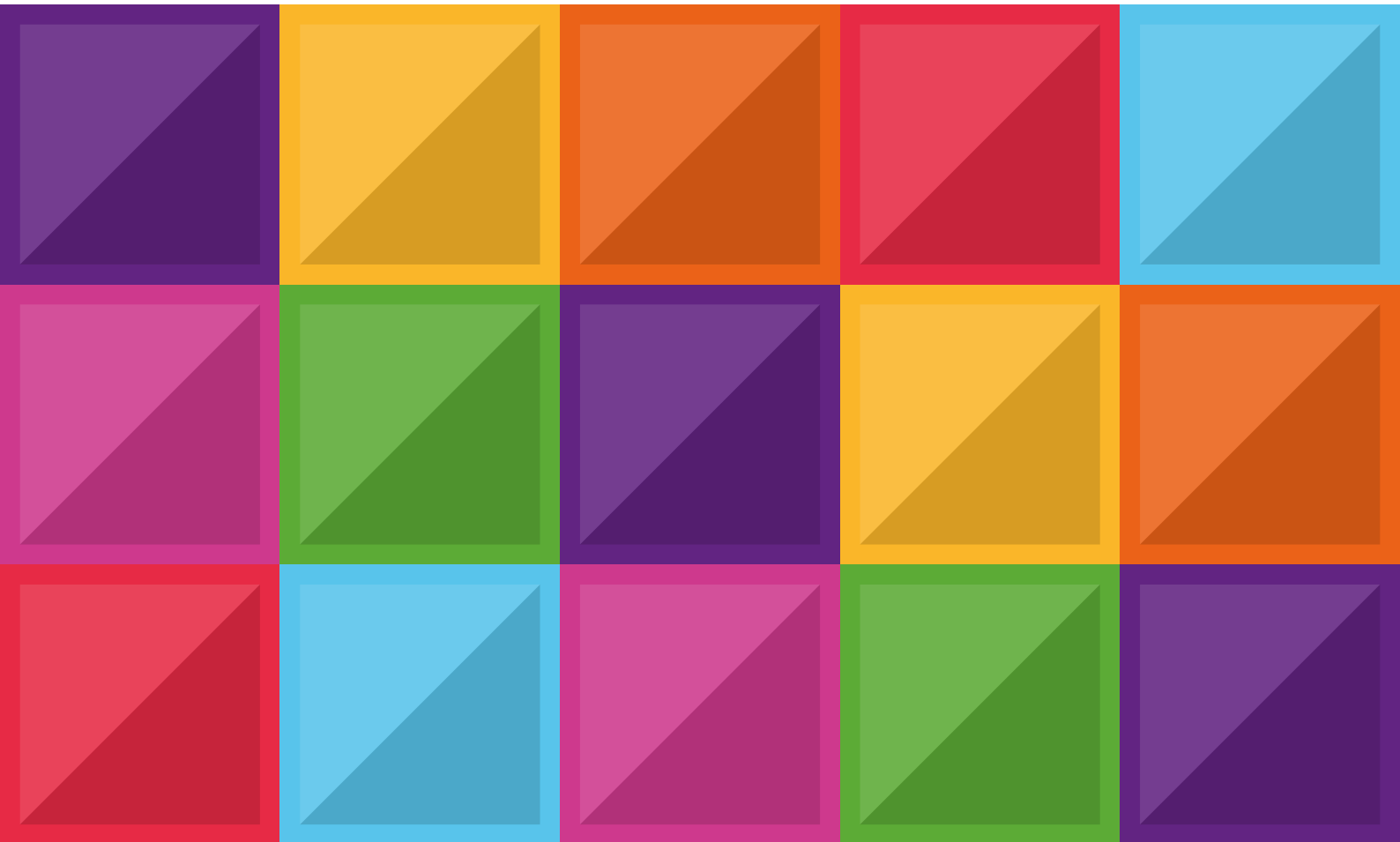




MCAST

2023

ANNUAL REPORT





Annual Report 2023

This report covers the period January 2023 – December 2023.

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Statement from the Minister



Every year, MCAST works to strengthen its reputation as a unique institution on an international scale. It offers comprehensive qualifications not just to those who have completed their compulsory education, but also to working professionals and lifelong learners.

The College's commitment to diversity and accessibility has prompted a large number of students to enrol in its diverse curricula.

MCAST has more than 11,005 students (June 2024), including both full-time and part-time students. The institution offers a wide range of programmes, with a strong emphasis on work-based learning and industry collaborations to prepare students efficiently for the job market. MCAST's efficacy is shown in its high student retention rate of 94% (as of March 2024) and job outcomes in a variety of areas.

The government's substantial investment in MCAST continues to produce major returns, with employers actively seeking out its graduates for new and exciting job opportunities. Furthermore, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have greatly boosted their participation in MCAST, delivering over 49,500 hours of voluntary work through the College's community service activities in 2023. MCAST constantly updates and introduces new programmes at levels 4 and 6 to ensure that the curriculum is current and applicable in real-world circumstances.

We are improving the College's infrastructure to support MCAST's expanding academic capacities through continual investments, which include €35 million in new facilities over the last five years. We are currently attempting to centralise operations at the Paola campus and improve services for Gozitan and international students.

In 2023, major achievements included the introduction of the MCAST Act 2023. This new legislation will give the institution more autonomy to improve its efficiency, marking an important milestone in the sphere of Maltese higher education. Despite these accomplishments, the ever-changing landscape of vocational and professional education in Malta presents ongoing challenges. As the industry grows in popularity, it is critical to highlight the value of vocational training as a desirable alternative for occupations that require both theoretical knowledge and practical abilities. Given the current condition of near-full employment, Malta must ensure that the younger generation has the essential skills to keep up with the latest innovations. It is critical to highlight the practical application of knowledge in education. We prioritise giving MCAST students

hands-on experience through apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities. We endeavour to deepen industry collaborations and integrate employer-driven initiatives directly into the classrooms.

I believe that together, we will continue to set the standard for implementing innovative programmes and procedures that benefit students, staff, and the entire country.

Hon. Dr Clifton Grima
Minister for Education, Sport, Youth,
Research and Innovation

President's Statement



Over the years, I have had the privilege of witnessing MCAST's incredible progress as it has turned into a thriving institution, propelled by our students' and staff's steadfast passion and work.

The dedication and enthusiasm of our management and staff continuously propel the College to new heights of greatness. As President, I have been actively involved in improving the governance and operational frameworks, which have seen considerable advances over the last year. I would like to thank the Internal Audit Office and its committee for their dedication and thoroughness in maintaining compliance throughout the business. Promoting a culture of accountability is critical for efficiently operating our institution, and the Board of Governors is dedicated to ensuring transparency in all of our operations.

As our College community grows, it becomes increasingly vital to follow rules and laws to assure the delivery of high-quality services while also improving working conditions and opportunities for our personnel. I am committed to getting additional financial assistance for continued professional development and encouraging greater participation from student organisations such as the Students' Council.

It is critical that MCAST continues to be a vital resource for the entire community, which aligns with our goal as a community institution. The implementation of the new MCAST Act will be a key milestone allowing us to increase operational autonomy and effectiveness. This legal framework will allow us to improve our engagement with industry and to respond promptly to societal developments, ensuring that we always meet the needs of our stakeholders, particularly employers.

Despite limited resources, the year 2023 saw exceptional progress in terms of more activities, higher student enrolment and increasing

international participation. Our commitment to building a varied community is reflected in strong international connections and a student population from over 105 countries, which benefits from programmes like the ERASMUS+ programme and our new EU4DUAL project. It is worth noting that the EU4DUAL initiative, directed by Mondragon University and involving nine European higher education institutions, exemplifies our commitment to combining formal education with practical experience. As we approach our 25th anniversary, MCAST is a hallmark of educational excellence in Malta.

We are well-positioned for long-term success and forward thinking thanks to our dedicated employees and talented management team. I am confident that with the strong foundation we have built, MCAST is ready to embrace a future full of opportunities and accomplishments.

Professor Ian Refalo
President of the Board of Governors

Principal & CEO Statement



Looking at data from 2023, it is clear that MCAST saw considerable growth in student numbers while also expanding the diversity and excellence of our educational courses.

Our College has seen a considerable increase in the number of students from other nations, demonstrating our commitment to creating a varied and welcoming community. This is evident in our ongoing investment in academic curricula and cutting-edge infrastructure.

Continuing our primary strategy, we expand on work-based learning with new and updated programmes. Despite obtaining more government funding, our operational expenses remain significant as we grow our range of programmes and retain our commitment to providing high-quality learning settings. In 2024, our campus will continue to grow with the completion of the new Institute of Information and Communication Technology building, among other initiatives. This structure is expected to be completed and available for use in the 2024-2025 academic year.

In addition to infrastructure improvements, MCAST is broadening its educational focus. We are now finishing plans for a new Institute of the Trades and extending our Centre for Learning and Employability to improve trade teaching in partner schools. In 2024, these activities will be expanded across the country in conjunction with the Lifelong Learning Department.

Additionally, our Agribusiness Centre has secured a strategic partner to work on a veterinary studies plan. As part of this strategy, we are also considering acquiring a government-run animal hospital to improve our campus facilities. Additionally, the Institute of Community Services is developing a new social work degree plan that includes apprenticeships. This will help to develop

our health and social care initiatives by providing a path to advanced certifications.

Furthermore, we are working on a second doctoral degree in education, with a focus on research and practice, both of which are critical components of dual education. Every year, MCAST Institutes make significant changes to their academic courses, resulting in higher rates of student retention and employment for our graduates.

Last year, we had the opportunity to hold an international qualitative research conference, which allowed us to broaden our participation in global initiatives and ERASMUS+ mobilities. Our educational model's performance is quantifiable, and it is clearly detailed in the report's conclusion. We regularly connect with the industry through the Centre for Learning and Employability to ensure that our programmes are up to date and meet the demands of the workforce. This work culminated in an annual conference at Verdala Palace, where we discussed apprenticeship schemes and their significance to the sector.

We are looking forward to new accomplishments as well as challenges in the next year. With a dedicated governance board, management team, and staff, MCAST is well positioned to attract school leavers by emphasising a seamless blend of academic excellence and hands-on training.

Professor Joachim James Calleja
Principal & CEO

Our Vision, Our Mission, Our Strategy

Our Vision

To foster a working and learning community in which any individual or group can feel welcome, respected, supported and valued.

Our 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.

