

External Quality Assurance

Programmes Audit Report

FUTURE FOCUS LTD

Carried out between
4th and 7th December 2023

Programmes Audited:

Certificate in the Practice of Inclusive Education in the Classroom Level 1

Certificate in the Practice of Inclusive Education in the Classroom Level 2

Quality education for
confident futures .

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Abbreviations List

ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EQA/QA audit	External Quality Assurance Audit
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
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
SAR	Self-Assessment Report

Executive Summary

Institutional Background

Future Focus Ltd is an institution for Further and Higher Education offering courses in different fields of studies. The courses which qualify individuals as *Learning Support Educators* are offered at different levels, varying from short courses of 14 ECTS to a Master of Education Level 7.

Future Focus's purpose is to inspire learning, advance knowledge and enrich society. They strive to inspire learning for students and staff; advance knowledge in practice and the professions, and academic areas; enrich society through education, the impact of their research and their contribution to global challenges; and support the local community in which they operate.

The institution is built around four core values: excellence, inclusivity, responsibility and creativity and flexibility.

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 onsite and also online audit visit. The panel is responsible for reaching conclusions on all Standards within the evaluation areas set out in the Procedures for Programme Audits in Further and Higher Education Institutions. 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.

The programme audit process was carried out with the aim to evaluate the areas set out in the procedures for Programme Audits in Further and Higher Education Institutions which group the 11 Standards of the National Quality Standard Framework for Further and Higher Education (NQAF) as follows:

Section A: Design and Development of Programme of Study

Section B: Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Section C: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

Section D: Teaching Staff

Section E: Learning Resources and Student Support

Section F: Information Management

Section G: Public Information

Timeline

The panel meetings for the Certificate in the Practice of Inclusive Education in the Classroom Level 1 (20-week course) and the Certificate in the Practice of Inclusive Education in the Classroom Level 2 (30-week course) took place according to the following schedules:

Day 1: 4th December 2023

Venue: Online – via Zoom

Brief introduction by Chair of the panel.

Meeting with the Director/owner of Future Focus and Head of Institution. Presentation on QA policy and processes at Future Focus. This presentation addressed the quality processes, procedures and guidelines at Future Focus, the organisational chart and a run through of the 11 Standards of the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education (NQAF).

Day 2: 7th December 2023

Venue: Future Focus premises

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 (The Framework, hereafter), 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, and
 - 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 assurance to the public that the standards of further and higher education programmes and the quality of the learning experience of students are high. 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 Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (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 with reference to 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 aspects 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 programme audit is carried out in line with the evaluation areas set out in the Procedures for Programme Audits in Further and Higher Education Institutions which group the 11 Standards of the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education (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 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.

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:	Dr Robert Cassar (PhD)
Peer Reviewers:	Dr Elena Marin (PhD) Ms Marjoe Abela
Student Peer Reviewer:	Mr Matthew Kitching
QA Managers (MFHEA):	Mr Giacomo Annese Ms Bilyana Boshova

Summary of the Conclusions Reached by the Peer Review Panel

Based on the documented findings in the report and interviews with different stakeholders, the panel has determined that Future Focus meets the requirements of Sections E, F and G, needs improvement in B, C and D, and does not meet requirements in Section A. The recommendations outlined in this report aim to elevate existing standards and promote enhanced good practices.

Specific Terms of Reference

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 which **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 analysis and observations; these **could** be implemented by the institution.

The panel made ten mandatory recommendations and five key recommendations. Furthermore, the panel made three additional recommendations which the institution can choose to work on.

Institutional Context

Future Focus is a leading private training organisation in the Mediterranean offering local and international learners the opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge that are relevant to today's changing business and working environments. The institution has been providing training opportunities for 23 years. The main academic hub is located in Floriana, with staff working on a full-time basis to provide a point of reference, accessibility, support and guidance.

Future Focus provides for adults' upskilling through part-time tuition as well as academic support across various vocational and academic domains. The institution's mission is to inspire students to become lifelong, independent learners. Enrolment in Learning Support Educator courses is accessible to everyone, with the only requirements being those established by competent regulatory authorities. They actively aim to address Malta's present and future skill needs in the ever-evolving economy.

Their approach is focused on creating an engaging teaching and learning environment tailored to participants with diverse competencies. This methodology seeks to transform individuals into skilled, productive and responsible contributors to the national labour force. To facilitate this, the institution's students can access career enhancement courses designed to prepare them for adept participation in the professional world.

Ultimately, the institution's goal is to develop students who evolve into self-directed decision-makers within their respective fields of specialisation. Future Focus is dedicated to providing support and encouragement, fostering increased self-esteem and motivation to facilitate the learning journey for students pursuing academic and vocational courses. Their objective is to ensure that learners can successfully achieve their goals.

At Future Focus, the lecturers bring extensive experience in their specialised fields and collaborate with learners of varying abilities to enhance their skills. Recognising the challenges of balancing work, family and social commitments, they encourage learners to progress at their own pace, setting targets and goals collaboratively. They strive to make the learning process enjoyable, with lecturers engaging in individual discussions to encourage open dialogue, creating a more productive learning environment.

Analysis and Findings of Panel

Section A - Design and Development of Programme of Study

A1 Policy for Quality Assurance

Main Findings

Future Focus has an internal quality assurance manual which is accessible through their website <https://futurefocus.com.mt/>.

The comprehensive manual comprises three sections: Internal Quality Assurance Standards, Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures, and Quality Assurance Forms.

The internal quality assurance policy is based on the European Standards and Guidelines as determined by the Malta Further and Higher Authority.

The institution has a clear vision for quality assurance built on five processes:

- i. Sample planning based on the principles of 'CAMERA'
- ii. Effective communication
- iii. Interim sampling
- iv. Monitoring of assessor practice
- v. Standardisation activities

Based on the documentation provided, the panel concluded that the institution has established policies and procedures that actively promote best practices, thereby ensuring sound governance. However, even though the institution designates a staff member to oversee the quality assurance process, it remains uncertain to the panel whether the processes for the two programmes under review are formalised and adhere to a specific timeframe.

In general, both interviewed learners and lecturers exhibited limited awareness of the existing quality assurance (QA) processes at the institution and lacked clarity on their respective roles within these procedures. Learners acknowledged receiving requested written feedback through questionnaires and having the opportunity to provide verbal feedback directly to the management. However, the panel determined that despite lecturers being asked for learning materials and objectives, they were not aware that this participation was part of an internal

quality assurance process. Additionally, the panel observed a lack of official feedback solicitation from external stakeholders. Consequently, the panel concluded that the overall level of involvement from various stakeholders is relatively low.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

MR1: Future Focus shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, strengthen and formalise the implementation of an internal quality assurance system that shall allow for the regular review of stakeholder feedback to inform action plans. Relevant initiatives shall include recruiting a pool of internal verifiers to strengthen the quality assurance mechanisms related to teaching and learning of specific study units, as well as establishing a formal structure to collate direct feedback from external stakeholders.

