

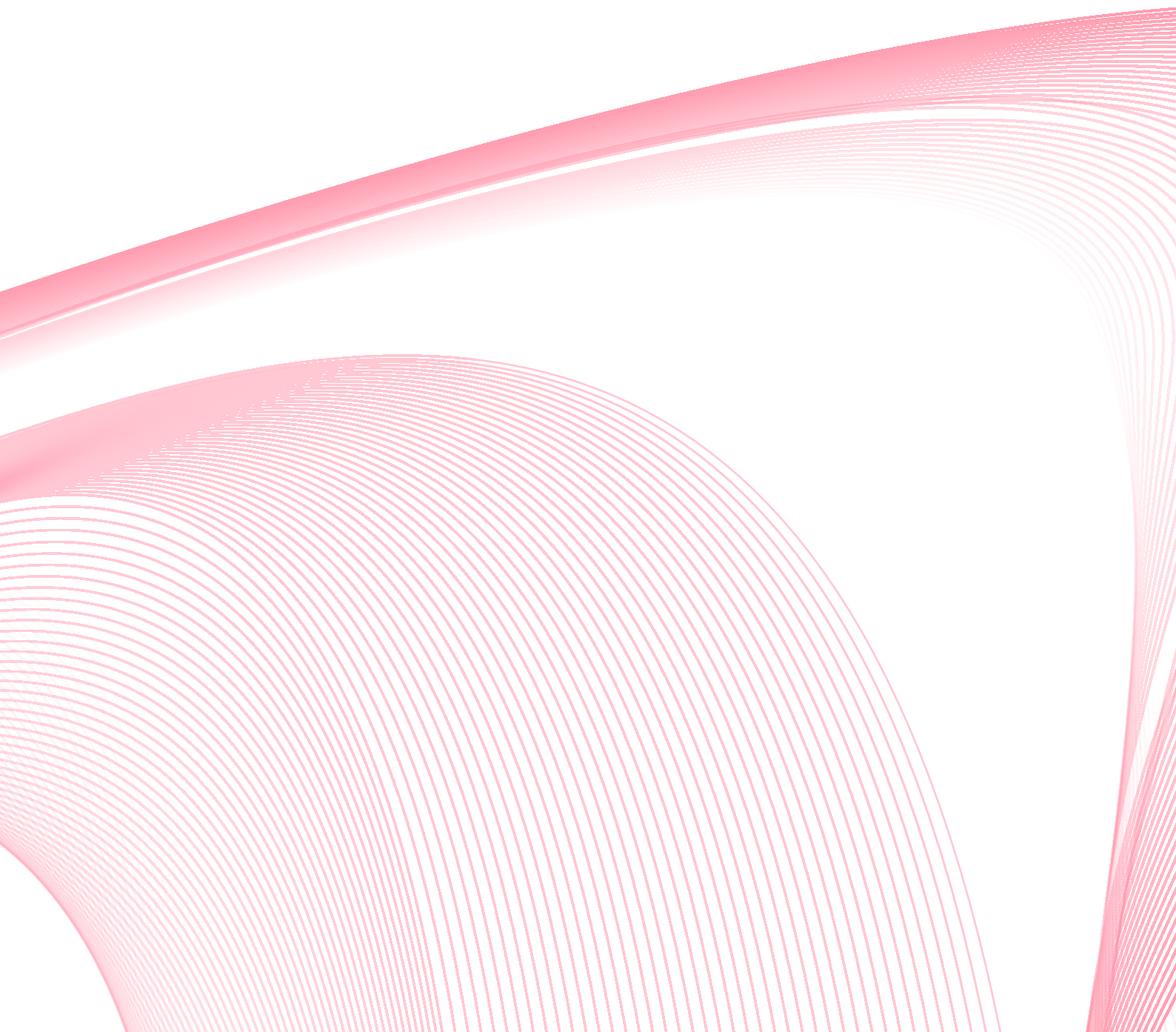


L-Università
ta' Malta

Quality Assurance
Committee

QAC Report

AUGUST 2024 - JULY 2025



FOREWORD BY THE PRO-RECTOR

It is with great satisfaction that I present this report as the Chairperson of the Quality Assurance Committee. This document stands as evidence of our collective commitment to excellence, continuous improvement, and transparency in all aspects of our academic, administrative, and operational endeavours.

During the period under review, the committee has undertaken a wide range of initiatives aimed at fulfilling its primary responsibility of planning, developing and implementing robust internal quality assurance processes as a self-accrediting university. Our goal has been not only to monitor whether we are meeting the standards that stakeholders expect, but also to identify opportunities to enhance our performance, to better serve our students, staff, and the wider community.

Several observations emerge from the findings. We have many strengths—areas in which our dedication, professionalism, and innovation are clearly evident. At the same time, there are challenges and gaps that require our attention: whether in aligning certain practices with emerging best practices, enhancing resource allocation, or refining internal feedback loops. The committee is encouraged by the willingness of all academic and administrative staff to engage in self-reflection, to embrace constructive criticism, and to collaborate in implementing recommended improvements.

Quality assurance is not a one-time exercise; it is an ongoing journey. The insights in this report are meant to guide us forward, to solidify good practices, to remedy weak points, and to adapt to evolving expectations. As Chairperson, I commend all those who contributed to this process: faculty, staff, administrators, students, and external partners. Everyone's input, honesty, and cooperation have made this report possible and meaningful and a testament that quality is a collective responsibility.

Looking ahead, I urge all members of our community to engage with the findings, to support the evolving plans, and to remain vigilant to the emerging landscape of higher education and institutional accountability. Let us collectively ensure that our institution not only meets the standards but sets benchmarks of quality for others to follow.

I am confident that, together, we will build on our successes, learn from our shortcomings, and continue advancing our mission with integrity, rigour, and vision.



Prof. Frank Bezzina

Pro-Rector International Development and Quality Assurance
Chair – Quality Assurance Committee

PREAMBLE

The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) is a committee set up by the Senate at its meeting of 11 May 2017. During the period under review, it was composed of the following members:

- Professor Frank Bezzina, in the Chair
- Dr Felicity Attard
- Ms Jo-Anne Attard
- Professor Nikolai J. Attard
- Professor Joel Azzopardi
- Dr Colin Borg
- Professor Ing. Victor Buttigieg
- Dr James Calleja
- Professor Isabel Stabile
- Dr Peter A. Xuereb
- Dr Jacqueline Vanhear
- Mr Andrea Cuschieri (Senate Student Representative)
- Mr Gerard William Zammit Young (Senate Student Representative)

The QAC met eleven times in the period under review.

Meeting 01	19 September 2024	Min. 001–028
Meeting 02	9 October 2024	Min. 029–046
Meeting 03	6 November 2024	Min. 047–086
Meeting 04	4 December 2024	Min. 087–113
Meeting 05	15 January 2025	Min. 114–139
Meeting 06	12 February 2025	Min. 140–171
Meeting 07	12 March 2025	Min. 172–192
Meeting 08	9 April 2025	Min. 193–212
Meeting 09	7 May 2025	Min. 213–231
Meeting 10	11 June 2025	Min. 232–255
Meeting 11	14 July 2025	Min. 256–269

Table 1: QAC meetings during academic year 2024/2025

This document is an overview of the work undertaken by, and under the auspices of, the QAC during this eighth year of its operations.

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List of Acronyms

A4QA	Academics for Quality Assurance
APQRU	Academic Programmes Quality & Resources Unit
APR	Annual Programme Review
CWUR	Center for World University Rankings
EQA	External Quality Assurance
EQAF	European Quality Assurance Forum
ESGAC	Erasmus Selection and Grant Allocation Committee
FICS	Faculties, Institutes, Centres and Schools
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information & Communication Technology
IQR	Internal Quality Review
ISR	Interdisciplinary Science Ranking
MCAO	Marketing, Communications & Alumni Office
MFHEA	Malta Further & Higher Education Authority
OPAD	Office for Professional Academic Development
PPR	Periodic Programme Review
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QAC	Quality Assurance Committee
QS	Quacquarelli Symonds (QS Rankings)
QSU	Quality Support Unit
S4QA	Students for Quality Assurance
SED	Self-Evaluation Document
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
THE	Times Higher Education
UCC	University College Cork
UCD	University College Dublin
UM	University of Malta
WUR	World University Ranking

UM's External Quality Assurance (EQA) Audit – Action Plan

Throughout the academic year, the Quality Support Unit (QSU) maintained regular engagement with all relevant entities involved in the implementation of the EQA audit action plan. This included a series of meetings with key offices and ongoing email correspondence to monitor progress and provide support as needed.

All updates are being systematically tracked in a master document, which is complemented by a comprehensive repository of supporting evidence. These records will form the basis for the follow-up review by the Malta Further & Higher Education Authority (MFHEA).

The QSU is pleased to report a constructive and collaborative approach across the institution. Notable progress has already been made in implementing several of the recommended actions, and it is expected that further developments will be reported by the time of the MFHEA's follow-up.

