

MALTA COLLEGE OF ARTS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2021

Inclusion - Excellence - Equity



WELCOME MESSAGE

The role of vocational education and training in the modern world is rapidly evolving and the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology is determined to adapt and grow in the applied manner from which it has organically grown.

A well-functioning VET institution is fundamental to a strong and prosperous economy that delivers skills which industry needs. The inclusion of technology for distribution and facilitation at a high level of quality is key, otherwise students will go elsewhere. Skilled workers are an invaluable asset in a world characterized by workers' mobility in the light of fluctuating market dynamics. The emphasis on student retention is best tackled when one understands the student risk factors, the students' changing circumstances at a personal and social level and the ability to respond faster and more intensively to the actual needs of students at risk. Inclusion and excellence will be our guiding pedagogical principles.

In the provision of its academic and training programmes, MCAST aims to be always relevant and responsive to industry's needs, particularly with the advent of Industry 4.0, driven by cyber physical systems. MCAST is committed to equip its learners through industry based qualifications with all the necessary skills, knowledge and competences to make them professional and employable contributors to the economy. This retains the significance of preparing learners to be flexible, specialists in vocational industry areas as required, but also in possession of transversal skills, behavioural skills and appropriate attitudes. We strive to be a service to society through education, research and community engagement. We seek deep collaborations with other education institutions, business, industry and government in our common pursuit of excellence.

Continual monitoring of our progress against 86 strategic goals will underpin our capacity to evolve, adapt and thrive. We have specified our targets here in our strategy and these are carried into our operational and individual staff plans. These will be evolving documents that will guide our actions and define our priorities.



Frederick Schembri
President, Board of Governors



Joachim James Calleja
Principal and CEO

OUR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

Established in 2001, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology is the country's leading vocational education and training institution. Through the six Institutes in Malta and the Gozo Campus, MCAST offers more than 160 full-time and over 300 part-time vocational courses ranging from certificates to Master degrees (MQF Intro A to Level 7).

The six MCAST Institutes, namely the Institute of Applied Sciences, the Institute for the Creative Arts, the Institute of Engineering and Transport, the Institute of Business Management and Commerce, the Institute of Community Services, the Institute of Information and Communication Technology and the Gozo Campus provide all the technical and professional expertise towards the delivery of the programmes at MCAST and maintain the aim of driving forward all the areas of study under their respective responsibility.

The MCAST firmly believes in inclusion and offers various initiatives and opportunities to support learners with diverse educational, social, emotional and cultural background to benefit from free and supported Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET). The full-time student population now stands at 6,700 students. During each academic year MCAST also provides short courses for approximately 5,000 part-time adult students. MCAST employs more than 700 members of staff.

The MCAST's relationship with industry stimulates the College's success – MCAST programmes are flexible, relevant and responsive to the aspirations of the students and to the needs of industries which are constantly evolving to meet the challenges of a changing global economy. The College supports small and medium-sized enterprises in a multidisciplinary approach that encompasses work-based learning through the Apprenticeships Programme, the various entrepreneurship initiatives and through MG2i (MCAST commercial arm) services, whereby it provides training courses tailor-made to their needs. The College is focusing on increasing the portfolio of MG2i by developing new programmes in Life Long Learning, accrediting new programmes at different levels including Masters and introducing more professional development programmes. It is working on the internationalization of MG2i through the Training and Professional Development Programmes and joint-venture opportunities in different vocational areas.

VISION

Inclusion

Providing an environment in which any individual or group can feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate.

Excellence

Promoting the highest standards of intellectual inquiry and rigour; embracing continuous improvement; celebrating the success of our people.

Equity

Creating an educational institution where personal and social circumstances do not create an obstacle to achieving educational potential.

MISSION

To provide universally accessible vocational and professional education and training with an international dimension, responsive to the needs of the individual and the economy.

