

## **MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL TO LECTURING and STAFF MEMBERS**

As we start the seventh week since the temporary closure of the College, I wish to take this opportunity to thank you once again and very warmly indeed for engaging with students regularly and with such strong commitment to ensure that their entitlement is being delivered.

We all recognise that these have been challenging times but also an opportunity to address the way we interact with each other. There is no doubt to my mind that in education, as in health, nothing will ever substitute the person-to-person interaction. Care, empathy, eye contact and other valued characteristics of human behaviour cannot be replaced by machines and yield the same results.

Machines, technology and what is known as artificial intelligence has however brought a new dimension to human interaction in practically all spheres of development from aviation to medicine, to data storing, to building cars and machines, to searching files and documents, to computation; you name it and technology is there. Thanks to these inventions, we can today continue to interact while fighting an invisible enemy. But it would be an error to ignore the humanistic value of the relations with each other. This is what education is all about and I venture to say that those who professionally do not belong to this sector will struggle to understand why education is so different from all other professions. COVID-19 has given us the opportunity to soul search what education is all about and how we can still reach out and continue to make a difference in people's lives.

Over these last few weeks, management and the Union together with the Ministry for Education and Employment have been in continuous dialogue over how best to reach out to our students and staff members and make sure that we continue to provide the services online. Our web portal and the College's social media have been in constant updating throughout these weeks with important Circular and other news items for all staff and students. Our new Helpline 2398 7100 has been a channel of communication used by many to solve their difficulties and in reaching out to lecturers and management. The College has also distributed IT equipment to many students across the island in need of this support and to enable them to engage with their class and their lecturers. Although we are respecting social distancing, the gap between students, lecturers and management has probably never been so close and productive.

I am proud of all our staff and their commitment.

We may commit errors and we may not be meeting all requests. But errors are committed by those who engage and those who care.

In a few days, we shall be launching the new Prospectus 2020-2021, an in-house production by students and lecturers of ICA and management that fills us with pride. I look forward to seeing the campus vibrant again and full of life. That time will come. But in the meantime, we need to respect the instructions given by the health authorities fully. On behalf of the whole MCAST community, I wish to join many others and thank the health authorities for their sterling work for the Maltese people. We will remain forever indebted to them for their cost beyond compare in taking good care of us all.

**The Principal/CEO**  
**Prof Joachim James Calleja**