

# MCAST LINK

Issue 59 // Q4 2021



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# Editorial



**THIS CHRISTMAS** edition highlights the main twentieth anniversary celebrations organized by the College. These include the launch of a new College logo and brand guidelines, the announcement of the new Professional Research Doctorate (DRes) and the presentation of the College's strategic direction for the next six years.

Throughout these last few months the College has signed several Memorandums of Agreement with both local and international entities, including the University of Malta, the AFM, the Jiangsu Vocational College of Medicine in China, the Water Services Corporation and VIBE FM amongst others. These collaborations strengthen MCAST's relationship with industry and the local community and are win-win situations whereby both MCAST students and members of staff and the signing entities benefit.

This issue features the much awaited for MCAST Graduation Ceremonies and MCAST Freshers' Days that were not held last year due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Over 2,500 students graduated during twelve ceremonies that were held at the MCAST Main Campus in Paola in September 2021.

During the MCAST Freshers' Days 2021-2022 the Campus was buzzing with activity and this is portrayed in the photos inside this magazine. A full programme of activities was organized during which students had the opportunity to mingle and discover the MCAST life on Campus.

I wish all our readers a peaceful and safe Christmas celebrated with loved ones!! May next year be better than this one!!

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# Message by the Principal and CEO

**AS WE** close in to the end of year 2021, I wish to take this early opportunity to thank all MCAST staff and students for their singular contributions as well as collective contributions towards the number of activities at MCAST over these last few months.

The lifting of several COVID19 restrictions gave a new lease of life to the College. Evidence of this has been the active participation of students, staff and many stakeholders at Fresher's Week. This year we have had extraordinary participation from industry and non-governmental organisations. This added to colour the event and to engage more students throughout the whole week. Of interest were the daily discussions every morning on students' life in and outside the College. The planned interaction between students and industry, and NGOs was added value to the event. Students could appreciate that education and training at MCAST were much more than being in lecture rooms, laboratories and workshops. Work-based learning is indeed at the heart of all our learning activities at the College. Whether one's contribution is in a real workplace or at NGO, the practical dimension of what is being learnt and experienced is the best education one can acquire.

Students active participation was also at the heart of the launch of the new Strategic Plan 2022-2024. Launched by Minister Caruana, the strategy outlines the College's commitment for the next six years in the key aspects of its quality and services to students and adult learners. Three transversal themes and seven strategic objectives, initiatives and measures have been recommended upon by an extensive stakeholders' online forum, which included students, staff members and social partners and agreed upon by the Board of Governors and our Line Ministry. Our ambition remains that of consolidating and changing structures that serve the learning community of MCAST. Priority will be given to ensure adequate and modern infrastructure, quality and relevance that enhance the



student's learning experience, work-based learning for all students, an enhanced image of vocational and professional education and training in Malta, a wider international network and connectivity, a reinforced and sustainable governance and management structure as well as incentives to strengthen the development of applied research and innovation across the College. These strategic objectives have already formed the first strategic plan for the College 2019-2021. In the plan launched a few weeks ago, these objectives will be further developed to achieve higher levels of excellence, of services and of a learning and teaching environment conducive to 21st-century advancements in technology and in work practices requiring skills and competences that match the challenges of a labour market in constant fluctuation.

For this reason, the College binds itself to achieve twenty smart targets aimed at having a clinical and accountable approach to development across the whole spectrum of the College. In addition, the three transversal themes identified as a result of consultation will focus on (i) student retention, engagement, development and involvement; (ii) the aspiration of all of us to have a community college and a college for the community as well as (iii) greener sustainability and digitalisation. In doing so, the College's ambition is to attract more students and make MCAST a better place for employment. On top of these objectives lies our overall ambition to prepare students for a world which is increasing becoming a hub of communication, competition and excellence.

It is with this spirit of hard work and achievement that we look at the coming year with a stronger commitment to raise standards in teaching, learning, administration and relations with national and international stakeholders.

The increasing activities as can be evidenced from this edition show that the College is gradually becoming a meeting point of several stakeholders who consider the MCAST brand as a quality product. More and more employers are engaging in different activities with the College. More and more MoUs and Agreements are being signed with public and private organisations. More and more NGOs are knocking on our doors to engage students on their various activities. These are signs of a growing organisation that is clear in its strategic direction of ultimately becoming a community college for all. This implies that our resources will be available to as many learners as possible. MCAST will shortly be seen as a learning hub par excellence with the new Resource Centre about to be inaugurated. This is being achieved by striking a balance between the provision of qualifications at all levels of the Malta Qualifications Framework. This unique feature of the College makes our academic life more challenging but equally

rewarding. The large number of graduates who have climbed the ladder of achievement from the lowest to the highest is perhaps the greatest prize any lecturer or administrator would win in an educational setup.

Lately several new initiatives have also been taken by management and approved by the Board of Governors notably the setting up of MStart a new Entrepreneurship Centre for our students which aims at promoting the concept of entrepreneurship amongst students, alumni and researchers, actively help and support them to start a business venture and organise activities that increase their business success opportunities while acquiring funding and other types of financing related to SMEs. The other important decision taken by the Board of Governors has been to establish systems of procedures for the Governing Board itself, the Council of Institutes as well as the Executive management Team which it now recognises as a key management structure. In this way, the College continues to strengthen its governing and management structures as outlined in one of the key strategic objectives of the College.

MCAST is also working to acquire the Equality Mark Certification in order to provide a healthy college environment that is free from any type of discrimination. MCAST acknowledges the responsibility to provide equal access to all services provided by the College irrespective of their gender and responsibilities.

The College community will continue to meet the needs of our students, support them and their families and deliver the very best level of education to ensure that every single student is provided with the opportunities they need. Equally, the College will continue to improve the working conditions of all staff members and sustain the already high retention rate of our employees.

As we are already in the festive season may I take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a very Merry Christmas and a safe and Healthy New Year.



# Ten candidates apply for MCAST's first Professional Research Doctorate



During the Launch of the Professional Research Doctorate (DRes)

# Ten candidates have applied for the new Professional Research Doctorate (DRes) that was launched in June 2021.

**THIS PROGRAMME** of studies is the first of its kind provided at MCAST. The doctorate is a research-based EQF/MQF Level 8 qualification and focuses on the competitive behaviour of small organisations within small island states.

Statistics developed by the National Statistics Office (NSO) have identified around 30,000 small firms operational in Malta. According to the NSO, these small organisations are responsible for more than 65% of employment in Malta. The NSO's findings highlight the importance of conducting research aimed to help small organisations grow and thrive.

Professor Joachim James Calleja, MCAST's Principal and CEO said, "The launch of this Level 8 programme is the result of years of research and preparation. Our collaboration with industry goes beyond course provision, and not everyone might be aware of the diverse work going on at the College. Our research work aims to provide data and information, which will help industry to make evidence-based decisions."

Dr Ing. Alex Rizzo, Deputy Principal for Research and Innovation said, "Through the application of mixed research methods, the course aims to unearth much-needed information on the behaviour of small organisations. Driven by grounded research, data obtained will help professionals comprehend better the complex decision-making processes and behaviours within small organisations. In turn, potential findings

will help researchers understand which best-practise models should be adopted by business-oriented small firms and other small organisations."

Also present for the launch of the DRes programme was Ms Stephania Dimech Sant, CEO of the Richmond Foundation that is also a partner of the MCAST DRes. Ms Dimech Sant commented on the importance of applied research to better understand and respond to human needs and behaviours.

Mr Paul Abela, President of the Malta Chamber of SMEs and Ms Abigail Mamo, CEO of the Malta Chamber of SMEs said, "MCAST is a very important pillar in our education system, and it is also an entity with whom we share many common goals related to how education should contribute to Malta's economic development. This is one of a number of initiatives the Malta Chamber of SMEs is working on, with the ultimate objective of elevating the knowledge and competences of SMEs in Malta while encouraging small businesses not to lag and to spearhead with their own research projects."

Aimed toward Master's Degree holders, this DRes will run over 5 years on a part-time basis. Students must follow four taught modules related to advanced Research Methods during their first year. After completion, successful candidates will progress to the main component of the DRes, namely the research endeavour. Students must also publish three academic, rigorously researched articles.





# MCAST Launches Brand Guidelines

As part of its twentieth anniversary celebrations, MCAST launched its new College logo and brand guidelines representing both the College's legacy and its vision as a centre of excellence in vocational and professional education and training.



# MCAST

**THE NEW** emblem encapsulates the diversity of MCAST and the oldest form of education: 'learning by doing.' The three major, distinctive features of the new logo highlight very significant messages in a rapidly changing world. The Latin motto *scientia et labore* epitomises the chronological development of technical, vocational and professional education and training in Malta.

The former Technical Institute carried the same motto. Additionally, the name given to the College in the late 1960s, MCAST, has been added to it, while the circled letters symbolise the entire activity of a distinctive education and training institution. The spherical shape of the logo signifies lifelong learning, while the prominent design at the centre expresses a hand and a quill. These signify wisdom, creativity and achievement. The minor symbols in the new emblem refer to the overarching goals driving MCAST's strategy and activity: to serve innovatively the nation and its community with a creative approach and within an international perspective.

A stone shield engraved in the front MCAST building, which belonged to the former Technical Institute and now serves as the College's Administration Building, inspired the new MCAST logo.

The MCAST Prospectus 2021-2022 was also launched on this day. It included details on all 190 full-time courses offered by the College, from Introductory level courses to Master's level. Six new courses are being offered reflecting industry skills needs: Advanced Diploma in Graphic Printing; Advanced Diploma in Hairdressing; Master of Science in Aerospace Engineering; Master in Artificial Intelligence for Industry 4.0; Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering and Sustainable Technology and Master in Retail.

Professor Joachim James Calleja, Principal and CEO said: "At MCAST, we strive to provide accessible professional education and training that responds to the needs of the individual and the economy. Over twenty years, we have continued to develop as a centre of excellence in vocational education and training. Our brand identity lets us tell the MCAST story where the student is at the centre and community matters. Inspiration is at the heart of our community of creators and innovators. We invite students to start their lifelong journey at the College."

*further information about the brand guidelines can be found here:*  
<https://www.mcast.edu.mt/mediakit/>



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I s s u e 5 9

# MCAST and Water Services Corporation aim to enhance sustainable water management



*Prof Calleja, MCAST CEO and Mr Ivan Falzon WSC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at the signing of the MoU*

**INA** bid to enhance sustainable water management MCAST and the Water Services Corporation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The new MoU will build upon three areas of ongoing and increasing collaboration between the two organisations, namely: skilling, upskilling and re-skilling in water operations and technologies, the creation of an innovative water platform and the advancement of water research.

Ongoing and regular collaboration with the WSC is driven by MCAST's R&I Centre, supported by a number of MCAST Institutes.

Just over five years ago, the first WSC-MCAST MoU was signed to announce and support the launching of MCAST's new Water Research and Training Centre (WRTC). This WRTC has been successful in acquiring over €1 million in EU funding towards a range of projects and initiatives, strongly supported in various ways by the WSC. It is now that the WSC is reaching new heights as a knowledge-driven organization, and is re-energizing its own Institute of Water Technology. Therefore, an updated MoU that strengthens and commits further collaboration with MCAST, is in order.

MCAST and the WSC have regularly collaborated in various skilling and training programmes in recent years, with programmes such as the upskilling of WSC technicians and higher programmes aimed for the public such as the MCAST MSc in Integrated Water Resource Management. Plans are in the pipeline to acquire EU funds for a new mode of water skilling, in collaboration with a range of European higher education institutions and water utilities, utilizing Extended Reality to allow learners to immerse themselves in water technologies in a virtual fashion.

Moreover, during the past three years MCAST and the WSC have joined forces in a first-of-its-kind Erasmus+ Platform of Vocational Excellence in Water (POVE) project that included ten other European partners, and which established a common European platform for water education that addressed the various industry's water skills gaps.

MCAST and WSC have embarked on an exercise to identify the local attitude, knowledge, skills and competences that are missing in current and future water professionals, thus ensuring an agile and competent future workforce. MCAST has developed an Online Platform which gave all twelve partners the opportunity to create water related courses, whilst the WSC were vital in providing technical knowledge within the local courses. Plans are now underway to extend this POVE project in a forthcoming EU-wide programme relaunch.

Importantly, whilst various research collaborations take place regularly between the WSC and MCAST, the research into Apparent Water Losses is in the forefront and has been ongoing since the inception of MCAST's WRTC. The main focus of this research is in water meter under-registration and degeneration, a topic that is of high interest to all water utilities around the world. The synergies here are of great potential; MCAST hosts one of the most accurate water meter test facilities to be found, whilst the WSC is an expert in smart metering and in water loss control. Yearly research collaboration efforts have resulted in vital knowledge acquisition on water meter performance and replacement strategies, and in a number of dissertations and peer reviewed publications. Plans are at hand to extend this vital research even further.