STRATEGIC GOALS

- To provide a learning space and an outstanding education experience for every student, leading to our graduates being competent, resourceful, critically conscious and innovators in preparation for their future vocational and professional careers.
- To provide students and staff with a high-quality landscaped setting while maximizing the use of investment made in the past years and ensuring financial sustainability.
- To promote and sustain our position as leaders in providing vocational professional education and training through internationally recognised qualifications valued by industry; while working in partnership with employers and other stakeholders to continuously improve the relevance of our curriculum.
- To ensure that all qualifications are informed by industry, while based on community oriented curricula and impact research.

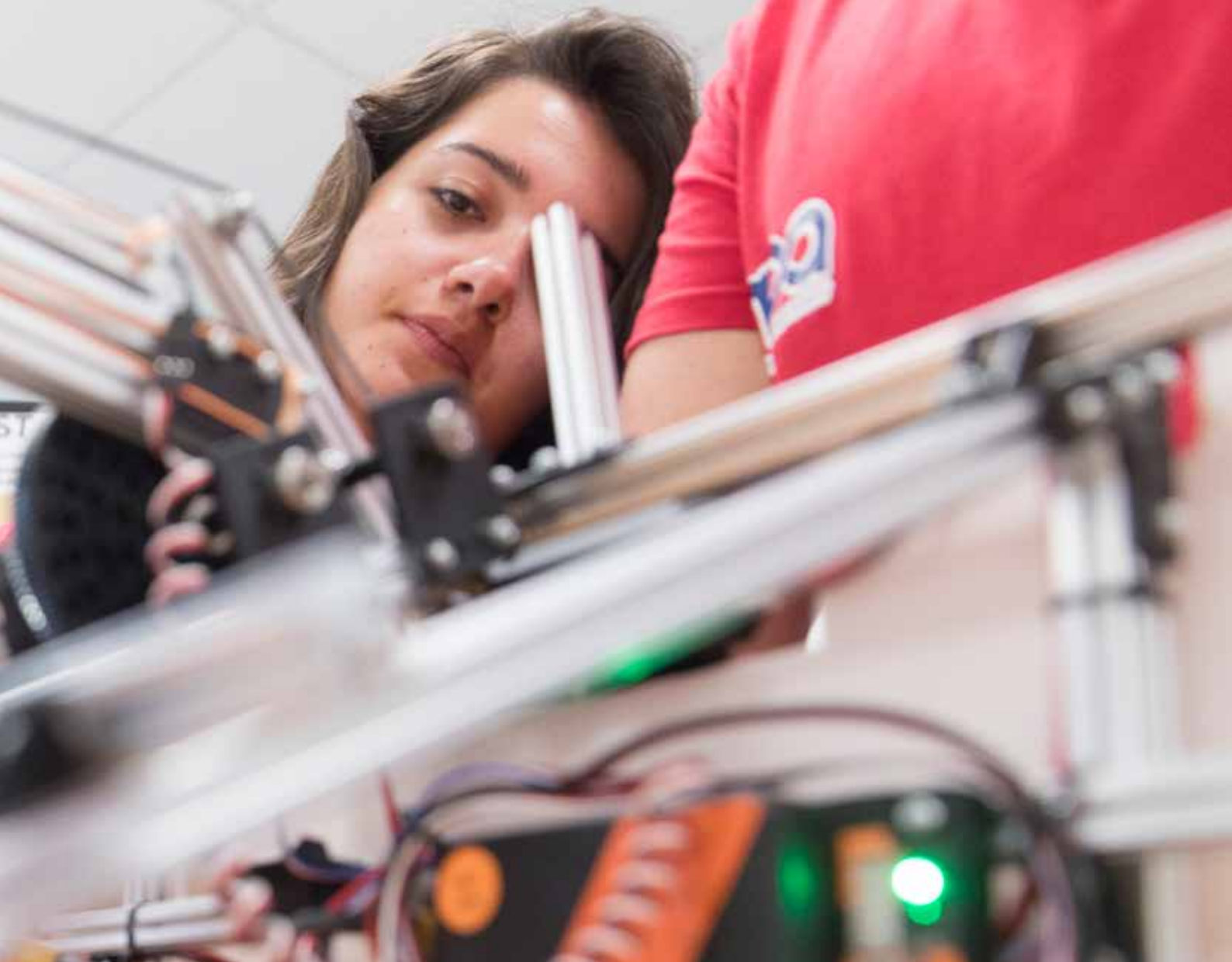


POLICY AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Education and Training are pivotal for economic growth and social progress, highlighting the importance of skills alignment to labour market needs. In an increasingly globalised and knowledge-based economy, it is necessary to ensure a well-skilled workforce in order to be competitive in terms of productivity, quality and innovation.

