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GENERAL INFORMATION

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	<p>- New Document</p> <p>The development of this procedure originates from an MFHEA EQA finding. Its purpose is to establish a standardised, ethical, and robust approach for the drafting, administration, analysis, and dissemination of official MCAST internal studies that utilise data collection tools (such as surveys and tracer studies) within the context of the College's Quality Framework.</p> <p>Through this procedure, the College aims to strengthen trust by ensuring transparency, thereby encouraging higher levels of participation from its stakeholders.</p> <p>The document has been drafted and reviewed through a collaborative effort involving the QA Department, the College Data Protection Officer, and the College Data Analyst.</p>			
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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to establish a standardised, ethical and robust approach for the drafting, administration, analysis and dissemination of official MCAST internal studies using data collection tools (e.g. surveys and tracer studies) in relation to the College's Quality Framework.

This document ensures:

- High-quality data collection tools including survey design aligned with methodological frameworks.
- Protection of respondent privacy, confidentiality and data security.
- Transparent roles and responsibilities across MCAST units.
- Consistency in reporting, dissemination and follow-up actions.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all MCAST units, institutes, departments, centres, offices, project teams and individual stakeholders intending to issue:

- Internal studies using data collection tools targeting students, staff, alumni or external stakeholders.
- Tracer studies conducted periodically as part of MCAST's quality assurance and strategic monitoring processes.

The policy excludes informal polls or classroom-level feedback tools that do not collect personal data and are not intended for institutional decision-making purposes.

3. Definitions

Stakeholder	An individual, group, or entity that has an interest in, is affected by, or can influence decisions of an organisation and the tools it uses for decision making purposes. In the MCAST context, stakeholders may include students, staff, alumni, employers, industry partners, regulators and internal administrative or academic units.
Survey	A structured data collection instrument used to collect quantitative and/or qualitative information from a target population. Surveys typically consist of predefined questions designed to measure perceptions, experiences, satisfaction, or other indicators required for institutional monitoring, planning and continuous improvement.
Tracer Study	A specialised type of longitudinal or follow-up study conducted to track the progression, employment outcomes, educational pathways and experiences of graduates or participants after they complete a programme. Tracer studies provide evidence on programme relevance, employability, skills acquisition and long-term impact on learners.
Likert Scale	A widely used rating scale that measures respondents' attitudes, perceptions, or levels of agreement with a statement. Likert scales typically range from 3 to 7 points (e.g., Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree), enabling structured analysis of sentiment or intensity of opinion.
Participant	Any individual who provides responses to an official internal study including MCAST survey or tracer study. Participants may include students, staff, alumni, employers or other stakeholders involved in institutional feedback processes. All participants are protected under data protection regulations and MCAST confidentiality requirements.

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Bias (Survey Bias)	Any distortion or systematic error in internal studies using data collection tools or alternative instruments in design, sampling, analysis, that leads to a priori biased results. Forms of bias include selection bias, response bias, leading questions, confirmation bias and non-response bias.
Instrument Validity	The degree to which a data collection instrument including survey questionnaire accurately measures what it is intended to measure. A valid instrument produces meaningful, interpretable results that align with the study's objectives. Validity includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content validity (the extent to which questions cover the intended construct), • Construct validity (the degree to which the instrument measures the theoretical concept), • Criterion validity (alignment with external benchmarks or outcomes).
Target group	The complete list or database of all individuals in the population eligible for participation in a survey or study. Examples include student enrolment lists, staff directories, or graduate alumni databases.
Data Analysis	The MCAST Data Analysis Office
QA	The Quality Assurance Department

4. Guiding Principles

4.1. Confidentiality and Trust

MCAST is committed to protecting the anonymity and confidentiality of all respondents and **places trust at the centre of its internal studies including survey and data-collection operations**. Trust is the foundation upon which meaningful participation, honest feedback and data integrity are built.

To uphold this principle, MCAST ensures that:

- 4.1.1. Any responses collected via such operations cannot be linked to identifiable individuals (explicit and informed consent is to be obtained in advance).
- 4.1.2. Respondent data will never be used in any way that could harm, disadvantage or deter the respondent, and that all information collected is processed solely for legitimate institutional purposes in line with ethical and data protection standards.
- 4.1.3. Access to raw data shall be restricted solely to the Data Analysis Office and the Quality Assurance Department unless explicitly approved in exceptional cases.
- 4.1.4. In cases where replies to open-ended questions reveal concerns related to physical or mental wellbeing of respondents, the specific replies will be brought to the attention of the respective Deputy Principal.
- 4.1.5. Respondents shall be provided with clear information regarding the purpose of each data-collection operation and how their data will be handled.
- 4.1.6. Trust is sustained through consistent application of Quality Assurance principles, including integrity, transparency, stakeholder involvement and accountability.
- 4.1.7. Data collection outcomes shall support continual improvement, ensuring that results feed into evidence-based decision-making, quality enhancement cycles and institutional development, reinforcing trust through demonstrable action and responsiveness.

