



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA

Government response to the consultation on *The Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology Act*

31st August 2021

*Ministry for Education
Great Siege Road, Floriana*

This publication (excluding Logos) may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. This material must be acknowledged as Government of Malta and the title of the publication specified.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent at onlineconsultations@gov.mt.

Published by the Ministry for Education.

Contents

CONTENTS

Contents.....	3
Executive Summary	4
Introduction and overview	4
Responses to the consultation and process used to seek stakeholder views	5
Summary of responses and decisions.....	5
Implementation.....	6
Contact Details	6
Detailed overview of responses and the Government’s response.....	6
Annex A: List of respondents	10

Executive Summary

Introduction and overview

1. A brief introduction about the subject.

The aim is for MCAST to have an act of its own which is distinct and separate from the Education Act. The act seeks to primarily give greater autonomy to MCAST as an institution. Another aim is to have better representation of stakeholders in decision making bodies by widening the National profile of the Board of Governors and strengthening the relations between the College and industry to reflect the exigencies of the industry in the College's learning methods and educational programmes. The act also promotes strengthening accountability and transparency particularly through improving the definitions of the remit, the responsibilities and the composition of the internal governing and management structures streamlining decision-making and implementation. As a Vocational institution an emphasis is being made on the centrality of all forms of work-based learning within the education and training process at MCAST, in alignment with the Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship Act (2018) and on highlighting the importance of applied and impact-based research to enrich and innovate vocational and professional education and training to meet the challenges of Industry 4.0/ 5.0. Furthermore, the act seeks to widen the delivery of vocational education and training at all levels of the Malta Qualifications Framework particularly in upskilling and the reskilling of Malta's workforce.

The new MCAST Act aims to:

1. Better **address the demands arising from dynamic local and global economic and industry developments** through the provision of free quality vocational education and training in Malta.
2. **Enshrine legal principles and structures** reflective of the Framework for Educational Strategy for Malta 2015-2024, the Further and Higher Education Strategy 2020 and the National Vocational Education and Training Policy.
3. **Strengthen the institutional link** between VET in secondary education (*My Journey*) and further and higher education.
4. **Introduce for the first time**, in local legislation, the concept of **VPET**.

2. The public consultation date.

Include the objective and purpose of the public consultation.

On 28th May 2021, the Government published a consultation paper setting out proposals for a new MCAST Act consisting of the draft bill itself in order to gain feedback from stakeholders regarding the Act itself.

3. This consultation sought views on:

- Whether the new act will improve MCAST's profile
- The impact the new act would have on vocational education in Malta
- The advantages in MCAST becoming more autonomous
- Whether the act will increase opportunities of employability for students

Responses to the consultation and process used to seek stakeholder views

This document is the Government Response to this consultation and sets out the Government's decisions on these matters.

4. The closing date of the public consultation. Which methods were used to receive the feedback. The total amount of responses. From whom you received the feedback.

The consultation closed on 30th June 2021. The consultation document was available online and responses were accepted via email. In total, there were 10 responses. These were received from stakeholders which include industry, trade unions and individuals. A list of respondents can be found at Annex A.

5. Include (if any) meetings with stakeholders and list who the stakeholders were.

No meetings were held.

Summary of responses and decisions

The following is a summary of the consultation responses received. We would like to thank all those who took the time to respond to the consultation and participate in stakeholder meetings around the consultation exercise.

6. Statistics.

- Total feedback received: 10
- Total feedback received by individuals: 7
- Total feedback received by organisations: 3
- Total feedback received through email: 10
- Total feedback received through online form: 0
- Total feedback received by post: 0

7. Summary of feedback received.

The main feedback received consisted of the following:

1. The inclusion of the Institute Deputy Directors as principal officers of the College and their consequential inclusion in a number of governing bodies
2. The Composition of the Board of Governors as proposed. A significant number of stakeholders are particularly opposed to the involvement of the Permanent Secretary.
3. The Retention of balance between MCAST as an educational institution (in the general sense) vs. that of an institution which prepares future employees. In this regard, the

involvement of industry representatives when compared to the number of academics involved in governing bodies was particularly highlighted.

4. The greater involvement and engagement with trade union in day to day operations of the College.

Other comments referred to:

1. The Role of the Internal Audit Officer
2. The Inclusion of foreign students
3. The experience of lecturers in Industry
4. The governance of curriculum development
5. The greater focus and priority being given to MQF Levels 4 and 5 study programmes

8. Your assessment and the Government's decision (list the Government's decisions).

In view of this and the evidence and opinions from the consultation exercise, the Government has decided to take the decisions as summarised below:

- To implement changes to the text whereby the balance between MCAST as an educational institution vs an institution that prepares future employees is better struck
- To implement changes to the text as to have greater involvement by recognised trade unions in day to day decisions
- To implement changes to the text as to better define the role of the Internal Audit Office
- To refine certain individual articles within the text as to bring more clarity when it comes to its interpretation

Implementation

9. When you intend to implement the decisions

All changes adopted have been included in the draft text, prior to the Bill being proposed in Parliament.

