



Malta
Further & Higher
Education Authority

External Quality Assurance

Audit Report

MALTA BARTENDING ACADEMY

Carried out on

2nd July 2025

mfhea.mt

Quality education for
confident futures .

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Abbreviations List | 4 |
| Executive Summary | 5 |
| Institutional Background | 5 |
| Overview of the Audit Process | 6 |
| Summary of the Conclusions Reached by the Peer Review Panel | 6 |
| About the External Quality Audit | 7 |
| Aims and Objectives of the EQA..... | 7 |
| The Peer Review Panel..... | 10 |
| Specific Terms of Reference | 10 |
| Institutional Context..... | 12 |
| Analysis and Findings of Panel | 13 |
| Standard 1: Policy for Quality Assurance..... | 13 |
| Standard 2: Institutional Probity | 16 |
| Standard 3: Design and Approval of Programmes..... | 19 |
| Standard 4: Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment | 22 |
| Standard 5: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification..... | 25 |
| Standard 6: Teaching Staff..... | 27 |
| Standard 7: Learning Resources and Student Support | 29 |
| Standard 8: Information Management..... | 31 |
| Standard 9: Public Information | 33 |
| Standard 10: Ongoing Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes | 35 |
| Standard 11: Cyclical External Quality Assurance..... | 38 |
| Response by the Provider | 39 |
| Preamble | 39 |
| Response to Key Recommendations and Recommendations Made by the Peer Review Panel..... | 40 |
| Response to Mandatory Recommendations Made by the Peer Review Panel | 42 |
| Annexes..... | 43 |
| Annex 1: Review Panel Bio Notes..... | 43 |
| Annex 2: Agenda of the Onsite Visit. | 45 |

Abbreviations List

| | |
|--------------|---|
| CPD | Continuing Professional Development |
| ECTS | European Credit Transfer System |
| EQA/QA audit | External Quality Assurance Audit |
| IQA | Internal Quality Assurance |
| MBA | Malta Bartending Academy |
| MFHEA | Malta Further and Higher Education Authority |
| MQF | Malta Qualifications Framework |
| NCFHE | National Commission for Further and Higher Education |
| NQAF | National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education |
| RPL | Recognition of Prior Learning |
| SAR | Self-Assessment Report |

Executive Summary

Institutional Background

Malta Bartending Academy (MBA) was established in January 2016 with the mission of providing high-quality bartending education tailored to the evolving needs of the hospitality industry, with a particular focus on the food and beverage segment. The Academy's guiding vision is to elevate the hospitality profession by creating 'hospitality heroes'—skilled, passionate and professional individuals who exemplify excellence in their craft.

The Academy operates from its premises in St Venera, Malta, and is licensed by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) as a Further Education Institution (Licence No. 2020-017), valid from 27th October 2020 to 27th October 2025. It is owned by Francis Busuttil & Sons Marketing Limited.

MBA offers a blend of accredited qualifications and non-accredited training. The MFHEA accredited courses include:

- Award in Bartending (MQF Level 3)
- Award in Bartending (MQF Level 4)
- Award in Wines (MQF Level 3)

All programmes are delivered face to face, combining theoretical instruction with hands-on training to ensure learners develop both technical competencies and professional confidence. The Academy is currently in the process of expanding its offerings and intends to seek accreditation for other awards by the end of the year.

Overview of the Audit Process

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 online scoping meeting and onsite audit visit from the Academy's premises in St Venera. The panel is responsible for reaching conclusions on all Standards. As outlined in the External Quality Audit Manual of Procedures, the MFHEA sought external expert advice to evaluate the financial capacity of the provider. Through this report, the panel also highlighted areas of good practice which, in its view, make a positive contribution to academic standards and quality of education that are worthy of being emulated and disseminated more widely.

Timeline:

| Date | Milestone |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 16 th April 2025 | Panel induction meeting |
| 2 nd June 2025 | Desk-based analysis |
| 23 rd June 2025 | Preliminary scoping visit online |
| 2 nd July 2025 | Audit carried out at Academy premises in St Venera |

Summary of the Conclusions Reached by the Peer Review Panel

On the basis of the findings documented in the report, the panel has concluded that MBA meets Standards 2, 7, 9 and 11, needs improvement to meet the requirements of Standards 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8, and does not meet Standards 1 and 10. The recommendations in the report are meant to improve the standards already in place and to enhance good practice.

The panel made nine mandatory recommendations, two of which are to be implemented within 3 months from the date of publication of this report and seven which are to be implemented within 6 months from the date of publication of this report. They also made 24 key recommendations, three of which are to be implemented within 3 months, 16 within 6 months and five within 12 months from the date of publication of this report. In addition, the panel made eight recommendations.

About the External Quality Audit

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 their 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.

The MFHEA 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 the MFHEA.
- 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 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. 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 an external quality assurance audit by, or with the approval of, the MFHEA on a cyclical basis, according to the MFHEA guidelines, 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 the 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 rather 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.

The Peer Review Panel

The peer review panel was composed of:

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Chair of Review Panel: | Veronica Montebello |
| Peer Reviewer: | Mario Caruana Grech Perry |
| QA Managers (MFHEA): | Bilyana Boshova Sibby Xuereb |

Specific Terms of Reference

As defined in the MFHEA Quality Audit Manual of Procedures, the panel was responsible for examining how the institution manages its responsibilities to ensure the provision of the quality and standards of the education they offer. In particular, the following issues were addressed:

1. the fitness for purpose and effectiveness of the Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) processes, including an examination of the systems and procedures that have been implemented, together with the documentation that supports them;
2. the compliance of licensed providers with the established regulations and any conditions or restrictions issued by the MFHEA;
3. the governance and financial sustainability of providers, including assurance about the provider's legal status, the appropriateness of corporate structures and the competence of staff with senior management responsibilities.

These areas have, therefore, been identified as lines of inquiry.

The review team decided that, as part of an enhancement-led approach, it would issue recommendations linked to all parts of the operations of the institution. The report therefore distinguishes between:

- Mandatory recommendations (MR) which are crucial to meet a Standard and **shall** be implemented within the timeframes decided by the panel and indicated in this report.
- Key recommendations (KR) which are important to improve a Standard and **should** be implemented expediently by the institution, within the indicated timeframes, to address weaknesses.
- Recommendations (R) for improvement which are merely suggestions based on the panel's analyses and observations; these **could** be implemented by the institution.

