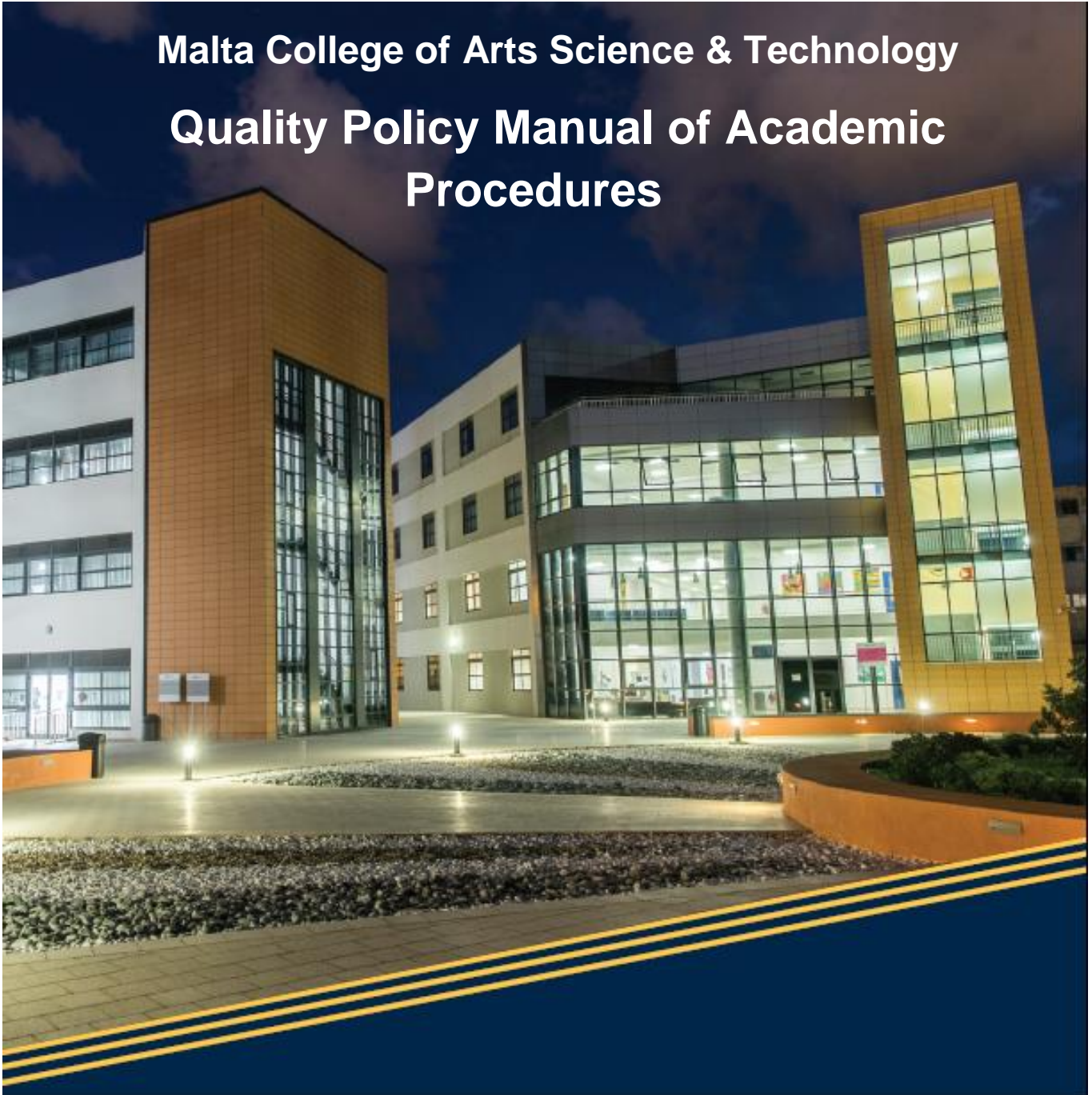


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Malta College of Arts Science & Technology Quality Policy Manual of Academic Procedures



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GENERAL INFORMATION

1	Document category	Manual of Procedures		
2	Document approver	Col		
3	Minimum list of document users to be notified upon release of document update	All staff		
4	Document change history			
D	Document Change Tracking Number	Date released	Change originator	
	78/2022	18/07/2022	Dalmas Pierre	
	Change history (Section/change details)			
	The 1 st draft of the document was completed in 2015. The document was updated over the years to reflect changes and improvements in the MCAST quality management system. The document was also shared with the EQA Panel during the October 2022 external review. The document is formally approved by COI and published on the College website as per recommendation by the EQA Panel.			

Instructions for document users with access to College Website

All MCAST employees can access current, controlled and approved documents related to the Quality Management System via the College website www.mcast.edu.mt.

Document users are encouraged NOT to retain printed hard copies of the Quality Management System documents. If, however, a hard copy of the document is required, the user is to ensure before using that the printed document is the current revision.

Continuous Improvement

Procedures are meant to be 'living' documents that need to be followed, implemented and maintained. If the procedure does not reflect the current, correct work practice, it needs to be updated! Contact your Document Controller on Ext 7121 today!

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Acronyms

BVET: Bachelor of Vocational Education and Training 4.0 (Hons.)

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

CPD: Continuous Professional Development

ECTS: European Credit Transfer System

IEU: Inclusive Education Unit

SSSC: Student Support Services Coordinator

IVC: Institute Vocational Coordinator

IQMS: Integrated Quality Management System

LSU: Learning Support Unit

MCAST: Malta College of Arts Science and Technology

MFHEA: Malta Further and Higher Education

MVEAR: MCAST Master in Vocational Education Applied Research 4.0

QA: Quality Assurance

QMS: Quality Management System

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Introduction to the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology

Established in 2001, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) is the country's leading vocational education and training institution. Through its six Institutes and two Centres in Malta and the Gozo Campus, MCAST offers more than 180 full-time and over 300 part-time vocational courses ranging from MQF Intro Level A to EQF/MQF Level 8.

The six MCAST Institutes, namely the Institute of Applied Sciences, the Institute for the Creative Arts, the Institute of Engineering and Transport, the Institute of Business Management and Commerce, the Institute of Community Services, the Institute of Information and Communication Technology and the Gozo Campus together with the Aviation Centre and Centre for Maritime Studies, provide all the technical and professional expertise towards the delivery of the programmes at MCAST with the aim of driving forward all the areas of study under their respective responsibility.

Since October 2014, the college is operating from a single site at the Gozo Campus. The improved facilities and setup have put MCAST in a better position to offer alternative options in VET further and higher education to Gozitan school-leavers. It is also continuing to fulfil its role as a community college for re-skilling and up-skilling the Gozitan community in general.

The MCAST firmly believes in inclusion and offers various initiatives and opportunities to support learners with diverse educational, social, emotional and cultural backgrounds to benefit from free and supported Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET). The full-time student population now stands at 6,700 students. During each academic year, MCAST also provides short courses for approximately 4,000 part-time adult students. MCAST employs more than 700 members of staff.

The MCAST's relationship with industry stimulates the College's success – MCAST programmes are flexible, relevant and responsive to the aspirations of the students and to the needs of industries that are constantly evolving to meet the challenges of a changing global economy. The College supports small and medium-sized enterprises in a multidisciplinary approach that encompasses work-based learning through the Apprenticeships Programme, the various entrepreneurship initiatives and through MG2i (MCAST commercial arm) services, whereby it provides training courses tailor-made to their needs. The College is focusing on increasing the portfolio of MG2i by developing new programmes in Life Long Learning, accrediting new programmes at different levels, including Master's and introducing more professional development programmes. It is working on the internationalization of MG2i through the Training and Professional Development Programmes and joint-venture opportunities in different vocational areas.

Prof James Calleja

Principal & CEO

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Introduction to the MCAST Quality Assurance Manual

The College implements an Internal Quality Assurance system that contributes to its quality in VET and to increased transparency and consistency in its qualifications, thus promoting trust, mobility of its learners and lifelong learning. The MCAST has a self-accrediting status for qualifications up to EQF/MQF Level 7. The MCAST Doctorate in Research programme was approved by MFHEA in April 2021.

The College aligned its Quality Management System in 2004 to the requirement of the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education Internal Quality Assurance Standard.

The MCAST Quality Manual addresses the following key requirements of the QA Framework:

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

The College undertakes to regularly maintain and update this key document with the changes and improvements to its Quality Management System.

Ing Pierre Dalmas

Director, Quality Assurance

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1. POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

1.1 MCAST Vision and Mission Statement

To provide universally accessible vocational and professional education and training with an international dimension, responsive to the needs of the individual and the economy.

1.2 MCAST Strategic Goals and Strategic Directions

The Strategic Plan is set and approved by the Board of Governors following a number of internal and external meetings with various stakeholders. The Strategic Plan is reviewed at regular intervals during Senior Management Meetings, also since the objectives are integrated within the management staff performance appraisals.

The Senior Managers are entrusted with the deployment and cascading of the strategic objectives within the organisation.

1.2.1 Strategic goals

The College has identified the following key strategic goals:

To provide a learning space and an outstanding educational experience for every student, leading to our graduates being competent, resourceful, critically conscious and innovators in preparation for their future vocational and professional careers.

To provide students and staff with a high-quality landscaped setting while maximizing the use of investments made in the past years and ensuring financial sustainability.

To promote and sustain our position as leaders in providing vocational professional education and training through internationally recognised qualifications valued by industry; while working in partnership with employers and other stakeholders to continuously improve the relevance of our curriculum.

To ensure that all qualifications are informed by industry while based on community-oriented curricula and impact research.

The College has set out the strategic direction of how the strategic goals will be achieved.

1.2.2 Objectives

The College has established and monitors Corporate objectives as one of the tools for measuring the effectiveness of the Quality Management system. The objectives chosen are pertinent to the College Strategic Plan goals and form part of the Management performance appraisal process. Institutes and Support Departments are also assigned the responsibility of

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establishing their specific objectives. The objectives are carried forward, updated or replaced.

1.3 MCAST Globalisation Strategy

MCAST aims to be always relevant and responsive to global industry's needs, particularly with the advent of Industry 4.0, driven by cyber-physical systems. This overall objective highlights the significance of preparing our learners to be global learners, specialists in vocational industry areas as required, but also in possession of soft skills, behavioural skills and appropriate attitudes. This scenario motivates MCAST to manage its resources and redirects its efforts into implementing a global culture, responding to the changing international student and industry requirements, collaborating with international educational and industrial stakeholders and embracing an innovative approach to render the students' experience at MCAST truly meaningful. Further details are available in the MCAST Globalisation Strategy Document 2021/24.

1.4 Job Descriptions of key Staff and Coordinators

All key members of staff are issued by the Human Resources Department a Job Description that describes their roles and responsibilities. The job description describes the overall objectives and responsibilities of the incumbent.

1. The College appoints a number of Coordinators (also from amongst academic staff) through open calls for application for the posts of:
2. Institute Vocational Coordinator
3. Key Skills coordinator
4. Student Support Services Coordinators
5. Degree Coordinators

The terms of reference of the roles are intended to support the Institute Management in the fulfilment of tasks that are not necessarily mainstream teaching, learning and assessment.

Additionally, the QA Department is responsible for identifying key processes that have a direct or indirect impact on the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment and ensuring that appropriate procedures are set up, discussed with stakeholders and approved by the Council of Institutes. The approved procedures are essential in ensuring that the various stakeholders are aware of what is expected in the day-to-day conduct of their work. These procedures are complementary to the job descriptions and terms of reference of key personnel.

1.5 Boards for Governance

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MCAST has in place a number of governance boards that include a combination of top management officials as well as teaching and student representatives as well as external stakeholders. Through this structure, the College strives to ensure academic integrity and freedom by giving an opportunity to its main stakeholders (lecturers and students) to voice their opinions and have their say in the running of the College. All Boards meet on a regular basis throughout the year, and minutes are kept for each meeting.

The following is a list of other Boards (Refer to 'Doc 188: College Board procedures for details of board composition and terms of reference).

Board Title

Mature Student Interviewing Board (including RPL / RAPL)
 Admissions Board
 Institute Disciplinary Board (IDB)
 Institute Appeals Board (IAB)
 MCAST Corporate Disciplinary Board (MCDB)
 MCAST Corporate Appeals Board (MCAB)
 MCAST Research and Ethics Board
 MCAST Research and Ethics Appeal Board
 Master's Degree Committee
 Degree Ratification Board (DRB)
 Master's Degree Committee (MDC)

The Education Act identifies and defines the purpose of the following boards/councils/bureau:

- Board of Governors
- Administrative Bureau
- Council of Institutes
- Board of Studies

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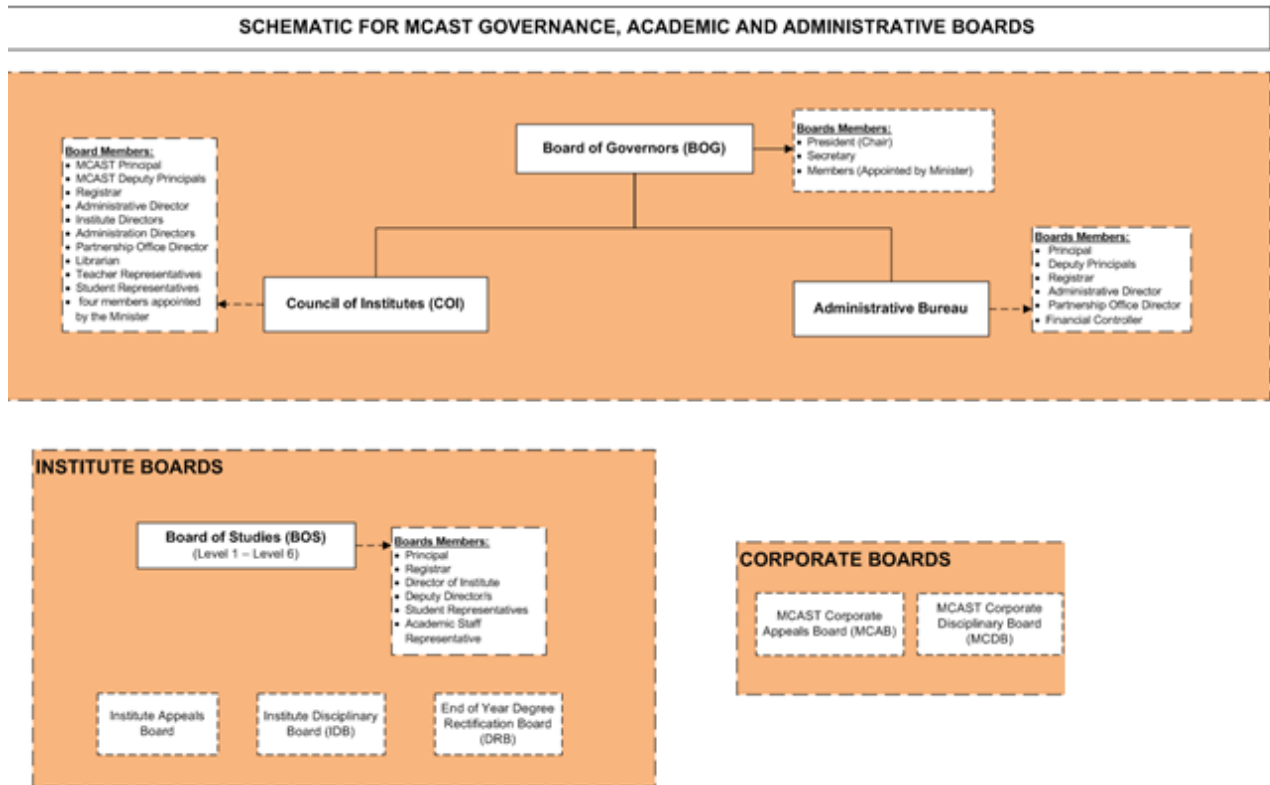


Figure 5: Schematic of College Boards and their interactions

The section below briefly describes the main boards and councils that are mandated by the Education Act:

1.5.1 The Board of Governors

The highest governing body of the college. It has the duty of performing the objectives and to exercise the powers of the college as laid down in the provisions of the Education Act.

The Board of Governors shall be composed of not less than seven and not more than nine members to be appointed by the Minister for a period of three years, and the members shall be eligible to be re-appointed after their term of office expires.

The members of the Board of Governors shall be persons having competence or experience in the education sector, vocational training, the economy, industry and services sectors or in the social sectors, and who, in the opinion of the Minister, possess leadership qualities, and have an understanding of the importance of vocational education and training within the context of general socio-economic development.

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1.5.2 The Council of Institutes (Col)

The Col is responsible for the general direction of the vocational and professional education and training of the College. As per the Education Act Cap 327 Par 94:

The Council of the Institutes shall be constituted of the following members:

- a) the Principal who presides ex officio;
- b) the Deputy Principals ex officio;
- c) the Registrar ex officio;
- d) the Administrative Director ex officio;
- e) the Heads of the Institutes ex officio;
- f) the Head of the Partnership Office ex officio;
- g) the Librarian ex officio;
- h) two members elected by and from among the College
- i) teaching staff;
- j) two members elected by and from among the College
- k) students; and
- l) four members appointed by the Minister.

The Council meets once every month. An agenda is drafted and circulated to all participants prior to the meeting, whilst minutes and action points are duly kept and circulated amongst members. When decisions taken at COI level are of concern to staff outside the Council, these are also duly communicated via circulars.

The Col has the following functions:

- a) To issue and approve regulations which govern the provision of programmes within the College
- b) To setup and approve entry requirements for study programmes
- c) To act as a bridge between the College and the Board of Governors providing advice to the board on any matter related to Vocational and professional education and training
- d) to discuss and decide upon any other matter which refers to education and training within the various institutes as well as matters of an administrative nature as they arise from time to time.

Having members representing students and lecturing staff, the Council of Institutes also provides a forum in which students and staff can voice their opinions and concerns, thus narrowing the gap between Top Management and the rest of the college

1.5.3 The Administrative Bureau

The Administrative Bureau *is* responsible for the general direction of the administrative functions of the College and is constituted of the following members:

- a) the Principal who shall be Chairperson;
- b) the Deputy Principals;
- c) the Registrar;
- d) the Administrative Director;

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- e) the Head of the Partnership Office; and
- f) the Financial Controller.

1.5.4 The Board of Studies (BoS)

The BoS is responsible for the academic matters of the Institute. Each Institute shall have a Board of Studies to be constituted of the following members:

- a) the Head of such Institute who shall be president ex officio;
- b) one of the Deputy Principals as may be decided by the Principal who shall be vice-president ex officio;
- c) the Heads of the Departments of the Institute ex officio;
- d) a member elected by and from among all the teaching staff of the Institute;
- e) a member elected by and from among the students of the Institute;
- f) two members appointed by the Minister from among persons recognised for their competence and experience in the educational and training area of such particular Institute;
- g) representatives of foreign institutes with which the College may have partnership agreements;
- h) a representative who is selected by the Minister from an economic sector having close ties with the area of studies and training of such particular Institute;
- i) a representative of a professional body which is recognised by the Minister in the area of studies and training of such particular Institute.

Formal procedures regulate the operations of this board (Doc 188 referenced below).

1.5.5 MCAST Corporate Appeals Board (MCAB)

This board deals with student appeals against academic decisions taken by their Institute regarding assessment, academic Integrity, discipline and attendance procedures. Prior to presenting their appeal to the MCAB, students must have first appeared at their Institute (Institute Appeals Board). Formal procedures regulate the operations of this board (Doc 188 referenced below).

1.5.6 Institute Disciplinary Board (IDB)

This board handles cases of serious student misconduct that occur at the Institute level or somewhere on the main campus or at satellite institutes, whether face-to-face or online or through any other platform used by the Institution. Directors initially handle cases of Petty misconduct by talking to the individual student and sometimes by issuing letters of warning. In the case of repeated cases of petty Misconduct or Misconduct (DOC 038 refers), students are referred to the IDB. Formal procedures regulate the operations of this board (Doc 188 referenced below).

1.5.7 MCAST Corporate Disciplinary Board (MCDB)

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Persistent misconduct and serious offences are referred immediately to the MCDB.
Formal procedures regulate the operations of this board (Doc 188 referenced below).

1.6 Procedures for guarding against intolerance and discrimination.

The College is an inclusive community which seeks to promote and respect the principles of diversity, inclusion and respect for the dignity of all its members. The College has a policy which informs the parties concerned of their roles and obligations and, where appropriate, their rights under this policy. This document defines the Students' Grievance Policy and Procedure which all students and academic staff are encouraged to follow in case they feel that they are being treated unfairly.

MCAST expects all students and academic staff to work in an environment in which they feel comfortable. MCAST considers the following acts of a very serious nature:

- a) All kinds of bullying.
- b) Victimization.
- c) Harassment.
- d) Unfair discrimination based on gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, race and disability.
- e) Aggression, including physical and psychological.

The College addresses gender mainstreaming and are also a participant in gender mainstreaming studies

1.7 Organisational Structure

The Management Structure of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology is governed by the Education Act Cap.327 par 85 – 112 and provides for the following key officers:

- a) Principal & CEO
- b) Deputy Principals Curriculum, Quality Assurance, CPD, R&I and Entrepreneurship
- c) Deputy Principals Academic Affairs and Student Support Services
- d) The Registrar
- e) The Administrative Director
- f) The Heads of the Institutes
- g) The Head of the Partnerships Office

The Education Act outlines the functions and responsibilities of some of the above-mentioned officials. The areas of responsibility of the key officers are represented in the MCAST Corporate Organigram.

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MCAST ORGANIGRAM _as at 04.02.2021

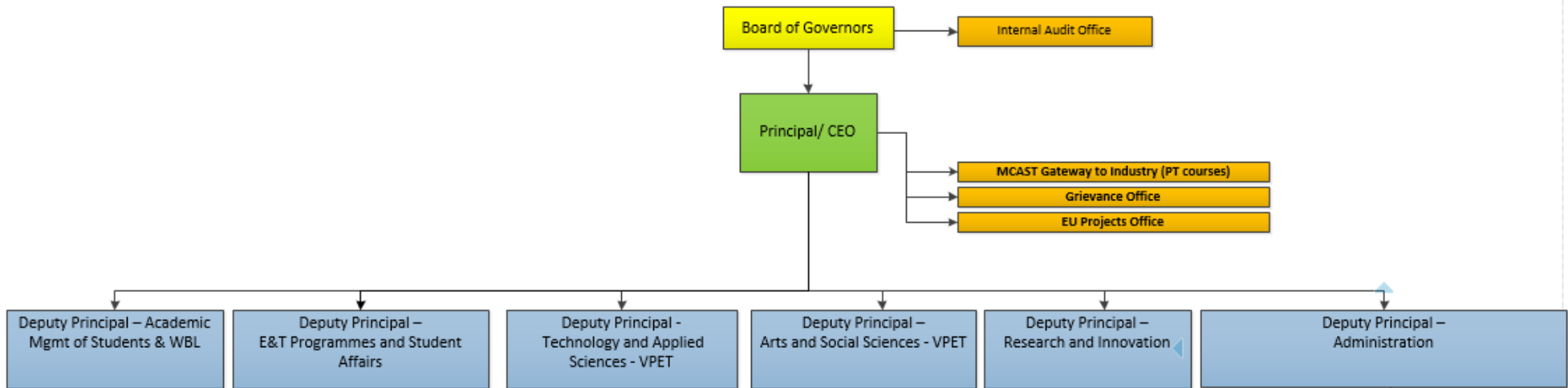


Figure : Schematic of upper top management structure



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1.8 Key Positions

The following provides a list of key positions, departments and offices.

