**Quality Assurance Department (Malta)**

**Guidelines to the external review documents**

**Standards and criteria**

Our standards set clear and measurable goals that inform schools on what are considered to be high quality outcomes in education. Quality standards may also guide schools in their internal review and in the planning, implementation and monitoring of their school development plans. The *National Quality Standards* focus on three main areas that contribute to the provision of quality education: Leadership and Management, Learning and Teaching and School Ethos. Each area encompasses three standards. Success criteria, linked to these standards were also developed to guide schools while still maintaining flexibility as well as the awaress of and the respect towards school autonomy.

The *National Quality Standards* ensure a transparent and coherent external school review process. There is inevitably some variation as to whether, during a review, all or specific standards are considered. This depends on the type of review and the focus required. Reviewers use the success criteria to evaluate the school’s progress and its vision for the near future by involving the different stakeholders and through various research tools.

**External Review Questionnaires**

For the Whole School Review, educators, learners and parents are asked for their views about various quality indicators related to their school through questionnaires. Their views give the review team an indication of the quality of educational leadership and management, the learning and teaching and the school ethos. Questionnaires are filled in anonymously. These questionnaires provide every stakeholder with the opportunity to voice their opinion and are used to complement evidence gathered from other sources. An analysis of questionnaire results highlights the most effective features of the school and possible areas for improvement and in the process indicate possible foci for the external review to explore. Following the Whole School Review, a questionnaire is sent to all educators at the school for feedback on the whole process.

**Pre external review evaluation**

An important part of the Whole School External Review Process is the Pre-External Review School Self-Evaluation which is a reflective exercise compiled by the Head of School on how the school is performing in relation to the National Quality Standards. This is used as a further tool by the review team to start building a picture of the school and how it is performing according to the National Standards.

**Observation Sheets**

External reviewers observe a part of or a full lesson. In large schools a representative sample of lessons is observed. Observations are conducted in the least intrusive way possible. During these observations teachers are not identified and notes are taken on the quality of the different elements of each lesson, using lesson observation sheets based on the standards and success criteria. These are used to provide teachers with verbal feedback when they request it. They serve also to identify trends across the school about the quality of learning and teaching.