

# **External Quality Assurance**

## Audit Report

**NEW HORIZONS (INSTITUTE FOR WORK COMPETENCIES)**

Carried out on

Thursday 18 March 2021

Quality education for  
confident futures .

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## Abbreviations List

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ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EQA/QA audit	External Quality Assurance Audit
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
MFHEA	Malta Further and Higher Education Authority
MQF	Malta Qualifications Framework
NQAF	National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education
SAR	Self-Assessment Report
MEA	Malta Employers' Association
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CPD	Continuous Professional Development

## Executive Summary

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### Institutional background

New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) is licensed as a Further Education Institution (License number: 2016-015) by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA). New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) were given a provisional license for one year in 2016 and then a renewal of license was granted for five years. The license expires on 31 July 2022. New Horizon (Institute for Work Competencies) is an institute that specialises in offering accredited programmes to leaders of industry who wish to up-skill their employees. Therefore, the courses offered are those that are in demand by employers in order to remain competitive in their markets while retaining and attracting the best talent possible. The programme that is currently being offered, trains leaders in managing people effectively. This programme titled “Award in Leading People at the Workplace”, is spread over 84 contact hours awarding a total of 16 ECTS and it is made up of four modules.

The main objectives of New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) are

- to offer experiential learning through formal and informal training to individuals who seek success in their life’s project;
- to offer skills based training programs that impart the necessary competences to lead people and shape the culture of work;
- to challenge for personal change, believe in self, create new directions for people and transform situations at work for sustained success.

The Institution’s mission statement as highlighted in the Self-Assessment Report (SAR), which was presented to the panel, is: “To grow the knowledge, skills and confidence of individuals who seek to engage others in achieving sustained success for the common good at work.”

The current offices and training facilities of New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) are hosted within the premises of the Malta Employers’ Association (MEA) at 35/1, South Street, Valletta VLT 1100, Malta.

### Overview of the audit process

This report is a result of the External Quality Assurance process undertaken by an independent peer review panel. The panel evaluated the documentation submitted by the educational institution and conducted an online audit visit. The panel was responsible for reaching conclusions on Standards 1 and 3 – 11. As outlined in the External Quality Audit Manual of Procedures, the MFHEA sought external expertise to evaluate and reach a conclusion on Standard 2. Through this report, the panel also highlighted areas of good practice which, in its view, make a positive contribution to academic standards and quality of education that are worthy of being emulated and disseminated more widely.

## Summary of the conclusions given by the Peer Review Panel

On the basis of the findings documented in the report, the panel has concluded that New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) meets Standards 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10 and 11, requires improvement for Standards 1, 6, 8 and 9. The recommendations in the report are meant to improve the standards already in place and to enhance good practice. The panel made four (4) mandatory recommendations, two of which are to be implemented within six (6) months of the publication of the report, one of which is to be implemented within three (3) months of the publication of the report and one which is to be implemented within two (2) years of the publication of the report. They also made four (4) key recommendations, three (3) of which are to be implemented within six (6) months of the publication of the report and one (1) of which is to be implemented within two (2) months of the publication of the report. The panel also made seven (7) recommendations.

The panel has found New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) to be particularly responsive and self-reflective during the entire quality assurance process. All members of staff showed a lot of motivation to use the line of questioning of the review panel and the discussions which ensued during the online QA audit in order to improve the operations and practices.

## About the External Quality Audit

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### Aims and Objectives of the EQA

Quality assurance in Malta is underpinned by six principles that determine the remit and function of the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education, and the relationship between internal and external quality assurance to enhance learning outcomes.

- i. The Framework is based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and enriched by the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) perspective.
- ii. The Framework contributes to a National Culture of Quality, through:
  - increased agency, satisfaction and numbers of service users,
  - an enhanced international profile and credibility of providers in Malta,
  - the promotion of Malta as a regional provider of excellence in further and higher education.
- iii. The Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) is fit for purpose.
- iv. The External Quality Assurance (QA audit) is a tool for both development and accountability. The QA audit shall ensure that the internal quality management system of the provider is:
  - fit for purpose according to the provider's courses and service users,
  - compliant with Standards and regulations and contributing to the development of a national quality culture,
  - contributing to the fulfilment of the broad goals of Malta's Education Strategy 2014-2024,
  - Implemented with effectiveness, comprehensiveness and sustainability.
- v. The Quality Improvement Cycle is at the heart of the Framework.
- vi. The integrity and independence of the QA audit process is guaranteed.

The QA audit provides public assurance about the Standards of further and higher education programmes and the quality of the learning experience of students. It presents an opportunity for providers to demonstrate that they adhere to the expectations of stakeholders with regards to the programmes of study that they offer and the achievements and capabilities of their students. It also provides a focus for identifying good practices and for the implementation of institutional approaches to the continuous improvement in the quality of educational provision.

