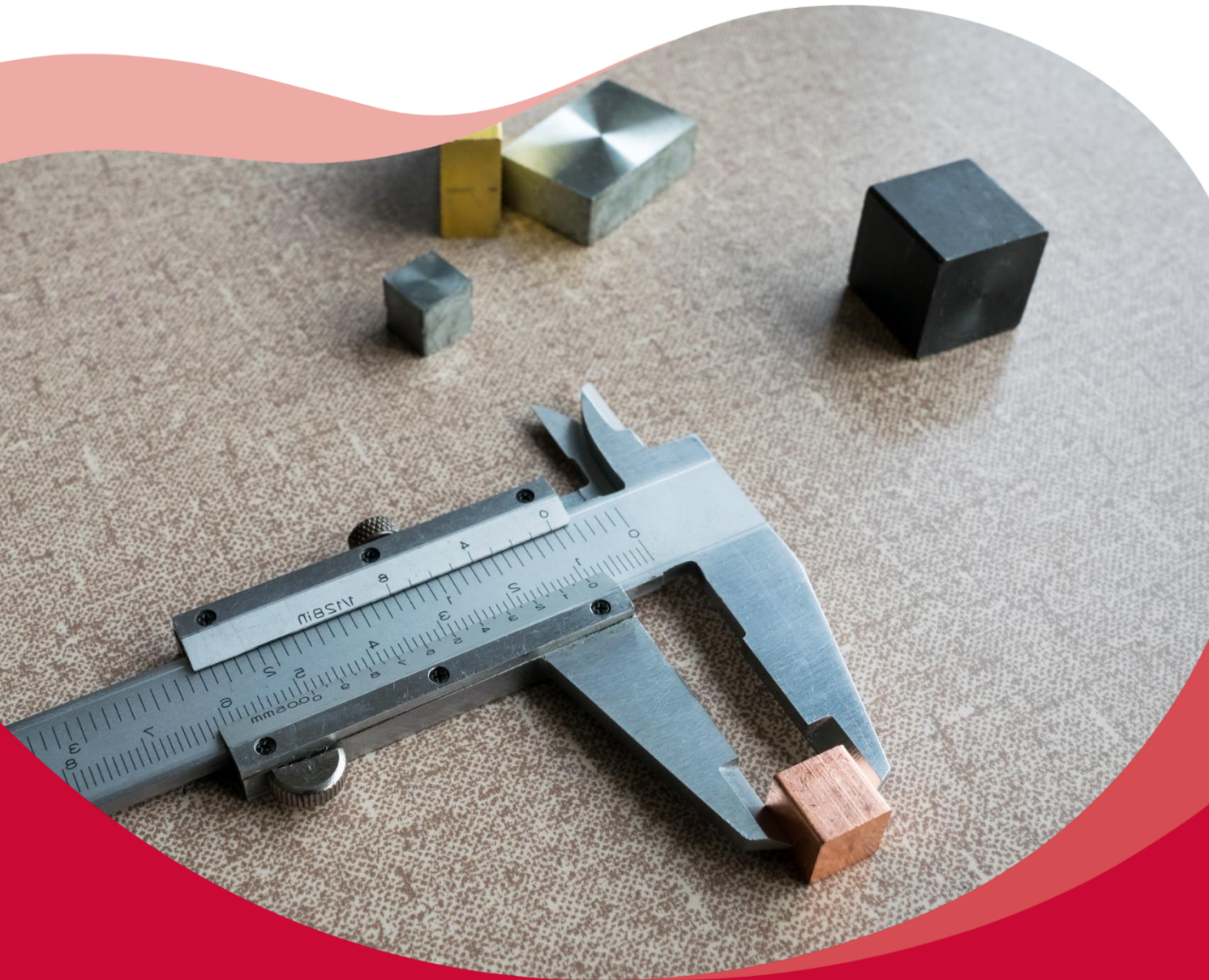




L-Università  
ta' Malta

MATSEC  
Examinations Board



## Syllabus Panels: Guidelines


MATSEC


2022

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**A. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- A.01. Different syllabus panels are to, as much as possible, follow the guidelines set in this document. This ensures a level of comparability between different syllabi at all levels.
- A.02. Syllabi are to specify, as clearly as possible, the knowledge, skills, competencies and level of understanding that successful candidates are expected to demonstrate.
- A.03. Syllabi need to allow for a pedagogically sound course outline taking into consideration the length of course and the school candidates' modal age.
- A.04. Each syllabus needs to set out clearly how candidates are to be assessed and graded.

