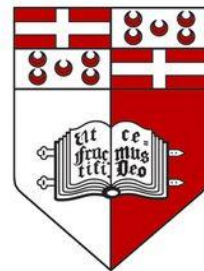




# CANDIDATES' FEEDBACK: MATSEC 2017 EXAMINATIONS

*MATSEC Support Unit  
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## A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents data collected from MATSEC's post-examination survey, which was sent to all 2017 candidates via e-mail. A total of 1,549 individuals participated in the study between the 27<sup>th</sup> June and the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2017. Unlike last year's survey, this year feedback was collected from candidates before the results of the Main/First session were published.

Feedback about **examination centres and invigilation staff** is mostly positive, although there is room for improvement. New measures taken by MATSEC have ensured that regulations are read to candidates and that more disciplinary action has been taken. However, most complaints from 2016 were reproduced and further action is required. Staff should be more aware of the importance of their role and more eager to report irregularities.

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*Suggestion 1:* The work started with the Examinations Department to revamp invigilation staff is to be continued. Head of Centres should be more eager to report staff irregularities while invigilation staff should be more cooperative in reporting candidate irregularities. Suggestions on examination centres pointed in last year's report need to be attended to.

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*Suggestion 2:* Examination centres should ensure that disturbances to candidates are kept to a minimum. Reported disturbances which can be controlled by the centre include (i) sporting/leisure events held within the centre, (ii) the school's students, and (iii) the school's PA system.

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The mass and social media have been quick to report news of "poor audio quality", a student petition to get their artwork back (the examination paper itself), and accusations that Mathematics examinations were 'harder' than last years' before such information was verified. However, the newly published **MATSEC candidates' guidebook** was given much less prominence. This is likely to be one of the factors why most candidates (79.3%) remained uninformed of this guidebook. From those who were informed, nearly half of them (48.2%) used the guidebook and, of these, nearly all (96.3%) believe it to be helpful for candidates. MATSEC's candidate guidebook remains freely available on the MATSEC website.

Similar to 2016, although most respondents (73.8%) did not seek **help from MATSEC**, those who did were satisfied with the response (81.7%). The only group of respondents who were not satisfied with the response were those who used non-MATSEC official means (e.g. student organisations, school counsellors, petitions). Reasons why candidates resort to secondary sources of information are unclear, though they might range from lack of knowledge to lack of trust. Negative comments included claims of unanswered phone calls, e-mails which took "long times" to be answered, and being given a reply which (although correct) they did not agree with.

While most respondents believe that **aural examinations** should be conducted using live speakers rather than recorded audio, the participants' comments indicate that

respondents' views have been heavily shaped by the problems reported in the recent session. Nevertheless, a sizeable number of respondents realised that recorded audio offers equality of access. Several participants agree with the use of live speakers because they believe these would provide them with (unfair) advantages, such as resorting to lip-reading and having readers repeat phrases and/or change their rate of delivery when candidates in that examination hall are unable to follow. Candidates who did not sit for SEC examinations reported audio problems in the comments section, further accentuating the effects of the media on public perception.

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*Suggestion 3:* MATSEC needs to find more effective ways of communicating with the public and indicating the main paths of communication. The use of recorded audio for aural examinations should continue as it provides equality of access, however more feedback is to be collected in future sessions.

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Most respondents had positive views about **coursework interviews** held at MATSEC. Some negative views were held regarding interviews as a means of assessing a project's authenticity. Two participants from the minority of respondents who claimed unprofessional treatment were successfully contacted but, from these, no case was made.

Respondents' views about the **structure of the Matriculation Certificate** were similar to those obtained through last year's survey, with most respondents agreeing that importance should be given to subjects from different areas but disagreeing with the compulsory nature of IM Systems of Knowledge. Respondents defended the option to sit for examinations before the completion of the two-year course with some arguing that they learn through studying on their own rather than from lectures. The latter two differences seemed to be affected by age, with older candidates seeing more value in Systems of Knowledge being a requirement for the MC and being less likely to defend the option to sit for examinations before the completion of the course. Some noted this option fuels an existing exam culture. However, such differences were not game changing and the same view was held by most participants irrespective of their age.

About a tenth of survey participants qualified for **Examination Access Arrangements**, which is a similar ratio as in examination registrations. The clear majority (82.5%) claimed that the provided EAAs were fair. All arrangements were deemed to be either helpful or very helpful by most respondents. However, a fifth of participants noted that different people aiding them provided them with different levels of access.

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*Suggestion 4:* More measures need to be taken to ensure that different Access Arrangements Support Staff provide candidates with equal/fair levels of access.

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## B. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the views of a sample of MATSEC 2017 candidates in a bid to stimulate the continuous process of development within MATSEC. Although this is the third year that a post-examination survey has been sent to MATSEC candidates, the 2015 survey is considered a pilot project. This year's post-examination survey has parts which are in common with the 2016 survey allowing for some comparison in some sections.

Several developments have been adopted by MATSEC in 2017 with the aim of further improving the structure and consumer-friendliness of examinations. These changes have spanned across most of the processes affecting examinations, including formatting of examination papers, invigilation, and marking.

Measures were taken to ensure a more uniform examination paper layout across subjects and levels. These include changes from standardising the formatting used to display marks and titles to ensuring that partial marks are shown for sub-questions which do not carry equal weighting. In addition, the MATSEC Support Unit has carried out research to shed light on whether candidates show preference for any typeset from a range of suggested fonts. A research report on the matter was made public on the MATSEC website and was given some prominence in several parts of the media. The Unit was also featured in the press following the publication of a new candidate guidebook and once results were published.

Teething troubles were not absent and MATSEC featured heavily in the press following an online survey signed by 1,870 individuals claiming "that the sound quality was poor" during the aural component of SEC Italian (1,611 candidates sat for the examination). Although a comparison of achievement a random sample of 25% of 2017 candidates with that of previous years showed no difference in attainment, Malta candidates (problems were not reported in the Gozo centre) were given a choice between a compensation of 5% or resitting the aural examination.

This was the first year that the SEC Italian aural examination, along with that of SEC French, was carried out using recorded audio. This followed the implementation of such practices in the other SEC language subjects with a smaller candidature: German, Spanish, and Arabic. This is done to ensure uniformity across examination rooms and halls.

Exam invigilation has been revamped. The Unit has adapted new measures to ensure that guidelines are adopted by examination centres, which are run by the Examinations Department. Changes include training offered to Head of Centres by MATSEC; facilitated reporting of candidate, staff, and centre irregularities; and wider and clearer consequences for both candidate and staff malpractice. The presence of MATSEC officers during examinations was also increased. This year, the number of candidates summoned in front of MATSEC's disciplinary board has augmented considerably. Although this suggests that invigilation staff were more vigilant, it should be noted that a considerable amount of these cases were reported by MATSEC officers visiting the examination centres.

Candidate feedback about examination access arrangements offered by MATSEC and the Access Disability Support Committee (ADSC) was collected and evaluated through a 2016 study by MATSEC. Questions from this study were added to this year's post-examination survey.

It is expected that this year's changes and events affect the candidates' and general public's perception of MATSEC. Thus, these should be kept in mind when analysing this research's results.

### **C. METHODOLOGY**

The data presented in this report was collected through an online survey which was distributed to candidates via e-mail between the 27<sup>th</sup> June and the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2017. This means that, as opposed to last year, feedback was collected from candidates before the results of the Main/First sessions were published. Candidates were reminded to answer the survey via MATSEC's official Facebook page. There were 1,549 responses, 182 more than the number in 2016. 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***

Similar to last year's research, 64.3% of respondents were female (64.9% in 2016). However, while most 2016 respondents (65.2%) had sat for IM and AM examinations, this year a more equal mix was present among respondents. It is notable that the largest two age groups are 16 and 18 years old, which are the ages at which candidates usually sit for SEC and Matriculation level examinations respectively. It is also worth noting that 12 candidates claim to be 15 years old, at which age candidates should only be allowed to sit for SEC examinations if they have completed secondary education or if they attain the age of 16 by the end of 2017.

Table 1: Information on participants

		2016		2017	
		N	% (from total)	N	% (from total)
<b>Total</b>		1367		1549	
<b>Gender</b>	<i>Response Rate</i>		97.6		99.4
	Male	447	32.7		35.1
	Female	887	64.9		64.3
<b>Age</b>	<i>Response Rate</i>		94.4		91.8
	15	10	0.7	12	0.8
	16	381	27.9	670	43.3
	17	123	9.0	119	7.7
	18	463	33.9	364	23.5
	19	172	12.6	86	5.6
	20+	33	2.4	31	2.0
<b>Examinations Applied for in 2016</b>	<i>Response Rate</i>		99.4		100
	At least 6 subjects at SEC level (O' levels)	355	26.0	622	40.2
	Individual AM (A' level) examinations	215	15.7	174	11.2
	Individual IM (Intermediate) examinations	80	5.9	70	4.5
	Individual SEC (O' level) examinations	113	8.3	291	18.8
	Matriculation Certificate	596	43.6	392	25.3

### Examination Centres, Invigilation and Cheating

#### General

The first part of the survey sought to gather general impressions about examination centres. Respondents were asked to mark their level of agreement with seven statements, which are shown in Table 2 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.

Candidates, in general, agreed with all the presented statements. They seem to agree more with the statements regarding examination centres being well-maintained (87.2%) and fit-for-purpose (83.5%). Common complaints include the lack of clocks in examination halls and the lack of space between desks. Such complaints are repeated from last year's survey.



