

Supporting stakeholder involvement in work-based learning

POLICY DEVELOPMENT**PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE** MALTA

Timeline

2016 Implementation	2017 Implementation	2018 Implementation
2019 Implementation	2020 Implementation	2021 Implementation
2022 Implementation	2023 Implementation	2024 Implementation
2025 Implementation		

ID number 28419

Background

Stakeholder involvement, especially that of employers, is critical in achieving VET success. Partnerships with employers ensure that VET courses provide skills and competences are relevant and responsive to the requirements of industry. They also aid collaboration between industry and VET providers in accommodating learners during their work-based learning, internships and apprenticeship placements.

Objectives

The objectives of the policy include:

- (a) pathways for learners are clear, and endorsed by industry;
- (b) VET study programmes are in line with the needs of industry and up to date with technological developments;
- (c) skills and competences are relevant and responsive to the requirements of the economy;
- (d) work-based learning and apprenticeship placements are supported;
- (e) collaboration, professional exchange and reflective practice between lecturing staff and work-place mentors is promoted.

Description

Measures have also been taken to strengthen the involvement of social partners and companies:

- (a) companies that participate in apprenticeship are awarded a testimonial in recognition of their contribution to the apprenticeship scheme. This third-party endorsement can be used by the companies as a logo to promote themselves and to trigger conformity bias by other companies;
- (b) social partners, particularly employers, participate in the governing board of the two

state VET providers (MCAST and ITS). Industry representatives in tourism and hospitality (Malta hotels and restaurants association, the bartenders guild, tour leaders and Air Malta) participate in the scientific committee set up by ITS in 2016 to develop up-to-date training content for internships and apprenticeships;

- (c) many VET stakeholders (employers' associations, chambers, trade unions, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), teachers and education authorities) cooperate closely with the MCAST apprenticeship department and promote apprenticeships among their members. MCAST offers a support tool for employers (*Gateway to industry* – MG2i), part-time tailor-made courses for SMEs and industries) to help them prepare training courses for employees in various disciplines.

2016 Implementation

No major developments. Implementation continued.

2017 Implementation

No major developments. Implementation continued.

2018 Implementation

As part of the programme of activities of Vocational skills week 2018, MCAST organised a series of industry consultation seminars between 5 and 16 November in different MCAST institutes in the following sectors: accounting, environmental health, health and social care, maritime industry, financial services, insurance, aviation, interactive media, inclusive education, blockchain, artificial intelligence, iGaming, and construction and building services. MCAST also organises consultation seminars as part of the periodic cyclical review of courses throughout the year.

2019 Implementation

In 2019, MCAST in partnership with the Malta chamber of commerce and the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) launched the project *Achieving vocational excellence through enhanced work-based learning*. The project which is jointly funded, secured EUR 7 million from the European Social Fund (ESF). The overall objective of this project is to provide a higher qualitative VET experience generating higher calibre skills and increase in skills profile. The actions envisaged include:

- (a) the training of 400 trainers to support students during their work placements, and the development of a competence framework that covers over 250 occupations in Malta;
- (b) the setting up of emulative centres to explore emerging economic sectors and innovative technology requiring competences that are not readily available and address their provision to ensure future economic growth. These centres will facilitate student take-up of essential competences and help them improve the time of effectiveness during their apprenticeship as well as when they are full-time employees.

2020 Implementation

- (a) The COVID -19 pandemic adversely affected the new initiatives. However, MCAST still managed to conclude all programmes successfully with modified requirements for apprenticeship programmes.
- (b) Long-term commitments could not be made by all stakeholders, hence apprentices were required to attend for a lower number of hours on apprenticeship to accommodate social distancing and health restrictions.
- (c) Online collaborative working was allowed as part of the work experience where the employer could provide such a possibility.
- (d) Supplementary payments to meet the Work-based Learning and Apprenticeship Act requirements were still implemented irrespective of the pandemic restrictions.

2021 Implementation

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and physical restriction measures, no major developments took place.

