# External Quality Assurance Audit Report

National Commission for
**Further and
Higher Education**
Malta

## Armed Forces of Malta

**Carried out between the 27th and 28th of September 2018.**

# Table of Contents

# Abbreviations List

ECTS        European Credit Transfer System

QA audit      External Quality Assurance Audit

IQA          Internal Quality Assurance

MQF         Malta Qualifications Framework

NCFHE     National Commission for Further and Higher Education

NQAF      National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education

# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1 Section A: Background

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 on-site audit visit. The panel was responsible for giving judgments on Standards 1 and 3 – 11. As outlined in the External Quality Audit Manual of Procedures, the NCFHE sought external expertise to evaluate and give judgment on Standard 2. Through this report, the panel also highlighted areas of good practice, which in view of an NCFHE peer review panel, make a positive contribution to academic standards and quality and are worthy of being emulated and disseminated more widely.

### 1.1.1 The Peer Review Panel

The Peer Review Panel was composed of:

**Chair of Panel:** Dr. Sandro Spiteri

**External Peers:** Dr. Mary Muscat

**Student Peer Reviewer:** Mr. Chris Sammut

**QA Managers (NCFHE):** Ms. Sibby Xuereb and Ms. Angelique Grech

### 1.1.2 Specific Terms of Reference and Main Lines of Inquiry

Throughout the rest of this report, the AFM Training School is referred to as: 'the entity'. Although the entity has only one accredited course at present, the Panel was clear that its role was not to quality-assure the course, but the capacity and fitness for purpose of the entity to fulfil its institutional quality assurance requirements in terms of the National Quality Assurance Framework.
Following the desk-based analysis and the scoping visit held with the entity on the 22nd August 2018 the panel agreed on the main area which needed to be covered during the EQA process. Given the nature of the training provided by the entity, the main line of enquiry of this audit was:
- Given the predominantly physical and inherently danger-adjacent nature of training provided by the entity, how was it ensuring the quality of learning especially in terms of health and safety?

The Panel decided that as part of an enhancement-led approach it would issue recommendations linked to specific Standards but which also intersect across Standards as applicable. The report therefore distinguishes between:
- Conditional Recommendations which should be implemented by a set date as indicated in the respective recommendation;
- Key Recommendations which need to be implemented expediently by the institute to address weaknesses, and need to be effectively in place before the next EQA;

- Recommendations for improvement which are suggestions based on our analysis and observations.

## 1.2 Section B: Key Findings, Judgements and Recommendations

### 1.2.1 Standard 1 - Policy for Quality Assurance

**Good Practice Identified**

1. The Entity's training programme is based on the richness of training experience gained from participation in training in different countries, which has then been adapted according to Malta's needs.
2. The training programme has detailed health and safety procedures.
3. The Entity has a policy and procedures for bi-annual identification of training requirements.

**Judgment**

**Requires Improvement to Meet Standard 1.**

**Recommendations**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| CR | 1. | With immediate effect, the Entity should take all necessary steps to revise its Sexual Harassment Policy so as to explicitly forbid the display of offensive material on the premises of the Entity in line with Cap 456 'Equality for Men and Women Act', and ensure that this Policy is implemented effectively throughout its premises. |
| CR | 2. | The entity needs to formalise and augment its existing good practices, policies and procedures into an IQA policy, by the end of 2020 |
| KR | 3. | This policy needs to take into consideration the provision of student support services, bearing in mind the nature of the training course and the entity. |

### 1.2.2 Standard 2 - Institutional Probity

**Good Practice Identified**

**N/A**

**Meets Standard 2.**

| Recommendations | |
|---|---|
| KR | AFM shall develop an organigram specifically for the training arm of the institutions, clearly detailing roles and responsibilities. |

### 1.2.3 Standard 3 - Design and Approval of Programmes

**Good Practice Identified**

1. The Entity has an internal checks-and-balances dynamic between the Training Branch within HQ that provides strategy, direction and approval for training, and the Training School that executes and implements direction and proposes or gives feedback to new training proposals.
2. The Entity provides detailed and well-structured syllabi in the form of its Course Manual and pamphlets, as well as related assessment procedures, to support the standardization of teaching and learning across instructors.
3. The Entity has a highly detailed planned procedure for the provision of its course programme.

**Judgment**

**Meets Standard 3.**

| Recommendations | |
|---|---|
| KR | 1. Procedures for the design and approval of programmes need to be formalised in the QA Manual as per Standard 1. |

### 1.2.4 Standard 4 - Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

**Good Practice Identified**

1. Within the limitations inherent in nature of the Entity, teaching and assessment modalities are sufficiently flexible to cater for a number of learner contexts and learning styles.
2. Remedial teaching is provided whenever needed, even after normal training hours, to ensure mastery by students.
3. The Course has a strong continuous assessment element in the form of a detailed student course file.

**Judgment**

**Requires Improvement to Meet Standard 4.**

**Recommendations**

| KR | 1. | Assessment results need to be given out in a way that respects student privacy, in line with GDPR requirements. |
|----|----|---|
| KR | 2. | Within the context of the nature of the Entity, it should institute systematic student feedback on provision. |
| R | 3. | Within the limitations inherent in the nature of the Entity, it may wish to consider more inclusive ways of teaching and assessment. |
| R | 4. | The Entity should consider establishing assessment resit limits. |
| R | 5. | The Entity should consider including greater variety between resits of the same assessment, as and where applicable, to enhance assessment validity. |

### 1.2.5 Standard 5 - Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

**Good Practice Identified**

1. The Entity conducts a two-day induction programme prior of the recruitment training programme itself, which allows new recruits to get a taste of training requirements and thus confirm or otherwise their aptitude for this career choice.
2. The Entity conducts an AFM Open Day yearly, and actively uses it to attract new recruits.
3. The Entity has outsourced to the national education authorities the vetting of academic credentials of its applicants, and the provisions of equivalency tests where required.
4. The Entity has established a uniform progression route for new recruits after their initial training.