Table 2: Response to questions about examination invigilation and centres

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Responses
<b>The examination centres were well maintained.</b>	N	309	1035	171	27	1542
	%	19.9	66.8	11.0	1.7	99.5
<b>The noise levels in examination centres were adequate.</b>	N	230	858	375	80	1543
	%	14.8	55.4	24.2	5.2	99.6
<b>The examination invigilators were professional.</b>	N	247	795	412	89	1543
	%	15.9	51.3	26.6	5.7	99.6
<b>The examination centres were fit for purpose.</b>	N	354	930	222	31	1537
	%	22.9	60.0	14.3	2.0	99.2
<b>It is difficult to cheat during MATSEC examinations.</b>	N	542	649	251	100	1542
	%	35.0	41.9	16.2	6.5	99.5
<b>Instructions were read to candidates before the start of every examination.</b>	N	762	517	203	61	1543
	%	49.2	33.4	13.1	3.9	99.6
<b>Invigilators were on task to ensure no copying or collusion took place.</b>	N	556	755	188	45	1544
	%	35.9	48.7	12.1	2.9	99.7

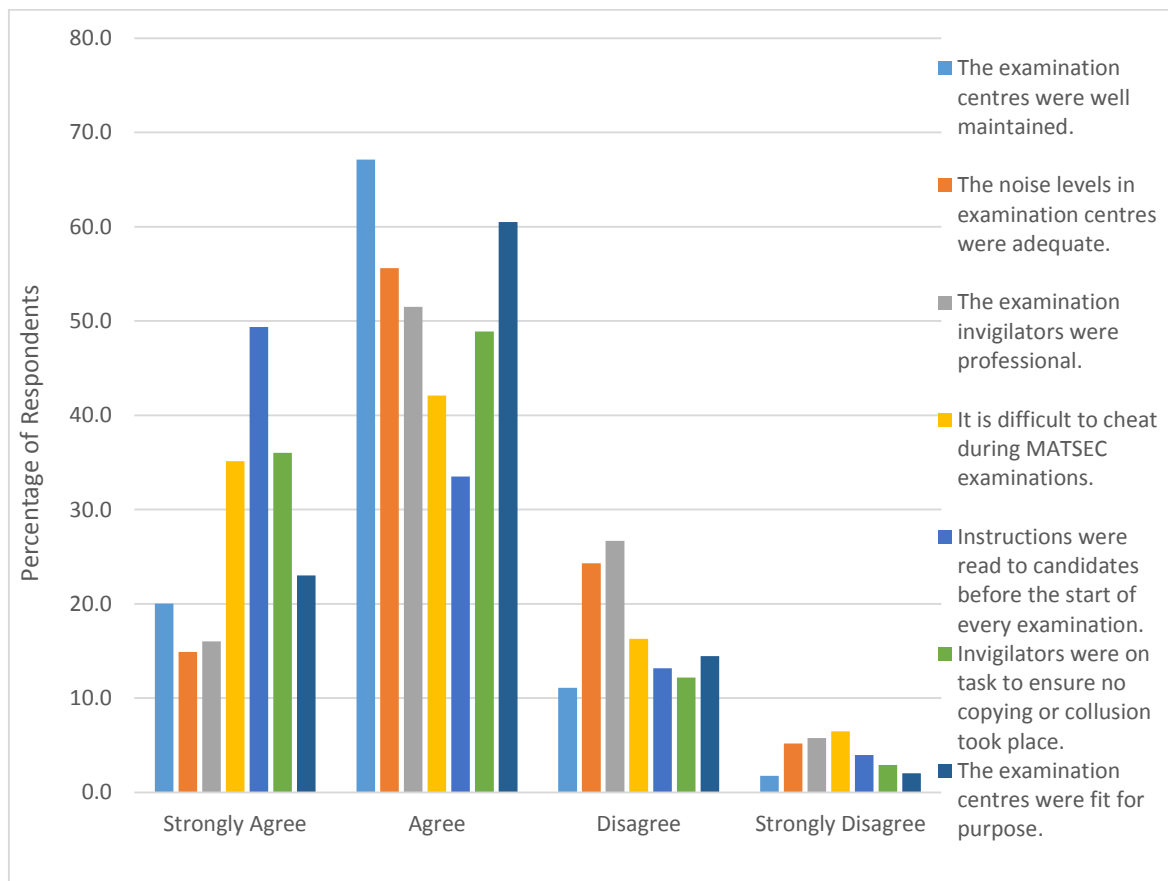


Figure 1: Respondents' level of agreement with five statements regarding examination centres and invigilation

When compared to the results obtained from the 2016 survey, candidates seemed more likely to complain about noise. When asked for comments, a large number were related to noise from (i) sporting or other leisure events held in the examination centre itself; (ii) the construction industry; and (iii) students attending school in the centre itself. Two respondents mentioned the school PA system as a source of noise. Some respondents praised invigilation staff for trying to act about the noise (by calling the local authorities or the school management), however a respondent noted that school students mocked invigilators and opted to increase interruptions from their end. A total of 21 respondents complained about invigilators talking amongst themselves while three respondents noted noise from misbehaving candidates and, at times, lack of action by invigilators in this respect. Lack of respect shown by candidates has been pointed out by invigilators, MATSEC officers, and other candidates.

The majority (82.9%) of candidates agreed that instructions were read to candidates before the start of every examination. From these, 49.4% strongly agreed with the statement. Invigilation staff were given new forms designed by MATSEC during 2017. Each form had a list of instructions which had to be read to candidates and a space where invigilators had to confirm having read these. It seems that the practice has been widely adopted, although there is room for improvement.

Interestingly, 84.9% of candidates agreed that invigilators were on task to ensure that no copying or collusion took place but 67.5% agreed that they were professional. Nine candidates complained that invigilators were ignorant about examination regulations and procedures, with two more candidates complaining not being given extra writing scripts for SEC mathematics and eight more complaining that some or most invigilators did not allow them to take notes during the reading and noting time. Another candidate claimed that s/he was stopped from using a ruler for the mental part of SEC Mathematics Paper I.

This year, 77.2% of respondents agreed that it is difficult to copy during MATSEC examinations, an increase of 3.1% over last year. Comments pointed more at the use of notes on a suspect's person and/or inside their pockets/timetable envelopes. It should be noted that invigilators were given direction not to allow candidates have non-transparent pencil cases within their reach. Cheating in bathrooms was frequently mentioned. As from 2017, MATSEC has instructed invigilation personnel to log which candidates temporarily left the examination room and the duration of their absence. Comments on invigilators failing to take action were still present.

*"There was a particular case when a student had their notes under his timetable. These notes fell from the table and the invigilator picked them up and tucked them under his timetable without even noticing that they were actually notes."*

*"Cheating is easy and that isn't fair for the people who work hard. In my opinion, before going to the bathroom, students should be lightly patted down to check for papers and phone, and wrists checked for writing. Phones should be placed on the desk at the front. More measures should be taken to take care of this situation!"*

### Differences by Examination Level and/or Gender

When response to items about examination centres, invigilation, and cheating are stratified by the level of examination which candidates sat for, it seems that those who sat for AM and/or IM examinations generally have less positive views than those who sat for SEC examinations. This is true for all items, as shown in Table 3. It is impossible to ascertain reasons for these differences as they could vary from differences in perceptions (e.g. older candidates might have different standards of what constitutes 'professional' and 'difficult to cheat') to differences in provision (e.g. the centres and invigilation staff used for one group of students might have been of a higher quality than those used for another).

Differences between male and female candidates were less pronounced and are shown in Table 4. Female candidates were, however, less likely to agree that the noise levels at examination centres were adequate and that instructions were read to candidates before the start of every examination. On the other hand, they were more likely to agree that examination centres were fit for purpose and well maintained.

Examination halls are not segregated by gender, implying that male and female candidates have, mostly likely, experienced the same centres and invigilation staff. This is unlike SEC and AM/IM candidates who, most commonly, sit for examinations in separate centres.

Table 3: Response to questions about examination invigilation and centres, by level of examination

		<b>At least 6 subjects at SEC level</b>	<b>Individual SEC exams</b>	<b>Individual AM exams</b>	<b>Individual IM exams</b>	<b>Matriculation Certificate</b>
<b>The examination centres were well maintained.</b>	Strongly Agree	139	68	34	8	60
	Agree	416	188	107	48	276
	Disagree	60	28	25	10	48
	Strongly Disagree	6	4	7	3	7
	% Agree	89.4	88.9	81.5	81.2	85.9
<b>The noise levels in examination centres were adequate.</b>	Strongly Agree	85	59	26	9	51
	Agree	356	152	88	37	225
	Disagree	154	60	42	21	98
	Strongly Disagree	25	17	18	3	17
	% Agree	71.1	73.3	65.5	65.7	70.6
<b>The examination invigilators were professional.</b>	Strongly Agree	100	69	21	12	45
	Agree	335	136	86	27	211
	Disagree	152	71	52	22	115
	Strongly Disagree	34	12	15	9	19
	% Agree	70.0	71.2	61.5	55.7	65.6
<b>The examination centres were fit for purpose.</b>	Strongly Agree	169	70	32	10	73
	Agree	356	173	103	45	253
	Disagree	82	40	32	12	56
	Strongly Disagree	11	4	6	2	8
	% Agree	85.0	84.7	78.0	79.7	83.6
<b>It is difficult to cheat during MATSEC examinations.</b>	Strongly Agree	225	133	39	22	123
	Agree	249	118	84	25	173
	Disagree	110	27	35	16	63
	Strongly Disagree	35	11	16	7	31
	% Agree	76.6	86.9	70.7	67.1	75.9
<b>Instructions were read to candidates before the start of every examination.</b>	Strongly Agree	340	129	79	22	192
	Agree	184	109	54	27	143
	Disagree	79	41	30	9	44
	Strongly Disagree	16	10	11	12	12
	% Agree	84.7	82.4	76.4	70.0	85.7
<b>Invigilators were on task to ensure no copying or collusion took place.</b>	Strongly Agree	231	123	56	22	124
	Agree	301	132	81	31	210
	Disagree	70	29	30	12	47
	Strongly Disagree	18	5	7	5	10
	% Agree	85.8	88.2	78.7	75.7	85.4