Institutional Context

Malta Bartending Academy plays a key role in professionalising the hospitality workforce in Malta, particularly within the food and beverage service industry. Through its educational offerings, MBA continues to contribute to sectoral development, workforce readiness, and lifelong learning, supporting the transformation of Malta's hospitality industry into a more professional, skilled and future-ready sector.

The Academy's training courses are designed to serve both new entrants and working professionals seeking to upskill or specialise. Its training programmes are especially relevant to those working or aspiring to work in hotel bars, cocktail bars, nightclubs, restaurants and others.

Training is delivered within a structured academic calendar, and course schedules are regularly updated and published on the official website. The Academy maintains a planned pause in operations between 15th July and 1st September.

Aligned with its mission 'to train individuals to become competent hospitality professionals', the Academy is also committed to continuously improving bartending standards in accordance with the latest industry trends. This commitment to ongoing innovation and responsiveness ensures that the Academy's training remains current, practical, and impactful, equipping graduates with the skills and mindset needed to thrive in a dynamic, service-oriented hospitality industry.

Analysis and Findings of Panel

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

MBA, despite its small size, demonstrates a commendable commitment to delivering high-quality education aligned with current industry needs. The institution operates under a streamlined structure led by the Head of Institution (HoI), who also assumes multiple roles including occasional course delivery, quality assurance monitoring, and administrative oversight. This centralised approach reflects the dedication of the HoI and allows for close monitoring of training provision. However, the concentration of responsibilities raises concerns regarding sustainability, particularly if the institution seeks to expand its offerings. The panel notes that for the institution to ensure continuity and uphold its obligations toward learners, a formal succession plan should be developed. At present, the responsibilities of the HoI are concentrated on one individual, and this is not sustainable in the long term.

The Academy's financial model used is one where surplus income is returned to the parent company and only reflected in the following year's budget upon approval by the Board. Although this arrangement may be functioning adequately at present, it introduces added complexity when making strategic decisions related to investment in human resources and support staff, and may introduce constraints when trying to allocate funds for urgent staffing needs or quality-related improvements. Although the institution does not subcontract training provision to third parties, the role of the parent company in governance and resource allocation is significant. The financial and operational interdependence between MBA and its parent company necessitates a formal reference within the IQA framework to define the roles, responsibilities and quality assurance oversight involved. This clarity will help safeguard academic autonomy and ensure compliance with national standards.

The institution maintains an IQA policy, currently available online. However, the document was last updated in 2019 and does not reflect several ongoing processes and procedures. While some quality-related practices—such as class observations, assessment reviews, appeals and resit process, and informal feedback mechanisms—are taking place, these are not supported by documented procedures, nor are records or audit trails being maintained. Furthermore, several key areas are missing from the current IQA manual, including admissions protocols, assessment and examination policies, and external verification processes. In order to align with Standard 1, MBA must revise its IQA manual to incorporate all operational procedures and ensure these are implemented consistently across all aspects of provision.

Stakeholder involvement in quality assurance is currently minimal. Lecturers and students are largely unaware of the institution's quality assurance mechanisms, and there is no structured involvement of external stakeholders such as industry experts, alumni or employers. Standard 1 emphasises the participation of both internal and external stakeholders in the development and implementation of quality policies. The institution would benefit from establishing formal mechanisms to capture stakeholder feedback, such as consultation templates, programme review surveys, and dedicated stakeholder engagement sessions. These steps will not only strengthen the relevance of the training offered but also foster a stronger quality culture within the institution.

Additionally, while the current IQA policy includes a brief reference to MBA's commitment to serving a diverse population, this statement is general and lacks depth. The institution does not have formal, documented policies addressing key areas such as academic integrity, academic freedom or safeguarding against discrimination. Although the panel did not identify any specific incidents of concern during the audit, the absence of structured procedures in these critical areas presents a potential risk to institutional accountability and learner protection. The panel strongly encourages MBA to develop comprehensive policies covering these aspects and to formally integrate them into the updated IQA documentation.

Notably, the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) compiled by the HoI was aligned with the MFHEA Internal Quality Assurance Standards and demonstrated that the institution is aware of its strengths and areas requiring further development. The panel also noted that MBA is taking steps to improve its operational framework. Planned initiatives include the introduction of a formal succession and recruitment policy, the implementation of standardised teaching observations, the development of an online application and enrolment system, and the adoption of student information and learning management systems appropriate to the institution's scale. These initiatives indicate a growing awareness of the importance of structured internal quality assurance and strategic development.

The institution's quarterly quality meetings involving internal leadership and finance are another positive aspects of the operations within the institution. However, the panel encourages MBA to keep formal minutes and maintain an audit trail of actions discussed and implemented. As MBA continues to evolve, its commitment to continuous improvement will be best supported by a quality assurance system that is clearly documented, inclusive and operationally sustainable.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

- MR1: MBA shall, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, formalise all IQA processes and procedures currently carried out informally and further develop the IQA policy document. This revision shall incorporate feedback and recommendations from this EQA audit and take into account input from all stakeholders.
- MR2: MBA shall, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, develop a succession plan to ensure that the institution can continue to operate if the HoI is unable to fulfil the duties of one or more of his roles.
- MR3: MBA shall, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, introduce more robust and formal stakeholder engagement mechanisms for staff, alumni and industry representatives in quality assurance and programme development.
- KR1: MBA should, within 3 months from the date of publication of this report, formalise the quarterly quality meetings involving internal leadership and finance by keeping detailed minutes and maintaining an audit trail of actions discussed and implemented.
- KR2: MBA should, within 3 months from the date of publication of this report, document the relationship between the parent company and MBA in terms of financial governance and quality oversight.

Conclusion

MBA does not meet the requirements of Standard 1.

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

Francis Busuttil & Sons (Marketing) Limited is a limited liability company registered on 22nd February 1999 under registration number C 24137. The company is majority-owned by Francis Busuttil & Sons Limited (registration number C 334). The current directors are Mr Morgan Leigh Jamieson, Mr Kris Lanzon and Ms Geraldine (also known as Nadine) Casaletto.