**Judgment**

**Surpasses Standard 5.**

**Recommendations**

| R | 1. | The Entity should consider making available the electronic submission of applications for recruitment |
|---|---|---|

### 1.2.6 Standard 6 - Teaching Staff

**Good Practice Identified**

1. The Entity has seen a significant increase in training funds, including for the CPD of its trainers, in recent years.
2. The Entity makes a significant investment in the CPD of its staff, including the management of the Training School.
3. The Entity has clear plans for further CPD to maintain and enhance the capacity of its training staff.
4. The Training School senior staff keep track of the instructors' career trajectory to the point where they highlight and direct such staff towards opportunities for advancement.
5. Instructors are available for additional remedial training after normal training hours.

**Judgment**

**Meets Standard 6.**

**Recommendations**

| KR | 1. | The Entity needs to increase its cadre of instructors to adequately service the overlapping needs of course provision and other Entity requirements. |
|---|---|---|
| KR | 2. | The Entity should fast-forward its plans for a Certificate that is especially targeted for instructors; such a programme should have a strong element of andragogy adapted to the specific learning context of the Entity. |
| KR | 3. | The Entity should provide training opportunities so instructors can renew expired certification in lifesaving, and first aid courses. |
| R | 4. | The Entity should consider giving recognition to the training of instructors t par with 'trades' training, so that this can be given due weighting for promotion prospects. |

## 1.2.7Standard 7 - Learning Resources and Student Support

**Good Practice Identified**

1. Instructors develop learning resources from the official pamphlets and supplement these with highly visual material to ensure comprehension.
2. Students are required to undertake further targeted research, and to rehearse both academic and physical learning, to maintain all-round mastery of course expected outcomes.
3. Students are well aware of referral and redress procedures in case of inappropriate behaviour, and are satisfied with their effectiveness.
4. The training provision evidences awareness of and respect for particular student needs and characteristics.

**Judgment**

**Requires Improvement to Meet Standard 7.**

**Recommendations**

| CR | 1. With immediate effect, the entity shall remove all sexually offensive material on its premises. |
|---|---|
| KR | 2. More dedicated teaching space is required that is fit for purpose, including both classrooms and outdoor spaces. |
| KR | 3. Student psychological support services need to be enhanced, and the review process for identified cases expedited. |
| KR | 4. The entity needs to increase its cadre of instructors to adequately service the overlapping needs of course provision and other AFM requirements |
| KR | 5. The Entity needs to provide more computer workstations for appropriate teaching and learning. |
| KR | 6. The Entity needs to ensure that all equipment is in good working condition. |
| R | 7. The Entity should consider updating resources that are suffering from wear and tear. |
| R | 8. The Entity should consider providing more office work space for instructors. |

### 1.2.8 Standard 8 - Information Management

**Good Practice Identified**

1. The Entity uses the data gathered for planning and forecasting.
2. The Entity has intranet facilities for staff to access and share policies, resources and information.
3. The recruits' file during their training is kept separate from their main file which is opened once the training is concluded. Medical information is kept separate from the main file to protect personnel's privacy.
4. The students' profile includes personal information such as on phobias, allergies and religious orientation.
5. Personal physical files are also digitised and are thus easier to retrieve.

**Judgment**

**Surpasses Standard 8.**

**Recommendation**

| R | 1. The Entity should consider ways how to make recruits aware of the existence of the Subject Access Request. |
|---|---|

### 1.2.9 Standard 9 - Public Information

**Good Practice Identified**

1. The website and social media page of the entity are detailed, informative and updated.
2. Queries for further information are answered promptly.
3. The yearly Journal 'On Parade' is disseminated with national newspapers.
4. The Entity makes good use of PR with respect to its Open Day and other public events.

**Judgment**

**Meets Standard 9.**

**Recommendations**

| CR | 1. The Entity should have more information about its educational provision permanently available on website, not only when applications are open. |
|---|---|

| R | 2. The entity should consider having a Maltese version of its website, for greater access by potential recruits. |
|---|---|

### 1.2.10 Standard 10 - On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes

**Good Practice Identified**

1. The entity reviews each course with all personnel involved at the end of each course.
2. The previous Officer in Charge of the Training School had reviewed the provision of the Training School as part of his studies, and proposed recommendations for improvements which were taken into consideration by the Entity.

**Judgment**

**Requires Improvement to Meet Standard 10.**

**Recommendation**

| KR | 1. The entity should include in its IQA policy a formal procedure for a cycle of ongoing course review |
|---|---|
| KR | 2. The entity should include student and alumni feedback in such a cyclical review. |
| KR | 3. The Entity should systematically include instructors in the updating and review process of the Training Manual. |

### 1.2.11 Standard 11 - Cyclical External Quality Assurance

**Judgment**

**Meets Standard 11.**

The Entity was well prepared for the EQA and generally cooperated well with the Panel in the undertaking of the EQA.

## 2. About the External Quality Audit

### 2.1 Introduction

The External Quality Assurance 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.

### 2.2 Reviewers

<table>
<tr><td><strong>Evaluation subject</strong></td><td colspan="2">Armed Forces of Malta</td></tr>
<tr><td><strong>Peer Panel Members</strong></td><td colspan="2"><strong>External Peers:</strong><br>• Dr. Sandro Spiteri,<br>• Dr. Mary Muscat<br><br><strong>Student Peer Reviewer:</strong><br>• Mr Chris Sammut<br><br><strong>QA Managers (NCFHE):</strong><br>• Ms. Sibby Xuereb<br>• Ms. Angelique Grech</td></tr>
<tr><td><strong>Timeline</strong></td><td><strong>Dates</strong></td><td><strong>Milestone</strong></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>11th July 2018</td><td>Panel received induction and preparation.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>22nd August 2018</td><td>Panel met to determine the specific terms of reference, aims, objectives and research questions.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>27th and 28th September 2018</td><td>Preliminary provider meeting.<br><br>On-site audit visit.</td></tr>
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## 2.3 Institutional Context

The AFM Training School forms part of 4 Regiments and is located mainly within Luqa Barracks. The school is composed of four Officers and 41 other ranks, distributed in five different sections, each having its distinctive roles: HQ, Initial Training Section, Career Development Section, Physical Training Wing and Maritime Safety and Security Training Centre. The overall operation of the school is headed by an Officer Commanding, assisted by the second most Senior Officer, followed by the School Sergeant Major and the Training Warrant Officer.

