

25 YEARS
SHAPING
SUCCESS

ISSUE 75

MCAST LINK

THE FUTURE OF
MCAST

KampuSajf²⁰²⁶



PRODUCED BY:

MCAST

25 YEARS
SHAPING
SUCCESS



POWERED BY:

APS bank



6,7,8 AUGUST

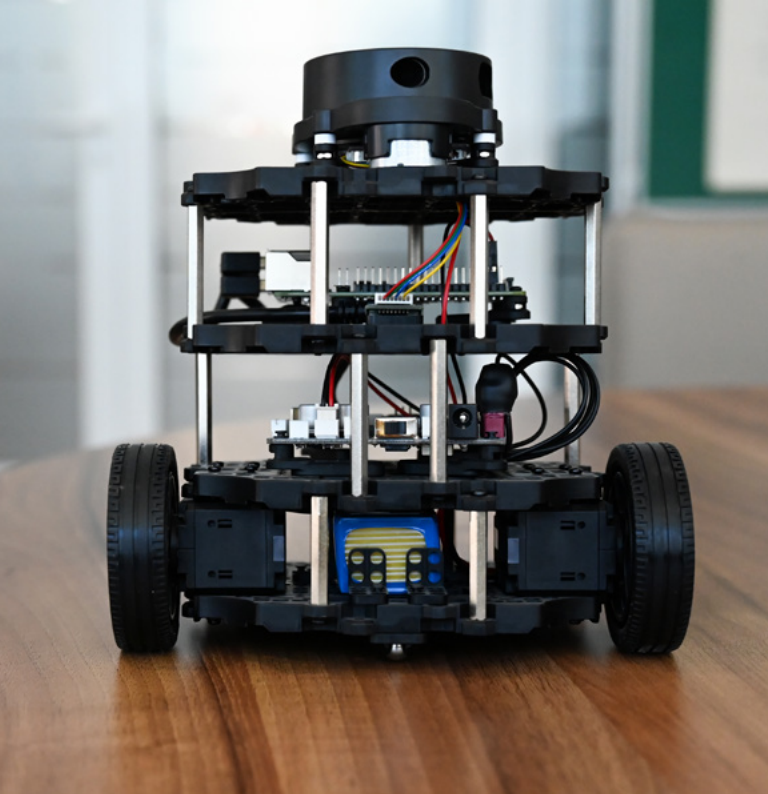
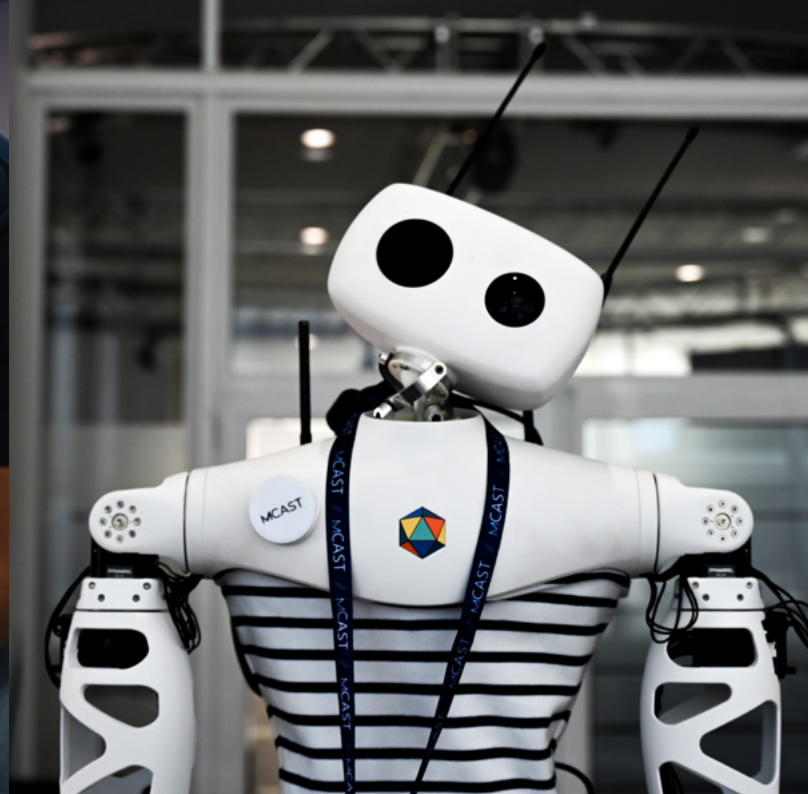
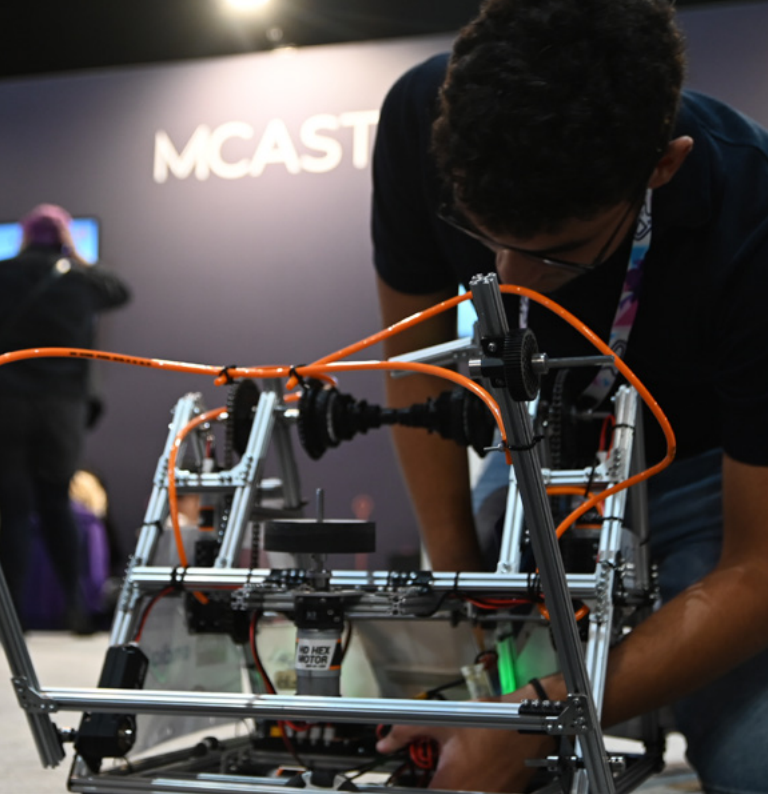
MCAST MOSTA CAMPUS

