



Malta Further & Higher Education Authority

COVERING NOTE TO THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT REPORT PREPARED BY THE
MFHEA FOLLOWING A PROGRAMME AUDIT OF

MALTA COLLEGE OF ARTS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (MCAST)

September 2024

INTRODUCTION

The MFHEA Board has received and endorsed the attached report from the Quality Assurance Committee, which was drafted by the external review panel set up to carry out a programme audit of MCAST's Undergraduate Certificate in Inclusive Education and Undergraduate Diploma in Inclusive Education, in line with the requirements of the *National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education (NQAF)*. The review took place between 4th and 5th December 2023 and the report reflects the findings at that time.

All providers that undergo an MFHEA audit are measured against the 11 Standards laid down in the *Maltese National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education*; these Standards are based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), which inform the quality assurance systems of all countries signatory to the European Higher Education Area.

The Board is determined that the Authority should carry out its regulatory responsibilities for standards in further and higher education independently, even-handedly, objectively and in a transparent manner. The Board notes that this is the first MFHEA programme audit of MCAST and has taken due account of the learning process which this entailed.

ANALYSIS

The programme audit processes were carried out with the aim of evaluating the areas set out in the *Procedures for Programme Audits in Further and Higher Education Institutions* which group the 11 Standards of the *NQAF* as follows:

Section A - Design and Development of Programme of Study (Standards 1, 2, 3 and 10)

Section B – Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment (Standard 4)

Section C – Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification (Standard 5)

Section D – Teaching Staff (Standards 2 and 6)

Section E – Learning Resources and Student Support (Standards 3 and 7)

Section F – Information Management (Standards 8 and 10)

Section G – Public Information (Standards 1, 2, 9 and 11)

The NQAF Standards that were further analysed included:

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 the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.
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. 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.
11. Cyclical external quality assurance: entities should undergo external quality assurance by, or with the approval of, the MFHEA on a cyclical basis, according to the MFHEA guidelines, at least once every five years.

During the audit process, the focus was on the justification of evidence about the existence of and adherence to systems and procedures of quality assurance that should be available in worldwide, respected higher education institutions.

FINDINGS

On the basis of the findings documented in the report, the panel has concluded that MCAST meets Sections B, D, E, F and G and requires improvement for Sections A and C. The recommendations in this report are meant to improve the standards already in place and to enhance good practice.

FOLLOW-UP

MCAST has developed an action plan for improvement, which is included in the report.