The school runs different courses such as the 'Basic Military Training' which is its first MQF Level 3 award, in basic military training. This course was specifically designed for personnel joining the AFM for the first time. The school plans to have other courses accredited by the NCFHE. It offers also a series of courses at different levels (JNCO, SNCO and LEOCC) that aim to build up the leadership and management proficiency of AFM personnel as part of their career development and promotion. The main objective of the school is to provide the necessary training required by AFM standards in a positive and constructive environment. The aim is to give each candidate the opportunity for a fresh start irrespective of the background he/she comes from and provide them with a rewarding learning experience.

The Basic Military Training course is the main responsibility of the Initial Training Section (ITS). The ITS deals primarily with aspiring entrants into the Armed Forces of Malta, mainly being either new recruits or Officer Cadets. The mission statement of the ITS is: "To develop and deliver basic military training to recruits in order to produce soldiers that have the necessary soldiering skills and who are capable of operating in uncertain, volatile and complex situations and that live by and embrace the core Army values''.

Discipline is the root of all good qualities, particularly self-discipline. Separating the candidates into two platoons or as required maintains a manageable instructor to candidate ratio for better supervision and monitoring whilst still promoting a healthy element of competition which drives individuals to strive for the greater good of the squad.

The ITS is led by an Officer in Charge (OiC) who coordinates the courses with the assistance of a Senior Non-Commissioned Officer who is appointed as course coordinator for every different course. As a rule of thumb, the school conducts two recruitments annually with around 60 - 80 recruits per intake. Recruits are divided into different platoons with each platoon having an assigned platoon sergeant and instructors.

## 2.4 General Terms of Reference, 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 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.

NCFHE 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 NCFHE.
- 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 eleven (11) Standards:

1. <u>Policy for quality assurance</u>: entities shall have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management.
2. <u>Institutional and financial probity</u>: entities shall ensure that they have appropriate measures and procedures in place to ensure institutional and financial probity.
3. <u>Design and approval of programmes</u>: self-accrediting providers shall have appropriate processes for the design and approval of their programmes of study.
4. <u>Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment</u>: entities shall ensure that programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in the learning process.
5. <u>Student admission, progression, recognition and certification</u>: entities shall consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student 'life-cycle'.
6. <u>Teaching staff</u>: entities shall assure the competence and effectiveness of their teaching staff.
7. <u>Learning resources and student support</u>: entities shall have appropriate funding for their learning and teaching activities and sufficient learning resources to fully support the students' learning experiences.
8. <u>Information management</u>: entities shall ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.
9. <u>Public information</u>: entities shall publish information about their activities which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible.
10. <u>On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes</u>: entities shall implement the 'Quality Cycle' by monitoring and periodically reviewing their programmes to ensure their continuing fitness for purpose.
11. <u>Cyclical external quality assurance</u>: entities should undergo external quality assurance, approved by NCFHE, at least 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 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 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.

## 2.5 Specific Terms of Reference and Research Questions

Throughout the rest of this report, the AFM Training School is referred to as: 'the entity'. Although the entity has only one accredited course at present, the Panel was clear that its role was not to quality-assure the course, but the capacity and fitness for purpose of the entity to fulfil its institutional quality assurance requirements in terms of the National Quality Assurance Framework.
Following the desk-based analysis and the scoping visit held with the entity on the 22nd August 2018 the panel agreed on the main area which needed to be covered during the EQA process. Given the nature of the training provided by the entity, the main line of enquiry of this audit was:

- Given the predominantly physical and inherently danger-adjacent nature of training provided by the entity, how was it ensuring the quality of learning, especially in terms of health and safety?

The Panel decided that as part of an enhancement-led approach it would issue recommendations linked to specific Standards but which also intersect across Standards as applicable. The report therefore distinguishes between:

- Conditional Recommendations which should be implemented by a set date as indicated in the respective recommendation;
- Key Recommendations which need to be implemented expediently by the institute to address weaknesses, and need to be effectively in place before the next EQA;
- Recommendations for improvement which are suggestions based on our analysis and observations

## 3. Analysis and Findings of Panel

### 3.1 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**

- The entity has developed a comprehensive vision for the professional development of its members that is linked to promotion prospects.
- Although the entity is not required to accredit its training since this is exclusively for its own members, it has decided to do so as an additional measure to guarantee quality. Indeed, the entity is in discussions with NCFHE to accredit other courses beyond the one that is currently accredited.
- The Panel was informed the policy direction towards accreditation was also intended to provide greater transferability of skills and qualifications to entity members once they left the service, to enhance their post-AFM employment prospects.
- The QA Manual of the entity is clearly mapped on the National Quality Framework, whilst factoring in the standards of other military training provision abroad that are considered to be international examples of good practice and fit for purpose for the Maltese context.
- As such, the Entity's training programme is based on the richness of the training experience gained from the participation of its members at various levels and departments within the entity in training in different countries. These experiences have been adopted according to Malta's needs.
- The training programme has detailed health and safety procedures. It is clear that the entity gives such issues high priority as is appropriate given the nature of its activities.
- The Entity has a policy and procedures for the bi-annual identification of training requirements. This policy includes liaison between the Training Branch at central administration, and the Training School, as is discussed in more detail in Standard 3.
- The Entity has an information retention policy and a sexual harassment policy.
- Not all of the entity's policies and procedures actually in operation are formalised in its QA Manual. These include its recruitment drives, efforts towards the integration of recruits of non-Catholic faith, and the care to ensure that female recruits are not subjected to inappropriate behaviour.
- It is understood that the provision of student support services within the entity is informed by the nature of the entity itself. As is discussed in further detail in Standard 7, there is some provision available, and care is taken to preclude unacceptable behaviour. However the entity lacks a comprehensive policy and procedures for appropriate student services.

In sharp contrast with the measures just mentioned, the Panel witnessed a disturbing episode of the normalisation of pornographic content in the form of a drawn cartoon prominently displayed in the administration offices of the entity, where the Panel held some of its meetings and in full view of officers of both genders and their commanding officer. The Chair of the Panel alerted the

entity of the inappropriateness of this content on the first day of the on-site visit, and recommended that it be removed immediately. However he was informed that this drawing was not considered objectionable, and it was not removed even during the last briefing of the audit. It was this reaction, which could be evidence of desensitisation and/or a lingering misogynistic culture in the entity that would undermine its sexual harassment policy and its pro-gender equality efforts in other areas, that the Panel considered particularly troubling. Furthermore, it is the considered opinion of the Panel that there is a prima facie case for considering the Entity to be in material breach of articles 9(1)(c), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(b) of Cap 456 'Equality for Men and Women Act'.

