

QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

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Section: Quality Assurance
Policy Owner: BOG

QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

The **Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS)** is an institution of further and higher education dedicated to creating high quality talent in order to meet the changing needs of the Travel, Hospitality and Tourism Industry.

Consolidated by the Institute of Tourism Cap 566 of the Laws of Malta, the Institute's primary function is to attract and prepare hospitality leaders for the Tourism Sector who are able to deliver excellence and value.

The Quality Assurance Policy defines the ITS approach to Quality Assurance and continuous enhancement with the ITS vision, mission and values. It serves as a guide to the ITS staff, students and external stakeholders. The intent of the Policy is to assure all stakeholders including the public of the integrity and quality of ITS academic activities and management is of the utmost importance to the standing of the Institute of Tourism studies internationally.

Vision and Mission:

Mission Statement

The proposed Mission Statement of the Institute for Tourism Studies is:

“Shaping **Excellence** and **Innovation** in Tourism, through **teaching and learning, quality research, advice,** and **realisation** of innovative business concepts”

Where:

- By **Shaping** we mean that we will be proactive and lead the change process in the Tourism Industry;
- By **Excellence** we mean that we shall be at the fore front in ensuring that we create Professionals, Business Concepts and Support Industry in obtaining the highest levels of quality in what they do.
- By **Innovation** we mean that we shall instigate creativity and entrepreneurship and key fundamental attributes in the tourism industry
- By **teaching and learning** we mean that at the core we shall remain committed

in providing high quality education and training programmes to our students that are relevant to the current and future needs of the industry.

- By **quality research**, we mean that we will transition from a teaching based institution to become a research lead institution wherein we will strive to generate relevant comprehensive and systematic content, concepts and publications.
- By **advice** we mean that we shall provide support and assistance to the tourism industry in improving its management, standards, processes and systems with a view to enhance excellence and operating and financial performance.
- By **realisation of innovative business concepts**, we mean that we shall assist promising start ups in the Tourism Industry to develop and implement their business ideas

The above mission statement may be effectively communicated to the outside world through the tag line:

RESEARCH | EDUCATION | INNOVATION | ADVISORY

Vision

The proposed vision of the Institute for Tourism Studies is as follows:

“The Institute of Tourism Studies will lead the transformation of **tomorrow’s international tourism industry** by directing its resources to:

- create **comprehensive and systematic knowledge** through **high quality research**,
- **develop** innovative and relevant higher and further education and training programmes **combining** technical, generic and behavioural skills.
- deliver such programmes through a **student centred and inclusive learning environment**, integrating **theory and practice** whilst promoting **modern leadership approaches**
- provide **expert advice** to established players
- **mentor entrepreneurs** in successfully **commercialising innovative business concepts** in the Tourism Industry.

1.1 Creativity

Is key to hospitality, we embrace it in our talent and drive it through our teaching methods and programmes. We promote an international outlook whilst embracing **diversity** between local and foreign cultures. The Institute is a centre for ongoing professional development through **lifelong learning** opportunities for all levels. We perform and solicit practices which are **ethically correct** and **environmentally friendly**.

1.2 Commitment to Quality

The Institute of Tourism Studies is firmly committed to provide learning programmes aimed at guaranteeing exceptional standards of service within the Hospitality Industry. Students' progress is continuously monitored by their respective lecturers' and tutors. The lecturers' feedback is submitted to BOS, in a formal and informal way and is henceforth discussed in this board. Overall performance of students is also recorded in the annual report issued by COO-Academia. Lecturing staff receive specialist training and guidance in methodology and assessment techniques.

The purpose of quality assurance at ITS is to ensure continuous development and accountability to stakeholders. ITS is committed to the principle of continuous enhancement. The aim of the Institute's Academic Quality Assurance (AQA) system is to ensure that a level of excellence in all aspects of the Institute's operations is consistently attained, with the objective of assuring the quality of the students' holistic learning experience both academically and in areas of social and personal development.

Quality assurance is the means through which ITS commits itself and confirms to its customers and stakeholders alike, that the conditions are in place for students to achieve a high educational standard set at international, national, and institutional levels.

The above is secured through ongoing monitoring by using Monitoring tools as described in this Quality Assurance Manual.

1.3 The Approach

The approach is a PDCA cycle to assure the Quality of its inputs, processes and outcomes and to identify improvements. The plan is created through Inputs, the Do are the processes, the Check are the outputs and outcomes and Act is the improvement as seen in the table.

The Planning stage is what ITS aims to achieve according to the Mission, Vision and Values on which our strategy is built.