Our Strategy

Strategic Goals & Objectives

To provide an outstanding educational experience for every student, leading to our graduates being innovators who are fully prepared for their future vocational and professional careers.

To provide students and staff with a high-quality landscaped setting while maximising the use of investment made in the past years and ensuring financial sustainability.

To position ourselves as leaders in providing vocational and 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 industry-driven and based on community-oriented curricula and impact research.

To establish an Eco Charter and become an ecologically sustainable College and a hub for Education for Sustainable Development.

As the year progressed, the total number of planned actions for 2023 increased from 82 to 100. This adjustment, made throughout the year, demonstrates the College's adaptive responsiveness to evolving scenarios and circumstances.

The MCAST Strategic Plan serves as a guiding framework for decision-making processes within the College. In the past year, the Strategic Plan played a pivotal role in shaping discussions regarding Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the College's leadership team. These KPIs were established through a collaborative process, taking into consideration bottom-up concerns and insights from various stakeholders.

As the year progressed, the total number of planned actions for 2023 increased from 82 to 100. This adjustment, made throughout the year, demonstrates the College's adaptive responsiveness to evolving scenarios and circumstances. These changes were made while ensuring alignment with the strategic direction of the College.

In July 2023, the Board of Governors was provided with an update report on the progress of target implementation. In January 2024, the Board received another update covering the latter half of the year. By the end of 2023, 98% of the planned

actions were either successfully implemented or ongoing, with only 2% postponed to 2024.

All targets for Strategic Objective 5 have been fully implemented. However, there are two pending targets: one in Strategic Objective 3 and another in Strategic Objective 6.

In the fourth quarter of 2023, the Strategy Implementation Office compiled a thematic report on the implementation progress of the Transversal Theme 'Greener Sustainability and Digitalisation'. The College remains focused on advancing within the strategic direction outlined in the six-year plan. In addition to finalizing outstanding actions from 2023, new targets have been delineated for the College in 2024.



Equality

The Equality Consultative Committee (ECC) at MCAST remained dedicated to promoting a culture of equality and inclusivity. Meeting eight times throughout the year, the ECC served as a vital platform for dialogue, collaboration and action.

A notable achievement was obtaining the NCPE Equality Mark in March 2023, signifying MCAST's commitment to inclusivity. This achievement was celebrated with an event that both highlighted MCAST's efforts and inspired further progress in equality.

Participation in three Mutual Learning Workshops, including the hosting of one at MCAST on 15th September 2023, provided opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaboration with stakeholders. These workshops further enriched MCAST's efforts towards networking, sharing and collaborating with other institutions on equality and inclusivity.

The introduction of the Inclusive Language Guidebook marked a significant step in promoting inclusive communication within the MCAST community. By adopting inclusive language, MCAST reinforced its dedication to creating a welcoming atmosphere for everyone.

Teaching resources from the GEPARD project were shared with lecturing staff, and equality-awareness CPD courses were delivered to ensure all educational personnel are equipped to foster a safe and inclusive environment.

MCAST also focused on enhancing accountability and transparency through the drafting and finalisation of the Internal Audit Report Action Plan. This plan addresses areas for improvement and outlines steps for enhancing equality and inclusivity.

MCAST also promoted non-stereotypical academic role models, hosted information sessions tailored for girls and women interested in traditionally male-dominated careers, used gender-neutral language in official documents, and made available gender-neutral bathrooms. These initiatives underscore MCAST's multifaceted approach to equality and inclusion.

The ECC was instrumental in overseeing the implementation of equality-related targets, including the Gender Equality Mainstreaming for Strategic Action Plan (GEMSAP) and the Gender Equality Plan (GEP). MCAST's comprehensive approach includes: (1) policy monitoring and governance; (2) training and awareness; (3) inclusive representation, and (4) infrastructure to support inclusivity.

MCAST's commitment to creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment in 2023 is evident through its strategic initiatives and continuous efforts.

	Completed	Ongoing	Pending	Total
Strategic Objective 1 – Invest in modern infrastructure that is fit for current and future staff and students	9	3	0	12
Strategic Objective 2 – Strengthen Quality and Relevance to enhance the students' learning experience	16	3	0	19
Strategic Objective 3 – Position quality Work Based Learning at the heart of all professional and vocational training programmes offered at MCAST	6	2	1	9
Strategic Objective 4 – Reinforce the image and build the esteem of Vocational and Professional Education and Training	11	1	0	12
Strategic Objective 5 – Broaden the local and international MCAST partner network	16	0	0	16
Strategic Objective 6 – Provide support to and reinforce the Management and Governance Structures	11	3	1	15
Strategic Objective 7 – Incentivise the development of applied research and sustainable innovation across the College	14	3	0	17

Cultivating Sustainability

In MCAST's vision for sustainable development, the Strategic Plan 2022-2027 outlines a transversal theme of Greener Sustainability and Digitalisation. This overarching commitment pervades the institution, shaping its ethos and efforts.

The journey towards sustainability is marked by milestones, with progress reports highlighting the College's dedication.

By December 2023, out of 32 outlined measures, MCAST celebrated the completion of 12 initiatives, making significant strides towards its sustainability goals. With 15 initiatives pending and 5 ongoing, the momentum continues, fuelled by innovation and determination.

From the ground up, MCAST's infrastructure integrates eco-conscious design principles. LED lighting, passive shading, rainwater harvesting and double-glazing were installed on Campus, leading to energy efficiency. Embracing the digital age, the transition to a 10Gbps bandwidth enables scalability and technological readiness, supported by Wi-Fi 6 deployment for enhanced connectivity.

Sustainability transcends the physical realm; it is woven into the fabric of education itself. MCAST's curriculum reflects the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), offers some courses designed to nurture green expertise. Whether through engineering solutions for renewable energy or by embedding sustainability in the creative arts,

MCAST prepares a generation of young people to address the challenges of tomorrow.

Online education emerges as one of the pillars of accessibility and sustainability. Through a range of online courses, MCAST promotes inclusivity while reducing carbon footprints. From cybersecurity to healthcare, education transcends geographical boundaries, embodying the College's commitment to equitable access.

MCAST's sustainability ethos extends beyond academia, permeating its outreach efforts. A strategic campaign plan employs a mixed-media approach, advocating for reduced waste and mindful consumption. Merchandise choices reflect this sentiment, featuring reusable bags and recycled notebooks.

Research sparks innovation, merging environmental consciousness with academic pursuit. Hubs like the EIT Climate KIC and RIS Urban Mobility incubate ideas, fostering a culture of sustainability-driven inquiry. From electric mobility to urban resilience, MCAST's research pioneers solutions for a rapidly evolving world.

The MCAST Library underwent a transformation. As physical copies give way to electronic counterparts, the institution advances towards a paperless future, reducing its carbon footprint one digital page at a time.

MCAST's pursuit of sustainability is, at its core, a testament to collective determination and forward-thinking leadership. This report underscores a fundamental truth: sustainability is a journey requiring constant adaptation and ongoing dedication, rather than merely a destination.



Governance

New MCAST Legislation

On the 21st July 2023, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology Act was endorsed by the President of Malta.

This Act supersedes Articles 85 to 112 of Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta, the Education Act, and outlines the structure, objectives and governance of MCAST, Malta's leading institution for vocational and education and training.

This standalone Act provides MCAST with its own legal framework and creates mechanisms that safeguard business continuity, solid good governance and outline better the roles and responsibilities of the different offices. The new Act embodies Malta's commitment to fostering a skilled workforce and better address the demands arising from dynamic local and global economic and industry developments through the provision of quality vocational education and training. At its core, the Act lays the foundation for an institution dedicated to equipping individuals with the practical skills and knowledge necessary for success in diverse fields ranging from arts to science and technology.

One of the main strengths of the MCAST Act is the updating and the modernisation of the governance structures. The Board of Governors is enlarged, more reflective of the MCAST partnership, and includes staff and student representatives. This will bring more value-added to the strategic orientation of the College.

The MCAST governing structures have also been updated through improved definition of the titles, remits and responsibilities. The composition of the internal governing and management structures was streamlined for more effective decision-making and implementation. The composition of the Vocational and Professional Council (VPC) that

replaces the Council of Institutes (COI) has been reviewed to put the emphasis on the academic stakeholders within the College. The VPC is expected to draft an academic strategic plan and approve curricula and syllabi. The composition of the Administrative Council (AC) that replaces the Administrative Bureau, has also been streamlined towards the administrative functions of the College. The Boards of Studies (BOSs) reflect the current internal structures and are expected to draft academic plans, oversee all curricula matters and propose research and CPD initiatives to the VPC.

One of the most important developments in the new MCAST Act is the improvement and consolidation of the role of democratic staff and student representation on governing bodies at MCAST. The College continues to support the voices of staff and students to be heard around decision-making tables. For the first time, the Board of Governors includes one elected student, one elected administrative staff member and one elected academic staff member. The VPC includes two student representatives. The Boards of Studies include two staff representatives (instead of one), and one student representative.

The MCAST Act emphasizes the centrality of all forms of work-based learning within the education and training process at MCAST. This is in alignment with the Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship Act and reflects also the objectives of the MCAST Strategic Plan 2022-2027. The role of industry is also made clearer to reflect their exigencies in the College's learning methods and educational programmes by promoting an entrepreneurial culture and offering practical on-the-job

experience. Industry is represented on the Board of Governors, the Vocational and Professional Council and the Boards of Studies.

Applied and impact-based research is also highlighted in the new Act. The College is now entrusted to ensure that applied and impact-based research as well as community-based curricula be at the core of all student learning experiences, including in curriculum design and in the development of study programmes. This is

intended to enrich and innovate vocational and professional education and training to meet the challenges of Industry 4.0.

The Act also creates the legal framework to assign the current physical resources, facilities and properties to the College Management. The transfer of the properties to the College guarantees the delivery of vocational and professional education in Malta for the years to come.

Board of Governors

Prof Ian Refalo

President

Prof Mark Borg

Vice-President

Mr Brian Farrugia

Member nominated by the Ministry for Education

Mr Anthony Scicluna

Member nominated by the Ministry for Education

Ms Marietta Lanzon

Member nominated by the Ministry for Education

Ms Rhoda Garland

Member nominated by the Ministry for Education

Mr Kurt Farrugia

Member nominated by the Ministry for Education

Ms Louisa Grech

Member nominated by the Ministry for Education and Secretary to the Board

Besides the Board of Studies and the Vocational and Professional Council, the Principal and CEO convenes every Tuesday morning the Executive Management Meeting (EMT) with all Deputy Principals. The EMT discusses the day-to-day management of the College, new programmes at all levels, projects and new procedures and regulations as well as financial matters and human resources management.