## Good Practice Identified

4. The Entity's training programme is based on the richness of training experience gained from participation in training in different countries, which has then been adopted according to Malta's needs.
5. The training programme has detailed health and safety procedures.
6. The Entity has a policy and procedures for bi-annual identification of training requirements.

## Overall judgment for Standard

Requires Improvement to Meet Standard 1.

## Recommendations for improvement

| CR | 4. | With immediate effect, the Entity should take all necessary steps to revise its Sexual Harassment Policy so as to explicitly forbid the display of offensive material on the premises of the Entity in line with Cap 456 'Equality for Men and Women Act', and ensure that this Policy is implemented effectively throughout its premises. |
|---|---|---|
| CR | 5. | The entity needs to formalise and augment its existing good practices, policies and procedures into an IQA policy, by the end of 2020 |
| KR | 6. | This policy needs to take into consideration the provision of student support services, bearing in mind the nature of the training course and the entity. |

## 3.2 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**

- Educational institutions within the public sector are already subject to stringent national financial and administrative regulations and oversight and to national legislation that regulates the appointment of senior personnel and the selection of staff. The EQA does not seek to duplicate the national regulatory structures and procedures already in place. Thus, for educational institutions within the public sector, Standard 2 is interpreted in terms of the capacity and resources of the provider to implement effectively its internal quality assurance procedures to improve the learning experience.
- AFM has a very detailed hierarchal structure in place, however, for the purposes of the educational institution is recommended that a specific organigram structure is created for the training arm of the institution. A description of the roles and responsibilities should be clearly indicated.
- AFM is a government entity therefore its budget is planned ahead through the pertinent ministerial channels.
- The full-time management and administrative staff at central office of the Entity and the part-time coordinating staff at in the centres, are appointed according to established public service procedures that have in-built due diligence and fitness for purpose considerations.
- Headship positions are deemed to be fit for purpose and recruitment in accordance to national legislation that regulates the appointment of Headship positions.

**Good Practice Identified**

**N/A**

**Overall judgment for Standard**

**Meets Standard 2.**

**Recommendations for improvement**

| KR | 1. AFM shall developed an organigram specifically for the training arm of the institutions, clearly detailing roles and responsibilities. |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## 3.3 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 Training Branch is responsible for course formation and can either initiate the process through its strategic planning or receive directions from external entities such as the Ministry, or from internal sources such as the four regiments. Once the need is identified, the commitment to develop the course design and implementation passes on to the Training School.
- The Training School makes it a priority to be constantly aware of the other Regiments' human resources, trainers' background and availability and liaises with them in the design and scheduling of courses.
- The training strategy is essentially shaped by external military training developments and the budget has increased over the years to reflect this. Due to the specialised equipment used, training in itself tends to be expensive and typically requires substantial funding.
- The current need for accreditation for the recruitment course became evident after the development of the Officer's career path internal handbook by the Training Branch. The need to do this manifested itself following questions from officer cadets who were aware of the existence of the soldier's career handbook, but the equivalent internal document did not yet exist. This further prompted the Training Branch to map out the required training trajectory and making it accessible to its officers
- One of the main assets of the training branch is the availability and pooling of experiences from abroad – training undertaken in the UK, Italy, the Czech Republic (by the British Army), Ireland, and the US. The first reference point tends to gravitate towards British Army practices for traditional reasons. This fusion of experience has developed into a hybrid training model that the Entity considers to be fit for the Maltese context.
- There is evidence of AFM's willingness to learn from past training experiences and present commitments, not only local but overseas engagements through the EU, such as the Somalia anti-sea piracy experience.
- Syllabi and manuals are very structured, have different subtitles including learning outcomes, and are available on intranet for instructors such that one instructor can easily pick up where the other has left off. The structure is supported by outlines for assessments such as recruits' portfolios and practical exercises.

- The planned procedure is clear enough to map each step involved in the training for both instructors and recruits, and evidence of this was examined during the audit. However, course design procedures used by the Training School need to be standardized according to the Quality Assurance Manual. It is clear that course requirements received internally from the regiments need to be filtered and structured according to QA standards rather than be adopted in the same way as presented by the Regiment.

## Good practice identified

4. The Entity has an internal checks-and-balances dynamic between the Training Branch within HQ that provides strategy, direction and approval for training, and the Training School that executes and implements direction and proposes or gives feedback to new training proposals.
5. The Entity provides detailed and well-structured syllabi in the form of its Course Manual and pamphlets, as well as related assessment procedures, to support the standardization of teaching and learning across instructors.
6. The Entity has a highly detailed planned procedure for the provision of its course programme.

## Overall judgment for Standard

**Meets Standard 3.**

## Recommendations for improvement

| KR | 2. Procedures for the design and approval of programmes need to be formalised in the QA Manual as per Standard 1. |
|----|----|

## 3.4 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

- During the recruitment phase and throughout the recruits' lifecycle, the panel experienced the pride and trust developed between AFM members.
- Within the limitations inherent in nature of the Entity, teaching and assessment modalities are sufficiently flexible to cater for a number of learner contexts and learning styles. For example, student recruits can write in Maltese, and highly visual material is used to supplement the use of English. Instructors are aware of different ways of learning and the implications of these to the presentation of content. However, they admitted they were not trained to cater for students with specific learning needs, such as dyslexia.
- The Panel saw evidence that the entity's efforts to ensure that female and LGBTIQ+ students were not subject to unacceptable behaviour during their training. It also took limited *ad hoc* arrangements to cater for non-Catholic recruits, but the adaptation was more from the recruits' side than the entity's.
- The Panel formed the impression that the instructors are highly dedicated to ensure that all recruits achieve mastery. They provide remedial teaching whenever needed, even after normal training hours.
- Students took an active role in their learning through the strongly practical and hands-on element of the training.
- The Course has a strong continuous assessment element in the form of a detailed and voluminous student course file, which the Panel considered to be fit for purpose. The course file was checked by the course instructors.
- Assessment results were communicated to the student recruits in a way that did not always respect their privacy. Whilst the Panel understood that this may be related to the fostering of a competitive spirit amongst the student recruits, there are other ways how this can be done whilst not unduly exposing low-performing students.
- There are currently no assessment resit limits. In practice, students could hardly fail the course. Also, the resits were essentially the retaking of the same assessment task. Whilst in some cases there was very limited room for adaptation (e.g. how to disassemble and

reassemble a rifle, which is a key skill), in others the Panel felt there could be scope for greater adaptation between resits of the same assessment task. The instructors felt that this procedure should be reviewed since at a certain point it was obvious that a non-performing recruit was not fit for purpose, with negative consequences on the morale of the rest.

