The Academy for Disciplined Forces Board and the Academic Committee: Assessing the Two Bodies set up by the Academy for Disciplined Forces Act

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This article by **Aleysia Saliba** was previously submitted as an assignment for LHM2001 and is being published with the author's permission. The article examines the Academy for Disciplined Forces Act, which establishes the Academy for Disciplined Forces Board and the Academic Committee. The Board is the Academy's highest governing body, composed of representatives from the disciplined forces and major educational institutions. Its statutory functions focus on strategic leadership, resource management, academic oversight and quality assurance. The Academic Committee, by contrast, is entrusted with operational and teaching duties. It designs training programmes and study units, oversees course delivery and examinations, advises on educator qualifications and monitors learner performance and programme effectiveness. The article concludes by examining the intersection of the two bodies, which uphold the Academy's mission of delivering high-quality, standardised training that meets both national and international security needs.

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1. Introduction

The establishment of a unified and professional training framework for Malta's disciplined forces marked a significant development in the modernisation of national security structures. Prior to 2016, the Malta Police Force, the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM), the Corradino Correctional Facility, and the Civil Protection Department trained personnel internally. Accordingly, in 2016 the need was felt to establish one single institution that perhaps provides a broader oversight and consistency between the departments. The Academy for Disciplined Forces Act (Chapter 559) transformed this landscape by creating a single institution responsible for training and continuous professional development.

At the centre of this legal framework are two principal bodies: the Academy for Disciplined Forces Board and the Academic Committee, whose roles ensure good governance, quality assurance, and academic integrity within the Academy. Therefore, this article identifies these two bodies and elaborates on their functions, drawing upon statutory provisions, and relevant academic research.

2. Legislative Background to the Academy

The Academy for Disciplined Forces was established as a self-governing body under Article 3 of Chapter 559 to deliver high-quality training and continuous professional development for Malta's disciplined forces:[1]

> ***3.*** *(1) There shall be an Academy, to be known as the "Academy for Disciplined Forces", which shall be autonomous and which shall carry out functions related to members of disciplined forces and to continuous professional development and training of disciplined forces trainees.*
>
> *(2) Disciplined forces may provide training to their respective members, outside the scope of this Act, subject to written approval from the Academy:*
> *Provided that the Academy shall retain the right to assess the quality of the training provided and make recommendations where applicable.*

The Act emphasises the interdisciplinary nature of training, and reflects the diverse operational roles within the AFM, Police Force, Correctional Services, and Civil Protection. Historically, training for these bodies had evolved independently; the Police Academy dates back to the mid-1980s at Ta' Kandja, while the Civil Protection Department emerged far later and developed its own training culture.

Academic research also highlights the need for modernised, standardised training. Andria Tanti's study on police recruits found gaps between theoretical teaching and practical needs.[2] Similarly, Marcus Cachia's work on Police Education Beyond Recruitment stressed the necessity of continuous

[1] Academy for Disciplined Forces Act, Chapter 559 of the Laws of Malta, art 3(1).

[2] Andria Tanti, *To Serve and Protect – Are Newly Appointed Constables Ready for the Challenge?* (Bachelor of Criminology Thesis, University of Malta 2017) 28–33.

professional development to address evolving security challenges.[3] The AFM's development from a modest land force to a complex military organisation also demonstrates the evolving and demand for structured academic training.[4]

[3] Marcus Cachia, *Police Education Beyond Recruitment* (Bachelor thesis, University of Malta 2021) 29–40.
[4] Gregory K Ebbs, *A Study of Military Leadership in the Armed Forces of Malta* (Master's Thesis, University of Malta 2020) Chapters 3–4.

3. The First Body: The Academy for Disciplined Forces Board

Article 5 of Chapter 559 establishes the Academy for Disciplined Forces Board (the Board) as the Academy's highest governing body.[5] Its composition is intentionally broad, ensuring representation from the Armed Forces of Malta, Malta Police Force, Civil Protection Department, Correctional Services, the University of Malta, and MCAST, along with a Chairperson and two additional members.[6] This framework ensures that the Academy benefits from interdisciplinary expertise to academic guidance.

The Board's central function under Article 7(1)(a) is to 'develop the direction, strategy and image of the Academy'.[7] This positions the Board as the institution's strategic leadership body. The broad mandate reflects the Academy's role as a national institution aligned with security and educational priorities. The need for such strategic oversight is reinforced by the AFM's evolution, which has required adaptation to international missions, migration pressures, and new operational duties.[8] The Board ensures the Academy's programmes remain relevant in such a dynamic environment.

Under Article 7(1)(b), the Board administers and controls all resources, facilities, and property of the Academy.[9] Training institutions rely heavily on specialised resources, including simulation environments, firearms facilities, and maritime or rescue equipment.

A substantial aspect of the Board's authority under the Academy for Disciplined Forces Act concerns the safeguarding of academic standards and

[5] Academy for Disciplined Forces Act (n 1) art 5(1).
[6] ibid art 5(2).
[7] ibid art 7(1)(a).
[8] Ebbs (n 5) 21–33.
[9] AcademyforDisciplined Forces Act (n 1) art 7(1)(b).

the enforcement of high-quality training mechanisms. Within this framework, the Board is responsible for assisting the Commandant in ensuring a high-quality performance provided across all courses and programmes delivered by the Academy, thereby ensuring that educational provision meets the expectations of disciplined forces training.[10] This includes representation from recognised educational institutions, namely the University of Malta and MCAST.