Boards of Studies

MCAST has appointed eight Boards of Studies, one for each academic Institute and Sections. The aim of each respective Board of Studies is to develop and direct an academic plan for the academic unit, approve and oversee all full and part-time curriculum programme matters at the Institute, draft and propose bye-laws relating to the respective academic unit, advise and support the Principal in providing administrative, academic, training and development operations within the College, nominate examiners for consideration for approval of the VPC, and propose research and continuous professional development projects to the VPC.

Each Board of Studies is constituted of:

- a. the Director of the relevant Institute who shall be the chair ex officio;
- b. the Registrar, or a representative of the Office of the Registrar, ex officio;
- c. the Deputy Director of the relevant section/s of the Institute/unit ex officio;
- d. the Institute Vocational Co-ordinators of the relevant academic unit/sections;
- e. two members elected by and from among the full-time lecturers of the academic unit;
- f. one student representative elected by and from amongst the students of the academic unit;
- g. one member representing the industry appointed by the President of the Board of Governors, and
- h. two members representing the Minister.

Vocational and Professional Council

The Vocational and Professional Council (VPC) is responsible for the general direction of the academic, vocational and professional education and training offered by the College. It should create, administer and monitor all education and training activities of the College including part-time commercial and non-commercial study programmes. It has full authority over the quality and standards of Awards and Qualifications offered by the College.

The VPC is constituted of:

- a. the Principal, who presides ex officio;
- b. the Deputy Principals, ex officio;
- c. the Registrar, ex officio;
- d. two members representing the industry appointed by the President of the Board of Governors;
- e. two members appointed by the Minister;
- f. the Directors of all the Institutes, ex officio;
- g. the Director, Education and Training Programmes;
- h. the Director, Quality Assurance;
- i. the Director, Student Services;
- j. two members elected by and from amongst the full-time academic staff; and
- k. two members elected by and from amongst the students.

Administrative Council

Answerable to the Board of Governors, the Administrative Council (AC) is responsible for ensuring that the policies, strategy and decisions relating to administrative affairs adopted by the Board of Governors are implemented. It shall oversee the preparation, drafting and monitoring of the Financial, Human Resources and Communications plans. It is responsible for ensuring that recruitment within the College is carried out in a fair and transparent manner and according to laws and regulations, and establishes grievance policies and procedures. The AC is also responsible to administer the use of all College facilities whether for commercial or non-commercial purposes.

The AC is constituted of:

- a. the Principal, as Chairperson;
- b. the Deputy Principals;
- c. the Registrar, and
- d. the Financial Controller.

Internal Audit Office

During 2023, the MCAST Internal Audit Office (MIAO) performed 5 Internal Audits and 25 Internal Audit Spot Checks, in line with the MCAST Internal Audit Plan. These assurance checks resulted in a number of findings and as a result recommendations were made. Besides the Audits and Spot Checks, MIAO also performed a number of Consultancies as requested by the MCAST Principal.

The Internal Audit Office regularly follows up on the recommendations made to ensure their implementation by MCAST Management.

The MIAO has performed and concluded an exercise to create a comprehensive Risk Register, which will serve as the basis for future assurance functions by the MIAO and as a guide to MCAST Management where action and attention are required.

The Internal Audit Committee (MIAC) which oversees the MIAO meets monthly to discuss and approve the reports prepared by the Office. The MIAC is made up of 3 members (a Chairman and two members) who are external to MCAST. The Chairman of the MIAC is also a member of the MCAST Board of Governors.

The Director of the Internal Audit Office reports regularly to the MIAC and to the MCAST Board of Governors about findings, recommendations and other issues that might arise from time to time.

Grievance Office

In 2023, the MCAST Grievance Office maintained its commitment to offering structured and reliable support to the MCAST community and prospective clients. Throughout the reporting year, the Office recorded a total of 343 interactions with students, staff and other individuals, as detailed in Table 1.

	Total
Staff (all categories)	40 *
Full-Time Students	97 **
Part-Time Students	25 **
Ex-Students	11
Parents or Relatives	47
Others - Non-MCAST	113
Employers	9
Anonymous	1
	343

Table 1 - MCAST Grievance Office distribution of contacts

NB: * 2 of the 40 cases lodged included a group of staff members. ** 7 of the 122 cases lodged included a group or whole class of full-time and part-time students.

	Total
Formal / Informal Grievances	91
Concern	77
Seeking Advice	31
Reporting	23
Information Seeking / Clarification / Referral Case	121
	343

Table 2 - MCAST Grievance Office type of cases

An examination of the aforementioned data reveals that the vast majority of submitted grievances (95.6%) were closed upon completion of their respective investigations. Additionally, four grievances (4.4%) were discontinued by the complainants concerned. Ninety-seven per cent of the complainants opted for the informal route

to address the concerns raised. This approach involved fostering open dialogue among all parties involved, facilitating discussions aimed at reaching mutually agreeable solutions.

A noticeable increase was observed in the number of service users seeking advice from the Office or sharing their concerns on various matters, and these were promptly addressed. The Office maintained a consistent approach in handling issues, conducting thorough investigations through both formal and informal channels.

Throughout 2023, the MCAST Grievance Office remained actively engaged in outreach efforts. The primary aim was to raise awareness and provide clear understanding of the function of the MCAST Grievance Office. Participation during Freshers Week played a significant role in reaching new students, by providing explanations about the Office's role and distributing informational leaflets. Additionally, involvement in community events contributed to strengthening relationships with staff members.

In addition to outreach efforts, ensuring accessibility to the Office for our community involved a comprehensive review of its mechanisms and documentation. This approach guarantees that the Office remains accessible to all members of our community.

The Grievance Office consistently engaged in discussions with the Institutes' Directors and the Quality Assurance Department to review documents, procedures, and regulations, with the aim of strengthening standardized practices so as to ensure equitable treatment of all students. The overarching goal was to guarantee that all students were provided with the same opportunities.

Significant efforts were dedicated to monitoring the successful implementation of recommendations outlined in final reports.



Launch of the Sports Symposium



Nurses' Campaign



Engineering Warrant Course

Highlights

National Sports Symposium

MCAST organised a two-day National Sports Symposium at the Paola Campus on 23rd February 2023. Over 120 sports professionals, students and educators participated in this event organised by the College's Institute of Community Services (ICS).

Titled 'Challenging the Status Quo: Inspiring a Legacy Beyond the 2023 Major Sports Events', the symposium provided an opportunity to

showcase local and foreign sports best practices whilst offering the possibility to discuss common sports challenges.

The event tackled three main themes to inspire a tangible legacy for Maltese sports: 'Debating Sports Higher Education', 'Sports for All Leading to Sports Performance' and 'Challenging the Status Quo: Inspiring a Renewed Mindset'.

MCAST Campaign highlights how Nurses make a Difference

MCAST's Institute of Applied Sciences (IAS) held a campaign event with the theme 'Our Nurses. Our Future' at its Campus in Paola. The event, which was held to celebrate International Nurses' Day on 12th May 2023, aimed to put the nursing profession in the spotlight by recognizing the work being done by nurses within the healthcare industry, and looking at ways by which policymakers could strengthen health systems to address growing global health demands.

Key industry stakeholders, lecturing staff, and undergraduate nursing students from the Institute of Applied Sciences (IAS) participated in the event.

MCAST hosts Prospective Students during vibrant Open Day Events

MCAST successfully hosted prospective students and their families during Open Day events held on 23rd June and 25th June 2023 at the College's Main Campus in Paola and at the Mosta Campus.

Hundreds of visitors attended the Open Day enthusiastically, seeking information about education and training opportunities.

MCAST Alumni successfully pass the Engineering Pre-Warrant Qualification Course

MCAST Institute of Engineering and Transport has awarded certifications to the first 29 alumni who have successfully passed the Engineering Pre-Warrant Qualification Course (PWQC).

The Engineering Board formally notified MCAST that the Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes in Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics (ASIIN e.V.) deemed the College's Bachelor in Engineering programmes as having the necessary academic standards and are highly similar to programmes offered within other European institutions.

ASIIN noted that the Pre-Warrant Qualification Course (PWQC) leads to results that confirm

the engineering capabilities of the applicants and regarded this as "a reasonable justification for their eligibility for the award of the Engineering Warrant."

The local Board of Engineers unanimously approved the conclusions of the ASIIN's aforementioned report and confirmed its position in line with the ASIIN's recommendations.

MCAST pledges to continue delivering high-quality academic engineering programmes which are both innovative and relevant to its students.

MCAST hosts 2023 IBMC Fexserv Awards

Together with the Institute of Business Management and Commerce (IBMC), MCAST proudly hosted the 2023 IBMC Fexserv Awards at the College's Main Campus in Paola.

The event brought together academic staff and industry partners to celebrate the students' success. Fexserv Fund Services Limited, one of Malta's leading financial services providers, sponsored the award ceremony and presented awards to the winners.

MCAST Students participate in the FIRST Global Competition

A group of female students following courses at the Institute of Information and Communication Technology (IICT) participated in the FIRST Global Robotics Competition in Singapore.

marks an outstanding milestone for Team Malta, achieving such a high ranking for the very first time.

The MCAST team spent much of their summer learning and experimenting with their robot in preparation for the competition. This innovative event enabled them to carry out diverse activities with their robot while helping them advance their knowledge and skills in areas related to their programmes of study.

The event aimed to inspire leadership and innovation in youth from all nations by empowering them through education in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics - also known as STEM.

The MCAST team secured the 4th place in the playoffs during the competition. This result

Institute for the Creative Arts Festival

The seventh edition of the MCAST Institute for the Creative Arts (ICA) Festival celebrated the creative accomplishments of students from eleven Bachelor of Arts (Honours) courses at the MCAST Institute for the Creative Arts in Mosta. The festival provided an invaluable platform for these students to showcase their hard work and individual talents, gaining recognition among stakeholders in the creative industry and the local arts and design community.

and imagination, thereby unlocking their inner potential.

Throughout the festival, visitors had the opportunity to explore a diverse array of creative works and final year dissertations produced by students enrolled in Bachelor of Arts (Honours) courses at the College's Institute for the Creative Arts (ICA). The showcased projects spanned various creative disciplines, including creative media production, fashion, fine arts, game art, visual design, graphic design, interactive media, journalism, performing arts, photography, product design, and spatial design.

