

Quality Assurance at ITS

A Public Summary of the Quality Assurance Manual
Version 5

Internal Quality Assurance Unit
Effective from 1 October 2026

About This Summary

Quality assurance is the way an institution checks, on a continuing basis, that its courses, teaching and services are of a good standard, and keeps improving them. At the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), the rules and responsibilities for doing this are set out in the **ITS Quality Assurance Manual**.

The full Manual is a detailed working document written for staff, governing bodies and external reviewers. This summary explains, in plain language, what the Manual covers and what it means for students, applicants, parents, employers and anyone else with an interest in ITS.

Document	ITS Quality Assurance Manual, Version 5 (Fifth Edition)
Approved by	ITS Board of Governors, 22 September 2026
In force from	1 October 2026
Next review	By 1 October 2027
Owner	Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQAU)

About ITS

ITS was founded in 1987 with the support of the World Tourism Organization, and has been Malta's national centre for further and higher education in tourism, hospitality and culinary arts ever since. Since 2017 the Institute has been governed by its own law, Chapter 566 of the Laws of Malta.

ITS offers programmes at many levels, from foundation courses to certificates, diplomas, higher national diplomas, undergraduate degrees and master's programmes. Students learn in realistic working environments on campus and gain experience through placements in industry.

ITS has documented its quality assurance procedures since 2014/15. This fifth edition is a full revision that brings the Manual into line with:

- the eleven standards set by the **Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)** for accredited higher education institutions;
- the **European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG 2015)**, which apply across the European Higher Education Area;
- the **ITS Act (Cap. 566)** and the ITS Strategic Plan.

Our Commitment to Quality

ITS is committed to high-quality, industry-relevant education in tourism and hospitality. In practice, our Quality Policy means that we:

- make sure everything we do supports our mission and strategic goals;
- treat students as active partners in their learning and in improving the Institute;
- give staff clear responsibilities, room to develop and a culture of reflecting on their work;
- work with industry so that our programmes stay relevant and our graduates are ready for work;
- act openly and fairly, and base decisions on evidence;
- keep improving through regular monitoring, review and follow-up action.

How Quality Assurance Works at ITS

Four guiding principles

- **A regular cycle.** Quality work follows a repeating cycle, not a one-off check.
- **Everyone has a say.** Students, staff, employers and external partners help design, deliver and review what we do.
- **Open and documented.** Policies, processes and responsibilities are written down, and key decisions are backed by evidence.
- **Improvement first.** We use data and feedback to get better, and do not treat quality as a box-ticking exercise.

Plan, Do, Check, Act

Every area of the Institute works through the same four-step improvement cycle:

Step	What happens
Plan	We set goals and prepare strategic plans, yearly plans, new programmes and policies.
Do	We carry out the plans: teaching, assessment, student support and administration.
Check	We measure how well things are going using performance indicators, student feedback, external examiner reports, audits and annual reviews.
Act	We act on the results, make improvements and feed the lessons into the next round of planning.

Who is responsible

Quality is a shared responsibility across the whole ITS community. Some bodies have particular roles:

- **Board of Governors:** approves the Institute's strategy, budget and key policies, including this Manual, and oversees how they are carried out.
- **Chief Executive Officer and Executive Management:** lead the Institute day to day and turn strategy into action.
- **Academic Boards:** oversee academic standards, approve programmes and deal with academic integrity.
- **Internal Quality Assurance Committee (IQAC):** reviews reports and data from across the Institute and follows up on improvement actions.
- **Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQAU):** coordinates quality assurance work, keeps this Manual up to date and supports departments.
- **Students' Council and student representatives:** bring the student view into committees and decision-making.
- **Programme Advisory Committees:** bring employers and industry experts into programme design and review.

What the Manual Covers

The Manual is organised around eleven quality standards, following the MFHEA framework. For each one it sets out a policy, the procedures to follow, who is responsible, how progress is measured and how often it is reviewed. The sections below summarise each standard and what it means in practice.

1. Mission and Strategic Management

ITS has a clear mission, vision and set of values, published on its website. A five-year Strategic Development Plan sets the Institute's direction and is prepared after wide consultation with staff, students, industry and national bodies.

What this means in practice:

- The mission, vision and values are reviewed at least every five years.
- Yearly plans turn the strategy into specific actions, targets and budgets.
- An Annual Strategy Report tracks progress and feeds into the next year's plans.
- A Business Continuity Plan, reviewed every year, prepares the Institute for disruptions such as IT failures or emergencies.

2. Governance, Oversight and Integrity

ITS is run through a clearly defined structure of governing bodies, each with set roles and responsibilities. Decisions are made openly, on evidence and in line with the law and MFHEA requirements.

What this means in practice:

- The ITS organigram and key governance documents are published on the ITS website.
- Anyone involved in decision-making must declare conflicts of interest and step aside where needed.
- Students and staff are represented on governing bodies and committees.
- Academic freedom is protected, and all institutional policies are reviewed regularly.

3. Quality Management

ITS runs a single Quality Management System that covers every academic and administrative area, from teaching and admissions to finance, facilities and partnerships.

What this means in practice:

- Every department carries out a yearly Departmental Quality Review.
- The IQAC brings together survey results, external examiner reports, complaints data and performance indicators to spot where improvement is needed.
- Improvement actions are given owners and deadlines and followed until completed.
- ITS takes part in external reviews by the MFHEA and acts on their findings.

4. Integrity, Accountability and Information

ITS expects honesty and ethical conduct from all staff and students, and manages its information securely and lawfully.