Table 4: Response to questions about examination invigilation and centres, by gender

		Male	Female
<b>The examination centres were well maintained.</b>	Strongly Agree	100	208
	Agree	367	664
	Disagree	65	105
	Strongly Disagree	12	15
	% Agree	85.8	87.9
<b>The noise levels in examination centres were adequate.</b>	Strongly Agree	89	138
	Agree	310	545
	Disagree	124	251
	Strongly Disagree	21	59
	% Agree	73.3	68.8
<b>The examination invigilators were professional.</b>	Strongly Agree	96	148
	Agree	272	520
	Disagree	149	263
	Strongly Disagree	27	62
	% Agree	67.6	67.3
<b>The examinations centres were fit for purpose.</b>	Strongly Agree	116	237
	Agree	319	606
	Disagree	92	130
	Strongly Disagree	16	15
	% Agree	80.1	85.3
<b>It is difficult to cheat during MATSEC examinations.</b>	Strongly Agree	205	337
	Agree	214	431
	Disagree	90	159
	Strongly Disagree	34	66
	% Agree	77.2	77.3
<b>Instructions were read to candidates before the start of every examination.</b>	Strongly Agree	289	469
	Agree	184	331
	Disagree	49	154
	Strongly Disagree	21	40
	% Agree	87.1	80.5
<b>Invigilators were on task to ensure no copying or collusion took place.</b>	Strongly Agree	198	357
	Agree	268	482
	Disagree	57	131
	Strongly Disagree	21	24
	% Agree	85.7	84.4

### **Examination Papers: Difficulty and Format**

In 2017 MATSEC published information regarding the formatting of examination papers to be applied for all subjects and levels (except for IM and AM Mathematics). The process was extensive and time-consuming.

The clear majority (94.6%) of respondents agree that MATSEC examination papers should adopt a uniform format across subjects and levels. Nearly three in every four respondents (71.5%) believe that the format adopted across MATSEC papers is consistent, although one can note a shift from 'strongly agree' to 'agree' when compared to the previous item. This corroborates the internal analysis carried out by the MATSEC Support Unit: A uniform style for examination papers should be aimed for and this year's process was partly successful. Moreover, 72.7% of respondents claimed to have noted changes in examination paper layout when compared to that in past papers and 90.1% believe that

schools should adopt a paper layout which is like MATSEC's (outlined in MATSEC's online guide, 'Paper Setting: Procedures and Good Practices').

Table 5: Response to questions about Examination Paper Format

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Responses
<b>The format adopted across MATSEC exams SHOULD BE consistent across levels and subjects.</b>	N	739	710	71	12	1532
	%	48.2	46.3	4.6	0.8	98.8
<b>The format of MATSEC examination papers IS consistent across subjects and levels.</b>	N	268	818	358	75	1519
	%	17.6	53.9	23.6	4.9	98.0
<b>When compared to past papers, I have noticed changes in MATSEC examination paper layout.</b>	N	484	623	374	41	1522
	%	31.8	40.9	24.6	2.7	98.2
<b>The school/s which I attend/ed should adopt a paper layout which is similar to that of MATSEC exams.</b>	N	794	575	109	41	1519
	%	52.3	37.9	7.2	2.7	98.0

Comments provided by respondents, however, suggest that replies should be taken with a pinch of salt as some – or the majority – might have misread these survey items. Many participants who commented qualitatively seem to have linked 'format' with 'difficulty', even though format was explained as "e.g. font; numbering; use of bold, caps, italics, and underline; display of marks". Thus, many respondents grumbled that the examination for a subject (most commonly Mathematics) was different and more difficult than those in previous years. Some respondents who were in the wrong put the blame on the system, for example:

*"that in the school annuals in the fifth year environment studies should be similar to that of matsec not geography alone and social alone and history alone , the paper should be like the environment so we could have a taste of what the matsec will be like."*

Other candidates pointed out that the format adopted by their schools is already similar to that of MATSEC examinations while others lambasted their school for not doing so. Mock examinations in state schools were frequently mentioned. Two respondents did not like their examination paper to be coloured while another two complained that the provided graph paper was too dark. One respondent noted that inter-subject differences cannot and should not be completely removed:

*"The format of MATSEC exams should depend on the subject (e.g. in Maths spaces should be left for working, English requires a separate booklet or space for a composition, etc.) Format and content of annual exams should be as similar as possible to the equivalent MATSEC paper."*

Four respondents mentioned the arts section of IM Systems of Knowledge, labelling it as "vague". Two of these respondents explained their claim, relating it to the use of the phrase "any" rather than "any ONE" in a question:

*One of the sok art titles for instance was quite vague. 'Any' can refer to one, 5, 7, 20 etc. It is a great misconception that 'any' refers to only one period. Thus I do believe, along with many others that it would not only unfair but WRONG to penalise those who wrote about more than one period since 'any' does NOT signify such. if one period was what wished to be communicated, then the word 'one' or even "only one' in bold or underlined should have been used.*

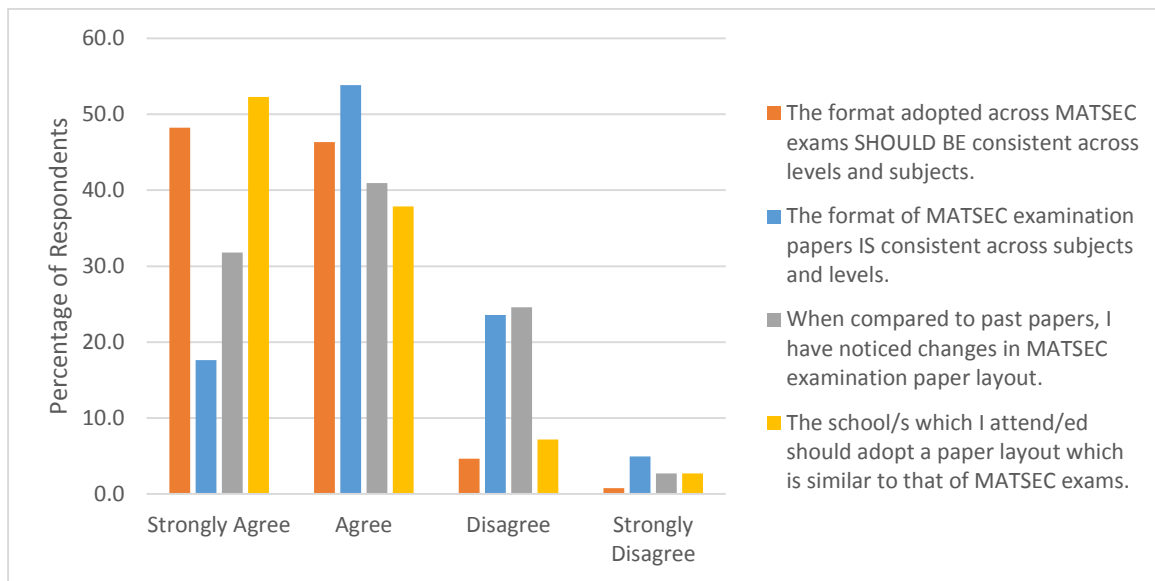


Figure 2: Respondents level of agreement with four statements regarding examination paper layout

### **MATSEC's New Candidate Guidebook**

This year MATSEC published a new candidate guidebook. This is freely available on MATSEC's website and collates information relating to MATSEC examinations in a brief document which aims to be as student-friendly as possible. The most common questions directed to MATSEC are answered in the guidebook.

Although MATSEC and the Marketing, Communications and Alumni Office at the University of Malta informed different parts of the press about this, only a few chose to give attention to this news. In fact, only 0.9% of respondents claimed to have been informed about the guidebook through newspapers (online or printed). Respondents were mainly informed of the guidebook from school (9.8%), the MATSEC website (8.3%), and the MATSEC Facebook page (6.4%). The majority (79.3%) remained uninformed. This data is represented in the following figure. Percentage and number of respondents are shown next to each bar. The percentages do not tally to 100% as respondents could select more than one reply.

