

WP2: National Report

MALTA

Report compiled by
Dr Ing. Alexia Pace Kiomall & Ing. Mario Cachia
Malta University Consulting Limited
*with the support of the Malta Business Bureau
& the Institute for Tourism, Travel & Culture, University
of Malta*

1.0 Introduction

The Malta University Consulting Limited (MUC) with the support of Malta Business Bureau (MBB) undertook a review of national policies in Malta in relation to soft skills in the workplace. Moreover, MUC content analyzed the curricula of tourism & hospitality (T&H) higher education institutions (HEI) in Malta.

MUC held in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion during September of 2018, respectively. MUC also administered two survey questionnaires, one in August and September of 2018 to former T&H students, and at the same time to current undergraduate students in T&H.

The in-depth interviews (Appendix 1) in September 2018 involved representatives of national tourism and hospitality employers' association (one being an employee and the other a council member) and HEI T&H instructors.

The focus group (Appendix 2) involved representatives of two T&H stakeholder groups in Malta – employers (representatives from national/ tourism and hospitality employers' association) and HEI educators (e.g., dean of a tourism HEI or the head of a HEI's tourism department).

Finally, MUC surveyed former and current T&H undergraduate students via two e-surveys (Appendix 3). Through in-depth interviews, focus group, and two survey questionnaires, the MUC gathered information to help T&H faculty, administrators, consultants, and industry practitioners in Malta narrow the soft skills gap between the requirements of the T&H Industry and Tourism Curricula adopted by HEI's. The in-depth interviews, focus group, and survey questionnaires were conducted as part of the MUC involvement in the INCOME Tourism project.

2.0 Findings

2.1 Overview of National Policies on Soft Skills

The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) that was established in Malta in 2012 is the body that provides accreditation and quality assurance of both educational institutions as well as the programmes/courses they offer. 'Further' education is up to Level 4 of the Malta Qualification Framework (Figure 1) whereas 'Higher' Education is at Level 5 of this Framework or higher.

8	Doctoral Degree	
7	Master's Degree Post-graduate Diploma Post-graduate Certificate	
6	Bachelor's Degree	
5	Undergraduate Diploma Undergraduate Certificate	VET Higher Diploma Foundation Degree
4	Matriculation Certificate Advanced Level Intermediate Level	VET Diploma (iv)
3	General Education SEC Grade 1-5	VET Level 3 (iii)
2	General Education Level 2 SEC Grade 6-7	VET Level 2 (ii)
1	General Education Level 1 School Leaving Certificate	VET Level 1 (i)
B	Introductory Level B*	
A	Introductory Level A*	

* These are not yet included in legislation

Annotations

- i. A Full VET Level 1 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as a Full Secondary School Certificate and Profile (SSC&P) Level 1.
- ii. A Full VET Level 2 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 4 Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) subjects at Grade 6 and 7.
- iii. A VET Level 3 Qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 6 Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) subjects at Grades 1 to 5.
- iv. A VET Diploma should enjoy the same parity of esteem as the Matriculation Certificate.

Figure 1. The Malta Qualification Framework (NCFHE)

The NCFHE in collaboration with JobsPlus and Malta Enterprise carried out a research project as part of an Erasmus+ project “Promoting the Bologna Process in Malta 2014-2016”¹ aimed at identifying shortages in skills in different sectors of the labour market in Malta.

Figure 2 below shows the skills lacking in applicants for vacancies as per representative samples of this project.

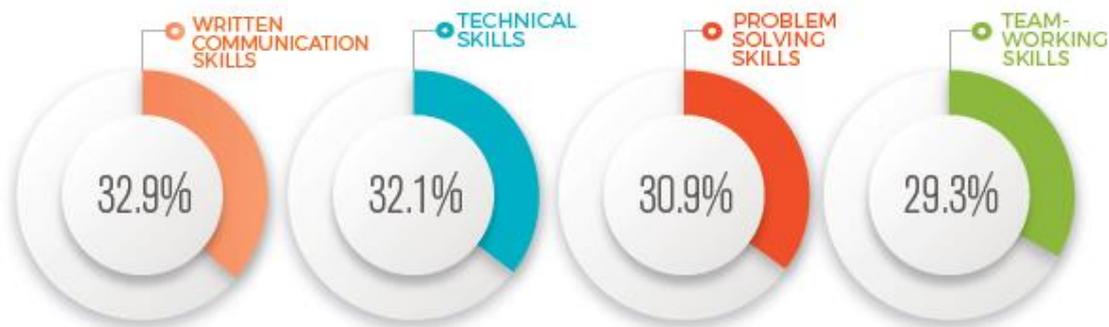


Figure 2. Lacking Skills in Applicants for Vacancies

The project’s results indicated that skills considered as important by employers are oral communication skills (78.7%); team working skills (78.6%); English language (74.4%) and customer handling skills (72.3%). Similar results were obtained when employers were asked why the staff were not fully proficient and the reasons were mainly lack of problem solving skills (43.0%); lack of customer handling skills (37.7%); lack of team-working skills (34.9%) and lack of oral communication skills (31.8%).

The majority of employers (94.6%) stated that there should be more collaboration between education providers and employers. Only 19.3% of respondents stated that they participated in collaborative activities with educational institutions.

The University Students' Council’s (KSU)² report on “Future Skills Needed in the Industry in the context of Lisbon Agenda and Vision 2015” highlights that the following skills should be

¹

<https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/research/Documents/Employee%20Skills%20Survey/Employee%20Skills%20Survey%20Leaflet.pdf>

²

<https://www.ksu.org.mt/images/resources/ksu%20report%20on%20future%20skills%2C%20lisbon%20agenda%20and%20vision%202015..pdf>

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embedded into the education system, identified through the defined Learning Outcomes of University degree programmes and most notably during the years of compulsory education:

- Basic/fundamental skills – such as literacy, numeracy and using technology;
- People-related skills – such as communication, interpersonal, team-working and customer-service skills
- Conceptual skills – such as organisation skills, problem-solving, innovative and creative skills.

In this report, KSU states that students should start acquiring ‘soft-skills’ during the compulsory years to ensure that early school-leavers also have such essential skills, KSU holds that at a tertiary level fine-tuning of such skills would be required. Such fine-tuning would include the mastering of innovation and creativity skills, entrepreneurship skills and critical thinking skills.

2.2 Content Analysis of HEIs’ Tourism Curricula

In Malta there are two main HEIs that provide training on Tourism.

HEI1 provides:

- ✓ three postgraduate courses:
 - Master of Arts in Cultural Sustainability and Tourism;
 - Master of Arts in Tourism (By Research);
 - Mphil//PhD (By Research); and
- ✓ three undergraduate Courses:
 - Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Tourism Studies;
 - Certificate in Food Culture;
 - Master Chef Diploma.

HEI2 provides

- ✓ three undergraduate courses:
 - Bachelor in Culinary Arts (Hons) - (in collaboration with the Institute of Paul Bocuse, France);
 - Bachelor in Gastronomy (Hons) - (in collaboration with HEI1);
 - Bachelor in International Hospitality Management - (in collaboration with the University of Applied Science, Haaga-Helia, Finland).

Analysis of the curriculum of the undergrad courses offered in Malta revealed that the former (i.e. HEI1) was the one offering a three-year Degree Course with least soft skills. The first year of the HEI 1 Degree course offers a compulsory Unit on 'Critical Thinking and Communication' and a compulsory Unit on 'The Other: Relationships in Tourism'. During the second year of studies students follow a compulsory Unit on 'Managerial Leadership for Tourism and Culture Organisations' while in the third year of studies students follow a Unit on 'Human Resources and Work Relations in Tourism'.

It was therefore decided that this project focuses on HEI1 undergrad course.

2.3 In-Depth Interviews

The interviews were designed to gather information from T&H employers and HEI1 instructors in regard to the following outcomes:

1. To understand how important are soft skills in the modern T&H workplace?
2. To rank the 10 most relevant conceptual/creative skills in the contemporary T&H workplace in order of their perceived importance.
3. To rank the 10 most relevant leadership skills in the contemporary T&H workplace in order of their perceived importance.
4. To rank the 10 most relevant interpersonal skills in the contemporary T&H workplace in order of their perceived importance.
5. To divulge how satisfied are T&H employers with the soft skills that, in their experience, graduate employees have? Which are best & which worse developed?
6. To uncover what emphasis is given to learning these skills in the T&H curricula today? Is it satisfactory and why (not)?
7. To unveil how are soft skills now learned and evaluated in the HEI system (methods, frequency, importance/weight, in which courses)?
8. To propose how should soft skills be learned and evaluated in the HEI system (methods, frequency, importance/weight, in which courses)?
9. To rank the 10 most relevant methods of learning soft skills by T&H undergraduate students in order of their perceived effectiveness.
10. To understand what are the main assumptions/obstacles/challenges in achieving these learning methods?
11. To propose how can these be assured/resolved?

2.3.1 Participant demographics

Four T&H HEI1 instructors and two T&H employer representatives took part in the interviews.

2.3.2 Results / participant perspectives

Outcome 1: Training of the appropriate soft skills is essential for the modern tourism and hospitality workplace

How important are soft skills the modern tourism and hospitality workplace?

1. Very important given the ultimate on the job continuous contact with people. The term people skills would be more appropriate than soft skills as the latter is too vast.
2. Soft skills are very important given the people-to-people activities on the workplace. The University should be looking at careers rather than job growth by giving students career orientation and not just opportunities for short-term jobs.
3. One has to distinguish the workplace where the student will ultimately work at i.e. whether a front liner or a managerial post.
 - a. For front liners soft skills are very important as this job deals more directly with guests;
 - b. In case of a managerial job, the student needs to be trained on critical thinking and communication skills to analyse situations and problems and communicate solutions effectively.
4. Soft skills are important as these are skills required by a person to interact with other persons. Such skills include understanding, communicating, empathy and analysis. Tourism is a people's industry especially for tourists with different cultural backgrounds.
5. Very important given that the hospitality industry in nature is very human-to-human. In fact, given that the basics are in place, soft skills are the next fundamental requirements to the mission of the hospitality industry. Moreover, management in the hospitality industry is very complex given that at the very same time one is dealing with guests and employees coming from various social statuses. The skills listed in the Interview Questionnaire are comprehensive enough but one needs to be cautious trying to find a curriculum where one size fits all given the diverse cultural background of the participants in this project and the different target guests.
6. Soft skills are crucial to the hospitality industry given the sensitivity regarding the way clients are treated as this can make or break the business especially in today's world where clients voice their experience through social media. This is more so important in a boutique hotel considering the small number of employees. The hospitality industry is customer driven requiring immediate decision-making and interaction with clients who are present for a relatively short period and expect a satisfactory service.

In sum, all participants reflected very high importance of soft skills in the modern tourism and hospitality workplace.