# Apprenticeship Recovery Plan



*Prof Calleja addressing the audience during the launch of the Apprenticeship Recovery Plan*

Hon. Dr Justyne Caruana, Minister for Education and Hon. Clyde Caruana, Minister for Finance and Employment announced an investment of almost €2.75 million for students to be given apprenticeship opportunities. This investment will allow MCAST to encourage more companies to recruit students in apprenticeship programmes.



**THE COVID-19** pandemic has put several challenges on employers and companies. For the economy to grow in a post-pandemic scenario, companies must keep investing in work-based learning to have qualified and well-trained employees to sustain growth. Apprenticeships play a key role in such development of human capital. The Government will be supporting industry to encourage the take-up of apprentices during these challenging times.

Speaking about this support

scheme, Principal and CEO Professor Joachim James Calleja said: “This is an extraordinary commitment in support of apprenticeships. Work-based learning is at the heart of what MCAST does. Ensuring that students engage in positive hands-on learning experiences is crucial. As a College, we will keep working on strengthening our active network of over 1,463 companies. We have 1,675 students engaged on an apprenticeship, and we will keep striving to ensure that more students experience the benefit of apprenticeships.”





From left Mr Stephen Vella, Ms Maxine Micallef, Prof Joachim James Calleja, Mr Juheng Chen and Ms Elaine Zammit

## MCAST collaboration with Jiangsu Vocational College of Medicine in China

**ON THE** 15th July 2021 MCAST signed a new partnership agreement with Jiangsu Vocational College of Medicine in China (JSMC).

The partnership between both parties was sealed by the virtual signing of a Memorandum of Understanding. The event was attended by the College's top management, representatives from Jiangsu's Education Ministry, the Malta-China Chamber of Commerce and officials from Education Malta.

The virtual signing was aimed to enhance educational opportunities through diverse initiatives, such as student and faculty exchange programmes, dual degrees, cultural immersion and resource sharing.

Jiangsu's Vocational College of Medicine (JSMC) has a long standing medical

educational history dating back to 1941, when it started its operations.

JSMC gives great importance to developing students' practical abilities. This correlates well with MCAST's approach of delivering education. Thus, a mutual ground for both Colleges is in place.

The China-based college boasts excellent academic achievements. In recent years, JSMC won more than 30 Jiangsu provincial commendations. The College has also secured 126 individual and group student awards in the national vocational students' skills competitions.

MCAST looks forward to continue strengthening its ties with high achieving international entities, in order to enhance opportunities for both its staff and students.

# MCAST prepares students for careers in the Malta Public Service

**MCAST IS** now preparing students wishing to embark on a career in the Malta Public Service. The Institute for the Public Services has published a call for applications to identify suitable students from outside the Public Service to pursue a full-time course leading to a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Public Policy and Management accredited at MQF Level 6.

The course includes class work and work placements within the Malta Public Service in areas related to the course content. The selected applicants who graduate in the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Public Policy and Management will

be appointed Managers at Salary Scale 10 level of responsibility, subject to the terms, conditions and benefits stipulated in this circular, within the various Ministries in the Public Service.

The course leading to the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Public Policy and Management commenced in October 2021 with lectures being held according to a timetable issued jointly by IPS and MCAST and which covers the class and work placement. The course is of a duration of three years and is accredited at Level 6 within the Malta Qualifications Framework.



## MCAST lecturers design novel MCAST sculpture

**MCAST STAFF** members Stefan Priehyba, Clint Calleja, David A. Agius and Sefton Mamo were behind the meticulous design and creation of the new MCAST sculpture.

The statue as an abstract object is an amalgamation of two processes of the development. One aspect is the development itself and this is represented as a copper wire that runs across the statue. Another part of the statue is the tools including a right angle and fragments of a compass. These elements represent the idea of the planning process that is required as a part of one's studies and development.

The lecturers involved in this project used the skills and practices that they employ in their designated workshops when tutoring their students. The different components of the sculpture show the different skill set of individual lecturers.



## Debate Tournament organized at MCAST

**BETWEEN NOVEMBER** 2020 and March 2021, a third Debate Tournament was organised by several MCAST Initial VET Student Mentors and Aġenzija Żgħażaġh Youth Workers. The aim of this project was to continue providing young people with life skills and soft skills which would help them throughout their academic journey at MCAST.

The objective was to empower young people to develop skills such as communication skills, leadership skills, organisational skills, presentation techniques, public speaking, research skills, teamwork and time-management skills.

This year's tournament was held online via the Microsoft Teams platform. Keeping in line with the tournament's rules and regulations, Level 3 students from various Institutes within MCAST signed up to participate in groups of three. The Aġenzija Żgħażaġh youth workers provided multiple training sessions about debating techniques for the young people, while student mentors provided a briefing session to the

tournament judges.

Throughout the debates students displayed exceptional communication skills and showed that they could still work as a team, despite pandemic related restrictions. With this year's participants forming two distinctive teams, The Girls' Team and The Boys' Team, four initial rounds took place. Following the points achieved in these two rounds, two final rounds were held in which both teams competed for first place.

During an award ceremony organised on campus at MCAST, the winning team were presented with a trophy and €240 in prize-money, the runners-up were given €100 prize-money, while every participant received a certificate of participation.

Awards were once again kindly sponsored by Aġenzija Żgħażaġh. Following a satisfactory debate tournament, the organisers look forward to plan further debate tournaments at MCAST in the coming years.



# New bachelor's course for kindergarten teachers

**KINDERGARTEN EDUCATORS** with a post-secondary education can now enrol in a new Bachelor of Arts course being delivered by MCAST and the Institute for Education.

The Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Early Years, Learning and Care (Top-up) will be open to kindergarten educators who already have an MQF Level 5 Higher National Diploma in this sector. The course will begin in January 2022.

The course is a collaboration between MCAST and the Institute for Education, which over the past two years joined forces to design and develop the course.

It is 18 months long and part-time. Kindergarten educators who graduate with

a degree will be classified as KGE 3, and the progression will also reflect a better salary.

Lectures will be delivered both online and face-to-face. This will provide educators with the flexibility and possibility to continue working full-time whilst obtaining a high standard degree.

The course will be designed in a way that participants have direct sessions with lecturers and peers, and sessions where course material is accessible at any time.

Applicants can also apply for the 'Get Qualified' Scheme which will enable them to benefit from a tax credit for the cost incurred.



# Agreement between AFM and MCAST to strengthen military skills

**MCAST AND** the Armed Forces of Malta reached an agreement to strengthen the skills of soldiers. The agreement will provide educational development for College students but also for Armed Forces personnel.

MCAST offers various study programmes at different and at various levels, a programme leading to a career in the military forces.

Dylan Portelli and Dwayne Spiteri, two AFM soldiers, and scores of others were given the opportunity to study at MCAST to enhance their skills and studies not only in the execution of their current

duties but also for the future of their career with the AFM.

Dylan Portelli said that the opportunity offered by AFM provides an opportunity to invest in oneself by continuing to study the trades. This will be helpful after terminating from the military force, which offers many opportunities because this is a life of dedication but also plans for the future.

Dwayne Spiteri said that he is now in his second year of his studies which are preparing him to become a technician on AFM Patrol Boats and will also help him when he leaves the Armed Forces.



University of Malta technical staff training at MCAST

# MCAST partners with the University of Malta

**A PARTNERSHIP** agreement was signed on 6th July 2021 by Prof. Alfred J. Vella Rector of the University of Malta and Professor Joachim James Calleja MCAST Principal and CEO. This will result

in University of Malta technical staff being trained at MCAST. The project is planned to train UOM technical staff in seventeen courses in various technical and scientific areas.



## IAS-ICT collaborative research on Research Excellence Programme funded project

With the continuous evolvement of the COVID-19 outbreak, there is the potential tangible occurrence of larger-scale community outbreaks, both locally and globally. Healthcare professionals (HCPs) must, therefore, act unfailingly with updated protocols on the appropriate use of a hierarchy of control measures, including the appropriate wearing (donning), removal (doffing) and disposal of personal protective equipment (PPE), designed for the mitigation of transmission risks associated with infectious diseases. Protocol breaches during donning/doffing PPE, such as touching the face while doffing, can increase transmission of COVID-19; thus, the importance of strict adherence to PPE protocols is paramount.



*iSADD Research Team photo*

**A GROUP** of researchers made up of lecturers at the Institute of Applied Sciences and the Institute of Information and Communication Technology are conducting an innovative project aimed at building and testing an augmented reality and voice controlled prototype which can support appropriate donning and doffing of PPE. As part of the project a voice control system and a PPE evaluation system will be developed to allow for effective voice commands to be relayed to a smart device and to highlight if PPE has been correctly donned and whether the correct sequence was followed during doffing, respectively.



*The project is called Development of an Integrated Simulation and Assessment in Donning and Doffing for healthcare professionals (iSADD). For further details please contact a member of the iSADD Research Team: Neville Schembri (Senior Lecturer – IAS; Project Lead); Dr Lorna Bonnici West (Senior Research Officer – Research & Innovation); Phyllis Farrugia Abanifi (Lecturer - IAS); Daren Scerri (Senior Lecturer - IICT); Gerard Said Pullicino (Senior Lecturer - IICT); Jonathan Vella (Senior Lecturer - IAS); Dorriane Cachia (Senior Lecturer - IAS).*



*This research is financed by the Malta Council for Science and Technology under the Research Excellence Programme.*

*Further information and latest developments can be accessed at <https://isadd.mcast.edu.mt/>*



*Stem Education Awards 2021 - Ms Scicluna Bugeja, Assistant Director, Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes, His Excellency Dr Vella, President of the Republic of Malta, Mr Zahra, Senior Lecturer II, Institute of Applied Sciences, and Dr Fabri, Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Education*

# MCAST lecturer receives STEM Award

**RICHARD ZAHRA**, MCAST Senior Lecturer, was nominated by the Institute of Applied Sciences to contest the first edition of the Malta STEM Education Awards (2021). He has won the Distinguished STEM Educator Award in the post-secondary category. This event was organised by the Science Centre (Pembroke) within the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes

(DLAP), under the auspices of the President of Malta. The Malta Stem Education Awards were set up to celebrate practitioners and organisations that excel in high quality STEM educational practices which inspire young people to take up STEM careers. The winners of each category were awarded a trophy and a certificate of recognition by His Excellency the President of Malta in a ceremony held on

28th June 2021 at San Anton Palace.

Mr Zahra has been teaching science subjects for over twenty-five years. Over the years, he developed a deep interest in Inquiry-Based Science Education and assimilated this approach into his own practice. He also ran various science popularisation activities at school level including a Science Club, a yearly Science Open Day and a number of science hands-on activities during which students had the opportunity to work under the guidance of real scientists. In 2011, a team of students under his tutorship won the NSTF Young Scientist Contest and were subsequently awarded a trip to the Brussels Science Expo to present their project on an international platform.

Mr Zahra was appointed Head of Department for Chemistry in 2010 and became involved in national and SEC exam paper setting as well as teacher training and mentoring. He promoted the use of inquiry-based pedagogy in the teaching of science subjects and attended an Inquiry Science Education training course at Dublin City University. For two years, he also took the role of Professional Development Facilitator as part of the EU's PRIMAS project (Promoting Inquiry in Maths and Science), wherein he set up a science teacher professional learning community at St Ignatius GSS, Blata I-Bajda.

In 2012, Mr Zahra was appointed Education Officer for Chemistry. Together with his team of Heads of Department, he continued to promote the use of inquiry pedagogy amongst chemistry teachers nationally through the running of continuous professional development programmes, and also set up a training programme for school laboratory technicians so that they could better support educators in the use of inquiry-based methods. He also served as a teaching practice tutor for university

students reading for science education degrees. Richard Zahra later served as a Deputy Headteacher in charge of Curriculum in a Church school before moving to the MCAST Institute of Applied Sciences (IAS) as a lecturer in 2015.

At the Institute of Applied Sciences, Mr Zahra strove to apply an inquiry-based pedagogy within the post-secondary vocational context, together with a complementary Assessment for Learning approach. He has been driven in his approach to teaching by a Constructivist philosophy, which sees students as actively constructing their own conceptual frameworks and scientific skills rather than being passive recipients of knowledge. His 'lectures' are more focused on ensuring that students' thinking is evident and that students think critically, rather than simply on 'transmitting' subject content. He uses a collaborative approach amongst students, and where possible, this approach is embedded in scientific investigations that are carried out by his students. During the pandemic, Mr Zahra transferred the tenets of Inquiry-Based Learning and Assessment for Learning to online learning platforms. Thus, a collaborative work approach, which was not possible in class due to anti-COVID restrictions, could still be carried out by means of Microsoft Teams, and each team of students could be monitored and assessed in real time.

