

Quality Assurance Development Plan 2023-2025

Development plan - goals and objectives for development

Programme Accreditation

Goal: Evaluation of the current programme accreditation process to identify strengths and weaknesses and to make recommendations on the changes necessary to render the process more transparent, to ensure consistency and instil more trust in the system amongst stakeholders

Earlier this year the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) agreed to start an Analysis of the current Programme Accreditation Methodology which has been in place since the inception of the then National Further and Higher Education Commission.

Two reviewers from the pool of programme accreditation evaluators were appointed to draft a report for internal discussion within the Authority on the current process. Recommendations were made and the Authority is currently considering these internally before issuing a final report for consultation with all stakeholders.

The following action plan has been drafted and approved by the Quality Assurance Committee.

Action	Date for Completion
Appoint two evaluators from MFHEA's pool to present a report identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the process and make recommendations	July 2023
Internal Consultation: Report to be discussed amongst Accreditation and Quality Assurance Officers, MFHEA Management Team, MFHEA Staff and Quality Assurance Committee	October 2023
Finalise Report with proposals to be presented for consultation and discussion amongst stakeholders. Publish Report	December 2023
Consultation with Stakeholders: Advisory Committee, Providers, Students and Employers	March 2024
Final Report to be presented to the Advisory Committee, Quality Assurance Committee and to MFHEA's Board together with an action plan on the implementation of the new process. Publish Report together with the Action Plan	June 2024
Professional Development Sessions with providers and evaluators about the new process	December 2024
Implementation of the new process	January 2025

Objective: Involvement of Students in Programme Accreditation

As from 1st September 2023, MFHEA is engaging the third evaluator in the accreditation process of higher education programmes at MQF Level 6 and higher. This will be a student studying at a higher level and in the case of qualifications at MQF Level 8, students who are in the last two years of the programme shall be eligible to be part of the panel of reviewers that will be accrediting the programme in line with the Referencing Report. An online tool kit was developed for students to help them acquire the necessary skills to perform this task.

Objective: MQF/EQF Level 8 Programmes Accreditation

A new format of how an evaluation report is submitted by evaluators in the case of MQF Level 8 programmes, will come into effect from 1st October 2023. The evaluation report will be sent to providers after the appointed evaluators will have met remotely to discuss their individual evaluation of the programme and any recommendations they may have. This will ensure a unified approach by the evaluation panel. This process is repeated in all cycles until there is a recommendation or refusal for the accreditation of programme. This amendment in the evaluation process will not affecting the deadline period.

Following feedback from stakeholders (providers, students, and evaluators), the Quality Assurance Committee shall decide how and when the same procedures will be applied to other higher education programmes at lower levels.

Objective: Publication of the Programme Accreditation Reports

As from October 2024, MFHEA will be publishing programme accreditation reports. The QAC is currently conducting an internal discussion to determine the nature and scope of the information to be published. A decision is expected to have been taken by the end of the year so that a consultation process involving all stakeholders may be conducted during the first half of 2024.

Objective: Increase the pool of local programme evaluators particularly students.

With Malta being a small country with limited resources, one of the main challenges faced by the MFHEA is identifying persons locally to be engaged as programme evaluators. Nevertheless, MFHEA remains committed to increasing the local pool of programme evaluators by identifying academics who are employed in industry and not necessarily with Higher Education Institutions or Universities. Contacts have already been made with the Chamber of Commerce and SMEs in this regard.

A reach-out campaign is currently being planned on how to involve local students in the programme accreditation and internal quality assurance of institutions. In this regard, a workshop was held last in July 2023 for the management of HEIs discussing the involvement of students in internal quality assurance processes. A similar workshop will be held on the 13th November 2023 for students. This shall be an opportunity for the Authority to have direct contact with students to explain the importance of their involvement not only in the IQA processes of their respective institution but also to inform them of the opportunity that MFHEA is offering them to be part of its pool of reviewers.

The same applies for peer reviewers involved in External Quality Assurance Audits.

Goal: To conduct regular programme audits of accredited programmes in accordance with the National Strategic Action Plan for Further and Higher Education 2022-2030, which is viewed as fundamental to ensure the quality of HE provision.

In June 2023, two experts were identified to revise the current guidelines for programme audits. It is anticipated that processes will be in place by the end of 2023 following a consultation exercise with all stakeholders. The programme audit guidelines and procedures to providers will be presented on the 16th November 2023, when views and feedback will be collected from providers and students during the event.

Following approval from QAC, during a webinar on the 1st of December 2023, providers and students will be informed of the final version of the programme audit guidelines and procedures.

Goal: To strengthen the process of Provider Accreditation (Licensing)

Objective: Implementation of the New Manual of Provider Accreditation for Higher Education Institutions

The New Manual of Provider Accreditation for new Higher Education Institutions shall be applicable for applications received as from 1st January 2024.