Outcome 2: “Demonstrating an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment” is considered by HEI tutors as the most important conceptual/creative skill whilst that by T&H Employer Representatives is “Considering customer needs when making decisions”.

Ranking of the 10 most relevant conceptual/creative skills in the contemporary T&H workplace in order of their perceived importance.

Tables 1 and 2 below set up the ranking of the 10 most relevant conceptual/creative skills as ranked by HEI1 tutors and T&H Employer Representatives respectively.

Table 1 Ranking of the 10 most relevant conceptual/creative skills as ranked by HEI tutors

	Percentage Marking
Demonstrates an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment	15%
Manifests critical thinking	14%
Develops new ideas	11%
Considers customer needs when making decisions	11%
Develops adaptation responses to unexpected changes	10%
Maintains the "big picture" while working for a specific firm/organization	9%
Exhibits knowledge of related job roles of peers, subordinates, others	8%
Manifests development and adaptation of innovation or improvements	8%
Understands the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties	8%
Brings together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways	5%

In sum, HEI1 tutors believe that the most relevant conceptual/creative skill is the ‘*Demonstration & Understanding of the Organization’s Interaction with the Larger External Environment*’.

Table 2 Ranking of the 10 most relevant conceptual/creative skills as ranked by T&H Employer Representatives

	Percentage Marking
Considers customer needs when making decisions	18%
Understands the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties	16%
Maintains the "big picture" while working for a specific firm/organization	12%
Brings together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways	10%
Develops new ideas	9%
Develops adaptation responses to unexpected changes	8%
Exhibits knowledge of related job roles of peers, subordinates, others	8%
Manifests development and adaptation of innovation or improvements	8%
Demonstrates an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment	5%
Manifests critical thinking	5%

In sum, T&H Employer Representatives believe that the most relevant conceptual/creative skill is the *'Considering customer needs when making decisions'*.

An interesting observation is that skills that were noted as most important by HEI tutors were given the least ranking by T&H Employer Representatives, highlighting the gap between industry and academia.

Outcome 3: "Building networks with people inside and outside the firm" is considered by HEI tutors as the most important leadership skill whilst that by T&H Employer Representatives is "Listening carefully to input and concerns expressed by others"

Ranking of the 10 most relevant leadership skills in the contemporary T&H workplace in order of their perceived importance.

Tables 3 and 4 below set up the ranking of the 10 most relevant leadership skills as ranked by HEI1 tutors and T&H Employer Representatives respectively.

Table 3 Ranking of the 10 most relevant leadership skills as ranked by HEI tutors

	Percentage Marking
Builds networks with people inside and outside the firm	14%
Employs a team approach to solve problems when appropriate	13%
Listens carefully to input and concerns expressed by others	12%
Operates effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations	11%
Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner	10%
Presents ideas in a convincing manner	9%
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change	9%
Steers conflicts away from personalities and toward issues	8%
Confronts problems early before they become unmanageable	7%
Promotes respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences	7%

Table 4 Ranking of the 10 most relevant leadership skills as ranked by T&H Employer Representatives

	Percentage Marking
Listens carefully to input and concerns expressed by others	17%
Promotes respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences	16%
Steers conflicts away from personalities and toward issues	15%
Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner	12%
Operates effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations	11%
Presents ideas in a convincing manner	10%
Confronts problems early before they become unmanageable	8%
Employs a team approach to solve problems when appropriate	6%
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change	3%
Builds networks with people inside and outside the firm	3%

In sum, T&H Employer Representatives believe that the most relevant leadership skill is the *'Listening carefully to input and concerns expressed by others'* whereas HEI1 Tutors consider *'Building networks with people inside and outside the firm'* as the most relevant leadership skill.

Similarly to the observation between Tables 1 and 2, Table 3 and 4 highlight that what is highly ranked as relevant by HEI tutors is ranked low by T&H employer representatives, further highlighting the gap between industry and academia.

Outcome 4: “Communicating efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers” is considered by HEI tutors as the most important interpersonal skill whilst that by T&H Employer Representatives is “Acting courteously and respectfully”

To rank the 10 most relevant interpersonal skills in the contemporary T&H workplace in order of their perceived importance.

Tables 5 and 6 below set up the ranking of the 10 most relevant interpersonal skills as ranked by HEI1 tutors and T&H Employer Representatives respectively.

Table 5 Ranking of the 10 most relevant interpersonal skills as ranked by HEI tutors

	Percentage Marking
Communicates efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers	18%
Acts courteously and respectfully	13%
Manages guest requests with understanding and sensitivity	12%
Exhibits negotiating skills	11%
Demonstrates empathy in dealing with customers and staff	11%
Effectively handles staff grievances and complaints	10%
Exhibits emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion	10%
Demonstrates awareness of others’ feelings	8%
Provides effective feedback	5%
Manifests intercultural sensitivity	2%

Table 6 Ranking of the 10 most relevant interpersonal skills as ranked by T&H Employer Representatives

	Percentage Marking
Acts courteously and respectfully	15%
Manages guest requests with understanding and sensitivity	15%
Provides effective feedback	13%
Communicates efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers	12%
Effectively handles staff grievances and complaints	10%
Demonstrates empathy in dealing with customers and staff	9%
Exhibits emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion	7%
Demonstrates awareness of others' feelings	7%
Exhibits negotiating skills	6%
Manifests intercultural sensitivity	5%

In sum, T&H Employer Representatives believe that the most relevant interpersonal skills are 'Acting courteously and respectfully' and 'Managing guest requests with understanding and sensitivity' whereas HEI1 Tutors consider 'Communication' as the most relevant leadership skill.

Results of Tables 1-6 are summarized in Appendix 4.

Outcome 5: T&H employers are generally not satisfied with the soft skills graduate students have.

How satisfied are T&H employers with the soft skills that, in their experience, graduate employees have? Which are best & which worse developed?

1. There is a lot of room for improvement especially in Leadership Skills, which require more development. One cannot expect that soft skills are learned from home or people are born with all the necessary soft skills required to be successful in the hospitality industry. On the other hand, students coming from the University are stronger when it comes to interpersonal skills. Students need also be trained better to carry out research work.
2. As a boutique hotel operator, interviewee is of the opinion that his experience with placements is not particularly positive especially when front line tasks are allocated to students. The training requires more on the job experience where students need to be monitored closer by the HEI and show more commitment and motivation. Students need to be made more aware of brand standards and taught how to come up with new ideas. Leadership skills should prepare students to remain calm and understand the guests' requirements and the way to approach problems. Students

need to be prepared to be good listeners and are not taken over by emotions. Cultural issues need also to be address when having students from other countries. In sum, T&H employers believe that graduates are not so well prepared with the soft skills that, in their experience, are required. Leadership skills followed then by interpersonal skills are mostly required to be developed further.

Outcome 6: Much more can be done to teach the required soft skills. More coordination and control is required both the University and during placements. Lack of adequate interaction between tutors and students. One has to ensure that all tutors have undergone training especially on communication and pedagogical skills.

Uncover what emphasis is given to learning these skills in the T&H curricula today? Is it satisfactory and why (not)?

1. One main course module about leadership skills but several other indirect tuition in other modules such as the module dealing with the Business Environment e.g. time management and marketing though this may lead to an element of repetition. The Leadership Skills module is work based. More tuition of soft skills is required. Preference of having tutors with more industry background. This is being address with plans to change in curriculum in 2019 where the Customer will be the focus. The periodic review of the undergrad course is done every three years.
2. Students need to be more interactive during their academic training, such as by working in groups, being more innovative & creative in their thinking and should practice leadership skills. The University should be less spoon feeding. There should be a more systematic approach to assignments and academic group work and more emphasis on R&D.
3. Not enough is being done to assess students on soft skills especially when these skills are being taught as part of a module where soft skills are not the core subject or in cases where not enough effort is done by the lecturers. Current training course lacks training on communication skills especially in written communication - which is considered to make up to at least 80% of the overall communication skills required at managerial level. Following a recent change in the leadership of the Institute, where in the opinion of the interviewee there was lack of proper appreciation of placements requirements, things are changing in the right direction. However, the solution is not just in the introduction of new modules to address soft skill learning but a number of lectures need to change their attitude to be able to motivate better students. One also needs to train students in research in tourism. Although taught, it is peripheral and whilst of critical importance is not being assessed.
4. The main problem is that people come from different backgrounds. Training in writing is very different from practice – trainers lack adequate training in pedagogy and sociology and lack industry experience. Trainers need to identify key soft skills,

practice such skills, apply them in classrooms and keep them updated with the industry requirements.

In sum, more practical rather than theoretical learning of soft skills is needed. Most skills are thought indirectly through non-explicit soft skills related modules.

Outcome 7: Soft skills are currently being taught in a single module with 4 ECTS (out of a total of 180) and indirectly in a number of other modules. Marked written assignments are also done by students which in many cases lack the desired level of tutor/student interactivity. Coordination of the teaching staff and students during placements needs to be improved. It is important to have teaching staff who have undergone training on how to teach.

Unveil how are soft skills now learned and evaluated in the HEI system (methods, frequency, importance/weight, in which courses)?

1. The current soft skills module has 4 ECTS (out of a total of 180) although other indirect tuition contribute to another 12. This brings the total to 6.7% of the total marking.
2. One needs to question whether the training is leading to a career in tourism or just a job. Students should be well prepared for the long-term requirements at the workplace and these should not be of a surprise to students. Students are to question why they are going into the tourism industry – it should be more than travel and meeting people.
3. There is lack of overall coordination in the teaching of soft skills and not enough is being done. This is being addressed following the change in the directorship of the Institute. There is lack of appropriate students- lecturers interaction which would lead to enhancement of the content and teaching methods.
4. Many academics have never been trained on how to lecture. As a solution one may consider CPD courses especially on communication skills especially to young academics – teacher training experience.

In sum, a very small % contribution of the academic syllabus involves explicit soft skills teaching.

Outcome 8: Soft skills can be better learned through a more coordinated approach to lecturing and by including more group work during the academic year, interactive teaching, research focused on the hospitality industry and more structured and followed up placements. Consideration is to be given to revising the method of placements (being on full weeks' basis) and duration and method of supervising the placements.

Propose how should soft skills be learned and evaluated in the HEI system (methods, frequency, importance/weight, in which courses)?