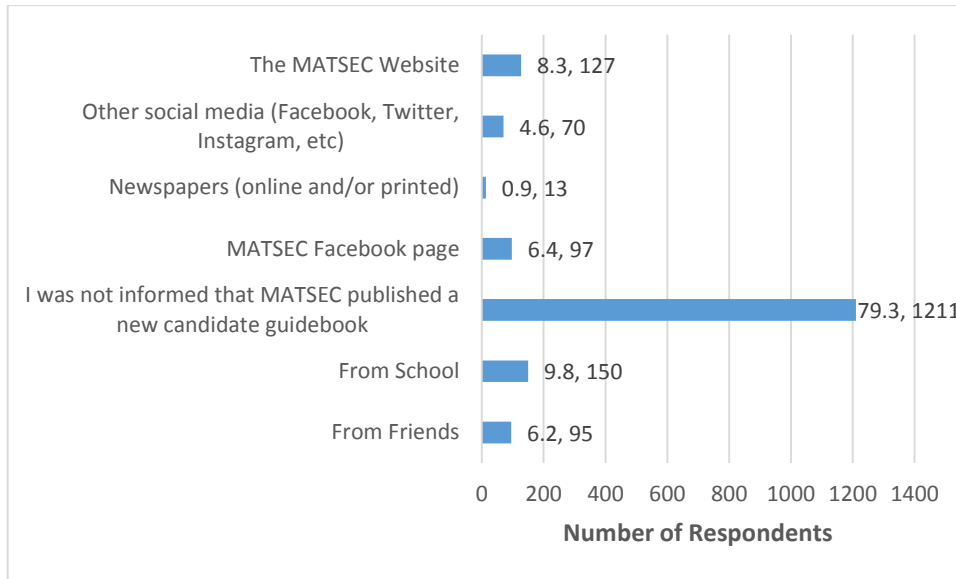


Figure 3: Sources from which participants claimed to have been informed of MATSEC's new guidebook.

Of those who were informed of the guidebook and chose to reply to the remaining questions, 48.2% claimed to have used the guidebook and, of these, 96.3% claimed that it is helpful for candidates. Furthermore, 35.7% claimed to have downloaded a copy of MATSEC's candidates' guidebook.

Table 6: Response to items about MATSEC's candidates' guidebook by the respondents who were informed of the guidebook

		Yes	No	Total Responses
<b>I have downloaded a copy of the guidebook.</b>	N	123	222	345
	%	35.7	64.3	22.3
<b>I have used the guidebook.</b>	N	165	177	345
	%	48.2	51.8	22.3
<b>The guidebook is helpful for candidates.</b>	N	157	6	163
	%	96.3	3.7	10.7

### Help from the MATSEC Support Unit

Most participants (73.8%) did not seek help from the MATSEC Support Unit. In the 2016 post-examination survey, this percentage stood at 69.3%. In addition, while in 2016 most participants had claimed to have sought help through telephone, this year the majority of those who sought help from MATSEC used e-mails. Twenty respondents used 'other' means which, on further analysis, were not official MATSEC channels. These included school councillors and, most prominently, student organisations (e.g. Pulse and SDM) and petitions. Percentage and number of respondents are shown next to each bar.



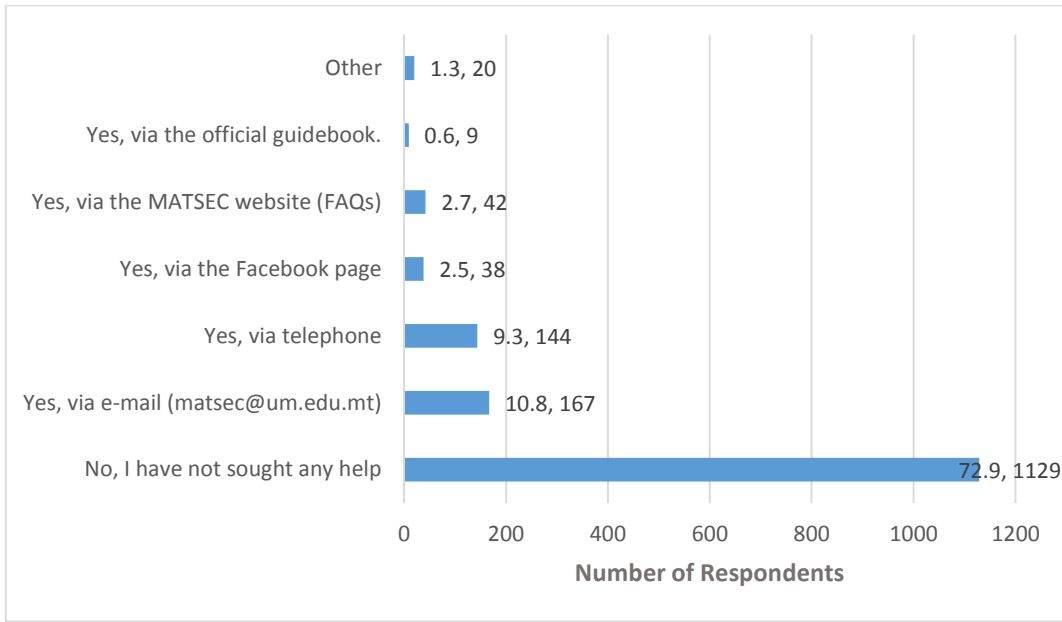


Figure 4: Number of candidates who sought help from MATSEC and the means they used

The majority (81.7%) of respondents who claimed to have sought help from MATSEC classified this as 'helpful'. This marks a slight increase from the 80.4% reported in 2016. These percentages varied slightly depending on the selected channel, as shown in the table below. Respondents who sought help from MATSEC official means were least satisfied when they did so through e-mail. This is the same as last year, although an increase from 74.0% to 79.2% is noted in positive replies. Also, candidates who sought help from unofficial means were the only group who were mostly (90.0%) not satisfied with the help while those looking for information on the MATSEC website and candidate guidebook were the most satisfied groups.

Table 7: Response to the item 'When you sought help from the MATSEC Support Unit, was this helpful?' by selected channel.

Channel		Yes	No	Total Responses
e-Mail	N	126	33	159
	%	79.2	20.8	
Telephone	N	120	20	140
	%	85.7	14.3	
Facebook Page	N	31	5	36
	%	86.1	13.9	
MATSEC Website (FAQs)	N	35	5	40
	%	87.5	12.5	
Official Guidebook	N	7	0	7
	%	100	0	
Other	N	2	18	20
	%	10.0	90.0	

One should, again, be careful when analysing the above replies. For instance, one respondent claimed that the Facebook was helpful because "They gave me better notes than those of school". This is clearly referring to an unofficial MATSEC Facebook page administered by students' organisations. Of those answering negatively, some claimed that their queries were not answered or not answered in enough detail. Others were unhappy because they were unhappy with the answer (e.g. claims of a subject's examination being difficult; being sick for an examination; having clashes with foreign examination boards; having to pay to change personal details submitted with the application). Others claim that phones remain unanswered. However, on further analysis it transpires that some callers do phone after office hours (which are published on the MATSEC website).

When asked for other services which could be offered by MATSEC, replies included free past papers and model answers. The service of revision of papers was most frequently mentioned with suggestions being that it should be free, include a copy of the candidate's paper, and be a better indication of where a candidate did wrong. Unfortunately, it seems that respondents are ignorant of the aims of and procedures behind the revision of paper exercise. Some proposals, such as talks held in schools, clear instructions to be read to candidates, and waiving of fees for specific cases are already offered by MATSEC. Others gave suggestions which clearly go beyond MATSEC's role as an examinations board, such as organising study groups and private tuition. Other suggestions targeted the examination centres, their accessibility (many respondents complained of traffic), and measures to deal with heat. These included transport to centres and having these with either more fans or air conditioning.

### **Coursework Interviews**

A total of 96 respondents (6.2%) claimed to have sat for an interview regarding coursework at the MATSEC Support Unit. Most of these respondents claimed to have sat for an interview regarding IM Systems of Knowledge. This is a subject with large number of candidates applying as private candidates.

*Table 8: Subjects for which respondents had coursework interviews*

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Count</b>
<b>Art</b>	1
<b>Biology</b>	2
<b>Chemistry</b>	3
<b>Computer Studies</b>	11
<b>Environmental Studies</b>	2
<b>Home Economics</b>	1
<b>Information Technology</b>	6
<b>Physical Education</b>	1
<b>Physics</b>	3
<b>Systems of Knowledge</b>	45

When asked for their level of agreement about four statements relating to coursework interviews, most replies were positive, as shown in the table and figure below. Least positive replies were observed when respondents were asked whether interviews are a good way of verifying the authenticity of a project, although the majority (60.2%) shared this view. This is also the only case where a large difference between responses was noted by examination level: While 12 of the 17 respondents (70.6%) who sat for SEC examinations believe that interviews are a good way of ensuring the authenticity of a project, 44 of the 76 respondents (57.9%) who sat for AM/IM examinations share this view.