MR2: Future Focus shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, implement strategies to raise awareness among students, including those in online courses, about institutional quality assurance processes to involve them more in such processes. Relevant initiatives shall include orientation sessions, informational campaigns, or integrating relevant information into the curriculum. Improving students' understanding of the QA process shall lead to more active engagement and participation, hence their having a more proactive role in shaping and improving the quality of their academic programmes.

A2 Design and Development of Programme

Main Findings

The course specifications for both the Undergraduate Certificate in the Practice of Inclusive Education in the Classroom Level 1 and the Undergraduate Certificate in the Practice of Inclusive Education in the Classroom Level 2 provide details on the programme and broad learning outcomes, the list of study units, and respective number of ECTS for each unit. The information on the website states the MQF level and entry requirements.

The panel was informed that both programmes' rationale prioritises the learner, covering the learning content in both theory and practice. Each course includes compulsory 180-hour practicums aligned with the course content. These practicums involve creating a learner's portfolio through a longitudinal study. While the main goal is to produce high-quality professionals, the primary focus during the design was on the ultimate beneficiary – the child with diverse needs.

The first lecture is a 3-hour induction session, which helps students understand the schedule, assessment and the demands of the course. This session includes a presentation on academic writing, institution policies and rules. The final assignment is divided into steps and the lecturer is available to support the students to understand what is expected of them. Guidance is given whilst the work is still in progress.

According to the documentation provided and interviews carried out, the panel learnt that the design of both programmes is intended to ensure a seamless transition for learners, preventing any gaps as they progress from one level to the next. The courses follow a consistent pattern, instilling confidence in learners right from the beginning of each subsequent course. This is reflected in the topics of the study units which are similar in both courses, aiming towards deeper learning in the second course, and identical mode of assessment in all study units for both courses. The contact hours, self-study hours, placement hours and hours allocated for assessment are structured in accordance with the ECTS weighting of each module.

During interviews, concerns were raised regarding the lack of practical strategies for direct student engagement. It was noted that lecturers may face limitations in providing effective techniques, especially for secondary school learners. Whilst acknowledging the importance of theoretical knowledge, there seems to be a gap in applying general strategies to diverse situations, with an apparent bias towards primary school settings.

Additionally, it was observed that the courses primarily focus on Autism and ADHD, with insufficient attention given to other disabilities and Social, Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (SEBD). Although there is a module dedicated to Supporting Students with SEBD, the panel noted the learners' dissatisfaction with the level of preparation provided for dealing with such challenges in real life situations.

Furthermore, the panel identified the learners' need for improved skills in adapting curriculum tasks to meet diverse student needs, especially in middle and secondary school contexts. Although specific topics were not mentioned, there was a consensus on the necessity for broader skill development.

External stakeholders highlighted a perceived progression in difficulty across the programmes. Employers indicated that feedback from learners suggested continuity between the courses, with the 30-week course incorporating more practical scenarios for real-world application.

Despite completion of these courses, it was suggested that Learning Support Educators still require substantial on-the-job mentoring. This sentiment was echoed by a lecturer with practical experience in the education sector, who emphasised the need for additional support despite the depth of content covered in the courses.

Good Practice Identified

- The practicum tutors act as links between the learners, the academic staff/programme leader and external stakeholders.

Recommendations for Improvement

MR3: Whilst reviewing and revisiting study programmes, consideration shall be given to the current challenges the school communities are encountering in inclusion practices. Therefore, Future Focus shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, gather formal feedback from external stakeholders, specifically referring to national policy makers in the field of inclusion, the prospective/current employers (state, church and independent schools), the learners' students and/or their parents.

MR4: Future Focus shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, conduct regular reviews of the study units within each programme to ensure that students are adequately prepared to work in both the primary and secondary education sectors and carry out the necessary adaptations. Also, while recognising the importance of being familiar with the Autism Spectrum and ADHD as the most common profiles, the lecturers shall incorporate references to other conditions, learning difficulties and disabilities. This shall ensure students are sufficiently prepared to navigate a diverse range of variables in their future roles.

A3 Internal Review – Monitoring and Periodic Review

Main Findings

According to the documentation provided, the sampling information is collated from different sources such as the assessors' feedback to learners, internal quality assurance observations on the assessors' work and feedback to assessors, the direct observation of the learners' skills through the practicum, and the Complaint and Consultation Review process. Notwithstanding what is written in the policy documents, during the onsite visit it was evident to the panel that the internal quality assurance system is relatively informal at the institution. The main stakeholders, that is the teaching staff, practicum tutors and learners, are not aware of such quality assurance processes.

The programme leader for the two courses being reviewed undertakes partial responsibility for standardising the learning programmes. The latter supports the internal quality assurance process by monitoring the assessor's notes and presentations for adherence to the study unit's learning outcomes to ensure consistency, then reviewing the assessor's feedback to ensure it aligns with the learning outcomes. Furthermore, the internal quality assurer conducts random observations, completes a form and provides feedback accordingly.

As indicated by Future Focus representatives, students provide feedback through questionnaires at the end of each study unit and random surveys focusing on specific topics like the preference for retaining online lecture modalities. It was noted that students' representatives may be invited to attend quality assurance committee meetings based on the meeting agenda. Each class informally designates a representative, often known as "class leaders". In situations involving the entire class, the class representative or leader communicates with the institution's management. A similar process is followed when the institution seeks input from students, either communicated through the class representative/leader or through the portal, depending on the subject. However, during interviews with current students and alumni, no mention was made of this process, suggesting that student involvement is not a common practice unless challenges arise. In fact, when issues do arise, they are addressed on a case-by-case basis, either by the Head of Institution with regulatory and quality assurance responsibility or even personally by the Director.

The lecturers proactively update their materials through personal initiatives, drawing inspiration from Continuing Professional Development (CPD) experiences provided by the institution, Erasmus projects, or self-directed efforts. Alongside routine evaluations conducted by the programme leader and feedback from the internal quality assurer, the lecturers play a key role in reviewing the content they deliver.