1. Current work-based assignment is very effective. Increase more work based assignments and add a module on Customer Focus.
2. More group work and motivating students to think and take an active role during lectures. The class setup should be such to promote this by having students facing each other.
3. It is critical that directions are issued to lectures for a coordinated approach to lecturing as changing the way lectures were being delivered for a number of years will not be simple. More teaching should be done through interactive teaching such as group discussions, submission of draft assignments for comments before formal submission and one to one tutorials. During the new academic year a module on communication skills will be introduced.
4. Method: experience, self- criticism, observational & and research.
5. In the first year, one may consider whether a psychologist can be deployed who can screen students and establish whether a student can be trained to work in the hospitality industry. If in the affirmative, the screening will also establish the areas where training is required. In the final year, students need to be empowered and experience a leadership role during placements where students should be asked to deliver a small project/task e.g. research on customer satisfaction. This should prepare them for deployment at the deeper end following their successful completion of their studies at the University.
6. It is up to the HEI to coordinate better the workplace training with the industry and give it the importance through the weighting of marking of the students based on the workplace performance. HEIs should co-ordinate more with the larger hotels who can focus more on training. HEI is to consider lobbying with the relevant authorities so that soft skills are taught at school at an earlier age.

In sum, more observational & practical group-work based teaching is needed.

Outcome 9: Better and more interactive learning at both the University and workplace. These include interactive class discussions on topics being lectured and case studies, group assignments, listening to student feedback and industry focused research which can take place during the placement. Following up students at workplace in a better organised on the job training and keeping a detailed reflective diary,

Rank the 10 most relevant methods of learning soft skills by T&H undergraduate students in order of their perceived effectiveness.

1. Interviewee 1
 - a. Module presentation;
 - b. Reflective diary on place of work visits;

- c. Case study with focus in business environment;
 - d. Breaking into a market – operational aspects.
2. Interviewee 2
 - a. Understanding and practicing of soft skills needs to be put into practice at the workplace during student attachments. Research and interactivity needs to be promoted and rewarded better. Monitoring of students at the workplace should be continuous and more rigorous.
 - b. One needs to continuously question the whether the soft skills being though are holistic and applicable to the current industry requirements and whether new soft skills training needs to be introduced.
 3. Interviewee 3
 - a. Class discussion of assignments leads to learning from the assignments submitted by other students though this is limited by time.
 - b. More organised on the job training. Thinking process and skills are better learned at the workplace. This requires better management and 4 full weeks at one go would be more beneficial than one day per week for a full semester. The student will have to interact with at least one pre-defined staff at the workplace.
 - c. Discussions on relevant topics and issues.
 4. Interviewee 4
 - a. Listen to students – reflect on the questions asked;
 - b. Be a friend to students.
 5. Interviewee 5
 - a. Placement of longer duration. During placements students are to be assigned a small number of staff to manage for the delivery of a project/task.
 - b. Group students in small groups with the participation of students from other Faculties (e.g. Management & HR) to work on assignments with a lecturer as a supervisor. Role-plays during the academic study.
 6. Interviewee 6
 - a. Pre-enrolment at the University and on the job training – more time needs to be allocated for hands on training and academic training.

In sum, most relevant methods include group discussions, reflections & observations.

Outcome 10: Level of competence of students in soft skills prior to enrolment at the University, students need to be more committed to their career, well prepared tutors with solid industry background, University's should allocate more time for tutors to prepare the material for lectures and day to day operational issues hinder proper workplace training especially when the entity employs a small number of staff.

Understand what are the main assumptions/obstacles/challenges in achieving these learning methods?

1. Interviewee 1 listed the following:
 - a. Everyone assumes that students have the soft skills required for the place of work if they had managed to enroll in a university course as it is assumed that these are learned at home.
2. Interviewee 2 listed the following:
 - a. Get students to understand better that soft skills are essential in the success of the career and the importance of being innovative and creative at the workplace otherwise their job will become boring and mundane. Otherwise, they will keep moving from one job to another.
3. Interviewee 3 listed the following:
 - a. Attitude of lecturers. Lectures should not be a monologue –students acknowledge lecturers' commitment and would consequently work harder.
 - b. Lecturers should have a solid industry background.
 - c. Time constraints.
 - d. University lecturing load and expected research from lectures are not designed to encourage quality lecturing as this may not leave enough time for the lecturers to prepare for the lectures.
4. Interviewee 4 listed the following:
 - a. Convincing people that they do not know enough;
 - b. Keep up with developments – update staff and modify curriculum accordingly.
 - c. Soft skills need to be updated continuously with the changes in circumstances
 - d. There is no such thing as fixed softs skills for everyone for every occasion;
 - e. Projects involves a number of EU countries with different needs – there will probably be variations in requirements and objectives – it will therefore be very challenging to come up with a common project deliverable;
 - f. Culture – how people live – is a very important sub-set of soft skills.

5. Interviewee 5
 - a. Students should understand that the training at the University is the starting point for employment and not the end point.
 - b. One should be careful on fast promoting even the more promising students especially those lacking training in management.

6. Interviewee 6
 - a. Day to day operation issues can undermine the training opportunities – students can be kept focused by having regular assessment based on their placement performance. Such appraisals should be subject to clear business objectives.

In sum, it is assumed that people have soft skills and do not need to be taught these and that once learnt they do not need to update these with time.

Outcome 11: Introducing additional modules to cover new topics in soft skills and another on research or organising postgrad courses with significantly much more focus on soft skills, more effective cooperation between academia and industry and motivating students who need to be more flexible and committed.

To propose how can these be assured/resolved?

1. Interviewee number 1 listed the following:
 - a. Introduction of additional study units. Need for more tutors with industry experience – increase the number of people/soft skills study units.
2. Interviewee number 2 listed the following:
 - a. Bringing academia and industry together to provide the necessary training to students.
3. Interviewee number 3 listed the following:
 - a. One needs to instill in students a desire to learn – wanting to learn the required soft skills and more to be able to carry out their future work in a professional way. This should be despite all the distractions and other commitments in our life.
4. Interviewee number 4 listed the following:
 - a. Research needs to be done about soft skill required to satisfy industry needs followed by necessary changes to the curriculum.
5. Interviewee number 5 listed the following:
 - a. Employers should participate more in the training of students and do not rely on the students' observation skills when shadowing an employee during their placements.

- b. Employer training should be limited to 5 star and a number of selected 4 star hotels (especially those forming part of a franchise) given that usually these have structures that permit and promote training. As a rule, most restaurants and 3 star hotels in Malta are family or individually run leaving very little time, if any, for training. Such entities usually lack an HR Department.
 - c. The University is to develop more courses similar to the 'Master Chef Diploma' where soft skills and management training complement core training.
6. Interviewee number 6 listed the following:
- a. pre-agreed structured placement programs between the University and representatives of the industry. Such an approach will provide the opportunity to bridge the training gaps.
 - b. Students need to be more flexible at the workplace so that they can integrate better within the organisation providing the training leading to a better experience.

In sum, continuously restructuring the syllabus to remove modules that have become irrelevant as times have changed and introduce modules that are more up-to-date with the current needs and changes in the industry.

2.4 Focus Groups

The discussion was designed to gather information from T&H employers and HEI1 educators in regard to the following outcomes:

1. To understand how important are soft skills in the modern T&H workplace?
2. To generate a list of up to 10 most relevant conceptual/creative skills in the contemporary T&H workplace and to rank them in order of their perceived importance.
3. To generate a list of up to 10 most relevant leadership skills in the contemporary T&H workplace and to rank them in order of their perceived importance.
4. To generate a list of up to 10 most relevant interpersonal skills in the contemporary T&H workplace and to rank them in order of their perceived importance.
5. To propose how should soft skills be learned and evaluated in the HEI system (methods, frequency, importance/weight, in which courses)?
6. To generate a list of up to 10 methods of learning soft skills by T&H undergraduate students and rank them in order of their perceived effectiveness.
7. To understand what are the main assumptions/obstacles/challenges in achieving these learning methods?
8. To propose how can these be assured/resolved?

2.4.1 Participant demographics

Five participants (excluding the moderator) took part in the focus groups: two females and three males. Two were HEI1 Tutors and three were T&H Employer Representatives.

2.4.2 Results / participant perspectives

Outcome 1: *Selecting the Most Important Soft Skills for each of the three soft skills domains (conceptual/creative, leadership and interpersonal domains)*

Question(s) *Participants were asked to independently write down from the pool of skills to be presented provided up to 10 specific conceptual/creative; 10 leadership skills & 10 interpersonal skills that a tourism/hospitality graduate should possess. The participants were asked also to separately rank the specific soft skills in order of their perceived importance and establish a country master list of skills.*

Findings from the focus group:

Table 7 below summarises the outcome of this exercise.

**Table 7 Summary of the most important soft skills for each of the three soft skills domains
Ranking 1 = most important**

Ranking	Conceptual/Creative	Leadership	Interpersonal
1	Understands the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties	Present an appropriate personal role model (setting an example) of attendance, punctuality, time usage, professionalism etc.	Manages guest requests with understanding and sensitivity
2	Manifests critical thinking	Make sound decisions under time pressure with limited resources	Communicates efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers
3	Demonstrates an understanding of the job role	Promote teamwork among groups, discourage "us versus them" thinking	Manifest conflict management skills

N.B. The skills in red did not make it up with the short list of the ten soft skills in each domain presented in the in-depth interviews meaning conflict with the outcome of this process with that of downsizing the list of soft skills to 10 in each domain.

Outcome 2: Teaching methods:

Question: *The participants were requested to list and rank methods of teaching soft skills in the order of priority starting with the most important.*

The following list ranks the methods of teaching soft skills in the order of priority as set by the focus group:

- 1 *University and associated partners from industry (chosen employers of good reputation approved as training providers) develop a learning hub to assist in soft skills training and monitor students' progress;*
- 2 *Hold workshops to complement classroom teaching;*
- 3 *On the job placement should not be linked to a specific project (as in the beginning this may be too onerous on students) but let the hosting company adapt the on the job training;*
- 4 *Longer period of placements with a specific Company, say 6 months and on part time basis;*
- 5 *Enhanced methods of teaching using multimedia and shadowing;*
- 6 *Integration of the teaching of soft skills e.g. delegation and leadership.*

Outcome 3: *Action points to improve the teaching of soft skills*

Question: *Participants were asked to list the main action points that can be taken to improve the method of teaching soft skills.*

Findings from the focus group in order of priority starting with the most relevant:

- 1 *Provide students with a more holistic view of the industry both quantitatively and qualitatively;*
- 2 *Industry tutors mentor/act as moderators for the 3rd year thesis;*
- 3 *Industry tutors assist in the compilation of CVs and preparation for interviews;*
- 4 *Industry tutors assist students in finding job opportunities during the study period;*
- 5 *Need to reach the right balance between a generic vs a focused course;*
- 6 *Students need to take a more professional approach to industry placements;*
- 7 *Students need to start practice from a low rank slowly progress to a managerial role.*

2.5 Survey Questionnaires

2.5.1 Survey of former students

N = no. of HEI1 graduates = 5 respondents

Respondents 1 to 4 answered survey online however Respondents 1 & 2 are not included in the analysis as the questionnaire was not completed in full.

Feedback from Respondents 5 to 7 was obtained in hard copies.