Mr Zahra has recently read for a Master in Research Methods at MCAST. His dissertation, entitled "Conceptual Assessment Roadmapping: An Explanatory Model of the Assessment Design Process", reflects his interest in science pedagogy and was written from the point of view of a practitioner-researcher. In his study, Mr Zahra explored the cognitive aspects of the assessment design process amongst a sample of MCAST science subjects lecturers.

# Exciting times at the Automotive Department within the Institute of Engineering and Transport

2020 and 2021 were the most challenging years in the history of MCAST. This was very evident in the Automotive Department as practical sessions are an integral part of its courses.



**DESPITE THESE** abnormal and difficult times, all the courses offered by the Automotive Department were delivered. The MQF Level 3 courses, namely the Diploma in Light Vehicle Servicing and the Diploma in Automotive Repair (Body and Paint), were delivered on campus. The MQF Level 4 course – Advanced Diploma in Light Vehicle Maintenance – was held online with the practical sessions delivered on campus.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the Automotive Department was also busy planning and formulating an Undergraduate Diploma (MQF Level 5) in Auto Electronics and Electrical Theory. This diploma is being offered on a part-time basis over two years and is intended for qualified and experienced automotive mechanics seeking to broaden their knowledge on electric vehicles and hybrids. The diploma contains 60 credits, but offers

the learner an exit route after 30 credits, with the possibility of being awarded an Undergraduate Certificate in Auto Electronics and Electrical Technology.

The course delves into the theory of electrical vehicles and hybrids, including electrical machines, power electronics and the different energy sources available on the market. The course also provides hands-on experience using diagnostic approaches that help students troubleshoot potential integration problems. Learners are also instructed to work with various electronics equipment and become familiar with various computer-controlled systems, diagnostic software test equipment and tooling.

The Automotive Department is also looking into motorcycles, heavy machinery and agriculture machinery.



# MCAST Aerospace Programme Launch

**IN MARCH** 2021 the Institute of Engineering and Transport launched the MCAST Aerospace Programme.

The vision of MCAST is to create a Centre of Excellence in the sector of Technology and Measurements for Aerospace with the aim of boosting local academic research and increasing international collaborations.

Technologies and mechanical measurements for aerospace is a branch of engineering covering a wide range of problematics in the ever-growing aviation and space industry.

Research will be focused on addressing the following main topics, which are all interconnected:

- Hypervelocity impacts,
- Aerospace Structures,
- Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) for Aviation.

The main aim of this group is to develop research in disciplines connected with sciences, technologies and measurements for aviation and space. It also aims to explore business and research opportunities in the rapidly growing aviation market and the new emerging space sector in Malta.

There are currently ongoing collaborations with the University of Padova and the Centre of Studies and Activities for Space CISAS G. Colombo (Italy) to develop the first hypervelocity impact facility in Malta.

# IPAS+ 2021 awarded to Dr Leonardo Barilaro

Dr Leonardo Barilaro, MCAST Senior Lecturer, will lead an international research collaboration in space technology thanks to the Internationalisation Partnership and Awards Scheme Plus (IPAS+) 2021 funded by the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST).



**THE TITLE** of the awarded project is “Single-stage Light-gas Gun Preliminary Design for Aerospace Research Opportunities (SPARO)” and it will involve a collaboration with the Centre of Studies and Activities for Space (CISAS) at the University of Padova for the preliminary design of a hypervelocity research facility for MCAST.

The understanding of material properties subjected to impact situations is pivotal in different aerospace applications. This guarantees safe operations. To address this topic, specific tools are required to evaluate the impact damage on structures and systems. Light-Gas Gun (LGG) facilities can be applied to simulate different scenarios, varying the ballistic impact conditions. Common types of light-gas guns are the

single-stage LGG, two-stage LGG, and the shock tube. Single-stage LGG, despite being relatively simple in concept, is a cutting-edge technology that presents unique mechanical challenges.

This is the first time ever that this type of research is proposed in Malta. The activity will be in collaboration with Prof. Alessandro Francesconi, one of the best experts in the field worldwide.



# Launch of Master in Aerospace Engineering



**THE LEVEL 7** course is delivered part-time, with blended modalities and with a total of 120 ECTS. This brand new MCAST Master course aims at providing graduates with the skills required by national and international aerospace companies and with the right profile to match recruitment criteria for agencies as well as public and private bodies in the aerospace sector.

MCAST graduates will design and implement aerospace projects, focusing on more productive but environmentally friendly technologies, so as to respond to today's challenge of a cleaner sky and a non-polluted and less noisy environment,

as well as to provide safer, faster and cheaper transportation for a growing society.

The students will be able to choose to specialize in one of several highly sophisticated fields, such as Specialization in Structures and Measurements for Aerospace, Specialization in Aerodynamics and Space Technologies.

The Master is one of the courses provided by the Department of Aviation at the Institute of Engineering and Transport and is coordinated by Director Stephen Sammut and Deputy Director Roberto Tiscio.



# MCAST Academics attend prestigious UNESCO Conference

**ING. LONGINO DINGLI AND ING. ROBERTO TISCIO**, both Deputy Directors at the Institute of Engineering and Transport, participated as key speakers at a conference held by UNESCO. Organized by the BILT project, the conference entitled “Bridging Africa and Europe: New Qualifications and Competencies in TVET” was held to discuss initiatives that address current challenges to TVET systems.

The “Bridging Africa and Europe: New Qualifications and Competencies in TVET” conference served as a platform to explore the challenges and practical solutions related to new qualifications and competencies in the fields of

digitalization, entrepreneurship, greening and migration in TVET. The conference encouraged dialogue about the relevance, innovativeness, and applicability of the presented approaches to different contexts.

Ing. Tiscio and Ing. Dingli spoke about the difficulty of efficient integration of new qualifications and competencies into occupational profiles, curricula, and training regulations.

The project complements national developments to explore and support innovative, market-oriented and attractive modes of learning and cooperation in TVET.

# Prof. Emeritus Cesare Barbieri visits MCAST



*Prof. Emeritus Cesare Barbieri addressing the audience*

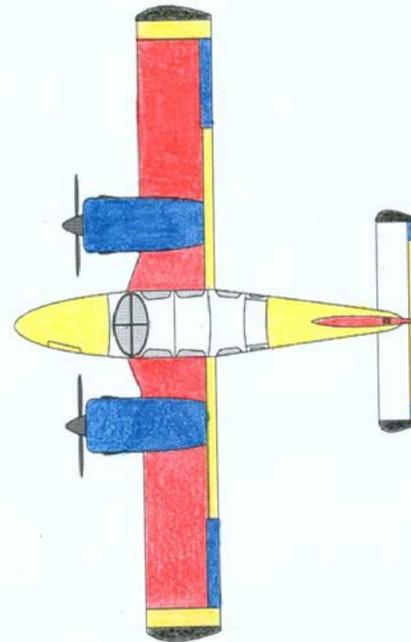
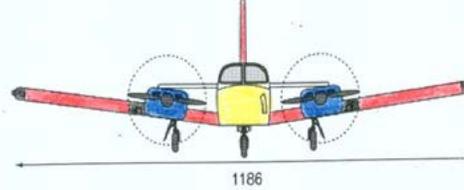
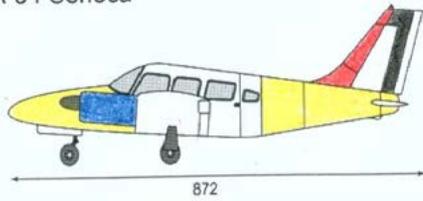


## MCAST is honoured to have hosted on campus Prof. Emeritus Cesare Barbieri from the University of Padova between the 5th and 11th of October 2021.

**APART FROM** technical meetings, Prof. Barbieri held a seminar on Friday 8th October and a public speech on Monday 11th October 2021. Dr Leonardo Barilaro, MCAST Senior Lecturer, and Prof. Barbieri will carry out research related to a cooperative preliminary evaluation for interplanetary exploration, business opportunities and applications to the aerospace sector.

Prof. Emeritus Cesare Barbieri participated in several international space projects (among others Rosetta, Hubble Space Telescope and Giotto) and directed the design and construction of the Galileo National Telescope. He has been a visiting scientist and visiting professor of various universities and scientific institutions in Europe, USA and Australia.

Piper PA-34 Seneca



All measurements in centimeters.

# MCAST's children drawing competition attracts 100 entries

A children's design competition organised by the Institute of Engineering and Transport in March 2021 has attracted around 100 entries. To participate, students had to design the colour scheme for the body and wings of a Piper Seneca aeroplane.

**THE DESIGN** competition was aimed towards primary school children in Years 4, 5, and 6.

The winning entry was by Elise Schembri who attends Year 4 at the Gozo College Rabat Primary School. The winner and the five runners up were presented with a token during an awards event at the College.

The colour schemes of the winning entry will be spray painted on an actual Piper

Seneca aeroplane at MCAST. This work will be carried out by students following the Diploma in Automotive Repair at the Institute of Engineering and Transport.

Each entry was evaluated according to three different criteria – originality, presentation and feasibility. The evaluators took into consideration the practical aspect in transferring the colour scheme into an actual life-sized aeroplane.



# Dr Lorenzo Olivieri visits MCAST

Dr Lorenzo Olivieri, a postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Space Studies CISAS G. Colombo of the University of Padova, visited MCAST during October 2021. This event was organised as part of the new MCAST Aerospace Programme and MSc in Aerospace Engineering.

**DURING HIS** visit to MCAST Dr Olivieri held a seminar and technical meetings whereby he presented his work on advances in space activities.

He has been carrying out research related to space debris impacts, structures response simulations and experiments with a particular focus on applications in the growing aerospace economy.

Dr Lorenzo Olivieri graduated in Aerospace Engineering in 2011 and he received a PhD in Measures for Space from the University of Padova in 2015. His research interests include small satellite technologies, docking systems and capturing strategies and debris protection and removal. During his career he worked in the international teams of the ReDSHIFT and E.T.PACK projects in the framework of the European H2020 programme. He is the author of 59 international conference articles and 9 papers published on peer-reviewed journals.

# MCAST Energy Researchers' contributions at several conferences and leading international peer-reviewed journals

MCAST Energy Research group has been working on Photovoltaic and Electric Vehicles integration solutions through several collaborations with the lead partners of the H2020, JUMP2Excel and NEEMO projects and other international partners. The collaboration resulted in three successful journal article publications from the group and several conference articles in the last six months. Several aspects related to PV efficiency, energy harvesting and parameters extraction were included in published articles.



The MCAST Energy Team

**AN ARTICLE** published in IEEE Transactions on Energy Conversion by MCAST Energy members as the lead authors, along with a leading advanced partner in the JUMP2Excel project, deals with the Maximum Power Point (MPP) tracking of a PV array in a niche application that is simultaneous load and irradiance change, a case which was not dealt with earlier in any of the literature. The results featured in the article have arguably achieved efficient tracking capability avoiding power losses during rapid insolation change, which is a crucial parameter ensuring the longevity of the PV panel and subjecting the related electronics to much lower stress. The open-access article may be accessed from <https://doi.org/10.1109/TEC.2021.3058454>.

Other research endeavours contributed to new and efficient methods for PV parameter extraction and estimations under various insolation levels without the knowledge of module specifications. These works that may be accessed in 10.3390/electronics10030312 and 10.3390/electronics10080878 are instrumental in quickly determining the vital operating points of PV that can ensure improved overall system efficiency.

MCAST Energy Research team members

also contributed to designing a state-of-the-art controller for a twin-arm inverted pendulum system that finds application in Segway and other types of e-mobility, published in IEEE Access. The proposed controller can help improve the stability system of Segway and may be accessed from <https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2021.3058645>.

### Interested in engaging with MCAST Energy Research Group?

*There are several ways for you to be a part of the JUMP2Excel and NEEMO projects.*

*Our researchers are constantly promoting more innovative multi-modal transport methods and PV integration through simulations and analysis. Together with you, we get deeper insights into the possibility of e-mobility, photovoltaics and the several advantages that these solutions bring along.*

*Should you be interested send us an email at [energy@mcast.edu.mt](mailto:energy@mcast.edu.mt).*

*The next JUMP2Excel is in March 2022 (registration <https://forms.office.com/r/Nf2jWCUrex>).*

*If you are interested in international workshops please send us also your interest on [energy@mcast.edu.mt](mailto:energy@mcast.edu.mt).*



## Masonry Heritage Skills students bring Medieval Chapel back to life

**FOUNDATION STUDENTS** following the Diploma in Masonry Heritage Skills at the Institute of Engineering and Transport – Construction Department, helped in the restoration of the St Catherine’s 17th century Chapel in Gudja.

