

## MALTA [1] - 2013 CORE CURRICULUM PROGRAMME [CCP]

### A. BASIC INFORMATION

<b>Country:</b>	Malta
<b>Title of initiative:</b>	Core Curriculum Programme (CCP)
<b>Coordinator/ Organization:</b>	Curriculum Management and E-Learning Department (CMeLD) within the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE)
<b>Key competences addressed:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Communication in mother tongue</li> <li>· Communication in foreign languages</li> <li>· Mathematical competence and basic competences in Science and Technology</li> <li>· Digital competence</li> <li>· Learning to learn</li> </ul>
<b>Type of initiative and channels used for implementation</b> (e.g. curriculum reform introduced through legislation etc.)	This programme was a curriculum initiative to support Basic Skills learners (low ability learners) during the last three years of the secondary cycle. The continuum of achievement outlined in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2012 states that the curriculum will meet the needs of learners according to their stage of development. It is envisaged to be a seamless process in order to ensure continuity in the educational pathways followed by learners. Moreover, the NCF endorses learner-centred learning, which requires the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes that promote self-directed and lifelong learning.
<b>Partners:</b>	State secondary schools, with support from the CMeLD, education officers, programme mentors, teachers and senior management teams within schools.
<b>Scope:</b> (student/teacher/school level; local/regional/national)	School level systemic change (within a small network)
<b>Learning context:</b> (formal or non-formal)	Formal
<b>School education level/s:</b> (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary)	Between Form 3 and Form 5 Final three years of secondary cycle Learners aged approx. 13-16

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**Target groups:**

- Basic skills learners in Form 3, continuing until the end of their secondary cycle.
- Teachers of this cohort and the class mentor who will be leading the CCP group.

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**Time frame:**  
(start and end date)

September 2013 – on-going

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**Relevant links:**

For more information on the Core Entitlement:  
<http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/content/home-documents-and-publications-mqc-publications-descriptors-of-key-competences/5963778/>

## B. SUMMARY

The Core Curriculum Programme in Malta is based on the three aims of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF p.6), which seeks to prepare all children to become lifelong learners who are confident, successful, creative, connected and engaged in the community and the world around them, and able to secure social justice (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012).

This programme of learning that targets the needs of lower-level learners is characterised by a constructivist approach and three main theoretical understandings upon which this approach is based:

- The Assessment for Learning pedagogy;
- The theories of the Zone of Proximal Development and Scaffolding as proposed by Lev Vygotsky, Ausubel and Bruner;
- Inquiry-Based Learning.

The programme will give a core entitlement to learners, which covers the subject-specific key competences including Maltese, English, Mathematics, Science with Design and Technology and ICT as well as PE, Religion, Social Studies, History and Geography. The learners will also opt to study any one of the following: PE Certificate (Level 1), Music, Art, Home Economics, Textile Studies, Design and Technology or Graphical Communication.

Learners following the Core Curriculum Programme will carry out projects that enhance their 'soft competences'. Evidence through different methods of assessment will be collected in a portfolio, which will be used to instil learning to learn skills.

## C. IN DEPTH INFORMATION

### Rationale/contextual background/motivation for introducing the initiative/reform:

A core competence support programme was being applied for low ability learners in the first two years of the secondary cycle. A need developed for a programme that catered for these students during the last three years of this cycle. The programme was required to instil life-long learning competences together with the skills that are necessary for employability.

### Objectives:

- To provide the most effective way of delivering quality education to enable each learner to achieve her/his full potential;
- To develop a learning environment that is accepting of and has an appreciation for the diverse abilities/backgrounds/interests of learners;
- To develop an environment that addresses each learner's unique nature and learning ability in a responsive manner;
- To encourage creative expression and the recognition of communicative, practical, and aesthetic arts;
- To provide opportunities for the holistic development of each learner;
- To develop an opportunity for the application of ever-changing technological resources;
- To develop a programme that is sensitive to learners' life challenges and realities, and that seeks to overcome such challenges in a socially just and equitable manner;
- To develop alternative assessment methods that recognise the achievement of learners

### Dimensions targeted by the initiative/reform (e.g. student curriculum, assessment, initial/in-service teacher education, school autonomy etc.):

The programme focuses on the outcomes of the key competences in all subjects and also further develops assessment methods. A wider array of assessment methods and techniques will offer possibilities for assessment for learning, which will help learners to identify new targets and to develop self-assessment strategies in order to compare achievements with outcomes. This process will result in significant and diverse evidence of achievements in the key competences, which will be compiled in a portfolio to be used in a learning-to-learn process that will take place with the class mentor throughout the programme.

**Overall approach** (e.g. holistic – existence of an overarching strategy, or targeted approach focusing on a specific dimension etc.):

The approach is a holistic one in that it involves all the teaching staff of this level, both when the subject is streamed (Maltese, English, Mathematics, Science with Design and Technology, and Italian), and when it is mainstream (Religion, PE, Social Studies, Geography and History). It aims to achieve a systemic approach to up-skilling learners at the lower end of the achievement spectrum and to develop lifelong learners with a certification of at least EQF Level 1.

This programme is based on a constructivist approach and therefore assessment for learning is the overarching pedagogy, together with inquiry-based learning to make learning more relevant and evidence based.

### Detailed explanation of the key competence/s concerned:

Core Entitlement:

· Maltese ; English ; Italian ; Mathematics ; Foundation Science with Design and Technology ; ICT ; Physical Education and Sport ; PSD ; Religion ; Geography ; History ; Social Studies

Each of the above subjects will be accredited an equivalence to EQF Level 1, upon presentation of evidence that the outcomes as described in each subject programme have been achieved.

