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GENERAL INFORMATION

1	Document category		Policy and 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, Directors, Deputy Directors, Academic Staff and Students	
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		Change history (Section/change details)		
		Creation of a narrative (text) procedure to replace current flowchart. Some updates and clarifications to the process are being applied. A new flowchart will be updated and included in a future revision.		
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Abbreviations

ARIC	Applied Research & Innovation Centre
DP	Deputy Principal
DP VPET	Deputy Principal Vocational Professional Education and Training
GA	Grant Agreement
IRC	Institute Research Committee
MCAST	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
PI	Project Investigator
SAO	Senior Administrative Officer
SRO	Senior Research Officer



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1. Introduction

This Standard Operating Procedure (referred to as the SOP) is intended to guide the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) personnel in the planning, submission, implementation, and managing of externally funded projects. This SOP describes all pre-award and post-award procedures to be followed during MCAST's submission and implementation of projects run through national and international funding programmes, excluding Erasmus+ and regional fund programmes (such as ESF and ERDF).

1.1 Roles and responsibilities

The 'Beneficiary' is the organisation (referring to MCAST) responsible for implementing an awarded project through the use of the acquired funds.-

The 'Funding Entity' (sometimes referred to as 'Managing Authority') is responsible for managing and administering the funds. Any queries, requests, and concerns by the beneficiary should be brought to the immediate attention of the funding entity. This can refer to a national entity (such as Xjenza Malta), as well as an international/European agency responsible for funding programmes, such as Horizon Europe.

The 'Senior Research Officer' (SRO), based at the Applied Research & Innovation Centre (ARIC), provides administrative support and procedural guidance at pre- and post-award stages contributing towards the achievement of research targets.

The 'Institute Research Committee' is an existing structure that operates within each of MCAST's Institutes, chaired by the Institute Director and supported by Institute Deputy Directors, Senior Lecturers and an SRO.

The 'Person-Months' is the metric for the time (effort) that the key personnel of an organisation devote to a specific project, e.g. the annual workable hours divided by 12.

The 'Principal Investigator' (PI) is the researcher representing the beneficiary (referring to MCAST) and is responsible for overseeing the delegation, implementation, and communication in relation to all tasks and deliverables assigned to the beneficiary under the project. Further, the PI needs to ensure that both technical and financial aspects are in line with applicable regulations (e.g. grant agreement (GA), funding regulations, MCAST regulations).

The 'Post-award team' oversees the overall progress in a project's implementation, providing support on the overall project monitoring, financial, human resources (HR) and procurement related procedures. Personnel roles within this team may include 'EU Projects Manager – Post-award', the 'Finance Manager - Post-award', the 'HR Manager - Post-award' and the 'Procurement Manager - Post-award', amongst others.

The 'Researcher/s' is/are the members of the research team who, together with the PI, execute the implementation of the project, carrying out tasks as agreed with the PI.



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2. Pre-award Stage

The pre-award process encompasses all the stages from the identification of a funding programme which may support the development of a specific research field/interest, the drafting of a project proposal covering all the requirements defined under the funding call (e.g. project description, identification of partners, budgets, etc.), acquisition of internal approvals prior to the proposal submission, and the submission itself.

These stages are described in greater detail hereunder and illustrated through the process flowchart for the 'Submission and Implementation Process of Externally Funded MCAST Research Projects' (Annex 1).

2.1 Preparation of Concept Note for internal approvals

MCAST's PI (supported by an SRO where necessary) develops a concept note consisting of a concise description of the project reflecting details on the funding call/programme, the research theme, identified partners, identified MCAST researchers and relevant submission deadlines.

With the concept note at hand, the PI (supported by SRO) seeks written approval by email from the following in the order presented below:

1. the IRC Chair where applicable / Director where the PI involved in the project is based.
2. the IRC Chairs where applicable / Director of the Institutes/Centres representing other identified MCAST researchers to be involved in the project.
3. the respective Deputy Principal Vocational Professional Education and Training (DP VPET).
4. the DP Research and Student Academic Management.