MFHEA has a responsibility to ensure that a comprehensive assessment is conducted for all higher education providers in Malta. The QA audit provides an opportunity to assess the Standards and quality of higher education in Malta against the expectations and practices of provision across the European Higher Education Area and internationally.

The QA audit examines how providers manage their own responsibilities for the quality and Standards of the programmes they offer. In particular, the following issues are addressed:

- The fitness for purpose and effectiveness of internal quality assurance processes, including an examination of the systems and procedures that have been implemented and the documentation that supports them.
- The compliance with the obligations of licence holders with established regulations and any conditions or restrictions imposed by MFHEA.
- The governance and financial sustainability of providers, including assurances about the legal status of the provider, the appropriateness of corporate structures and the competence of staff with senior management responsibilities.

The QA audit benchmarks the QA system and procedures within an institution against eleven (11) Standards:

1. Policy for quality assurance: entities shall have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management.
2. Institutional and financial probity: entities shall ensure that they have appropriate measures and procedures in place to ensure institutional and financial probity.
3. Design and approval of programmes: self-accrediting providers shall have appropriate processes for the design and approval of their programmes of study.
4. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment: entities shall ensure that programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in the learning process.
5. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification: entities shall consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student 'life-cycle'.
6. Teaching staff: entities shall assure the competence and effectiveness of their teaching staff.
7. Learning resources and student support: entities shall have appropriate funding for their learning and teaching activities and sufficient learning resources to fully support the students' learning experiences.
8. Information management: entities shall ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.
9. Public information: entities shall publish information about their activities which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible.
10. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes: entities shall implement the 'Quality Cycle' by monitoring and periodically reviewing their programmes to ensure their continuing fitness for purpose.
11. Cyclical external quality assurance: entities should undergo external quality assurance, approved by MFHEA, at least once every five years.

Peer-review panels essentially ask providers the following question about their arrangements for quality management:



'What systems and procedures are in place and what evidence is there that they are working effectively?'

The approach to quality assurance can be encapsulated in a number of key questions which providers should ask themselves about their management of quality.

- What are we trying to do?
- Why are we trying to do it?
- How are we trying to do it?
- Why are we doing it that way?
- Is this the best way of doing it?
- How do we know it works?
- Could it be done better?

Answers to these questions should form the basis of the provider's critical assessment of and response to the self-evaluation questionnaire.

The approach of the QA audit is not simply about checking whether providers adhere to the regulations; it examines how providers are developing their own systems in addressing the expectations of sound management of educational Standards and the quality of their learning and teaching provision. It does not involve the routine identification and confirmation of criteria – a 'tick- box' approach – but a mature and reflective dialogue with providers about the ways in which they discharge their obligations for quality and the identification of existing good practices.

## The Peer Review Panel

The Peer Review Panel was composed of:

**Chair of Review Panel:**

Dr Ing. Owen Casha

**Peer Reviewer:**

Dr Katya De Giovanni

**Student Peer Reviewer:**

Ms Tiziana Gatt

**QA Managers (MFHEA):**

Ms Annalisa Mallia

Mr Giacomo Annese

## Specific Terms of Reference

The general terms of reference of the Review Panel were to review the fitness for purpose and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes as implemented by the provider against the Standards outlined in the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education.

Following the preliminary meeting held with the provider on the 17 February 2021 and pursuant to the documentation received from New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) Ltd., the Panel sought to focus their questions around three main themes and used triangulation in order to gain a better understanding of the QA provisions in place.

The main lines of enquiry were:

- The effective implementation of an internal quality assurance system at New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) aligned to the Standards outlined in the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education and with an active input from staff, students, lecturers and external stakeholders.
- The capacity of New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) to ensure a student-centred approach to teaching and learning.
- The regular feedback collected from the students and staff and the use of that feedback by the institution in ongoing development of the study programmes.
- The value added of the training provided by the institution.

The review team decided that, as part of an enhancement-led approach, it would issue recommendations linked to all parts of the operations of the institute. The report therefore distinguishes between:

- Mandatory recommendations (MR) which are crucial to meet a standard and shall be implemented within the timeframe indicated by the panel.
- Key recommendations (KR) are important to improve a standard and which should be implemented expediently by the institute to address weaknesses; within the timeframe indicated by the panel.
- Recommendations (R) for improvement which are merely suggestions based on the panel analysis and observations; these could be implemented by the institution.

## Institutional Context

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In 2016, New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) was provisionally licensed by the MFHEA as a Higher Education Institution (holding licence no 2016-015) and then a renewal of license was granted for five years. New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) is authorised to provide a number of programmes as indicated in the following list of MQF Level 5 qualifications:

1. Getting Close to the Results That You Want (4 ECTS)
2. Award in Learning Needs Analysis Process and Performance Management (5 ECTS)
3. Award in Leading People at the Workplace (16 ECTS)

The third programme is currently the only one being offered and it was developed and designed to train leaders in managing people effectively. This programme is spread over 84 contact hours awarding a total of 16 ECTS and it is made up of four modules:

- Award in Shaping the Work Environment (6 ECTS)
- Award in Selling and Generating Revenue (3 ECTS)
- Award in Managing Performance and Coaching (4 ECTS)
- Award in Resolving Conflict and Mediation (3 ECTS)

which are also considered as exit points.