The Do is the stage where the ITS plans are carried out in accordance with plans, policies and procedures. Examples are when classes are held, lecturers carry out their work, students learn and achieve the learning outcomes, finances are managed properly, committees meet and other tasks are done.

The Checking is the stage when ITS reviews the progress in achieving the targets and evaluate the effectiveness of the planning and doing. ITS identifies weaknesses or risks by realizing what should happen (plan) and what does happen in practice (do). The checking comes from the tools of Monitoring as described in the QA Manual. Example student feedback.

Act is the stage when ITS uses the results from checking and enhances the system by improving them whether they are plans, policies and procedures. Improvements also refer to how ITS evaluates its own activities. The underneath Table explains the QA Framework based on the PDCA cycle:

**ITS QUALITY ASURANCE FRAMEWORK
HOW WE ENSURE AND CONTINUOUSLY DEVELOP QUALITY AT ITS**

	PLAN	DO	CHECK	ACT
	<i>Inputs</i>	<i>Processes</i>	<i>Output review tools</i>	<i>Improvement tools</i>
Learning and Teaching	Strategic Plan, L&T plan, Schools Plans Academic governance Academic positional responsibilities Academic policies, including student admission Academic freedom Qualified academic staff Recognition for good teaching Admission criteria for students Program approval mechanisms Academic development support	Learning and teaching activities Assessment of learning Provide learner resources Provide learner support Committee meetings	Monitoring of plans Review of assessment outcomes Retention and completion rates Student evaluations of modules/programs Graduate feedback Internal reviews External reviews, including professional accreditation Benchmarking with other institutions	Staff professional development Staff appraisals Follow up to student feedback Follow up to external reviews
Research	Strategic Plan, Research Plans Research governance Qualified academics Research funding Research partnerships	Prepare proposals or submissions Ethics review Conduct research Supervise research students Present findings	Monitoring of plans Review of ethics clearances Numbers of publications (peer reviewed and other) Number of research grants and contracts Research student outcomes	Staff professional development Improve research students' skills Research management and networking
Management	Strategic Plan, Campus Plans Governance and committee structures Positional responsibilities Policies and procedures Qualified staff Conditions for staff Budgets and financial controls Facilities and ICT Risk management Income generating commercial activities	Perform duties as expected Communicate effectively Manage human resources Observe financial controls Increase qualified staff Ensure staff development Keep records Manage risks	Monitoring of plans Review of policies and procedures External reviews Financial outcomes Financial audit Recruitment	Staff professional development Implement identified improvements
Partnerships and Engagement	Strategic Plan Operational Plans Positional responsibilities MoUs Record-keeping systems	Partnership management meetings MoU activities Engage with communities, alumni	Reviews of MoUs Review community engagement activities Partner feedback Stakeholder feedback	Staff professional development Implement identified improvements Networking

Under this QA Policy as explained above the ITS requires the following QA processes at a minimum to be in place:

- Clear Mission and Vision
- Strategy and its monitoring
- Student admission and enrollment against defined admission criteria
- Appointment of Qualified staff as per calls and job descriptions
- Clear governance and management responsibilities
- Annual Financial Audits (external if required)
- Academic and Administrative policies and procedures as much as collective agreements
- Robust processes for approval of academic programs
- Student questionnaires for evaluation each semester
- Various Stakeholder feedback (example from LITP and IITP)
- Research Management policies and procedures, including requirements for Ethics clearance
- Reviews of professional areas, ex: ICT
- External Independent audit by MFHEA

1.4 Responsibility for QA Policy

The strategy is one that involves everybody in the organisation. The success of a Quality Culture depends entirely on the responsibility of every ITS staff member. The collective effort of all ensures the Quality Culture ITS is aspiring to achieve. Ultimately the responsibility for establishing the Quality Culture rests with the Management Team, namely the CEO, COO-Academia and COO- Corporate Services.

Every member of staff has a role in monitoring the quality of their work. As a result, quality assurance is shared responsibility. In support of this, Management will devolve as much authority for decision making as possible, to the point where the action directly imports upon users of our services. In such a case Quality is everyone's responsibility and cannot be delegated. The responsibility for quality and standards is shared by all those who support students' learning.

The administration and other support services have an essential part to play in the assurance of quality, as the work of administration bears directly on quality and standards, in providing learning environments and support services.

Quality Assurance at ITS is a shared responsibility of all staff both academic and administration and support staff. The Quality Assurance Manual is the guideline for all processes at ITS.