2.2 Proposal Writing and Submission

Whilst preparing the groundwork and requesting approval as described above, the following process is to be followed by the PI, with the support of the SRO:

1. The familiarisation with the rules/regulations and the submission procedure (e.g. any digital platform/portal such as the European Commission's 'Funding and Tenders' portal) related to the call/funding program of interest.
2. Once all internal approvals are at hand, the concept note can be further elaborated within the requested proposal format.
3. The official contact point for the call/program must be identified and contacted, as necessary, to clarify any queries.
4. The level of detail of the proposal will depend on the submission requirements of the call but will also need to be aligned to a number of criteria such as the scope/priority thematic areas of the call and eligibility rules for the partners/consortium.
5. Budgets may need to be defined covering personnel costs, equipment and consumables, travel and subsistence, dissemination, and other. It is also essential to include a procurement plan. The proposed budget needs to be discussed and agreed upon with the 'Finance Manager - Post-Award' and/or the designated SRO. Existing MCAST employees to work on projects are to complete the 'Confidentiality & GDPR Declaration Form' (Annex 2) giving consent to the PI to contact the Finance Manager, requesting for the project's employee's hourly/daily/monthly rate, as applicable. Further details regarding personnel costs are available in section 6.1.



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6. Some calls may constitute multiple stages of proposal submission e.g. a first submission of a pre-proposal and, for successful pre-proposals, a second submission of a full proposal.
7. The PI is to contact the SRO for any requested details pertaining to the institution, e.g. MCAST's PIC number, profile of the entity, etc.
8. In parallel with the above, effective communication with all MCAST departments/personnel – such as HR, the Finance Department, the Procurement Department, relevant Institute/Centre Directors, and others – needs to be maintained to ensure the eventual commitment in terms of human, financial, and material resources towards the project, as well as to ensure that all MCAST regulations are adhered to.
9. When finalised, if the signature is required to submit a proposal, the PI (supported by the SRO) provides a covering letter (Annex 3), the full proposal and signature deadlines to the Director R&I, who in turn will seek endorsement by the DP Research and Student Academic Management and the institution's legal signatory (referring to Principal & CEO).
10. The proposal can then be submitted following submission guidelines. Both internal (institutional) stipulated deadlines and external submission deadlines must be adhered to.

3. Post-award process

Following notification by the Funding Entity of the submission's success, the PI is to communicate the said notification to the respective Director(s) - as Chairs of the relevant IRC(s), the Director R&I, SRO, and post-award team.

The PI is to provide the post-award team with:

- a copy of the proposal, including the proposed and approved budget,
- a copy of the signed consortium agreement, if this was required and made available at proposal stage (See section 3.2),
- a procurement plan and travel plan,
- the contact person (if this is not the PI) responsible for liaising with the Funding Entity.

3.1 The Grant Agreement

For projects awarded through external funds, the Grant Agreement (referred to as the GA) is signed between the Funding Entity, the beneficiary (referring to MCAST), and other consortium partners as applicable. At times, mostly for projects awarded through international funds, the GA is signed between the Funding Entity and the Project Coordinator/Lead Partner (the partner responsible for leading the consortium) who signs on behalf of the consortium. This agreement is the basis for project funding and will determine the terms and conditions for the administration of all fund transfers. Further it provides key information on the project targets, objectives, deliverables, and financial distribution.

3.1.1. The review and endorsement of the GA for projects awarded through national or international funds is to adhere to the following process (or the process stipulated by the Funding Entity):

1. The PI will receive a draft GA from Funding Entity and, with the support of the EU Project Manager – Post-award and other project partners, is to compile the requested details within the draft version and revert back.



