



Global College Malta

Quality and Standards Assurance Manual – Section 8 Supporting Students' Academic Achievement

GLOBAL COLLEGE MALTA
QUALITY ASSURANCE MANUAL (2021)

Section 8 – SUPPORTING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

1. This section of the College's *Quality and Standards Assurance Manual* sets out the College's practices with respect to supporting its students' academic achievement. This section of the *Manual* is very much a 'living' document and whilst reviewed and updated annually, the guidance contained in this Section will necessarily be updated and added to as and when circumstances dictate. This may not be limited to the start of each academic year.
2. The purpose of this section of the *Manual* is to promote good practice in supporting the College's students academically, and also to act as a source of information for College staff on procedures which relate to the support of College students.

Pre-Arrival at the College, Arrival and Induction

Pre-arrival at the College

3. The College recognises the importance of trying to engage with incoming students prior to their arrival, and the benefits this can have on their transition to studying with the College. Professional support staff and programme teams are, accordingly, encouraged to make contact with incoming students sometime between the point at which an offer of a place is made to them to when they first arrive at the College to study. Particular emphasis should be placed on providing information that will enable incoming students to get to know the College and its team, and giving an insight into the work that the College is undertaking.
4. In engaging with incoming students the College is ever mindful of the need to at all times protect the rights and freedoms of individuals as detailed in relevant legislation including looking after any personal data that it collects, uses or hold.

Arrival and induction

5. A number of centrally-led College induction activities are provided for students during their initial period at the College. These activities are typically, though not exclusively, coordinated by the College's student support team.
6. The College's induction activities are aimed at helping new students to settle in to their new life as a student both academically and socially. This involves ensuring they complete their

enrolment process and arrange payment of fees. The induction activity may include a Pre-Arrival E-Library with useful resources and materials to help them get a head start on their College journey. The College organises a number of events and activities, along with the student representatives, to help try and ensure that new arrivals to the College have been introduced to their programme team and are aware of all the College services and facilities available to them, preparing them for life at the College and providing opportunities for socialising and lifelong networking.

Academic Support - Learning and Teaching

The peer observation of teaching

7. The College actively encourages teaching staff to observe a colleagues teaching and/or have their teaching observed, and produce a short commentary about their learning from the observation. If practicable, this should be undertaken each academic year. The purpose of the College's peer observation of teaching activity is to share and enhance learning and teaching within and across the College, to benefit not only the student experience, but also to provide an opportunity for teaching staff to reflect on their teaching practice and, where appropriate, introduce enhancements.

Personal Tutor system

8. The College operates a Personal Tutor system for its students. The Personal Tutor plays an important part in the College's student support system, and its function is to provide academic and pastoral support for students throughout their time with the College. **Appendix 21** to this *Manual* provides an overview of the Personal Tutor system.

Student Peer Mentoring

9. The College recognises that student peer mentoring can help to foster a stronger sense of belonging and commitment for students within the College's vibrant academic community, this in turn having positive benefits to student retention and success.
10. Where appropriate, the College is keen to match current students with new students and to encourage flexible interaction between them. Peer Mentors can help with a range of queries, from social issues, to money, living and study-related issues.

Developing Academic Skills

11. The College firmly believes that the embedding of academic skills within programmes and modules has to be an integral part of curriculum design and delivery. Through its central support team and College lecturers the College is able to offer help and support in respect of:
 - Support with transition to College and through each level of study;
 - Time and task management;

- Academic integrity and referencing. This includes support to understand how and why citations are needed to support ideas; strategies for developing good academic practice, including: paraphrasing, summarising and quoting; and referencing support;
- Reading and note-making. This includes developing reading strategies for academic purposes to aid comprehension and developing active note-making when reading and listening;
- Academic writing. This includes assignment planning; structure; writing style; grammar and punctuation; and proof reading and editing your own work;
- Critical thinking. This includes the critical selection, analysis and evaluation of sources and creating arguments in academic writing;
- Reflective learning. This includes developing reflective practice and reflective writing;
- Revision and exams. This includes exam revision, preparation and managing exams on the day; and,
- Posters and presentations. This includes oral and written communication and group work.