The licence for New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) to operate as a Higher Education Institution expires on 31 July 2022. All programmes are home grown qualifications. The institution designs and delivers accredited courses both on a public and bespoke basis. The training programmes offered by New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) are relevant and contemporary to current trends and niches in the market and in business and have practical value both nationally and internationally. The target students are professionals who are looking to keep abreast of developments in their line of work, and also individuals who would like to explore new areas of study.

The Institute is customer focused and therefore their products and services are driven by what the customers need as their objective is to deliver the results that their customers aspire for. New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) celebrate diversity, engage in open communication and ensure health and safety for all. In addition, New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) seek continuous improvement in all aspects of our work to ensure quality of educational programmes and services.

New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) collaborates with other MFHEA licensed training suppliers such as the Malta Employers Association (MEA) and the Learning Hub Training Centre. So far in such collaboration New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) offers and delivers courses while MEA or Learning Hub do the promotion of the courses, take the bookings from potential students and provide the venue with the necessary back up. The certificates are issued by New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) as directed by MFHEA at the point of being granted the license. During 2020, the institute collaborated only with MEA. In fact, although the office address on the license is: Gardjola, Salvu Buhagiar Street, Marsascala MSK 2218, the current offices and training facilities of New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) are hosted within the premises of the Malta Employers' Association (MEA) at 35/1, South Street, Valletta VLT 1100, Malta.

## Analysis and Findings of Panel

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### Standard 1: Policy for Quality Assurance

*Policy for quality assurance: entities shall have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management.*

#### Main findings

The panel was presented with preliminary information on the vision, mission and objectives of the institution and an outline of a long-term strategy of continuously providing professional and practical training services in response to the demands of industry, business organisations, government, and NGOs. New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) endeavours to accredit all its courses with MFHEA. This is a safeguard for quality of training and validates the value of the courses for the employment market and industry in general.

The panel heard that although New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) has a very good working relationship with external stakeholders, including employers and social partners, this is not formally documented. The panel can confirm that this networking is extremely important for the institution. External stakeholders confirmed that they have regular communications and meetings with the institution before the launching of a training course and this ensures that their needs and requirements are met. The stakeholders also confirmed that they were satisfied with the skills and knowledge which their employees developed following the courses delivered by New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences).

The panel saw that New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) compiled a comprehensive SAR which is based around the standards outlined by MFHEA. This SAR clearly shows that the institution is truly reflecting on ways to improve its internal quality assurance structure. New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) has an Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) document (reference SOP 12) which describes in detail the policy for quality assurance and forms part of their strategic management. The IQA document is based and divided in number of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) which are well documented. This document provides information about the organisation of the quality assurance system and covers the responsibilities of the different members in the organisation. It also includes procedures for ensuring academic integrity and freedom, including the use of plagiarism detection software. In addition, the IQA documentation includes procedures for guarding against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff. Moreover, the current IQA document is not publicly available on a website and since this is a requirement of the QA standards the panel insists that this is rectified at the earliest.

The panel could see that there is considerable engagement by the provider to comply with the quality standards of the MFHEA and continuously seeks to improve the learning experience of students via feedback received from external stakeholders, students and employers, and an internal QA exercise is also carried out by an internal verifier.

## **Good Practice Identified**

None

## **Recommendations for improvement**

MR1.1: The provider shall, within three (3) months from the publication of this report, make the IQA document public.

R1.2: The provider shall formally document and minute meetings held with external stakeholders, including employers and social partners.

## **Conclusion**

New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) requires improvement to meet Standard 1.

## Standard 2: Institutional Probity

*Institutional and financial probity: entities shall ensure that they have appropriate measures and procedures in place to ensure institutional and financial probity.*

### **Main findings**

New Horizons Institute (For Work Competencies) Limited is a company incorporated in Malta under registration number C 88631, which runs an institute that specialises in offering accredited programmes to leaders of industry who wish to up-skill their employees. Typically, clients are employers who seeks to remain competitive in their respective markets while retaining and attracting the best talent possible.

The company is owned by a sole shareholder, Mr. Joe Gerada, who is the managing director and has Mr. Jurgen Gerada as co-director. The Academic field of the operation is managed by Ms. Sylvana Piscopo. Mr. Joe Gerada, is highly qualified and experienced in key areas for the institute, namely, management, human recourse and mediation. Whereas Ms. Piscopo, as the director of studies is also a highly qualified person with many years of experience of human resource management, teaching and leading academic staff.