The exceptional restoration work carried out by the students helped bring back to life a chapel dating back to the 1600s, which was in dire need of a restoration and conservation intervention. This workmanship ensured that future generations will be able to witness a part of our long-standing local heritage dating to the era of the Great Siege of 1565.



This opportunity allowed students following the Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Masonry Heritage Skills to do practical work related to the conservation of local heritage. MCAST provided a helping hand to the Gudja community by preserving their local heritage.

Ing. Stephen Sammut, Director of the Institute of Engineering and Transport stated: “These talented students were considered dropouts a year ago and have now restored a historical vernacular chapel, saving Maltese heritage in the process.”

The final restoration result showcases the students’ skills, dedication and talent in preserving what has been left to us to protect for future generations.

# New PhD Graduate at the Gozo Campus



**FEBRUARY 2021** marked the end of a four-year journey for Dr Vanessa Saliba, MCAST Senior Lecturer II at the Gozo Campus. Dr Saliba recently completed her PhD at the University of Sheffield, with the research study titled “Working with Autistic Students in Mainstream Primary Schools in Malta” where she investigated the perceived needs of professional stakeholders when working with autistic students in mainstream primary schools in Malta, namely school management team (SMT) members, teachers and learning support educators (LSEs). Her research work was fully funded by the ENDEAVOUR Scholarships Scheme.

Dr Saliba chose this area of research because experience has taught her that, although the Maltese educational system embraces the principle of inclusion and despite the many benefits of inclusive education set out in theory and in policy, reality poses several challenges to this concept. Having students with various disabilities, such as autism, in mainstream classrooms can be challenging and thus requires the creation of a supportive environment for all learners and for the educators working in inclusive schools. For the study Dr Saliba adopted a qualitative research approach to allow participants to share their opinions about the current inclusive system of education for autistic students and openly express their needs and suggestions vis-à-vis resources and services, training and support when teaching autistic students. Through this study, Dr Saliba provided educators with the opportunity to share various suggestions for improvement within the Maltese inclusive education system.

Dr Saliba has been an educator for ten years and specialises in the field of inclusion and learning disabilities, specifically autism.



# Degree students participate in Remote Sensing (RemSen 21) Hackathon

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20/04/2019

09/06/2019

29/06/2019

06/12/2019

10/01/2020





**TWELVE STUDENTS** reading for degrees at the MCAST Institute of Information and Communication Technology participated in the Remote Sensing (RemSen 21) HackatHon. that took place in February 2021. The students started their training in the use of Sentinel-2 satellite data from the European Space Agency (ESA) Copernicus programme.

For over three months each participant researched regional events of environmental importance which were then presented during the half-day seminar organized on Friday 11th June 2021 in a virtual format. The participants showcased their use of satellite data in research areas such as Monitoring Quarry Activity; Drought, Fire, Road and Construction Analysis; Land State Classification; Wied Fulija Landfill Activity; and Coastline/Shoreline Corrosion.

The event was also complemented with

a number of talks by experts from EIT-Climote KIC Malta as well as from the ERA. We are really proud of all the participants who have shown great dedication and presented great use of remote sensing. Congratulations to Ms Mandy Cortis for being rewarded the best overall award, Mr Leonard Bruno for being rewarded the best programming award and Mr Massimo Darmanin for being rewarded the best impact award. We would also like to thank our sponsors for making this event possible and the management within the ICT Institute and the ARIC Department.

The Remote Sensing (RemSen 21) HackatHon. was organized by Mr Daren Scerri and Mr Frankie Inguanez from the Institute of Information and Communication Technology and was supported by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, the Environment and Resource Authority, the EIT-Climote KIC Malta, and the eSkills Malta Foundation.

# MCAST Applied Research and Innovation Centre

The key to inter-disciplinary  
and industry research  
collaboration

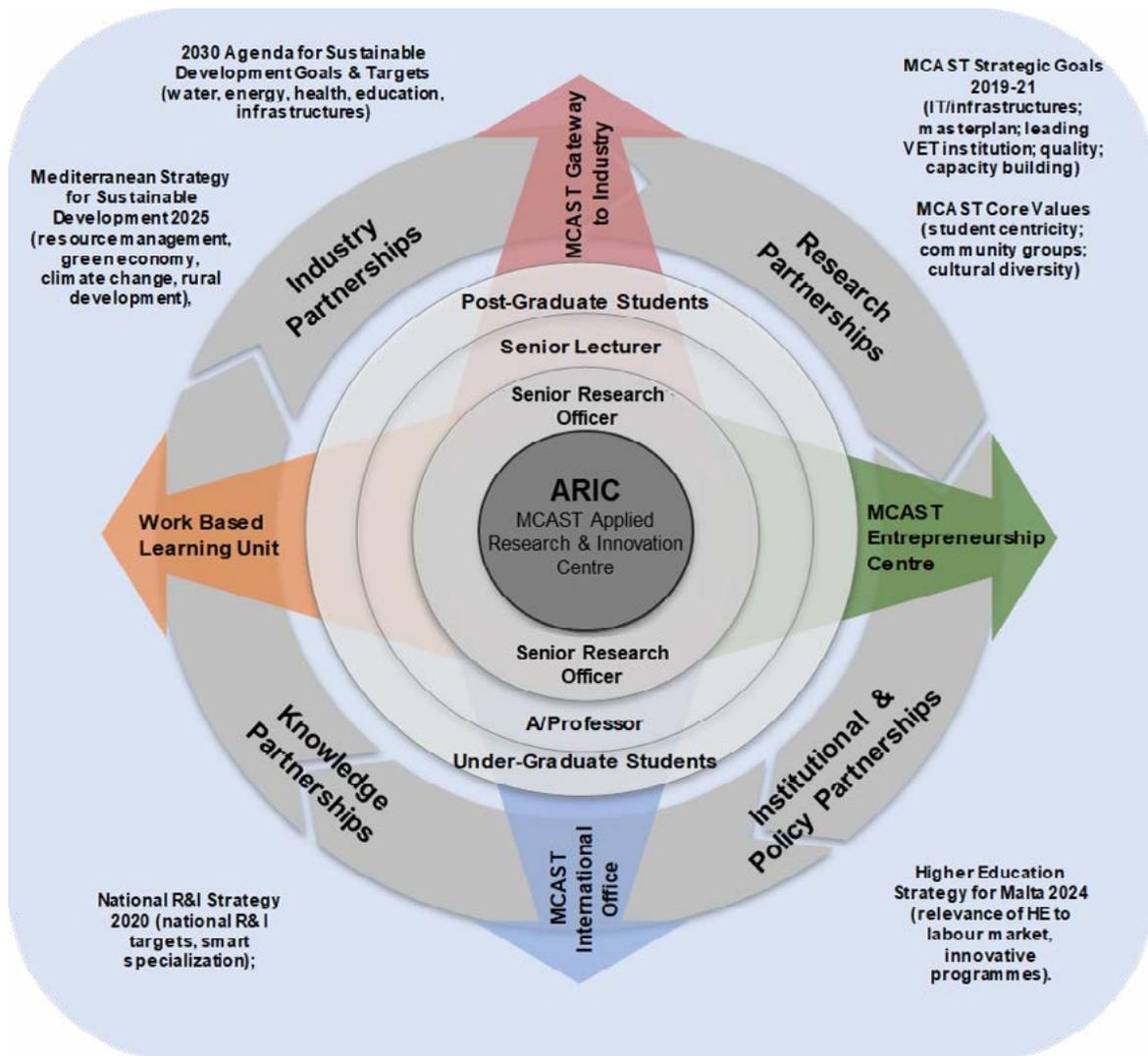
**By Dr Ing. Alex Rizzo**

Deputy Principal - Research and  
Innovation

**THE APPLIED** Research and Innovation Centre (ARIC) is positioned at the nucleus of MCAST's growth aspirations, serving as the guiding influence in knowledge creation and dissemination across the College. In line with MCAST's strategic direction, the ARIC focuses on stimulating and driving applied research and innovation within and between the six Institutes, strengthening existing relationships with the Industry and local entities, and building new partnerships with international institutions. While the research encompasses a wide spectrum of fields and thematic areas, the collective aim of this research is to lead to business development, create transfer of knowledge, and develop prototypes.

The impactful research being performed at MCAST can be classified into three principal application categories:

1. Research that addresses practical problems faced by industry, as a means of creating opportunities for students to be involved actively in industry and academics to keep abreast with industry developments.
2. Research that aims to augment the knowledge and capacity of academics, inherently incentivising academics to transfer this avant-garde knowledge into the curriculum and also eliciting and bringing forward this innovative frame of mind to its students.



MCAST Research & Innovation Framework serves as the key enabler for the integration and proliferation of all research activities across all key stakeholders and entities

**3.** Research that strengthens industry-academia links to promote business development ideas.

The ARIC plays a key role in driving and stimulating the above objectives and applications by providing the foundational base for over 120 academic and management staff active in research and innovation thereby helping their activities flourish. The ARIC falls under the remit of the Deputy Principal Research and Innovation (R&I), Dr Ing. Alex Rizzo, whose dynamic and proficient core team is led and motivated by the Director of Research, Dr Ing. Clifford De Raffaele and strengthened through the drive and resolution of the Deputy Director of Innovation, Mr Edwin Zammit. A team of six Senior Research Officers (SROs) form a key team of distinguished professionals who collectively guide, support and instigate research across the Institutes.

The role of each respective SRO is to act as a contact point and liaison between the ARIC and the specific Institute that they support, while also driving and supporting the adoption of research initiatives by Institute academic staff and facilitating inter and intra Institute research initiatives. Dr Christine Zerafa merges her two PhD qualifications in Chemistry and in Music together with her experience as an international concert pianist and artistic researcher to emerge a repertoire of research diversity from within the Institute for the Creative Arts. Capitalizing on her professional background in clinical pharmacy, as well as her PhD and postdoctoral research, Dr Lorna Marie Bonnici West proficiently instigates scientific research excellence across the Institute of Applied Sciences. Transferring his insight and knowledge within the Institute of Engineering and Transport, Dr André Attard creatively adopted his PhD in Engineering to support the developmental research

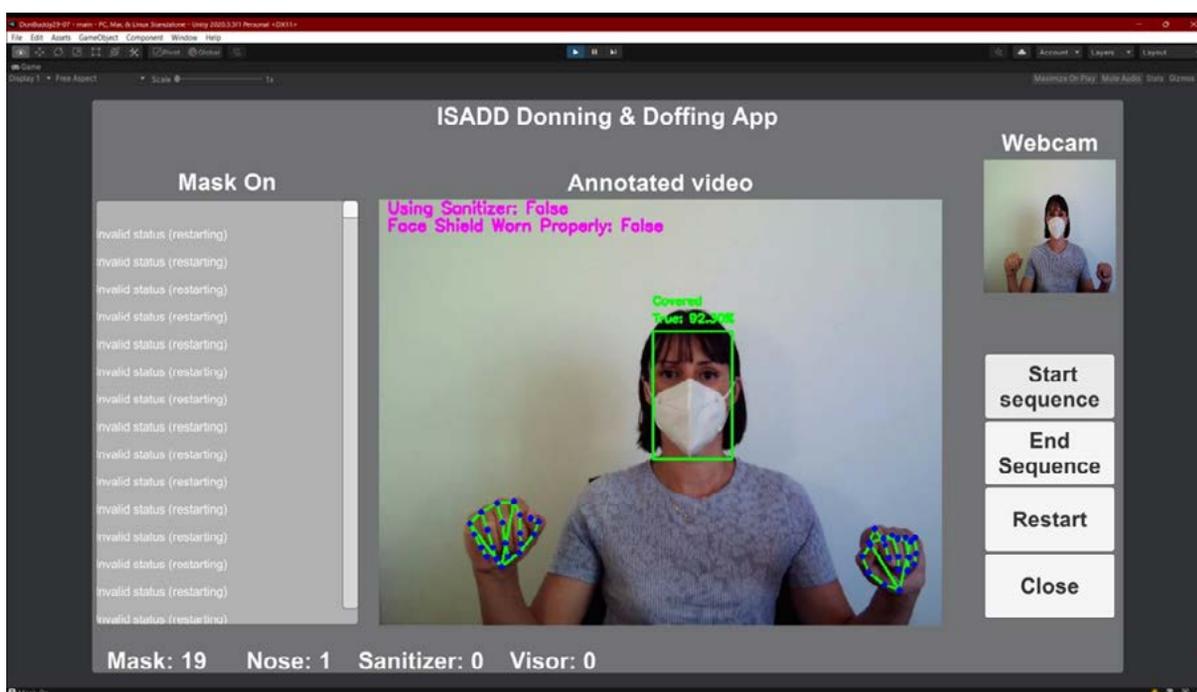


stemming in a myriad of technologies and solutions. In a similar fashion, Dr Maria Cardona has successfully ignited and kindled research within the Institute of Community Services through her PhD within Systems Chemistry and her education background; whilst the inspiration and scientific rigour obtained from his doctorate in Neuroscience enables Dr Massimo Pierucci to emerge and structure research endeavours through the Institute of Business Management and Commerce. Similarly, the dynamic energy of Ms Gonca Kara amalgamated with her legal background and external funding experience serves to emanate and consolidate the efforts of a research team stemming from within the Institute of Information and Communication Technology.