Key Recommendations		
KR1	UM should decide on a formula for workload calculation that is widely disseminated to all academic units.	Achieved
KR2	UM should implement a systematic mechanism for assessing students' workload across all academic units and consider students' workload in designing the programmes/courses.	Partially achieved
KR3	UM should introduce formal mechanisms that enable the involvement of graduates in the design of new study programmes.	Achieved
KR4	UM should ensure that students from all faculties and study programmes receive timely feedback after each assessment.	Achieved
KR5	UM should ensure the appropriate correlation between the volume of time required for students' involvement in the learning process and the number of ECTS credits for all study units.	Achieved
KR6	UM should develop an information platform that integrates all the University data: students, faculty, research, etc., and provides the possibility to generate immediate reports for strategic decision-making.	Achieved
KR7	UM should increase the number of the staff working at the Health and Wellness Centre to cope with the increased demands from students and staff.	Achieved
KR8	UM should provide extended hours for reading at the library or any other available and suitable rooms for students.	Achieved
KR9	UM should introduce feedback evaluation instruments specifically addressing the adequacy of infrastructure and administrative staff.	Partially achieved
Recommendations		
R1	UM could continue working on the mechanism to review and evaluate the effectiveness of its quality assurance system.	Achieved
R2	UM could increase and formalise the practical component within the curricula across all faculties.	Achieved
R3	UM could continue its efforts to train academic staff to complete the mapping of learning outcomes for each study programme.	Achieved
R4	UM could consider increasing the number of external experts for programme proposal review.	Not Applicable
R5	UM could identify solutions to convince students about the importance of their response to formal questionnaires.	Achieved
R6	UM could respect established appeals procedures to ensure a fair and reliable process.	Achieved
R7	UM could increase efforts to be an inclusive university by providing the necessary educational resources for those with special learning needs.	Achieved
R8	UM could increase student representation in the structures of the University.	Not Applicable

R9	UM could reduce its reliance on end of unit student feedback and instigate different forms of student evaluation that are reliable.	Partially achieved
R10	UM could ensure that part-time and sessional teaching staff receive appropriate support and resources to deliver high-quality teaching and that this could be closely monitored to ensure the integrity of the student experience.	Not achieved
R11	UM could continue to improve the learning resources and equipment across all academic units.	Partially achieved
R12	UM could consider increasing the number of green spaces for students.	Achieved
R13	UM could increase efforts to improve further its educational resources for students with special needs.	Achieved
R14	The feedback platform could be separated from SIMS to discourage the perception that the feedback forms are not anonymous.	Achieved
R15	An external site from the Msida Campus could also house data backups for better disaster recovery.	Achieved
R16	UM could conduct more campaigns abroad to attract international students.	Achieved
R17	UM could introduce more science communication campaigns to attract more STEM applicants.	Achieved
R18	UM should consider creating a central marketing budget which third parties can contribute to. Each FICS may access the resource equally.	Achieved

Table 2: Current status of the nine Key Recommendations and the eighteen Recommendations of the EQA audit report

Ongoing Monitoring and Review of Programmes

Periodic Programme Review (PPR)

FICS involved in the 2024/2025 cycle

Based on the **5–6-Year PPR Schedule**,¹ the PPR of programmes in nine Faculties, one Institute and two Centres were scheduled to take place during academic year 2024/2025:

- Faculty of Economics, Management & Accountancy
- Faculty of Education
- Faculty of Engineering
- Faculty of Health Sciences
- Faculty of ICT
- Faculty of Laws
- Faculty of Medicine & Surgery
- Faculty for Social Wellbeing
- Faculty of Theology
- Institute of Earth Systems
- Centre for Molecular Medicine & Biobanking
- Centre for Resilience & Socio-Emotional Health

Internal Quality Review (IQR) panels

Based on previous experience, this year it was agreed to limit the number of programmes to be reviewed by any one IQR panel to five at most. This was done to ensure that the IQR panel members do not feel overwhelmed with the number of programmes to be reviewed, and the respective documentation this entails. Limiting the number of programmes reviewed by a panel in turn makes the PPR exercise more thorough and meaningful.

This year's IQR panels were composed as follows:

Faculty of Economics, Management & Accountancy	
External Dean	Dr Stephen Lungaro Mifsud
External Director	Dr Moira Catania
QAC Member	Prof. Nikolai J. Attard
QSU Member	Dr Chaker Mhamdi
Student Member	Ms Amy Marie Calleja
Student Member	Mr Gerard William Zammit Young

¹ [um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/about/qualityassurance/PPRSchedule\(October2025\).pdf](https://um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/about/qualityassurance/PPRSchedule(October2025).pdf)

Faculty of Education	
Panel 1	
External Dean	Prof. Noellie Brockdorff
External Director	Dr Omar NShea
QAC Member	Dr Felicity Attard
QSU Member	Dr Jacqueline Vanhear
Student Member	Mr Daniel Calleja
Student Member	Ms Angela Debono
Panel 2	
External Dean	Dr Sandra Scicluna
External Director	Dr Ivan Riolo
QAC Member	Prof. Joel Azzopardi
QSU Member	Dr Jacqueline Vanhear
Student Member	Ms Maya Abela
Student Member	Ms Marion Bennet Neame
Faculty of Engineering	
External Dean	Prof. Ing. Carl James Debono
External Director	Dr Luke Fiorini
QAC Member	Ms Jo-Anne Attard
QSU Member	Dr Chaker Mhamdi
Student Member	Mr Alec Attard
Student Member	Ms Ruby Sciriha Camilleri
Faculty of Health Sciences	
External Dean	Chev. Prof. Marc Bonello
External Director	Prof. Sandro Caruana
QAC Member	Dr James Calleja
QSU Member	Dr Jacqueline Vanhear
Student Member	Mr Henry Onyedika Adibe
Student Member	Ms Emma Theuma
Faculty of ICT	
Panel 1	
External Dean	Prof. Colin Calleja
External Director	Dr Daniel Vella
QAC Member	Dr Felicity Attard
QSU Member	Dr Chaker Mhamdi
Student Member	Ms Julia Camilleri
Student Member	Ms Mariah Vella

Panel 2	
External Dean	Prof. Ing. Andrew Sammut
External Director	Prof. Stefano Moncada
QAC Member	Ms Jo-Anne Attard
QSU Member	Dr Chaker Mhamdi
Student Member	Mr Andrea Cuschieri
Student Member	Ms Elysia Farrugia

Faculty of Laws	
External Dean	Prof. Emanuel Said
External Director	Prof. David Mifsud
QAC Member	Prof. Isabel Stabile
QSU Member	Dr Jacqueline Vanhear
Student Member	Ms Darine Aboulez
Student Member	Mr Nico Schiavone

Faculty of Medicine & Surgery	
External Dean	Prof. Nikolai J. Attard
External Dean	Rev. Prof. Stefan Attard
QAC Member	Dr Peter A. Xuereb
QSU Member	Dr Jacqueline Vanhear
Student Member	Ms Andrija Gauci
Student Member	Ms Precious Adamma Ikeogu

Faculty for Social Wellbeing	
Panel 1	
External Dean	Prof. Emmanuel Sinagra
External Director	Prof. Odette Vassallo
QAC Member	Prof. Ing. Victor Buttigieg
QSU Member	Dr Chaker Mhamdi
Student Member	Mr Ahmed Dawood Al Mahrizi
Student Member	Mr Chidera Godstime Joseph
Panel 2	
External Dean	Prof. Ivan Mifsud
External Director	Prof. Norbert Bugeja
QAC Member	Prof. Joel Azzopardi
QSU Member	Dr Chaker Mhamdi
Student Member	Mr Danou Nauck
Student Member	Ms Nina Petkovic

Faculty of Theology²	
External Dean	Prof. Dominic Fenech
External Director	Prof. Philip Ciantar
QAC Member	Prof. Ing. Victor Buttigieg
QSU Member	Dr Chaker Mhamdi
Student Member	N/A
Student Member	N/A

Institute of Earth Systems	
External Director	Prof. Luciano Mule Stagno
External Director	Prof. Maria Attard
QAC Member	Prof. Isabel Stabile
QSU Member	Dr Chaker Mhamdi
Student Member	Mr Joseph Colombo
Student Member	Ms Rebecca Green

Centre for Molecular Medicine & Biobanking	
External Director	Prof. Dennis Mizzi
External Director	Prof. Charles Savona Ventura
QAC Member	Dr Peter A. Xuereb
QSU Member	Dr Chaker Mhamdi
Student Member	Ms Clarissa Attard
Student Member	Ms Denitsa Todorova

Centre for Resilience & Socio-Emotional Health	
External Director	Prof. Margaret Mangion
External Director	Dr Ċensu Caruana
QAC Member	Dr James Calleja
QSU Member	Dr Chaker Mhamdi
Student Member	Ms Claire Ellul
Student Member	Ms Genevieve Wight

Table 3: Composition of the IQR panels for academic year 2024/2025

² The two students who were originally assigned to form part of the IQR panel for the Faculty of Theology informed the QSU in the latter stages of the process that they were no longer in a position to continue their participation.

Programmes reviewed

A total of **50 programmes** have been reviewed during academic year 2024/2025, as outlined in the table below:

Faculties

Faculty of Economics, Management & Accountancy: 1 programme reviewed

- Master of Arts in Banking, Finance and Investments

Faculty of Education: 8 programmes reviewed

- Postgraduate Certificate in the Teaching of Ethics in Schools
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Adult Education, Training and Development
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and Care
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Facilitating Inclusive Education
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Home Economics
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Science for Education and Communication
- Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management
- Master of Arts in Open and Networked Higher Education

Faculty of Engineering: 2 programmes reviewed

- Certificate in Engineering Sciences
- Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Mechanical Engineering

Faculty of Health Sciences: 6 programmes reviewed

- Certificate for Graduates of Non-EU/EEA Nursing Programmes
- Preparatory Course & Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Nursing
- Master of Science in Health Systems Management and Leadership
- Master of Science in Mental Health Nursing
- Master of Science in Midwifery
- Master of Science in Patient Safety and Clinical Risk Management

Faculty of ICT: 10 programmes reviewed

- Certificate in ICT Foundation Studies
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computer Engineering
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computing Science
- Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (Honours) (Artificial Intelligence)
- Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (Honours) (Computing and Business)
- Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (Honours) (Software Development)
- Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence
- Master of Science in Data Science
- Master of Science in Computer Information Systems
- Master of Science in ICT (Microelectronics and Microsystems)

Faculty of Laws: 4 programmes reviewed

- Diploma in the Laws of Procedure
- Higher Diploma of Legal Procurator
- Master of Arts in Financial Services
- Master of Arts in Human Rights Law and Practice

Faculty of Medicine & Surgery: 4 programmes reviewed

- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Medical Sciences
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Pharmaceutical Technology
- Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences
 - » Cell Therapy and Tissue Banking
 - » Haematology
 - » Molecular Biology and Genetics
- Doctor of Medicine and Surgery

Faculty for Social Wellbeing: 7 programmes reviewed

- Certificate & Diploma in Community Access for Disabled People
- Diploma in Policing
- Higher Diploma in Psychology
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social Policy
- Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Social Work
- Master in Counselling
- Master of Arts in Community Action & Development

Faculty for Theology: 5 programmes reviewed

- Diploma in the Archival and Cultural Appreciation of Ecclesiastical Patrimony
- Postgraduate Diploma in Pastoral Psychology
- Master of Arts in Bioethics
- Master of Arts in Catholic School Leadership
- Master of Arts in Matrimonial Canon Law and Jurisprudence

Institutes

Institute of Earth Systems: 1 programme reviewed

- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Earth Systems

Centres

Centre for Molecular Medicine & Biobanking: 1 programme reviewed

- Master of Science in Bioinformatics

Centre for Resilience & Socio-Emotional Health: 1 programme reviewed

- Master of Arts in Transdisciplinary Childhood Studies

Table 4: Programmes reviewed as part of the 2024/2025 PPR cycle

Launch of Students for Quality Assurance (S4QA)

As part of ongoing efforts to increase student involvement in the PPR process, the QSU collaborated with the DegreePlus office to explore opportunities for formal recognition of student contributions. This collaboration resulted in the launch of the new DegreePlus study-unit DGP0010: *Students for Quality Assurance (S4QA)* which was officially promoted via **Newspoint**³ in November 2024 to coincide with the composition of the IQR panels.

