MCAST

# MQF Level 7

# RI7-05-21

## Master in Research Methods

## Course Specification

## Course Description

The MCAST Master in Research Methods (MResMethods) programme is carried out via a taught methodology component that is then developed into a detailed research endeavour that has to be implemented, presented and defended at Master's level. Students will have demonstrated originality in the application of knowledge by designing and developing advanced research skills using specific tools and a robust methodological approach. The programme guides the student towards compiling peer-reviewed research articles at publishable level. It provides the student with sound practical knowledge and experience in preparation for a career that includes a significant research element, as well as in the preparation and training for a research endeavour at doctoral level.

## Programme Learning Outcomes

At the end of the programme the learner will be able to:

1. *Identify main area of study and theme being researched, specifying research question/s and objectives, and critically research the literature on selected research topic*
2. *Appraise relevant research methodologies and techniques and their appropriate application*
3. *Evaluate main ethical issues implied by the choice of research*
4. *Develop and implement advanced research skills using specific tools and the corresponding methodological approach*
5. *Present and defend research outcomes before an appropriate audience, in a constructive manner.*

## Entry Requirements

A relevant first degree at 180 ECTS or more.

A MQF Level 5 qualification and adequate professional experience may also be considered for mature students.

# Key Information

Awarding Body – MCAST

Accreditation Status – Accredited via MCAST's Self Accreditation Process (MCAST holds Self-Accrediting Status as per 1st schedule of Legal Notice 296/2012)

Type of Programme: Qualification

| MQF Level | Examples of Qualifications | 'Qualification' Minimum Credits Required | 'Award' Credits Required |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level 8 | Doctoral Degree<br>Third Cycle Bologna Process | NA | NA |
| Level 7 | Masters<br>Second Cycle Bologna Process | 90-120 | Less than 30 |
| | Post-Graduate Diploma | 60 | |
| | Post-Graduate Certificate | 30 | |
| Level 6 | Bachelor[23]/Bachelor (Hons.)[24]<br>First Cycle Bologna Process | 180-240 | Less than 180 |
| Level 5 | Short Cycle Qualification | 120 | Less than 60 |
| | Undergraduate Higher Diploma | 90 | |
| | Undergraduate Diploma | 60 | |
| | Undergraduate Certificate | 30 | |
| | VET Level 5 Programme[25] | 60-120 | |
| Level 4 | Pre-Tertiary Certificate | 30 | Less than 120 |
| | VET Level 4 Programme[26] | 120 | |
| | MATSEC Certificate | NA | |
| Level 3 | VET Level 3 Programme[27] | 60 | Less than 60 |
| | General and Subject Certificate | NA | |
| Level 2 | VET Level 2 Programme[28] | 60 | Less than 60 |
| | General and Subject Certificate | NA | |
| Level 1 | VET Level 1 Programme[29] | 40 | Less than 40 |
| | General and Subject Certificate | NA | |
| Introductory Level A | Preparatory Programme | 30 | Less than 30 |
| Introductory Level B | Pre-entry Basic Skills Course | 30 | Less than 30 |

Table 1: Minimum number of credits for 'Qualifications' and parameters for 'Awards'

Fig.1: p56, Ministry for Education and Employment & National Commission for Further and Higher Education Malta (2016). *Referencing Report, 4th Edition*. NCFHE.

Total number of Hours: 2250

Mode of attendance: Part Time

Duration: 3 Years

The official language of instruction at MCAST is English. All notes and textbooks are in English (except for language courses which will be in the respective language being instructed). International candidates will be requested to meet English language certification requirements for access to the course.

This course will be offered at

MCAST has four campuses as follows:

**MCAST Main Campus**
Triq Kordin, Paola, Malta

All courses except for the Institute for the Creative Arts, Centre of Agriculture, Aquatics and Animal Sciences are offered here.

**Institute for the Creative Arts**
Mosta Campus
Misraħ Għonoq Tarġa Gap,
Mosta

**Institute of Applied Sciences,**
**Centre of Agriculture, Aquatics and Animal Sciences,**
Luqa Road, Qormi

**Gozo Campus**
J.F. De Chambray Street
MCAST, Għajnsielem
Gozo

*Teaching, Learning and Assessment*

The programmes offered are vocational in nature and entail both theoretical lectures delivered in classes as well as practical elements that are delivered in laboratories, workshops, salons, simulators as the module requirements dictate.

Each module or unit entails a number of in person and/or online contact learning hours that are delivered by the lecturer or tutor directly (See also section 'Total Learning Hours).

Access to all resources is provided to all registered students. These include study resources in paper or electronic format through the Library and Resource Centre as well

as tools, software, equipment and machinery that are provided by the respective institutes depending on the requirements of the course or module.

Students may however be required to provide consumable material for use during practical sessions and projects unless these are explicitly provided by the College.