Table 9: Respondents' views of coursework interviews

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>Interviewers were professional.</b>	N	37	43	11	2
	%	39.8	46.2	11.8	2.2
<b>I was asked personal questions which were unrelated to the subject.</b>	N	8	11	44	29
	%	8.7	12.0	47.8	31.5
<b>Interviews are a good way of assessing the veracity of a project.</b>	N	22	34	27	10
	%	23.7	36.6	29.0	10.8
<b>The questions asked were relevant to the submitted coursework.</b>	N	34	39	16	4
	%	36.6	41.9	17.2	4.3

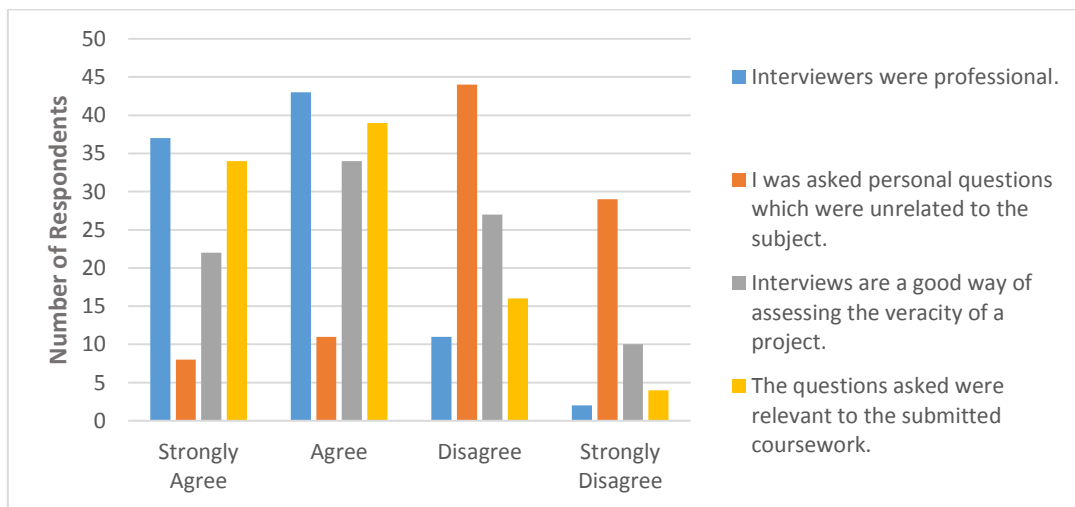


Figure 5: Respondents' views of coursework interviews

Four respondents who indicated either lack of professionalism of interviewers or having been asked personal questions provided contact details. Attempts were made to contact these respondents to gather further information. Of these, two were successfully contacted and agreed to answer to further questions and one interview led to salient data<sup>1</sup>. This respondent said that, although initial questions ('Where did you do the project?', 'With whom?' and so on) were asked, interviewers started with the most difficult questions, thus stressing the already nervous candidate. One should note, however, that question difficulty can be a rather relative measure. As such, no case was made.

### ***The Secondary Education Certificate Examinations***

#### **Recorded Audio in SEC Aural Examinations**

This was the first year that the SEC Italian and SEC French aural examinations were carried out using recorded audio. This follows the implementation of such practices in the smaller SEC language subjects with an aural component: German, Spanish, and Arabic. This is done to ensure uniformity across examination rooms and halls. However, there were several complaints following the SEC Italian aural examination with candidates and other people who were not present for the examination claiming lack of audibility.

In recent years, complaints were received about certain live speakers. In addition, recruiting live speakers and ensuring a fair examination in which candidates were exposed to the same examination conditions were yearly challenges for national examinations. Survey respondents were asked whether aural examinations should be carried out using recordings or live speakers. Most participants expressed their belief that SEC aural examinations should be carried out using live speakers, rather than recorded audio.

*Table 10: Respondents' view: Should SEC aural examinations be carried out using live speakers or recorded audio?*

		<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>Listening comprehension examinations should, as much as possible, be carried out using recordings.</b>	N	193	323	477	494
	%	13.0	21.7	32.1	33.2
<b>Listening comprehension examinations should, as much as possible, be carried out using live speakers (persons).</b>	N	726	398	250	114
	%	48.8	26.7	16.8	7.7

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<sup>1</sup> The other interviewee claimed s/he had been asked personal questions. When further probed, s/he said these were related to parts of his/her coursework being copied (which s/he did not deny) and why s/he chose such path. S/he then said the case had happened three years before and had forgotten details of the event.

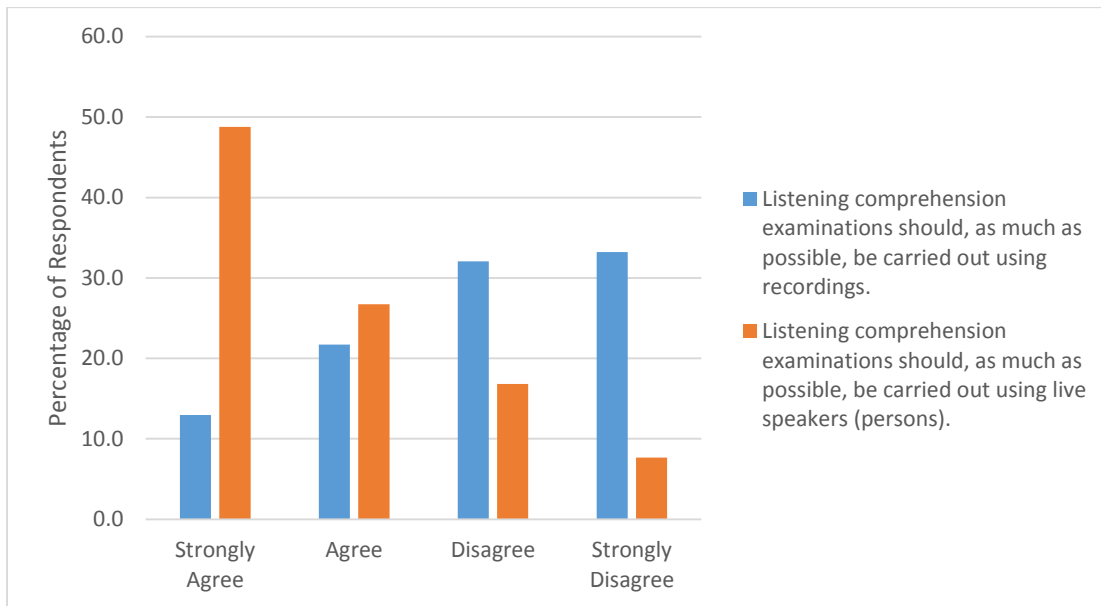


Figure 6: Respondents' view: Should SEC aural examinations be carried out using live speakers or recorded audio?

From the above, 26 respondents agreed with both statements while another six disagreed with both. Most of the comments left by participants lambasted the audio quality in the SEC Italian aural examination, as reported in the media. Others complained about the sound in other examinations, mostly Spanish, while others complained about the accent of other speakers, usually French.

*I was bothered by the fact that we were told that a local was going to read out the French listening yet the female speaker had a French accent that made it quite hard to understand.*

A sizeable number of respondents realised that the use of recordings offered equality of access. However, others thought that a live speaker would provide them with (unfair) advantages, such as allowing candidates to lip-read and repeating phrases and/or change their rate when candidates in that examination hall are unable to follow.

These set of questions were asked to all respondents, whether they sat for SEC examinations in 2017 or in earlier years (but were sitting for AM/IM examinations in 2017). Although similar views were held by participants, more negative views towards recorded aural examinations were held by SEC candidates. Candidates who did not sit for SEC examinations reported audio problems in the comments section, further accentuating the effects of the media on public perception.

Table 11: Respondents' view by examination level: Should SEC aural examinations be carried out using live speakers or recorded audio?

		At least 6 subjects at SEC level	Individual SEC exams	Individual AM exams	Individual IM exams	Matriculation Certificate
<b>Listening comprehension examinations should, as much as possible, be carried out using recordings.</b>	Strongly Agree	65	29	29	14	56
	Agree	126	59	38	12	88
	Disagree	184	88	51	19	135
	Strongly Disagree	243	98	38	21	94
	% Agree	30.9	32.1	42.9	39.4	38.6
<b>Listening comprehension examinations should, as much as possible, be carried out using live speakers (persons).</b>	Strongly Agree	340	139	64	30	153
	Agree	152	74	42	17	113
	Disagree	86	44	36	11	73
	Strongly Disagree	36	23	13	8	34
	% Agree	80.1	76.1	68.4	71.2	71.3

#### Examinations Offered by Foreign Examination Boards

A total of 405 (26.1%) respondents claimed to have sat for examinations with foreign examination boards. A third of these (141, 34.8%) claimed to have sat for only one examination offered by a foreign examinations board. A considerable number of respondents sat for two (78, 19.3%) and three (64, 15.8%) such exams while one respondent sat for 11 examinations offered by a foreign examinations board. A total of 95 (23.5%) respondents provided no information about the subjects they sat for.

Table 12: Number of examinations with foreign examinations board sat for by respondents

Number of subjects	Respondents	
	N	%
1	141	34.8
2	78	19.3
3	64	15.8
4	20	4.9
5	4	1.0
6	2	0.5
11	1	0.2

The subjects sat for ranged from subjects which are not offered by the MATSEC Examinations Board, such as Drama and Bulgarian Language, to others offered by the Board. The subjects with largest entries were English Language (213), Biology (104), Chemistry (91), Physics (72), and Accounts (50).

Table 13: Examinations with Foreign Examinations Board sat for by Respondents

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Count</b>
<b>Accounts</b>	50
<b>Biology</b>	104
<b>Bulgarian Language</b>	1
<b>Bulgarian Literature</b>	1
<b>Business &amp; Management</b>	1
<b>Business Studies</b>	2
<b>Chemistry</b>	91
<b>Drama</b>	3
<b>Economics</b>	14
<b>English Language</b>	213
<b>English Literature</b>	2
<b>French</b>	10
<b>Further Mathematics</b>	1
<b>German</b>	9
<b>Italian</b>	3
<b>Maltese</b>	1
<b>Mathematics</b>	16
<b>Music</b>	2
<b>Physics</b>	72
<b>Psychology</b>	1
<b>Pure Mathematics</b>	11
<b>Religion</b>	1
<b>Social Studies</b>	1
<b>Spanish</b>	1
<b>No Reply</b>	95

Participants were asked four questions: two about centres and invigilation and two about level of difficulty. A summary of replies is shown in the table and figure that follow.