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2. Once the Funding Entity finalizes the GA, two or more hard copies are sent to PI/EU Project Manager – Post-award for the collection of relevant signatures by a specified deadline.
3. If the physical signature is required, the EU Project Manager – Post-award or PI provides two or more copies (as necessary) of the GA, a covering letter (Annex 3), and signature deadlines to the Director R&I, who in turn will seek endorsement by the DP Research and Student Academic Management and the institution's legal signatory (referring to Principal & CEO). If the digital endorsement is sufficient, the EU Project Manager – Post-award or PI shall inform the Director R&I of this requirement, who in turn will inform DP R&I and the institution's legal signatory.
4. The PI will then circulate the signed copies of the GA amongst other consortium partners for their respective endorsements by their legal representatives, according to the instructions provided. The Funding Entity is to be informed of such transactions. The EU Project Manager – Post-award liaises with MCAST Reception to send the hard copies of the GA through internal mail to the Funding Entity.
5. After the GA is signed by all consortium members, the Beneficiary (referring to MCAST) is to receive one fully signed original hard copy of the GA from the Funding Entity. If signed digitally, the EU Project Manager – Post-award or PI will download and send a copy of the signed GA to the post-award team for filing in the relevant digital folder.
6. Upon receipt, the EU Project Manager – Post-award or PI:
 - a. Hands over the fully signed original hard copy of the GA to the Director R&I for storage in the 'Grant Agreements' archive.
 - b. Scans the original signed GA and sends it to the post-award team for filing in the relevant digital folder.

Failure to adhere to the above processes may compromise the award of the fund.

3.2 Consortium agreement

The consortium agreement refers to the agreement signed between the consortium partners and specifies the rights and obligations of the project consortium partners. A consortium agreement, which is typically drafted by the Leading Partner in a consortium, may be mandatory in order for a Funding Entity to award the grant. When MCAST is the Leading Partner in a consortium, and a consortium agreement is required, the PI is to liaise with the SRO or EU Projects Manager – Post-award for a consortium agreement template. The PI is to submit the consortium agreement to Director R&I, through the SRO, in order to obtain MCAST's legal clearance, if necessary. Signing of the consortium agreement will follow the process described above for the signing of the GA (Section 3.1). Copies will also be stored as per the process described above for the signing of the GA (Section 3.1).

3.3 Declaration of Honour and other documents

In preparation for the GA, some documents may be required for endorsement by MCAST's legal representative, such as the Declaration of Honour form which ensures



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that all beneficiaries comply with the rules and are not in a situation that would exclude them from receiving funding. Signing of these documents will follow the above process described above for the signing of the GA (Section 3.1). Copies will also be stored as per above process described above for the signing of the GA (Section 3.1).

3.4 Start Date and End Date

A proposed start date, agreed by all the partners is specified within the GA. The PI is to inform the EU Project Manager – Post-award of the start date whilst compiling the requirements of the draft GA. The project end date shall reflect the project's duration from the stipulated start date. All financial transactions related to the project expenses must occur between the project start date and the end date.

3.5 Project Extension

An extension to the end date of the project may only be requested in exceptional cases and must be approved by the Funding Entity. The PI must inform the post-award team of the need to request a project extension at the earliest possible, and not later than two months before the project's end date (unless different timeframes are stipulated in the grant agreement). Additionally, requests for approval for extensions need to be discussed with all consortium partners as necessary and respect all Terms and Conditions stipulated by the same Funding Entity. The PI is to prepare a letter with the request for extending the project and include the details stipulated in the GA. Further, the letter is to include the following details:

- required extension time-frame,
- detailed justification on why the project's deadlines will not be met,
- the pending deliverables or tasks that will be conducted during the extension period,
- any resultant impact on the budget.

The EU Project Manager – Post-award or PI will send the letter to the Funding Entity for approval, using the appropriate channels as stipulated in the GA.

The end date of the project will be amended only if the Funding Entity accepts the request, provides the necessary approval in writing, including a reference to the accepted new end date. This will require the endorsement of an addendum, including details as requested by the Funding Entity, which will follow the above process described above for the signing of the GA (Section 3.1). Copies will also be stored as per above process described above for the signing of the GA (Section 3.1).

3.6 Changes to the Grant Agreement

If it is a requirement of the approved scheme, any changes to the GA at any stage of the project, including changes of personnel and budget, should be requested in liaison with the post-award managers, to the Funding Entity contact person. These requested changes, together with a justification letter stating the reason behind each adjustment, must be sent within a considerable timeframe to the Funding Entity allowing for approval or rejection. In case of a change in budget, or personnel, an updated budget or list of personnel discussed between the post-award team, SRO and the PI may also be requested by the Funding Entity.