- President of the Board of Governors
- Principal and Chief Executive Officer
- Deputy Principal Administration
- Deputy Principal VPET (Technology and Applied Sciences)
- Deputy Principal VPET (Arts and Social Sciences)
- Deputy Principal Research and Innovation
- Deputy Principal QA and Student Academic Management
- Director IT
- Director Education & Training, LSU and IEU
- Director Work Based Learning
- Director Internal Audit Office
- Data Protection Officer
- Director - Quality Assurance
- Director Erasmus+ Projects and Mobility Office
- Director Library and Learning Resource Centre
- Director Outreach Services and Student Affairs
- Director EU Projects
- Director Corporate Social Responsibility
- Director Communications
- Director Capital Projects and Health & Safety
- MCAST Chaplaincy

1.9 List of Institute / Centres.

- Institute of Applied Science
- Centre of Agriculture, Aquatics and Animal Sciences
- Institute of Creative Arts
- Institute of Business & Commerce
- Institute of Community Services
- Institute of Information and Computer Technology
- Institute of Engineering and Transport
- Marine Engineering and Centre of Maritime Studies
- Building & Construction / Building Services
- Mechanical Engineering
- Electrical & Electronics
- Aviation
- Automotive and IET Foundation Courses



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1.10 MCAST Quality Policy

The Quality Policy was established and approved by MCAST's Top Management. The MCAST Quality Policy explains what the College aims to achieve in terms of stakeholder expectations (first paragraph), as well as how it goes about achieving it (second paragraph).

The underpinning of any Quality Policy is the need for continual improvement that inherently implies:

- a) An attitude for improvement;
- b) The need to develop systems, skills and tools for improvement;
- c) Knowing what to improve and how to measure improvement.

MCAST Quality Policy

The College fulfils its mission by ensuring that all programmes are designed, validated and periodically reviewed with the involvement of staff, students, industry and other stakeholders in order to ensure that their expectations are met and even exceeded when these programmes are being realised.

The College aims to achieve this by committing to a structured Quality Management System that fulfils, as a minimum, the requirements of the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education in order to ensure continuous improvement.

The MCAST Quality Policy Manual of Academic Procedures and supporting documents (available on the College website) describe how this policy is being implemented.

(Approved by the Council of Institutes – 4th of July 2022)

The Quality Policy is reviewed by the Council of Institutes for continuing suitability. The Policy is documented, communicated and explained at all levels.

1.11 Integrated Quality Management System

As a self-accrediting institution, the College is required to comply with the various academic and administrative National and European legislative and regulatory requirements.

In order to fulfil its obligations, the College has established and maintains a formal, structured, documented Integrated Quality Management System (QMS) that is focused on the added value to the customer, both internal and external, as identified by the Organisations' Mission Statement and Quality Policy.

The Quality Management System (QMS) of the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology is compliant to the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education, in particular the ten (10) Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Standards.



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The Quality Assurance Office is responsible for ensuring that, together with the Deputy Principals, Institute Directors and Heads of Departments, the academic and administrative processes are disseminated, regularly reviewed and updated. The Deputy Principals, together with the Institute Directors and Heads of Department who are the owners of these dynamic processes and procedures, also have the responsibility of ensuring that their staff are au courant and compliant with the content of these manuals.

The academic domain incorporates two main key processes, namely:

Quality System Support processes, comprising of:

- a) Management Responsibility
- b) Administration of the QMS
- c) Resource Management
- d) Measurement, Analysis and Improvement

VET Operational Processes, comprising of:

- e) Curriculum Design, Development and Approval of VET Programmes/Courses
- f) The realisation of Programmes/Courses
- g) The realisation of Learner Support Services
- h) The realisation of Services to Industry
- i) The realisation of Research and Innovation Activities

The College management is thus committed to the implementation of the MCAST Integrated Quality Management System and continually improving its effectiveness. This is achieved through:

- a) Ensuring that all key administrative and academic processes are documented as part of the MCAST Integrated Quality Management System,
- b) Communicating the importance of identifying and fulfilling relevant stakeholder requirements;
- c) Ensuring compliance with the College Quality Policy;
- d) Applying the Plan, Do, Check Act (PDCA) cycle in order to achieve and review the quality objectives;
- e) Conducting management reviews and;
- f) Ensuring the availability of resources.

The MCAST Integrated Quality Management System (Figure 1 below refers) incorporates under its scope the following three MCAST domains (Governance, Administrative and Academic), namely:

- Domain 1: Board of Governors processes
- Domain 2: Administrative processes
- Domain 3: Academic processes (Teaching, learning, assessment and student support services key processes).

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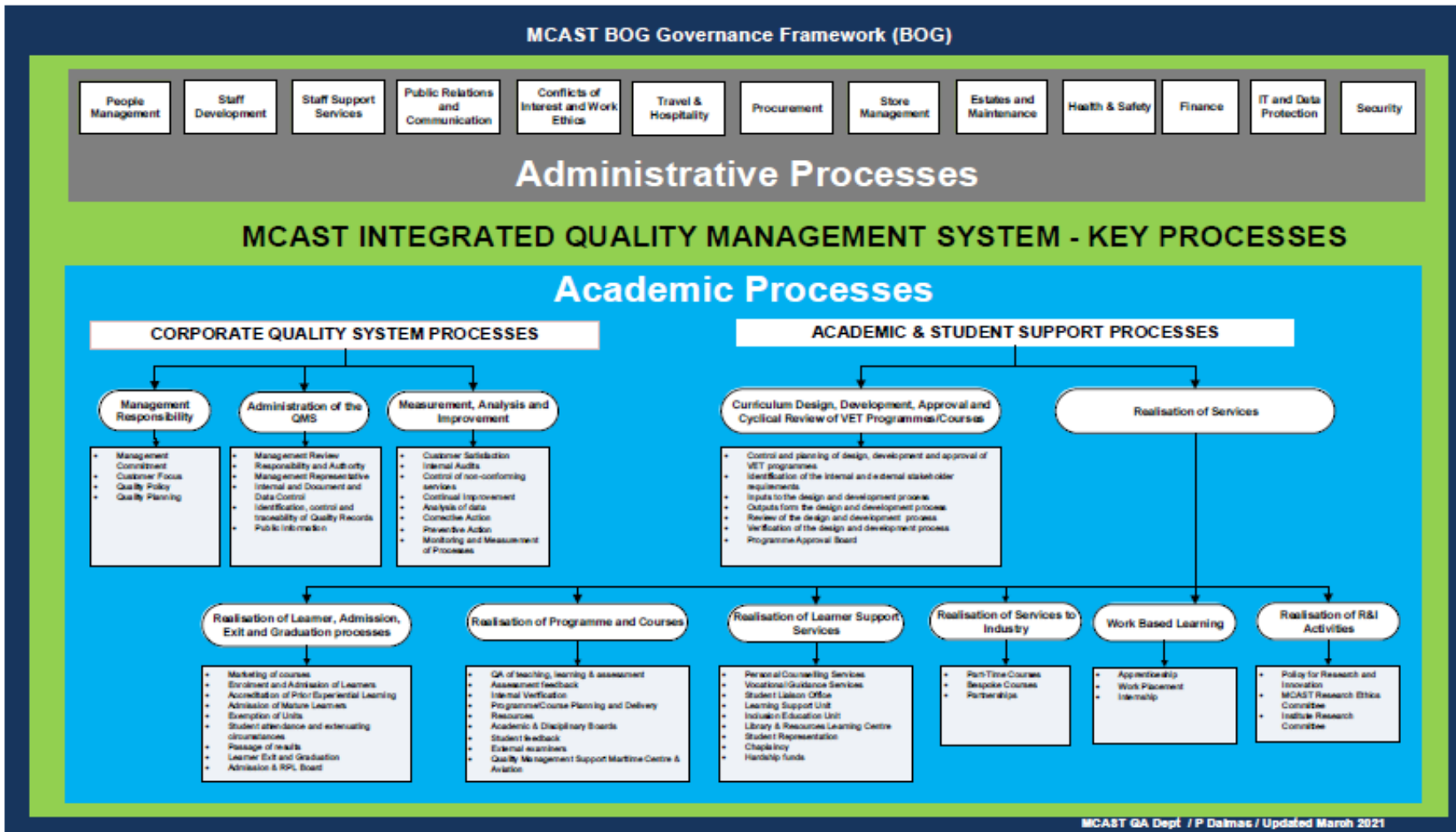


Figure 1: A detailed schematic that describes the various sub-processes under the remits of the three process domains.

1.12 Manual of Academic Policies and Procedures

The QA Department is committed to maintaining, updating, promoting and facilitating the implementation of the Integrated Quality Management System (academic and administrative) that will help develop MCAST further into a College of excellence.

The key process areas of teaching, learning, assessment and student support services processes are described (schematically) in the figure below.

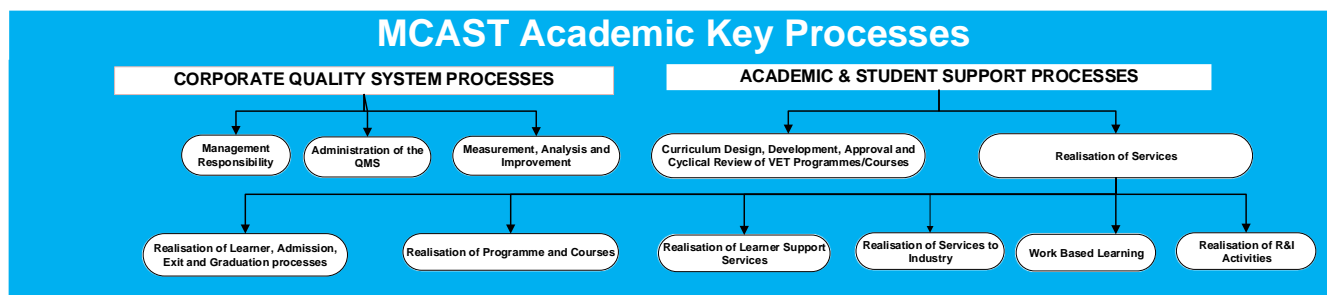


Fig 3: Schematic of key Academic processes

These key processes are described under the respective sections (representing the NCFHE IQA standards) in the QA Manual (sections below refer).

The key Academic policy areas (pertaining to the processes illustrated above) are included in the section below:

Registration & Certification Policy

- To register individual learners to the correct programme within agreed timescales.
- To provide valid learner certificates within agreed timescales.
- To construct a secure, accurate and accessible audit trail to ensure that individual learner registration and certification claims can be tracked to the certificate which is issued for each learner.
- To ensure that the assessment methodology is valid and reliable and does not disadvantage or advantage any group of learners or individuals.
- To ensure that the assessment procedure is open, fair and free from bias and to College standards.
- To ensure that there is an accurate and detailed recording of assessment decisions.

Internal Verification Policy

- To ensure that internal verification is valid and reliable and covers all assessors and programme activity.
- To ensure that the internal verification procedure is open, fair and free from bias.
- To ensure that there is an accurate recording of internal verification decisions.

Appeals Policy

- To enable the learner to enquire, question or appeal against an assessment decision.
- To attempt to reach an agreement between the learner and the assessor at the earliest opportunity.
- To standardise and record any appeal to ensure openness and fairness.
- To facilitate a learner's ultimate right of appeal to the awarding body, where appropriate.
- To protect the interests of all learners and the integrity of the qualification.

Assessment of Malpractice Policy

- To identify and minimise the risk of malpractice by staff or learners.
- To respond to any incident of alleged malpractice promptly and objectively.
- To standardise and record any investigation of malpractice to ensure openness and fairness.
- To impose appropriate penalties and/or sanctions on learners or staff where incidents (or attempted incidents) of malpractice are proven.
- To protect the integrity of the College qualifications.

Programme Design, Development, Approval and Review Policy

- To ensure that the identification of training/programme needs involves the participation of external stakeholders who are likely to benefit from the outcomes of such provision;
- To provide for employment-oriented programmes involve stakeholders from the world of work in their design and review;
- To facilitate through various fora, the involvement of students in their design and review;
- To ensure that programmes are subject to a formal institutional approval process.

Policy for Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

- To create a dynamic environment that encourages an active knowledge transfer between academics, students and industry.
- To facilitate knowledge transfer through a multidisciplinary approach encompassing work-based learning and entrepreneurship.
- Enable academics, students, and industry stakeholders to identify real shortcomings and conduct research with the aim of developing tangible solutions.
- To safeguard rights on practical application and economical use of the results generated through Research and Innovative (R&I) work carried out at the College.
- To provide students and alumni with the opportunity to transform their creative and innovative ideas into profitable and sustainable business ventures.

Policy for CPD

- To identify, develop and realise continuous professional development courses for the academic staff in order to ensure that Lecturers are technically and pedagogically prepared for the developments in VET and needs arising from curriculum development.
- To provide upskilling courses to administrative staff.

Policy for Work-Based Learning

- To bring vocational learning and training to the centre of the local industry.
- To provide learners with high-quality underpinning knowledge that is indispensable for the growth of the local industry and economy.
- To increase the number of vocational pathways offered on an apprenticeship while also enhancing the quality of work-based learning through the monitoring of work-based learning and accreditation of work-based modules.

Policy for guarding against intolerance or discrimination against students or staff

- To provide an environment for students and academic staff to work in an environment in which they feel comfortable.

Policy for Recruitment

- To implement a principle of transparent, open, fair competition in the recruitment approach.

Policy for Partnerships Office

- To provide MCAST with an interface with local and foreign institutions, organizations, entities and industries that helps identify and develop relationships for mutual benefit and for the benefit of students attending MCAST.
- To provide information about MCAST and the services it offers to local and foreign institutions, organizations, entities and industries in order for them to be knowledgeable and to be able to access these services for their advancement and development.
- To be the catalyst that brings about agreements and memoranda of understanding between MCAST and local and foreign institutions, organizations, entities and industries that help bond relationships that benefit all parties but most importantly, the students

Policy for MCAST Gateway to Industry

- To enhance the industrial and vocational objectives of MCAST in support of the students' interest and academic standing of the staff
- To establish and consolidate links with the industry
- To provide training services to local and foreign industry
- To be the gateway for foreign students wanting to take up vocational education and training at MCAST
- To sustain continuous professional development for MCAST staff
- To be self-sustainable and generate revenue

1.13 Manual of Administrative Policies and Procedures

Complementing the above, the Manual of Administrative Procedures includes fourteen (14) chapters dealing with individual administrative aspects, each chapter comprising policies, procedures and forms.

The administrative policies and procedures are intended to achieve excellence in the quality of the Corporate and Institute administrative services, thus, in turn, ensuring the best possible student experience on campus. These procedures are meant to stimulate all staff to comment, suggest and create an ongoing platform for discussion so that MCAST's administrative procedures will, in the long run, reflect three basic principles:

- An instrument of transparency, flexibility, efficiency and effective management;
- A tool for improving the management of the College and
- A means to achieve better communication between staff on all sites and between employees at all levels of management and teaching.

The Manual of Administrative Policies and Procedures covers fourteen chapters, namely:

Chapter 1: People Management

Chapter 2: Staff Development

Chapter 3: Staff Support Services

Chapter 4: Public Relations and Communications

Chapter 5: Conflicts of Interest and Work Ethics

Chapter 6: Travel and Hospitality

Chapter 7: Procurement

Chapter 8: Stores

Chapter 9: Precincts, Facilities, Equipment and Fixed Assets Control procedure

Chapter 10: Health and Safety

Chapter 11: Finance

Chapter 12: Information Technology

Chapter 13: Security

Chapter 14: Data Protection
 Chapter 15: Grievance Office (Staff and Students) Policy and Procedure

Each of the above chapters is subdivided into various sections covering a wide range of operational policies and the appropriate practices. Every section is self-explanatory, giving the user administrative and managerial parameters within which a person can work in a more cost-effective, efficient, safe and secure environment.

1.14 QMS and Continuous Improvement (PDCA cycle)

The main purpose of the QMS is, therefore, to consolidate the various key processes in order to ensure that the VET objectives are met through continuous improvement.

To promote and monitor continuous improvement and in order to ensure the effective implementation of the Quality Management System, the College promotes the 'Plan, Do, Check, Act Cycle' approach.

- | | |
|-------|--|
| Plan | <p>Planning for improvement through:
 Design and development of full-time and part-time accredited vocational education programmes;
 Development of student support services;
 Setting of strategic and quality objectives;</p> <p>Planning of Programme(s) Realisation involves setting objectives, learning outcomes, and assessment methods. Regular and continuous talks with Industry, relevant stakeholders and the College ensure the identification of required skills and competences, which are used to build and design the training programme. Courses and programmes are all outcomes based in definition, design, delivery and assessment.</p> |
| Do | <p>Realisation of:
 VET programmes/courses;
 VET-related student support services;
 Industry-related services;
 Research and Innovation initiatives.</p> <p>A number of processes are in place to ensure the best possible learner experience.</p> |
| Check | <p>Measurement, monitoring and analysis of results of:
 Strategic objectives;
 internal and external customer feedback;
 appraisal of delivery
 internal and external auditing;
 Internal verification;
 management review.</p> <p>Quality in the programme assessment process is ensured through a process of internal verification of both assignment tasks and assessment decisions as well as through a process of External Verifiers / Examiners of the Degree Courses.</p> <p>To ensure quality in the delivery of courses/programmes, the College has in place a supportive QA Appraisal process which looks at two aspects: desk review of teachers' scheme of work and preparation of teaching material and class visits which looks at the delivery method and approach.</p> |
| Act | <p>Implementation of corrective, verification and preventive actions.</p> |

The College has in place a number of governance, academic and administrative boards to ensure that decisions are taken in line with the regulatory and internal requirements.

1.15 Quality Planning

Management is required to ensure that:

- a) College operational and support processes are the product of quality planning and conform to the organization's quality policy and quality objectives.
- b) all processes conform with approved documented policies, regulations and procedures.

Quality planning is an integral part of the preparation and realisation of VET and the related support services and is embedded in the processes comprising the QMS, namely:

Allocation of competent lecture and administrative resources;

- a) Setting of quality objectives for continuous improvement;
- b) Customer feedback and complaints (students, industry and the community);
- c) Programme design, delivery and review (including existing programmes);
- d) Corrective and preventive action;
- e) Outputs of procedures feed into the Management Review procedure.

1.16 Quality Assurance Department

The College set up its Quality Assurance Department in 2009. The ethos of the Department is that quality assurance needs to be focused on the added value to the customer, both internal and external as identified by the Organisations' Mission Statement and Quality Policy. All Quality Assurance initiatives, therefore, need to be supported and consolidated by a formal and structured Quality Management System (QMS).

The Director, Quality Assurance is the appointed Quality Management System representative. Irrespective of other responsibilities, the Director, Quality Assurance has the responsibility to:

- a) ensure that processes needed for the quality management system are established, implemented and maintained;
- b) report to top management on the performance of the quality management system and any need for improvement;
- c) ensure the promotion of awareness of stakeholder requirements throughout the organization, and;
- d) liaise with external parties on matters relating to the quality management system.

1.17 Document Control - Updating and Dissemination of Policies and Procedures

The Quality Assurance Department is responsible for facilitating the regular review of processes and that academic and administrative policies, procedures and regulations are updated accordingly.

All corporate academic and administrative documents are available in a corporate template with a unique number (identifier) and revision status displayed as part of the document control template. All revision changes are assigned a unique 'Document Change Tracking Number' in order to ensure a revision trail of all the changes to the policies, procedures, regulations and Forms in use.

A master list of documents is kept at the QA Department. The list includes as a minimum:

- a) Document number
- b) Document Revision
- c) Document Title
- d) Document type
- e) Approver
- f) Date releases
- g) Document Change Tracking Number
- h) Document change proposed by

New or updates in academic and administrative policies, regulations, procedures, and forms (quality record sheet templates) are disseminated by the QA Department via a dedicated inbox (and email address – MCAST QA). The documents are released as controlled and approved and are posted on the College e-portal to all members of staff and students.

The Deputy Principals, Directors and Managers have the responsibility of ensuring that their staff are au courant and compliant with the contents of these documents.

In general, all documents that are student-centred are uploaded on the website, whereas internal administrative documents are made available via the MCAST intranet. All MCAST staff and students have access to the intranet via their MCAST email address.

Where possible, awareness and training sessions are delivered to administrative staff.

The above procedure is described under Doc 013 'Document Control Procedure'.

1.18 Requirements for quality records

Quality records are required where it is necessary to demonstrate:

- a) Compliance with Corporate policies, regulations and procedures;
- b) Effectiveness of the Quality Management System;
- c) Compliance with external regulatory requirements (EG MFHEA, NSO, Ministry of Education etc)

In the above cases, employees are responsible for ensuring that the record sheets are legible and readily retrievable. Quality records are stored in a safe and secure environment. The responsibility for ensuring confidentiality, the minimum retention time for records, maintenance, storage and disposal of records lies with the end-user.

Access to records by external parties to the College is governed by the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

1.19 Academic integrity and freedom

The following provisions are in place to ensure commitment to academic integrity:

- a) Ensure that recruitment is carried out on the basis of merit, through a fair and open selection process (internal/external call for application, job description and setting up of interviewing boards.
- b) Appointment of administrative and academic boards and councils;
- c) Appointment of a management representative (Director QA) to overlook the implementation and continuous improvement of the Quality Management System;
- d) Ensure that educational programmes and processes comply with statutory/regulatory requirements;
- e) Commitment towards achieving the continual improvement and effectiveness of the Quality Management System;

- f) Regular review of the Quality Policy;
- g) Three-year review cycle of all academic and administrative policies, procedures, regulations and forms to ensure ongoing suitability;
- h) Regularly identify and communicate quality objectives based on:
 - i) strategic planning,
 - j) external requirements,
 - k) internal and external customer feedback,
 - l) internal and external audit findings and
 - m) Outputs from Management Review meetings.
- n) Cascade objectives to individual members of staff;
- o) Perform management review of the inputs and outputs of the quality management system;
- p) Ensure that the College is governed by and complies with national legislation (referenced below) that set the necessary standards and criteria for the institutions to retain its license.

1.20 Internal Communication – Circulars

The HR Department issues on a regular basis a number of email circulars to keep staff and students informed on progress, opportunities, vacancies, protocols, updates etc at MCAST. These circulars are also intended to establish a 'personal' link with staff and students, especially during the challenging times experienced in lieu of the pandemic.

1.21 Internal Communication – Key Available Fora

Dedicated communication meetings are held at various levels and frequencies to facilitate communication. The meetings include:

- a) Council of Institutes for Academic (*) matters (including staff and student representatives);
- b) Administrative Bureau (*) for Administrative matters);
- c) Board of Studies (*) (including external stakeholders, staff and students);
- d) Top Management Team Meetings
- e) Senior Management Team Meetings;
- f) Communication meetings with staff and students by the Principal and CEO
- g) Institute / Department Meetings
- h) 'Time to Talk' sessions with the Principal & CEO with live streaming and questions from the students and staff (held 2 – 3 times a year).

(*) The Board composition and terms of reference are as provided for in the Education Act.

