Implementation of Quality Assurance
IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING (VET) INSTITUTIONS

A MANUAL FOR VET PROVIDERS
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- National Centre for TVET Development (CNDIPT) Bucharest, Romania  
  www.tvet.ro
- Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione dei Lavoratori (ISFOL) Rome, Italy  
  www.isfol.it
- Youth and LifeLong Learning Foundation, Athens, Greece  
  www.inedivim.gr
- Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), Malta  
  www.mcast.edu.mt
- Institution of Tourism Studies (ITS), Malta  
  www.its.edu.mt
- Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), Malta  
  www.etc.gov.mt
- Clear Dimension Ltd. (CDL), Malta  
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**Project Partners**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>CDL</td>
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<td>Continuous Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<td>EQAVET</td>
<td>European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<td>Employment and Training Corporation</td>
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<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<td>ITS</td>
<td>Institution of Tourism Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>IVET</td>
<td>Initial Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<td>MCAST</td>
<td>Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology</td>
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<td>Malta Environment and Planning Authority</td>
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<td>NCFHE</td>
<td>National Commission for Further and Higher Education</td>
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<td>QA</td>
<td>Quality Assurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
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If you are reading this document, you are probably a person working within a VET institution and either responsible for implementing quality assurance procedures, or else have been asked to be part of new quality assurance procedures within your institution. Whether VET institutions like it or not, times have changed from the traditional approach where nobody questioned the integrity of the ‘masters of the trade’. Nowadays, with the need for workers to present their qualifications to a wide range of employers nationally, as well as trans-nationally within Europe and also beyond, it has become essential that any learning which takes place, even in the smallest of institutions, is of quality and assures the learner and the employer, that the competences intended to be developed are actually learnt.

This document was drawn up as a working document – a guideline - with the intention of taking you through the process of reviewing your current quality assurance system. It will accompany you through the process of implementing checks and procedures within your system which are needed to provide evidence that the vocational education and training that your institution provides is of quality. This evidence is first and foremost of interest to you as you can ensure that you are providing good quality service, but it is also very important to the learners; to employers who eventually employ those who graduate from the courses your institution provides; as well as to the national and European labour markets who can only be competitive if they can offer the service of high quality skilled workers. The stakes are high and this is what has placed quality assurance in VET high also on the European Agenda.

The Manual will provide you and other end users with examples of good practice on how quality indicators can be used in the quality cycle systematically. It will not prescribe one system to be adopted by all. It will not set the criteria for accreditation required by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE). These will be decided and formalised at a later stage as part of the licensing and accreditation process of VET institutions, but which will in any case be inspired by the European indicators and adapted to our local context. This Manual also highlights the importance of quality development to ensure continual improvement.

How is the Manual divided?

This Manual is divided in three main sections.

- **The first section** provides background information on quality assurance and related developments at both National and European level. It introduces the concept of EQAVET (European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training) which reflects standards developed at the European level;

- **The second section** introduces quality assurance indicators which have been agreed to be relevant for Malta by the EQAVET project partners. It describes how VET institutions can use these agreed indicators to carry out a stock-taking exercise of their existing quality assurance system. This is a first step towards implementing quality assurance;

- **The third section** is the most important part of this Manual. It describes the quality cycle and focuses on how the indicators can be used for both the implementation and development of your quality assurance system. It highlights the building blocks, the basis on which an effective quality assurance system can be implemented within a VET institution.

*This Manual is a GUIDELINE on how to implement Quality Assurance and is not prescriptive in any way.*
SECTION 1

BACKGROUND TO QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VET
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This section provides background information on Quality Assurance. A question-answer format is used to make it easier to read through in the first part of the Manual.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE MANUAL

This Manual is the outcome of the work done within the Leonardo Da Vinci project EQAVET Malta – Quality Assurance Tool for VET Providers funded by the European Commission within the Lifelong Learning Programme (75%) and co-funded by the Government of Malta (25%). The 24 month project aimed to develop a Quality Assurance tool to help vocational education and training institutions in Malta implement Quality Assurance systems which are compliant to National and European Standards. This Manual is the resulting ‘Quality Assurance Tool’ which each and every VET institution, whatever its size or factor, in Malta will be able to use.

The NCFHE, as the coordinator of the project, could only achieve this ‘Quality Tool’ with the support of four local VET institutions in Malta:

- **Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)** which is the umbrella structure in Malta housing most of the public provision of vocational education and training at post-secondary education level. MCAST currently houses ten institutes. Courses offered vary in the type of study, level of study, and in the amount of work experience offered. VET qualifications offered by MCAST vary from Level 1 to Level 6 on the Malta Qualifications Framework, some of which are home-grown courses while others are awarded by BTEC, ITEC, AAT and City & Guilds. As from 2009, MCAST also started to offer the first vocational degrees.

- **Institution of Tourism Studies (ITS)** provides educational programmes in the field of tourism. Full-time training courses offered range from foundation level to Level 5 on the Malta Qualifications Framework. The Institution of Tourism Studies also provides a range of evening part-time courses. These courses are usually organised as soon as there are adequate numbers of applicants.

- **Employment and Training Corporation (ETC)** is a training organisation offering a wide array of training courses for both unemployed and employed people who want to upgrade their skills. Courses currently offered include: language and numeracy skills; electrical subjects; welding; trade subjects; construction-related subjects; care work; health, safety and security; job search; and entrepreneurship skills. Furthermore, the Corporation runs a series of apprenticeships and traineeships, which are developed by the ETC and other VET institutions with employers, their associations or other professional bodies. It is to be pointed out that training offered by ETC is outsourced to private training providers.

- **Clear Dimension Ltd. (CDL)** is a private training provider set up to provide specialised IT training and consultancy services in Malta. Clear Dimension’s mission is to promote and facilitate the integration of accredited IT qualifications, as well as to provide the necessary services to fully support vocational education and training and further education
in specialised areas of IT directly or through joint venture partnerships. Clear Dimension partners with expertise from industry both to train and to keep updated with the latest technologies as well as to provide training to students entering the IT Market.

MCAST and ITS are mainly state Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) institutions, but both also offer VET courses as evening classes, supporting Continuous Vocational Education and Training (CVET). ETC is an example of CVET provision as is Clear Dimension in ICT.

The project was also supported by three European partner organisations that provided feedback on the work developed, as well as, provided international experience as inspiration and good examples to learn from. These partners included:

- **National Centre for TVET Development (CNDIPT)** Bucharest, Romania [www.tvet.ro](http://www.tvet.ro);
- **Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione dei Lavoratori (ISFOL)** Rome, Italy [www.isfol.it](http://www.isfol.it);
- **Youth and LifeLong Learning Foundation** Athens, Greece [www.inedivim.gr](http://www.inedivim.gr)

The valid contributions of the local and international partners have fed into the development of this tool. The local partners have shared their experiences and examples of good practice to be included in this Manual. The expertise of the international partners, together with the input by the external evaluator – Mr. Kim Faurschou, FACO, Denmark, has provided insights and valid advice from similar experiences across Europe.

### 1.2 BASIC ISSUES ABOUT QUALITY IN VET

This section tackles the most basic issues related to the importance of having and developing a quality assurance system in your institution. You need to be convinced of its value and benefits before you can work with your staff to ensure quality VET provision which meets European standards.

**What do we understand by Quality?**

One can find various definitions for quality provided by official and international organisations. For the purpose of this Manual two working definitions for quality are being used. These are given below:

**All characteristics of an entity that bear on its ability to satisfy stated and implied needs.**

Source: ISO 8402.

**Degree to which a set of inherent characteristics fulfils requirements.**


These two definitions indicate that quality is an aspect which refers to standards that are agreed to by a group and to which real practices are then compared to. In this case, the group can be the staff of one single VET institution, or those agreed by a group of VET institutions. It can also refer to the standards which regulators, such as NCFHE, can set to regulate VET. Quality is thus relative, a construction and a way of thinking. It is the players involved who decide on what aspects of quality to focus.

Such a definition also implies that standards may change. This means that the quest for quality is a continuous process where, in this case, VET institutions strive to keep on improving. Standards can thus change as higher quality levels are sought.

**Why is quality in VET important?**

**What is in it for me?**

Imagine that you intend to buy a new car. Many are those who take time to choose the car they would like. It is not just the design, colour and cost which are important, but probably, like many others you would want to know about the quality of its engine, how much fuel it consumes, how often you need to service it and many other aspects which ensure value for money. The same argument can be applied to learners who shop around for the best providers of education and training. Aspects which are considered in the case of education and training include:

- **Assuring Quality to learners:** As people look around for opportunities of either initial or continuous VET courses, they will ask similar questions such as: Do I really achieve all competences mentioned? How much will the training help me gain a better job? Do employers value this certification? etc. Systems which monitor quality can be used to assure current and prospective students that...
studying within your training institution will be a worthwhile exercise;

- **Satisfying key stakeholders:** Quality Assurance enables students to be engaged in meaningful learning. Employers will know that certified personnel have the competences stated in their certification. Other VET institutions would know what graduates from your VET institution have learnt and that they have achieved the standards that you strive for. National government will know the standard of quality of VET courses in its country. VET can also be appreciated across the European labour market as there is recognition of qualifications across all Europe.

- **Quality is an ongoing process:** It is to be kept in mind that implementing a quality assurance system is but a first step. It is the mechanism which ensures that you are providing quality training. It is also the tool which will allow you to improve your practice as it indicates your areas of weakness and problems which may arise, and thus you can take action and intervene to improve further. Therefore a quality assurance system itself also needs to be continually developed and improved as standards and targets for quality change.