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4.2. Scientific Integrity

MCAST strives to ensure that its official data collection tools (surveys etc.) are developed with care and sound methodological practice, supporting trustworthy, meaningful and well-designed data collection.

Accordingly;

4.2.1. Data collection tools shall be designed in accordance with established research and survey methodology principles to ensure accuracy, reliability, and fairness.

4.2.2. Data collection tools shall be reviewed by qualified personnel, including the **Data Analysis Office** and the tools shall be constructed to minimise bias and maximise clarity, validity, and reliability of results.

4.3. Data Protection Compliance

MCAST is committed to handling all data collected for internal studies responsibly and in line with established data protection standards, ensuring that every internal data collection process respects legal requirements and institutional safeguards.

In light of this, all internal studies using data collection tools and processes must comply with:

- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- MCAST's Data Protection Policy and Procedure (MOP_ADM_001_14).
- Requirements and recommendations issued by the Data Protection Officer (DPO).

5. Approval, Validation and Control of Survey Tools

5.1. All approved data-collection tools shall undergo a structured validation process prior to their institutional use.

5.2. MCAST, through its Quality Assurance Department in liaison with the Data Analysis Office, shall maintain a register of approved and validated data-collection tools.

5.3. These validated tools shall be version controlled in line with the requirements of DOC 014 Document Control Procedure and made available for subsequent use by different College departments based on the needs of their study.

5.4. Tools shall be validated by the DPO, the REC, the Data Analysis Office and Quality Assurance Department. Validated Instruments will be presented to the VPC as apppoint of information.

5.5. The validation process shall confirm that:

- **Content validity** is established by ensuring that the tool accurately reflects the intended constructs, indicators or areas of inquiry. This involves expert review by the Quality Assurance Department and the Data Analysis Office.
- **Technical validity** is upheld through the assessment of question clarity, logical flow, appropriate scaling and alignment with analytical requirements, ensuring that collected data can be reliably and consistently analysed.

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- **Compliance validity** is achieved by verifying that all items adhere to MCAST’s Data Protection Policy, GDPR principles and any specific recommendations issued by the Data Protection Officer.
- **Pilot testing** is conducted, when appropriate, to assess respondent comprehension, identify potential sources of bias, confirm usability of the tool and ensure that the survey behaves as expected under real conditions. Feedback gathered during this stage shall inform refinements prior to official deployment.
- **Version control integrity** is maintained, ensuring that only the most up-to-date, validated versions of tools are used, and that any revisions follow established document-control procedures.
- **Ethical standards** are ensured through assessment of the MCAST Research Ethics Committee (REC) as external validator and ethical compliance actor

6. Approved Platforms

- 6.1. MCAST will maintain a list of approved internal studies and data collection platforms that meet institutional security, accessibility and privacy requirements.
- 6.2. While Microsoft Forms (M365 Environment) is the preferred official data collection tool due to its secure authentication, data residency safeguards and seamless integration with institutional systems, the use of alternative survey tools may be permitted.
- 6.3. Such use requires the submission of a formal justification and accompanying risk assessment and is subject to approval by the Quality Assurance Department and the College Data Protection Officer.

7. Ownership and Access to Data

- 7.1. Internal studies will be owned by the department responsible for the specific area of study.
- 7.2. Depending on the platform used, appropriate measures shall be implemented to ensure that access to raw data or containing identifiable information (if any) is restricted to the Quality Assurance Department and Data Analysis Office.
- 7.3. Data shared with other departments shall, as a standard practice, be anonymised and/or aggregated to prevent the identification of individual respondents.
- 7.4. Access to raw data or containing identifiable information (if any) may only be granted in exceptional and justified cases, on a need-to-know basis, in compliance with GDPR requirements, and through secure institutional channels.

Data Element	Who Has Access	Notes
Raw data responses	Data Analysis; QA	Access restricted to ensure confidentiality and protect respondent anonymity.
Anonymized datasets	Data Analysis; QA; requesting unit (where relevant)	All identifiers removed; used for reporting and quality assurance.
Final reports	QA; requesting unit; leadership	Reports never contain identifiable information.