Whilst individually supporting and guiding the respective Institute Research Committee in all research endeavours brought about by staff and students, each SRO is actively engaged in seeking regular individual and group meetings

with lecturers and management to introduce and support members of staff within the research framework and their projects. The operational efforts of the research management team are also based on regular knowledge-sharing team meetings, which apart from sharing ideas and opportunities, serve as a pivotal way to discuss and involve inter-Institute collaboration, cross-discipline team building and funding opportunities around a research idea.

There are in fact a number of inter-disciplinary and inter-Institute collaborations that have emerged thanks to the centralised structure deployed within the ARIC. Collaboration between the IAS, ICT and ARIC has led to the creation of the iSADD project, which has been successfully funded by the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) through the Research Excellence Programme. This research project seeks to build and test an augmented reality and voice controlled prototype which can support appropriate wearing



Effective Research output stemming from the iSADD project aiming at developing an Integrated Simulation and Assessment solution in Donning and Doffing for healthcare professionals

and removal of personal protective equipment processes by healthcare professionals; and to explore perception and acceptability of the final packaged prototype amongst a sample of experienced and non-experienced healthcare professionals.

Also within a health-related field of research, a group of researchers from the ICS and IICT Institutes are collaborating with the Mental Health division of the Ministry of Health to develop a diet regime and physical exercise programme that improves the well-being of patients with early-onset schizophrenia. In parallel to this, the group is working through the creation of an innovative application of Virtual Reality (VR) technology to improve the public perception and understanding of such a condition. Another group of lecturers from the ICS are collaborating with the Standards of Care Authority. Their combined research is related to Youths in Supported Accommodation using innovative participatory-based research methods and will contribute valuable insights to policy makers in this much needed area.

A vast amount of research at MCAST focuses on the development of computer

technologies and their innovative application to a number of different fields, which has fostered the creation of several collaborative relations between different Institutes and with external entities. For example, the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) is collaborating with a group of researchers from different MCAST Institutes to develop wearable motion sensors for application in the sports and ballet industries. Another notable collaboration has been set up with Ninjamoba, an AI start-up in Malta, which is working with MCAST researchers to develop new systems and tools that can be implemented and contribute to the Educational Technology (EdTech) project running at MCAST.

A strong collaboration is currently ongoing between researchers from the IICT, IET and IAS Institutes on Remote Sensing Technologies and Earth Observation. IICT lecturers whose research focus was related to Computer Vision and AI joined forces with the leading researcher at the IET who is also the Principal Investigator of the externally funded project PIXAM under the Space Research Fund. Their ongoing collaboration led IICT lecturers to start a new research theme on Remote Sensing Technologies, which is now growing with the support of IAS lecturers who are bringing in their expertise on environmental sciences. The group has successfully delivered a HackatHon. this year – REMSEN HackatHon. and engage with key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, the Malta Resources Authority and the Environmental Resources Authority.



*Development of Virtual Reality solution to support the public's understanding and education on Schizophrenia*



*European Innovation & Technology workshops undertaken at MCAST across external funding research programmes*

Applied research pursues the creation of new knowledge that can be directly applied to practice, addressing specific problems and providing innovative solutions to issues affecting society at large. In the case of MCAST, these research endeavours with external entities have the strong advantage to both strengthen existing collaborative relations and creating new ones. In turn, this leads to significant impact on the pedagogical outcome of MCAST courses since the research process is designed to translate into new teaching pedagogies and methodologies through the integration of new and innovative knowledge within lectures.

As early stage researchers engage

evermore within R&I activities throughout the campus and across a plethora of domains, MCAST's trajectory towards mature research outcomes is an exciting forecast. The work done by the team of SROs in supporting ideas, promoting research initiatives and guiding on funding opportunities is and will undoubtedly remain key to the successes obtained by MCAST. Within the upcoming years, the expansion of the ARIC role with the creation of dedicated teams supporting each Institute will extend the roles of SROs to enable MCAST to seek further increases in research capacity, evolving naturally towards evermore engaging research projects and augmented collaborations between different Institutes and with Industry.



# FLEEK: Forming Leaders in Emotional Energy and Kindness

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FLEEK is a voluntary training programme which will prepare you to be able to assist other students in daily activities at College and introduces you to the concept of basic helping skills. Topics that you will cover mainly consist of self-awareness and communication skills. These include values, beliefs and attitudes, verbal and non-verbal communication skills, listening skills, empathy, diversity, different roles and relationships, boundaries, self-disclosure, confidentiality and self-care. Sessions are hands-on and will consist of a number of fun activities and interesting discussions!

**ALTHOUGH THIS** training does not aim towards helping others in personal and emotional problems, it equips you with enough helping skills and knowledge to be able to identify the need of a referral to the appropriate services and encourage such a referral effectively. You will develop the basic attributes and skills contributing to a better college community and transferring these qualities into the workplace and your personal and social life. You will also have the opportunity to practice leadership skills and plan the future of FLEEK.

The group is limited to 15 individuals due to the nature of the course. If a large number of applicants apply, we will consider having more than one group.

Students' timetables will be evaluated and

as much as possible we will aim to find a common day and time for the applicants.

A meeting will be held with all applicants so as to provide us with the opportunity to meet you on an individual basis and get to know you better.



## Why join FLEEK?

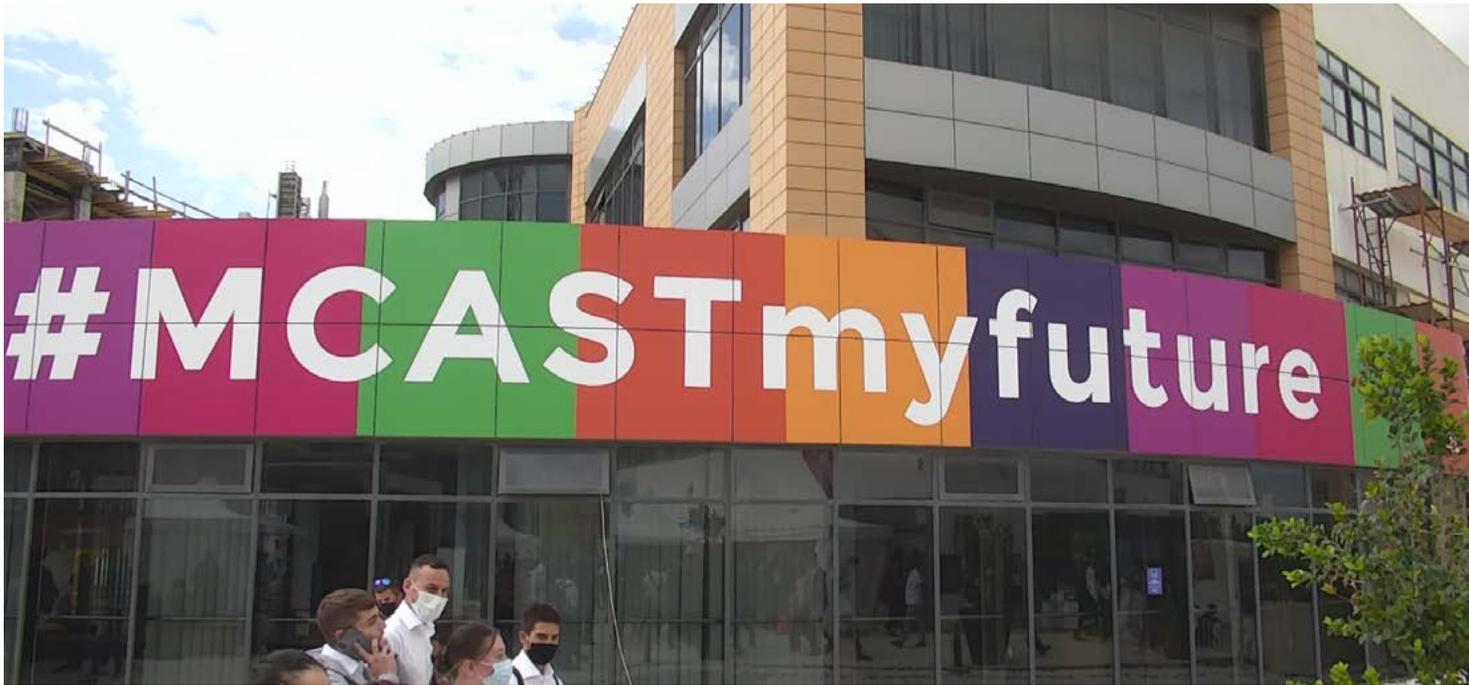
By joining FLEEK you will:

- Have the opportunity to learn more about yourself and increase self-awareness;
- Improve your helping skills;
- Become a better leader;
- Be part of a team, and
- Achieve an accredited certificate.

The number of hours in training and voluntary work can be presented as the Corporate & Social Responsibility (CSR) component in your programme of studies

...whilst doing something positive and rewarding.

# MCAST Freshers' Days 2021-2022





**THEY WERE** the busiest and most vibrant days MCAST has seen in a while, as students physically visited MCAST Campus and joined their peers for Freshers' Days 2021-2022. MCAST organized a full programme of activities during this massive annual event held between the 11th October and the 19th October 2021.

The celebrations kicked off with the College announcing its collaboration agreement with the radio station Vibe FM. This partnership will help MCAST build yet another link with industry, and will enable students to benefit from hands-on

experience. Vibe FM is now MCAST's official radio station.

An Opening Ceremony was held as part of the Freshers' Days celebrations. MCAST Principal Joachim James Calleja noted that over 40,000 students had benefitted from the opportunities offered by MCAST since it was established 20 years ago. Student Council President Bradley Debono appealed to fellow students to make the most of their time at the College by participating in campus activities, join student organisations and make their voice heard.



The activities organized during Freshers' Days were designed to help students get to know each other, make new friends and find their way around campus. These included treasure hunts, workshops, talks and discussions, hair and beauty demonstrations and several sports activities. Various student organisations, companies and NGOs also set up stands and disseminated information.

His Excellency the President of Malta, Dr George Vella and his wife Mrs Miriam Vella, Hon. Dr Justyne Caruana, Minister for Education, Hon. Dr Miriam Dalli, Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Sustainable Development, Hon. Dr Stefan Zrinzo Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary for EU Funds, Hon. Dr Bernard Grech Leader of the Opposition, and

Hon. Kristy Debono, Member of Parliament, all visited MCAST Freshers' Days.

Archbishop Charles Scicluna also visited Freshers' Days. During the visit, the Archbishop urged youths to spend more time with their friends and off social media. He explained that by socialising, one learns to listen and cherish others. Mgr Scicluna urged the youths present to use their skills and talents and contribute to society through voluntary work.

MCAST Campus was buzzing with countless stalls offering student support services, food, freebies, pamphlets, special offers and more; all showcasing that which MCAST life has to offer.



SEPTEMBER  
**Graduation  
Ceremonies**  
YEAR 2019/2020





**FOR THE** first time since the introduction of COVID-19 restrictions in March 2020, the College has recently begun holding in-person graduation ceremonies for about 2,500 of its graduands following Health Authority regulations for organised events.

The ceremonies were organised by the College at its Paola Campus, much to the relief of the students whose campus life had been disrupted over the past 18 months.