The Maltese Government, through the **Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024**, has set a clear objective: to improve the quality and effectiveness of our country and to develop a society which is competent, resourceful, critically conscious, and competitive in a global economy driven by information, knowledge and innovation. In the context of lifelong learning, the Framework supports the modernisation process of vocational education and training, and supporting apprenticeship, traineeship, work-based and work-placed learning initiatives.

This strategic drive is reflected in the **National Vocational Education and Training Policy (2015)** which aims at addressing quality and attractiveness as well as ensuring labour market relevance. These notions are in themselves interlinked in providing and sustaining stronger vocational education in Malta. Government has consolidated the quality



approach to work-based learning through the enactment of the **Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeships Act (2018)** which sets out governance structures to protect the rights and obligations of trainees and employers and reframes the centrality of a closer, more structured and wider relationship between education institutions and employers.

In parallel to policy direction, Government has consistently increased the expenditure on IVET year after year, however data shows that public expenditure on IVET as a percentage of GDP (0.33%) is still considerably below the EU average (0.56%). In 2015, the employment rate of IVET graduates (aged 20 to 34) at ISCED 3-4 (91.7%) was higher than the EU average (77.2%). IVET graduates in Malta have an employment rate of 4.1 percentage points higher than their counterparts from general education. Similarly, IVET graduates in Malta have an employment rate of 23.2 percentage points higher than that of those with lower-level qualifications.

Sustained efforts and investments are necessary across all education and industry stakeholders to drive the upskilling of the Maltese labour force to become more dynamic, knowledge-based and more relevantly skilled.



Strategic Objectives, Initiatives and Measures

STRATEGIC DIRECTION: AT A GLANCE



Strategic Direction 1:

Invest in modern infrastructure that is fit for current and future staff and students.

- Upgrade IT infrastructure to enhance the teaching and learning.
- Sustain the implementation of the Master Plan with the involvement of expert practitioners in the field and within the College.



Strategic Direction 2:

Strengthen Quality and Relevance to enhance the students' learning experience.

- Focus on sustained Quality Improvement.
- Provide students with a richer experience that enables all our students to reach their full potential.
- Enhance comparable internationally recognised skills and qualifications.



Strategic Direction 3:

Position quality Work Based Learning at the heart of all professional and vocational training programmes offered by MCAST.

- Widen the availability of work-based learning to more students.
- Work with industry partners for quality placements



Strategic Direction 4:

Reinforce the image and build the esteem of Vocational and Professional Education and Training.

- Reinforce MCAST's communication structures.
- Increase the visibility of VPET in Malta.

Strategic Direction 5:

Broaden the local and international MCAST partner network.

- Strengthen the local Community Network.
- Structure and nurture the international links.



Strategic Direction 6:

Provide support to and reinforce the Management and Governance Structures.

- Re-dimension the role and functions of the Internal Audit Function within the College.
- Invest in recruiting and retaining a high-quality workforce.
- Establish a long term financial strategy.
- Develop internal structures for data management, provision and dissemination.



Strategic Direction 7:

Incentivise the development of applied research and sustainable innovation across the College.

- Establish a leading Applied Research and Innovation Hub at College level providing expertise to other research teams within and outside the college system.
- Stimulate and develop applied research at College level leading to business development, transfer of knowledge and prototypes.
- Encourage Institutes to raise their research standards to international levels, whilst securing grants and participating in higher education research projects.

