HR QUALITY MARK (RULES & REGULATIONS)

2026

V15.0

FOUNDATION FOR
HUMAN RESOURCES
DEVELOPMENT

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1 Introduction

1.1 Objective

The Malta Foundation for Human Resources Development (FHRD) – VO/0294 was established in 1990 to lead the advancement of people management, human resource development, and the HR profession in Malta. FHRD works closely with its corporate members, HR professionals and service providers, industry leaders, and key local stakeholders to promote excellence in human resources management and development. FHRD's vision is to ensure that Malta's workforce benefits from the highest standards and best practices in human resources management—enabling individuals and organisations to reach their full potential through meaningful, productive work, collaboration, and sustainable returns on investment that contribute to national prosperity.

The **HR Quality Mark** is an FHRD-developed standard that recognises organisations demonstrating excellence in human resources management. Its objective is to acknowledge organisations that display strong HR competence, professionalism, and a commitment to continuous improvement in their people practices.

The HR Quality Mark recognises organisations that:

- Embed employee engagement within their strategic and operational frameworks
- Invest in continuous learning and development to enhance individual, team, and organisational performance
- Implement HR performance and reward systems that add tangible value to the organisation
- Promote equality, inclusion, fairness, and employee well-being in the workplace

By encouraging organisations to invest in effective human resource practices, the HR Quality Mark supports the attraction, engagement, and retention of a skilled and motivated workforce—driving sustainable business success and long-term value creation.

1.2 Context

Many organisations are facing new challenges to gain a competitive advantage due to an increase in economic growth and changes in the labour market. The talent competition, the challenges and complexities to engage a skilled and multi-generational workforce are creating a new reality that HR professionals have to adapt to. For this reason, the Malta Foundation for Human Resource Development (FHRD)'s HR Quality Mark recognises the efforts and achievements of small, medium and large organisations in the field of HR.

1.3 Benefits

There is an increasingly greater need today to understand, monitor, track, and measure how well people are being managed and developed. The HR Quality Mark Certification benefits organisations in the following manner:

- External Recognition
  - The HR function will be recognised as a leader in HR practices among local and international organisations.
  - Promotion of the organisation as an employer of choice
  - Enhance the Employer Branding of the organisation

- Internal Recognition
  - Elevates the status of the HR function within the organisation
  - Motivates the HR team to strive for excellence
- Report
  - HRQM Evaluators issue a brief report identifying areas of strength and improvement.

1.4 Duration

The HR Quality Mark certification is applicable for a period of three years from the date of issuance of the report, during which respective organisations must be fully paid FHRD members.

1.5 Designated Authority

This programme is administered by FHRD. FHRD reserves the right to review, revise, issue and publish updates to the official programme guidelines as may be required from time to time.

1.6 Applicable and Eligible Organisations

To be eligible to apply for the HR Quality Mark, organisations must have at least 10 full-time employees registered with Jobsplus. Applicants must be fully compliant with all the statutory obligations. The organisation and its people must show they follow ethical standards in their line of business.

2 The HR Quality Mark

2.1 HR Quality Mark Principles

The Quality Mark provides that impetus for organisations to invest in their own people. Applicants will acquire sectoral know-how and good practices, and will be subject to an external evaluation of their HR practices. This will enable them to gauge the strengths of their organisation's HR function and note the areas for improvement.

The aim of the FHRD Quality Mark is not to create competition between various organisations but to encourage all entities, irrespective of size and sector, to invest in their HR practices. There are no restrictions or rankings on how many entities can achieve this award, as long as the established criteria are satisfied.

FHRD is pleased to accommodate HR audit submissions and remains dedicated to providing comprehensive support to organisations throughout this important process. HR audits are inherently complex and require significant time and attention to ensure a thorough and accurate evaluation. For this reason, while FHRD is committed to facilitating these submissions, requests will be reviewed and considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the specific circumstances of each audit and our available resources.