**Why is quality assurance so important for my institution?**

- **Client Satisfaction:** As a VET provider you have a vested interest to ensure that you provide quality education and training and that learners, employers and the regulator are all satisfied with the level of competences reached by your graduates.

- **Need for Evidence/Documentation:** You may say that quality assurance has always been important to your institution and ask ‘so what is so different now?’ The difference is that now you need to provide evidence of quality. You also have to show the mechanisms your institution uses to immediately detect any shortcomings in your system;

- **Formal Mechanisms:** While before you only knew informally if your training courses were relevant to the labour market, now you need to have a formal mechanism to prove this. Success is measured by aspects such as completion rates, and you must collect, analyse and publish completion rates in your courses regularly, and to also show what action has been taken to counteract dropouts or people not turning up for courses. Likewise, if you need to show that you have quality teaching staff, besides their curriculum vitae, you have to show how your institution is investing in their professional development;

- **Commitment to Improvement:** Quality Assurance requires structures and mechanisms, and these are possibly also expensive. But if you really want to ensure that students get the best training possible, then you must commit yourself to quality assurance. This is a commitment not only to set up a QA system, but a commitment to quality development such that the quality system develops and improves together with the quality of the training;

- **Transparency in Processes:** An aspect of quality assurance is that of making sure that all the processes and mechanisms developed are transparent. This implies that different stakeholders are involved and that results and outcomes are made known internally and externally;

- **Promoting Mobility:** Quality assurance can facilitate the mobility of students both during their studies as well as when they graduate and are looking for opportunities of employment within the European labour market. If you can show that the training you provide is of quality, it would be much easier for other institutions to recognise periods of study within your institution, as well as the certification which you provide.

**But why is there so much emphasis on Quality Assurance?**

- **Recognition of Qualifications:** Europe has opened up opportunities for persons studying in one country to look for and find work in another country. Workers need to have their qualifications recognised across borders. This was one of the aims of the Lisbon Strategy in the year 2000, and is still relevant today in the EU2020 Strategy. The European Commission brought together representatives of the European Member States to work and develop transparent mechanisms to build trust between different education systems which make recognition of qualifications across different Member States possible. This would help European citizens to have their skills and
competences recognised across the whole of the European labour market, facilitating mobility of workers, and thus enhancing the competitiveness of the European market due to a larger potential pool of trained workers;

• **EQAVET**: European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) forms part of the ‘Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training’ published in 2009. This document formalised the agreed European Standards and then asked the EU Member States to implement the recommendation at national level;

• **The Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF)** is pegged to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The framework allows qualifications to be recognised and understood across all Europe. Quality Assurance in VET also supports recognition of qualifications and this is why there is so much emphasis about quality assurance.

**Why has the European Commission given so much attention to QA in VET?**

• **Copenhagen Process**: Quality Assurance forms part of the Copenhagen Process which started on the 30th November 2002 by the Ministers responsible for vocational education and training in the EU Member States, candidate countries, EFTA-EEA countries, the European Social Partners and the European Commission.

**Aims**: There was agreement on the priorities within VET and the need to develop strategies which facilitate mutual trust, transparency and recognition of competences and qualifications in order to increase mobility and facilitate access to lifelong learning. In the Copenhagen Declaration of 2002, it was agreed to strengthen the European dimension of VET by working to: improve transparency, information and guidance systems; recognise competences and qualifications - including non-formal and informal learning; and promote cooperation in quality assurance. Quality assurance formed the backbone of integration of VET across Europe. Mechanisms which ensure that all VET institutions across Europe provide quality education and training which respect standards set within the sector were developed. These common tools help the recognition of qualifications at the European level.

**How have the EU Member States worked together?**

• **Communiqués**: In the Copenhagen Process, the Ministers for Vocational Education and Training of the Member States met and set the Agenda for work to be done in VET through a Communiqué. The first communiqué was the Copenhagen Communiqué of 2002 and the most recent is the Bruges Communiqué of 2010;

• **European Commission support**: Work between the Member States then took place through the open method of coordination with every EU Member State nominating representatives on committees involved in developing tools to be eventually applied to the different contexts across Europe. The European secretariat supporting this work is known as EQAVET and can be accessed on: www.eqavet.eu

**Who is to benefit from implementing QA in VET?**

We have already made some reference to this. Students, employers, governments and Europe will benefit from quality assurance in VET. But your institution will benefit too, as it is the mechanism through which you can show that you provide good quality service and that what you are offering in your institution, even if not famous, can be of the same quality as large international institutions. Quality Assurance can help you attract more students, funds and better teachers, helping you grow both nationally and internationally.

### 1.3 DEVELOPMENTS AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

In its work towards a better Europe, Member States worked together to facilitate learner and worker mobility across Europe to provide more opportunities and thus improve the quality of life of European citizens. This section provides you with some background on the work which has been done at a European level to help you understand the aims behind the European Quality Assurance tools developed.
What were the main achievements of the Copenhagen Process in VET?
The Copenhagen process has helped to align European and national VET policies. It also gave VET a strong voice at the European level, and raised its profile in related policy areas. Most importantly, it has laid the foundation for the development of several common European instruments and principles:

- **The European Qualifications Framework (EQF):** This is a European Framework for classifying qualifications at European level and helps compare qualifications throughout Europe to support lifelong learning and educational and job mobility. Malta has already published its Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and its Referencing document which are used to compare qualifications obtained in Malta, as well as qualifications obtained elsewhere in the world.

- **European credit system for VET (ECVET):** This is a credit system which is being developed for VET and aims to help validate, recognise and accumulate work-related skills and knowledge acquired during a stay in another country or in different institutions. This tool facilitates mobility through comparability of studies across countries.

- **European Quality Assurance Framework for VET (EQAVET):** This is of most interest to this document. The Framework aims to help countries develop, improve, guide and assess the quality of their VET systems and develop quality management practices in a way which is harmonised across Europe.

- **Europass:** This is a portfolio of documents (Europass CV, Language Passport, Europass Mobility, Diploma Supplement and Certificate Supplement) which can be used to support mobility by enabling people to present qualifications and skills in a standard format understandable to employers across Europe.

- **Guidance and Counselling:** Strengthens the role of lifelong guidance in developing European policies for education, training and employment. The Recommendation on better integrating lifelong guidance of 2008 addresses four priority areas: career management skills; access to services; quality of guidance provision; and policy cooperation.

- **Identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning:** A document developed by Cedefop sets out common principles to encourage and guide development of high quality, trustworthy approaches and systems to identify and validate non-formal and informal learning. Malta intends to have a fully developed validation process soon.

### 1.4 MAIN EUROPEAN QA TOOLS

This section provides some background on the instruments which you will be required to implement in your institution.

**Which are the main European Tools for QA in VET?**
The main European Tool for Quality Assurance in VET is the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET). EQAVET helps Member States promote and monitor continuously their VET systems. The Framework is not prescriptive, but provides common principles, quality criteria, indicative descriptors and indicators which may help in assessing and improving the provision of VET.

The framework consists of a **Quality Assurance and improvement cycle** (planning, implementation, evaluation/ assessment and review/revision) based on a selection of indicators applicable to quality management at both VET-system and VET-provider levels.

The Quality Assurance methodology proposed and which you will need to implement is based on three main aspects:

- **quality cycle consisting of four phases** (planning, implementation, evaluation and review) described for VET providers/systems;

- **quality criteria and indicative descriptors for each phase** of the cycle to direct providers on how to implement the quality cycle; and

- **common indicators (quantitative and qualitative)** for assessing targets, methods, procedures and training results at both system and provider level.

What is of importance to you as a VET provider is the Quality Assurance cycle and the indicators which you will need to use to implement a quality assurance system within your institution.
It is to be kept in mind that EQAVET is a meta-framework (umbrella framework) and the application of other quality management systems like ISO and EFQM do not conflict with/contradict EQAVET.

What is this Quality Assurance and Improvement Cycle?

The QA cycle involves the following phases:

- **Planning**: Set up clear, appropriate and measurable goals and objectives in terms of policies, procedures, tasks and human resources.

- **Implementation**: Establish procedures to ensure the achievement of goals and objectives (e.g. development of partnerships, involvement of stakeholders, allocation of resources and organisation/operational procedures).

- **Evaluation**: Design mechanisms for the evaluation of achievements and outcomes by collecting and processing data in order to make informed assessments.

- **Review**: Develop procedures in order to achieve the targeted outcomes and/or new objectives. After processing feedback, key stakeholders conduct discussion and analysis in order to devise procedures for change.

You may have an official quality assurance system, but your processes may not have been formalised yet. What you need to do is thus to formalise the process in order to have the evidence that you are ensuring quality at every stage of the Quality Cycle.

One main common pitfall is that often institutions do not take action following a review. One word of advice, ensure that you feed the outcomes of your review back into your system.

Who is responsible for regulating VET in Malta?

The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) is responsible for licensing, accrediting, and quality assuring all further and higher institutions, among them VET institutions, in Malta. The recent **Legal Notice 296/2012** gives the NCFHE the legislative power to set the necessary standards and criteria which institutions need to fulfil in order to obtain their license as VET institutions, and to maintain their license. The implications of this legislation is that all providers providing further or higher education in or from Malta will require a licence issued by the Commission to operate in Malta. The legal notice also provides details on how quality assurance will be regulated through the setting up of a Quality Assurance Committee which will have the power to set Quality Assurance standards and criteria to regulate the licences.