Drawing inspiration from the idealistic and imaginative spirit of Don Quixote, students embodied values such as creativity, authenticity

MCAST Teens Summer Camp a Success

In partnership with MG2i, the commercial arm of the College, MCAST has successfully conducted the MCAST Teens Summer Camp for the second consecutive year. This edition saw the active participation of 93 youths aged between 13 and 16. The Teens Summer Camp provided participants with exposure to diverse educational domains, empowering them to make informed decisions

as they navigate their future learning and career paths.

Students participated in various activities during the camp, including educational projects, sports days, and teamwork. Courses in woodwork and robotics provided during the programme, and events such as treasure hunts, historical



Fexserv Awards



MCAST students participate in the First Global Competition



ICA Festival

visits, and fitness activities, were top-rated among participants.

The College aims to continue building on the ideas and values of inclusivity and creating a community college for all, which helps to widen opportunities for all.

The Erasmus+ European Universities Alliance EU4Dual Rectors' Council Meeting

In November 2023, Professor Joachim James Calleja, the Principal and CEO of MCAST, took part in the third Erasmus+ European Universities Alliance EU4Dual Rectors' Council Meeting held in Kecskemét, Hungary.

The EU4DUAL European University Alliance brings together nine European multi disciplinary universities or universities of applied sciences from Austria, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Spain and Malta. The project also includes companies from each participating country that want to promote innovative learning and the availability of future talent.

This consortium of universities was the first European University Alliance co-funded by the European Union ERASMUS+ programme. The EU4Dual European University, a Centre of Excellence on Dual Education, brings together academia and industry to collaborate in offering higher education programmes with a strong element of work-based learning.



Freshers' Week

Freshers' Week

MCAST kicked off the new academic year with a warm welcome to both fresh faces and returning students, igniting the campus with vibrant Freshers' activities. Spanning across five dynamic days, the festivities unfolded at the Paola Campus, the Mosta Campus and the Gozo Campus.

With over 160 organizations participating in the MCAST welcome week, students had the

invaluable opportunity to engage with potential employers and delve deeper into various career prospects, establishing connections within the professional realm. Additionally, Freshers' Week showcased the 'Live outside the box' initiative, designed to stimulate dialogue surrounding diversity and inclusion among incoming students, fostering an environment of openness and acceptance from the very start.

Apprenticeship Conference

In November 2023, the 'Encounter - MCAST Meets the Industry' conference titled 'Quality Apprenticeship: Are We There?' took place at Verdala Palace. The conference served as a vital platform for influential leaders, featuring three international speakers, alongside industry

partners, apprentices, and academics. Together, they convened to contemplate current practices and chart a path forward to ensure that the apprenticeship experience adequately equips our current student workforce to tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities of tomorrow.

Gozo Campus holds Encounter Meetings with Industry

The MCAST Gozo Campus held a seminar with the theme 'Employment and Skills in Gozo' as part of the 'Encounter – MCAST Meets the Industry' series.

MCAST representatives and key industry stakeholders participated in panel discussions where the dynamic nature of the Gozitan industry, society, and ideas that could be implemented for a better way forward, were discussed.

The College recognises the need to focus on Gozo's labour market and address the challenges of the region's current and future skills requirements. With its Gozo Campus, MCAST is well placed to offer both full-time and part-time courses that address reskilling and upskilling needs.

Future Innovators Summer School programme

In summer 2023, a total of 63 students aged between 13 and 15 attended the Future Innovators Summer School programme held at the MCAST.

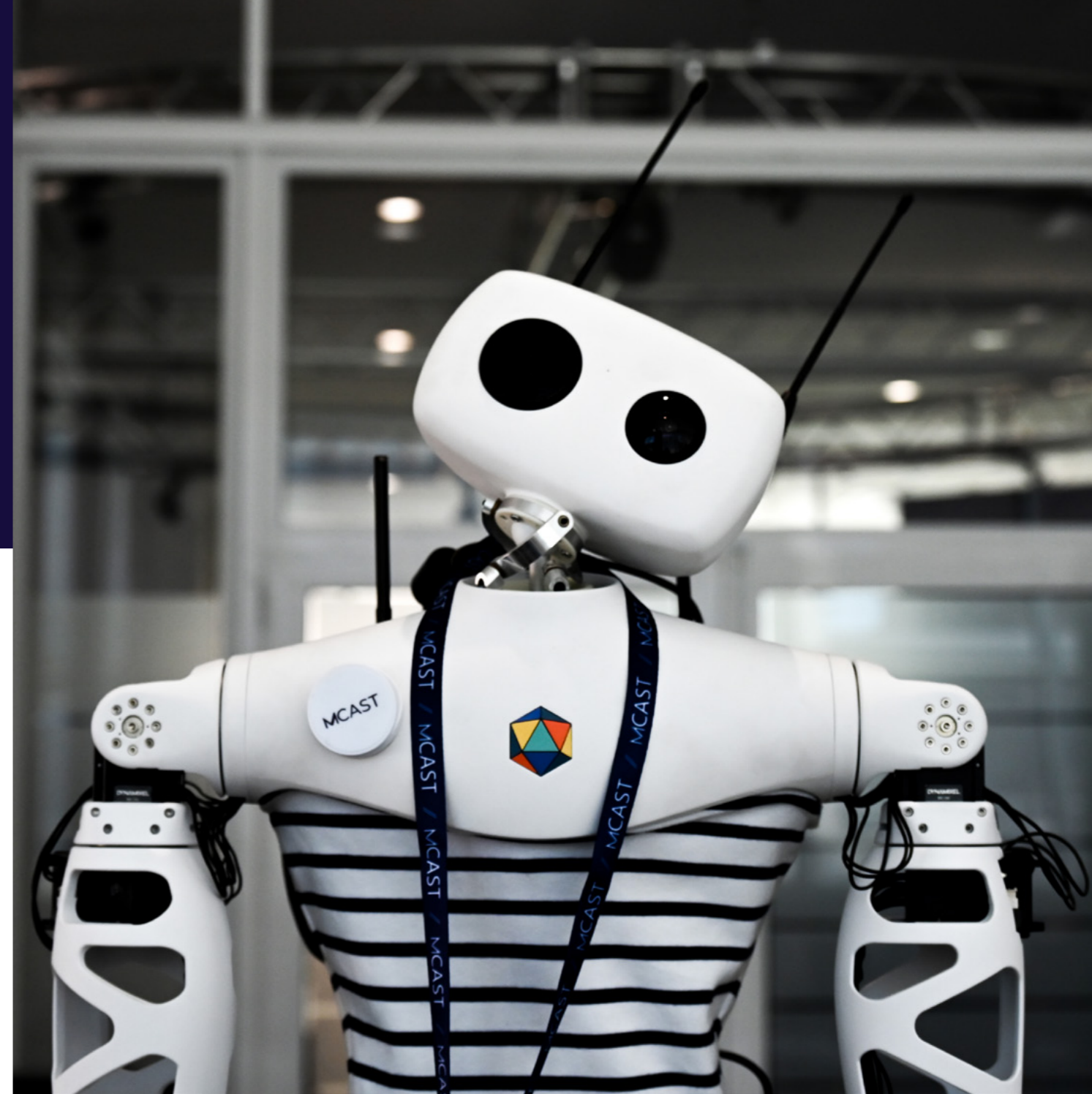
The Future Innovators Summer School is a technologically-themed summer school intended to give students the opportunity to learn about new technologies through interactive learning.

Topics covered during the summer 2023 programme included artificial intelligence, coding, blockchain, metaverse, digital innovation, cybersecurity, and 3D printing.

First edition of KampuSajf

MCAST, in collaboration with APS, successfully hosted the inaugural edition of the arts festival production titled KampuSajf. The festival took place from 25th to 28th August at MCAST's Paola Campus, with an additional event on August 30th at MCAST's Mosta Campus. This production provided an enriching experience for both College students and staff, particularly those involved in the creative fields. Moreover, the festival served as a vital platform for emerging artists to showcase their talents and connect with a broader audience.





Research And Innovation

During the year 2023, the Applied Research and Innovation Centre (ARIC) continued to strengthen the research output of the College. 2023 was a year of new and sustained initiatives as well as further development for the Centre for Applied Research and Innovation.

During the year under review, MCAST was officially approved and acknowledged as a Research Organisation operating in Malta by MCST by virtue of LN 212/2018.

In the year under review, dissemination of information and outreach were one of ARIC's successful initiatives. Between March and June 2023, the Centre held a number of information sessions with Institutes focusing on research targeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, external funding opportunities and other ARIC functions. A number of targeted information sessions were also held with MCAST final year degree students with the aim of promoting Master programmes offered by ARIC and of informing students about other higher education opportunities within the College. The year 2023 has also seen the Master in Artificial Intelligence for Industry 4.0 kick off with its first cohort of participants.

ARIC coordinated 8 training events aimed at further strengthening research skills and innovation within the College. Training included

topics such as SPSS, the use of motion capture cameras and semi-humanoid robots, Research Excellence Programme Proposal Writing, as well as Project Management.

Some highlights during 2023 included the second annual Qualitative Research Conference held in December with the involvement of international experts, as well as the 5th edition of the annual Research and Innovation EXPO also held in December, showcasing research and innovation projects taking place within the College.

Another highlight was the launching of the MCAST Monograph series as well as the publication of 3 issues of the MCAST Journal of Applied Research and Practice, including one special edition focusing on a particular area of expertise.

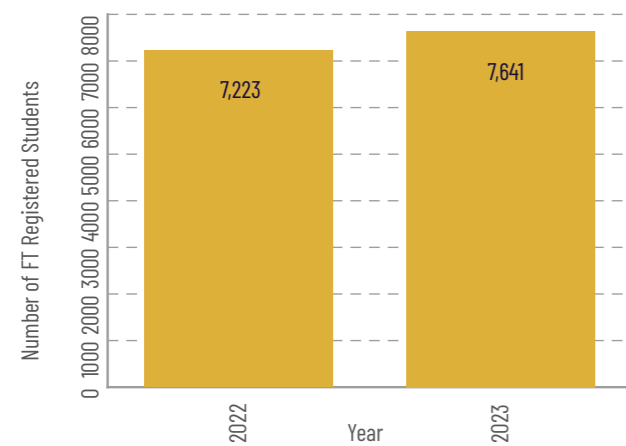
Our People

This data refers to 15 December 2023.

