

# A competency approach to education - Malta

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- The Government of Malta considers education and training as a major pillar for its social and economic development
  - The aim is to make Malta a regional centre of excellence in education by 2015
  - Substantial reforms are being implemented involving extensive consultation with policy makers, teachers, parents , the teacher's union and civil society. Various documents refer to key competences and lifelong learning.

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- Key competences for lifelong learning are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are particularly necessary for personal fulfilment and development, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment.
  - These competences should be acquired by young people at the end of their compulsory schooling to equip them for adult working life and also by adults throughout their lives in the context of lifelong learning.



- **The European Reference Framework sets out the 8 Key competences:**

- 1. Communication in the mother tongue
- 2. Communication in foreign languages
- 3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
- 4. Digital competence
- 5. Learning to learn
- 6. Social and civic competences
- 7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- 8. Cultural awareness and expression

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- These key competences are all overlapping and work together and the emphasis in each case is on critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem solving, risk assessment, decision taking and constructive management of feeling.
  - Thus an approach to teaching and learning that is based on key competences shifts the focus from inputs such as programme content, time, materials and methods on to outcomes of the learning process: what a learner knows, understands and is able to do

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- In 2009 The Directorate for Quality & Standards in Education set up a policy and a strategy to tackle core competences attainment in Literacy, e Learning and Mathematics.
  - The policy ensures that at the end of the primary cycle of compulsory education all learners would have mastered the required key competences in fulfilment of their potential

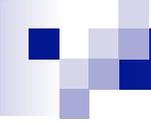
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- A new National Curriculum Framework is to be launched in May 2011
  - A new curriculum is currently being written for Form 1 students with well-defined learning outcomes and student-centred activities
  - This new curriculum will continue to be written for all years of schooling



## ■ 1. **Communication in the mother tongue**

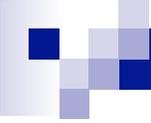
- Maltese, the mother tongue and national language is taught at the primary, secondary and higher secondary levels and specify listening, speaking, reading and writing competences as well as cultural and literary components.

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- The NMC considers bilingualism, Maltese and English as a key element of the educational system. This entails the effective, precise and confident use of the country's two official languages. This goal must be reached by the students by the end of their compulsory schooling experience. A number of students start school using English already.



## ■ 2. Communication in Foreign Languages

- English is one of the two official languages. It is compulsory at primary and secondary levels and it is the recommended language of instruction and examinations for most subjects at all levels of education.
- The syllabi for foreign languages are according to the CEFR (Common European Framework Reference)
- Students in Year 5 & 6 Primary have foreign language awareness programmes for German, French and Italian of 10 half hours per subject. Spanish and Arabic are option subjects in the secondary.

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- **3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology**
  - Core competence strategy for mathematics
  - The new curriculum for Form 1 students (11 years) has outcomes and activities for students from Levels 1-8 (in Malta we are working on a ten point scale system). Students may move from one set to the next in Maths, English & Maltese
  - The science framework highlights the importance of knowledge, skills and attitudes that students need to develop.

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- The approach used helps students observe, measure, analyse, solve problems, gather and interpret data and design experiments
  - The framework supports an attitude for the application of scientific concepts to everyday life and for safeguarding the natural environment for sustainable development

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- The science curriculum gives enquiry based learning a more centralised role and is designed for students to acquire competence in science and technology based on knowledge, skills and attitudes aimed at further learning in a knowledge based society



## ■ 4. Digital competence

- Digital competence is not only being used to target subjects such as Mathematics or literacy but it is being promoted as a form of dialogue, information, cultural expression and exchange of practices.
- All state schools are provided with Internet.
- All teachers are provided with laptops. 4 computers are provided in every primary school class.

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- Computer laboratories are used in secondary schools. Interactive whiteboards are found in every Year 5 and 6 class and are being provided in others.



## ■ 5. Learning to learn

- The focus in the new curriculum is on the shift from text-book learning to experiential and more active learning. Autonomous and peer learning are stressed
- Students are encouraged to learn about new issues and ideas through the use of internet, investigative work, practical work in workshops, the laboratory and fieldwork.



## ■ **6. Social and Civic competence**

- This is acquired mainly within active citizenship and a democratic environment
- The history curriculum provides understanding and tolerance and aims to combat racism and discrimination, It encourages the use of evidence and different sources. The national history is taught within a wider Mediterranean



## and European perspective

- During environmental education the focus is on helping students develop a sense of responsibility and solidarity by understanding how one's personal and local action could have national, regional as well as global repercussions. A number of schools achieve Green Flag status as part of Eco school initiatives.

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- Commemoration and remembrance events at schools nurture social awareness in students towards issues related to racism and xenophobia like the Holocaust Day.
  - Emphasis is laid on the themes of justice, democracy and entrepreneurship through initiatives and projects including Students Councils which have become statutory, visits to the Law Courts, School co-operatives etc.

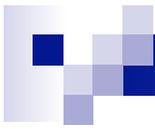


## ■ **8. Cultural awareness and expression**

- Cultural awareness, intercultural dialogue and creative expression enrich all subjects.
- Culture includes the appreciation of all forms of visual, plastic and performing arts
- Maltese and foreign language teaching emphasize the culture component

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- The Malta Qualifications Council has worked on a National Qualifications Framework that defines:
  - Level 1 qualification as a School Leaving Certificate
  - Level 2 qualification in a subject as a SEC pass at grades 6-7
  - Level 3 qualification in a subject as a SEC pass at grades 1-5

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- The *Descriptors of Key Competences in the National Qualifications Framework* present the learning outcomes of the 8 EU competencies at Levels 1,2 and 3.
  - The aim is to help training providers in planning vocational education and training courses enriched by key competences which cut across all areas of education and training



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- **Initial teacher education and continuous professional development**
  - The B.Ed (primary or secondary options) is the main entry into the teaching profession. The University of Malta is the key provider. However it must respond to the emerging needs in the sector and it does this through the introduction of new ECTS modules and post-graduate degree programmes. These courses prepare educators to acquire competences in area



that present a particular challenge  
eg. dyslexia, social and emotional needs,  
inclusive education adult and continuing  
training etc.

- The up-skilling of teacher competences to achieve modernisation of school curricula and enhance teaching and learning processes are a major focus of the reform process. The main providers in this area is the Education Directorates within the MEEF.