1.22 External Communication and Events

On and off-campus events are held during the year. Information and photos of events are available on the MCAST webpage and the MCAST Events and CSR Facebook pages. Events include high-profile meetings, expositions, graduation ceremonies, fundraising activities etc.

1.23 Involvement of External Stakeholders (MCAST Partnership Office)

The College Management is in regular contact with the external stakeholders through the strategy consultation process (records of all meetings and events are kept), direct feedback on the development of programmes and their cyclical review, seminars, sponsorship of teaching resources, discussion on student placements, setting up of Memorandum of Understanding and others.

The College has a Partnership Office that provides MCAST with an interface with local and foreign institutions, organizations, entities and industry that helps identify and develop relationships for mutual benefit and for the benefit of students attending MCAST. This Office provides information about MCAST and the services it offers to local and foreign institutions, organizations, entities and industries in order for them to be knowledgeable and to be able to access these services for their advancement and development. It serves as a catalyst that brings about agreements and memoranda of understanding between MCAST and local and foreign institutions, organizations, entities and industries that help bond relationships that benefit all parties but most importantly the students

1.24 Involvement of Internal Stakeholders

The College is committed to having a strategic presence in all relevant National and European policy-making fora, in particular where decisions on QA in VET are discussed and decided. In this regard, a number of College personnel hold nominations on National and European Boards, networks, teams etc. In this way, the College is not only informed of the changing needs of the stakeholders but can also influence the decisions being taken.

The College personnel at the Corporate and Institute levels are involved in regular discussions and meetings with local industry stakeholders.

1.25 Needs of Internal and External Stakeholders

A number of Quality Assurance processes and measures are in place to ensure that the needs and expectations of both the external and internal stakeholders are identified and fulfilled, namely:

- a) The Involvement of employers and internal customers (students) in the development of the competences of full and part-time programs and courses.
- b) The provision of different communication options for the public to contact the college. The College's website and Social Media accounts are examples of such options.
- c) The monitoring and measuring of Learner satisfaction with respect to delivery of both academic and support services both for full-time and part-time courses.
- d) The provision of, academic assistance, counselling and other support services, in particular with disadvantaged Learners in order to ensure that the best possible relationship with the Learner is maintained. The registration, addressing and documentation of any reported instances of academic and/or service-related customer dissatisfaction (complaints), at the Institute and where necessary at the Corporate level.
- e) The provision of opportunities for appeals in various processes against decisions (related to assessment; discipline and/or reporting of grievances) which do not satisfy the learner
- f) The organisation of student review meetings in order to address specific concerns or to obtain input with regard to a specific issue or issue.
- g) The collection of Learners' feedback/complaints regarding their learning experience both during their stay at the College as well after their graduation.

1.26 Regulatory Programmes and Joint Award Qualification

The College has a robust Quality Assurance System on the basis of which it retains its self-accrediting status. In the case of courses accredited by foreign awarding bodies, the MCAST Policy is to follow the most stringent regulation. If and when a conflict arises

between an MCAST regulation and the one prescribed by a foreign institution, it stands to reason that the latter shall prevail and provided the COI is at all times notified of such discrepancies. In such cases, all other MCAST provisions and regulations referred to in this document shall continue to apply.

Core teaching, learning and assessment operations are not subcontracted.

MCAST is an approved centre for the delivery and assessment of EASA, IMO, AAT qualifications.

The MCAST also delivers a joint qualification with Northumbria University (Nursing Degree Programme). The College is represented in the Joint Education Committee, that meets twice a year with established terms of reference, committee composition and minutes of meetings.

1.27 College Corporate Social Responsibility

The College management and student council take initiatives to organise or support funding of good causes both on-campus or via third parties. These initiatives are disseminated via circulars to all staff and students (refer to the evidence list for examples of such initiatives).

1.28 Internal Audit Function

MCAST has devised a quality framework which is built on leadership and strategy, teamwork, customer focus, systems, processes and procedures. The MCAST QA framework follows the standards established by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA).

The MCAST QA Framework is underpinned by an Integrated Quality Management System that brings together the academic and administrative processes of the College. The QA Framework is sustained through the Quality Assurance office led by a Director for Quality Assurance who reports to the Deputy Principal concerned. The office is further supported by a Deputy Director, who also internally audits the educational processes and procedures in line with MFHEA's Internal Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines and carries out the role of Lead Internal Verifier as well as lecturer appraisals within and across all institutes of the College, including its Gozo Centre on Malta's sister island, a Quality Assurance Manager, whose main focus is the creation and updating of MCAST's quality assurance documents, with plans to recruit a Quality Assurance Coordinator.

Internal Quality Assurance

The main inputs contributing to the creation, maintenance and responsiveness of the College quality assurance system are the MFHEA National Quality Assurance Framework-Internal Quality Assurance Standards as influenced by the European Standards and Guidelines and EQAVET. Several measures have been developed and implemented at the Malta College of Arts, Science, and Technology (MCAST) over the past few years as part of an overarching College Quality Framework in order to gauge and assure quality. Such measures include, amongst others, the documentation of processes in the form of standard operating procedures and process maps (inputs, process and outputs), internal verification and lead internal verification of assessment tools and decisions, internal audits of the educational and operational processes within and across MCAST providers and the way in which these processes impact the quality of the service delivered to MCAST clients, the students, and lecturer appraisal, are in line with National Quality Assurance Framework requirements stipulated by Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA).

Internal Verification and Lead Internal Verification

The findings from various internal audits carried out by the Quality Assurance Department have indicated that a number of quality practices were predominant, in that several observations showcased the strengths of the internal verification process underpinning its credibility and validity in assuring the quality of programmes delivered through its assessment tools and the assessment decisions are taken. Several factors deemed necessary to the vocational essence of the various programmes offered by MCAST, and the robustness of the assessment/internal verification process feeding into internal and external audits were also identified.

Overview of internal verifiers' work, crucial to assessment validity and innovation, is a theme which recurs across a wide range of literature. The discourse also inclines to such roles resolving the problems with consistency and enabling innovation. All findings consolidate the analysis of the roles of assessors/internal verifiers and lead internal verifiers, in which their maximization is strongly conveyed, as manifested in a number of good practices identified by the trends observed in the data gathered. Nonetheless, this analytical exercise has also highlighted some factors which would benefit from attention and improvement in assessment skills and competences, particularly as these areas are considered crucial to the vocational education and training being delivered by MCAST.

Incorporation of the recommendations advocated by the findings would reflect the discourse which stems from the premise that internal verification yields the greatest benefits when integrated within an explicit quality management framework.

Internal Audits

The main objective of such audits is to identify good practices within the providing institutions and then create a vehicle by which these are shared with sister institutions within MCAST. A corresponding and equally important goal of this exercise is to delve into areas which present risks to the smooth running of the processes and, hence, would need improvement, in turn, necessitating the delineation of possible strategies for corrective action.

The scope of the engagement is to reinforce the strengths of the legacy accumulated over the past 20 years since MCAST's inception, identify the opportunities, anticipate the threats and address the weaknesses through an open and transparent encounter with personnel, an overview of related documentation and the observation of the interactions of those involved.

1.29 College Policy Analyst Office

The primary role of the Policy Analyst Office is to provide immediate and consistent support to the daily agenda of the Principal with up-to-date policy information on an EU or national level, to facilitate discussions and ensure a high level of preparedness when meeting with other MCAST representatives, external key stakeholders, and for other strategic commitments.

An essential task falling under a policy analyst's remit is the constant involvement in various stakeholder consultations on policy formulation. The main key stakeholders that contact this office regularly are the entities falling within the remit of the Ministry for Education.

ACADEMIC DOCUMENTS		
Doc #	TITLE	Doc Type
2	Quality Manual	Manual
14	Document Control Procedure	Policy/Procedure
25	Accepting Students' Societies Procedure	Policy/Procedure
74	Research Ethics Policy and Procedures	Policy/Procedure
83	External Reviewer Procedure	Policy/Procedure
160	Corporate Audit Procedure (Aviation Centre)	Policy/Procedure
275	MCAST Election Procedures	Policy/Procedure
299	COI Decisions by Circulated Written Procedure	Policy/Procedure
327	Process Flowchart for the Bidding and Implementation of Externally Funded MCAST Research Projects	Policy/Procedure
328	Process Flowchart for Junior Researcher Endeavour MCAST Research Projects	Policy/Procedure
329	MRES Research Process Flowchart	Policy/Procedure
349	Procedure for Setting of Agenda Items for Col Meetings	Policy/Procedure
137	Masters Degree Examiner's Report Form	Form
239	MCAST Student Support Services Staff Feedback Form	Form
251	Request for Research Contact Hours for Lecturing Staff	Form
270	Academic Staff Nominations for COI	Form
271	Student Nominations for the Student Council	Form
272	Student Nominations for Board of Studies	Form
273	Student Nominations for COI	Form
274	Academic Staff Nominations for Board of Studies	Form
343	SOP For Research Funding Request	Form
344	Request Form for Research Funding Support Form	Form
356	Project Responsibility Chart	Form
357	Budget Consumption Report	Form
ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS		
Doc #	TITLE	Doc Type
MOP_ADM_001_01	People Management Procedure	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_02	Staff Development	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_03	Support Services	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_04	Public Relations And Communications Procedure	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_05	Conflict Of Interest And Ethics Procedure	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_06	Travel Expenses Procedure	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_07	Procurement Procedure	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_08	Stores Management Procedure	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_10	Health And Safety Policy And Procedure	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_11	Finance Procedure	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_12	Information Management Procedure	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_13	Security Procedure	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_14	Data Protection	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_01_FORM_02	Confidentiality And Non Disclosure Agreement Form	Form
MOP_ADM_001_01_FORM_03	Request For Approval Of Sabbatical Leave For Education Purposes (Applicable To Lecturer Grades)	Form
MOP_ADM_001_01_FORM_04	Letter Of Appointment To Disciplinary Board (Applicable To Lecturer Grades)	Form
MOP_ADM_001_01_FORM_05	Conflict Of Interest Declaration (Applicable To Lecturer Grades Disciplinary Boards)	Form
MOP_ADM_001_01_FORM_06	Application For Qualification Allowance	Form
MOP_ADM_001_01_FORM_07	Outpatient Sick Leave Adjustment Form	Form
MOP_ADM_001_01_FORM_08	Additional Hours Lecturers Attendance Sheet	Form
MOP_ADM_001_02_FORM_01	Lecturer Progression Form	Form
MOP_ADM_001_04_FORM_01	Consent Form For Photographic And Video Images - Staff	Form
MOP_ADM_001_04_FORM_02	Consent Form For Photographic And Video Images - Students	Form
MOP_ADM_001_06_FORM_01	International Mission Report Form	Form
MOP_ADM_001_13_FORM_01	CT Review Request Form	Form
MOP_ADM_001_13_FORM_02	Inventory Of Personal Data Capture Record Sheet	Form
MOP_ADM_001_15	Girevance Policy and Procedure (Staff and Students)	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_15_FORM_01	Grievances Form (Staff and Students)	Form

2. INSTITUTIONAL PROBITY

The legal and juridical representation of the College is vested in the Principal & CEO.

The College has appropriate measures and procedures in place to ensure financial probity. The College has yearly audited accounts and regular budget plans.

The President and members of the Board of Governors and members occupying a headship are nominated by the Ministry of Education and Employment. Other positions are appointed following transparent public calls for an application that ensure that the incumbents are fit and proper persons to deliver further or higher education programmes.

3. DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF PROGRAMMES

3.1 Design and Approval of College-Based Programmes

MCAST regularly develops new VET programmes. This process is supported by continuous and regular dialogue with stakeholders, including industry, business and non-governmental (NGO) sectors. Inputs from the various official sources and stakeholders are transposed into actionable plans in order to improve the relevance of VET curricula with respect to labour market needs addressing skill requirements.

As a measure of ensuring that MCAST's curriculum is constantly tied to the needs of the labour market and in order to make curriculum development a sustainable process, the College has set up an organisation structure where Curriculum Development is strongly linked to the Quality Management System. This process includes consultation with stakeholders to guarantee the relevance of the curriculum to meet the current and future economic needs.

The design, development and approval procedure (Doc 013) covers:

- a) New accredited courses/programmes and;
- b) The structural changes to existing accredited courses/programmes (arising out of cyclical reviews).

As a self-accrediting institution, MCAST is required to follow:

- a) Accreditation rules as stipulated in the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education and,
- b) The NCFHE Internal Quality Assurance Standard 3 'Design and Development of programmes.

It is the policy of MCAST that the design and development process of an accredited programme:

- a) identifies the expected student workload in terms of ECTS or ECVET learning credits;
- b) indicates the target audience and the minimum eligibility and selection criteria, where applicable;
- c) is learning outcome-based and distinguishes between knowledge, skills and competences;
- d) identifies appropriate learning dynamics and a measure of tutor-learner interaction as is appropriate for the course level and content;
- e) identifies appropriate resources and forms of assessment;
- f) identifies the minimum requirements in terms of qualifications and competences for teaching staff;
- g) is designed so that programmes enable smooth student progression;
- h) is in line with the National Quality Assurance Framework accreditation rules.

The process shall be conducted in a way that ensures that:

- a) the identification of training/programme needs involves the participation of external stakeholders who are likely to benefit from the outcomes of such provision;
- b) programmes that are employment-oriented involve stakeholders from the world of work;
- c) it involves students and student bodies;
- d) it is subject to a formal institutional approval process;
- e) the Curriculum Office and the Office of the Registrar are consulted as necessary throughout the process.
- f) Monitoring, measurement and progress reporting are ongoing during the curriculum design and development process.

A Programme Leader reporting to the Institute Director of the hosting Institute is to be identified in order to coordinate the submission of a proposal for

- a) a newly accredited programme or
- b) a structural change to an existing programme (arising from a cyclical review process).

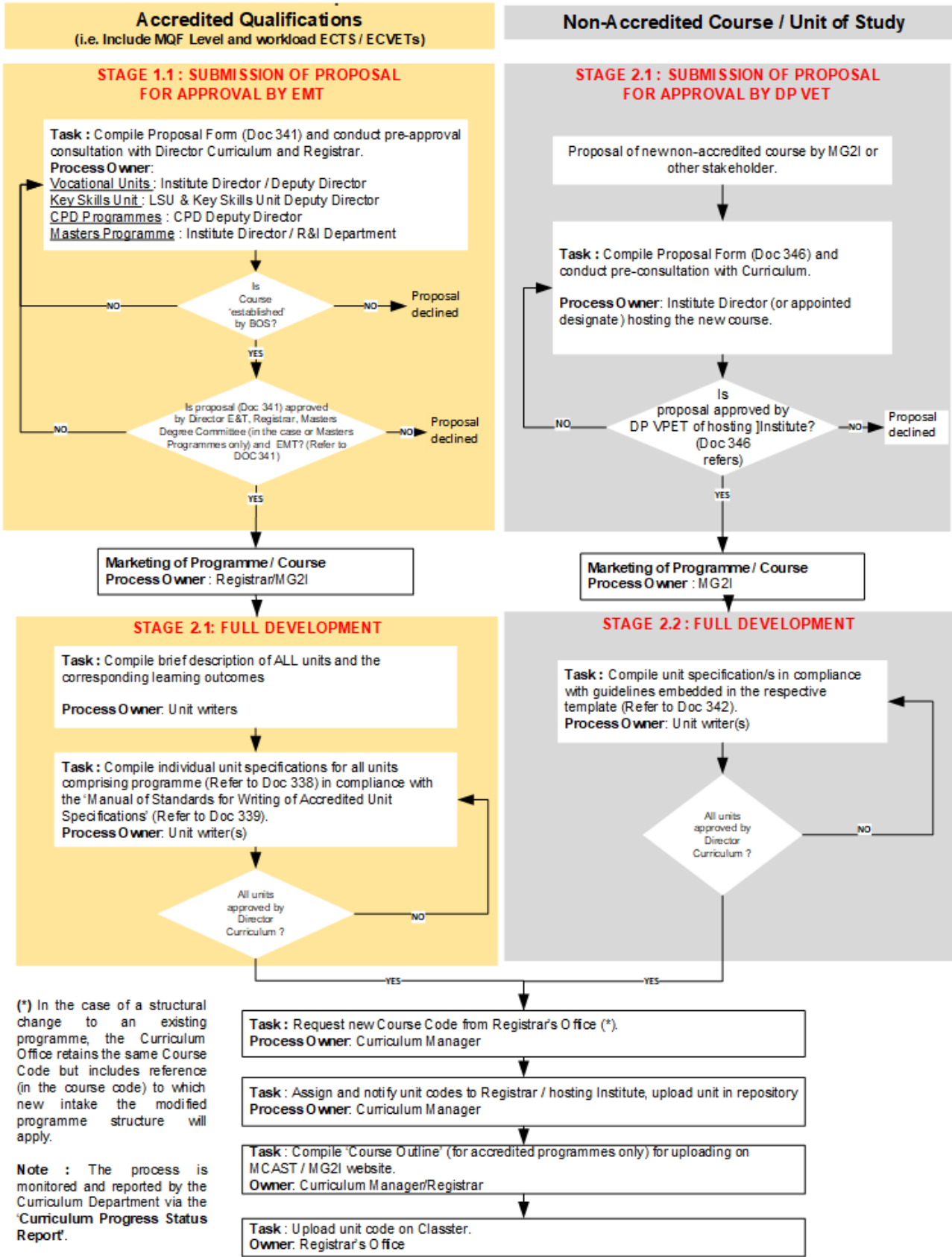
The 'Proposal Form for Approval by EMT of Accredited Qualification / Structural Change of Existing Qualification' (Doc 341) is to be filled by the Programme Leader. This Form (Doc 341) indicates the (minimum) information that is required to be submitted in the proposal, namely:

- a) Overall rationale, objectives and course outline of qualification being proposed
- b) Overall Learning Outcomes of Qualification
- c) Minimum entry requirements for qualification
- d) Programme structure of Qualification (List of vocational, key, transversal units, MQF Level, number of credits per unit, the academic year during programme unit will be delivered, mode of delivery (face to face, online, blended, practical, WBL etc.).
- e) Internal and external stakeholder feedback (feasibility study), e.g. from students, alumni, industry, employers, NGOs etc. Note: In the case of courses being requested by MG2i, the hosting Institute is exempt from the need to conduct internal and external stakeholder (feasibility study) feedback. It is thus the responsibility of MG2i to conduct the feedback and retain appropriate records.
- f) Details of external expertise (competences, qualifications) required to develop and deliver the qualification.
- g) Whether the course/programme requires regulatory approval.
- h) List of physical resources (and approximate cost) that need to be procured specifically for the teaching, learning and assessment of the units of the qualification
- i) Whether the course is being requested by MCAST or MG2i
- j) Scheduled launch date of the qualification.
- k) Research and analysis have been conducted to establish whether the course being proposed is related to a National Occupational Standards (NOS) / Occupational Profile / Regulated Profession. The Course Proposer must conduct thorough research and analysis in order to ensure that the major functions of the particular occupation (if any) have been considered for the course being proposed. The research and analysis must cover as a minimum the following sources:
 - l) List of NOS : <https://mfhea.mt/national-occupational-standards/>
 - m) Occupational profiles via the Jobs Plus 'Occupational Handbook' <https://secure.etc.gov.mt/occupationalflipbook/Html%20Output/Jobplus%20-%20Occupational%20Handbook.html>
 - n) Mutual Recognition of Professions: https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/services/Pages/All%20Services/mutual_recognition_professions.aspx

The Procedure is described in the schematic included below (Refer to Doc 013 for further details).

Appendix 1 : Process Flow for the Design, Development and Approval of Qualifications

This procedure applies to design, development and approval of MCA ST and MG2i:
 (a) New accredited / non-accredited courses / programmes / units of study,
 (b) Structural changes in existing accredited / non-accredited courses/programmes/units of study arising from cyclical reviews.



3.2 Use of Unit Specification Template

The College ensures the consistent implementation of programme and unit design through the use of a Unit Specification Template (Doc 338). The 'Accredited Unit Specification Template for Face-to-Face, Blended or 100% Online learning'.

Course proposers (from amongst lecturing staff) are identified through an internal call for application for course design and assigned a contract to deliver the unit specification (against additional hours).

The template is used by the course proposer when compiling the unit specification. This ensures that the minimum requirements as explained under the MFHEA IQA 3 for the design of curriculum are met consistently.

The Unit Specification template includes the following instructions to the assigned course proposer.

- a) The template is to be used by the Unit Writer when compiling the 'Accredited Unit Specification
- b) Refer to the 'MCAST Manual of Standards for the Writing of an Accredited Unit Specification' (Doc 339) when filling in this template. The document is available via the MCAST intranet https://intranet.mcast.edu.mt/?page_id=320
- c) All sections in this template are filled in correctly.
- d) Use the updated version of the template of this Form that is available via MCAST intranet https://intranet.mcast.edu.mt/?page_id=323. No changes can be made to this template
- e) The final draft of the Accredited Unit Specification is to be first approved by the Institute Director and then forwarded to the Curriculum Office via email for vetting and feedback.
- f) In the case of any questions, please contact Curriculum Office personnel on 2398 7147.

The E&T Department at MCAST is responsible for ensuring through its internal accreditation process that the template is correctly filled in. This process normally requires a number of iterations between the E&T staff and the course proposer. The unit specification is released as approved when all the minimum criteria have been met.

The template has recently been updated to include units to be delivered as:

- a) face-to-face, or
- b) blended (combination of face-to-face and online)
- c) 100% online.

3.3 Manual of Standards for Writing of Accredited Unit Specifications

The College has published and regularly updates the 'MCAST Manual of Standards for Writing of Accredited Unit Specifications' (Doc 339). The Manual is a step-by-step guide and standard to be used for course proposers (writers) when submitting a new unit specification for internal accreditation.

This Manual of Standards is available via the MCAST intranet and is intended to enhance the competences of the unit writers when submitting units for internal accreditation. It is hence a QA tool that facilitates the quality of the written curricula together with the availability of the unit specification template.

Any updates to the minimum requirements set out by MFHEA are therefore transposed in the unit specification template and explained in the Manual.

The Curriculum Officers are required to inform and promote the template and Manual with new and existing unit writers (from among lecturing staff).

3.4 Monitoring and Reporting of Progress of Programme Development Initiatives

The Curriculum Department is responsible for ensuring the monitoring and reporting of all new programmes and programmes requiring structural change via the 'Curriculum Progress Status Report' (CPSR) throughout the project cycle, that is, the EMT approval stage (Stage 1) and the full development stage (Stage 2). (Refer to EQA Evidence Folder for samples).

The CPSR makes it possible to track via a colour code the progress of every programme at the unit level. The colour code essentially indicates as follows;

Red: No information received at the Curriculum Office from the Unit writer

Amber: A Unit Writer has been assigned by the hosting Institute

Green: Unit Specification has been internally verified (course developer can be reimbursed).

The Curriculum Office issues regular updates of the CPSR to the Programme Coordinator, who is also responsible for checking and confirming the status of the programme and the individual units

The Curriculum Office is also required to issue monthly (or as required) programme status reports to ensure timely approval and release of new MCAST programmes.

3.5 Key Skills Units

The College offers key skills units across the different EQF/MQF levels and Institutes as follows:

- English,
- Maltese
- Maltese as a Foreign Language,
- Mathematics,
- Science,
- Individual and Social Responsibility (ISR),
- I.T
- Entrepreneurship,
- Inter/Intra personal skills

The College appoints a number of Key Skills Coordinators from amongst lecturing staff.