**CEREMONY 1**  
FRIDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER 2021

**INSTITUTE FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS**

- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Creative Media Production
- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Fine Art
- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Game Art and Visual Design
- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Graphic Design
- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Interactive Media
- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Journalism
- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Photography
- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Product Design
- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Spatial Design

**CEREMONY 2**  
FRIDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER 2021

**INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCES**

- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Chemical Technology
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Environmental Engineering
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Health Sciences (Physiological Measurements)
- Northumbria University Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Nursing Studies

**INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCES**  
**CENTRE FOR AGRICULTURE, AQUATICS AND ANIMAL SCIENCES**

- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Animal Management and Veterinary Nursing
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Fish Management

**INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING AND TRANSPORT**

**DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONICS ENGINEERING**

- Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Electronics and Control Engineering
- Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Electronics Engineering



**INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING AND TRANSPORT**

**DEPARTMENT OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING**

- Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Mechanical Engineering (Manufacturing)
- Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Mechanical Engineering (Plant)
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Marine Engineering

**INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING AND TRANSPORT**

**DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING**

- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Construction Engineering
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Construction Engineering (Civil Engineering)



**CEREMONY 3**  
MONDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER 2021

**INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Business Analytics
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Computer Systems and Networks
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Multimedia Software Development
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Software Development

**CEREMONY 4**  
MONDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER 2021

**INSTITUTE OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND COMMERCE**

- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Business Enterprise
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Financial Services Management

**INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Health and Social Care (Management)
- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Inclusive Education
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Sport, Exercise and Health

**CEREMONY 5**  
TUESDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2021

**INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

- Higher Certificate in Inclusive Education

**CEREMONY 6**  
TUESDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2021

**INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

- Higher Certificate in Inclusive Education

**CEREMONY 7**  
TUESDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2021

**APPLIED RESEARCH AND INNOVATION CENTRE**  
**Master in Research**

- MCAST – Haaga Helia Master of Business Informatics (MBI)
- Post-Graduate Certificate in Research Methods

**CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- Post-Graduate Certificate in Vocational Education Applied Research 4.0

**INSTITUTE OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND COMMERCE**

- Higher Diploma for Accounting Technicians
- Master of Business Administration for the Small Business
- Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration for the Small Business
- Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration
- Undergraduate Diploma in Hotel and Hospitality Management

**INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCES**

- Undergraduate Certificate in Nursing (Bridging Course)

**INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

- Higher Diploma in Advanced Studies in the Early Years

**INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING AND TRANSPORT**

- Higher Diploma in Mechanical Engineering (Plant)

**INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

- Higher Diploma in Computer Systems and Networks
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Multimedia Software Development
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Software Development

# Library and Learning Resource Centre publishes Research Study



From left to right: Mr Carmel Borg, Senior Assistant Librarian, Ms Liza Franco, Library Director and Ms Abigail Agius, Assistant Librarian

**THE PRIMARY** function of an academic library is to support the curriculum as well as staff and student research. Each year, new courses are added to the MCAST curriculum, resulting in an increase in the demand for additional resources. The Library team decided to conduct a study to determine the resource needs of the MCAST community.

As a first phase, all staff, faculties, and students in Levels 1 to 7 were given a survey questionnaire. The findings of Ms Abigail Agius' study were intriguing, as the majority of respondents sought more electronic resources.

There are numerous databases available on the market. Considering the number of courses offered by MCAST, choosing the best database for all MCAST courses was a complex task. Thorough market research was required for this purpose. To assure its appropriateness and return on investment, the database's quality as well as its reach to all MCAST Institutes were critical.

The rest of the story is an exciting tale of the Library team's dedication and the MCAST community's support.

Given the Library's intensive research in

selecting the IEEE database, one of the best databases in the world, we decided to produce a research paper to share the knowledge we gained in the process. The aim was to raise awareness of the time and work that goes into choosing a database.

Inspired by the research activities of the MCAST Applied Research and Innovation Centre, we conveyed our intention to write a research article to the Director of Research, Dr Ing. Clifford De Raffaele. With his expert advice, we were able to give our work a more professional direction and present our data in a proficient way.

Writing an academic article that is evidence-based is not an easy task. It involves research, analysis and referring to works on both primary and secondary sources. The initial difficulty was to know where to begin the manuscript writing process when confronted with a mountain of data, notes and other research articles. Being librarians, we were familiar with the structure of a research paper. Writing within that structure, on the other hand, necessitates a greater comprehension of each section's function. Lots of patience and intellectual discipline are a must!

The notion of writing a research article can be both exciting and overwhelming.

The following days witnessed brainstorming sessions where we discussed our thoughts, findings and progress. When these thoughts occurred to us, we felt the urge to jot them down and, if possible, begin writing right away.

Efficient teamwork played an important role as well as the distribution of the writing tasks. This built a strong team spirit, and we learnt that collaborating for a common purpose is always beneficial. It took hard

work and dedication over Teams and WhatsApp. The use of online technology and apps was indeed a blessing. We did not just write about technology, we made ample use of it! One of our colleagues generously offered to proofread the draft for us. This went through several internal and external review processes, and the manuscript was greatly amended as a result.

Finally..... the excitement!

Our article "Responding to student needs through Library e-Database Investment - An MCAST Journey" was published in the MCAST Journal of Applied Research and Practice (Volume 5, Issue 1, 2021, page 66)!

A soft copy of the article can be accessed from <https://journal.mcast.edu.mt/resources/html/article/details?id=217645>



MCAST Journal of  
Applied Research & Practice

The MCAST Journal of Applied Research and Practice is a bi-annual peer-reviewed scholarly journal. Internal and external review methods ensure that the journal maintains its high standards. This is a great opportunity for all MCAST staff and students to indulge in research and have it published. A journal is a great tool for knowledge sharing and we were proud to publish our research endeavour in it. Seeing your work recognized and published in a scholarly publication for the academic community to see and read, gives you a great deal of satisfaction. For us this was our first experience of writing a research paper. It was indeed a learning curve; it also gave us better perspectives on our profession and encouraged us to do more research!

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I S S U E 5 9

# MCAST launches a 6-year Strategic Plan

MCAST has launched its strategic direction for the next six years. In an event held on the 17th November 2021, Minister for Education Hon. Dr Justyne Caruana presided over the launch of the MCAST Strategic Plan 2022-2027. This document, formulated in the overarching context of the College's Strategic Blueprint (2018-2030), comes in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact felt within the education sphere has spurred on a drive towards a more resilient, sustainable and inclusive approach to the vocational and professional education and training at the College.



**THE LAUNCH** event was characterised by student panels and facilitated discussions about their priorities to create a practical learning experience, become active citizens, and prepare for their careers. Throughout the discussions with future employers, students emphasised the need for hands-on learning throughout their learning journey and the need for developing transversal skills.

Minister Justyne Caruana said: "This Strategic Plan is a key milestone and part of the College's success story. Student feedback and reflections on how we can

keep improving educational opportunities are crucial. MCAST is a key partner and stakeholder in the socio-economic development of the country. This is a pro-active institution leading the way in education and skills development. The College's forward-looking approach shows a vision that champions life-long learning and offers opportunities for all."

Professor Joachim James Calleja, MCAST Principal and CEO, stated that, "This publication is the result of feedback and ongoing collaboration with educators, students and industry. The students' voice



# MCAST



is at the centre of our strategic goals as we strive to encourage more people and organisations to prioritise education and training. MCAST will be the College that will integrate learning with working in an even stronger manner.”

In January 2021, the College initiated an internal thematic consultation process. The sessions held with staff and students were the main catalyst for the Draft Strategic Plan. MCAST also launched a staff and student attitude survey, which helped develop the direction for the next six years. The public consultation process included meetings with each member of the Board of Governors, an employers’ consultation event, bilateral meetings with social partners, consultation with officials from

the Ministry for Education and with policy stakeholders. In total, more than 1,720 persons participated in consultation events or provided input during the process.

MCAST is working towards establishing itself as a Community College for all to consolidate its presence amongst students, the community, NGOs and the general public. As the students’ profile changes, the College aims to provide learners with innovative support, including online tutoring and library services, on-campus hotspots and digital course materials. The Strategic Plan identifies three transversal themes, seven strategic objectives, 41 initiatives and 184 measures. The 20 ambitious, smart targets also sustain the College’s strategic vision for the next six years.

# MCAST partners up with European countries to create international VET learning mobilities

The MCAST International Office has joined a consortium of European partners to create international learning mobilities related to vocational education and learning.

**THIS PROJECT**, called INTERVET Western Balkans Project, aims at creating opportunities for students and staff to participate in learning mobilities related to vocational and educational training (VET). It also helps improve the culture of learning mobilities in VET through access to existing resources and opportunities in international training mobilities. This project, which is supported by the European Union, is particularly important as VET is becoming more popular due to its positive impact on economy and society.

The project intends to provide a significant number of important opportunities which include:

- 56 mobilities of 3 months for recent graduates and apprentices;
- 360 mobilities of one month for high school VET students;
- 54 job shadowing experiences for VET teachers and managers;
- participation of 36 VET teachers in summer schools;
- participation of 72 VET teachers and managers in the Thematic Themes organized by EfVET and hosted by different partners from EU Member States.

The consortium working on this project is composed of a number of stakeholders including associations, SMEs, chambers of commerce, together with VET and Higher Education institutions from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia. It also includes eight partners from EU Member States, namely Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Malta, Spain, Slovenia and Poland.

Besides participating in the online transnational meetings, MCAST has also hosted a major Thematic Theme Event on the area of “Internationalization and Learning Mobility” which was organized by EfVET.

By participating actively in this project, besides reaffirming the MCAST 2019-2021 Strategic Direction 5 which aims to broaden the local and international partner network, the College is also supporting Western Balkan countries to further improve their students’ learning experiences in VET.

More information on the project can be accessed from the project website (<https://intervetwb.net/>) or facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Intervetwb>).

# My Erasmus Experience at a Dance Festival on a Greek island

By **Angela Bettoni**

Institute for the Creative Arts student

Angela Bettoni, a student currently following the BA (Hons) in Performing Arts at the Institute for the Creative Arts, has recently participated in an Erasmus+ mobility project in Greece. This is her experience.

**LAST YEAR**, during my Advanced Diploma, I received an Erasmus+ VET invitation to spend two weeks on a Greek island called Syros to help out at the Akropoditi Dance Festival. Unfortunately, it was first postponed due to COVID-19, yet luckily it was held this year instead. As I have Down syndrome, the Erasmus+ programme also paid for my father to travel with me in order for him to help me.

As part of my Erasmus+ programme, I participated in selected workshops, helped at events, and assisted with the reviewing of the festival. The events I helped at were mainly performances done by some of the tutors and were held during daytime. During the night events I helped with the selling of tickets, setting up and preparing the space and also clearing up afterwards.

I was also a participant in four very different workshops. Most of the workshops ran for five days, and were two to three hours long. The workshops I participated



in were called: Autonomous Moves, Movement Waves, Acoustic Improvisational Movement and Passing Through.

Autonomous Moves was intended for participants with mixed abilities. We learnt how to use dance to develop meaningful relationships of trust and collaboration between people with different abilities. The Movement Waves workshop was about structured improvisational movement and stretching. It was held in the evenings at Galissas Beach, where we could also watch the sunset during the workshop.

The Acoustic Improvisational Movement workshop provided me with techniques on how to use my body as an instrument to create music. In the evenings I took part in a workshop called Passing Through,



which was about the making of movement compositions. I worked with the others in the group, constantly moving, improvising and transforming. This workshop was physically very demanding for me, but I was able to learn how to be more aware of myself and the others around me.

During the festival I interviewed participants, tutors and performers using questionnaires I had prepared. One of my tutors, Thanos Daskalopoulos, said that dancing for him was “like being in a strange new land waiting to be explored”, while another tutor, Milan Herich, said: “I always love to teach, sharing the information that I (have) received and trying to transform it, to adapt. With teaching I am teaching myself as well, it is a good practice of self-discipline.” One of the participants, Ioanna,

who took part in the inclusive workshop, said that she did so because, “I (wanted) to have the experience to do a more open workshop with dance as a medium. And I always find very interesting how people with different backgrounds use their bodies.”

I also found the time to discover the beautiful Aegean Sea and do some sightseeing. I visited the fortress on Syros, which was built in the 13th century and is now the Roman Catholic quarter of the island. It is on a hill, and at the very top there is a beautiful church. In the night it looks magical with the lights on. We also found time to visit the beautiful Acropolis in Athens on our way back to Malta.

One of my best memories is the performance we put on for a small audience at the end of the last session of the Passing Through workshop. Even though this workshop was very demanding and strenuous for me, I managed to persevere and push through, making huge improvements. In the end I was able to catch up and keep up with the other participants and do the same things as them. My tutor was constantly making sure that I was keeping up and the whole group supported me.

What was really great about the festival was that I felt really included. Several tutors and participants actually said they learned something from having me join in, which made me feel that I had succeeded in promoting inclusivity in the performing arts.



This mobility was funded through the Erasmus+ Project: “New Work Perspectives for Vocational Students”, Grant Agreement No. 2020-1-MT01-KA116-074093. The student also received additional funds for participants with special needs.

# Intern's Experience at MCAST

MCAST caught up with one of its interns, Tailanne, and asked her about her experience as an intern at the MCAST Erasmus+ Projects and Mobility Office.

