already in place. The IQA report, including its respective policies will be reviewed and updated by Q4 of 2020.</p>
<p>R1.4 Conditional Recommendation: The function and remit of the TDQAU shall be reviewed so as to focus on the substantive monitoring, enhancement and review of high quality training provision. Course coordination and administration functions need to be separate from and subject to review by the QA Unit. The entity needs to develop a structure that would verify the quality of training provision by the Entity, this needs to be in place by end of 2019.</p>	<p>The structure referred to is already in place. The course coordination and administration functions are separate from QA and one of the QA's main function is to monitor and verify the quality of training provision by Jobsplus. This is also done through visits by the QA during course and assessment sessions. The coordinators' main functions are to book clients for courses, schedule courses with trainers, inform trainees about course schedules and to carry out all administrative duties when the courses are ongoing. The coordinators' work is verified by QA by means of thorough checks on the courses' files for each module and Jobsplus' database that is used by the coordinators.</p>
<p>R1.5 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a multi-cultural policy that addresses how best to serve its growing non-Maltese client base, whilst ensuring comparability in the level and quality of provision across courses.</p>	<p>A formal policy will be drawn by Q4 2021. Presently courses for Maltese speaking individuals and non-Maltese speaking individuals are being offered separately.</p>
<p>R1.6 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a detailed non--discrimination policy and procedure.</p>	<p>A formal policy will be drawn by Q4 2021.</p>
<p>R1.7 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a detailed Complaints policy and procedure.</p>	<p>Jobsplus' complaints procedure is already in place and may be accessed through this link: https://jobsplus.gov.mt/privacy-policy/complaints-procedure</p>
<p>R1.8 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a Specific Learning Needs (SLN) policy</p>	<p>A formal policy will be drawn by Q4 2021.</p>

that affects its strategic thinking as well as training provision and assessment.	
R1.9 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a Mitigation policy that is linked to the SLN policy but also addresses other categories of learners, and that includes provision for mitigation and adaptation of teaching, resources and assessment where applicable.	A formal policy will be drawn by Q4 2021.
R1.10 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall have a Staff CPD policy that is fit for purpose according to the context of its different categories of staff and guarantees minimum competence,	This is already in place. A systematic CPD policy is in place within Jobsplus in conjunction with HR. In line with the corporation's collective agreement, all staff can be referred to training that is deemed crucial and relevant to their duties. With regards to staff within the Training Department, they have been submitted and followed relevant training as per previous comments.

Standard 4: Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment	
Comments/proposals	Jobsplus comment
Part of the role of the Training Coordinators is to act as an intermediary between the course tutors and the TDQAU. The Panel saw evidence of email strings, and heard similar evidence from stakeholders, that this gate-keeping role created a bureaucracy of rigid lines of communication and delineation of roles that did not add value to the process of communication and feedback between the tutors and the TDQAU with respect to review and identification of new courses, and indeed slowed down and may have impeded this process.	The Training coordinators are the first port of call for matters that require communication with tutors. All of them developed a good working relationship with tutors. The QA members always make themselves available whenever a tutor asks to meet them and in most cases such requests are instigated by the QA. The fact that feedback on course notes, assessment, course visits and administrative matters are passed through the coordinator does not necessarily lead to a bureaucratic and rigid line of communication. When it comes to review and identification of new courses, in most cases QA liaise directly with the respective stakeholders. Before introducing this structure, QA staff were often not able to provide timely feedback on course notes and assessments. This reinforced Jobsplus' idea of having a focal point for both trainers and trainees.
R4.1 Conditional Recommendation: The TDQAU shall undertake a comprehensive	The plan is that by Q4 2020 all assessments will be reviewed so that any necessary