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Approvals in writing are sent to MCAST's PI or contact person, where relevant, and may be followed by an addendum which will be signed by both MCAST and the Funding Entity. An original copy of the signed addendum will be stored with the GA as per section 3.1 while a scanned copy is to be sent to the post-award team and saved on Teams folder 3.1.

3.7 Project Coordinator (Lead Partner)

The grant will be managed by the Project Coordinator (also referred to as Lead Partner) who is also the central contact point for the Funding Entity. If the Beneficiary (referring to MCAST) is the Project Coordinator, through the PI, it is to manage the consortium and oversee the project implementation, including complying with all the terms, conditions and planned obligations. The Project Coordinator is to submit technical and financial reports to the Funding Entity on behalf of the consortium and, therefore, is to collect and collate all necessary data from consortium partners. When funding for international projects is provided through national funding, the PI may need to submit technical and financial reports to the national Funding Entity.

4. Internal Reporting

Internal reporting is carried out to monitor and evaluate the financial performance of each project. PIs are required to submit internal financial reports to the EU Project Manager – Post-award, with copies to the Finance Manager and other relevant post-award team members. For projects lasting one year or less from the project's start date till the end date, reports must be submitted every four months; for longer projects, every six months. Each PI must update and submit the budget consumption sheet (Annex 4) accordingly.

4.1 Budget Consumption Reporting

The aim of budget consumption reporting sheet (Annex 4) is to assist the PI with the financial monitoring and reporting about the different project cost categories. At the start of each project the PI is to compile a budget consumption reporting template, in line with the GA, supported by the SRO or Finance Manager, as necessary. It is good practice to update the budget sheet whenever a budget claim takes place, thus facilitating the process prior to official project reporting periods (as in Section 5). The PI (or another member of the research team delegated by the PI) is to update the financial budget according to any claims done, supported by the post-award Finance Manager. Daily/Hourly Project rates for personnel working on the project should be requested from the post-award Finance Manager at the start of each financial year. Travel costs, including the cost of flights, travel insurance and any claims for airport travels are also to be requested from the post-award Finance Manager. This sheet is to be submitted to the EU Project Manager – Post-award, together with a copy of project timesheets covering the personnel costs and a copy of the invoices for other expenditures made during this period, every four months for projects of a year or less duration or six months for projects longer than one year. The Finance Manager will review the updated submitted budget consumption sheet and if necessary, request any clarifications from the PI. Following the requested clarifications and any necessary amendments by the PI, the EU Projects Manager – Post-award will file the budget consumption sheet in the relevant digital folder.



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5. External Reporting

External reporting should be submitted to the Funding Entity as required, in line with the GA.

5.1 Technical Report

The templates for the periodical, end-of-stage, and final technical reports are typically provided by the Funding Entity, depending on the requirements stipulated in the Terms of Reference of the programme. The PI or EU Projects Manager – post-award is to request the template/s at the start of the project. The PI, with the support of other researchers involved within the project, is to compile and submit such report to the Funding Entity based on timelines stipulated in the GA or whenever requested by the Funding Entity. The PI is to inform the EU Project Manager – post-award of this submission. Any clarification meetings called for by the Funding Entity following submission shall be handled by the PI and/or the EU Projects Manager – post-award.

5.2 Financial Report

The template for the financial report is typically provided by the Funding Entity, depending on the requirements stipulated in the Terms of Reference of the programme. The PI or EU Projects Manager – post-award is to request the template at the start of the project. The PI, with the support of other researchers involved within the project and the Finance Manager (or other post-award team members as necessary), is to prepare and submit the financial report to the Funding Entity based on timelines stipulated in the GA or whenever requested by the Funding Entity. The PI is to inform the EU Project Manager – post-award of this submission. Any clarification meetings called for by the Funding Entity following submission shall be handled by the PI and/or the EU Projects Manager – post-award.