**MY NAME** is Tailanne and I am 26 years old. I am a student who lives in Germany. I was born in Cuba and went to Germany with my family when I was 8 years old. At the moment I am an intern in the Erasmus+ Projects and Mobility Office and I would like to share my story of how I got here.

It was always a big wish of mine to do an internship abroad. I finally decided on Malta because I wanted to go to a country where English was spoken and it was warm. However, I had no contacts either from the vocational school or locally, so it was research, research and more research.

After endless research and a lot of email correspondence with various companies, I finally decided on MCAST. I was assigned to the now Erasmus+ Projects and Mobility Office (previously the International Office). My contact person was Christian Debono. The whole team is super friendly and very interested in me as a person. Since I had read reports from other students beforehand, I knew roughly what kind of work I could expect and was even more excited to finally start. Christian and the team involved me in the tasks and

processes right away. My first big task was to process applications for the Erasmus+ programme. Mostly these came from MCAST students or employees who wished to go abroad for an internship.

My job was to check the applications for completeness and assign an applicant number. Afterwards, the applicants were entered into an Excel spreadsheet with important information about themselves and their courses at MCAST, as well as their wishes for the internship. I also had to call the applicants personally to confirm whether they were coming for the interview or not. Besides the big task of applications, there were also tasks like scanning, copying and filing. There were also tasks like making Power Point presentations about the different cities in Europe which were then presented to the students. I also had to prepare the Erasmus+ contracts (Grant Agreements, Learning Agreements and Certificates of Attendance).

Malta turned out to be the perfect choice for me personally, as I not only enjoyed the Mediterranean Sea, but was also very interested in the culture of my destination



country. Malta is historically like an open air museum and there is something new to discover around every corner. But there are also many small bays to jump into and the unique views on the edges of the island make the hearts of hiking enthusiasts beat faster.

This experience has taught me to be more patient, more open to new situations and more self-confident. On an island where the culture and the people are completely different from those in Germany, it was not easy for me to deal with this at first. But I quickly learned to adapt and make the best of the situation. I learned to ask for help. I was not aware of how introverted I actually was. I always tried to solve my problems myself, but here I learned that it is okay to ask for help, especially if the people here are happy to help you.

I will definitely visit Malta again. I am very grateful for this opportunity and I can only recommend everyone to do an internship abroad - you grow as a person in an incredible way. You learn to put stereotypes aside and just focus on the person.



# My visit to Leeuwarden

**By Paula Grech Bonnici**  
Director Institute of  
Applied Sciences

**BETWEEN THE** 27th September and 8th October 2021, I was given the opportunity to attend a training programme on Water in Leeuwarden, The Netherlands. This training dealt primarily with the topic of water and wastewater purification and comprised of a blend of theoretical sessions, fieldwork, site visits as well as participation in the annual Wetsus Water Congress.

The course was organised by the team of the Centre of Innovative Craftsmanship Water (CIV Water) housed in the Water Campus of Leeuwarden. This International Project Weeks Water was a deliverable of the PoVE Water Project funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. MCAST is one of the partners in this project.

During my stay in Leeuwarden a one-day meeting was also dedicated to discuss the deliverables of the project, future extension of the project, future partnerships and organisation of similar training programmes on water in Malta.

The course was truly an example of VET education at its best! MCAST participated in this course with a complement of four Advanced Diploma in Applied Sciences students, two Applied Sciences lecturers and the undersigned. It was truly an enriching experience for all of us. Students and lecturers from Friesland College in the Netherlands, Riga Technical Institution –



*This is the largest still functioning Steam Pumping station in Friesland. Built in 1920 and is on the UNESCO World Heritage List.*

University Olaine College of Technology in Latvia, and Upper Secondary School of Chemistry, Pardubice, Czech Republic, have also participated.

The extensive training programme delved into the most important theoretical aspects of water and wastewater treatment. It focused a lot on hands-on experience which was achieved through site visits,

demonstrations, field work, computer programming and finally through the design and successful implementation of pilot or small scale treatment plants in the laboratory. The latter was performed by splitting the students into four groups each having a student from each of the participating countries, and presenting them with a technical problem which had to be resolved in the laboratory by applying the skills and knowledge they had gained in the previous days.

The results were presented by the students through presentations and defence viva voce of the mechanisms and methodology chosen in order to resolve the technical problems. As a water professional, I found the content of the course very interesting. It enabled me to experience how to transmit generally perceived as heavy technical concepts in a simple and interactive way. It was evident that this mode of delivery and mode of learning was very well received by the students and participants and engaged them fully. It brought out the best in each student and encouraged the students to work in a team and collectively develop something tangible. The site visits incorporated as part of the programme helped the participants to visualise the aspects of water and wastewater management and to eventually relate to realistic examples during their final presentation of their project. The field work integrated the various theoretical components followed in class as well as amalgamated the site visit observations, thus finally enabling the participants to put in practice what they had learnt.

### **The Wetsus Congress**

Participation in the Wetsus Congress was an additional continuous professional development programme for me since it enabled me to keep abreast with the latest

technologies being used in the water and wastewater industry as well as it gave me insights on the present opportunities for Master's and Doctoral programmes which MCAST will surely embark upon in the coming future.

It also presented opportunities for further collaboration of institutions. During the Congress I have also taken the opportunity to visit the demonstration floor which had a lot of poster presentations from various PhD students and graduates as well as from various leading researchers and companies dealing with water technology.

### **The PoVE Water meeting**

The partner PoVe meeting not only dealt with the partners' obligations to discuss deliverables in order to finalise the project successfully, but a good couple of hours were spent on brainstorming and planning of future collaborations and tapping of further funding for similar experiences and more. This was very beneficial to me on a professional level and also to MCAST.



*Hands-on training in the Water Application Centre of the Water Campus of Leeuwarden.*

# The Role of the Registrar in a Vocational College

By Ms Maria Pace, MCAST Registrar

**JULY 2020** marked new beginnings in my educational career. I was appointed Registrar at the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology. I was exhilarated, excited. The need for a change was beckoning and as always with change, these feelings give in to trepidation, the fear of the unknown. I boldly took the plunge and here I am proudly learning, discovering this dynamic world of vocational education and training at MCAST – definitely a unique institution on the island, a beacon of light in further and higher education for many Maltese and International students, past, present and future, who owe their vocational educational achievements and careers to the opportunities offered to them by MCAST.

True to its mission statement, MCAST has been instrumental in providing universally accessible vocational and professional education through VET courses at levels ranging from Introductory to Masters level. MCAST's vision is steadfast and evolving. It forges ahead to create opportunities of study beyond Level 7 courses.

Within this vibrant and ever growing

context, the role of the Registrar becomes crucial. Vocational Education demands specialized training, a close working relationship with industry and a thorough knowledge of all career oriented employment needs. As a main stakeholder of the College Prospectus, the Registrar needs to ensure that the courses offered are diverse in nature and focus on the practical, unique skills necessary for the labour market, be it in the business, technology, health, art or science sectors. MCAST and Industry are nowadays partners. Across the past twenty years MCAST responded, implemented and achieved by adapting and aligning its studies, by strengthening the work based learning component, placements and apprenticeships. Today industry comes to MCAST to discuss programmes that suit the needs of the business community. It is MCAST's mission to provide this service and it is MCAST's pride to certify all successful students in different areas of applied expertise, paving a seamless path for employment opportunities. The myriad of courses at different levels as well as the different employment positions held by the great majority of MCAST students attest to this.



The learning programmes offered, carry implications for certification and transcription purposes. The Registrar is responsible for the issuance of both documents for all successful graduates. Certificates and transcripts provide a full description of the achievements and expertise acquired by a student. This detailed information is a sine qua non for employers and for student employment options. The more hands-on experience and certified skills the student has, the greater their opportunities for employment and job mobility.

Within a short time, I have come to realise that the Registrar's role within a VET college is particularly challenging. This not only vis-à-vis the tasks already mentioned and others like registrations and admissions, but particularly so vis a' vis a number of other roles, namely, the recording and actioning of students' data; the academic and vocational record keeping and safe retention of student data and GDPR implications; creating the right balance between the academic and administrative life at the College; supporting students' pathways and scaffolding them; recognizing students' prior learning and accrediting it; updating regulations and procedures; blockcerts management and provision; having and maintaining an efficient and effective information management system, and also providing the necessary training and re-training on management information systems which are fundamental to all the processes and procedures involved within the Office of the Registrar.

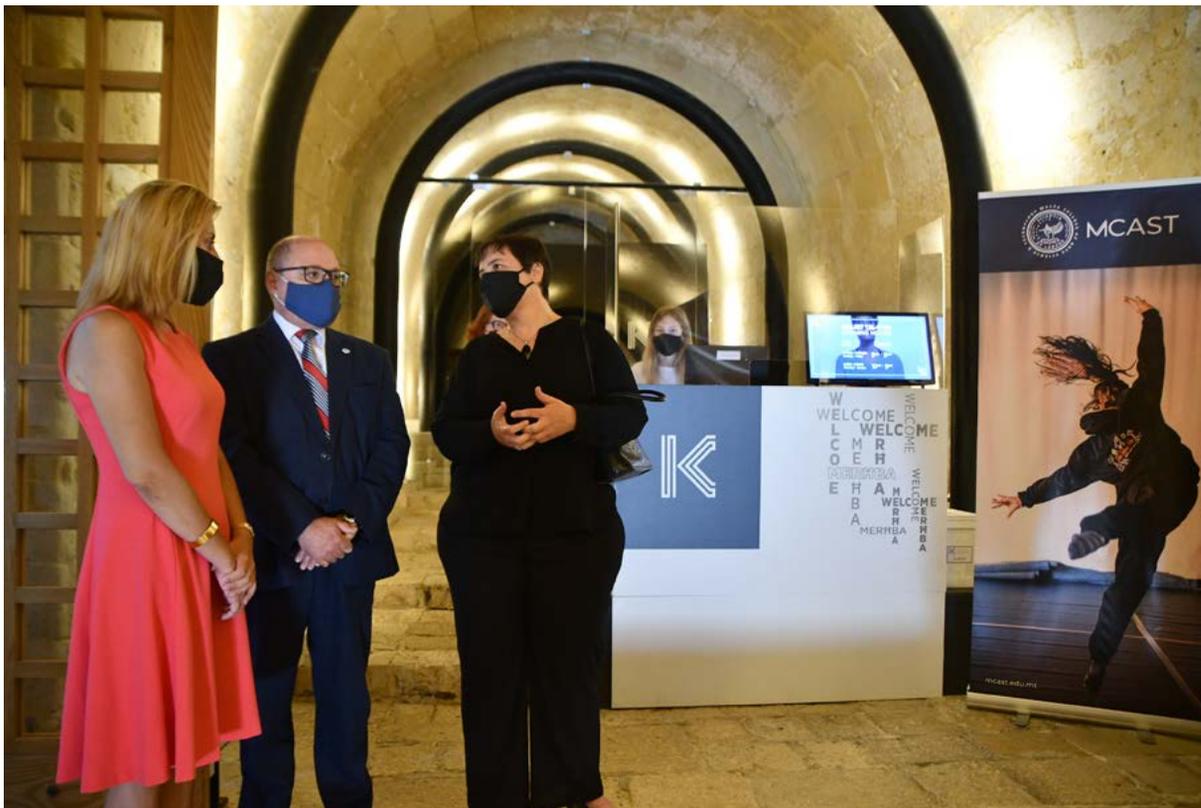
The tasks are endless but interesting. The office is a hive of activity which brings me and my team in contact with many students and staff members. The regular Boards of Study and the Council of Institutes' meetings keep me abreast of what happens at both Institute and Campus level.

This is a learning curve in my educational career. Experience is showing me that processes, tasks and functions within my office require continuous evaluation, action or initiation, closure or review. These are part and parcel of my ongoing work. With the support of my colleagues and my wonderful team, I am eager to continue leading in this challenging role with the sole aim of providing improved student experience and excellent service to our students and college.

# The 2021 MCAST ICA Festival - July 2021

**Dr Martina Caruana**

Director Institute for the Creative Arts



The pandemic has affected us all in different ways and, for many, this has been a life-changing experience that has been characterised by the endurance of serious hardships. Difficulties have been faced with following programmes of choice, with completing tasks assigned, with getting on with day-to-day life. Nonetheless, with appropriate support and facilitation, most have persevered and succeeded, and in the process have developed precious transversal skills that will make them better prepared for the future.

**WITH THIS** context as a backdrop, the MCAST ICA Festival adopted a light-hearted aesthetic to counter the sobriety of the challenging COVID-19 experience. The theme of this year's edition was "Diversify" and the event took place last July at Malta's national centre for creativity – Spazju Kreattiv – in Valletta, with a number of preliminary performances held at MCAST's Main Campus in Paola, together with an art and design exhibition at MCAST's Institute for the Creative Arts (ICA) in Mosta. The festival invited us to appreciate the endeavours of students whose different identity was reflected in the work they chose to showcase.