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SECTION 2
STOCKTAKing YOUR CURRENT QUALITY SYSTEM AND MECHANISMS
STOCKTAKING YOUR CURRENT QUALITY SYSTEM AND MECHANISMS

This section will help you understand better those quality assurance processes which you already have within your institution. You do not need to start from scratch, but can build on already existing good practices. Even if you may think that you have never really done much about ensuring quality, you may still have relevant and valid processes in place.

2.1 QA INDICATORS RELEVANT TO THE QUALITY CYCLE

The indicators identified at European level to be used within the quality cycle are based on the ten quality assurance indicators developed as part of EQAVET. These indicators will provide a measure of the degree of quality within your institution. They will also serve within the quality cycle. It is thus important to note that the indicators have meaning mainly on how they are used within the quality cycle.

The indicators considered by the Maltese Project Partnership that may be relevant to Malta are the following:

1. **Investment in training of teachers and trainers.** This indicator refers to the share of teachers and trainers participating in further education and training and the amount of funds invested for such purpose. This indicator provides a measure of commitment of the institution to providing up-to-date training to its learners.

2. **Involvement of teachers and students in QA.** This indicator refers to the degree of involvement of both the students and the academic staff in the planning, development and decision-making related to Quality Assurance. This indicator also refers to the students’ and staff’s involvement in the development of mechanisms for the collection of feedback on the learning experience provided and the learning environment created.

3. **Participation rate in VET programmes.** This indicator refers to the percentage of annual student cohort starting formal IVET programmes at upper secondary level; and the percentage of active population (15-74 years old) entering CVET programmes.

4. **Completion rate in VET programmes.** This indicator refers to the percentage of students completing an IVET programme(s) and obtaining certifications, compared to those who started the programme(s); and the percentage completing (i.e. attaining a formal qualification) a CVET programme(s), compared to those starting the programme(s).

5. **Placement rate in VET programmes.** This indicator refers to what learners do after completing the VET course/s, and the rate of students who find work according to the training received.

6. **Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace.** This indicator refers to the extent to which the skills acquired through the VET course/s are being used in the workplace e.g. percentage of VET graduates working in relevant occupations within 12-36 months from completing the VET course. It can also be measured through the percentage of employers satisfied with the competences of their workers.

7. **Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market.** This indicator refers to
mechanisms used to update VET programmes to better address future labour market needs and to provide stakeholders with the most recent information on the future needs of the labour market.

8. **Schemes used to promote better access to VET**: This indicator refers to schemes used to promote better access to VET. Of particular interest are vulnerable groups. This indicator provides a measure of how much a VET institution is making efforts to help and support vulnerable groups to access VET.

9. **Self-Evaluation**: This indicator refers to periodic self-evaluation, as well as to the use of external evaluators. Periodic self-evaluation can involve a process of evaluation through which staff within a VET institution evaluate their provision of VET through a reflective exercise. External evaluators are experts from outside the institution who are invited to review either specific aspects of training, or else to review the quality assurance management system of the institution and give an independent opinion. Self-evaluation also includes mechanisms related to early warning signs about problems related to quality in provision.

10. **Transparency of QA System**: This indicator refers to the degree at which outcomes of a review are widely and publicly available and whether they are discussed with the relevant stakeholders.

11. **Trans-institutional Relations**: This indicator refers to cooperation initiatives with other VET providers and/or other relevant stakeholders, both local and foreign.

These indicators can help your institution measure the quality of its education and training. They themselves also need to be developed on time in order to also have quality development. This means that you will improve your quality assurance system as you improve your quality provision of training.

### 2.2 THE STOCK-TAKING TOOL

To know what indicators you already have in place within your VET institutions, you first need to carry out a stock-taking exercise of your current quality assurance system. The exercise should not be carried out by one single person but ideally it should be carried out by a committee of people from within the VET institutions, who can possibly bring different perspectives and insights to the process.

The project partners have developed the following template which you need to work through and ask yourself (or your group):

- What structures and processes do I/we have for each of the indicators identified?
- What evidence (policies/reports/studies/minutes of meetings etc.) do I/we have to show that the process is present and there is a documented trail of the work done.

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**Notes**

* Kindly specify: i) % of academic staff following further training; ii) list of courses followed and their MQF Levels.
** Information to be provided according to: i) age; ii) sex; iii) delayed transition; iv) nationality; v) region; vi) vulnerable groups
*** Information on a) persons completed courses b) persons who abandoned courses, to be provided for each chosen course according to:
   i) age; ii) sex; iii) delayed transition; iv) nationality; v) region; vi) vulnerable groups
**** Information to be provided for each chosen course according to:
   i) age; ii) sex; iii) delayed transition; iv) nationality; v) region; vi) vulnerable groups

**Definitions**

^^ Age: Defined as per year of birth.

^^^ Delayed Transition: Defined as students who enter further and higher education for the first time at a later stage in their lives (even after one year of completion of compulsory education).

^^^^ Nationality: Defined in terms of Maltese or foreign citizenship. Dual citizenship is to be considered as Maltese. It is important to include inward and outward exchange students, yet separate.


^^^^^^ Vulnerable Group: Defined as persons with disability / special needs, refugees, single parent families / students, low-income families / students, convicts.
Section 1
Question 1 (a) asks you to check if you have a policy statement committing to quality in education and to a quality assurance system in your institution. If your answer is yes, all you need to do is identify the official document, and check if it binds your institution to have a quality assurance structure. If you think that your document does not cover both aspects insert a comment in the comments section.

Question 1b asks whether your institution’s policy is based on the quality assurance cycle and on the use of quality indicators. This information would probably be found in a quality assurance policy for your institution.

Section 2
In section 2 you need to see how many of the indicators you already have in place. You do not need to have information about each and every sub-heading, but you need to have some information about each indicator, even if you realise that you have nothing related to it.

For each indicator you need to first indicate whether you have this aspect implemented in full, in part or not implemented at all. If you have any mechanisms, you need to describe them in the column ‘process description’. You also have to identify what evidence you have for what you are stating. In the last column you need to write what challenges you have experienced or think that you are likely to face in implementing this indicator.

So now, I invite you to read through each of the indicators and to try and fill in the template in the best and most truthful way possible. This is just for your own institution and it will help you understand what you have in place and what you will need to do in order to develop your quality assurance system to the required standards.

Indicator 1: Investment in training of teachers and trainers
Questions to ask yourself include:
• Do we have a policy/formal agreement on the professional development of staff?
• Does this policy/formal agreement expect staff to keep abreast with developments in their sector, in what way, and how much have we committed to invest annually?
• What evidence do we have to show this investment? Is there a specific vote allocated?
• Do we organise regular in-house training?
• Do we support further studies by staff?
• Do we have annual reports on the continuous professional development of the teaching staff in our institution?

Indicator 1 - Investment in training of teachers and trainers
Example: Investment in training of teachers and trainers at MCAST
MCAST are committed to investing in the professional development of their teaching staff and they do this by, amongst others, securing funds through projects and keeping good track of such funds. One such example is the European Social Fund (ESF) project involving the upgrading of MCAST’s lecturers’ pedagogical skills through the delivery of an in-house PGCE course at Level 7, as well as the investment in content knowledge through upgrading the qualification of other lecturers who pursued a Masters degree in their content area of teaching.

Indicator 1 - Investment in training of teachers and trainers
Example: Investment in training of teachers and trainers at ITS
ITS promotes the participation of its teaching staff in different forms of training. It achieves this by organizing various seminars, conferences as well as promoting voluntary enrolment by its staff in academic programmes at Masters level; ITS’s policy about subsidies for further training of its staff at the ratio of 60% by the Institution and 40% by the staff is a clear evidence of this. The percentage of funds invested per staff in 2011 was calculated. ITS recognizes the fact that the Institution should take greater advantage of government schemes and funding through participation in EU projects and from structural funds. So far, ITS, participates in ERASMUS and Leonardo exchanges.
**Indicator 2: Involvement of teachers and students in QA**

Questions to ask yourself include:

- To what degree is our teaching staff involved in the planning and design of the VET courses? How do we ensure that there is quality?
- Are current and past students consulted about the relevance of our VET courses?
- Do we obtain feedback about the learning experience provided from both the teaching staff and the students?
- What mechanisms do we use (e.g. evaluation questionnaire)? What do we do with such information? Do we have structures (committees etc.) which go through the outcomes of such a mechanism?
- How much documented evidence do we keep of the above process?

**Example: Student evaluation at CDL**

Clear Dimension is mainly focused on CVET provision in the IT sector. Most of the training which it provides involves short courses to workers. To ensure that the training which it provides is of quality, CDL uses an student evaluation form which it requests all students to fill in at the end of each course. This evaluation form involves asking students about different aspects of training, these include:

- Quality of the learning;
- Level of preparedness of tutors;
- Relevance of the content in the training;
- Pace of learning provided;
- Quality of the centre infrastructure; and
- Catering facilities available at the centre.

This tool provides CDL with insight into the quality of the training which they provide. It allows them to monitor all the individual courses from the students’ perspective.

**Indicator 3: Participation in VET programmes**

Questions to ask yourself include:

- Do we keep record of the number of students who apply for our courses annually, what gender distribution is there for the different courses?
- How is this information stored and how can we access it to use it in our quality assurance cycle?
- Do we keep track of the trends in type of students attracted to our VET courses?

**Example: Tracking of trends by ETC**

ETC have developed a form of reporting tool which enables it to keep track of the number of students enrolling in its training courses every month of the year. The screenshot provided below provides the trends obtained for courses across gender, state of employment as well as whether they are registering for work or otherwise.
**Indicator 4: Completion rate in VET programmes**

- Do we keep record of the rate of students who complete or drop out from our VET courses?
- Do we analyse this data? How can we access this data and how is it used in the quality assurance cycle?
- Do we have any report drawn up on such information?

