



L-Università  
ta' Malta

MATSEC  
Examinations Board



## Candidate's Feedback

### Main and First Sessions of 2021

**2021**

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## CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

### A. Executive Summary

MATSEC examinations for 2021 were again impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. To make up for any teaching and/or studying time which might have been lost, MATSEC postponed the examination session by a month and examinations started in June rather than May. Several factors might have impacted the performance of candidates in 2021. In addition to mitigation measures taken to reduce the risk of transmission during examinations, which included doing away with oral components and practical examinations in most subjects and the use of a large number of examination centres to better spread candidates, a heat wave hit the country during examinations. Furthermore, a pilot project was held whereby two state secondary schools acted as examination centres for the students they prepared for SEC.

MATSEC's post-examination survey was sent to all 2021 Main and First Session candidates before this session's results were published. There were 1,685 participants, from 9,058 distinct candidates providing 8,851 unique e-mail addresses, or 19.0% of the number of e-mails sent and 18.6% of the total number of candidates. Comparable to previous years (excluding 2020 due to mitigation measures in that year), more respondents applied for SEC subjects (63.1%) than AM/IM (36.1%). Similar to previous post-session surveys, the majority of the respondents were female (67.1%) and the two largest age groups were 16 (50.5%) and 18 (20.5%). However, the percentage of 18-year olds is the smallest since the start of the survey, corroborating MATSEC's observations that the number of 18-years olds sitting for MC examinations is decreasing.

The majority of respondents agreed that sufficient mitigation measures were published by the Ministry for Health to minimize the spread of COVID-19 (88.7%) and that these measures were properly adopted by examination centres (90.7%). Furthermore, most candidates agreed (89.4%) that the invigilation staff enforced the mitigation measures inside the examination centres. However, only 37.2% of the respondents agreed that candidates avoided crowding before and after the examinations and were following mitigation measures. This was despite Law Enforcement officers being present outside centres to ensure that social distancing and other mitigation measures were followed. Only 66.0% of respondents indicated that Law Enforcement officers were effective for this purpose.

Respondents' opinion of examination centres is similar to that expressed in past Candidate Feedback reports. When compared to last year, less candidates agreed that the noise levels were adequate in the examination centres (79.1%) although the response is more positive than that registered in 2018 and 2019. The majority of candidates thought that the examination centres were fit for purpose (76.3%) even though many participants complained about the heat.

The majority (75.9%) of participants agreed that invigilators were sufficiently informed about the various examinations to be able to direct candidates with any difficulties that they had. However, this is the lowest percentage of positive responses in the past three years. Additionally, only 60.5% of the participants indicated that invigilators read instructions at the beginning of examinations, an alarming decline from when this practice was first enforced by MATSEC five years ago. Similar to previous years, respondents indicated (84.4%) that it is difficult to cheat during examinations and that invigilators were on task to ensure no copying or collusion took place (88.6%).

The majority of the candidates agreed (84.5%) that the removal of oral components in language subjects was necessary to limit the risk of transmission, and less than half (43.7%) indicated that they thought that the resulting assessment would be unfair for those subjects. Aural examinations were held for both SEC and MC examinations using recordings. This is the first session where no live speakers were used throughout the entire examination sessions. A total of 1,043 respondents (63.0%) claimed to have sat for Aural examinations in 2021. Most respondents (72.2%) stated to prefer listening comprehension examinations be held using recordings, with 36.5% strongly agreeing with the statement, an improvement over previous years where aural examinations were held. Participants also generally felt that the audio quality was good (77.2%).

A total of 609 participants (36.1%) indicated sitting for MC subjects. Similar to previous years, respondents agree with the compulsory nature of each of Groups 1, 2, and 3, with the highest level of agreement being with the compulsory

## CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

nature of Group 1 subjects (89.8%). Also similar to previous years, respondents (67.3%) disagree with the compulsory nature of IM Systems of Knowledge, with many respondents repeating that while the subject content is interesting, it should not be a requirement for the award of the MC. There is more to candidates' views about SoK than meets the eye, as candidates suggest being inadequately prepared to take the subject's examination. Only half the respondents (53.7%) indicated that submitted work during the course was returned with feedback and comments, that they were provided with exam-type questions (43.5%) and that teachers guided them on how to answer exam-type questions (37.8%).

This year, a pilot project was held whereby two state secondary schools acted as examination centres for the students they prepared for SEC examinations. The identified schools were St. Thomas More Secondary School (Žejtun) and Maria Regina Secondary School (Žokrija). These selected schools offered conditions which may have been regarded as ideal for the pilot project, such as their physical size and the presence of separate buildings in which lessons and examinations could be carried out. There were 76 respondents claiming to be students from these schools, of which 15 respondents claimed to have sat for examinations in other examination centres. In general, they agreed that having examinations in the schools they attended made them feel at ease (67 of the 69 replies).

Most respondents (75.9%) would like to have coursework contribute to the final mark in all SEC subjects. They believe that coursework makes it easier to pass examinations (79.7%) and that it reduces stress (60.9%). However, while 41.8% of the respondents indicated that content already assessed through coursework should not be included in examinations, in the next question, 64.7% of the respondents agreed that it should. Most respondents (72.9%) believe that coursework is unfair because different schools/teachers mark the work unreliably.

A total of 277 survey respondents (16.4% of total participants) claim to have qualified for Examination Access Arrangements (EAAs). The figure reported this year is in line with figures reported in previous years excluding last year's Special Session (29.8%). Although 122 candidates did not specify on which conditions EAAs were granted, the most stated conditions are ADD/ADHD (16.6%) and SPLD/Dyslexia (15.9%), similar to previous candidate feedback results. From the 157 participants to this item, 105 claim one condition while the rest stated multiple ones. Similar to previous reports, Room with Few Candidates and Extra Time are deemed the most helpful (90.6% and 76.8% respectively). Similar to previous reports, the Prompter is deemed the least useful, with 45.0% indicating not using this arrangement and 17.5% not finding it useful. The feedback on prompters this year is similar to that of previous reports, and better than that indicated last year during the Special Session (37.5% and 33.3% respectively). Respondents were asked to describe the equality of EAAs when these were offered by different persons, with a total of 21 from the 137 responses to this survey item (15.3%) claiming that different personnel provided them with different levels of access, 53 (38.7%) stating they received a similar level of access for the examinations, while 63 (46.0%) said they received the same level of access throughout all examinations, similar to last year. Most participants (85.3% of 16 responses to this item) indicated that EAAs were fair.

This year, 71.5% of the respondents did not seek help from MATSEC. This is similar to the figure quoted in past reports with the exception of last year's (49.2%), where COVID-19 mitigation measures were introduced for the first time. The use of e-mail and telephone remain the two most used means of contacting MATSEC, although the percentage of respondents preferring e-mail is increasing across the years. The majority of the respondents (66.6%) were satisfied with the assistance provided by MATSEC. It is to be noted that the positive response for both this year and last year (64.0%) are lower than in previous years (where all satisfaction rates were above 75%). Uncertainty regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant mitigation measures in place could explain such a drop. From the 250 participants who left additional comments, 72.8% were very positive, citing quick responses and clear instructions.

## B. Introduction

This report presents the views of a sample of MATSEC 2021 candidates in a bid to stimulate the continuous process of development within MATSEC. This is the seventh year that a post-examination survey has been sent to all MATSEC candidates. This post-examination survey has parts which are in common with past surveys allowing for comparison when analysing these responses. Other items are new and relevant to proposed or ongoing changes.

This was the second year where mitigation measures were taken due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Oral components and most practical examinations were not held in order to mitigate the risk of transmission. Candidates were awarded full marks for these components. All aural examinations for both SEC and MC were held using recorded speakers while coursework interviews were held online. Furthermore, to maintain two-metre social distance between candidates, a larger number of examination centres were utilised, some of which not commonly used for MATSEC examinations. Although accommodation for MATSEC examinations is the responsibility of MFED's Examinations Department, the use of more examinations centres than usual has had repercussions on MATSEC's operations as it affects (i) the provision of human resources to manage, check, and prepare for certain examinations, (ii) packing, distribution, and collection of examination material, and (iii) communication with centres where needed (e.g. in case of an *errata corrigé*).