- English – 2 coordinators
- Maltese – 2 coordinators
- Mathematics – 2 coordinators
- I.S.R., I.T., Science, Entrepreneurship, Inter/Intrapersonal skills - 1 coordinator for each unit

The role of the Key Skills coordinators is as follows:

- a) Ensuring that all units are updated and that the proper versions are included on the programme specification repository /MIS;
- b) Updating units as necessary, per official cyclical reviews or as required;
- c) Writing new units as required by the Education and Training programmes department;
- d) Liaising regularly with Lecturers and Internal Verifiers to guide them on the whole process of assessment and verification;
- e) Organising regular meetings with staff to ensure a smooth running of the delivery and assessment;

- f) Providing guidelines for assessment on the different units at different levels to ensure that the key skills units are standardized across different units;
- g) Stock taking of the assessment in the middle of the scholastic year;
- h) Acting as external verifiers at the end of the scholastic year and giving feedback to the department on how to improve the quality of the units in the form of a report

These coordinators liaise with the Deputy Director Curriculum – Key skills and Learning Support under the overall guidance of the Director for Education and Training Programmes and Learning Support.

3.6 Work Load of Programmes (ECTS / ECVETs)

All MCAST home-grown programmes are based on the principles of ECVET and ECTS. Programmes at MQF Level 1,2,3,4 are based on ECVET, whilst programmes at MQF Level 5, 6 and 7 are based on ECTS. All programmes are in line with the requirements as set out by the latest edition of the Referencing Report.

Level	Number of Credits	Duration of programme
1	40	1
2	60	1
3	60	1 or 2 years *
4	120	2 or 3 years *
5	120	2
6	120 / 240	3 / 4 years
7	90 - 120	Duration is typically 2 to 3 years with some Master Programmes having exit points at PG Cert, PG Dip and full Masters qualification

(* Depending on AWBL component as part of the overall programme).

The College also has a standard structure for its courses at different levels. Consequently, all courses are based on units of learning outcomes with a pre-defined value highlighting the expected student workload.

Level	Vocational Units		Key Skills Unit		Embedded Units	Total Credits
	Number of Units	Number of Credits	Number of Units	Number of Credits	Number of Credits	
1	2	6 ECVET	6	3 ECVET	10 ECVET	40
2	4	6 ECVET	6	3 ECVET	18 ECVET	60
3	6	6 ECVET	6	4 ECVET		60
4	16	6 ECVET	4	6 ECVET		120
5	18	6 ECTS	2	6 ECTS		120
6	8 Units at 6 ECTS Each and a dissertation of 12 ECTS					60
7	Specialised / taught units					30,60, 90 – 120

The College also accepts courses for internal accreditation only if they have a minimum of 4 ECVET/ECTS. This is in fact, clearly seen in the part-time prospectus, whereby only such courses are published with both a level rating and credits.

3.7 Minimum Eligibility Requirements per Programme

All advertised programmes have specific entry requirements as well as suggested paths or opportunities of academic and/or career opportunities upon programme completion.

Both full time and part-time accredited courses are listed both on the College website and also in the printed prospectus, which is also available on the MCAST website (<https://www.mcast.edu.mt/mcast-prospectus-2020-2021/>).

Course outlines are also provided to prospective applicants in the prospectus in the case of full-time courses and via the 'Course Outline Information Sheet' that is available online (<https://www.mcast.edu.mt/full-time-programmes/>) or via course flyers in printed or online media.

3.8 Learning Outcome Approach

All MCAST full-time Programmes, at all MQF Levels currently being offered at the College are based on learning outcomes that distinguish between knowledge, skills and competences. All programmes designed at the College undergo an accreditation process as described in Doc 013 referenced below.

The Accreditation process is managed by the Education & Training Programmes Department with the support of the Quality Assurance Department.

Training sessions for Lecturers and Programme Coordinators by the Education & Training Programmes and Learning Support department are delivered so as to build and reinforce capacity in this aspect. Moreover, a manual (Doc 339) has been developed and is provided to all staff involved in the accreditation process. This manual is also available on the College website.

3.9 Contact (Guided) Hours and Total Learning Hours

The College has internal guidelines that it adopts in terms of the ratio between tutor-learner interaction (Guided Learning Hours) and self-study and assessment hours.

Such guidelines are based on the reasoning that at a higher level, one is expected to have a higher ability to learn independently. In the standard College unit specification, there is a section titled 'Guidance for teaching and assessment' whereby one can find suggested activities and the self-study and assessment hours for each unit.

3.10 Assessment Strategy included in Programme Design

The College Standard Unit Specification requires that, where applicable, information regarding appropriate resources and forms of assessment is included in the course specification.

The College also actively encourages various modes of assessment in order to cater for the needs of different students. Each unit specification also contains a section, 'Guidance for Teaching and Assessment', whereby one can find information on suggested activities that can be used for assessment in relation to the specific requirements of the unit.

3.11 Additional Requirements in terms of Qualifications and Competences

The programme design proposal from (Doc 341 refers) includes a request for information regarding the specific additional requirements in terms of qualifications and competences for teaching staff.

The College recruitment policy follows the recommendations put forward by MFHEA in terms of minimum requirements for teaching different level programmes. The College ensures that the recruitment process identifies the person best suited to the job and to the Institution in the following manner;

- a) Capacity-building exercises for Lecturing staff are undertaken annually, culminating in the external call for applications;
- b) The calls for application include minimum qualifications and competences for teaching staff;
- c) Calls for application are issued and publicised internally and externally;
- d) Recruitment selection interviews is conducted by a recruitment board according to set procedure in a professional, timely, open and responsive manner.

Additionally, the College maintains a repository of Lecturers CVs that are available at HR.

Refer also to section IQA 6, Teaching Staff

3.12 Compliance with MFHEA Referencing Report (2016)

The College programmes follow the requirements if the latest edition of the referencing report. Each course is also vetted internally by the Education & Training Programmes and Learning Support department and Quality Assurance Department to verify the learning outcomes and to ensure that the course is pegged at the correct level. The level descriptors are used as a reference point in this case.

The College also ensures that the balance between key competences, sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge is in line with the guidelines on the distribution of credits for the different qualifications and the minimum number of hours per year as per MFHEA Referencing Report (2016).

The MFHEA Referencing Report (2016) also specifies that qualifications need to be written in terms of learning outcomes. As indicated in previous sections, the College also follows such guidelines and offers courses that are learner-centred. This is also in line with the contemporary approach, which emphasises the shift from learning inputs to learning outcomes.

3.13 Identification or Training Needs

The process of the identification of training/programme needs involves the participation of external stakeholders who are likely to benefit from the outcomes of such provision.

Training needs/demands for programme development come from several sources/stakeholders, such as:

- a) Industry stakeholders where occupational standards are/are not established
- b) Labour market analysis,
- c) Specific training needs,
- d) Ministries / Government Entities,
- e) other's needs.

Appendix 1 of Doc 013 indicates the typical iterative interaction which occurs between the College and the stakeholders during the identification of needs and preliminary course development phase.

The College is in constant contact with the industry through various channels. All Institute Directors have regular meetings with industry representatives in their respective fields so that key areas that require further training are identified.

In line with the College strategy, the College encourages members of both the Academic and Administrative Staff to hold key positions within the various National and European bodies, institutions, agencies etc. In this way, the College is not only informed of the changing needs of the stakeholders but can also influence the decisions being taken. Examples of such positions held by College staff are provided in IQA 1.3 above.

A number of College courses actually resulted from such collaborative efforts.

3.14 Identification of Needs for Work-Based Learning

Additional to the review and updating of the College based programmes, the College is also collaborating closely with a wide spectrum of employers in order to improve the provision of work-based learning in different forms to ensure that it is more relevant and addresses current and future needs.

This is being done by conducting discussions with employers, including SMEs and large companies, to redefine the competences and occupational standards of VET programmes that are currently on offer and for new programmes which are planned to be launched shortly. The aim is to move towards on-the-job training plans that are more formal and where the employer is required to provide hands-on experience in strict adherence to a schedule designed and approved by the College as part of the course syllabus. In addition, work experience will be recognised further by being accredited as a study unit. On completion of training, the apprentice will be assessed to ensure that the targeted learning outcomes of the on-the-job experience have actually been achieved. This system will allow the apprentice to be released by his employer to acquire the competences with another employer if such competences cannot be acquired at his/her workplace. This will lead to greater collaboration between employers, and such a system would definitely be beneficial for apprentices as they will acquire broader exposure. This would also be beneficial for employers since a better-trained workforce would be more available in the labour market.

3.15 Employment Oriented Programmes

The College is constantly looking for ways in which to modernise its curriculum to reflect the present and future needs of the industry, focusing on enhancing the employability of students. In view of this, the college maintains close relations with the industry and involves it actively, especially in the design of its curriculum.

The College ensures that this aim is achieved directly and indirectly through the following:

- a) Academic staff, especially those lecturing vocational study units, are involved in work placements, thus in liaising with industry to find work placements for students to carry out their work-based learning in. Moreover, they visit the students and assess them while they are doing their WBL. During such visits, the academic staff strengthens the networks with the industry and keeps abreast with what is going on in the particular sector.
- b) MCAST study programmes are regularly reviewed by academic staff in collaboration with the relevant industry sector. Industry partners are invited to attend fora to discuss study programmes with academic staff to reflect the needs of the industry. These offer opportunities for academic staff to discuss new trends in the workplace.
- c) Academic staff can request to carry out an industrial placement whereby they spend their working hours in the industry instead of the College to keep abreast with the industry.
- d) Within the Master in Vocational Education Applied Research 4.0, which is a course focusing on teacher training, students are required to carry out an industrial placement as a mandatory part of the course.

As explained in Doc 013 referenced below, Internal and external Stakeholder feedback is one of the minimum requirements which is requested when a new full-time programme is proposed for design, development and accreditation. Before a programme is submitted for accreditation, the proposer needs to consult with internal and external stakeholders and provide evidence of the relevance of the programme to the needs of the industry. Such information is to be submitted for approval via Doc 341 referenced below.

3.16 Student Involvement in Programme Design

Internal and External stakeholder feedback is one of the minimum requirements for the approval of a programme for development and accreditation. Students and student bodies are considered the main internal stakeholders at the college and therefore, their feedback is also collected as part of the course design, development and approval process.

Moreover, as provided by The Education Act (Article 94), the Council of Institutes also comprises two members elected by and from the College students. The Council is responsible for the general direction of the vocational and professional education and training of the College. Consequently, students also have the opportunity to voice their concerns and discuss any issues which concern them and their peers.

In addition to the above, student representatives are also elected on the Institute Board of Studies (BOS). The remit of this Board also covers the review of programmes.

3.17 Design of Programmes for Student Progression

The programmes are designed to build upon the knowledge, skills and competences obtained at lower levels. This makes it possible for the College to offer a (clear) progression route from MQF Introductory A to MQF Level 7 for as many of its programmes on offer as possible in order to ensure that student has the opportunity to obtain a qualification in the desired field. The progression paths are clearly shown on the MCAST Prospectus.

Moreover, information on Student progression is also available in the Programme Regulations (documents 003, 004 and 005) referenced below.

The college also offers different entry and exit points. Consequently, external applicants holding the appropriate entry requirements may also apply directly at a particular level and then progress to higher levels.

A continuous progression scheme is available for learners following MQF Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 courses. This scheme ensures that there is a smooth and continuous transition from the foundation courses at Level 1 and 2 to Level 3 vocational courses, with students being fully certified at the end of Level 3 if they achieve all the set criteria for Level 3.

Learners who for some reason, fail to achieve all the necessary criteria to progress to the next level will be allowed to repeat the failed units with attendance during the following year, thus getting the opportunity to achieve the required credits for progression.

A 'Compensatory Pass' system is also in place and is available to students who are at the final year of their course and have obtained between 40 and 49 % in only one of the 6-credit units. Only one compensatory pass is allowed per qualification and students may not claim a CP on any Accredited work-based learning units. Details of the Compensatory pass can be found in the Programme Regulations (documents 003,004 and 005) referenced below.

College graduates from Higher Diploma in Advanced Studies in the Early Years (MQF level 5) are eligible to progress to the final year of the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) within the Faculty of Education, the University of Malta, subject to fulfilling a number of requirements relating to proficiency in the Maltese and English languages Prospective students are made aware of this possibility via the Prospectus.

3.18 Approval Process

The "Programme Design, Development and Approval Procedure (Doc 013)" describes the multi-staged approval procedure. The procedure ensures that the inputs of the process are clearly defined and approved in order to avoid the need to correct errors at the output of the process (programme release stage) that provides for a thorough process. This is based on a two-tier approval process whereby prior to actual development, there is a preliminary approval by the EMT. Following this process, the required units are developed and then submitted to the Education & Training Programmes Department

At the first approval stage, a proposal form (Doc 341 referenced below) which includes the following aspects, is compiled:

- a) Overall rationale, objectives and course outline of Qualification being proposed
- b) Overall Learning Outcomes of Qualification
- c) Minimum entry requirements for Qualification
- d) Programme structure of Qualification (List of vocational, key, transversal units, MQF Level, number of credits per unit, the academic year during programme unit will be delivered, mode of delivery (face to face, online, blended, practical, WBL etc.).
- e) Internal and external stakeholder feedback (students/student. industry, employers, NGOs etc.).
- f) Details of external expertise (competences, qualifications) required to develop and deliver qualifications.
- g) Whether course/programme requires regulatory approval.
- g) List of physical resources (and approximate cost) that need to be procured specifically for the teaching, learning and assessment of the units of the Qualification
- h) Whether the course is to be marketed by MCAST or MG2i j) Scheduled launch date of the Qualification.

- i) Whether Research and analysis has been conducted to establish whether the course being proposed is related to a National Occupational Standards (NOS) / Occupational Profile / Regulated Profession. The Course Proposer must conduct thorough research and analysis in order to ensure that the major functions of the particular occupation (if any) have been considered for the course being proposed

Following the approval at stage 1, the Development of the programme is initiated. Unit writers are engaged to compile the units as per the standard 'Unit Specification Template' (Doc 338) and in compliance with the 'Manual of Standards for Writing of Unit Specifications' (Doc 339). First drafts are submitted to the Institute Director for endorsement before being submitted to the Education & Training Programmes and Learning Support department for accreditation. Subject to the availability of the 'Course Outline' document at the Curriculum Office and subsequent to the necessary iterations (between the Curriculum Office and the Unit writer), the units are individually and internally accredited by the Curriculum Manager. Full details of the process including a Flowchart can be found in DOC 013 referenced below.

Reference Documents

ACADEMIC DOCUMENTS		
Doc #	TITLE	Doc Type
13	Programme Design, Development and Approval Procedure	Policy/Procedure
45	Course Unit and Class Code Generation Procedure	Policy/Procedure
100	Dissertation Regulations	Policy/Procedure
339	MCAST Manual of Standards for Writing of Accredited Unit Specifications	Manual
34	Request for Exemption Embargo for Dissertation Publication	Form
67	Dissertation Logbook - Undergraduate	Form
76	Assignment Cover Sheet - Individual Criteria	Form
79	Assignment Cover Sheet - Grouped Criteria	Form
88	Plagiarism Sanction Report Form	Form
91	Formal Student / Staff Grievances Procedure Form	Form
189	Apprenticeship Regulations Agreement Form	Form
338	Accredited Unit Specification Template	Form
341	Proposal for Approval by EMT for Full Development of a New/Major Change of Accredited Qualification	Form
346	Proposal for Approval by EMT for Full Development of a New/Major Change of Non-Accredited Qualification	Form

4. STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

The College aims to attend to the diversity of learners and their needs as its main aim, in fact, this is clearly embedded in the Mission Statement. The MCAST Mission Statement aims to respect and attend to the diversity of learners and their individual needs by offering them flexible learning paths as part of its education system.

The College has a number of Units set up that attend to the diversity of learners and their different needs in order to offer a flexible learning path as explained below and provide the individualised support necessary for the students to succeed in their programmes.

4.1 Learning Support Unit (LSU)

The Learning Support Unit collaborates closely with other units and institutes within the College to ensure that learners receive the necessary academic support to succeed and become autonomous, independent learners. The LSU supports learners regardless of limited or lack of previous qualifications. The LSU considers different teaching and learning strategies to cover set Key Skills syllabi from Foundation programmes throughout higher-level courses. (more information about the LSU and the services offered can be found under IQA 7)

4.2 Introductory and Foundation Courses

The College also offers EQF/MQF Level 1 and EQF/MQF Level 2 qualifications in all its Institutes for those learners who have finished compulsory schooling but have obtained no qualifications. Therefore, the College caters for their needs by providing them with another opportunity and another chance to obtain training, skills and qualifications.

The LSU provides lecturing staff and any additional help required. Level 1 and 2 programmes are taught through vocational embedding and/or contextualization of Key Skills delivery, together with lessons in PD and IT.

The LSU has also created an EQF/MQF Level 1 qualification in Basic Office Skills to provide more learning paths for those learners who would like to gain the necessary skills and competence to work in an office environment.

4.3 Additional Support Sessions

The LSU also offers support to learners at higher levels on a one-to-one basis or in a small group setting. Learners attending LSU sessions receive support in general or specific literacy skills; in planning for assignments and course work; in developing coping and study strategies such as study skills, time management and many others. LSU also tackles particular learning conditions and also the development of sound learning strategies and study skills. The LSU also has a structure in place that caters for those learners who are struggling for genuine reasons and cannot meet the deadlines of an assignment. These services are made known to learners so they are aware that they can look for help if they are struggling. Learners are made aware of these services by the LSU staff, who visit classes as much as possible. Similarly, Institute Directors, Deputy Directors and lecturers

may also refer students to the LSU. Students may join the LSU at any point of the academic year, and support is provided according to their specific needs. Further information is available in Doc 246.

4.4 Student Support Services Coordinator (SSSC) and Mentors

In addition to this, a number of the Institutes have been assigned an Institute Student Support Services Coordinator (ISSSC). The ISSSC monitors learners and if required or if they notice any problems that a student might be having, refer them to the Learning Support Unit. The ISSSC is the link between the Institute and the different support services and the first contact person within the Institute for the student.

The Learning Support Unit also provides ad hoc subject-specific training sessions to the LSU staff.

4.5 Student Mentors

The aim of the mentoring programme is to create via the Student Mentors an outreach system through which all students, up to MQF Level 3, can be reached, helped and supported and in so doing, not only aid them during the transition and school permanence but also encourage student engagement in their educational journey. The aim of the program is to help students in a holistic manner, not only academically but with any issues that may be impeding their educational journey.

4.6 Exemptions for Key Skills Unit

The College provides for exemptions under the Key Skills Unit regulation. This regulation can be applied by the IEU Deputy Director to recommend to the Registrar's Office the exemption of learners with disabilities from some key skill units if it is confirmed that the learner cannot cope.

Other exemptions cover;

- a) Foreigners from the Maltese Key Skill classes;
- b) Learners who have a recognized and valid qualification in any of the key skills which are compulsory in the course.

In view of the fact that students are trained in skills that are not necessarily covered under O/A level syllabi, students attending Level 3 courses are asked to attend, participate and achieve all units of their respective Level 3 courses, including the key skills units. Therefore, Exemptions are no longer given to learners who may have presented SEC passes in English, Maltese, Maths or a science subject. Exemptions are only given in the case of IT for learners who have achieved a full ECDL certificate.

To achieve a full level 3 certification, learners need to pass all units at level 3. Learners who do not achieve all units will still achieve an award listing all units they have achieved.

For the purposes of progression to level 4 courses at MCAST, learners who may have failed a key skills unit at level 3 may present a SEC O level subject in lieu of the key skills unit they may have failed according to established criteria.

4.7 Inclusive Education Unit (IEU)

The Inclusive Education Unit at MCAST forms an integral part of the College's policy to provide an inclusive environment for all learners. The IEU caters for all MCAST learners with particular needs and/or disabilities, and provides them with the educational support needed to develop their full potential.

There are various ways in which a student can be referred or come in contact with the IEU, these are explained in Doc 253 referred below.

4.7.1 Provision of Access Arrangements

The IEU records and coordinates the provision of special access arrangements for students with specific needs. A mechanism is in place so that learners wishing to join MCAST, who already have access arrangements in place, can carry over their access arrangements from Secondary Education to MCAST. This process is explained in DOC 253 referred to below.

Students who are not in possession of access arrangements but are deemed to require them are referred to the college Educational psychologist for an assessment – after which the student is registered with the IEU and access arrangements provided accordingly.

4.7.2 Provision of Additional Support Sessions.

The IEU offers Support Sessions to MCAST learners requiring academic and/or accessibility-related support. Such sessions are provided on a weekly basis for the duration of one hour each and can spread over an entire academic year. Support Sessions focus, although not exclusively, on the following areas: Key Skills: Mathematics, Maltese, English, IT, Science, Accessibility / Learning Skills: assistive technology, assignment support, organisational skills, time management, study skills., etc. The Additional Support programme is very flexible and is tailored to the needs of the individual learner. Further details on the provision of additional support by the IEU can be found in Doc 250 referred below.

4.8 Mature Students

The Adult Maturity Clause allows entry to MCAST courses to mature students who do not satisfy the entry requirements for a course of study up to level 7. Students may be eligible for admission if they can provide satisfactory evidence of their ability to pursue successfully the programme of study which they are applying for. This enables learners from the age of 19 upwards to enter for a qualification making use of their experiential knowledge.

Applicants who satisfy the following conditions may apply for consideration to join MCAST programmes, under the Maturity clause:

1. Be in possession of a School Leaving Certificate.
2. Have, by the end of the same calendar year:
 - a. attained the age of 27 years for entry to MQF Level 7 programmes
 - b. attained the age of 23 years for entry to programmes at MQF Level 5/6
 - c. attained the age of 21 years for entry to programmes at MQF Level 4
 - d. attained the age of 19 years for entry to programmes at MQF Level 3.

Further details on Admissions via the maturity clause can be found in DOC 185 referenced below.

4.9 Modes of delivery

The College considers various modes of delivery to cater to all its learners. It also recognizes that learning should be learner-centred and hence given according to the needs of the learner. A number of modes of delivery are provided by the College as indicated below:

4.10 Modes of Delivery: Online Blended Learning

The MCAST QA Online Policy (Doc 020) describes the requirements for ensuring the quality of online teaching, learning and assessment.

4.11 Work-Based Learning (including apprenticeship)

Under the coordination of the Work-Based Learning Office, the College offers various forms of work-based learning across all levels, giving the student the opportunity to learn through work experience.

The main forms of work-based learning deployed by the College are shown below:

4.11.1 Work/Industry Placements

Learners work in business, government or community organizations which vary in terms of duration, structure (block, part-time, intermittent) and how the placements are sourced.

They are typically deployed at Levels 3 and 4.

4.11.2 Industry or Community Projects/Activities

These typically require individual learners or teams of students to undertake a project based on a real situation, problem or need encountered by a business or community organization, also referred to as Project-Based Learning (PBL) or Life Cases. These sessions are typically deployed at levels 5 and 6.

4.11.3 Simulated Workplace Environments

Reflect a real workplace in its function and operation, in which learners can experience a range of inter-related activities and scenarios. These may include on-campus laboratories, offices, hair salons etc. These sessions are typically deployed at levels 1,2 and 3.