The training provider is clearly ensuring that the members of its body corporate, legal representative/s and staff are fit for purpose, and this by carefully selecting personnel for the respective crucial regulatory and academic roles. It was noted that the company has clearly outlined the duties and responsibilities of the main roles within its organisational structure, and has in place a written procedure relating to the engagement and selection for headship positions based on the criteria of attitude, disposition, knowledge and skills.

The company is a start up, incorporated in October 2018, and prepared audited financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2018, which indicate a profitable performance, positive liquidity and equity. In addition, financial projections for two years were submitted which were clearly aligned with operatioanl objectives of the company. Thus from a financial perspective, given its small size, flat organisational structure and the long track record of the managing director, the company is expected to be flexible in its approaches and hence able to act quickly and decisively in the case of any short term pressures or negative trends.

From the documentation provided it is clear that the company is compliant in terms of its fiscal, employment and regulatory obligations including those emanating from the Companies Act.

### **Good Practice Identified**

The company prepares projected financial performance reports that are clearly aligned with operational objectives thus ensuring that finance and operations operate in tandem.

### **Recommendations for improvement**

None

### **Conclusion**

New Horizons Institute (For Work Competencies) Limited meets the requirements of Standard 2.

## Standard 3: Design and Approval of Programmes

*Design and approval of programmes: self-accrediting providers shall have appropriate processes for the design and approval of their programmes of study.*

### **Main findings**

The programmes which are developed and delivered at New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) are designed to be learning outcome-based and they distinguish between knowledge, skills and competences. The programmes are in line with the institutional strategy in providing training to people with experience who did not necessarily have the opportunity to follow a formal academic path while recognising their prior learning. Programmes are also designed to cater for people coming from different backgrounds. Design and approval of programmes is aided by the feedback which is received by the institution from various industry stakeholders and employers via Mr Joseph Farrugia, who is currently the director general of MEA. New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) also receives feedback from students, which triggers discussions at meetings held by the board of directors, which sustain continuous improvement. Programmes are subject to a formal institutional approval process which is aided by the fact that the team of people involved are small in number while having the necessary skill set. The expected student workload is clearly indicated on the brochures in terms of ECTS or ECVET learning credits. Programmes are accredited by the MFHEA and are in line with the MQF and the Malta Referencing Report and subsequent updates. The target audience and the minimum eligibility and selection criteria are clearly specified and they are broad enough to be inclusive and recognise prior learning and experience of the potential attendees.

Appropriate learning dynamics and a measure of tutor-learner interaction are appropriate for the level and content of the programme since the background of the attendees is highly recognised and taken on board by means of pre-admission evaluation. Lectures are delivered only by Mr Joe Gerada who is competent in the field and is supported by feedback and supervision from his colleagues who sit on the board of directors. His knowledge is constantly updated by adequate Continuous Professional Development (CPD) that he receives through the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). The trainer makes use of appropriate resources such as presentations, videos, articles, case studies, physical tools and reflective exercises amongst others. These encourage students to relate the theory they learn to practical scenarios, thus enabling them to apply it in their working context.

### **Good practice identified**

The background of the attendees is highly recognised and taken on board by means of pre-admission evaluation.

### **Recommendations for improvement**

R3.1 - It is recommended that New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) setups mechanisms to enable and aid trainers, that might join the institution in the coming years to follow CPD events, courses or training.

## Conclusion

New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) meets Standard 3.

## Standard 4: Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment

*Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment: entities shall ensure that programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in the learning process.*

### Main findings

#### *Student – Centred Learning and Training Pedagogy*

Although in its vision the provider envisages to grow in terms of student numbers, the current small numbers which the training institution caters for, offers the possibility for individual attention - whether in person or online. Notwithstanding the current pandemic scenario, the provider still tries to hold in person training, taking into consideration all Covid-19 related health and safety measures, so as to give an authentic practical experience to the trainees.

The learning takes place within a diverse-rich setting, as people from various companies, with different backgrounds and of different nationalities come together for these training programmes. Notwithstanding the divergences, the trainer manages to create a healthy learning scenario whereby trainees interact with each other and benefit from the ample examples and experiences that are shared.

Trainees commend the transition of the provider from in-presence training to online training. However, the panel noted that the trainees deem that breaks should take place more frequent and perhaps having longer breaks as it can get tiring to maintain the attention span for the duration of three hours with minimal break-time, as has been noted by an 'external' observer in his report.

A learning essential which is accentuated by this training institution is that of reflective practice. The staff at this training institute believe that aiding trainees to become reflective practitioners in their field of work is at the crux of performing their jobs effectively and efficiently. In fact, trainees are subject to reflective journaling on a weekly basis, in order that "reflection on action can become reflection for action". With regards to this reflective task, trainees are guided by themes to look out for when compiling the reflective journal, together with the assessment criteria, which information can be found in the trainees' handbook.

The panel noted that trainees are able to transfer the skills and knowledge gained from the training to their place of work and moreover, trainees feel that the content covered during this programme aids them to develop holistically.