Such work presented itself in diverse forms and media depending on the area of study that the student was enrolled in, whether

- Creative Media Production,
- Fashion and Retail,
- Fine Art,
- Game Art & Visual Design,
- Graphic Design,
- Interactive Media,
- Journalism,
- Performing Arts,
- Photography,
- Product Design or
- Spatial Design.

These are the majority of the areas of studies offered at MCAST's ICA which also offers a programme in Cultural Heritage Skills.

Most of the works displayed were directly related to students' dissertation projects at bachelor's level. Together with reflections on how the pandemic affected creative practitioners, their output, and society at large, works also showed these graduands' critical analysis of and/or creative solutions to issues of concern, largely for the benefit of society.

When considering the diversity of opportunities available to learners, the festival largely accounting for the higher levels at which studies take place, one must note that the ICA offers full-time programmes at Levels 1-7 of the Malta Qualifications Framework, thus welcoming school leavers through to graduates wishing to follow postgraduate studies. It also offers part-time courses in a variety of subjects too.

Such offerings are in line with MCAST's mission statement which reads: "To provide universally accessible vocational and professional education and training with an international dimension, responsive to the needs of the individual and the economy." Throughout the educational journey diversity is experienced in various ways. Erasmus exchanges, amongst other opportunities, and tutoring from different lecturers with unique overseas experiences, afford learners exposure to the international dimension, and thanks to the fact that programmes are periodically reviewed with industry stakeholders, this also ensures relevance to industry in its rich diversity.





The MCAST ICA Festival indeed celebrated this association with industry. Thanks go to all industry stakeholders who supported learners in their development over the years. These were acknowledged in the various departmental areas in the exhibition and also in the numerous industry-related events which departments organised as part of the festival, whether

- performances with Q&A sessions with practitioners in the industry,
- screenings of diverse media-related projects,
- talks from alumni who shared their experiences and accomplishments when transitioning from student life to the working world within the creative sector,
- portfolio presentations before potential employers,
- meet-the-artist sessions with gallery owners, art critics and stakeholders in further education, or
- presentations from relevant businesses who can support both students and emerging practitioners alike.

Special thanks go to Arts Council Malta and Spazju Kreattiv for their continuous support and contribution to this yearly event which now firmly positions itself in the national cultural calendar. Moreover, the extraordinary effort of ICA staff and students, together with that of MCAST stakeholders, is also warmly acknowledged.

# Performing Arts student attends Summer Performance Programme in Valencia, Spain



**MALCOLM CAURANA-DINGLI**, a student enrolled in the Advanced Diploma in Performing Arts at the MCAST Institute of Creative Arts, attended a three-week Summer Performance Programme at Berklee College of Music in Valencia, Spain. Malcolm plays the drums and the electric guitar. The Summer Performance Programme provided an immersive learning experience in understanding what being an excellent musician entails. The course covered musicianship, instrumental skills, as well as recording and production techniques.

Malcolm described his experience as incredible. “I met expressive musicians from seventeen different countries. The professors were so inspiring and passionately communicated a wealth of knowledge and expertise.”

At the end of the course, Malcolm performed at Un Lago de Conciertos, an open-air concert which is part of Berklee’s College of Music’s collaboration with Valencia’s City of Arts and Sciences. Musicians shared their talent and music with the general public in a unique location at one of Valencia’s landmarks.

Participation in this Programme was supported by Arts Council Malta through the Young Talent Fund.



# The 2021 IBMC Fexserv Awards Ceremony



*During the 2021 IBMC Fexserv Awards Ceremony*

The Covid-19 pandemic has created many challenges in our everyday life. Education is one of the industries which was immensely affected by this pandemic, however this did not hinder the successes of MCAST's Financial Services degree students.



*During the 2021 IBMC Fexserv Awards Ceremony*



**FOR THE** third consecutive year, Fexserv Fund Services Limited, one of the leading and most established companies in the financial and investment services, has proudly sponsored an award ceremony at the Institute of Business Management and Commerce.

This year's first placed student was Sarah Pisani, followed by Braxton Borg winning the second place award. A third award was given for the best dissertation which was achieved by Christabelle Debono. In her study Christabelle sought to understand the cost of cash and cheque usage for local small and medium enterprises.

The Director of the Institute of Business Management and Commerce, Mr. Andrew Galea, stated that such events are key to bring the Financial Services industry to the classroom ensuring that the courses offered at MCAST remain valid and relevant to the workplace.

The IBMC is proud to provide its students with unique learning platforms which

bring hands-on experiences in learning. Students at IBMC can start off their studies at Level 4 by following the Advanced Diploma in Financial Services, with the option to either specialise in Finance or Insurance. At a higher level, students can also further their studies by reading for the Bachelor of Science in Financial Services Management which opens an array of opportunities for the students in the workplace.

MCAST embraces the importance of bridging the gap between the workplace and the classroom. In fact as part of their compulsory study units, students following any course in financial services need to enrol in an apprenticeship position or an internship position depending on the course chosen.

An immense appreciation goes to Ms. Anabel Mifsud, Managing Director of Fexserv Fund Services Limited, and Mr. Lawrence Buttigieg, Group Chief Executive Officer, for believing in MCAST and our students.

# Malta: migration of teaching appraisal at MCAST from physical classroom observation to online teaching appraisal

**By Ms Jacqueline Micallef Grimaud**  
Deputy Director, Quality Assurance Department

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) believes in the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of its personnel. As part of MCAST's ongoing CPD programmes, its Quality Assurance Department is instrumental in creating a discursive space, via appraisal by a critical friend, for professional dialogue between educators, with the overarching aim of improving MCAST's pedagogical/andragogical methodologies. Owing to the circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the objective of this quality assurance exercise for the academic year 2020-2021 was to appraise and provide constructive feedback on online learning following the re-design of the College's appraisal tools and methodologies in line with MCAST QA Policy and Standards for Online Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Doc 020).

#### APPRAISAL RATIONALE

Over the past two academic years, MCAST has transitioned from the traditional, face-to-face learning era to the blended and 100% online learning era, after being catapulted into this working mode in a minimal time frame by the ongoing catalyst, the COVID-19 pandemic. The rationale behind the appraisal exercise is naturally similar to both modes, with adaptations and observations that render it applicable to the appraisal of remote learning sessions delivered and led by MCAST lecturers/academics. The scope of such online appraisal is to:

- A** enhance the professional and personal growth of lecturers, through
- B** observation of their online provision and delivery, so as to
- C** recognize accomplishments and good practices in digital pedagogy by outlining strengths and improvement opportunities, leading to the
- D** identification of professional development needs, with the overarching aim being the constant enhancement of the level of learning and teaching in online and blended scenarios.

Reflecting the rampant spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU Employment Committee's (EMCO) Review of the 17th March 2021 commended Malta and, hence, MCAST, where vocational education and training and higher education covering EQF/MQF Levels 1-7 are concerned, for its immediate reactive and proactive response to the changing pandemic environment. In line with the UN SDG Goal 4 – "Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All" – MCAST/ Malta introduced supportive measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- Permanent measures, including for remote learning, to enhance the educational journey for all;

- Development of best practices in online pedagogy to be retained post-COVID;
- Strengthening Malta's digital preparedness and digital tools to improve the quality and inclusiveness of education systems;
- Provision of digital learning platforms and tools: freely available and easily accessible online;
- Free internet and digital equipment for those in need.

### **OBSERVATION LEADING TO APPRAISAL**

To be appraised effectively, lecturers/ academics need to know what they are being measured against. An appraisal checklist was drafted, the Internal Audit Checklist for Online Quality Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Educational & Technological Standards, in line with DOC 020 MCAST QA Policy and Standards for Online Teaching, Learning and Assessment, outlining the standards against which appraisal takes place. The appraisal covers key performance indicators such as 'lesson management', 'student engagement/feedback', etc., and is intended to avoid difficulties which often ensue when there is only an assumed, informal knowledge of expectations.

Expectations that feed the evaluation of the performance of lecturers/academics are, therefore, communicated to the lecturers/academics delivering in a remote learning environment well in advance of the observation date. This is the basic step applied in the appraisal exercise practised at MCAST.

### **METHODOLOGY APPLIED TO APPRAISAL**

The methodology to be followed for the entire appraisal exercise is communicated to the lecturer at the outset, when the process is initiated by the critical friend.

### **APPRAISAL MEETING FOLLOWING OBSERVATION**

The appraisal meeting is an opportunity for the critical friend from the MCAST Quality Assurance Department and the lecturer to sit down and discuss the range of issues affecting online provision and delivery against the standards set.

It is hoped that MCAST lecturers shall benefit as a result of individual attention from senior management, denoting that their contribution, particularly in rising to the occasion brought about by the COVID-19 emergency situation and delivering/creating an effective learning environment in the alternative online mode, is valued.

### **UNDERPINNING PHILOSOPHY**

The essence of teaching appraisal is to enhance professional practice and effectiveness, leading to improved student learning and achievement, especially in the escalated digital application of methodologies in the COVID-19 pandemic circumstances. A derivative of this process is a general overview of the appraisal reports, together with an analysis of the data thereby generated, which is presented to senior and executive management. In this way, MCAST management may take informed decisions on future strategy in respect of online learning, such as the recently approved template for the migration of unit specifications to digital pedagogy, where pedagogically appropriate.

# Student Peer Reviewer @ MFHEA

By **Damian Turner**

For the past two years I have formed part of the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (MFHEA) Peer Review Board. My role was to renew accredited educational licences as a Student Peer Reviewer. Although the process of auditing an educational institution is lengthy and time consuming, participation in these audits has assured me of the resilience and professionalism that the Maltese Islands pride themselves on when it comes to education, thus indicating that Malta possesses a highly professional education sector.

**AN AUDIT** board is usually comprised of 4-5 reviewers, and from my personal experience, these have always been work-driven, well-informed individuals with vast experience hailing from related sectors, and who are ready to assist each other with the tasks assigned during

every audit. Throughout each stage of the audit, the board notifies its progress to MFHEA, where guidance is given on methods to proceed. The process starts by introducing the institution to be audited, collecting all documents related to the institution and receiving information on how the institution operates on a daily basis.

Having been nominated by MFHEA as Student Peer Reviewer on two boards, this experience has led to creating new networks within the educational industry, as well as the understanding of how educational institutions acquire and renew their operating licences in Malta. Throughout the period of auditing, it has also become clear that the relevant authority, being the MFHEA, is relatively strict and requires that all educational institutions abide by its suggestions and directives relating to providing services. Being part of such auditing boards provides for the training of multiple interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, through the process of interviewing stakeholders related to particular institutions and asking questions which reap relevant and sought-after information. Furthermore, the task of auditing requires the reviewing of all institution documents to ensure that standards are met, while visiting the premises and meeting staff to understand the environment being audited. Being part of MFHEA's audit board provides the opportunity for one to step into the shoes of the institution

as an entity itself, and try to understand whether its operations, environment, and functions are providing for high standard educational services to be carried out. The process of auditing increases attention to detail and helps reviewers become aware of processes or procedures which might need amending or complete change, in order for the institution to operate in a more effective and efficient manner. After interviews are carried out and all documents are reviewed by the board, it is then up to the board to establish whether the institution operates in a satisfactory manner in relation to the guidelines set by MFHEA, and whether the licence shall be revoked or renewed. Suggestions for enhancement are always handed to the institution by the board. Forming part of the board gives the student a stake in all of these decisions.

Being an MCAST student for the past years and currently reading for a BSc in Financial Services Management, it can be said that MCAST is providing me and students like me the soft skills and attention to detail necessarily required to conduct such extra-curricular initiatives. Having a diversified spectrum of subjects relating both to financial services and other topics such as entrepreneurship and soft skills, MCAST has taken care that we as students not only excel in the field

of study in which we take part, but also in building a strong and resilient character with professional relevance, due to the assistance and encouragement found within the organisation, its administration and lecturing staff. My input within such boards has been of relative importance and had an effect on the decisions ultimately taken by the board. Although my role as a full member on the panel was that of a student representative, my perspective influenced the outcome of the final report as it represents the expectations of the students in Maltese educational institutions.

In a nutshell, MCAST students who are interested in taking up extra-curricular activities and are seeking to improve their personal and educational skills are encouraged to form part of these audit boards and hence contribute to the work of MFHEA. The staff at MFHEA are very professional and dedicated to their work and provide assistance in all related aspects. Furthermore, accredited certificates are given to those who attend MFHEA's course prior to forming part of an audit board and they are also compensated for participating in the panels.

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