**Indicators 3 - Participation in VET programmes; and Indicator 4 - Completion rate in VET programmes**

Example: MCAST’s online system for statistics

MCAST have invested in a system which enables them to input students’ data and to also obtain statistics on the student participation by course as well as by particular characteristics such as gender, age etc. This system enables the college to track the number of students who register for the course/s, and the number of students who actually complete the course.

The figure below provides a screenshot of the type of statistics that can be generated from this management system.

**Indicator 5: Placement rate in VET programmes**

- Do we keep track of our past students to see whether they have continued to study or whether they have found employment and where?
- If we carry out such tracer studies, how often do we do this and how is it carried out?
- How are these tracer study reports drawn up?

Example: ETC’s register/database

ETC as Malta’s Public Employment Agency, has a register of employed persons. Through this register/database, the Corporation carries out a tracer study every six months. Through this tracer study ETC is in a position to identify the number of trainees that managed to find employment six months after course completion.
Indicator 5: Placement rate in VET programmes

- Do we keep track of our past students to see whether they have continued to study or whether they have found employment and where?
- If we carry out such tracer studies, how often do we do this and how are they carried out?
- How are these tracer study reports drawn up?

Indicator 5: Placement rate in VET programmes
Example: Tracer Study to be carried out by MCAST

MCAST is planning to conduct a tracer study among its students. This pilot tracer study will be conducted in 2013 by the QA office in collaboration with the Information & Support Services unit. This tracer study will be conducted with students 12-36 months after their completion of studies.

Data which will be collected from the respondents will look at various aspects, among which it will include:
- **Demographical Information** such as age, gender, place of residence etc.
- **Occupational Information** which will collect information about the respondents’ employment, the sector, salary and other aspects;
- **Type of Contract** (Definite, Indefinite, FT or PT) that respondents have.
- **Satisfaction with and the Utilisation of skills at the workplace**: Respondents are to be asked about how prepared they were for the job responsibilities that they currently have.

Indicator 5 - Placement rate in VET programmes
Example: Tracer Studies at ITS

ITS conducts a tracer study among its students six months after graduation. The aim of this tracer study is to see if students are gainfully employed and whether they were taken up by the tourism sector for which they were trained or otherwise. The tracer study also gathers data on whether ITS’s past students are continuing their studies, and whether they are furthering their knowledge and experience in the tourism sector or in another sector.
**Indicator 6: Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace**

- What mechanisms do we use to check that the VET courses we are providing are relevant and useful in the labour market?
- Do we have committees with representatives of the labour market?
- Do we carry out periodic surveys? In what ways is this documented and how is the information fed back into our VET courses?
- How do we make sure that employers are satisfied with the training which we provide to our students?

**Example: Online employer satisfaction survey developed by MCAST**

MCAST have invested in developing an employer satisfaction online survey. Through this survey employers can provide feedback on their first-hand experience at employing MCAST graduates and on the graduates’ preparedness and competence to carry out the required jobs and tasks. Employers’ feedback enables MCAST to assess the degree to which its’ courses are meeting labour market needs.

The screenshot below illustrates part of the online survey which is used.
Indicator 7: Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market

- How do we identify the sectoral training needs in the labour market?
- Do we have committees with representatives from the labour market?
- Do we carry out periodic surveys?
- Do we hold regular meetings with employers?
- How is the above documented and used in the different stages of the quality cycle?

Example: CDL’s customer feedback form

Clear Dimension has developed a form which it distributes to employers when visiting its clients i.e. employers who send their workers to CDL for training. This form asks about training needs which employers have or believe that they may need in the near future. This mechanism has formalised what before was an informal approach.

Indicator 8: Schemes used to promote better access to VET

- How do we promote our courses?
- Have we used any form of external funding to make our courses accessible to certain disadvantaged groups?
- What are our main channels of information for prospective students?

Example: MCAST’s use of ESF funding to increase access to VET

MCAST has taken advantage of opportunities within European Social Fund (ESF) to implement projects which support the access to VET by particular vulnerable groups. Below are two examples of such projects:

- Linking Industrial Needs and Vocational Education & Training (VET) to Optimise Human Capital (ESF 2.85) - The overall objective of this project is to increase the number of persons trained with the aim of addressing emerging trends and developments in the labour market in Malta. Ten sectors for VET training were chosen namely: Pharmaceuticals and Chemicals; Financial Services; ICT; Furniture; Printing; Infrastructure; Food; Beverages; Maritime; and Plastics.
- Increasing Accessibility, Flexibility and Innovation to MCAST Lifelong Learning Course Offer (ESF 2.139) - The overall objective of this project is to focus on increasing the attractiveness of the lifelong learning course offer and introducing novel methods of training. It also focuses on the introduction of Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) and the electronic Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (eAPEL) at MCAST.
Indicator 9: Self-Evaluation

- Do we have a system of periodic evaluation of our VET courses?
- How is this periodic evaluation organised and carried out?
- To what degree do we include external evaluators and in what ways?
- How do we document the outcomes of an evaluation and how do we use the outcomes to improve our service?
- What mechanisms do we have to raise alarm when and if things are going wrong in a VET course and action needs to be taken immediately?

Indicator 9 - Self-Evaluation

Example: CDL’s evaluation sheet

CDL use evaluation sheets at the end of each training course. These sheets are filled in by students and they provide feedback on the quality of the learning experience throughout the duration of the course. In addition, this year, CDL have included additional questions which also probe into other aspects such as the provision of food during break-time. This allows evaluation of the learning process in a holistic way.

Indicator 9 - Self-evaluation

Example: ETC’s QA Personnel

Since ETC does not provide training itself but outsources it to private training institutions, it cannot provide direct quality assurance. However, ETC is still committed to Quality Assurance and has thus invested in QA personnel who are responsible to monitor the implementation of training by the successful tenderers.

The QA personnel at ETC are responsible for:
- Checking trainers’ eligibility;
- Carrying out monitoring visits and follow-up actions where applicable; and
- Carrying out desk-based checks to ensure the up-keeping of course documentation.

QA personnel thus provide ETC with a form of self-evaluation of the training that it outsources to training providers.

Indicator 10: Transparency of QA System

- How do we ensure that we are transparent in our procedures?
- Do we publish all the outcomes of the evaluation, or parts of it?
- Do we discuss the outcomes of reviews with relevant stakeholders, in what way and how is this documented?

Indicator 10 - Transparency of QA System

Example: Transparency of policies and procedures at MCAST

MCAST, in striving to increase the transparency of its system, has placed all its regulations, policies and procedures on the college’s website. This allows anybody interested in gaining information about MCAST’s workings to download the institution’s official policies and procedures.

These regulations, policies and procedures can be downloaded from the following website: www.mcast.edu.mt/about_rules.asp
**Indicator 11: Trans-institutional Relations**

- What type of collaboration and networking do we have with other similar VET institutions locally and abroad?
- Are there specific bilateral agreements?
- Do we participate in any form of mobility programme for our staff and for our students?
- How much do we invest in our national and international cooperation?
- What evidence do we have of such activity?

**Indicator 11 - Trans-institutional Relations**

**Example – CDL’s International Affiliations**

To further enhance the level of its’ trainers, CDL has sent two of its top trainers to Cisco Rome to qualify as Instructors for the train the trainer programme. CDL are now an official Instructor Training Centre (ITC).

CDL have also trained two CISCO trainers to teach in CISCO academies around Malta and are making sure that all CISCO instructors are trained to the right level.

If you have included information and details up to indicator 11, then you have managed to fill in the whole template. By now you should have two main sets of documents:

1. The template filled in with details. This is the outcome of the exercise just completed, and reading through it should provide you with an overview of your existing QA processes; and
2. A boxful of documents/evidence that you have as part of your QA management system. These documents can include policies, guidelines, regulations etc. Although it is not necessary to collect this documentation for the implementation of your QA system, it would be wise to start collecting and filing such documentation as it will be essential to present in an external quality assurance audit by NCFHE, once the standards and criteria for licensing and accreditation are officialised.

### Using the traffic light system

This exercise asks you to go through your template again and to rate the state of the particular indicator within your institution. An evaluation of the filled-in template provides a clear picture of your institution’s quality assurance system state of ‘readiness’ for the implementation of EQAVET. A traffic light system has been developed for this exercise.

You are to use the following scoreboard for assessing the state of each and every sub-indicator. The traffic light system consists of three levels. Each of these levels is colour coded as shown below.

#### Nothing or little is in place

- **RED** indicates that no or few mechanisms as yet are in place with respect to the sub-indicator. The organisation thus needs to build and develop new structures from scratch;
- **Amber** indicates that although the sub-indicator is currently not yet in force, there are

### 2.3 Evaluating the state of your QA mechanisms

The next step involves analysing how many QA aspects you already have in your institution. Now that you have your template filled in, you can obtain a snapshot of your current state of QA by taking stock of:

- what mechanisms you already have in place;
- what mechanisms need to be improved; and
- what mechanisms need to be introduced.
initiatives, even if to a small degree, which can be further developed and improved to fulfil the required indicator. The indicator still needs to be developed to ensure the full implementation;

- **GREEN** indicates that the sub-indicator is in full force at a level which is acceptable and that, if necessary, only a little degree of improvement is required.