2.5.1.1 Respondent demographics

Table 8. Respondent Demographics

Variable	%
<i>Gender</i>	
Female	40
Male	60
<i>Combined length of any work experience</i>	
0-2 YWE	20
3-4 YWE	20
5-6 YWE	20
7-9 YWE	0
≥ 10 YWE	40
Highest	20
Lowest	2yrs 3 months
Mode	≥ 10 YWE
Standard Deviation	7.57
<i>Length of work experience in T&H</i>	
0-2 YWE	20
3-4 YWE	40
5-6 YWE	0
7-9 YWE	20
≥ 10 YWE	20
Highest	20
Lowest	2
Mode	0-2YWE
Standard Deviation	7.67
<i>Current field of employment</i>	
DMO / tourism board (national, regional or local)	0
Hotel / restaurant (including catering)	30
Cruising / nautical (including charter)	0
Travel agency / tour operator	20
Transportation (air, sea, rent a car, etc.)	0
Event / congress organization	30
Marketing / PR	0

Consulting agency	20
Other	0
<i>Current position</i>	
Entry level	0
Assistant manager	40
Department manager / supervisor	40
Other	20

2.5.1.2 Results

Table 9. Importance of Soft Skills at the Current Job vs. Satisfaction With the Soft Skills Actually Learned/Acquired During Undergraduate Study in T&H

Variable	\bar{x}^*	\bar{x}^{**}
<i>Conceptual/Creative Soft Skills</i>	<i>Importance</i>	<i>Satisfaction</i>
Maintain the "big picture" while working on a specific property-management, layout, and design component	2,8	3,0
Manifest critical thinking	3,8	2,6
Demonstrate an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment	4,6	3,0
Develop new ideas	3,6	2,4
Develop adaptation responses to unexpected changes	4,0	2,6
Exhibit knowledge of related job roles - peers, subordinates, others	4,4	2,8
Manifest development and adaptation of innovation or improvements	3,0	2,4
Understand the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties	3,4	1,8
Consider customer needs when making decisions	3,6	3,4
Bring together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways	3,0	3,0
<i>Leadership Soft Skills</i>		
Steer conflicts away from personalities and toward issues	4,4	2,8
Present ideas in a convincing manner	3,6	2,8
Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner	3,8	2,8
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change	3,2	2,2
Operate effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations	3,6	3,0
Build networks with people inside and outside the firm	3,8	2,8

Confront problems early before they become unmanageable	3,8	2,8
Employ a team approach to solve problems when appropriate	4,2	2,6
Listen carefully to input and concerns expressed by others	3,6	2,8
Promote respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences	4,8	3,6
<i>Interpersonal Soft Skills</i>		
Manage guest requests with understanding and sensitivity	4,0	3,0
Communicate efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers	4,0	3,0
Exhibit emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion	3,4	2,8
Effectively handle staff grievances and complaints	3,8	2,4
Act courteously and respectfully	3,2	3,8
Demonstrate awareness of others' feelings	4,2	3,4
Exhibit negotiating skills	3,2	2,2
Provide effective feedback	3,4	2,8
Demonstrate empathy in dealing with customers and staff	3,8	2,8
Manifest intercultural sensitivity	4,0	3,2

* Importance of Soft Skills at the Current Job on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=*not very important* to 5=*critically important*.

** Satisfaction With the Soft Skills Actually Learned/Acquired During Undergraduate Study in T&H on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=*very dissatisfied* to 5=*very satisfied*.

2.5.2 Survey of current students

N = no. of HEI1 students = 49 respondents

Respondents 1 to 4 filled in the survey online.

Hard copies of the replies were obtained as follows:

Year 2 Students - Respondents 5: to 21;

Year 3 - Respondents 22 – 49

2.5.2.1 Respondent demographics

Table 10. Student Respondent Demographics

Variable	%
<i>Gender</i>	
Female	71
Male	29
<i>Major field of study</i>	
Tourism and/or hospitality	88
Hotel/lodging management	6
Restaurant management	2
Destination management	2
Other (Gastronomy)	2
<i>Combined length of any work experience</i>	
None	0
< 1 year	8
1-2 years	22
≥ 3 years	69
<i>Length of work experience in T&H</i>	
None	2
< 1 year	18
1-2 years	24
≥ 3 years	56
<i>T&H field(s) in which you worked so far (multiple answers are possible)</i>	
DMO / tourism board (national, regional or local)	1
Hotel / restaurant (including catering)	47
Cruising / nautical (including charter)	3
Travel agency / tour operator	8
Transportation (air, sea, rent a car, etc.)	9
Event / congress organization	12
Marketing / PR	9
Consulting agency	3
Other (Tourist information assistant + English Language Teaching with Students + entertainment + Bakery + Airport representative + Retail)	9
<i>Job assignment(s) – multiple answers possible</i>	
Waiter / waitress	23
Kitchen worker	5
Bar worker	10
Host / hostess	7

Social media	4
Front desk / reception	19
Housekeeping	2
Travel agent	4
Event planner	5
HR	2
Sales & marketing	5
Guest relations	7
Tour guide	1
Other (Airline Check in Clerk + Cashier + Call Centre Agent within Airline Industry + Management tin Catering + Reservations Executive + check in clerk with Airline Company+ Airport Desk Representative + Sales Assistant)	7

2.5.2.2 Results

Table 11. Importance of Soft Skills at the Current Job vs. Satisfaction With the Soft Skills Actually Learned/Acquired During Undergraduate Study in T&H

Variable	\bar{x}^*	\bar{x}^{**}
<i>Conceptual/Creative Soft Skills</i>	<i>Importance</i>	<i>Satisfaction</i>
Maintain the "big picture" while working on a specific property-management, layout, and design component	3,6	3,3
Manifest critical thinking	4,3	3,4
Demonstrate an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment	3,8	3,4
Develop new ideas	4,3	3,3
Develop adaptation responses to unexpected changes	4,3	3,3
Exhibit knowledge of related job roles - peers, subordinates, others	3,8	3,4
Manifest development and adaptation of innovation or improvements	4,0	3,4
Understand the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties	3,9	3,4
Consider customer needs when making decisions	4,3	3,9
Bring together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways	4,1	3,7
<i>Leadership Soft Skills</i>		
Steer conflicts away from personalities and toward issues	3,9	3,5
Present ideas in a convincing manner	4,0	3,7

Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner	3,9	3,3
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change	3,8	3,3
Operate effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations	4,3	3,3
Build networks with people inside and outside the firm	4,0	3,8
Confront problems early before they become unmanageable	4,2	3,7
Employ a team approach to solve problems when appropriate	3,8	3,5
Listen carefully to input and concerns expressed by others	4,0	3,7
Promote respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences	3,8	3,7

Interpersonal Soft Skills

Manage guest requests with understanding and sensitivity	4,1	3,7
Communicate efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers	4,5	4,0
Exhibit emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion	3,7	3,6
Effectively handle staff grievances and complaints	4,0	3,4
Act courteously and respectfully	4,1	3,6
Demonstrate awareness of others' feelings	3,6	3,3
Exhibit negotiating skills	3,5	3,3
Provide effective feedback	3,7	3,8
Demonstrate empathy in dealing with customers and staff	3,9	3,4
Manifest intercultural sensitivity	3,7	3,6

* Importance of Soft Skills at the Current Job on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=*not very important* to 5=*critically important*.

** Satisfaction With the Soft Skills Actually Learned/Acquired During Undergraduate Study in T&H on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=*very dissatisfied* to 5=*very satisfied*.

3.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Following the gathering of feedback from HEI1 tutors, students, graduates and T&H representatives and employees, via Focus Groups, One-to-one Interviews and Questionnaires the following observations can be drawn:

3.1 Main Outcomes from the One-to-one Interviews

- All participants reflected very high importance of soft skills in the modern tourism and hospitality workplace.
- HEI1 tutors believe that the most relevant conceptual/creative skill is the *'Demonstration & Understanding of the Organization's Interaction with the Larger External Environment'* whilst T&H Employer Representatives believe that the most relevant conceptual/creative skill is the *'Considering customer needs when making decisions'*.
- T&H Employer Representatives believe that the most relevant leadership skill is the *'Listening carefully to input and concerns expressed by others'* whereas HEI1 Tutors consider *'Building networks with people inside and outside the firm'* as the most relevant leadership skill.
- T&H Employer Representatives believe that the most relevant interpersonal skills are *'Acting courteously and respectfully'* and *'Managing guest requests with understanding and sensitivity'* whereas HEI1 Tutors consider *'Communication'* as the most relevant leadership skill.
- An interesting observation is that skills that were noted as most important and most relevant by HEI tutors were given the least ranking by T&H Employer Representatives, highlighting the gap between industry and academia.
- Most skills are thought indirectly through non-explicit soft skills related modules.
- Due to a very small % contribution of the academic syllabus involving explicit soft skills teaching, more practical rather than theoretical learning of soft skills is needed. The need for more observational & practical group-work based teaching was highlighted.
- Most relevant teaching methods include group discussions, reflections & observations.

- It is wrongly assumed that people have soft skills and do not need to be taught these and that once learnt they do not need to update these with time.
- The need to continuously revise the curriculum to remove modules that have become irrelevant as times have changed and introduce modules that are more up-to-date with the current needs and changes in the industry.

3.2 Main Outcomes from the Focus Group

The following Table summarizes the most important soft skills according to the participants of the Focus Group.

