

# EQA AUDIT FOLLOW-UP REPORT

May 2024



## Standard 1: Standards For Internal Quality Assurance

Judgement: The IfE meets the requirements of Standard 1

Recommendation	Take-up and Implementation of Recommendation
<p>KR: Course participants and also external stakeholders shall be more intensively involved in relevant boards and committees related to QA.</p>	<p>The IfE has reviewed the governing structure and included a number of course participants and/or external stakeholders in a number of boards and committees. The IfE also plans to include more course participants and/or external stakeholders in more boards and committees.</p>
<p>KR: Funding should be available for conducting research.</p>	<p>As part of the budget preparation process, the Finance Department requests feedback from senior management on requirements for the next year's budget allocation. The requests are vetted and included in the final budget plan according to financial resources available. Requests for research studies are invariably given due consideration and allocated with funding according to financial resources available to the IfE for that year.</p>
<p>R: Consider a possibility to define a limited number of strong research themes with a potential to serve as a longer-term driver for the development of research activities within the IfE.</p>	<p>The IfE has formulated a Research Road Map indicating the key areas of research activities of the IfE. It is available at: <a href="https://ife.edu.mt/research-road-map/">https://ife.edu.mt/research-road-map/</a></p> <p>Besides that, the IfE has followed up on the themes of the previous Symposia conducted, namely internationalisation/ multiculturalism in education, neuroscience education and the educators' vision for tomorrow. These themes were followed up through training and information session with Senior Leadership teams, educators and /general public. As part of and following the training evaluation will be carried out on further actions required on these themes.</p> <p>The Research Road map will be revised periodically according to the feedback received and the needs of the education sector.</p>

Standard 2: Institutional Probity	
Judgement: The IfE meets the requirements of Standard 2	
Recommendation	Take-up and Implementation of Recommendation
<p>KR: The IfE should develop and include in its Strategic Plan the main indicators, both for 2030 and intermediary, that would be measurable and would support the process of monitoring of institutional development and the communication with external stakeholders. In determining the indicators to be achieved, a clearer connection with the institutional capacity, especially human resources, is recommended to ensure clarity to all the parties involved in planning the financial and human resources of the institute, on which goals can be achieved with available human resources.</p>	<p>The Strategic Plan 2021-2030 was formulated amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitating remote work and the transition to online learning. This unique scenario prompted a comprehensive reflection on strategic priorities, evaluating their effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement. In response, the IfE initiated the development of a strategy for the next five years (2025-2030), engaging in extensive consultations with internal staff, lecturers, and stakeholders.</p>

Standard 3: Design And Approval Of Programmes	
Judgement: The IfE meets the requirements of Standard 3	
Recommendation	Take-up and Implementation of Recommendation
N/A	

Standard 4: Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment	
Judgement: The IfE meets the requirements of Standard 4	
Recommendation	Take-up and Implementation of Recommendation
<p>KR: IfE should strengthen the student representation by ensuring that the institutional student council regularly conducts elections and that elected students are empowered to</p>	<p>Being a relatively young educational institution, the IfE has recently set up a system of course participant representation (please refer to the page on <a href="#">website</a>) as an integral part of its quality assurance including its teaching and learning enhancement processes. The course participant representation gives a voice to every course</p>

<p>function as true student representatives.</p>	<p>participant and provides them the opportunity to contribute in programme review processes. It is also the main channel through which course participants can forward any issues of concern and highlight areas for improvement. Elections for these representatives are organised annually by the Admissions Department following a team building activity for first years. The Admissions department also schedules periodic meetings at the beginning of the academic year to ensure that the IfE is providing the platform and opportunity for reps to meet.</p> <p>IfE is still promoting a culture whereby students have a voice in the governing structure. This recommendation will be implemented by May 2026. We firmly believe that in order to develop a solid base where students are actively involved in the structure a system of students' capacity building needs to be developed. One has to consider also the challenge that since all course participants are mature and part-time, they are only available late in the afternoon since they all have a full time-job. As indicated in the recommendation related to Standard 1, the IfE plans to include more course participants in its governing structure.</p>
<p>KR: IfE should include students in all of its governance, decision-making and expert bodies.</p>	<p>As indicated earlier, the IfE has reviewed the governing structure and included a number of course participants and/or external stakeholders in a number of boards and committees. The IfE also plans to include more course participants and/or external stakeholders in more boards and committees when the structure is updated in 2026.</p>
<p>R: The Institute could consider implementing greater flexibility in how students can plan and, if needed, extend their studies, without reducing academic requirements, in order to successfully combine studies with work and private responsibilities. The school year commitments of teachers and the overall learning workload at the Institute could be taken into account in developing the study calendar to a larger extent.</p>	<p>Programme timetables are designed following a blended approach combining face-to-face, synchronous and asynchronous lectures. Each module's schedule is planned according to the modality that best serves its implementation. Where possible fixed days are scheduled per programme, however IfE has a large percentage of lecturers who work on a contract for service (self-employed) basis with limited availability.</p> <p>Student representatives have been involved in the planning of timetables. This practice will continue.</p>