The Memorandum of Association of Francis Busuttil & Sons (Marketing) Limited does not specifically include the provision of accredited courses and tuition related to bartending as one of the company's stated objects. Instead, it includes a general object clause, which reads:

"To do all such other things as may be deemed incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objects or any of them."

The company is still deemed to be compliant with the current requirements. The company provided its organisational chart, which clearly outlines the names and roles of individuals occupying top and middle management positions. This information was corroborated by a recent employee list issued by Jobsplus at the employer's request.

Based on the documentation reviewed, it is evident that the company is compliant with its fiscal obligations, including the timely submission of income tax returns, PE returns and VAT returns to the Commissioner for Revenue. No outstanding liabilities with the fiscal authorities were noted. Additionally, the company is fully compliant with respect to the submission of its annual audited financial statements and annual return to the Malta Business Registry (MBR), although at the time of this report, the latest filings were not yet visible on the MBR online portal.

Francis Busuttil & Sons (Marketing) Limited shared the signed audited financial statements for the year 2024 and a financial budget projecting its Profit and Loss Account for 2025. Our analysis of the company's financial performance indicated that it recorded a profit. Furthermore, its financial position reflects adequate cash resources and a positive equity balance. Both current and liquid ratios were within a healthy range. Overall, it is concluded that the company maintains sufficient financial resources to withstand unforeseen challenges.

The panel notes that the HoI at MBA possesses a good educational background, professional industry experience, and the requisite competencies to effectively lead the institution. The HoI demonstrates clear commitment to the institution's mission and currently holds sole responsibility for the overall governance, academic leadership and operational management of the Academy. In addition to his executive duties, the HoI also undertakes administrative responsibilities and occasionally serves as a tutor, reflecting a high degree of personal investment in the Academy's day-to-day functioning.

The panel noted that MBA currently lacks a formalised and documented procedure for the recruitment and appointment of the Head of Institution. The SAR does recognise this as an area for development, stating that 'a documented policy on succession planning and recruitment for future leadership roles will be drafted by Q4 2025.' The panel recommends that this forthcoming procedure be fully integrated into the institution's IQA policy documentation, ensuring transparency, preparedness and alignment with good governance practices.

As described in Standard 1, given the small size of the institution and the high operational dependency on a single individual, the panel emphasises the importance of developing a formal contingency plan. Such a plan should aim to ensure operational continuity in the event of unforeseen circumstances affecting the HoI. This risk-mitigation strategy is essential to safeguard the institution's ongoing delivery of education and administration.

Moreover, the panel encourages MBA to outline clear strategies for recruiting and engaging additional personnel to support administrative and academic functions. Broadening the human resource base would not only reduce over-reliance on the HoI but also strengthen institutional resilience and capacity, particularly in light of future plans for expansion.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

KR3: MBA should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, revise the Objects clause in the company's Memorandum of Association to more explicitly reflect the nature of its operations by specifying the provision of accredited courses and tuition in bartending and related disciplines.

MR4: MBA shall, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, develop and formalise a comprehensive policy for the recruitment and succession planning of the Head of Institution. This policy should be integrated into the institution's Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) framework, ensuring transparency, consistency and good governance in leadership transitions.

R1: MBA could develop a strategic staffing plan to recruit and engage additional administrative and/or academic personnel. This will support the institution's sustainability, alleviate the operational burden on the HoI, and enhance capacity for future programme growth or institutional development.

Conclusion

MBA - Francis Busuttil & Sons (Marketing) Limited meets the requirements of Standard 2.

Standard 3: Design and Approval of Programmes

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

Main Findings

The panel reviewed the programme design and approval procedures at MBA, with a particular focus on the following MFHEA-accredited courses: Award in Bartending (MQF Level 3), Award in Bartending (MQF Level 4), and Award in Wines (MQF Level 3). MBA is also in the process of developing two additional qualifications: Award in Bartending (MQF Level 5) and Award in Wines (MQF Level 4).

New programme proposals at MBA are typically initiated based on identified market needs and feedback from industry stakeholders, as well as input from lecturers, alumni and students. This reflects responsiveness to industry developments.

The design of study-units adheres to a standardised template required by the MFHEA and clearly outlines the aims, content, teaching methods, learning strategies and assessment procedures. Programmes define the student workload using ECTS credits, and intended learning outcomes are structured around knowledge, skills and competences. The course content undergoes an informal annual review to maintain its relevance in line with industry developments.

Eligibility and selection criteria are indicated, and the target audience for each course is clearly defined. The panel noted that there is no formal screening process in place to assess applicants' level of English proficiency prior to enrolment. Given that English is the primary language of instruction and assessment, the absence of a formal mechanism to evaluate language competency may impact learners' ability to fully engage with course materials, participate in tutor-learner interactions, and meet the intended learning outcomes. The panel confirmed that the course structures support student progression and meet the expectations set out in the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and the Malta Referencing Report.

Lecturer qualifications are appropriate to the course level and content, and tutor-learner interaction is suitable given the nature of the training. In the case of the Award in Wines, student feedback is awaited before implementing formal changes, although the lecturer has already identified areas for refinement. This demonstrates a degree of responsiveness to learner input, though MBA is encouraged to formalise student involvement in programme design and review.

Although Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is referred to in both the SAR and the IQA policy document, MBA does not currently have a formal RPL policy that has been reviewed and approved by the MFHEA. Should the institution intend to implement RPL in any capacity, whether for admission, exemption or credit transfer, it is essential that it develops a comprehensive policy that fully complies with the MFHEA regulations and guidelines.

While the internal process for course development is largely informal, the panel noted that the HoI and the Senior Commercial Manager meet weekly to discuss challenges and possibly any opportunities. Course financial viability is assessed by the accounts team under the parent company, and new course proposals require Board approval. However, the design and content development are the responsibility of the HoI. Formal marketing plans also undergo review and approval by the Company Board.

Proposals and decisions presented and taken yearly at Board level are recorded while a powerpoint presentation is used during the quarterly meetings; however, weekly meetings are not currently minuted. This limits traceability and consistency in decision-making. The panel recommends that MBA formalise its internal quality assurance procedures to ensure a more robust and documented approach to programme design and approval. This includes creating formal records of meetings and involving a broader group of internal and external stakeholders in the process.