Ranking	Conceptual/Creative	Leadership	Interpersonal
1	Understands the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties	Present an appropriate personal role model (setting an example) of attendance, punctuality, time usage, professionalism etc.	Manages guest requests with understanding and sensitivity
2	Manifests critical thinking	Make sound decisions under time pressure with limited resources	Communicates efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers
3	Demonstrates an understanding of the job role	Promote teamwork among groups, discourage "us versus them" thinking	Manifest conflict management skills

The following are the most relevant teaching methods identified during the Focus Group:

- 1 *University and associated partners from industry (chosen employers of good reputation approved as training providers) develop a learning hub to assist in soft skills training and monitor students' progress;*
- 2 *Hold workshops to complement classroom teaching;*
- 3 *On the job placement should not be linked to a specific project (as in the beginning this may be too onerous on students) but let the hosting company adapt the on the job training;*

The following are the 3 proposed most effective ways to improve Teaching Methods

- 1 *Provide students with a more holistic view of the industry both quantitatively and qualitatively;*
- 2 *Industry tutors mentor/act as moderators for the 3rd year thesis;*
- 3 *Industry tutors assist in the compilation of CVs and preparation for interviews;*

3.3 Main Outcomes from the Survey Questionnaires

3.3.1 Results from the Graduate Survey Questionnaires

The below Table summarizes the MOST IMPORTANT soft skills as per GRADUATE Survey Results

Conceptual/Creative	Leadership	Interpersonal
Demonstrate an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment	Steer conflicts away from personalities and toward issues	Manage guest requests with understanding and sensitivity
Develop adaptation responses to unexpected changes	Employ a team approach to solve problems when appropriate	Communicate efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers
Exhibit knowledge of related job roles - peers, subordinates, others	Promote respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences	Demonstrate awareness of others' feelings
		Manifest Intercultural Sensitivity

The below Table summarizes the LEAST SATISFACTORY soft skills as per GRADUATE Survey Results

Conceptual/Creative	Leadership	Interpersonal
Develop new ideas	Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change	Exhibit emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion
Manifest development and adaptation of innovation or improvements	Employ a team approach to solve problems when appropriate	Effectively handle staff grievances and complaints
Understand the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties		Exhibit negotiating skills
		Provide effective feedback
		Demonstrate empathy in dealing with customers and staff

3.3.2 Results from the Student Survey Questionnaires

The below Table summarizes the MOST IMPORTANT soft skills as per STUDENT Survey Results

Conceptual/Creative	Leadership	Interpersonal
Manifest critical thinking	Present ideas in a convincing manner	Manage guest requests with understanding and sensitivity
Develop new ideas	Operate effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations	Communicate efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers
Develop adaptation responses to unexpected changes	Build networks with people inside and outside the firm	Act courteously & respectfully
Consider customer needs when making decisions	Confront problems early before they become unmanageable	
	Listen carefully to input and concerns expressed by others	

The below Table summarizes the LEAST SATISFACTORY soft skills as per STUDENT Survey Results

Conceptual/Creative	Leadership	Interpersonal
Maintain the "big picture" while working on a specific property-management, layout, and design component	Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner	Effectively handle staff grievances and complaints
Develop new ideas	Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change	Demonstrate awareness of others' feelings
Develop adaptation responses to unexpected changes	Operate effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations	Exhibit negotiating skills
		Demonstrate empathy in dealing with customers and staff

Appendix 1: In-Depth Interview Protocol and Supporting Documentation

Research Protocol - HEI

<p>HEI Interview Protocol (IP) Interview No 1 (Use a tape recorder or similar device to record the interview [ask the interviewee for permission to tape the interview] and/or take notes on paper or computer)</p>
<p><i>Step IP1:</i></p> <p>What are soft skills? (warm-up question) How important are soft skills the modern tourism and hospitality workplace? (warm-up question) Notes:</p> <p><i>Acknowledged that soft skills are very important given the ultimate on the job continuous contact with people. The term People Skills would be more appropriate than soft skills as the latter is too vast.</i></p>
<p><i>Step IP2:</i></p> <p>Ask the interviewee to submit his or her interviewee questionnaire. Spend several minutes reviewing the questionnaire responses. Invite the interviewee to share his or her thoughts on anything noteworthy regarding the questionnaire.</p>
<p><i>Step IP3:</i></p> <p>What emphasis is given to learning these skills in the T&H curricula today? Is it satisfactory? If the answer is no, then why do you think that is?</p> <p><i>One main course module about leadership skills but several other indirect tuition in other modules such as the module dealing with the Business Environment e.g. time management and marketing though this may lead to an element of repetition. The Leadership Skills module is work based.</i></p> <p><i>More tuition of soft skills is required. Preference of having tutors with more industry background. This is being addressed with plans to change in curriculum in 2019 where the Customer will be the focus. The periodic review of the undergrad course is done every three years.</i></p>

HEI Interview Protocol (IP) Interview No 2

(Use a tape recorder or similar device to record the interview [ask the interviewee for permission to tape the interview] and/or take notes on paper or computer)

Step IP1:

What are soft skills? (warm-up question)

How important are soft skills the modern tourism and hospitality workplace? (warm-up question)

Notes:

Soft skills are very important given the people-to-people activities on the workplace.

The University should be looking at careers rather than job growth by giving students career orientation and not just opportunities for short-term jobs.

Step IP2:

Ask the interviewee to submit his or her interviewee questionnaire.

Spend several minutes reviewing the questionnaire responses.

Invite the interviewee to share his or her thoughts on anything noteworthy regarding the questionnaire.

The questionnaire has address the main relevant soft skills

Step IP3:

What emphasis is given to learning these skills in the T&H curricula today? Is it satisfactory? If the answer is no, then why do you think that is?

Students need to be more interactive during their academic training, such as by working in groups, being more innovative & creative in their thinking and should practice leadership skills. The University should be less spoon feeding . There should be more a more systematic approach to assignments and academic group work and more emphasis on R&D.

<p>HEI Interview Protocol (IP) Interview No 3 (Use a tape recorder or similar device to record the interview [ask the interviewee for permission to tape the interview] and/or take notes on paper or computer)</p>
<p><i>Step IP1:</i></p> <p>What are soft skills? (warm-up question) How important are soft skills the modern tourism and hospitality workplace? (warm-up question)</p> <p><i>One has to distinguish the workplace where the student will ultimate work at i.e. whether a front liner of a managerial post.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>For front liners soft skills are very important as this job deals more directly with guests.</i> ✓ <i>In case of a managerial job, the student needs to be trained on critical thinking and communication skills to analyse situations and problems and communicate solutions effectively.</i> <p><i>Ideally on sets common learning outcomes rather than a common curriculum. It would be up to the HEI to decide on which soft skills to focus and how depending on local situations.</i></p>
<p><i>Step IP2:</i></p> <p>Ask the interviewee to submit his or her interviewee questionnaire. Spend several minutes reviewing the questionnaire responses. Invite the interviewee to share his or her thoughts on anything noteworthy regarding the questionnaire.</p> <p><i>The first 3 to 4 rankings are usually those that require particular attention. The other are usually less important and can be taught indirectly as part of the bigger package.</i></p>
<p><i>Step IP3:</i></p> <p>What emphasis is given to learning these skills in the T&H curricula today? Is it satisfactory? If the answer is no, then why do you think that is?</p> <p><i>Not enough is being done to asses students on soft skills especially when these skills are being taught as part of a module where soft skills are not core subject where in some cases not enough effort is being done by lecturers.</i></p> <p><i>Current training course lacks training on communication skills especially in written communication - which is considered to make up to at least 80% of the overall communication skills required at managerial level.</i></p> <p><i>Following a recent change in the leadership of the Institute, where in the opinion of the interviewee there was lack of proper appreciation of placements requirements, things are changing in the right direction. However the solution is not just in the introduction of new modules to address soft skill learning but a number of lectures need to change their attitude to be able to motivate better students.</i></p>

One needs also to train students in research in tourism. This may be taught but is peripheral and although of critical importance is not being assessed.

HEI Interview Protocol (IP) Interview No 4

(Use a tape recorder or similar device to record the interview [ask the interviewee for permission to tape the interview] and/or take notes on paper or computer)

Step IP1:

What are soft skills? (warm-up question)

How important are soft skills the modern tourism and hospitality workplace? (warm-up question)

Notes:

Soft skills are important as these are skills required by a person to interact with other persons. Such skills include understanding, communicating, empathy and analysis.

Tourism is a people's industry especially for tourists with different cultural background.

Step IP2:

Ask the interviewee to submit his or her interviewee questionnaire.

Spend several minutes reviewing the questionnaire responses.

Invite the interviewee to share his or her thoughts on anything noteworthy regarding the questionnaire.

Main constraint is for a great number of a cases, the same ranking could have been applied to a number of soft skills.

- *Conceptual – understanding reality is the most important;*
- *Leadership – goes beyond the individual – includes environmental issues – seeing the wider context – macro and micro;*

Step IP3:

What emphasis is given to learning these skills in the T&H curricula today? Is it satisfactory? If the answer is no, then why do you think that is?

The main problem is that people come from different backgrounds.

Training in writing is very different from practice – trainers lack adequate training in pedagogy and sociology and lack industry experience.

Trainers need to identify key soft skills, practice such skills, apply them in classrooms and keep them updated with the industry requirements.

Research Protocol – T&H Employer Representatives

<p>Employer Interview Protocol (IP) Interview 5 (Use a tape recorder or similar device to record the interview [ask the interviewee for permission to tape the interview] and/or take notes on paper or computer)</p>
<p><i>Step IP1:</i></p> <p>What are soft skills? (warm-up question) How important are soft skills the modern tourism and hospitality workplace? (warm-up question)</p> <p>Notes: <i>Very important given that the hospitality industry in nature is very human-to-human. In fact, given that the basics are in place, soft skill are the next fundamental requirements to the mission of the hospitality industry. Moreover, management in the hospitality industry is very complex given that at the very same time one is dealing with guests and employees coming from various social statuses.</i></p>
<p><i>Step IP2:</i></p> <p>Ask the interviewee to submit his or her interviewee questionnaire. Spend several minutes reviewing the questionnaire responses. Invite the interviewee to share his or her thoughts on anything noteworthy regarding the questionnaire.</p> <p><i>The skills listed in the Interview Questionnaire are comprehensive enough but one needs to caution trying to find a curriculum where on size fits all given the diverse cultural background of the participants in this project and the different target guests.</i></p>
<p><i>Step IP3:</i></p> <p>How satisfied are you with the soft skills that, in your experience, graduate employees have? Which are best & which worse developed?</p> <p><i>There is a lot of room for improvement especially in Leadership Skills, which require more development. One cannot expect that soft skills are learned from home or people are born with all the necessary soft skills required to be successful in the hospitality industry. On the other hand, students coming from the University are stronger when it comes to interpersonal skills.</i></p> <p><i>Students need also be trained better to carryout research work.</i></p>

Step IP4:

How can these skills best be learned (methods, frequency, in which courses, in which year of the study, etc.) and evaluated?

In the first year, one may consider whether a psychologist can be deployed to can screen students and establish whether a student can be trained to work in the hospitality industry. If in the affirmative, the screening will also establish the areas where training is required.

In the final year, students need to be empowered and experience a leadership role during placements where students should be asked to deliver a small project/task e.g. research on customer satisfaction. This should prepare them for deployment at the deeper end following their successful completion of their studies at the University.

Step IP5:

Please rank the methods/ways of learning soft skills at an undergraduate level in order of their effectiveness.

Placement of longer duration.

During placements students are to be assigned a small number of staff to manage for the delivery of a project/task.

Group students in small groups with the participation of students from other Faculties (e.g. Management & HR) to work on assignments with a lecturer as a supervisor.

Role-plays during the academic study.

Step IP6:

What are the main assumptions/obstacles/challenges in the process of learning soft skills? How can these be assured/resolved?

Students should understand that the training at the University is the starting point for employment and not the end point.

One should be careful on fast promoting even the more promising students especially those lacking training in management. The University is to develop more courses similar to the 'Master Chef Diploma' where soft skills and management training complement core training.

Step IP7:

How can T&H employers facilitate the process of learning soft skills by undergraduate students?