## B. SYLLABUS CONTENT AND FORMAT

Each syllabus is required to have a section on each of the following components: Aims, Assessment Objectives, Subject Content, and Scheme of Assessment.

### AIMS

Aims are broad statements stating the general education outcomes that a successful candidate should be able to demonstrate.

- B.01. The Aims section should state the aims of the course leading to a qualification of the appropriate level (SEC, AM or IM) in the subject. This section should mention, in general terms, the knowledge (breadth and depth), the cognitive and practical skills, and the attitudes and values (where appropriate) that candidates should develop on completion of the course of studies.
- B.02. Not all the aims can be assessed by an examination. It is important for candidates to realise that their course of studies targets at developing a wide range of skills and attitudes and is not just a preparation for assessment.
- B.03. A clear distinction needs to be made between the aims of courses in subjects at the different levels. IM level syllabi equate to approximately a third of AM level syllabi.
- B.04. In the case of IM and AM level syllabi of those subjects that are also offered at SEC level, the syllabus should consider whether to include the following aim:

*“This syllabus assumes knowledge of the subject at SEC level. Its aim is to consolidate this knowledge and to extent it to include more advanced concepts, which are dealt with in a broad manner. Most of these new concepts are included to provide a general and coherent view of the subject”.*

- B.05. IM level syllabi might also consider adding the following to the preceding point:

*“and they will not be treated with the same rigour and at the same depth as in the Advanced level course in the subject.”*

## ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

Assessment Objectives are those specific objectives derived from the aims of the course and which are to be **assessed** (by written, oral, aural, and/or practical examination/s and/or coursework).

- B.06. Assessment objective usually describe what candidates should be able to do or demonstrate during the examination.
- B.07. Candidates can be expected to:
- a. demonstrate knowledge and understanding of specific concepts, principles, and theories or theoretical frameworks;
  - b. apply knowledge to explain unfamiliar situations;
  - c. analyse given information;
  - d. synthesise or integrate knowledge from various areas of the subject;
  - e. evaluate or judge a piece of work, an argument, or an interpretation.

## SUBJECT CONTENT

- B.08. Subject Content should be as specific as possible in order to avoid misinterpretation.
- B.09. Further clarifications are to be included wherever appropriate. These might include stating what is **not** expected from candidates.
- B.10. It is agreed that in some subjects with a highly developed hierarchical conceptual framework the content can be listed in great details in some other subjects.
- B.11. The content should include:
- content knowledge: specific facts, concepts, principles, theories or theoretical frameworks that should be covered during the course of studies;
  - knowledge skills: understanding, application of knowledge, analysis synthesis and evaluation with reference to specific topics and themes.
  - practical skills: psychomotor skills and techniques relating to the use of equipment, apparatus and materials.
  - oral and aural skills: skills relating particularly to languages and music.
- B.12. Higher educational outcomes (e.g. apply, analyse, synthesis and evaluate) automatically assumed required knowledge and understanding of the same concepts. However, when the base of knowledge and understanding required by candidates is not clear, this should also be stated.
- B.13. The grouping of topics into themes or modules should be considered by all subject panels, especially where this helps learners to understand the relationship between the various sections of the subject. It must be clear, however, that the syllabus is **not** meant as a teaching schemes and that teachers are free to adopt any teaching sequence they deem suitable for their students and the educational content in which they operate as long as these are in line with aims of the syllabus.
- B.14. The syllabus should, as much as possible, refrain from stating set textbooks. A list of reference might be used.
- B.15. Where the syllabus refers to set texts, musical compositions, artistic works, economic data and similar works.
- these should be clearly indicated, including title, publisher, and date of the edition;
  - panels should not set works that are out of print or not easily available to students;
  - panels should be free of bias in the selection of such work. Panel members who are involved in the production/publication of a discussed text, or are related by consanguinity or by affinity to the third degree inclusive to such person, should be exempted from the panel for this discussion.
- B.16. In some subjects (e.g. the sciences, technical subjects, music), besides subject content, the syllabus needs to include a list of symbols, conventions, tables and mathematical techniques that candidates are expected to know. These need **not** be listed if they will be given in the examination.