<p>Lectures could be planned on fixed week days. Workload required for studies could be communicated more clearly for applicants.</p>	<p>Course participants are presented with the module assignment and tasks at the commencement of each module indicating the workload required and the timeframe for which it is to be completed. Furthermore, the IfE takes into account extenuating circumstances (please refer to our <a href="#">Extenuating Circumstances policy</a>) and provide provided opportunities to course participants to either extend their studies (please refer to our <a href="#">Extension to the Duration of Studies Policy</a>) and/or take leave from enrolment for a period of time (please refer to the <a href="#">Leave of Absence Policy</a>). Course participants are also given a personalised approach according to their needs.</p> <p>Therefore, in light of the above, the IfE considers the recommendation as implemented.</p>
<p>R: IfE could develop a formal way of validating and recognising student engagement (e.g. student representation, extracurricular activities of students related to IfE etc.) either through ECTS (recognition of informal learning), or through another institutional acknowledgement mechanism.</p>	<p>CPs attending non accredited professional development sessions/ workshops/ seminars at IfE receive a certificate of attendance which can then be redeemed against CPD hours acknowledged in the <a href="#">accelerated progression scheme</a> which enables teachers to progress further in their salary scale. IfE is now also providing student representatives with a reference letter that recognises their role in the governance and quality assurance structures of the IfE.</p>

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

Judgement: The IfE meets the requirements of Standard 5

Recommendation

Take-up and Implementation of Recommendation

N/A

#### Standard 6: Teaching Staff

Judgement: The IfE meets the requirements of Standard 6

Recommendation

Take-up and Implementation of Recommendation

KR: The IfE should ensure that all lecturers receive fast anonymised feedback from students without the need to specially request it.

Presently, IfE collects anonymised feedback via Microsoft Forms after the module delivery and after the assessment results are published. The data gathered is then sent to the lecturers upon request.

	<p>The QA Dept. is working with the portal supplier so that this functionality is available on the portal so that all lecturers are sent the anonymised feedback that is received. IfE is cognisant that having this system within a customised portal needs a designated budget and further meetings and tweaks which needs to happen before this functionality is in place.</p> <p>In the meantime, the QA Dept. has sent the respective feedback to all the full-time lecturers and the lecturers on a contract for service teaching within the following programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Master of Education (All programmes)</li> <li>▪ Master in Applied Educational Leadership</li> <li>▪ Master of Science in STEM Education and Engagement</li> <li>▪ Awards (All stand-alone modules and short courses)</li> </ul>
<p>KR: The IfE should continue the efforts to employ more full-time lecturers to support further expansion and development of the IfE’s teaching offer.</p>	<p>Since the audit, IfE has employed 5 full-time lecturers. The IfE also plans to hire part-time lecturers as replacements for those who are on contract for service basis. Through this, IfE will further develop its academic community. To implement the above, the IfE relies totally on the approval of the HR plan by the Ministry. To mitigate the current situation, the IfE constantly increases its pool contract for service lecturing staff.</p>
<p>R: The panel recommends that participation of lecturers, including lecturers on a contract for service, in the “Peer Conversation on Practice” activities could be promoted further. Inclusion of this activity in the individual development plans could be considered, along with the other developmental and staff cooperation activities aiming at enhancing innovative teaching practice and self-reflection.</p>	<p>The QA Dept. has held a number of sessions with the lecturers including those on a contract for service to promote this practice. These include sessions on Teaching and Learning in HE, the benefits of Peer Conversation on Practice in HE, how to provide effective constructive feedback etc. The IfE plans to continue holding the subject meetings periodically with the lecturers which provide opportunities for lecturers to discuss and reflect on how to enhance teaching, learning and assessment.</p>

## Standard 7: Learning Resources and Student Support

Judgement: The IfE meets the requirements of Standard 7

### Recommendation

KR: IfE should set up a way to monitor the state of diversity among its students and clearly determine which are the underrepresented and/or vulnerable groups. Following this, IfE should develop measures to attract students belonging to underrepresented and/or vulnerable groups.