The Ministry for Education (MFED) is committed to provide the infrastructure so that MATSEC examinations are held in the schools that the candidates attend. This year, a pilot project was held whereby two state secondary schools acted as examination centres for the students they prepared for SEC examinations. This pilot project saw the setting up of an examination centre within each of the two schools, with staff contracted by the Examinations Department running the examinations (head of centre, invigilation staff, EAA support staff) and school staff running the school. Many times, selected school staff had a dual role – as school staff and staff contracted by the Examinations Department (e.g. cleaners). The identified schools were St. Thomas More Secondary School (Żejtun) and Maria Regina Secondary School (Żokrija). The Żokrija centre accommodated pilot project candidates in Blocks S and K but used other blocks for other candidates. The Żejtun centre was solely used for pilot project candidates. These selected schools offered conditions which may have been regarded as ideal for the pilot project, such as their physical size and the presence of separate buildings in which lessons and examinations could be carried out.

Candidate feedback about examination access arrangements offered by MATSEC through the Access Disability Support Committee (ADSC) of the University of Malta was collected and evaluated through a 2016 study by MATSEC. Questions from this study have become a part of MATSEC's post-examination survey as from 2017. Most of these items are unchanged.

## C. Methodology

The data presented in this report was collected through an online survey which was distributed to all candidates who sat for examinations during the Main/First Session via e-mail on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2021. A total of 8,851 e-mails were sent and candidates had up to the 13<sup>th</sup> August 2021 to complete the survey. Thus, all feedback was collected from respondents before the results of the Main/First Session were published on the 13<sup>th</sup> August, which in practice is identical to that adopted for the past four years. All responses were anonymous and treated with confidentiality; however, participants had the option to provide their phone number in case some of their responses prompted further questioning.

## D. Results

### Descriptive Information

There were 9,058 individual registrations for the SEC and/or MC examinations for the Main/First Session providing 8,851 non-duplicate<sup>1</sup> e-mail addresses to which an invitation to participate in this survey was sent.

There were 1,685 responses. Thus, the number of responses is equal to 19.0% of the number of e-mails sent (including those which were not delivered) and 18.6% of the total number of candidates. This is the highest amount of responses since the survey was started in 2016, with the numbers steadily increasing every year with the exception of 2020, where the Main Session was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic and only 2,892 out of the original 5,158 SEC candidates (57.5%) had opted to sit for the September Special Session 2020 following the predicted level exercise.

Comparable to previous years (excluding 2020), more respondents applied for SEC subjects (63.1%) than AM/IM (36.1%). Similar to previous post-session surveys, the majority of the respondents were female (67.1%), the majority of whom sat for SEC examinations (61.4%). The majority of male respondents sat for SEC examinations as well (68.2%).

For both males and females, more respondents claimed to have registered for enough subjects to be awarded the Matriculation Certificate (MC) than for single AM/IM examinations. This is interesting because, although this claim is reproduced in previous statistical candidate feedback reports, statistics published by MATSEC show an ever-decreasing number of candidates who apply for the six subjects required to obtain the MC in one single session. Often, candidates prefer to stagger their subjects across two or more examination sessions.

Similar to previous post-session surveys, the largest two age groups are 16 (50.5%) and 18 (20.5%) years old. However, the percentage of 18-year olds is the smallest since the start of the survey, corroborating MATSEC's observation that the number of 18-years olds sitting for MC examinations is decreasing.

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<sup>1</sup> Some candidates might register for both SEC and MC examinations. These are considered as two separate registrations. The candidate will likely provide the same e-mail address for both registrations. In addition, some guardians who register their dependents for examinations might also provide the same e-mail address for the registrations of different candidates.

**CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021**

*Table 1: Information on participants – gender, age, and examination applications*

		2018		2019		2020		2021	
		N	% (from total)	N	% (from total)	N	% (from total)	N	% (from total)
Total		1594		1671		852		1685	
Gender	<i>Response Rate</i>	99		99.4		98.4		99.5	
	Male	548	34.7	549	33.1	302	35.7	302	31.7
	Female	1030	65.3	1112	66.9	543	64.3	543	67.1
Age	<i>Response Rate</i>	92.5		89.1		94.4		99.1	
	15	19	1.3	19	1.3	9	1.1	29	1.7
	16	737	50	799	53.7	287	34.2	843	50.5
	17	105	7.1	110	7.4	115	13.7	174	10.4
	18	386	26.2	315	21.2	237	28.3	343	20.5
	19	56	3.8	65	4.4	66	7.9	82	4.9
	20	23	1.6	24	1.6	11	1.3	23	1.4
	20+	148	10	157	10.5	113	13.5	176	10.5
Examinations Applied for in 2021	<i>Response Rate</i>	100		100		100		99.2	
	At least 6 subjects at SEC level (O' levels)	728	45.7	820	49.1	127	14.9	671	40.1
	Individual AM (A' level) examinations	265	15.9	201	23.6	201	23.6	392	23.4
	Individual IM (Intermediate) examinations								
	Individual SEC (O' level) examinations	238	14.9	308	18.4	275	32.3	315	18.8
Matriculation Certificate	249	15.6	278	16.6	248	29.1	294	17.6	



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### Examination Centres

The first part of the survey sought to gather general impressions about examination centres during the First/Main Session 2021. To adopt a two-metre separation between candidate's desks, additional centres had to be utilized together with more invigilation and examination centre staff. Furthermore, law enforcement officers were on duty outside examination centres to ensure that social distancing was maintained at all times.

Respondents were asked to mark their level of agreement with 14 statements concerning COVID-19 mitigation measures, examination centres, invigilation, and paper layout. Table 2 shows the seven of these statements related to COVID-19 mitigation measures along with the number of respondents selecting each option. The response rate for each item is also shown. The information is represented graphically in Figure 1. Where applicable, this data is compared with that of previous Candidate Feedback reports. This table will only show the percentage of respondents in each year who agreed with the statement. Information about the other items will be presented in the same manner in the respective sections.

*Table 2: Response to questions about COVID-19 mitigation measures*

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Responses
<b>Sufficient mitigation measures to minimise the spread of COVID-19 during examinations were published by the Ministry for Health.</b>	N	576	918	154	37	1685
	%	34.2	54.5	9.1	2.2	100
<b>Mitigation measures to minimise transmission of COVID-19 were in place INSIDE the examination centres.</b>	N	633	894	123	35	1685
	%	37.6	53.1	7.3	2.1	100
<b>Candidates observed mitigation measures and did not form crowds BEFORE and AFTER the examinations.</b>	N	200	426	668	391	1685
	%	11.9	25.3	39.6	23.2	100
<b>The removal of oral components in language subjects was needed to limit risk of transmission</b>	N	869	554	194	68	1685
	%	51.6	32.9	11.5	4.0	100
<b>The removal of oral components makes the assessment unfair in those particular subjects.</b>	N	296	439	641	309	1685
	%	17.6	26.1	38.0	18.3	100
<b>Invigilation staff ensured that mitigation measures were followed during the examinations.</b>	N	575	932	145	33	1685
	%	34.1	55.3	8.6	2.0	100
<b>Law Enforcement officers ensured the mitigation rules were followed outside examination centres.</b>	N	404	742	397	142	1685
	%	24.0	44.0	23.6	8.4	100

The majority of respondents (88.7%) agreed that sufficient mitigation measures were published by the Ministry for Health to minimize the spread of COVID-19, with a further 90.7% agreeing that the measures were in place inside the examination centres. However, only 37.2% of the respondents claimed that

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candidates avoided crowding before and after the examinations. This can be partly attributed due to the fact that the instructions called for the candidates to present themselves around an hour before the examinations were to start to ensure a controlled entry, but from comments submitted by the candidates, several centres allowed entry only a few minutes prior to the examination starting time. Given it was summer, candidates were often crowding together where they could find shade, as well as crowding in front of the entrances as the examination was about to start. Although there were Law Enforcement officers present to ensure that social distancing and other mitigation measures were followed, only two thirds of respondents (66.0%) indicated that, in their opinion, the Law Enforcement officers were effective. Several respondents indicated in comments that they observed Law Enforcement officers repeatedly asking candidates to disperse, but eventually gave up trying to enforce the regulations.

Considerably more candidates agreed (89.4%) that the invigilation staff enforced the mitigation measures inside the examination centres, although, several respondents commented that they observed more invigilators with their masks lowered and not enforcing proper mask-wearing. Furthermore, several respondents commented that the tables were placed closer than the mandatory two-meter distance.

As part of the mitigation measures, oral components in language subjects were removed. The majority of the candidates agreed (84.5%) that this measure was necessary to limit the risk of transmission. Less than half (43.7%) indicated that they thought that the resulting assessment would be unfair for those subjects.