Table 14: Perceptions of difficulty of and examination centres used for examinations by foreign examination boards

		Strongly Agree	Agree	They're the Same	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>The level expected in examinations offered by foreign examination boards is HIGHER than that expected in MATSEC examinations.</b>	N	27	60	120	135	54
	%	6.8	15.2	30.3	34.1	13.6
<b>The examination centres used for examinations offered by foreign examination boards are BETTER than those used for MATSEC examinations.</b>	N	31	62	182	66	57
	%	7.8	15.6	45.7	16.6	14.3
<b>The invigilation staff used for MATSEC examinations are BETTER trained than those used for examinations offered by foreign examination boards.</b>	N	29	68	228	50	19
	%	7.4	17.3	57.9	12.7	4.8
<b>It is EASIER to obtain a good grade in MATSEC examinations rather than those offered by foreign examination boards.</b>	N	20	46	112	117	97
	%	5.1	11.7	28.6	29.8	24.7

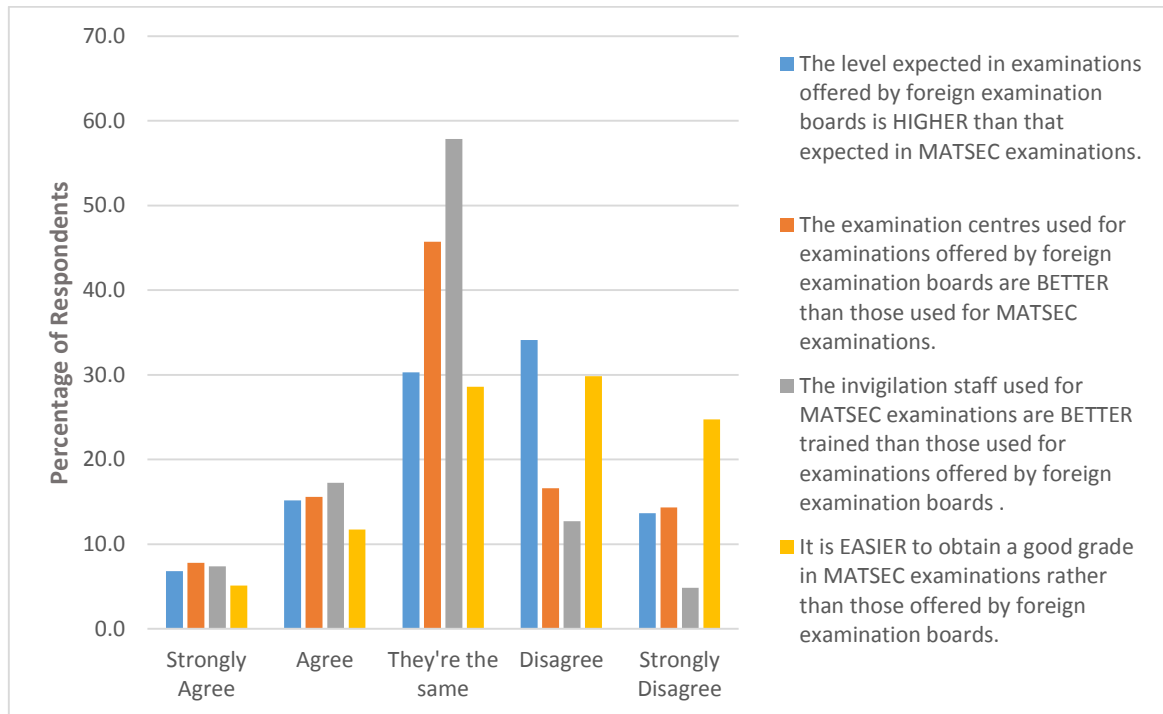


Figure 7: Perceptions of Difficulty of and Examination Centres used for Examinations by Foreign Examination Boards



Examination centres and invigilation staff are the responsibility of the Examinations Department for examinations held by either MATSEC or foreign examination boards. Most respondents who have sat for both types of examinations believe that the same level of examination centres (45.7%) and invigilation staff (57.9%) is used for both type of examinations. However, as more respondents disagree that centres are better for foreign examination boards and more respondents agree that invigilation staff is better in MATSEC exams, there might be some differences in respondent perception in favour of MATSEC examinations.

Perceptions of differences between examinations held by MATSEC and foreign examination boards are wider when it comes to difficulty as less than a third of respondents believe that exams are equally difficult (30.3%) with equal chances to obtain a good grade (28.6%). The most common perception for those who believe that differences exist seems to be that MATSEC examinations are more severely graded.

### ***The Matriculation Certificate***

#### **General**

The awarding of the Matriculation Certificate (MC) currently requires candidates to sit for six subjects and obtain a passing grade in at least one subject from each of Groups 1, 2, and 3, along with Systems of Knowledge. Respondents were asked for their level of agreement with these requirements. In addition, they were also asked whether one should be required to pass (rather than sit for) six subjects to obtain the MC and whether this should be awarded to those who obtain enough points by passing three examinations at AM level along with IM Systems of Knowledge (old structure of the MC). As the survey item was identical to that used in last year's post-examination survey, the results can be compared. These are shown in the table that follows.

The main results obtained through the 2017 post-examination survey are identical to those of last year's. Most respondents seem to agree with the general idea that in order for one to obtain the MC, s/he should show competence in a range of subjects. This is indicated by the fact that most respondents agree that passes in Group 1 (89.0%), Group 2 (79.8%), and Group 3 (76.0%) subjects should be required to qualify for the MC. Most participants agree that one should sit for six subjects (58.0%) and only 1.4% less (56.6%) agree that one should obtain a passing grade in six subjects<sup>2</sup>. The respondents who left comments criticising the current requirements to qualify for the MC usually related the award of the MC to academic strength in a single area (and their future employment), seeing it "unfair" to "force" someone who is good in one area to exhibit competence in another.

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<sup>2</sup> This is not a current requirement to qualify for the MC.

Table 15: Respondents' level of agreement with the requirements to obtain the Matriculation Certificate

The Matriculation Certificate should include:		2017 (N)	2017 (%)	2016 (%)
<b>A group 1 subject</b>	Strongly Agree	291	49.2	48.3
	Agree	235	39.8	43.0
	Disagree	35	5.9	5.5
	Strongly Disagree	30	5.1	3.1
	% Agree		89.0	91.4
<b>A group 2 subject</b>	Strongly Agree	214	36.0	28.3
	Agree	260	43.8	49.0
	Disagree	89	15.0	15.9
	Strongly Disagree	31	5.2	6.8
	% Agree		79.8	77.3
<b>A group 3 subject</b>	Strongly Agree	245	41.7	37.8
	Agree	202	34.4	40.4
	Disagree	92	15.6	14.0
	Strongly Disagree	49	8.3	7.8
	% Agree		76.0	78.2
<b>Systems of Knowledge</b>	Strongly Agree	80	13.7	11.6
	Agree	135	23.1	26.5
	Disagree	158	27.1	27.2
	Strongly Disagree	211	36.1	34.7
	% Agree		36.8	38.1
<b>Candidates to sit for at least six subjects</b>	Strongly Agree	108	18.9	18.3
	Agree	224	39.2	42.3
	Disagree	175	30.6	25.9
	Strongly Disagree	65	11.4	13.5
	% Agree		58.0	60.6
<b>Candidates to have passed at least six subjects</b>	Strongly Agree	116	20.2	19.9
	Agree	209	36.4	35.7
	Disagree	180	31.4	30.2
	Strongly Disagree	69	12.0	14.3
	% Agree		56.6	55.6
<b>3 A' Levels + Systems of Knowledge (without other intermediates)</b>	Strongly Agree	154	26.6	26.2
	Agree	160	27.6	27.9
	Disagree	161	27.8	27.5
	Strongly Disagree	104	18.0	18.4
	% Agree		54.2	54.1

Most respondents disagree with Systems of Knowledge being a compulsory part of the MC. Respondents' comments were similar to those of last year. A range of ideas were presented, including that the subject:

- is a waste of time;
- should not be compulsory (with some suggesting placing it in Group 4);
- should make space for other subjects with suggestions including language competence, history, ethics, or a revised version of the subject that reflects modern times;
- should be compulsory but not examinable;
- is important for one's formation.

In the 2016 survey, respondents were asked whether candidates should be allowed to sit for MC examinations before the completion of their two-year course at Sixth Form. This has been occurring since 2012 to the extent that now there are more 17-year-olds than 18-year-olds sitting for MC examinations in the second session (held in September). The clear majority (85.0%) had agreed with this statement with arguments of reduced stress by getting subjects "out of the way". However, others had argued that this practice negatively affects students' education and increases the emphasis given to private tuition and surface learning simply to pass examinations and obtain the required qualification.

In this year's survey, respondents were asked for their level of agreement on whether this practice "harms students' learning of the subject". Most respondents (63.9%) disagreed with this statement. Those who cited reasons for this argued that preparation for most subjects is done by reading and self-studying. Lectures were deemed as a waste of time. Other respondents, like last year's respondents, argued that this is not possible in all subjects, with a participant deeming this difference as "unfair". Another respondent noted how s/he obtained "2 As, 1 B and a C" for four intermediates which s/he sat for after his/her first year of studies.

When asked whether SEC subjects are a good preparation for the MC, more participants were likely to agree, rather than disagree, with this. However, a negative shift is noted from replies in 2016: while the same percentage of respondents did not feel that SEC offered a good preparation for the MC, a larger percentage were undecided on the matter.