4.11.4 Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning

The MCAST apprenticeship scheme offers a combination of both college-based learning and industry-based training in preparation for career choices, giving students the opportunity to develop their technical competences through real work experience. There are presently over 1,600 students who are in their first, second or third year who are enrolled in courses which incorporate apprenticeship.

Apprentices have the opportunity to experience learning within the industry market, providing students with the opportunity to develop their creativity and acquire problem-solving skills. MCAST offers over 50 courses at MQF Level 3, MQF Level 4 and also MQF Level 6 on apprenticeships across different sectors, including - aviation, heating ventilation and air-conditioning, joinery and furniture making, masonry, welding and fabrication, electrical and electronics, automotive, hairdressing, applied science, food technology, information technology, business administration and secretarial, finance and insurance, accounting, marketing, fashion and retail, cultural heritage skills, plumbing and liquid petroleum gas systems, polymer process technicians, manufacturing, marine engineering, operations and maintenance and biomedical engineering. – with an extensive selection of over 1700 industries and employers registered with MCAST as industry partners, where students have the opportunity to train and learn.

An apprenticeship allows for authentic industry-based training within an authentic workplace environment. It allows students to engage with employers and achieve opportunities to become part of the active labour force while developing their competences. In addition, apprentices earn while learning and developing the required skills to become professionals in their choice of career.

MCAST works with Industry Partners to extend its base of Industry partners in order to provide high-quality apprenticeship opportunities. Through MCAST's partnership with industry, apprenticeships facilitate the transition into the labour market and give apprentices the opportunity to acquire competences that are better acquired through a work environment.

MCAST Apprenticeships typically take between one to three years to complete, depending on the framework. The programmes begin at one of the MCAST Institutes, where the apprentice acquires the underpinning knowledge needed in the chosen occupation. This will then be followed by the actual on-the-job training at an employer's establishment for the acquisition of hands-on practice, skills and competences.

4.12 Use of Pedagogical Tools

Qualifications at MCAST are based on learning outcomes and the national level descriptors. Therefore, the pedagogical methods used are oriented around learning outcomes which are vocationally oriented.

The following are methods used:

1. Learner-centred classroom,
2. Process - cantered learning,
3. Teacher as an organiser of knowledge,
4. Teacher as a helper to learners in their learning,
5. Holistic learning focus.

For lower levels, lecturers use mostly different methods of learning to engage students such as discussions, reading, videos, and hands-on as well as try to place the students in situations where there is a lot of collaboration work. In their pedagogical methods, lecturers include skills that the learners would make use of in the world of work. Learners are

exposed to an environment that resembles the place of work where they can practice in a supervised manner.

Lecturers also use a variety of assessment modes such as presentations, role plays; reading and writing; practice in the workshop; project work; Research (mini-research with regards to lower levels).

4.13 Student Autonomy in Learning

The College encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher through a number of initiatives, namely:

a) Autonomy through involvement in Student Societies

Learners are encouraged to set up Student Organisations in order to enhance the communication between the Learner (internal customer) and the College and hence the learning environment.

b) Autonomy in the Learner through entrepreneurship

To address a need to promote and support a sense of entrepreneurship in youth, the College offers entrepreneurship courses as an integral part of every Degree Course being offered at MQF Level 4 -6. The College is working to strengthen its entrepreneurship curriculum by offering entrepreneurship training at all levels within its educational and training courses. Such a measure will enable the development of entrepreneurial qualities and competences, sustaining a lifelong learning process, thus ensuring job creation and economic growth whilst encouraging a sense of autonomy in the learner.

c) Autonomy through CSR

Involving students in society and the workplace is one of MCAST's main goals. This provides learners with a unique opportunity to learn through direct embedding, enabling them to acquire a number of transversal skills that they would not be able to obtain in the classroom

In addition, all the programmes at MCAST up to MQF/EQF level 3 include a compulsory study unit Individual and Social Responsibility (ISR), that includes all the themes mentioned above. The ISR unit also includes the CSR (Corporate social responsibility), which is in fact, directly related to active citizenship where students are engaged in 20 hours of community work. At the higher levels, namely Level 4 and Level 6 a unit called Inter/Intra personal Skills was also developed to encourage active citizenship at higher levels and instil these types of skills in our students.

Autonomy Through Mobility

The College has an International Office committed to participating in EU mobility programmes. Learners are encouraged to participate in placements as they become available during the academic year. The placements are not embedded in the study programmes but related to them.

d) Autonomy of Learning – Sharing of Best Practices identified by External Examiners

The feedback received by the College from the various external peer reviewers during their annual visits is consolidated by the QA Office into a single report that is shared with all academics and students on EQF / MQF 6 and 7 programmes. This report provides the students (researchers) with direct access to the key feedback received from the external peer reviewers, which otherwise would be restricted (feedback) to a

very restricted audience also since the nature of the discussions and decisions taken during these board meetings are considered to be within most academic institutions of a confidential nature. This consolidated report provides students with very useful hands-on insights (Do's and Do not) that can support the student in their dissertation journey to receive a better grading and hence classification. This information is also disseminated to the lecturers, some of which are appointed as dissertation supervisors.

4.14 Mutual Respect Within the Learner-Teacher Relationship

The College is an inclusive community college which seeks to promote and respect the principles of diversity, inclusion and respect for the dignity of all its members. The College has various procedures that safeguard both lecturers and students at the College, thus promoting mutual respect in the learner-lecturer relationship.

Key regulations that are meant for students, as well as lecturers, are communicated as follows:

- Online on the MCAST website
- Online on the MCAST Intranet
- Summarized and printed in the Induction Handbook issued at the start of the academic year

Any changes to the documents need to be approved by the Council of Institutes (COI). New/updates in regulations are e-mailed to all staff and students by the Quality Assurance Department.

The main regulations are:

4.14.1 Student Conduct Regulations (Doc 038)

Students enrolled on MCAST (including MG2I) full-time, and part-time courses and programmes are expected to comply with MCAST regulations and behave respectfully towards all members of the College community and visitors. Through these regulations, students are made aware of what constitutes misconduct at the College or any extension thereof (including online platforms, placements etc.), its classification, and how misconduct shall be dealt with.

This document is closely referred to DOC 188, which tackles in more detail the procedures of the various boards in charge.

4.14.2 College Academic and Student Disciplinary Board Procedures (Doc 188)

This regulation explains the various Academic and Disciplinary boards at MCAST, explains their terms of reference and ensures that the rights of both lecturer and student are being safeguarded and respected throughout the execution of the various board procedures (especially in the case of the Disciplinary and Appeals boards). Also, learners are given a chance to appeal the decision of a lecturer and the Institute director if s/he feel that the treatment was unfair.

4.14.3 Students Grievance Policy and Procedure (MOP Chp 15)

This policy informs the parties concerned of their roles and obligations and, where appropriate, their rights under this policy. Students and academic staff are

encouraged to follow this procedure in case they feel that they are being treated unfairly.

4.15 Blended learning

MCAST courses are delivered in a blended learning manner that includes:

- a) Face-to-face learning sessions during weekend schools
- b) Synchronous online learning sessions during weekend schools
- c) Asynchronous online learning sessions
- d) Online tasks – discussion forum, resource sharing forum and personal engagement with the topic.

4.16 Assessment Criteria and Learning Outcomes

The criteria and method of assessment are defined clearly and published in advance in the Unit Specification. The Learning Outcomes (Competences, Skills and Knowledge) are clearly mapped to the assessment criteria. This ensures that all the outcomes are being assessed and that the learner has fulfilled the necessary criteria for the unit.

The Assessment Criteria created per unit show very clearly the evidence required to achieve the outcomes set per unit. Students are given an Assignment Brief based on the set criteria. The assignment brief is submitted by the Assessor to the student together with a 'Assessment and IV Front Sheet', which is used to record the achievement of the criteria and the assessment feedback by the lecturer to the student.

On the Assessment and IV Front Sheet, the Lecturer is required to provide clear feedback on:

- a) the criteria the learner achieved (explaining the assessor's decisions);
- b) the criteria not achieved (and why) without providing a list of instructions on how to get a higher grade.

Feedback can include, for example:

- a) Which assessment criteria did the learner achieve, and what did the learner do well;
- b) Which assessment criteria the learner has not achieved, and what was missing;
- c) Which information or guidance available to the learner they could have drawn on (e.g. class notes; handouts; resources in assignment brief etc.);
- d) General behaviour regarding approach.

Apart from the feedback on the Assessment and IV Front Sheet, lecturers also make use of in-text feedback. Such feedback is more specific to the task and/or question.

4.17 Access to Testing and Examination Methods

Assessors have access to the testing and examination methods through the Unit Specification that is accessible via the Institute Management / MIS.

Rubrics are used where necessary to facilitate testing and examination methods. Assessors can also consult with the Institute Programme Coordinator assigned to the units they are assessing as well as the Assessment Internal Verifier for assistance and for the development of their own skills in the field.

Each Academic year the CPD Department offers a number of CPD sessions for Academic and Administrative Staff on various aspects concerning good pedagogical practices and other aspects of living and working within an educational organization, such as:

- a) Curriculum Drafting Implementation and Review
- b) Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- c) Educational leadership and teacher/student/worker agency
- d) Ethos and the creation of a learning community

CPD sessions are usually held at the start/end of a semester, namely in September, February and June. However, other ad hoc sessions are held whenever a need arises

4.18 Modes of Feedback to the Learner

The College encourages various modes of feedback that can be used by the Lecturer as follows:

4.18.1 Verbal Feedback

Verbal feedback is considered a strong element within the guided learning hours. Used as a formative mode of assessment, it provides the student with ongoing feedback throughout the duration of the study unit or module. Verbal feedback is delivered both to groups but mostly to individual students in direct relation to their work. It helps students identify their strengths and weaknesses and lets them focus on specific areas that require improvement. It also helps lecturers recognise where students are struggling and address issues immediately.

4.18.2 Written Feedback

In addition to verbal feedback, students are also provided with written feedback. This is provided to students through different media and forms as explained below:

4.18.2.1 *Via MIS (Classter)*

The College MIS provides space for lecturers to include written feedback for the individual students. The space allows for generic feedback to be provided to students and lecturers have the freedom to provide overall feedback or divide it by the individual tasks/ assessment criteria.

4.18.2.2 *Assessment and IV Front Sheet:*

All assignments issued as part of the fulfilment of full-time study programmes at MCAST need to be accompanied by an Assessment and IV Front Sheet (reference documents below refer). Lecturers are instructed to make use of the Assignment front sheets to provide written feedback to students for any Class-based supervised assessments.

4.18.2.3 *In-text annotations (on the script)*

More detailed written feedback is provided to students directly in the assessment scripts. Lecturers provide feedback which is more specific to the question/ criteria at hand, highlighting any improvements that the student can apply to achieve the criteria and/or reinforcing good attempts by the student. Whilst feedback for class-based supervised assessments is written by hand on the physical script, feedback for online assessment is provided via the LMS (for EQF/MQF Level 4 – 7 programmes) and directly in the student submission as annotations and/or on the assignment front sheet in the case of EQF/MQF Level 1 – 3 programmes. The written feedback helps

students to evaluate their work as it highlights the strengths and weaknesses that should be considered for future projects, especially if such projects pertain to linked or related units.

4.18.2.4 *Dissertation Tutorials – One-to-one*

Students reading for a Bachelor's Degree are expected to hold regular one-to-one meetings/tutorials with their designated dissertation tutors. Progress on the dissertation is monitored by the tutor, and verbal feedback is provided to the student accordingly. Records of each tutorial are recorded on a Dissertation Logbook.

4.18.2.5 *Class meetings – Live cases*

Live cases have become an integral part of the curriculum whereby students work to a real-life brief in order to achieve their study unit outcomes. Students are initially provided with the brief by the partner organisation. The students work on their individual or group projects for a number of weeks and eventually present their work to the organisation's representatives, who in turn provide verbal feedback to the students in direct response to their work. Periodic meetings with stakeholders provide the students with opportunities to discuss, ask direct questions and indicate any difficulties and issues, among others.

4.19 Internal Verification Procedure and Viva Procedure

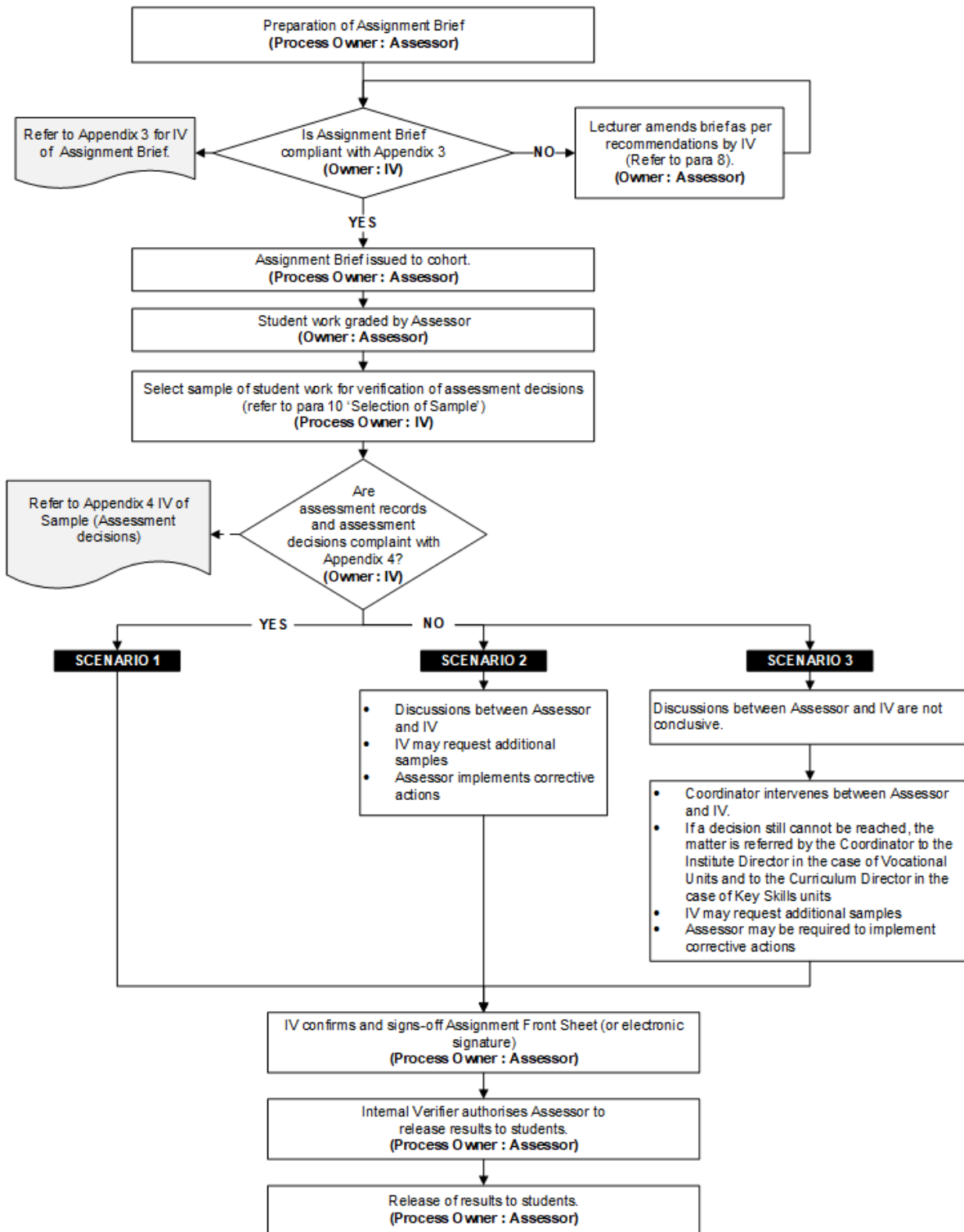
The College has in place an internal verification procedure (Doc 086 and process map below refer). Internal verification is an internal quality assurance process that, if conducted correctly, ensures that:

- a) Assessment instruments are fit for purpose, hence providing the Learner with the opportunity to present the evidence required by the assessment criteria;
- b) Assessment decisions assess the Learner's work fairly, accurately and consistently against the unit assessment criteria.

A robust internal verification process allows issues to be identified at the input stage of the assessment process and addressed before they reach the Learner (output). The internal verification process is also an opportunity for collaboration between staff members. Through dialogue and discussion, assessment provision can continuously improve, thus ensuring fair, accurate and consistent assessment judgements.

Well-implemented internal verification helps defend the Assessors' decisions in the case of academic challenges during Institute and Corporate Appeal Boards. The internal verification process ultimately ensures that the College qualifications have the required validity and recognition.

Internal Verification Process



4.20 Viva Procedure

Student submission of dissertations is marked by the dissertation supervisor and then assessed viva-voce with the student by a Panel of academic staff/management. The Viva Board provides the opportunity for the Panel to confirm (or otherwise) the mark assigned by the dissertation marker.

4.21 Use of Grading Rubric

Additionally, the External Verifier select random samples of the dissertations and confirm (or otherwise) the marks assigned to the student.

The College has established a number of grading rubrics (Doc 100 refers) that are used by the student and assessors (dissertation supervisor, Viva Board and external verifier) when assigning a final mark in order to ensure fairness, consistency and transparency of marking.

4.22 Mitigating Circumstances

The Programme Regulations (Docs 003, 004 and 005 referenced below) provide for mitigating circumstances under sections:

- a) Section 9.2 Justification of Absence and Extenuating Circumstances – related to students' attendance obligations.
- b) Section 10.5 Submission of Individual Home-Based Coursework
- c) Section 10.9 Request for Consideration of Extenuating Circumstances for Extension of the Submission Deadline of Home-Based Assignment
- d) Section 10.10 Absence from Time Constrained Assessment (TCA)

Assessments and examinations are also regulated under the Doc 038 Student Conduct Regulations

These regulations, which govern the conduct of all students during assessment/examinations, are approved by the Council of Institutes (Col) and form part of Quality Assurance policies. The terms 'assessment' and 'examinations' include any kind of formal assessment. This may be 'formative' as in continuous assessment, which is 'cumulative' and 'summative' (such as time-constrained examinations). A formal assessment always involves the lecturer's feedback which is published and has a direct bearing on the student's progression.

4.23 Assessment

Candidates' development needs are matched against the requirements of the qualification(s), and an agreed assessment plan is established. Lecturers provide regular and formal feedback after assessment, and candidates' needs are identified in the process.

The following procedures are in place to ensure fairness and consistency:

- a) Students within the same cohort are given the same assessment briefs with the same tasks regardless of the group or class to which they are assigned.
- b) No alterations, deductions or additions to the originally declared unit outcomes shall be allowed;
- c) All assignment briefs and assessment decisions shall be verified by the internal verifier/s. The latter shall ensure that all established programme requirements and documentation are in place;
- d) Internal Verifiers ensure that candidates are given an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and competency and that the assessor/s shall be able to make sound professional judgments;

- e) A variety of assessment instruments shall be used to gather and interpret evidence of learner competence to pre-established grading criteria, which are made known in writing to the student at the launch of the assignment.

4.24 Student and Staff Concerns, Complaints and Grievances

Procedures are available for Learners to make a complaint about the provision of services. This includes decisions regarding their academic results. Complaints by Learners are addressed either to the Institute personnel or directly to the Student Liaison Manager.

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) spares no effort to ensure that all its community members, including full-time and part-time students and staff, operate in a conducive environment where they can live together, guided by sound values of inclusion and respect in the light of social and cultural diversity.

The MCAST Grievance Office provides its services to all registered MCAST full-time and part-time students and staff. The overall aim is to actively promote and safeguard their well-being by dealing with their grievances and offering fair and adequate counsel to assist in bringing grievances to a satisfactory closure for the benefit of all concerned.

The Student and Staff Grievance Policy and Procedure (Doc 035) outlines the procedure that a student has to take if she/ he wants to appeal any decision taken in their regard regarding incidents related to:

- a) All kinds of bullying.
- b) Victimization.
- c) Harassment.
- d) Unfair discrimination based on gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, race and disability.
- e) Aggression, including physical and psychological.

The MCAST Grievance Office has the role of assisting MCAST students and staff in sharing and obtaining advice about their concerns, complaints and grievances. The Grievance Office seeks, above all, to promote and facilitate a culture of truthful dialogue in obtaining a solution for minor disagreements at the source. Whenever it is necessary, the Senior Grievance Officer responsible for the Grievance Office guides the complainant and the other party to reach an informal resolution to the satisfaction of all concerned. In cases of a more serious nature, the complainant is entitled to opt for a formal grievance procedure, where the Senior Grievance Officer responsible for the Grievance Office investigates the grievance until a fair solution is reached.

Any grievance presented to the 'Grievance Office' under the formal procedure must be in writing. The Grievance Office is totally committed to the investigation of any grievance impartially, while priority is given to the communication of the Grievance Office's recommendations within realistic time frames throughout the process.

This policy aims to ensure that problems among the MCAST community are dealt with in a timely manner, fairly and consistently. The 'Grievance Office' provides additional support for vulnerable MCAST members who may need more guidance in their individual circumstances.

Data is retained of all concerns, appeals and grievances reported to the Grievance Office (Refer to EQA Evidence Folder: Student and Staff Concerns, Complaints and Grievances (2018, 2019 and 2020))

4.25 Student Appeals on Assessment Decisions (Result)

Appeals shall be lodged in the first instance with the Institute Appeals Board (IAB). This shall be made up of (a) Institute Director as Chairperson, b) Deputy Director c) Director Quality Assurance or his appointed designate d) Secretary to the Board appointed by the Chairperson

Appeals may be based upon one or more of the following:

- a) Grounds to suspect that there was an error in the assessment or grading of the work submitted by the student.
- b) The assessment/examination procedures have not been conducted fairly or in accordance with MCAST-approved regulations. In other words, proof exists there has been some administrative error, misdirection or irregularity.
- c) The assessor/assessment board has been unaware of or has given insufficient weight to extenuating circumstances supported by appropriate evidence, as verified and accepted by the College itself which circumstances have adversely affected the student's/candidate's performance.
- d) Discrimination is alleged.

Data is retained by the QA Department of all appeals registered, upheld or rejected. Refer to EQA Evidence Folder (Appeals Register).

4.26 Corporate Social Responsibility

The implementation of the CSR initiative encourages personal development among students at MCAST while positively impacting the local community. The initiative has enhanced relationships with the CSR partners in supporting public value outcomes. All students at MCAST have the opportunity to carry out community work at either non-governmental organisations, sports associations, care homes for the elderly and local councils as part of their training programme. Learners participating in the MCAST CSR can enhance their educational experience during their study period at MCAST through a diverse range of opportunities provided by MCAST in collaboration with interested stakeholders.

