



L-Università  
ta' Malta

**MATSEC**

**Examinations Board**



**MATSEC Assessment Code of Practice 2025**

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## A. INTRODUCTION

This Code of Practice is designed to support schools and colleges in the development of assessment that meets the standards and criteria as set by MATSEC related to the Secondary Education Certificate qualification. This Code of Practice will set out guidelines to have these assessments fair, valid, reliable, and manageable.

## B. DESIGN OF THE SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE

B.01. The assessment of non-vocational syllabi for school candidates shall be based on two components:

- a. School-based assessment (Paper I) and
- b. Controlled assessment (Paper II).

The school-based assessment (SBA) shall carry 30% of the whole assessment while the controlled assessment shall carry 70%.

The assessment of Private candidates in these subjects shall also have two components:

- a. Paper I will mainly focus on Learning Outcomes which are suggested for SBA in the syllabus and shall assess all three levels [Levels 1, 2 and 3] and;
- b. Paper II for private candidates will be the same paper as for those candidates who registered as school candidates.

B.02. All reported assessments shall be exclusively based on the prescribed syllabi (year of award of the qualification) published on the MATSEC website. To be eligible for a level higher than Level 1 in non-vocational subjects candidates must fulfil the set criteria in Paper I and Paper II.

B.03 The assessment of vocational subjects is explained in the *SEC Vocational Subjects Policy Document 2019*.

B.04 For vocational subjects, the assessment of application criteria shall not be externally verified.

## C. SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS TO IMPLEMENT SBA

C.01. Only schools which are duly licenced to operate as a compulsory secondary school may deliver and assess SBA related to MATSEC qualifications.

C.02. Schools are to provide a specific generic email address and contact number for communication with MATSEC.

C.03. Schools should include SBA in their own school assessment policy.

C.04. It is suggested that the Head of School or their delegate makes sure that school resources (human and physical) are enough to provide quality education and fair and valid assessment in each subject offered, as stipulated in the respective subject's MATSEC syllabus. Examples include but not limited to, the availability of well-equipped laboratories for some subjects.

- C.05. The school has to compile the SBA results mark (out of 100) and SBA Level of registered school candidates each year. These results shall be uploaded when the candidates are in Year 11 on the MATSEC portal by the published date.
- C.06. Schools shall not use MATSEC and L-Università ta' Malta t logo.
- C.07. Schools are to abide by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and ensure that any candidates' data are professionally handled and stored. E-mails and letters sent by MATSEC are not to be forwarded to third parties, uploaded on social media, or published unless written consent is given by MATSEC.
- C.08. Schools are not to advise legal guardians or candidates to contact MATSEC directly regarding SBA, unless specifically instructed to do so by MATSEC.
- C.09. MATSEC will apply sanctions as indicated in this document should schools:
  - a. fail to abide by the regulations in this document or other official MATSEC documentation;
  - b. ignore or fail to abide by official MATSEC communication; and/or;
  - c. otherwise undermine the trustworthiness or integrity of MATSEC or its qualifications.
- C.10. MATSEC may decide not to accept results from schools should this MATSEC Assessment Code of Practice or any Secondary Education Certificate regulation be infringed.

## **D. SUBJECT REGISTRATIONS**

- D.01. All candidates, whether private or school, must be registered to sit for MATSEC examinations.
- D.02. School candidates must be in their Year 11 to register for MATSEC examinations during the dates published by MATSEC. Registrations as private candidates will be accepted only from individuals who have sixteen years of age by 31 December of the year of certification.
- D.03. During the registration period, the candidate has to indicate the choice of paper: Level 1-2 or Level 2-3 (or Level 3-3\* for SEC Mathematics only).
- D.04. Candidates who register for a subject will receive an individual timetable at least 10 days before the date of the controlled assessment.
- D.05. Every effort is done to accommodate candidates as close to their hometown as possible. However, this depends greatly on the examination centres that are available on that particular day.
- D.06. The printed copy of the individual timetable together with the ID card/passport (not a copy or photo) are to be presented by the candidate to the examination centre on the day of the controlled assessment.

### **School Candidates**

- D.07. Candidates must register with MATSEC in the beginning of their Year 11 (Form 5) during the registration period published by MATSEC.
- D.08. Schools are to inform candidates of the set dates for registration.