These subjects relate to the following key competences of the European Framework:

- Communication in mother tongue
- Communication in foreign languages
- Mathematical competence and basic competences in Science and Technology
- Digital competence
- Learning to learn

Learners will have the possibility to choose from a PE certificate at Level 1, Music (up to Level 3) and Art (up to Level 3), or to complete a Home Economics/Textile Studies/Graphic Communication/Design and Technology course with the mainstream.

Projects to develop soft competences:

- Independent Living Skills Project
- Creative Expressions Project
- Career Education Project
- Learning to Learn through portfolio management

The explanation of each key competence at Level 1 can be found in the document Descriptors of Key Competence, which can be downloaded here:

<http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/content/home-documents-and-publications-mqc-publications-descriptors-of-key-competences/5963778/>

## Specific subjects concerned or cross-curricular approach:

### Specific Subjects:

Maltese, English, Mathematics, Science with Design and Technology, Italian, PE, Religion, Art and Music.

### Cross-curricular:

The competence of learning to learn, through the development of the portfolio for each subject.

Three hours per week will be dedicated to the following projects: Independent Living Skills, Creative Expressions, Communicative English and Career Education. These will aid in the development of these competences: Learning to Learn, Entrepreneurship, Social and Civic Competence and Cultural Awareness and Expression.

**How the initiative/reform is being implemented** (e.g. process followed, political commitment, consultation with stakeholders and their respective roles, incentives for stakeholders, dedicated funding, teaching material, definition of goals and standards, assessment and evaluation mechanisms, impact on teacher training/professional development and school practices/leadership, scaling-up approach, based on research/evidence? etc.):

- In developing this Core Curriculum Programme, the CMeLD conducted a preliminary review of practice in the field and collected initial feedback from practitioners in order to obtain a sense of the current provision. A specially structured programme was developed, targeting low ability secondary school learners who need support to attain Level 1 of the Malta Qualifications Framework by the end of compulsory schooling.
- Education officers were consulted with regards to developing an effective programme for these learners.
- Education officers and heads of department developed detailed learning outcomes and assessment programmes for the different subjects.
- Heads of schools were informed about the Core Curriculum Programme and were offered the choice of using it as a whole or in part, or of developing their own school-based programme targeting the same learners as the Core Curriculum Programme.
- Initial meetings with the teachers of these learners were scheduled for the beginning of the school year, September 2013.
- Consequently, weekly 90-minute meetings will be held weekly for the different subjects in order to provide continuous professional development in this area.

## Present stage/phase of implementation:

The Core Curriculum Programme has been developed together with the accompanying subject-specific learning outcomes and assessment programmes. Schools are considering whether to apply for this programme or to go for an in-house programme developed by the school itself.

A classification exercise is being implemented in order to understand the teaching personnel needed for effective implementation. Schools are choosing the adequate teachers and mentors for this programme.

**Pedagogical issues** (issues related to how key competences are being taught to students and how are teachers being prepared to teach them):

Assessment for learning is integral to good teaching, student motivation and engagement, and also to higher achievement levels. The first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting students' learning. An assessment activity can help learning by providing information to be used as feedback, by teachers and by their learners, in assessing themselves and each other and to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. The evidence can be used to adapt the teaching work to meet learning needs.

- A diverse range of assessment methods will put emphasis on the different evidence collected, rather than on the results obtained by one method of assessment. This will promote a climate that encourages learners to put in more effort, since achievement is visible and possible.
- Learners are resources for one another and the environment is conducive to learning since targets are shared and the outcomes known.
- Learners will be given time to work on the feedback given and to reflect on the learning that is taking place.

**What works well** (to identify enablers):

- On-going support from an education officer for every school involved in the programme.
- Teachers from different schools will have the possibility to meet and discuss pedagogical issues and share ideas.

**Challenges and how these are being addressed** (to identify obstacles and solutions):

- Time for continuous professional development for teachers and mentors. Teachers and mentors need training in order to develop assessment for learning strategies, to use various methods of assessment in order collect evidence and to help learners identify their next targets and share with them the outcomes that need to be achieved.
- Learner absenteeism.
- Funding to develop cross-curricular projects.
- Job shadowing procedures.

**Monitoring & evaluation so far/planned, and which methods are being used** (e.g. internal/external quality assurance, inspection, national assessments, international tests, self-evaluation, formative or summative evaluations):

CONTINUOUS FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT	SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT
70 – 80 %	20 – 30 %
Marks assigned to different pieces of student work based on learning outcomes. These marks are recorded but not given to students. Students are only given informative feedback in the form of comments.	School-based half-yearly examination + centrally-set annual examination (written and/or oral and/or listening and/or speaking)
A final grade ranging from A to D, including the two sets of assessment components	
Criteria for the assessment of the portfolio were developed for each subject in order to ensure a more reliable result. This will also help in future moderation.	

**Impact** (e.g. any planned impact assessment?):

The programme will be reviewed at the end of the first year in order to understand what needs to be improved and how. Evaluation will focus on whether teaching has become more learner-centred, on whether learners have become more engaged in their learning and on whether learning has become more effective (evidenced in the portfolios of work). It is envisaged that due to the relevance of the learning taking place, absenteeism will decrease.

On a national level, this programme has targeted those learners who usually finished compulsory education without any certification. This programme will be the first to award these learners an EQF Level 1 certificate for the different subjects, provided they produce enough evidence to demonstrate that the outcomes have been achieved.

**Communication of the initiative/dissemination of outputs and activities:**

This has been achieved through departmental circulars and various meetings held with college principals, heads of school administration and education officers.

**Next steps/follow-up:**

- Meetings with teachers of the various subjects in the Core Curriculum Programme.
- Professional development for mentors of the Core Curriculum Programme Class.