<p>review to check the validity, reliability and fitness for purpose of all end-of-module and end-of-course assessment, including practical and portfolio assessment, and related procedures and mechanisms. This review should take into consideration the nature of the course, the characteristics of learners, and the MQF level. This needs to be concluded by the end of 2019.</p>	<p>updates will be carried out according to this recommendation. This will be done in liaison with tutors.</p>
<p>R4.2 Key Recommendation: The Entity shall foster and support possibilities for tutors to meet, liaise, and/or communicate to share good practice and resources, and to norm teaching and assessment.</p>	<p>Such possibilities are already available and in place. As mentioned in earlier comments, some courses were re-designed and re-submitted for accreditation following feedback by tutors. In some cases it was the tutor who came forward with suggestions. In other cases Jobsplus requested feedback from tutors. Moreover, before introducing changes to any courses Jobsplus invites trainers for a meeting. An example of this is the introduction of the oral component for the English literacy courses.</p>
<p>R4.3 Key Recommendation: The Course Notes and course assessment should be based on, and reviewed against, the course summaries provided on the Entity website.</p>	<p>Already in place (Doc 1).</p>
<p>R4.4 Key Recommendation: The assessment of portfolios needs to be systematized through the use of scoring rubrics.</p>	<p>Already in place for a number of courses (one example is presented in Doc 3) since the accreditation process now requests a more detailed description of the assessments. To re-evaluate the procedure for the other courses.</p>
<p>R4.5 Key Recommendation: Learners should be informed of their assessment results within a set timeframe. Additionally, learners should receive timely formative feedback in an assessment-for-learning context.</p>	<p>In most cases, results are issued within 2 to 3 weeks. Only in some exceptional cases a tutor provides the corrected papers and results after the stipulated timeframe.</p>
<p>R4.6 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to ensure that the language of assessment is in line with its Mitigation and its Multicultural Policies as discussed in Standard</p>	<p>As highlighted earlier this policy will be formulated by Q4 2021.</p>

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Standard 5: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification	
Comments/proposals	Jobsplus comment
One aspect that the Panel did not deem to be fit for purpose was the use of reading texts by the Employment Advisors to determine the literacy competence of applicants. The Panel ascertained that the Advisors make their own judgement as to the literacy competence of applicants without guidance or training from the TDQAU on how to do so with validity and reliability. The advisors and the TDQAU do not communicate so as to ensure that there is an agreed understanding on the use of standard texts, and of the literacy competence required to undertake particular courses with profit.	Employment Advisors are no longer carrying out literacy assessments. All clients for literacy courses sit for the pre-assessment organised by the Training Services Unit so that the level of the applicant will be determined and assigned in the respective course module.
The Panel saw evidence that trainees undertaking the same course were subject to variations in admission procedures and assessment parameters from those established in the NCFHE-accredited course descriptions. When asked to justify this practice, the Entity administration explained that this decision took into consideration the different language competences of Maltese and non-Maltese students who were grouped as two separate cohorts undertaking the same course. Whilst the Panel appreciated the human considerations behind this decision, it noted that the Entity did not appreciate the potential complications that could arise from this unilateral decision, for which prior NCFHE approval should have been sought as per standard NCFHE procedures.	While Jobsplus is committed that the admission procedures are fair, transparent and common for all, there are instances where foreigners are exempt from the Maltese proficiency entry requirement. This mainly takes place for the elderly course, where many of Jobsplus' trainees are foreigners. In those instances where an exemption of the entry requirements is deemed necessary, coordinators discuss the matter with QA. For those candidates who do not possess the entry requirements Jobsplus offers the pre-assessment. Having said this Jobsplus will be reviewing its courses and if needs be will re-submit for accreditation.
During the audit, the panel was informed that the administrative information pertaining to the course in terms of schedule, transportation, etc. is sent to students three weeks prior to commencement of course. The Panel deems this period to be too brief for the students to prepare themselves adequately. Examples were given of how some students struggled to make arrangements in order to avail themselves of state-supported childcare	Note is being taken on this comment. The three-week duration was established and considered as the most suitable notification period after several claims by trainees that when notified much before (such as 6 weeks before the start date), they either ignore the notification letter or forget about it and fail to attend when the course starts. In most cases at application stage candidates ask about the approximate start date/month of the course