This approach allows FHRD to maintain the high standards of quality, precision, and professionalism that every HR audit requires, ensuring that all organisations receive the detailed and thoughtful analysis needed to meet their objectives. To support the ongoing review and understanding of the HRQM process, a designated member of the FHRD team may attend, in an observational

capacity only, up to three (3) audits per intake. The observer will not take part in the audit, ask questions, influence the audit outcome, or otherwise interfere with the audit process.

We appreciate your understanding and collaboration as we work together to deliver this service effectively.

2.2 HR Content Areas

Organisations will be assessed in the following six HR content areas:

1. Strategy
2. Talent
3. Engagement
4. Career
5. Efficiency
6. Relations

The HR Quality Mark (Guidelines for Organisation) provides further details on the above content areas.

3 The Application

3.1 The Process

In order to apply for the HR Quality Mark, interested organisations are to fill in an online application form as well as pay the respective FHRD Membership fee for the current year. If multiple legal entities are applying, please contact FHRD for guidance on how to handle the application/s - https://fhrd.org/hr-quality-mark/

Applicants are also to send, via e-mail, proof of the organisation's headcount (A Jobsplus Dashboard Screenshot with the number of employees registered with the organisation will suffice) and all the other documents listed in Clause 4, as well as the fee in line with Clause 2.

Organisations may submit additional supporting documentation following the submission of their application and up until the audit date. Supporting documents may also be presented in hard copy during the audit. However, no further documentation will be accepted or considered once the audit has concluded.

On receipt of all the above, two evaluators will visit the organisation. The evaluators are to submit a technical report to FHRD, including their recommendations for improvement. Each participating organisation will receive the outcome of the assessment from FHRD. The outcome of the evaluation process is final and cannot be appealed.

It is envisaged that the HR Quality Mark will run at least once a year. All fees are to be paid to FHRD together with the application form. An HR Quality Mark award ceremony will take place after every intake to celebrate those successful organisations deserving of this award. A memento for the HR Quality Mark will be given to each successful organisation during the award ceremony.

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3.2 HR Quality Mark Timeline

Applications will be accepted in Q1 of every year.

As a guideline, the HRQM report will be issued within 2 months of the application date.

3.3 Achievement criteria

- Successful organisations will be awarded the HR Quality Mark Certification based on a marking system tied to a set of questions relating to the six content areas, with a pass mark of 75% in **each** Content area. The marking takes into account the overall conversation of each content area, the evidence produced to substantiate the organisation's case for each content area and, finally, a set of specific questions directly related to each content area.
- All organisations will receive a report identifying their respective areas of strength and areas which need improvement.
- Organisations that fail in achieving the HR Quality Mark are eligible to re-apply when the next intake is launched.
    - If an organisation fails in more than one content area, that organisation will be required to re-apply for the whole audit as from the next intake.
    - If an organisation fails in only one content area, that organisation will be given the possibility to rectify within six months and will be re-assessed only on the one content area they failed in. They will not need to re-apply with the next intake. Organisations must inform FHRD about their request for re-assessment within one week from report date. An additional fee will apply for this re-assessment to take place.
- In order to create a level playing field, small and medium-sized organisations will be entitled to positive discrimination in the form of a decreased minimum threshold.
- Evaluators will have to declare any conflict of interest with any organisation participating and/or sponsoring the HR Quality Mark.

3.4 The HR Quality Mark Logo

The HR Quality Mark logo (located on the front cover of the Rules and Regulations) is the official logo. Successful organisations can use the HR Quality Mark Logo for a period of three years on:

- All outgoing correspondence
- Recruitment advertising
- Press releases and social media websites

Successful organisations will also be listed in a register on the FHRD website with their company logos.

4 Information on Data Protection

4.1 Data Protection

FHRD is committed to ensuring that your information is used responsibly and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (Cap. 586 of the Laws of Malta). The collection, use and processing of data from organisations shall comply with the following principles. Namely, that data is:

i. processed fairly and lawfully;
ii. always processed in accordance with good practice;
iii. only collected for specific, explicitly stated and legitimate purposes;
iv. not processed for any purpose that is incompatible with that for which the information is collected;
v. processed adequately and is relevant
vi. processed correctly and is up to date;
vii. subject to reasonable measures to complete, correct, block or erase data to the extent that such data is incomplete or incorrect
viii. not kept for a period longer than is necessary, having regard to the purposes for which they are processed.