From the interviews conducted during the onsite visit, it became apparent that stakeholders are cognizant of existing shortcomings in terms of course content, assessment methods and delivery modalities. However, the institution did not acknowledge these shortcomings in the documents provided or during their presentation. This implies a weak procedural system for gathering feedback for monitoring and the review process. The panel observed a gap in connecting informal and formal feedback collected from various stakeholders to formulate an action plan that effectively addresses identified shortcomings.

There is no indication of formal feedback being gathered from external stakeholders. Nonetheless, practicum tutors solicit feedback on the learners from the senior leadership team at the school during onsite observation visits. Furthermore, the panel noted that, at the moment, feedback from parents of learners with disability is not being collected. This would provide the institution with rich data to analyse since, ultimately, Learning Support Educators will spend most of their time with differently-abled students, particularly at school.

Good Practice Identified

- The practicum tutors contribute to collating feedback for quality assurance purposes. This is done through direct observation of the students' skills and informal conversations with a member of the school's senior management team when visiting learners during the practicum. Such feedback is passed on to the programme leader.

Recommendations for Improvement

MR5: Future Focus shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, develop a Standard Operating Procedure for collecting feedback from stakeholders, ensuring a systematic and consultative approach to monitoring and reviewing of programmes. This practice shall demonstrate a commitment to keeping programmes relevant and responsive to the needs of the sector and learners. Additionally, awareness among various stakeholders shall be promoted to acquaint themselves with these processes and utilise these channels for submitting formal feedback.

KR1: Future Focus should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, share the responsibility of internal quality assurance among an increased pool of people with designated roles as specified in the Standard Operating Procedure recommended.

MR6: Future Focus shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, implement a cyclical review to ensure that objectives are being met, areas of improvement are identified, and adjustments are made as necessary. The cyclical nature of the review shall allow for continuous improvement and adaptation to changing circumstances.

Conclusion

Future Focus does not meet the requirements of Section A.

Section B – Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

B1 Teaching and Learning Strategies

Main Findings

Currently, all lecture sessions are conducted through the online modality using the same link consistently. The students highlighted the implementation of active learning methodologies, even within the constraints of the online mode. During sessions, students are actively encouraged to engage in discussions about various scenarios, utilise photos and videos, and reflect on the practical resources that the staff incorporate into their own professional practices. The feedback from students during the panel discussions was generally positive, emphasising the good level of interactivity experienced in both programmes.

Students appreciated the teaching staff's effort to make online lectures as interactive as possible. They are given space to discuss the challenges they encounter at school with their students and exchange ideas regarding strategies, and the lecturers point out misconceptions backed up by theory and scientific evidence. These shared enriching experiences across the three education sectors in Malta (State, Church and Independent) contribute to the establishment of a cohesive community among learners who are already practitioners.

Students feel secure with a common structure across the different courses' progression. The online modality is very accommodating to life-work-study balance. However, some did refer to specific topics, such as feeding, physical handling and behaviour management, where the face-to-face modality probably lends itself better.

On the other hand, different teaching staff mentioned the importance of recapitulating the concepts and relating to the school situation enabling the learners to internalise the concept/strategies.

The panel identified a lack of practical components in lectures to address job-related challenges. It was also observed that academic staff has limitations in providing strategies tailored for older students in secondary school settings. Also, there seems to be an assumption that all Learning Support Educators will be deployed in primary schools, which does not align with reality. This perception also influences the choice of topics covered in both courses. While importance is placed on supporting students in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills, there is a lack of confidence in adapting the curriculum or providing age-appropriate materials for middle and secondary school students. During the interviews, the need for a more hands-on, practical teaching experience was highlighted a number of times by the interviewees.

Good Practice Identified

- Lecturers utilise various teaching methodologies, to promote dynamic dialogues and peer interactions among learners. This includes employing varied learning techniques, even in an online setting, where students engage in discussions, utilise multimedia resources, and reflect on practical examples from staff's professional experiences. The positive feedback from students underscores the high level of interactivity in both programmes.

Recommendations for Improvement

- R1: Future Focus could conduct a comprehensive assessment to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the online modality, especially regarding applied skills. Existing study units and recommendations from stakeholders should be evaluated to determine which ones are most suitable for in-person delivery rather than virtual instruction.
- KR2: Future Focus should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, utilise students' feedback to reassess the range of topics offered in these two study programmes, placing greater emphasis on addressing challenges encountered by students in middle and secondary school settings.

B2 Student Assessment

Main Findings

Most course-related assessments are conducted online in the form of Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) tests. Students must also submit a final assignment, where the grade is determined by their lecturer. For the practicum, learners must compile a student's portfolio which includes a reflective journal. The panel was informed that this approach represents a considerable reduction in the range of assessment strategies used on these programmes compared to several years ago. Indeed, several interviewees pointed out to the panel that this is a negative development. Conversely, some expressed a more positive outlook regarding this aspect of the programme.

During a three-hour long induction session, the Head of Institution explains the processes, platform and assessment modalities of the course. Most students would have already been familiar with the system since they would have previously completed other courses at Future Focus.

Even though the MCQ-generating software provides feedback on the difficulty level of the questions and allows for potential adjustments once uploaded by the staff, the panel suggests that ongoing monitoring of standardisation should be the responsibility of the Quality Assurer, thus ensuring academic integrity. Although MCQ examinations are timed, the panel believes that further enhancements should be implemented to prevent collusion between students in unsupervised assessments.

Future Focus maintains a clear policy on plagiarism, and both staff and students are well-versed in the institution's requirements. Students are encouraged to use plagiarism detection software before submitting assignments, and assessors, as part of their responsibilities, are obligated to utilise the detection software (Dupli checker) before grading assignments. In cases of plagiarism, students are required to resubmit the assignment. Failing in the second opportunity would necessitate the retaking of all study unit modules. The institution clarified that, to date, no one has been mandated to repeat modules due to plagiarism, but some students have had to undergo resits, often prompted by MCQ failures.

Assessment feedback comments are accessible on the online platform, but they are generally non-descriptive, lacking specific references for formative assessment or learning. The feedback, viewed through the Learning Management System (LMS), is concise, and examples observed by the panel lack specific references to relevant sections within the learners' scripts. The panel suggests that, for the purpose of providing constructive guidance, it would be beneficial to explicitly specify feedback related to particular content within an assessment script for learners.