Enhancing formal procedures will enable the institution to better support the development efforts of its training courses and uphold quality standards across all levels.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

- KR4: MBA should, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, develop and implement a structured, documented process for the design and approval of all programmes. This process should clearly outline roles, responsibilities, timelines and quality criteria to ensure consistency and alignment with the MFHEA requirements.
- KR5: MBA should, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, introduce mechanisms to actively involve all stakeholders (lecturers, industry, students and alumni) in the design and review of courses. Their feedback should inform programme structure, content and delivery methods.

KR6: MBA should, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, implement a formal English language proficiency screening process as part of its admission procedures.

Conclusion

MBA requires improvement to meet the requirements of Standard 3.

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

MBA has adopted a predominantly practice-based and industry-relevant educational model, which reflects its strong alignment with the principles of student-centred learning. The institution demonstrates a clear effort to engage students actively in the learning process and ensure that the learning experience translates effectively into workplace competence. The Academy employs a variety of pedagogical approaches tailored to the unique needs of adult learners in the vocational and hospitality sectors. Learning outcomes are achieved through hands-on practice, practical examinations and small class sizes (capped at 12) that allow lecturers to personalise instruction and adaptive instruction. Lecturers adapt their methods based on students' prior knowledge and backgrounds. For example, when gaps in foundational understanding are observed, additional instruction is provided before progressing. The use of real-world environments, such as hotel bars/restaurants (e.g., The Phoenicia) and sponsors (e.g., Kitchen Concepts), further enhances experiential learning. Students reported that the knowledge and skills acquired during the courses are directly applicable to their current roles, which indicates that intended learning outcomes are generally well achieved. Course content is updated periodically to reflect industry trends, such as evolving consumer preferences in mixology and wine. This responsiveness ensures ongoing relevance and supports employability, aligning with the principle of outcome-based learning.

The learning model supports active student participation. Lecturers employ interactive techniques such as group discussions, collaborative tasks and guided problem-solving exercises. Students are encouraged to write questions and answers in their booklets, promoting a reflective learning style. Feedback from both students and alumni reflects a sense of engagement and appreciation for the learning environment. Nonetheless, autonomy in the learning process could be enhanced further by introducing mechanisms that support self-directed learning, for instance, access to supplemental digital resources or optional pre-course preparation materials. Although students are encouraged to voice opinions and give feedback, these processes are mostly informal and not always followed up in a structured manner.

Feedback to students is mostly verbal and informal, and provided either on request or during lessons. While lecturers confirm that student performance is monitored daily and that practice tests are used to prepare for exams, the absence of formal, systematic feedback mechanisms may hinder some students' ability to gauge their progress consistently. Students expressed satisfaction with the quality of instruction but did not report a regular process for receiving detailed written or rubric-based feedback following assessments. The timeframe within which feedback is provided varies depending on the lecturer and course. Introducing clear timelines

for feedback return and ensuring that students are provided with constructive comments after all assessments would strengthen the learning loop and support academic development.

The assessment process at MBA is based on a final multiple-choice question, including a practical examination. Assessments are aligned with course content and learning outcomes and are periodically reviewed for relevance. The use of ClassMate® software in the beginner course introduces automation and reduces bias, while also improving efficiency. However, assessment consistency could be further strengthened by ensuring that formal moderation and marking schemes are used across all courses. While the HoI reviews and validates final marks, and in some cases, lecturers consult each other, the extent to which multiple assessors are involved varies. For example, the wine course appears to rely heavily on the judgement of a single tutor. In cases of assessment failure, students are allowed to re-sit exams, initially for free, but there is no formalised institutional policy for dealing with students who repeatedly fail. One lecturer expressed concern about repeated failures and suggested course repetition, but no standard guidance exists.

While students are generally positive about their experience, the institution does not formally assess students' English language proficiency nor capture medical or learning support needs at enrolment. Given the diversity of the student cohort, implementing screening tools or offering learning support for students with additional needs would improve inclusivity and align with student-centred learning principles. Lecturers are selected based on their expertise and practical experience, and while this strengthens vocational credibility, many were not recruited through a formal academic vetting process. Continuing professional development opportunities and a more structured 'Train the Trainer' programme, as proposed by the Hoi, would help ensure consistent pedagogical standards and improve internal quality assurance.

Good Practice Identified

Real world application is emphasised, with students reporting strong workplace relevance.

Recommendations for Improvement

- KR7: Within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA should introduce regular, structured feedback mechanisms linked to assessment criteria across all modules. This supports deeper reflection and progress tracking.
- KR8: Within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA should develop and disseminate a clear written policy on resits and failed assessments, including procedures for repeated failures.
- KR9: Within 3 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA should ensure that minutes for key meetings are formally recorded (such as those with lecturers or the QA Committee) to promote transparency and foster accountability.

- KR10: MBA should, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, establish a systematic process for collecting and reviewing student feedback and suggestions (e.g., offering a course on coffee or beer) as part of regular curriculum reviews.
- KR11: MBA should, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, implement a formal moderation process and standardised marking schemes across all courses. This process should include documented moderation reports and approved marking schemes.
- R2: MBA could implement optional pre-course assessments focusing on English language proficiency and consider diverse learning needs. Appropriate support structures would enhance inclusivity.

Conclusion

MBA requires improvement to meet the requirements of Standard 4.

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

Admission into the Academy's courses is generally open and transparent. For MQF Level 3 courses, no prior experience or qualifications are required, reflecting their introductory nature. For MQF Level 4, students must either complete the Level 3 course or pass a short entry test. The audit panel noted that a sample of this entry test was requested during the meeting, but the documentation appears to be kept informally. The institution does not currently conduct any formal screening of English language proficiency, nor does it ask for medical or learning support needs upon enrolment. This poses a potential risk in terms of inclusivity and student support, especially given the multicultural and international nature of the student body. Regarding induction, students reported being given a detailed course compendium upon enrolment, which outlines course content, expectations and logistics. However, no formal, structured induction process, such as an orientation session or welcome briefing, is currently in place. Students who were enrolled through employers often receive basic information from their workplace, which may lead to inconsistencies in preparedness and expectations.

MBA tracks student progression both informally and through emerging digital systems. Daily observations are carried out by lecturers and the HoI, who often attends the initial sessions of each course. The recently adopted ClassMate® software is currently used for the beginners' course to manage exams more efficiently. This system has improved the Academy's ability to manage records, ensure fairness and streamline student performance data.