#### *Feedback*

Feedback with regards to one's performance and progression is given in writing; however, such constructive and formative feedback is not graded as the purpose of such feedback is for the trainee to



position him/herself in a way as to make him or her thrive forward on a personal level, academic level and professional level. Feedback about the result of the trainees' assessment is given both in written format and through verbal communication, while any trainee may request a second meeting with the trainer to discuss the results further.

### *Assessment*

Each module within the training programme is broken into parts. For each part (Content, Analysis, Evaluation and Creativity) trainees are rated from 1 to 10 for the various competencies exhibited. Therefore, trainees are made aware of where their strengths and weaknesses lie for each respective module. The collected data reflects the trainee's capacity and ability to digest the content, critically analyse and evaluate it, and apply it creatively to his or her own personal and professional needs.

Initially, before commencing the training, trainees go through a diagnostic assessment by filling in a pre-assessment training sheet, compiled together with their work supervisor, delineating the trainee's performance, skills and knowledge within his or her role at the workplace. Upon terminating the training programme, trainees together with their supervisor fill in a final assessment (post-training assessment sheet), which assessment includes points from the supervisor with regards to the actual performance of the trainee, rating the various skills, knowledge and aptitude of the trainee following the training, and noting any actions to be taken on by the trainee to improve his/her personal and professional development. By comparing the initial and final evaluation with regards to the trainee's performance, skills and knowledge, one can analyse the trainee's progress and assess the importance of such training in the growth and development of the trainee.

Trainees submit weekly reflective journals, which journals are not graded but serve as a means for the trainers to formatively assess them. With regards to assignments, trainees have multiple opportunities to submit draft versions of their assignment for their trainer's review until a given submission date. Such opportunity serves to aid trainees, especially the ones who have been out of formal learning settings for quite some time, as by means of initial corrections and clarifications by their trainer, trainees are further directed and informed on how to supplement their assignment.

Although the assessment tasks to be completed are of a highly reflective and experiential nature, the training institute has in place a plagiarism software used to analyse the assessments produced by the trainees.

### **Good practice identified**

None

### **Recommendations for improvement**

R4.1 - It is recommended that the training sessions are to include adequate breaks.

R4.2 - It is recommended that the number of opportunities given to the trainees for the submission of draft versions of assignments is capped to a certain number.

## Conclusion

New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) meets Standard 4.

## Standard 5: Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

*Student admission, progression, recognition and certification: entities shall consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student 'life-cycle'.*

### Main findings

Delegates attending courses at New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) are invited to apply via google documents. All those who have so far applied to attend courses at New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) have all been admitted. On commencement of the course they are supplied with a course handbook which outlines the processes and assessments expected throughout the learning journey. There are extensive processes in place which monitor the delegates' progress. This has been evidenced during the audit by means of an excel spreadsheet where all the components of each module are clearly marked and annotated. There seems to be no official mechanism for recognition of prior learning for those who have formal qualifications but it seems that this course has been in fact created for the purpose of helping people get a formal qualification for what they have been learning through their experiences at work. On course completion delegates receive a certificate which is level rated and has three stamps: that of New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences), that of the Malta Employers' Association (MEA) and also of the Malta Higher and Further Education Authority. Attached to the certificate provided is the qualification supplement which outlines the modules covered and the mark attained.

### *Recruitment and Progression*

The recruitment and progression practices at New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) are sound. There is continuous contact with the delegates, and these are supported with feedback and development on the course portfolio and exercises which they produce. The number of submissions for feedback on the delegates' work is limitless and the opportunity for development is evident with the kind of feedback provided.

### *Certification*

The certification, a sample of which was provided, has all the necessary information as required. It clearly delineates the logos of the service provider and the stakeholders involved. Furthermore, it also provides further detail on the qualification supplement.

## Good practice identified

The practices related to this standard are higher than expected. Detailed feedback and information regarding progression are given on a weekly basis. The recruitment protocol is clear and delegates are supported from the beginning of their learning journey and even after termination of the course.

## Recommendations for improvement

KR5.1 - It is recommended that New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) compiles and implements a policy for the recognition of prior learning – within six (6) months of the publication of the report.

R5.2 – It is recommended that a follow-up study on the candidates who complete the course is carried out and adequately documented.

## Conclusion

New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) meets Standard 5.

## Standard 6: Teaching Staff

*Teaching staff: entities shall assure the competence and effectiveness of their teaching staff.*

## Main findings

New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) is a very small institution. There seems to be only one official trainer who holds the role of Managing Director and another person who acts as the internal verifier. During the audit, it was noted that the feedback form used to provide feedback for the trainer is not very clearly delineated with its purpose and intention. At times there was mention of a delegate with initials and it seems that it was a feedback sheet for a delegate. However, it was presented as something used to give feedback to the trainer.