MORE INFO & FULL LINE-UP
COMING SOON!

M C A S T L I N K

Contents

05	Editorial	45	How MCAST is shaping Malta's Future in Animal Health	67	News
06	We're Training People to Lead Change, Not Just Survive It	48	Bridging Aviation Education and Industry at MCAST	68	Eight MCAST Graduates Awarded the Engineering Profession Warrant
11	The Future of MCAST Starts with Us	50	Arriving at MCAST: Dance, Environment, and New Forms of Research	68	MCAST Marks 25 Years with Focus on Growth, Skills and Future Direction
13	Shaping MCAST's Next Chapter	52	Pioneering a Sustainable Pedagogy: The GreenDale Handbook and the Future-Ready MCAST Graduate	69	MCAST and Studioseven Sign Memorandum of Understanding to Strengthen Audiovisual Industry Collaboration
17	Doctorate Development at MCAST Advancing Applied Research and Industry Collaboration	54	Optimising Creative Engagement through AI Research	70	MCAST Graphic Design Students Visit Malta Biennale 2026
20	BA (Hons) Social Work: Shaping Tomorrow's Professionals in a Changing Society	56	Pathways to the World: MCAST's Strategic Pivot to International Mobility and Employability	70	US Ambassador Visits MCAST
23	Trades Make a Comeback in MCAST:The Future of Trades	58	Looking into the Future of Research at MCAST with Dr Lorna Bonnici West, Director for Research and Innovation	71	MCAST Celebrates Hairdressing Innovation with "Silver Linings" Showcase
26	MCAST's First Doctorate Graduates	60	Shaping the Future of Digital Education at the Institute of ICT	72	MCAST Institute of Applied Sciences Enhances Experiential Learning through Field Trip to Sicily
28	Building Inclusive Futures: What We are Learning through InclusiPHE and EngageALL	62	Future-Proofing the MCAST Campus: Designing the Smart and Sustainable Campus of the Future	73	MCAST Hosts Seminar on Technologies for Future Sustainable Space Missions
31	Between Tradition and the Para-Baroque: A Conversation with Mario Abela, Gozitan Artist and Educator			74	MCAST Participation at EU4Dual Annual Conference
36	A Journey of Inspiration and Innovation in Singapore, 16-20 March 2026			75	MCAST and the University of Malta Host Joint NurseAI Hackathon Focused on AI Innovation
39	What is the Vision of the MCAST Deputy Principals?			76	MCAST Showcases Agricultural Innovation at Malta AgriFair 2026
				77	Guidance Professionals Explore Learning Opportunities at MCAST
				77	MCAST Creative Computing Students Visit BOV to Explore Innovation and User Experience
				78	Inside KampuSajf: MCAST's Festival for Work in Progress
				79	Students Meet Industry on Campus
				80	MCAST and Proximo Ltd Partner to Support Future Trades Professionals
				81	MCAST Hosts Malta Unity Game Jam as Students Showcase Game Development Skills
				82	MCAST and Beijing Polytechnic University Partner to Expand Aviation Education Opportunities
				83	MCAST and STMicroelectronics Launch Upskilling Programme
				84	Aviation Student Gains Valuable European Experience through EPAS and Euroscola
				85	MCAST Signs Collaboration Agreement to Bring Maltese Literature to Life
				86	Celebrating Diversity at MCAST
				87	Launch of Women in Action Network
				88	MCAST Academic Dr Charles Daniel Saliba Featured on TVM's <i>Hajjitna Ktieb</i>
				89	MCAST Participates in the 14 th Philanthropy Lab Leadership Summit in Texas
				90	MCAST Graphic Design Students Create Typographic Posters to Promote Children's Rights
				91	MCAST Students and Lecturers Restore St John's Co-Cathedral Wind Vane Damaged in Storm Harry
				92	MCAST ICA Festival 2026 commemorates a decade of creative achievement



Editorial

CAROLINE BALZAN

Throughout this edition, readers will discover how MCAST is responding to these challenges and opportunities. In an interview with Principal and CEO Stephen Vella, conducted by Natalino Fenech, we explore the institution's vision for the years ahead. Mr Vella highlights one of the most significant developments in MCAST's evolution, which is the introduction of professorships, a milestone that further strengthens the College's academic and research ambitions.

This issue also features interviews with MCAST's newly appointed Deputy Principals, who share their perspectives on the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. Complementing these discussions are reflections from all Deputy Principals, whose insights demonstrate the collective leadership driving MCAST's continued growth.

Research remains a cornerstone of the College's future. Dr Neville Schembri outlines the progress achieved since the launch of MCAST's first doctoral-level qualification, while Dr Lorna Bonnici-West highlights the College's progress in applied research, participation in European and international projects and the development of a strong research framework. Looking ahead, Dr Bonnici West envisions stronger international partnerships and continued investment in research.

The future also requires us to anticipate the changing needs of society. Our feature on the BA (Hons) Social Work programme highlights how MCAST is preparing tomorrow's professionals to address complex social challenges. Equally important is our focus on the future of skilled trades through the newly established Institute for the Trades.

As you read this issue, we invite you to join us in imagining, and building, the next chapter of the MCAST story.



**MCASTlink is produced by the
MCAST Communications Office**

Editor & Producer
Caroline Balzan

MCASTlink Editorial Team:
Daniela Blagojevic
Natalino Fenech
David Kenely
Nikita Pisani

Design
Moose Design Studio

Print
Government Printing Press

Proofreading
Joyce Hili

Photography
Jonathan Borg
Mark Micallef

MCAST Communications Office
Main Campus, Corradino Street,
Paola PLA 9032, Malta.
CALL +356 2398 7200

MCAST.EDU.MT



We're Training People to Lead Change, Not Just Survive It

DR NATALINO FENECH, MCAST SENIOR LECTURER

Mr Stephen Vella, MCAST Principal and CEO, has been at the helm of MCAST since September 2024. Dr Natalino Fenech caught up with him for a frank conversation about his vision for MCAST.