- D.09. Candidates should only register as school candidates if they are studying the subject at school and assigned SBA for the subject as specified in the respective subject syllabus.
- D.10. It is recommended that school candidates have the necessary support by the school to guide them through the registration process.
- D.11. Schools must properly inform candidates and their guardians of the data being transferred to MATSEC.
- D.12. Candidates who have all or some of their non-vocational SBA tiered at levels 1-2 may still sit for the paper level 2-3 option. In such cases their SBA mark at the 1-2 level will be weighted at 60%.
- D.13. Schools are encouraged to inform candidates and their guardians about the SEC regulations as reproduced on the MATSEC website.
- D.14. During and after the registration period, schools should check and confirm or otherwise, the list of candidates who applied as school candidates and report any inaccuracies to MATSEC.
- D.15. Requests for changes to candidates' registrations following the registration period shall incur a fee.

### **Private Candidates**

- D.16. Candidates who study non-vocational subjects through private tuition, independently, or otherwise, are to register as private candidates for those subjects (where applicable).
- D.17. Private candidates for non-vocational subjects, including those who study the subject through private tuition, independently, or otherwise, are to register independently and sit for two controlled assessments (Paper I and Paper II) on the dates published by MATSEC.

### **Late and very late registrations**

- D.18. Late and very late application fees as published on the MATSEC website will apply for candidates who register outside the normal period of registration.

### **Registration of appeals**

- D.19. Candidates who are not satisfied with the Grade and/or Level awarded to them in any of the subjects for which they sat, may request a review of their written examination scripts of the controlled assessment, within the period specified by MATSEC and against a fee as determined by the University of Malta.
- D.20. Complaints about the marking of the SBA are to be directed to the school. The Head of School is to take the necessary measures to ensure that the marking was fair. Such complaints are to be settled at their earliest during the three-year course and before the submission of marks to MATSEC.
- D.21. SBA marks may not be appealed with MATSEC.
- D.22. Grades and Levels issued by MATSEC may be changed following justification from the Head of School. In such cases fees will apply.
- D.23. MATSEC will inform candidates about the appeal's outcome.
- D.24. The result of the appeal is final.
- D.25. Any subject can only be appealed once in the same session.

- D.26. MATSEC cannot guarantee that the Main Session appeal results are published before the beginning of the Supplementary Session.

### **Registration for the supplementary session**

- D.27. Only the following subjects are available for the supplementary session:
- a. Il-Malti
  - b. English Language
  - c. Mathematics
  - d. One science subject
- D.28. Candidates are eligible to register for the Supplementary Session in any of the subjects mentioned above only if in the Main Session of that year, they had not obtained a Level 3 in the subject.
- D.29. Candidates may sit for only one examination in either Biology, or Chemistry or Physics, provided that they did not already obtain a Level 3 in any of these three subjects in the Main session.
- D.30. Candidates must register with MATSEC for the supplementary session within the registration dates published by MATSEC.
- D.31. Late and very late application fees will apply for candidates who register outside the normal period of registration.
- D.32. In the Supplementary Session, only levels 2-3 shall be offered for Paper II.

### **Registration for examination access arrangements**

- D.33. Examination access arrangements shall be given to candidates in accordance with the latest 'Guidelines to MATSEC Examinations Access Arrangements'. Candidates who require examinations access arrangements (EAAs) are to register through the school as early as the beginning of year 9 but not later than the registration period in year 11.
- D.34. Schools should submit the required forms for candidates requiring EAA through the MATSEC portal.
- D.35. The candidates, through relevant professionals or the school, should submit any other required form or test to complement their application for EAA through the MATSEC portal.

### **E. SBA**

- E.01. SBA marks, and their respective levels shall only be accepted from candidates who register as school candidates.
- E.02. SBA which are set and marked by teachers within each school, need to follow MATSEC syllabi and regulations.
- E.03. Schools shall ensure the quality of the SBA carried out.
- E.04. Candidates are expected to present work that is authentic, sufficient, and valid.
- E.05. Candidates are to fulfil the set criteria in both the controlled assessments and the SBA to be awarded a Level 1 or higher in a SEC subject.

- E.06. It is suggested that schools make the following arrangements:
- a. guide candidates to submit the SBA according to the guidelines set in this document and syllabi;
  - b. inform parents/legal guardians on what is expected as SBA from the students;
  - c. guide members of staff to set and mark SBA according to the guidelines set in this document and syllabi;
  - d. publish assessments which are in line with the subject syllabus;
  - e. assign valid and manageable SBA;
  - f. assess the learning outcomes and/or assessment criteria indicated for SBA in the respective subject syllabus (where applicable);
  - g. standardise marking within the school where there is more than one teacher involved in marking the same subject and year group;
  - h. take as many measures as is humanly possible to detect and report plagiarism, copying, and/or collusion;
  - i. avoid plagiarism, copying, and/or collusion, through suitable measures such as changing the context and/or mode of assessment for any assessment and informing students of the seriousness of such malpractices, guiding them how to properly reference others' work and AI-generated content;
  - j. ensure that all candidates' marks are inputted and checked before being sent to MATSEC by the set deadline.
- E.07. The deadline for the submitting of marks and their corresponding level will be communicated to schools by MATSEC in the beginning of the year 11.
- E.08. MATSEC reserves the right not to accept SBA marks which do not follow the guidelines in this document and other official MATSEC documentation.
- E.09. SBA results shall be retained for the Supplementary Session.
- E.10. SBA marks may be retained for not more than five subsequent years from the first Examination they were submitted for.