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8. Procedure for the design, implementation and analysis of a data-collection tool

- 8.1. Requests for the design and dissemination of a data-collection tool such as (but not limited to) a survey or a tracer study are formally submitted to the Quality Assurance Department.
- 8.2. The requestor is to provide all the details related to the study such as:
- the purpose of the survey.
 - the target population.
 - the envisaged deadline.
 - Any expected outcomes or specific problems which need to be analysed.
 - Whether the survey forms part of an accreditation cycle, project requirement, or internal study.
- 8.3. QA will call a meeting with the internal study requestor to further discuss the parameters of the survey. During the meeting Survey Outcome Brief will be prepared outlining:
- Data collection questions.
 - Information needs.
 - Indicators and expected analysis.
 - Risks and limitations.
 - Methodology and sampling.
- 8.4. Throughout this process QA will ensure alignment with MCAST strategic and quality frameworks.
- 8.5. Following the meeting, the QA Department will review the request and the information gathered. If there is an existing approved internal study already meets the requestor's requirements, QA will recommend its use accordingly.
- 8.6. In cases where a new internal studies using data collection tools needs to be developed or where amendments need to be applied to an existing one, QA will provide any technical and conceptual support to construct the draft instrument, ensuring that:
- Questions are unbiased and scientifically sound.
 - Response scales align with statistical needs.
 - Survey length is appropriate.
 - The survey adheres to good questionnaire design principles
- 8.7. QA Department will liaise with the Data Analysis Office by forwarding the draft survey instrument or any internal data collection instrument including invitation letter for feedback and endorsement.
- 8.8. The Data Analysis Office shall review and analyse:
- Question clarity and neutrality,
 - Data types and analytic feasibility,
 - Structure of response options,
 - Suitability for analysis,
 - Anticipated reliability and validity concerns.
- 8.9. The Data Analysis Office may request revisions which will be managed by the QA Department. Once satisfied, the Data Analysis Office endorses the internal data collection instrument including survey questionnaire for DPO review.
- 8.10. The Data Protection Officer (DPO) will endorse the internal data collection including survey questionnaire following a review of the survey for compliance with GDPR,

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ensuring that the principles of data minimisation are respected and that the tool follows all anonymity safeguards.

- 8.11. The DPO shall also provide the mandatory covering text and invitation letter that is to appear at the beginning of the survey should the scope of this text differ from the text listed in the Data Protection Policy and Procedure referenced below. No internal data collection instrument may be issued without DPO approval.
- 8.12. Once the internal data collection instrument is ready, QA in liaison with the Data Analysis Office and the requestor will issue the survey through the department in charge, i.e.,
- In the case of surveys issued to staff: The Communications Office,
 - In the case of surveys issued to students (excluding alumni): The Information Systems Department,
 - Alumni Tracer Studies: Outreach and Student Affairs
 - Others: to be discussed on a case-by-case basis.
- 8.13. Upon receipt of the final set of raw data, it shall be reviewed by the Data Analysis Office and shall produce:
- A comprehensive analytical report, including charts, tables, and key findings.

Reference Document

MOP_ADM_001_14 Data Protection Policy and Procedure

9. Dissemination of Results and Follow-up Activities

- 9.1. All internal data collection including results shall be provided to the Principal & CEO and the Executive Management Team.
- 9.2. Internal data collection including results will be shared internally with the relevant stakeholders, according to their respective areas of interest and responsibility.
- 9.3. Internal data collection including results will be discussed in various fora governing the institution and will feed into the strategic decisions of the college as well as any Quality Improvement Plans.
- 9.4. QA will keep a record of all the reports issued by Data Analysis and will monitor the follow up activities such as:
- Coordination of follow-up actions, timelines and responsibilities;
 - Logging of any actions taken in the Quality Improvement Plan; and,
 - Monitoring of Progress and periodical reporting.

10. MCAST Annual Internal Studies Timeline

- 10.1. This table outlines the current MCAST Annual Internal Studies Timeline, indicating the typical academic-year-based schedule for the dissemination and analysis of key internal studies.
- 10.2. The timelines are indicative and may be adjusted as necessary to reflect operational needs.



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Survey (listed by priority)	Frequency (minimum tentative)	Owner (in liaison with QA)	Projected Dissemination Timeline	Projected Analysis Results Timeline
Staff Satisfaction	1 per academic year	HR department	March/April	October/November
Student Satisfaction	1 per academic year	QA	March/April	May/June
End of Programme Feedback Surveys Student	1 per academic year	Institute Directors	Apr/May	May/June
End of Unit Feedback Surveys Student	1 per academic year	Institute Directors	Apr/May (in the last lecture)	June/July
Alumni Tracer Study	1 per academic year	Student Support Services	May/June	July/August
Industry Partners Satisfaction Survey	1 per academic year	AWBL Dept	June/July	October/November