- B.17. Information that will be provided during the examination, e.g. equations that candidates are not expected to memorise but should be able to use, should be clearly stated.

### SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT

- B.18. The Scheme of Assessment should inform the candidates about the components of the examination and the general distribution of marks.
- B.19. This section of the syllabus should include details about:
- a. the number of the papers and any differences between them;
    - \* for SEC level subjects, the written examination should consist of Paper I (a core paper) and Paper II, of which two versions at different levels are to be set. Of these, Paper IIA is more challenging than Paper IIB.
    - \* for SEC Vocational Subjects three yearly assessments are set of which two are set by the teacher while one is a centrally set controlled assessment of 1 ½ hours.
    - \* for IM level subjects one paper of 3 hours is set.
    - \* for AM level subjects, between three to four papers are set. Written papers are usually of a length of 3 hours.
  - b. whether the paper is divided into sections and whether the sections refer different parts of the syllabus;
  - c. whether there will be a choice of sections or questions, with a clear indication of any compulsory sections or questions and the (approximate) number of optional questions to choose from;
  - d. the weighting of each paper and each section, where applicable;
  - e. the types of question that will be set, where applicable (e.g. short-answer, essay-type, comprehension-type, summaries, calculations, production of diagrams, drawings, computer programs, musical compositions);
  - f. practical tests;
  - g. oral and aural tests (e.g., duration, methods of assessment, choice of texts/pictures/role play);
  - h. school-based assessment.
- B.20. In the case of oral/aural tests and school-based assessments (SBA) especially, the syllabus panel should consider quality assurance and control mechanisms. Minimally, the syllabus should indicate the type of tasks that the candidates are required to perform and the expected level of achievement. This is best indicated by a list of criteria that should be applied for marking and moderating/verifying these tests and tasks.

## MATSEC Regulations: Syllabus Panels Guidelines

- B.21. In the case of SBA components, the syllabus should indicate the provisions to be made for private candidates.
- B.22. If new methods of assessment are envisaged, the syllabus panel is expected to bear in mind the financial and administrative burdens, and the currently available and potential physical and human resources that are needed by the schools to implement the assessment.
- B.23. When the syllabus panel believes that candidate attainment in one or more parts of the assessment is imperative for obtaining a certain grade, this should be stated as follows, changing the underlined terms as necessary:

*“Candidates can obtain a grade between X and Y (inclusive) if they satisfy the examiner in the (written/practical/all) component/s, irrespective of the total marks obtained.”*

### SPECIMEN PAPERS

- B.24. When a new syllabus is presented or when substantial changes are made to the current syllabus, the syllabus panel should issue specimen papers. A specimen paper should have the same format as the intended examination paper/s. It may include questions from past MATSEC examination papers.
- B.25. Any specimen papers circulated with the syllabus are only meant to give an indication of the level expected of the candidates. In the specimen papers, it should be stated quite clearly that the actual examination paper may vary substantially in the number of questions and type of questions set, in accordance with the provisions of the syllabus.



**C. PROCEDURE ADOPTED BY SYLLABUS PANELS**

- C.01. The Chairperson is to call meetings of the syllabus panel and inform the PSAO concerned of these meetings.
- C.02. The concerned PSAO will normally attend panel meetings. In some cases, another representative of the MATSEC Support Unit might attend for panel meetings.
- C.03. One of the members of the panel is to be appointed to keep minutes. These should record decisions only and should be forwarded to the PSAO within fifteen days of the meeting. Copies 13 of the minutes will be kept at the MATSEC Support Unit.
- C.04. The minutes should record attendance. The Chairperson should inform the MATSEC Support Unit about members who are habitually absent so that replacements could be sought as soon as possible. With the permission of the MATSEC Examinations Board, it may be possible to co-opt members for specific meetings or for a series of meetings. Co-opted members will not have voting rights and do not qualify for an honorarium.
- C.05. The tentative copy of the syllabus, along with relevant documentation, is to be forwarded to the concerned PSAO for presentation to the MATSEC Examinations Board.