The use of the ClassMate® software for the beginners' course has introduced a more systematic way to manage assessments and performance. However, its use is not yet standard across all programmes. The institution does track participation and offers resits to students who fail, but this data is not currently aggregated or reported in a way that could support quality assurance or academic planning.

Students receive informal, mostly verbal feedback on their performance during lessons. Lecturers and the HoI remain approachable and use WhatsApp and email to maintain open lines of communication. However, there is no formal system for academic advising, learning contracts or mid-course progress reviews. Students are expected to request feedback proactively, and while they report satisfaction with this approach, more structured academic guidance could support progression, especially for those who struggle.

The institution allows entry into Level 4 courses based on prior completion of Level 3 or successful performance in an internal entry test. However, no documented RPL policy exists that outlines the recognition of non-formal or informal learning or procedures for matching such learning to MQF standards. This limits the institution's ability to attract experienced professionals or those with international backgrounds who may not have formal local qualifications but possess relevant experience. Students who successfully complete their courses receive a certificate detailing their achievement. The institution also offers a certificate of attendance to those who do not pass the final assessment.

MBA has demonstrated an evolving yet practical approach to managing the student life-cycle, from admission to certification. While many practices are effective and well-received by students, several areas would benefit from formalisation and strategic improvement to fully align with Standard 5 of the National Quality Assurance Framework.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

- KR12: Within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA should introduce structured orientation sessions for new students, including academic expectations, support services and programme navigation.
- KR13: Within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA should expand the use of Class Mate® or similar tools across all levels to record student progression and generate reports to inform decisions.
- KR14: Within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA should draft and implement clear, transparent guidelines for the recognition of prior formal, non-formal and informal learning, with reference to the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) where applicable.
- R3: MBA could consider establishing a mentoring structure (e.g., buddy system) to ensure that students receive timely, proactive feedback and guidance throughout their studies.

Conclusion

MBA requires improvement to meet the requirements of Standard 5.

Standard 6: Teaching Staff

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

Main Findings

MBA relies on a small, specialised team of teaching professionals, many of whom are active in the hospitality industry and bring current, practical knowledge to the classroom. The HoI plays a direct and visible role in monitoring teaching quality. He frequently attends classes, especially at the start of each course, to observe delivery and ensure alignment with course expectations. While this provides a helpful oversight mechanism, there is currently no formal framework for classroom observation, documentation of findings or structured feedback to staff. Feedback to lecturers is primarily informal and verbal, often provided during casual conversations with the HoI. While this open-door communication culture fosters approachability, it lacks a documented mechanism for regular review or professional reflection on teaching performance.

Students confirmed they are asked to provide feedback, either during or after the course. In some cases, this is done through feedback forms, but these mechanisms are not consistently applied across all programmes. While student feedback appears to influence minor changes (e.g., suggestions for new courses like beer-related modules), there is no clear process for aggregating, analysing and acting upon this input systematically.

During the audit it was confirmed that MBA does not have a formal programme for staff professional development. Most lecturers were engaged through informal networks and were not recruited via open calls or formal interview processes. Although lecturers are highly experienced and keep abreast of industry trends, opportunities for structured pedagogical training, upskilling in digital tools, or research-based practice are lacking. During the interviews with lecturers, it was noted that some are active in competitions and industry associations, which helps them stay updated and engaged. However, there is limited evidence of structured institutional support for continuing professional development (CPD) or scholarly engagement. The HoI has expressed interest in launching a 'Train the Trainer' initiative and in recruiting a full-time lecturer, both of which would be steps toward greater continuity, quality assurance and internal staff development.

The Academy's teaching staff operate on a part-time, self-employed basis. While this allows for flexibility and access to current industry professionals, it also raises concerns about consistency, availability, and formal accountability. Staff do not currently have employment contracts, which the HoI acknowledged as an area requiring improvement. Tutors are 'headhunted' based on reputation or personal recommendations, but there is no centralised HR process for onboarding, training or evaluating part-time staff. Despite these challenges, part-time staff appear well-integrated in practice, regularly engaging with the HoI and

occasionally contributing to course design or refinement (e.g., wine course). However, their access to QA documentation and awareness of institutional procedures is limited.

Good Practice Identified

Lecturers are professionals with real-world expertise, enhancing the practicality of the training.

Recommendations for Improvement

- MR5: Within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA shall provide written agreements, induction materials and periodic check-ins to ensure part-time tutors are aligned with institutional standards.
- KR15: Within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA should develop a structured teaching observation protocol with documentation, peer review and follow-up feedback to lecturers.
- KR16: Within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA should establish clear, fair recruitment procedures with advertised roles, formal interviews and criteria-based selection.
- KR17: Within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA should introduce a CPD framework that includes training in pedagogy, assessment practices, and use of technology in teaching.
- KR18: Within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA should ensure consistent collection of student evaluations and integrate findings into course reviews and lecturer feedback loops.
- R4: MBA could, where feasible, encourage participation in teaching-focused research, workshops or hospitality education networks and ask employed lecturers to periodically show a professional portfolio.

Conclusion

MBA requires improvement to meet the requirements of Standard 6.

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

MBA operates under the financial oversight of its parent company, with the HoI responsible for presenting proposed courses and related resource needs. The institution has its own dedicated annual budget, prepared each October and approved at company level. Financial decisions, including investments such as new air conditioning and classroom partitions, are routed through internal channels (i.e., the Marketing and Commercial Directors and the Board), based on proposals from the HoI. While the funding process is practical and responsive, resource allocation decisions are largely centralised and informal. There is no indication of a formal internal mechanism or committee that allocates resources across academic or support functions based on performance metrics or student feedback. However, there is evidence that the institution considers student suggestions informally, such as a request for decanters for the wine course was voiced, though not yet acted upon!

There is no formal student-facing digital learning platform or virtual library, but compendiums are provided to students in physical format. These contain detailed course content, including cocktail recipes, responsible alcohol service and institutional policies. While useful, the lack of centralised digital learning resources or access to reference materials may limit the ability of students to undertake self-directed study.