### Example

**Indicator 1: Investment in training of teachers and trainers**

This institution recognises the need for its staff to keep abreast of developments in their sector and to participate in further training. This is reflected in its staff training department, responsible for providing opportunities of continuous professional development of the academic staff. The institution also supports academic staff by funding their further studies. It has also utilised European Social Funds for the further training of staff. Indicators 1c and 1d were assessed to be amber rather than green even though the institution has made efforts to invest in its staff, there is no official allocation of budget to this aspect and there is no official commitment that it will be sustained after the EU funding has ended.

The overall rating is thus green which highlights that the institution has this indicator already in a well-developed phase and there is only some work which still needs to be done to be able to state that this indicator is fully developed.

### Required Action

Official commitment of funds for professional development as part of policy and/or collective agreement.

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<th>No.</th>
<th>Quality indicator</th>
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<td>Investment in training of teachers and trainers</td>
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<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>Share of teachers and trainers participating in further training</td>
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<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Amount of funds invested (per staff capita)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1c</td>
<td>Policies which encourage academic staff to follow further training</td>
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<td>1d</td>
<td>Measures to ensure academic staff is abreast with developments in industry</td>
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Now consider each sub-indicator and assess it according to these three levels. Here below is one example from one institution related to Indicator 1.

Once you have done the exercise for all the indicators you can look at the state of your QA system and get a holistic impression of how much you need to do and how big/small the challenge for your institution is. If you have mainly green areas, you are currently in a good position and you only need to develop your current system a little further. However, you must also keep in mind that the quality assurance system needs itself to develop further, and this in itself means that you have to continually invest in developing your existing system. If you have large patches of red and amber, then you have much more work to do as it is not mere further development of an existing system. It is highly probable that you will need to invest in developing and implementing new systems. You will also need to invest in training your staff in using these new mechanisms and to be rigorous when inputting any data and following procedures implemented.

**Example 2: Whole template filled in for a VET institution**

The figure above gives the summary of the outcome of the stock-taking exercise across the different indicators for one particular VET institution. It can be noted that there are a number of indicators which need particular attention.

This institution needs to work on the following aspects:

- Indicator 3 which means that the data about students in its institutions needs to be collected in a better manner to allow trends analysis;
- Indicator 4 requires a mechanism to trace drop-outs from courses and find reasons for which this occurs;
- Indicator 5 shows that this institution does not yet invest in periodic tracer studies to see what students are doing once they graduate;
- Indicator 6 shows that there need to be formal methods through which the institution communicates with the key stakeholders and obtains feedback on the value of the training provided;
- Indicator 9 shows that this institution has ways of evaluation but this is not applied across all the courses and thus there is the need for further improvement; and
- Indicator 10 highlights that the institution needs to be more transparent and to find ways to share/make public the outcomes of the evaluation process within its institutions.
2.4 FRAMEWORK FACTORS BEYOND THE EDUCATIONAL INDICATORS

The indicators on which the stock-taking exercise has been carried out are mainly academic indicators. However, one must not forget that there are other aspects which also determine the quality of VET provision, and although not strictly academic in nature, still impinge on the quality of vocational educational and training. These indicators also need to be reviewed and are listed to include the following:

- **Building infrastructure:** It is important to ensure that your institution has the necessary physical building and space to house the students to whom training is being offered. While the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) regulates this aspect when issuing a building permit, it is also known that student numbers tend to drop or grow with time and one needs to monitor to what degree the institution can provide the necessary physical space to cater for them;

- **Resource infrastructure:** The building on itself is not enough. Different types of training in different sectors may require the need of specific resources such as laboratories, workshops, ICT labs etc. which are necessary in order to provide training of quality. In addition, students need other services such as libraries, canteen facilities, a recreational area, a study area etc.;

- **Administrative infrastructure:** A training course cannot be delivered well if the administrative infrastructure is lacking. Administrators are needed to collect data, organise logistics for the delivery of training, follow correspondence, consider staff and student requests etc. Part of quality training is dependent on an efficient administrative infrastructure. Thus you need to have adequate human and other resources to ensure that both students and teachers are provided with the appropriate administrative support;

- **Access to information:** for students and other players: Access to information, whether about courses available, timetables, email contacts of teaching staff etc., are all considered important as students need to know what is going on with respect to their training programme and need to be informed immediately about any changes made in order to keep the provision of training smooth and without any unnecessary disruptions;

- **System of Redress:** There needs to be a system where students can ask for a second opinion, or assessment when they do not agree with the outcome of an assessment or procedures which have been implemented by the institution. Such a system of redress allows learners to have a fairer and better quality service.

These aspects of a training institution do not formally form part of the academic programme but are support structures which can impinge on the quality of the training programme delivered. Any institution wanting to provide quality training needs to ensure that there are high standards also with respect to its support structures.

Having gone through the whole stock-taking exercise, now you have not only identified your institution’s strengths and weakness but have defined quality at your institution. You can now take decisions on how to move forward.
SECTION 3
IMPLEMENTING EQAVET
IMPLEMENTING EQAVET

Having read about quality assurance and carried out the stock-taking exercise, the next step involves aligning your QA system to EQAVET. However, first there needs to be a number of basic principles which you need to have instilled within your institution.

The six key principles on which to base your QA system
Work by the EQAVET team of experts and representatives from the different Member States have identified 6 principles (known as the 6 building blocks) which can enable you to achieve an effective quality assurance system which aims to ensure the quality of both the provision of education and training as well as to improve the quality assurance system itself. These 6 blocks are shown in the diagram below:

1. **Ensure there is a management culture which is committed to quality assurance**: If management do not believe and support quality assurance within the institution, it is not worth investing in mechanisms. The message needs to be loud and clear from those managing the VET institution that quality assurance is part of the institution’s culture of doing work and that this culture is promoted in all of the institution’s activities.

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**Example: Quality Assurance aspect in MCAST**

MCAST’s Board of Governors is committed to quality assurance and have consequently invested in setting up a unit specifically dedicated to quality assurance at management level. This unit establishes quality assurance systems which are then implemented in all of the different MCAST institutes. The organigram below shows the structure of the Quality Assurance unit at MCAST.

The diagram shows that MCAST has invested in a QA Director who is supported by a QA manager. They work together with other four Quality Assurance officers who focus on quality assurance systems. The unit also houses the section for investment in teacher continuous improvement. The structure also has a section dedicated to special projects. All the sections together work to develop and promote QA across all the 10 institutes within MCAST as well as in the Gozo campus.
2. Develop approaches which reflect the provider’s circumstances: Implementing EQAVET is meant to build on already existing structures within the VET institution. So when working on your quality assurance system first ask yourself if you can improve the processes which you already have, and only if this is not possible would you set up new structures.

Example: Implementation of QA at ETC
ETC has a system of outsourcing its training provision to private training providers. ETC however, still needs to have a quality assurance system which monitors training courses and which ensures that quality training is provided by these private institutions. ETC has thus set up a Training Programme Design and Quality Assurance Unit with the responsibility of supervising the provision of training. The responsibilities of this unit include the following:

- Identifying labour skills shortages such that training courses offered reflect needs within the labour market;
- Designing and updating of training programmes;
- Obtaining accreditation of training programmes such that those following the courses obtain certification for their learning; and
- Performing quality checks to ensure that the training provided reflects the organisation's quality standards.

ETC has thus tailored its Quality Assurance system to reflect its circumstances of outsourcing its training to private training providers.

3. Develop a culture of self-assessment: It is important to reflect and learn from one’s shortcomings. This is best done through a process of self-assessment which cuts across all the levels of training. Staff, both academic and non-academic, are encouraged to develop forms of assessing their work, either through an internal exercise of self-evaluation involving tools such as questionnaires with students, focus interviews/meetings with the different stakeholders etc. In addition, it is also healthy for institutions to look for independent opinions through external evaluators and/or other experts who can provide an unbiased opinion of the training provided. External evaluators can either be invited to provide feedback on specific content areas e.g. as external examiners but they can also act as external evaluators who look at the quality assurance system of the institution.

Example: Self-assessment at CDL
Although CDL is a small training institution, it still prides itself in providing quality education and training to its students. To promote this culture of self-assessment CDL has worked on the implementation of the following mechanisms:

- CDL has developed its procedures manual which describes black on white the institutions’ ways of working. This document is important for both the institution’s administration as well as to its students;
- CDL has developed a Quality Document where it commits itself to quality assurance and describes the systems it has developed to achieve this;
- CDL amended and included procedures related to quality indicators and worked on developing further its quality assurance indicators;
- CDL has developed and published its assessment guide for students;
- CDL has developed an instructors’ manual;
- CDL has developed its learners’ manual which will eventually also include a learner agreement;
- CDL has developed other documents like the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), certificate transcripts, and
- CDL has formalised its system of stakeholders’ feedback by linking it to the customer care form.
4. **Support staff training in relation to quality assurance:** Investing in training your staff about quality assurance can make a great difference. Such training can help your staff develop a quality culture, as well as be committed to quality assurance structures;

**Example: MCAST's investment in QA training for its staff**
MCAST has managed to invest in the training of its staff through various ways, for example, MCAST has secured an ESF Project (ESF 1.36) for investing in the training of its staff. This project involved internal training organised by the QA office in which lecturers received training on how to write effective learning outcomes, which are an essential element in a good internal quality assurance system.

5. **Use data and feedback to improve VET:** It is useless to collect data about the quality of the training that you provide and then do not use it for further development. When problems and issues arise from, for example, student feedback, training institutions must take action to rectify and to make sure that such issues do not repeat themselves. It is thus important that you make sure that you use any data about students, training and labour market needs into your quality assurance system and to then use it to ensure better planning, implementation, evaluation and review within your institution;

**Example: Canteen services provided by CDL**
In its student feedback questionnaire, CDL decided to also include questions about the quality and variety of food options that it provides. It transpired that whilst students were happy with the learning experience, they were less happy with the food options which they had during break; this was mainly because Clear Dimension did not offer any selection. Upon reviewing the students’ responses, Clear Dimension amended the situation and now students can choose what to eat during break from a list of options, an aspect which was not possible before.