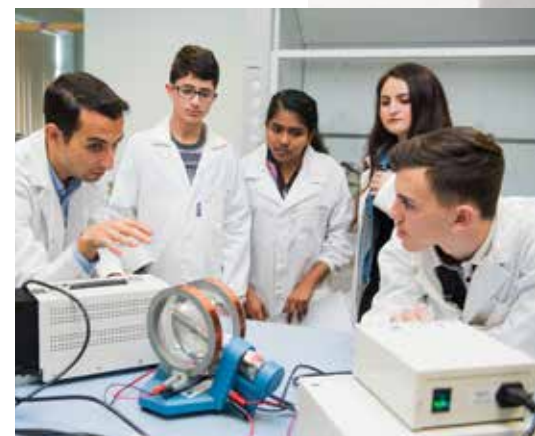




Photo by: Students in Advanced Diploma Photography Year 2

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1:

Invest in modern infrastructure that is fit for current and future staff and students.

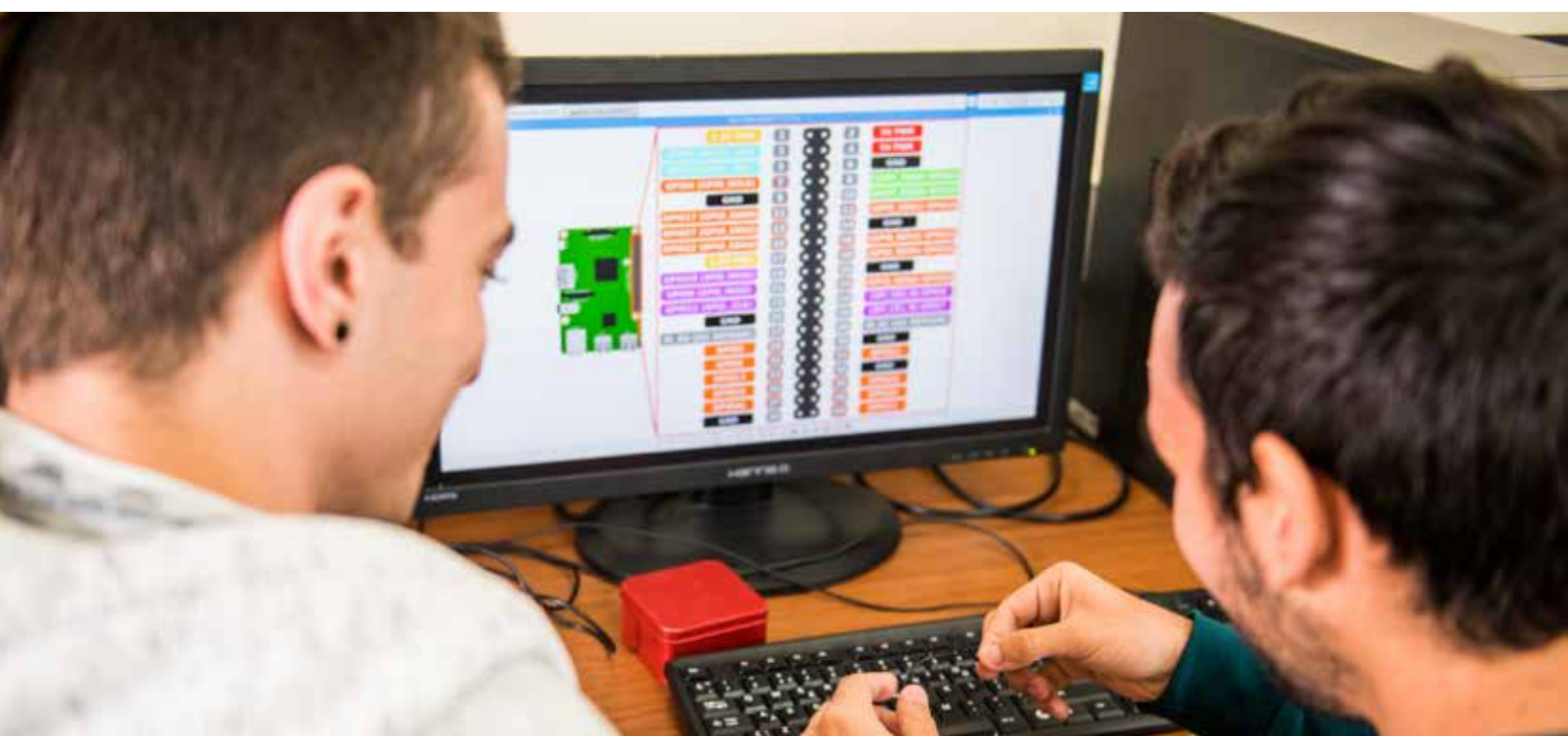
Initiatives	Measures
Upgrade IT infrastructure to enhance the teaching and learning.	<p>1.1 Widen the availability of bandwidth and its quality to all the campus including the public spaces and common areas.</p> <p>1.2 Maximize benefits from IT innovations to enhance teaching and learning.</p> <p>1.3 Ensure that all staff employed are well trained and fully equipped for their role.</p> <p>1.4 Invest in IT resources leading to efficiencies in support of administration functions.</p> <p>1.5 Adequately equip and upgrade, as necessary, teaching and learning spaces that are more specialised in nature.</p> <p>1.6 Setup video conferencing and collaborative e-learning facilities to enable Gozo residents to follow training programmes remotely.</p>
Sustain the implementation of the Master Plan with the involvement of expert practitioners in the field within the College.	<p>1.7 Design and construct purpose-built energy efficient buildings for each Institute.</p> <p>1.8 Design and construct flexible teaching blocks including technical workshops and labs.</p> <p>1.9 Develop a residential facility to attract international students seeking to study at the College.</p> <p>1.10 Construct theatre, multi-purposes training spaces, sports and childcare facilities.</p> <p>1.11 Maintain the Gozo Campus infrastructure to the highest standards.</p> <p>1.12 Increase the number of and the attractiveness of public socialising spaces on campus.</p> <p>1.13 Implement waste separation mechanisms and facilities, across the entire Campus.</p> <p>1.14 Include green infrastructural elements in all construction, maintenance and renovation projects.</p>