The Academy's model prioritises small group teaching, with a maximum of 12 students per class. This enables high levels of direct contact between students and lecturers. Students reported that communication with the HoI and lecturers is easy and effective, often using WhatsApp or email. However, there is no formal system of academic tutoring, no documented learning support mechanism, and no process for regular academic progress meetings or intervention for struggling students. Lecturers provide support reactively rather than through structured sessions. For instance, if a student is not progressing, feedback is given informally, and in some cases (e.g., repeated exam failure), the tutor may recommend retaking the course. Yet there is no formal policy or referral pathway for academic or personal counselling. While students expressed satisfaction with the supportive environment, the absence of defined academic advisory structures limits the institution's ability to address the diverse needs of its student population, particularly mature, part-time, international, or those with learning differences.

Administrative duties are largely handled by the HoI, who has no dedicated assistant. HR and finance staff support the HoI when needed, but they do not appear to be integrated into

student-facing support functions. There is no specific role or team for student welfare or academic advice, and no evidence of professional development opportunities for support staff. MBA offers a specialised vocational learning environment with a strong emphasis on practical, real-world training. The premises are equipped with fully-fledged bars and a comprehensive range of professional tools, ensuring that learners can engage in authentic, hands-on training sessions that closely mirror industry practice. While the institution has made meaningful investments in resources and maintains a highly engaged leadership, student support structures remain mostly informal and would benefit from more systematisation to align fully with the expectations of Standard 7.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

- KR19: Within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA should establish a more structured, transparent process for allocating resources across teaching and support functions, guided by student needs and course feedback.
- R5: MBA could consider expanding digital access to learning materials (e.g., a centralised student portal or digital compendium) to support independent study.
- R6: MBA could establish a clear referral pathway for academic and personal counselling, to ensure students can access support services promptly and effectively, supporting both their wellbeing and academic progress.

Conclusion

MBA meets the requirements of Standard 7.

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

MBA has a basic digital infrastructure to support the storage and security of student data and records. While some systems are in place to manage enrolment and assessment information, the institution has not yet established a comprehensive or strategic framework for the collection, analysis and evaluation of key data. As a result, its ability to make fully evidence-based decisions regarding academic quality and institutional planning remains limited.

Student data, including admission records, course participation and assessment results, is currently stored both physically and digitally. The Academy uses Microsoft Cloud for online storage and maintains daily data backups, ensuring that files are not lost and are accessible by authorised personnel, namely the HoI and the IT Manager of the mother company. Physical documents are kept securely in the office of the HoI. The HoI confirmed that student data dating back to 2020 is available; however, this data has not yet been compiled or analysed in a systematic way. While the Academy is aware of the need for long-term record retention (40 years as per national regulations), there is currently no formal archival policy or system in place that provides assurance of long-term digital preservation.

At present, the analysis and internal evaluation of student data, such as participation rates, completion rates or student satisfaction trends, are conducted informally and on an ad-hoc basis. There is no formal internal process for the regular evaluation of these metrics, nor is there a documented system for using this information to guide decision-making at the senior management level.

The institution conducts student feedback exercises, but the results are not consistently analysed or used to inform programme development or strategic planning. For example, suggestions from students and alumni (e.g., to include a beer course) are noted but have not yet led to structured follow-up or curriculum changes. Although there is some basic demographic profiling of the student population, there are no data on any vulnerable groups identified and no formal mechanisms in place to track alumni employment outcomes, although informal contact is maintained with some former students through social media or workplace visits.

The use of the ClassMate® software for the beginners' course has introduced a more systematic way to manage assessments and performance. However, its use is not yet standard across all programmes. The institution does track participation and offers resits to students who fail, but this data is not currently aggregated or reported in a way that could support quality assurance or academic planning.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

- MR6: Within 3 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA shall establish policies and procedures for the systematic collection, retention and evaluation of key data related to students, staff and programme outcomes.
- MR7: Within 3 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA shall ensure that long-term digital storage solutions comply with the 40-year retention requirement and are supported by an archival policy.
- KR20: Within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA should expand the use of digital tools across all programmes and develop dashboards to monitor progression, retention and course completion.
- KR21: Within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA should introduce a simple tracer study or alumni survey to gather data on employment and career progression, especially for courses with an occupational focus.

Conclusion

MBA requires improvement to meet the requirements of Standard 8.

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

MBA provides clear, accurate, up-to-date and accessible information regarding their activities, including training courses accredited by the MFHEA, offered by the institution. This is publicly available on its official website (<https://www.maltabartendingacademy.com>) and complemented by an active social media presence.

The panel reviewed the MBA's website and found that it effectively presents key public information required by the MFHEA. This includes training courses titles and the certification awarded, with references to MQF levels and ECTS credits. Course fees and durations are transparently outlined, and selection criteria and entry requirements are clearly described. The intended learning outcomes for each course are published and align with the National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF). The teaching, learning and assessment procedures are explained in an accessible manner, providing insight into the delivery methods and assessment tools used. Further learning opportunities and progression paths are also clear to prospective students. Students and prospective applicants have access to direct contact information, including phone and email, enabling personalised guidance.

The website is user-friendly, responsive and easily accessible. The HoI is responsible for maintaining the accuracy of content and ensuring that updates are regularly implemented. The panel was told that a website refresh is planned for 2026 to further improve mobile compatibility and enhance the visual experience. The institution's IT department will lead the technical component of this initiative with the HoI providing the content.

It was noted that students and alumni are not currently consulted regarding the usefulness or clarity of the public information provided. The panel recommends that feedback mechanisms be incorporated into evaluation forms to assess the effectiveness of the information available. Additionally, including student testimonials and alumni success stories would add a more personalised, engaging perspective for prospective applicants.

All information published online, including course schedules, entry requirements, fees and newly accredited programmes, undergoes internal review before publication. Student statistics, such as pass rates and enrolment numbers, were made available to the panel upon request. MBA also leverages social media platforms to increase public engagement and update followers on institutional developments.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

- R7: MBA could seek student feedback regarding the usefulness of the public information provided.
- R8: MBA could include student testimonials to highlight successful student experiences and attract prospective students.

Conclusion

MBA meets the requirements of Standard 9.

Standard 10: Ongoing 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 institution maintains a process of regular internal evaluation for its training programmes, which includes course monitoring, feedback from students, and reflective input from teaching staff. At the end of each course cycle, the management team (the Senior Commercial Manger and the HoI) meets for their weekly catch-up meeting every Friday and reviews key aspects such as student uptake and any challenges encountered during delivery. These meetings, while useful, are not consistently documented or supported by formal procedures.