In this case the issue raised was not really education, but it still reflects the institution's sensitivity to the needs of the students.

6. **Ensure VET is based on the involvement of external and internal stakeholders:** The optimal way to know what training best to offer, how to tailor courses to reflect labour needs, and how much employers value your trained students is through the involvement of the different stakeholders. Internal and external stakeholders include the teachers, the management, employers, the students, trade unions, sectoral representatives etc. Thus when setting up mechanisms as part of the programme planning, implementation, evaluation and review, make sure that there are representatives of the different internal and external players in each of the processes. This way you can ensure that the best decisions are taken.

These building blocks show you that you need to invest both in changing the culture within your institution to one which values quality assurance, as well as develop mechanisms which can help you to improve the education and training provided by your VET institution. If you really wish to implement an effective quality assurance system in your VET institution, always keep these six principles in mind when implementing any part of EQAVET.
The six building blocks in practice
There are three aspects which your quality assurance system, based on the six building blocks, needs to have if you want to be in line with EQAVET. These include:

A. Commitment to Quality Assurance:
You first need to have your VET institution commit officially to quality assurance. In practice, quality assurance should form part of your institution's ethos. Official commitment usually refers to an official declaration of this commitment such as a policy or a mission statement. You should also keep in mind that every institution will be in all probability required to show such documentation during an eventual external quality assurance audit by NCFHE.

B. Commitment to the quality cycle and the indicators:
The official commitment to quality assurance needs to be translated into actions and mechanisms through the quality cycle and indicators. Institutions need to develop official documentation, often in the form of policies, which state that the QA system is built on the quality cycle, and how the indicators feed into each phase of this quality cycle. Small institutions providing training in a limited number of sectors can have one framework, but larger institutions may have one central institutional document which is then translated and adapted to the individual sectoral training provided. VET institutions need to develop policies which describe the institution's ways of working and ensure that staff, (both teaching and management) within the institution follow the procedures in these policies.

C. Internal/External and ongoing/periodic processes:
The quality assurance system needs to have internal and external processes which are both ongoing and periodic. Ongoing and periodic procedures use indicators to ensure quality at every stage: planning; implementation; evaluation and review. Programmes of study need to be reviewed regularly and a periodic review of how the QA system has been implemented and its efficiency needs to be carried out as well.

A word about Learning Outcomes
Learning outcomes are the backbone on which any quality assurance system is to be based as they specify the result of the learning process and can be measured in relation to the targeted learning. Learning outcomes describe what a learner should know, understand and be able to do by the end of the course. As a consequence of this, learning outcomes determine the pedagogy which is to be applied during the training course. They also determine to a great degree the assessment process which is to be utilised in order to ensure that the learning outcomes have been achieved.

Learning outcomes are crucial to quality assurance as:
- **Learning outcomes provide a tangible description of the learning which is to be achieved**: Learning outcomes enable course designers to identify tangible learning achieved during training courses. When the different stakeholders get together in the process of planning course content and modes of training, learning outcomes facilitate understanding of what learning is to be achieved and thus to also evaluate the relevance of such learning;
- **Learning outcomes reflect pedagogies used during the learning process**: Learning outcomes do not only specify what type of learning is achieved, but often also include the context within which such learning can be demonstrated e.g. in a hairdressing course, a learning outcome can specify that a student will be able to blow dry hair in a salon. Such a learning outcome does not only imply that the learning process must involve practice in blow drying hair, but also that this must be carried out in a salon.
- **Learning outcomes make it easier for employers to review course content**: Since one of the characteristics of learning outcomes is that of providing a tangible outcome of the learning that has taken place, then it is easier for employers to assess the relevance and adequacy of the learning to the labour market needs;
- **Learning outcomes play a central role in self-evaluation**: When carrying out either internal or external evaluation, learning outcomes
Quality Assurance

become central to the process as the main question relates to the relevance of the learning, degree to which the learning outcomes have been achieved, how well the learning outcomes have been assessed, etc. This implies that evaluation revolves round learning outcomes.

- **Learning outcomes facilitate the assessment process**: Since learning outcomes describe the learning achieved in tangible forms, then assessment must measure whether these outcomes have really been achieved and that students can demonstrate that they are capable of performing the actions which are specified in the learning outcomes.

All these aspects highlight how the quality of learning outcomes drawn up impinges on all aspects of quality assurance. If there is investment in writing good quality learning outcomes, then mechanisms ensuring quality assurance are effective. If, however, learning outcomes are not well articulated, then it would be difficult to implement education and training courses effectively, and even more difficult to evaluate their adequacy to the labour market etc. All this would mean that the quality assurance mechanisms may not be that effective.

While more details about learning outcomes are referred to in the Maltese Referencing Report and in the ECVET manual also published by NCFHE, this note is intended to keep you aware of the important role that learning outcomes play in ensuring quality in VET.

**How am I to implement EQAVET in my institution?**

The flowchart below represents diagramatically the main steps which you need to go through to implement a Quality Assurance system based on EQAVET principles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Commitment to QA</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you have a policy/document which states your institution’s commitment to QA?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide what type of policy to have included &amp; develop policy document</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify where this is stated and keep document</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Commitment to QA Cycle &amp; indicators</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does your policy document base your QA system on the quality cycle and use of indicators?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work on developing mechanisms and procedures, and include in QA policy document. Sometimes there is need for a number of sub-policies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify where described, check need for further development or more policies, and take action where needed – keep policies for presentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Implementation of Procedures &amp; Mechanisms</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that procedures and mechanisms are implemented. In large institutions, documents describing adaptation to their sector may need to be drawn up.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Keep in mind that the above cannot be achieved without the involvement of all the staff in a VET institution. So invest in sharing with and involving everybody, teaching and non-teaching staff, within your VET institution. It is all the staff within the VET institution who will implement the changes. They will only do it if they are convinced of the value of quality assurance. Change also takes time to take place, so allow time for you and your colleagues to adjust, and eventually your VET institution will manage to implement a quality assurance system.

3.1 COMMITMENT TO QA

The first thing that you need to have is a policy statement which reflects your institution’s commitment to quality assurance. This means that if you do not have a quality assurance policy, then you need to draw one up based on your quality work and especially on how you define and achieve quality.

What should be included in the quality assurance policy?
The QA policy document does not need to be a long document. However, it must state the following with respect to QA:

1. It must state its commitment to quality assurance in ensuring that the VET institution provides training which is of high quality. If possible, this should be tied to the institution’s mission statement;
2. The QA policy should be committed to be in line with EQAVET standards, endorsing the use of the quality cycle (planning, implementation, evaluation and review) and the indicators.
3. Identify those who are responsible for the implementation of the QA system and who have the remit to develop the indicators and the responsibility to draw up any additional policies considered necessary.

This policy document then allows the VET institution to implement its QA system. Following is an example of one such policy as drawn up by MCAST. This is accompanied by other policy documents which have been developed to describe mechanisms and processes within the institution:

MCAST Mission Statement
To provide universally accessible vocational and professional education and training with an international dimension, responsive to the needs of the individual and the economy.

MCAST Quality Policy (DRAFT)
The College will fulfill its Mission by ensuring that all programmes are designed and validated with the involvement of industry/business in order to ensure that the stakeholders’ expectations are met and even exceeded when these programmes are being delivered.

The College aims to achieve this by committing to a structured Quality Management System that fulfils as a minimum the EQAVET requirements and facilitates continuous improvement.

MCAST shall subscribe to measurable and realistic objectives through the involvement of learners and trained staff on an ongoing basis.

Approved by
Mr Stephen Cachia, MCAST Principal and CEO
on XXXXXXXXXX

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35
3.2 DEVELOPING YOUR INDICATORS

Now that you have carried out the stock-taking exercise you know the state of your indicators – i.e. whether you have them, need to improve them or to build them from scratch. You also need to identify who or which department is responsible for measuring and assessing the indicator. The table below is the template where you can describe the process and source of evidence for each of your indicators. Refer to the descriptions and the examples provided in section 2 to help you develop your system. This template will help you map the work which you aim to achieve for your institution and what work you need to invest in to ensure implementation.

Do keep in mind that the list of indicators provided in this Manual are at this point mainly a suggestion and there is no specific official obligation to implement them all. However, you are invited to work through them in order to decide which quality assurance mechanisms are most adapted and important to your type of education provision. The situation may be different once NCFHE specifies the internal quality systems and mechanisms which it would like every VET institution to have. But again these may be the minimum requirements and you may still be free to implement more mechanisms than those required for licensing and accreditation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Quality Indicator</th>
<th>Process for gathering data</th>
<th>Person/ dept. responsible</th>
<th>Evidence produced for indicator</th>
<th>Where can this indicator be found</th>
<th>Work which needs to be done to implement this indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Investment in training of teachers and trainers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Involvement of teachers and students in QA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Participation in VET programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Completion rate in VET programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Placement rate in VET programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Schemes used to promote better access to VET</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Self-Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Transparency of QA System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Trans-institutional Relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 APPLYING THE INDICATORS TO THE QA CYCLE

Now that you have started understanding quality assurance better and have developed your indicators, you need to tackle the most important, and possibly, the most challenging part of implementing EQAVET. This is because you now have to map how these indicators are to be used within the quality cycle: planning, implementation, evaluation and review.