*Table 16: SEC subjects as a preparation for the Matriculation Certificate*

	2017 (N)	2017 (%)	2016 (N)	2016 (%)
<b>Yes</b>	164	27.1	280	32.3
<b>So and so</b>	307	50.7	394	45.5
<b>No</b>	134	22.1	192	22.1

### Differences by Age

Responses were stratified by age to assess whether candidates' views were age-dependent. This data is shown on the adjacent page. However, the small number of respondents within certain age groups not only makes the information complex to analyse, but calls for caution.

From the data on the adjacent page, it seems that candidates' age does affect their response. The most notable cases are:

1. Older respondents seem more likely to agree about the inclusion of IM Systems of Knowledge as a requirement to obtain the MC. While 29.3% of 17-year-olds agreed with its inclusion, 34.5% of 18-year-olds did so, and 45.1% of those aged 19 years or more did.
2. Older respondents seem more likely to agree that the option to sit for examinations before the completion of the course harms learning. While 17- and 18-year-olds have similar perceptions, with roughly a third of respondents agreeing with this statement (32.8% and 33.9% respectively), 40.3% of those aged 19 or over agree with the statement.

Table 17: Respondents' level of agreement with the requirements to obtain the Matriculation Certificate, by respondents' age

The Matriculation Certificate should include:	Replies	Respondents' Age							
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20	20+
<b>A group 1 subject</b>	Strongly Agree	0	0	10	26	162	42	10	18
	Agree	1	0	6	23	135	30	14	6
	Disagree	0	0	1	4	21	6	1	1
	Strongly Disagree	0	1	0	6	17	2	1	2
<b>A group 2 subject</b>	Strongly Agree	0	1	8	20	121	28	8	12
	Agree	1	0	6	27	145	32	14	10
	Disagree	0	0	1	9	53	15	3	4
	Strongly Disagree	0	0	1	4	16	5	1	2
<b>A group 3 subject</b>	Strongly Agree	0	1	8	20	142	31	9	17
	Agree	1	0	5	23	116	27	10	6
	Disagree	0	0	3	8	55	12	6	1
	Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	8	24	10	1	2
<b>Systems of Knowledge</b>	Strongly Agree	0	0	1	7	45	12	4	7
	Agree	0	1	5	10	70	25	8	4
	Disagree	1	0	6	14	99	16	4	6
	Strongly Disagree	0	0	3	27	119	27	10	10
<b>Candidates to sit for at least six subjects</b>	Strongly Agree	0	0	3	7	67	12	4	7
	Agree	1	1	4	28	129	29	5	10
	Disagree	0	0	5	16	103	22	12	6
	Strongly Disagree	0	0	3	7	28	15	4	4
<b>Candidates to have passed at least six subjects</b>	Strongly Agree	0	0	4	13	65	16	3	6
	Agree	1	1	5	22	128	21	4	12
	Disagree	0	0	3	16	108	26	9	6
	Strongly Disagree	0	0	3	6	29	14	9	3
<b>3 A' Levels + Systems of Knowledge (without other intermediates)</b>	Strongly Agree	0	1	2	17	79	24	11	8
	Agree	0	0	5	17	99	13	4	10
	Disagree	1	0	5	14	91	30	3	6
	Strongly Disagree	0	0	3	10	60	14	6	4

### Examination Access Arrangements

A total of 169 survey respondents claimed to have qualified for Examination Access Arrangements (EAAs) in the First/Main session. This amounts to 10.9% of participants, which is roughly identical to the percentage of candidates who qualify for EAAs in SEC examinations. Although slightly more than half the respondents did not specify on which condition they were granted EAAs (86, 50.9%), the most stated conditions were SpLD / Dyslexia and ADD / ADHD, in line with data published yearly on MATSEC SEC Statistical Reports. As respondents could select more than one condition, the percentages in the table below do not tally to 100%. Ten participants selected two conditions (5.9%) while three participants selected three conditions (1.8%).

Table 18: Conditions on which Respondents were Granted Examination Access Arrangements

Condition	Respondents	
	N	%
<b>ADD / ADHD</b>	16	9.5
<b>Autism Spectrum Disorder (Including Asperger's Syndrome)</b>	8	4.7
<b>Hearing Impairment</b>	2	1.2
<b>Last Minute Injuries</b>	4	2.4
<b>Medical Conditions (Including Diabetes, IBS, ME, Fibromyalgia, Systemic/Discoïd Lupus Erythematosus)</b>	10	5.9
<b>Mental Health (Including Anxiety, OCD, Bipolar Disorder, Depression)</b>	11	6.5
<b>Mobility Problems (Including Cerebral Palsy)</b>	2	1.2
<b>SpLD / Dyslexia</b>	34	20.1
<b>Stammer</b>	2	1.2
<b>Visual Impairment</b>	1	0.6
<b>DCD / Dyspraxia</b>	6	3.6
<b>Other</b>	3	1.8
<b>No Reply</b>	86	50.9

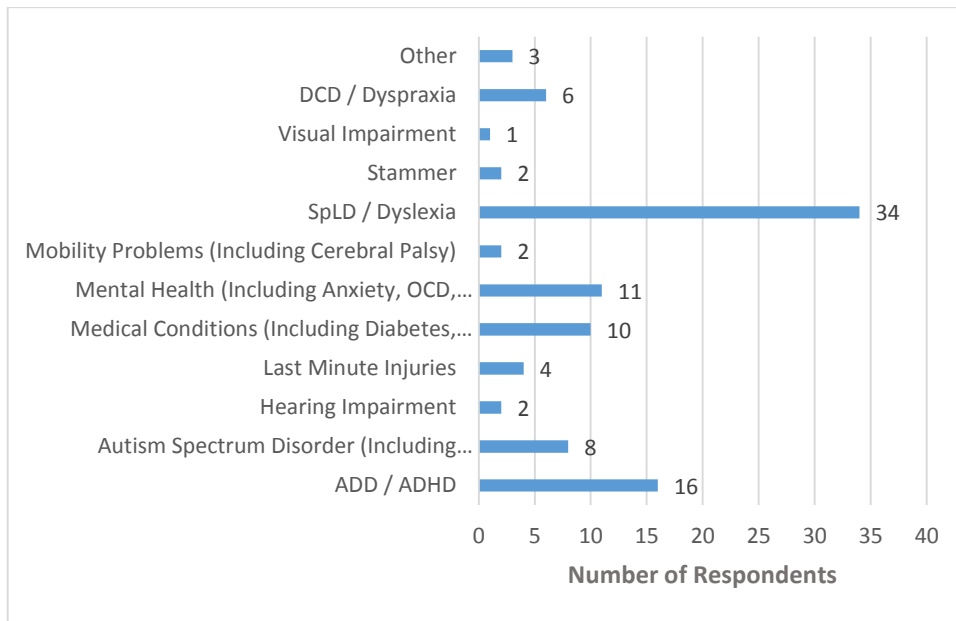


Figure 8: Conditions on which Respondents were Granted Examination Access Arrangements

Respondents qualified for a range of EAAs, as shown in the figure below ('scribe' and 'accessibility' have been added by respondents using the 'other' option). From the 94 (55.6%) respondents who replied to this question, 45 (26.6%) qualified for one EAA. A total of 13 respondents (7.7%) qualified for four to six EAAs.

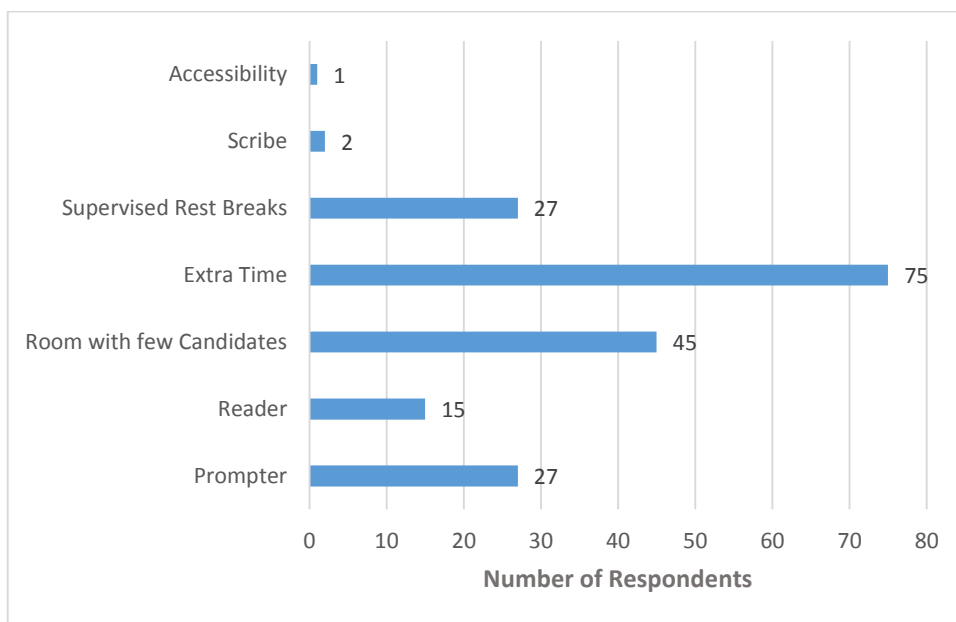


Figure 9: Examination Access Arrangements Qualified for by Respondents

Respondents were then asked about the level of usefulness of the EAA/s they qualified for. The option 'Not Used' should have been reserved for respondents who qualified for the arrangement but did not use it. Thus, responses of individuals who claimed not to have qualified for the EAA in the previous item were ignored. Results are shown in the table below and summarised in the figure that follows.