The Board must also ensure that the Academy's operations comply with the requirements of national educational authorities, aligning its programmes with statutory and regulatory standards.[11] In its academic oversight role, the Board reviews and approves all programmes and study units submitted by the Academic Committee, ensuring coherence, relevance, and quality across the Academy's curriculum.[12] Furthermore, the Board determines the conditions for admission into courses in accordance with the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF), thus, shaping the standards of entry and progression within the institution.[13] The Board is additionally entrusted with establishing the procedures of assessment and certification, a function central to maintaining the credibility and consistency of qualifications awarded by the Academy.[14] Collectively, these duties underline the Board's pivotal role in providing academic success.

The Internal Quality Assurance Policy (2021) confirms that the Board is the primary body responsible for both the teaching processes and examination.[15] This aligns the Academy with the National Quality Assurance Framework.

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[10] ibid art 7(1)(c).
[11] ibid art 7(1)(d).
[12] ibid art 7(1)(e).
[13] ibid art 7(1)(f).
[14] ibid art 7(1)(g).
[15] *Internal Quality Assurance Processes* (ADF, 2021) 2–4.

The Board's academic authority is vital given research findings indicating that Maltese police training has not always kept pace with modern policing demands. Tanti found that training remained overly theoretical and insufficiently applied.[16] The Board's oversight seeks to correct such shortcomings by ensuring that the curriculum meet both professional and regulatory standards, covering both practice and theory. The Board may issue guidelines on the conduct of trainees, educators, and staff under Article 7(1)(h), ensuring a high ethical and professional culture within the Academy. This is particularly important in disciplined forces, where hierarchical structures and strict codes of conduct are essential to keep the level of discipline within the disciplined boards.

Furthermore, Article 7(1)(k) empowers the Board to establish internal quality assurance schemes, connecting governance with academic integrity. The Policy document reinforces this by placing quality assurance at the heart of the Academy's operations.[17] Article 4(c) expressly mandates the Academy to engage in international cooperation.[18] Through its power to approve curricula and oversee standards, the Board ensures programmes incorporate international best practices, including exchanges, placements and joint training opportunities. This aligns with observations from scholarship on the AFM, which highlights how international collaboration has shaped its professional identity.[19] Its authority ensures the Academy operates as a modern, accountable and academically well-rounded institution serving national security needs.

[16] Tanti (n 2) 30–33.
[17] *Internal Quality Assurance Processes* (n 15) 3.
[18] Academy for Disciplined Forces Act (n 1) art 4(c).
[19] Ebbs (n 4) 24–35.

4. The Second Body: The Academic Committee

The Academic Committee, established under Article 8, provides the educational leadership of the Academy.[20] While the Board sets strategy, the Academic Committee designs and implements the academic content that forms the core of the Academy's training function.

Its statutory functions include Article 8(3) of the Academy for Disciplined Forces Act, which outlines a comprehensive set of statutory functions that position the Academic Committee as the principal educational and operational body within the Academy. The Committee is primarily responsible for developing training programmes and study units for submission to the Board, ensuring that these adhere to the requirements of national educational regulations.[21] It further oversees the delivery of training, courses, and examinations, thereby maintaining direct control over the implementation of the Academy's academic framework.[22]

In addition, the Committee advises on the qualifications and selection of educators, a function essential to safeguarding instructional quality and professional standards.[23] Its remit also includes monitoring learner performance and evaluating the effectiveness of training programmes, ensuring continual improvement through systematic review.[24] Finally, the Committee supports the Director of Studies in the academic management of the Academy, reinforcing its central role in shaping educational policy and practice.[25] Collectively, these functions demonstrate that the Academic

[20] Academy for Disciplined Forces Act (n 1) art 8(1).
[21] ibid art 8(3)(a)–(b).
[22] ibid art 8(3)(c).
[23] ibid art 8(3)(d).
[24] ibid art 8(3)(e).
[25] ibid art 8(3)(f).

Committee's role is not merely advisory but constitutes a core component towards the Academy.

The Academic Committee ensures that curricula meet the needs of contemporary policing, emergency management, military operations, and correctional work. Research consistently shows that Maltese police officers value practical, realistic training over overly theoretical instruction.[26] Cachia similarly emphasises the importance of balancing academic learning with professional experience.[27] The Committee's curriculum-design function allows the Academy to build programmes that address these concerns.

Although the Academic Committee develops programmes, its proposals require the Board's approval. This hierarchy ensures a better strategic alignment that regulates compliance, consistency across programmes, and coordination between academic and administrative objectives. This dual-body system is consistent with maintaining important structures within the higher education and professional training institutions.

[26] Tanti (n 2) 28–31.
[27] Cachia (n 3) 36–39.

5. Integration of Both Bodies Within the Academy

Together, the Board and the Academic Committee provide a comprehensive governance system combining strategic direction with educational leadership. This model reflects best practices in forefront educational institutions while adapting them to the specific needs of disciplined forces. This integrated hierarchy supports the Academy's objectives under Article 4, including high-quality training, continuous professional development, and international cooperation.[28] It also ensures compliance with MQF standards and reinforces the professionalisation agenda identified in academic literature.[29]

[28] Academy for Disciplined Forces Act (n 1) art 4.
[29] Cachia (n 3) 37–43.

6. Conclusion

The Academy for Disciplined Forces Act (Chapter 559) establishes two key bodies; the Board and the Academic Committee. Their combined work has transformed Malta's approach to preparing members of its disciplined forces, and creating a unified and professional training institution aligned with national security needs and international standards. The establishment of these two bodies represents a significant step forward in modernising Malta's law enforcement, military, correctional, and emergency response sectors.



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