<p>as the process for this access normally takes one-month to be concluded.</p>	<p>and such information is always provided. Furthermore, Jobsplus offers trainees the possibility to avail from the Childcare Subsidy Scheme.</p>
<p>The Course Co-ordinators carry out a brief induction at the beginning of each course to pass on key information to students. However, from the interviews conducted, the Panel gathered that the information provided during induction can vary considerably from one Co-ordinator to another with some giving more detailed information than others.</p>	<p>During this brief induction the co-ordinators explain the registration process, attendance, average wage earners scheme, transport procedures, assessment procedures, and other basic information. Jobsplus shall ensure that the information provided is standardised.</p>
<p>R5.1 Conditional Recommendation: With immediate effect, no further variations from established admission procedures and parameters that discriminate between different kinds of trainees undertaking the same course are to be considered before the appropriate QA structures that are fit for purpose as discussed in Standard 1 are in place.</p>	<p>Admission procedures are being followed. For those applicants who are not in possession of the entry requirements, they are invited to sit for a pre-assessment in the respective subject/s and will be deemed eligible to join the course upon passing the pre-assessment.</p>
<p>R5.2 Key Recommendation: The Employment Advisors and the TDQAU are to improve and formalise ongoing communication so as to have a common understanding of literacy competence required to undertake courses with profit.</p>	<p>The reading exercise by the employment advisors is no longer being held and clients are being referred to the pre-assessment administered by the Training Services Unit.</p>
<p>R5.3 Key Recommendation: Employment advisors need to have standardised procedures in consultation with the TDQAU so as to check for literacy and numeracy competence.</p>	<p>For each course offered by Jobsplus, when booking a client the employment advisors have full access for the course's entry requirements which are visible at the application process stage. Clients are being referred to the pre-assessment administered by the Training Services Unit.</p>
<p>R5.4 Key Recommendation: The induction given to trainees by the Coordinators is to be standardised so as to ensure that all trainees are exposed to all key aspects.</p>	<p>Jobsplus shall ensure that the information provided at the beginning of each course is standardised. During this brief induction the coordinators explain the registration process, attendance, average wage earners scheme, transport procedures, assessment procedures, and other basic information.</p>
<p>R5.5 Key Recommendation: During the</p>	<p>It is planned that by the first quarter of 2021</p>

induction, Coordinators are to make available the course summary for those who request it, that would include the main LOs, assessment details, possible progression and any other relevant information.	the trainees will be provided with such document including the Learning outcomes and assessment details.
R5.6 Key Recommendation: The application form for prospective trainees is to be further developed in order to include reference to SLN and not only to disability. Such student profiling would aid the student to have a better learning experience, especially if tutors are informed of the various learning needs of the students <i>a priori</i> .	This recommendation is being noted. Jobsplus intends to update the course registration form by Q3 2020.
R5.7 The entity may consider issuing a receipt on notification of placement on course list. For example, this could be generated automatically once on-line applications are possible.	Jobsplus intends to start issuing confirmations of course bookings by Q3 of 2020.

Standard 6: Teaching staff	
Comments/proposals	Jobsplus comment
The contracts do not clearly state that hourly payments cover preparation, tuition and assessment. This was taken as given by the entity management but was raised as a point of contention by some tutors during interviews.	New contracts for prospective recruits can be amended. All trainers are informed about this during the QA information session for trainers. This session is always held before trainers are assigned any courses and before they sign the contract.
Additionally, present contracts do not cater for the participation of tutors in CPD. This is a matter of concern considering that only 20% of tutors have a teaching warrant. Additionally, the Panel recognises that due to developments in warranting requirements over the years, not all teaching warrant holders may, in fact, have sufficient teacher training and/or experience.	Most of the courses offered by Jobsplus such as trade, technical, care, health safety and security, employability skills, clerical and accounting, business skills, hospitality and customer service and ICT courses do not necessitate a teaching warrant for an effective delivery. These courses require the tutor to be qualified in the subject with good working experience in the field and experience in delivering training. Notwithstanding, Jobsplus is in favour of CPD and will strive to encourage tutors to participate in CPD.
However, the Panel saw evidence that the matching of tutors to courses was not always in line with the minimum requirements in the	The tutors' entry requirements are in line with the minimum requirements in the accredited applications as approved by NCFHE. This practice was also adopted in the