- Whilst the instructors and course coordinators do gather informal feedback from the student recruits, there is currently no systematic student feedback on provision.

## Good practice identified

4. Within the limitations inherent in nature of the Entity, teaching and assessment modalities are sufficiently flexible to cater for a number of learner contexts and learning styles.
5. Remedial teaching is provided whenever needed, even after normal training hours, to ensure mastery by students.
6. The Course has a strong continuous assessment element in the form of a detailed student course file.

## Overall judgment for Standard

**Requires Improvement to Meet Standard 4.**

## Recommendations for improvement

| KR | 6. Assessment results need to be given out in a way that respects student privacy, in line with GDPR requirements. |
| KR | 7. Within the context of the nature of the Entity, it should institute systematic student feedback on provision. |
| R | 8. Within the limitations inherent in the nature of the Entity, it may wish to consider more inclusive ways of teaching and assessment. |
| R | 9. The Entity should consider establishing assessment resit limits. |
| R | 10. The Entity should consider including greater variety between resits of the same assessment, as and where applicable, to enhance assessment validity. |

## 3.5 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**

- The stated aim of the AFM training branch is not just providing a job opportunity but a career path to the personnel so that after 25 years of service they can choose to continue working in society based upon their previous experiences. All new posts or calls for new recruits are channeled through a single portal. Interested applicants can download the application form online or else collect the form in person. After filling and submitting the form, the applicant receives by post a letter confirming the date of the interview. During the interview phase, the interviewee is asked several general knowledge questions and questions related to their interest to this post.
- The Entity has outsourced to the national education authorities the vetting of academic credentials of its applicants, and the provisions of equivalency tests where required. It can thus focus on its strengths, which is the identification of likely recruits through a variety of methods.
- New recruits attend a two-day induction programme to help assess whether this is the right career for them. This approach has helped to winnow out unsuitable candidates in the beginning of the recruitment phase.
- It also conducts an AFM Open Day yearly, and actively uses it to attract recruitment.
- At the beginning of the course, the entity asks recruits to indicate in writing the existence of any phobias, allergies, and religious orientation, which are then used in planning ahead for meals, lodging, and well-being issues.
- The AFM Training Branch is planning to accredit further programmes to help sustain their aim of providing a career path to members. Moreover, the branch is also giving the opportunity to army members that whilst employed with the AFM, they can go and work with the private sector to further their experience.
- The entity has plans to develop a three-year accredited course to further assist recruits' work mobility after their years of Army service.
- During the interview with the student recruits, the Panel saw evidence that they are well informed of the steps to progress in this career.

## Good practice identified

5. The Entity conducts a two-day induction programme prior of the recruitment training programme itself, which allows new recruits to get a taste of training requirements and thus confirm or otherwise their aptitude for this career choice.
6. The Entity conducts an AFM Open Day yearly, and actively uses it to attract recruitment.
7. The Entity has outsourced to the national education authorities the vetting of academic credentials of its applicants, and the provisions of equivalency tests where required.
8. The Entity has established a uniform progression route for new recruits after their initial training.

## Overall judgment for Standard

**Surpasses Standard 5.**

## Recommendations for improvement

| R | 2. The Entity should consider making available the electronic submission of applications for recruitment |
|---|---|

## 3.6 Standard 6: Teaching Staff

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

**Main findings**

- Instructors are assigned to the School either through an internal call for application, or by being scouted and approached for their experience. Their qualifications are accessible via the Human Resources intranet which grants specified access to the training school and to senior staff. Once the potential instructors are identified, the next step is to get them certified in their respective field, usually through training abroad.
- Preference is given to instructors from within the entity, including the AFM lawyers who cover humanitarian law and the Chaplain who teaches military ethics. If the need arises, foreign military instructors are invited. Civilian lecturers are considered only where army instructors are unavailable or where the specialisation has to be sought from external sources, as was the case when soldiers needed to be trained in handling an accident scene that could potentially also be a crime scene. A Police Inspector from the Forensic team was invited for the purpose.
- The need to increase the number of instructors was particularly evident during the assessment of the course design (in particular timetabling) and in the recruits' feedback from classes that had the same instructor for different courses due to instructor shortage. The replenishment of the instructors team must be given top priority.
- Senior management keeps track of the instructors' personal progress towards promotion and takes measures to ensure that the instructors do not miss out on such advancement even if it means losing the staff as a result of placement in other regiments or army units
- Due to the recent steady increase in the training budget, opportunities for training placements abroad for the School's instructors has also increased, ensuring professional development of senior staff and instructors, apart from the use of gear.
- Although it is understandable that training gear is expensive, recruits have complained of using gear from World War II and heavily recycled gear that might not fit health and safety standards.
- The training school is run on a system of instructors and assistant instructors, which ensure continuity and future handing-over of the training baton to the next person who would have been exposed to the procedure first hand. The management of the school is styled in the same way; both manager and assistant manager have the same ranks but the assistant manager's role ensures that valuable experience and practices are not lost.