Employers should participate more in the training of students and do not rely on the students' observation skills when shadowing an employee during their placements.

Employer training should be limited to 5 star and a number of selected 4 star hotels (especially those forming part of a franchise) given that usually these have structures that permit and promote training. As a rule, most restaurants and 3 star hotels in Malta are family or individually run leaving very little time, if any, for training. Such entities usually lack an HR Department.

Employer Interview Protocol (IP) Interview No 6

(Use a tape recorder or similar device to record the interview [ask the interviewee for permission to tape the interview] and/or take notes on paper or computer)

Step IP1:

What are soft skills? (warm-up question)

How important are soft skills the modern tourism and hospitality workplace? (warm-up question)

Notes:

Soft skills are crucial to the hospitality industry given the sensitivity regarding the way clients are treated as this can make or break the business especially in today's world where clients voice their experience through social media. This is more so important in a boutique hotel considering the small number of employees.

The hospitality industry is customer driven requiring immediate decision-making and interaction with clients who are present for a relatively short period and expect a satisfactory service.

Step IP2:

Ask the interviewee to submit his or her interviewee questionnaire.

Spend several minutes reviewing the questionnaire responses.

Invite the interviewee to share his or her thoughts on anything noteworthy regarding the questionnaire.

Lists provided are comprehensive.

Step IP3:

How satisfied are you with the soft skills that, in your experience, graduate employees have? Which are best & which worse developed?

As a boutique hotel operator, interviewee is of the opinion that his experience with placements is far from expected especially when front line tasks are allocated to students. The training requires more on the job experience where students need to be monitored closer by the HEI and show more commitment and motivation.

Students need to be made more aware of brand standards and taught how to come up with new ideas.

Leadership skills should prepare students to remain calm and understand the guests' requirements and the way to approach problems. Students need to be prepared to be good listeners and are not taken over by emotions.

Cultural issues need also to be address when having students from other countries.

Step IP4:

How can these skills best be learned (methods, frequency, in which courses, in which year of the study, etc.) and evaluated?

It is up to the HEI to coordinate better the workplace training with the industry and give it the importance through the weighting of marking of the students based on the workplace performance.

HEIs should co-ordinate more with the larger hotels who can focus more on training.

HEI is to consider lobbying with the relevant authorities so that soft skills are taught at school at an earlier age.

Step IP5:

Please rank the methods/ways of learning soft skills at an undergraduate level in order of their effectiveness.

Pre-enrolment at the University.

On the job training – more time needs to be allocated for hands on training.

Academic.

Step IP6:

What are the main assumptions/obstacles/challenges in the process of learning soft skills? How can these be assured/resolved?

Day to day operation issues can undermine the training opportunities – students can be kept focused by having regular assessment based on their placement performance. Such appraisals should be subject to clear business objectives.

Students need to be more flexible at the workplace so that they can integrate better within the organisation providing the training leading to a better experience.

Step IP7:

How can T&H employers facilitate the process of learning soft skills by undergraduate students?

Pre-agreed structured placement programs between the University and representatives of the industry. Such an approach will provide the opportunity to bridge the training gaps.

Interviewee Questionnaire – HEI Tutors

Importance of leadership skills	
Same as in the previous task, now please rank each of the following 10 leadership skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.	
Steers conflicts away from personalities and toward issues	4
Presents ideas in a convincing manner	5
Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner	3
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change	9
Operates effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations	8
Builds networks with people inside and outside the firm	10
Confronts problems early before they become unmanageable	6
Employs a team approach to solve problems when appropriate	7
Listens carefully to input and concerns expressed by others	2
Promotes respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences	1

Importance of interpersonal skills	
Finally, please rank each of the following 10 interpersonal skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.	
Manages guest requests with understanding and sensitivity	5
Communicates efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers	1
Exhibits emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion	7
Effectively handles staff grievances and complaints	9
Acts courteously and respectfully	2
Demonstrates awareness of others' feelings	8
Exhibits negotiating skills	10
Provides effective feedback	4
Demonstrates empathy in dealing with customers and staff	3
Manifests intercultural sensitivity	6

Interview Questionnaire - HEI

Interviewee Questionnaire 1

(to be emailed to the interviewee a few days prior to the interview)

 Importance of **conceptual/creative** skills

Please imagine that you are part of an interview panel/team involved in recruiting a university graduate to fill an entry-level management trainee position at a tourism and hospitality (T&H) firm. Please rank each of the following 10 conceptual/creative skills in order of their importance, with 1 being the most important skill to 10 being the least important skill in a new recruit.

NOTE: You cannot choose the same ranking for multiple skills (for example, you cannot choose two skills to be ranked 1).

Fill in one unique number per row

Maintains the "big picture" while working for a specific firm/organization	
Manifests critical thinking	
Demonstrates an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment	2
Develops new ideas	3
Develops adaptation responses to unexpected changes	7
Exhibits knowledge of related job roles of peers, subordinates, others	1
Manifests development and adaptation of innovation or improvements	
Understands the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties	6
Considers customer needs when making decisions	5
Brings together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways	4

 Importance of **leadership** skills

Same as in the previous task, now please rank each of the following 10 leadership skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

Steers conflicts away from personalities and toward issues	
Presents ideas in a convincing manner	
Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner	3
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change	4
Operates effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations	5
Builds networks with people inside and outside the firm	2
Confronts problems early before they become unmanageable	
Employs a team approach to solve problems when appropriate	1
Listens carefully to input and concerns expressed by others	
Promotes respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences	

Importance of interpersonal skills

Finally, please rank each of the following 10 interpersonal skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

Manages guest requests with understanding and sensitivity	
Communicates efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers	1
Exhibits emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion	4
Effectively handles staff grievances and complaints	5
Acts courteously and respectfully	2
Demonstrates awareness of others' feelings	8
Exhibits negotiating skills	6
Provides effective feedback	7
Demonstrates empathy in dealing with customers and staff	3
Manifests intercultural sensitivity	

Interviewee Questionnaire 2

(to be emailed to the interviewee a few days prior to the interview)

Importance of conceptual/creative skills

Please imagine that you are part of an interview panel/team involved in recruiting a university graduate to fill an entry-level management trainee position at a tourism and hospitality (T&H) firm. Please rank each of the following 10 conceptual/creative skills in order of their importance, with 1 being the most important skill to 10 being the least important skill in a new recruit.

NOTE: You cannot choose the same ranking for multiple skills (for example, you cannot choose two skills to be ranked 1).

Fill in one unique number per row

Maintains the "big picture" while working for a specific firm/organization	9
Manifests critical thinking	3
Demonstrates an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment	1
Develops new ideas	2
Develops adaptation responses to unexpected changes	10
Exhibits knowledge of related job roles of peers, subordinates, others	4
Manifests development and adaptation of innovation or improvements	5
Understands the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties	6
Considers customer needs when making decisions	7
Brings together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways	8

Importance of **leadership** skills

Same as in the previous task, now please rank each of the following 10 leadership skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

Steers conflicts away from personalities and toward issues	6
Presents ideas in a convincing manner	5
Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner	10
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change	9
Operates effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations	4
Builds networks with people inside and outside the firm	3
Confronts problems early before they become unmanageable	8
Employs a team approach to solve problems when appropriate	1
Listens carefully to input and concerns expressed by others	2
Promotes respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences	7

Importance of **interpersonal** skills

Finally, please rank each of the following 10 interpersonal skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

Manages guest requests with understanding and sensitivity	2
Communicates efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers	1
Exhibits emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion	3
Effectively handles staff grievances and complaints	4
Acts courteously and respectfully	5
Demonstrates awareness of others' feelings	6
Exhibits negotiating skills	7
Provides effective feedback	10
Demonstrates empathy in dealing with customers and staff	8
Manifests intercultural sensitivity	9

Interviewee Questionnaire 3
(to be emailed to the interviewee a few days prior to the interview)

Importance of **conceptual/creative** skills

Please imagine that you are part of an interview panel/team involved in recruiting a university graduate to fill an entry-level management trainee position at a tourism and hospitality (T&H) firm. Please rank each of the following 10 conceptual/creative skills in order of their importance, with 1 being the most important skill to 10 being the least important skill in a new recruit.

NOTE: You cannot choose the same ranking for multiple skills (for example, you cannot choose two skills to be ranked 1).

Fill in one unique number per row

Maintains the "big picture" while working for a specific firm/organization	3
Manifests critical thinking	1
Demonstrates an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment	7
Develops new ideas	2
Develops adaptation responses to unexpected changes	4
Exhibits knowledge of related job roles of peers, subordinates, others	8
Manifests development and adaptation of innovation or improvements	9
Understands the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties	10
Considers customer needs when making decisions	6
Brings together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways	5

Importance of **leadership** skills

Same as in the previous task, now please rank each of the following 10 leadership skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

Steers conflicts away from personalities and toward issues	7
Presents ideas in a convincing manner	1
Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner	2
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change	8
Operates effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations	3
Builds networks with people inside and outside the firm	4
Confronts problems early before they become unmanageable	5
Employs a team approach to solve problems when appropriate	9
Listens carefully to input and concerns expressed by others	6
Promotes respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences	10

Importance of **interpersonal** skills

Finally, please rank each of the following 10 interpersonal skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

Manages guest requests with understanding and sensitivity	4
Communicates efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers	1
Exhibits emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion	9
Effectively handles staff grievances and complaints	5
Acts courteously and respectfully	6
Demonstrates awareness of others' feelings	8
Exhibits negotiating skills	2
Provides effective feedback	7
Demonstrates empathy in dealing with customers and staff	3
Manifests intercultural sensitivity	10

Interviewee Questionnaire 4

(to be emailed to the interviewee a few days prior to the interview)

Importance of **conceptual/creative** skills

Please imagine that you are part of an interview panel/team involved in recruiting a university graduate to fill an entry-level management trainee position at a tourism and hospitality (T&H) firm. Please rank each of the following 10 conceptual/creative skills in order of their importance, with 1 being the most important skill to 10 being the least important skill in a new recruit.

NOTE: You cannot choose the same ranking for multiple skills (for example, you cannot choose two skills to be ranked 1).