Students receive both theoretical and practical exposure throughout the course thus enabling them to be operational as soon as they step into the world of work. The Institute offers programmes of study from MQF Level 2 up to MQF Level 7), for careers as found in the ITS prospectus found in the website. The majority of programmes at ITS involve a compulsory internship program:

Local Internship Programme (Foundation, certificates and Degrees and HND Tour Guiding).

International Internship Programmes (Diplomas and Degrees).

1.5 Related Documents to the QA Policy

The ITS Law Cap 566, the ITS legal notices and the ITS strategy while the Governance underneath is important to carry out the above QA Policy.

Internal Responsibilities of the Internal Quality Assurance

The main accountability and responsibilities within the ITS's internal quality management systems are currently:

1.6 Management Structure

ITS has a Chief Executive Officer, a COO-Academia and a COO-Corporate Services as Top management, directed by a Board of Governors. They are responsible for the quality assurance on a day today basis while the Internal Quality Assurance Committee over sees that the quality is safeguarded through processes, procedures and decisions taken on a daily basis.

1.7 Managers

Managers are responsible for departmental management with their respective teams and report to their respective COOs.

1.8 Academic Co-ordinators

Coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the quality assurance system at the respective department; managing quality assurance procedures in the department, organization and conducting the self-reviews of the department, reporting of the results to the IQAC and the management of ITS.

1.9 Board of Governors (BOG) as per legislation

Establishes internal quality assurance schemes that ensure there is full transparency and a structure of clear operational accountability;

Establishment of the composition of the ITS internal quality assurance committee;

Approves all curricula and syllabi submitted by the BoS and approved by PQVB;
Defining the strategic plan;

1.10 Board of Studies (BOS) as per Legislation

Proposes new study programmes and courses for validation by the PQVB;
Discusses changes in the current curricula and is the first monitoring point for new programmes;

Makes comments and recommendations on programmes to the PQVB;

1.11 Programme Quality Validation Board (PQVB) as per legal notice

Responsible for the internal approval and accreditation of programmes, ensures that programmes and courses are in line with binding documents and regulations thus making the accreditation decision.

Validating the conditions/implementation of internal and external activities.

Students are represented on the Board of Studies and the Programme Quality Validation Board.

1.12 Internal Quality Assurance Committee as per legal notice:

Developing and monitoring the implementation of ITS's internal QA system according to ITS mission and vision and strategic planning, promoting quality culture within ITS, supporting departments in establishing their department-based quality standards and monitoring these standards; monitoring of self-reviews and evaluation of departmental quality assurance procedures, monitoring of the implementation of recommendations out of the internal self-reviews.

IQAC issues monthly reports as part of ongoing monitoring and an annual self assessment report (SAR).

1.13 Main Boards and Committees

Apart from the structures above The Institute of Tourism Studies has the following:
List of Main Boards & Committees: -

- Disciplinary Board
- Exams Board
- Student Cases Board
- Academic Research and Publications board (ARPB)
- Scientific Committee

1.14 Admission and Progression of Students

The Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) is open to all those who have the qualifications and/or requirements as indicated in the yearly prospectus and rules and regulations.

ITS is also open to Erasmus students as per the Erasmus Charter. Progression of students is also according to the yearly prospectus.

1.15 Assessment Process

Assessment methods are described in the module templates indicating the learning outcomes to be assessed. The Examination Committee ensures that exam assessment is inclusive and equitable so as to be challenging yet fair with all students.

External examiners and external verifiers are validated by the PQVB in order to participate in various programmes assessment.

1.16 Students Feedback

The students are invited by an e-mail to participate twice yearly in an online anonymous questionnaire about the modules, programmes and other areas. The results are communicated to the staff and students.

1.17 Programme Review

Evaluation is first carried out by the Lecturer. The evaluation report will be passed on to the Academic Co-ordinators, who issue a programme report to their line manager which is finally passed on to the COO-Academia for any required discussion at Board of studies.

1.18 Collective Agreement

ITS has a collective agreement for Academics while the administration and support staff have a separate collective agreement.

1.19 Student Support

Several support services exist for the student. A student can always refer to these support services including guidance and counseling, library, IT Dept, website, student council, accounts department, registrar dept, Erasmus, International office, Internship dept, and student support office to ensure optimum outcome from their studies at the Institute.

1.20 Public Information

All Programmes of study with their respective entry requirements are found on the ITS Prospectus which is also available on the ITS website. ITS also participates

in fairs and other public activities to disseminate information and market the Institute's programmes and activities as well as to promote careers with the tourism and hospitality sector.