**D. PROCEDURE FOR CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW SUBJECTS**

- D.01. The MATSEC Examinations Board will consider requests for the introduction of new subjects only if they come from the Education Division, the Private Schools' Association, a department or institute of the UoM, MCAST, ITS or a group of schools where the subject is being taught.
- D.02. If the subject is not already being taught in the schools, the proponent should guarantee that it will be taught and that a reasonable number of students will opt to be assessed in this subject at the indicated level (SEC, IM and/or AM).
- D.03. The request must include evidence showing that the examination will be of an appropriate level corresponding to the level (SEC, IM or AM) of other subjects on offer.
- D.04. Any overlap with subjects already on offer must be indicated. In case of substantial overlap between subjects, candidates should be precluded from taking the subjects together.
- D.05. The scheme of assessment needs to be shown, including written papers, coursework, and/or practical work and the weighting of each component.
- D.06. The procedure to be adopted is as follows:
- a. the request is presented to the MATSEC Examinations Board with all relevant details;
  - b. the MATSEC Examinations Board, upon approval, advises the Senate about the new request;
  - c. senate approves the introduction of the new subject;
  - d. the MATSEC Examinations Board sets up a syllabus panel;
  - e. the syllabus panel presents a syllabus and specimen papers to the MATSEC Examinations Board;
  - f. the Senate approves the syllabus;
  - g. the new subject is included in the regulations.
- D.07. In its evaluation of the request, the MATSEC Examinations Board will consider, amongst other relevant issues:
- a. the availability of examiners;
  - b. timetable constraints;
  - c. costs; and
  - d. the impact on the administration of the schools and the curriculum.

**E. PROCEDURE FOR CONSIDERATION OF SET TEXTS, MUSICAL COMPOSITIONS, ARTISTIC WORKS, AND SIMILAR WORKS.**

As noted earlier, syllabi should, as much as possible, refrain from stating set textbooks.

- E.01. The MATSEC Support Unit does not itself consider set texts, musical compositions, artistic works, and similar works to be included in one of its syllabi. Such requests can be passed to syllabus panels.
- a. if the syllabus panel in question is in operation, such requests will be forwarded to the members of the syllabus panel and it is only at their discretion whether such material can be included or not.
  - b. if the syllabus panel in question is not in operation, it will not be formulated for considering an external request for a change in set text and similar works.

**F. APPENDIX: CHECKLIST FOR SYLLABUS PANELS**

# Checklist for Syllabus Panels

1. **Subject Title and Code** (e.g. SEC 05 Business Studies)

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2. **Aims** (General aims of the **course** of studies leading to the examination)

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3. **Assessment Objectives**

- Specific objectives that will be assessed by the examination
  - Objectives are realistic for candidates at the expected level with normal course duration
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4. **Scheme of Assessment**

- Number of papers (Paper I, Paper IIA, Paper IIB)
  - Duration of each paper
  - Weighting of each paper
  - Brief information about each paper (e.g. number and choice of questions, any sections, types of questions)
  - Language of the examination
  - Weighting of coursework / SBA / oral / aural / other components
  - Coursework (e.g. project / practical lab book / portfolio + details about length, number of practical reports, other details)
  - Submission of Coursework (Schools and Private candidates)
  - Interviews relating to Coursework
  - Coursework of candidates re-sitting the examination (procedure for carrying forward the CW mark)
  - Oral (e.g. Listening comprehension, conversation + details about length and other information)
- 

5. **Results**

- AM/IM: Grades A to E or fail (F)
  - SEC: Grades 1 to 5 for Paper I + IIA or unclassified (U)
  - SEC: Grades 4 to 7 for Paper I + IIB or unclassified (U)
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6. **Subject Content** ("Syllabus")

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7. **Guidelines / Notes to Teachers**, where necessary. These may be important especially for new subjects and for new content.

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8. **Mathematical requirements** for science and science related subjects

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