<https://www.mcast.edu.mt/mcast-corporate-social-responsibility/>

Reference Documents

ACADEMIC DOCUMENTS		
Doc #	TITLE	Doc Type
3	Programme Regulations - MQF Levels 1 - 3	Regulation
4	Programme Regulations - MQF Levels 4	Regulation
5	Programme Regulations - MQF Levels 5 - 7	Regulation
8	Programme Regulations - Doctorate in Research MQF Level 8	Regulation
16	Programme Regulations - Masters by Research MQF 7	Regulation
56	Invigilation Procedure	Regulation
20	MCAST Policy Guidelines and Quality Assurance Standards for Online Learning	Policy/Procedure
25	Accepting Students' Societies Procedure	Policy/Procedure
32	Academic Misconduct (Plagiarism) Policy - MQF Levels 1 to 4	Policy/Procedure
38	Student Conduct Regulations	Policy/Procedure
52	Plagiarism Policy and Procedure (MQF 1 - 4)	Policy/Procedure
74	Research Ethics Policy and Procedures	Policy/Procedure
86	Internal Verification Procedure	Policy/Procedure
99	Plagiarism Policy and Procedure (MQF Levels 5 - 7)	Policy/Procedure
188	College Academic and Student Disciplinary Board Procedures	Policy/Procedure
212	Illegal Substance Procedure	Policy/Procedure
237	Research Programme Viva Procedure (MQF 7 and 8)	Policy/Procedure
296	Process for the realisation for AWBL certification	Policy/Procedure
297	Process for the realisation of AWBL placement vacancies	Policy/Procedure
298	Process for the matching of AWBL placement vacancies	Policy/Procedure
104	Request for Consideration of Extenuating Circumstances for extension of submission deadline of home based assignment.	Form
106	Request for consideration of extenuating circumstances for TCA (Examination) Form	Form
110	Request for Consideration of Compensatory Pass	Form
133	Record of Verbal Warning for Student Misconduct	Form
161	MVEAR Assignment Proposal Form	Form
164	Research Proposal (Statement of Intent) Form	Form
174	Assignment Cover Sheet - Individual Criteria	Form
175	Assignment Cover Sheet - Grouped Criteria	Form
181	Research Proposal Form (Internal and External Senior Researchers)	Form
189	Apprenticeship Regulations Agreement Form	Form
198	Illegal Substance Incident Report Form	Form
199	Illegal Substance Record of Search Report Form	Form
223	Id-Document Tal-Assessjar U L-Verifikazzjoni Interna (Kriterji Individwali)	Form
224	Id-Document Tal-Assessjar U L-Verifikazzjoni Interna (Kriterji Individwali)	Form
266	Request for Attempting Repeat Unit without Attendance.	Form
284	Summons for the IDB Hearing	Form
285	Summons for the MCDB Hearing	Form
286	Record of Decision following IDB Hearing (Form)	Form
292	Assessment / Examination Result Appeal Form	Form
336	Id-Document Tal-Assessjar U L-Verifikazzjoni Interna (Kriterji Individwali) - Online	Form
337	Id-Document Tal-Assessjar U L-Verifikazzjoni Interna (Kriterji Magħquda) - Online	Form
348	Learning Agreement (MQF 7)	Form
352	Masters Dissertation - Supervisor Logbook	Form
ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS		
Doc #	TITLE	Doc Type
MOP_ADM_001_15	Girevance Policy and Procedure (Staff and Students)	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_15_FORM_01	Grievances Form (Staff and Students)	Form

5. STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION

5.1 Admissions Process

The admission process and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner via the College MIS (Classter). The admission process is preceded by the MCAST Expo, where all the institutes, as well as the various administrative departments, participate in an exposition of services offered by the College. During the Expo, various activities are set up to advertise and promote all the different courses, qualifications and opportunities that the College has on offer to prospective participants. The Prospectus is launched during the Expo.

The Prospectus shows clearly and in a transparent manner the entry requirements for each and every qualification listed within it. The Prospectus is available in a printed and online format (<https://www.mcast.edu.mt/mcast-prospectus-2020-2021/>).

The Prospectus also includes information with regards to services offered at MCAST, such as Career Guidance, Learning Support Unit, Library and others.

The periods of course registration are advertised on printed and social media.

The forms used by MCAST for the different registrations are explained below:

Forms of Application Used by MCAST	Scope
Form A : Application	This registration form is for new students who want to apply for a course. This also includes students who were following a course but stopped in a previous academic year which will not be the one just finished and want to start afresh in a totally different area.
Form B : Progressing	This form is for students who have successfully completed a level of study and would like to progress to the next level.
Form C : Continuing	This form is for continuing students; that is for courses which are longer than one year. If a student successfully completes the first year of study to go to the second year, a student has to register once again under this form. The same applies from second to third etc.... continuing studies to a subsequent year according to the course regulations
Form D : Repeating Unit/s	This form is for students who have failed a unit(S) and they need to repeat that unit to be able to close the programme. Therefore, they would need to register once more with this form.

The following procedures provide for consistency and transparency of the admission process:

Document 185 'Admissions Procedure'

This document describes the processes related to the admission process at MCAST and the different entry paths available to prospective students. It outlines what is required for admission, the general entry requirements, the admission complaints procedure as well as penalties should students provide fraudulent information to gain admission at MCAST. The document also outlines the procedure for enrolment of New Students, Progressing Students and Continuing Students and the Procedure in case there are Late Applications.

<http://www.mcast.edu.mt/MainMenu/Full-TimeCourses/Methodofapplication.aspx> - The following link on the website provide all the information that a student needs to apply at MCAST. The same information is also presented on the Prospectus.

Doc 003 004 005 – Programme Rules and Regulations

These regulations contain the general rules and regulations which apply to the programmes offered at the different MQF levels.

5.2 Induction Sessions

All Institutes organize an induction session for students at the beginning of the academic year. The presentation covers aspects of both the institution and the programme being delivered. Inductions sessions are delivered by the Institute Management staff. During this presentation, students are given a presentation as well as a copy of the Institute Handbook that contains all relevant information pertaining to the respective Institute and the support functions.

As necessary, students are also given talks by Support Services, Counsellors, Career Guidance, Library and other relevant MCAST departments.

5.3 Student Progression

MCAST has processes and tools in place (MIS Classer) to collect students' grades, monitor them and also manage their progression.

All Institute-specific progression routes are clearly evident on the MCAST Prospectus. The progression rules are described in the College Programme Regulations.

The results are issued by the Lecturer, who inputs the grades on Classter. Grades are input per task per student the year progresses. Unit overall grades are generated automatically by the system by summing up the results for the various tasks for a specific Unit. Students are notified of the results they achieved once these are released by the lecturer following Internal Verification of Assessment Decisions.

Result Broadsheets can be automatically generated via Classter from the data input by the various lecturers. Senior Administrative Officers (SAO) can access these broadsheets in order to issue the individual student Record of Achievement (ROA), which is printed and sent to students by post. ROA's are sent to the student by the Institute management with a covering letter which includes the instructions on how students should access the link for registration, including the unique code. Students access the link just once and register following the instructions provided on the cover letter and the instructions provided by the link for registration. This information will be uploaded by the system on a Database that is owned by the registrar. The database will automatically divide the students according to the form they registered with, enabling the sorting of forms. The output is as shown in the provided sample.

5.4 Recognition of Prior Learning

The College supports and recognizes learning which takes place in different contexts. Knowledge and skills can develop from many types of formal, non-formal and informal

learning. The College recognises that current and prospective students¹ may acquire learning and skills in a formal learning environment, in employment or in other working/voluntary contexts.

All formal, non-formal and informal learning may be directly relevant to the vocational or professional education and training programme which a student seeks to follow at the College.

RPL can have multiple purposes, including:

- RPL to gain entry to an Award or Qualification; and
- RPL for the award of ECTS or ECVET points in order to gain exemption from parts of an existing programme of study.

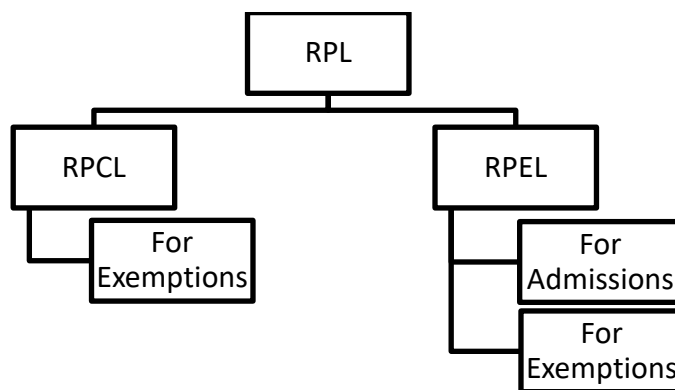


Figure: Different types of RPL services at MCAST and their application

Recognition of Prior Learning can take many forms and definitions. At MCAST a distinction and a separate process is adopted for RPCL and RPEL, and the document structure is organised accordingly, as explained below:

- Doc 358 RPL Policy is considered as the overarching framework for all RPL at the College
- Doc 360 Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL) Policy for Exemption, focusing specifically on the concepts, policy and procedure for RPCL; and
- Doc 361 Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) Policy for Admission and Exemption focuses solely on the policy, procedures, and guidance for RPEL.

All three documents need to be read in conjunction with each other.

359 RPCL Application Form

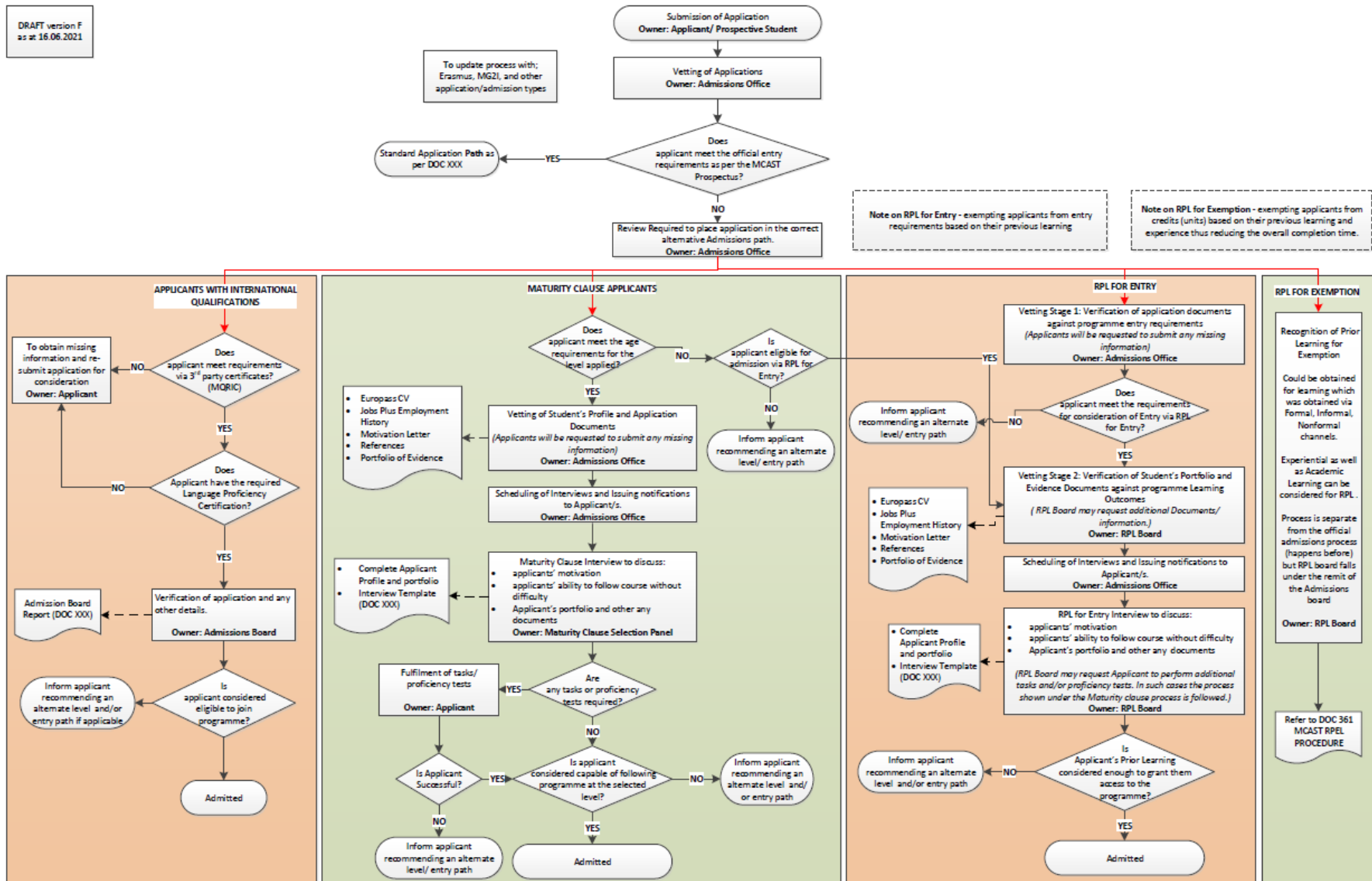
363: RPEL Application and Portfolio Form

The College recognises that central to this policy is the responsibility for the academic standards of all Qualifications and Awards granted in its name and the quality of learning opportunities for students. The College is ultimately responsible for the academic standards of its Qualifications and Awards.

¹ For the purposes of this policy, the term 'student' refers to both prospective or current students.

FLOWCHART FOR ADMISSION PROCESSES FALLING UNDER THE REMIT OF THE ADMISSIONS BOARD

DRAFT version F
25 of 16.06.2021



Reference Documents

ACADEMIC DOCUMENTS		
Doc #	TITLE	Doc Type
3	Programme Regulations - MQF Levels 1 - 3	Regulation
4	Programme Regulations - MQF Levels 4	Regulation
5	Programme Regulations - MQF Levels 5 - 7	Regulation
8	Programme Regulations - Doctorate in Research MQF Level 8	Regulation
16	Programme Regulations - Masters by Research MQF 7	Regulation
77	Administrative Procedure for Processing of Claims for Certificates at Interim Exit Points	Policy/Procedure
358	RPL Recognition of Prior Learning Policy	Policy/Procedure
360	RPCL Recognition of Prior Certified Learning Policy for Exemption	Policy/Procedure
361	RPCEL Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) Policy for Admission and Exempt	Policy/Procedure
277	Request to Transfer Course	Form
278	Resignation Letter	Form
280	Absenteeism Warning	Form
281	Strike Off Letter	Form
294	Progression Application Form	Form
359	RPCL Application Form	Form
362	RPEL Application Form & Portfolio	Form

6. TEACHING STAFF

6.1 MCAST strategy and CPD

In the section on Focus on sustained Quality Improvement, the MCAST strategy (2018/21) states as a goal: Focus on the continuous professional development of lecturing staff to enrich their vocational pedagogical skills, knowledge and teaching tools.

The new strategy 2022-2027 sets the SMART target of an increase by 10% in the CPD activities of staff members.

6.2 Continuous Professional Department

The MCAST Continuous Professional Development Centre is committed to fostering excellence in the development and provision of continuing vocational and educational training programmes for MCAST's teaching staff. It strives to provide educational training opportunities which promote, support and enhance MCAST's role and its response to the needs of the individual and the economy.

One of the roles of the Centre for Professional Development is to be a catalyst for the dissemination of good pedagogical practices. Members of academic staff are invited to lead sessions during which they share their good pedagogical practices with their peers. The volunteers are invited to share their practices by leading a 60-90-minute online session on a pedagogical topic.

Training needs are analysed on an ongoing basis but mainly through:

- a. Need Analysis Surveys' issued by the CPD Department prior to the launch of the CPD annual campaign,
- b. Lecturer Performance Appraisals: Analysis of Performance Appraisals identifies strengths and weaknesses in the teacher performance, which is used for teacher training programme review and CPD of the lecturing staff
- c. Educational Research

Apart from the formal inputs mentioned above, the MCAST CPD Development Centre also provides training based on Ad hoc requests which may originate from various sources, both within and outside of the Institution.

The MCAST Centre for Professional Development organizes CPD sessions at regular intervals, which are open to all MCAST staff. Besides these, particular ad hoc sessions are organized when the need arises.

The College offers various postgraduate research opportunities and studies to all its members of staff.

6.3 Competence of Teaching Staff

Competence of teaching staff is assured through Continuous Professional Development in a number of ways, as indicated below.

6.4 Induction Session

The Centre for Professional Development is also responsible for the coordination of the induction training days for new MCAST staff.

An induction session is held for newly recruited full-time lecturing staff in order to introduce MCAST's VET Learning Environment and to create an Engaging Learning Environment (the learners taking up VET, the subject areas offered at MCAST, the physical learning space, and the MCAST Curriculum). The session also indicates to the participants the importance of engaging learners in their learning and of evaluating themselves through self-evaluation to improve their own self and own work (Preparing to deliver a lecture, choosing the appropriate teaching method/s, Assessment, and the Internal Verification Process).

The induction session is led by the CPD Department. Other members of management are invited to deliver short talks to the new recruits regarding the role of their respective departments.

Some courses have a license from a recognized national authority such as Transport Malta. In such cases, new tutors need to have a basic initial pedagogy short course prior to their engagement and accreditation as tutors in the Maritime and Aviation courses.

6.5 Full Teacher Training Qualification

As already mentioned in 4.5 above, MCAST provides teacher training programmes for all its lecturing staff.

The goal of this programme is to train teachers teaching in vocational institutions to meet the educational, life-long learning needs of the learner facing the challenges of employment and employability in a fast-changing labour market. The programme aims to train teachers who are professionals in their fields but do not have formal pedagogical training and qualifications.

The MCAST Master in Vocational Education Applied Research 4.0 (MVEAR 4.0) is in its second year with 32 participants enrolling at PG Cert. level and another 16 participants progressing to the second year of studies PG Dip. Level. The first cohort started in February 2019 – 45 participants graduated with a Post Graduate Certificate with 15 participants moving on to the Post Graduate Diploma.

MVEAR 4.0 is a Level 7 course of 120 ECTS which has lately been officially recognized by the Council for the Teaching Profession as a possible route to apply for a permanent teachers' warrant.

The Programme has a number of exit points as shown below:

- MQF / EQF Level 7 Postgraduate Award in Vocational Education Applied Research 4.0 (15 ECTS);
- MQF / EQF Level 7 Postgraduate Certificate in Vocational Education Applied Research 4.0 (45 ECTS);
- MQF / EQF Level 7 Postgraduate Diploma in Vocational Education Applied Research 4.0 (90 ECTS)
- MQF / EQF Level 7 Master in Vocational Education Applied Research 4.0. (120 ECTS).

This part-time course is popular both internally and externally, especially for those aspiring to specialize in vocational education and research.

Besides a critical friend component whereby a warranted individual mentors a participant in her/his teaching, there is also an industrial placement. It gives the opportunity to VET professionals to keep abreast with the latest developments in the industry sectors, which are linked to their area of expertise which they lecture. The industrial placement may be a catalyst in the building of a community of practice. Through this placement, the participant will go to the industry and experience for some hours the culture and identities within specific contexts. Participants will appreciate the importance of preparing students for such cultures to facilitate transitions and enhance preparedness for employment.

6.6 ERASMUS+ Opportunities

The International Office encourages CPD training through the Erasmus Programme, which offers the possibility of training and observation of delivery methods at a European College for a period of training in a company for a period of time.

Such initiatives are designed to offer academic and administrative staff a learning and/or professional experience in the areas of education and training in another country as well as providing opportunities for improving the level of personal and professional development.

The CPD of staff members results from their participation either in transnational mobilities (KA103, KA116 projects), exposing them to international experiences or through KA2 projects with partner organizations that offer specialized exposure and contribution to various subject areas (Refer to EQA Evidence Folder).

6.7 Ongoing CPD Opportunities

Various CPD opportunities are organised for members of the Academic Staff throughout the Academic year. The MCAST CPD Department manages the provision of CPD for both academic and non-academic staff. Whilst some are planned and delivered in specific periods throughout the Academic Year, others are done Ad Hoc in response to a given need, such as the focus on training for Online Learning in response to the need to shift to online learning due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

The MCAST R&I department also provides CPD opportunities for Lecturing staff. As part of its CPD support to lecturing staff, the R&I Department has set up a 'Grounded Theory Research Hub' to facilitate the research activity as well as to support its lecturing staff. The staff are also largely registered as internal research students in a complementary programme titled the Post-Graduate Certificate in Research Methods (EQF L7, 30 ECTS), which is free for all MCAST staff.

The 'Hub' delivers support in the form of training, hands-on application on the use of MaxQda2020 software and other initiatives intended to support its own lecturing staff whilst conducting their research endeavours.

6.8 Academic Vacancies – Yearly Capacity Building Exercise

The College ensures that the processes for recruitment, conditions of employment and professional development of staff are clear, fair and transparent as follows:

- Academic vacancies are determined following capacity-building exercises initiated every March. The HR Office undertakes this annual exercise of Capacity Building to assess the recruitment requirements for the next academic year. This exercise is requested by the College by MEDE and MFIN.
- The competence requirements of teaching staff are derived from the programme design and development process. The competences are translated into 'minimum requirements' in the call for applications. Minimum requirements include:
 - a) Professional qualification/s (a qualification which is relevant to the area in which prospective lecturers would be lecturing);
 - b) Teaching qualification/s;
 - c) Industrial experience (in the sector relevant to the area in which prospective lecturers would be lecturing); and
 - d) Teaching experience.
- Interviewing boards are appointed by the Principal & CEO and include 3 Management representatives and one from MEDE.
- Once the applications are received, the Interviewing Board determines applicants that are not eligible against the criteria set in the call for application. All eligible applicants are interviewed and scored against a pre-established matrix.
- Although results are not published in order to protect the confidentiality of the individuals, applicants are entitled to request information on their results.

6.9 Academic Vacancies - Academic Support and Management Vacancies for Lecturing Staff

Throughout the Academic year and depending on the needs of the college and the individual institutes, the HR Department issues internal calls. (Refer to evidence file for samples) for applications to its academic staff for various positions, including:

- a) unit developers,
- b) coordination duties (vocational and support),
- c) management positions etc.

The calls are disseminated via the College email and uploaded on the recruitment portal (<http://jobs.mcast.edu.mt/en/page/home>). The recruitment procedure is explained in MOP Administrative Procedures Chapter 1 (referred to below).

6.10 Teacher education courses: MCAST Bachelor of Vocational Education and Training 4.0 (Hons.)

The MCAST Bachelor of Vocational Education and Training 4.0 (Hons.) (BVET 4.0) is a Level 6 course of 180 ECTS which has been recognized by the Council for the Teaching Profession as a possible route to apply for a permanent teachers' warrant.

6.11 Work-based learning in MCAST teacher education courses

Industrial Placement is an integral and mandatory component of MVEAR 4.0. It aims to give the opportunity to professionals at MCAST to keep abreast with the latest developments in the industry sectors, which are linked to the area of expertise in which they lecture.

An industrial placement is also included in the MCAST Bachelor of Vocational Education and Training 4.0 (BVET). In the first year, BVET students observe learning in industry. In the third and final year, BVET students will lead learning in the industry.

6.12 Teaching Appraisal

As part of the MCAST ongoing Continuing Professional Development, the Quality Assurance Department is instrumental in creating a discursive space, via appraisal by a critical friend, for professional dialogue between educators with the overarching aim of improving MCAST's pedagogical/andragogical methodologies. The exercise generally targets traditional classroom learning, practical sessions carried out in scientific and computer laboratories, engineering workshops, as well as in gymnasiums, hair and beauty salons, childcare centres and those for the aged, and agricultural environments. The objective of the quality assurance exercise is also to appraise and provide constructive feedback of online learning.

6.12.1 Appraisal Rationale

The rationale behind the appraisal exercise is to:

- a) enhance the professional and personal growth of lecturers, through
- b) observation of their provision and delivery so as to
- c) recognize accomplishments and good practices by outlining strengths and improvement opportunities, leading to the
- d) Identification of professional development needs with the overarching aim being the constant enhancement of the level of learning and teaching.

