

Country Profile MALTA

1. Basic information – this should be as short as possible; doesn't need to be in paragraphs or full sentences.

Country name: MALTA

Structure of inspectorate:

Are you organised centrally or by region/state? Does inspection regulation or standards vary across regions or states?

The Quality Assurance Department is organised at a central/top level and as a National regulator within the Ministry for Education and Employment. Malta does not have regions or states since it is one small island.

Age of inspectorate:

How long have you been established for? What was your predecessor organisation (i.e. who did inspection before you?)

Quality Assurance in schools was introduced in Malta since 2005 and the Quality Assurance Department has been given the responsibility to carry out external reviews (audits/inspections), as per Education Act of 2006. Since their inception, inspections have fallen under the Ministry for Education and Employment. Since July 2016, our inspectorate is also regulating Childcare Centres (0-3 years) and the Ministry for Family and Social Solidarity previously owned the responsibility of regulation for this sector.

Size:

How many inspectors do you have? How many central/policy staff do you have?

Our team is made up of 14 people as follows:

- 1 Director
- 2 Assistant Directors
- 10 Education Officers (inspectors)
- 2 Clerks

Remits:

What form of education do you inspect? E.g. early years, schools, universities? Anything that is non-education?

The Quality Assurance Department carries out External Reviews in all pre-compulsory (0-5 years) and compulsory school age (5-16 years) educational institutions irrespective to which sector (State, Church or Independent) they pertain to.

Unit of inspection:

Do you inspect schools or groups of schools (or both?) Do you inspect teachers, or subject departments? Do you inspect local authorities?

The Quality Assurance Department inspects schools through a whole-school approach and does not inspect specific teachers or specific subject departments but the overall processes within a School, and how these are affecting improvement and learners' achievement. We are currently exploring new External Review models.

What is your strapline? *E.g. Ofsted's is "Raising standards, improving lives"*

The Quality Assurance Department does not have a strapline but it has a vision, mission and clearly stated goals.

Relationship with government:

Do you operate as part of the Education Ministry, or are you independent? Briefly explain the legal relationship you have with the Ministry (e.g. any reporting duties)? Are you allowed to report on government policy? Are you allowed to publish reports without govt approval?

The Quality Assurance Department is currently in transition to become part of a more autonomous National Commission that will have a distinct legal identity so as to reinforce the concept of an independent national regulator responsible for the setting and quality assurance of standards for the local educational field. This will be implemented through a newly proposed Education Regulatory Act, which is currently a draft bill and is being amended following feedback arising out of a public consultation. The Commission will still operate under the broad umbrella of the Ministry for Education and Employment, also for funding purposes. It is proposed that the Commission will provide the required guidelines, for the better implementation of the education policy and services.

Accountability: *What are you accountable for delivering? Where is this set out? (e.g. in legislation or in a policy document?) How are you held to account as an organisation (e.g. must you report annually)?*

A key function of the Quality Assurance Department as established in the current Education Act is:

"in support of the evaluation and the internal audit of every school, (to) implement inspections and external reviews, and also so that children and students are helped so that they may obtain in the best possible manner the set learning targets and necessary skills"

(Education [Amendments] Act 2006, Art. 9 [2][d])

The external review in Malta is primarily an instrument that guides and empowers schools in their ongoing quest to improve their practice and their outcomes in terms of the holistic vision of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2012) and the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 (2014). The external

review is also, an instrument for accountability and conformity with national standards and aspirations while promoting a culture of consistent excellence and rigour in aiming for the highest possible standards. Consequently, a successful and meaningful external review is situated precisely in the delicate and dynamic balance between these complementary functions of guidance and accountability.

2. **Evaluation process** – this should be in short paragraphs

Self-evaluation: *Do you have a form of self-evaluation (i.e. do you expect institutions to report on themselves?) If so, briefly explain how this relates to external evaluation.*

The Quality Assurance Department has invested in aligning internal and external review processes which form the basis of its functions and which mirrors the National Curriculum Framework (2012:32) which states “*Quality Assurance is to be realised through a system of ongoing self-evaluation, monitoring and review within schools complemented by an external review system that together foster school improvement.*”

In 2015, the Quality Assurance Department issued standards with respective success criteria covering the areas of educational leadership and management, teaching and learning and school ethos. The standards and success criteria were developed primarily according to the vision of the National Curriculum Framework (2012), the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta (2014-2024), the Education for All External Audit Report (2014), the various documents within the Respect for All Framework (2014-2015) and other related national priorities, policies and strategies.

Schools are encouraged to use these standards and success criteria to guide their internal evaluation and school development planning. Success criteria are not binding, but provide guidance as to how one can evaluate the extent to which a standard is achieved.

Schools that are to undergo an external review are requested to carry out a self-evaluation exercise based on established standards and success criteria that will be used during the external review. This complements the internal review that schools are expected to carry out every year to inform their school development planning.