Staff are not really recruited at New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences). As a training entity there seems to be over-reliance on one person who is both the Managing Director and also the trainer. The entity is well aware of this and is actually roping in and training another person who is interested in taking over. There was no actual call for applications for this new recruit as this seems to be a family-run business (legacy). Overall, there is an atmosphere of a learning culture in this organisation and the trainer is a fellow of an internationally renowned organisation to which he refers to for his own CPD. There are enough feedback mechanisms to encourage innovation and the use of new technologies for teaching and learning. This was evidenced by the use of skype and zoom for online teaching and also because the assessment forms included a number of case studies showing that what is presented theoretically is then also applied through role plays and in class discussions and exercises.

## Good practice identified

There is an atmosphere of learning and actual CPD within New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences). The trainer who is also a director is a highly qualified and experienced professional who not only encourages other to develop their skills but also leads them by example. The internal verifier is also highly qualified and experienced.

## Recommendations for improvement

MR 6.1 – The panel recommends that clear feedback sheets for the purpose of improving the course delivery should be in place. This is to be carried out within six (6) months of the publication of the report.

KR 6.2 – Furthermore, there the panel recommends that there should be back up plans should the main trainer and director be unavailable. A wider pool of people needs to be officially recruited and involved in order to make New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) more sustainable. This is to be carried out within six (6) months of the publication of the report.

## Conclusion

New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) requires improvement to meet Standard 6.

## Standard 7: Learning Resources and Student Support

*Learning resources and student support: entities shall have appropriate funding for their learning and teaching activities and sufficient learning resources to fully support the students' learning experiences.*

## Main findings

### *Resources*

Upon commencing the training, trainees are given a handbook in digital format, where the course assessment, complaints' procedure, and other information are delineated for the trainees' reference. Training programmes are tailor-made, in that, based upon the trainees' profiles, the trainer constructs his training to suit all the trainees' backgrounds and work-related matters.

A battery of learning/training resources is made use of, in that, through PowerPoint presentations, videos, readings, case studies, assessment sheets, and management and team building activities, the trainees gain both practical insights and theoretical knowledge that they can apply at their place of work and in their everyday life. Before every lecture, notes are sent to the trainees via email for ease of reference during the training sessions. Moreover, if any discussions or topics arise during the lecture, that were not part of the planned session, the trainer supplements the trainees with adjunct reading lists and/or material for them to further develop on the themes talked about in class.

If there is the need for a trainee to access learning equipment, like the use of a laptop, this is loaned to the student by the provider. Moreover, any trainees who need to make use of training facilities to follow training or to study, can avail themselves of the ones offered at MEA.

### *Support*

When trainees are unable to attend a session or sessions due to illness or priority tasks at the place of work, trainees are given a copy of all the handouts to read or work out as the case may be, and return to the trainer for correction and discussion. In addition, the trainee who misses the session is provided with an abridged one-to-one session, during which the trainee is given the salient points of the missed session, given feedback about the handouts that she or he worked on, and is requested to carry out a task which she or he needs to reflect about in his or her diary or journal.

When trainees struggle to report adequately in the reflective diary or journal, the trainer conducts a one-to-one session with the individual and assists him or her in making a clear distinction between what constitutes non-reflective / reflective and critical abilities as indicated in the reflective journaling marking scheme. The trainer will work through with the trainees the fine differences between the three grades and encourage him or her to report in this manner.

In case of a trainee who lacks digital tools and connectivity, she or he is given the facility to use the equipment and connectivity from the offices of the MEA during office hours. Such facilities, which offices are fully accessible and licensed as a training centre by MFHEA, are offered free of charge. In addition, such trainees may submit their assignments in hand written format, while any documents which they need to work on shall be either mailed to them at their residence or they may pick them up from the offices of the MEA in Valletta.

With regards to submission deadlines of assessments, while ensuring that trainees do not slack in their assessment tasks, the provider allows a degree of flexibility in the submission date.

Mr Joe Gerada (the training provider) apart from being the sole trainer for the accredited programmes currently being offered, is the main point of reference for trainees. He is available to any queries or for support the trainees might need via email and via telephone, and also for one-to-one meetings if need be. Moreover, in those cases where a trainee falls behind in his or her studies or is showing lack of interest, the trainer enquires and offers his support.

### **Good practice identified**

None

### **Recommendations for improvement**

KR7.1 - Provide more resources to trainees through the development of an online library within two (2) years of the publication of this report.

R7.2 - Develop a centralised virtual learning environment to hold lectures, disseminate notes and learning material, and promote events.

## Conclusion

New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) meets Standard 7.

## Standard 8: Information Management

*Information management: entities shall ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.*

### Main findings

During the audit it was ascertained that information pertaining to the student population, vulnerable groups, course participation together with retention and completion rates were all available and kept up to date. Although rudimentary, the information system used serves its purpose. Records are accurately maintained and this is somewhat easy because the delegate population is small. Students are also given feedback sheets so that they can write their own comments following the course. On the whole it seems that the course is very well received. The information collected is analysed and evaluated by the Board of Directors at least twice a year. There is no library available for independent research as the trainer provides all the necessary readings for the delegates. The learning resources seem to rely heavily on what the trainer provides for the delegates.