1.21 Internal Quality Assurance Committee

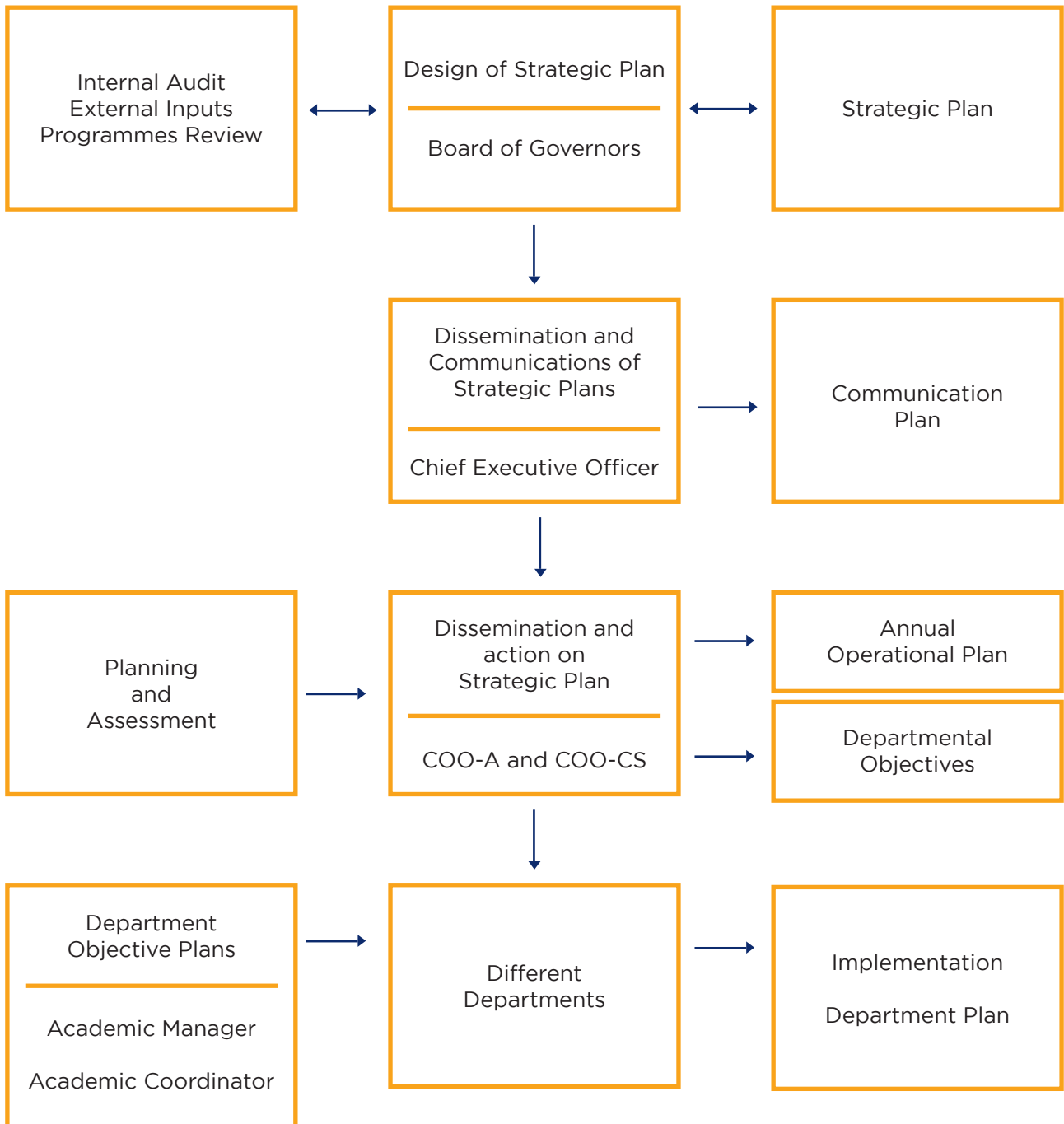
The establishment of the composition of the ITS Internal Quality Assurance Committee is the responsibility of the Board of Governors as per Legal Notice Cap. 566 Under Functions and Power of Board of Governors as stated in article 10 (1S) "to establish internal quality assurance schemes as required by this Act or by any regulation made thereunder and required auditing procedures for the operations of the Institute".

The Design and Development of the quality Policy and Procedures is based on the strategic plan. The strategic plan is formulated by the Board of Governors after having consulted with the internal audits, program reviews and external inputs. The Strategic Plan is communicated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who in turn formulates a Communication Plan of how to disseminate the Strategy. This is done by informing the COO-Academia and COO- Corporate Services. Both COOs will make quality plans of operations to consolidate the annual plans. The COOs will communicate with the different departments to create objectives to reach their goals.