Table 3 shows the three statements specifically related to the examination centres for the Main/First Session 2021 along with the number of respondents selecting each option. The response rate for each item is also shown. Where applicable, this data is compared with those of previous Candidate Feedback reports. This table will only show the percentage of respondents in each year who agreed with a statement. Information about the other items will be presented in the same manner in the respective sections.

*Table 3: Response to questions about examination centres*

		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total Replies
<b>The examination centres were clean and well maintained</b>	N	618	942	103	16	1679
	%	36.8	56.1	6.1	1.0	100
<b>The noise levels in examination centres were adequate.</b>	N	404	923	291	61	1679
	%	24.1	55.0	17.3	3.6	100
<b>The examination centres were fit for purpose.</b>	N	445	833	284	112	1674
	%	26.6	49.8	17.0	6.7	100

## CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

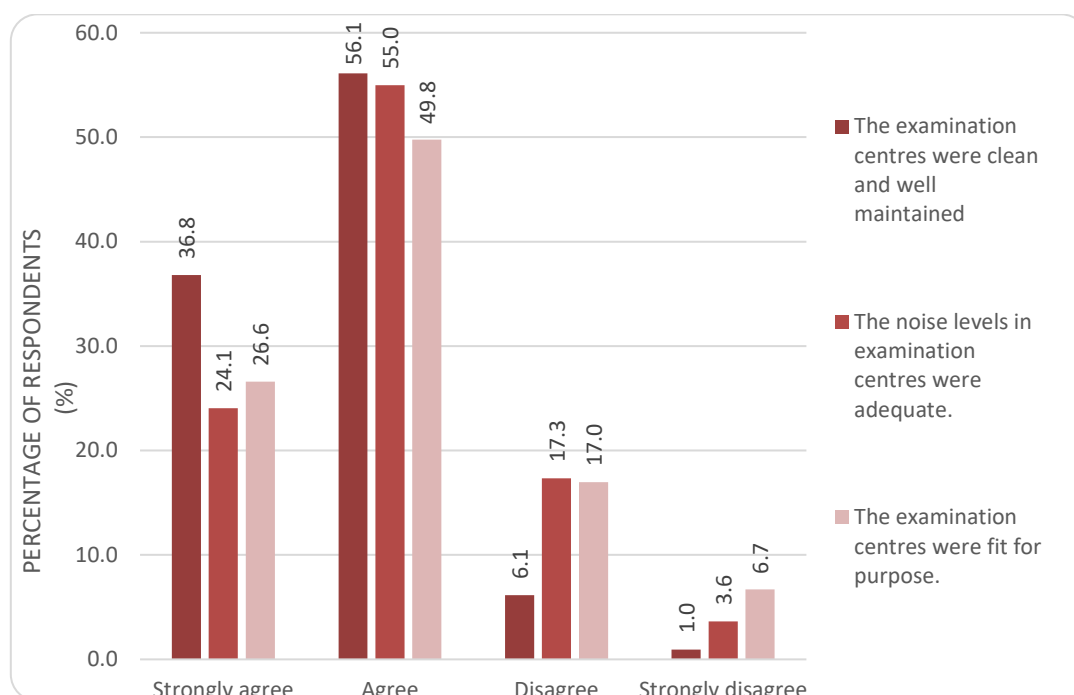


Figure 1: Response to questions about examination centres

Table 4: Response to questions about examination centres, by Year of Survey

Year	2021		2020		2019		2018	
Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
<b>The examination centres were well maintained.</b>	36.8	56.1	47.2	49.3	39	56.2	33.8	58.5
	92.9		96.5		95.2		92.3	
<b>The noise levels in examination centres were adequate.</b>	24.1	55.0	40.1	48.3	15.2	54.1	20.4	56.9
	79.1		88.3		69.3		77.3	
<b>The examination centres were fit for purpose.</b>	26.6	49.8	40.1	48.3	32.5	57	28.2	60.6
	76.3		88.4		89.6		88.8	

Candidates, in general, agree with all the presented statements. Similar to previous years, they agree mostly with the statement regarding examination centres being clean and well-maintained (92.9%). Respondents also agreed that examination centres were fit for purpose (76.3%) and that noise levels were adequate (79.1%). However, several respondents indicated via comments that they found items underneath their workstations, and questioned how this was possible if their stations were really thoroughly cleaned after every session. A number of candidates also complained that there were non-working clocks at one particular centre.

Although still overwhelmingly positive (76.3%), this is the year since the beginning of the survey with the most candidates (23.7%) indicating that the examination centres were not fit for purpose. There could be multiple reasons for this. It could be that as examinations were held later in the year, weather was

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considerably warmer and many examination centres do not have an air conditioning system and rely on traditional fanning systems. To make things worse, several respondents claimed there was construction work going on near a number of examination centres, forcing invigilation staff to close windows to reduce the noise. Another reason could be the use of venues which would usually, when one has a choice, not be selected as examination centres. Additionally, a number of respondents, claiming they are quite tall, stated that the tables were too small to comfortably work in during their examination.

Participants were also asked a series of questions regarding Listening Comprehensions. This was the first year where all aural examinations for both SEC and MC were held using recorded speakers. A total of 1,043 respondents (63.0%) claimed to have sat for Aural examinations in 2021. Most respondents (72.2%) stated to prefer listening comprehension examinations be held using recordings, with 36.5% strongly agreeing with the statement. There is a noticeable improvement in candidate perceptions over the use of recorded speakers. The response rate was 37.6% (13.1% strongly) in 2018 and 45.5% (17.5% strongly) in 2019. Listening comprehensions were not held in 2020 as part of the mitigation measures. Participants also generally felt that the audio quality was good (77.2%).

*Table 5: Response to questions about Listening Comprehensions*

		<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
<b>Listening comprehension examinations should, as much as possible, be carried out using recordings.</b>	N	385	377	206	88	1056
	%	36.5	35.7	19.5	8.3	100
<b>Listening comprehension examinations should, as much as possible, be carried out using live speakers (persons).</b>	N	276	249	390	138	1053
	%	26.2	23.6	37.0	13.1	100
<b>Audio quality in Listening Comprehensions was good.</b>	N	277	533	175	65	1050
	%	26.4	50.8	16.7	6.2	100

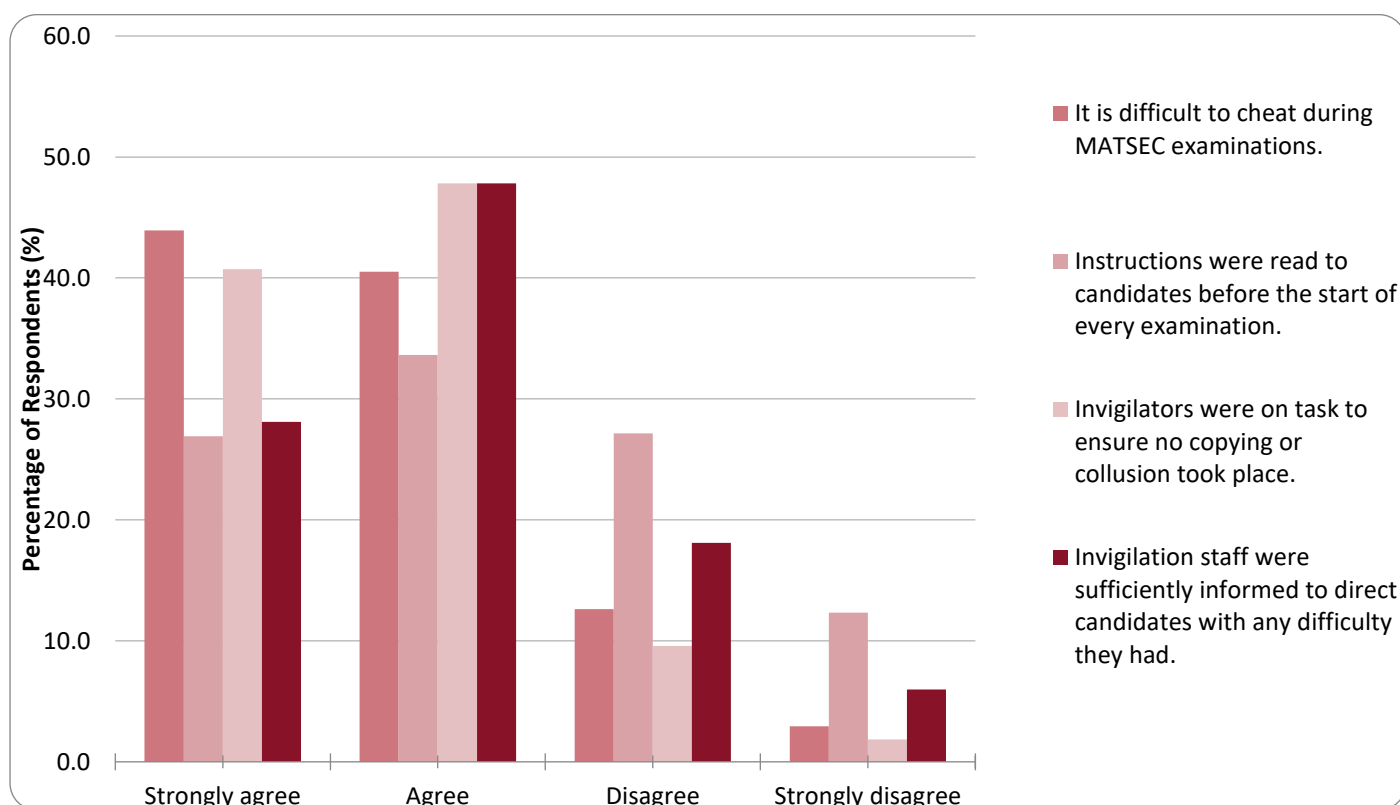
### Invigilation, Examination Regulations and Cheating