accredited applications as approved by NCFHE.	last recruitment for trainers process carried out after this audit.
R6.1 Conditional Recommendation: With immediate effect, the Entity needs to ensure that any new course provision is in line with the minimum tutor qualification requirements as approved by the NCFHE.	The entry requirements for trainers' recruitment are in line with the minimum tutor qualification requirements as approved by the NCFHE.
R6.2 Conditional Recommendation: The tutors' contract needs to clearly state that the hourly remuneration for service is also inclusive of all preparation and assessment-related duties. This needs to be in place by the next cycle of recruitment and cover all tutor provision from that point on.	New contracts for next recruitment can be amended. All trainers are informed about this during the QA information session for trainers. This session is always held before trainers are assigned any courses and before they sign the contract.
R6.3 Key Recommendation: New tutors need to have an appropriate introductory training programme that goes beyond the present administrative induction, and that ensures that all tutors have sufficient competences with respect to key issues such as assessment, SLN and multicultural context.	Jobsplus ensures that selected tutors have sufficient competences mentioned in this recommendation at the recruitment stage. Such criteria have substantial mark weighting in the selection process. Jobsplus shall modify and upgrade the introductory training programme for tutors for the next recruitment exercise.
R6.4 Key Recommendation: Current tutors, especially those without teacher training, are to be given core CPD on the points mentioned above. The provider needs to set up systems that ensure that tutors remain <i>au courant</i> with developments in their subject or craft.	Most of the tutors' occupation is fully related to the subject they teach hence they have to remain up-to-date with their subject i.e. accountants and auditors delivering accounting subjects, care professionals delivering care subjects, self-employed in construction delivering construction related subjects, environmental health practitioners delivering food handling and so on. Jobsplus shall encourage its tutors to participate in CPD and to identify training courses relevant for their role.
R6.5 Key Recommendation: Given the emphasis on core and supplementary CPD in these recommendations, the Entity needs to consider what type of contractual relationship with tutors would best ensure quality of provision through CPD, given the nature of tutors' service.	Jobsplus takes note of this recommendation and shall include it in the next recruitment phase.

<p>R6.6 Key Recommendation: Tutors need to be actively involved in the identification of their own training needs, and in provision that capitalises on sharing of good practice, standardisation and other in-house expertise, where applicable.</p>	<p>Jobsplus agreed with the involvement of tutors in sharing of good practice.</p>
<p>R6.7 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to set up systems for the systematic sharing of good practice in assessment, andragogy and resources between tutors, especially of same subject.</p>	<p>Presently tutors especially those delivering training in the same subject have a good working relationship with each other. Whenever changes are adopted all are consulted upon and everyone is given the opportunity to discuss and share their views.</p>
<p>R6.8 Key Recommendation: Tutors need to be given substantive feedback on spot-checks in a systematic manner, and by the revitalised TDQAU that was discussed in Standard 1.</p>	<p>When course visits are carried out, tutors are informed of the findings in a systematic manner.</p>

<p>Standard 7: Learning Resources and Student Support</p>	
<p>Comments/proposals</p>	<p>Jobsplus comment</p>
<p>The Panel was informed that previously, during induction students would be provided with a booklet with course information; however, these were often discarded by students, so the practice was discontinued. Whilst the Panel appreciated the environmentally-friendly perspective of this decision, it was felt that the Coordinators should still have in hand a number of handouts, in both Maltese and English, with the summarized LOs as they appear on the website and with information on assessment. These would be available on request during induction.</p>	<p>This comment is being noted and Jobsplus finds no objection in providing these documents on request during induction.</p>
<p>The student guidelines presently available do not include student rights and obligations.</p>	<p>This recommendation is being noted and guidelines will be reviewed and necessary updates will be carried out by Q3 of 2020.</p>
<p>Apart from on-site training, as requested by some employers, training takes place in a purpose-built training centre within the Entity. When it was built it was a state-of-the-art. However, both students and tutors felt that Wi-Fi should now be available for</p>	<p>Discussions have already been held with IT on the availability of Wi-Fi in all classes. This was also raised during the IT strategy meetings. Having said that, Jobsplus has a specific area where there is Wi-Fi access and trainers needing internet for training delivery</p>