Our Students

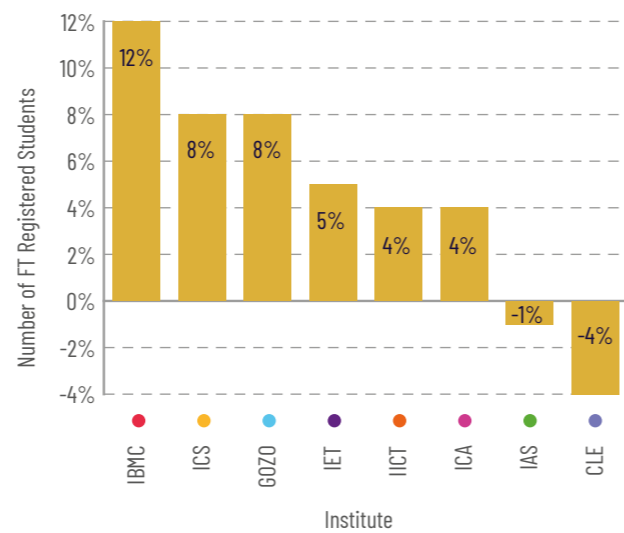
Our Students	
Full-time and Part-time Registered Students	8,905
Full-time Registered Students	7,641
Part-time Registered Students	1,264

Full-time Registered Students



Difference from 2022
+6%

Full-time Registered students % difference compared to previous year

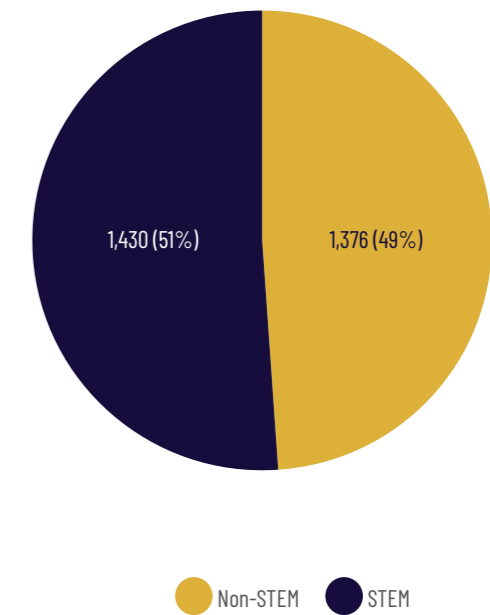


Legend: Institutes

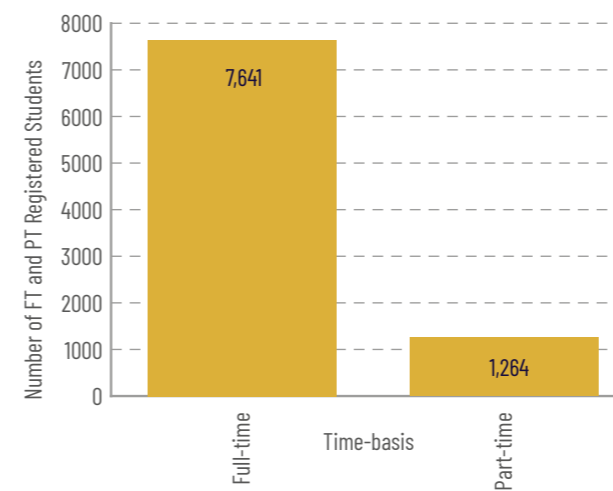
- Institute of Community Services (ICS)
- Institute of Engineering and Transport (IET)
- Gozo Campus (GOZO)
- Institute of Information and Communication Technology (IICT)
- Institute for the Creative Arts (ICA)
- Centre for Learning & Employability (CLE)
- Institute of Business Management and Commerce (IBMC)
- Institute of Applied Sciences (IAS)
- Applied Research and Innovation Centre (ARIC)



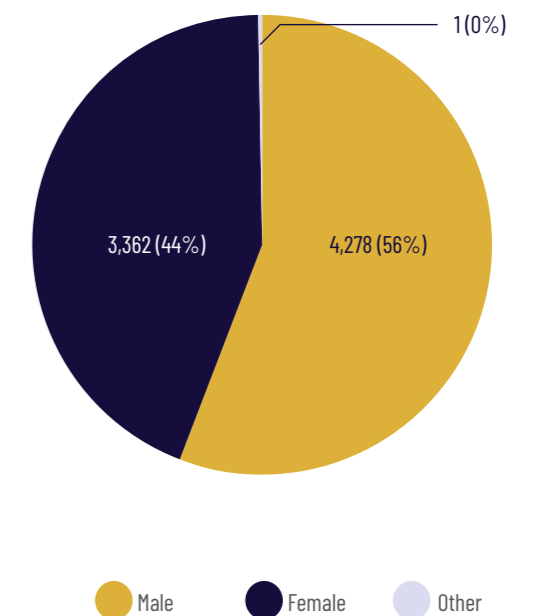
Graduates 2023



Full-time and Part-time Registered Students per Time basis

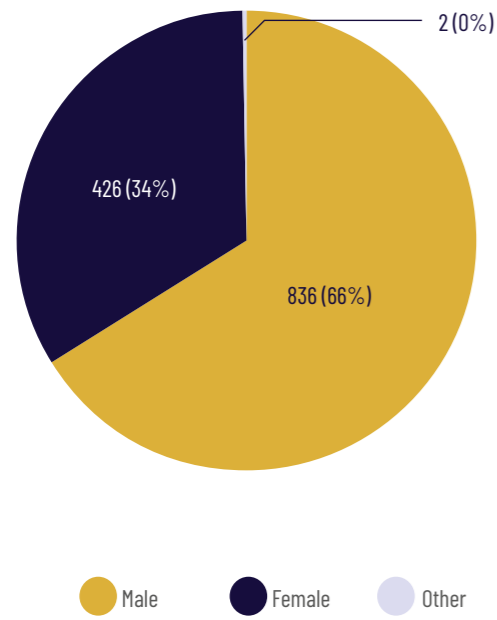


Full-time Registered Students per Gender

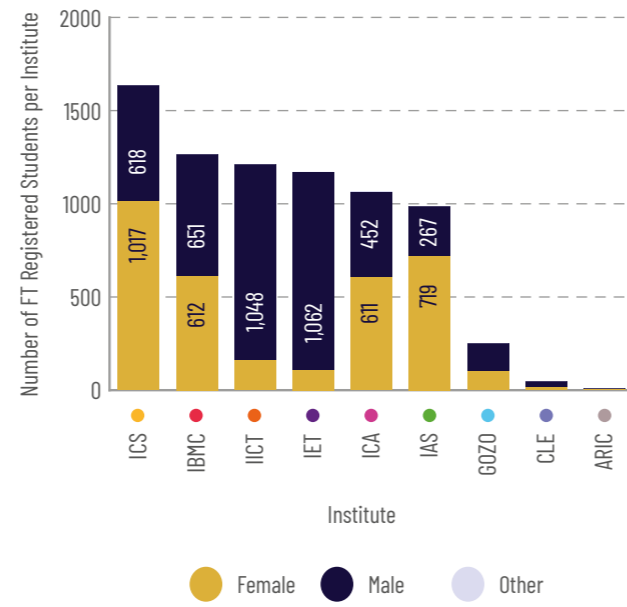


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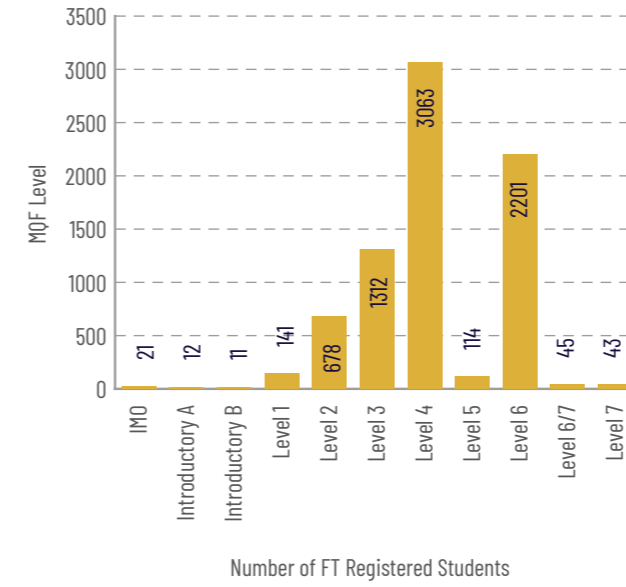
Part-time Registered Students per Gender



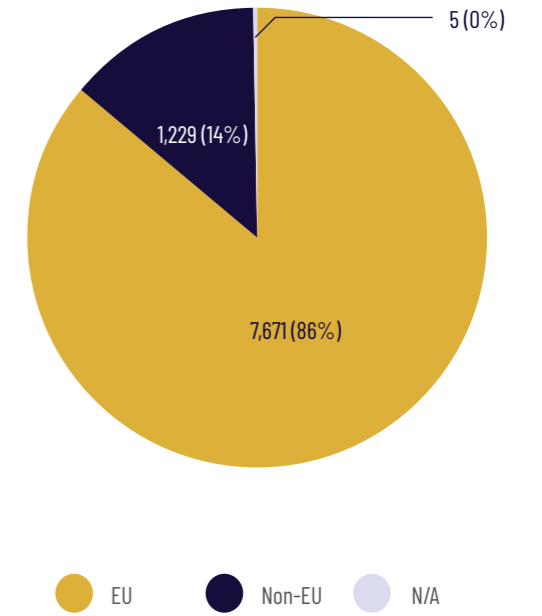
GENDER - Number of Full-time Registered per Institute



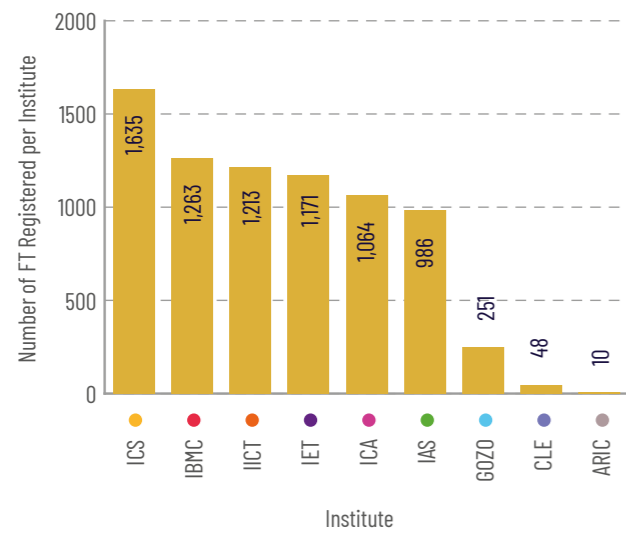
Full-time Registered Students per MQF Level