### Good Practice identified

None

### Recommendations for improvement

MR8.1 – Research space should be made available for students in order for them to be able to do their own research and find their own resources. This is to be carried out within two (2) years of the publication of the report.

KR8.2 – Formal follow up on delegates' career paths should be strongly suggested as it is left entirely to the delegates to make contact after course termination. This is to be carried out within six (6) months of the publication of the report.

## Conclusion

New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) requires improvement to meet Standard 8.

## Standard 9: Public Information

*Public information: entities shall publish information about their activities which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible.*

### Main findings

The institution has an agreement with the Malta Employers Association (MEA), whereby MEA markets and receives the applications for courses offered by this institution. New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) does not have a website of its own, therefore it is limited in what information it can publish. In fact, the quality assurance policy and other course related policies are not available to the general public. The brochures available on the MEA website contain all the information required (course dates and times, MQF level, ECTS weighting, course content, modes of training and assessment, entry requirements, fees and funding opportunities).

### Good practice identified

None

### Recommendations for improvement

MR9.1 – New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) needs to design an own website or page on the MEA website in order to display the training institution’s IQA policy, academic calendar, and other relevant notices accordingly. This is to be carried out within six (6) months of the publication of the report.

R9.2 - The provider might also want to consider creating a social media platform page.

### Conclusion

New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) requires improvement to meet Standard 9.

## Standard 10: On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes

*Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes: entities shall implement the 'Quality Cycle' by monitoring and periodically reviewing their programmes to ensure their continuing fitness for purpose.*

### **Main findings**

New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) have in place appropriate arrangements for monitoring and periodically reviewing their academic programmes in order to ensure that they are meeting the set objectives and expectations. These include an internal audit exercise, supervision of lectures and capturing feedback from students via a questionnaire (referred to as the Training Evaluation Form – SOP 07) which is given at the end of each course or sub module.

The provider makes sure to identify recommendations for improvement and further development of programmes and ensures that the views of students, employers and other stakeholders are fully taken into consideration as part of this process. Programmes and courses are meeting the expectations of the employers are evidenced by the feedback given by some employers during an interview, held as part of this QA audit (vide agenda).

The provider carries out an analysis of the relationship between the input and the output standards, by assessing the skills of the attendees prior to joining for a programme and after the successful completion of the programme. This is also based on the feedback which is directly given by the employers relative to the workplace performance of their employee.

### **Good practice identified**

New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) assess the skills of the attendees before they join a programme and after they successfully complete it. In particular, this enables the provider to analyse the effectiveness of their programmes on the performance of attendees at their workplace.

### **Recommendations for improvement**

None

### **Conclusion**

New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) meets Standard 10.



## Standard 11: Cyclical External Quality Assurance

*Entities should undergo an external quality assurance audit by, or with the approval of, the MFHEA on a cyclical basis, according to the MFHEA guidelines, once every five years.*

### **Main findings**

New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) fulfils this standard by hosting the external online QA audit referred to in this report. This is the first EQA cycle of the institution. The panel has found New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) to be particularly responsive and self-reflective during the entire quality assurance process. All members of staff showed particular motivation to use the line of questioning of the review panel and the discussions which ensued during the online QA audit in order to improve the operations and practices at New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) Ltd.

### **Conclusion**

New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) meets Standard 11.

## Response by the Provider

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### Preamble

Further to the attached external quality assurance report, the management of New Horizons Institute commits to taking action on the recommendations as follows:

### Response to Key recommendations and Recommendations made by the Peer Review Panel

Action plan		
Recommendations	Actions to be taken to address the recommendations	Date for completion
Standard 1:		
R1.2	Recommendation accepted and actioned The meetings with clients in connection with training requests are being documented as suggested.	Done
Standard 2:		
none	Not applicable	Nil
Standard 3:		
R3.1	Recommendation accepted – Policy amended to offer wider CPD opportunities to the trainers of the Institute	Done
Standard 4:		
R4.1	Recommendation accepted Adequate break time is being scheduled in every training session	Done
R4.2	Recommendation accepted Policy amended to cap the submission of draft versions to two.	Done
Standard 5:		
KR5.1	Action in Progress The Institute is currently working on developing the right tool to assess prior learning of the delegates and shall be in place by due date.	28.02.22
R5.2	Recommendation accepted The policy has been changed to ensure follow up of past students in terms of their careers development.	Done
Standard 6:		
KR6.2	Recommendation accepted A new trainer is currently in training and shall take on the official role at the start of 2022.	28.02.22
Standard 7:		
KR7.1	Implemented – Physical library provided at MEA offices	Done