Practical competencies of learners are evaluated through direct observation by the practicum tutor during a single visit. The tutor provides formal feedback on various aspects, including the interaction with students, responsiveness to their needs, planning of adaptations/resources, and the reflective journal. One tutor noted the evident professional growth in learners transitioning from the 10-week to the 30-week course. This observation suggests that for the two stand-alone courses under this audit, enhancing the learning journey could be achieved through an additional visit during the practicum.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

- MR7: Future Focus shall, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, establish consistency among assessors by introducing uniform criteria ensuring a consistent level of difficulty for Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQ).
- MR8: Future Focus shall, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, provide a rubric for the final assignment and offer feedback to learners in accordance with the established criteria specified in the rubric.
- KR3: Future Focus should evaluate the programme to ascertain whether a single written assignment could adequately contribute to the learners' professional development, allowing them to refine academic writing skills through additional readings, literature review, and engagement with various schools of thought. This should be implemented within 12 months from the date of publication of this report.
- R2: Future Focus could explore the possibility of reintroducing various modes of assessment to engage and challenge students across multiple skill sets.
- R3: Future Focus could explore the option of extending the practicum placement period and/or incorporating a second observation visit. This adjustment would enable practicum tutors to assess learners' proficiency more thoroughly in applied skills.

Conclusion

Future Focus needs improvement to meet the requirements of Section B.

Section C – Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

C1 Student Admission Regulations

Main Findings

The Future Focus website is designed with user-friendliness in mind. The home page prominently features two tabs – one for finding a course and another for applying. Upon clicking the “apply” tab, users are guided through a step-by-step registration process. Templates for the application form, student agreement and student acceptance form are individually tabbed for convenient reference. The website provides clear instructions for online payment, with an alternative option for applicants to pay in person at the Future Focus premises if needed.

Following the application stage, the administration team checks identification, CV and certification prerequisites or transcript. This process takes place prior to enrolment. Students confirmed that any queries during the admission process are responded to fully and promptly.

The first tab, “find a course,” directs users to a comprehensive list of all available courses, including the two courses currently being reviewed. Once a specific course is selected, detailed information is presented, encompassing the list of study units, corresponding ECTS credits, course duration, delivery mode, assessment method, and entry requirements.

The prerequisites state that completion of the 10-week course is required for admission to the 20-week course, and completion of the 20-week course is necessary for entry into the 30-week course. It is crucial to note that while the 10-week course is not part of this audit, it serves as the sole entry requirement for the 20-week course. This could potentially be misleading to applicants. Supply Learning Support Educators (LSEs) may be employed temporarily without meeting all entry requirements, including having a minimum of four MQF Level 3 subjects, including Maths, English and Maltese. During this period, these employees are eligible to enrol in the 10-week course.

Good Practice Identified

- The Registrar and the administrative staff offer timely assistance and guidance to applicants who may not be technologically inclined. This support is not limited to the registration process; it is extended to technical assistance during lectures until individuals become accustomed to the system. Despite lectures being held in the evening after office hours, learners can contact the office, and any calls received during this time are directed to the Director. The latter then promptly notifies the support staff to provide immediate support.

Recommendations for Improvement

MR9: Future Focus shall, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, include MQF Level 3 qualifications in Mathematics, English and Maltese as additional entry requirements for the 20-week course. These fundamental prerequisites not only align with the essential skills for the role of a Learning Support Educator (LSE) but are also crucial for developing proficiency in supporting Literacy and Numeracy - key components covered in both the 20- and 30-week courses.

C2 Student Progression

Main Findings

There is no established pattern to course dates; instead, Future Focus offers multiple entry points, and the 30-week course is normally scheduled shortly after the completion of the 20-week cohort. This is to facilitate the institution supporting smooth progression for those students who want to complete both courses.

The panel noted that courses are designed with a similar structure but feature an elevated level of the same content. Midway through the 20-week course, there is a progression session where students can ask questions, listen to course content and understand how progression will take place. This information session is scheduled early to give learners ample time to make an informed decision.

Students may apply for the 30-week course before they finish the 20-week course. However, they can only be enrolled if the students would have successfully completed all the modules. There may be exceptions when students ask for an extension for the assignment and/or the practicum could not take place as the 20-week course would have started close to the end of the scholastic year. In these cases, the learners may enrol in the 30-week course conditionally. A Risk Form is filled in specifying the missing component/s from the 20-week course. Unless these components are completed successfully and the 20-week certificate is published, the certificate for the 30-week course will not be issued.

The panel notes a process which is learner-centred and transparent, giving students ample opportunities for further guidance and support. Progression is proving to be smooth with various entry points for both courses through the year. Nonetheless, the exceptional accommodation of starting the 30-week course prior to finishing all the 20-week components should be more restrictive. It is not recommended that a student who has not yet completed the practicum of the 20-week course, start the theory of the 30-week course. There should be a degree of applicable skills and reflection before progressing to the next level.

Good Practice Identified

- The Head of Institution takes on an advisory role for the learners. She offers counselling on pathways and qualifications. The service is available through an open-door policy by emails, phone calls and face-to-face appointments.
- After completing the 30-week course, participants can advance to courses at MQF Levels 6 and 7.

Recommendations for Improvement

MR10: Future Focus shall, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, restrict commencement of the 30-week course without completing the full 20-week course to exceptional cases. Specifically, candidates shall not be granted an exception if they have not successfully completed the practicum component of the 20-week course.

C3 Student Recognition

Main Findings

The institution has established a procedure for recognising prior learning, including credits or exemptions, to ensure that individuals with relevant prior experience or qualifications receive fair credit and can progress efficiently in their studies. These mechanisms are designed to be easily accessible and transparent to both prospective and enrolled students. The procedure is explained to learners during their induction session.

Additionally, the panel has been informed that students who have completed one related course in the field (either the 10-week or the 20-week course) with another institution offering similar courses, can further their studies by enrolling in a more advanced course at Future Focus if, of course, they have the required qualifications to do so.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

Nil.

C4 Student Certification

Main Findings

Information on eligibility criteria to obtain certification is accessible online prior to the application stage. The virtual learning environment (VLE) is a transparent tool where individual students have records of their pathway, including marks for each study unit and comments for the practicum and the assignment. Students can keep track of their progress towards eligibility of certification.

Students who do not pass the Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) assessment at the end of the study unit are provided with another opportunity to retake it. In the event of a second failure, the student is required to redo the entire module. The certification process can only be initiated once the grades for all MCQ tests, final assignment, learner's portfolio and practicum are uploaded. This was confirmed to the panel by the Future Focus administrative staff explaining that the system does not permit certification unless all components have been successfully graded.