What do you examine during inspection? *Do you look at finances? Do you look at legal compliance? Do you observe and/or grade lessons?*

External reviews evaluate these main areas:

- Educational leadership and management, including the Head of School’s vision and leadership style, the effectiveness of the school internal review and planning processes, and effective school administration.

- Learning and teaching, including the extent of the curriculum and learners' entitlement, learners' learning experience, and the quality of pedagogy and assessment. Lesson observations are an essential source of data in this evaluation.
- School ethos, including the support offered to learners to reach their full potential, the school climate, learners' voice and well-being, inclusion and the active involvement of parents.

In the case of non-State schools, compliance checks are carried out to ensure compliance with and the implementation of the provision of laws and regulation including the physical environment, human and other resources.

We do not look into the finances.

Do you have an inspection framework? Is this a quality or compliance model? *Do you evaluate the quality of education or teaching, or report against a series of non-qualitative standards? How does this work?*

The Quality Assurance Department have established National Standards, which are intended to serve for quality whole-school improvement.

External reviews evaluate schools according to the standards and reports are issued outlining strengths, areas for development and a way forward to progress in the achievement of the said standards. Following the External Review report, a post-review meeting is held in order to create a professional dialogue between the Quality Assurance department and the Educational Leadership team of the school. During this meeting, an action plan, created by the whole school community on how the School intends to address the recommendations in the External Review report, is discussed in detail.

All this is done through a model based on an iterative process and which is intended to create a balance of guidance and accountability.

Inspection time and resource. *How long are your inspections? Do they last several days, or shorter? How many people go on inspection? What sort of qualifications/experience do they have? i.e. are they former head teachers, lawyers or accountants?*

Currently, whole school inspections are carried out by two to five review team members over two to five days, depending on the size of the school. Reviewers all hail from the teaching profession and the majority would have had years of experience as members of school senior management teams. All Education Officers possess an EQF

Level 7 and some of them have achieved or are in the process of achieving an EQF Level 8 qualifications and which are related to education.

Frequency of inspections: *Do you have set inspection cycles? How long are these? Are they risk-based or not? If risk-based, what information do you use for assessing risk?*

By end of July 2018, the QAD would finish off the first cycle. We are currently exploring to introduce a multi-model system to ensure that all schools are reviewed at least once every three to five years. Whole school and focussed reviews will be mainly carried out, based on a number of triggers including but not limited to a risk-based assessment.

Main business: *Do you do anything that is not inspection? E.g. pre-registration or providers, or other forms of regulation? Are you involved in complaints examination? Do you take part in competition of headmasters?*

While not part of our main business function, we are very often involved in any complaints pertaining to the quality of educational service provision. These are either redirected to the relevant support providers or tackled directly in collaboration with the educational institution.

The department also organises a yearly seminar to welcome newly qualified teachers to the profession. Biannually we also organise a seminar to showcase and share good practices encountered during the External Reviews.

3. Consequences of inspection

The Quality Assurance Department (QAD) is set to monitor and sustain the quality of holistic educational provision in Maltese general education and to ensure that all learners receive their entitlement to high quality education. The objectives of the QAD are to establish educational standards that reflect national priorities, policies and strategies and to monitor school practices. During the external review process the Quality Assurance Department provides the school with clear feedback regarding the effectiveness of their educational provision and helps in the identification of priorities for future action that inform the school's development planning for improvement.

The reports for external reviews carried out in educational institutions in Malta are not currently published on the inspectorate's online portal or accessible to the general public and are not used to grade schools in any way. The QAD sends the final external

review report and the report summary to the Head of School. It is then the school's duty to communicate the main outcomes to the different stakeholders, including parents whose children already attend the school. Moreover, the QAD ensures that the communication of these outcomes happens in a timely manner. The school is also free to publish the external review report and/or report summary on the school's portal or website. The report is also sent to the governing body or person to whom the Head of School is directly accountable as well as to the Director General for Quality and Standards in Education (in the case of schools across sectors) and the Director General for Educational Services (in the case of State Schools).

Reports are written in an evaluative manner and at the end of the external review schools are given a maximum of six recommendations to work on. The seriousness of the recommendations given determines the dynamics of the next external review. During the follow up visit, which takes place within a year of the external review, the inspectorate will evaluate the steps taken by the school and the extent to which the recommendations have been addressed. This will provide enough information to recommend for the school to either be reviewed within the next cycle of reviews or else a short cycle.

The QAD also guides the school in the planning phase when it comes to addressing these recommendations based on an iterative model. The school is expected to discuss as a whole school the outcomes of the report and develop an action plan on how to tackle these recommendations. This plan is then discussed with the QAD and guidance is given accordingly, and if needed, on how to make these plans SMARTer to facilitate implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The QAD following each scholastic year analyses the reports, identifies indicators and trends in particular areas. These are shared with policy makers.