Although lecturers and students provide valuable input through informal channels, their involvement in data analysis or follow-up actions is currently unstructured. While lecturers may provide observations or suggestions to the HoI regarding teaching delivery or student performance, there is no systematic approach to integrating this feedback into broader institutional quality enhancement strategies. Similarly, while some engagement with industry stakeholders occurs, formal documentation and analysis of these interactions remain limited. The panel recommends that records of meetings and feedback with external stakeholders, particularly those from the labour market, be formally collected, analysed, and incorporated into course review processes.

Despite the absence of a formalised mechanism, the HoI regularly initiates course updates based on the informal feedback received from various stakeholders. These updates aim to ensure that programmes remain aligned with industry developments, student needs and national or MFHEA regulatory frameworks. Adjustments may include the integration of new industry tools and trends, feedback from employers, evolving student demographics or updated qualifications guidelines.

Students are invited to submit structured feedback at the end of their training through anonymous evaluation questionnaires. However, while this data is reviewed and occasionally acted upon, the absence of a formalised system for analysis and timely review limits its effectiveness. The panel recommends the establishment of a structured and documented review process to ensure that student feedback is systematically analysed, actions for improvement are identified, and outcomes are formally recorded. Such a system should include clear procedures for documenting and following up on issues raised, including meeting minutes with designated action points and timelines.

Furthermore, the institution's current QA handbook, publicly available online and dated January 2019, is outdated. Several sections within the handbook are inconsistent with the SAR submitted for this audit. This misalignment highlights the need for a formal, comprehensive procedure for reviewing and updating IQA policies and documentation. The panel recommends that this review procedure clearly define the frequency of internal audits, identify responsible personnel, and outline the steps and criteria involved in evaluating each policy and process. All related documentation, including IQA and EQA minutes, reports and action plans, should be maintained and readily accessible for audit and quality assurance purposes.

Despite these procedural limitations, feedback gathered during the audit confirms that students and alumni value the impact of the institution's training courses. Many participants, including those working part-time, reported improvements in their practical skills and workplace performance. Some also credited the courses with facilitating career advancement and increased earnings. This feedback reflects the institution's strong commitment to personalised education, individual support and positive learner outcomes.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

- MR8: Within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA shall establish a formalised process for the periodic review of its courses and ensure that all related meetings and actions are appropriately documented. This process shall be integrated into the institution's IQA policy document.
- MR9: Within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA shall formalise the periodic review process for the Academy's IQA policies and procedures. This will be included in the IQA manual. This shall also include an update of the current IQA handbook currently available for the public.
- KR22: Within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, the institution should develop a system for recording and analysing all collected data from its feedback mechanisms. This system should enable the feedback to be integrated into the overall system to inform and enhance teaching and learning practices.
- KR23: Within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA should formally involve lecturers and students in data analysis and follow-up actions related to course reviews and improvements.

KR24: Within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, MBA should formally collect and analyse feedback from alumni and external stakeholders, especially from the world of work, and integrate this into programme development and review.

Conclusion

MBA does not meet the requirements of Standard 10.

Standard 11: Cyclical External Quality Assurance

Cyclical external quality assurance: entities should undergo an external quality assurance audit by, or with the approval of, the MFHEA on a cyclical basis, according to the MFHEA guidelines, once every five years.

Main Findings

MBA fulfils this Standard by participating in the external audit referred to in this report. This is the first EQA cycle of the institution.

The panel appreciated the cooperation of the HoI and the other interviewees throughout the audit. The panel has found MBA to be responsive and self-reflective during the quality assurance audit process. Such a constructive approach bodes well for the institution's continued development. It provides a strong foundation for the effective implementation of the panel's recommendations, which are intended to further strengthen the delivery of high-quality, learner-centred training and ensure sustained compliance with the National Quality Assurance Framework.

Recommendations for Improvement

Nil.

Conclusion

MBA meets the requirements of Standard 11.

Response by the Provider

Preamble

Malta Bartending Academy (MBA) thanks the EQA panel for their thorough review and constructive feedback. We acknowledge the areas identified for improvement and appreciate the recognition of the Academy's strengths, particularly in delivering industry-relevant, practical training and maintaining close engagement with students.

We confirm that we have reviewed all recommendations and key recommendations, and we understand the deadlines provided for implementation (3, 6 and 12 months). MBA remains fully committed to continuous improvement and quality assurance, and we will systematically address each area highlighted by the panel.

The Academy will develop and implement a structured plan to formalise policies, procedures and processes across all areas, including quality assurance, programme design, teaching, student support and information management. Stakeholder engagement, documentation and the consistent application of internal standards will be prioritised to ensure compliance with MFHEA requirements and best practice in vocational education.

MBA looks forward to continuing its collaboration with the QA Unit to demonstrate progress and ensure that the recommendations are effectively addressed in a timely manner.

Response to Key Recommendations and Recommendations Made by the Peer Review Panel

| Action plan | | |
|-----------------|---|---------------------|
| Recommendations | Actions to be taken to address the recommendations | Date for completion |
| Standard 1: | | |
| | Keep minutes & action trails for quality meetings. | 31.12.2025 |
| | Document relationship with parent company (governance & QA roles). | 31.12.2025 |
| | | |
| | | |
| Standard 2: | | |
| | To develop Recruitment and Staffing Plan that will support academy operations. | 31.12.2025 |
| | | |
| Standard 3: | | |
| | Involve all stakeholders (lecturers, industry, students, alumni) formally in programme design and review. | 02.02.2026 |
| | | |
| Standard 4: | | |
| | Create and share a formal resit/failed assessment policy (incl. repeated failures). | 01.02.2026 |
| | Start keeping formal minutes of lecturer/QA meetings. | 1.10.2025 |
| Standard 5: | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Standard 6: | | |
| | Provide written agreements, induction, and periodic check-ins for part-time tutors. | 31.12.2025 |
| | Collect student evaluations consistently and use in course/staff reviews. | 31.12.2025 |
| | | |
| Standard 7: | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Standard 8: | | |
| | Introduce tracer study or alumni survey to track employment/career outcomes. | 01.03.2026 |
| | | |
| Standard 9: | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Standard 10: | Involve lecturers and students in data analysis and follow-up actions. | 01.03.2026 |
| | | |

| | | |
|--------------|---|------------|
| | | |
| Standard 11: | | |
| | Collect and analyse alumni and external stakeholder feedback and integrate into programme review. | 01.03.2026 |
| | | |

