



Document Title	EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW POLICY AND PROCEDURE			Page 1 of 5
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### GENERAL INFORMATION

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Document Title	EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW POLICY AND PROCEDURE			Page 2 of 5	
Document Number	083	Document Revision	A	Date Issued	28/7/21

## GENERAL

### Acronyms:

BoG : Board of Governors

BoS : Board of Study

DRB : Degree Ratification Board

EPR : External Peer Reviewer

EQF/MQF: European Qualification Framework / Malta Qualification Framework]

## 1 Policy and Scope

The external peer review of the MCAST accredited programmes is considered to be an essential internal quality assurance process that enhances the confidence of the internal and external stakeholders.

The external peer review is also a requirement of the Internal Quality Assurance Standards (IQA) set out in the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) National Quality Assurance Framework Internal Quality Assurance Standards.

This policy applies to the final year of all EQF/MQF 6 and 7 Degree programmes.

## 2 Selection of External Peer Reviewers

Article 99(1)(d) of the Education Act stipulates that the Board of Studies (BoS) is 'to nominate Maltese or foreign examiners in terms of previously established and approved procedures by the Board of Governors'.

In order to facilitate this process, the Director Quality Assurance shall be responsible for coordinating the identification and selection of External Examiners (referred to as External Peer Reviewers (EPR) hereafter) and the setting-up of the respective Degree Ratification Board sessions for all the Institutes.

The prospective External Peer Reviewers need to fulfil the following minimum eligibility criteria:

- a) Have not provided lecturing, consultancy or other services (other than External Peer Review) to the College in the previous three (3) years from the required date of appointment;
- b) Are employed with a reputable academic or vocational University or higher education institution;
- c) Have lecturing experience;
- d) Have participated as dissertation supervisors and also preferably served as external peer reviewer;
- e) Have a Masters Degree (EQF/MQF 7) qualification or higher in the subject area;
- f) Have published peer-reviewed papers.



Document Title	EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW POLICY AND PROCEDURE			Page 3 of 5	
Document Number	083	Document Revision	A	Date Issued	28/7/21

On an annual basis, the Director Quality Assurance shall present to the respective BoS a list of prospective External Peer Reviewers together with their respective academic and professional profile.

The BoS will confirm or otherwise the list of proposed External Peer Reviewers. The BoS shall otherwise provide justification of any refusal.

Whereas in terms of Article 93(1)(g) of the Education Act (Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta), the Board of Governors (BoG) has the power to appoint external examiners, the Registrar (acting in the capacity of Secretary to the BoS) in collaboration with the Director QA shall submit to the BoG the list of external peer reviewers as nominated by the BoS.

Upon approval by the BoG of the proposed External Peer Reviewers, the QA Department communicates the appointment and the compensation policy (as directed by the Human Resource Office) to the respective EPRs and sets out the necessary Degree Ratification Board meetings in conjunction with the Institute Management.

### **3 Documentation and Other Dissertation Related Material**

As a minimum, the following documentation and material will be made available by the hosting Institute to the respective EPR prior to the DRB:

- a) Student dissertation including annotations (marking) by Supervisor;
- b) Artefacts, projects, recordings etc. that constitute part of assessment material submitted by the student for marking
- c) Filled-in dissertation grading rubric and student result;
- d) Student result for all units;
- e) Student / Supervisor Dissertation Logbook;
- f) Access (upon request by EPR) of the assignment briefs and student submissions (at module level);
- g) Programme specification;
- h) Degree Programme Regulations (Doc 005)
- i) Dissertation Guidelines (including Dissertation Grading Rubric Doc 100).

### **4 Preparation for External Peer Review process and Opening Meeting**

The QA Department will set up an opening meeting between the EPR and the Institute representative(s). The session can be conducted in person or remotely.

During this meeting, the Institute representative(s) shall present all the evidence (as outlined above in para 2) and provide any clarifications requested by the EPR.

The EPR will have access, throughout the review, to all dissertations and may sample as deemed appropriate. The Institute management is encouraged to suggest for review by the EPR borderline cases or cases where consensus was not achieved between the Viva Board and the dissertation marker.

The EPR is entitled to request private meetings with academic staff and students.

Where logistically possible, the EPR can decide to take part in Viva Boards.



Document Title	EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW POLICY AND PROCEDURE			Page 4 of 5	
Document Number	083	Document Revision	A	Date Issued	28/7/21

## 5 Degree Ratification Board

The composition and terms of reference of the Degree Ratification Board are set out in the document referenced below.

The EPR is invited to attend the Degree Ratification Board (DRB) meeting as an active observer. At the start of the meeting, the Deputy Principal Academic Management of Students and Work-Based Learning/Registrar shall invite the EPR to provide feedback to the DRB members on the quality of the overall quality of programme and assessment tools. The EPR is also entitled to provide feedback on individual student work.

The DRB members are required to take decisions by consensus on:

- a) the overall classification for every student in the respective cohorts,
- b) Granting of dissertation submission date extensions.

The EPR is (also) a signatory of the final result sheet of the programme cohort.

Minutes are taken by the Secretary to the DRB.

### ***Document Reference***

Doc 188: College Board Procedures

## 6 External Peer Reviewer Visit Report

The EPR is required to issue a visit report that includes the key findings of the external peer review any other comments, criticism, suggestions and recommendations for improvement.

This report is considered to be a very important part of the continuous improvement process at the College as it informs the decisions that need to be taken by management.

Refer to Appendix 1 'Terms of Reference' below for guidelines for the EPR's terms of reference.



Document Title	EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW POLICY AND PROCEDURE			Page 5 of 5	
Document Number	083	Document Revision	A	Date Issued	28/7/21

### APPENDIX 1: Terms of Reference of the External Peer Reviewer

The following section describes the purpose of the External Peer Reviewer:

- a) To advise the College on whether the standards set are appropriate for its awards, by reference to subject benchmarks, national qualification framework, course specifications, broader vocational standards, best practices and other relevant information.
- b) Comment on the overall programme Learning Outcomes and whether they are commensurate with the subject area, workload and (EQF/MQF) level of the award.
- c) Benchmark the programme(s) with a similar (external) programme(s).
- d) To provide an external evaluation of the effectiveness of the College's assessment method and determination of awards.
- e) Monitor consistent and fair application of course assessment regulations and procedures and appropriateness of standards being applied.
- f) Review adequacy of the verification process of the assessment methods with respect to the Learning Outcomes.
- g) Review adequacy of marking schemes and classification of awards, interpretation of and decisions on grade boundaries
- h) Provide overall impressions of College and Institute management structure, programme team and course organisation.
- i) To report on the standards of student performance.
- j) Provide suggestions for areas of improvement.
- k) Identify best practices.
- l) Attend Degree Ratification Board.
- m) Review sample of students' dissertations.
- n) Conduct interviews with students and, if necessary of academic staff.
- o) Compile visit report and forward (visit report) to the QA Director.