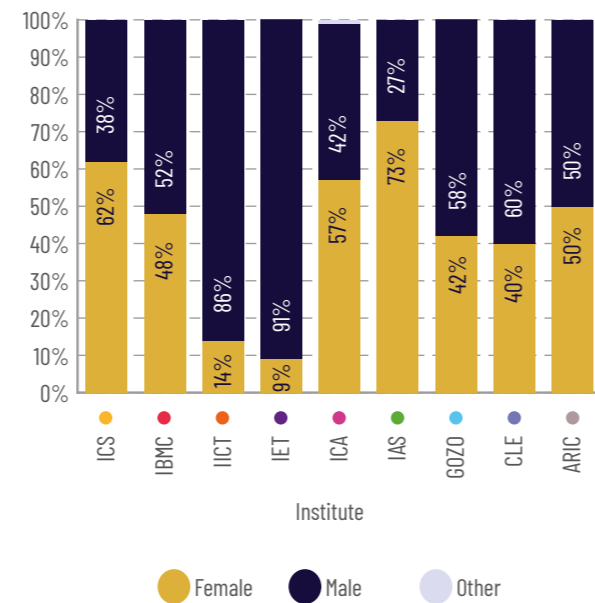
Full-time and Part-time Registered Students per Nationality (EU NON EU)



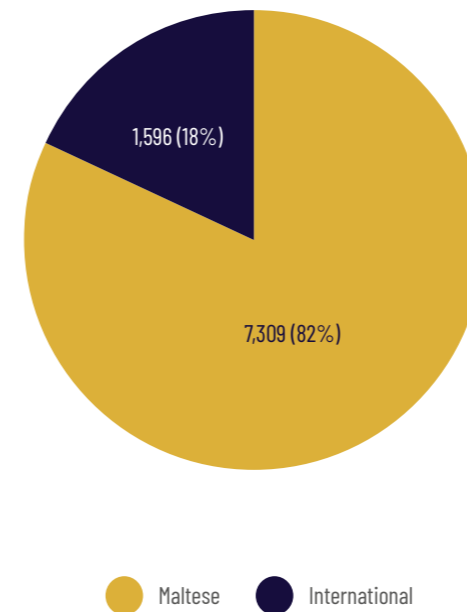
Number of Full-time Registered per Institute



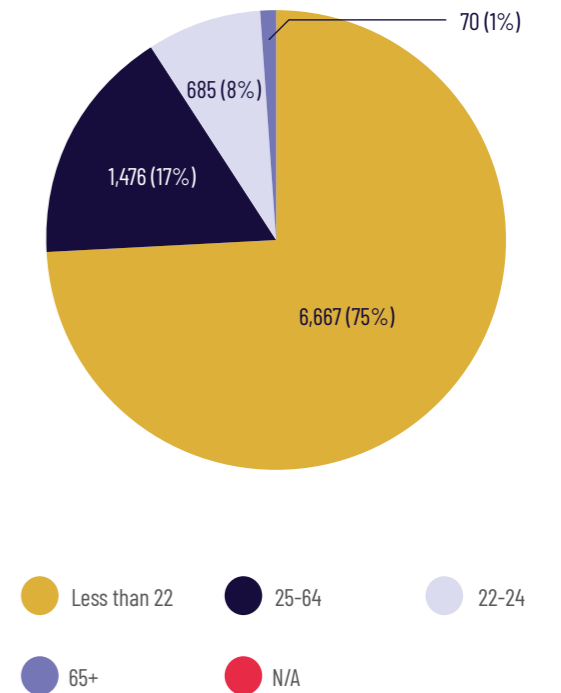
GENDER - Percentage of Full-time Registered per Institute



Full time and part time registered students per nationality (Maltese - International)



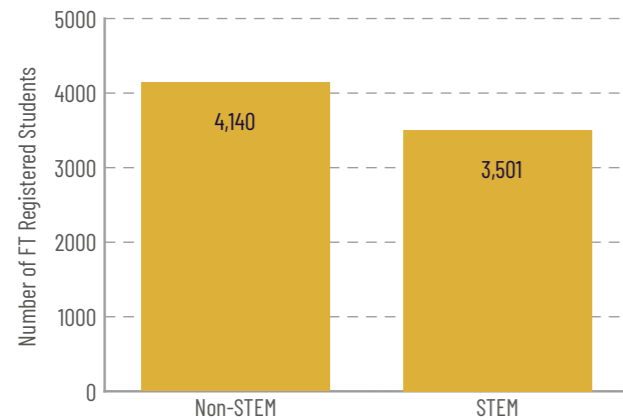
Age cohort - Full-time and Part-time Registered Students



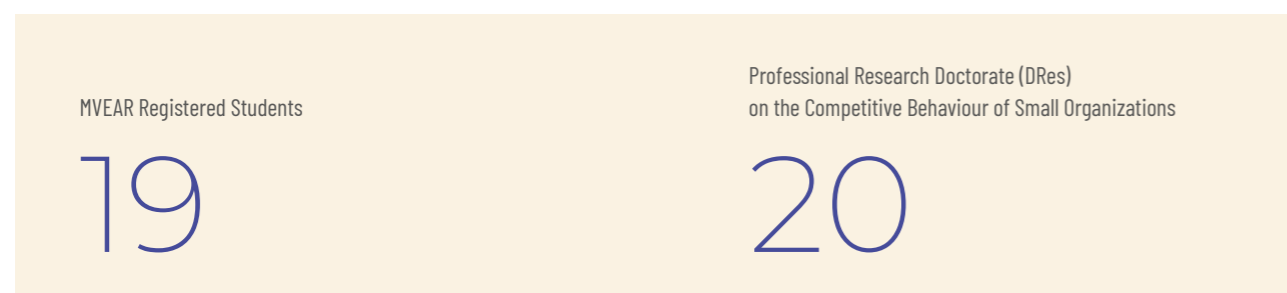
This data refers to 15 December 2023.

This data refers to 15 December 2023.

STEM and NON STEM - Full-time Registered students



Full-time and Part-time Registered Students



This data refers to 15 December 2023.

WELL-BEING HUB

3645 sessions
were carried out

OUTREACH SESSIONS

47 sessions
were carried out

Erasmus+ Projects and Mobility Office

ERASMUS+ PROJECTS AND MOBILITY OFFICE

Throughout 2023 the Erasmus+ Projects and Mobility Office remained active in its efforts to boost the involvement of MCAST students and staff in both Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) Erasmus+ programmes, through a variety of activities and promotional events.

OUTGOING MOBILITIES

406

KA1:

29% increase over 2022

VET:

186 students
79 staff

HE:

89 students
52 staff

TOTAL OUTGOING

275
students
131 staff

INCOMING MOBILITIES - 250

32 foreign students studied at MCAST for 1 semester at MQF Level 6

173 Erasmus+ agreements were signed with international VET and PVET institutions between January and December 2023 (HE – 96, VET – 77)

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

HE Erasmus+ Inter Institutional Agreements – **25**

VET Erasmus+ Agreements, MoUs – **11**

Total – **36**



Our Staff

NUMBER OF FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME MEMBERS OF STAFF

FT ACADEMIC	PT ACADEMIC	
603	355	
FT ADMINISTRATION	PT ADMINISTRATION	
300	75	
TOTAL (FT & PT) ACADEMIC	TOTAL (FT & PT) ADMINISTRATION	
958	375	
FT STAFF	PT STAFF	TOTAL
903	430	1333

NUMBER OF ACADEMIC STAFF BY GENDER

TOTAL FEMALE ACADEMICS	TOTAL MALE ACADEMICS	TOTAL NON-BINARY ACADEMIC	
422	535	1	
FT FEMALE ACADEMIC	FT MALE ACADEMIC	FT NON-BINARY ACADEMIC	
293	309	1	
PT FEMALE ACADEMIC	PT MALE ACADEMIC	PT NON-BINARY ACADEMIC	
129	226	0	
% FEMALE ACADEMICS	% MALE ACADEMICS	% NON-BINARY ACADEMICS	TOTAL
44.05%	55.85%	0.10%	958

NUMBER OF ADMINISTRATION STAFF BY GENDER

TOTAL FEMALE ADMINISTRATION	TOTAL MALE ADMINISTRATION	
187	188	
FT FEMALE ADMINISTRATION	FT MALE ADMINISTRATION	
157	143	
PT FEMALE ADMINISTRATION	PT MALE ADMINISTRATION	
30	45	
% FEMALE ADMINISTRATION	% MALE ADMINISTRATION	TOTAL
49.87%	50.13%	375

Centre for Professional Development

57 CPD sessions were organized with a total of 427 participants attending.

Our Community

CAREER GUIDANCE SESSIONS

Participation in 13 fairs

Delivery of 46 talks in 39 different feeder schools

928 prospective students visited MCAST

I BELONG PROGRAMME

2,912 students followed courses offered under the programme

PASTORAL CARE

Around 245 students completed the programme successfully.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOR THE THIRD AGE

In 2023 the Community College for the Third Age saw a record of applications. 50 participants completed this course successfully.

COLLABORATION WITH THE CORRECTIONAL SERVICES AGENCY (CSA)

The Centre for Learning and Employability offered 8 courses in areas ranging from transversal skills, arts and languages to vocational courses. 56 attendees successfully achieved a certificate.





Our Place

Library and Learning Resource Centre

The state-of-the-art Library regularly hosted visitors from international delegations, as well as a number of high profile national events, exhibitions and book launches.

It has increased its investment in physical books, e-books and magazines as well as databases such as Elsevier Science Direct Database and Elsevier Clinical Skills.

During 2023, the Library has been working towards becoming a library that is open to the community. Thus, in June 2023, the Library launched the initiative 'Friends of the Library' with strong outreach to the public being made through the Local Councils. Through this initiative, members of the public can join the 'Friends of the Library' and use the Library on site, which is another step towards making MCAST a community college, in line with the College's strategic plan. The Library has also extended its opening hours in satellite Institutes while being open for a full 12 hours per day on weekdays at the Main Campus in Paola, thus accommodating both the College population and users from the general public. In 2023 the Library also invested in the cloud-based ExLibris Management System,

so as to facilitate the development towards becoming a library which is both an academic and a public library.