The S4QA unit was designed with three key objectives in mind:

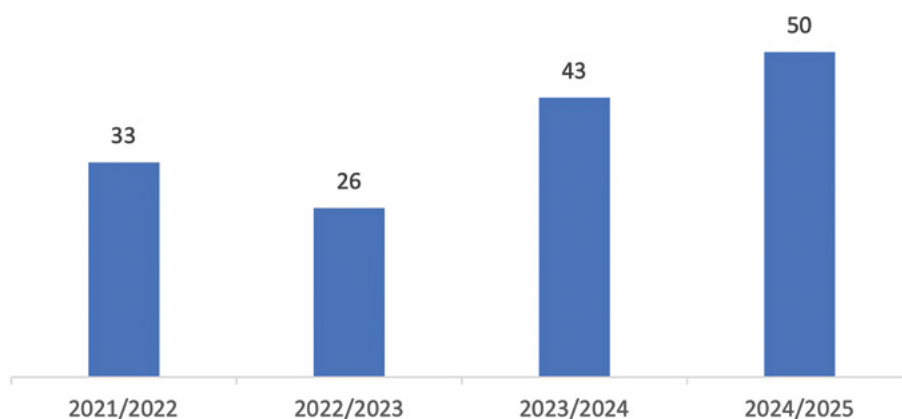
- To promote student feedback in programme evaluations;
- To develop skills in thinking critically about the students' voice at the university;
- To discuss and analyse findings from feedback, identify good practices and recommend improvements.

The initiative was highly successful, with all 30 student positions on this year's IQR panels filled. Furthermore, the establishment of S4QA has created a sustainable model for engaging students in quality assurance beyond the PPR cycle, supporting the development of a committed pool of student contributors.

S4QA is being implemented alongside its counterpart for academic staff, *Academics for Quality Assurance (A4QA)*. These parallel initiatives represent a concrete expression of the University of Malta's commitment to cultivating a participatory quality culture, integrating both student and staff perspectives in quality assurance processes.

QSU reflections following this PPR cycle

- a) **Number of programmes reviewed:** This year, a total of 50 programmes were reviewed – the highest number to date:



Graph 1: Number of programmes reviewed per academic year

Conducting such a large volume of reviews in a thorough and meaningful way required a substantial investment of time and effort from all parties involved, namely the QSU, the

³ um.edu.mt/newspoint/notices/um/2024/11/join-um-internal-quality-review-panels

IQR panel members and the staff of the respective FICS whose programmes were under review. This collective commitment ensured the integrity and value of the review process.

- b) **Initial meetings:** In alignment with the proposed updates outlined in last year's report, the QSU was pleased to observe that the changes implemented this year significantly enhanced the effectiveness of initial meetings. Key improvements included:
- **Use of internal checklist:** The introduction of an internal checklist proved highly effective in ensuring that all necessary information was covered and key decisions were made during the initial meeting. The checklist also contributed to a more consistent, structured and focused discussion.
 - **Early scheduling:** For the first time, all initial meetings were scheduled at the start of the academic year. This eliminated the distinction between reviews held in the first and second semesters and facilitated more consistent monitoring of progress across all PPRs. As a result, the QSU was better positioned to ensure that all reviews were concluded by year-end.
 - **Identification of external stakeholders:** FICS were asked to identify, early in the process, the external stakeholders they intended to invite to the Stakeholders' Meeting. This forward-looking approach proved effective in encouraging better planning and ensuring better engagement during the later stages of the process.
- c) **Self-Evaluation Documents (SEDs):** With each successive PPR cycle, the QSU has observed a continued improvement in the quality of SEDs submitted by FICS. While a small number still require further development, the majority of SEDs reflected thoughtful self-evaluation and, in some cases, included self-identified recommendations for improvement — a welcome sign of proactive engagement with the review process. The next step in strengthening the SED is to ensure greater consistency across FICS. This could be supported by establishing mechanisms to ensure discussion of the SED within Boards of Studies, thereby promoting shared understanding and coherence. In addition, endorsement by the FICS Board would provide an appropriate level of oversight, helping to assure the overall quality of SEDs presented by the different Boards of Studies.
- d) **Contribution of IQR panels:** The IQR panels continue to play a central role in the success of the PPR process. This year's record number of programme reviews necessitated broad participation across all panel roles, and the QSU is grateful for the commitment and professionalism demonstrated by all those involved. The peer-reviewed nature of the PPR process ensures that evaluations are informed by disciplinary expertise and external perspectives, thereby strengthening objectivity, transparency, and academic rigour. Importantly, the panels not only support the enhancement of learning, teaching, and curriculum design, but also contribute to the further expansion and dissemination of a quality culture across the institution. By fostering constructive dialogue and sharing sector-wide good practice, the panels embed a shared commitment to continuous improvement that extends beyond programme reviews.

- **External Deans/Directors:** Given the volume of reviews conducted this year and for fair distribution, nearly all Deans and Directors were called upon to participate on IQR panels. Their involvement brought significant added value to the process, particularly through their external perspectives and academic leadership. In a few cases for this year, conflicts of interest were identified, and the QSU promptly reassigned the affected individuals to alternative panels.
 - **QAC/QSU Members:** Either Dr Jacqueline Vanhear or Dr Chaker Mhamdi served as QAC/QSU representatives on every IQR panel, alongside another QAC member, as detailed in Table 3. These members provided consistent support and guidance throughout the PPR process and were instrumental in ensuring the continuity and integrity of the reviews. Sincere thanks are extended to all QAC and QSU members for their valuable and sustained contributions during this year's review cycle.
 - **Student Members:** Student representatives on the IQR panels made meaningful contributions, particularly by leading student feedback sessions and submitting evaluative reports. In some cases, the impact of their involvement was limited by low student turnout at these sessions — a challenge beyond the student members' control. Of the 30 student panel members engaged this year, 27 met the requirements to receive the DegreePlus certification, recognising their active participation and timely submission of reports. Three students, having disengaged from the process for personal reasons, did not qualify for the award.
- e) **Collecting student feedback:** Gathering feedback from current students enrolled in programmes under review continues to present a significant challenge. In accordance with the approach adopted for this academic year, the QSU obtained student contact details from FICS' administrative offices, which were then supplemented by a random sample provided by the SIMS Office. Additionally, where relevant, student societies were contacted and asked to support outreach efforts by encouraging student participation in feedback sessions.

Despite these combined efforts, overall attendance at the student feedback sessions remained disappointingly low. In a number of cases, no students attended, while in others, participation was limited to one or two individuals. This persistent issue highlights the need to further explore alternative strategies for engaging students more effectively in the review process.

To address this persistent issue, the QSU is actively considering several strategies aimed at improving student engagement:

- **Increased FICS involvement:** In the case of the Faculty of Engineering, programme coordinators played a proactive role by personally identifying students and encouraging them to attend the session. This resulted in a confirmed list of attendees prior to the meeting, enabling smoother coordination. If adopted more widely, this model of increased FICS involvement might lead to improved student turnout across the board.

- **Shifting meetings online:** While student feedback sessions are currently held in person by default, hybrid formats were used on occasion to accommodate students preferring to join virtually. Moving to an online format could help reduce barriers to participation, particularly for students deterred by the requirement to attend in person. Additionally, this would eliminate the need to secure physical venues—often a logistical challenge given the unpredictable turnout.
- **Use of online questionnaires:** In one instance this year, due to very low attendance at a feedback session, the QSU opted to circulate a brief online questionnaire as an alternative means of gathering student input. While this approach provided a flexible and accessible option for students, it also presented challenges. The response rate to the questionnaire was limited, making it difficult to capture a representative range of views. This highlighted that even when digital tools are employed, encouraging students to actively engage and provide meaningful feedback remains a persistent challenge.

The QSU will continue to explore and refine these approaches with a view to ensuring that student voices are more effectively integrated into the review process.

- f) **Logistics of Stakeholders' Meetings:** In line with the proposal outlined in last year's report, the responsibility for the logistical organisation of the Stakeholders' Meetings was once again delegated to the respective FICS. This shift allowed FICS to take greater ownership of the process and exert more control over the planning and execution of these important meetings. Overall, this approach proved effective in reinforcing FICS' engagement with the review process and promoting a stronger sense of accountability in the coordination of stakeholder input — a key component of the PPR cycle.
- g) **Follow-up on the implementation of PPR action plans:** To support ongoing quality enhancement, the QSU has established a structured system for tracking and following up on the implementation of PPR action plans. Once a PPR report has been presented to and approved by the Senate, the respective FICS is notified via email that a progress update will be requested one year from the date of Senate approval. As a reminder, a follow-up email is sent six months after approval, prompting FICS to begin preparing for the forthcoming progress report. This system ensures continued accountability and facilitates the timely implementation of the agreed actions arising from the review process.

Way Forward

As part of the quality cycle, the QAC is committed to regularly evaluating the PPR process to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. Starting with the programmes reviewed during the academic year 2024/2025, the QAC will introduce a structured feedback mechanism by disseminating a questionnaire to academic staff who have participated in and contributed to a PPR. This initiative will enable the collection of valuable insights on each phase of this comprehensive review process, ensuring that the experience and perspectives of staff directly inform future enhancements. The systematic gathering and analysis of feedback will not only support continuous improvement of the PPR but will also strengthen the University of Malta's Internal Quality Assurance framework. By embedding reflective practice,

promoting evidence-based decision-making, and enhancing transparency, this measure contributes to sustaining academic standards, fostering staff engagement, and aligning the PPR with national and international quality expectations.