6.12.2 Appraisal Objectives

MCAST appraisals shall be a two-way process, which both parties should benefit from, aimed at:

- a) offering the opportunity to express difficulties or uncertainties on either side, establishing and maintaining good communications.
- b) Giving and receiving feedback.
- c) Discussing and agreeing on the actions necessary to move forward.

Furthermore, it is hoped that MCAST lecturers shall benefit as a result of:

- e) Individual attention from senior management, denoting their contribution, is valued.
- f) A clear idea of where they are now and a sense of direction for the future.
- g) The meeting is a guarantee that the lecturers' efforts are not overlooked.

6.12.3 Observation leading to Appraisal

To be appraised effectively, staff members need to know what they are being measured against. The appraisal checklist outlines the standards against which appraisal takes place. The appraisal covers key performance indicators such as "lesson management", "student engagement/feedback", etc., and is intended to avoid difficulties which often ensue when there is only an assumption or informal knowledge of expectations.

6.12.4 Appraisal Meeting following Observation

Following the initial drafting of the preliminary report, to be read in conjunction with the compiled Appraisal Checklist, an appraisal meeting is scheduled. The appraisal meeting is an opportunity for the Critical Friend from the MCAST Quality Assurance Department and the Lecturer to sit down and discuss the range of issues affecting provision and delivery against the standards set.

6.13 Applied Research & Innovation Centre (ARIC)

The Applied Research and Innovation Centre (ARIC) aims to create a dynamic environment that encourages an active knowledge transfer between academics and students. Through this process, academics, students, and, very often, industrial stakeholders identify real shortcomings and conduct research with the aim of developing tangible solutions.

The remit of the ARIC covers:

- a. Applied Research,
- b. EdTech Innovation and
- c. Partnerships across MCAST.

These three main pillars of the Applied Research & Innovation Centre all serve one common purpose, to drive and pilot research, innovation and collaboration initiatives across MCAST.

The ARIC strategy (refer to the graphic below) is anchored on the premise of making existing structures more flexible and fostering their ability to innovate, react and respond.

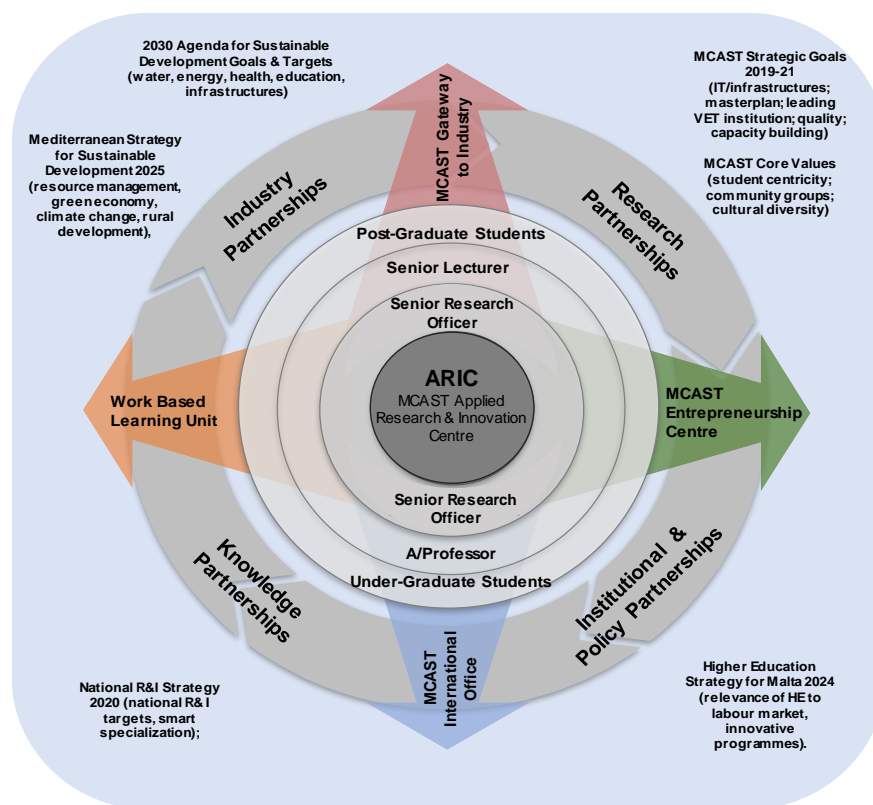


Figure: Visualization of the MCAST Research Structure

The three main underlying pillars:

- a. A focus on key, select research thrusts leading to smart specializations.
- b. Creating and working within one or more Knowledge Centre / R&I Ecosystem, Centres for Smart Specialization, and peer learning through international networks such as ASEF, Eurashe and UAS4Europe.
- c. Developing and propagating new research, innovation and pedagogical & andragogic methodologies and technologies.

The Applied Research and Innovation Centre (ARIC) research framework is available via https://www.mcast.edu.mt/wp-content/uploads/Regulatory-and-Operational-Framework-for-Applied-Research_Final-BOG-Approved-Document_V5.pdf whereas the range of ongoing research themes is available at <https://www.mcast.edu.mt/applied-research/>. The MCAST Research Framework is now in full implementation, providing vital research support and momentum

6.13.1 Applied Research

The Applied Research Department (under the remit of the Applied Research & Innovation Centre – ARIC) is governed by the MCAST Research Framework that is freely accessible to staff and students at https://www.mcast.edu.mt/wp-content/uploads/Reg_Oper_Frame_-A_R_Sanctioned_BoG_2021_V6.pdf. Page 5 of the Framework details the mechanisms and processes applied by MCAST to go about in the implementation of research. The Framework also provides all the necessary structural and processual direction for the implementation of research across MCAST.

6.13.2 EdTech Innovation:

The MCAST innovation framework is entirely governed by the EdTech Framework, that can be accessed at <https://www.mcast.edu.mt/wp-content/uploads/mcast-edtech-operational-framework.pdf>. This Framework gives all the strategy and implementation processes that allow MCAST to adopt its main innovation drives that include Blended Learning, Artificial Intelligence, Virtual and Augmented reality in vocational education. Best practice can be seen by way of the AI Strategy, that can be accessed at <https://www.mcast.edu.mt/wp-content/uploads/MCAST-AI-StrategyFinal.pdf>.

6.13.3 Partnerships

The new Partnership collaboration drive is encapsulated entirely in the new MCAST Globalization Strategy that was designed in 2020 and is being launched across MCAST in 2021. The Globalization Strategy is based on four dimensions that are as follows:

- a. Academic Endeavour and Opportunity
- b. Stakeholder Engagement
- c. Reputation Building and Embedding Internationalisation in the MCAST Community
- d. Becoming a Global VPET Teaching and Learning Hub

Reference Documents

ACADEMIC DOCUMENTS		
Doc #	TITLE	Doc Type
54	Lecturer Performance Appraisal Procedure	Policy/Procedure
74	Research Ethics Policy and Procedures	Policy/Procedure
327	Process Flowchart for the Bidding and Implementation of Externally Funded MCAST Research Projects	Policy/Procedure
328	Process Flowchart for Junior Researcher Endeavour MCAST Research Projects	Policy/Procedure
329	MRES Research Process Flowchart	Policy/Procedure
93	Lecturer Performance Appraisal Form	Form
251	Request for Research Contact Hours for Lecturing Staff	Form
270	Academic Staff Nominations for COI	Form
274	Academic Staff Nominations for Board of Studies	Form
293	Sabbatical Leave Agreement (Lecturers)	Form
343	SOP For Research Funding Request	Form
344	Request Form for Research Funding Support Form	Form
356	Project Responsibility Chart	Form
357	Budget Consumption Report	Form
ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS		
Doc #	TITLE	Doc Type
MOP_ADM_001_03	Support Services	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_15	Girevance Policy and Procedure (Staff and Students)	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_01_FORM_01	Formal Staff And Student Grievance Procedure Form	Form
MOP_ADM_001_01_FORM_03	Request For Approval Of Sabbatical Leave For Education Purposes (Applicable To Lecturer Grades)	Form
MOP_ADM_001_01_FORM_04	Letter Of Appointment To Disciplinary Board (Applicable To Lecturer Grades)	Form
MOP_ADM_001_01_FORM_05	Conflict Of Interest Declaration (Applicable To Lecturer Grades Disciplinary Boards)	Form
MOP_ADM_001_01_FORM_06	Application For Qualification Allowance	Form
MOP_ADM_001_01_FORM_07	Outpatient Sick Leave Adjustment Form	Form
MOP_ADM_001_01_FORM_08	Additional Hours Lecturers Attendance Sheet	Form
MOP_ADM_001_02_FORM_01	Lecturer Progression Form	Form
MOP_ADM_001_15_FORM_01	Grievances Form (Staff and Students)	Form

7. LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

7.1 The Library and Learning Resource Centre (LLRC)

The College has invested in the setup of modern library facilities on all its sites, both on the Main Campus and off-site Institutes, including the Gozo Centre. In addition to the traditional library facilities and services, MCAST has created a Learning Resource Centre as part of its strategy of ensuring that its graduates learn the skill of independent learning. It is these skills that guarantee that MCAST graduates, over the years, can continuously keep up-to-date with their chosen area of expertise and, as necessary, branch out into new areas of knowledge for their own and their employers' mutual benefit.

The LLRC provides the information material that supports taught course content. In addition, it also provides the information and facilities to explore other subject areas, even if for purely personal interest. Learning how to access and evaluate information on their own, library users are equipped with skills for becoming independent lifelong learners. For academic and non-academic staff, the LLRC is a source for continuing professional development, particularly in their area of expertise.

The LLRC hosts an extensive set of electronic journals, conference proceedings and eBook databases, namely:

- a. ProQuest
- b. EBSCO
- c. IEEE
- d. Emerald.

The College has conducted a stakeholder consultation exercise with all staff in order to collect feedback on the type and extent of the new learning resource centre

The College ensures that all resources are as much as possible, fit for purpose and accessible. The Library Learning Resource Centre (LLRC) provides for:

- a. clear library signage,
- b. a well-designed and presented library website and online catalogue,
- c. short library tours to longer courses of instructions on library use
- d. individual and group assistance, especially through the MCAST Learning Support Unit.
- e. Student meetings that focus on initiatives that promote reading and research, to propose improvements for library users, including regulations, introduce and spread e-books, and organize staggered activities which attract students to the library venue.

Students are informed about the services available to them. Induction sessions are organised for students and new members of staff. At the beginning of each year, an induction week is organised for students starting a new programme of studies at MCAST. The Student Handbook, which includes information regarding the services available to learners, is handed out and presented to learners during the induction week talks/meetings. During the various talks in each institute, members from different departments also give talks regarding the services offered to learners during their course of studies.

Similarly, during the staff induction sessions, the services available to members of staff are presented. Different members are invited to talk to the new members of staff, where they talk about what is done by their department and how they may help any staff member who needs support.

Services available at MCAST are also mentioned in the initial pages of the MCAST full-time prospectus.

7.2 IT Services

The College provides users (mainly its' staff and students following full-time studies at the College) with electronic access, consisting of an email system, a network connection, and Internet/Intranet access. Any User of MCAST IT resources consents to all provisions of the MCAST Information Technology (IT) Policy and agrees to comply with all of the terms and conditions set forth in this policy, all other applicable College policies, regulations, and procedures.

The College also manages a number of wireless hotspots in designated areas on campus. The service enables College staff, students and visitors to connect to the campus network using laptops, tablets, smartphones and other devices supporting wireless connections. All users employing wireless methods of accessing MCAST technology resources using MCAST-approved access points must adhere to the College's defined processes for doing so. Wireless networks are not a replacement for a wired network. The wireless network managed by MCAST is also designed to enhance seamless roaming between access points within and between many buildings and outdoor areas.

7.3 Student Support Services

The Student Support Services are in line with and support the MCAST Mission Statement. These services are available for all students and staff at the College and are free of charge with no exceptions. The Student Support Services: are client-focused and action-oriented; are growth-oriented and offer understanding in a therapeutic and non-judgemental environment; are delivered by appropriately fully-qualified counsellors in a safe environment, and assists clients through the counselling process.

The Student Support Services undertake a range of services and responsibilities which are listed in the Support Services Policy referenced below. Sessions are carried out in an appropriate, safe and confidential environment. Counsellors will develop and maintain an effective network of external referral agencies and refer students as appropriate.

Information, advice and guidance about qualification procedures and practices are also provided to candidates and potential candidates.

7.4 Learning Support Unit (LSU)

MCAST has always believed in supporting students with their academic, psychological and pastoral needs. The Learning Support Unit has for many years been a stepping stone in helping students in these needs through a number of services that are continuously being offered and revised as per requests received. Through different teaching and learning strategies, the LSU helps students acquire the basic skills (and not only) in line with the set Key Skills syllabi, from the foundation programmes to higher-level courses.

Ultimately the mission of LSU is to help students become autonomous, independent learners.

The unit is made up of a number of lecturers (approximately 45 in total) delivering key skills units which include: English, Maltese, Maltese as a Foreign Language, Mathematics, Science, Individual and Social Responsibility, Inter/Intra personal Skills, Entrepreneurship,

I.T. and Pastoral Care among others. Apart from delivering the units, a number of lecturers are involved in other services that are offered by the unit.

7.5 One-to-one or Small Group Support

Students are offered support at various levels and in various units, mainly key skills units in which they would be struggling. Students are grouped by level, unit and in order to maximise the resourcing. In order to apply, students are requested to send their application to the department administration together with a copy of their timetable. Following the application, a lecturer who is willing to provide such support is identified and assigned to the student. The attendance is closely monitored to ensure that the students are properly committed to receiving the service and not waste time which would be more appropriately provided to other students in need.

7.6 Assignment Support

Students struggling to start researching for their assignment or struggle to start writing the assignment refer to us for support. Lecturers help the students to structure their ideas and give them hints on how to do their research or how to structure their arguments without helping them in the actual assignment. Students requesting such support tend to be mature students who have not been in school for a while.

7.7 Academic writing, study skills, time-management skills and support in units

Academic Writing – Students ask for help in writing project reports, dissertations and other high-level writing tasks. A lecturer is assigned who helps the student structure their ideas and gives pointers on how to search for correct information, among other things.

Study skills – Students at any level (although mainly from levels 3 and 4) are assisted by a lecturer showing them how to write short notes, manage their time, find good examples to study upon and anything in which they would be struggling in their studies.

Time management – Similar to the above, one would focus on helping the student to formulate a timetable for their studies and monitoring their progress weekly.

Vocational Units Support – Students would be assisted with help on units which are vocational rather than key skills units. This is done only in cases where the unit has the internal capacity/expertise to offer the service.

It is important to note that the above-mentioned support is given upon request and on confirmation of the exact need between the student(s) and the department administration. Moreover, in the case of study skills, time management and academic writing, this is rarely done over a period of a whole year to maximise resources.

7.8 Pastoral Care

The Pastoral Care Programme is a non-academic unit that aims to support students in developing their self-awareness and self-esteem through the practice of self-empowerment.

These sessions aim to encourage and assist the students in differentiating between thinking and reflecting while improving their techniques to retrospect and plan.

This programme is non-academic and delivered to ALL foundation students at level 2, the sessions are intended to be carried out in a safe space where the students can explore and reflect in a fun yet peaceful environment. Consequently, throughout this journey, the students are supported to express their ideas, visions, and thoughts in different modes, including writing, drawing and orally etc.

7.9 Provision of Foreign Languages

Courses in foreign languages are offered to MCAST students, staff and also people from the general public. This service is offered by part-time lecturers during the evenings, and this year so far we have the following number of applicants.

7.10 Student Handbook

The College publishes a Student Handbook. Handbooks are updated and issued each year to all MCAST students. Handbooks are also made available online on the College Website.

7.11 College Resources via ESF and ERDF Funds

The College regularly applies for and is awarded funds via the ESF and ERDF budgets. The EU Projects Office is responsible for submitting the application for the funds, the evaluating of the submissions by contractors, issuing of the tender and eventually ensuring the timely and correct disbursement. The Capital Projects Office is responsible for the design of capital projects through its team of architects and engineers, the management of on-site contracts and the hand-over of the finished projects.

The projects funded via these budgets are dedicated to the upgrading of the physical infrastructure of the College and also for the design, development and delivery of new accredited programmes.

7.12 Student Liaison Manager

The Student Liaison Manager is responsible for maintaining student relations. Students can also be referred to this office for any complaints that they may have. The Student Liaison Manager handles these complaints in order to find a suitable solution within the parameters provided by College procedures, rules and regulations.

All academic and administrative staff, Institute Student Support Coordinators (ISSCs) and mentors are available for students to discuss any particular issues that may be hindering their satisfaction within the programme or other support services.

7.13 Needs of Diverse Student Population

The needs of the diverse student population at the College and the shift towards student-centred learning are provided for by a number of Student Support Services. The Department embraces the following Units:

- a. Wellbeing Hub
- b. Educational Psychology Services
- c. Career Guidance Services
- d. Student Support Services Coordinators
- e. Student Liaison Office
- f. Integration Unit

These units work together in close collaboration to provide a comprehensive service related to the needs of students whilst providing them with a holistic education.

7.13.1 Wellbeing Hub - Overview

The Wellbeing Hub forms part of the Outreach Services and Student Affairs Department. The aim of the Hub is to provide a holistic service both to students and staff. All support is provided by specialized professionals within each area where confidentiality is safeguarded. The six different services provided by the Wellbeing Hub include:

7.13.2 Therapy Services:

Counselling or therapy provides clients with a space to explore options for problems that are causing distress or preventing positive life experiences. Having someone who is trained to listen and is non-judgemental can support clients further in dealing with their difficulties in a safe and confidential space. Therapy services are offered by this department to students as well as staff at the main campus and all satellite institutes.

7.13.3 Addictions

Addictions such as those regarding drugs, alcohol, gambling and gaming often have serious consequences in a person's life. Sedqa and MCAST are collaborating to offer individual and group prevention sessions to support students and staff who are facing such issues.

7.13.4 Mental Health Services

The Mental Health Department personnel offer their services to both students and staff through their psychiatrists. When a referral is made to this service, there will be an initial review by a counsellor or a psychotherapist, followed by a psychiatric assessment and follow-ups. The mental health services extend their services to the team of practitioners by holding monthly group psychiatric supervision sessions that enhance the team's knowledge and experience in dealing with a variety of mental health issues. This service also provides consultations, group case support and liaising with mental health services outside of MCAST.

7.13.5 Nutritional Advice

The Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate is providing the services of a Nutritionist offering individual sessions to both students and staff during which one will be able to acquire information about improved food choices, nutritional facts about food, one's BMI and advice about losing weight in a healthy manner.

7.13.6 Sexual Health Services

The Sexual Health Clinic provides discreet and confidential advice to students and staff about sexual health, treatment available, prevention of sexually transmitted infections, vaccines and referral to the Genitourinary Clinic for testing. Group prevention sessions are also provided for students and staff with the aim of increasing awareness about such issues.

7.13.7 Tobacco Cessation Support

The Health Promotion and Disease Directorate is giving students and staff the opportunity to benefit from free, confidential individual smoking cessation services at the MCAST Main Campus. The tobacco cessation advisor will address the individual's smoking trends and help them stop smoking in a planned manner for a better and healthier lifestyle.

7.14 Educational Psychology Services

The service of an Educational Psychologist at MCAST was established in November 2019. The service is provided as part of the Wellbeing Hub. The role of the Educational Psychologist is to support students, lecturers and other staff working in the field of student support. Staff can liaise with the Educational Psychologist to discuss concerns that they have on any of their students and identify how they can be supported. The Educational Psychologist also supports students who are experiencing difficulties in their academic learning, social and emotional difficulties and mental health. This support is provided to students across all levels. Identification of the students' needs is carried out and the appropriate support is provided either at an individual or group level. Assessments can be carried out to identify any underlying conditions that are impacting the student's developmental progress. These conditions include Autism, ADHD and Dyslexia, amongst others. In collaboration with the Inclusive Education Unit (IEU) and Learning Support Unit (LSU), interventions can be provided to help students develop skills such as: social skills, study skills and organisational skills. Literacy and attention interventions can also be provided.

7.15 Career Guidance Services

Career guidance at MCAST is defined as a service provided to prospective students and the general public so that they are better prepared to make decisions regarding their education, vocational learning or career, based on understanding their own interests, aptitudes and abilities, as well as the resources and opportunities around them.

- a. It is the first step to establishing a more secure foothold in an unstable labour market.
- b. It is a key decision factor in choosing the right vocational education option.
- c. It can provide a periscope look at the many adult education or further learning opportunities.
- d. It gives access to labour market information or experiences not available at home or in the immediate environment of the client.

7.16 Institute Student Support Services Coordinator (SSSC)

SSSCs are the extended arm of the Outreach and Student Affairs Department in their respective institutes by providing students with options of support. SSSCs actively contribute in strengthening cooperation between the students, this department, their institute, the management and staff.

The SSSCs seek to make the services provided by the department more accessible by promoting these services and by assisting both the institute administration and staff, in offering referral guidance to students who would need such support. The SSSCs are also involved in dealing with pastoral care issues, and relational issues and support students who are finding difficulty in keeping up with their course requirements.

They also meet students to help them identify their specific needs in order to assist them to the various relevant services offered by MCAST. Over the years, stronger collaboration was developed between the SSSCs, Students' Mentors and the Outreach and Student Affairs Department.

SSSC's are appointed via an internal call for application to MCAST full-time academic staff for a 2-year period. The applicants are paid an annual retainer and are allowed an extra five additional hours (paid). There are typically one ISSSC per Institute.

7.17 Student Liaison Office

The objective of the Student Liaison Office is to create a College ambience that offers students a holistic experience towards educational and personal growth. Throughout the year, a number of students call at the office with various difficulties. These generally deal with assignment issues such as deadlines, plagiarism and very often, the students challenge assignment results.

The role of the Student Liaison Manager is thus to counsel students on the assistance and guidance to all services provided by the College.

7.18 Student Organisations and Future Collaboration

A number of student organisations emerged over the years to strengthen the students' voice not only as individual organisations but also through their representation on the MCAST Student Council.

The aim of these organisations is to stimulate more College activities that are student-focused, and that will bring about further student involvement. It is, however, very difficult for them to stimulate interest in students.

The College academic system may not help, whilst it may also be noted that students need to receive more encouragement for participation through their respective institutes. Students should be cognizant of the importance of being active members in society and in contributing to decisions that may affect their future.

The years spent in post-secondary education should be memorable ones to a student because these form part of the individual's development.

7.19 Help Me Succeed Fund

This fund was set up with the aim to assist students who, through difficult personal and social situations, are facing tough moments in their lives. These difficult situations may determine the students' future such that pursuing their studies may no longer be tenable.

Student Support Coordinators within the institutes work directly with the students to promote the 'Help Me Succeed Fund'. Funds are generated through the voluntary participation of both students and staff. This is not enough to meet the financial assistance that arises from different student cases, thus necessitating further drive to overcome the difficulties. Reach out has been made with Industry partners welcoming any form of support they may be able to offer.

We are therefore committed to do our best to assist these students in the best way possible to ensure that they may achieve their potential through their studies, thus securing a brighter future for themselves.

7.20 Community Outreach

As part of its commitment to offering Educational Outreach Services to the community, MCAST information sessions within various groups of Local Councils were planned. The aim of these sessions was not only to explain what the College offers but also to promote the benefits of lifelong learning towards making oneself employable.