	2023
Visitors	71,429
Books purchased	165
E-books purchased	217
Magazines - new subscriptions	5
Magazines – renewed subscriptions	33
Book donations	441
Total number of books	62,901
Total number of magazines	38
Total number of databases	7

Magic Wonders Child Care Centre

In 2023, the Magic Wonders Child Care Centre catered to the needs of 25 children aged up to three years old. The centre operated with five groups of children, each supervised by five child care educators and overseen by one coordinator. The primary focus remained on providing nurturing and educational experiences in a safe and caring environment.

Magic Wonders Child Care Centre believes in fostering children's curiosity and unveiling the wonders of the world through playful learning experiences. The dedicated child care educators actively engage children in activities designed to stimulate their imagination and encourage exploration.

Throughout 2023 the Centre intensified efforts to strengthen the partnership with parents through innovative activities.

During the same year, the Magic Wonders Child Care Centre made significant investments in enhancing outdoor facilities to enrich the children's play experiences. These improvements included the installation of a protective awning to shield the children from the elements, as well as the addition of a caterpillar structure, slide, and swing to encourage active play and physical development.



New Canteen



Canteen

A new canteen concession was awarded for the operation of the facilities at the three MCAST Campuses. This has led to a more varied and better catering offer for staff and students.

Procurement

Nº OF TENDERS AWARDED

23 tenders

Nº OF PURCHASE ORDERS AWARDED

785 POs

Nº OF CALLS FOR QUOTATIONS PUBLISHED ON EPPS

20 CFQs

Branding

In 2023, MCAST's internal and external communications were characterised by a commitment to transparency and engagement. By fostering effective communication channels within the institution and with external stakeholders, the College aimed to provide accessible information about vocational and professional education that meets the needs of individuals and the economy.

MCAST focused on enhancing engagement across the institution through proactive communication strategies and channels. This included promoting internal policies, procedures, and regulations to ensure that staff and students are well-informed and engaged with the College's mission and quality standards.

Externally, the Communications Office's efforts were directed towards promoting the institution and engaging with the media to raise awareness about its vocational educational programmes and initiatives. Outreach initiatives and participation in fairs helped in reaching more audiences and stakeholders.

The MCASTlink publication was further improved by adopting a thematic approach and including stories by journalism students. More in-house video productions focused on community success stories, highlighting the work across all institutes and departments, including work-based learning opportunities.



ERDF 9.036: MCAST Campus Master Plan – Phase 2

During 2023, the implementation of the second phase of the MCAST campus master plan reached its final phase. This 32.9 million euro project, which has been co-financed by the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), comprised the construction of three new buildings: the Building and Construction (BC) Facilities within the Institute of Engineering and Transport (IET), the MCAST Resource Centre (MRC) and the Institute of Information and Communication and Technology (IICT) at the MCAST Main Campus in Corradino.

Final works are underway to complete the new building of the Institute of Information and Communication Technology (IICT), which will provide students, lecturers and administrators with new and modern facilities in the new academic year. The 14 million euro building boasts 58 teaching spaces, including IT laboratories and

lecture rooms, 13 offices, and a 500-square-metre multipurpose space. The new building's spaces can be used flexibly for teaching and are equipped for the needs of students of all ages and abilities. The modern design and the latest technology is meant to create an inspiring environment which is key in encouraging students, employees and any other person who is neither in employment nor in education to continue their learning and training journey at MCAST.

The construction of the new IICT building is another significant step in MCAST's journey to establish itself as an international center of excellence in vocational education and training. The investment in state-of-the-art educational infrastructure not only provides access to high-quality education, an even broader spectrum of courses, and more relevant skills but significantly contributes to the creation of a modern and

dynamic environment. The building follows the initiatives set out in the MCAST Strategic Plan for 2022-2027, specifically: Ensure purpose-driven, target campus investment smartly and sustainably.

This development is not just another achievement in the college's continuous commitment to education. It is also a tangible proof of MCAST's commitment towards the environment. The modern and aesthetically pleasing edifice has contributed towards the upgrading and beautification of the Corradino urban area by replacing the otherwise old and derelict structures.

Furthermore the new institute includes various environmental protection measures to reduce GHG emissions, promote energy efficiency and water reuse. Sustainability measures include the use of energy efficient equipment, insulation across the walls and roofs, the use of natural light, and the harvesting of rain water to be used as second class water, amongst others. The main objective of these measures is to reduce the college's carbon footprint and create a more sustainable learning environment, a cause MCAST can surely be proud of.



Operational Programme I - European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020
 "Fostering a competitive and sustainable economy to meet our challenges"
 Project part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund
 Co-financing rate: 80% European Union; 20% National Funds



Our Partnerships

Work-Based Learning

More than 50 meetings were held with industry. Besides these meetings, a series of one-to-one meetings were also organized with various industry partners to encourage them to offer vacancies to our students. In March 2023, MCAST welcomed 28 new companies as industry partners.

In December 2023, the Office collaborated with the department of the Deputy Principal Quality Assurance and Student Academic Management to develop two key resources:

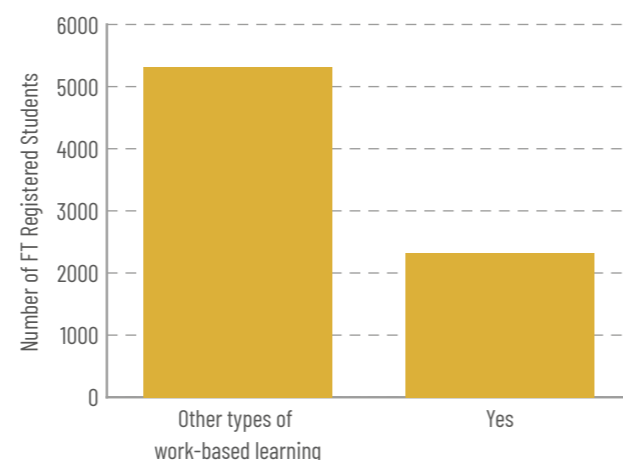
- the Apprenticeship Courses catalogue, designed to furnish industry partners, both current and prospective, with comprehensive information about available programmes. This catalogue aids industry partners in identifying programmes and attendance modalities that align with their work environments;
- the MCAST Apprenticeship Guidebook for Industry Partners, intended to assist both prospective and current industry partners in understanding the process of onboarding apprentices from MCAST, providing valuable guidance for effective engagement with apprenticeship programmes.

Number of registered industry partners

2,365

Number of full-time students that enrolled in an apprenticeship-based course —

FT Registered Students on an apprenticeship course



Encounters with Industry

The project titled 'Encounter – MCAST meets Industry' was extended as part of the MCAST Quality Cycle. Collaborating with MCAST Institutes and other College departments, the Education and Training Programmes Office organised a series of 8 seminars and consultative meetings under the banner of 'Encounter – MCAST meets Industry'. These sessions aimed to solicit feedback from industry representatives, alumni, peer reviewers and external stakeholders on various accredited programmes and qualifications offered by MCAST.

A conference was held in November 2023, focusing on quality apprenticeships. The insights gathered through this initiative were carefully considered by the respective MCAST Institutes during the review of existing programmes and the planning of new ones, aligning with the Quality Cycle for the upcoming academic years.

Partner Schools

The Partner Schools Project has been growing and collaborations have been added from the previous year. A total of eight schools are now endorsed, offering eight different programmes. There are more than 300 students participating in this project. All stakeholders involved in the project receive professional training for quality assurance and better collaboration.

Partner Schools 2023	
Participating Schools	8
Number of Programmes	23
Number of Students	324
Training for Partner Schools Sessions	5
Training Participants	46

Memoranda of Understanding

During the year 2023 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed between MCAST and the following –

- The Western Regional Council
- Temasek
- St Monica School, Gżira
- SP Jain School of Global Management
- SOS - St Joseph School, Slovakia
- Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights
- York St. John University (UK)
- Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training
- Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST)



MCAST Gateway to Industry (MG2i)

MG2i focused on providing an extensive range of offerings tailored to different career paths and aspirations. MG2i and MCAST were continuously committed to bridging the skills gaps in Malta by nurturing the talents of adult workers with remarkable trade skills and courses to preserve and enrich Malta's heritage. MCAST's agenda in 2023 focused particularly on skills retention and upgrading through part-time courses focusing on formal skills training while guiding students towards the newly launched Diplomas, Bachelor Degrees and Master Degrees. The focus areas were broad and ranged from Learning Support Education to Master's in Conservation. In 2023, having been equipped with new digital resources, most of the theoretical courses were digitised to support the work-life balance of the students. Over

2,000 applicants have benefitted from government schemes to fund their studies and associated certifications. The goal for 2024 is to further enrich the Maltese market with skilled, professional and capable people.

During 2023, Training for Industry [TFI] focused on approaching different companies for customised training. The training approaches offered a wide range of skills transfer from industry professionals to industry workers. The training ranged from technical courses, such as welding courses, to theoretical modules such as finance-related modules. TFI maintained and strengthened its relationship with local industry through meetings, gatherings and participation in events. In the coming year, TFI aims to expand its reach through

new ventures and further developed courses to fill the gaps in current employment trends.

MG2i made numerous efforts to strengthen its ties with North African partners; the team even participated in a trade mission to Casablanca, Morocco, and welcomed a number of delegates from the Freeport of Misrata for a maritime training session.

Employment opportunities are always a key focus for international recruitment. In conjunction with the Institute of Engineering and Transport, MG2i has worked with a number of employers to ensure employment prospects for their international applicants. A number of discussions have also been held to ensure that the courses on offer meet

the needs of local employers. This has led to the introduction of a number of bespoke programmes in engineering.

In 2023, MG2i's international team successfully launched the opening of the Zheng He Centre in collaboration with Jiangsu Vocational College of Medicine - the first traditional Chinese medicine centre at MCAST under the management of the Institute of Community Services.