All Units of study are assessed throughout the academic year through continuous assessment using a variety of assessment tools. Coursework tasks are exclusively based on the Learning Outcomes and Grading Criteria as prescribed in the course specification. The Learning Outcomes and Grading Criteria are communicated to the Student via the coursework documentation.

The method of assessment shall reflect the Level, credit points (ECTS) and the schedule of time-tabled/non-timetabled hours of learning of each study unit. A variety of assessment instruments, not solely Time Constrained Assignments/Exams, are used to gather and interpret evidence of Student competence toward pre-established grading criteria that are aligned to the learning outcomes of each unit of the programme of study.

Grading criteria are assessed through a number of tasks, each task being assigned a number of marks. The number of grading criteria is included in the respective Programme Specification.

The distribution of marks and assessment mode depends on the nature and objectives of the unit in question.

Coursework shall normally be completed during the semester in which the Unit is delivered.

Time-constrained assignments may be held between 8 am and 8 pm during the delivery period of a Unit, or at the end of the semester in which the Unit is completed. The dates are notified and published on the Institute notice boards or through other means of communication.

Certain circumstances (such as but not limited to the Covid 19 pandemic) may lead Institutes and Centres to hold teaching and assessment remotely (online) as per MCAST QA Policy and Standard for Online Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Doc 020) available via link https://www.mcast.edu.mt/college-documents/

The Programme Regulations referenced below apply. (DOC016 available at: link https://www.mcast.edu.mt/college-documents/

*Total Learning Hours*

The total learning hours required for each unit or module are determined as follows:

| Credits (ECTS) | Indicative contact hours | Total Student workload (hrs) | Self-Learning and Assessment Hours |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 5 – 10 hrs | 25 hrs | 20-15 hrs* |
| 2 | 10 – 20 hrs | 50 hrs | 40-30 hrs* |
| 3 | 15 – 30 hrs | 75 hrs | 60-45 hrs* |
| 4 | 20 – 40 hrs | 100 hrs | 80-60 hrs* |
| 6 | 30 – 60 hrs | 150 Hrs | 120-90 hrs* |
| 9 | 45 – 90 hrs | 225 hrs | 180-135 hrs* |
| 12 | 60 – 120 hrs | 300 hrs | 240-180 hrs* |

* The 'Self-Learning and Assessment Hours' amount to the difference between the contact hours and total student workload.

*Grading system*

All MCAST programmes adopt a learner centred approach through the focus on Learning Outcomes. The assessment of MCAST programmes is criterion-referenced and thus assessors are required to assess learners' evidence against a pre-determined set of Learning Outcomes and assessment criteria.

For a student to be deemed to have successfully passed a unit, a minimum of 50% (grade D) must be achieved. In case of part time programmes, the student must achieve a minimum of 45% to successfully pass the unit.

All units are individually graded as follows:
A* (90-100)
A (80-89)
B (70-79)
C (60-69)

D (50-59)
Unsatisfactory work is graded as 'U'.

Work-based learning units are graded on a Pass/Fail basis only.

Detailed information regarding the grading system may be found in the following document: DOC 016 available at: link https://www.mcast.edu.mt/college-documents/

*Intake Dates*

•MCAST opens calls for application once a year between July and August of each year for prospective applicants residing in MALTA.
•Applications to full-time courses from international students not residing in MALTA are accepted between April and Mid-August.
•For exact dates re calls for applications please follow this link https://www.mcast.edu.mt/online-applications-2/

*Course Fees*

MCAST course are free for Maltese and EU candidates. International candidates coming from outside the EU need to pay fees for the respective course. Course fees are set on a per-level and course duration basis. For access to course fee structure and payment methods please visit https://www.mcast.edu.mt/fee-payments-for-non-eu-candidates/.

*Method of Application*

Applications to full-time courses are received online via the College Management Information System. Candidates can log in using Maltese Electronic ID (eID) or European eIDAS (electronic identification and trust services) to access the system directly and create an account as the identity is verified electronically via these secure services.

Non-EU candidates need to request account creation though an online form by providing proof of identification and basic data. Once the identity is verified and the account is created the candidate may proceed with the online application according to the same instructions applicable to all other candidates.

Non-EU candidates require a study visa in order to travel to Malta and joint the course applied for. For further information re study-visa please access https://www.identitymalta.com/unit/central-visa-unit/.