- Despite the strategic planning aspect of the instructor /assistant instructor set-up, there are a number of vacant posts that cause stress and friction on the programme's running. Although non-Maltese military instructors are brought over to Malta to fill in either these gaps or to address specific specializations, which is a positive aspect in itself, it is not enough to ensure the smooth running of the programme. Recruits have attested to this, and are aware of the advantage other recruits have over them in having all the necessary instructors covering the course.
- Instructors have the necessary predispositions to not only point out the need for remedial training but to take the time after hours to do so, and the School is well-disposed to accommodate this as much as possible through the updating of timetables and informing senior staff of the needs arising.
- The Entity needs to develop a clear and continuous 'train the trainer' approach apart from relying on the initial certification of the instructor. The benefits of such an approach include enhanced teamwork, effectiveness and competence of the instructors and would be in line with the QA manual.
- Instructors felt that they would benefit from a clearer line of communication with their superior officers/ managers in matters that concern their work, and from being informed of upcoming opportunities for their own personal training. They also felt that the quality of training would benefit by not being disrupted by extraneous events such as army commitments during official events,
- Instructors also felt that it would be helpful if they were sent in time for refresher courses in connection with certifications/ qualifications necessary in their work whose validity was due for renewal, rather than letting the certification validity expire. This applies to disciplines such as Life-Saving and First Aid.
- However, the Panel was assured that when this happens, other instructors with valid certification are drafted in.
- The Panel was told that training is not treated as a 'trade' and therefore does not carry with it the same favourable conditions. This may hamper instructors' willingness to stay and overall morale within the School.
- In line with the friction created by training not being considered a trade, the entity would need to standardise the teaching element by means of a certificate that would equip the instructors with the necessary andragogical and pedagogical awareness.
- There has been a step forward in leaving behind the military model of instruction, typically styled on the Russian approach of having a senior member of staff always present to supervise the instructor, in favour of the current system observed during the visit.
- There is much that can be learnt by other disciplined forces from this approach. Although the Training School is not unique within the disciplined forces, its ability to anticipate training needs and be forward-thinking in making its instructors' career progress top priority can serve as a benchmark for similarly structured, hierarchical entities.

## Good practice identified

6. The Entity has seen a significant increase in training funds, including for the CPD of its trainers, in recent years.
7. The Entity makes a significant investment in the CPD of its staff, including the management of the Training School.

8. The Entity has clear plans for further CPD to maintain and enhance the capacity of its training staff.
9. The Training School senior staff keep track of the instructors' career trajectory to the point where they highlight and direct such staff towards opportunities for advancement.
10. Instructors are available for additional remedial training after normal training hours.
11. Instructors who move on from the Training School or other roles within the Entity are still considered an asset despite their new and different postings, and are still recalled for ad hoc training provision if required.
12. The Training School's fusion of local and foreign training experiences of its officers into the design and implementation of courses ensures not only that such valuable investment is not lost but that a hybrid local model is developed. Other disciplined forces such as the Police, LESA, CCF and the CPD have much to learn from this approach.

## Overall judgment for Standard

**Meets Standard 6.**

## Recommendations for improvement

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| KR | 5. | The Entity needs to increase its cadre of instructors to adequately service the overlapping needs of course provision and other Entity requirements. |
| KR | 6. | The Entity should fast-forward its plans for a Certificate that is especially targeted for instructors; such a programme should have a strong element of andragogy adapted to the specific learning context of the Entity. |
| KR | 7. | The Entity should provide training opportunities so instructors can renew expired certification in lifesaving, and first aid courses. |
| R | 8. | The Entity should consider giving recognition to the training of instructors on a par with 'trades' training, so that this can be given due weighting for promotion prospects. |

## 3.7 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**

- Class-based instruction is given in dedicated classrooms that are generally fit for purpose, even if space is sometimes at a premium. Other venues within the entity are also used for class-based instruction, such as the mess hall, which the Panel viewed and considered to be fit for purpose. The Panel was informed that there are plans for a relocation of offices currently within the training school block, which would allow more space for the school.
- Non-class-based instruction is given on the grounds of the entity around Malta as the case may be, or in open spaces (e.g. cross-country run with full gear). A detailed health and safety report is drawn up for off-road training. The Panel was informed that even the use of the entity's own grounds at Hal Luqa was restricted due to multiple demands by the other functions of the entity.
- The Panel saw evidence that the instructors develop learning resources, such as handouts, from the official pamphlets, and supplement these with highly visual material to ensure comprehension.
- The Panel saw evidence that student recruits are required to undertake further targeted research which is a component of their portfolio. They are also required to rehearse both academic and physical learning outside class time, so as to maintain all-round mastery of course expected outcomes.
- The Panel noted that student recruits are well aware of referral and redress procedures in case of inappropriate behaviour, and are satisfied with their effectiveness.
- The student recruits were also satisfied with efforts by the entity to address such issues as separate gender private space and food allergies.
- The Panel was informed that the entity could access the psychological support services provided by the public service. Although the quality of service provided was deemed to be satisfactory, the amount of provision did not cope with actual needs, and the referral procedure took too long.
- The instructors felt that their numbers needed to be increased to adequately service the course. This was even more urgent given that they were often involved in other AFM tasks that overlapped with course provision, reducing further their availability.
- They also felt the need for more office space, more computer workstations for appropriate teaching and learning, and for the regular upkeep and/or replacement of all equipment that suffered from wear and tear.
- As commented in Standard 1, the Panel was concerned to note that the care towards gender issues and harassment shown in policy documentation and during instruction was not mirrored in the working environment of the administrative staff, where a

pornographic cartoon was retained on display despite attention being drawn to its inappropriateness by the Panel.

**Good practice identified**

5.  Instructors develop learning resources from the official pamphlets and supplement these with highly visual material to ensure comprehension.
6.  Students are required to undertake further targeted research, and to rehearse both academic and physical learning, to maintain all-round mastery of course expected outcomes.
7.  Students are well aware of referral and redress procedures in case of inappropriate behaviour, and are satisfied with their effectiveness.
8.  The training provision evidences awareness of and respect for particular student needs and characteristics.