<p>preparation as well as a teaching/learning tool. The panel noticed that some of the air-conditioning system is quite old and noisy contributing to a disruptive learning environment.</p>	<p>are being assigned these rooms. Presently all air-conditioning system is functioning well and faulty units have been replaced. Whenever a tutor either writes a comment on the evaluation sheet or informs the coordinator about any maintenance requirements, this is reported to the technical support executive and immediate action is taken.</p>
<p>The Entity does not have a systematic CPD policy for its administrative staff involved in services supporting training provision. For example, from interviews with TDQAU staff the panel got to know that the staff had not received CPD to be able to give appropriate substantive feedback to tutors during class observation visits, or to have effective oversight on all substantive issues related to quality.</p>	<p>A systematic CPD policy is in place within Jobsplus in conjunction with HR. All staff can be referred to training that is deemed crucial and relevant to their duties. With regards to TDQAU staff, they have been submitted and followed relevant training as per previous comments.</p>
<p>R7.1 Conditional Recommendation: The Entity shall itself start providing services for the identification of SLN to its learners so as to facilitate their access to learning. This needs to be in place by the end of 2019.</p>	<p>Presently learners with SLN are being assigned to courses that are designed to facilitate access to their learning. These courses are not delivered at Jobsplus Training Complex but at Job Bridge Training Centre. This training centre houses a number of fully equipped training rooms, computer lab and a well-equipped common area for both trainers and trainees. Jobsplus administers another project co-financed by ESF. This project was designed to facilitate access to ICT training in Malta and Gozo, in order to assist persons with SLN.</p>
<p>R7.2 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to enhance its teaching and learning provision so as to cater for SLN learners in its courses.</p>	<p>See comment above.</p>
<p>R7.3 Key Recommendation: In line with the review of the TDQAU in Standard 1, TDQAU executives staff are to be up-skilled, receive regular CPD and be empowered to give substantive feedback to tutors and to have effective oversight on all substantive issues related to quality from course and resource design, to provision, and assessment.</p>	<p>This is being done. Notwithstanding, efforts shall be intensified to ensure that this role is strengthened.</p>

<p>R7.4 Key Recommendation: CPD for TDQAU staff needs to include indicators on the quality of the lessons as well as administrative indicators during on-site inspections.</p>	<p>CPD for TDQAU is in place. Suggested indicators to be included for CPD initiatives throughout 2021.</p>
<p>R7.5 Key Recommendation: Employment Advisors are to be trained in the appropriate and efficient use of standardised procedures to measure literacy competence as mentioned in Standard 5.</p>	<p>As per previous comments, a system is already in place to measure literacy competence. This is administered by the Training Services Unit.</p>
<p>R7.6 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to develop a CPD policy for administrative staff supporting training provision that includes recommendations 7.3 – 7.5.</p>	<p>In place as per previous comments.</p>
<p>R7.7 Key Recommendation: Course notes need to be developed on the basis of the course LOs summarised in the course descriptions available on the website.</p>	<p>This is already in place as course notes are developed and evaluated according to the LOs approved by NCFHE and summarised on the website (Doc 1).</p>
<p>R7.8 Recommendation: Food and beverage facilities, which cater for both staff and learners, should be sustainably upgraded.</p>	<p>Recommendation noted.</p>
<p>R7.9 Key Recommendation: An IT technical support service needs to be on call to service ICT break-downs in real time and minimise learning disruption.</p>	<p>At Jobsplus Training Complex there is a staff member responsible for all technical support service requirements on the premises. The main responsibility is to overlook all maintenance and technical support requirements and to immediately report and follow up with in-house maintenance and IT personnel and contractors.</p>
<p>R7.10 Key Recommendation: Wi-Fi needs to be made available for all tutors and learners, so that it can be used for preparation as well as a teaching/learning tool.</p>	<p>Discussions have already been held with IT on the availability of Wi-Fi in all classes. This was also raised during the IT strategy meetings. Having said this Jobsplus has a specific area where there is Wi-Fi access and trainers needing internet for training delivery are being assigned these rooms.</p>
<p>R7.11 Key Recommendation: All workshops and classrooms are to be equipped with health</p>	<p>This is continuously monitored as per previous comment regarding maintenance and technical support requirements within</p>

and safety equipment as per the applicable legislative HSE parameters.	the Training Complex.
R7.12 Key Recommendation: The student guidelines need to be enhanced as a student handbook, to include student rights and obligations.	This recommendation for action is being noted and guidelines to be reviewed and updated by Q3 of 2020.
R7.13 Key Recommendation: Tutors must have sufficient information on learners' SLN and disabilities to be able to adapt their teaching and resources accordingly.	With regards to learners following one of the courses offered at Hal Far Training Complex, tutors are alerted about individual cases by the training coordinator during the registration process.
R7.14 The Entity needs to consider the provision of popular courses in central or northern sites to accommodate learners.	Jobsplus already considered this option and was given access to a central/northern site. The intention is to acquire access to more sites. Jobsplus is also considering online courses as an alternative mode for its course delivery.
R7.15 The entity needs to consider introducing air-conditioning that is fit for purpose in all indoor learning spaces.	This is in place.
R7.16 The Entity has to consider upgrading the computer hardware and software used by learners.	This has been done throughout 2019.
R7.17 The Entity may consider introducing student representatives in the longer courses.	Recommendation noted.
R7.18 The Entity should consider informing students and employers earlier than three weeks before the start of a course as is current practice.	Recommendation noted. Earlier comment on this matter refers.
Standard 9: Public Information	
Comments/proposals	Jobsplus comment
Public information on the website can be updated in liaison with the IT sub-contractor. This means that content updates are not instantaneous and could take some time to be executed.	Public information on the website is updated swiftly in-house and no sub-contractors are involved in the process.