For access to instructions on how to apply online please visit https://www.mcast.edu.mt/online-applications-2/

*Contact details for requesting further information about future learning opportunities:*

**MCAST Career Guidance**
Tel: 2398 7135/6
Email: career.guidance@mcast.edu.mt

## Current Approved Programme Structure

| Unit Code | Unit Title | ECTS | Year |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Post-Graduate Certificate in Research Methods** | | | |
| CDRSH-706-1803 | Basics of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods | 6 | 1 |
| CDRSH-706-1804 | Research Methodology related to the Chosen Research Topic | 6 | 1 |
| CDRSH-706-1805 | Formulating an Ethically Sound Research Proposal | 6 | 1 |
| CDRSH-712-1806 | Designing and Piloting a Research Project | 12 | 1 |
| **Post-Graduate Diploma in Research Methods** | | | |
| CDRSH-730-1901 | Research Project | 30 | 2 |
| **Masters in Research** | | | |
| CDRSH-730-2001 | Dissertation | 30 | 3 |
| **Total ECTS** | | 90 | / |

# CDRSH-706-1803: Basics of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods

Unit Level (MQF/EQF): 7

Credits: 6

Delivery Mode: Fully Face-to-Face Learning

Total Learning Hours: 150

## Unit Description

This unit will give the candidate core research skills and insights into correct research practices and methods of data enquiry. It provides the student with the opportunity to understand and master excellently the main basic concepts in applied research and development methods. The processes learned will direct the student to collect and analyse data in quantitative and/or qualitative research. This course is linked to the student's design and piloting of the research project.

## Learning Outcomes

**On completion of this unit the learner will be able to**

1. *Identify a research theme;*
2. *Carry out an early literature review on existing research/knowledge on the theme;*
3. *Suggest research objective/s and possibly a research question;*
4. *Recommend a suitable research methodology and justify own choice.*

# Unit: CDRSH-706-1804 - Research Methodology related to the Chosen Research Topic

Unit Level (MQF/EQF): 7

Credits: 6

Delivery Mode: Fully Face-to-Face Learning

Total Learning Hours: 150

## Unit Description

This unit will give the candidate core research skills and insights into general research design, correct methods of data enquiry such as survey methodology or in depth-interviews and methods of data analysis such as multivariate analysis or grounded theory method. This unit provides the student with the opportunity to understand and master the main basic concepts in applied research methods. In particular, the student has to demonstrate deep reading into at least two of the three methodology domains: general research methods; method of enquiry; quantitative or qualitative research methodology. For this Module students will also be tasked with undertaking out a critical literature review on their selected research topic by reviewing a reaction of peer academic journals. Students shall be expected to be able to confidently interpret the rationale and applicability of the chosen research methodology in front of an audience.

## Learning Outcomes

**On completion of this unit the learner will be able to**

1. *Identify and define essential issues for general research methods; method of data enquiry; quantitative or qualitative research methodology*
2. *Evaluate methods of data enquiry for the constructivist/qualitative and positivist/quantitative research philosophies.*
3. *Evaluate methods of data analysis for the constructivist/qualitative and positivist/quantitative research philosophies.*
4. *Evaluate the suitability of secondary data for answering research question(s) and meeting objectives in terms of coverage, validity, reliability and measurement bias for the chosen (qualitative or quantitative) research methodology.*

# Unit: CDRSH-706-1805 - Formulating an Ethically Sound Research Proposal

Unit Level (MQF/EQF): 7

Credits: 6

Delivery Mode: Fully Face-to-Face Learning

Total Learning Hours: 150

## Unit Description

This unit gives the student core clear insights into ethical research practices, methodologies and the basic research tools and techniques utilised within the relevant ethical parameters. This unit provides the student with the opportunity to formulate an ethically sound research proposal based on the main basic concepts in applied research methods. The student specifies a Research Abstract by evaluating a preliminary critical literature review on the selected research topic based on reviewing a selection of peer academic journals and stipulating the physical or analytical outcome of the research study through the formulation of the purpose statement. In particular, the student has to specify the main area and theme of study being researched, identify the research problem, delineate the research objectives, justify the adoption of the research methodology, devise a sampling strategy to select participants, propose correct methods of data enquiry by outlining the data collection plan, draw up a Research Project Plan and evaluate main ethical issues implied by the choice of research.

## Learning Outcomes

**On completion of this unit the learner will be able to**

1. *Identify the main area of study and theme being researched*
2. *Evaluate a preliminary critical literature review on their selected research topic based*
3. *Justify the adoption of the research methodology and propose correct methods of data enquiry by outlining the data collection plan and draw up a Research Project Plan*
4. *Evaluate main ethical issues implied by the choice of research*