The Board of Governors are entrusted with designing a Strategic Plan for the Institute of Tourism Studies

This strategic plan is disseminated by the Chief Executive Officer, who makes a communications plan. The communication must first reach the COOs after planning and assessing the situation at ITS. The action on strategic plan must formulate an annual operational plan and state the department objectives. The department objective plans must be communicated through Academic Coordinators in order to have the department plans implemented (in diagram A below).

DIAGRAM A



The Internal Quality Assurance Committee is responsible for a yearly Institutional Audit (SAR) based on 11 standards to attain the mission and vision of the institution, the system capacity and the ITS programmes.

Regular meetings are held across all sectors as shown below: (All these meetings are minuted).

INSTITUTE OF TOURISM STUDIES

TABLE 1

Meetings	Period	Responsibility	Circulation of Minutes
Board Of Governors	Six Weeks (Minimum) As per current Legislation enforced from time to time	Chairman	BOG Board Members only CEO
Board Of Studies	As per current Legislation enforced from time to time	Chief Operation Officer - Academia	All BOS BoardMembers, and IQAC
PQVB	As per Legal Notice	Chief Operating Officer - Corporate Services	All PQVB members, COO-A, IQAC and CEO
Disciplinary Board	As required	Chair	All Board of Governors, CEO, Registrar and IQAC
Examinations Board	As required	Chair	COO-Academia, Registrar and IQAC
Student Cases Board	As required	BOG Member	IQAC
IQAC	As per IQAC Legal Notice	Head of IQAC	All IQAC Committee Members
Scientific Committee	As per Legal Notice	COO-Corporate Services	All CommitteeMembers, CEO and IQAC
ARPB meetings	Meeting as Required	COO-Academia	All committee members IQAC Registrar

1.22 Meetings

All meetings as per Table 1.

The IQAC receives a copy of all meeting minutes except those of Board of Governors and CEO. The two Boards that are important to assist top Management in Academic affairs are the BOS and the PQVB. The functions of BOS is well explained in the Law article 11, 12 (BOS) while the PQVB has its own Legal Notice. The IQAC also has its own Legal Notice and meets once weekly.

The Institute of Tourism Studies is in compliance with National Legislation and with its Governance structure. The Governing Bodies of ITS are stated in the Legislation Cap. 566. The ITS integrity is also found in the Recruitment Process as established through the Collective Agreements.

1.23 Complaints and Appeals

For complaints and appeals please refer to complaints policy and procedure P004 and training restaurants complaint policy and procedure P044

1.24 Monitoring Tools of the Internal Quality Assurance

IQAC plans, guides and monitors Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement activities of the institution. It channels and systematizes the efforts and measures of an institution towards academic excellence. IQAC recommends to BOG and CEO intervention strategies to remove deficiencies and enhance quality. The procedures/tools adopted by the IQAC to monitor the programmes and activities of the institution are as underneath.

Tools of Monitoring:

- Yearly self assessment reports
- Executive Management meetings
- External stakeholders feedback
- COOs Annual reports
- Complaints, Appeals and Grievances
- IQAC/student council meetings
- Self Reviews of Modules/Programme reports
- Student Questionnaire result reports
- Performance Appraisals
- Board and Committees Meeting minutes
- Calendar

1.25 Internal Quality Audit

To ensure consistency and objectivity across the Institute, the internal quality assurance committee (nominated by the board of governors) will inspect areas and procedures, and check that systems are in place and adequately implemented. The internal quality assurance committee will produce reports as a result of their observations on a monthly basis (when required) to the Board of Governors and Chief Executive Officer.

1.25.1 Features of the Quality Assurance Committee

ITS has a Quality Assurance Committee serving both the purpose of internal auditing and to ensure that ITS meets the recommendations and stipulations as required through an external audit.

The Institute Review is purposely done to:

- Satisfy itself that its policies, especially their relation to the implementation of quality assurance are being implemented.
- Evaluate the cumulative effect on the quality and standard of provision of progressive changes to programmes.
- Evaluate the Institute's strategic plan and balance of Programme.
- Evaluate the links with the Industry.
- Provide a mechanism to identify and disseminate good practices in quality assurance and programme delivery.
- The terms of Reference for the Review are embedded in the Quality Assurance legal notice to be carried out by IQAC.

It will specifically look into:

How ITS addresses its Strategic Plan including policies of Quality Assurance, admission, learning, teaching, research and assessment strategy, as well as current and proposed committee reporting Structures; compliance with Health and Safety Policies, Institute's level of engagement with Industry and resource allocation.