2022 Implementation

In mid-2022, in consultation with key industry partners, MCAST undertook an exercise to redesign the approach towards work-based learning as regards to accredited hours and assigned credits. The aim of this review was to ensure that all apprenticeship hours are assigned a workload (credits), a rationale is defined and implemented that is both pedagogically sound and meets regulatory guidelines, and ensures fair and consistent allocation of apprenticeship hours across all MCAST apprenticeship programmes.

Standard modalities were established for apprenticeship programmes at Levels EQF/MQF 3,4 and 6. A total of 11 other modalities were identified and agreed with industry partners. Non-standard variants were set-up to accommodate the needs of industry and the requirements of regulated courses. The new modalities were launched for the October 2022 intake.

2023 Implementation

During 2023, MCAST evaluated the new apprenticeship modalities based on industry feedback following the first year of implementation. The main change introduced was to allow apprentices to carry forward/anticipate apprenticeship hours from year one to year two (or year three) of their programme improving flexibility for both apprentices and employers. A new apprenticeship modality was created and launched in 2023 in consultation with the manufacturing industry that provides 82% of the apprenticeship days on a block release. These attendance modalities were very well received by industry.

In response to industry feedback on the time-consuming process of submitting and viewing apprenticeship vacancies via the College MIS, a simplified system was launched in April 2023. Since then, industry partners can now submit vacancies through a quick online form, taking only about two minutes. A new website also replaced the need to log in to view vacancies, making opportunities easily accessible to both partners and prospective apprentices. The site is updated weekly, and filled vacancies are only removed after consultation with partners, who often prefer to keep them visible to attract more applicants.

MCAST organised *Encounter, MCAST meets industry* thematic roundtables, facilitating discussions between mentors and industry stakeholders to enhance work-based learning experiences for students. Over 120 participants attended these events.

MCAST's annual national conference on apprenticeship, themed *Quality in apprenticeship*, was held at Verdala Palace on 14 November 2023, welcoming over 140 guests, including three international keynote speakers. The event also marked the launch of the first edition of the *MCAST apprenticeship guidebook for industry partners*, which outlines the apprenticeship scheme, attendance requirements, and the rights and responsibilities of employers, students, and the college.

2024 Implementation

In 2024, MCAST focused on consolidating stakeholder engagement and improving transparency in apprenticeship provision. In January, the college organised its first apprenticeship onboarding event, connecting eligible students with 67 industry partners over four days and supporting early matching between learners and employers. Employer feedback was largely positive, although skills shortages persisted in high-demand sectors such as finance, EV, HVAC, and welding.

The event also marked the launch of the first MCAST apprenticeship catalogue for

industry partners, providing a structured overview of over 40 programmes, including attendance modalities and simplified vacancy submission. During the year, MCAST reviewed apprenticeship attendance modalities and assigned workload (ECTS) based on industry feedback, confirming their effectiveness and maturity for the October 2024 intake, with no major changes required.

2025 Implementation

In 2025, stakeholder involvement continued to focus on quality assurance and system optimisation. Engagement with social partners and employers supports ongoing monitoring of apprenticeship delivery, while guidance tools such as the apprenticeship catalogue and guidebook are used to clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

In preparation for the 2025/26 academic year, MCAST is introducing a process to verify the suitability of employer premises hosting apprentices. These checks will assess the adequacy of facilities, equipment, health and safety compliance, and the workplace's capacity to provide effective supervision and mentoring. This measure strengthens quality assurance in work-based learning and enhances learner protection, while reinforcing employer accountability and confidence in the apprenticeship system.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry for Education (MFED)(until 2022)
- Ministry of Education and Employment (MEDE) (until 2020)
- Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)
- Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS)
- Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices

Entities providing VET

Companies

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[MCAST Gateway to industry project](#)

[Achieving vocational excellence - work-based learning at MCAST: newspaper article](#)

Related policy developments

2018 **Approved/Agreed**

The Work-based learning and apprenticeship Act

Following consultation in 2016, a draft act was proposed by the education ministry on a framework for developing quality work placements, apprenticeships and internships.

 MALTA

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28419>