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2:

Strengthen Quality and Relevance to enhance the students' learning experience.

Initiatives	Measures
Focus on sustained Quality Improvement.	<p>2.1 Introduce more flexibility in the study programmes through the concept of compulsory modules, pre-requisites and option modules.</p> <p>2.2 Modernize the learning processes through more online learning, enhanced self-learning and use of e-learning while supporting the learning process with tutorials, where necessary.</p> <p>2.3 Focus on continuous professional development of lecturing staff to enrich their vocational pedagogical skills, knowledge and teaching tools</p> <p>2.4 Define appropriate indicators for monitoring processes and results.</p> <p>2.5 Instil self-assessments and internal audit mechanisms.</p> <p>2.6 Revisit and create guidelines for the involvement of industry in the design and review of study programmes.</p> <p>2.7 Explore and introduce diverse alternative assessment methods, as necessary, while retaining rigour, verifications and external oversight to ensure the reliability and quality underpinning the MCAST certifications.</p> <p>2.8 Emphasize the embedding of key skills and horizontal/transversal skills in units and programmes of study.</p> <p>2.9 Institutionalise the recognition of prior learning across all disciplines.</p>
Provide students with a richer experience that enables them to reach their full potential.	<p>2.10 Continuously seek to improve the pastoral care and the student support services, including career guidance, psycho-social services, learning support, and the inclusive education service.</p> <p>2.11 Ensure the provision of a range of services aimed at creating an environment which is conducive to quality learning for persons with disabilities.</p> <p>2.12 Proactively introduce more actions aimed at bringing about more equality between women, men and different groups including evaluation of processes and equality audits.</p> <p>2.13 Foster a safe working and studying space which is open, tolerant and conducive to a multicultural population.</p> <p>2.14 Establish a College-wide sports programme for all.</p>
Enhance comparable internationally recognised skills and qualifications.	<p>2.15 Encourage the participation of staff and students in local and international competitions, conferences and events which promote and showcase vocational and professional endeavours.</p> <p>2.16 Contribute actively and work closely with the NCFHE and other stakeholders for the upkeep and development of the MQF.</p> <p>2.17 Work with international awarding bodies for continued relevance of the study programmes offered.</p>



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3:

Position quality Work Based Learning (WBL) at the heart of all professional and vocational training programmes offered by MCAST.

