

3. Introduction

"Quality, whilst not easy to define, is mainly a result of the interaction between teachers, students and the institutional learning environment. Quality assurance should ensure a learning environment in which the content of programmes, learning opportunities and facilities are fit for purpose. At the heart of all quality assurance activities are the twin purposes of accountability and enhancement. Taken together, these create trust in the higher education institution's performance. A successfully implemented quality assurance system will provide information to assure the higher education institution and the public of the quality of the higher education institution's activities (accountability) as well as provide advice and recommendations on how it might improve what it is doing (enhancement). Quality assurance and quality enhancement are thus inter-related. They can support the development of a quality culture that is embraced by all: from the students and academic staff to the institutional leadership and management." (European Standards and Guidelines, 2015: 7)

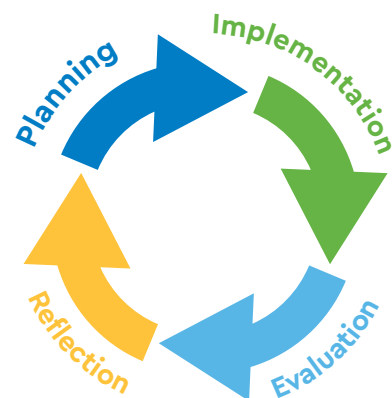
This document defines the principles, purposes and procedures that underpin the University of Malta's academic programme reviews and monitoring.

The following four principles for quality assurance (QA) in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015) are considered here:

1. Higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance;
2. QA responds to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programmes and students;
3. QA supports the development of a quality culture;
4. QA takes into account the needs and expectations of students, all other stakeholders and society.

The Periodic Programme Review (PPR) is an integral component of the University of Malta (UM)'s Internal QA. It is a rolling system of peer review, in which all academic programmes of UM are reviewed on a five-to-six-year cycle. This policy and procedures do not preclude the Rector from calling for review of an academic programme for other purposes not covered here.

Institutional responsibility and pride inspire us to evaluate our academic programmes. This will lead to critical reflection of the relevance, appropriateness and utility of what we teach in relation to academic progress, the changing needs of the local economy as well as the global context in which the University exists. QA also provides a platform for continuous enhancement through both internal and external stakeholders' feedback which in turn contributes to improvements in content, learning outcomes, means of delivery, as well as mode/s of assessment.



The University of Malta's PPR process draws on Malta's National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE, 2015) and adheres to Internal QA standards as well as the principle of "ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes to ensure objectives are met and respond to the needs of the students and society" (NCFHE, 2015). Underpinning the PPR process and a prerequisite for success is continuous enhancement as embodied by the quality cycle.

4. Aim

The aim of the PPR is to monitor the quality and standards of the provision of the University's educational programmes, qualifications and courses. It provides the basis for ongoing quality enhancement to assist in achieving excellence in learning, teaching and research at UM.

It is intended that PPRs are carried out in a spirit of open, collegial discussion through a developmental approach with the overarching aim of continuous enhancement. They are not auditing of past performance, but rather opportunities for transparent professional dialogue and meaningful reflection and to steer forward planning to ensure that our programmes are relevant, current and effective in providing a high-quality learning experience for our students and to equip them for success as graduates.

5. Objectives

The objectives of the PPR are to:

- Monitor the quality of the students' learning and teaching experience.
- Identify, encourage and disseminate good practices, identify challenges and how to address these.
- Provide an opportunity for Faculties, Institutes, Centres and Schools (FICS) to evaluate the effectiveness of their systems and procedures for monitoring and enhancing quality and standards.
- Encourage the development and enhancement of these systems, in the context of current and emerging provision.
- Provide a report with robust evidence to guide continuous enhancement.
- Address and inform the University's strategic planning process.
- Adhere to the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education in Malta as required by **Subsidiary Legislation 607.03** and the **European Standards and Guidelines** (2015).