Fill in one unique number per row →

Maintains the "big picture" while working for a specific firm/organization	2
Manifests critical thinking	8
Demonstrates an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment	1
Develops new ideas	9
Develops adaptation responses to unexpected changes	7
Exhibits knowledge of related job roles of peers, subordinates, others	3
Manifests development and adaptation of innovation or improvements	6
Understands the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties	5
Considers customer needs when making decisions	4
Brings together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways	10

Importance of **leadership** skills

Same as in the previous task, now please rank each of the following 10 leadership skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

Steers conflicts away from personalities and toward issues	3
Presents ideas in a convincing manner	8
Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner	9
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change	4
Operates effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations	10
Builds networks with people inside and outside the firm	7
Confronts problems early before they become unmanageable	5
Employs a team approach to solve problems when appropriate	6
Listens carefully to input and concerns expressed by others	1
Promotes respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences	2

Importance of **interpersonal** skills

Finally, please rank each of the following 10 interpersonal skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

Manages guest requests with understanding and sensitivity	1
Communicates efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers	2
Exhibits emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion	7
Effectively handles staff grievances and complaints	8
Acts courteously and respectfully	3
Demonstrates awareness of others' feelings	4
Exhibits negotiating skills	5
Provides effective feedback	9
Demonstrates empathy in dealing with customers and staff	6
Manifests intercultural sensitivity	10

Interview Questionnaire – T&H Employer Representatives

Interviewee Questionnaire 5
(to be emailed to the interviewee a few days prior to the interview)

Importance of **conceptual/creative** skills

Please imagine that you are part of an interview panel/team involved in recruiting a university graduate to fill an entry-level management trainee position at a tourism and hospitality (T&H) firm. Please rank each of the following 10 conceptual/creative skills in order of their importance, with 1 being the most important skill to 10 being the least important skill in a new recruit.

NOTE: You cannot choose the same ranking for multiple skills (for example, you cannot choose two skills to be ranked 1).

Fill in one unique number per row

Maintains the "big picture" while working for a specific firm/organization	4
Manifests critical thinking	8
Demonstrates an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment	10
Develops new ideas	9
Develops adaptation responses to unexpected changes	6
Exhibits knowledge of related job roles of peers, subordinates, others	3
Manifests development and adaptation of innovation or improvements	5
Understands the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties	2
Considers customer needs when making decisions	1
Brings together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways	7

Importance of **leadership** skills

Same as in the previous task, now please rank each of the following 10 leadership skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

Steers conflicts away from personalities and toward issues	4
Presents ideas in a convincing manner	5
Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner	3
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change	9
Operates effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations	8
Builds networks with people inside and outside the firm	10
Confronts problems early before they become unmanageable	6
Employs a team approach to solve problems when appropriate	7
Listens carefully to input and concerns expressed by others	2
Promotes respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences	1

Importance of interpersonal skills

Finally, please rank each of the following 10 interpersonal skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

Manages guest requests with understanding and sensitivity	5
Communicates efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers	1
Exhibits emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion	7
Effectively handles staff grievances and complaints	9
Acts courteously and respectfully	2
Demonstrates awareness of others' feelings	8
Exhibits negotiating skills	10
Provides effective feedback	4
Demonstrates empathy in dealing with customers and staff	3
Manifests intercultural sensitivity	6

Interviewee Questionnaire 6

(to be emailed to the interviewee a few days prior to the interview)

Importance of conceptual/creative skills

Please imagine that you are part of an interview panel/team involved in recruiting a university graduate to fill an entry-level management trainee position at a tourism and hospitality (T&H) firm. Please rank each of the following 10 conceptual/creative skills in order of their importance, with 1 being the most important skill to 10 being the least important skill in a new recruit.

NOTE: You cannot choose the same ranking for multiple skills (for example, you cannot choose two skills to be ranked 1).

Fill in one unique number per row

Maintains the "big picture" while working for a specific firm/organization	5
Manifests critical thinking	9
Demonstrates an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment	6
Develops new ideas	3
Develops adaptation responses to unexpected changes	7
Exhibits knowledge of related job roles of peers, subordinates, others	10
Manifests development and adaptation of innovation or improvements	8
Understands the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties	2
Considers customer needs when making decisions	1
Brings together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways	4

Importance of **leadership** skills

Same as in the previous task, now please rank each of the following 10 leadership skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

Steers conflicts away from personalities and toward issues	4
Presents ideas in a convincing manner	6
Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner	5
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change	10
Operates effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations	2
Builds networks with people inside and outside the firm	9
Confronts problems early before they become unmanageable	7
Employs a team approach to solve problems when appropriate	8
Listens carefully to input and concerns expressed by others	1
Promotes respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences	3

Importance of **interpersonal** skills

Finally, please rank each of the following 10 interpersonal skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

Manages guest requests with understanding and sensitivity	1
Communicates efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers	8
Exhibits emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion	7
Effectively handles staff grievances and complaints	2
Acts courteously and respectfully	3
Demonstrates awareness of others' feelings	6
Exhibits negotiating skills	5
Provides effective feedback	4
Demonstrates empathy in dealing with customers and staff	9
Manifests intercultural sensitivity	10

Appendix 2: Focus Group Protocol and Supporting Documentation

MALTA UNIVERSITY CONSULTING

Focus Group: Soft Skills in the Tourism Industry

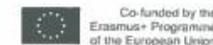
4th September, 2018

9:00 am

Events Room – 2nd Floor
Dar Guzeppi Zahra,
University of Malta

9:00 am	Registration & Coffee
9:15 am	Opening Remarks Introduction to the Focus Group on Soft Skills – purpose and rules
9:20 am	Focus Group Discussion – Part 1 Moderated by: Mr Joe Tanti, CEO Malta Business Bureau
10:20 am	Coffee break
10:35 am	Focus Group Discussion – Part 2
11:35 am	Concluding Remarks

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

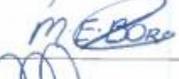
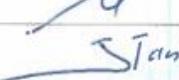
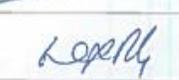


Supported by: The Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture at the University of Malta.

 Event Type: Focus Group (Work Package 2)
Event Date: Tuesday, 4th September 2018
Location: Events Room – 2nd Floor, Dar Guzeppi Zahra, University of Malta

Erasmus+ Programme – Project No. 588476-EPP-1-2017-1-PT-EPPKA2-KA

Focus Group (Work Package 2)
Participants List

No.	Name and Surname	Organisation	Address	Email	Signature
1	Abela Genevieve	Member of the Malta Chamber's Tourism Business Section Executive Committee	17, Sir Augustus Bantolina Street Ta' Xbiex	genevieveabela.com	
2	Arrigo Alan	Member of the Malta Chamber's Tourism Business Section Executive Committee	51, C. Tabone Street St. Julian's STS 1217	alan@robertarrigo.com	
3	Avellino Marie	University of Malta's Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture	Rm 434, UoM	marie.avellino@um.edu.mt	
4	Borg Marija Elena	Malta Business Bureau	64, The Exchange Buildings, Republic Street, Valletta	mborg@mbb.org.mt	
5	Cachia Mario	Malta University Holding Company	Room 212 Dar Guzeppi Zahra University of Malta	mario.cachia@muhc.com.mt	
6	Caruana Simon	University of Malta's Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture	Rm 336 FBIA ANNEX, ITC UNIVERSITY OF MALTA, (UoM)	Simon.caruana@um.edu.mt	
7	Fitzpatrick Ian	Member of the Malta Chamber's Tourism Business Section Executive Committee		ianfitz@maltonet.net	
8	Pace Kiomall Alexia	Malta University Holding Company	64, The Exchange Buildings, Republic Street, Valletta	ced@mbb.org.mt	
9	Tanti Joe	Malta Business Bureau	Dar Guzeppi Zahra, UoM	alexia.pace@maltonet.net @muhc.com.mt	
10	Zarb Julian	University of Malta's Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture			

Disclaimer: By participating in this event, you consent to being photographed and authorize the Malta Business Bureau to use the photographs in print, digital or web-based formats for its promotional and archival purposes.

Appendix 3: Survey Questionnaires and Supporting Documentation

Income - Graduates - English - 1

Start of Block: Default Question Block

SURVEY OF EU TOURISM & HOSPITALITY GRADUATES

Hi, Thank you for agreeing to take part in this important survey measuring the importance of soft skills among former tourism & hospitality (T&H) students. Your answers will help us better serve future T&H students. Be assured that all answers you provide will be kept in the strictest confidentiality.

Q1 Your gender:

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
-

Q2 Your combined length of any work experience:

- Years (1) _____
- and months (2) _____
-

Q3 Your length of work experience in tourism & hospitality:

- Years (1) _____
- and months (2) _____

Q4 Your current field of employment:

- Destination management organization / tourism board (national, regional or local) (1)
 - Hotel / restaurant (including catering) (2)
 - Cruising / nautical (including charter) (3)
 - Travel agency / tour operator (4)
 - Transportation (air, sea, rent a car, etc.) (5)
 - Event / congress organization (6)
 - Marketing / PR (7)
 - Consulting agency (8)
 - Other (9) _____
-

Q5 Your current position:

- Entry level (1)
 - Assistant manager (2)
 - Department manager / supervisor (3)
 - Other (4) _____
-

Q6

Please rate (on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=not very important to 5=critically important) how important each of the following skills is at your current job.

	Not very important (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Critically important (5)	Not applicable / don't know (6)
Maintain the "big picture" while working on a specific property-management, layout, and design component (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manifest critical thinking (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrate an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop new ideas (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop adaptation responses to unexpected changes (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exhibit knowledge of related job roles - peers, subordinates, others (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manifest development and adaptation of innovation or improvements (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understand the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Consider customer needs when making decisions (9)	<input type="radio"/>					
Bring together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways (10)	<input type="radio"/>					
Steer conflicts away from personalities and toward issues (11)	<input type="radio"/>					
Present ideas in a convincing manner (12)	<input type="radio"/>					
Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner (13)	<input type="radio"/>					
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change (14)	<input type="radio"/>					
Operate effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations (15)	<input type="radio"/>					
Build networks with people inside and outside the firm (16)	<input type="radio"/>					
Confront problems early before they become unmanageable (17)	<input type="radio"/>					
Employ a team approach to solve problems when appropriate (18)	<input type="radio"/>					
Listen carefully to input and concerns expressed by others (19)	<input type="radio"/>					

Promote respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences (20)

Manage guest requests with understanding and sensitivity (21)

Communicate efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers (22)

Exhibit emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion (23)

Effectively handle staff grievances and complaints (24)

Act courteously and respectfully (25)

Demonstrate awareness of others' feelings (26)

Exhibit negotiating skills (27)

Provide effective feedback (28)

Demonstrate empathy in dealing with customers and staff (29)

Manifest intercultural sensitivity (30)

Q7

Now please rate (on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=very dissatisfied to 5=very satisfied) your satisfaction with the skills you actually learned/acquired during your undergraduate study in tourism/hospitality.