Information Literacy Guidance

12. College staff provide information literacy support for students of all levels and literacy skills are embedded within module teaching and assessment. This might, by means of example, take the form of assistance with:

- Navigating and managing reading lists;
- Identifying relevant books, journal articles and other information sources for topics;
- Evaluating information sources for authority, accuracy and relevancy;
- Undertaking literature searches for literature review;
- Using a range of information sources and research databases;
- Managing and organising references;
- Assistance with keeping up-to-date with research in a given field; and,
- Understanding copyright compliance and protecting work.

Academic Progression - Turnitin

13. It is a requirement that all students at the College must submit all assessed work which can be handed in electronically to Turnitin for originality checking. This applies to all summative assessments submitted for a Global College Malta award at levels 5, 6, 7, and taught provision at level 8.
14. Guidance on the use of Turnitin in online assignment submission is provided to College students by teaching staff and the College support team and forms part of the College's student induction process. The support provides advice and guidance on interpreting Turnitin reports and when an instance of malpractice may have occurred.

Recording of lectures

15. Where a student has a specific identified and agreed need, the College will allow students to record lectures.

Student Engagement and Feedback

16. As noted in the introduction to this *Manual*, Global College Malta believes that student engagement, involvement in decision-making and partnership learning should be at the centre of all aspects of the College student experience. This includes embedding student participation in academic quality assurance and enhancement processes.

Student Experience Representation system

17. The College's Student Experience Representatives voice student thoughts, opinions and feedback from their programmes of study on a variety of themes, these can be academic and non-academic as well as being positive and less positive.
18. A Student Experience Representative is a student chosen by other students to represent their views and feedback to the College. Any College student can volunteer themselves to be a programme representative. The role normally lasts for one academic year but students are encouraged to put themselves forward to do the role again in subsequent years if they enjoy it, feel it has been beneficial and have been effective in the role.
19. Student Experience Reps are involved in collecting feedback (both positive and less positive) from other students on their programme of study. The aim is to celebrate successes with their programme of study as well as to identify where improvements might be needed in current programme delivery arrangements and to bring about positive change where there may be issues. Student representatives can provide feedback on academic and non-academic matters such as timetabling, assessment feedback and College facilities. Student representatives will attend Staff-Student Liaison Meetings with College staff to discuss feedback and actions.
20. At least one student representative will be a member of the College's Academic Board and the College's Quality and Standards Committee.

Guidance for staff on Staff-Student Liaison Meetings

21. The College recognises that in order to maintain the high quality and standards of its provision and to secure quality enhancement that there has to be an effective partnership between College students and staff with clear structures for student feedback and representation. The Student Experience Representation System provides a framework in which students can have a

direct input on decisions regarding their academic programmes, with representatives feeding into structured feedback meetings.

22. Every College student at every level of every programme will have access to representation, and as a result, will be able to influence their student learning experience through their representatives. This will take place through Staff-Student Liaison Meetings. These meetings provide an important point of communication between Student Experience Representatives and programme delivery teams and normally take place at least twice per year. Circumstances may mean that remote/online meetings are preferable or even required.
23. Prior to a Staff-Student Liaison Meeting it is expected that Student Experience Representatives will collect feedback, both in areas of good practice and areas for improvement, from their colleagues on the programme of study and will share what they have been told with the Chair of the meeting as soon as is possible to allow for responses to be formed or possible remedial actions to be explored before the meeting starts. This helps save time and, importantly, allows for a discussion of actions to improve the student experience during the meeting itself. It is also good practice to talk to Student Experience Representatives if there is any specific feedback that the programme team would like (for example, on something that has been changed following feedback the previous year).
24. Staff-Student Liaison Meetings will be chaired by a College staff member and will be free to discuss any topics relating to learning and teaching. These may include, but are not limited to, matters such as:
 - Minutes from the last meeting
 - Matters arising
 - Reports from College staff on the outcomes from previous student feedback and on any actions taken
 - Student Feedback on areas such as:
 - overall quality of programmes and modules
 - learning and teaching methods
 - assessment methods
 - feedback on assessed work
 - the provision of study skills support, general student support and/or supervision
 - learning resources
 - facilities, and study space
 - Outcomes of any surveys that may have been undertaken.
25. Staff-Student Liaison Meetings should be seen as a safe space for ideas and issues to be openly discussed and meetings should not, therefore, engage in discussion of:
 - Individual staff members