When Mr Vella walked into a classroom in China earlier this year, he was struck by how seamlessly artificial intelligence had become part of everyday learning. "It showed me how fast things are moving," he recalls. For Mr Vella, that moment crystallised the urgency of his vision: preparing students not just to survive technological change, but to lead it. "AI will hit everyone hard," he says. "From engineering to healthcare, from trades to the arts, we need to make sure our people are ready."

MCAST serves as a bridge between education, employment and industry, and Mr Vella is determined to ensure it remains relevant in a rapidly shifting world. "Our ambition is clear," he says. "By 2030, MCAST must be a fully future-ready, innovation-driven College. That means flexible learning pathways; microcredentials, which give you the flexibility to upskill or reskill as your career develops; applied research, and campuses that model environmental responsibility. We are not just preparing students for jobs. We are preparing them to shape the future."

"This vision does not stand in contrast to our academic evolution. The introduction of professorships this year marks another step forward, strengthening our credibility.

The China visit left a lasting impression. "Seeing students interact with an avatar was stimulating," Mr Vella says. "It showed me how quickly AI is expanding. Big companies are already using AI to mimic engineering processes. This is not science fiction; it is happening now." But he is quick to stress that AI is not about replacing human educators. "Lecturers are irreplaceable. What AI does is change the environment in which they work. It forces us to rethink how we deliver knowledge, how we train people to solve problems, and how we prepare them to adapt." He sees AI as a leveller across disciplines. "Whether you are a mechanic working with diagnostic software, a builder using smart tools, or a nurse relying on data-driven systems, AI is part of your world. Our responsibility is to make sure students are not displaced by automation but empowered by it."

In an interview he gave recently, Mr Vella also emphasised that MCAST is "not second division." He is keen to shake off misconceptions about vocational education. "This whole idea that MCAST is for "second chancers" is passé. We do offer second opportunities, but no matter where you are in your journey, MCAST's door is open to help you reach your goals. Our mission is to show that vocational education is a first choice for many." Another misconception, he added, is that MCAST focuses solely on trades. "While it might have

started that way 25 years ago, the plan was always to evolve according to the needs of the country. When MCAST opened in 2001, it started because there was a lacuna in the country's education system. But the vision was always to grow beyond that. We need tradespeople, plumbers, electricians and so on, but the tradesperson of the future is different to the tradesperson of the past. Today they look into technology, and our courses reflect that."

If AI is the challenge, research is the response. Mr Vella is clear that MCAST must grow its research capacity to sustain long-term innovation. "We need to build research groups, embed applied research into our disciplines, and ensure that what we discover informs both teaching and national policy," he says. This year marks a milestone that some may have not noticed. For the first time, MCAST offered its lecturers the chance to apply for dedicated research hours in areas such as Cultural Conservation and Heritage. "It is about enabling our staff to publish internationally, to put MCAST more firmly on the map in all areas," Mr Vella explains. "We want our lecturers to be recognised not just as teachers, but as contributors to global knowledge." He sees applied research as central to Malta's future. "Whether it is maritime innovation, advanced manufacturing, or social inclusion, MCAST must be a centre for sustainable innovation. That is how we serve the country, by tackling its fundamental challenges head on." MCAST is becoming a hub for applied research and industry partnerships not just in Malta, but across the Mediterranean and beyond."

He believes efficiency is not just about paperwork but about culture. "We must be data driven, with clear performance indicators. Governance is not glamorous, but without it, vision stalls. My role is to make sure our structures support innovation, not block it." This realism is part of his leadership style. "I am proud of what our staff and students have achieved, but equally aware of the improvements needed to our



“On governance, Mr Vella was quick with his reply. “As we have expanded, our administrative systems have not always kept pace,” he admits without hesitation. “Procurement delays, resource constraints, and bureaucratic bottlenecks can slow us down. We need modern HR systems, stronger governance and clearer accountability.”

systems. We must strengthen governance and elevate the perception of vocational education. That is how we build credibility.” Infrastructure is another area where MCAST is making visible strides. New ICT buildings, resource centres, and rapid prototyping labs have already reshaped the campus.