# Unit: CDRSH-712-1806 - Designing and Piloting a Research Project

Unit Level (MQF/EQF): 7

Credits: 12

Delivery Mode: Fully Face-to-Face Learning

Total Learning Hours: 300

## Unit Description

This unit continues to provide the student core clear insights into research practices, methodologies and the basic research tools and techniques. It seeks to enhance the research skills required for an academic, both to allow for more effective mentoring of undergraduate dissertation students but also to enable the academic to become a competent researcher in his/her own right. Other participants will also enhance their research skills in their respective fields. This unit provides the student with the opportunity to design and pilot a research project. The student formulates and clarifies the research topic; generate ideas that help in the selection of a suitable research topic; transforms research ideas into a research project that has valid research question(s) and objectives. The student also formulates the research design and identifies the main research strategies. In particular, the student selects quantitative and/or qualitative data collection method and critically reviews the literature; primary, secondary and tertiary literature sources; the relevance, value and efficiency of the literature found accurately. The student evaluates the main ethical issues implied by the choice of research. The student discusses and analyses findings from the data collected, whilst ensuring credibility of research findings by emphasizing factors relating to Reliability and Validity. The report, of approximately 10,000 to 15,000 words, is written in a coherent, structured and appropriate way; organising the project's content which encompasses a background to the study delineating the research question/s and corresponding objectives, selection of research methodology and research enquiry, drawing up of conceptual model, analysis of findings, conclusions and recommendations for future research.

## Learning Outcomes

**On completion of this unit the learner will be able to**

1. *Identify the main area of study and theme being researched*
2. *Evaluate a preliminary critical literature review on their selected research topic based*
3. *Justify the adoption of the research methodology and adopts correct methods of data enquiry*
4. *Analyse findings from data collected and draw up conclusions. Formulate the conceptual model, where necessary.*
5. *Evaluate main ethical issues implied by the choice of research*

# Unit: CDRSH-730-1901 - Research Project

Unit Level (MQF/EQF): 7

Credits: 30

Delivery Mode: Fully Face-to-Face Learning

Total Learning Hours: 750

## Unit Description

The Post-Graduate Diploma in Research Methods, is a natural progression for candidates successfully completing the research certificate and wishing to further enhance their research skills. Before proceeding to the second stage of the Research Methods program, the student would have completed successfully the Post-Graduate Certificate in Research Methods. Through this Certificate, the student would have developed and enhanced core research skills; acquired a basic understanding of the broader context of research; critically appraised and interpreted preliminary secondary literature and prepared a research proposal of appropriate research design, measurement criteria, and consideration towards ethical issues. The second stage is that of the Post-Graduate Diploma in Research Methods, at a further 30 ECTS cumulating to a total of 60 ECTS. A stronger focus is placed here on methods of data enquiry and on key techniques for data analysis and interpretation. Within this second stage the candidate will be further exposed to robust quantitative and qualitative data acquisition and analytic methodologies, and sound research writing practices.

Candidates that opt for the Quantitative approach are directed to both descriptive and exploratory multivariate techniques utilizing tools such as SPSS. Candidates that adopt a Qualitative stance shall learn how to carry out qualitative analysis on textual data using basic grounded theory concepts, and using tools such as MAXQDA. A main component of this stage shall be the implementation of a research project that builds from the pilot research endeavour carried out in the first stage.

## Learning Outcomes

**On completion of this unit the learner will be able to**

1. *Confirm the identification of the main area of study and theme being researched*
2. *Evaluate an enhanced critical literature review on the selected research topic*
3. *Justify adoption of research methodology and selection of correct methods of data enquiry through effective use of resources and tools*
4. *Evaluate main ethical issues implied by the choice of research.*

# Unit: CDRSH-730-2001 - Dissertation

Unit Level (MQF/EQF): 7

Credits: 30

Delivery Mode: Fully Face-to-Face Learning

Total Learning Hours: 750

## Unit Description

The Masters in Research is a natural progression for candidates successfully completing the research diploma and wishing to further specialise in their research skills. Before proceeding to the third stage of the Research Methods program, the student would have completed successfully the Post-Graduate Certificate in Research Methods and completed successfully all the learning outcomes of the diploma programme. The third stage of the programme is the full Masters in Research, building from the initial two successive stages, at a further 30 ECTS cumulating to a total of 90 ECTS. This research endeavour shall build from the applied research components of the first two stages, utilizing the design and preparation of the first stage and the pilot implementation of the second stage to develop a sound and defendable research endeavour. A stronger focus is placed here on methods of data enquiry and on key techniques for data analysis and interpretation. Within this third stage the candidate will be further exposed to robust quantitative and qualitative data acquisition and analytic methodologies, and sound research writing practices. This third stage is carried out via a detailed research project that has to be presented to, and defended before a select, expert audience.

## Learning Outcomes

**On completion of this unit the learner will be able to**

1. *Identify main area of study and theme being researched, specifying research question/s and objectives, and critically research the literature on selected research topic*
2. *Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of relevant research methodologies and techniques and their appropriate application*
3. *Evaluate main ethical issues implied by the choice of research.*
4. *Develop and implement advanced research skills using specific tools and the corresponding methodological approach.*
5. *Constructively present and defend research outcomes before an appropriate audience.*