**Quality Assurance**

**What is Quality Assurance?**

Quality Assurance aims at safeguarding and improving the quality of teaching, learning, training and research within the economic, social and cultural context on a national, European and international level.

**Why is Quality Assurance of importance?**

Quality assurance is essential for building trust and to reinforce the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area, including in the provision of cross-border education. At a national level quality assurance in further and higher education ensures transparency and efficiency. This helps to create a trustworthy national education system, for the benefit of both national and international students by ensuring the portability of Maltese qualifications across European Member States fostering employment or learning mobility.

**How did Quality Assurance develop in the Bologna Process?**

With the aim of developing comparable criteria and methodologies for Quality Assurance, Ministers at the Bologna Ministerial Summit in Bergen held in 2005 adopted the *Standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) based on a proposal by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in co-operation with the European Students’ Union (ESU), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the European University Association (EUA) – the so-called E4 group.

At the Bologna Ministerial Summit held in London in 2007 the E4 group was tasked with setting up the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). Quality Assurance Agencies may apply for inclusion in EQAR, if they are in substantial compliance with the *Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG).

Ministers at the Bologna Ministerial Summit held in Bucharest in 2012 decided to review the *Standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* in order “to improve their clarity, applicability and usefulness, including their scope”.

**What is the Bologna Process target for Quality Assurance?**

Education ministers at the Bucharest Ministerial Summit in 2012 committed themselves to maintain the public responsibility of quality assurance and ensure the active involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the process as well as to allow EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies to perform their activities across the European Higher Education Area, while complying with national requirements.
What is the state of implementation of Quality Assurance in Malta?

The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) is the competent authority in Malta for licensing, accreditation and quality assurance of Further and Higher Education providers and programmes. Through the ESF Project 1.227 ‘Making Quality Visible’ the NCFHE developed the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education. It is based on a cyclical approach as indicated in the diagram on the quality cycle below. Moreover, it is based on a three-tiered structure of Internal Quality Assurance (including the external review of Internal Quality Assurance processes), External Quality Assurance and the external review of External Quality Assurance.

The Framework was launched at a consultative conference with stakeholders in July 2014 and revised following three pilot External Quality Assurance Audits of the University of Malta, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology and the Institute of Tourism Studies.
Standards for Internal Quality Assurance:

1. Set-up and publication of an effective policy for quality assurance
2. Institutional probity both financial and institutional;
3. Appropriate design and approval of programmes;
4. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment that encourages students taking an active role;
5. Published and consistently applied regulations for student admission, progression, recognition and certification;
6. Competence and effectiveness of teaching staff
7. Appropriate learning resources and student support;
8. Collection, analysis and use relevant information for the effective management of programmes and other activities
9. Appropriate public information;
10. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Further information

Information on Quality Assurance published by the Bologna Secretariat

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG):

Website of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR):
http://www.eqar.eu/


Further information on the National Quality Assurance Framework:
http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/content/home-national-quality-assurance-framework/89784324/