6. Personnel costs

Personnel costs refers to the costs claimed from the project fund for personnel effort.

6.1 Hourly rate/Daily rate/Monthly rate

During the proposal stage, when MCAST is bidding for a new project for calls funded by various funding authorities, the project's hourly rate/daily rate/monthly rate (based on the funding programme/call regulations) for each personnel listed in the proposal is to be requested from the Finance Manager who in turn will liaise with the HR Department for necessary information. Such rates are calculated in line with the specific funding programme regulations. Once the project is awarded, before drafting the GA for final signatures, the PI, with the support of the SRO, is to confirm with the Finance Manager that the hourly/daily/monthly rates as determined pre-submission are applicable and in line with the eligibility criteria set up in the specific funding call regulations.

Existing MCAST employees to work on projects are to complete the Confidentiality & GDPR Declaration Form (Annex 2) giving consent to the PI to contact the Finance Manager (or delegate), requesting for the project's employee's hourly/daily/monthly rate, as applicable. The hourly rate calculation may differ from one fund to another and is subject to the specific fund regulations.



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For any new recruitment (Part-time or Full-time), the PI in liaison with the SRO is to contact the post-award Finance Manager (or delegate) to seek the project's hourly/daily/monthly rate based on the salary scale for the particular position.

The PI is to also confirm with the SRO and HR Manager the proposed total amount of Person Months, translated into hours, that are allocated for each employee to be engaged on the project to ensure that these are within the allowed capping set up by MCAST.

6.2 Project timesheets

The project timesheet template is typically provided by the Funding Entity, depending on the requirements stipulated in the Terms of Reference of the programme. The PI or EU Projects Manager – Post-award is to request the template at the start of the project. If the funding programme does not include any specific timesheet template, the EU Project Manager – Post-award is to provide to the PI a generic timesheet template (Annex 5), as and if necessary.

This timesheet covers the details and hours of works undertaken by the personnel working within the project under each relevant Work Package. Timesheets should include monthly claims. For each timesheet the following process is to be followed:

1. Each personnel working within the project is to submit to the PI a signed monthly project timesheet.
2. The PI is to verify the timesheet to ensure that the hours claimed for each work package are in line with the signed GA. The PI is to discuss any discrepancies with the personnel claiming the hours, and the latter is to update the timesheet accordingly. The PI is to sign the final monthly timesheet.
3. The PI's timesheets are to be signed by the Director (or delegate), following confirmation by the Director R&I (or delegate).
4. Once fully signed, PI is to keep the originals in the project file, while a scanned copy is to be submitted to the post award team as described in section 4.1.
5. The project timesheets are to be submitted by the PI to the Funding Entity with the Financial report, if requested.

6.3 MCAST Payment Claim sheets

This timesheet only applies for Part-Time employees recruited specifically to conduct research work. The HR Manager is to provide each newly recruited part-time employee an MCAST Payment Claim sheet template. This sheet is necessary as it is the document in line with the employment contract displaying specific dates and times of the work completed. Each part-time employee is to complete this claim sheet monthly.

The part-time personnel is to submit the original copy of this filled claim sheet to the PI to confirm that the work has been conducted and tallies with the project timesheet, then to the Senior Administrative Officer (SAO) of the Institute/Centre linked to the project, for review and signature. The SAO will then pass this on to the Institute/Centre Director (or delegate) who will also sign this document and process it as per MCAST procedures.



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7. Travel and Subsistence costs

Travel and subsistence expenses related to externally funded projects can be claimed from the project fund if these are specifically allocated as per the GA. Prior to making such travel claims, the PI is to ensure that these are eligible costs. If in doubt, the PI can liaise with the Finance Manager. To claim such expenses, the project team is to follow the procedures below.

Additionally, such claims must always follow MCAST policy for Travel and Expenses Procedure.

7.1 Travel (Flights and Subsistence Expenses) Claim

Prior to engaging in project-related travels, the PI discusses the travel plan as necessary with the Finance Manager (or delegate) and EU Projects Manager – Post-award by specifying the forecast of expenditure during such travel. This is to ensure that the expenses forecasted are eligible costs in line with the GA.