4.2 How your information will be used

The data you provide us about your organisation, including policy documents, incentives and records pertaining to your workforce and employment practices, shall be used for the following purposes:

i. To assess your organisation's eligibility for the HR Quality Mark based on the principles and practices set forth
ii. For research purposes, so that FHRD can assess current practices in Malta and be able to tailor its services to the needs of both employers and employees.

We will not use the information you voluntarily provide us with for purposes other than those for which you were informed, without first providing you with an opportunity to agree or otherwise limit any use for other purposes to which you have consented. No reference shall be made to your organisation when referring to or quoting the data you supply, unless explicit written consent is obtained beforehand.

Any information or data obtained about the organisation's business during the course of evaluation shall be kept in confidence and shall not be used under any circumstances unless authorised by the organisation. All organisations' employee personal information shall be managed and stored in accordance with GDPR guidelines.

4.3 Contact us

For further details about the HR Quality Mark and issues related to this certification, you may contact the Malta Foundation for Human Resources Development on: Tel: 21313550 or via email: qm@fhrd.org

FHRD
5, Clock Tower Building,

Tigne Point, Sliema, Malta www.fhrd.org

ANNEX 1 : EVIDENCE OF FAIRNESS AND TRANSPARENCY
FHRD HR Quality Mark (HRQM)

This document outlines the measures implemented by the Malta Foundation for Human Resources Development (FHRD) to ensure fairness, transparency, and integrity in the administration of the HRQM. It serves as formal evidence that the certification process is designed, managed, and executed in a manner that is impartial, consistent, and accountable, in line with best practices in quality assurance and ethical governance.

1.1 Principles of Fairness and Transparency

FHRD upholds fairness and transparency as core values throughout the HRQM process. These principles are reflected in the following commitments:

- Equal opportunity for all eligible organisations to apply and be assessed.
- Objective evaluation based on published and standardised criteria.
- Clear communication of procedures, requirements, and decisions.
- Confidential handling of all applicant information.
- Absence of bias, conflict of interest, or undue influence in decision-making.

1.2 Governance

The HRQM process is governed by FHRD and operationally managed by the HRQM team. Independent evaluators are appointed to conduct the assessment process in accordance with the established evaluation framework.

1.3 Application Process

The application process is designed to be clear, inclusive, and transparent.

- All eligibility criteria and submission requirements are publicly available on FHRD's official website and within the published Application Form and Rules and Regulations
- Applications are accepted on an equal basis from all eligible organisations.
- Submission deadlines, fees, and documentation standards are consistently applied.
- Receipt of applications and subsequent processing are logged to ensure traceability and fairness.

1.4 Audit and Assessment Procedures

- Audits are conducted by qualified and impartial evaluators using a standardised evaluation framework (HRQM Calculator) aligned with the HRQM content areas.
- Assessment procedures are structured to ensure consistency and fairness:
    - Each evaluator is bound by confidentiality and code of conduct embedded in the contract.
    - Evaluation is based solely on documentary and interview evidence during the audit.
    - All findings are documented in the HRQM Calculator and subject to agreement from both independent evaluators.

1.5 Decision-Making and Communication

The HRQM report is signed by both evaluators who conducted the audit as well as the FHRD President and FHRD CEO. Applicants are formally informed of their results in writing by e mail. Decisions, including any conditions or recommendations, are communicated clearly and promptly to the applicant. Documentation of all decisions is retained for audit purposes.

1.6 Conflict of Interest Management

FHRD enforces strict conflict of interest controls throughout the certification process:

- Auditors are assigned to applicants with whom they have no conflict of interest.
- All evaluators are required to disclose potential conflicts prior to assignment.
- Any declared conflict results in reassignment of the evaluator to maintain impartiality.

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- Evaluators will not evaluate any organisation during the intake when the organisation they work for is being evaluated for the HRQM.