	With immediate effect the Business and management library of MEA is available to use for free to all delegates on the programme.	
R7.2	Recommendation under consideration Virtual learning is not the NH business model but a facebook page shall be developed to promote events and courses while the main sources of information shall remain the website at MEA.	---
Standard 8:		
KR8.2	Action in Progress The information collated through the follow up of past students shall be analysed and reported as suggested.	28.02.22
Standard 9:		
R9.2	Recommendation under consideration A facebook page shall be developed as suggested.	
Standard 10:		
	Not Application	

### Response to Mandatory recommendations made by the Peer Review Panel

Mandatory recommendations	Actions to be taken to address the recommendation	Date for completion
MR1.1	Arrangements are already in hand to upload the IQA document on the web site of the Malta Employers Association. The content is currently being updated as requested and shall be uploaded by due date.	30.11.21
MR6.1	A feedback sheet has been developed to compliment the current system of providing feedback on the submission made by the delegate.	Done
MR8.1	The research space was made available with immediate effect at the Malta Employers Association offices in Malta. The space houses the library as well to facilitate research and referencing. In addition, the delegate may, if necessary, be served with a computer laptop and software to carry out the research work.	Done
MR9.1	Arrangements are already in hand to upload the IQA document on the web site of the Malta Employers Association. The content is currently being updated and shall be uploaded on the website by due date.	28.02.22

### Annex 1: Review Panel Bio Notes

In the setting up of the review panel for New Horizons (Institute for Work Competences) Ltd., the MFHEA sought to maintain a high degree of diligence in the process of selection of the members of Peer Review Panel. The Panel sought to be composed of specialists in quality assurance to act as External Peers, professionals and practitioners of quality assurance frameworks, as well as students who, prior to the audits, attended professional Training Seminars organised by the MFHEA.

The following bio notes present the profiles of the members of Peer Review Panel. The bio notes are correct as at the time of when the QA audit was carried out (Thursday 18 March 2021).

#### **Chair of Review Panel:**

Dr Ing. Owen Casha received the B. Eng. (Hons.) degree (summa cum laude) in Electrical Engineering from the University of Malta in 2004. From September 2007 till June 2008, he was on a research collaboration with CEA-LETI (Grenoble, France) and ST-Microelectronics, as part of his doctoral studies. He received a Ph.D. in Radio Frequency Integrated Circuit Design from the University of Malta in 2010. He is currently a Senior Lecturer with the Department of Microelectronics and Nanoelectronics. He is also the Head of Department. His research interests are low voltage low phase noise radio frequency oscillators and synthesizers, high speed integrated circuits, embedded systems, RF MEMS and design of assistive devices. He authored more than 76 peer reviewed publications in conference proceedings, journals and book chapters. Dr Casha was the co-investigator in a number of EU and National funded research projects including LAB4MEMS, LAB4MEMS II and SPEECHIE and is currently involved in the Interreg CESBA MED and ESAIRQ-EUREKA Cluster PENTA projects. Dr Ing. Casha has sat on a number of MFHEA QA review panels for various institutions, acted as a COST Action proposal evaluator and as an evaluator for the Post Doc Reach High Scholarships in 2015.

#### **Peer Reviewer:**

Dr De Giovanni holds an honours degree in psychology from the University of Malta where she attained the shield for best dissertation. In 2000, she joined the Programme for Teaching and Learning in Diversity at the University of Malta and trained as a Let Me Learn Trainer and Consultant both in Malta and at Rowan University, USA. Dr De Giovanni is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist and Scientist and holds an Associate Fellowship from the British Psychological Society. In 2004, she was appointed lecturer within the Vocational Teacher Training Unit where her main responsibility was that of offering pedagogical training to lecturers. Further on, she held the posts of Deputy Director and Director at the Institute of Community Services at MCAST. Dr De Giovanni was also consultant for the European Commission and for the Council of Europe involving VET in Malta. She has also recently completed a Level 7 Award in Quality Assurance in Education. Currently Dr De Giovanni is the co-ordinator for the Bachelor in Psychology (Hons.) degree at the University of Malta.

#### **Student Peer Reviewer:**

Ms Tiziana Gatt is a University of Malta student reading for the Master of Arts in Health, Medicine and Society. She graduated with a Diploma in Management Studies and furthered her academic knowledge through a B.Sc. (Hons) in Sport and Active Lifestyles, and an Award Certificate in Teaching Adults.

## Annex 2: Agenda of the QA Online Audit (18 March 2021)

08.30 – 09.00 Meeting with Alumni

09.05 – 09.40 Meeting with Current Students

09.40 – 09.55 Panel Discussion

09.55 – 10.40 Meeting with members of the Board of Directors

10.40 – 11.00 Panel discussion

11.00 – 11.45 Meeting with external stakeholders

11.45 – 12.00 Panel Discussion

12.00 – 12.30 Working Lunch

12.30 – 13.00 Back Officer personnel meeting

13.00 – 15.00 Meeting with the Head of the Institution and Trainer

15.00 – 17.00 Panel Discussion and QA report

17.00 – 17.30 Presentation of findings



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