## SBA

- E.11. In non-vocational subjects, SBA refers to any work assigned to candidates and marked by the school as part of a MATSEC qualification.
- E.12. In non-vocational subjects, SBA shall be set at either Level 1-2 only or Level 1-2-3. The higher/highest level shall have a larger allocation of marks. It is suggested that the allocation of marks is as shown below:

Tier	Percentage marks allocated per level		
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Level 1-2	40%	60%	
Level 1-2-3	30%	30%	40%

E.13. The SBA shall be marked out of 100 each year (9, 10 and 11). The assessment for each year will contribute to 10% of the overall mark and will be reported to MATSEC by the school in Year 11. Therefore, each year will equally contribute to the final 30% mark of the SBA.

**\* For the 2025 session the school-based assessment shall be marked out of 100 each year (years 10 and 11 only). The School-Based Assessment for years 10 and 11 will be reported to MATSEC by the school in Year 11. Each year will equally contribute to the final 30% mark of the SBA.**

E.14. The SBA mark should reflect the assessment of different skills using different assessment tools.

E.15. Schools shall submit the mark of each scholastic year and its corresponding level for each candidate in Year 11 to MATSEC as indicated in the following table:

Name	ID No:	SBA	Scholastic Year	SBA MARK [0-100]	SBA LEVEL [1-2 OR 1-2-3]
PAUL BORG	12345 L	SUBJECT 1	YEAR 9		
			YEAR 10		
			YEAR 11		

### Recommended procedures for SBA

E.16. It is suggested that all work for any cohort in any subject should be planned before/at the start of the course to ensure that this in its entirety meets the requirements set by the respective subject syllabus.

E.17. Teachers may help the candidate understand and access the work assigned, without being too prescriptive or overriding the candidates' autonomy in meeting the criteria assessed.

E.18. Candidates may seek feedback and support from their teachers prior to submission as long as:

- a. communication is verbal, although the candidate may write notes;
- b. detailed indications of errors or omissions are **not** given;
- c. a draft version of the expected work is **not** collected for marking.

E.19. Following marking,

- a. the submitted work may not be modified and resubmitted multiple times (resubmission);
- b. part of the work is neither added nor removed.

E.20. The school is to direct parents/legal guardians that if candidates seek support from them to complete the SBA they:

- a. should encourage their child to allocate time for the work assigned, planning ahead wherever possible;
- b. may provide access to additional resources;
- c. may discuss the SBA but should **not** give specific indications on what should and/or should not be included;
- d. should encourage the candidate to speak to their teacher/s.



- E.21. Should a candidate require additional help to demonstrate any particular aspects of the assessment, the awarded mark should take this into consideration and only represent the candidate's unaided achievement.
- E.22. Teachers are encouraged to keep an appropriate record of all submitted work.
- E.23. Parents/legal guardians are to be kept regularly updated with their child's performance in the SBA's.
- E.24. Should a candidate change schools, attention should be given that the assessments are aligned, such that the criteria set in the syllabus are met.

## Recording of marks

- E.25. Marks awarded to students should be recorded as follows:

Mark awarded	School Based Assessment
0 - 100 (SBA)	Range of marks allowed for submitted work.
0	A true zero, meaning work was submitted by the student by the deadline but the work deserved no marks.
NP	Work was not submitted (Not Presented).

## Access arrangements and special considerations

- E.26. Candidates with a disability may encounter difficulties in covering certain assessment criteria. In such instances the school should communicate in writing to the student and their legal guardian/s about these difficulties.
- E.27. Should the candidate wish to pursue their studies in such subjects they should **not** be stopped from doing so provided that the SBA can be objectively designed by the teachers to reflect the content found in the syllabus. SBA should not be engineered in a way that gives an advantage to a particular student or group of students.
- E.28. If a candidate with EAAs is unable to fulfil a SBA objective due to their condition, the school should apply with MATSEC for a consideration of exemption. If an exemption is agreed-to by MATSEC, marks for the exempted component will be pro-rated. The missed component may not constitute more than 25% of the global mark. Certificates will be endorsed as follows: "Special arrangements were made to enable the candidate to be assessed in this subject. Details may be obtained from the MATSEC Executive Director."
- E.29. EAAs do not automatically qualify candidates for an extension of a deadline. The same procedure as other candidates applies.
- E.30. For SBA which is carried out in class or under controlled conditions, Examination Access Arrangements for controlled assessments as communicated by MATSEC are recommended to be given by the candidate's own Learning Support Educators (LSEs) and/or teachers as described in the *Guidelines for MATSEC Assessment Centres: Controlled and Synoptic Assessments*.