Results showing respondents' views about invigilation during examinations are shown below. This is also shown graphically in the figure that follows. Results to this section are compared to those of previous years in Table 6. It is to be noted that due to the increased number of centres utilized due to the COVID-19, more invigilators were employed during this session than is standard.

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*Table 6: Response to questions about examination invigilation, by Year of Survey*

		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total Replies
<b>It is difficult to cheat during MATSEC examinations.</b>	N	734	677	211	49	1671
	%	43.9	40.5	12.6	2.9	100
<b>Instructions were read to candidates before the start of every examination.</b>	N	452	565	456	207	1680
	%	26.9	33.6	27.1	12.3	100
<b>Invigilators were on task to ensure no copying or collusion took place.</b>	N	684	803	161	31	1679
	%	40.7	47.8	9.6	1.8	100
<b>Invigilation staff were sufficiently informed to direct candidates with any difficulty they had.</b>	N	470	800	303	100	1673
	%	28.1	47.8	18.1	6.0	100



*Figure 2: Response to questions about invigilation*

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*Table 7: Response to questions about examination invigilation, by Year of Survey*

Over the Years	2021		2020		2019		2018	
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
<b>Invigilation staff were sufficiently informed to direct candidates with any difficulty they had.</b>	28.1	47.8	30.2	50.7	22.6	55.1	18.6	51.2
	75.9		81.0		77.8		69.8	
<b>It is difficult to cheat during MATSEC examinations.</b>	43.9	40.5	49.3	37.3	37.8	37.4	38.6	39.4
	84.4		86.7		75.2		77.9	
<b>Instructions were read to candidates before the start of every examination.</b>	26.9	33.6	26.5	35.7	40.8	33.8	41.6	36.7
	60.5		62.2		74.5		78.3	
<b>Invigilators were on task to ensure no copying or collusion took place.</b>	40.7	47.8	41.0	47.4	34.5	50.1	37.4	49.1
	88.6		87.4		84.6		86.5	

The majority (75.9%) of participants agree that invigilators were sufficiently informed about the various examinations to be able to direct candidates with any difficulties that they had. However, this is the lowest response in the past three years, totally the opposite of last year which held the highest positive response for invigilator professionalism since the survey was started. Previous to this year, there had been a trend of increasing positive response by participants. Unlike previous years, there were no comments directed specifically towards the size of tables used in Art examinations. Through qualitative comments, several respondents, similar to previous years, indicated a number of shortcomings claiming that invigilation staff:

- removed their masks when talking;
- spoke only in Maltese to the detriment of foreign- speaking candidates;
- kept talking between themselves while candidates were doing their examinations;
- hurried up candidates at the end of the examination;
- struck conversations with candidates;
- were inattentive;
- used or even answered mobile phones;
- asked the candidates what must be done;
- had lunch;
- slept.

## CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

Although invigilation staff is given instructions to read to candidates before each and every examination, the percentage of candidates who agree that this is done stands at 60.5%, an alarming decline from when this practice was first enforced by MATSEC four years ago. There were complaints that instructions were issued only in Maltese while other instructions were poorly explained, and that some invigilators actually had to ask candidates what was needed. This is the statement which received the lowest positive rating regarding invigilation within the survey this year.

Similar to previous years, respondents indicated that it is difficult to cheat during MATSEC examinations (84.4%) and that invigilators were on task to ensure no copying or collusion took place (88.6%). However, it is alarming to note that some respondents indicated that invigilators fell asleep during the examination. Others complained that mask-wearing made cheating easier as there is no nonintrusive way to search for hidden material in masks.

### Oral and Aural Examinations

Oral and aural examinations are usually carried out as part of language subjects, although some other subjects, such as music, might also feature an oral and/or aural component. In language subjects, oral examinations assess candidates' ability to use spoken language while aural examinations assess candidates' ability to make sense of spoken interaction.

Similar to last year, oral examinations were not held during the First/Main session as part of the COVID-19 mitigation measures. The aural examinations, however, were held for both MC and SEC language subjects. MC aural examinations were held using recorded audio rather than live speakers for the first time in 2021.

The shift from live speakers to recorded audio for SEC foreign languages was implemented gradually as shown below:

- 2016: Use of recorded audio in small subjects (Arabic, German, Spanish)
- 2017: Use of recorded audio for larger subjects. Multiple recordings and sessions for each of these subjects as candidates could not be accommodated at one time (Italian, French)
- 2018: Accommodation of all candidates for any one subject at one time
- 2019: Recorded audio is used in SEC English Language in the Supplementary session, where number of candidates is much smaller than the Main session
- 2020: All aural examinations (both SEC and MC) were not held as part of the COVID-19 mitigation measures
- 2021: All aural examinations (both SEC and MC) were held using recorded audio

A total of 1,043 respondents (63.0%) claimed to have sat for aural examinations in 2021. These respondents were directed to mark their level of agreement with three statements concerning the aural comprehensions. Results are summarized in the table below.

## CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

*Table 8: Response to whether candidates sat for aural examinations in 2021*

		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Did you sit for aural examinations in the May 2021 session?</b>	N	1043	612
	%	63.0	37.0

More respondents (72.2%) indicated preferring that listening comprehension examinations be held using recordings, with 36.5% of them strongly agreeing with the statement. Conversely, slightly less than half the participants (49.8%) indicated preferring live speakers.

*Table 9: Feedback for Listening Examinations in 2021*

		<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
<b>Listening comprehension examinations should, as much as possible, be carried out using recordings.</b>	N	385	377	206	88	1056
	%	36.5	35.7	19.5	8.3	100
<b>Listening comprehension examinations should, as much as possible, be carried out using live speakers (persons).</b>	N	276	249	390	138	1053
	%	26.2	23.6	37.0	13.1	100
<b>Audio quality in Listening Comprehensions was good.</b>	N	277	533	175	65	1050
	%	26.4	50.8	16.7	6.2	100

Participants' qualitative comments indicate that some candidates would have preferred if the speaker during the recording were a native speaker of that particular language. These comments were mainly directed at Advanced French and SEC Spanish. This is interesting to note, since in a previous survey, a few qualitative comments explicitly indicated favouring a local speaker (citing a subject in which the speaker was local). Some participants also indicated that they found the pace of the recordings, in particular SEC English Language and SEC Italian, to be very fast. It should be emphasized that these qualitative comments do not necessarily summarize the views of participants.

Participants generally felt that the audio quality was good (77.2%), although in qualitative comments some participants mentioned interference from the audio recording coming from other examination rooms. Several participants also indicated that the high volume on which the recordings were played caused some echoing and distortion. They also mentioned that since the speakers were mainly at the front of the examination rooms, to reach candidates at the back the volume was raised too high, and the candidates sitting at the front could sometimes not understand very well due to the crackling emanating from the speakers.



## Help from MATSEC

Respondents were asked whether they sought help from MATSEC and, if they did, to rate the assistance received. Again, like last year's survey, the 'Other' option was not provided. This is because past respondents have used this to include irrelevant options like school counsellors, teachers, and student political organisations. This allows comparison of this year's survey with that of last year, but makes comparison to former surveys problematic. Participants were asked to refrain from commenting on complaints sent to bodies which are unrelated to MATSEC (e.g. newspapers, student organisations, school counsellors, etc) since these are not necessarily forwarded to MATSEC.