He also points to plans for new sports facilities, student residences and the transfer of the Institute for the Creative Arts. “We want our campus to be a living environment, one that reflects the values of innovation, sustainability and community.” MCAST has opened the Institute for the Trades. This new Institute is dedicated to flexible, shorter one-year courses that lead to certificates in areas such as the trowel trades (plumbing, plastering, painting, tile laying), tilemaking and stonework, textile techniques (weaving, embroidery, sewing), metal works (wrought iron, aluminium, copper), and precious metal works (silver and goldsmithing, filigree). “It is part of our commitment to serve both traditional crafts and modern industry needs,” Mr Vella explains.

Education, he insists, is not only about skills but about people. “Mentoring and counselling have become integral to our operations,” he says. “Education is as much about wellbeing as about qualifications. If our students do not feel supported, they cannot thrive in the workplace. That is why mentoring and wellbeing services are now embedded into our daily operations.” MCAST has strengthened partnerships with NGOs, employers and local councils, embedding sustainability into its operations. “We have taken early steps towards a greener campus, and this is another initiative that needs to develop further with more

green spaces, but more importantly, we have built a stronger sense of community. That is what makes education meaningful.”

He insists that MCAST’s national role must be recognised. “We are Malta’s bridge between education, employment and innovation,” he says. “Our distinctiveness lies in the applied, hands-on nature of our education. From MQF Level 1 to Level 8, we are unique both locally and internationally.” He sees this identity as vital to Malta’s economic vision. “Our work is fully aligned with Malta’s human capital and innovation ecosystem. The country’s economic vision calls for adaptable, work-ready graduates, and that is exactly what we deliver. We are not just following policy; we are shaping it.”

More than 50,000 people in Malta have graduated at some level from MCAST. The College today is uniquely placed as it offers courses from basic levels to advanced diplomas, as well as at Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctorate levels. “MCAST is not in competition with any other institution. MCAST is there to provide a viable choice. We are mainly a vocational institution. There are overlaps in academic courses such as engineering and nursing, but MCAST is more hands on. That difference is our strength.”

Work-based learning is central to this mission. Two-thirds of MCAST’s programmes now include a work-based component, and Mr Vella is proud of how this has become a hallmark of the institution. “Employers see us as a creator of talent pipelines,” he says. “That is why work-based learning is central to every programme. It is what makes our graduates

“From this year, MCAST will also introduce professorships, a step that strengthens our academic standing and opens the path to evolving into a university with its own colleges. It is the natural progression of our journey: from trades to degrees, and now to professorial leadership, reflecting our growth and the ambitions of our students.”

adaptable and work ready. Apprenticeships and employer partnerships are not add-ons, they are the DNA of MCAST.” Work-based learning continues to grow, and preparing students for the world of work remains a priority. Full-time student enrolment in apprenticeship-based courses has increased by an average of 18 per cent over the past four years. By this year, 61 per cent of full-time students were exposed to work-based learning or apprenticeships, up from 50 per cent in 2024. “Ultimately, what is important is that students leave MCAST with the right skills, which guarantee improved job opportunities and growth,” Mr Vella says.

MCAST’s growing international profile is another pillar of Mr Vella’s vision. Since 2017, the College has tripled its international student intake, strengthened its research credentials, and become a recognised contributor to EU-funded projects. Erasmus+

activities are expanding, and plans are underway to build a student residence to house the international community. “We want international students to feel at home here,” Mr Vella explains. “That is why we are investing in a residence and expanding Erasmus+ activities. MCAST is not just Maltese, it is regional.” Internationalisation, he stresses, is not just about numbers. “It is about becoming a regional hub of applied knowledge, connecting Malta with other centres of vocational and professional education. International students are becoming part of our academic community, and that enriches everyone.”

Lifelong learning is another cornerstone of his vision. “Our future success depends on how well we serve not only school leavers but also adults who need to reskill,” he says. “Lifelong learning is not a slogan. It is a necessity. Electricians, welders, builders, mechanics, all of them are seeing their work transformed by data and digital technologies. What we once called manual work is now augmented by automation and diagnostics. We must honour the roots of the trades while preparing students for a blend of craft and code, dexterity and digital literacy.”

