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Key features of the education system

In Malta responsibility for the education system lies with the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE). Education is provided by State, Church (predominantly Catholic) and Independent schools. The Government's education policy is underscored by two main premises: equity and quality. This commitment is evidenced by an inclusive policy at all levels of education and the provision of free education from early childhood education and care to tertiary education in state institutions except for students from non-EU/EAA countries. The state subsidises Church schools, which do not charge tuition fees, and grants tax rebates to parents whose children attend independent schools.

The Maltese educational system is largely centralised due to the size of the country. However, since the establishment of the College system in 2005 a certain amount of decentralisation has been introduced. Primary, middle and secondary schools within the Colleges system are managed by College Principals and the Council of Heads. Funds are handled by the central authorities through the College Principals as is the curriculum which is drawn up by the Department of Curriculum Management. The Senior Management Team of the schools, however, can initiate projects and programmes relevant to their school ethos. They may also decide on topics for the professional development of educational staff.

Compulsory education in Malta is between the age of 5 and 16 and is regulated by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) within the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE). Compulsory education consists of an 11-year programme (age level 5 to 16) with the first 6 years being covered in primary schooling.

The majority of students attend mainstream education with only a small percentage attending Resource Centres (catering for children with severe disabilities). The inclusivity policy requires that different learning programmes are provided in mainstream schools to meet the students' needs. These include:

- Individual Learning Programmes (IEPs) for students with special needs and support by Learning Support Assistants (LSA) and Inclusive Coordinators;
- Complementary Education Programmes in primary schools and the Princes Trust XL, the Core Curriculum Programme, the Alternative Learning Programme (ALP) in the secondary cycle e for students who require remedial support;
- Linguistic Induction Programmes in Maltese and English language for foreign students and third country nationals;
- Ethics Programme for students of different religions and beliefs in primary and secondary education;

At primary level the Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD) classes address themes in preparation for career education in the secondary cycle. Students in Year 6 are given their first foreign language option which language they will continue to study till the end of Year 11. Maltese and English languages are core subjects throughout the 11 years of compulsory education. Furthermore, at the end of Year 8 students opt for 2 more subjects, which can include one vocational subject. Job shadowing opportunities are provided in Year 10 to give students the opportunity to experience the work environment to help them in their career choice and facilitate the transition process.

At the end of Year 11, students sit for the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC). Students may then proceed to post-compulsory educational institutions opting for either a vocational or an academic path.

As from October 2017, all education provision throughout the years of compulsory schooling will aim to achieve the learning outcomes set by the Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF). The LOF has been developed from The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) (2012) and is aligned to the the four objectives of the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024. It also reflects the values expressed in the Respect for All Framework and the recommendations of the Education for All review. The latter policy document, provides the basis for the educational community to assist learners reach these aims and lead to more curricular autonomy of colleges and schools and address the learning needs of all students. Post-compulsory institutions namely the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) and the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) cater for vocational education ranging from Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) (levels 1 to 6), which is in line with the European Qualifications Framework. MCAST is divided into 3 colleges namely, the Foundation College, the Technical College and the University College to cater for the diverse needs and aspirations of students.

The Junior College provides post-secondary formal academic education and forms part of the University of Malta. It offers a two-year course specifically designed for future University students who are prepared for the Matriculation Certificate in accordance with the University's General Entry Requirements. Students may choose from a wide range of subjects and must take two subjects at Advanced Level, three at Intermediate Level, as well as Systems of Knowledge. Since the College forms part of the University of Malta, students are able to become familiar with the University campus. There is a healthy interaction between the Junior College and the University students who collaborate on cultural projects such as concerts, drama, sport, student exchanges, debates, seminars and so on.

The Higher Secondary Schools within the state sector and the sixth forms in the non-state sector also provide academic courses leading to the Matriculation examination.

Students in full-time post-secondary and tertiary education up to first degree level are eligible to receive financial support in the form of an annual grant and a stipend given every four weeks. Such support contributes to cover part of students' educational expenses and is granted independently of the family's financial situation.

Lifelong learning courses for adult learners are provided both during the day and as evening classes both in state educational institutions and by private providers. Some of the courses are run in collaboration with Local Councils to facilitate accessibility to adult learners. Courses cover a wide array of vocational and academic subjects that lead to formal qualifications or personal self-development.

Stages of the Education System

Early childhood education and care, available for children from the age of 3 months up to 2 years and 9 months, is provided at centres run by both the state and private entities. As from April 2014 families with both parents in full-time or part-time employment or in education are entitled to free childcare. Children between the ages of 2 years and 9 months and 5 years attend kindergarten classes which are operated by State, Church and Independent Schools.

Compulsory education is distributed over 11 years and covers the ages from 5 to 16 years. It consists of two cycles: the primary cycle (from age 5 to 11) and the secondary cycle (from age 11 to 16) which consists of Middle Schools (from age 11 to 13) and Secondary Schools (from age 13 to 16). Around 50% of students in compulsory education attend state schools, another 36% go to Church Schools and around 14% are in Independent Schools.

Primary education consists of a 6 year programme which addresses general and vocational themes. Students are streamed in the last 2 years and sit for the National End of Primary Benchmark Assessment in Year 6 to determine their level of education.