Transcripts related to the institution provide comprehensive information, including the qualification's name, its level, the awarding institution, total credits earned, study unit names, ECTS credits, grades and the student's personal details. Transcripts with all grades and an overall average is issued with every certificate. After graduation, students have the option to request additional copies of their transcripts, which are also stored in scanned versions within the electronic systems of the institution.

Good Practice Identified

- The Risk Form serves as a critical signal for administrative staff, indicating that the issuance of the 30-week certification should not proceed until all outstanding components from the 20-week course are satisfactorily completed.

Recommendations for Improvement

Nil.

Conclusion

Future Focus needs improvement to meet the requirements of Section C.

Section D: Teaching Staff

D1 Teaching Staff Recruitment

Main Findings

The recruitment process is rigorous, transparent and consistent, aiming to attract qualified and suitable candidates. Calls are made public on the institution's website and social media.

All teaching staff recruited for these two programmes are on a part-time basis. Most of them have demonstrated long-term commitment, having been educators at Future Focus for several years, underscoring a sense of stability and continuity.

According to the documents provided, the institution maintains an organised record-keeping system for staff, regularly updating and storing records of their qualifications, certifications and contact information. The aim is to ensure easy accessibility for administrative and communication purposes, promoting efficiency in staff management.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

Nil.

D2 Teaching Staff Numbers and Academic Background

Main Findings

Future Focus manages to recruit a healthy number of teaching staff, all qualified in their area of study. Given their part-time status, most teaching staff remain actively employed in the sector or in an educational setting, directly engaging with children and/or adults with disabilities, Learning Support Educators and latest technological tools. The panel acknowledges and values their professional experience as a positive aspect.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

Nil.

D3 Teaching Staff Professional Development

Main Findings

According to the documents submitted by the institution and the interviews carried out, the panel was informed that the teaching staff's employment contract requires them to participate in annual Continuing Professional Development (CPD). However, the institution does not commit to providing CPD. The staff acknowledge their professional responsibility to remain up to date with the latest developments in the field. Due to their fractional contracts, they understand that much of this learning direction falls on them, not the institution.

During the presentation, the Director informed the panel that as partners with similar EU institutions, they can provide teaching staff with international CPD opportunities through Erasmus+. Additionally, the institution actively promotes local CPD opportunities that may benefit the teaching staff. The recording of CPD forms and self-appraisal forms is a requirement for the renewal of contracts. Staff members have engaged in various CPD activities, including self-sought courses or those offered through their full-time jobs. A number of lecturers have also pursued formal qualifications related to dyslexia and IT software applications used in teaching and learning. While there is some limited support from Future Focus for CPD, including a system for requesting international opportunities, the lecturing staff acknowledged the challenges of availing themselves of such opportunities due to family and other commitments.

The programme leader explained to the panel that official network meetings for teaching staff provide a platform to share ideas and discuss emerging trends and concerns.

Good Practice Identified

- The collaborative sharing of resources with other teaching staff was notable.

Recommendations for Improvement

- KR4: Future Focus should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, establish procedures for peer observation among teaching staff. This should enable staff to observe and learn from others' teaching practices and engage in constructive feedback while at the same time should contribute to personal growth and development amongst academic staff.
- KR5: The programme leader should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, formalise and facilitate the teaching staff network meetings at regular intervals to create a community of learners.

Conclusion

Future Focus needs improvement to meet the requirements of Section D.

Section E – Learning Resources and Student Support

E1 Learning Environment

Main Findings

All lectures are conducted online using Zoom and complemented by the portal to track their learning journey's process. To minimise technical issues and improve accessibility, students utilise a consistent link for each class. The panel observed that students are familiar and comfortable with these systems. Additionally, administrative staff are available to assist instructors who may need support in navigating the systems for student benefit. The panel concludes that the system is straightforward and easy to use.

Since all lectures take place online, the institution's Centre is infrequently used by the learners. Nonetheless, the central office is accessible with an administrative team employed full-time, available to support the learner face to face and online during office hours and, when necessary, and at times after office hours.

During the onsite visit, the panel conducted the interviews in a room which can be used as a classroom. However, if the management reconsiders reverting to class-based lectures, the size of the rooms does not accommodate the current cohorts of 30 learners. In that case, an alternative venue needs to be found.

Good Practice Identified

- The Director, the Head of Institution and administration team are personally invested to facilitate processes, supporting learners and teaching staff alike to ensure quality and accessibility for a positive learning experience.

Recommendations for Improvement

Nil.

E2 Facilities and Learning Resources

Main Findings

The IT infrastructure at the Centre not only facilitates ease of access for both teachers and students but also plays a pivotal role in ensuring the efficient delivery of the study programmes. This accessibility enables seamless integration of technology into the teaching and learning process, enhancing the overall educational experience. Moreover, students benefit from a diverse array of online learning resources tailored to meet the specific requirements of their programmes. These resources are carefully administered to align with the programmes' objectives and cater to the varying needs of students, thereby fostering a conducive learning environment.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the institution's commitment is reflected in its proactive approach towards maintaining and upgrading these online learning resources. Future Focus staff members have affirmed their dedication to regularly monitoring and enhancing these resources to keep pace with evolving educational trends and best practices. By staying abreast of technological advancements and educational innovations, the Centre ensures that its IT infrastructure remains robust and adaptable, thereby effectively supporting the dynamic needs of both faculty and students throughout their academic journey.

Good Practice Identified

- Digital resources are regularly maintained and upgraded to meet evolving educational needs aligned with the programmes' objectives.

Recommendations for Improvement

Nil.

E3 Student Support

Main Findings

Support staff at Future Focus offers assistance and guidance from application stage throughout the full academic journey. This includes preparation for study, answering logistical queries, signposting to further information, and technological support. Staff reported the majority of students are familiar with the institution's systems and that a minority (10-15%) will contact Future Focus regularly with questions and requests.

The maximum cohort size of a classroom is 30 students, and despite being virtual in nature, lecturers regularly divide students into breakout rooms for group work.

For certain learners, these courses mark their initial venture into adult education while for others, a considerable time has passed since their last educational engagement. This circumstance not only results in academic disparities but also manifests as a lack of self-confidence and, in certain instances, heightened levels of anxiety. Despite the relatively large number of students per class, its only modality as well as other challenges, learners have expressed appreciation for the academic and psychological support provided by the teaching staff, administrative staff and Future Focus management. This personalised support plays a crucial role in motivating students to actively participate in the programme, successfully complete assignments, and navigate practical components, all without compromising the academic integrity of these programmes.

Students may request reasonable adjustments to the study programme timeline based on the individual needs. Furthermore, if a student struggles with a particular topic, they can request additional support. On the other hand, the lecturer may refer the learner for additional support. Regular meetings are held with groups and/or individual students to keep tabs on their progress – personal and academic.