What this means in practice:

- Clear rules cover plagiarism and academic dishonesty, supported by plagiarism detection software. Use of artificial intelligence is allowed within the limits of the ITS policy on AI.
- Research involving people needs ethics approval.
- Personal data is handled in line with the GDPR and the Maltese Data Protection Act, overseen by a Data Protection Officer.
- Information published about programmes, fees, rules, quality outcomes and complaints procedures is checked at least once a year.

5. Teaching and Administrative Staff

ITS makes sure that its staff are properly qualified and supported. Recruitment, induction, development and appraisal follow fair and open procedures, and all staff are treated with dignity and respect.

What this means in practice:

- Teaching staff must meet MFHEA qualification requirements, and lecturers include practitioners from industry.
- Staff take part in continuing professional development, including time spent in industry.
- Teaching is observed by peers, and every member of staff has a yearly appraisal.
- An annual staff wellbeing survey helps ITS improve working conditions.

6. Design and Approval of Programmes

Every new programme, and every significant change to an existing one, goes through a formal design and approval process before it is offered to students.

What this means in practice:

- Programmes are shaped by labour market needs, consultation with industry and comparison with similar programmes elsewhere.
- Each programme has clear learning outcomes pitched at the right level of the Malta and European Qualifications Frameworks (MQF/EQF).
- Programmes include practical, work-based learning suited to tourism and hospitality.
- Programmes are designed to be accessible to a wide range of learners, including students with disabilities.

7. Student-Centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Students are at the centre of teaching and learning at ITS. Teaching, learning and assessment are linked to clear learning outcomes and kept up to date with research and industry practice.

What this means in practice:

- Assessment is fair, consistent and transparent, and is checked by second markers and external examiners.

- Students receive written feedback on their assessed work within three weeks of the deadline, unless told otherwise in advance.
- Every student is assigned a Personal Academic Advisor.
- Students can ask for recognition of prior learning and have the right to appeal assessment decisions or raise a complaint.

8. Student Administration and Support

ITS aims to give every student the information, guidance and help they need, from the first enquiry to graduation and beyond.

What this means in practice:

- Admissions are fair and based on published entry requirements, with a route for mature and non-standard applicants. Applications are acknowledged within five working days.
- Fees and financial support, including scholarships and flexible payment plans, are published clearly.
- Wellbeing services include confidential counselling, learning support and reasonable adjustments, study skills help, English language support, careers guidance and placement support.
- Attendance is monitored so that students who fall behind can be contacted and supported early.

9. Learning Resources and Facilities

ITS provides students and staff with suitable, safe and accessible learning spaces and digital resources.

What this means in practice:

- Specialist facilities reflect real working environments in the hospitality and tourism industry.
- Library services, the online learning platform and IT support are monitored against set service levels.
- Facilities are inspected on a regular schedule.
- ITS tracks its energy use and waste as part of its commitment to sustainability.

10. Programme Management, Monitoring and Review

Once a programme is running, it is watched closely and reviewed regularly so that it stays current and useful.

What this means in practice:

- Students complete an evaluation at the end of every module and an annual satisfaction survey.
- Each programme is reviewed every year, with input from staff, student representatives and industry.
- Each programme undergoes an in-depth Periodic Review at least every five years.
- If a programme is closed, students already enrolled are supported to finish their studies or offered a suitable alternative.

11. Internationalisation and Service to Society

ITS prepares students for an international industry and contributes to the economic, cultural, social and environmental life of Malta and the Mediterranean.

What this means in practice:

- Students and staff can study, teach or train abroad through Erasmus+ and other mobility schemes.
- ITS works with partner institutions abroad and takes part in European and international projects.
- ITS offers short courses and professional development for people already working in the industry, and carries out applied research.
- The Institute supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and takes part in cultural, community and national policy work.

Your Voice Counts

Feedback is central to how ITS checks and improves its quality. There are several ways to take part:

Who	How you can take part
Students	Module evaluations and the annual Student Satisfaction Survey; elected programme student representatives; the Students' Council; the academic appeals and complaints procedures.
Graduates	Graduate destination surveys, which tell ITS how its graduates are doing in the world of work; the ITS alumni network.
Employers and industry	Programme Advisory Committees, employer surveys, placement partnerships and consultation on the Institute's strategy.
Staff	Departmental meetings, surveys, the annual staff wellbeing survey and membership of institutional committees.

Complaints and appeals are handled under published ITS policies that set out the grounds, the stages, the timelines and the right to be accompanied. The IQAC looks at complaints and appeals data every year to see what can be improved.

Reporting and Openness

ITS reports on how well it is doing, both internally and to the public:

- An Annual Institutional Quality Report brings together the results of monitoring and review across the Institute.
- A Self-Assessment Report is prepared for external review by the MFHEA.
- Programme information, entry requirements, fees, rules and regulations, quality assurance policies, external review outcomes and the Annual Report are published on the ITS website.
- The Quality Assurance Manual itself is reviewed regularly and made available on the ITS website.

Find Out More

For more information about quality assurance at ITS, or to request a copy of the full Quality Assurance Manual, please contact us:

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Terms Used in This Summary

Term	Meaning
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, the common European reference for quality in higher education.
External Examiner	An independent academic or expert from outside ITS who checks that assessment is fair and standards are appropriate.
IQAC / IQAU	Internal Quality Assurance Committee / Internal Quality Assurance Unit.
MFHEA	Malta Further and Higher Education Authority, the national regulator for further and higher education.
MQF / EQF	Malta Qualifications Framework and European Qualifications Framework, which describe the level of a qualification.
Periodic Review	An in-depth review of a programme carried out at least every five years.
Recognition of Prior Learning	A process that gives credit for knowledge and skills gained through earlier study, work or life experience.