



Document Title	LECTURER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCEDURE				Page 1 of 7
Document Number	054	Document Revision	H	Date Issued	05.10.2026

GENERAL INFORMATION

1	Document category		Procedure	
2	Document approver		Vocational and Professional Council	
3	Minimum list of document users to be notified upon release of document update		Principal & CEO; Deputy Principals VPET; Institute Directors; QA Director; Institute Deputy Directors; Critical Friends Appraisal (QA); Lecturing Staff; QA Staff	
4	Document change history			
	H	Document Change Tracking Number	Date released	Change originator
		123/2026	05.10.2026	MCAST QA in line with MFHEA standards and discussions with MUT
	Change history (Section/change details)			
	Whole document revamp to reflect the latest MFHEA requirements			
	Included a distinction between the appraisal process for New, Part time, and Progressing lecturers (who will be subject to a performance appraisal) and other MCAST seasoned academics (who will be subject to Pedagogical/Andragogical Dialogue)			
	Aligned the process to standards 4, 6 and 7 of the MFHEA EQA standards			
	Expanded the classification of the process outcome providing a definition for each possible option. The outcomes now include a score of Outstanding (O), Very Satisfactory (VS), Satisfactory (S), and Needs Improvement (NI).			
	Added 6.3 Pedagogical/ Andragogical dialogue description.			
	Updated 8.1 Frequency			
Document change history				
G	Document Change Tracking Number	Date released	Change originator	
	02/2025	14.03.2025	Albert Agius	
	Change history (Section/change details)			
Document Approver and Minimum List of users to be notified upon release				
Updated 2.1 B to refer to full and part time staff teaching STCW and EASA courses.				
Removed the following text from 6.2, to ensure it does not conflict with or duplicate the text of Section 8: <i>The possibility and opportunity of a second appraisal visit by the critical friend could be considered</i>				

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Document Title	LECTURER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCEDURE			Page 2 of 7
Document Number	054	Document Revision	H	Date Issued 05.10.2026

1. PURPOSE

1.1. As part of the MCAST ongoing Continuing Professional Development, the Quality Assurance (QA) Department is instrumental in creating a discursive space, through either a Formal Lecturer Performance Appraisal or a Pedagogical/Andragogical Dialogue by a Critical Friend, for professional dialogue between educators with the overarching aim of improving MCAST's Pedagogical/Andragogical methodologies.

The rationale behind the QA process 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 all-encompassing objective being the constant enhancement of the level of learning and teaching.
- e) and so, satisfy the relevant MFHEA Internal QA requirements

2. SCOPE

2.1. This procedure covers:

- a) Part-time and Full-time Lecturers delivering accredited courses and,
- b) Part-time and Full-time Lecturers delivering STCW courses (Centre for Maritime Studies only) and EASA courses (Aviation, Transportation and Logistics Dept).

Academic staff shall participate in one of the following QA processes according to the annual schedule prepared by the QA department:

- a) Formal Lecturer Performance Appraisal, applicable to progressing lecturers, newly recruited lecturers, part-time lecturers and Internal Critical Friends; or
- b) Pedagogical/Andragogical Dialogue, applicable to all remaining academic staff.

Lecturers are, generally, observed across a wide range of learning environments, including traditional classrooms, 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/aquatic environments.

As from academic year 2020-2021, the scope of this QA exercise was extended to include online and blended modes of delivery, ensuring that observation and appraisal practices remain responsive to evolving Pedagogical/Andragogical approaches and learning environments. This extension supports the provision of structured, constructive feedback that promotes reflective practice and continuous enhancement of teaching, learning, and assessment.

In line with the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Standards, this appraisal framework reflects three of the eleven standards that are most directly relevant to lecture observation and feedback:

- Standard 4: Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment – emphasising the importance of encouraging students to take an active role in their own learning, while ensuring that assessment is used formatively to guide and enhance progress.
- Standard 6: Competence and effectiveness of teaching staff – recognising that lecturing staff



Document Title	LECTURER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCEDURE			Page 3 of 7
Document Number	054	Document Revision	H	Date Issued 05.10.2026

are central to the quality of provision, and that their competence, organisation, and professional conduct form an effective learning environment.

- Standard 7: Appropriate learning resources and student support – ensuring that learners have access to a wide range of high-quality resources and that appropriate support is available to enable them to reach their full potential.