1.7 Appeals and Re- Assessments

- The outcome of the evaluation process is final and cannot be appealed. Applicants have the right to approach FHRD to raise questions on the outcome of the audit. These questions will be sent to the HRQM Evaluators for their feedback; however the outcome of the audit will not change.
- If an organisation fails in only one content area, that organisation will be given the possibility to rectify within six months and will be re-assessed only on the one content area they failed in. During a re-assessment one independent auditor is assigned to assess the failed content area.

1.8 Continuous Improvement

FHRD is committed to continuous improvement of the HRQM process. Feedback from applicants, auditors, and stakeholders is systematically collected and used to enhance fairness, transparency, and efficiency. Periodic reviews of procedures are conducted to ensure ongoing compliance with ethical and quality assurance standards. Yearly post-mortem meetings with HRQM evaluators are held to discuss the learnings from each intake. In the upcoming 9th intake, we will be adding a post-audit survey to the email that accompanies the report for all participating organisations.

1.9 Declaration of Compliance

FHRD hereby affirms that the HRQM application, assessment, and certification processes are conducted in accordance with the principles of fairness, transparency, and accountability. These processes align with FHRD's mission to promote excellence in human resource development and ethical governance within the Maltese HR community.

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ANNEX 2: TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR APPLICANTS
FHRD HR QUALITY MARK (HRQM)

These Terms and Conditions govern the application process for the HRQM administered by the Malta Foundation for Human Resources Development (FHRD). They outline the responsibilities, obligations, and rights of both applicants and FHRD in relation to the certification process. The HRQM is a recognition of excellence in human resources practices and organisational development in Malta.

1.1 Eligibility Criteria

- Applications are open to organisations registered and operating in Malta, including private, public, and voluntary entities and must have at least 10 full-time employees registered with Jobsplus.
- Each applicant must be a legally recognised entity and must ensure that the information provided is accurate and complete.

1.2 Application Submission

- Applicants must complete and submit the HRQM application Form per legal entity unless otherwise advised by FHRD.
- The application must be duly signed by an authorised representative responsible for HR.

1.3 Fees and Payments

- The applicable fees are outlined in the Submission Guidelines. *(Application and Membership Fees)*
- Upon receipt of a completed application, FHRD will issue an invoice for the relevant fees.
- All fees are payable upon invoice and are non-refundable, regardless of the outcome of the application.
- Organisations that are already paid FHRD members are exempt from paying the membership fee.

1.4 Audit Process

- Once the application is approved, FHRD will schedule an audit during the preferred week (where possible) indicated by the applicant.
- Audit scheduling is handled on a first-come, first-served basis and subject to auditor availability.
- Organisations are required to ensure that relevant personnel and documentation are available for review during the audit.
- FHRD reserves the right to adjust audit dates when necessary.

1.5 Confidentiality and Data Protection

- All information and documentation provided by the applicant will be treated as confidential and will be used solely for the purpose of processing the application and conducting the HRQM assessment.
- FHRD will process personal data in compliance with the Data Protection Act (Chapter 586 of the Laws of Malta).

1.6 Ethical Compliance

- Applicants and their representatives are expected to adhere to the highest ethical standards and professional conduct.
- FHRD reserves the right to refuse, suspend, or revoke the HR Quality Mark if an organisation is found to have breached ethical standards or submitted false or misleading information.

1.7 Validity and Renewal

- The HR Quality Mark is valid for a period of three years, from the date of issuance of the report during which respective organisations must be fully paid FHRD members.
- Prior to the expiry of their current certification, organisations are required to apply for re-certification when they will undergo a full audit once again.
- FHRD reserves the right to review and amend the certification criteria as necessary.

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1.8 Withdrawal or Refusal of Application

- FHRD reserves the right to decline any application that does not meet the established criteria.
- Applications may be withdrawn by the applicant at any time by providing written notice to FHRD.
- Fees paid will not be refunded in cases of withdrawal or refusal.

1.9 Contact and Communication

All correspondence and queries relating to the HR Quality Mark application process must be directed to: Email:qm@fhrd.org