Table 19: Usefulness of Examination Access Arrangements

	Prompter		Reader		Room with few Candidates		Extra Time		Supervised Rest Breaks	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Not Used</b>	7	25.9	4	26.7	2	4.4	4	5.3	13	48.1
<b>Used but not Helpful</b>	3	11.1	3	20.0	4	8.9	2	2.7	0	0.0
<b>Used and Helpful</b>	8	29.6	4	26.7	11	24.4	30	40.0	10	37.0
<b>Used and Very Helpful</b>	6	22.2	4	26.7	25	55.6	34	45.3	4	14.8
<b>Total Responses</b>	24	88.9	15	100.0	42	93.3	70	93.3	27	100.0

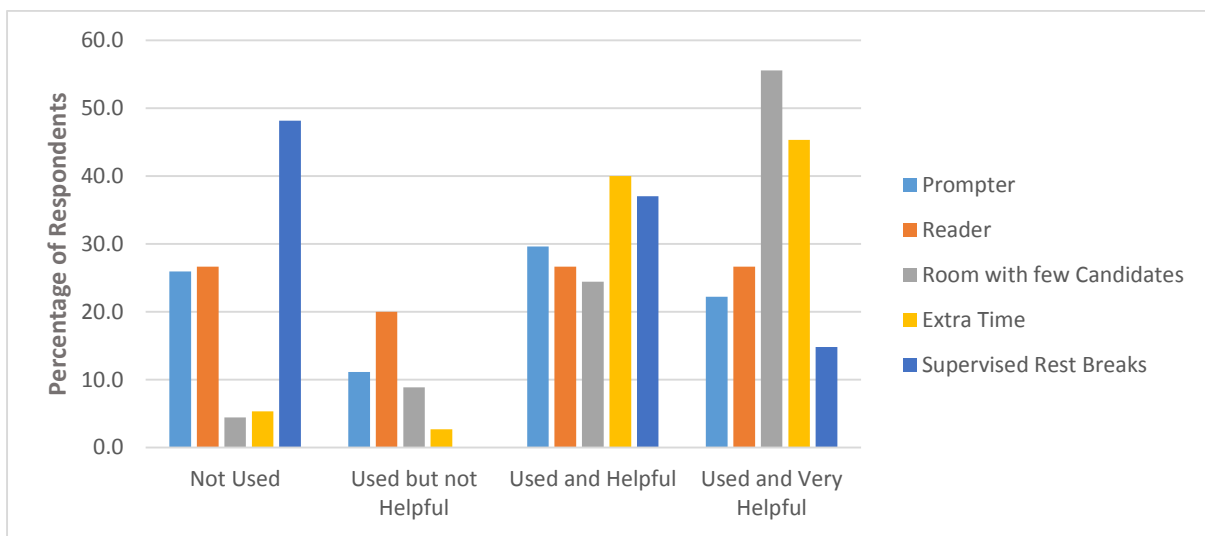


Figure 10: Usefulness of Examination Access Arrangements

Supervised rest breaks was the least commonly used EAA as nearly half of those qualifying for it did not use it. From those who used it, all respondents found the arrangements to be helpful or very helpful. This was the only condition which none of respondents classified as not helpful.

The EAAs with the best ratings of helpfulness were the room with few candidates and extra time. Of the qualitative responses, a participant complained that the 25% extra time s/he was given was insufficient while another held that the reader, when qualified for, should be provided in language exams as well<sup>3</sup>. Another respondent suggested that there should be no need for extra time as candidates should be allowed as much time as needed by them to finish an examination.

Respondents were asked to agree with one of three statements regarding the equality of access arrangements when these were offered by different persons. A total of 18 from

<sup>3</sup> Readers are not provided in language subjects as ability to read is deemed to be part of language competency.

the 82 responses to this survey item (22.0%) claimed that different personnel provided them with different levels of access.

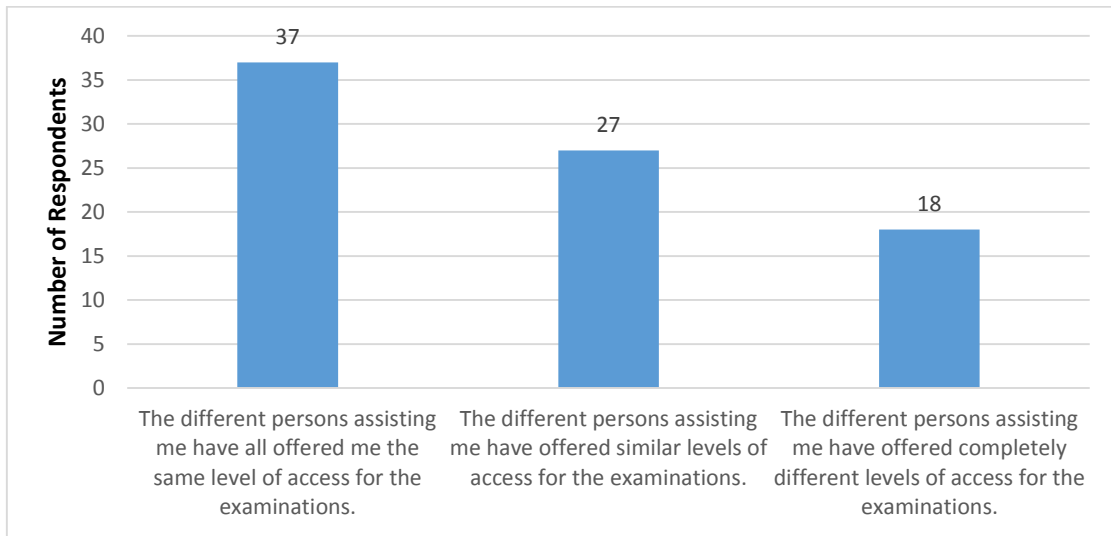


Figure 11: Equality of Access Offered by Different Access Personnel

It should be noted that although most candidates do use the EAAs they qualify for in some examinations, most candidates do not necessarily use the EAAs in all of their examinations. For instance, while 65.6% of the candidates who qualified for extra time in May 2016 made use of the arrangement for Maltese Paper I, 38.3% made use of the arrangement for Paper II. For Mathematics, 41.0% and 29.9% made use of the arrangement for Paper I and Paper II respectively, while for English Language these percentages stand at 92.8% and 29.9%. When it comes to other access arrangements, 70.8% and 75.2% of candidates did not make use of the EAAs for Maltese Paper I and Paper II respectively. These numbers stood at 62.2% and 66.0% for Mathematics Paper I and Paper II and 85.3% and 76.1% for English Language.

When asked whether EAAs were fair, most participants (82.5% of the 97 responses to this item) responded positively. Comments from those who did not agree complained of not being given the EAA/s they thought they should have qualified for.

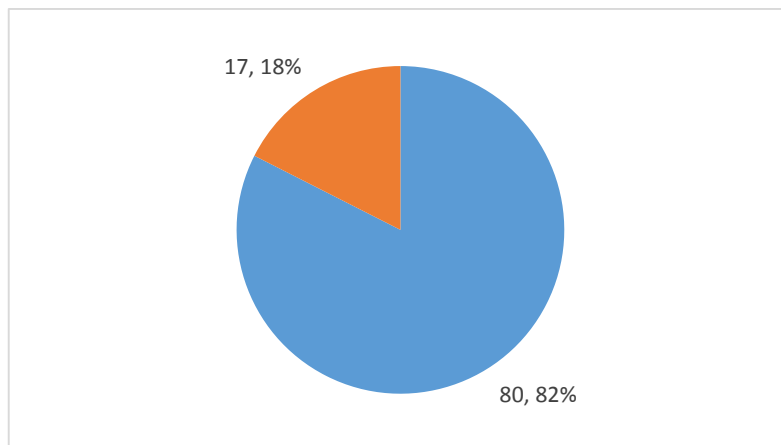


Figure 12: Overall Fairness of Provided Examination Access Arrangements



### General Comments

Comments to this year's post-examination survey were less varied than those in 2016. Many respondents commented on things reported in the media: the speculated difficulty of Mathematics examinations and audio problems in aural examinations. A few respondents thanked MATSEC for providing another session for the SEC Italian Listening Comprehension and many more criticised MATSEC for "not taking action"<sup>4</sup> on either Mathematics or another aural examination. Some participants also complained about particular examinations, such as the length of SEC Maltese examination papers, the essay topics chosen for AM Biology paper II, and reported vagueness of art questions in IM Systems of Knowledge. Numerous complaints targeted traffic. It would be interesting to assess how many candidates try to address this issue by using public transport or carpooling.

A few respondents used the space at the end of the questionnaire to thank MATSEC for providing such tool. Some participants also thanked the Unit for its work.

*Just thank you for your hard work and constant help, the work you manage to do is truly inspiring. Good day.*

### E. Conclusion

MATSEC is always on the lookout for informed criticism as an opportunity to further improve its practices. This is the third report to collate candidates' feedback on the MATSEC examinations they just sat for. Candidate perceptions are a valuable piece of information which can provide a more detailed, or even an alternative, description of current practices.

Comments on this report and any recommendations on improving this or similar documents published by the MATSEC Support Unit are welcome. These are to be addressed to Mr. Gilbert John Zahra, Principal Assessment Research and Development Officer, MATSEC Support Unit, University of Malta on Tel: 2340 3965 or email: gilbert.j.zahra@um.edu.mt.

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<sup>4</sup> All claims were investigated by the MATSEC Support Unit.