So which indicators are to be used for each phase, for what purpose and what type of evidence can I have? A detailed discussion and description of how the indicators can be used in each phase can be found on the online tool developed by the EQAVET secretariat: www.eqavet.eu Information from this website has been used for developing the methodology in this sub-section.

In order to facilitate the process and help you implement the QA system, we are going to tackle each phase separately and use tables to help map what indicators are used, for what purpose and what type of evidence is available. To help you understand, real examples from the different VET institutions involved in the project will be provided.

The figure above provides suggestions as to which indicators can be used in which part of the evaluation cycle. For example, investment in training of teachers is used at planning stage, enabling VET institutions to use their human capacity when designing and preparing logistics for the implementation of programmes. On the other hand, tracking participation rates helps in the implementation as VET institutions can quickly identify drop outs, obtain trends in the types of students attracted etc. Indicator 7, identifying labour market needs can be used in review stage as it provides an insight into how much the education and training provided prepares students for the labour market, as well as helps in the review of existing programmes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Investment in training of teachers and trainers; 2: Involvement of teachers and trainers in QA; 11: Trans-institutional Relations.</td>
<td>3: Participation in VET programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Completion rate in VET programmes; 5: Placement rate in VET programmes; 6: Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace; 9: Self-evaluation; 10: Transparency of QA system.</td>
<td>7: Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market; 8: Schemes to promote better access to VET; 9: Self-evaluation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The indicators listed in the latter figure are just suggestions. You are free to decide how to best use your indicators at each phase of the quality cycle. In fact, in the next section where you are to plot how you are going to use the indicators, all the indicators are listed so that you can choose to utilise any of the indicators which you feel helps most to improve the quality of provision of VET in your institution.

3.3.1 Stage 1 Planning
There are a number of indicators which you may use to help you with the planning of your courses and which ensure that you are planning quality training. The training needs to be relevant to the sector targeted and the learners must acquire those skills which are required by the sector. You must also have and keep evidence of how you ensured this quality training.

The EQAVET tool recommends that you use your indicators to consider the following aspects of planning. When deciding how to use your indicators, keep in mind that it would be worth showing that you are ensuring quality in the following aspects:

- How are European, national and regional VET policy goals/objectives reflected in the targets that you have set for your institution?
- How do you ensure there is clarity in the goals or objectives that you have set?
- How do you ensure that there is enough on-going consultation with relevant stakeholders to identify specific local/individual needs?
- Do you have persons responsible for each aspect of quality management and development?
- How is staff involved early in the planning of all aspects of VET provision?

The table below gives you the indicators which you can use and you have to indicate how you are going to use them and what evidence you can show. You do not need to use all the indicators in each phase. You may use some as you feel is best. What is important is that you make sure that you tackle all the aspects which were listed above. A few examples on how the table can be used are provided.

**Table: Mapping how you are using your indicators during planning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Process/mecanism</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Investment in training of teachers and trainers</td>
<td>e.g. to ensure quality adult educators</td>
<td>Inclusion of QA standards in tender documents for VET Providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Involvement of teachers and students in QA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Participation in VET programmes</td>
<td>e.g. to keep track of applicants</td>
<td>Forms include data on students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Completion rate in VET programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Placement rate in VET programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Schemes used to promote better access to VET</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Self-Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Transparency of QA System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Trans-institutional Relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you are at a loss on how to go about it, it would be best to see how others have done it. Here you can find two examples from two different institutions, on how they have gone about using the indicators at planning stage. The box gives a description of the processes used and the table of how in their case they would have filled in the table above. Please consider this as inspiration and not as how it should be done. Every institution has its needs and ways of working. It would be much easier to implement what you think works best for your institution.

Use of indicators at planning stage
Example: Quality assurance at ETC
Since ETC outsources its training provision, its QA system is different from that of institutions which provide training themselves. ETC has, however, developed ways through which to ensure QA for its externally provided training. ETC has ensured quality by:
- Including reference to quality assurance standards in its tender documents for training provision;
- Setting trainers’ minimum qualification requirements to ensure high quality education professionals; and
- Setting the trainees’ minimum eligibility criteria so that there is adequate choice of learners which increases the possibility of successful completion of training courses.

Use of indicators at planning stage
Example: MCAST’s database
MCAST has invested in a database which collects students’ data from which trends for the individual courses can be extracted. The screenshot below provides an example of the type of trends which can be obtained and which allows MCAST to trace any changes in participation in training according to different subgroups.
3.3.2 Stage 2 Implementation

This phase refers to the actual delivery of the training to students. It is important that the training which students receive, whether as IVET or CVET, is of quality. The following are the aspects to take into consideration:

- Are staff and other resources assigned effectively?
- How strong are the current forms of collaboration and how do they support the implementation plan?
- Do you have a strategic plan for staff competence development which specifies the need for training of teachers and trainers?
- How do you ensure that your staff receive regular training and work with external stakeholders to develop their knowledge, skills and competences in their field?

Table: Mapping how you are using your indicators during implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Investment in training of teachers and trainers</td>
<td>e.g. to ensure that teachers and trainers are qualified and with up-to-date knowledge of the sector</td>
<td>Recording of investment in training of teachers and trainers per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Involvement of teachers and students in QA</td>
<td>e.g. to regulate the assessments including assignments</td>
<td>Ensuring standards and transparency through the application of the policies on e.g. assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Participation in VET programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Completion rate in VET programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Placement rate in VET programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market</td>
<td>e.g. to identify new training needs in the labour market</td>
<td>Customer care forms which probe into the needs of employers who send their staff for training, are filled in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Schemes used to promote better access to VET</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Self-Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Transparency of QA System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Trans-institutional Relations</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Use of indicators at implementation phase**

**Example: Implementation phase at ETC involves**

In order to ensure that the education and training providers contracted by ETC are providing quality training, ETC has developed mechanisms for monitoring the entities to which training provision has been outsourced. This was achieved by designing a sampling methodology to monitor training. Through such a system, service providers are monitored by ETC’s QA personnel while they are delivering training.

QA personnel are, as part of the monitoring process, responsible for:
- Checking the trainers’ qualifications for eligibility;
- Carrying out monitoring visits to review training being provided and follow-up actions where trainers have been asked to review their approach, documentation etc.;
- Carrying out desk-based checks to ensure the up-keeping of course documentation. This ensures that ETC has its own database through which information about trends in learners’ preference for training, as well as drop out and completion rates can be recorded and worked out.

**Use of indicators at implementation phase**

**Example: MCAST’s database to record investment in teaching staff development**

MCAST is using an ICT tool which enables it to record the type of continuous professional development its staff is engaged in, as well as work out MCAST’s expenditure dedicated to teacher staff development. Teachers and trainers provide information on the course followed, the duration of the course of studies, its cost and the source of funding. The figure below shows the excel sheet which MCAST is using to track its investment in staff training.
Use of indicators at implementation phase
Example: ITS’s monitoring of placements
One aspect of training which forms part of students’ studies at ITS includes placements. These placements require that students work for a period of time within the Tourism and Hospitality sector. The quality of the learning experience during this placement is a major concern to ITS. In order to ensure quality in the implementation of training, ITS has set up a Placements Unit. The main role of this unit is to monitor administrative matters such as; learning agreements and contracts for students when they go for their six month international placement. However, this unit has extended its remit and every three months it now requires an evaluation of the students from the placements’ sponsor. This improves the quality of monitoring of students during their placement and it makes it easier for ITS to immediately identify situations which may be problematic during the placement experience and which would jeopardise the student and his/her training if such they are not resolved.

Use of indicators at implementation phase
Example: MCAST’s assessment procedures
In order to ensure that assessment of learning within MCAST reflects quality standards, MCAST has developed two policies related to assessment: one which states the processes and procedures for assignments, assessments and appeals; and the Students’ Grievance Policy with Procedures, which refers to the process through which students can seek redress. These policies are public and can be downloaded by students and all those interested from the institute’s website. Such a system ensures transparency as well as access to all students.

This approach makes sure that there is quality in the process through which assessment is made and that procedures for assessment across MCAST are standardised and followed by all teaching staff across the different college’s institutes.

See www.mcast.edu.mt/about_rules_policies.asp

Use of indicators at implementation phase
Example: CDL’s use of customer-care forms
Clear Dimension has developed a form which it distributes to employers when visiting its clients i.e. employers who send their workers to CDL for training. This form does not only probe the employers’ satisfaction with the training provided, but also asks about training needs which they have or believe that they may have in the near future. This form, together with information on the number of students enrolling for the various courses, allows CDL to identify existing training needs. Every quarter CDL management meets to review both the number of students enrolling to note any increase or decrease in trends, as well as review the responses which employers gave in their customer care forms. All this information is fed into the reviews process and used to improve current training courses or design new training. Such a system is very relevant for the ICT sector where there is fast development of technologies. Any new course offered by CDL has most probably been inspired from the evaluation reports of the entities' own learners.
3.3.3 Stage 3 Evaluation

If you want to be sure that you have designed and implemented high quality training, you need to evaluate the outcome of the training taking place. Evaluation can be carried out during and after the training has taken place and there are a number of aspects which have to be taken into consideration when carrying out the evaluation. When one consults the EQAVET online tool, the following aspects are highlighted:

- Is periodic evaluation (internal and external) within an agreed framework carried out and does it identify where improvements can be made?
- Does the evaluation and review take account of a full range of views including learners’ satisfaction and staff performance?
- Does it gather the views of both internal and external stakeholders?
- Do you have a system(s) to predict problems or issues?

