



# **Saudi Skills Standards**

## **Quality Manual for Capstone Assessments**

### **Guide for Training Providers**

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## 2 Purpose of Document

This document is designed to support colleges in managing the Capstone assessments for SSS Associate Diploma and Diploma qualifications. The document covers the delivery of the end-of-program Capstone assessments and supplements the information given in the SSS Quality Handbook.

The document provides guidance and support for assessors and internal verifiers in the management and assessment of the Capstone assessments, and how to grade evidence submitted by trainees.

This document should also be read in conjunction with the SSS “Code of Practice” which is on the SSS website.

## 3 Definitions

The following definitions are used in this document:

### **Qualification –**

The detailed specification of learning outcomes for both skills and knowledge across a particular subject. The structure is based on units that comprise performance criteria and scope.

### **Curriculum –**

The broad scheme of training and learning for each subject at each level that normally includes learning aims and objectives, academic content, specific learning outcomes or competencies, teaching scheme and teaching/learning resources. The curriculum is developed by colleges.

### **Test specification –**

The detailed plan showing the structure of a final (summative) test that covers a particular set of learning outcomes within a subject qualification.

### **Assessments –**

The tests or instruments devised and developed by SSS that are used to measure the performance of trainees in demonstrating understanding and competence across the qualifications. SSS assessments include assessment through the use of e-portfolios, knowledge-based synoptic assessment through the use of computer-based tests (CBT), and synoptic skills-based assessment through the use of Capstone assessment.

### **Assessor-**

The assessor is the member(s) of the college team that will assess trainee evidence of performance in their e-portfolio and through the Capstone. In most cases this person will also be the subject trainer.

Internal Verifier-

The internal verifier is the person(s) appointed by the college to provide internal quality assurance of the assessment processes and outcomes carried out by assessors.

External Verifier-

The external verifier is appointed by SSS to provide external verification of the assessment processes and outcomes carried out by assessors and internal verifiers.

**Learning Assistant (LA) -**

The e-portfolio system being used by SSS for capturing and recording the trainee portfolio and Capstone assessment evidence.

## 4 Capstone Assessment - Structure

The Capstone assessments are an important and mandatory part of the assessment structure of the Associate Diploma and Diploma qualifications. Trainees must achieve a pass grade in order to pass the qualification. The Capstone constitutes 50% of the final overall qualification grade. Capstones are designed by SSS and delivered and assessed by colleges. All colleges deliver the same Capstone in the same assessment session with opportunities for trainees to sit the Capstone provided in each trimester. Examples of Capstone assessments are available through the SSS website. There is also a video available introducing the Capstone.

For most subjects, the Capstones are undertaken by trainees in a period of 6 – 10 hours, usually over a one or two-day period. For some practical subjects, trainees will be expected to undertake and evidence some research prior to the main Capstone assessment period.

Each Capstone consists of a number of tasks for the trainee to complete. The number of tasks varies according to the subject. With some exceptions, each task has a set of grading criteria for grades A – D. Some Capstones include one or more tasks where the assessor only needs to indicate pass (D) or fail (F).

For each task, the trainee evidence is captured or uploaded on Learning Assistant (LA). In the same way, assessors assess the evidence within LA and allocate the appropriate grade. The process is described in detail in this guide.

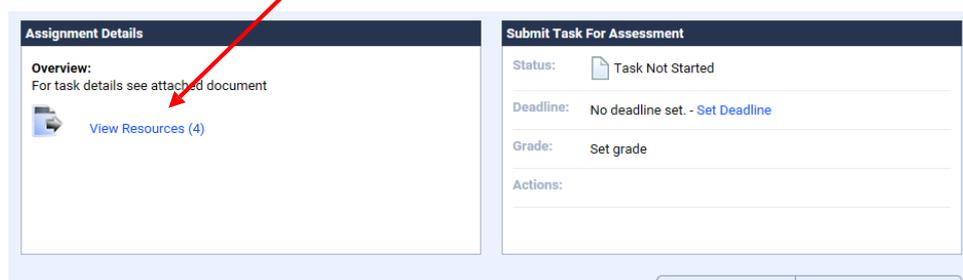
After the Capstone evidence has been fully assessed, the college undertakes internal verification and standardization of the assessment and this is followed by external verification and, where required, Kingdom-wide standardization by SSS.

Once these processes are complete, the Capstone assessment outcomes are combined with those from the e-portfolio and Computer based Test (CBT) to form the overall grade for the qualification.

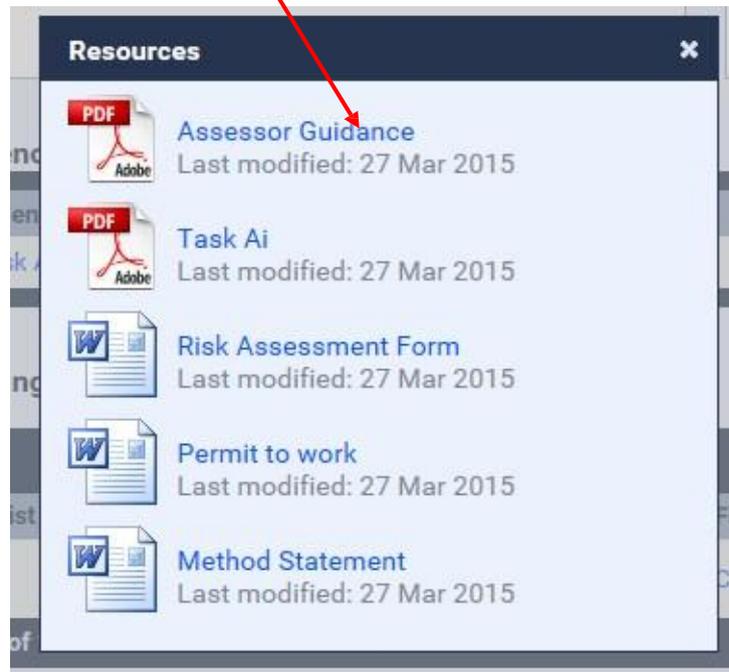
## 5 Delivering the Capstone Assessment

### a) Prior to the assessment

The Capstone assessment in a paper format will be available for assessors to download from LA two weeks prior to the assessment. Resource lists for practical subjects will be available at least six weeks prior to the assessment; it is the responsibility of the college to ensure that there are adequate and appropriate resources available to conduct the Capstone.



The “View Resources” button accesses all the documentation required for the Capstone, including a copy of the Capstone itself:



The Capstone is a “live examination” and, as such, its contents must not be divulged to any trainee, staff member or employer except for those directly involved in delivering the Capstone. These may include:

- Subject assessors
- The Internal Verifier
- The college Quality Manager
- College staff responsible for preparing practical equipment

Any evidence that this regulation has been broken will mean that the Capstone may be declared “void” and the college would be subject to the SSS maladministration process.

There are some exceptions to the above:

- Some Capstones may include instructions to trainees that can be given to the trainees in advance of the Capstone being started.
- Some Capstones in practical subjects include preparation activities which are undertaken by the trainee, and the evidence recorded, prior to the main Capstone period. The period of time allowed and the extent to which the trainees are given details of the Capstone are detailed in the applicable Capstone document. This activity might be research, preparation of materials or similar activities which will enable the trainee to complete the main tasks with the 6 – 10 hour time allowance.

*b) Managing Resources*

All Capstone evidence will be uploaded to LA. Where practical activities take place or artefacts are produced, these should be captured digitally. This means that trainees will need access to IT throughout the Capstone to create evidence and to upload it to their LA portfolio.

The college is responsible for ensuring that all the necessary equipment is available and in working order.

Some practical Capstones will require access to specialist equipment. Whilst this has been kept to a minimum, where assessing a particular skill requires the use of such equipment, colleges will need to carefully plan access for trainees to what might be a limited resource. There is no requirement for trainees to complete the tasks in the order in which they appear in the Capstone and one way to ensure all trainees can access equipment might be to stagger undertaking those tasks. If colleges are likely to encounter difficulties with specialist equipment, they should discuss the issues with SSS or their EV at the earliest possible opportunity.

Any specific work related environments required are detailed in the Capstone brief.

*c) Timings and Duration*

The Capstone should be completed within the prescribed 6-10 hour period, it is the college's responsibility to administer the assessment within this timescale.

The assessment can be divided into discrete sections to suit administrative and trainee needs. The time should not normally be spread over more than two days, except where practical subjects require gaps between tasks. As the assessment is taken over more than one day, there is a facility within LA that will enable assessors to "lock" the system so that trainees cannot access their portfolio overnight. Assessors must ensure that they collect all other trainee evidence at the end of each day.

*d) Introducing the Capstone*

The assessor should introduce the Capstone, making sure that the trainees understand the tasks and the grading opportunities. Trainees should understand that the Capstone is NOT a series of exam questions, but a set of tasks which all relate to one or more "real-world" workplace scenarios.

It will be beneficial to take the trainees through what is required in each task and the way in which each task will be graded. Trainees should have an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the way the tasks are graded, and they will be able to see the grade criteria for each task through their access to LA.

Trainees may ask for clarification about what a task is asking for, or for confirmation about the type of evidence required. Assessors may also explain any English which trainees might be having difficulty understanding. However, they should not translate into Arabic, as this could provide an advantage to trainees. The assessor cannot answer questions about the content of evidence or, for example, the best way to produce the evidence if this is part of the task.

The assessor may also discuss the timings for the tasks, particularly where assessors need to allocate specialised resources to individual trainees for certain period of time. The assessor should also remind trainees of elapsed time and progress points during the Capstone period. Timings given are recommended times only and most trainees should be able to complete the tasks within given timings. A small amount of additional time taken should not be penalized, but trainees should not consistently spend more than the time recommended for each task (grade criteria may make reference to timings) otherwise they may find that they do not have enough time to complete all the tasks and that, as a consequence, they risk failing the Capstone.

The assessor should also explain that access to LA, and therefore any incomplete evidence, will not be allowed during breaks or overnight.

#### *e) The Tasks*

A typical Capstone includes a scenario for the trainee, followed by the tasks that require completion. Each Capstone task includes an outline of the evidence that is required from the trainee and the grading criteria associated with that task.

Once complete, evidence should be uploaded to LA in the normal way.

#### *f) Security*

All trainees should bring appropriate identification to the Capstone on both days. Trainees who arrive late for the start will not be allowed additional time and the college may wish to prevent trainees starting the Capstone if they are significantly late and have little chance of completing on time.

The Capstone assessment is an open book assessment and trainees may bring into the assessment any relevant documents. In addition, trainees will have access to the internet and may have with them smartphones and tablets to enable them to take digital images of evidence. Whilst they may use all these facilities, they should be reminded that the time available does not allow for extensive research of any kind. Furthermore, any evidence of them being supported by a person outside the assessment room will be considered as cheating and render them subject to appropriate malpractice sanctions.

### *g) Health and Safety*

For some Capstones, health and safety issues form part of the assessment, so assessors must brief trainees accordingly and remind them of this fact. SSS expects that a minor breach of a health and safety regulation should not result in an automatic fail, and that assessors must exercise professional judgement to determine if a trainee can be allowed to continue with the task with an appropriate reminder.

## **6 Types of Evidence**

The Capstone tasks will, in most cases, indicate the type of evidence expected. Where this is in an electronic format already, the file can simply be uploaded. Where the evidence is not in an electronic format, the assessor should ensure that an electronic record is available.

### **Observation Evidence**

Where the assessor is required to observe an activity, a pre-loaded observation grading record will be found in LA.

The assessor should complete the record, agree it with the trainee and upload it to LA.

### **Products and Artefacts**

In some practical subjects, the task will require the trainee to prepare a product or artefact and may also specify that each stage of the process should be recorded.

In many cases, the assessor will need to observe the various stages of the process as well as the final outcome. They may also need to visually examine the outcome or even sample it. The most obvious example is catering, where the quality of the outcome may need to be tasted for quality. In others, the completed artefact may need to be examined in detail, for example in fashion design where the assessor may want to establish the quality of cutting and stitching.

In these situations, some aspects of the development of the actual artefact cannot be captured electronically. In these and similar practical examples, an observation grading record will be provided. However, as well as the observation record prepared by the assessor, a digital image(s) of the final product or artefact should support the assessment outcome including, if applicable, images taken at various stages of development.

## **7 Assessing and Grading Capstone Tasks**

All assessment and grading takes place within LA. The process has been made as straightforward as possible with access to the trainee evidence on a task by task basis with the applicable grading criteria identified. Progress tracking shows how far the trainee has progressed with the tasks, so that the assessor can, for example, get an interim view of progress after the first day.

*Capstone progress*

*Task progress*

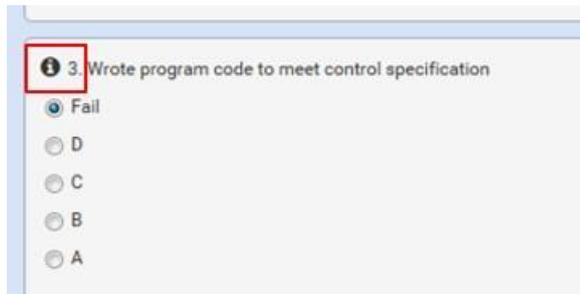
As stated earlier, Capstone tasks are, with some exceptions where only “pass” or “fail” is available, each graded based on a set of criteria published with the tasks. To achieve a pass, trainees must provide appropriate evidence against all the task requirements. The basic pass is at grade D. A set of criteria is then given for the additional requirements for each grade A – C. The grade criteria are incremental, so, for example, to get a “B”, trainees also need to demonstrate evidence for “D” and “C”.

Where a task comprises a number of sub-tasks, LA will provide the assessor with a grid of marks to complete which will automatically calculate the overall grade for the task.

*This sub task is graded*

*These two sub tasks are pass/fail only*

Grading criteria are available in a pop up box to show assessors what criteria are required to meet a certain grade.



### 3. Wrote program code to meet control specification

Grade A: All inputs and outputs including timers, counters were correct as per control specification. Program completed efficiently using the minimum number of program steps to achieve the objective. No changes to program were required.

Grade B: All inputs and outputs including timers, counters were correct as per control specification. Program completed efficiently using the minimum number of program steps to achieve the objective. Minimal editing changes to program were required.

Grade C: All inputs and outputs including timers, counters were correct as per control specification. Program completed using some non required code to achieve the objective Minimal editing changes to program were required.

Grade D: All inputs and outputs including timers, counters were correct as per control specification. Program completed using some non required code to achieve the objective. A substantial amount of editing changes to program were required.

Close

Once all the tasks are assessed, LA automatically calculates the grade.

The assessor can take a holistic view of the evidence presented in order to determine a grade for a specific task if it is felt that the calculated grade does not reflect the overall trainee evidence. LA will allow the assessor to amend the grade.

Grading		
	Task	Grade
ITUSD-1-1-3-CAPS-v2.A	Design a website and create a web page	B <span style="font-size: small;">▼</span>
ITUSD-1-1-3-CAPS-v2.B	Programming	Task Not Started
ITUSD-1-1-3-CAPS-v2.C	Create a flowchart, implementation and testing	Task Not Started
ITUSD-1-1-3-CAPS-v2.D	Use and test XML	Task Not Started

*Calculated grade for task 1*

**Submit The Task**

Status: Task Started

Deadline: No deadline set. - [Set Deadline](#)

Grade: **B** [Set grade](#)

Actions: [Accept](#) [Return](#)

*Grade B accepted in this box but can be amended in screen above before acceptance.*

The assessment and grading model described above does mean there is no compensation between one task and another, so a good grade in one task will not compensate for a failure to provide suitable evidence in another task. **However, it is anticipated that some trainees may fall short of the required standard in minor ways, and SSS expects that assessors will exercise professional judgement in not failing a trainee for a specific task if the failure is of a minor nature; flexibility needs to be given in allowing a trainee to correct a minor error or incomplete response.** In particular, assessors are expected to monitor performance and evidence as it being completed during the Capstone period and enable a trainee to correct minor errors as they go.

**However, tasks cannot be repeated to enable a trainee to achieve a higher grade if the trainee has already achieved a grade D or above.**

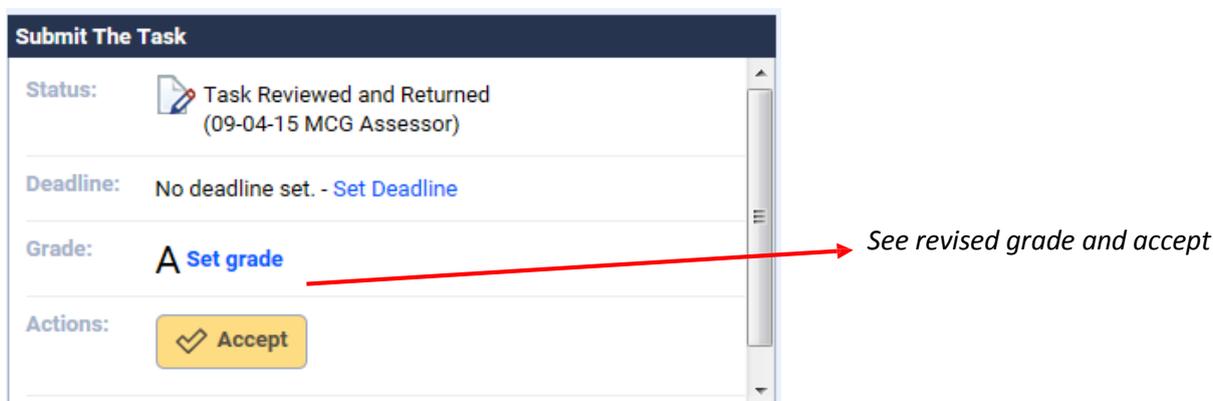
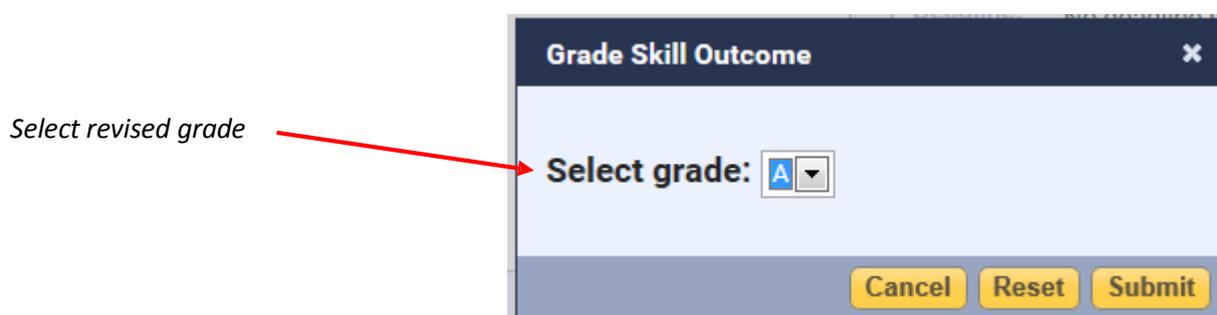
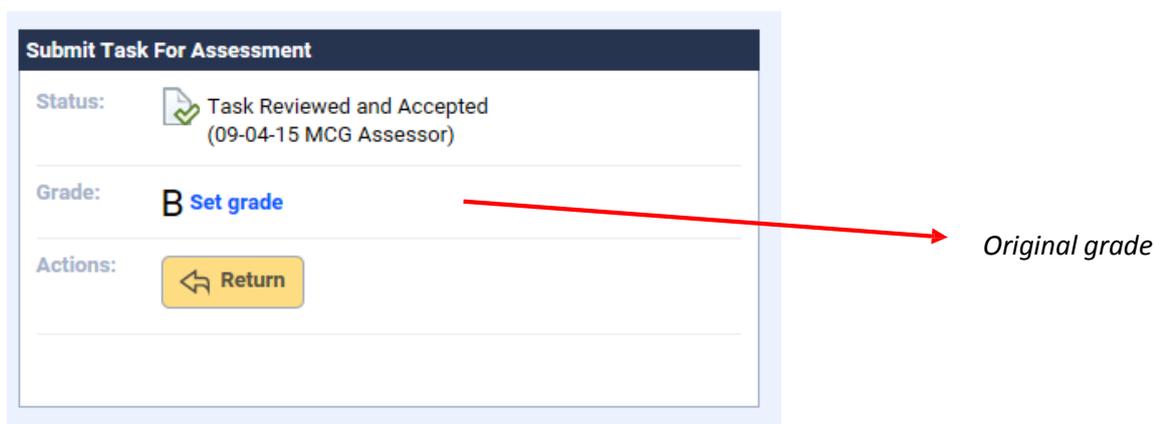
It is also important that trainees are not disadvantaged in areas that are not being assessed, eg if they have poor literacy skills and these are not being specifically tested.

At the end of the assessment process, LA will automatically take all the task grades and produce an overall grade for the Capstone.

Grading		
	Task	Grade
ITUSD-1-1-3-CAPS-v2.A	Design a website and create a web page	B
ITUSD-1-1-3-CAPS-v2.B	Programming	A
ITUSD-1-1-3-CAPS-v2.C	Create a flowchart, implementation and testing	D
ITUSD-1-1-3-CAPS-v2.D	Use and test XML	D
ITUSD-1-1-3-CAPS-v2.E	Research and review	A
ITUSD-1-1-3-CAPS-v2.F	Recommend guidelines and policy	B
<a href="#">View Conversion Chart</a>		Overall grade : B
<a href="#">Save Grade</a>		

This generates a grade history.

Following verification or standardization (see below), a task grade may be amended by the assessor.



The grade history will be updated.

## 8 Providing Feedback

Unlike the portfolio evidence, trainees should not be given feedback during or immediately after the Capstone period. The assessor will need to complete the assessment of all the evidence, and the Capstones will need to be internally and externally verified and may need to be standardized by SSS.

However, feedback should be noted and can be provided to trainees at a later point either to support those who might be retaking the Capstone or to identify areas for improvement for those trainees progressing to the Diploma.

## 9 Internal Verification

In the case of the Capstone assessment internal verifiers are responsible for:

- sampling, including by direct observation, assessment activities, methods and records to monitor consistency of assessment decisions
- sampling an increased ratio of assessment decisions by new assessors and being responsible, and accountable, for arranging the checking process
- providing assessors with prompt, accurate and constructive feedback on their assessment decisions
- liaising with other staff members and the external verifier to implement the requirements of the Capstone assessment system
- organizing internal standardization of the Capstone assessment where two or more assessors have assessed the same tasks

The internal verifier should establish a sampling plan using the same methodology as for the e-portfolio.

## 10 External Verification

SSS has arranged for external verifiers to support the delivery of the Capstone in each college. They will be experienced EVs who can work with the assessor and the internal verifier to ensure the successful delivery of the Capstone assessments.

In undertaking this role they will, at the same time, monitor the assessment process and highlight to the assessors and internal verifiers any assessment issues which can then be addressed immediately in order not to disadvantage the trainees.

On completion of this visit, external verifiers will prepare a report for SSS and the college on the operation of the Capstone highlighting actions to improve delivery for subsequent sessions.

### Confirming Awards

It is the responsibility of the external verifier to confirm that the college may claim an award for a cohort of trainees, based on the satisfactory completion of their skills evidence and of the knowledge test and the Capstone assessment. They will do this after any grade amendments are made following the final visit and any SSS standardization.

Assessors may be required to amend grades at a task level following verification or standardization before awards are finally confirmed.

## 11 Appeals

Where a trainee disagrees with an assessment decision made by the college assessor the matter should initially be reviewed by the college's internal verifier. This applies to the Capstone

assessments. If the trainee remains dissatisfied, the matter should be passed to the next stage of the college's internal appeals procedure. This usually involves an investigation by a member of the senior management team.

If this does not resolve the situation and the trainee is still dissatisfied, the college may refer the matter to the SSS external verifier for reconsideration. If the matter remains unresolved following consideration by the external verifier, an appeal should be made by the college to SSS. An Appeals Procedure will be published on the SSS website.

## **12 Malpractice and Maladministration**

SSS takes the issue of malpractice and maladministration very seriously. Any allegations of malpractice, whether from college staff, senior management, trainees or as a result of external verifier monitoring, will be investigated by SSS.

Examples of possible malpractice and maladministration include:

- Contravention of SSS College and qualification approval conditions
- Failure to enable SSS to carry out its work or by failing to give access to SSS staff, external verifiers or other staff who have reasonably requested access to the College, its records and trainee evidence
- Actions required by SSS's external verifiers not being undertaken within agreed timescales
- Failure to carry out delivery, internal assessment, internal moderation or internal verification in accordance with SSS's requirements
- Failure to maintain auditable records, e.g. certification claims
- Fraudulent claims of qualification achievement
- Intentional withholding of information from SSS which is critical to maintaining robust quality assurance mechanisms
- Forgery
- Plagiarism of any nature by trainees
- Impersonation

A Malpractice and Maladministration Procedure will be published on the SSS website.