Contact Details

If you have any questions regarding this response, please contact: sue.falzon@gov.mt – Events MFED

Detailed overview of responses and the Government's response

The following section provides a brief summary of the initial proposals and the responses received, before setting out the final decision that has been made.

Question 1 : *DO YOU THINK THIS NEW ACT WILL IMPROVE MCAST'S PROFILE?*

Consultation Proposal

- 1.1 The proposed MCAST Act outlined a number of measures which, collectively, aim at creating mechanisms that safeguards business continuity, solid good governance and outlines better the roles and responsibilities of the different offices. All this contributes to the improvement of the MCAST profile.
- 1.2 The majority of respondents did not answer this question or were unable to express a direct response to this question.
- 1.3 The only respondent to this question cited the need for complementary systematic changes, better definition of roles, the need for additional resources and more frequent meetings of the Governing Board.

Post-consultation analysis / Final decision

- 1.4 Having considered the proposals put forward, the Ministry is of the opinion that the Governing Board should remain focused on the strategic, non-executive level of the College's management, with substantial meetings held every quarter.

Question 2 : *WHAT IMPACT WILL THIS NEW ACT HAVE ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN MALTA?*

Consultation Proposal

- 2.1 The proposed MCAST Act outlined a number of measures which will also ensure that MCAST is able to better address the demands arising from dynamic local and global economic and industry developments through the provision of free quality vocational education and training in Malta. It will also strengthen the institutional link between VET in secondary education (*My Journey*) and further and higher education.
- 2.2 The majority of respondents did not answer this question or were unable to express a direct response to this question.
- 2.3 The only respondent to this question confirmed that this proposed act reinforces Government's commitment towards the importance of VET in Malta and insisted that credibility of VET is necessary and possible by working very closely with industry.

Post-consultation analysis / Final decision

- 2.4 The Ministry reconfirms its intention to work towards having in place legal principles and structures reflective of the priority placed on VET in the Maltese context and as indicated in the Framework for Educational Strategy for Malta 2015-2024, the Further and Higher Education Strategy 2020 and the National Vocational Education and Training Policy.

Question 3 : *WHAT ADVANTAGES ARE THERE IN MCAST BECOMING MORE AUTONOMOUS?*

Consultation Proposal

- 3.1 The proposed MCAST Act outlined more robust governing structures, clarified better the roles and responsibilities of the different offices and officers, widening the Board of Governing and brought more value-added in the strategic orientation.
- 3.2 The majority of respondents did not answer this question or were unable to express a direct response to this question.
- 3.3 The only respondent to this question confirmed that the autonomy to the College is necessary to ensure the agility for it to respond better to industry needs. The respondent also highlighted the need for the role of the Internal Audit Office to be clarified in the legislation; to refer to revenue generated by foreign students; and to distance political influence from the appointment of board members.

Post-consultation analysis / Final decision

- 3.4 Having considered the proposals put forward, the Ministry is of the opinion that MCAST should operate in the most autonomous manner possible within the context of the public administration and the context of the Ministry within which it falls under. The College will benefit from a good proportion of representatives from both the Ministry, staff, students, industry and the social partners, thus securing a balance of powers and a reasonable degree of checks and balances. The remit and role of the Internal Audit Office is retained within the Office of the President of the Board of Governors.

Question 4: *DO YOU THINK THAT THIS ACT WILL INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES OF EMPLOYABILITY FOR THE STUDENTS?*

Consultation Proposal

- 4.1 The proposed MCAST Act emphasizes the centrality of all forms of work-based learning within the education and training process at MCAST, in alignment with the Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship Act. It also highlights the importance of applied and impact-based research to enrich and innovate vocational and professional education and training to meet the challenges of Industry 4.0. Part of the Ministry's proposal is to widen the delivery of vocational education and training at all levels of the Malta Qualifications Framework particularly in upskilling and the reskilling of Malta's workforce
- 4.2 The majority of respondents did not answer this question or were unable to express a direct response to this question.
- 4.3 The only respondent to this question confirmed that the College cannot rely on the Act alone to increase opportunities for the employability of students. The College needs a strategy to ensure continued relevance of its programmes, retain contacts with industry and encourage lecturers to widen their industry experience. The proposal received suggests that the Board of Governors should remain responsible for the curriculum and also drives MCAST to focus on its Level 4 and Level 5 study programmes, rather than on the higher level qualifications.

Post-consultation analysis / Final decision

4.4 Having considered the proposals put forward, the Ministry disagrees with the declaration that the responsibility of the Curriculum Department should remain with the Board of Governors. This would entail the interventions and decisions on the Curriculum by the non-executive sector of MCAST (the Board of Governors) while removing it from the hands of the true professionals (lecturers, Directors, Deputy Principals, Principal), for whom the Curriculum is their daily 'bread and butter'. The College already offers the majority of its courses at the indicated MQF Levels 4 and 5. Ultimately, the College is an educational institution which serves, first and foremost, the students to realise their potential at whichever level, and in whichever subject area they wish to advance their educational journey. This offering needs to be balanced with industry driven needs for particular sectoral skills.

Annex A: List of respondents

Organisation
Private Individuals (7)
Secretariat for Catholic Education
The Malta Union of Teachers
The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and the Industry