**Overall judgment for Standard**

**Requires Improvement to Meet Standard 7.**

**Recommendations for improvement**

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|---|---|
| CR | 9. With immediate effect, the entity shall remove all sexually offensive material on its premises. |
| KR | 10. More dedicated teaching space is required that is fit for purpose, including both classrooms and outdoor spaces. |
| KR | 11. Student psychological support services need to be enhanced, and the review process for identified cases expedited. |
| KR | 12. The entity needs to increase its cadre of instructors to adequately service the overlapping needs of course provision and other AFM requirements |
| KR | 13. The Entity needs to provide more computer workstations for appropriate teaching and learning. |
| KR | 14. The Entity needs to ensure that all equipment is in good working condition. |
| R | 15. The Entity should consider updating resources that are suffering from wear and tear. |
| R | 16. The Entity should consider providing more office work space for instructors. |

## 3.8 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

- The Training School has a very detailed and structured information management system that forms part of the entity's overall system, from personal dossiers that are also scanned and digitised into the system on intranet facilities to shared policies and internal documentation. These files are easily accessible and retrievable by the School's staff on a need-to-know-basis.
- The Panel saw evidence that there are clear expiry dates and weeding out / closure of access or availability of data once a recruit passes his/her course and becomes fully-engaged as a soldier, at which point a new dossier is opened. Medical info is kept separate.
- The Training School asks recruits to indicate the existence of any phobias, allergies, and religious orientation, which are then used in planning ahead for meals, lodging, and well-being issues.
- The necessary GDPR check and balances ensure that legal standards are kept and protected.
- The recruits need to know about the existence of the Subject Access Request (SAR) according to the Data Protection legislation in that they can access their own data if there is a legal reason for it.
- This effectiveness could be a standard to emulate by other disciplined forces. There is a wealth of experience in strategic planning that might not be as easy to other disciplined forces as the AFM, since its very nature is based on military planning.

### Good Practice identified

6. The Entity uses the data gathered for planning and forecasting.
7. The Entity has intranet facilities for staff to access and share policies, resources and information.
8. The recruits' file during their training is kept separate from their main file which is opened once the training is concluded. Medical information is kept separate from the main file to protect personnel's privacy.
9. The students' profile includes personal information such as on phobias, allergies and religious orientation.
10. Personal physical files are also digitised and are thus easier to retrieve.

### Overall judgment for Standard

**Surpasses Standard 8.**

| R | 1. The Entity should consider ways how to make recruits aware of the existence of the Subject Access Request. |
|---|---|

## 3.9 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**

- The AFM website has extensive information that includes selection criteria (including the minimum requirements), application forms, sample paper exam questions, courses referenced to the MQF , course intended learning outcomes, details of progression, and career opportunities within the army. However detailed information is only made available on the AFM website during recruitment drives.
- The entity also makes extensive use of publicity in various ways.  It updates its Facebook page, which provides a lot of information for prospective recruits and other stakeholders, on a regular basis. The entity also makes use of popular video-sharing sites to make information available to prospective recruits.  Several videos with real life scenarios are also uploaded on the official entity website.
- Another important way of disseminating information to the prospective recruit and public is through the 'On Parade' magazine which is published yearly and disseminated with national newspapers.  It includes messages from newly recruits, the involvement of AFM in local and foreign operations, soldiers' career progression and further articles on life in the field.
- More information regarding AFM can also be obtained through public events and open days.
- The Panel noted that the information uploaded on the various sources is consistent.
- Because of the nature of the entity, not all information can be made available online.  Once the recruit completes the induction programme and chooses to continue with the recruitment, they are provided with all detailed pamphlets which will be used during their training.
- Student handbooks and procedures are all made available through the entity's intranet.
- Recording, filing and archiving of recruit's information is fit for purpose. Every recruit has access to the intranet (where the student handbook and procedures are visible). The personal file of every recruit is kept separate from the medical records in line with data protection regulations, and all file records are scanned and digitally stored on an off the shelf document management system.

**Good practice identified**

5. The website and social media page of the entity are detailed, informative and updated.
6. Queries for further information are answered promptly.
7. The yearly Journal 'On Parade' is disseminated with national newspapers.
8. The Entity makes good use of PR with respect to its Open Day and other public events.

**Overall judgment for Standard**

**Meets Standard 9.**

**Recommendations for improvement**

| CR | 3. | The Entity should have more information about its educational provision permanently available on website, not only when applications are open. |
|----|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| R  | 4. | The entity should consider having a Maltese version of its website, for greater access by potential recruits. |

## 3.10 Standard 10: On-going 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 entity reviews its provision with all personnel involved at the end of each course. For now this is carried out only during the recruitment phase, but the Panel was informed that the entity intends to expand this review process to other provision. The Panel considers that this would be a positive development.
- The Panel saw evidence that the previous Officer in Charge of the Training School had reviewed the provision of the Training School as part of his studies, including through a systematic student questionnaire, and had proposed recommendations for improvements which were taken into consideration by the Entity.
- Currently the IQA policy of the entity does not include a formal procedure for a cycle of ongoing course review. Nor does it have feedback by student recruits, alumni and instructors as a systematic component of the updating and review process of the course and Training Manual.

### Good practice identified

3. The entity reviews each course with all personnel involved at the end of each course.
4. The previous Officer in Charge of the Training School had reviewed the provision of the Training School as part of his studies, and proposed recommendations for improvements which were taken into consideration by the Entity.

### Overall judgment for Standard

**Requires Improvement to Meet Standard 10.**

### Recommendations for improvement

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|---|---|
| 4. | The entity should include in its IQA policy a formal procedure for a cycle of ongoing course review |
| 5. | The entity should include student and alumni feedback in such a cyclical review. |
| 6. | The Entity should systematically include instructors in the updating and review process of the Training Manual. |

## 3.11 Standard 11: Cyclical External Quality Assurance

Entities should undergo external quality assurance by, or with the approval of, the NCFHE on a cyclical basis, according to NCFHE guidelines, once every five years.

### Main findings

The Entity was well prepared for the EQA and generally cooperated well with the Panel in the undertaking of the EQA.

### Overall judgment for Standard

**Meets Standard 11.**

## 4. Response by the Provider

### 1. Preamble

The Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) is Malta's military organisation tasked with primary defence functions and safeguarding national sovereignty and interest, both in peacetime and in crisis. Malta's military instrument, in the form of the operational capabilities delivered by the AFM, is a major component of the Maltese Island's national defence and security architecture.

With the military & civilian sectors having been so distinctly dissimilar in past decades, in fact rendering them incompatible on most levels, the situation has been reversed nowadays with the two increasingly converging , espousing recognition of mutual benefit derived from co-operation and reciprocal permeation of skill sets.

### 2. Response to comments and proposals made by the Peer Review Panel in connection with Standards where the judgment was "Standard met or surpassed".