7.21 Integration Unit

The Aims of the Integration Unit are to (a) provide an environment in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported and valued to fully participate in the life of the College. (Inclusion), (b) create an educational institution where personal and social circumstances do not create an obstacle to achieving educational potential. (Equity)

These aims focus on providing an outstanding educational experience for every student.

7.22 Inclusive Education Unit

The Inclusive Education Unit aims to support mainstream students and provide assistance to the students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities attending any mainstream course within MCAST. This support aims to provide the necessary environment and give the right help to the students to be able to reach their full potential and complete their course of choice successfully.

The Inclusive Education Unit has the remit to evaluate examination and assessment requirements according to established procedures. Assessment requirements of candidates are identified and met where possible

7.23 Personal Development

Delivered as one of the Key Skills in Levels 1 and 2, Personal Development is meant to enhance the students' personal and social development, thus empowering them by acquiring self-esteem and basic skills to be responsible and reliable citizens.

7.24 Sports Department

The Sports Department aims to provide access to MCAST students to participate in sport and exercise on campus during their breaks and free lessons as well as in other sports activities organised during the College year.

7.25 Chaplaincy

The aim of Chaplaincy is to provide spiritual assistance and guidance to all students, irrespective of their creed, giving them opportunities to share their spiritual experiences and concerns with the Chaplaincy Team.

7.26 MCAST Youth Hub

The aim of the Youth Hub is to strengthen the concept of the MCAST Youth Hub for students through collaboration with Agenzija Zghazagh.

7.27 Committees and Boards that are student-centred

7.27.1 Library Committee

The Deputy Principal R&I chairs this committee, with the participation of the Librarian (Vice-Chair), and other chosen to represent both academic and support staff as well as students. Meetings focus on initiatives that promote reading and research, propose improvements for library users, including regulations, introduce and spread e-books, and to organize staggered activities which attract students to the library venue.

7.27.2 Inclusion Committee

The overarching mission statement of the Inclusion Committee is “to develop a policy/strategy/action plan for inclusion within MCAST as an institution and at the various Institutes to promote quality inclusion within the vocational sector.” Meetings are held approximately once every six weeks, and the main agenda items revolve around issues arising from the Award in Vocational Skills Programme and from different Institutes on inclusion-related problems.

7.27.3 MCAST Student Financial Support Fund

This committee meets regularly, especially at the start of the academic year, to consider student applications for financial assistance to cover examination fees due to foreign awarding bodies.

7.28 Child Care Services for staff

The College offers childcare services at the Magic Wonders Child Care Centre. College students who currently have children from new-born to up to three years of age can make use of this centre which is located at the MCAST Main Campus.

Reference Documents

ACADEMIC DOCUMENTS		
Doc #	TITLE	Doc Type
25	Accepting Students' Societies Procedure	Policy/Procedure
31	Counselling Support Services Policy	Policy/Procedure
32	Academic Misconduct (Plagiarism) Policy - MQF Levels 1 to 4	Policy/Procedure
38	Student Conduct Regulations	Policy/Procedure
41	Library & Learning Resources Centres (LLRCs) Policy	Policy/Procedure
55	Careers Guidance Policy	Policy/Procedure
203	Practitioner Supervision	Policy/Procedure
246	LSU Provision of Additional Support Process	Policy/Procedure
248	IEU Procedure for the Requesting of Access Arrangements for TCA	Policy/Procedure
250	Provision of IEU Support Sessions	Policy/Procedure
253	IEU Registration Process	Policy/Procedure
275	MCAST Election Procedures	Policy/Procedure
44	Support Services Guidelines	Guidelines
104	Request for Consideration of Extenuating Circumstances for extension of submission deadline of home based assignment.	Form
106	Request for consideration of extenuating circumstances for TCA (Examination) Form	Form
110	Request for Consideration of Compensatory Pass	Form
195	Monthly Log Sheet – Institute Student Support Services Coordinator	Form
196	MCAST Student Support Services Referral Form – Mental Health Services	Form
200	Student Support Services Coordinator Logging Form	Form
201	Consent Form (Adults)	Form
202	Crisis Report Logging Sheet	Form
204	Illegal Substance - Receipt and Handing Over of Suspicious Find	Form
206	MCAST Student Support Services Student Feedback Form	Form
207	MCAST Student Support Services Referral Form	Form
208	MCAST Student Support Services Client Registration Form	Form
209	Monthly Statistics - Student Support Services	Form
211	MCAST Student Support Services External Supervision Attestation of Attendance Record	Form
213	Monthly Statistics for Sessions Observed - Student Support Services	Form
214	Monthly Statistics - SSSA	Form
215	MCAST Counselling/Therapy Agreement	Form
216	MCAST Student Support Services Intake Session Non-Attendance Form	Form
217	MCAST Student Support Services Trainee Practitioners on Observation Placement	Form
220	MCAST Student Support Services Trainee Practitioners on Placement	Form
221	MCAST Counselling / Therapy Agreement Form (Maltese Version)	Form
222	Monthly Log Sheet - Student Support Services	Form
239	MCAST Student Support Services Staff Feedback Form	Form
245	LSU Additional Support Application Form	Form
247	IEU Support Sessions Application Forms	Form
249	Consent Form in view of Trusted Representation	Form
260	Declaration to Drop Access Arrangements – Specific TCA's	Form
261	Declaration to Drop Access Arrangements – Subject TCA's	Form
263	Request to Drop IEU Support Sessions	Form
264	IEU TCA Support Request Form	Form
265	Application fro IEU Registration	Form
268	IEU Registration Form	Form
271	Student Nominations for the Student Council	Form
272	Student Nominations for Board of Studies	Form
273	Student Nominations for COI	Form
ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS		
Doc #	TITLE	Doc Type
MOP_ADM_001_03	Support Services	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_09	Precincts, Facilities And Equipment Procedure	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_10	Health And Safety Policy And Procedure	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_15	Girevance Policy and Procedure (Staff and Students)	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_15_FORM_01	Grievances Form (Staff and Students)	Form

8. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

8.1 Student Data

The main data is held at the Registrar's office via the MIS (Classter). The system can generate various of reports as follows:

Institute, level, course, title and student type

- a. Student Type (New, Progressing, Continuing, Repeat, Mature)
- b. Gender
- c. Locality
- d. Nationality
- e. Age
- f. Last School Attended (New Students)
- g. List of Terminated Students (by month)
- h. Reasons for Resigning
- i. Reason for Resigning classified by course
- j. Results by student
- k. Attendance records
- l. Progression records
- m. Units undertaken

The College also has data available on vulnerable groups. However, this covers students with some form of physical and/or intellectual disability and financial status (due to supplementary maintenance grants).

8.2 Stipends Office

The stipends office maintains data on the number of students that are currently receiving a supplementary maintenance grant. This applies to students that come from a family that experiences financial difficulties. The Stipends office administers the maintenance grant scheme; however, decisions are taken by the Students Maintenance Grant Board. The Registrar's office also collects information about foreign students, particularly migrants /refugees etc.

8.3 Course Participation Rates and Success Rates

Course attendance is one of the elements which students need in order to progress successfully at MCAST. Attendance is recorded for each lecture and other compulsory college activities by the lecturer in charge of a specific class. This is input and recorded via Classter (the college MIS) and it is monitored by the individual Institute/Centre's administrative staff. Attendance Status reports can be generated via Classter and warning letters are issued at specific thresholds in an attempt to improve student retention.

Classter is also the main source for individual student information. Several reports can be generated through it, including information on commencement, completion and success rates.

8.4 Student Satisfaction Surveys

The College issues regular student surveys. The questions asked are intended to address various aspects of teaching, learning, assessment and support services. The survey is

disseminated by the QA Department and Strategy Office, whereas the data analysis and reporting is outsourced to an external, independent 3rd party.

8.5 Student Alumni Association

The college also reaches out to its alumni, asking them to share their experiences as motivation to current and prospective students. These experiences are published in the form of Magazines forming part of MCAST LINK, which are distributed for free both physically and online via the MCAST website. The links to the 2019 and 2020 issues of Success Stories are available below.

The College is in the process of setting up a Student Alumni Association charter.

8.6 Source of Information accessed by the College

The College has access to and utilises various internal and external sources of data and information, namely:

- a. NSO Statistics
- b. Information provided by the Ministry of Education and Employment
- c. NCFHE yearly statistics
- d. Feedback from students- MCAST Students Council, Other student organisations within MCAST
- e. Surveys to Staff and Students
- f. Alumni Tracer Studies

<http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/uploads/filebrowser/statistics%20report%20oct%202013.pdf>

8.7 Tracer Study - Destinations of Graduates

The Student Support Services Department conducts regular basis tracer studies with the aim of identifying the paths taken by graduates following their graduation. The aim of the tracer study is to identify whether students following MCAST qualifications were finding employment if the employment was related to their course, whether the qualification obtained was a requirement for employment and whether the skills obtained were being applied on the job.

8.8 Employment Rates and Career Paths

The College MCAST offers courses in different industry sectors. Apart from providing a holistic type of education, a key objective is always the issue of employability of graduates.

Reference Documents

ACADEMIC DOCUMENTS		
Doc #	TITLE	Doc Type
14	Document Control Procedure	Policy/Procedure
ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS		
Doc #	TITLE	Doc Type
MOP_ADM_001_12	Information Management Procedure	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_13	Security Procedure	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_14	Data Protection	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_13_FORM_01	CT Review Request Form	Form
MOP_ADM_001_13_FORM_02	Inventory Of Personal Data Capture Record Sheet	Form

9. PUBLIC INFORMATION

9.1 Communication with the press or media

Requests for information by the press or media are handled by the Communications Office. The Public Relations and Communications Procedure refers.

9.2 College Information

Information to the public pertaining to the College is available and updated by the Communication Office on a regular basis.

The College website includes, as a minimum, the following information:

- a. Mission Statement
- b. Quality Policy
- c. College Policies, Regulations, Procedures related to the planning and realisation of VET Programmes/Course and Learner Support Services;
- d. The Full-Time programme/courses prospectus
- e. The Part-Time courses prospectus;
- f. Academic calendar;
- g. Contact Information

9.3 Course Enquiries

Course enquiries are handled by the Admissions Section within the Registrar's office. The Admissions staff may redirect enquiries as appropriate in order to provide individuals with the best response to their enquiry.

9.4 Course Prospectus

The College publishes a prospectus including all full-time courses every year around May, in time for learners to apply following the end of their compulsory education studies and ordinary level examinations. The prospectus is launched during a public event. The prospectus is available both as a hardcopy publication and made available online. The Prospectus is also made available at all local council offices in Malta and Gozo.

The prospectus includes programmes offered by all institutes and Centres forming part of the College. For each institute, the prospectus illustrates the different programmes and their levels. A detailed description of each programme follows the aforementioned diagram in both Maltese and English languages.

The Prospectus includes, as a minimum, the following information:

- a. Name and location of hosting Institute
- b. Course Code
- c. Course Title
- d. Course Duration
- e. EQF / MQF Course Level
- f. Course Description
- g. Availability of apprenticeship

- h. Typical career opportunities
- i. Prerequisites and Entry requirements
- j. Progression chart

9.5 Prospectus – Part-Time Courses

MCAST publishes a prospectus including all part-time courses twice every year around February and September (one for each semester). The prospectus is available both as a hardcopy publication and online. The prospectus includes all part-time programmes offered by all institutes, including those courses offered at the Gozo Centre and MG2I.

Similarly, the Prospectus for part-time courses offers opportunities not just to full-time MCAST learners but also to anyone who wishes to pursue studies in any of the MCAST institutes. These courses are launched as part MCAST's ongoing undertaking to offer vocational and professional education and training in response to the needs of individuals at large and the economy. These courses include hobby courses as well as Upskilling courses.

For each institute, the prospectus illustrates the different programmes and their levels and distinguishes between courses which are awarded ECTS, and those awarded only a certificate of attendance.

9.6 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Procedures

The procedures for teaching, learning and assessment are documented in the programme regulations (Doc 003,004,005, 006) that are made available on the MCAST website and Intranet.

The QA Department is responsible for annually coordinating the publication of the Student Handbook for all new learners and progressing learners. The Handbook provides important information to students in terms of academic, administrative, health and safety, conduct and support services. The information found in the handbook is intended as a general summary of the approved MCAST policies, procedures and regulations, and other College practices. The Student Handbook is also uploaded on the MCAST website and intranet. Sample of e-mail notifications (Letter, email re change in regulations)

The pass rate is explained in the programme regulations and also on the individual assignment front sheets.

Reference Documents

ACADEMIC DOCUMENTS		
Doc #	TITLE	Doc Type
MOP_ADM_001_04	Public Relations And Communications Procedure	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_05	Conflict Of Interest And Ethics Procedure	Policy/Procedure
MOP_ADM_001_04_FORM_01	Consent Form For Photographic And Video Images - Staff	Form
MOP_ADM_001_04_FORM_02	Consent Form For Photographic And Video Images - Students	Form

10. ON-GOING MONITORING AND PERIODIC REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES

10.1 Cyclical Review of Programmes

It is the College policy that:

- a. Accredited programmes are to be reviewed regularly to ensure that the programme objectives are relevant and responsive to the needs of the various internal and external stakeholders;
- b. Review of programmes takes cognisance of the feedback from internal and external stakeholders;
- c. The calendar for cyclical programme reviews is followed;
- d. The cyclical reviews are conducted in compliance with the requirements of the NCFHE QA Framework and Internal Quality Assurance Standards.

A cyclical review of the programme is to be conducted:

- a. at the end of the first programme cycle,
- b. at a frequency of at least once every three years, or
- c. as the need arises (unscheduled).

Institute Directors are responsible for the cyclical review of programmes hosted by their respective Institutes and Centres. The cyclical review process needs to take cognisance of feedback from internal and external stakeholders that are received during the previous three years of programme delivery. The stakeholders include:

- a. Individual students and student bodies;
- b. Industry / Business / NGO stakeholders (when major changes are proposed);
- c. College staff, Institute Directors, Coordinators and Lecturers, QA,
- d. Internal and external academic reports/reviews, student results, drop-outs, complaints, appeals etc.

At the end of each calendar year (November), the Curriculum Office shall forward to the Institute Directors the list of programmes that are due for the 3-year cyclical review.

Based on the feedback from internal and external stakeholders), the Institute (Programme) Management shall determine which programmes are eligible for (refer to Table 1):

- a. cyclical review (structural, minor, major, re-write),
- b. withdrawal, or
- c. no changes

The Institute Management shall compile a 'Cyclical Review Proposal Report' for each of the programme (due for cyclical review).

The report shall typically cover the following areas;

- a. Summary of feedback from internal and external stakeholders (could include emails, reports from student focus groups etc.);
- b. Rational of changes being proposed;
- c. List of units that require cyclical review;
- d. The extent of review required (minor, major, re-write, withdrawal, no changes) – Refer to Table 1 below.

The report is to be approved by the respective DP VPET or the Masters Degree Committee (in the case of Masters programme hosted by the R&I Department).

The Table below provides the four possible scenarios that describe the extent and nature of cyclical review options.

Scenario	Type of change	Nature of change	Procedure to be followed
1	Structural changes	Changes to the overall structure, level of qualification, workload, change in the list of units, changes in the mode of delivery	Doc 013 'Design, Development and Approval of programme Qualifications. Proposed changes to be submitted to EMT for approval via Doc 341.
2	Minor changes	Changes that are related to the content (updates to keep the relevance in view of new developments in the area of study) or some assessment criteria. Minor changes exclude (changes) to the overall title, course rationale, learning outcomes, level of study or workload (ECTS/ECVETs).	A 'Cyclical Review Proposal Report' is compiled and submitted for approval to the DP VPET / Masters Degree Committee (MDC). Refer to information on the typical content of the report. Once the report is approved, a copy is forwarded to the Curriculum Office. Note: The Curriculum Office is to issue and circulate the 'Curriculum Progress Status Report' to monitor and report the progress of the cyclical review process.
	Major changes	Substantial changes to the extent that it would not be possible to ensure parity for any student retaking the programme in a subsequent year. This includes changes to LO's hence also requiring changes to KSC's, content, and a major change to assessment criteria to accommodate the changes to the Los.	
	Re-write of unit	Major changes to LO's, title and assessment criteria, and assessment strategy.	
3	No changes recommended		A 'Cyclical Review Proposal Report' is compiled and submitted for approval to the DP VPET / Masters Degree Committee (MDC). Refer to typical content of the report. The approved report is to be forwarded to the Curriculum Office and Registrar's Office.

4	<p>Programme recommended for withdrawal</p>	<p>A 'Cyclical Review Proposal Report' is compiled and submitted for approval to: EMT – in the case of programmes at MQF Levels 1 – 6 MDC followed by final approval by EMT – in the case of MQF Level 7 programmes. Refer to the typical content of the report. The approved report is to be forwarded to the Curriculum Office and Registrar's Office</p>
<p>Table : Four possible scenarios of cyclical review.</p>		

Document 013, Appendix 1 : Cyclical Review of Accredited Qualifications

Task : Issue list of approved accredited qualifications that are due for 3-year cyclical review and forward list to respective Institutes.
Process Owner : Curriculum Director

Task : Consult with internal and external stakeholders re 'fitness for purpose' of qualification.
Process Owner: Vocational Units : Institute Director / Deputy Director; Key Skills Unit : LSU & Key Skills Unit Deputy Director; CPD Programmes : CPD Deputy Director; Masters Programme : Masters Degree Committee / Institute Directors

Task : Based on outcome of stakeholder feedback, determine extent and nature of review that is required (if any) as per (four) classification categories identified below.
Process Owner: Vocational Units : Institute Director / Deputy Director; Key Skills Unit : LSU & Key Skills Unit Deputy Director; CPD Programmes : CPD Deputy Director; Masters Programme : Masters Degree Committee / Institute Director

Structural Change to Programme
 Eg : Changes to overall structure, level of qualification, workload, change in list of units, changes in mode of delivery.

Task : Follow Doc 013 : Design, Development and Approval of Programme Qualifications
Process Owner : Director

Task : Compile and Submit proposal for EMT approval (Refer to Doc 341 Proposal Form for Approval by EMT of a New Accredited Qualification or Major Change of an Existing Qualification)
Process Owner : Director

Minor/Major/Re-write of Unit(s)
 Eg : Changes in unit learning outcomes, major changes in assessment criteria, assessment methods

Task : Compile and submit 'Cyclical Review Proposal Report' (Note 1) to DP VPET / Masters Degree Committee.
Process Owner: Vocational Units : Institute Director / Deputy Director; Key Skills Unit : LSU & Key Skills Unit Deputy Director; CPD Programmes : CPD Deputy Director; Masters Programme : Director R&I

No Changes required

Programme Withdrawal

Task : Compile and submit 'Cyclical Review Proposal Report' (Note 1) to DP VPET / Masters Degree Committee.
Process Owner: Vocational Units : Institute Director / Deputy Director; Key Skills Unit : LSU & Key Skills Unit Deputy Director; CPD Programmes : CPD Deputy Director; Masters Programme : Director R&I

Proposal approved by DPVPET / Masters Degree Committee

YES

Task : Forward copy of approved 'Cyclical Review Proposal Report' to Curriculum Director (Note 2).
Process Owner: Vocational Units : Institute Director / Deputy Director; Key Skills Unit : LSU & Key Skills Unit Deputy Director; CPD Programmes : CPD Deputy Director; Masters Programme : DP R&I

Task : Forward copy of the 'Cyclical Review Proposal Report' to Curriculum Director and Registrar's Office (in the case of programme withdrawal).
Process Owner: Vocational Units : Institute Director / Deputy Director; Key Skills Unit : LSU & Key Skills Unit Deputy Director; CPD Programmes : CPD Deputy Director; Masters Programme : Masters Degree Committee

Note 1 : 'Cyclical Review Proposal Report' (CRPR) is to include:
 a) Summary of feedback from internal and external stakeholders (could include emails, reports etc);
 b) Rational of changes being proposed;
 c) List of units that require cyclical review;
 S) Extent of review required (minor, major, rewrite, withdrawal, no changes)

Note 2: The cyclical review process is monitored and reported by the Curriculum Department via the 'Curriculum Progress Status Report'.

Task : Assign tasks to subject expert via 'Tasking Programme' under cost centre 'Curriculum'. Subject expert forwards 1st draft of new/updated unit to Curriculum Office.
Process Owner: Vocational Units : Institute Director / Dep Director; Key Skills Unit : LSU & Key Skills Unit Deputy Director; CPD Programmes : CPD Dep Director; Masters Programme : Masters Degree Committee

Task : Update Curriculum records accordingly.
Process Owner: Curriculum Manager

Changes to Units(s) approved by Curriculum office?

Task : Request new course code from Registrar's office. Assign and notify unit codes to Registrar / hosting Institute. Upload updated unit in repository
Process Owner: Curriculum Manager

Task : Update 'Course Outline' (for accredited programmes only) for uploading on MCAST / MG2I website. Update 'Course Structure' for uploading on Curriculum Repository.
Owner: Curriculum Manager/Registrar

Task : Upload unit code on Classter.
Owner: Registrar's Office

10.2 Feedback from External Peer Reviewers

The College invites a number of External (foreign) Peer Reviewers to visit the College during the last week of June and the first week of July each year in order to perform a number of checks related to the delivery and assessment of MCAST degrees focusing mainly on the dissertations submitted by students. External Reviewers are afforded access to all student material and results.

The External Peer Reviewers are also invited to meet Institute management, students and academic staff as part of their visits. During their visits, External Peer Reviewers are also expected to participate in Degree Ratification Boards, where they report their findings from their visit; provide recommendations on the standards set for MCAST Degrees.

The feedback received by the College from the various external peer reviewers during the annual peer-review visits is consolidated by the QA Office into a single report that is shared with all academics and students on EQF / MQF 6 and 7 programmes.

10.3 Feedback from Students

MCAST has different means of obtaining student feedback, namely:

a) Student Representative on the Council of Institutes and Board of Studies

Students elect a number of Student Representatives to form part of the MCAST Students' Council as well as a number of students to represent them on a number of administrative boards, namely the Council of Institutes and the Board of Studies. In doing so, the students have the opportunity to voice their opinions and have their say in the administration of the College and to share their thoughts in some of the most important MCAST administrative fora.

b) Student Surveys

As explained in section 8.3, the College has issued a student survey for the year 2020/21 to all students registered at MCAST. Two surveys were conducted, one for EQF/MQF Levels 1 to 3 and one for EQF / MQF Levels 4-7 registered students. The questions asked to address various aspects of teaching, learning, assessment and support services. The survey was disseminated by the QA Dept and Strategy office, whereas the raw data was analysed and interpreted by an external, independent 3rd party.

At the time of the issue of this SAR, the analysis reports of both surveys were being compiled. The reports will be forwarded to the MFHEA as soon as they become available (around July 2021).

Reference Documents

ACADEMIC DOCUMENTS		
Doc #	TITLE	Doc Type
28	Programme Cyclical Review Procedure	Policy/Procedure
83	External Reviewer Procedure	Policy/Procedure
339	MCAST Manual of Standards for Writing of Accredited Unit Specifications	Manual
137	Masters Degree Examiner's Report Form	Form
338	Accredited Unit Specification Template	Form
341	Proposal for Approval by EMT for Full Development of a New/Major Change of Accredited Qualification	Form
346	Proposal for Approval by EMT for Full Development of a New/Major Change of Non-Accredited Qualification	Form