Since students are already in the field, they have the opportunity to bring up challenges during lectures. They are encouraged to use the chat box on the portal, but when the lecturers consider the question a learning opportunity, the challenge is discussed in confidence with the wider group.

Good Practice Identified

- There is an open channel between students and staff.

Recommendations for Improvement

Nil.

Conclusion

Future Focus meets the requirement of Section E.

Section F – Information Management

F1 Information and Records

Main Findings

The institution's administrators implement a well-structured system to manage and store student records, encompassing transcripts, attendance details, and personal information. This ensures convenient access for both administrative and academic purposes. The system is safeguarded in adherence to GDPR regulations and regularly updated, and consistently complies with pertinent data protection guidelines, safeguarding the privacy and integrity of student records.

The institution maintains comprehensive and regularly updated student records, covering academic progress, assessment results, and relevant information for a holistic view of each student's journey. Organised profiles for student cohorts are readily available, encompassing academic performance, career outcomes and feedback. These profiles aid in programme analysis, reporting and continuous improvement. Additionally, student feedback on study units informs changes made to the programme of study, highlighting a systematic approach to data collection and programme enhancement. As highlighted earlier in this report, although recognising the significance of tracking the learners' data and tutors' feedback to gauge the study programmes' effectiveness, the panel highlights the importance of collating information from a wider range of external stakeholders. The panel is generally satisfied with the infrastructure and system in place.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

Nil.

Conclusion

Future Focus meets the requirements for section F.

Section G – Public Information

G1 Course Information

Main Findings

The institution's website is highly user-friendly. It provides clearly defined information about the courses, including a list of study units with their corresponding ECTS credits, course duration, delivery modality, assessment methods, and entry requirements.

Good Practice Identified

Nil.

Recommendations for Improvement

Nil.

Conclusion

Future Focus meets the requirements of Section G.

Response by the Provider

Preamble

We extend our sincere gratitude to the evaluation panel for the comprehensive assessment of Future Focus. The detailed insights provided through your report and stakeholder interviews are invaluable to us. We recognize the significance of each section in ensuring the quality and effectiveness of our services. Below, we address the evaluation outcomes in detail:

1. Sections Meeting Requirements (E, F, and G)

We are pleased to note that our efforts in Sections E, F, and G have met the required standards. This affirmation underscores our commitment to excellence and motivates us to sustain and further enhance our practices in these areas:

- i) Section E: Our processes and systems in place for this section will continue to be monitored and refined to ensure ongoing compliance and quality.
- ii) Section F: We will build on our current success by introducing new innovations and best practices to maintain our high standards.
- iii) Section G: Continuous improvement initiatives will be implemented to ensure that we not only meet but exceed expectations in this area.

2. Sections Needing Improvement (B, C, and D)

We take the feedback on Sections B, C, and D seriously and are committed to making the necessary improvements. Our planned actions are as follows:

i) Section B:

- Current Status: We acknowledge the gaps identified in our operational protocols.
- Action Plan: We are in the process of revising our protocols, with a focus on compliance and efficiency. This includes additional staff training and the introduction of new monitoring tools to ensure adherence to revised standards.
- Timeline: These changes will be implemented within the next 6 months, hence by March 2025, with regular progress reviews.

ii) Section C:

- Current Status: We recognize the need for more robust practices and strategies.
- Action Plan: A comprehensive review of our current practices is underway. We will continue to develop enhanced strategies that align with best practices and regulatory requirements.
- Timeline: The implementation of these strategies is ongoing.

iii) Section D:

- Current Status: We see the need for improved stakeholder engagement and process optimization.

- Action Plan: Our approach includes refining and formalising existing processes, increasing transparency, and fostering better communication with stakeholders. We will also introduce regular feedback mechanisms to track the effectiveness of these improvements.

- Timeline: These initiatives will be given attention with continuous evaluation.

3. Section Not Meeting Requirements (A)

i) The feedback on Section A is critical, and we acknowledge the need for improvements. Our detailed plan includes:

- Root Cause Analysis: Conducting a thorough analysis to understand the underlying issues affecting our performance in this section.

- Consultation: Engaging with stakeholders to collect feedback that will enable us to redesign our approach and implement best practices.

- Enhanced Training: Providing training for our staff to ensure they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge.

- Monitoring and Evaluation: Implementing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track progress and make adjustments as needed.

- Timeline: We aim to see measurable improvements within the next six months, with monthly progress reports to ensure accountability and transparency, and a date for completion within 6 months, hence by March 2025.

4. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

We are dedicated to elevating our standards and ensuring that all sections meet or exceed the required criteria. The recommendations provided in the report serve as a crucial roadmap for our improvement journey. We will provide regular updates on our progress and remain open to ongoing feedback and guidance from the panel.

Thank you once again for your constructive feedback and support. We look forward to demonstrating our commitment to improvement and achieving the high standards expected of us.

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
Section A:		
KR1 - Future Focus should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, share the responsibility of internal quality assurance among an increased pool of people with designated roles as specified in the Standard Operating Procedure recommended.	Future Focus will work at creating a shared pool of people to share the present responsibility of the IQA function	September 2025
Section B:		
KR2 - Future Focus should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, utilise students' feedback to reassess the range of topics offered in these two study programmes, placing greater emphasis on addressing challenges encountered by students in middle and secondary school settings.	Following successful completion of the course, students will be asked to complete a feedback form which would focus on their overall satisfaction of the course including but not limited to scheduling, teaching staff, classes, topics covered, relevance to area of employment and other recommendations.	September 2025
KR3 - Future Focus should evaluate the programme to ascertain whether a single written assignment could adequately contribute to the learners' professional development, allowing them to refine	A study will be carried out with the IQA panel, tutors and learner sample to ascertain whether a single written assignment could adequately contribute to the learners' professional development, allowing them to refine academic writing skills through additional readings, literature review and engagement with various schools taught and feedback on this study will be implemented accordingly.	September 2025

academic writing skills through additional readings, literature review, and engagement with various schools of thought. This should be implemented within 12 months from the date of publication of this report.		
R1: Future Focus could conduct a comprehensive assessment to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the online modality, especially regarding applied skills. Existing study units and recommendations from stakeholders should be evaluated to determine which ones are most suitable for in-person delivery rather than virtual instruction.	A comprehensive assessment will be conducted to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the online modality, especially regarding applied skills. Stakeholder feedback will be utilised to determine the most suitable mode of delivery.	September 2025
R2: Future Focus could explore the possibility of reintroducing various modes of assessment to engage and challenge students across multiple skill sets.	The incorporation of other modes of assessment is being evaluated. FF believes that the present methods already offer different means that allow the student an opportunity to be assessed through different learning styles.	September 2025
R3: Future Focus could explore the option of extending the practicum placement period and/or incorporating a second observation visit. This adjustment would enable practicum tutors to assess learners' proficiency more thoroughly in applied skills.	The timeframe of the practicum will be explored with a view to exploring whether an extension to the present period should be introduced	September 2025
Section C:		
NIL	NIL	NIL
Section D:		