- Individual students
- Personal complaints/grievances/appeals

26. All the dates and times for Staff-Student Liaison Meetings will be set by the College and communicated to the relevant Student Experience Representatives. Staff-Student Liaison Meetings should include a record of who attended the meeting, an outline of the issues raised, actions agreed and timescales for implementation. Following each meeting the minutes should be circulated to the respective Student Experience Representatives and made more generally available to students, either on noticeboards or through the College's email system.

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Appendix 21 to accompany Section 8 – Supporting Students Academic Achievement

The role of the College Personal Tutor

The College Personal Tutor role is an important one in the College's student support system and its function is to provide academic and pastoral support for students throughout their time with the College.

The Personal Tutor's role can be sub-divided into four distinct but interconnected responsibilities:

To help provide academic advice for students on a one-to-one basis. They can helpfully review a students' attendance and contact, meet and support students who are not attending taught sessions regularly for any reason.

Provide pastoral advice or referral for students with problems which could inhibit their academic progress. Personal Tutors can occasionally be asked to advise on minor personal problems at their discretion but students presenting with complex issues such as bereavement, relationship breakdowns, potential learning difficulties or any mental health problem should be forwarded to the College's Support Team.

Provide academic advice on issues arising from non-academic matters. Nonacademic issues can sometimes impact on academic engagement and progression and Personal Tutors are well placed to provide information about potential interventions and academic options.

Provide a consistent point of contact for the student with a member of staff who knows them well, sometimes culminating in the Personal Tutor writing the student a reference.

What can a student expect of their Personal Tutor?

A minimum of one meeting per year;

To be a friendly and helpful first point of contact;

To respond to requests for meetings positively and promptly, and to refer to a suitable replacement if a prompt meeting is not possible;

To be aware of a student's attendance pattern in order to counsel and support students who are not attending taught sessions regularly;

To provide a point of contact concerning key academic advice and any pastoral issues; and,

To provide a reference for the student on the completion of their studies.

What can the Personal Tutor expect of their student?

To attend pre-arranged meetings and to respond to requests for meetings;
To inform their Personal Tutor of any circumstances which may impact negatively on their studies; and,
To respect the availability of their Personal Tutor and to be courteous at all times.

The Role of the Personal Tutor: Boundaries and Limits

Personal Tutors should refer students to professional support when required. Whilst the limits of Personal Tutor expertise is a matter for the discretion of individual tutors, the College strongly urges its Personal Tutors to recognise both their professional limitations and to be aware of their own personal health and wellbeing. Therefore, should these circumstances arise, it is perfectly acceptable for a Personal Tutor to say *“I’m unable to advise you about “X”, so I am going to refer you to “Y” who is more experienced in this area”*. The College advises its Personal Tutors to make the boundaries of their expertise absolutely clear when advising students.

Confidentiality

It is important that students trust their Personal Tutors sufficiently to talk freely, but it is equally necessary to identify reasonable limits of confidentiality. If personal information disclosed is impacting upon the student’s ability to fulfil the demands of their programme, they should be encouraged to seek professional guidance and support. Personal Tutors should not disclose any such information unless the student has explicitly agreed that any such information can be shared.

Emergency Situations

Very occasionally Personal Tutors may be contacted by a student who is extremely distressed and/or is experiencing a personal crisis. In this situation, the Personal Tutor should very carefully assess the situation and attempt to get a clear understanding of the nature and severity of the issue. If in any doubt, the Personal Tutor should contact the College’s Support Team.

Medical Emergencies

In the case of a medical emergency, such as a student experiencing anaphylactic shock or having a reaction to medication, Personal Tutors should immediately contact the College Support Team.