Initiatives	Measures
Widen the availability of work-based learning to more students.	<p>3.1 Integrate aspects of work-based learning at all levels, in all IVET programmes, also through work placements, internships and job shadowing experiences.</p> <p>3.2 Increase the possibility of industry placements abroad through MOUs with foreign employers.</p> <p>3.3 Provide CPD Pedagogy for all teaching professionals to integrate more real-world experiences in classroom teaching and to explore innovative ways of taking the learning beyond the classroom walls.</p> <p>3.4 Set up emulative training centres as a means of providing students with added practical work options within an environment similar to the place of work.</p> <p>3.5 Introduce apprenticeship degrees with multiple exit points and work with industry partners for quality placements.</p>
Work with industry partners for quality placements.	<p>3.6 Develop working relationships with industry representatives and social partners to create a channel of communication on WBL.</p> <p>3.7 Widen the network and increase collaboration with industry partners to strengthen WBL .</p> <p>3.8 Build capacity of industry-based mentors as a means of providing more valuable work experiences.</p> <p>3.9 Develop a competency framework for WBL.</p> <p>3.10 Establish and strengthen closer ties with industrial and business partners in Gozo to increase WBL opportunities.</p>



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4:

Reinforce the image and build the esteem of Vocational and Professional Education and Training

Initiatives	Measures
Reinforce MCAST's communication structures.	<p>4.1 Improve the College's internal and external communications procedures and processes.</p> <p>4.2 Maintain to high standards the MCAST web portal and calendar of events.</p> <p>4.3 Update the current communication mechanisms.</p> <p>4.4 Modernize and streamline the presence of the College online and on social media.</p>
Increase the visibility of VPET in Malta.	<p>4.5 Make more visible to potential students and the general public the alternative learning opportunities, the different learning methodologies, the resources and routes available through MCAST.</p> <p>4.6 Be more present and engage with the Maltese community through targeted family events, open days and community-based events in collaboration with Local Councils and other local organizations.</p> <p>4.7 Promote good practices, achievements and milestones as a way to communicate better the multiple facets of the VPET education process.</p> <p>4.8 Together with academics and professionals in the various sectors, continue to raise awareness among policy makers of the pivotal leading role of VPET as a developer of future leaders.</p> <p>4.9 Together with industry partners, carry out joint promotional campaigns to create awareness of employment and career opportunities in various sectors.</p> <p>4.10 Build an alumni network to create enhanced awareness of the value of VPET.</p> <p>4.11 Set up an alumni tracker/tracer mechanism that allows the College to remain in touch with its graduates and their career progressions.</p>



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5:

Broaden the local and international MCAST partner network.