### Take-up and Implementation of Recommendation

At present, the IfE already collects data related to gender, age and nationality. This data is then analysed by the Gender Equality Committee who has created a detailed action plan (which is available in the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) section on the IfE website) to address gender inequalities and to enhance diversity with regard, for example, to age, culture, physical ability, sexual orientation, multilingualism, etc. Furthermore, the IfE has a multi-faith room which is a space for spiritual refreshment, exploration, quiet contemplation and worship for course participants, and staff of any religious persuasion and none.

The IfE is committed to continue:

- Updating all policies and procedures that address equality, diversity and inclusion including the [Equal Opportunities Policy](#).
- Designing welcoming adverts, handbooks and other publications etc by including pictures of individuals with disabilities different language, different culture etc.
- Ensuring that the physical building, the website and the portal are accessible.

Since the audit the IfE has:

- Run communication campaigns on equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Created a multi-cultural day.
- Began to implement a student survey with current course participants. The data collected will be analysed and research report will be compiled.

Moreover, the IfE will be:

- Providing training opportunities for staff on the needs of students with disabilities, how they can be included in the programmes and on the benefits of working with these students.
- Recording of information regarding culture, multilingualism etc.

<p>KR: IfE should strengthen the student representation by ensuring that the institutional student council regularly conducts elections and that elected students are empowered to function as true student representatives. Furthermore, IfE should include students in all of its governance, decision-making and expert bodies.</p>	<p>Please refer to the actions being taken as per recommendation in Standard 1 and 4.</p>
<p>KR: IfE should work on equipping the library with all the necessary resources and literature, in particular computers that the students can work on.</p>	<p>IfE will continue to procure further physical and digital literature resources, particularly those outlined in the module reading lists.</p> <p>Furthermore, as per recommendation, the IfE has placed computers in a room adjacent to the library for academic, educational, and research purposes.</p>
<p>R: IfE should integrate the topic of learning resources in its internal QA system, e.g. by including a question on the available and needed learning resources in the student survey.</p>	<p>The QA Dept will continue to integrate the topic of learning resources in its IQA system. Since the audit the IfE has expanded the questions related to learning resources and included a question specifically asking the students to provide feedback related to any other resources that may enhance their educational experience. All the feedback received will then continue to be analysed by the QA Dept.</p>

## Standard 8: Information Management

Judgement: The IfE requires improvement to meet Standard 8

Recommendation	Take-up and Implementation of Recommendation
<p>MR: The IfE shall upgrade the functionalities of the IfE portal in order to ensure that it can be used for monitoring student admission, progression and completion (see Standard 5) and conduct at least basic analysis of the aggregated student data.</p>	<p>The IfE is looking into specific software that will manage data analysis of the data that is available on the IfE portal. This software has to be compatible with the portal so as to cater for better visuals of data analysis. This is a challenging initiative considering that the IfE portal is custom made however the IfE is fully committed to having a solid data analysis tool in the near future.</p>



<p>KR: The IfE should develop a monitoring of student employment and career pathways and connect this with the internal QA system (12 months after publication of this report)</p>	<p>The IfE is currently implementing a student survey with current course participants and a graduate tracer study to be able to gain in-depth insights into the experience of IfE graduates prior to, during and after their studies.</p>
<p>KR: The IfE should feed the results of the data analysis on student success (progression and completion) into the processes for fostering social inclusion - removing barriers for underrepresented and vulnerable groups (see Recommendation under Standard 7) (12 months after publication of this report)</p>	<p>Please refer to the actions taken as per recommendation in Standard 7.</p>
<p>KR: The IfE should feed the results of the data analysis on student success (progression and completion) into the QA procedures of IfE (See Standard 1) (12 months after publication of this report)</p>	<p>Presently, the IfE monitors student progression throughout the academic year through the student affairs office where students who are struggling academically are identified and given the necessary support. Upon course completion that is, before the graduation takes place, the Admissions Dept. provides the QA department with all the results and their classification for sampling and review. Therefore, the data on progression and completion is already feeding into the QA mechanisms of the IfE.</p>

Standard 9: Public Information	
Judgement: The IfE meets the requirements of Standard 9	
Recommendation	Take-up and Implementation of Recommendation
N/A	N/A

Standard 10: On-Going Monitoring and Periodic Review Of Programmes	
Judgement: The IfE meets the requirements of Standard 10	
Recommendation	Take-up and Implementation of Recommendation
KR: The IfE should ensure effective participation of the students and stakeholders in the reviews of all programs (12 months after publication of this report).	As indicated by the auditors in the report, IfE already includes course participants and stakeholders as part of its Programme Review Panels set up for full qualifications and short programmes. IfE will continue to include these members in its panels to safeguard the validity and quality of them.

Standard 11: Cyclical External Quality Assurance	
Judgement: The IfE meets the requirements of Standard 11	
Recommendation	Take-up and Implementation of Recommendation
N/A	N/A