



LETTER CIRCULAR

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To: All Schools: State and Non-State

From: Mr Stephen Cachia, Director General

Subject: Working Group issues further guidelines on online teaching

Dear colleagues,

Following the closure of schools and the initial educational initiatives, the Working Group set up by the Ministry for Education and Employment has continued meeting regularly this week. The group is made up of representatives from the all three sectors: State, Church and Independent Schools, together with the Malta Union of Teacher. The Group's remit is to explore methods of online teaching during this period as well as to explore the impact of the present situation on the curriculum.

The Working Group strongly welcomed the commitment, dedication and hard work being shown by hundreds of educators to provide educational material to their students using online means. These last few days have shown the strong and committed professionalism of educators in such challenging times.

Following the announcement that the closure of schools will continue until the end of the Easter holidays, the Working Group strongly encourages educators to continue with this process of undertaking online teaching for their students. Educators can ask for support in this directly through their schools or through the dedicated website and helplines <https://digitalliteracy.skola.edu.mt/>. An educational resources repository is now freely available on www.curriculum.gov.mt and it is constantly being updated.

The Working Group is now recommending the following guidelines for educators and for schools:

- Educators are encouraged to find the best way which works for them to communicate with their students. This can be done through the support of their school and/or, if needed, through the support available through <https://digitalliteracy.skola.edu.mt/>
- Educators are encouraged to collaborate together and with their school to enable the pooling of resources for the benefit of all. www.curriculum.gov.mt is a valuable tool for resources freely available to all educators and in which all teachers can contribute.
- Educators should plan their communication and dissemination of educational material in a manner which is realistic for themselves and also for their students. They should attempt to cover the most important parts of their relevant syllabi in a manner which takes into consideration the fact that school closure may cover an extended period. Educators are to be reassured that due consideration is being given that business is not as usual for anyone and

mitigation strategies on the curriculum are being discussed. Nevertheless, they are encouraged to continue pacing the material provided gradually so as not to overwhelm students with too much material at one time and ensuring a realistic mode of working in exceptional circumstances from home.

- Educators are encouraged to give feedback to students with regards to any tasks submitted. However, the Group is very much aware that it is not realistic to expect educators to correct all the work which students may carry out at home during this period. A balance should be found by each educator in this regard in which feedback is given to students in a realistic manner. Parents are being invited to be supportive in this aspect as well, by trusting in educators' professionalism and keeping expectations realistic.
- The use of model answers and marking schemes, especially for older students, could be a valuable tool to enable students to self-assess their work. In this regard, the Examination Papers section on www.curriculum.gov.mt provides a vast amount of past papers and marking schemes for the Annual National Examinations of State Schools. These are freely available for all students from all sectors. A number of schools provide similar resources through their respective portals or online presence. The MATSEC Unit will also be uploading a number of available marking schemes for a number of SEC subject past papers. This resource is available for free together with past papers on the MATSEC website: <https://www.um.edu.mt/matsec/pastpapers/>
- Educators should ensure that all communication with students is done within the clear parameters of professional ethics and the safeguarding of students and educators themselves. Clear professional boundaries should always be maintained. The Working Group will continue to support educators in this regard.
- With regards to the Annual examinations, the Benchmark Assessment, the SEC examinations and the Advanced and Intermediate level Matriculation examinations, the Working Group is discussing possible scenarios which take into consideration the current situation. Discussions are also taking place with the MATSEC Board. At this stage educators are encouraged to continue supporting their students. Clear direction will be given to educators, students and parents in due course by the respective Awarding Body (either School, Directorates or MATSEC accordingly).

The Working Group would like to sincerely thank all educators for the exemplary manner in which they are rising to the challenge of this unprecedented situation. Our appreciation is also extended to the IT staff supporting this sudden wave of online learning, as well as cleaning and maintenance staff who are taking all necessary measures for schools to welcome back educators and students when this ordeal is over.

The Group would also like to thank parents and guardians for their co-operation and for the manner in which many are supporting their children while at home, possibly coping with work and certainly with other facets of their lives.

Finally, the group would like to thank all students. Despite undergoing a very challenging time, many students are remaining focussed on their education and are co-operating fully to make these online teaching and learning systems work.

During this difficult period, the educational sector is showing exemplary professionalism and commitment by working together to overcome such a challenging situation. The major life lesson from this experience is the personal and collective rediscovery of meaning and priorities. The Working Group is committed to continue working to ensure that this will continue in the coming weeks.

Stephen Cachia
Director General
Curriculum, Lifelong Learning and Employability