<p>R9.1 Conditional Recommendation: The Entity's core information on its website, including with respect to training, needs to be accessible also to Maltese-dominant users. This needs to be in place by the end of 2020.</p>	<p>Recommendation for action noted. With regards to training, the intention is to have the updated student's guidelines in Maltese and English uploaded on the website by Q3 of 2020. This however is a process which would need to incorporate all the website's text and not just the training section.</p>
<p>R9.2 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to expand the course descriptions on its website to include information in the specific methods of assessment, the pass-mark and pass rates, and on possible progression that is available to potential applicants.</p>	<p>Recommendation for action noted.</p>
<p>R9.3 Key Recommendation: The Entity is to systematically collect and process feedback from its stakeholders on the fitness for purpose of the website and how to improve its user experience.</p>	<p>This is being done.</p>
<p>R9.4 Key Recommendation: The website user experience flow need to be altered to make key information more efficiently accessible.</p>	<p>This is being done.</p>
<p>R9.5 Key Recommendation: The website needs to be enhanced to allow for prospective learners to register their interest through the website, especially since most are employed and so will not have Employer Advisor hand-holding.</p>	<p>This is already possible. The intention is to enhance this service by making more courses on the website available for booking by website users.</p>
<p>R9.6 Key Recommendation: When applications are processed by phone or at a job centre, the Entity needs to provide information on the course, by handout or email.</p>	<p>This is being done and the intention is for this service to be enhanced and systematic.</p>
<p>R9.7 Key Recommendation: Signage on the Entity's premises must exclusively bear the current name of the Entity, i.e. "Jobsplus".</p>	<p>Done.</p>
<p>R9.8 Key Recommendation: Course</p>	<p>Recommendation for action is being noted. Jobsplus intends to have these updated</p>

descriptions need to be available during the course induction sessions.	course descriptions and available during induction sessions by Q1 of 2021.
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Standard 10: Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes	
Comments/proposals	Jobsplus comment
R10.1 Conditional Recommendation: The Entity needs to develop a mind-set of continuous improvement as a learning provider in line with the Quality Cycle principle of the <i>National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education</i> . An integral part of this process is the overhaul of the present QA function within the TDQAU as discussed in Standard 1. This needs to be in place by the end of 2019.	The policies referred to in Standard 1 shall be reviewed and developed. With regards to the recommendation of reviewing the function and review of the TDQAU so as to focus on the substantive monitoring, enhancement and review of high quality training provision, as per this comment in Standard 1, this is one of the unit's main function. As an ongoing process, Jobsplus shall continue to evaluate and develop this function as much as necessary.
R10.2 Conditional Recommendation: As part of this process, the entity shall have a 5-year plan in place to review all its courses, by the end of 2019.	This is already being done. A number of courses have already been re-designed and the plan is to keep reviewing and updating all courses on offer.
R10.3 Conditional Recommendation: The Entity needs to commission external review/s of the effectiveness and fitness for purpose of its provision in view of the new policy direction as recommended in previous Standards. These review/s need to be finalised by the end of 2020.	Jobsplus intends to commission this external review/s by the end of 2021 after all reviews of website documents, courses' summary documents and all assessments is concluded.
R10.4 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to review and enhance the communication and coordination between the various sections that contribute to the review of its training provision.	Recommendation is being noted. Jobsplus aims at enhancing the existing good communication and coordination between colleagues and departments.
R10.5 Key Recommendation: The Entity is to systematically involve all its stakeholders in course review.	This is already being done and the intention is to maintain such system and improve where necessary.
R10.6 Key Recommendation: The Entity needs to strengthen and shorten the feedback	As per previous comments on this matter, there are no such delays or bureaucratic channels. However Jobsplus is taking note of

loop between learners, the TDQAU, tutors and Course Coordinators at end of courses.	the panel's impression in this regard and aims to further strengthen the feedback loop.
R10.7 In the review of courses, the Entity could formalise which curriculum standards and/or frameworks it is making reference to, taking as its starting point EQF/MQF tools, formats and frameworks.	Recommendation noted.