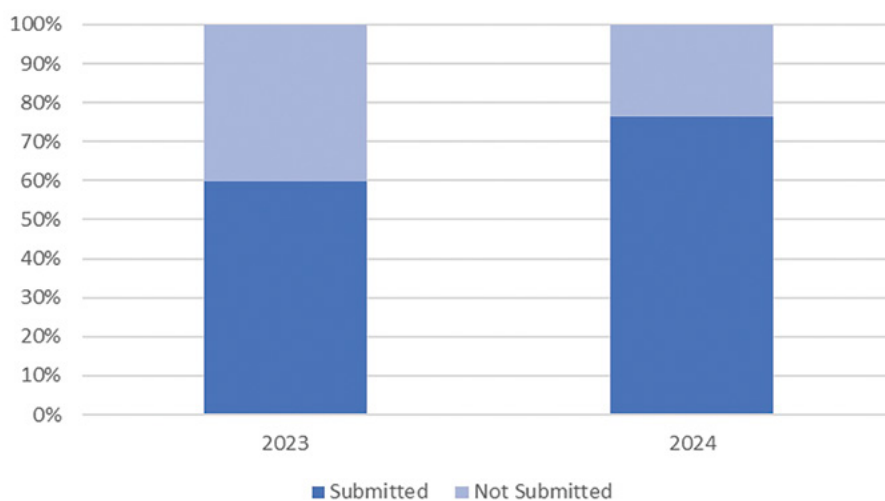
Annual Programme Review (APR)

The QSU continued to support FICS in conducting their Annual Programme Review (APR). This internal evaluation exercise is part of UM's Internal Quality Assurance Framework for the ongoing monitoring and review of programmes that include a taught component of at least 30 ECTS.

APR Submission Process

To streamline the submission process, the QSU in collaboration with Professor Joel Azzopardi (Associate Professor at the Faculty of ICT and member of the QAC) introduced the option to submit APRs via a dedicated digital platform. This system is expected to eventually replace the previously used Google Forms. However, for the academic year 2024/2025 both options were retained, allowing FICS to choose their preferred way of submission. A total of 35 APRs were submitted through the platform – an encouraging outcome given that submission via the platform was optional and was only made available after several FICS had already compiled their APRs in Word format. Full utilisation of the APR digital platform for both submission and review is expected to significantly enhance the archiving and reporting of APRs and to simplify the review task assignment process.

As for the academic year 2022/2023, the total number of submitted APRs for 2023/2024 was 124. However, the submission rate increased in 2024, as more APRs were expected compared to the previous year. The number of required submissions fluctuates annually, depending on the number of offered programmes and exemptions for programmes undergoing a PPR in the current or preceding academic year.



Graph 2: APR submission rate per academic year

Throughout the year, the QSU worked proactively to raise awareness and provide direct support to FICS in completing the APR in a meaningful and beneficial manner for both the programmes and their respective Boards of Studies. Compared to the 2023 cycle, there was a significant increase in engagement and cooperation from FICS, with many taking an active interest in the process.

The primary challenge remains the handling of unsubmitted APRs, particularly when FICS consistently fail to submit without valid justification. When major programme changes are proposed, the Academic Programmes Quality & Resources Unit (APQRU) now requests the most recent APR. In cases where it is not available, APQRU will coordinate with the QSU to determine an appropriate way forward. The QSU remains committed to supporting any FICS experiencing challenges with APR submissions. As part of this commitment, the QSU plans to engage with Deans or Directors of FICS that submitted 50% or fewer of their expected APRs, to discuss the difficulties encountered and identify possible collaborative solutions.

Academics for Quality Assurance (A4QA) and the APR Review Process

With the launch of the digital platform, the QSU conducted several trial review phases to test and refine the system before assigning the official 2024 APR review tasks to the A4QA reviewers. During each phase, feedback was collected through both email and focus group discussions. This feedback informed a number of updates, mainly focused on technical improvements, reviewer experience enhancements and improvement of the review outcomes in supporting FICS with quality enhancement. Parallely, the APR review rubric was revised and improved based on feedback from A4QA reviewers and internally from the QSU team.

Building on the foundations of the Periodic Programme Review (PPR), the APR adopts a **peer-review approach** that encourages reflection, collaboration, and shared responsibility among academic staff. The aim of this peer-review approach is to nurture professional dialogue around quality assurance practices, fostering reflection and enhancement rather than policing.

The participating reviewers were paired and designated as lead and second reviewer. Each reviewer completed an individual review, after which the lead reviewer—typically the more senior academic—compiled an aggregated report. The A4QA system streamlines this process by supporting reviewers in completing their individual reviews through a structured interface. For each indicator, reviewers select the most appropriate option via a radio button and may add comments where further clarification is required. Once the individual reviews are submitted, the system automatically generates a draft aggregate report that synthesises the input from both reviewers. This functionality reduces the effort and time typically needed by the lead reviewer to compile the report manually. This report will then be sent to the respective FICS. The report is intentionally designed to:

- encourage and support critical reflection;
- promote professional dialogue with a specific focus on enhancement;
- identify good practice for dissemination within the University and beyond.

In total, **70** A4QA academics expressed their interest to participate in the 2024 review cycle, following their interest and involvement in earlier trials. As the number of APRs exceeded the number of available reviewers, a selection key was used to randomly select APRs for review:

- At least one APR from each FICS was reviewed
- FICS offering a higher number of programmes had a proportionally larger number of APRs reviewed

Due to the additional time needed to incorporate feedback and implement technical updates, the launch and task assignments were slightly delayed, with final assignments issued towards the end of Semester 2. As a result, several academics requested deadline extensions, primarily due to responsibilities related to examinations. This issue is expected to be resolved in the future cycle, as the platform and processes have now been extensively tested and therefore the reviewing process will start earlier in the academic year. The QAC is committed to keep on receiving and analysing feedback to evaluate this process and analyse its impact on the continuous improvement of programmes.

Phase	Start Date	Description
Pilot	9 September 2024	14 identified academics participated in initial testing; feedback was collected during a session held on 25 October.
Trial	30 January 2025	All A4QA academics were invited. Pairs reviewed one 2023 APR to test the platform and review process. Two feedback sessions were held on 10 and 11 March.
APRs 2024 Review	12 May 2025	After incorporating trial feedback, each reviewer pair was assigned two APRs to review.

Table 5: Overview of the APRs review testing phases

Strengths identified during the first cycle of APR reviews

- The platform was found to be user-friendly by both reviewers and the QSU. It is intuitive to navigate and requires minimal training.
- The system streamlined the review process, reducing time and effort while enabling efficient tracking, documentation, and record-keeping.
- The integration of the rubric enhanced consistency and clarity in reviews and focused on reflective practice and enhancement.
- Discrepancies in some evaluations were resolved through dialogue and consensus, supported by effective coordination.
- Responsive and effective support was provided by the QSU and Professor Joel Azzopardi throughout the process. Feedback and requests for system or process improvements were

continuously collected and discussed between the QSU and Professor Azzopardi to ensure they are implemented in a timely manner ahead of the next review cycle.

- The QSU team proved to be pivotal as the first point of reference and concerns were addressed promptly.

Challenges encountered during the first cycle of APR reviews

- Some reviewers did not respect submission deadlines and a number of them failed to submit evaluations altogether despite reminders.
- Some reviewers did not consistently apply the provided rubric during individual reviews. This led to mismatches between the two reviewers' evaluations and the rubric's criteria.
- A few of the criteria in the rubric were either misunderstood, unclear or not fully aligned with the requirements of the APR template. This created room for subjectivity and potential misunderstanding among reviewers, leading to some inconsistencies in ratings.
- In some cases, lead reviewers did not complete aggregate reports using the 'generate template' function, or were inconsistent with other standard practices communicated ahead of review task assignments.
- In certain instances, aggregate reports were not created at all.
- Collaborative discussion between reviewers prior to the submission of aggregate reports, in cases where the reviewers' judgement differed, was inconsistent, despite repeated encouragement. While this was not the case in all APR review instances, a few lead reviewers were unable to obtain clarifications from second reviewers regarding their individual assessments.

Way Forward

After reviewing the APR process and carefully considering the feedback received, the QSU is planning for the following recommendations for improvement and growth:

- Refine and align certain criteria in the rubric with the APR template to ensure clarity and consistent expectations, thereby reducing ambiguity, subjectivity, and inconsistencies in reviewer ratings.
- Additional training and orientation may be necessary to ensure consistent and effective use of the platform and evaluation tools.

For the academic year 2025/2026, the QAC has proposed organising a seminar for academics involved in the A4QA initiative. The seminar will mainly serve to expand shared understanding and showcase examples of good practices at UM and to collect feedback on the University's internal quality assurance processes. Planning is currently in progress in collaboration with the Office for Professional Academic Development (OPAD).

The introduction of the A4QA and the APR review process has brought valuable benefits as well as notable challenges. On the positive side, the structured peer-review approach fosters collaboration, professional dialogue, and reflective practice among academics, shifting the focus from compliance to enhancement of quality assurance. The use of feedback loops—through trials, focus groups, and email—helped refine both the digital platform and the review rubric, leading to improvements in reviewer experience and the overall usefulness of

review outcomes. However, challenges emerged in the form of delays caused by technical refinements, time constraints during the academic calendar, and the limited capacity of reviewers relative to the number of APRs. These issues highlighted the importance of early planning and workload management, which are expected to improve in future cycles. Overall, the process has created a strong foundation for a culture of continuous improvement, while also underscoring the need for balancing quality assurance demands with academic responsibilities.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Introduction

Throughout the periodic programme reviews conducted during the academic year 2024/2025, a number of programmes implemented commendable practices that contribute significantly to the overall quality of academic programmes and that meaningfully impact the students' tertiary education experience. Nevertheless, a number of key areas for improvement have been identified to further enhance the quality of educational provision.

Good practices

1. Promotion of Practice-Based and Reflective Learning

- Students are provided with opportunities to engage in discussions that connect theoretical learning to real-world practice, enhancing critical thinking and reflective skills.
- Students are encouraged to critically reflect on how theoretical frameworks shape their understanding of key concepts within the local context, fostering both self-awareness and informed engagement with societal issues.

2. Strong Engagement with Industry and Stakeholders

Regular collaboration with industry partners and key stakeholders ensures that academic offerings remain responsive to evolving professional and societal needs.

