

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

SOP CODE	SOP TITLE
ZQA-001-03	PROCEDURE GOVERNING THE QUALITY MAILSHOT INITIATIVE

PART 1

Author

Dr Jonathan Xuereb
Administration Specialist

PART 2

Approver

Dr Jacqueline Vanhear
Senior Executive

PART 3

Authoriser

Prof. Frank Bezzina
Pro-Rector

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PART 4 (To be filled in by OOTS, QSU or RSSD)

<input type="checkbox"/> This procedure has been revised and is no longer valid as from: (Write date)	<input type="checkbox"/> Date of NEXT REVISION is extended until: (Max. 4 years)	<input type="checkbox"/> SOP rendered obsolete on: (Write date)
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1. Reason for revision

- 1.1. The SOP has been updated to better reflect current practices and continuous improvement for this initiative to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

2. Purpose and scope

- 2.1. The purpose of this SOP is to document the procedure governing the 'Quality Mailshot Initiative', which was launched by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) in 2019 to highlight good quality practices by means of occasional mailshots.
- 2.2. The procedure outlined in this SOP involves four main stages, namely the development, dissemination, follow-up and subsequent archiving of such mailshots.

3. Definitions

- 3.1. AIMS: Administrative Information Management Systems. This system was established in order to have an integrated management information system which adequately serves the University of Malta's dynamic business and operational demands.
- 3.2. CMS: Content Management System
- 3.3. FICS: Faculty, Institute, Centre or School
- 3.4. Mailshot: An e-mail disseminated to a large number of people.
- 3.5. Mailshot Proposer: A UM academic or administrative member of staff who contacts the QSU with a suggestion for a quality mailshot.
- 3.6. MCAO: Marketing, Communications & Alumni Office
- 3.7. QAC: Quality Assurance Committee
- 3.8. QSU: Quality Support Unit
- 3.9. Reminder email: An e-mail sent by the QSU to the Marketing, Communications & Alumni Office one day prior to the scheduled release of a mailshot.
- 3.10. UM: University of Malta

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4. Responsibilities

4.1. Roles and Responsibilities of the Quality Support Unit

- 4.1.1. Devise a schedule for the dissemination of mailshots at the start of each academic year.
- 4.1.2. Determine whether a mailshot suggestion is to be accepted for dissemination or not.
- 4.1.3. Liaise with the Mailshot Proposer to determine what the content of the mailshot should be, and request a suitable banner image if necessary.
- 4.1.4. Prepare a draft of the mailshot and present it for vetting and approval by the Mailshot Proposer.
- 4.1.5. Decide on a subject title for the mailshot in liaison with the Mailshot Proposer.
- 4.1.6. Send a reminder email to MCAO one day prior to the dissemination of mailshots.
- 4.1.7. Revise the mailshot's content in line with any feedback from MCAO prior to dissemination.
- 4.1.8. Oversee any feedback received in reply to the mailshots, and take relevant action as necessary.
- 4.1.9. Retain a record of all feedback received in reply to released mailshots.
- 4.1.10. Archive disseminated mailshots on the Quality Assurance website.

4.2. Roles and Responsibilities of the Mailshot Proposer

- 4.2.1. Send an email on gac@um.edu.mt with a mailshot suggestion for the QSU's consideration.
- 4.2.2. Liaise with the QSU regarding the subject and content of the mailshot.
- 4.2.3. Provide a suitable accompanying banner image if necessary.
- 4.2.4. Vet and approve the mailshot draft once finalised.

4.3. Roles and Responsibilities of the Marketing, Communications & Alumni Office

- 4.3.1. Ensure that proposed mailshots are in line with [UM's branding guidelines](#) once a reminder email is received from the QSU.
- 4.3.2. Oversee the dissemination of mailshots.