Once confirming that the travel is an eligible cost aligning with the project's GA and that budget is available, the PI (or a member of the research team that will be travelling) is to:

1. Seek approval by email for travel from the Director R&I (or delegate) to ensure that the expense is in line with the GA.
2. Seek approval by email for travel from the respective Line Authority (Director or delegate).
3. Seek approval by email for travel from the respective Deputy Principal, if required by other MCAST procedures.
4. Liaise with the Procurement Department, to follow required procedures from the Office.
5. Liaise with the Finance Department, providing them with the flight booking details and meeting agenda (final or draft as available) if requested, to issue the per diem (where and if applicable) according to MCAST practices.
6. Keep all receipts of travel, accommodation and subsistence, as well as a copy of the tickets and boarding passes, if the programme regulations stipulate that these are required for reimbursement and auditing purposes (as applicable).
7. Provide any required financial documents.
8. Save digital and hard copies of any final approvals, invoices and proof of payment along with all supporting documents in connection to the claim, for future reference and auditing purposes.

Upon making the expense, the PI (or a member of the research team) is to update the 'travel' section of the budget consumption sheet (referred to in Section 4.1).

Upon return from travel, the PI (or a member of the research team that will be traveling) is to update the budget consumption sheet. The person travelling is to submit a mission report as per MCAST MANUAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES.

8. Equipment, dissemination and other costs

Equipment, dissemination and other project expenses related to externally funded projects can be claimed from the project fund if these are specifically allocated as per the GA. Prior to making such claims, the PI is to ensure that these are eligible costs. If in doubt, the PI is to liaise with the Finance Manager.



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8.1 Equipment, dissemination and other expenses claims

Prior to incurring such expenses, the PI discusses these as necessary with the Finance Manager (or delegate) and EU Projects Manager – Post-award by specifying the forecast of expenditure. This is to ensure that the expenses forecasted are eligible costs in line with the GA.

Once confirming that the expense is an eligible cost aligning with the project's GA and that the budget is available, the PI (or a member of the research team) is to:

1. Seek approval by email for equipment, dissemination and other expenses claims from the Director R&I (or delegate) to ensure that the expense is in line with the GA.
2. Seek approval for the expense from the respective Line Authority (Director or delegate)
3. Seek approval for the expense from the respective Deputy Principal, if required by other MCAST procedures.
4. Liaise with the MCAST Procurement Department, to follow required procedures from the Office and use the official templates if requesting quotes.
5. Liaise with the service provider as regards any specific details/arrangements relevant to the service.
6. Save digital and hard final approved copies, invoices and proof of payment along with all supporting documents in connection to the claim, for future reference and auditing purposes. If procurement is made through the attainment by the PI or delegate of at least three quotes, proof of such quotes has to be kept in digital folder. This should include the initial email sent to the intended supplier/s requesting the quotations and the suppliers' reply.

Where depreciation for equipment needs to be considered, the PI (or a member of the research team) is to liaise with the Finance Manager.

Upon making the expense, the PI (or a member of the research team) is to update the 'other costs' section of the budget consumption sheet (referred to in Section 4.1).

8.2 Record of research assets

When research assets, such as equipment, are purchased through the project fund the PI is to follow the following process:

1. The PI is to keep comprehensive records of all research assets purchased through the project fund in the project file and forward the relevant requested details to the Inventory Management and Archives Office. All specified equipment, once delivered, must be included in the MCAST inventory register and labelled by the Officer of the Inventory Management and Archives Office.
2. Upon project completion, the PI is to liaise with his/her Director to determine location where the research assets should be physically stored/based. The PI is to inform the Inventory Management and Archives Office, the relevant Institute/Centre Director and the Director R&I, of any transfer of equipment between institutes/centres, clearly indicating the new location of the assets.