3. Commitment to Inclusivity

Inclusive practices are actively implemented and embedded in teaching and learning, reflecting a strong commitment to equity and diversity.

4. Relevance to Contemporary Developments

Feedback from graduates and external partners highlights the continued relevance of academic provision to current developments in the field.

5. Use of Past Papers and In-Class Support

Working through past examination papers in class provides students with valuable practice and creates space for discussing challenges in a supportive environment.

6. Targeted Academic Support through Tutorials

Tutorials are used effectively to address common areas of difficulty identified in student work, contributing to more responsive and tailored academic support.

7. Supportive Learning Environment

An open-door approach to academic communication and the availability of facilities enhance student access to guidance and practical resources.

8. **Partnership in Learning**

Some programmes have a dedicated Student Curriculum Committee where annual student-led discussions take place, and where representatives from each cohort share ideas on course delivery, content, and any emerging concerns. Outcomes are then presented and discussed at Board of Studies level.

9. **Co-designing the Curriculum**

Some programmes include a slot in the timetable which is intentionally dedicated to allow students to discuss any identified gaps in their knowledge and skills so that it could be delivered through the programme.

10. **Graduate Employability and Transferable Skills**

Graduates are recognised for their strong transferable skills, making them attractive to employers and well-prepared for professional environments.

Areas for Improvement

1. **Alignment and Communication of Learning Outcomes**

- Learning outcomes should be regularly reviewed and updated across programmes to ensure consistency and alignment with the programme's overall objectives and expectations.
- Clear mapping of how individual study-unit outcomes align with broader learning goals can further enhance transparency and coherence.

2. **Assessment Practices and Transparency**

- Continued efforts are needed to diversify assessment methods in line with institutional policies.
- Sharing assessment rubrics more widely can support student understanding and engagement with assessment criteria.
- Assessment methods should be aligned to the intended learning outcome.

3. **Consistency and Quality of Feedback**

Strengthening the consistency and quality of feedback provided to students to guide their progress can enhance learning support and academic development.

4. **Closing the Feedback Loop**

Mechanisms should be enhanced to ensure that students are informed about how their feedback is acted upon, beyond traditional communication channels.

5. **Engagement with Professional Development**

Staff participation in continuous professional development, particularly in areas such as digital learning, AI in education, and student engagement, should be further encouraged and supported.

6. **Visibility of Good Practice**

Existing inclusive and innovative practices should be more effectively communicated and promoted to ensure they are recognised within and beyond the university.

7. **Expansion of Experiential Learning Opportunities**

There is potential to expand student placement opportunities and enrich the practical elements of academic programmes to deepen real-world experience and applied learning. At the same time, there is a gap when it comes to a structured and consistent framework for work-based learning. While each FICS operates within its own context, adopting clear yet flexible principles would help ensure more equitable and meaningful learning experiences for all students irrespective of the programme.

8. **Focus on 21st Century Learning Skills**

Students would benefit from more opportunities to develop 21st century learning skills necessary to work across disciplines and engage effectively within diverse communities.

9. **Integration of Digital Tools and Skills**

Strengthening the integration of digital technologies within academic offerings can support innovation in practice.

10. **Focus on Communication Skills in Diverse Contexts**

Programmes should place greater emphasis on developing students' communication skills, with attention to working effectively in culturally and linguistically diverse settings.

11. **Opportunities for Lifelong Learning and Micro-Credentials**

Introducing micro-credentials or short courses in specialised areas can provide flexible learning pathways, particularly for professionals seeking to upskill in their fields.

12. **Active Alumni Networks**

There is a scope for ongoing engagement with graduates who could contribute to the development of a vibrant academic and professional community.

Conclusion

During the academic year 2024/2025, a significant number of good practices were identified, some of which were shared through the QAC's **Quality Mailshot Initiative**. Details on both good practices and areas for improvement for each programme are outlined in the PPR reports. By addressing these areas of development, UM's academic programmes can not only strengthen their overall quality, relevance, and appeal but also enrich the student experience—providing more engaging learning opportunities, greater practical exposure, and clearer pathways to future career success.

Development of a Policy for the Governance and Management of University Policies

The Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) gap analysis report (December 2022) highlighted the lack of a structured system at UM for developing, updating, reviewing, and archiving policies. In response, the QAC launched a comprehensive initiative to address this gap by forming a dedicated working group of key internal stakeholders and initiating a broad consultation process. This collaborative effort resulted in the creation of a meta-policy document, designed to provide a more structured, consistent, and transparent framework for policy management across UM.

The first step involved appointing a group of authors from both the QAC and the QSU to prepare an initial draft. Once completed, this draft underwent an extensive and structured consultation process, during which various stakeholders from across UM departments and offices engaged in discussions and provided feedback and suggested amendments.

Following these consultations, an advanced draft was presented and discussed at the QAC meeting held on 9 October 2024. The draft was subsequently shared with the University's Deans for further input. Their feedback was carefully reviewed, and the majority of their suggestions were incorporated into a revised version of the document. Feedback was also collected from the Internal Audit & Risk Management Function.

The revised draft was then presented by the QSU at a College of Deans meeting, where additional comments were further discussed, collected and considered. Ultimately, the finalised version of the Policy for the Governance and Management of University Policies was presented to the Senate and received approval during its meeting held on 26 June 2025. The document will be presented to the Council on 25 September 2025.

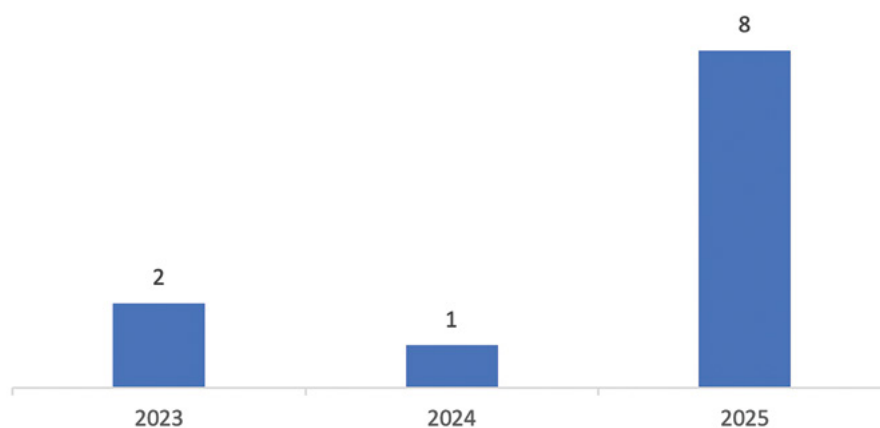
This document is an overarching policy that describes the University of Malta's policy process and framework. The policy outlines UM's policy lifecycle and describes the key elements of University-wide policies including the development, revision, approval, dissemination, implementation, management and archiving of policies at UM. This policy seeks to ensure that all policies go through a wide consultation process and are periodically reviewed to ensure that they are fit-for-purpose and remain effective.

Way Forward

Once the meta-policy document is approved by both the Senate and the Council, the QSU will collaborate with the Office of the Academic Registrar and the Office of the University Secretary—the two key internal offices responsible for overseeing the full lifecycle of a policy—to develop a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that ensures the effective and consistent implementation of the meta-policy.

Erasmus+ Mobility Visits

Throughout 2025, the QSU hosted a record number of eight Erasmus+ Mobility visits:



Graph 3: Number of Erasmus+ visits hosted by the QSU per year

Period	Visitors	Institution	Country
Feb 2025	Drahoslav Lančarič	Slovak University of Agriculture	Slovakia
Apr 2025	Evangelia Tagkareli	University of Ioannina	Greece
Apr 2025	Wojciech Wojtyła Katarzyna Głąbicka Joanna Smarż Paweł Śwital Monika Żuchowska-Grzywacz	Kazimierz Pułaski University of Radom	Poland
May 2025	Yusuf Ziya Çiçek	Middle East Technical University	Turkey
May 2025	Giada Mannias	Università degli Studi di Cagliari	Italy
Jun 2025	Sofia Marsidou	Democritus University of Thrace	Greece
Jul 2025	Alessia Carosi Lisa Parmegiani	University of Teramo	Italy
Jul 2025	Barbara Muszyńska	University of Wrocław	Poland

Table 6: Details of Erasmus+ visits hosted by the QSU in 2025

This increasing number of requests is a testament to the fact that UM is rapidly establishing itself as a hub of excellent practices in quality assurance across Europe. The robust and meaningful QA processes implemented at UM are not only enhancing internal academic standards and disseminating QA awareness among academics, but are also drawing increasing attention and admiration from institutions abroad. Between 2023 and 2025 alone, the QSU will have hosted 11 Erasmus+ Mobility visits from seven different European countries—a clear testament to the growing reputation of UM's QA framework.

These international engagements are more than just visits—they are a reflection of the trust and respect UM is earning in the field. These visitors have invariably expressed high praise for UM's QA practices, describing them as a model to be adopted at their own institution.

They also extend their heartfelt gratitude for the warmth, openness, and professionalism shown by the QSU team.

Plans for QSU visit to UCD and UCC

Beyond hosting the abovementioned eight visits this year, the QSU team has been actively planning its own Erasmus+ Mobility experience. Two institutions were specifically identified by Dr Jacqueline Vanhear for the purposes of this Erasmus+ experience, namely **University College Dublin**⁴ (UCD) and **University College Cork**⁵ (UCC). Collaboration with both institutions began at the annual European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF). Both institutions are in alignment with UM's own vision of instilling a quality culture through a developmental approach to QA.

In April 2025, all four QSU staff members submitted their individual applications, emphasising how important it is for the QSU staff to perform this training together as a team, as a form of much-needed CPD that is otherwise not available locally. During the meeting of the Erasmus Selection and Grant Allocation Committee (ESGAC) held on 26 June 2025, it was confirmed that all four applications were approved. The QSU team is thus expected to participate in this mobility experience in December 2025.

⁴ ucd.ie

⁵ ucc.ie/en

Annual Reports

The submission of FICS annual reports has continued to present a recurring challenge, as reflected in the comparative analysis of report submission statuses between July 2023 and July 2025 (see Table 7 below). This persistent issue arises despite the fact that the obligation of FICS to submit annual reports is explicitly stipulated within the Collective Agreement, which clearly outlines the responsibility of timely and accurate reporting.