<p>KR4 - Future Focus should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, establish procedures for peer observation among teaching staff. This should enable staff to observe and learn from others' teaching practices and engage in constructive feedback while at the same time should contribute to personal growth and development amongst academic staff.</p>	<p>A procedure will be created to encourage and recommend peer observation among teaching staff. This should enable staff to learn and observe from others' teaching practices and engage in constructive feedback while at the same time contributing to personal growth and development</p>	<p>September 2025</p>
<p>KR5 - The programme leader should, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, formalise and facilitate the teaching staff network meetings at regular intervals to create a community of learners.</p>	<p>The programme leader is working at creating a schedule of teaching staff network meetings to promote teaching staff professional development.</p>	<p>September 2025</p>
<p>Section E</p>		
<p>NIL</p>	<p>NIL</p>	<p>NIL</p>
<p>Section F:</p>		
<p>NIL</p>	<p>NIL</p>	<p>NIL</p>
<p>Section G:</p>		
<p>NIL</p>	<p>NIL</p>	<p>NIL</p>

Response to Mandatory Recommendations made by the Peer Review Panel

Action Plan		
Mandatory Recommendations	Actions to be taken to address the recommendations	Date for completion
Section A:		
MR1 - Future Focus shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, strengthen and formalise the implementation of an internal quality assurance system that shall allow for the regular review of stakeholder feedback to inform action plans. Relevant initiatives shall include recruiting a pool of internal verifiers to strengthen the quality assurance mechanisms related to teaching and learning of specific study units, as well as establishing a formal structure to collate direct feedback from external stakeholders.	As per KR1, Future Focus will create a pool of people to share the IQA function to strengthen the IQA mechanisms related to teaching and learning and to collate direct feedback from stakeholders.	SEPTEMBER 2025
MR2 - Future Focus shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, implement strategies to raise awareness among students, including those in online courses, about institutional quality assurance processes to involve them more in such processes. Relevant	This recommendation is a process that is already ongoing at the Institution. An induction session is presently held prior to the start of the course and during this session the Head of Institution raises awareness about the various policies and procedures of the institution including the quality assurance process. Furthermore, circulars and notifications are regularly uploaded to the institute's VLE to ensure that all students are in receipt of regular communication.	September 2025

<p>initiatives shall include orientation sessions, informational campaigns, or integrating relevant information into the curriculum. Improving students' understanding of the QA process shall lead to more active engagement and participation, hence their having a more proactive role in shaping and improving the quality of their academic programmes.</p>		
<p>MR3 - Whilst reviewing and revisiting study programmes, consideration shall be given to the current challenges the school communities are encountering in inclusion practices. Therefore, Future Focus shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, gather formal feedback from external stakeholders, specifically referring to national policy makers in the field of inclusion, the prospective/current employers (state, church and independent schools), the learners' students and/or their parents.</p>	<p>During the on site practicum visit, assessors will be discussing the current challenges within the school community with both learners and heads of schools to ensure that current challenges which are faced by the school community in relation to inclusion practices are analysed and the programme is adapted where possible to meet the current realities faced by learners/students and heads.</p>	<p>September 2025</p>
<p>MR4 - Future Focus shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, conduct regular reviews of the study units within each programme to ensure that students are adequately prepared to</p>	<p>A review of the study units is ongoing and is being carried out on an annual basis with both learners, assessors and heads to ensure that students are adequately prepared to work in both primary and secondary sectors and to carry out the necessary adaptations. With immediate effect additional focus will be placed on SEBD to ensure that students are sufficiently prepared to navigate a diverse range of needs.</p>	<p>September 2025</p>

<p>work in both the primary and secondary education sectors and carry out the necessary adaptations. Also, while recognising the importance of being familiar with the Autism Spectrum and ADHD as the most common profiles, the lecturers shall incorporate references to other conditions, learning difficulties and disabilities. This shall ensure students are sufficiently prepared to navigate a diverse range of variables in their future roles.</p>		
<p>MR5 - Future Focus shall, within 12 months from the date of publication of this report, develop a Standard Operating Procedure for collecting feedback from stakeholders, ensuring a systematic and consultative approach to monitoring and reviewing of programmes. This practice shall demonstrate a commitment to keeping programmes relevant and responsive to the needs of the sector and learners. Additionally, awareness among various stakeholders shall be promoted to acquaint themselves with these processes and utilise these channels for submitting formal feedback.</p>	<p>An SOP will be developed to ensure that the collection of feedback from stakeholders is done in a systematic and consultative manner to carry out programme reviews. The programme reviews will be relevant to the needs of the sector and learners.</p>	<p>September 2025</p>
<p>MR6 - Future Focus shall, within 12 months from the date of</p>	<p>The IQA shall create a policy and SOP to implement the need for a cyclical review to ensure that the programme objectives are being met and areas of improvement and adjustment are</p>	<p>September 2025</p>

<p>publication of this report, implement a cyclical review to ensure that objectives are being met, areas of improvement are identified, and adjustments are made as necessary. The cyclical nature of the review shall allow for continuous improvement and adaptation to changing circumstances.</p>	<p>highlighted and addresses as necessary. This would ensure that the programmes are in line with current realities to prepare learners for real world scenarios</p>	
<p>Section B:</p>		
<p>MR7 - Future Focus shall, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, establish consistency among assessors by introducing uniform criteria ensuring a consistent level of difficulty for Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQ).</p>	<p>Following the programme review, Future Focus has already implemented uniform criteria to ensure a consistent level of difficulty for MCQs. The process has already commenced in implementation with a view to being finalised by the deadline</p>	<p>March 2025</p>
<p>MR8 - Future Focus shall, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, provide a rubric for the final assignment and offer feedback to learners in accordance with the established criteria specified in the rubric.</p>	<p>Future Focus shall, with the IQA function, formalise a rubric for the final assignment and feedback to the learners will be given in accordance with the established criteria specified in the rubric</p>	<p>March 2025</p>
<p>Section C:</p>		
<p>MR9 - Future Focus shall, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, include MQF Level 3 qualifications in Mathematics, English and Maltese as additional entry requirements for the 20-week course. These fundamental prerequisites not only</p>	<p>Entry requirements for the 20 week course have been amended to read as follows:</p> <p>10 week course certificate plus any of the following:</p> <p>a) Be engaged as a Supply Learning Support Educator in a licensed school, and able to communicate in English and Maltese; OR b) Have a minimum of four MQF level 3 subjects at Grade 1-5, Grade C or a comparable, which must include Maltese, English Language, Mathematics, and any other subject; OR</p>	<p>December 2025</p>