8.3 Event claim

If an event needs to be organised outside of MCAST premises, the PI (or a member of the project's research team) is to:



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1. Seek approval by email for the event from the Director R&I (or delegate) to ensure that the expense is in line with the GA.
2. Seek approval for the expense from the respective Line Authority (Director or delegate).
3. Seek approval for the expense from the respective Deputy Principal, if required by other MCAST procedures.
4. Liaise with the MCAST Procurement Department, to follow required procedures from the Office.
5. Liaise with the service provider as regards any specific details/arrangements relevant to the service.
6. Save digital and hard final approved copies, invoices and proof of payment along with all supporting documents in connection to the claim, for future reference and auditing purposes.
7. Register the attendance of participants, ensuring that these reflect the registration list of invitees.

If an event needs to be organised within MCAST premises, the PI (or a member of the research team) is to:

1. Seek approval by email for the event from the Director R&I (or delegate) to ensure that the expense is in line with the GA.
2. Seek approval for the expense from the respective Line Authority (Director or delegate).
3. Liaise with the Communications/Events and Procurement Department, to follow required procedures from the Office, respecting stipulated deadlines.
4. Save digital and hard final approved copies, invoices and proof of payment along with all supporting documents in connection with the claim, for future reference and auditing purposes.
5. Register the attendance of participants, ensuring that these reflect the registration list of invitees.

9. Line transfer of funds or claims that are not in the original budget plan

Prior to carrying out line transfers and/or claiming funds that are not in the original budget plan, the PI is to:

1. Ensure that with these claims, the total approved 'direct' project costs are not exceeded,
2. Liaise with the post-award team to discuss the required line transfers, and
3. before making any changes, prepare a justification letter and seek approval from the

Funding Entity, if this is necessary, (in liaison with the post-award team) following the programme regulations.

10. Procurement, Finance, Communications and other matters

All procurement, financial transactions and communications made through the project fund are to follow MCAST's procurement and finance procedures and the Funding Entity programme's regulations.

If the project requires the support of other departments or committees (e.g. Research Ethics Committee), the project's research team is to follow the relevant MCAST procedures. All requests made to other departments are to be made in a timely manner.



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11. Human Resources

The following recruitment steps are to be followed:

1. The PI is to discuss with the post-award Finance Manager (or delegate) the eligible number of hours for researchers that will be required to work on the project in accordance with the GA.
2. The PI is to then inform HR well in advance about the need for external and internal recruitment, providing the job description, total number of hours and recruitment period.
3. The respective Institute/Centre director where the researcher will be based will upload the call.
4. Recruitment processes are to follow MCAST's HR procedures and the Funding Entity programme's regulations.

12. Project File

The PI is to compile all original documents in a physical/digital project file for internal and external audits. At the end of the project, after the audit is concluded (if this is necessary), the PI is to hand over the complete file, in soft or hard copy as applicable, to Director R&I and post-award team.

The following project file sub-divisions are recommended:

- i. Proposal, consortium agreement, GA, and other official addenda and agreements
- ii. Original timesheets covering every member of the research project personnel, fully signed
- iii. Relevant procurement and financial documentation and correspondence
- iv. Internal reporting documents (updated budget consumption sheets)
- v. Approved project deviations (e.g. extensions, budget line transfers) and relevant correspondence
- vi. Any publications, reports and technical documents
- vii. Interim and Final technical and financial reports which are submitted to the Funding Entity

13. Audits

Audits of a financial nature typically include verifications that the financed personnel costs, equipment, services and other expenditure declared by the beneficiary have been claimed according to the eligibility costs regulations as per the GA.

When an external financial audit, or similar, is a mandatory requirement of the programme, the PI is to liaise with the post-award team at least three months before the project end date to ensure that all the required documentation is in place and to start the procurement process. The PI and other relevant personnel are to provide any requested information during internal audits, ensuring alignment with all relevant legislation, policies, and procedures.

Further, all externally funded projects are subject to an MCAST internal audit. The PI and other relevant personnel are to provide any requested information during internal audits, ensuring alignment with all relevant legislation, policies, and procedures.



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APPENDIX 1

ANNEX 1- SUBMISSION AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS: EXTERNALLY FUNDED MCAST RESEARCH PROJECTS



MCAST