	Faculties with full submissions	Faculties with partial submissions	Faculties with no submissions	Institutes with submissions	Centres with submissions	Schools with submissions
July 2023	7/14 50%	6/14 43%	1/14 7%	11/18 61%	12/13 92%	3/3 100%
July 2024	7/14 50%	2/14 14%	5/14 36%	9/16 56%	10/13 77%	1/3 33%
July 2025	4/14 29%	6/14 43%	4/14 29%	8/16 50%	10/12 83%	2/3 67%

Table 7: Annual Report submissions

In response to this concern, the Internal Audit & Risk Management Function, in collaboration with the QSU, conducted a comprehensive audit. The audit specifically reviewed public information practices in relation to the National Standards for Further and Higher Education, as issued by the Malta Further & Higher Education Authority (MFHEA). These standards emphasise the importance of transparency and accountability, particularly under **Standard 9 – Public Information**, which requires entities to publish information about their activities in a manner that is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date, and easily accessible to stakeholders.

The audit findings revealed that the **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for FICS Annual Reporting** required significant revision to improve the overall effectiveness of the reporting process and to be able to publish such reports on the UM website to highlight and provide more information on the activities carried out during the academic year at FICS level. Drawing on both the audit's recommendations and feedback gathered from a range of internal stakeholders, a working group was established and tasked with revising the SOP.

The revised SOP has been designed to better reflect current institutional needs and priorities, while also streamlining the FICS annual reporting process. Key improvements focus on enhancing clarity, standardisation, and the presentation of FICS' activities to ensure greater visibility, accountability, and relevance. The updated SOP is currently under review at Rectorate level. Upon formal endorsement, the SOP will move into the implementation phase, thereby strengthening institutional compliance and ensuring more consistent, transparent, and effective annual reporting going forward.

International University Rankings

Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2025

In the **Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2025**,⁶ the University of Malta retained its ranking band of 801–1000, even as the number of universities ranked in this exercise continues to grow year by year. Indeed, the latest ranking included 2,092 universities across 115 countries, up from the 1,907 universities across 108 countries of the 2024 ranking. Furthermore, UM improved its overall score when compared to last year, as evidenced by the table below:

	2024	2025
Overall Score	32.7–36.9	↑ 34.5–38.1
Teaching	23.4	↑ 23.9
Research	16.2	↑ 17.3
Citations	60.6	↑ 61
Industry Income	20.5	↑ 33.3
International Outlook	53.8	↑ 57.8

Table 8: UM's institutional score in the THE World University Rankings in 2024 and 2025

The University also secured a ranking in **ten out of eleven subject areas**, seen below in comparison to last year's ranking:

Subject Area	2024	2025
Arts & Humanities	501–600	= 501–600
Business & Economics	401–500	↑ 301–400
Medical & Health	601–800	= 601–800
Computer Science	601–800	↓ 801–1000
Education Studies	401–500	= 401–500
Engineering	801–1000	= 801–1000
Law	Unranked	= Unranked
Life Sciences	Unranked	↑ 601–800
Physical Sciences	601–800	= 601–800
Psychology	401–500	= 401–500
Social Sciences	601–800	↑ 501–600

Table 9: UM's rankings in the THE World University Rankings by subject area

Building on the positive momentum from last year—when UM achieved first-time rankings in *Business & Economics* and *Psychology*—further progress was made this year with UM securing its first-ever ranking in the *Life Sciences* subject area.

⁶ timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/university-malta

The QSU remains committed to ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the data submitted for all ranking exercises, with continued support from Dr Carl Camilleri, Head of the Department of Economics at the Faculty of Economics, Management & Accountancy.

Looking ahead, the QSU's strategic focus in relation to subject rankings will centre on two key priorities:

- **Targeting a ranking in Law:** The *Law* subject area is now the only one in which UM is not currently ranked. The QSU will continue to engage with the Faculty of Laws in this regard to work towards a potential future inclusion.
- **Increase ranking in Computer Science:** The *Computer Science* subject area has seen a consistent downward trend. The QSU will collaborate with the Faculty of ICT to investigate the underlying causes and explore corrective measures.

A primary challenge affecting performance in these subject areas relates to research publication output. The QSU continues to work closely with the University Library to analyse publication data and gain insights into the current landscape. Emphasis will also be placed on raising awareness among FICS and research entities about the importance of publishing in reputable, indexed journals to strengthen UM's standing in international rankings. It is worth noting that, due to the methodology used by ranking agencies, university rankings often depend less on the number of publications produced by FICS and more on the journals in which those publications appear and the subject areas they cover.

Times Higher Education (THE) Interdisciplinary Science Rankings 2025

The University of Malta has been ranked in the inaugural **Interdisciplinary Science Rankings (ISR) 2025**⁷ published by the Times Higher Education (THE) in collaboration with the prestigious Schmidt Science Fellows. Launched in 2024, this new global ranking aims to evaluate universities' contributions to interdisciplinary science—acknowledging the growing consensus that addressing global challenges requires insights from across multiple academic disciplines.

In November 2024, UM was placed in the **501–600** band out of 1,023 participating institutions. Of these, only 749 universities from 90 countries met the eligibility criteria for ranking, while the remaining 274 were included as 'reporter' institutions and not assigned a rank.

UM's inclusion in this first edition highlights its ongoing commitment to interdisciplinary research and collaboration, and reinforces its role in advancing solutions to complex, global scientific challenges.

⁷ timeshighereducation.com/interdisciplinary-science-rankings

Center for World University Rankings (CWUR)

Since 2019, the University of Malta has been ranked by the **Center for World University Rankings (CWUR)**,⁸ a prominent international organisation based in the United Arab Emirates that evaluates educational and research performance. Established in 2012, CWUR publishes a global academic ranking of universities independently, without requiring data submissions from institutions. Its methodology assesses the quality of education, employability of graduates, academic staff credentials, and research performance.

Originally designed to rank the top 100 universities worldwide, the CWUR rankings gained significant traction and were expanded in 2019 to include the top 2,000 institutions globally—the year UM first entered the list.

In the latest CWUR rankings published in June 2025, UM achieved its highest position in seven years, featuring once again in the Global 2000 list and securing the **1,622nd** position out of 21,462 participant institutions across the globe. This result places UM in the **top 7.6%** of universities worldwide. Notably, this reflects a steady upward trend, improving on last year's ranking of 1,705, despite an increase in the number of participating universities. In the regional context, the University of Malta ranks 533rd in Europe and retains its position as Malta's top-ranked higher education institution.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
World Rank	1,659	1,762	1,696	1,702	1,684	1,705	↑ 1,622
Score	67.1	66.7	66.9	66.8	67.1	67.2	↑ 67.6
Participants	N/A	N/A	19,788	19,788	20,531	20,966	↑ 21,462

Table 10: UM's performance in the CWUR ranking, 2019 - 2025

Webometrics Ranking Web of Universities

The **Webometrics Ranking Web of Universities**,⁹ established in 2004, aims to promote open access to academic knowledge generated by universities. Despite what the name might imply, the ranking does not assess university websites, but rather evaluates institutions as a whole.

Using web-based indicators as proxies for overall institutional performance, the ranking considers factors such as academic output, visibility, impact, and relevance. Its methodology combines both webometric and bibliometric indicators, drawing data from trusted sources including Majestic, Google Scholar, and Scopus. Notably, universities do not submit data for inclusion—ensuring an independent and transparent evaluation process.

⁸ cwur.org

⁹ webometrics.info/en

In the most recent edition published in January 2025, the University of Malta was ranked **829th** globally—an improvement of 40 places compared to its February 2024 position of 869. This advancement places UM in the **top 2.59%** of more than 32,000 higher education institutions worldwide, underscoring its growing international presence and academic impact.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
World Rank	866	839	886	872	869	↑ 829

Table 11: UM's performance in the Webometrics ranking, 2020 - 2025

QS Rankings

The University of Malta has achieved another significant milestone in the 22nd edition of the QS World University Rankings, which offer a comprehensive, objective view of universities worldwide through the collection of data from around 16.4 million academic papers, gathering feedback from over 151,000 academics and 100,000 employers, and a meticulous analysis of various types of staff and students' data.

This year UM has managed to place in the ranking band **741–750**, improving from last year's ranking band of **751–760** and the previous year's ranking band of **850–900**.

This outstanding result stems from a collaborative internal review by the Quality Support Unit in collaboration with the UM Rankings Working Group and the various entities at UM focused on improving UM's performance in the various rankings and enhancing the quality and accuracy of the data provided.

This achievement is particularly notable given the increasing yearly additions of new institutions participating in the QS World University Rankings. This year, QS evaluated a total number of **8,467** institutions from **106** locations worldwide and only **1,501** institutions have managed to feature in the final ranking. In this highly competitive context, UM has continued its trend of consistently increasing its scores in the QS Rankings and thus fulfilling its commitment to *"nurture and disseminate the University's good name"*, in line with one of the main commitments of the International Outlook theme of the **Strategic Plan 2020–2025**.¹⁰

UM's QS rankings over the last five years are as follows:

Rankings	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
QS World	801-1000	801-1000	801-1000	851-900	751-760	741-750
QS Europe	N/A	N/A	N/A	344	306	Pending
QS Southern Europe	N/A	N/A	N/A	75	59	Pending

Table 12: UM in the QS Rankings 2021 - 2026

¹⁰ um.edu.mt/about/strategy

With this outstanding result UM surpassed **51%** of the institutions in terms of the overall rank and has notably performed well in **Employment Outcomes**, raising its rank in this indicator to **40th** place, placing UM in the top **3%** worldwide. Similarly, UM has risen to **401st** place in **Faculty Student ratio**, leaping **90** positions compared to last year.

It is worth noting that this year QS has included a new unweighted indicator called **International Student Diversity**. This new metric considers two main aspects: (1) the ratio of international students to overall students, and (2) the diversity of nationalities those students represent. UM ranked **436th** worldwide in this new metric.