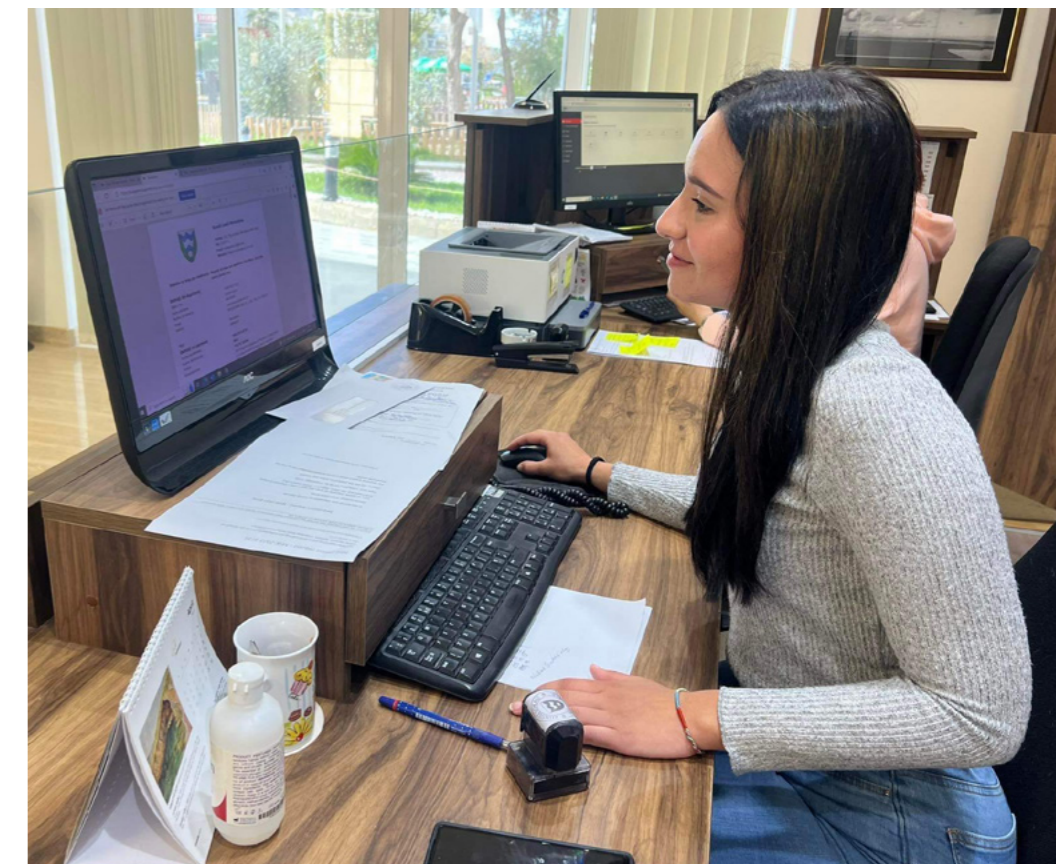


Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

2,476 students performed community hours amounting to a total of 49,520 hours.

The College worked with 790 different NGOs from various sectors.

MCAST students carrying out community hours within various NGOs





Our Performance

Quality Assurance Department (QAD)

The Malta College of Arts, Science, and Technology (MCAST) has devised a Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) built on leadership and strategy, teamwork, customer focus, systems, processes and procedures.

The QAF follows guidelines, indicators and criteria established by institutions such as European Standard Guidelines, EQAVET, the National Quality Assurance Framework issued by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) and best practices as mandated by the international quality management system standards.

Institutes/GC/Departmental Directors, supported by a QAF set-up that was tried and tested within IET-CMS/AMTC, i.e., appointing a DD or SAO as QMS Rep and an Internal Auditor per institute/centre/department via expression of interest or as advised. The appointed personnel will also prepare for and represent the entity during any external audit.

Quality Assurance Framework

The generic QMS currently in place, including the Quality Assurance Manual, is to be mirrored on that of MCAST's individual centres/institutes, which has been updated and piloted, for general application across all institutes/centres/campuses/departments. The set-up involves a formal MRM system within all institutes and areas within MCAST via Boards of Studies/Management Review Meetings (BoSs/MRMs). The latter are to feed into an overarching extended EMT MRM including all

Documentation

Over the years, MCAST has developed an Integrated Quality Management System that is supported by a comprehensive set of Academic policies, regulations and procedures as well as a detailed Manual of Administrative policies and procedures. The QA Department ensures that these documents are regularly reviewed and updated. The QMS Document Revalidation Status List is updated and distributed to Directors every quarter. A total of ninety-nine (99) documents,

thirty-eight (38) of which were new documents, were discussed, approved and released during the period.

Working Groups

Working groups, whose members represent the various pertinent roles within MCAST, are set up to address the necessity of developing and/or designing a current or new policy and/or procedure and/or guidelines and/or form/template by

- Researching best practices relevant to the area being addressed
- Consulting the MCAST community via questionnaires and/or workshops
- Issuing a draft document for consultation and, following feedback and updating, approval

Internal Verification and Lead Internal Verification (LIV): The findings from various LIV initiatives of assessment tools and decisions carried out by the QAD have indicated that a number of quality practices were predominant, in that several observations showcased good practice of the internal verification process underpinning its credibility and validity in assuring the quality of programmes. LIV was conducted on samples taken from the six Institutes.

MIS Check of IV Rigour

Auditing the rigour of the assessment process from the uploading of the front sheet/assignment brief to the results and feedback was the aim of a sample Classter Check, MCAST's Management Information System (MIS), to ensure that the internal verification process is meticulously reflected in the Workflow Log. Classter Checks were carried out on samples taken from the six Institutes.

Internal Audits

The main objective of such audits is to identify good practices and opportunities for improvement within the educational and operational processes within and across MCAST and the way in which these processes impact the quality of the service delivered to MCAST clients, the students. A corresponding and equally important goal of this exercise is to delve into areas that present risks to the smooth running of the processes and, hence, would need improvement, in turn, necessitating the delineation of possible strategies for corrective and preventive actions. A number of quality reviews of key processes have been conducted during the period that follow the 'plan', 'do', 'check' and 'act' continuous improvement cycle feeding into the external audits carried out by local and international agencies, such as Warranting Boards, Councils, EMSA, Bureau Veritas, ASIIN, etc..

Appraisal

A lecturer teaching appraisal exercise of both face-to-face and online teaching, learning and assessment is also integral to the system. MCAST's QAF serves to propel quality in relation to all matters affecting the educational and operational aspects of student-centred learning and programme delivery, ensuring the validity and transferability of MCAST qualifications. The QAF acts as a catalyst, encouraging staff and students to inspire and aspire to an innate quality culture. A number of appraisals were conducted during the period.

QA of New and Cyclical Review of Programmes

Internal cyclical review of programmes is conducted at the end of the first programme cycle, at a frequency of at least once every three/four/five years depending on the programme, or as the need arises, taking into account feedback from internal and external stakeholders. The process of new and cyclical review of programmes is quality assured through structured methods that are measured, monitored and reported. A total of 47 programmes and 331 units were reviewed and

updated as part of the programme cyclical review process, while 16 new programmes were launched during the period.

Annual Programme Review

Annual monitoring of programmes and reporting is a requirement of MCAST's quality assurance framework and MFHEA's standards. Iterative drafts of the Annual Programme Review (APR) template followed a number of dedicated sessions. In this way, MCAST can triangulate data thus garnered to feed into the Review of Programmes outlined above and ensure that there is a high quality of provision and that vocational and academic standards are being met on an annual basis.

MIS Generated Reports

The QAD facilitated the streamlining of MIS reports to be used systematically and consistently as part of both the annual monitoring and review processes.

Feedback

Surveys are drafted and implemented following BoG approval to garner feedback from students, alumni and staff, professional and statutory regulatory bodies, as well as industry and NGO stakeholders. Analysis of the data thereby gathered is evaluated by the MCAST Data Analyst and the resulting statistical report is disseminated to the various institutes/centres and management/governance for application in the APR above and management decisions. Questionnaires are updated following feedback and reissued on an annual basis.

External Peer Reviews

External Examiners were hosted by MCAST as part of the external peer review of MCAST qualifications. The External Examiners' reports are integral to the management review process and key learning points from these reviews are regularly communicated to both academic staff and students. A total of fourteen examiners were

present at MCAST during 2023 covering thirty-three areas under review.

External Quality Assurance

The College is required to conform to MFHEA's National Quality Assurance Framework Internal Quality Assurance Standards. As outlined in the foregoing, the college has developed and implemented several measures to gauge and assure quality in line with the ten (10) Internal Quality Assurance Standards. In this respect, the College's operations are subject to an External Quality Assurance Audit conducted by MFHEA every 5 years and the most recent audit was carried out in 2021.

MFHEA's External Quality Audit Report on MCAST, which has not as yet been published since MCAST is appealing a number of the findings, identified 4 Mandatory Recommendations, 19 Key Recommendations and 8 Recommendations. Notwithstanding the appeal, MCAST has forged ahead and is addressing the findings to the extent that 15 of the findings are closed and 16 are in progress thereby further honing the quality criteria already in place.

MCAST is committed to maintaining and upgrading the dynamic nature of the quality assurance (QA) measures described above and the supporting documentation emphasising the constant current relevance of its processes and procedures. The scope of such internal and external QA measures is to reinforce the strengths of the legacy accumulated over the past 23 years, since MCAST's inception, identify the opportunities, anticipate the threats and address the weaknesses through an open and transparent encounter with personnel, an overview of related documentation and the observation of the interactions of those involved.



Nurturing Learning Journeys for MCAST Students

In November 2023 MCAST celebrated the closing of the ESF 02.058 project, Adding Value: Nurturing Learning Journeys in IVET, through which several innovative tools are now available within the College.

One of the key achievements of this project was the creation of innovative tools that have significantly enhanced student engagement. These tools, coupled with the College's support systems, have empowered students to navigate the challenges of their educational journey with confidence. This project has also paved the way for the development of innovative, concise courses and continuous mentoring, fostering a more engaging learning environment.

MCAST identified several challenges students encounter and what factors were likely to make students more at risk of dropping out. Through research, three online platforms were planned, designed and developed, enabling students to

experience learning differently. One platform includes a communicator, enabling chat interaction, a learning application and a Smart Board for interactive learning; another innovative platform was designed to highlight potential dropouts early on, while a third platform allows students to learn through games.

Through the project, the Skills Kits Programme was developed so that MCAST students could opt to study various combinations of short study units at a basic level, varying from vocational subjects to employability skills and life skills. These were also offered to students outside of MCAST to get a taste of vocational education while providing a tangible option for students at risk of dropping out.



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA



MCAST has also introduced and sustained a new role, that of Student Mentors, whereby multidisciplinary mentoring teams support students in tackling situations they might have been going through, which might not be conducive to learning and, thus, navigating their learning journey successfully. The Student Mentoring Service has reached over 3,000 students, and MCAST is now sustaining this service, which is considered an integral part of the College's support services.



Co-funded by the European Union

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