The Manual has been uploaded on the MFHEA website together with the new applications to be submitted.

Training for Accreditation and Quality Assurance Officers by Dr Anca Prisacariu is planned on the 14th November 2023. Officers have already been provided with a copy of this manual and were actively involved in the drafting of the manual. Accreditation and QA officers will be training peer reviewers including student reviewers involved in external quality assurance audits.

A session for providers and students is scheduled for the 15th of November 2023.

Objective: Publication of the Provider Accreditation Reports

As from July 2023, MFHEA started publishing an announcement of licenses (provider accreditation) on its website. MFHEA will be updating this quarterly.

Furthermore, reports of panels assessing applications for a University License will also start being published. This was the case with the **temporary license issued to the International European University** (<https://mfhea.mt/resources/announcements/>)

Following the introduction of the new manual of Provider Accreditation in January 2024, Provider Accreditation Reports shall be published in their entirety for the general public and stakeholders' interest. This is expected to start in the second half of 2024.

Objective: Updating the National Quality Assurance Framework

The National Quality Assurance Framework will be updated by the end of 2023, in order to properly reflect the New Manual of Provider Accreditation.

Goal: Strengthening External Quality Assurance Audits

Objective: To increase the pool of local peer reviewers (including students)

An expression of interest for locals to act as peer reviewers shall be issued in November 2023. Training will be held at the beginning of 2024 to select suitable candidates for the post of peer reviewers.

Objective: Initiate Follow-up Activities

The MFHEA will document and assess the actions taken by the institution in a series of follow-ups to the audit, these may include site/online visits. The MFHEA may decide to conduct further follow-up visits during the five-year period of the license. The follow-up reports will

be published on MFHEA's website. It is expected that the first follow-up activities as outlined in the new manual will be held in 2025.

Objective: Updating the GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE – FOR ONLINE LEARNING PROVIDERS IN MALTA (2021)

The Guidelines shall be updated to reflect changes and new practices that have occurred or have been introduced in the e-learning sector following the pandemic, such as AI and Metaverse. This task is included in the National VET Team Project and shall be implemented by the **end of 2024**. Two e-learning experts will revise the Guidelines, taking into consideration feedback from VET providers who have been implementing said Guidelines since 2021. The experts will also conduct a workshop on new developments in the sector and MFHEA requirements.

Goal: Enhancing the quality of online learning provision in Malta

Objective: Development and Implementation of the CPD course in QA for providers and staff.

The CPD will be delivered asynchronously through a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). This will be designed based on an in-depth analysis of 50 institutions across Europe and will be followed by focus groups in three countries to identify any gaps, key challenges and best practices. The online CPD in QA will be inference-based and designed by experts in various fields such as quality management, innovation in teaching and learning methods, Quality Assurance of work-based learning/apprenticeship, Quality Assurance of micro-credentials, Bologna process and ESG, EQAVET and internationalisation. This course will be split into 7 different modules, namely: 1. Strategy, policies and procedures; 2. Maintaining and continuously improving QA system in Institutions; 3. Quality Assurance of work-based learning; 4. Quality Assurance of micro-credentials; 5. Synergies between ESG standards and EQAVET Framework; 6. Innovation in Teaching and Learning; 7. Internationalization.

The CPD is part of the EQAVET project and shall be completed by the **end of 2025**. The course will be available to the public and anyone who wishes to undertake training on one of the above topics will be able to do so by applying online and will be able to obtain an attendance certificate upon successful assessment after each of the topics.

Goal: To provide Further and Higher Education Institutions and their staff, as well as stakeholders with readily accessible and up-to-date information and activities related to the Further and Higher Education sector, to increase individual learning capacity, and to support the development of an evaluation and quality-improvement culture within institutions when implementing the ESG and EQAVET Framework.

Objective: Revision of the Guidelines for External Quality Assurance Audits of Further Education Institutions and Further Education Centres

The experts will revise the guidelines for external Quality Assurance Audits of Further Education Institutions and Further Education Centres based on providers' feedback, including internal and public consultations with various stakeholders. New developments will be implemented in the **first quarter of 2025**

Goal: Improve the quality of Further Education and VET Institutions without placing additional burden on them

Objective: Deliver professional development sessions/workshops to HE providers on the Standards of the new EQA Provider Accreditation Manual for HEIs.

The experts in QA of HE will deliver six workshops **in 2024** to support HEIs in understanding the changes and implementation of the updated Standards of the Manual and better preparation for the EQA audit at the licensing stage and after five years of operation.

Goal: To familiarise accredited providers with the new Standards of the EQA Provider Accreditation Manual and requirements of accreditation and EQA procedures