	Very dissatisfied (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Very satisfied (5)	Not applicable / don't know (6)
Maintaining the "big picture" while working on a specific property-management, layout, and design component (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manifesting critical thinking (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrating an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing new ideas (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing adaptation responses to unexpected changes (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exhibiting knowledge of related job roles - peers, subordinates, others (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manifesting development and adaptation of innovation or improvements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(7) Understanding the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties	<input type="radio"/>					
(8) Considering customer needs when making decisions	<input type="radio"/>					
(9) Bringing together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways	<input type="radio"/>					
(10) Steering conflicts away from personalities and toward issues	<input type="radio"/>					
(11) Presenting ideas in a convincing manner	<input type="radio"/>					
(12) Expressing disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner	<input type="radio"/>					
(13) Working to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept	<input type="radio"/>					

change (14)						
Operating effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations (15)	<input type="radio"/>					
Building networks with people inside and outside the firm (16)	<input type="radio"/>					
Confronting problems early before they become unmanageable (17)	<input type="radio"/>					
Employing a team approach to solve problems when appropriate (18)	<input type="radio"/>					
Listening carefully to input and concerns expressed by others (19)	<input type="radio"/>					
Promoting respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences (20)	<input type="radio"/>					
Managing guest requests with understanding and sensitivity (21)	<input type="radio"/>					
Communicating efficiently (orally and in writing) with	<input type="radio"/>					

other employees, clients, and customers (22)						
Exhibiting emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion (23)	<input type="radio"/>					
Effectively handling staff grievances and complaints (24)	<input type="radio"/>					
Acting courteously and respectfully (25)	<input type="radio"/>					
Demonstrating awareness of others' feelings (26)	<input type="radio"/>					
Exhibiting negotiating skills (27)	<input type="radio"/>					
Providing effective feedback (28)	<input type="radio"/>					
Demonstrating empathy in dealing with customers and staff (29)	<input type="radio"/>					
Manifesting intercultural sensitivity (30)	<input type="radio"/>					

End of Block: Default Question Block

Income - Current students - English - 1

Start of Block: Default Question Block

SURVEY OF EU TOURISM & HOSPITALITY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Hi, Thank you for agreeing to take part in this important survey measuring the importance of soft skills among current tourism & hospitality (T&H) students. Your answers will help us better serve future T&H students. Be assured that all answers you provide will be kept in the strictest confidentiality.

Q1 Your gender:

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
-

Q2 Your current major field of study:

- Tourism and/or hospitality (1)
 - Hotel/lodging management (2)
 - Restaurant management (3)
 - Destination management (4)
 - Other (5) _____
-

Q3 Your combined length of any work experience:

- Years (1) _____
 - and months (2) _____
-

Q4 Your length of work experience in tourism & hospitality:

- Years (1) _____
 - and months (2) _____
-

Q5 In which tourism & hospitality field(s) have you worked so far (please check all that apply):

- Destination management organization / tourism board (national, regional or local) (1)
- Hotel / restaurant (including catering) (2)
- Cruising / nautical (including charter) (3)
- Travel agency / tour operator (4)
- Transportation (air, sea, rent a car, etc.) (5)
- Event / congress organization (6)
- Marketing / PR (7)
- Consulting agency (8)
- Other (9) _____
-

Q6 Please list your job assignment(s) - please check all that apply:

- Waiter / waitress (1)
- Kitchen worker (2)
- Bar worker (3)
- Host / hostess (4)
- Social media (5)
- Front desk / reception (6)
- Housekeeping (7)
- Travel agent (8)
- Event planner (9)
- HR (10)
- Sales & marketing (11)
- Guest relations (12)
- Tour guide (13)
- Other (14) _____

Q7

Imagine that you are applying for an entry-level management trainee position in any field of the

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tourism & hospitality industry, e.g. hotel, restaurant, travel agency, meetings, events, conventions, festivals, recreation, gaming, cruise management, etc.

How important do you think each of the following skills or qualities would be to tourism & hospitality managers assessing your application?

Please rate the importance of each of the following skill descriptions on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=not very important to 5=critically important.

	Not very important (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Critically important (5)	Not applicable / don't know (6)
Maintain the "big picture" while working on a specific property-management, layout, and design component (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manifest critical thinking (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrate an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop new ideas (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop adaptation responses to unexpected changes (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exhibit knowledge of related job roles - peers, subordinates, others (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manifest development and adaptation of innovation or improvements (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Understand the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties (8)

Consider customer needs when making decisions (9)

Bring together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways (10)

Steer conflicts away from personalities and toward issues (11)

Present ideas in a convincing manner (12)

Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner (13)

Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change (14)

Operate effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations (15)

Build networks with people inside and outside the firm (16)

Confront problems early before they become unmanageable (17)

Employ a team approach to solve problems when appropriate (18)

Listen carefully to input and concerns expressed by others (19)

Promote respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences (20)

Manage guest requests with understanding and sensitivity (21)

Communicate efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers (22)	<input type="radio"/>					
Exhibit emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion (23)	<input type="radio"/>					
Effectively handle staff grievances and complaints (24)	<input type="radio"/>					
Act courteously and respectfully (25)	<input type="radio"/>					
Demonstrate awareness of others' feelings (26)	<input type="radio"/>					
Exhibit negotiating skills (27)	<input type="radio"/>					
Provide effective feedback (28)	<input type="radio"/>					
Demonstrate empathy in dealing with customers and staff (29)	<input type="radio"/>					
Manifest intercultural sensitivity (30)	<input type="radio"/>					

Q8

Now please rate (on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=very dissatisfied to 5=very satisfied) your satisfaction with the skills you actually learned/acquired so far during your undergraduate study in tourism/hospitality.

	Very dissatisfied (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Very satisfied (5)	Not applicable / don't know (6)
Maintaining the "big picture" while working on a specific property-management, layout, and design component (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manifesting critical thinking (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrating an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing new ideas (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing adaptation responses to unexpected changes (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exhibiting knowledge of related job roles - peers, subordinates, others (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manifesting development and adaptation of innovation or improvements (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understanding the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Considering customer needs when making decisions (9)	<input type="radio"/>					
Bringing together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways (10)	<input type="radio"/>					
Steering conflicts away from personalities and toward issues (11)	<input type="radio"/>					
Presenting ideas in a convincing manner (12)	<input type="radio"/>					
Expressing disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner (13)	<input type="radio"/>					
Working to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change (14)	<input type="radio"/>					
Operating effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations (15)	<input type="radio"/>					
Building networks with people inside and outside the firm (16)	<input type="radio"/>					
Confronting problems early before they become unmanageable (17)	<input type="radio"/>					
Employing a team approach to solve problems when appropriate (18)	<input type="radio"/>					

Listening carefully to input and concerns expressed by others (19)	<input type="radio"/>					
Promoting respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences (20)	<input type="radio"/>					
Managing guest requests with understanding and sensitivity (21)	<input type="radio"/>					
Communicating efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers (22)	<input type="radio"/>					
Exhibiting emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion (23)	<input type="radio"/>					
Effectively handling staff grievances and complaints (24)	<input type="radio"/>					
Acting courteously and respectfully (25)	<input type="radio"/>					
Demonstrating awareness of others' feelings (26)	<input type="radio"/>					
Exhibiting negotiating skills (27)	<input type="radio"/>					
Providing effective feedback (28)	<input type="radio"/>					
Demonstrating empathy in dealing with customers and staff (29)	<input type="radio"/>					
Manifesting intercultural sensitivity (30)	<input type="radio"/>					

End of Block: Default Question Block

Appendix 4: Results of the rank ordering task for face-to-face interviews

Results from the interviewee questionnaire completed in preparation for the face-to-face interview

Importance of **conceptual/creative** skills

Please imagine that you are part of an interview panel/team involved in recruiting a university graduate to fill an entry-level management trainee position at a tourism and hospitality (T&H) firm.

Please rank each of the following 10 conceptual/creative skills in order of their importance, with 1 being the most important skill to 10 being the least important skill in a new recruit.

NOTE: You cannot choose the same ranking for multiple skills (for example, you cannot choose two skills to be ranked 1).

<i>Soft skill</i>	<i>I1</i>	<i>I2</i>	<i>I3</i>	<i>I4</i>	<i>I5</i>	<i>I6</i>
Maintains the "big picture" while working for a specific firm/organization		9	3	2	4	5
Manifests critical thinking		3	1	8	8	9
Demonstrates an understanding of the organization's interaction with the larger external environment	2	1	7	1	10	6
Develops new ideas	3	2	2	9	9	3
Develops adaptation responses to unexpected changes	7	10	4	7	6	7
Exhibits knowledge of related job roles of peers, subordinates, others	1	4	8	3	3	10
Manifests development and adaptation of innovation or improvements		5	9	6	5	8
Understands the agendas and perspectives of owners, staff members, managers, and other parties	6	6	10	5	2	2
Considers customer needs when making decisions	5	7	6	4	1	1
Brings together different perspectives and approaches and combine them in creative ways	4	8	5	10	7	4

 Results from the interviewee questionnaire completed in preparation for the face-to-face interview

 Importance of **leadership** skills

Same as in the previous task, now please rank each of the following 10 leadership skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

<i>Soft skill</i>	<i>I1</i>	<i>I2</i>	<i>I3</i>	<i>I4</i>	<i>I5</i>	<i>I6</i>
Steers conflicts away from personalities and toward issues		6	7	3	4	4
Presents ideas in a convincing manner		5	1	8	5	6
Expresses disagreement in a tactful and sensitive manner	3	10	2	9	3	5
Works to understand why others resist change instead of forcing others to accept change	4	9	8	4	9	10
Operates effectively and calmly under pressure or in crisis situations	5	4	3	10	8	2
Builds networks with people inside and outside the firm	2	3	4	7	10	9
Confronts problems early before they become unmanageable		8	5	5	6	7
Employs a team approach to solve problems when appropriate	1	1	9	6	7	8
Listens carefully to input and concerns expressed by others		2	6	1	2	1
Promotes respect and appreciation for diversity and individual differences		7	10	2	1	3

Results from the interviewee questionnaire completed in preparation for the face-to-face interview

Importance of **interpersonal** skills

Same as in the previous task, now please rank each of the following 10 interpersonal skills in order of their importance in a new recruit.

<i>Soft skill</i>	<i>I1</i>	<i>I2</i>	<i>I3</i>	<i>I4</i>	<i>I5</i>	<i>I6</i>
Manages guest requests with understanding and sensitivity		2	4	1	5	1
Communicates efficiently (orally and in writing) with other employees, clients, and customers	1	1	1	2	1	8
Exhibits emotional intelligence, such as emotional control and passion	4	3	9	7	7	7
Effectively handles staff grievances and complaints	5	4	5	8	9	2
Acts courteously and respectfully	2	5	6	3	2	3
Demonstrates awareness of others' feelings	8	6	8	4	8	6
Exhibits negotiating skills	6	7	2	5	10	5
Provides effective feedback	7	10	7	9	4	4
Demonstrates empathy in dealing with customers and staff	3	8	3	6	3	9
Manifests intercultural sensitivity		9	10	10	6	10