Annex: Review Panel Bio Notes

In the setting up of the review panel for **Jobsplus**, 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 16th to 18th July, 2018**.

Head of Review Panel/External Peer:

Dr Sandro Spiteri has taught and trained in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors since 1989. From 2001 to 2008 he set up the first national family literacy and parent leadership programmes in Malta, and has worked and published with UNESCO on these issues. He founded the Malta Writing Programme in 2001, the first affiliate site in Europe of the National Writing Project in the USA, which also included a range of programmes for families and parents. From 2008 to 2009 Sandro was the first Principal of St Margaret College. In 2009 he was appointed Director for Quality Assurance and later Director for Curriculum Management for compulsory education. In these roles he set up the school external review system, the mentoring system for newly qualified teachers, and the first national literacy strategy. In 2013 Sandro was appointed as the first Head of Quality Assurance at the National Commission for Further and Higher Education; in this role he set up the QA system and authored the National QA Framework for the sector. He also co-ordinated the first three external quality audits (EQAs) and participated in the EQAs of the University of Malta and MCAST. Since November 2015 Sandro is Senior Executive at the QA Unit of the University of Malta. In 2017 he has awarded an educational doctorate from the UCL Institute of Education, London, with a focus on quality assurance in higher education.

Peer Reviewer:

Josephine Saliba BA, PGCE (Malta), Msc Educational Leadership (Leicester), MA Education Studies (Sheffield) is a Senior Lecturer at the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology. Following her initial teaching engagement within the Ministry for Education and a Programme Co-ordinator within the Foundation for Educational Services, in 2004 she moved to the MCAST Learning Support Unit (LSU), part of the Curriculum and Quality Assurance Department. She specialises in the teaching of English and Communication Studies within the Foundation, Technical and University Colleges and follows individual students in their academic and vocational studies, providing support programmes and assessment. Previously having spent two years as Co-ordinator of the LSU and lecturer within the Vocational Teacher Training Unit, she now fulfils various roles in programme development, assessment and verification, in the team design of Initial Assessment Tests, academic and vocational Embedded and Integrated assignments as well as assessment verification and quality assurance.

Dr Mary Muscat is currently a full-time lecturer at the University of Malta and a part-time child advocate at the Family Courts. She is posted at the Faculty of Laws, Civil Law Department, and is coordinating the practicum of the Masters in Advocacy (M.Adv). Her task is to prepare 5th year law students for their legal practice and eventually sitting for their warrant exam. She frequently lectures at the Academy of Disciplined Forces, formerly known as the Police Academy, mostly in criminal law, police law and policing subjects to police recruits, prison guards, and Frontex borderguards. She is also the Malta Police's Science and Research Correspondent within CEPOL, the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training. She works closely with the police and OSCE in developing a training programme that sensitizes police officers with regards to identifying and tackling hate crime. She is also currently involved in developing a set of textbooks for police officer and prison guard training.

Before becoming an academic, she was a Police Inspector for 13 years., She holds degrees in criminology, law, canon law, geography, history and environmental management. My PhD research focuses on the role of the 'green' court in ensuring environmental governance.

Student Peer Reviewer:

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.(Hons) in Sport and Active Lifestyles, and an Award Certificate in Teaching Adults.

Wilbert Tabone is a researcher in the areas of artificial intelligence, human-computer interaction and the application of technology in the arts and cultural heritage. He graduated BSc. (Hons.) with first class honours in Creative Computing from the University of London and later read for an MSc in Artificial Intelligence at the University of Malta, conducting his research at the Bernoulli Institute for Mathematics, Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence, University of Groningen in the Netherlands. Wilbert is actively involved in the cultural, technology and education sectors and is also an activist for a number of Maltese and international NGOs, including the Commonwealth Youth Council. He is currently a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellow PhD fellow in the Netherlands whilst also contributing to creative computing development in the Maltese heritage sector and serving as a quality assurance auditor for the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE). Wilbert formed part of Malta.AI, the Malta National Task Force on Artificial Intelligence, tasked with formulating Malta's national strategy on AI.