The lecturer appraisal form and the Pedagogical/Andragogical dialogue have been mapped to these standards (Table 1), ensuring that evidence gathered during observations is aligned with both local and international expectations for internal QA.

Section	Aligned MFHEA Standard
Section 1 – Planning	Standard 6: Competence and effectiveness of teaching staff
Section 2 – Learning Resources	Standard 7: Appropriate learning resources and student support
Section 3 – Role of the Lecturer	Standard 6: Competence and effectiveness of teaching staff
Section 4 – Role of the Student	Standard 4: Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
Section 5 – Assessment for Learning	Standard 4: Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Table 1 - Mapping the MCAST Appraisal Process to the MFHEA IQA Standards

3. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

DOC 093: Lecturer Performance Appraisal Form

DOC 020: REV E MCAST QA Policy and Standards for Online Teaching, Learning and Assessment

4. DEFINITIONS

4.1. Traditional Teaching, Learning and Assessment that takes place in a face-to-face classroom setting, practical sessions carried out in scientific and computer laboratories, engineering workshops, gymnasiums, hair and beauty salons, childcare centres and those for the aged, as well as agricultural/aquatic environments.

4.2. Online Teaching, Learning and Assessment that takes place in an online environment delivered through e-learning methodologies supported by educational technologies (EdTech), including but not limited to Artificial Intelligence (AI), Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), Robotics and, via MCAST's Learning Management System, Microsoft Teams.

4.3. Blended Teaching, Learning and Assessment consists of a combination of both face-to-face and online delivery implemented according to a predetermined proportion defined during the design and development stages of a programme of studies.

4.4. Critical Friend, a QA Department representative who conducts the observation, appraisal and feedback process, facilitating professional dialogue and reflective practice in line with MCAST's



Document Title	LECTURER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCEDURE			Page 4 of 7
Document Number	054	Document Revision	H	Date Issued 05.10.2026

developmental approach to QA. The Critical Friend could be an academic professional either internal to MCAST or external.

4.5. Pedagogical/Andragogical Dialogue, a structured professional discussion between a lecturer and a Critical Friend intended to promote reflective practice, review previous actions, identify continuing professional development needs and support continuous enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment. A Pedagogical/Andragogical Dialogue does not normally include a classroom observation unless specifically requested by the lecturer.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1. The QA Department is responsible for managing and overseeing and implementing this procedure.

5.2. Lecturers are responsible for preparing for and actively participating in the QA process whether through a Formal Lecturer Performance Appraisal or a Pedagogical/Andragogical Dialogue, and for engaging constructively in professional reflection and continuous improvement.

6. PROCEDURE

6.1. To be appraised effectively, staff members need to know what they are being measured against. The 'Lecturer Appraisal Form' (Doc 093) provides this information and outlines the standards against which appraisal takes place. The appraisal covers key performance indicators such as "lesson management" and "student engagement/feedback" and is intended to avoid difficulties that often arise when expectations are based solely on informal or assumed understanding. To further promote consistency and clarity in judgement, the following performance level descriptors outline how teaching practice is differentiated across the ratings used in the appraisal process.

The differentiation among **Outstanding (O)**, **Very Satisfactory (VS)**, **Satisfactory (S)**, and **Needs Improvement (NI)** are articulated below with the aim of supporting consistent and fair judgement across the appraisal process.

An **Outstanding (O)** performance is characterised by consistently exemplary practice that exceeds expectations and demonstrates a high level of professionalism, innovation, and impact on student learning. Teaching is fully aligned with learning outcomes and reflects best practice, with seamless organisation, excellent pacing, and highly effective strategies that engage all learners. The lecturer shows strong reflective practice and adaptability, responding dynamically to student needs. Students are highly motivated, actively involved, and demonstrate depth of understanding and autonomy in their learning. Overall, the practice is of such a high quality that it could serve as a model for others within the institution.

A **Very Satisfactory (VS)** performance reflects consistent, effective teaching that meets all expected standards with only minor areas for enhancement. Lessons are well planned, structured, and clearly aligned to outcomes, and the lecturer uses appropriate teaching strategies to support learning. Student engagement is generally good, and most students are progressing well towards achieving the intended outcomes. While the teaching is strong and reliable, it may lack the level of innovation, depth, or consistency required for an outstanding judgement. Minor improvements may be identified, but there are no significant weaknesses affecting the quality of learning.