WRT 1.2.8 Standard 8 - The Entity should consider ways how to make recruits aware of the existence of the Subject Access Request. - AFM publishes Part 1 Orders which periodically include these routine policies. It is each soldier's individual responsibility to read these orders.

WRT 3.6 Standard 6 - The Entity should provide training opportunities so instructors can renew expired certification in lifesaving, and first aid courses. - Agreed. This depends on the response time of external providers, namely Royal Life Saving Society & St. John's Rescue Corps. Qualifications have since been renewed. Having said this, it is the prerogative of the Service to choose whether an instructor's qualification should be renewed or not, based on personal performance.

### 3. Response to comments and proposals made by the Peer Review Panel in connection with Standards for which the Peer Review Panel decided "Improvement is required".

WRT 1.2.1 Standard 1- The office referred to has no relation to the training, planning, nor lessons for which this audit was conducted, is not accessible to the public, and used for other matters by three officers, of which the senior most officer was a female. Consequently, it falls outside the remit of this audit and related comments should have been inadmissible. The utilisation of this office was provided upon request for an available desk space by the Chair of the Panel, after the visit to the training facilities was completed.

The said 'pornographic' content was a simple drawing on a whiteboard, with an erasable marker, of a cat with an elongated body, that had ears, eyes, mouth, whiskers, legs and a tail. This was hand drawn by the same officers working in this office and became somewhat of an office mascot. It was the Chair of the Panel that highlighted that the elongated body of the cat, in his opinion represents a phallic symbol, but this was initially taken as a joke. Thereafter, the Chair insisted to have this drawing erased. On the contrary, the resident officers felt offended that this

implication was made and did not agree with his perception. They resisted his demand, and felt that by erasing it,  they would have accepted the allegations. As a result this have escalated in having to justify a drawing of a cat on a whiteboard.  On the contrary to the perception given, the AFM takes very seriously the Equality of Men and Women on the place of work, and it provides equal opportunities irrelevant of gender, to all of its soldiers. As a matter of fact, the senior most officer in this office, was a woman, with two junior male officers sub-ordinate to her.

WRT 1.2.7 Standard 7 - More dedicated teaching space is required that is fit for purpose, including both classrooms and outdoor spaces. – AFM estate is shrinking. This is a challenge to meet although perfectly valid.

WRT 1.2.10 - The entity should include student and alumni feedback in such a cyclical review - Junior soldiers are not aware of the skills required of them. They lack the maturity for constructive feedback mostly and seem to be focused on the self, rather than an altruistic approach to serve the Nation.

WRT 1.2.10 - The Entity should systematically include instructors in the updating and review process of the Training Manual.  – Point taken onboard

**4. Response to comments and proposals made by the Peer Review Panel in connection with Standards for which the Peer Review Panel decided "Does not meet Standard".**

## Annex: Review Panel Bio Notes

In the setting up of the review panel for **Armed Forces of Malta,** the NCFHE sought to maintain a high degree of diligence in the process of selection of the members of 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 NCFHE.

The following bio notes present the profiles of the members of Peer Review Panel. The bio notes are correct as at the time of when the QA audit was carried out **27th and 28th of September 2018.**

### Head of Review Panel/External Peer:

**Dr. Sandro Spiteri**

Dr Sandro Spiteri has taught and trained in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors since 1989. From 2001 to 2008 he set up the first national family literacy and parent leadership programmes in Malta, and has worked and published with UNESCO on these issues. For 10 years from 2001 he was founding Head of the Malta Writing Programme, the first affiliate site in Europe of the National Writing Project in the USA, which also included a range of programmes for families and parents. From 2008 to 2009 Sandro was the first Principal of St Margaret College. In 2009 he was appointed Director for Quality Assurance and later Director for Curriculum Management for compulsory education. In these roles he set up the school external review system, the mentoring system for newly qualified teachers, and the first national literacy strategy. In 2013 Sandro was appointed as the first Head of Quality Assurance at the National Commission for Further and Higher Education; in this role he set up the QA system and authored the National QA Framework for the sector. He also co-ordinated the first three external quality audits (EQAs) and participated in the EQAs of the University of Malta and MCAST. Since November 2015 Sandro is Senior Executive at the QA Unit of the University of Malta. In 2017 he has awarded an educational doctorate from the UCL Institute of Education, London, with a focus on quality assurance in higher education.

### Peer Reviewer:

**Dr. Mary Muscat**

I'm currently a full-time lecturer with University and a part-time child advocate at the Family Courts. I'm posted at the Faculty of Laws, Civil Law Department, and I'm coordinating the practicum of the Masters in Advocacy (M.Adv). My task is to prepare 5th year law students for their legal practice and eventually sitting for their warrant exam. I frequently lecture at the Academy of Disciplined Forces, formerly known as the Police Academy, mostly in criminal law, police law and policing subjects to police recruits, prison guards, and Frontex borderguards. I am also the Malta Police's Science and Research Correspondent within CEPOL, the EU Agency for Law

Enforcement Training. I work closely with the police and OSCE in developing a training programme that sensitizes police officers with regards to identifying and tackling hate crime. I'm also currently involved in developing a set of textbooks for police officers and prison guard training.  Before becoming an academic, I was a Police Inspector for 13 years, hence my current specialisation in training related to law enforcement. I hold degrees in criminology, law, canon law, geography, history and environmental management. My PhD research focuses on the role of the 'green' court in ensuring environmental governance.

## Student Peer Reviewer:

**Mr. Christian Sammut**

Christian Sammut is Senior Systems Administrator working within the Ministry of Education and Employment in the Government of Malta.  He has a broad experience in technical support and project management.  His recent activities include analysing, evaluating and managing IT projects within the Ministry. Christian, holds a Diploma in Industrial Electronics and Computer Engineering, BTEC Diploma in Computer and Information Systems and a Higher National Diploma in Computing and Systems Development.  He is currently reading a BSc Hons in Information Technology.  Moreover, Christian has successfully achieved several IT related certifications such as MCSA (Microsoft Certified System Administrator), CompTIA Network +, APMG ITIL Foundation, ISTQB-ISEB Certified Tester Foundation and much more.  He has always been very dedicated and hardworking in his work.