- E.31. Staff providing EAAs must not lead the candidates, give factual help to candidates, or suggest which questions to do, when to move to the next question, or the order in which questions are to be answered.

### Marking of SBAs

- E.32. All SBA is set and marked by teachers.
- E.33. Teachers should not assess candidates' SBA if they give/gave private tuition to the candidates in the current year.
- E.34. Teachers should not be related by consanguinity or affinity up to the third degree, friend, or peer to any candidate/s. Where this is not possible, the Head of School should take measures to ensure that such candidates are given a fair assessment.

### Appeals of SBA marks

- E.35. The process of appeals of SBA marks is internal to the school.
- E.36. The process of appeals must be completed before marks are submitted to MATSEC.

## F. MALPRACTICE AND SANCTIONS

### School malpractice and sanctions

- F.01. School malpractice includes any breach of regulations set in this document or other official MATSEC documentation, along with actions, whether deliberate or a result of incompetence, which undermine the integrity and validity of the assessment and certification of MATSEC qualification/s.

Examples of school malpractice include:

- a. inactivity and/or failure to reply to MATSEC communication;
- b. failure to submit required data by specified deadlines;
- c. failure to update data which was submitted to MATSEC;
- d. leak of confidential information to members of staff, legal guardians, or other unauthorised persons;
- e. providing or attempting to provide unfair advantage to candidates;
- f. not reporting candidate or staff malpractice.

For any school malpractice, MATSEC reserves the right to apply any of, or a combination of, the following sanctions:

- a. written warning;
- b. monetary fine;
- c. loss of candidate SBA marks;
- d. temporary suspension of registrations of school candidates for a subject/s until the situation is rectified.

### Malpractice in SBA and sanctions

- F.02. All candidates and school staff should report any suspected incidences of malpractice to the Head of School. All allegations made shall be taken seriously and acted upon. All instances of malpractice, whether intentional or unintentional, are to be reported to the Head of School.

### **Malpractice in Administering the SBA**

- F.03. Staff malpractice consists of acts, whether deliberate or a result of incompetence, which undermine the integrity and validity of the assessment and/or certification of a qualification.
- F.04. The school is to notify MATSEC of any staff irregularity. Reports are to clearly state:
- the nature, time and other relevant information about the irregularity,
  - any actions taken by the school.
- F.05. Examples of staff malpractice include:
- unfair support provided to candidates (e.g. resubmission);
  - a deadline is extended without a justifiable reason;
  - candidates' work is accepted following the submission deadline;
  - teacher/s intrigue with others to give an unfair advantage to candidate/s.
- F.06. Following allegations, the following procedure should be followed:
- The Head of School shall write a report. Any available supporting evidence should be attached to the report.
  - An investigation will be initially undertaken by the head of school, to establish the full facts and circumstances.
- F.07. If malpractice is proven, MATSEC should be informed including any action taken by the school.
- F.08. MATSEC reserves the right to apply any of, or a combination of, the following sanctions, should a school have promoted or masked up staff malpractice:
- loss of candidate marks;
  - temporary suspension of qualification/s until situation is rectified;
  - termination of qualification/s: registrations of some or all cohorts school candidates from the school are halted and/or deleted;
  - cancel the results of all/any of the examinations which school candidate/s sat for in any preceding session, providing that this sanction shall be applied only when MATSEC deems it in the interests of justice to do so.

### **School Candidate (Student) Malpractice**

- F.09. Student malpractice is any action by the student that has the potential to undermine the integrity and validity of the assessment of the same student or other student's work.
- F.10. Schools are responsible to check for plagiarism when marking students' work.
- F.11. Where malpractice such as plagiarism or collusion is suspected before or after submission of an SBA component, the school's assessment policy should be followed.
- F.12. Suggested action/s to be taken by the school in some cases of student malpractice are listed below. MATSEC may apply other sanctions as necessary.