A **Satisfactory (S)** performance meets the minimum expectations required but may lack consistency, depth, or effectiveness. While there is some evidence of planning and alignment with learning outcomes, delivery may be basic or uneven. Teaching approaches might be limited in variety, and student engagement may be inconsistent, with some learners remaining passive. Opportunities to differentiate, challenge, or actively involve students may be missed. Feedback and assessment practices may be present but not fully effective or consistently applied. Although



Document Title	LECTURER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCEDURE			Page 5 of 7
Document Number	054	Document Revision	H	Date Issued 05.10.2026

learning does occur, it may be at a surface level, and further development is needed to strengthen the overall quality of teaching and learning.

A **Needs Improvement (NI)** performance indicates that the teaching practice falls below acceptable standards and requires significant development. There may be weak or unclear planning, poor organisation, and limited alignment with learning outcomes. Teaching approaches may be ineffective, overly passive, or inappropriate for the learners' needs, leading to low levels of student engagement and participation. Communication may lack clarity, and there may be little or no evidence of checking for understanding or providing meaningful feedback. The lecturer may demonstrate limited awareness of student needs, and the overall impact on learning is minimal or negative. Support and targeted improvement actions are typically required in such cases. This may include, but is not limited to, additional Pedagogical/Andragogical guidance and general professional development to improve teaching practice and, where applicable, further observation sessions.

A **Not Applicable (NA)** rating indicates that the criterion is not relevant to the observed session or context and therefore cannot be meaningfully assessed. This may occur where specific elements, such as certain types of activities, resources, or assessment methods, are not part of the lesson being observed. In such cases, the omission does not negatively impact the overall evaluation of teaching and learning.

- 6.2.** The QA process shall consist of either a Formal Lecturer Performance Appraisal or a Pedagogical/Andragogical Dialogue, as determined by the QA department.

The Formal Lecturer Performance Appraisal shall follow the process outlined below. As part of this process, the QA Department shall assign lecturers to Critical Friends and may take into account the lecturer pool associated with the institute or area in which an internal MCAST Critical Friend is based. However, the QA Department retains the right to assign lecturers to Critical Friends across any MCAST institute, as required. Where external Critical Friends are engaged, the QA Department shall determine the lecturer assignments and the arrangements for conducting the appraisals or Pedagogical/Andragogical Dialogues.

Process

- i. The Critical Friend issues an invitation to the lecturer to participate in the appraisal and feedback process. The invitation also includes a template of the 'Lecturer Appraisal and Feedback Form' (Doc 093).
- ii. Lecturers selected for a review are informed as early as possible, preferably at the beginning of the academic year or if this is not possible, at least before the start of the semester in which the visit will take place.
- iii. On receipt of the email inviting lecturers to engage in observation sessions, lecturers being appraised provide the Critical Friend with a timetable for a specific unit in which they lead learning, so as to enable the scheduling of the appraisal visit at a time convenient to both parties.
- iv. The lesson plan for the session agreed upon and any other supporting material, as decided by the lecturers following discussion with the Critical Friend, are made available in electronic format prior to the session.
- v. The lecturers are observed leading learning in a vocational/academic education setting in a traditional or online or blended learning environment by the Critical Friend at the time and on the date agreed.
- vi. To give feedback, the Critical Friend drafts a preliminary appraisal report and compiles the Internal Audit Checklist for Quality Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Educational & Technological Standards, in line with the criteria outlined in the standards listed in the clauses of DOC 020 MCAST QA Policy and Standards for Online Teaching, Learning and Assessment.



Document Title	LECTURER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCEDURE			Page 6 of 7
Document Number	054	Document Revision	H	Date Issued 05.10.2026

Following the appraisal, the preliminary appraisal report is issued and forwarded to the lecturers concerned. Once the lecturers have had some time to assimilate the report contents and record comments, if any, on the appraisal feedback, they are requested to submit their availabilities so that a post-appraisal review meeting may be scheduled between the individual lecturer and Critical Friend.

- vii. The lecturer and Critical Friend set up a review meeting at a date and time convenient to both parties to discuss the feedback and checklist aspects that could not be observed during the lecture session, being administrative in nature. This meeting serves as a structured opportunity for professional dialogue and reflection on the overall provision and delivery of teaching and learning in relation to the established standards.