Mr Vella’s vision is rooted in his own journey through education. He began as a graphic design and photography teacher at the Salvatore Dimech School for Craftsmen, which together with the Art and Design Centre were the forerunners of MCAST’s Institute for the Creative Arts. He later took on leadership roles at MCAST, eventually being appointed Principal and CEO. “Those early classroom moments were formative,” he says. “They taught me how students learn, what motivates them, and the

importance of building relationships. Over the years, I have seen how vocational and applied education can truly transform lives, not just by giving students technical skills, but by opening real opportunities for growth and independence.”

His leadership style is industry aligned, technology enabled, inclusive and future oriented. “We are building a model that embraces digital transformation, applied research, and lifelong learning. We want every learner to be equipped with the necessary skills for tomorrow’s world of work.” He adds a personal reflection: “Leadership is about transparency and teamwork. We must lead by example, make data-informed decisions, and always keep students at the centre of our mission.”

Mr Vella is clear about what he expects from staff, students, and partners. “From our staff, I expect professionalism, passion, and collaboration. From our students, curiosity, commitment, and respect. From our partners, continued collaboration. Education is a partnership. We can do wonders if we walk through the gates together.”

As the conversation draws to a close, Mr Vella returns to the theme that has guided his vision from the start. He leans back, reflective but resolute. “We are training people to lead change, not just survive it,” he says. “That is the essence of what MCAST must be. A place where education meets innovation, where trades meet technology, and where Malta’s future workforce is prepared not just to adapt, but to drive the transformation ahead.”

It is a vision rooted in urgency but delivered with conviction: Malta’s vocational College can be both a guardian of craft and a pioneer of innovation, both a national institution and an international hub. For Mr Vella, the challenge is clear: to ensure MCAST is never caught off guard, but always ready to lead. And as he speaks, it is evident that his ambition is not simply to prepare students for tomorrow’s jobs, but to empower them to shape tomorrow itself.



The Future of MCAST Starts with Us

DR EDEL CASSAR, DIRECTOR, STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION – CHAIRPERSON, EQUALITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MCAST is stepping into a new phase of its journey. The next step is one that is shaped by change, ambition and a clearer sense of purpose. As the world around us evolves, so too must the way we teach, learn, collaborate and lead. The College’s strategic direction looks ahead to 2030 with a strong focus on relevance, quality and impact, ensuring that MCAST continues to play a central role in Malta’s social and economic development.

At the heart of this direction is a simple but powerful idea that the student experience must guide everything we do.

Today’s learners are preparing for a future that is still unfolding; a future that is shaped by digital transformation, artificial intelligence, sustainability and new ways of working. In response, MCAST is strengthening its programmes to be more flexible, skills-driven and more closely aligned with industry needs. Work-based learning is being further embedded across courses, ensuring that students gain real, practical experience that prepares them for employment.

At the same time, our role goes beyond preparing students for jobs. We are also shaping individuals who will contribute meaningfully to society. This means supporting the development of responsible, ethical and engaged citizens. It means shaping individuals who can think critically, act with integrity, and understand their role within their communities and the wider world. By embedding values such as social

responsibility, inclusion, sustainability and ethical awareness into the learning experience, MCAST aims to equip students not only with the skills to succeed professionally, but also with the awareness and mindset to contribute positively to society.

This direction is supported by a set of transversal themes that guide how the College operates and evolves. These include creating a future-ready learning experience, promoting vocational pathways as a first choice, harnessing technology to drive innovation, strengthening performance and accountability, fostering collaboration within and beyond MCAST, and embedding sustainability and social responsibility across all areas of work.

These themes are not abstract ideas. They are intended to influence daily decisions, including how we design courses, how we support students, how we work with colleagues, and how we engage with partners. They remind us that quality education is not only about content, but also about access, inclusion and the ability to adapt.



The strategic direction highlights the importance of strong partnerships, both locally and internationally. Collaboration with industry, community organisations and global institutions ensures that MCAST remains connected, relevant and forward looking. Applied research and innovation also play an increasing role, supporting practical solutions and contributing to national priorities.

However, no strategy can succeed without people.

The future of MCAST will not be shaped by documents alone, but by the actions we take every day. Each member of staff has a role to play in this transformation. Whether through introducing new teaching approaches, developing innovative projects, supporting students more effectively, or building new partnerships, every contribution matters.