As from 2014, co-education has been introduced in the secondary cycle. The phasing in of **middle schools** (from age 11 to 13) ensures that smaller sized school communities result in more individual attention and a more caring environment that promotes better student-teacher relationships. Parent involvement is encouraged with a view of preventing disengagement. The curriculum addresses general and vocational skills.

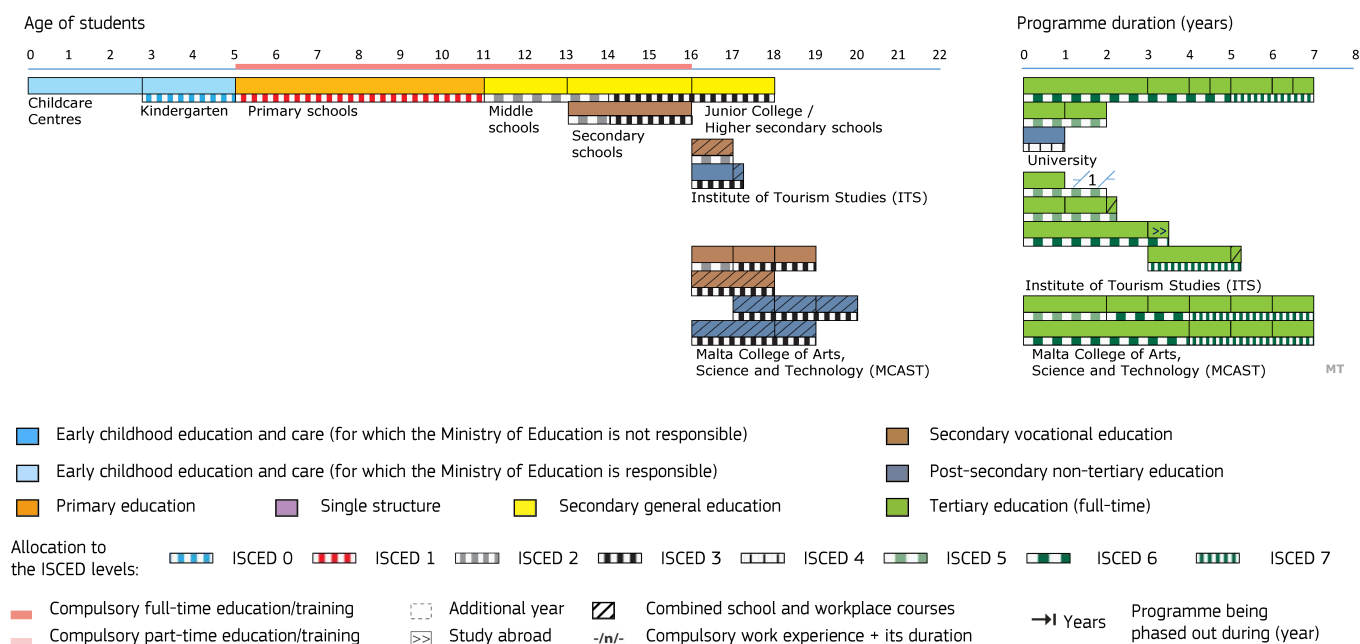
All **secondary schools** (from age 13 to 16) provide general education courses and also options for students who want to follow a vocational career pathway. At the end of secondary education students are awarded a Secondary School Certificate & Profile (SSC&P) that recognizes formal, non-formal and informal education. Students may sit for the SEC exams that are a prerequisite for taking up many of the programmes available at upper-secondary and post-secondary level.

Following compulsory education students can choose to follow either a general or a vocational **post-secondary education** path (from age 16 to 18). General and some vocational education programmes are intended to lead to tertiary education. The main institutions at post-secondary level are the Junior College Malta, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), the latter providing hospitality courses.

The University of Malta (UoM), also an autonomous institution, offers **tertiary general education** programmes ranging from certificate and under-graduate level to doctoral level. Tertiary vocational education is provided by MCAST's University College. It is envisaged that ITS will also start to provide degree courses. Private organisations also provide post secondary and tertiary education.

Structure of the National Education System

Malta – 2020/21



Source: Eurydice 2020/21

Common European reference tools provided by the Eurydice network

- [National Student Fee and Support Systems](#) [1]
- [Organisation of the Academic Year in Higher Education](#) [2]
- [Organisation of School Time in Europe](#) [3] (Primary and general secondary education)
- [Recommended Annual Instruction Time in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe](#) [4] (Presented by grades/stages for full time compulsory education as well as by subject and country.)
- [Teachers and School Heads Salaries and Allowances in Europe](#) [5] (Salaries and allowances of teachers and school heads at pre-primary, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education levels.)

Useful Links

[Malta Education Act 1998](#) [6]

[Ministry for Education and Employment](#) [7]

[Institute of Tourism Studies](#) [8]

[Junior College Malta](#) [9]

[Malta college of Arts, Science and Technology](#) [10]

[University of Malta](#) [11]

[National Commission for Further and Higher Education](#) [12]

[National Curriculum Framework 2012](#) [13]

[Learning Outcomes Framework](#) [14]

[Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024](#) [15]:

[Respect for all Framework](#) [16]

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