Response to Mandatory Recommendations Made by the Peer Review Panel

| Mandatory recommendations | Actions to be taken to address the recommendation | Date for completion |
|---------------------------|--|---------------------|
| Standard 1 | Update/rewrite IQA manual with all procedures & stakeholder input. | 03.03.2026 |
| | Formalise all informal QA processes. | |
| Standard 3 | Create a structured, documented process for programme design & approval (roles, responsibilities, timelines, QA criteria). | 03.03.2026 |
| Standard 3 & 4 | Introduce formal English language proficiency screening for admissions. | 03.03.2026 |
| | | |
| Standard 5 | Expand ClassMate® or similar system to all levels for tracking progression and reporting. | 03.03.2026 |
| | | |
| Standard 5 | Develop formal RPL policy aligned with MQF standards. | 03.03.2026 |
| | | |
| | | |
| Standard 6 | Develop structured teaching observation protocol with documentation, peer review, and feedback. | |
| | | |
| Standard 8 | Implement long-term digital storage/archival policy meeting 40-year retention requirement. | 31.12.2025 |
| | | |
| Standard 8 | Expand digital tools & dashboards to monitor progression, retention, completion across all programmes. | 01.03.2026 |
| | | |
| | | |
| Standard 10 | Formalise periodic review of IQA policies/procedures and update publicly available IQA handbook. | 01.03.2026 |
| Standard 10 | Establish formal periodic course review process with documented meetings and actions; integrate into IQA policy | 01.03.2026 |
| | | |

Annexes

Annex 1: Review Panel Bio Notes

In the setting up of the review panel for Malta Bartending Academy, the MFHEA sought to maintain a high degree of diligence in the process of selection of the members of the 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 MFHEA.

The following bio notes present the profiles of the members of the peer review panel. The bio notes are correct as at the time the QA audit was carried out, i.e., 2nd July 2025.

Chair of Review Panel:

Ms Veronica Montebello is a visiting senior lecturer at the University of Malta teaching both online and face to face and also is a clinical supervisor with the Faculty of Dental Surgery and the Faculty of Health Science, University of Malta. Ms Montebello is a registered dental hygienist by profession who works in the public and private sectors. She held the position of Director designate at the Department of Programme Implementation, MFH and currently works at the Directorate Allied Health Care Services. She is the project leader of an ambitious ESF project. Ms Montebello has a degree in Dental Hygiene, Health Sciences, a Masters in Blended and Online Education (Edinburgh) and is pursuing a Doctoral degree. She is a Senior Fellow with the Higher Education Academy UK. She is involved in the development, delivery and evaluation of a number of online modules at UM and collaborates with various foreign universities to enhance educational programmes of study. Ms Montebello is actively involved with a number of European and international federations, committees and associations. She sits on the Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine. Since 2016, Ms Montebello has been an expert panel reviewer and chairperson of several External Quality Assurance audits and programme evaluations for the MFHEA.

Peer Reviewer:

Dr Mario Caruana Grech Perry began his journey in health sciences at the University of Malta, completing his undergraduate degree between 1995 and 1999. Driven by a passion for nutrition and dietetics, he achieved a Postgraduate Diploma in Nutrition and Dietetics in 2002, also at the University of Malta. To deepen his expertise in dietetics, he then pursued a rigorous two-year master's programme at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh (2002–2004), during which he also attained registration as a dietitian. Following two years of professional practice, Dr Caruana Grech Perry embarked on a collaborative doctoral programme with the University of Malta and the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, focusing on the role of polyphenolic natural compounds with potential to influence biochemical and physiological pathways in neurodegenerative diseases. Awarded his doctorate in 2011, Dr Caruana Grech Perry continued his research as a postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Molecular Medicine and Biobanking at the University of Malta (2011–2018), contributing to numerous peer-reviewed publications. Currently, Dr Caruana Grech Perry is a lecturer in the Department of Food Sciences and Nutrition within the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Malta and serves as an executive dietetics' practitioner at Mater Dei Hospital. His research interests centre on the impact of nutraceuticals on ageing and longevity, with a strong focus on evidence-based applications in both health and disease.

Annex 2: Agenda of the Onsite Visit

EQA Audit Agenda:

Malta Bartending Academy
(Further Education Institution)

Date: Wednesday, 2nd July 2025

Venue: Santa Venera

| Time/Duration | Meetings | Names of attendees | Comments |
|----------------------|---|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 8.00 (30 m) | Arrival at the venue, MFHEA EQA panel preparation meeting | | |
| 8.30 (45 m) | Meeting with Head of Institution | | In person |
| 9.15 (15 m) | Internal panel meeting | MFHEA EQA panel | |
| 9.30 (60 m) | Meeting with students from all programmes | | |
| 10.30 (10 m) | Internal panel meeting | | |
| 11.00 (40 m) | Meeting with lecturers | | |
| 11.40 (10 m) | Internal panel meeting | | |
| 11.50 (10 m) | <i>Sales & Marketing Director</i> <i>Senior Commercial Manager</i> | | In person In person |
| 12.00 (60 m) | Working lunch and panel discussion | | |
| 13.00 (20 m) | IT Department (support; information management) | | In person |

| | | | |
|--------------|--|---|--------------------------------|
| 13.20 (10 m) | Internal panel meeting | | |
| 13.30 (40 m) | Finance Department, HR, Admissions | | In person |
| 14.10 (15 m) | Internal panel meeting | | |
| 14.25 (65 m) | Meetings with alumni | | Student – Link |
| 15.30 (15 m) | Internal panel meeting | | |
| 15.45 (30 m) | Meeting with external stakeholders (<i>employers of past students or someone from the industry whom Malta Bartending Academy collaborates with</i>) | | Online – Link |
| 16.15 (30 m) | Internal panel meeting | | |
| 16.45 (15 m) | Presentation of Initial Findings | Peer review panel and Head of Institution | In person |



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