UM will submit the required data to QS by February 2026 for the 23rd rankings edition, which will be released in June 2026. The QS World University Rankings indicators' weighting is shown below:

Pillar	Metric	Weighting (in %)
1. Research and Discovery	Academic Reputation	30.00
	Citations per Faculty	20.00
2. Employability and Outcomes	Employer Reputation	15.00
	Employment Outcomes	5.00
3. Learning Experience	Faculty Student Ratio	10.00
4. Global Engagement	International Faculty	5.00
	International Research Network	5.00
	International Students	5.00
5. Sustainability	Sustainability	5.00
		100.0

Table 13: QS World University Rankings 2027 intended weighting

Clarivate Global Institutional Profiles Project

The first time UM took part in the **Clarivate Global Institutional Profiles Project**¹¹ was in May 2023. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are ranked according to their performance across a set of widely accepted indicators of excellence. The rankings were revealed in September 2023 and UM featured among the **best 2000 HEIs** and was ranked **1,128th** in the Best Global Universities list as well as **411th** in the ranking for Best Global Universities in Europe.

This year, the overall ranking encompasses **2,250** top institutions, spread across **105** countries. UM has achieved an impressive advancement, climbing **209** positions to secure the **919th** spot, up from last year's 1,128th place. Regionally, UM made a remarkable leap of **91** spots, soaring to **320th** place among the Best Global Universities in Europe, a significant rise from last year's 411th position.

¹¹ clarivate.com/webofsciencelibrary/globalprofilesproject

Of special significance is UM's outstanding achievement in the **International Collaboration** metric, where it soared to an impressive **189th** position worldwide, highlighting its growing global partnerships. Equally remarkable is UM's performance in the **Percentage of Highly Cited Papers** metric, ranking **312th** globally, reflecting its impactful research among **the top 1% most cited publications worldwide**.

The Clarivate Global Institutional Profiles subject categories are:

- Arts & Humanities
- Clinical, Pre-Clinical & Health
- Engineering & Technology
- Life Sciences
- Physical Sciences
- Social Sciences

For every *subject category* UM submitted the following:

INDICATOR	SUB-INDICATOR (IF APPLICABLE)
Number of academic staff	Of which are of international/overseas origin Of which are women
Number of research staff	No sub-indicator
Number of students	Of which are of international/overseas origin Of which are women
Undergraduate – new student intake	No sub-indicator
Number of undergraduate degrees awarded	No sub-indicator
Master or equivalent – new student intake	No sub-indicator
Number of master's degrees awarded	No sub-indicator
Doctoral – new student intake	No sub-indicator
Number of doctorates awarded	No sub-indicator

Table 14: Indicators for each category submitted by UM

For the *whole institution level*, UM submitted the following:

INDICATOR	SUB-INDICATOR (IF APPLICABLE)
Institutional income	No sub-indicator
Research income	No sub-indicator
Research income from industry and commerce	No sub-indicator

Table 15: Indicators for the whole institution submitted by UM

Way Forward

To address some of the challenges and continue improving UM's rankings, the QAC successfully continued the excellent work conducted by the recently established UM Rankings Working Group dedicated to support UM in ensuring the quality, consistency and accuracy of

data submitted for university rankings purposes. The working group worked closely with the QSU team and consequently more accurate and up-to-date data was submitted for the ranking exercises which had a positive impact on UM's rankings.

Despite the improvement of UM's performance in global rankings over these past two years, there are still a number of recurring challenges for UM to keep advancing in the different global and regional university rankings. First of all, there is no dedicated office or staff to deal specifically with this important task which requires a lot of effort and time to collect the necessary data and to make sure it is accurate, up-to-date and submitted on time. Currently it is still the QSU, with its limited resources, that coordinates this task. Setting up a Data Intelligence Unit as well as expanding the Power BI initiative would be a step in the right direction.

The second challenge relates to research and citations, which take the highest weight in rankings compared to other indicators. Since not all UM academics publish in Web of Science and/or Scopus indexed journals, the QAC intends to plan initiatives aimed to increase awareness about university rankings and the importance of indexed publications and authors' cite scores. These are expected to include separate meetings with FICS and priority will be given to the subject areas in which UM's ranking is not improving. It is suggested that the Library will join these efforts to spread awareness among academics about the indexed publications. The Pro-Rector for Research and Knowledge Transfer could also join in supporting the initiative to spread awareness among UM researchers on the importance of indexed publications.

Quality Mailshot Initiative

Now in its sixth consecutive year, the Quality Mailshot Initiative continues to promote good quality practices across UM. Led by the QSU, this initiative shares examples of effective practices identified at FICS level through a series of mailshots circulated approximately every fortnight during the 2024/2025 academic year. A total of 13 mailshots were issued this year, yielding 10 responses and bringing the cumulative number of shared practices to 80.

	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Number of mailshots	13	15	12	13	14	13

Table 16: Number of Quality Mailshots sent per academic year

The initiative is guided by a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), originally issued in 2020 and revised in 2021. In anticipation of the scheduled June 2025 review, the SOP was proactively updated in February 2025 to align more closely with current practices and support continuous improvement. The updated version is catalogued as **ZQA-001-03**.¹²

Each mailshot continues to be purposefully aligned with the University's Strategic Themes, as outlined in the Strategic Plan 2020–2025. These thematic connections serve to highlight how UM's strategic priorities are being actively implemented at operational level.

During the year, the QSU also engaged with the Marketing, Communications & Alumni Office (MCAO) to explore opportunities for extending the reach of selected mailshots. This collaboration may involve sharing content via Newspoint or the University's official social media platforms, thereby increasing visibility and engagement with a broader audience.

The full 2024/2025 Quality Mailshot Initiative report is available [here](#),¹³ and an online repository of all mailshots issued to date can be accessed via the Quality Assurance [website](#).¹⁴

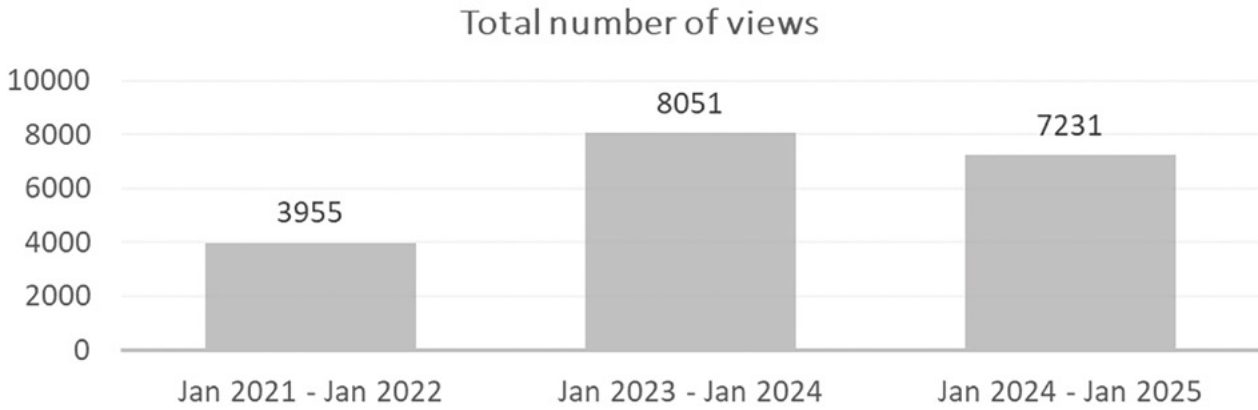
¹² um.edu.mt/operatingprocedures/doc/ZQA-001-03

¹³ [um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/about/qualityassurance/ReportontheQualityMailshotInitiative\(2024-2025\).pdf](https://um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/about/qualityassurance/ReportontheQualityMailshotInitiative(2024-2025).pdf)

¹⁴ um.edu.mt/about/qualityassurance/qualitymailshots

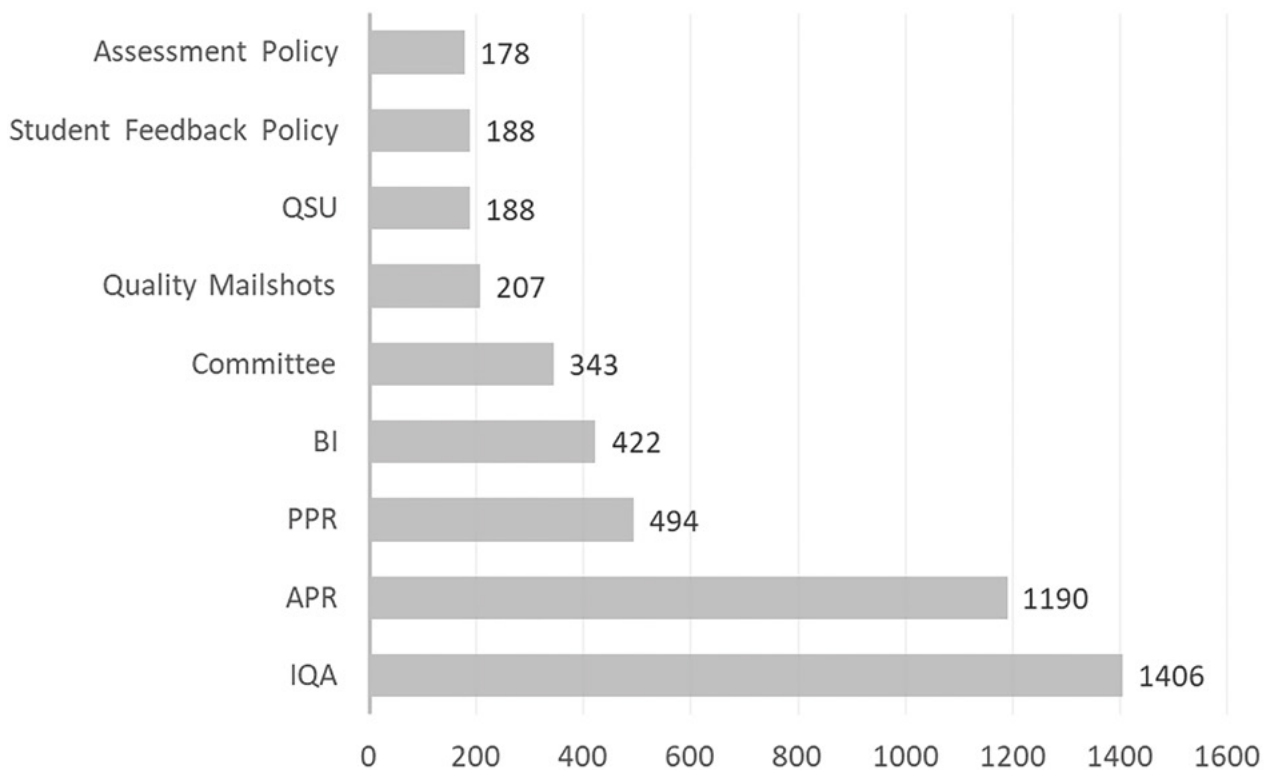
Quality Assurance Website Update

The **Quality Assurance homepage**¹⁵ attracted a total of 7,231 views in the twelve months between January 2024 and January 2025. The most-visited webpage was the **Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)**¹⁶ section, closely followed by the **Annual Programme Review (APR)**¹⁷ one.