align with the essential skills for the role of a Learning Support Educator (LSE) but are also crucial for developing proficiency in supporting Literacy and Numeracy - key components covered in both the 20- and 30-week courses.	c) In possession of an MQF Level 3 VET Qualification (minimum 60 ECTS, or equivalent which would include Maths, English and Maltese OR d) a recognised level 6 qualification or higher	
MR10 - Future Focus shall, within 6 months from the date of publication of this report, restrict commencement of the 30-week course without completing the full 20-week course to exceptional cases. Specifically, candidates shall not be granted an exception if they have not successfully completed the practicum component of the 20-week course.	Future Focus is already implementing this recommendation and learners who have not completed the learning components of their course will not be permitted to enrol for the 30 week course.	March 2025
Section D:		
NIL	NIL	NIL
Section E		
NIL	NIL	NIL
Section F:		
NIL	NIL	NIL
Section G:		
NIL	NIL	NIL

Annexes

Annex 1: Review Panel Bio Notes

In the setting up of the review panel for Future Focus, the MFHEA sought to maintain a high degree of diligence in the process of selecting the members of the peer review panel. The panel is 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, between 4th and 7th December 2023.

Chair of Review Panel: Dr Robert Cassar (PhD)

Dr Cassar is a quality assurance expert in education, with many years of direct experience in the field. His current role is that of Deputy Director with the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, in the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR). Prior to his current position, Dr Cassar was an Education Officer, Regulatory for seven years. He was primarily involved in external reviews in compulsory education institutions as well as in childcare centres.

Before his involvement in quality assurance in education, Dr Cassar was an educator for over sixteen years working across a number of sectors. Between January 2009 and May 2013, Dr Cassar was also the liaison officer and course coordinator for a Chartered Institute of Marketing (UK) centre in Malta. The centre offered a variety of accredited CIM (UK) courses. Throughout the years, Dr Cassar also worked with numerous organisations, in various capacities, but mainly as a marketing consultant, project manager and/or evaluator. Following his doctorate studies in 'Media and Cultural Studies' in 2004, Dr Cassar published in various academic journals and continues to do so until today.

Since 2005, he has been appointed by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA), to participate on its behalf, in various quality assurance panels. In August 2022, Dr Cassar was nominated and appointed to the European Schools Board of Inspectors in the capacity of Secondary Section inspector.

Peer Reviewer: Dr Elena Marin (PhD)

Dr Marin is senior lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Bucharest. She is in charge of several courses such as Inclusive Education, Learning and Cognition, and Instructional Theories. Her main research focus is on inclusive education, initial teacher training system and the social dimension of higher education. Dr Marin has published several articles and a book on the topic of inclusive education, and is particularly interested in analysing how the initial teacher training systems are managing to respond to future teachers' needs to face inclusion in the classroom. Moreover, the interest spreads across higher education systems with an interest in pinpointing ways universities can become more accessible and inclusive. She partners in several Erasmus+ funded projects exploring inclusive education (COALITION and Co-Creating inclusive school communities, Oriental 4VET), as well as providing services as external evaluator for different national and international calls.

Peer Reviewer: Ms Marjoe Abela

Ms Abela is a passionate advocate for inclusive education and currently serves as the Service Manager for Student Services in the Secretariat for Catholic Education. With over two decades of experience, she has been instrumental in promoting equitable and supportive learning environments for students. Ms Abela's journey began as a Learning Support Educator in Kinder, Primary and Secondary schools, where she pioneered inclusive education. As Head of Department Inclusion, she strategised and implemented policies to foster inclusivity in classrooms and school-wide initiatives.

Ms Abela actively collaborates with educators, parents and communities to promote diversity and break down barriers. As the Service Manager for Student Services, she oversees comprehensive support programs addressing educational, emotional and behavioural challenges. Beyond her professional role, Ms Abela volunteers with the Malta Girl Guides in different roles including quality assurance of adults' training programme and young members' non-formal educational programme. She also serves on the administrative boards of the Church Schools Children's Fund, Malta CAN, and Fondazzjoni Wenz.

Student Peer Reviewer: Mr Matthew Kitching

Mr Kitching is currently a PhD student in Higher Education at Lancaster University, where his work focuses on international quality assurance and student leadership and development. In addition, he is Deputy Chief Executive Officer at Buckinghamshire New University. In this role he is responsible for wide ranging student support services including advice, representation, sport, volunteering and civic engagement. Mr Kitching also holds Board roles at several European quality assurance agencies, including the European Council for Business Education, where he is responsible for accreditation standards, site visits and training peer reviewers, and EQ-Arts, where he is serving as a researcher on a European funded project exploring urgent and emerging skills needs in the creative industries. He has extensive experience of conducting programme audits for a wide range of quality assurance agencies across five continents and of reviewing material related to inclusive education programmes. This includes as a panel secretary responsible for reports.

Annex 2: Agenda of the Onsite/Online Visit

I day 4th December		
10.45 (75 m)	Head /QA Future Focus	Rosanne Galea; Diana Busuttil (online)

II day 7th December Future Focus		
8.30 (30 m)	MFHEA EQA panel preparation meeting for day 2 of the programme audit (at Future Focus premises)	
9.00 (60 m)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative staff/IT/Registrar, Student Services • Lecturers • Stakeholder 	
10.15 (15 m)	Internal meeting	
10.30 (60 m)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students of 20- and 30-week courses (focus group) 5/8 	
11.00(15 m)	Internal meeting	
11.15 (60 m)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme leader • Lecturers • First-time student • Alumni 	
13.00 (60 m)	Internal meeting and lunch break	
14.00 (45 m)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecturer • Practicum tutor • Stakeholder 	
15.00 (90 m)	Any other additional meetings plus a tour of the premises and final internal meeting	
16.30 (15 m)	Final presentation	
16.45	Close day 2	



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