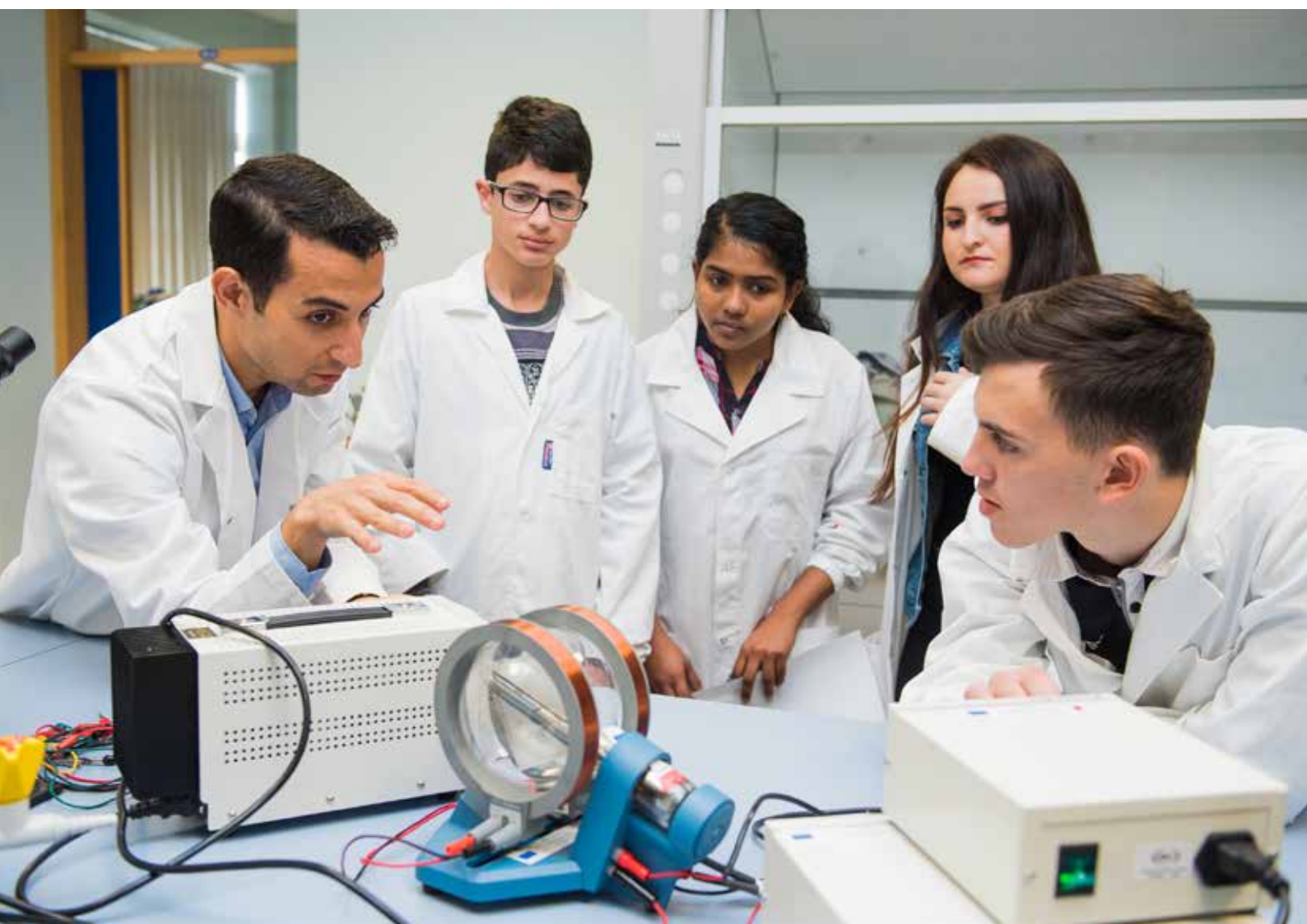
Initiatives	Measures
Strengthen the local Community Network.	<p>5.1 Develop further the liaison with feeder education institutions and partner with other compulsory education and training institutions.</p> <p>5.2 Create opportunities and seek to improve networking fora with industrial partners. Open the possibility of industry representatives and professionals to actively engage with staff and students within the College structure.</p> <p>5.3 Launch and continue expanding the Corporate Social Responsibility initiative as a means of engaging students in community service projects, also as part of their accredited study programmes.</p>
Structure and nurture the international links.	<p>5.4 Draft and launch an internationalization strategy.</p> <p>5.5 Structure and make more visible the relations established with international partners.</p> <p>5.6 Partner with international education and training institutions.</p> <p>5.7 Attract more international students to study at the MCAST on a full time basis.</p> <p>5.8 Develop further the MCAST as a destination for continuous professional development for international students, technical workers and professionals.</p>



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 6:

Provide support to and reinforce the Management and Governance Structures.