Table: Mapping how you are using your indicators for evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Investment in training of teachers and trainers</td>
<td>e.g. to give a voice to students and collect their feedback</td>
<td>Online questionnaire fill in at the end of the course or mid-course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Involvement of teachers and students in QA</td>
<td>e.g. to ensure quality and transparent assessment processes</td>
<td>Development of assessment policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Participation in VET programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Completion rate in VET programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Placement rate in VET programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Schemes used to promote better access to VET</td>
<td>e.g. to ensure that educational standards within the sector are achieved</td>
<td>Engage external examiners as part of the assessment process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Self-Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Transparency of QA System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Trans-institutional Relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use of indicators at evaluation phase
Example: MCAST’s student questionnaire
MCAST is committed to obtaining the students’ opinion about the education and training which they receive. This is done mainly through the use of an online student questionnaire. In this process, students are invited to fill in evaluation forms at the end of training courses in order to give feedback about various issues such as the relevance of the learning content, the effectiveness of the trainer, the ease with which content and skills were achieved etc.

Below is a screen-shot of the main email which is sent to students inviting them to find some time to provide MCAST with the students’ perspectives with respect to the learning experience of the course or credit in question.

![MCAST General Feedback Form](image-url)
Use of indicators at evaluation phase

Example: ETC's evaluation process

ETC also feels the responsibility for checking on the quality of the training provided. Since it cannot impose QA mechanisms beyond a certain extent among the Education and Training providers to whom delivery of training courses is outsourced, ETC has developed its own methods to ensure that the providers deliver quality education and training.

First of all, ETC asks all learners to fill in an evaluation questionnaire at the end of every training course. Here below is a sample of the questionnaire used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trainee's Course Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ETC would like to have your feedback in relation to the training course that you just completed. We would appreciate if you could kindly take a few minutes to complete this evaluation sheet. This evaluation sheet has been designed to help us evaluate the quality and effectiveness of our courses. Your response will remain strictly confidential and will be used for feedback purposes only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of course: ____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of trainer: ____________________________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. COURSE OVERVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you rate?</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Was course relevant for you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Was course relevant for your employability?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Were course objectives made clear at the beginning of the course?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Were the course topics arranged in a good sequence that facilitated your learning experience?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Was the course well prepared and organized?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. TRAINING CONTENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you rate?</th>
<th>Extremely</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Level of theory and concepts given were appropriate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hours spent on practical sessions were appropriate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Level of difficulty of the subjects/topics was appropriate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Exercises given in class helped you understand better the concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Length of the course in relation to its objectives was appropriate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Length of the course in relation to your needs was appropriate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, ETC, mainly through its QA personnel, carries out an evaluation of the outsourced education and training provided. QA personnel:

- **Analyse the feedback reports drawn up by the QA personnel.** These reports are very important in that they provide information about teaching staff effectiveness within the classroom setting;
- **Adjust courses following feedback obtained (if possible).** ETC has the responsibility of changing the content and/or type of pedagogy used such that training courses reflect real labour market needs. ETC allows QA personnel to thus assess the relevance and delivery of the course content and to propose changes should the evaluation identify areas which need to be included;
**Introducing penalty clauses when training service providers fail to deliver or rectify identified issues.** ETC tends to take up a positive approach and tries to rectify any shortcomings by its training providers through discussion and positive feedback. However, should training providers fail to take action with respect to lack of quality in particular aspects of the training provided, ETC can take legal action and remove the particular provider from the list of approved training providers.

Use of indicators at evaluation phase

**Example: ITS’s assessment process**

Through the years ITS felt the need of making its assessment processes fairer and more transparent. It achieved this through:

- Developing a standard assessment policy for practical and theoretical subjects. This policy describes how assessment is carried out both during placements as well as in the case of subject content areas;
- Developing an examination policy for standardisation of exam papers in all levels in collaboration with staff consultation; and
- Introducing external assessors for practical assessments

### 3.3.4 Stage 4 Review

This phase involves that action which is taken following an evaluation exercise. Too many times an evaluation of a training course or an institution is carried out but no concrete action is taken to remedy any shortcomings. This phase, in a way is crucial as it is the mechanism which pushes the quality of provision forward.

The EQAVET online tool highlights the following aspects to be considered in deciding how to use the indicators.

- How is learners’ feedback on their individual learning experience and on the learning and teaching environment collected? How is this information, together with teachers’ feedback used to take further action?
- Are the outcomes of any review made public?
- Are reviews planned and how are they used to improve training provision?
- Are the outcomes of the reviews shared widely in order to have appropriate action plans to be put in place?
Example: MCAST’s periodic self-assessment at MCAST

MCAST is committed to quality training. This commitment calls for time to be dedicated to carry out a review of the provision of training. This review exercise includes different forms of evaluation tools:

- MCAST carries out programme audits that serve as an early warning system in cases where the training does not reflect the desired level of quality.
- MCAST has external evaluators for BTEC courses and also for MCAST degree courses. These external examiners ensure that MCAST achieves the standards which should be accomplished by any institution in delivering training in the same sector/s;
- MCAST has a system for the internal verification of assignments by MCAST staff i.e. the assessment of assignment briefs, actual assignment content and results given for assignments;
- These systems ensure, as well as provide evidence, that MCAST delivers VET at levels of quality comparable to other similar institutions locally and internationally.

Table: Mapping how you are using your indicators for review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Investment in training of teachers and trainers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Involvement of teachers and students in QA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Participation in VET programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Completion rate in VET programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Placement rate in VET programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market</td>
<td>e.g. to ensure that VET courses meet the demands of the labour market</td>
<td>Consultation meeting with stakeholders on a regular basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Schemes used to promote better access to VET</td>
<td>e.g. to review existing VET courses and to update them</td>
<td>Meetings with employers, staff and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Self-Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Transparency of QA System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Trans-institutional Relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use of indicators at review stage
Example: ETC’s review process
ETC feels the need to periodically review the training courses that it offers, even if the training is actually delivered by outsourced training providers. In order to carry out its periodic review, ETC is engaged in a number of different exercises:
- Analysing feedback obtained from students through the evaluation sheet which learners fill in at the end of a training course;
- Evaluating the trainers’ performance through the progress reports produced;
- Analysing the trainees’ assessment of the quality of learning through course evaluation sheets; as well as;
- Conducting qualitative studies with trainees and training service providers to obtain feedback on how to improve a course.

These exercises are carried out in order for ETC to be able to improve the quality of the training which it offers to its clients.

Use of indicators at review stage
Example: ITS’s review process
ITS also believes in the need to review the education and training courses which it offers. ITS’s review exercises involve a number of different mechanisms, including:
- Meetings with industry to evaluate the programmes of studies and to adjust these programmes to better address the needs of the labour market. These changes are recorded and implemented in the new Institution’s prospectus;
- Consultation with staff members to further develop the curriculum from one year to the other; and
- Meetings with students, mainly with regard to feedback on rules and regulations which concern them - these meetings enable ITS to obtain the students’ perspective with respect to quality assurance mechanisms that are being implemented.

MCAST, ITS, ETC and CDL have managed to provide quite a number of examples of QA mechanisms which they have developed within their VET institution. They have also highlighted how these indicators and processes are then fed into the quality cycle. However, even for them, the job is definitely not over!
CONCLUSION

If you have gone through the various QA steps and are now reading this section, you can consider that you have set the foundations for your quality assurance system. The system will start working once it becomes everyday practice within the VET institution. But do not rest on your laurels yet! This was but the first step in implementation. It is important to check that you do have all the necessary aspects of EQAVET implemented. Here is the last task which you will need to carry out to be sure that you have everything in place with respect to QA.

If you have answered yes to all the questions above, you can have a rest for the day. But as from the day after you have to start monitoring your own QA system and to refine it as training needs and demands change. Quality assurance mechanisms need to be improved in the same way that the teaching and training provision has to improve. This is known as quality development.

But having gone through the process once, it is then just a continuation of what you have started. If you would have achieved a culture for quality within your VET institution, then the QA system will be developed and updated by all those who use it every day!

Finally, always keep in mind that quality is crucial to ensuring the best type of education and training and that having a quality assurance system will eventually be for the benefit of all: the learners, employers, the VET institution itself, and eventually society which will reap the fruits of competent workers.

Table: Checklist for QA implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not fully</th>
<th>What system do you have?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you have a QA policy expressing commitment to QA?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have a number of indicators which you feel are important developed and in place?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do your policies describe procedures and systems used in the planning, implementation, evaluation and review stages?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ADDITIONAL READINGS AND LINKS

EQAVET European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training website including the training material which was developed to support European, national and regional organisations which are interested in using the EQAVET Recommendation to monitor and/or develop their quality assurance approaches.
www.eqavet.eu/gns/home.aspx

CEDEFOP European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training – supports development of European vocational education and training (VET) policies and contributes to their implementation.
www.cedefop.europa.eu/En/Index.aspx

Maltese Referencing Report referencing the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA)

Legal Notice 294 of 2012 Education Act (CAP. 327) Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning Regulations

Legal Notice 295 of 2012 Education Act (CAP. 327) Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Regulations


National Centre for TVET Development (CNDIPT) Bucharest, Romania
www.tvet.ro

Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione dei Lavoratori (ISFOL) Rome, Italy
www.isfol.it

Youth and LifeLong Learning Foundation, Athens, Greece
www.inedivim.gr

Malta College of Arts Science and Technology, Malta
www.mcast.edu.mt

Institution of Tourism Studies, Malta
www.its.edu.mt

Employment and Training Corporation
www.etc.gov.mt

Clear Dimension Ltd., Malta
www.cleardimension.net


Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning