

# MCAST LINK

Issue 57 // Q2 2021

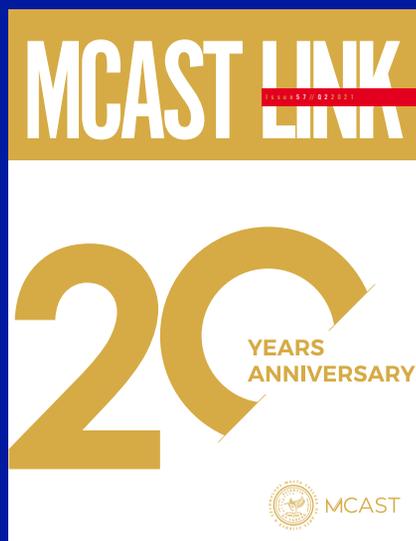
20  
YEARS  
ANNIVERSARY



MCAST

# MCAST LINK

Issue 57 // Q2 2021



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# Editorial

**2021** is special for us – MCAST is celebrating its 20th anniversary!

Since its inception in 2001 the College has grown and matured in multiple ways. MCAST opened its doors in September 2001 welcoming over 1,500 full-time students. Today, twenty years later, the College boasts of over 7,000 full-time students. Twenty years of MCAST was a time of intense professional activity, positive initiatives, growth and development in many areas. These twenty years have also affected the careers and lives of thousands of students.

This special edition features snippets of MCAST's rich twenty-year history. It provides insights into the main College milestones and events, major achievements of both students and members of staff, statistics on the growing student figures, pictures of several MCAST and student events, the development of the MCAST Campus, pictures of all the Prospectus and MCASTlink issues, as well as messages by the MUT and the UHM. MCAST industry partners and MCAST alumni have also contributed to this edition.

We have also embraced memories from the first MCAST Principal, the first MCAST Registrar, the first MCAST Librarian and also a few of the first MCAST Directors. This edition shows gratitude to the individuals that contributed towards the strengthening and growth of the College.

The way forward for MCAST is also featured as the Applied Research and Innovation Centre (ARIC) paves the way for the College to become a Professional Higher Education institution. The College's strategy and vision (2022-2027) is incorporated as it focuses on three initiatives that aim to achieve infrastructural investment at MCAST, at making MCAST a more outward-looking community College and at working closer with industry, stakeholders and social partners.

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# Message from the Minister for Education

Hon Dr Justyne Caruana

**Celebrating** an anniversary is always an excellent opportunity to reflect on the past and design a better future. This is precisely what MCAST is doing in 2021, twenty years after opening its doors to its first 1,500 students.

To mark this anniversary, Government has launched a public consultation on the first stand-alone legislation for the College. This is a first for a post-secondary and tertiary education institution. The motive behind such an Act is to give the education institution greater autonomy to function; better governance and management structures; to give learners more relevant programmes of education and training, allowing them to be employable throughout their careers through a lifelong learning culture; to facilitate closer relationships with industry and the other stakeholders, particularly those who work in voluntary and non-governmental organisations.

I welcome the MCAST Strategy document for the years 2022-2027, whereby the institution is creating platforms of dialogue with industry and other stakeholders to design a roadmap that will see this unique educational institution move towards a Community College for All. This will facilitate our community to develop its own educational platform and benefit from this public institution to enrich its quality of life and the standard of living of its community. The key focus on improving the infrastructure, the quality of its teaching and learning, its national and international networks, its research and innovation and its work-based learning culture among all learners are indicators of an institution that cares about the success of our country.

In this post-pandemic period, greater emphasis should be made on research, innovation, and technology. Building on the intrinsic values of arts and science in education and training, the vision for the College is to strengthen its structures

to give learners an entrepreneurial approach to their lives, to innovation as a means to improve their living conditions and to technology as the bridge that connects their personal and professional enrichment to their quality of life and its sustainability.

As Minister for Education, I shall continue to support its governance, management and administrative staff, lecturers, and learners. It is everyone's responsibility to support the College and help it move closer to the real workplace, to new technologies, state-of-the-art equipment and software and other work practices. We also need to ensure that the upskilling and the reskilling of the workforce becomes a regular feature in collective agreements and at College level. In addition, we need to empower lecturing staff with the skills to engage with and mainstream their relationship with industry. I encourage businesses to open their doors to MCAST and its students and support work-based learning.

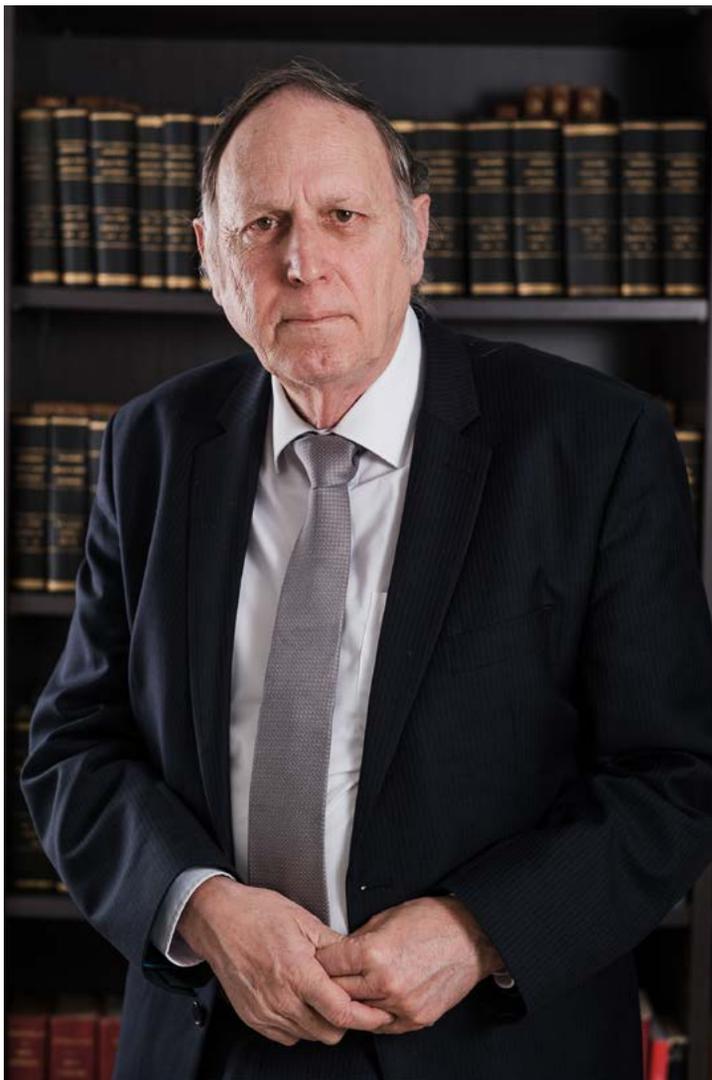
The College's rebranding, while reflecting the link with its past, portrays itself as an institution which cares for its students by providing education and training of the highest standards for decades to come.

While thanking all the past and present employees for their commitment and for what they have managed to give to the students throughout all these years, I am encouraging and supporting the College, and its employees, to continue to transform itself and remain innovative to offer learning programmes which are relevant to the present and future needs of our younger generation.



# FOREWORD

by Prof Ian Refalo, President of the Board of Governors  
and Prof Joachim James Calleja, Principal/CEO



**On** this special occasion we wish to pronounce a common message of thankfulness and encouragement. We are the product of those before us who have visualised the future of our workforce by re-creating MCAST in 2001. Twenty years back, the College, with its six Institutes, was the home ground of a new generation of vocational education and training (VET).

There was a new aura for a better organised technical and vocational education bringing in the British model of BTEC as a platform for future home-grown qualifications. With two successive British MCAST Principals at that time, the College moved towards higher standards of accountability and organisation, rigorous quality assurance of all qualifications and a better trained management and lecturing staff members in this new educational sector. The success of this approach could be seen by the publication of a new annual prospectus and subsequently by the production of MCASTlink which, since its inception, brought to the fore the many events that the College and its staff and learners organised throughout the year. Following the signing of the Copenhagen Process in 2002 and Malta's membership in the European Union in 2004, the College experienced a new renaissance in the quality of its general outputs.

The Copenhagen Process became the constant point of reference for reform in vocational education and training. Every two years, Ministers responsible for vocational education and training were recommending important reforms. These mainly consisted of emphasising quality assurance, home-grown qualifications pegged to national qualifications frameworks, work-based learning and in particular apprenticeships, the validation of informal and non-formal learning, and teacher training. Where the Copenhagen Process has failed is in supporting a credible and acceptable credit system for VET similar

to that in higher education.

In Malta, several changes after 2004 gave vocational education and training a better platform to enhance its important role in Malta's economic and social development. The launching of the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (2008) gave the College the opportunity to forge its own qualifications. With a regulatory function performed by the then Malta Qualifications Council and the unvarying declarations from the Copenhagen Process, MCAST had two robust points of reference on which to build its new learning structures. This it did with success throughout the last ten to fifteen years. The launching of the first VET degrees was a huge turning point in the success of this College and in the overall image of VET in Malta. Our country has been one of the first countries in Europe to launch VET degrees and this has provided us today with the infrastructure not only to move towards Master's courses but also in September this year to launch a first Professional Research Doctorate on the Competitive Behaviour of Small Organizations. The history of VET in Malta dates back to many years before government had opened the first MCAST in 1968. The Knights of St John considered apprenticeships as the learning tools par excellence to enable its workers to be efficient and effective in their construction of the bastions and the management of their naval fleet. During the British period, vocational education, trades and technical education were pillars of an unprecedented economic growth and stability for the Fortress Island. This led the Malta Drydocks to become the VET institution par excellence and the apprentices there were among the most highly paid workers in Malta. The opening of the trade schools provided the foundation for the re-founding of MCAST in 2001. Bringing a number of small colleges into one corporate entity was no small feat. But the reform was successful.



Today MCAST has a staff population of more than 1,500 employees and more than 12,000 full-time and part-time learners. The College has over 1,800 industry network partners and almost 1,700 apprentices each year. In 2019, the first Apprenticeship Degrees were introduced with considerable success. Hands-on education and training is becoming a standard in post-secondary and higher education. Our ambition is to provide each learner with work-based learning in different forms. Businesses are increasing their attention to MCAST and reaching out to support us. Government's recurrent and capital budgets have increased exponentially. A visit to the MCAST campuses makes this evident. The physical landscape of the College has improved considerably.

This year is a landmark in the history of post-secondary education as MCAST will have its own Act that regulates its operation. The Act prescribes a wider and higher profile of the Governing Board, new structures for the Academic and the Administrative Councils and a better representation of staff and students in all statutory committees and boards. The College will also exercise greater autonomy from government but it also pledges to be a community college open for all with its buildings used throughout the year and its operations running all day. Our ambition is to provide space for the community to enrich itself, to have space for dialogue and activities and a meeting place for interaction that enriches our citizenship and quest for a greener and sustainable community. As we derive most of our funding from the public coffers, we firmly believe that we ought to give back to the taxpayer a learning/meeting space in which one can fulfil legitimate ambitions and objectives. The new resource and learning hub, which will be inaugurated this summer, will be the first building open to the public 24/7. It is our vision to turn the campus into a space where Maltese and international learners and workers can call home. With new buildings being planned for 2027, our objective is to have a self-sufficient campus open to the community and symbolically linked through a bridge that links the Paola campus to the local community through the Mediterranean Gardens.

Celebrating twenty years of MCAST also allows

us to reflect on a new strategy that covers the years 2022-2027. Building on the successful achievements of past governing and management decisions, the revised strategy will focus on improving the physical environment, the learning structures, relations with industry, quality assurance, business development, national and international networks and work-based learning for all. Special focus will also be on strengthening the technician MQF Level 4 in collaboration with industry to make it more attractive to learners as a career path.

Twenty years into the life of an educational institution, and having experienced a pandemic, technology is re-prioritised as the new platform for education and training. With vocational education linked more intimately and more naturally with professional degrees and high-tech skills and competences, the next twenty years of MCAST will most likely determine the new approach in post-secondary and tertiary education to learning, research and innovation. Today, learning and working are the new mantra of success. This is the result of the original vocational approach in schools that today is referred to as 'vocational and professional education and training'. Learners who join MCAST, even at the lower levels of qualifications, stand the chance of earning a degree and enhance their employability. With 34% of those who earn a Bachelor's degree having a MQF Level 2 or 3 as entry point, it is evident that everyone can be a success story at MCAST. This is the story of MCAST so far. But this is also a prophetic message for a successful future for the College.

We wish to take this opportunity to thank all our predecessors for their strong commitment towards the College and our current staff members and learners for supporting the building of a new learning culture in Malta. MCAST has positively contributed and transformed the Maltese education landscape in these last twenty years. We augur that in the next two decades, it will become a first choice for post-secondary and tertiary education and training in Malta and an international reference point for professional and vocational education and training.

# MCAST PRESIDENTS

## OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS



**2006 - 2010**  
Mr Paul A. ATTARD



**2013 - 2018**  
Dr Silvio DE BONO



**2020 -**  
Prof Ian REFALO



**2001 - 2006**  
Mr Victor SCICLUNA



**2010 - 2013**  
Mr Joseph FARRUGIA



**2018 - 2020**  
Mr Frederick SCHEMBRI

# MCAST PRINCIPALS

2001 - 2021



**2002 - 2004**  
Mr Roy SNELLING



**2008 - 2012**  
Prof Maurice GRECH



**2018 -**  
Prof Joachim James CALLEJA



**2001**  
Mr Frederick FEARNE



**2004 - 2007**  
Mr Frank EDWARDS



**2012 - 2018**  
Mr Stephen CACHIA

# MCAST KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2001-2021

**AUGUST 2000**  
The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology is established by Public Deed.

**OCTOBER 2001** 📷 **1-5**  
MCAST is inaugurated with six Institutes.



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**SEPTEMBER 2002** 📷 6

The MCAST Gozo Campus is inaugurated in Xagħra. In 2003, additional space is provided in Xewkija.

**OCTOBER 2003**

Three new Institutes are integrated into MCAST: the Agribusiness Institute, the Institute of Mechanical Engineering and the Institute of Community Services.

**JULY 2004**

MCAST receives its Erasmus University Charter.

**NOVEMBER 2004**

The Vocational Teacher Training Programme is launched.

**JUNE 2005** 📷 7

MCAST is the first in Europe to

receive the Edexcel International Centre of Excellence Award.

**OCTOBER 2006**

Government launches the Masterplan to invest millions in building a new campus for MCAST.

**SEPTEMBER 2007**

A one-year programme for school leavers who have been assessed as having a moderate intellectual impairment is launched. The programme includes teaching independent living skills while sampling areas of vocational interest.

**OCTOBER 2007**

MCAST celebrates its first Foundation Day on 26th October.

**FEBRUARY 2008**

A Students' House is opened.

This consists of a Student Council Board Room, offices, a large common room where students can meet in a relaxed atmosphere, the College canteen and other facilities for the provision of student services.

**MAY 2008**

New simulators are installed at the Maritime Institute.

**SEPTEMBER 2008**

MCAST team participates in a EuroSkills competition with excellent results. Mark Philip Camilleri, Shawn Roderick Sciberras and Stephen Zahra win silver medals in Cross Media Publishing and Electronics Workshops respectively.

**JANUARY 2010**

MCAST sets up the Quality Assurance Department.

**APRIL 2010** 📷 8

Students Quintin Grech (IBCE) and John Vella (IME) are awarded the City & Guilds Gold Medals for Excellence in joinery and automobile engineering respectively.

**APRIL 2010** 📷 9

Officer Cadets David Mercieca, Steve Gauci and Mark Mercieca (Maritime Institute) are presented with the Grimaldi Group Awards. In 2010, James Sammut, Pierre Mangion and Christian Coleiro (Maritime Institute) are the winners of the Grimaldi Award.

**MAY 2010**

A Comenius project, in which MCAST worked closely with twenty-four vocational colleges, wins first prize at the Charlemagne Youth Prize 2010 Award event in Aachen, Germany.

**SEPTEMBER 2010**

MCAST launches its first degree programmes at MQF Level 6.

**DECEMBER 2010**

MCAST awards its first vocational degrees.



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2012 | Prime Minister Hon Dr Lawrence Gonzi lays the first stone of MCAST new Campus



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2012 | James Sammut, Pierre Mangion and Christian Coleiro are the winners of this year's Grimaldi Award, a prestigious prize presented to the MCAST Maritime Institute.



2012 | Electronics Technicians are awarded Silver Medal in the EuroSkills Competition

**APRIL 2012**

MCAST receives the highest number of City and Guilds Medals in Europe.

**JULY 2012**

Edexcel reconfirms MCAST as an International Centre of Excellence.

**AUGUST 2012**

A new gym, equipped with professional physical training equipment, is inaugurated at the

MCAST Main Campus.

**SEPTEMBER 2012**

A state-of-the-art digital TV studio is opened at the Institute of Art and Design.

**FEBRUARY 2013**

A new Fibre Optic Training Lab is set up at MCAST.

**MARCH 2013**

The new Institute for Applied Sciences is opened.

**APRIL 2013** 📷 10

Lecturer Alfred Mizzi is presented with the City & Guilds Medal for Excellence in recognition of his efforts and commitment to his students at the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering.

**MAY 2013**

Students Daphne Ann Mintoff and Janet Muscat (IBAC) are awarded Gold and Silver Medals for achieving the best results in the world in the exams for three London Chamber of Commerce and Industry qualifications.

**MAY 2013**

Lecturers Ing Godwin Caruana, Charles Cassar and Daniel Privitera (IBCE) and Deputy Director David Bonello and Lecturer Joseph Formosa (IME) attain international qualifications from the renowned UK-based Institute of Motor Industry.

**APRIL 2014**

Student Juan Sarcia (IME) wins top prize at the Contest for Young

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Scientists and represents Malta during the EU Contest for Young Scientists (EUCYS) in Warsaw.

**MAY 2014**

Students Noel Mizzi, Brendan Schembri, John Fenech and Ian Chetcuti (ICT) guided by lecturer Franco Farrugia win first prize at the Malta Robotics Olympiad.

**MAY 2014**

New premises with new equipment for the Institute of Business Management and Commerce are inaugurated.

**AUGUST 2014**

The centralised Curriculum Department is set up.

**SEPTEMBER 2014**

The MCAST Gozo Campus is further extended and consolidated in one location in Għajnsielem.

**OCTOBER 2014**

MCAST sets up the Entrepreneurship Centre in collaboration with KBIC at Malta Enterprise.

**OCTOBER 2014**  **11**

Students Christopher Galea and Luke Tanti (IEEE) and Kurt Bullock (ICA) win silver medals and a Medal of Excellence respectively, at the EuroSkills Competition 2014.

**OCTOBER 2014**

A Youth Hub is opened on campus in collaboration with Aġenzija Żgħażaġh.

**MAY 2015**

NCFHE carries out the first External Quality Assurance audit and deems that MCAST needs improvement in one standard and fulfils the requirements of the other remaining ten standards.

**JUNE 2015**

Lecturer Joseph Cilia is presented with the City & Guilds Medal for Excellence, in recognition of his efforts and commitment to his students at the Institute of Building and Construction Engineering.

**SEPTEMBER 2015**

New student support services, such as the role of the student support co-ordinator, are introduced in each Institute.

**OCTOBER 2015**

The underground parking for staff and students is opened.

**OCTOBER 2015**

Programmes in new vocational areas, such as the Performing Arts, are introduced.

**OCTOBER 2015**

The Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning Department is set up.

**NOVEMBER 2015**

The new Students' House is opened.

**FEBRUARY 2016**

The Quality Management System at the MCAST Centre for Maritime Studies is re-certified for 5 years by the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA).

**JUNE 2016**

Lecturer J. Grech (IET) together with FITA develop and produce a device to help people with limited sight identify paper notes.

**OCTOBER 2016**

All full-time programmes running at MCAST are developed internally and self-accredited. The last visit by BTEC Standards Verifiers is held during July 2016. This removes the dependency on external awarding bodies.

**OCTOBER 2016**

New sports facilities, including an artificial football pitch, tennis courts and basketball pitches, are inaugurated.

**OCTOBER 2016**

The Skills Kits programme is introduced.

**NOVEMBER 2016**

Ramon Mangion, Curriculum Administrator, wins the award for the most engaged Maltese EPALE Ambassador.



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**NOVEMBER 2016**

Student Alexia Muscat (ICA) designs the winning logo for Malta's presidency of the Council of the European Union 2017.

**FEBRUARY 2017**

Student Eman Borg (IBMC) receives the prestigious Queen's Young Leaders Award.

**MARCH 2017**

The support services are restructured. The services are now specifically focused on providing a multi-disciplinary response and interventions to the psychosocial,

emotional, mental health issues encountered by staff and students, and liaising with other entities, as necessary.

**MAY 2017** 📷 12

Students Roberto Tweraser and Sebastian Mizzi (Entrepreneurship Centre) receive the CIDIC (Cercle International Diplomatique et Consulaire) Award.

**OCTOBER 2017**

MCAST launches its first Master's degree programmes at MQF Level 7.

**NOVEMBER 2017**

Alumna Charlene Fenech is chosen as the Maltese VET Ambassador.

**OCTOBER 2018**

Nico Conti (ICA) is awarded the Charlotte Fraser Award.

**SEPTEMBER 2018**

MCAST Gozo Campus starts offering its first Degree programme.

**NOVEMBER 2018** 📷 13

Alumna Elaine Pavia is chosen as the Maltese VET Ambassador.



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**NOVEMBER 2018** 📷 14  
Lecturer Ing. Jeremy Scerri receives the Gold Leaf Award for a paper he presented at the 14th Conference on Ph.D. Research in Microelectronics and Electronics.

**FEBRUARY 2019**  
MCAST launches the Master's in Vocational Education Applied Research 4.0.

**FEBRUARY 2019** 📷 15  
MCAST introduces a Corporate Social Responsibility programme for students.

**APRIL 2019** 📷 16  
The MCAST Wellbeing Hub is opened.

**MAY 2019**  
A new building for the Institute of Engineering and Technology is inaugurated.

**MAY 2019** 📷 17  
The MCAST Strategic Plan 2019-2021 is launched.

**JULY 2019**  
MCAST launches its first six Degree Apprenticeships.

**JULY 2019**  
MCAST hosts its first Research Symposium.

**OCTOBER 2019**  
Students from the ICT Institute making the 'First Global Team Malta' participate in the robotics competition in Dubai.

**OCTOBER 2019** 📷 18  
Marylyn Sammut, a BSc (Hons)

in Environmental Engineering graduate, and her dissertation supervisor, Mr Juan J Bonello, participate in the 42nd CIESM Congress (largest association of Mediterranean marine scientists) in Cascais, Portugal.

**NOVEMBER 2019**  
Alumnus Julian Mallia is chosen as the Maltese VET Ambassador.



2019 | Launch of CSR event

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2019 | Launch of Wellbeing Hub



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2019 | Mr Frederick Schembri, ex President of the MCAST Board of Governors during the launch of the MCAST Strategic Plan 2019-2021



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**DECEMBER 2019**

MCAST officially opens the Multi-Faith and Contemplation Room, a dedicated space for prayer and reflection, and aims to improve the social and spiritual well-being of all the MCAST population.

**JULY 2020**

The new Resource Centre is in its final phase of construction and will include a Centre for Research and Innovation, the Learning Resource Centre and the new Library.

**NOVEMBER 2020**

The Apprenticeship Scheme call is launched.

**DECEMBER 2020**  **19**

MCAST holds its first Research and Innovation EXPO showcasing the research projects undertaken by 96 academic researchers and management staff as well as hosting 40 poster presentations by students from the College's six Institutes.



2020 | Launch of €32.8 million investment to establish MCAST as an international research hub



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**FEBRUARY 2021** 📷 20

MCAST announces the applications for the Pre-Warrant Qualification Course. MCAST engineering graduates will be eligible to apply for a warrant once they have completed the Pre-Warrant Qualification Course (PWQC).

**APRIL 2021** 📷 21

MCAST rebrands itself with a new logo and new brand guidelines that reflect the ongoing growth of a vocational College.

**MAY 2021**

A draft Strategic Plan for Consultation 2022-2027 is published and a new MCAST legislation is drafted.



MCAST

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# OUR STORY

## STUDENTS



**40,000**

Graduates since 2001

**32,400**

Part-time learners since 2002

**6,240+**

International students since 2009

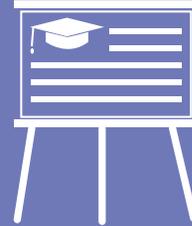
**1,300**

Corporate Social Responsibility Placements since 2019

**102**

Different nationalities of students in 2021

## COURSES



**43**

Bachelor Degree courses offered in 2021-2022

**16**

Master Degree courses offered in 2021-2022



## FULL-TIME STAFF

**1,036**

Academic

**572**

Administrative

**464**



## PART-TIME STAFF

**714**

Academic

**462**

Administrative

**252**

## RESEARCH



**66**

Research Projects submitted by lecturing staff since 2020

# IN NUMBERS



## INTERNATIONAL OFFICE



**1,104**

Students participated in Erasmus+ projects (since 2014)

**368**

Members of staff participated in Erasmus+ projects (since 2014)

**CAMPUS**

**134,000m<sup>2</sup>**

campus space in Paola



**48,873m<sup>2</sup>**

new buildings

**20,000m<sup>2</sup>**

new underground carpark

**INDUSTRY  
PARTNERS**

**1,800**

Registered  
Industry Partners



**5,590**

Number of apprenticeships since 2013



## BUDGETS



### National Funds

**€ 247.3 million**

Recurrent budget from 2010 to 2020

**€ 11.5 million**

Capital budget from 2010 to 2020

### European Funds

**€ 50.1 million**

European Social Fund

**€ 57.5 million**

European Regional Development Fund



# The Evolution of the MCAST Masterplan

## Masterplan 2006

The first masterplan document was formulated in 2006, and was based on a strategic, forward-looking assessment of the College, covering the period 2006-2015. The main driver for the 2006 masterplan was that the projected increase in demand would have to be matched by an increased supply of the physical and human resources. In addition to the strategic assessment, MCAST undertook a design brief for the Paola Campus which included the following services:

- Institute of Building and Construction Engineering
- Maritime Institute
- Institute of Community Services
- Institute of Agribusiness
- Institute of Tourism Studies.

The hallmark of this masterplan was to locate all the MCAST's Institutes on the Paola Campus together with the utilisation of Gaddafi Gardens (now Ġnien il-Mediterran) in order to house the College sports facilities. The total footprint area was of 120,000m<sup>2</sup>.



2012 | Visit by the Prime Minister Dr Gonzi at MCAST Campus Site



2012 | Works on the MCAST Campus



## Masterplan 2009

The 2009 version relied significantly on the original 2006 version with the most significant changes being:

- The introduction of the concept of an engineering village
- The introduction of the Institute of Applied Sciences
- The introduction and inclusion of formal spaces for the Pathway Programme
- An enlarged Institute of Information and Communications Technology (IICT)

- An enlarged Institute of Community Services
- Removal of the Institute of Tourism Studies.

The concept of the engineering village was introduced essentially to create an overall identity for the engineering based disciplines, including the IICT, in order to avoid the duplication of services and to rationalise on the allocated spaces.

The overall footprint of the masterplan remained as the original version of 2006.



Works on the MCAST Campus



## Masterplan 2018

In October 2018 the incumbent MCAST's Principal and CEO, Prof Joachim James Calleja set up a Task Force to produce a revised masterplan document in support of the new strategic developments being undertaken by MCAST.

The revised masterplan reinforced the importance of centralising operations on the Paola Main Campus.

In support of the internationalisation drive and the wider context of making MCAST a community college, a retail unit and a residential unit were conceptualised to cater primarily for the student cohort (local and foreign) and also for the benefit of the wider community.

The conceptual designs were based on the following principles:

- Student centred campus
- High-quality landscaped student areas
- Streets and piazzas with covered paths and informal routes
- Predominantly car-free campus environment and priorities for pedestrian and cycle movement
- Creative places for the engagement of students, staff and the surrounding community
- Buildings and spaces shaped around the functional activities
- Strong social ideas.

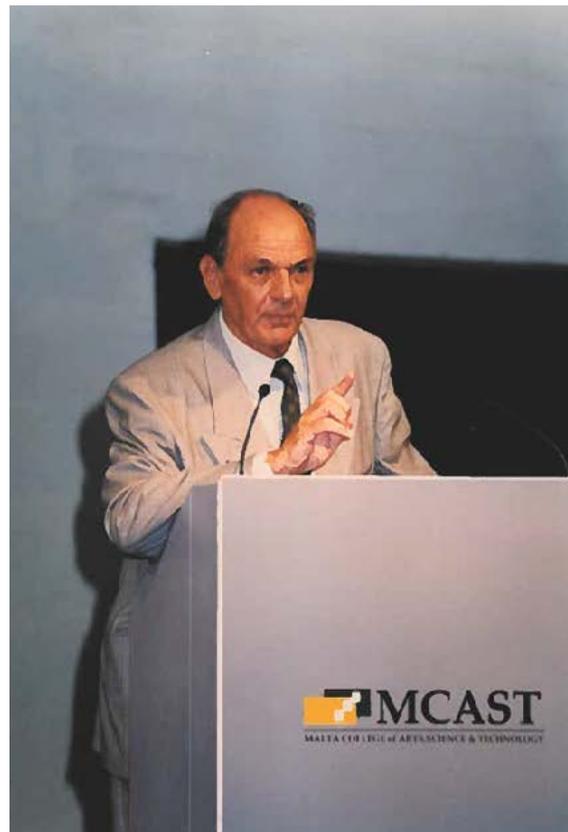


# An Experience by Mr Frederick Fearne, MCAST's first Principal

On MCAST's twentieth anniversary since its inauguration, I was asked by the editor of MCASTlink to spare some thoughts as to what it was like being College Principal way back in the year 2001.

In the late nineties, vocational education and training in Malta was in need of an urgent upgrade, in order to keep up with the fast changes taking place in the world of work. Vocational courses on offer were then mainly run at the Technical Institute, the Fellenberg Institute, the Art and Design Centre and the Secretarial School. Each setup had its own specific entry requirements and its own certification aimed mainly at technician level. That setup excluded a high percentage of secondary school leavers wishing to take up vocational training due to the fact that they lacked the necessary academic entry qualifications.

Faced with this situation, the Hon Minister Dr. Louis Galea, who then was the minister responsible for Education and Training, decided that something had to be done. Being the Permanent Secretary at his Ministry at the time and being a strong believer in the necessity of having a strong vocational setup, I found myself from day one attending numerous meetings and lengthy discussions on how best to go about it. Joining us at an early stage was Dr. J Cannataci, then adviser to the Minister. After taking stock of what areas of training were being catered for, what level of certification was on offer, and what were the respective number of graduate students, it became clear that all post-secondary institutions should be brought under one umbrella. Courses leading to different training levels were to be made available, the course content on offer was to be revised and updated, while new areas of training were to be introduced in order to keep up with the ever pressing needs for a highly trained workforce.



Mr Frederick Fearne

Once all the necessary legal formalities were in place, the first Board of Governors was set up under the chairmanship of Mr. Victor Scicluna, while personnel from the private sector representing the manufacturing, banking, insurance, information technology and education sectors were appointed Board members.

Being open to any secondary school leaver, no matter his or her academic qualification, a multi entry point



2007 | Mr Paul A. Attard introducing Mr Frederick Fearn to His Grace Mgr Paul Cremona, Archbishop Emeritus

system was established. This consequently led to the setting up of various courses starting from MQF Level 1 to Level 5. As this setup was a first in Malta, it had to be assured that the course content and the level of training on offer were up to recognised international standards. With this aim in mind, contact was made with the BTEC. Course benchmarks were set and course curricula acquired accordingly. BTEC were also to provide initial staff training and supervision. Whilst the negotiations were going on, an aggressive PR campaign was launched. Meetings were held with teaching staff, students as well as parents. Interviews were held on radio and TV, posters were set up in strategic places, and flyers were sent to all secondary school leavers explaining what the new MCAST was about and the opportunities it would present to the students. Prior to recruiting its own lecturing staff, teaching staff on Education Department books, performing duties in the various vocational institutions, were given the opportunity to join the College staff on a secondment basis with special time-tabling arrangements to compensate for the reduction of school holidays. Meetings were held with the ETC (the apprenticeship branch) to ensure that there will not be any interruption of any ongoing apprenticeship schemes.

Refurbishment works got under way on all sites, building alterations were carried out, and lifts were

installed to ensure accessibility to all. Additional floors were added on to accommodate the envisaged increase in student intake.

Since the College was to run on an eight to four time-table all the year round, closing only for Christmas, Easter and August summer holidays, AC systems were installed in all offices, lecture rooms, workshops and labs. Inventories were compiled and any suitable equipment that was to be taken over from the Education Department was identified. Tenders were issued for the procurement of all office furniture and equipment and no stone was left unturned in order to make sure that all the mechanical and electrical workshops, technical drawing offices and computer labs were furnished with the latest equipment available prior to the College welcoming its first student intake.

Congratulations are very much in order to all past and present College staff, through whose collective effort MCAST has been able to get established as a first-choice further or tertiary educational institution.

A big thank you goes to the present management and staff who, faced with an unexpected COVID-19 pandemic, successfully managed to keep courses going against all odds and at great personal risk. Taking on this challenge was no small achievement. Well done to all.

# Congratulations MCAST on your 20th Anniversary!

by Ms Josephine Cilia, MCAST's first Registrar

In February 2001 an Administration team was set up and I was appointed Registrar. I accepted this challenge very gladly as I had the previous experience and satisfaction of setting up a new Sixth Form and was an Assistant Director in the Department of Post-Secondary Education.

In the first year six Institutes had to be set up, incorporating few of the already existing post-secondary education providers. It was necessary to take stock of their existing provision in order not to disrupt students who were already attending, while a number of new courses had to be introduced. Decisions had to be taken as to on which well recognised qualifications we could organise our courses and these decisions were taken by the Board of Governors of the College.

The next stage was to produce an attractive prospectus of courses that were offered at three levels of entry according to qualifications - the lowest level aiming at applicants who left secondary education with hardly any qualifications but were ready to take a second chance to succeed. It was my task as Registrar to speak to as many school leavers as possible before they finished attending school to start the summer vacation. We wanted to answer any questions that students and parents presented and here the media was very effective. A copy of the prospectus was posted to all school leavers.



Ms Josephine Cilia



2002 | First Registrar team

In the meantime, clerical staff started being recruited in the Registrar's Office and trained according to the section they were to work in. At the end of July, the awaited day for receiving applications arrived. To the great satisfaction of all at MCAST we had a very good number of applicants especially for the new courses in Information Technology. It was with great regret that we could not accommodate all applicants at this stage and immediately we had to devise a system of points so as to be impartial to all. It was a laborious task and painful to refuse applicants but this was one, if not the major, difficulty we had to face. We felt it was the price of our success. Every following year we set to refine our system by engaging competent persons to work in this area.

Every year that followed more Institutes were added to MCAST and while we were all on a learning curve, work had become smoother although it increased substantially. During the first year there were a few hundreds attending MCAST whilst by the fourth year we had over three thousand full-time students joining the different courses. In the meantime we

were busy establishing a new certification system in conjunction with well recognised foreign institutions. As years passed, students were finishing their courses successfully and the presentation of certificates was the climax for all the effort by students and staff alike.

After having spent seven very busy uphill years it was time for me to retire. In spite of the hard work, with most of the days starting at eight up to seven in the evening, it was a great satisfaction to watch students progressing. It was always my dream that such an institution should exist parallel to the more academic ones already in existence and I had the pleasure to see it born and improve every year, giving students opportunities for success in life.

Now, after twenty years the College has gone a long way, people have changed but progress has not waned. MCAST is there to stay, continuously offering new opportunities.

Well done MCAST. Congratulations to all staff and students and best wishes for a bright future.



# 20 Years of MCASTlink

MCASTlink was the first corporate publication of its kind for MCAST. It aims to create and enhance a corporate identity for the College and also serves as a means whereby MCAST's ideas, achievements and developments are communicated to its many stakeholders.



Ms Caroline Balzan

**The** first edition was published in February 2002. Since then the design of the publication has changed and evolved into what it is today. Students and members of staff have contributed and shared their experiences over the years, providing a clear insight into the main activities, events and developments that took place at the College over twenty years. MCASTlink can be considered a 'history book' of the College as MCAST's twenty-year history is all documented in these publications. During these twenty years the magazine was compiled and edited by Ms Caroline Balzan, Communications Manager.

A copy of each edition can be found at the MCAST Library and Learning Resource Centre and at the Communications Office.



# MCAST Alumni

MCAST catches up with some of its alumni and their successes after their educational journey at MCAST.



## Caroline Apap

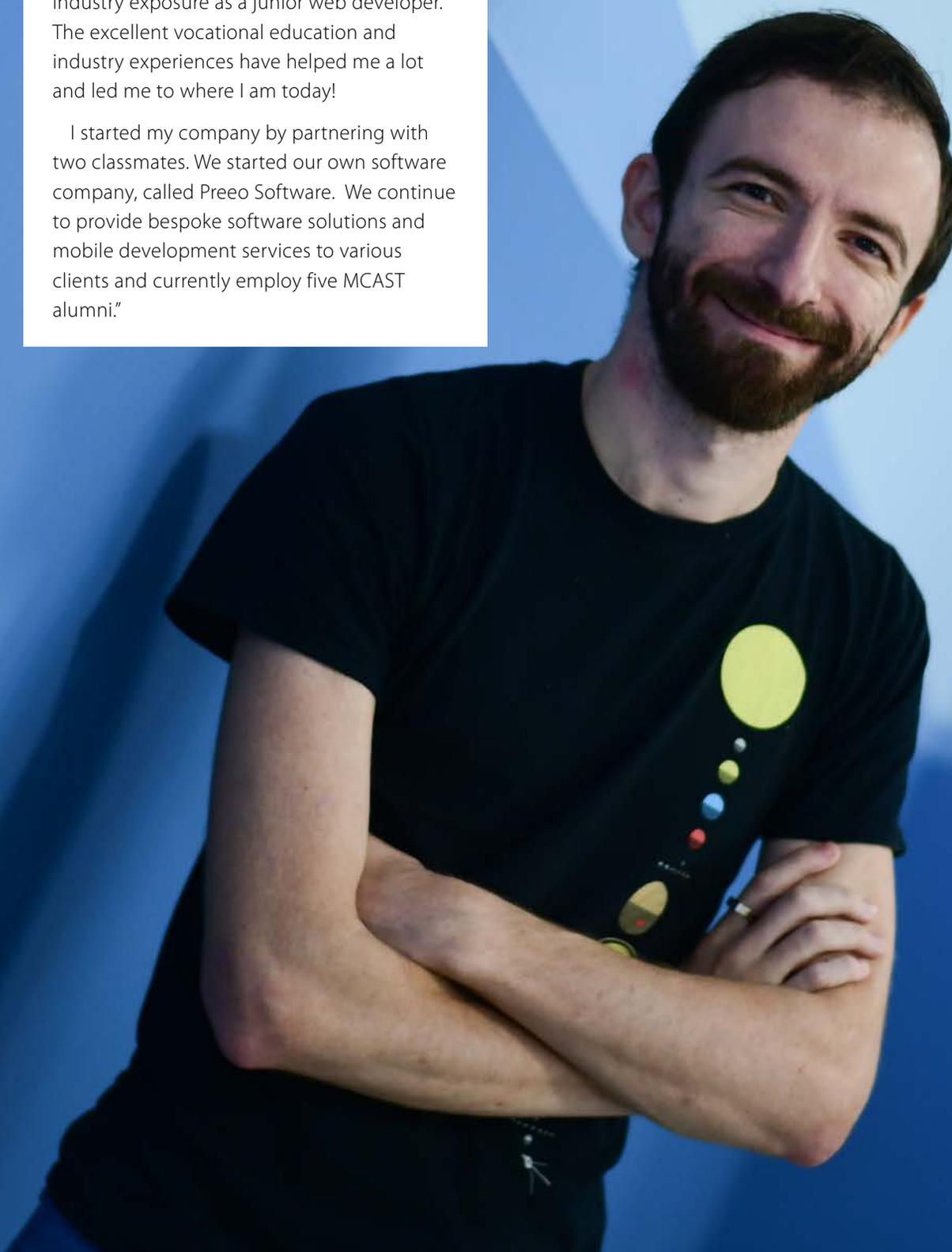
“The banking and financial services industry offers exciting and challenging career opportunities - I had always aspired to work in this sector, from a tender age. As a Form 5 student, I had attended the MCAST Gozo Campus Open Day and information talks for prospective students and parents and became aware of the related VET opportunities offered at the MCAST Gozo Campus. In summer 2008, after receiving my SEC results, I was at a crossroads with several career pathway options that I could pursue. I was determined to pursue a vocational pathway and my choice was definitely the MCAST Gozo Campus.

I feel that studying at MCAST was greatly beneficial as the courses are work-oriented and prepared me for a smooth and seamless transition from a student to employment. I am grateful for all that I learnt at MCAST. I now hold the position of Senior Officer within the Commercial Business Unit at APS Bank plc.”

## MARK PHILIP CAMILLERI GAMBIN

"I read for a National Diploma in Computing followed by a Higher National Diploma, and graduated with a BSc. During my years at MCAST I made sure to obtain the necessary industry exposure as a junior web developer. The excellent vocational education and industry experiences have helped me a lot and led me to where I am today!

I started my company by partnering with two classmates. We started our own software company, called Preeo Software. We continue to provide bespoke software solutions and mobile development services to various clients and currently employ five MCAST alumni."





## MARLON GRECH

"I joined MCAST in 2002, being one of the first students at the MCAST Gozo Centre. I completed a Level 4 programme in Software Development and some years later I founded Thynk Software. The venture started as a one-man operation but it quickly grew to a 25+ team with offices in Malta, New York and Dubai.

I have won prestigious awards including the Trade Malta High Potential Award, Gozo Best Start-Up Company, Gozo's Best Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award and Gozo Best Digital/ICT Company of the Year.

I am proud to say that MCAST paved my way to my brilliant career."

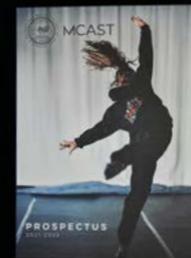
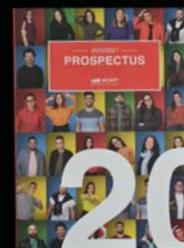
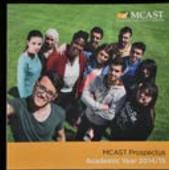
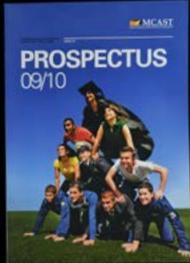
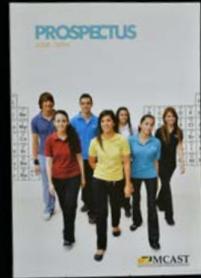
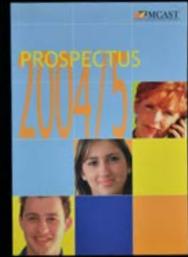


## CHARLON BRIFFA

"In 2016, I graduated from the MCAST Institute of Information and Communications Technology with a first-class Bachelor of Science (Hons) degree in Software Development. I am currently employed at the Malta Financial Services Authority as a Senior Applications and Database Specialist.

I was always intrigued by technology and how one can apply it in our day-to-day life. From a very young age, I was sure that my line of studies was to be related to computing, because I was certain back then of my love for technology.

I still believe that enrolling and completing my studies at MCAST was the best decision that I have ever made. At MCAST I was given the chance to learn new technologies in an interesting way through hands-on learning. Besides learning the theory, I also found a lot of support from lecturers that have shaped my future in a way I never thought possible at the time."



# 20 Years of MCAST Prospectus

By Ms Maria Pace, MCAST Registrar

The MCAST Prospectus is considered as the main medium for the promotion of MCAST full-time courses. Looking at the past issues of the published prospectuses, one can see the growth of MCAST within such a considerably short span of time. From a few number of courses contained in the early issues of the College prospectus, MCAST today offers more than 180 full-time courses at practically all levels of the Malta Qualifications Framework, in six different vocational sectors.

**The** prospectus has grown exponentially and travelled widely beyond our shores, putting the College predominantly on both the local and international arenas for learning. The common factor among all the prospectuses issued by the College is that they always responded to the educational, societal and occupational needs of the country.

The MCAST prospectus has grown not only in the number of courses it promotes but also in form. Initially the prospectus was a number of individualised pamphlets per Institute. Nowadays it has matured into a corporate publication. The involvement of students in the design concepts, the design by students for students, gives a more current and young approach.

Another major milestone in the MCAST prospectus was the shift from insular progression within the same Institute to permeability between Institutes and even other organisations such as the University of Malta.

MCAST looks back with pride at the past and present history of the College prospectus. Across the years, it has given sterling service to thousands of students. It has offered opportunities of study at different entry points and certification at different exit points. It has highlighted the realistic knowledge about the needs and expectations of the world of work through work-based learning which is part and parcel of MCAST courses and is considered as essential for a successful curriculum design, making the cooperation between the educational institution and the occupational sector of crucial importance. Such a profession-oriented approach enhances the use of a profession-bound, purposefully designed methodology that guarantees to both the lecturer and the student the factual, most relevant servicing ingredients that are needed for an effective and fast acquisition of vocation-oriented courses. This is MCAST's success story as attested across these twenty years by the College's twenty prospectuses.





2012 | MCAST Library

# 20 Years of the MCAST Library and Learning Resource Centre

By **Mr Laurence Zerafa**, first MCAST Librarian

The MCAST Library project started in the first half of 2002, with the appointment of Mr. Joseph Grima as a Library consultant to the Principal, at that time Mr Roy Snelling, followed by the appointment of Mr. Laurence Zerafa as the first MCAST Librarian in 2003.



**2020** | The Library team with HE Dr Vella, President of Malta, Mr Schembri, ex MCAST President and Prof Calleja, MCAST Principal and CEO

**New** staff members joined the Library and the material started to be organized. A temporary service was offered for some months from a hall in the present Community Services building and smaller libraries were also started at the Institutes in Sliema, Msida, Kalkara, Mosta, Naxxar and Qormi. Meanwhile, the Librarian's office had moved first to the Institute of Building and Construction Engineering library in Naxxar and later to the Main Campus at Paola. On the construction side, the activity consisted of adapting and extending a 1960s two-storey building (which served as laboratories to the previous Michelangelo Sapiano Technical Institute) by adding two more floors and refitting all four storeys. The new Library building was opened for use by the MCAST community of students, lecturers and staff in May 2005 and officially inaugurated in July 2005.

A series of projects with regards to IT and audio visual equipment were completed with the help of EU Regional Development Funds (ERDF) 2004-2006. The development of the online catalogue was a milestone. During the initial stages, the collection was enriched with donations by the American Embassy, Bank of Valletta, Denis Vella, Neville Ferry and John



MCAST Library

E. Viscardi. The collection increased further both in terms of electronic resources, especially with sources like EBSCO, Emerald Weblinks and Skillport, and in terms of physical items like DVDs. An interesting addition to the library's collection was that of toys in 2015. These were to be used by ICS students who would work with the early years.

Further changes had taken place as part of adapting to the social changes and needs of the institution. Over the years, the collections from Msida, Sliema and Naxxar moved to Paola as part of the merging of satellite Institutes with the Main Campus and the restructuring of MCAST. The Learning Support Unit (LSU) had also started operating from the Library



2010 | Ms Speranza Catania, HSBC Area Director, donating books to the MCAST Library



2015 | MCAST Library



Works on the MCAST Library



as part of their expansion. In 2014, a new MCAST Campus was inaugurated in Għajnsielem, Gozo. At the time, the MCAST Gozo library was part of the Xagħra Public Library. The shifting of the books from Xagħra to the new Gozo Campus Study Room took place during the Summer of 2014.

As part of the staff development, Laurence Zerafa, Josephine Mifsud and Liliana Grech took part in ERASMUS Mobility exchanges and attended international conferences. Mr Zerafa received an Excellence Award in Academic Research/Librarianship from the Malta Library and Information Association (MaLIA).

Mr. Zerafa took a year off to do voluntary work at Tanzania and, in his absence, the Library was administered by Mr. Anthony Saliba. Mr Zerafa announced his retirement upon his return to do further voluntary work in Africa.

Ms. Liza Franco was appointed the Director of the Library and Learning Resource Centre (LLRC) in July 2019. Throughout that year, the Library team initiated various events with much enthusiasm, like Freshers' Week, Valentine's Day, Book Launch and the Christmas celebrations. All the events were a big success and were well accepted by the staff and students. The highlight of the events was the visit by His Excellency the President of Malta, Dr George Vella, who spent time with the Library team admiring the event. Other dignitaries included the Leader of the Opposition, Dr Adrian Delia, and the Principal Permanent Secretary,

Mr Mario Cutajar, who visited the Library during the week. The merging of the Maritime Library Kalkara to the Main Library was another move which happened in 2019, resulting in a major library collection spread across the Main Library Paola, the ICA Library Mosta and the CAAAS Library in Qormi.

The other highlight was the enhancement of the E-Resource collection with the subscription of Proquest ebooks which provide 165,000 multidisciplinary ebooks. The outbreak of COVID-19 disrupted the usual work pattern and the team continued working from home. This proved to be a very fruitful period as not only was the use of online work, service and communication improved, but also new initiatives like the launching of the MCAST LLRC YouTube channel and the betterment of the Library's Facebook page took place.

The MCAST LLRC's team comprises Liza Franco, Josephine Mifsud, Victor Vella, Liliana Grech, May Callus, Carmel Borg, Abigail Agius and Alexander Micallef.

All our eyes are on the MCAST New Resource Centre where the second and third floors will be the New Library premises.

Once again, the Library team has proved that whatever the challenges they are faced with they always strive to and continue to provide the best resources and excellent service to all MCAST students and staff with a smile.

# A Trip down Memory Lane

by first HR Director Ms Joyce Hili

It was January 2002. After over twenty years at the same place of work, today was the day that I was stepping into a new role – that of Human Resources Officer at what was then considered the ‘new’ MCAST that had just opened its doors in October 2001.

**This** was going to be a very significant change in my life, and I had had ample time to reflect upon it. In spite of a strong sense of loyalty to my previous job and employer, which had sustained me for a good number of years, I had to admit that a sense of stagnation and desire for change had slowly crept into my life. Up to that point, my career choices had been largely determined by my decision to keep my family as the topmost priority in my life, and this generally posed a barrier to significant career progression. By this time, I had read for a Diploma in Gender and Development at the University of Malta, with very good results. This convinced me that I could still hold my own, and with my family circumstances now somewhat different, I finally acknowledged that I was ready for a change.

The HR Officer vacancy at MCAST was brought to my attention by a close family friend who believed in me and recognised that I could aspire to more, even though at that time I was perhaps rather unsure if this were indeed so. However, having overcome multiple misgivings over whether or not to submit my application for the post, I applied, was invited to interview and was subsequently

offered the position.

I clearly remember the way I felt during a flight back to Malta from a family holiday I had had to cut short in order to start my new job the following day. I was looking forward to what undoubtedly would be new challenges, while feeling quite apprehensive about my ability to fit in in a new working environment, with a team that had already started to be forged. I realised that this experience would be a shift for me: from being the expert to being the novice. I was used to being the one that others came to for advice, but at this stage I would be the one needing to ask questions, while finding my feet.

Much to my relief, I arrived punctually on my first day to be greeted by a smiling Administrative Director (today’s MCAST Principal and CEO) who was to be my direct line manager and mentor for the next three years. From there, my days quickly started to form a new routine, starting from my first task which was to organise a personal file for each and every member of staff. This might sound boring to some, however the repetitive nature of this task gave me much-needed time to settle in

and before I knew it, I had become an integral part of this new team and organisation.

I look back at those days with a lot of nostalgia. As tends to happen in any new organisation which starts off with a small number of employees, the atmosphere was that of a very happy, united family working hard towards a common goal. I still remember the excitement, in the summer of 2002, over the opening of the MCAST Gozo Centre. To me it meant a heavy workload of recruitment though, in my experience, nothing would beat the amount of recruitment that took place in the summer of 2003, in preparation for the opening of three new Institutes: the Agribusiness Institute, the Institute of Community Services and the Institute of Mechanical Engineering.

In those days, the lecturing grades' grading structure was different, as were the eligibility criteria. Candidates who had at least 5 years' relevant industrial experience were eligible for recruitment to the Teaching Assistant grade, while those with 15 years' experience qualified for the Assistant Lecturer grade if found suitable for employment. Perhaps this explains the huge number of applications that we used to receive - although this in no way means that academic qualifications were not deemed important. In addition, the practice back then was to issue one single call for applications in July, listing all the areas where vacancies existed. For example, the summer 2003 call catered for lecturing staff applications in around thirty different subjects, with more than one candidate needed in most of the subjects!

Those were days when applications would be submitted by post or by hand in hard format. Sometimes, simply opening the envelopes and sorting out the applications by subject proved quite an overwhelming task – not to mention how time-consuming the whole procedure was. To this,



Ms Joyce Hili

one must add the process of sending out a written acknowledgement by post to each and every applicant, recording all the applications received, preparing a file with a photocopy of all the eligible applications for each member of the interviewing board, sending out invitations to eligible candidates to attend an interview, and following this up by a phone call to confirm their attendance. In conclusion, all applicants had to be informed in writing of the outcome of their application.

Indeed, the work was never ending and had to be carried out within strict time frames. Besides, in the first couple of years, I had to do everything single-handedly, leading to some very long days and weeks at work. Finally, in mid-summer of 2003 a clerk was assigned to help out with photocopying and filing. This led to a new dimension in my job: that of coaching others how to carry out particular tasks. I have always enjoyed on-the-job coaching and teaching, and over the years I hope to have had a positive influence on all those who were assigned to my team.

Apart from all matters related to recruitment, I was also responsible for issuing contracts, keeping personnel records, such as leave, etc., liaising with

the ETC (the forerunner of Jobsplus), and tackling staff issues with the help of my superiors where necessary.

In September 2003, I embarked on reading for a master's degree in Training and Human Resources. It was a bold step to take when one considers the long hours that I was working and that I had a family to care for, but I was adamant that I would succeed. I needed to know that my judgement when assessing people and their complaints was not flawed and that my line of thought was supported by the literature. My studies reassured me that I was on the right track and I graduated with Distinction in July 2005.

By that time, there had been a change in Principal and the Administrative Director had moved on to a new position outside MCAST. In the meantime, our offices were transferred to new premises in the current Administration Building. This resulted in new friendships especially when staff who you rarely came in contact with before, all of a sudden ended up in the next or in a neighbouring office, on the same floor.

After some time I was promoted to HR Manager and eventually to HR Director. In the meantime, MCAST had continued to evolve. From an educational institution offering vocational programmes at the lower end of the Qualifications Framework, it can today boast of a portfolio ranging from Level 1 to Level 7 courses. The same can be said of its physical infrastructure. MCAST Institutes are no longer housed in old school buildings. Over the last years, each one of them has been accommodated in a new state-of-the-art building with modern amenities and the latest equipment.

To people like me, who was there at the beginning, MCAST has changed in many aspects. There is no comparison between today's organisational chart and that of up to a decade ago. The headcount has practically tripled. Crucial administrative functions, such as HR, Procurement

and Communications, which were initially each managed by a one-man band, have now become a department in their own right. People in key positions have seen their responsibilities grow, making it imperative to engage more staff to support the roles. New departments which were unthought-of in the first years of the College's existence, have been set up to cope with the ever increasing demands. Courses were overhauled and new ones were introduced, while others that were no longer in demand by the industry were discontinued.

Up to my retirement in 2014, I served under four Principals, each of whom worked hard to achieve particular objectives which, in turn, served as important building blocks to the MCAST we know today. Indeed, I strongly believe that MCAST has been a catalyst in the shift that has occurred, little by little, in people's perception of vocational education. What was previously viewed as second best now constitutes, in the mind of many, a different route than can equally lead to a promising and successful career which is financially rewarding. On the other hand, MCAST can also be viewed as the institution that provided a second chance to various students who were considered failures during their compulsory education, but who became a success story at the College because they found its environment appealing and engaged better with its characteristic hands-on teaching approach.

I am confident that, in spite of the many challenges that undoubtedly lie ahead, MCAST will be with us for a long time to come. In its constant quest to remain relevant and to respond effectively and in a very timely manner to the needs of the economy, it continues to renew itself and to secure an important position among the country's foremost education institutions. I feel very proud and privileged to have been one of the pioneers who belonged to the very first generation of MCAST administration. It was a phase in my life which I shall always cherish and look back upon with fondness.

*Let's meet*

# MCAST first Directors of Institute

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YEARS  
ANNIVERSARY

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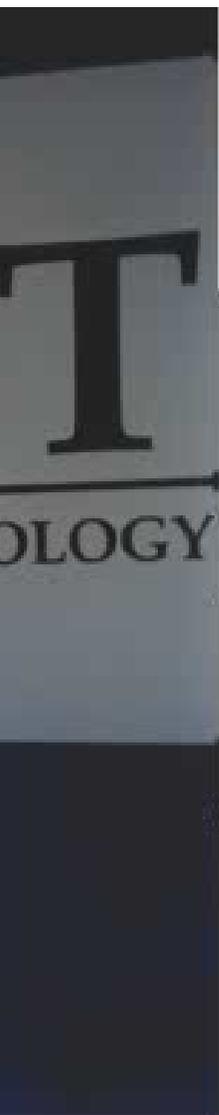
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**Juan**

# **Borg Manduca**

**First Director of the Institute  
of Information and  
Communications Technology**



**2002** | Microsoft Academy launch in November 2002 with ex-Minister Louis Galea, ex-Minister Michael Frendo and Microsoft representatives

Looking back at the origins of MCAST, one cannot help but be very proud of the achievements of the College over the years.

I believe I was the second employee on the books of MCAST, joining the College in May of 2001. Coming from the private sector, and having played an active role in the Chamber of Commerce, those were exciting times. I still vividly recall being shown around the old school at the south of the Campus. "You will be opening in October of this year and will be expected to receive your first two hundred full-time students," I was told.

With my mind in overdrive, I thought about all the work that had to be accomplished prior to the opening of the Institute. The building required a conversion, the types of courses needed to be selected, course material had to be developed, lecturing, technical, and administrative staff to be recruited, the Institute network, as well as computers, to be purchased and installed.

Together with the College consultant, a visit to the UK and a number of vocational colleges resulted in the selection of BTEC as the final choice of courses to be offered. The first eight full-time lecturers were employed, one of whom I am proud to state is the current Director of the Institute.

The College opened its doors in October of 2001 and the ICT Institute welcomed its first two hundred full-time students. Courses at four different levels were on offer, depending on the prior qualifications of the students applying to join. The most satisfying moments over the years were witnessing students with little or no prior qualifications successfully climb each step of the ladder and ultimately obtain employment within the ICT sector. Nothing makes me prouder than meeting my former students who today are successfully employed

in the ICT industry and are very appreciative of all the opportunities that the College provided them.

My private sector contacts allowed me to set up a number of academies such as Oracle and Microsoft, bringing in industry standard courses that were directly relevant to Industry's requirements.

One area that was pioneered by the Institute way back in the early days was the introduction of Entrepreneurship as a compulsory subject. Giving ICT students a background that would allow them to add value to their work when in employment, as well as provide them with the knowledge and confidence to take the plunge and set up their own business, was of immense benefit. I am pleased to see that the College has since widened the scope of such courses across other Institutes.

The College has come a long way since 2001, and has grown exponentially over the years. The Institute had over one thousand full-time students and fifty staff when I left in 2010, and has continued to evolve and grow ever since.

One cannot emphasize enough the importance of offering courses that are relevant to Industry, placing great responsibility on the shoulders of management and staff to continually update the course content as new tools are introduced into the workplace.

I am honoured and proud to have played a small role in the development of MCAST, and look back with fondness at the nine years I spent creating and managing the development of the ICT Institute. None of this would have been possible without the support and dedication of the lecturing, technical and administrative staff of the Institute.

2010 | Cdr Sean Schenk (Cente) with Capt R. Lanfranco and some of the participants attending the AMVER Presentation.



# Capt. Reuben Lanfranco

## First Director of the Maritime Institute



A fact not known to many is that the MCAST Maritime Institute was the first MCAST Institute to start operations, even before MCAST was officially inaugurated in October 2001. June 2001 saw the closing down of the previous Nautical School run by the Department of Education, and this was done to ensure that there would be a smooth transition over the summer months, leading to the opening of the MCAST Maritime Institute in October 2001. This did not happen as planned, since it coincided with a situation where the then Minister responsible for Transport enacted new regulations (The Small Ship Regulations, 2001) in July 2001, requiring all owners of pleasure craft with an engine capacity of over 100hp to attend courses and sit for an examination in order to receive a pleasure craft licence prior to the end of September 2001. The problem was... where were these courses going to be held and who would be organising them, since the previous Nautical School had closed down in June and MCAST was not meant to start operating until later in October that same year?

Cutting a long story short, the new skeleton staff of the Maritime Institute managed to run all the required courses and cater for all the examinations for over two thousand course participants, to meet the requirements of the then Malta Maritime Authority, before MCAST was officially up and running. This only showed the true dedication that the original staff members had towards their profession and the furtherance of the Maritime industry.

The Maritime Institute very quickly became a leading Institute within MCAST and one which was known for its focus on leadership and discipline, bearing in mind that many of the students attending the courses (or Officer Cadets, as they

were known) would one day be serving as Master Mariners or Chief Engineers on some of the larger Merchant Vessels sailing the oceans. The impeccable naval uniforms worn by the students were often a constant “eye catcher” in public and students would often be invited to attend local and international events representing the College. Noteworthy was the annual participation at the Trofeo Accademia Navale e Città di Livorno sailing regatta, which was attended by Officer Cadets from some other 30 nations and organised by the Italian Naval Academy in Livorno.

Some of the other highlights of my time as Director of the MCAST Maritime Institute were the official visit to the Maritime Institute by HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh during the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in 2005, the inauguration of the new full bridge simulator at Villa Portelli, the introduction of the Grimaldi Award for the best student (eventually best three students in the academic year), the participation of Officer Cadets at the annual Christmas and Easter training camps, and the agreements which the Institute had maintained, for many years, with shipping companies to provide placements on board ships for the Officer Cadets during the phase of the cadets’ sea practical training.

The MCAST Maritime Institute continued to grow and flourish, having also attracted large numbers of foreigners as full and part-time students due to the excellent reputation the Institute had as a leader in maritime training. Having served as the first Director of the Institute for 10 years it gives me great pleasure to see the College expand and I do augur that the Maritime Training Centre currently operating will continue to flourish and regain its status as a fully-fledged Institute once again.

# Yvonne Pulis

## First Director of the MCAST Institute of Business Management and Commerce



2010 | Ms Yvonne Pulis with MCAST graduates from the Institute of Business and Commerce





The official inauguration of MCAST twenty years ago, was the culmination of months and months of meetings and planning. Finally, it was no longer an idea on paper but we were actually embarking on this new journey. Naturally there was some apprehension because at the time we were a sixth form, Paolino Vassallo Upper Lyceum, and we were now joining MCAST as the Institute of Business and Commerce. It was a significant shift from the purely academic to a mixture of academic and hands-on experience. But there was enthusiasm and eagerness to start from all involved.

The final weeks prior to the opening of MCAST were full of activities with everyone giving a helping hand to finalise things. I clearly remember that a few days before the official opening we were on campus at the procurement office finalising some details when someone rushed in saying, "The United States is being attacked." It was the 11th September 2001 and the first plane had just crashed into one of the Twin Towers.

There were times when we worried whether we would be ready on time. But I can still remember, among others, the Minister of Education together with Ms Joyce Pullicino, Director of Further Studies and Adult Education, and Mr Frederick Fearne, who was Principal at the time, encouraging us on. I have never forgotten Mr Fearne repeating, "Don't worry. If we find a wall facing us, we will dismantle it and move on." And we did. We managed to be ready to welcome students thanks to the work of all involved: administration, administrative staff and ancillary staff.

One cannot but look back with satisfaction at all that has been achieved over the years. Courses have increased

at various levels ranging from Level 1 to Master degree courses. The curriculum ensured that students had both an academic and a practical preparation both through course work and through work placements.

One of the greatest satisfactions has been the many students who had joined the Institute at lower levels, and who managed to progress to higher levels with a number of them ending up with a degree. The joy on their faces on graduation day was ample repayment for all the work involved. Another satisfaction was seeing the development of student groups who organised various activities which enhanced their leadership and social skills. These students would have dropped out of the education system had it not been for the opportunities offered at MCAST. All of this could never have been achieved had it not been for the dedication, professionalism and hard work of all the lecturers involved who, throughout the years, gave their all to see students succeed. I must also mention the incredible support given by industry who from the very beginning provided work placement opportunities for all our students.

Of course, over the years there have been ups and downs, disagreements and difficult times. However mostly there was a feeling of satisfaction at what was being achieved. I believe that all of us can look back with pride at what has surely been a success story and I am sure that the Institute of Business and Commerce, now the Institute of Business Management and Commerce, together with all the other Institutes, will continue to build on its success and give the best education and training to our country's young generation.

# John Sciberras



# First Director of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering

Expectations were high at the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering. The end of each academic year was celebrated with the Institute's Annual Projects Exhibition. The Annual Projects Exhibition was held at a variety of different venues selected in order to attract the very best from industry. The rules of engagement for students were well documented and made clear to ensure structured guidance. Different boards were established to examine the different levels of projects within the Institute. The projects developed by students were discussed and monitored throughout the year and culminated in presentations exhibited at the Annual Projects Exhibition. The projects' criteria were specified for each of the different levels.

The end-of-year project has always been a demanding challenge and students were required to produce and document relevant feedback as the project developed. The projects' board consisted of the Institute's staff, UoM professors and engineers from local industry. This approach ensured that students were exposed to experts that had the relevant technical knowledge and experience in the field.

During the academic year 2008-2009 the Institute reached the highest student population, exceeding 600 full-time learners. Despite the increase in learners the Institute continued with the Annual Projects



2011 | Far right Mr John Sciberras during Dr Joseph Muscat's first visit to MCAST

Exhibition, displaying a variety of projects. The Annual Projects Exhibition also included Degree projects from the BSc (Hons) in Electronics and the BSc (Hons) in Electronics and Control. The latter has been a milestone achievement for both the College and the Institute.

As the Institute's Director, I knew that the Institute had an important role to play in the future of the students and of the country. I knew that I had a responsibility, which I undertook willingly, to provide technicians and engineers of a high calibre. We also worked hard to educate and train students who were confident and had developed a positive and proactive mindset.

The Institute's ethos was maintained along the years thanks to the commitment, flexibility and hard work of the management, administration and lecturing staff. The Institute participated successfully in a variety of local and international competitions and has gained respect from the local industry and prestigious institutions in other countries.

Students at the Institute were also given the opportunity to participate in the EuroSkills international competition which was held every two years. The first students that participated in the EuroSkills competition in 2008 placed second in the Rotterdam EuroSkills 2008 Electronics Technician workbench. Participation



2011 | Mr Sciberras at the Annual Projects Exhibition together with then Minister Cristina



2012 | MCAST students achieve results in EuroSkills 2012 held in Belgium



Fourteen employees from a total of eight manufacturing companies successfully completed the Diploma Course in Manufacturing Excellence (Level 4).

was also successful in Belgium Euroskills 2012 and Lille Euroskills 2014 where the students successfully placed second once again. In Lille the students missed the top place by two points. With regards to the ESTF Young Scientist competition, the Institute's student obtained the first prize three times and the second prize once. Philip Cordina placed second in the international competition for Young Scientist held in France.

In 2004 the Institute received the prestigious Grant Thornton Award for Enterprise and Foreign Direct Investment.

The Institute did its utmost to keep up with the pace of new technologies by ensuring good links with industry. It aimed to gain exposure to the new technologies and to provide students with real life and hands-on vocational experience. This approach enabled students to progress successfully at the place of work. The vocational practice plays an important part in the future career development of the student and is considered a strong asset by the prospective employers.

# Comments by a few of MCAST Industry Partners

## VICTORIA ANN MUSCAT

Senior Manager - Alter Domus

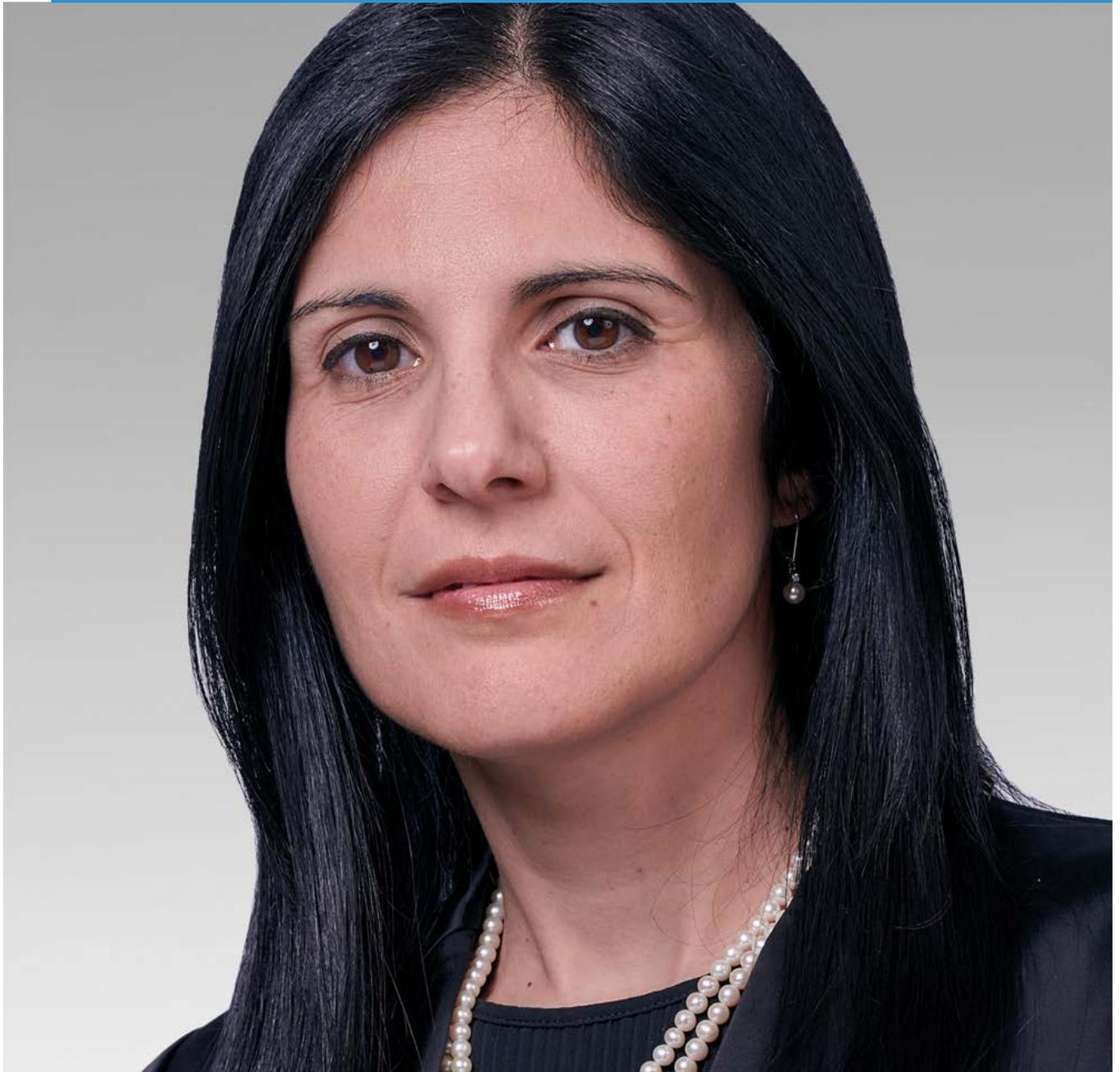


“Offering work experiences to students not only promotes Alter Domus but promotes the whole industry one is working in. A work experience gives students the chance to have a “taster” of what really goes on in the industry, and helps them grow and make knowledgeable choices about their careers. As an employer, having students within the workplace contributes to the team spirit at Alter Domus and helps us secure new talent faster.”

# CAROLINE BUHAGIAR KLASS

Resourcing Manager HR - HSBC Bank Malta

"We have been in partnership with MCAST for numerous years, working closely together to provide internship opportunities for its students. HSBC Malta remains committed to provide work experiences to students so that they are prepared for the world of work. The work placement, where theory meets practice, is an enriching experience both for the students and the employers. I look forward to continue this collaboration and welcome more students at HSBC."



# PEARL RAFFA

Chief People Officer HR - Epic



"At Epic, we are always delighted to welcome MCAST students from different departments. We have always enjoyed being trusted with the opportunity to expose these students to the working world, particularly the fast-paced one of telecoms. We get to keep abreast with the academic side of things through them as well. We look forward to many more years of collaboration between Epic and MCAST."



## ING AURELIO MICALLEF GRIMAUD

Chief Operating Officer & Accountable  
Manager - Mediterranean Aviation Co. Ltd.

My first contact with MCAST was in 2004, while working for Lufthansa Technik Malta, when I cooperated with MCAST in the setting up of the Aviation Training Centre to train our youngsters in this specialisation of engineering. Little could I imagine that years later, in 2011, I would actually work at MCAST as Director of the Institute of Mechanical Engineering, which included Aviation.

It was a very rewarding experience, working with our future generations, and helping them find a career doing what they love doing most. I had a great advantage in dealing with Industry Partners as I actually came from industry and I knew and understood the challenges being encountered and how best to resolve them with everybody's cooperation.

My biggest satisfaction after all these years is seeing ex students having built a successful career and progressed within their organisation. This reassures me that the industry is in good hands and ready to accept the challenges that the future might bring.

The aviation business, like any other business, is always evolving and in a state of flux. Upgrading to the new technologies being used is essential for the training to remain current, relevant and of value. Also important is to give the students the life skills to be able to cope in an ever changing world and with new situations that one faces from time to time.

MCAST students are definitely very well prepared!



## REDENT BALZAN

Divisional Manager HR  
- Enemalta plc

Enemalta plc depends highly on human resources, and for this reason it maintains an excellent relationship with MCAST, because this institution is instrumental in the development of the entity. During the past years the Company recruited highly skilled workers who finalized their studies at MCAST. Their areas of study include but are not limited to Engineering, Information Technology and Finance.

The relationship between Enemalta and MCAST was forged even further by virtue of an apprenticeship programme, in which an average of twelve students are given the opportunity to work with Enemalta every year. Most of these students will then pursue a career with Enemalta.

At Enemalta students can put into practice their skills learnt at MCAST, and are also given the opportunity to follow several internal training programmes during their apprenticeship. This gives them a better picture of our operations, core functions and work practices..

Enemalta is highly satisfied with the cooperation and synergy that exists between Enemalta and MCAST. Enemalta is confident that this relationship will increase in the future for the mutual benefit of Enemalta and MCAST but, above all, for the benefit of the students who are our future workers.

# The MCAST Logo over the Years

The first MCAST logo was designed in 2001. A defining feature of this first MCAST logo were the yellow and green rectangles that encompassed three white squares within. The white squares were strategically placed on top of each other to look like steps. These steps portrayed the College as the institution to progress in one's studies and to develop oneself.

The rectangles and squares also portrayed the main areas of study of the College comprising science, technology and art and also portrayed the values of precision, stability and security.

The second MCAST logo was created in 2015 to reflect changes within the College's organisational structure. This logo included three pillars.

The design of the embracing pillars emphasized the possibility of one continuous and strong pathway and progression between the different levels.

The third MCAST logo was designed in 2021 and it reflects the ongoing growth of a vocational college in the 21st century.

The new emblem captures the eclectic nature of the College and the oldest form of learning: "learning by doing". It is designed to embrace and acknowledge the past, the present and the future of this unique College.

The chronological sense of the development of technical, vocational, and professional education and training in Malta is enshrined in the Latin motto *scientia et labore* (through knowledge and work). This same motto pertained to the former Technical Institute to which was added the official name Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology



given to the College in the late 1960s, the circled letters symbolising the entire activity of a distinctive education and training institution.

The spherical shape of the logo represents lifelong learning, while the prominent design in the middle expresses a hand and a quill that act – a combination of wisdom, creativity, and achievement. The quill symbolises the arts while the ruler represents the sciences in different forms. The minor symbols in the new emblem refer to the pillars on which the College is built – a service to the Maltese nation and its community with a creative dimension as well as an innovative technological perspective.

# Marina Sceberras

## First member of MCAST Administration Staff

**MCAST** was established through a Deed of Foundation on 11 August 2000 and in January 2001 I became one of the first two employees. I was appointed Executive Secretary to the Chairman and to the Board of Governors.

The first months were the most hectic and exciting, seeing the College engage new staff and the first Principal, and the setting up of the six Institutes. September 2001 marked the official opening of the College and at the start of October MCAST opened its doors to the first students.

Throughout all of this I was busy coordinating recruitment and events whilst carrying out my duties with the Chairman and the Board. Over the years the members of the Board of Governors changed and this gave me the opportunity to meet with various people from different walks of life. Each brought their own knowledge and expertise and this also helped me grow personally. The various members contributed towards the continuous growth of the College.

After twelve years in this role I moved to another area, that of Student Liaison. This was a new role that brought with it new challenges and closer ties with the



**2019** | Ms Sceberras with His Excellency Dr George Vella and Mrs Vella, Mr Godwin Grech, Director MCAST Gozo Campus and Mr Matthew Xuereb at the Gozo Trade Expo

students. The close encounter with the students' world gave me greater insight into their needs. Shortly after taking up the new post I embarked on setting up a fund for students to help fellow students in need so that they too would be able to pursue their studies. The constant contact with students through their various challenges and the assistance given is most rewarding.

I have always believed in taking an active role in MCAST's mission, that of being a part in the success story of the students.



'Becoming a Designer in Europe' participants during the Erasmus+ mobility at MCAST's Institute for the Creative Arts in Mosta

# International Office

By **Louis Aquilina**  
Director | Erasmus+ Projects and  
Mobility Office

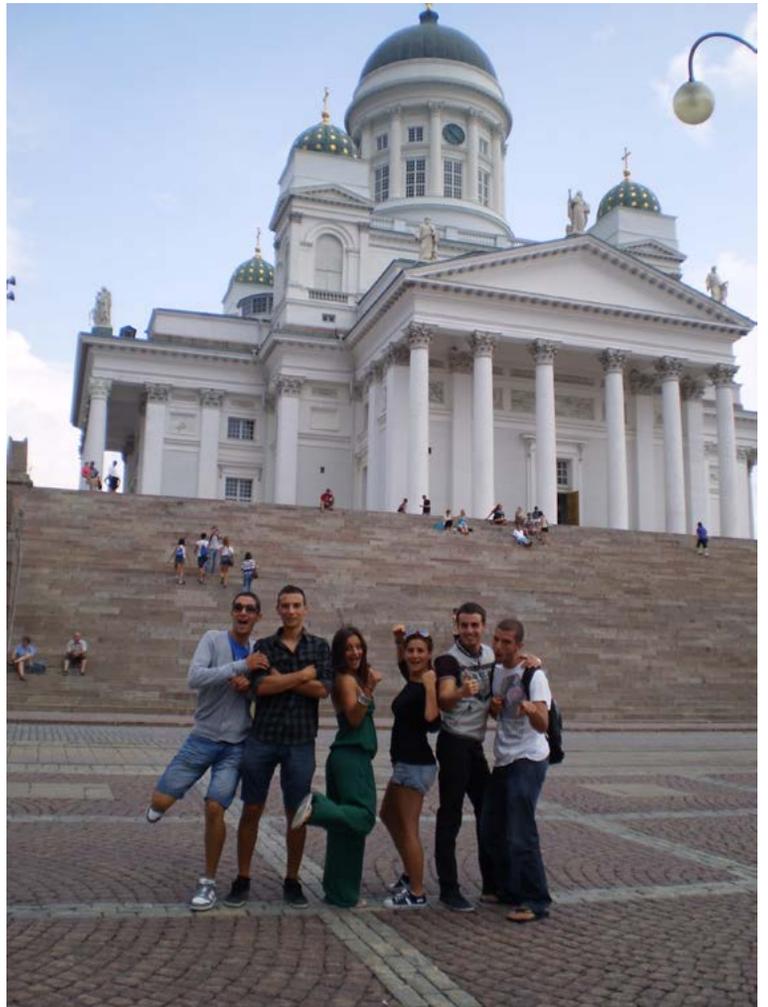
Within a year of MCAST being set up in 2001, the MCAST International Office started its operations and at once joined the Erasmus+ programme. The beginnings were small and humble, with few mobilities to and from Europe. But this changed completely with Malta joining the EU in 2004 and since then the International Office has operated incessantly to increase the number of projects the College participates in and to offer unique mobilities to its students and staff.



MCAST students in Latvia



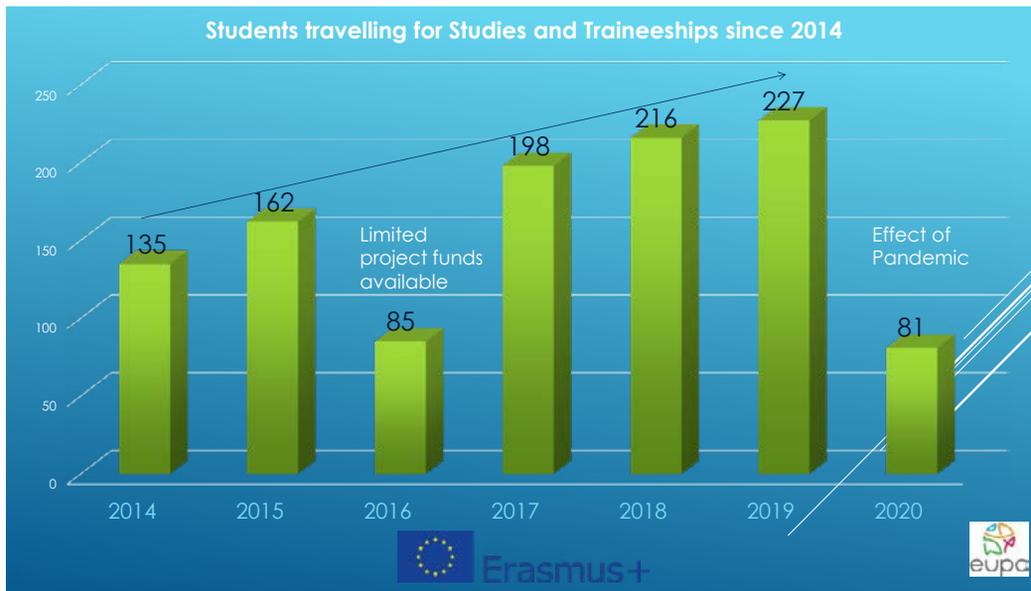
Roberta Micallef in Belgium



2010 | MCAST students in Finland

**Up** to 2013, the Office was run by 2 dedicated staff. However, in early 2014, the organization of the International Office was reshaped and activities increased exponentially. Nowadays the Office employs 5 staff members and manages 26 active Erasmus+ projects. Projects are typically valid for 2 to 3 year periods and the International Office submits fresh project applications along the year to sustain and expand its operations in this area.

At the beginning of 2021, the total funding for Erasmus+ projects ran into a few million euro. The projects cover student mobilities for studies and traineeships as well as staff mobilities for teaching and training. In addition, a large number of projects are in collaboration with a number of international partner universities and institutions and aim to deliver project outputs that serve to support both the partners as well as communities across the EU.



Graphs showing the number of projects engaged in, followed by the number of student and staff participants over the years.



Yanika Mifsud in Latvia



MCAST students in Latvia

The projects are classified as Key Action 1 (KA 1) and Key Action 2 (KA 2) projects.

KA 1 provides mobility projects to enable organisations to offer structured study, work experience, job shadowing, volunteering, training and teaching opportunities to staff and learners. KA 1 provides opportunities for individuals to improve their skills, enhance their employability and gain cultural awareness. They are able to

spend a period of time in another participating country gaining valuable experience of life, study and work with the aim of increasing the opportunities available to them.

On the other hand, KA 2 makes it possible for organisations from different participating countries to work together, develop, share and transfer best practices and innovative approaches in the fields of education, training and youth.

# A Pastoral Presence that Promotes Community

By Fr Antoine Farrugia, MCAST Chaplain



His Grace the Archbishop Charles J. Scicluna visited MCAST on a number of occasions

A holistic education involves the whole person, and spiritual care is an integral part of our overall well-being. It is for this reason that the attention which MCAST gives to its students stretches beyond the classroom and into their lives. Right from the College's foundation, the presence of a Chaplain on campus was seen as a valuable asset.



**Most** MCAST students are on the threshold of young adulthood, a time when one tends to question the meaning and purpose of one's life. Students tend to be concerned about the future and anxious about whether they will be able to take their place in society. It is this whole person that we wish to accompany throughout the years he or she spends at MCAST.

As Chaplains we meet people through an informal presence on campus. Very often we talk about mundane things though sometimes the conversation goes deeper. As Chaplains we offer a listening ear, accompanying individuals in their search for meaning. We encourage those we meet to share their personal story and experience. We help people to recognise the providential connections and sometimes this involves helping them develop their spiritual side, irrespective of

their declared religion.

Spirituality is the search for wholeness, meaning and purpose. It affirms the dignity and value of each individual and respects all spiritual paths. As we draw our inspiration from the values of our Christian heritage, we seek to provide a welcoming and caring environment, open to diversity and which affirms the value of each individual, encouraging and enabling each to draw on inner resources and beliefs to realise one's personal potential.

So, at the end of the day, it is through simple things that we fulfil our role: like hanging around in the canteen, dropping into a classroom to greet and share a thought for the day, meeting in the corridor and having a friendly chat.



## A PRESENCE WITH A LONG TRADITION

In 2007 the Archbishop of Malta, Mgr. Paul Cremona, paid an official visit to MCAST Paola Campus as part of the celebrations that marked MCAST's first Foundation Day. On that occasion he inaugurated a chapel just outside the main gate to cater for the spiritual needs of the MCAST community. The Archbishop entrusted the care of the chapel and MCAST community to Fr John Curmi, the College Chaplain at the time.

The design of the chapel was drawn by architect Jevon Vella, an MCAST lecturer who, in collaboration with the College's Projects Office, created an uncluttered space that drew its inspiration from Malta's rich architectural heritage. The utilisation of timber parquet and the use of glass blocks to allow as much sunlight in as possible, created a crisp and warm environment that facilitated quiet prayer.

In the years that followed, various priests and religious were involved in the Chaplaincy. Fr John

Curmi and Fr Marco Portelli served as Chaplains until 2014, when they were assigned to other pastoral field. The Capuchins were also quite engaged for many years, investing time and energy until they decided as a province to focus their pastoral efforts elsewhere. Fr Joe Portelli was the first Salesian to join the MCAST Chaplaincy team. A number of religious Sisters and lay people were also involved, and in various ways rendered a service to cater for the spiritual needs of the MCAST educational community in Malta and Gozo.

In 2014 the Archbishop officially asked the Salesians of Don Bosco to take on the responsibility of the MCAST Chaplaincy and Fr Antoine Farrugia SDB was assigned as the first Salesian Chaplain in MCAST with a team to support him. The current Chaplaincy Team consists of five Salesian priests and a Salesian Sister whose involvement on the team, as of this academic year, ensures a better outreach to female students. A diocesan priest is also available on the Gozo campus.



2019 | Launch of the Multifaith Room

## A CHAPLAINCY ABLE TO REFLECT AN INCLUSIVE VISION

**As** the student population at MCAST changed, so did the Chaplaincy's services adapt over time to reflect the diverse belief systems held by an increasingly international cohort of staff and students. In December 2019, a Multifaith and Quiet Contemplation Room was inaugurated to improve the social and spiritual well-being of the whole MCAST population by accommodating the spiritual needs of many.

The provision of such a sacred space for a variety of religious, spiritual, and ethical practices reflects the policy of the College that diversity and inclusiveness are pivotal in its underlying philosophy. This room supports a religiously diverse student population by giving value to different spiritual practices. It is also inclusive of individuals who do not profess any faith by creating an opportunity for them to find time and space to reflect in a calm environment.

# 20 YEARS OF MCAST EVENTS



2001 | Opening of MCAST



2010 | Dance - City and Guilds Diploma in Hairdressing Students



**2010** | Ms Kate Gonzi, the late Mr Paul A Attard, Prof Maurice Grech, Mr John Bartolo at the Help-EU Tobacco Free Stand at MCAST



**2010** | IEEE Exhibition



**2010** | Art and Design Annual Exhibition



2011 | Agribusiness Open Weekend



2011 | Foundation Day



2011 | MCAST 10th anniversary



2011 | Minister Cristina visits MCAST



2011 | Celebrating Pink October



2011 | Entrance to MCAST EXPO 2012



2011 | Students at MCAST's Institute of Art and Design present their Annual Exhibition



2014 | Agribusiness Open Weekend



2014 | Launch of MCAST Expo 2014



2014 | MCAST Partners' Conference



2014 | MCAST Partners' Conference



**2019** | Ex Prime Minister Joseph Muscat and ex Minister of Education and Employment Evarist Bartolo at the launch of the first phase of the Institute of Engineering and Transport building



**2015** | During the MCAST EXPO 2015



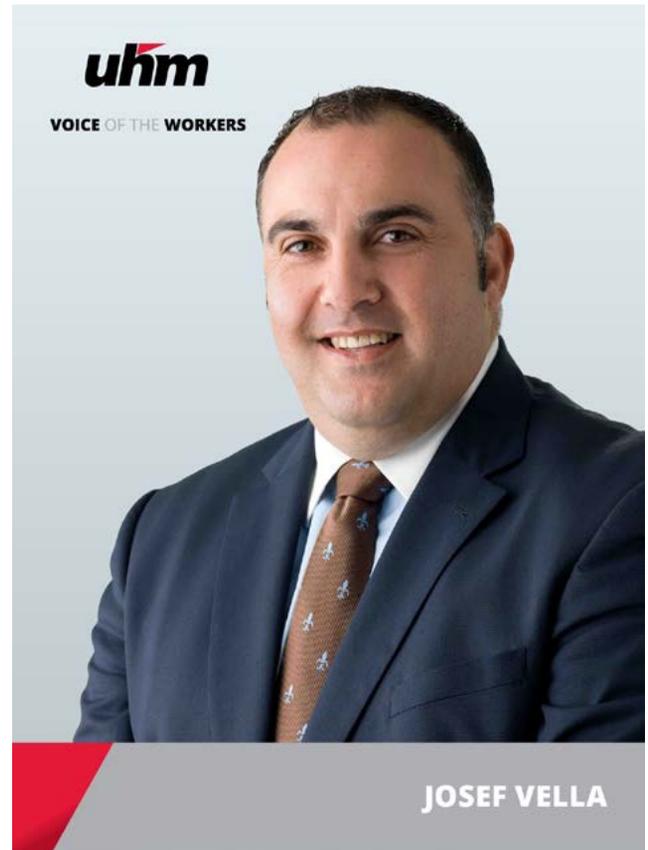
**2018** | EXPO at MCAST. From left: Mr John Bartolo, Director Student Outreach Services, Hon. Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Education and Employment, Prof Joachim James Calleja, MCAST Principal and CEO, and Mr Frederick Schembri, ex President of the MCAST Board of Governors.



**2021** | An agreement between IFE and MCAST further strengthens the teaching of vocational subjects

# An important milestone for vocational education

By Josef Vella CEO UHM Voice of the Workers and Isabelle Farrugia Assistant Director UHM Voice of the Workers



Marking twenty years from the setting up of the MCAST is a milestone worth celebrating. Throughout these two decades this educational institution was crucial in reshaping the Maltese economy as it played a key part in sectors like aviation. It is thus with great pleasure that on behalf of UHM Voice of the Workers, which has the official recognition of the administrative, clerical and support staff, we convey our message.

**The** relationship between UHM Voice of the Workers and this institution goes back to 2002 when administrative, clerical and support staff joined this union, in a bid to improve their employment conditions through a collective agreement. In view of the fact that the absolute majority of the MCAST employees joined the UHM, the union won official recognition. The collective agreement aimed to regulate the terms and conditions of employees at work. This translated into better wages, benefits and employees' duties and responsibilities.

The first collective agreement covered the period from 2004 to 2007. Subsequently, a further four collective agreements were signed, bringing continuous improvement in the conditions of work. The most recent agreement, which was signed in 2018, covers the period from 2017 to 2021. In view of this, the union is already gearing up and preparing to start the talks on the next collective agreement through a consultation process, whereby members have already been asked to submit their proposals.

This union is committed to the employees' well-being through more family-friendly measures such as flexitime and remote working. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, UHM has been at the forefront to support the provision of remote working facilities, to mitigate the impact as much as possible and support efforts for this education institution to keep serving its students. However, this would not have been possible were it not for the resilience, commitment and dedication of the MCAST staff who rose to the occasion.

Looking ahead, we look forward to more years of collaboration with MCAST to safeguard and improve the conditions of its employees and wish the College every success on the occasion of its 20th anniversary.

# Achieving Organisation, Status and Parity of Esteem

By **Marco Bonnici**, President, Malta Union of Teachers



Marco Bonnici

Twenty years of 'organised' vocational education to students is certainly an important milestone, and I hereby congratulate MCAST. I am very glad that the Malta Union of Teachers has been at the centre of this journey, which has seen the inception of MCAST and its evolution into an iconic Maltese vocational institution catering for an ever-increasing field of areas. My appreciation goes for all educators, who were or are still part of this journey, including its administrators throughout these twenty years.

**Referring** to 'organised' vocational education, this was surely one of the aims of the setting up of MCAST as one institution. Vocational education in Malta was in place well before MCAST but was fragmented, and certainly there was no national comprehensive approach towards vocational subjects. The national strategy, which formed the vision for MCAST twenty years ago, was ambitious considering the shortage, at the time, of qualified educators in the various specialised areas and also the lack of a national awarding body to issue and accredit qualifications. The former was addressed over a long span of time and saw the MUT at the centre of the process through its collective agreements which introduced incentives for training to existing and prospective lecturers. This gave a boost to training, with most lecturers benefitting from sponsorships for pedagogy courses and/or further qualifications. The latter required a lengthy process with MCAST initially making use of foreign accredited institutions to provide its training programmes and accredited qualifications. However, and this goes in line with the training aspect mentioned earlier, the upgrade of qualifications and expertise gained by lecturers enabled MCAST to enact its own home-grown programmes and to accredit its qualifications.

The autonomy of MCAST as an institution, gained also through its home-grown programmes, continued to improve the status of the institution. It also enabled MCAST to be more flexible in its approaches through the introduction of hundreds of units, tailor made for the needs of students and the employment field. And this is where I am somehow critic of some approaches taken in relation to employment. The pressures placed by employers and the labour market on MCAST is evident, and a number of courses offered are a direct reaction to pressures. However, in responding to such pressures, one needs to consider not only the immediate gain, but the long term one. Having hundreds of students trained specifically in one field simply because an employer or group is ready to offer immediate employment in the sector may sound lucrative at first but MCAST must question whether it is satisfying the needs of students or that of an employer or group. One of the fundamental

aims of an educational system is to enable students to fulfil their potentials. Having job-specific training to a group of students may not be fulfilling this aim, considering the changing world of work. Here is where, perhaps, I am in favour of those who advocate that post-secondary education should be divided in two stages, the first part providing general education and the second the specialisation. Going towards the specialisation instantly might be gratifying from a labour market perspective, but it may be disserving students who require a more holistic education.

As MCAST grew as an institution, even through the provision of programmes up to EQF level 7, educators have been rightly claiming that there was no parity of esteem between educators employed in academic institutions and those employed in vocational institutions. Collective agreements held since the inception of MCAST improved considerably conditions of work, but the salary gap, though reduced over time, was never bridged until the Collective Agreement 2017-2021 signed in July 2018. Discussions started immediately when I was elected to lead MUT in June 2017, but I knew from the very start that the achievement of the parity of esteem for vocational education would be a feat. Although I must say that MCAST administrators at the time were not against the bridging of salaries, it took months of industrial disputes, a court mandate, a strike, and hundreds of hours of negotiations, some of which held at Castille, to reach the goal. Following the conclusion of the agreement, which was a milestone, as MUT we also had extensive work due to the overhaul of the MCAST administration at the time. However, we managed to implement the agreement through discussions and persuasion.

MCAST is growing and so is the work of the MUT in the institution, having recently obtained recognition of a number of new grades. The MUT is now representing the great majority of employees at the institution. I congratulate MCAST, its management, personnel and our employee-representatives for this achievement. I look forward to further discussions and collaboration to continue providing the best educational experience to students.

# MCAST Research and Innovation

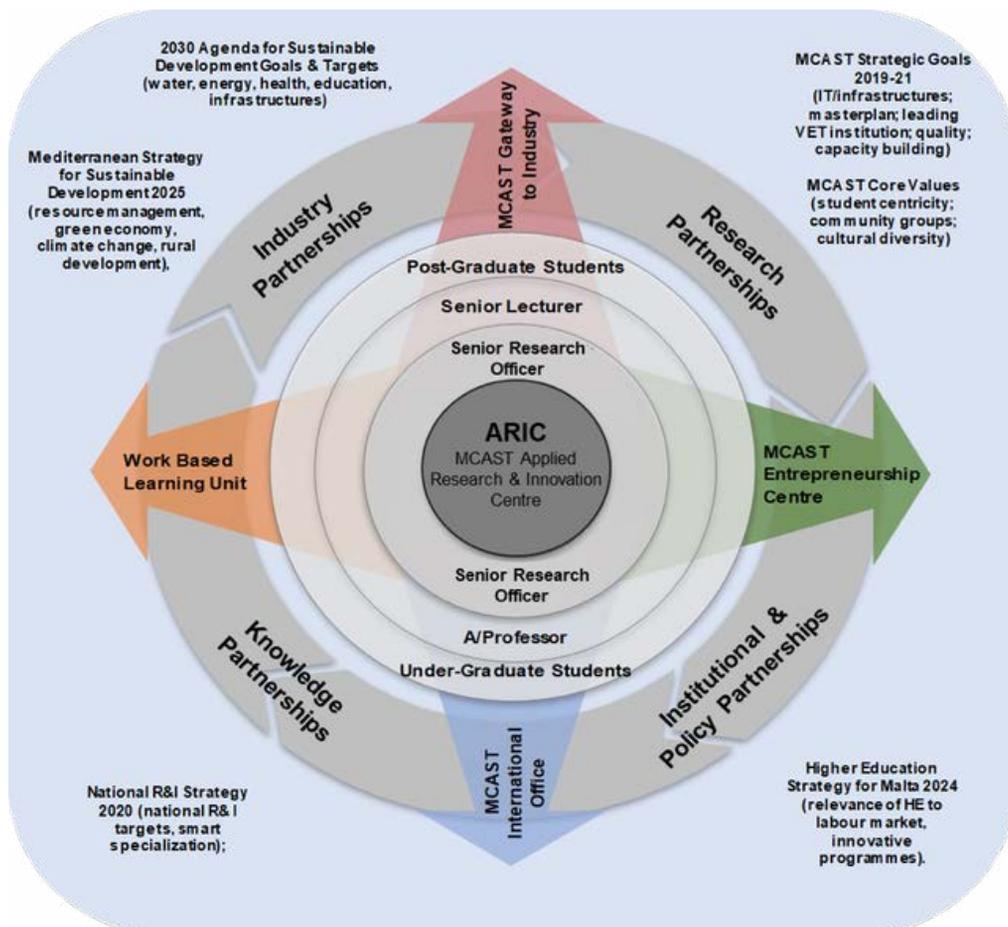
By Clifford De Raffaele, Director of Research

The Applied Research and Innovation Centre (ARIC) was conceived with the aim of assisting MCAST reach the pinnacles of Professional Higher Education. Founded on the premise that research and innovation lie at the heart of a higher educational institution, the Centre enables MCAST to distinctively provide:

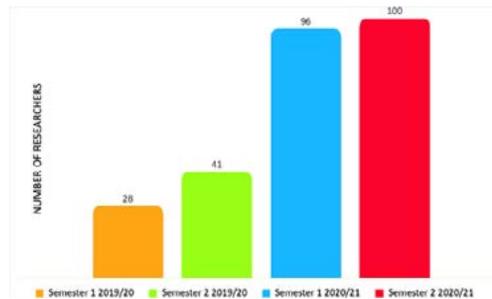
- New knowledge as opposed to mere reproduction;
- Real solutions to real-world problems;
- A process of learning that translates into new teaching approaches;
- A cycle of collaborating and disseminating findings, solutions, and new understandings.

The innovation model adopted by ARIC is one which sees innovation as a pivotal driver thus pushing MCAST closer to its strategic objectives. Innovation supports MCAST in its aim to enhance the student learning process and advance in new directions and with new methodologies and technologies.

Research at MCAST has been gaining significant momentum in the past year and a half, which saw a boom in applied research projects spanning across a variety of research areas and disciplines.



As shown in Figure 1, 28 academics were engaged in research projects at the beginning of the academic year 2019-2020, and following the engagement of the core research management team at MCAST, the number has increased sharply to 100 researchers.



## Local and International Research Collaborations

In line with MCAST’s strategic direction, the College focuses on stimulating and driving applied research and innovation within the six Institutes to strengthen existing relationships with industry and local entities, and to build new partnerships with international institutions. While the research encompasses a wide spectrum of fields and thematic areas, the collective aim of this research is indistinguishable, as it aims to lead to business development, transfer of knowledge and the development of prototypes.

The diverse list of themes that are being researched was strategically identified in response to national, regional and global policies to maximise the impact and value of the undertaken research. This approach was undertaken in response to the issue of research fragmentation which has recently been highlighted as a concern by several prominent authorities in relation to the applicability of blue skies research which occurs in domains where real-world applications are not immediately apparent.

The research drive and thematic areas which are being followed within MCAST aim to be directly responsive to the requirements of the industry, national and global strategies, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals and

Targets, the 2025 Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development and Malta’s 2027 Research and Innovation Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3).

## The Future of Research at MCAST

Research at MCAST is still relatively young. If one had to look five years into the future of research at MCAST, there are numerous dimensions that would very probably evolve and expand, such as in further refinements to MCAST’s academic and administrative structures, the challenge of penetrating the small business research domain, the further strengthening of industry collaboration within MCAST research endeavours, and stronger academic institutional research ties. An excellent insight into MCAST’s existing research themes can be found at <https://www.mcast.edu.mt/applied-research/>.

Albeit the recent adoption of research within MCAST was overwhelmingly embraced, the road ahead to mature research is undoubtedly one full of excitement and prosperity.

As MCAST shapes itself in line with the upcoming strategy for 2022-2027, the value of research and innovation will propel the institution evermore forward as a Professional Higher Educational institution, leading towards a future fulfilled with international collaborations and recognition.



2021 | MCAST Research Team

# Vision & Strategy

By **Edel Cassar**, Director Strategy

Since its inception, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology has always been intended to be a dynamic institution that adapts itself to the education and training needs of its students as well as ensuring relevance to the current and future demand for skills in the respective economic sector. The transformative nature of the College is its fundamental strength and the foresight for the coming years reinforces the necessity for the College to adapt, sustain and fuel creativity, innovation, research and quality in its delivery.

**The** path which the College is seeking to take is aligned with the European and the national policy context. The strategic horizon for the forthcoming years is informed, aligned and directed by relevant Maltese and European policy documents. These include the targets of the ET 2020 Monitor, the conceptual direction of the Cedefop publication VET in Europe 1995-2035, the Framework for Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024, the National VET Policy and the WBL and Apprenticeship Act.

In meeting ever-changing needs, the College develops the capacity to meet labour market demands on an ongoing basis. In delivering its professional and vocational programmes, it ensures that the infrastructure is well-equipped and provides access to the latest technologies. The College has been at the forefront of challenging the stigma which vocational training faces in being considered inferior to mainstream education. Since 2019, three-year cyclical programme reviews put the emphasis on the relevance, freshness and contemporary content of professional and vocational courses which carry parity of esteem alongside other programmes of study.

Developing physical infrastructure provides appropriate facilities for staff and students. Existing physical infrastructure refurbishment creates modern spaces for teaching, learning and research. Ongoing construction is meant to develop a purpose-built flexible campus. The upgrading of equipment and IT infrastructure is also central to optimizing physical and financial resources and modernizing the learning processes.

In parallel to the infrastructural developments, the College's governance and operational structure is continuously enhanced to allow it to respond in a more autonomous manner, for it to be leaner and more dynamic, while securing accountability and longer-term sustainability.

Going forward, the College's mid-term strategy (2022-2027) is focused on a three-pronged blueprint including initiatives that achieve the desired infrastructural investment; initiatives aimed at making MCAST a more outward-looking community college; and initiatives aimed at moving away from a silo mentality and working closer with industry, stakeholders and social partners.

In this regard, the first stream foresees the upgrading of internal management of IT, AI and EdTech systems, the continuation of the implementation of the masterplan; and the development of a financial strategy. These objectives are all aimed at contributing to an overarching strategy to make the facilities of the College future-proof and provide a state-of-the-art campus for current and future prospective students.

The second stream relates to becoming a more outward-looking organization including initiatives concerning work-based learning experiences and constant focus on quality improvement of teaching and learning, and CPD of all staff.

The third stream ties in with the second in that it refers to MCAST moving away from a silo mentality and strengthening the network with the local community and international partners and increased partnership with industry and social partners, including non-governmental organisations.

These concepts underpin the strategic blueprint of the College and also inform annual plans, management decisions and thematic/departmental strategic plans. In doing so, the College continues to promote the highest standards on intellectual inquiry and rigour; embrace improvement and change; and celebrate the success of our people.



# MG2i, MCAST commercial arm, goes from strength to strength



2020 | Signing of MoU between MCAST and Accra Technical University in Ghana

MCAST Gateway to Industry Ltd was established in 2008 and conceived as MCAST's commercial arm, with the aim of supporting, enhancing and complementing the College's commercial operations. During the past twelve years the company provided a suite of MCAST accredited courses in professional and vocational education for a skilled and flexible workforce to meet the challenges of the needs of industry.

**MG2i** kept its values consistent with those of MCAST - valuing inclusion, excellence and equity with a spirited commitment to cultural diversity, mutual respect and compassion amongst one another.

MG2i works closely with the local industries to ensure that the knowledge, skills and competences within the College's curricula are appropriate and relevant to a dynamic and forward-looking economy. This relationship stimulates the College's success, as it strives to ensure that its programmes are flexible, relevant and responsive to the industries' requirements.

During the past two decades we have experienced accelerated changes in the demand for skills that raised the possibility of structural shifts in the labour market in Malta and around the world. MG2i reacted to the needs of the country and offered quality training to support a robust economy, through the provision of tailor-made training programmes. MG2i offers a variety of courses, delivered in Maltese and English. These courses vary in depth, level and duration – from short hobby courses all the way to accredited ones, delivered across a number of years. Thousands of students responded and benefited from such courses. MG2i also delivers client-specific solutions whereby, through dialogue, tailor-made courses



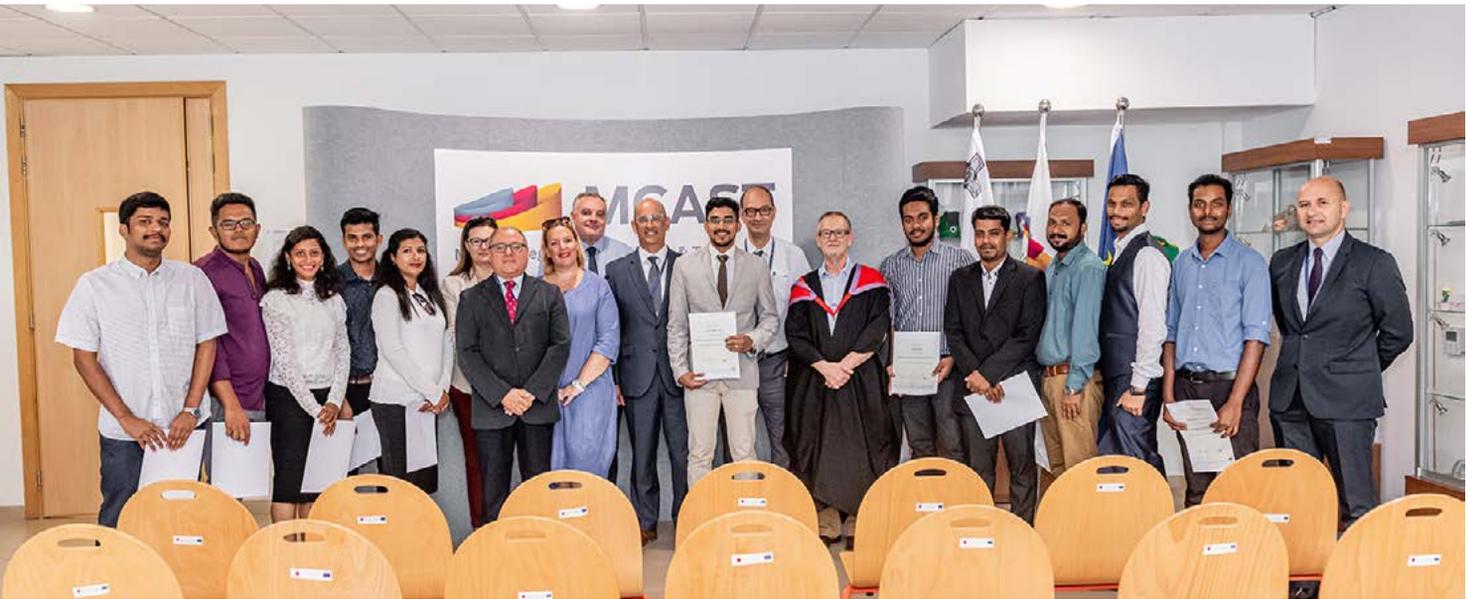
2019 | MCAST signs agreement with Transcargo International



MCAST signs MoU with CV Raman Group India



2017 | Launch of Part-time Courses



2019 | Graduation of a group of Indian students who successfully completed their studies at MCAST

are designed, prepared and delivered by the MCAST academic staff as per the clients' needs.

During the past four years, MG2i diversified its focus and launched the provision of bespoke courses to International students. Efforts by MG2i to promote the MCAST brand in the South East Asian market has yielded immediate results, registering an exponential increase in International students' applications.

The company has registered considerable growth during the past year. It is now geared towards taking the next steps to increase its operations through a three-year business plan, which was approved by the MCAST Board of Governors and the MG2i Board of Directors.

New commercial avenues will be explored and will position MCAST as a leader in vocational training provision. The company will be exploring new local and international markets and developing new methods to sustain its business and continue offering the best service to its customers during the coming years.

# MCAST Student Life over 20 Years





Car Wash in aid of Puttinu Cares



Hair and Beauty Marathon



Orchestra at MCAST



Freshers' Day



Diversity Day



MCAST Electronics students Christopher Galea and Luke Tanti and Art and Design student, Kurt Bullock won silver and a Medallion of Excellence respectively at the prestigious EuroSkills 2014 competition



One of the teams that participated in the voluntary work day at various residences of Richmond Foundation



Freshers' Week



Freshers' Day



2012 | MCAST Aircraft Maintenance ceremony



Institute of Community Services students with their lecturers

# MCAST members of staff



2001 | First group of ICT staff



2018 | MCAST celebrated Pink October



2001 | Administrative Staff party



2010 | Graduation - From left: Mr Vella, Ms Pulis, Mr Farrugia, Prof Grech, Mr Farrugia, Mr Sciberras and Mr Pace



Institute of Community Services staff present donation to Puttinu Cares



2010 | Library Staff on a teambuilding trip to Gozo



2002 | Institute of Business and Commerce staff team with Mr Scicluna, ex President of MCAST



2019 | MCAST Student Support Services staff team



2001 | First Administrative Staff team that was headed by today's Principal & CEO Profs Calleja



2002 | MCAST Senior Management - From left: Prof Calleja, Mr Sciberras, Mr Busuttill, Ms Pulis and Ms Cilia



Naxxar Staff Team



2001 | Staff Christmas Party held at the Maritime Institute



# MCAST

A heartfelt thank you to all members of staff, students and collaborators who helped create the MCAST legacy. These twenty years are a success story of a community that has come together to champion a culture of innovation in teaching and learning. We are immensely proud of each and every one of you!

# 20

YEARS  
ANNIVERSARY