During the feedback meeting, the Critical Friend will:

- 1) discuss summary comments, including strengths and areas needing improvement;
 - 2) give the Lecturer the opportunity to respond to the appraisal;
 - 3) offer the Lecturer the opportunity to make written comments regarding the appraisal;
 - 4) where applicable, review their previous Performance Appraisal and make notes regarding progress; and,
 - 5) discuss recommendations for further professional development
- viii. Following the review meeting, the Critical Friend forwards the final formal report to the lecturer, who, once again, has the opportunity to reflect and record comments on the appraisal feedback, prior to signing the report.

A copy of the formal report, signed by both parties, is then forwarded to the lecturer concerned, Institute Director/Deputy Director and the QA Department in copy for courtesy and traceability purposes.

6.3. Pedagogical/Andragogical Dialogue

Academic staff who are not scheduled to participate in a Formal Lecturer Performance Appraisal during the academic year shall participate in a Pedagogical/Andragogical Dialogue. The Pedagogical/Andragogical Dialogue provides a structured opportunity for professional discussion, reflective practice and the identification of continuing professional development needs. A classroom observation shall not normally form part of this process unless requested by the lecturer.

The Pedagogical/Andragogical Dialogue shall follow the process outlined below:

- i. The Critical Friend issues an invitation to the lecturer to participate in the Pedagogical/Andragogical Dialogue.
- ii. The lecturer and Critical Friend agree a mutually convenient date and time for the meeting.
- iii. During the meeting, discussion may include:
 - reflection on teaching practice;
 - implementation of previous recommendations;
 - examples of effective practice;
 - challenges encountered;
 - student engagement;
 - professional development undertaken;
 - future professional development needs.
- iv. Supporting documentation, including lesson plans, learning resources or assessment material,



Document Title	LECTURER PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCEDURE			Page 7 of 7
Document Number	054	Document Revision	H	Date Issued 05.10.2026

shall be made available by the lecturer for review and discussion purposes.

v. Agreed actions shall be documented for future reference.

A lecturer participating in a Pedagogical/Andragogical Dialogue may request a classroom observation. Such requests shall normally be scheduled during the subsequent academic year as part of the lecturer's next Formal Lecturer Performance Appraisal cycle. Where considered necessary by the QA Department, an observation may be scheduled earlier.

6.4. The Lecturer is expected to:

- participate actively in the whole process of the appraisal or Pedagogical/Andragogical dialogue;
- provide the Critical Friend with any information relative to the appraisal;
- view and use the appraisal process as an opportunity for personal growth and development;
- ask for clarification with respect to any part of the appraisal or the appraisal process which may not be fully understood; and,
- review and sign the forms completed as part of the appraisal.

6.5. Following the completion of the performance appraisal process, the Critical Friend will ensure that the appropriate signatures have been obtained while the QA representative administering the process ascertains that the completed Appraisal Form report is filed at the QA Office.

7. TARGETS

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

1. Offering the opportunity to express difficulties or uncertainties on either side, while establishing and maintaining effective communication.
2. Facilitating the giving and receiving of feedback.
3. Discussing and agreeing the actions necessary to support progress and improvement.

7.2. Furthermore, it is intended that MCAST lecturers shall benefit as a result of:

1. Individual attention from senior management, thereby recognising and valuing their contribution.
2. A clearer understanding of their current position and a sense of direction for the future.
3. The meeting, as an opportunity to ensure that the lecturers' efforts are not overlooked.

8. FREQUENCY

8.1. Progressing lecturers and newly recruited lecturers (Full-time and Part-time, including Internal Critical Friends) shall participate in a Formal Lecturer Performance Appraisal during the first semester of the academic year, at least once a year.

8.2. In the case of an unsatisfactory appraisal outcome, the Academic Staff member may be subject to additional appraisals. The number of appraisals shall be determined by the QA Department based on the observation carried out. In the case of repeated unsatisfactory appraisal reports, alternative strategies (such as the recommendation of targeted CPD) may be employed to rectify the situation.

Reference Documents

- Doc 093: Lecturer Appraisal and Feedback Form
- Doc 020: MCAST QA Policy and Standards for Online Teaching, Learning and Assessment.