Student Malpractice during SBA	Suggested Action/s To Be Taken By The School		
	Before marking	First offence	Repeated Offence
<p><b>Collusion: candidates work collaboratively beyond what is permitted</b></p> <p><b>Plagiarism: unacknowledged copying from sources such as teachers' notes, websites, books, other candidates' work</b></p> <p><b>Fabrication of data or other forms of evidence</b></p> <p><b>Destruction of own or other candidates' work.</b></p>	<p>If any malpractice is suspected from student/s before the assignment deadline, the teacher or Head of School are to make the student/s aware of the suspicion and of the consequences if such action is proven. Student/s are suggested to redo their work in a lawful manner before submission. No extension of deadline is to apply.</p>	<p>Marks for the copied section are lost.</p> <p>Report is filed. Marks for the copied section are lost.</p> <p>Report is filed. Marks for data/evidence are lost.</p> <p>Report is filed.</p>	<p>Internal report is filed. Marks for all task/assignment are lost.</p>

## Avoiding Malpractice

F.13. Candidates are expected to properly reference or paraphrase third-party work which is not their own.

F.14. The school is to:

- a. highlight aspects of avoiding malpractice (including plagiarism) in the assessment policy;
- b. remind members of staff that, some monitoring of candidates is necessary to ensure the authenticity of SBA;
- c. encourage teachers to make every effort to design assessments which give students the opportunity to produce their own work thus limiting the possibility of plagiarism.

F.15. Steps should be taken to ensure that plagiarism is avoided and/or detected. This includes, for example,

- a. train candidates on how to reference others' work and AI-generated content;

- b. ask candidates to sign an authentication form;
- c. change the context and/or assessment tool for any assessment, whenever this is possible from one year to another.

## **G. CONTROLLED ASSESSMENT**

- G.01. The controlled assessment is an end of course assessment set by MATSEC which will cover most of the course learning outcomes.
- G.02. Candidates are encouraged to refer to the *Candidate's Guidebook to MATSEC Examinations* to understand what is expected of them during the controlled assessment.

### **School Candidates**

- G.03. The controlled assessment of non-vocational subjects is set at two options: one option is set at levels 1-2 and the other is set at levels 2-3, with the exception of SEC Mathematics where an option 3.3\* is also offered.
- G.04. Candidates who have all or some of their SBA tiered at levels 1-2 may still sit for the paper level 2-3 option. In such cases their SBA mark at level 1-2 will be weighted at 60%.

### **Private Candidates**

- G.05. Private candidates for non-vocational subjects have to sit for two controlled assessment papers; Paper I and Paper II.
  - a. Paper I will be set at levels 1-2-3 and Paper II will be set in two options: levels 1-2 and levels 2-3. Paper II will be identical for both private and school candidates.
  - b. Each of the two papers will cover the content prescribed by the syllabus.

### **Supplementary Session**

- G.06. Students may register for the Supplementary Session in the subjects specified in the SEC regulations.
- G.07. SBA results shall be retained for the Supplementary Session.
- G.08. In the Supplementary Session, only levels 2-3 shall be offered for Paper II.

## **H. PUBLISHING OF RESULTS AND CERTIFICATES**

- H.01. MATSEC shall communicate the final results to candidates through one or more of the following systems:
  - a. SMS;
  - b. traditional mail;
  - c. MATSEC Portal.
- H.02. MATSEC shall deliver candidate certificates to individual schools following the final assessment. Schools are to make certificates available to candidates.

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- H.03. Private candidates have to collect the certificates directly from MATSEC on the dates published by MATSEC.
- H.04. Results of appeals shall be sent directly to individual candidates.
- H.05. Schools should not produce, reprint, or modify MATSEC results or certificates.
- H.06. The results and certificates for non-vocational subjects will report each component and the overall Level as shown below:

SUBJECT	PAPER I [0-30]	PAPER II [1-8]	LEVEL [1-2-3]
SUBJECT 1			
SUBJECT 2			
SUBJECT 3			

- a. Paper I[SBA] shall be reported as a mark with the maximum mark being 30.
- b. Paper II shall be graded on an eight-point scale, grades 1 to 8. Grade 1 shall be awarded for the highest level of achievement. Candidates sitting for Paper II level 1-2 may be awarded grades 6 – 8 whilst candidates who opted for Level 2-3 may be awarded grades 1-7.
- c. An overall level at level 1, 2, or 3 shall be reported. Level 3 shall be awarded for the highest level of achievement. The level shall be determined by the cumulative score of candidates in Paper I and Paper II. The results of candidates who do not achieve at least level 1 shall not have a level awarded and shall be reported by 'NA' which denotes Not Attained.
- d. For private candidates, only the Grade and the Level will be reported, and the term PC (Private Candidate) will be shown under the Paper I column.