5. Health and Safety requirements

- 5.1. N/A

6. Procedure

6.1. Mailshot Development

- 6.1.1. At the start of each academic year, the QSU will devise a schedule for the dissemination of mailshots throughout that academic year, in line with the following requirements:

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- A minimum of fourteen (14) days is to be kept between mailshots.
- No mailshots are to be sent during examination sessions and recesses.

6.1.2. Notwithstanding the above, it is at the discretion of the QSU to decide on alternative scheduling arrangements as the case may be, especially in the case of time-sensitive matters.

6.1.3. The initiation of a new quality mailshot may arise in two ways:

- The QAC members and/or the QSU team may identify a suitable good practice throughout the course of their day-to-day work.
- A Mailshot Proposer may contact the QAC/QSU (preferably by email to qac@um.edu.mt) with a mailshot suggestion. In such cases, the QSU Senior Executive retains the discretion as to whether such suggestion should be accepted for dissemination or not.

6.1.4. Once a mailshot suggestion is approved, the QSU is to liaise with the Mailshot Proposer to prepare a draft text. Ideally, the text should be limited to a reasonable length to encourage recipients to read it. The text's formatting must follow [UM's branding guidelines](#).

6.1.5. A subject title for the mailshot is to be agreed upon. The QSU shall liaise with the Mailshot Proposer to agree upon a suitable subject title.

6.1.6. When concluding the mailshot's text, the QSU shall consider the mailshot's content within the context of the University of Malta's [Strategic Plan 2020-2025](#). The manner in which the good practice identified in the mailshot aligns with the strategic themes and commitments of the Strategic Plan should be highlighted in the mailshot.

6.1.7. At the end of each mailshot, the following text is to be included: *Through this [Quality Mailshot Initiative](#), the [QAC](#) aims to disseminate best practices at UM that align with both national and European standards for quality in higher education. If you have an example of good QA practice which you would like us to share, please get in touch with us at qac@um.edu.mt*

6.1.8. Each mailshot is to be accompanied by a suitable banner image, to be included horizontally above the main text. The dimensions of the image must be 580 pixels in length and 209 pixels in width. In the absence of a suitable image provided by the Mailshot Proposer, the QSU will select an image.

6.1.9. Once the text and image are finalised, the mailshot is to be uploaded on CMS following the below procedure (basic understanding and training in CMS is presumed):

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- 6.1.9..1. The image is to be uploaded in the **Banners** folder to be found following this path: **Quality Assurance Committee** (id #420006) > **Mailshots** (id #416703) > **Banners (580 x 209px)** (id #416704).
- 6.1.9..2. The text is to be uploaded in a new News Item following this path: **Quality Assurance Committee** (id #420006) > **Mailshots** (id #416703) > **Quality Assurance Committee** (id #415728).
- 6.1.9..3. To create a new News Item, right-click on the folder **Quality Assurance Committee** (id #415728) to bring up a pop-up menu. Select **New Child > News > News Item**.
- 6.1.9..4. On the new News Item page, the **News headline** field should be filled with the mailshot's subject title. The mailshot text should be inputted in the **Body (WYSIWYG Content Container)**. Default formatting options are to be used (Font: Arial, Font Size: 2 (13px), Left Alignment).
- 6.1.9..5. All other fields are to remain blank. Once the green **Commit** button is clicked, the page will refresh to display the inputted details. The image must now be attached to the News Item by clicking **Acquire Lock**, and choosing the **Change** option under the **Thumbnail** section. The user can then select the previously uploaded image from the **Banners (580 x 209px)** folder (id #416704) by right-clicking on the relevant image and selecting **Use me**.
- 6.1.9..6. Once ready, the status of the News Item needs to be changed from **Under Construction** to **Live**. This can be changed from the **Status** section at the top. A drop-down menu is available next to the **Change?** option, where the user can select **Approve and Make Live**.
- 6.1.9..7. To finish the process, the user must again click on the green **Commit** button, and can then click on **Release Lock**.
- 6.1.10. Once the above process is finished, the new mailshot (as a News Item) will appear at the bottom of the list of mailshots (News Items) under the **Quality Assurance Committee** (id #415728) folder.
- 6.1.11. The next mailshot to be sent is always the **first News Item in this list which is marked as Live**. Therefore, the next mailshot scheduled for release is to be manually dragged to the top of this list, and all other mailshots (News Items) beneath it are ideally marked as **Under Construction**.

The URL for the next scheduled mailshot is always:
https://www.um.edu.mt/newspointemail/general/_nocache?dept=415728. The

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content will change according to the first mailshot (News Item) to be listed as **Live** in the list.

6.2. Mailshot Dissemination

6.2.1. One day prior to the scheduled release of a mailshot, the QSU is to check that the mailshot's content is still up-to-date and relevant, and may then proceed to send a reminder email to announce@um.edu.mt.

6.2.2. The reminder email should contain the four main details listed below. Apart from the **Subject**, all other details should remain the same for each mailshot:

- **URL:** This will always be the same URL, i.e., <https://www.um.edu.mt/newspointemail/general/nocache?dept=415728>
- **Subject:** The mailshot's subject title, which will feature as the subject of the actual e-mail.
- **From:** The sender of the mailshot, which is nominally the Quality Assurance Committee, so the official e-mail address is used: gac@um.edu.mt.
- **Recipients:** The target audience for the mailshot, i.e., all UM and Junior College staff, and all UM students.

6.2.3. MCAO is to acknowledge receipt of the reminder e-mail, and inform the QSU of any changes that need to be made in line with the branding guidelines. Once the QSU makes the necessary changes, MCAO is to confirm that the mailshot is in order and that it will be disseminated the following day.

6.3. Mailshot Follow-Up

6.3.1. Following the release of a mailshot, the QSU is to monitor any email received in reply to the mailshot and take action as necessary.

6.3.2. The QSU is to retain an internal record of all the responses received in reply to released mailshots, detailing any action taken where relevant.

6.4. Mailshots Archiving

6.4.1. Once a mailshot is released, the QSU is to archive it on the [Quality Mailshots](#) section of the quality assurance website within reasonable time.

6.4.2. This webpage shall feature an accordion for every academic year, with each accordion opening up to reveal a bullet list containing all mailshots sent during that academic year in the format: *DD/MM/YY: [Mailshot subject title]*. Each mailshot subject title shall be hyperlinked to a PDF record of the respective mailshot.

6.4.3. To create a PDF record of a mailshot, the following procedure is to be followed:

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6.4.3.1. Access this [link](#), which should feature the latest mailshot released, right-click anywhere and select **Print...** from the drop-down menu.

6.4.3.2. In the *Destination* field, select **Save as PDF**. The other options should be: *Pages: All, Layout: Portrait, Paper Size: A4, Pages per sheet: 1, Margins: Default, Scale: Default, Headers and footers: Unticked, Background graphics: Unticked*. When ready, click **Save**.

6.4.3.3. The PDF should then be uploaded on CMS in the folder **Mailshot PDFs** (id #420651), found under **Quality Assurance Committee** (id #420006) > **Mailshots** (id #416703)

6.4.3.4. The PDF is then to be linked to the respective mailshot's subject title within the relevant academic year's accordion.

7. References

7.1. **University Brand Manual** [Online], available at:

<https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/directorates/marketingcommunications/brandmanual.pdf>

[Accessed 28th January 2025]

7.2. **University of Malta's Strategic Plan 2020-2025** [Online], available at:

<https://www.um.edu.mt/about/strategy/downloadstrategicplan/>

[Accessed 28th January 2025]

7.3. **Current mailshot URL** [Online], available at:

https://www.um.edu.mt/newspointemail/general/_nocache?dept=415728

[Accessed 28th January 2025]

7.4. **Quality Mailshots Section on the QAC Website** [Online], available at:

<https://www.um.edu.mt/about/qualityassurance/qualitymailshots/>

[Accessed 28th January 2025]

8. List of appendices/worksheets

8.1. N/A