Graph 4: Total number of views of the QA homepage over the years

Jan 2024 – Jan 2025: Main individual page views (excluding homepage)



Graph 5: Main individual page views (excluding homepage) between January 2024 and January 2025

¹⁵ um.edu.mt/about/qualityassurance

¹⁶ um.edu.mt/about/qualityassurance/internalqualityassurance

¹⁷ um.edu.mt/about/qualityassurance/apr

In June 2025, a key update was implemented to the **UM in international rankings**¹⁸ section. This update was designed to provide a more accurate and comprehensive overview of UM's current standing across the various ranking exercises it participates in. Each accordion section now includes a summary of UM's year-on-year performance, creating a centralised online repository for all ranking-related statistics.

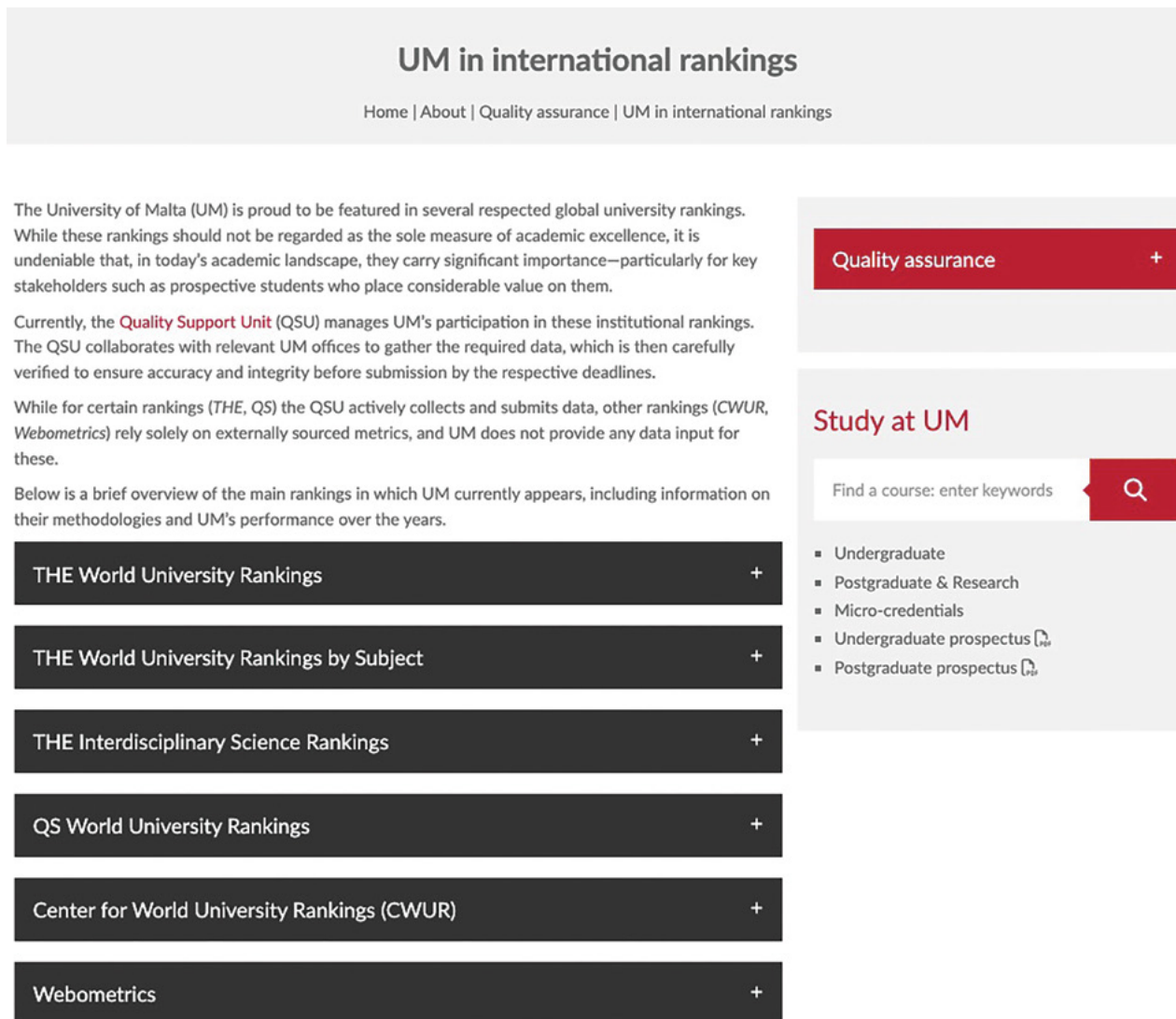


Figure 1: Screenshot of the updated 'UM in international rankings' webpage

¹⁸ um.edu.mt/about/qualityassurance/um-internationalrankings

Also in June 2025, the QSU collaborated with MCAO to prominently feature the digital ranking badge awarded by QS Rankings. This badge, which signifies UM's inclusion in the latest edition of the ranking, is now displayed in the footer of the UM website, appearing across all sub-pages.

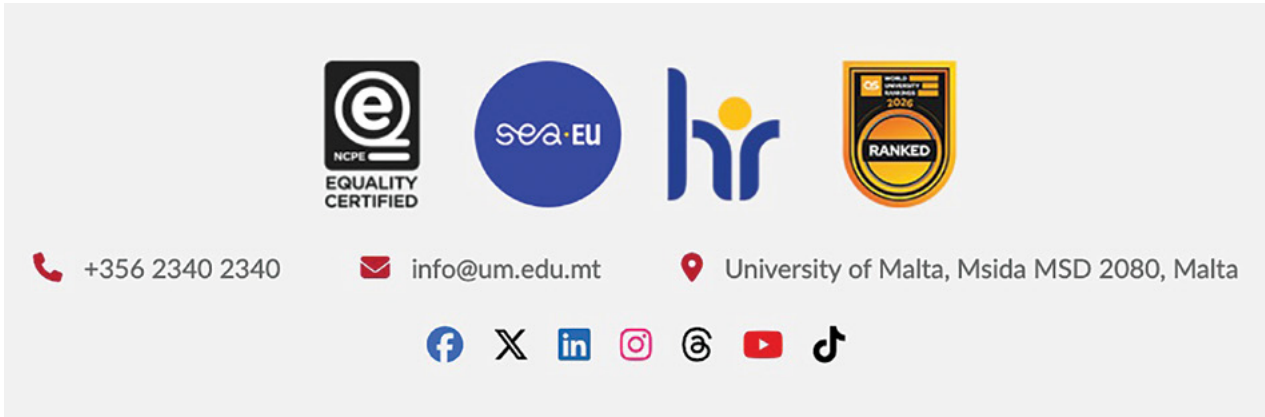


Figure 2: The UM website footer, now including the QS Rankings digital badge

Collaborative Development of an Internal Quality Assurance Policy at the Junior College

The Quality Support Unit team worked closely with key staff from the Junior College to design and progressively implement an internal quality assurance (IQA) policy tailored to the College's context. This collaborative effort combined planning, consultation, and phased development to ensure broad engagement and ownership of the process. The initiative reached a milestone on 6 June 2025, when Dr Jacqueline Vanhear delivered a presentation to Junior College staff. Her address highlighted the principles of a developmental approach to IQA, outlined national standards for further education, and shared best practices from the University of Malta in relation to quality assurance mechanisms. The presentation was very well received, and plans are already in place to build on this momentum through further collaboration between the Quality Support Unit and the Junior College.



Figure 3: Staff actively engaging in a live Slido poll during the workshop (photo provided by the Junior College)

Continuing Professional Development

The QSU team places a strong emphasis on continuous professional development (CPD), ensuring that staff is equipped with the knowledge and skills to support the University's quality agenda. In line with this commitment, the team actively prioritises CPD opportunities. Listed below are the key training and development events attended by QSU staff members between August 2024 and July 2025.

Event	Type	Organiser	Date
Professional Development Sessions on Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions	Training	MFHEA	Sep-Oct 2024
2026 QS Rankings Cycle: A complete guide to data submission	Webinar	QS	15/10/2024
THE World University Rankings 2025 Edition-Europe	Webinar	THE	23/10/2024
Building Brilliance: How Top Universities Shape their Global Reputation	Webinar	QS	24/10/2024
European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF 2024): Enhancing education, research and societal engagement through quality assurance	Forum & Workshops	ENQA, EUA, EURASHE & ESU	14-16/11/2024
The Art of Bringing Creativity and Fun into the Classroom	Webinar	THE	21/11/2024
QS World University Rankings: Sustainability 2025	Webinar	QS	28/11/2024
Updated Online Teaching and Learning Guidelines for Further and Higher Education Institutions	Workshop	MFHEA	06/12/2024
Building a Sustainable University: Empowering UM Staff for Change	Training	UM	20/01/2025
How to Boost Public Perception of Higher Education	Webinar	THE	28/01/2025
The Art of Public Speaking	Training	UM	Oct – Feb 2025
Certificate in Proof Reading: Maltese	Programme	UM	Feb 2025 – Jan 2026
INQAHE Talks: Indigenous Knowledge and Quality Assurance: A Global Dialogue	Webinar	INQAHE	12/02/2025
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	Webinar	GNQAHD	26/02/2025
Environmental Data Management Systems	Training	Jobsplus	Feb – Mar 2025
External Quality Assurance of Research in HEIs	Webinar	ENQA	14/03/2025
QS Sustainability Rankings: Navigating the Submission Process	Webinar	QS	18/03/2025
Instructional Design Engagement and Support	Webinar	UMass Amherst	01/05/2025
Understanding the Role of Reputation in QS Rankings	Webinar	QS	29/07/2025

Table 17: CPD events attended by the QSU team (August 2024 - July 2025)