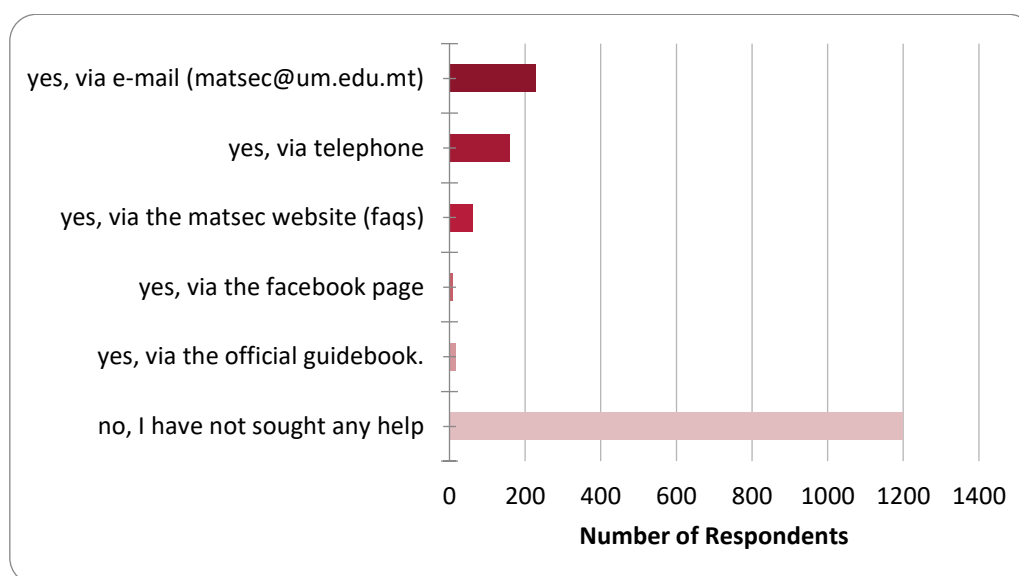


Figure 3: Response to questions about help sought from MATSEC

This year, 71.5% of the respondents indicated not seeking help from MATSEC. This is similar to previous reports, which stood at 76.5% (2019), 72.2% (2018) and 73.8% (2017), apart from last year, where the COVID-19 mitigation measures were introduced for the first time. This had caused a large increase in candidates seeking clarifications, with almost half the participants (49.2%) indicating having sought help or clarification from MATSEC.

The use of e-mail and telephone remain the two most used means of contacting MATSEC. However, the difference between the two continues to increase along the years with more respondents claiming to use e-mail. The majority of respondents (66.6%) were positive about the assistance received from MATSEC. It is to be noted that the positive response for both this year and the last year, are lower than in 2019 where 78.9% of respondents claimed so. Uncertainty regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant mitigation measures in place for these last two years could explain such a drop, as well as the change in question format explained at the beginning of this section.

## CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

*Table 10: Feedback on help provided by MATSEC, by type of assistance and by year of survey*

Channel		2021			2020			2019			2018		
		Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
e-Mail	N	164	42	80	68	5	80	124	40	178	135	17	157
	%	71.3	18.3		85	6.3		69.7	22.5		86	10.8	
Telephone	N	127	21	48	37	3	48	98	8	109	129	11	148
	%	79.9	13.2		77.1	6.3		89.9	7.3		87.2	7.4	
Facebook Page	N	7	0	5	3	2	5	22	9	33	23	2	28
	%	87.5	0.0		60	40		66.7	27.3		82.1	7.1	
MATSEC Website (FAQs)	N	48	4	14	12	1	14	49	3	57	73	3	82
	%	76.2	6.3		85.7	7.1		86	5.3		89	3.7	
Official Guidebook	N	14	0	2	2	0	2	10	3	15	16	2	18
	%	82.4	0.0		100	0		66.7	20		88.9	11.1	

From the 250 participants who left additional comments, 72.8% were very positive, citing quick response and clear instructions. For the other participants indicating not being satisfied, the issues mainly were that sometimes support from MATSEC took too long to get back to the candidates, at some points was providing what they deemed to be contradictory information, or MATSEC could not do anything about their problem. The most common unresolved problem was the one with heat in examination centres, as examination centres are the responsibility of the Examinations Department and not MATSEC.

Asked what other services could be offered by MATSEC, a few respondents made their suggestions. These included:

- provision of answers to examination papers;
- a live-chat service on the website;
- more mental health services and/or assistance.

Other comments shed light on candidates' perceived difficulty in their commute to examination centres.

### Matriculation Certificate

As in previous years, respondents were asked whether they agree with the compulsory nature of each group in the Matriculation Certificate. Currently, subjects are divided into four groups of which students have to sit for subjects from the first three groups if they wish to be awarded the MC. Systems of Knowledge is also a compulsory component of the MC. Results to these items are summarised in the tables below, with the second table allowing for comparison with previous candidate feedback reports. A total of 609 participants (36.1%) indicated sitting for MC level subjects.

## CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

*Table 11: Response to items about groups making up the Matriculation Certificate*

The Matriculation Certificate should require a pass in:		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Responses
<b>a Group 1 subject.</b>	N	249	296	39	23	607
	%	41.0	48.8	6.4	3.8	
<b>a Group 2 subject.</b>	N	204	279	94	29	606
	%	38.9	45.5	10.6	5.1	
<b>a Group 3 subject.</b>	N	227	260	81	37	605
	%	37.5	43.0	13.4	6.1	
<b>Systems of Knowledge.</b>	N	56	142	153	255	606
	%	9.2	23.4	25.2	42.1	

*Table 12: Response to items about groups making up the Matriculation Certificate, by year of survey*

The Matriculation Certificate should require a pass in:	2021		2020		2019		2018	
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
<b>a Group 1 subject.</b>	41.0	48.8	47.9	39.1	48	41.9	53.7	38.7
	89.8		87		89.9		92.4	
<b>a Group 2 subject.</b>	33.7	46.0	38.9	45.5	36.5	44.1	45.9	39.7
	79.7		84.4		80.6		85.6	
<b>a Group 3 subject.</b>	37.5	43.0	45.1	37.5	40.6	38.9	49	32.8
	80.5		82.6		79.6		81.8	
<b>Systems of Knowledge.</b>	9.2	23.4	12.6	28.9	12.2	25.1	17.2	26
	32.7		41.5		37.3		43.2	

Similar to previous years, respondents agree with the compulsory nature of each of Groups 1, 2, and 3, with the highest level of agreement being with the compulsory nature of Group 1 subjects (89.8%). Also similar to previous years, respondents (67.3%) disagree with the compulsory nature of IM Systems of Knowledge, with many stating that, while the subject content is interesting, it should not be a requirement for the award of the MC. Respondents recommend SoK should either be included as a subject in one of the groups, or else as an extra subject similar to the Degree Plus subjects offered by the University. As in previous reports, there was a considerable number of qualitative responses stating that candidates should be allowed to choose subjects relevant to their desired career path, rather than having to mandatorily pass from at least a subject from each group. This runs counter to the philosophy of the MC.

The Respondents were asked whether they had studied Systems of Knowledge. A total of 550 respondents (37.0% or the total or 90.3% of MC respondents) indicated so. These participants were asked to indicate their agreement with sixteen statements about Systems of Knowledge as reproduced in the table below.

CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

Table 13: Response to items about Systems of Knowledge

		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Replies
<b>The subject content is interesting.</b>	N	54	222	142	121	539
	%	10.0	41.2	26.3	22.4	
<b>The content is linked to local scenarios (Maltese art, history, politics and culture).</b>	N	47	260	167	64	538
	%	8.7	48.3	31.0	11.9	
<b>Teachers make links between different areas of SoK.</b>	N	46	211	201	79	537
	%	8.6	39.3	37.4	14.7	
<b>Tutors provide adequate guidance and feedback with the project.</b>	N	67	192	165	113	537
	%	12.5	35.8	30.7	21.0	
<b>The project was an educational experience.</b>	N	65	214	134	125	538
	%	12.1	39.8	24.9	23.2	
<b>We were assigned a number of exam-type essays during the whole course.</b>	N	59	175	163	141	538
	%	11.0	32.5	30.3	26.2	
<b>Teachers returned assigned work with comments and feedback.</b>	N	60	228	130	118	536
	%	11.2	42.5	24.3	22.0	
<b>Teachers guided students to properly answer exam-type SoK questions.</b>	N	43	159	205	128	535
	%	8.0	29.7	38.3	23.9	
<b>The project is fairly marked.</b>	N	49	292	140	45	526
	%	9.3	55.5	26.6	8.6	
<b>Project entries – journals, science and long essays – are copied/plagiarised by many students.</b>	N	59	160	241	72	532
	%	11.1	30.1	45.3	13.5	
<b>The content is linked to current affairs.</b>	N	41	255	173	64	533
	%	7.7	47.8	32.5	12.0	
<b>The syllabus content of Systems of Knowledge provide a holistic (general) education to students.</b>	N	72	227	128	107	534
	%	13.5	42.5	24.0	20.0	
<b>The questions in the exam reflect the subject content.</b>	N	48	313	100	52	513
	%	9.4	61.0	19.5	10.1	
<b>The questions in the exam allow for the input and development of an open discussion by the candidate.</b>	N	51	307	114	40	512
	%	10.0	60.0	22.3	7.8	
<b>The questions require critical thinking skills.</b>	N	78	311	89	33	511
	%	15.3	60.9	17.4	6.5	
<b>The questions require the students to only recall and write notes.</b>	N	75	155	221	60	511
	%	14.7	30.3	43.2	11.7	

In general, 56% of the respondents indicated that they found that the syllabus content provided a holistic (general) education, with over half the respondents claiming the content to be interesting (51.2%), related to current affairs (55.5%), and contextualised to local affairs (57.1%). Although, 53.7% of the respondents indicated that teachers returned their work with comments and feedback, 47.9% of the respondents indicated that teachers make links between the different areas of SOK, and that during their course they were provided with exam-type questions (43.5%). In fact, only 37.8% of the respondents indicated that teachers guided them on how to answer the type of questions present in SOK examinations.

## CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

Participants agreed (70.4%) that the questions presented in the examination paper reflected the syllabus content, and that the questions were open-ended (69.9%) and that the questions required critical thinking (76.1%). In fact, less than half the participants (45.0%) indicated that the questions required recalling class notes and/or study material. Regarding the mandatory project, less than half of participants indicate that tutors provided adequate guidance and feedback (48.2%) and that the project entries are plagiarized amongst students (41.2%). Participants were more likely to agree that the project is fairly marked (64.8%) and that it was an educational experience (51.9%).

### SEC as a preparation for MC

As in all past surveys, MC respondents were asked whether SEC subjects are a good preparation for one to study the subject at a higher level. Of the 592 respondents to this question, 277 (46.8%) respondents believe that SEC subjects offer a good foundation for subjects studied at IM or AM level, while 50 (8.4%) believe they do not. This is comparable to last year, where the values stood at 49.9% and 8.4% respectively. As in results of previous surveys, a large percentage of respondents (264, 44.8%) chose to remain impartial. These are illustrated in the figure that follows.

Comments provided by respondents are also similar to those of previous years and four arguments featured prominently:

- SEC examinations offer an adequate preparation for MC because candidates are introduced to MATSEC and high-stakes examinations. The structure of examinations adopted by MATSEC at the two levels is very similar, and thus SEC examinations offer a good preparation in this regard.
- Several participants indicated finding the jump from SEC to MC syllabi as too large. In addition to Advanced Pure Mathematics and Chemistry, which feature in every candidate feedback, there was a noticeable number of candidates this year who also indicated Advanced English.
- Participants also complained that the Advanced and Intermediate subjects, which are considerably more difficult than their SEC counterparts, are taught over a span of two years, while their SEC counterparts are taught over a span of three years.
- Several MC subjects needed for certain career progressions into University (Philosophy was mentioned as an example) have no direct SEC counterpart, while candidates have to learn SEC subjects which are not needed for their future careers.

*Table 14: Were SEC subjects a good preparation for the MC?*

		Yes	No	So and so	Replies
<b>Were SEC subjects a good preparation for the MC?</b>	N	277	50	265	592
	%	46.8	8.4	44.8	100

## CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

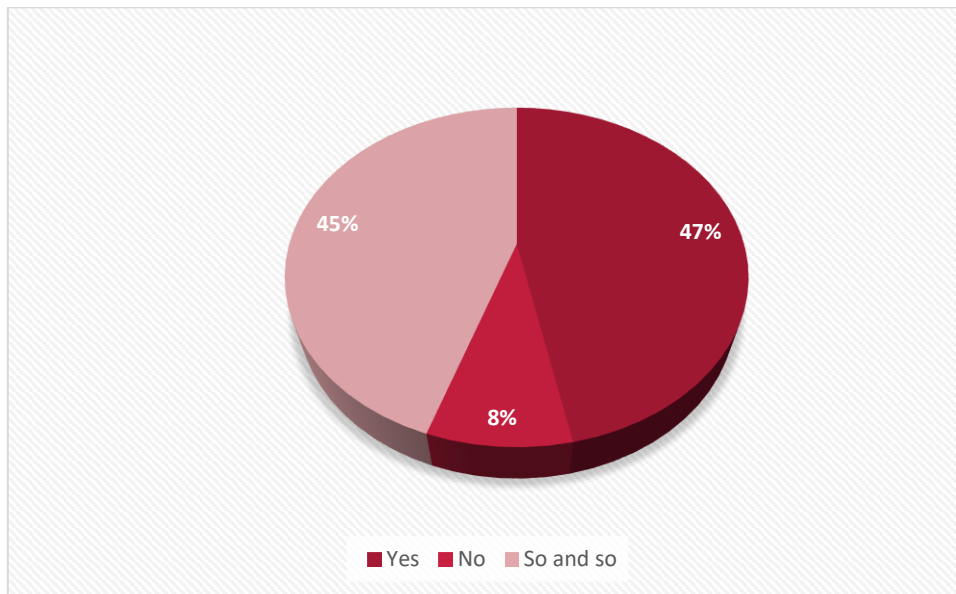


Figure 4: Where SEC subjects a good preparation for the Matriculation Certificate

### SEC Examinations

#### *SEC Pilot Project*

This year, a pilot project was held whereby two state secondary schools acted as examination centres for the students they prepared for SEC examinations. The identified schools were St. Thomas More Secondary School (Żejtun) and Maria Regina Secondary School (Żokrija). The Żokrija centre accommodated pilot project candidates in Blocks S and K but used other blocks for other candidates. The Żejtun centre was solely used for pilot project candidates. These selected schools offered conditions which may have been regarded as ideal for the pilot project. These may include their physical size and the presence of separate buildings in which lessons and examinations could be carried out.

This year's candidate feedback survey featured a section for those who were students in the two schools used for the project. There were 76 respondents claiming to be students from these schools, of which 15 respondents claimed to have sat for examinations in other examination centres. Reasons why these candidates were not accommodated in the schools they attended were not queried through the questionnaire. However, all Żejtun and Żokrija candidates were accommodated in these schools by the responsible Examinations Department and, later, MATSEC staff (who accommodate the very late registrants). These included candidates who registered during the normal, late, and very late registration periods and even those candidates who, after registration, changed their school to Żejtun or Żokrija. Thus, if Żejtun and Żokrija students were not accommodated in these schools, it could only be because they did not select the correct school upon registration.

## CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

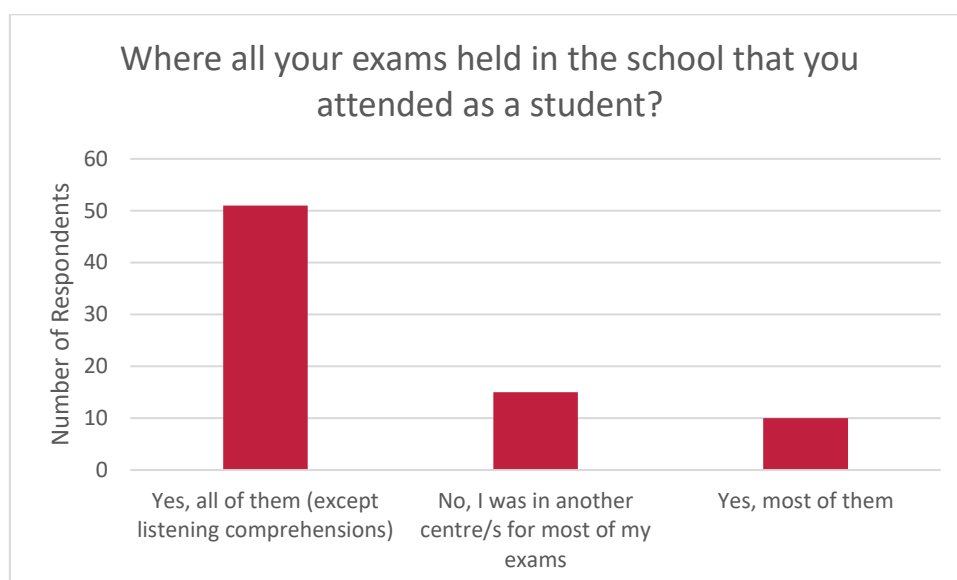


Figure 5: Where SEC subjects a good preparation for the Matriculation Certificate

Of these 76 respondents, most appraised the Pilot Project and responded positively to most set items. In general, they agreed that having examinations in the schools they attended made them feel at ease (67 of the 69 replies). A total of 47 respondents out of the 66 answering the item indicated that sitting for examinations in their own school made a difference to them, and 63 out of 66 replies indicated that it is money well spent to invest in having candidates sit for their examinations in their own schools. There were no reported distractions from students attending the school. Only 2 of the 68 replies to the question stated they do not prefer to have examinations in the schools they attended.

Table 15: Response to items about the Pilot Project

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Replies
<b>Sitting for exams in my own school made me feel at ease during the examination.</b>	46	21	1	1	69
<b>Sitting for exams in my own school made me prepare less.</b>	5	15	34	12	66
<b>Sitting for exams in my own school made copying/cheating easier.</b>	1	7	34	24	66
<b>Sitting for exams in my own school made no difference to me whatsoever.</b>	6	13	33	14	66
<b>Even if it costs twice to accommodate candidates in their own schools, it is money well spent.</b>	43	20	2	1	66
<b>There were distractions from students attending school during the day.</b>	5	8	28	25	66
<b>I prefer examinations to be held in my own school.</b>	53	13	2	0	68

## CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

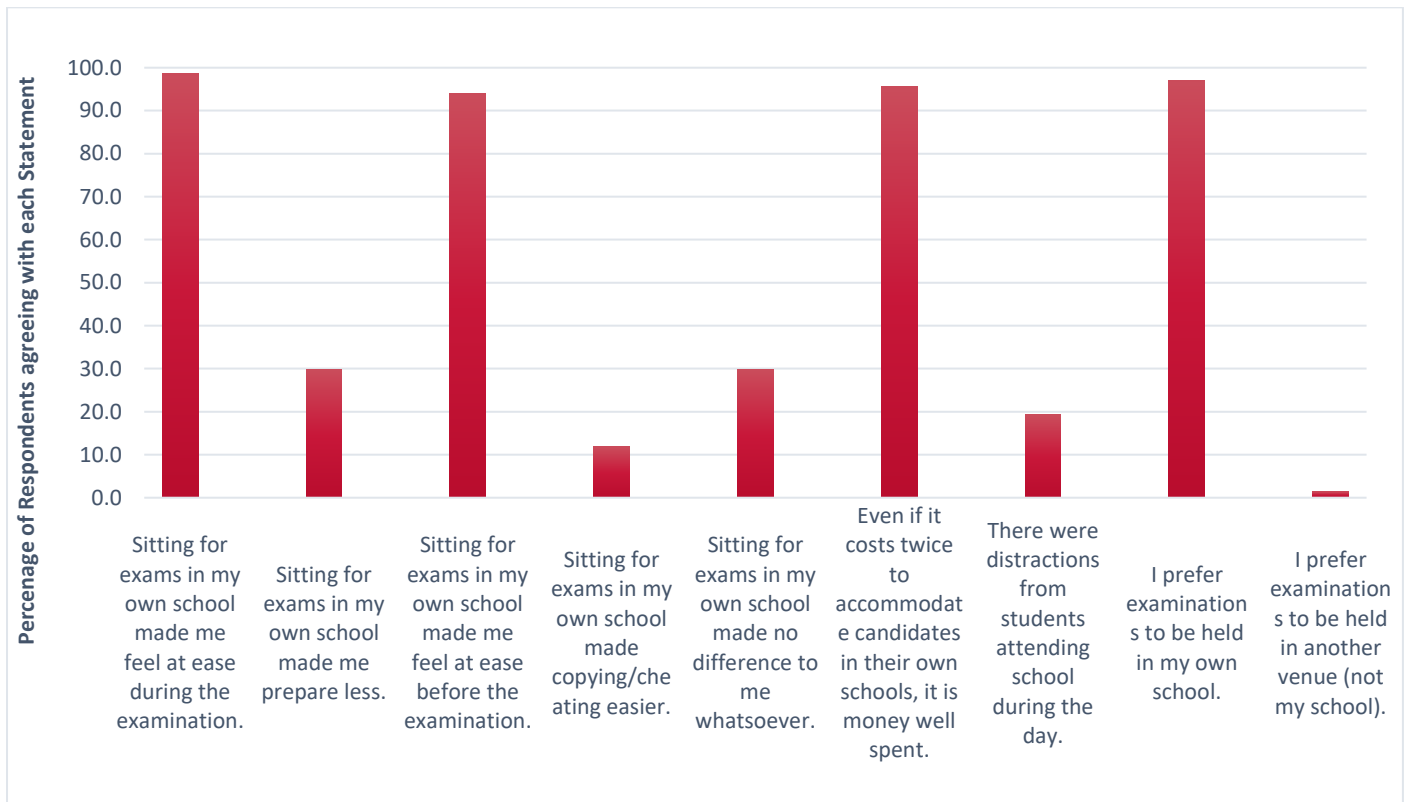


Figure 6: Response to items regarding the Pilot Project

### SEC Coursework

All respondents were given a number of statements about coursework in SEC assessments and asked for their level of agreement with each statement. The results are summarised in Table 16.

Most respondents are of the idea that coursework should contribute to the final mark in all SEC subjects (75.9%). This would, according to them, reduce stress (60.9%) and make it easier to pass examinations (79.7%). In addition, respondents agree that content already assessed through coursework should be included in examinations (64.7%). Such positive views towards coursework exist even though most participants agree that coursework is unfair because different schools/teachers mark the work unreliably (72.9%).



CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

Table 16: Response to items about the SEC Coursework

		<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Replies</b>
<b>Coursework should contribute to one's final mark in all SEC subjects</b>	N	485	669	280	90	1524
	%	31.8	43.9	18.4	5.9	90.4
<b>Coursework should not contribute to the final SEC Grade</b>	N	162	266	746	338	1512
	%	10.7	17.6	49.3	22.4	89.7
<b>Coursework makes it easier to pass from an exam.</b>	N	414	799	262	46	1521
	%	27.2	52.5	17.2	3.0	90.3
<b>Coursework makes it harder to pass from an exam.</b>	N	99	234	884	292	1509
	%	6.6	15.5	58.6	19.4	89.6
<b>Content that is assessed through school coursework, should not appear in examination paper.</b>	N	237	395	597	284	1513
	%	15.7	26.1	39.5	18.8	89.8
<b>Content that is assessed through school coursework should be assessed again by the examination paper.</b>	N	357	622	387	146	1512
	%	23.6	41.1	25.6	9.7	89.7
<b>Coursework reduces stress.</b>	N	362	559	418	173	1512
	%	23.9	37.0	27.6	11.4	89.7
<b>Coursework increases stress.</b>	N	249	432	584	234	1499
	%	16.6	28.8	39.0	15.6	89.0
<b>Coursework is unfair because different schools/teachers mark work differently.</b>	N	490	615	344	67	1516
	%	32.3	40.6	22.7	4.4	90.0

### Examination Access Arrangements

A total of 277 survey respondents claim to have qualified for Examination Access Arrangements (EAAs). This amounts to 16.4% of participants. This figure compares well with that in similar reports excluding the special one of 2020. Although 122 candidates did not specify on which conditions EAAs were granted, the most stated conditions are ADD/ADHD (16.6%) and SPLD/Dyslexia (15.9%). These are the most commonly cited conditions as shown in MATSEC SEC Statistical Reports for different years. Respondents could select more than one condition and many respondents did so. From the 157 participants to this item, 105 claim one condition while the rest state multiple ones. Data on the conditions stated by participants is shown in the table below.

## CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

*Table 17: Conditions on which Respondents were Granted Examination Access Arrangements*

<b>Conditions</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
ADD / ADHD	46.0	16.6
Autism Spectrum Disorder (Including Asperger's Syndrome)	18.0	6.5
Hearing Impairment	7.0	2.5
Last Minute Injuries	11.0	4.0
Medical Conditions (Including Diabetes, IBS, ME, Fibromyalgia, Systemic/Discoïd Lupus Erythematosus)	12.0	4.3
Mental Health (Including Anxiety, OCD, Bipolar Disorder, Depression)	21.0	7.6
Mobility Problems (Including Cerebral Palsy)	3.0	1.1
SpLD / Dyslexia	44.0	15.9
Stammer	2.0	0.7
Visual Impairment	3.0	1.1
DCD / Dyspraxia	8.0	2.9
Other	20.0	12.7
No reply	120	24.1

Table 19 shows the EAAs which respondents qualified for. Other specific arrangements were quoted by participants, including enlarged script, use of word processor, use of lift, close parking to centre, and special seating for certain examinations. There were 160 responses for this item, of which 49 selected one EAA.

*Table 18: Examination Access Arrangements granted to respondents*

<b>Granted Access Arrangements</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Prompter	46	16.6
Reader	43	15.5
Room with few Candidates	76	27.4
Extra Time	124	44.8
Supervised Rest Breaks	31	11.2
Scribe	3	1.1

Respondents were then asked about the level of usefulness of the EAA/s they qualified for. Participants may have misunderstood this section since while only three respondents claimed to have been eligible for a Scribe (Table 19), 60 respondents then stated they qualified for the arrangement but did not use it while 16 claimed to have used the arrangement to varying degrees of satisfaction. Furthermore, 23 participants claimed not to have made use of the EAA "Room with few Candidates" they qualified for. This is impossible because such candidates are accommodated in rooms with fewer candidates and therefore they would have automatically used this arrangement if they had qualified for it.

In earlier candidate feedbacks questionnaires, it was evident that some respondents misunderstood the question and understood the term "not used" as meaning not having been given this access arrangement.

## CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

For these last two years, participants were specifically asked to answer only for the EAAs for which they qualified. However, participants still seem to have misunderstood the question. Thus, the raw data (which can be found tabulated in Table 19) was cleared up to match feedback for the previous statement where respondents chose which EAA/s they were granted. This procedure is identical to that in last year's report. These fixed results are shown in Table 20.

*Table 19: Usefulness of Examination Access Arrangements (Raw)*

		Not used	Used but not helpful	Used and helpful	Used and very helpful	Replies
<b>Prompter</b>	N	63	13	17	7	100
	%	63.0	13.0	17.0	7.0	
<b>Reader</b>	N	59	8	23	10	100
	%	59.0	8.0	23.0	10.0	
<b>Room with few Candidates</b>	N	23	12	40	43	118
	%	19.5	10.2	33.9	36.4	
<b>Extra Time</b>	N	48	7	41	58	154
	%	31.2	4.5	26.6	37.7	
<b>Supervised Rest Breaks</b>	N	72	2	12	5	91
	%	79.1	2.2	13.2	5.5	
<b>Scribe</b>	N	60	6	7	3	76
	%	78.9	7.9	9.2	3.9	
<b>Other</b>	N	55	4	3	9	100
	%	55.0	4.0	3.0	9.0	

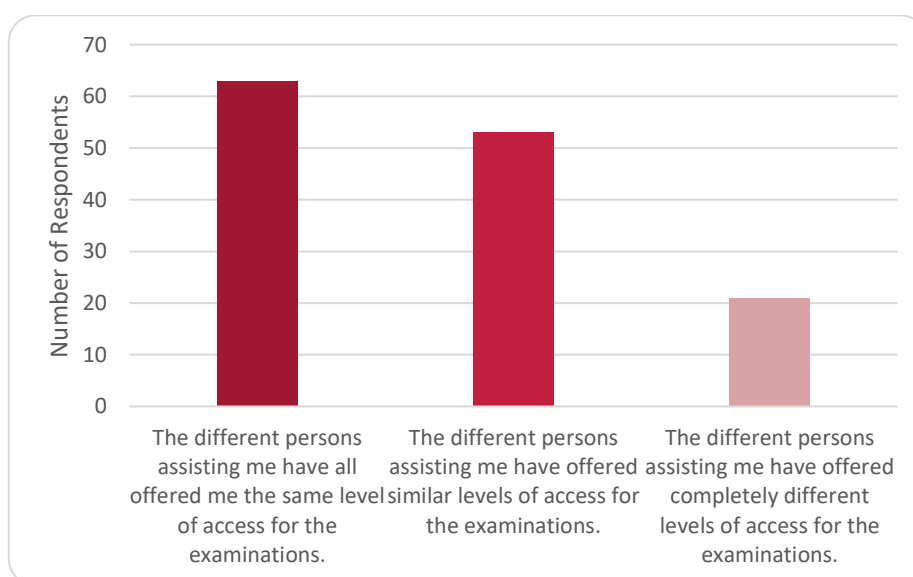
*Table 20: Usefulness of Examination Access Arrangements (fixed)*

		Not used	Used but not helpful	Used and helpful	Used and very helpful	Total
<b>Prompter</b>	N	18	7	11	4	40
	%	45.0	17.5	27.5	10.0	
<b>Reader</b>	N	17	3	12	5	37
	%	45.9	8.1	32.4	13.5	
<b>Room with few Candidates</b>	N	1	5	26	32	64
	%	1.6	7.8	40.6	50.0	
<b>Extra Time</b>	N	24	2	32	54	112
	%	21.4	1.8	28.6	48.2	
<b>Supervised Rest Breaks</b>	N	18	0	8	2	28
	%	64.3	0.0	28.6	7.1	
<b>Scribe</b>	N	0	0	1	1	2
	%	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	

## CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

Similar to previous reports, Room with a few candidates and Extra Time are deemed the most helpful, with the majority of respondents indicating that they found these EAAs helpful or very helpful (90.6% and 76.8% respectively). Of the three participants who were assigned a scribe, two indicated finding the EAA helpful and very helpful (100%) while the other person did not reply to this question. The Prompter is, similar to previous reports, deemed the least useful, with 45.0% indicating not using this arrangement and 17.5% not finding it useful. Although this year the feedback on prompter is better than that noted last year (37.5% and 33.3% respectively), the data mirrors that of previous years.

Respondents were asked which one of three statements best describes the EAAs when these were offered by different support staff. A total of 21 from the 137 responses to this survey item (15.3%) claimed that different personnel provided them with different levels of access, 53 (38.7%) stated that they received a similar level of access for the examinations, while 63 (46.0%) said they received the same level of access throughout all examinations. This year's feedback is, thus, similar to that obtained in previous reports.



*Figure 7: Equality of Access Offered by Different Access Personnel*

When asked whether EAAs were fair, most participants (85.3% of 151 responses to this item) responded positively. This is more favourable than last year where 81.3% of the 107 indicated so. The commonest reason cited by respondents who complained was that the reading pen provided did not work with Maltese fonts (and therefore the EAA could not be used during that particular subject), and suggestions that candidates who had hypoglycaemia were only given extra time for the time taken to eat, whereas additional time is required for the food to start having effect.

The majority of qualitative comments noted how EAAs are tailor-made for each individual candidate and were very appreciative for the support and assistance they received from MATSEC and the ADSU. Others also noted how EAAs allow candidates with specific conditions to express their skills without being given an unfair advantage over other candidates. These comments have become common for this part of the survey.

Respondents who had qualified for EAAs were asked to give suggestions as to how EAAs can be improved. A total of 53 respondents gave their opinions which were analysed individually. The most cited suggestion was to contact EAA candidates individually so that their needs are met, to ensure that the EAA granted is

## CANDIDATE FEEDBACK: MAIN AND FIRST SESSIONS OF 2021

sufficient. Some candidates asked for additional arrangements for Maltese examinations as, according to them, dyslexic candidates have more difficulty with this language. Some candidates indicated wishing to be placed in separate rooms. However, wherever possible, candidates with EAAs are assigned to the same, specifically assigned centre

*Table 21: Fairness of Access Arrangements*

		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Replies</b>
<b>Were Arrangements Fair?</b>	N	151	24	2	177
	%	85.3	13.6	1.1	

### **E. Conclusion**

MATSEC always considers informed criticism as part of its continuous improvement process. This is the fifth report to gather and analyse feedback from candidates on the MATSEC Examinations they have just sat for. Candidate perceptions of current operational practices are a valuable contribution to identifying areas to be proactively tackled to be able to deliver an enhanced service.