Initiatives	Measures
Re-dimension the role and functions of the Internal Audit Function within the College.	<p>6.1 Answerable to the Board of Governors, the Internal Audit Office is intended to create an objective assurance and consulting activity to improve the organisation's operation.</p> <p>6.2 Reconvene the MCAST Internal Audit Committee (MIAC) on a monthly basis.</p> <p>6.3 Carry out Full Audits (against the approved Internal Audit Charter), Investigations and Check-ups against documented policies and procedures for the proper operation, function and good governance of an organisation.</p>
Invest in recruiting and retaining a high-quality workforce.	<p>6.4 Improve the capacity of the HR department.</p> <p>6.5 Invest in staff development to ensure the right skills are in place to support the attainment of the vision.</p> <p>6.6 Review the recruitment processes to reflect strategic direction.</p> <p>6.7 Develop an organisational culture of quality employment, trust, talent management and personal support also by balancing better the managers and the educators within the College's organisational structure</p> <p>6.8 Teach and lead by example – promoting a culture of accountability, ownership, responsibility and professionalism.</p> <p>6.9 Promote extra-curricular activities on campus and stimulate a community life at the College through sports, cultural and musical events.</p>
Establish a long term financial strategy.	<p>6.10 Maximize the use of European Union funding for capital and capacity building projects.</p> <p>6.11 Develop cost centers for each Institute or body and strengthen internal controls.</p> <p>6.12 Explore options to finance capital projects through PPP models, the National Development and Social Fund, the National Development Bank, the European Investment Bank and Malita Investments p.l.c.</p> <p>6.13 Continue to work with MEDE and MFIN to leverage additional recurrent annual expenditure to reflect the objectives and deliverables of the College.</p>
Develop internal structures for data management, provision and dissemination.	<p>6.14 Implement a system of real time Business Intelligence, eventually encompassing all areas.</p> <p>6.15 Enhance quality and accessibility of all information leading to more accurate conclusions.</p>



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 7:

Incentivise the development of applied research and sustainable innovation across the College.

Initiatives	Measures
Establish a leading Applied and Innovative Research Hub at College level providing expertise to other research teams within and outside the college system.	<p>7.1 Engage lecturers to take on research and support the Applied Research Hub.</p> <p>7.2 Build capacity within the team to develop concepts, assist other teams, draft research bids and manage grants.</p> <p>7.3 Engage support officers to support lecturers and students in specific research aspects.</p> <p>7.4 Ensure adequate dissemination of research to students and support research at doctoral levels.</p> <p>7.5 Secure focus on socio-economic impact and community development across all research projects.</p>
Stimulate and develop applied research at College level leading to business development, transfer of knowledge and prototypes.	<p>7.6 Identify potential areas of impact research and draft research plans at all levels to incentivise research; which 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.</p> <p>7.7 Build industry-academia links to promote business development initiatives.</p> <p>7.8 Create networking opportunities within and outside the College to foster interdisciplinary and creative thought processes.</p>
Encourage Institutes to raise their research standards to international levels whilst securing grants and participating in higher education research projects.	<p>7.9 Develop synergies with Institute management teams and academics to elicit and bring forward the innovative frame of mind within the academic levels.</p> <p>7.10 Provide mentoring to Institute research teams to design impact research projects, seek funding and network.</p> <p>7.11 Mobilize resources to ensure that adequate research hours are available to academic staff.</p>

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS, MONITORING AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The process to develop this Strategic Plan started in August 2018 with a detailed review of internal processes and practices. A draft Strategic Plan was prepared and a consultation process was kicked off in September 2018 with a presentation to the MCAST management team. Over a six-month period, the consultation document was presented to academic and administrative staff, students, employers, policy makers, social partners and stakeholders. Fourteen internal consultation workshops and three external workshops were held. More than 300 staff members, 70 students, 90 employers and 55 stakeholder's representatives were present for the workshops. A dedicated email address was set up to attract feedback. A bespoke survey was issued, inviting views on ten questions. The survey attracted 215 anonymous returns. The consultation document was also available on the MCAST webpage and on the official Government consultation portal. All of the feedback received and the questionnaire returns have been analysed and key themes reflected in the Strategic Plan.

The development, launch and rolling out of the Strategic Plan will be undertaken by the Office of the Principal and CEO. The plan will be translated into annual and thematic action plans assigned to the different operational units and departments within the College. Targets to support the achievement of the Strategic Plan will be monitored and set annually.

Continual appraisal and evaluation of our performance is critical for ensuring future success. During the three-year period, progress will be measured through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that cascade from the higher levels through the college via planning and monitoring. Understanding our performance will allow us to manage and maximise the change process which MCAST will go through. A bi-annual review of the plan will be presented to the Board of Governors.

We will use the results of our evaluation to inform ongoing staff capacity building and business development, ensuring we realise our objectives and our ambitions to be a sustainable organisation.



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