“This is an opportunity to reflect. What can we do within our own areas to support this direction? How can we work differently, collaborate more, and think more creatively? What small changes can we make today that will have a lasting impact tomorrow?”

Transformation does not happen all at once. It happens gradually, through shared effort and a willingness to embrace change. By aligning our individual actions with a common vision, we can build a stronger, more responsive, and more inclusive MCAST.

The future of the College is not something that will simply unfold. It is something we will shape together.



Shaping MCAST's Next Chapter

CORYSE BORG, CONTENT WRITER

As MCAST marks 25 years of transforming lives through vocational and higher education, the institution enters a new chapter with the appointment, earlier this year, of two new Deputy Principals, Dr Ing Stephen Sammut and Ms Ann Marie Cassar.

Their arrival comes at a defining moment in the College's history—its 25th anniversary.

Since its establishment in 2001, MCAST has become one of Malta's leading educational institutions, equipping thousands of learners with the skills, confidence and qualifications required in a changing economy.

Today, as industries evolve through rapid technological advancement, sustainability goals and shifting workforce demands, leadership at MCAST carries greater importance than ever.

For Sammut and Cassar, the task ahead is to build on a proud 25-year legacy through innovation, stronger partnerships and a continued focus on student success.

Both share a belief in MCAST as a place of opportunity and progress.

For Cassar, MCAST represents opportunities - the possibility to achieve more notwithstanding the current standing in life.

“I believe that by strengthening our sense of community at MCAST we can foster a more inclusive environment. A strong community of practitioners reaching beyond campus empowers learners with the autonomy to reflect, question and develop the criticality required for a formidable professional formation,” she states.

As leaders in vocational education, she firmly believes that work-based learning and a critical mindset lead to a more resilient professional workforce and ultimately a better society.

“Through collaborative learning experiences we consolidate the skills necessary to build a community that values cooperation over individualism,” she continues.

At the heart of her approach is the conviction that learning necessitates a strong bond between educator and learners, between peers, between theoretical knowledge and practical application, between experiences on and off campus.



Ms Ann Marie Cassar



Dr Ing Stephen Sammut

Sammut, meanwhile, says that his vision for MCAST over the next 5 to 10 years is to see it become an even stronger, more forward-looking institution, while remaining firmly rooted in its vocational and professional mission.

“I want MCAST to continue opening doors for students from all backgrounds and to be recognised not only for the quality of its teaching, but also for its relevance to Malta’s future,” he says.

Sammut believes the College must continue strengthening academic standards, modernising its learning environments and expanding

its role in applied research, innovation and industry collaboration.

“At the same time, it must remain responsive, inclusive and ambitious. I would like to see MCAST continue growing as a national leader in technical and higher education, while also preparing students for the new realities emerging in technology, engineering, sustainability and the wider economy,” he adds.

Both Deputy Principals agree that quality and relevance will define success in an increasingly competitive educational landscape. Institutions are judged not

only by their programmes, but by the calibre of their graduates and their ability to anticipate future needs.

Sammut believes students should engage with the tools shaping tomorrow’s industries, from robotics and automation to artificial intelligence, electric vehicle systems and additive manufacturing.

“MCAST has a very important role to play in helping Malta build capacity in areas such as advanced manufacturing, digital technologies, sustainable energy and other high-value sectors. If we are serious about preparing students for the future, then we must ensure that innovation is not seen as an add-on, but as part of the culture of the institution,” he stresses.

Cassar places equal emphasis on ensuring that learning remains relevant through strong industry collaboration.

Student wellbeing and development are another shared priority.

“A student who feels supported is more likely to succeed. We must continue strengthening the support structures that help students feel valued, guided and able to overcome difficulties,” Sammut says.

Career readiness, he adds, is equally important. He says that students should graduate not only with qualifications, but with practical competence, communication skills, discipline, adaptability and an understanding of workplace expectations.

Apprenticeships, work-based learning, entrepreneurship and strong career guidance all have an important part to play, he continues.

Cassar’s focus, meanwhile, is on ensuring each learner feels visible and valued.

“Bringing people together, working together, collaborating for a more holistic experience that makes each student visible, this remains my focus for a better student experience,” she explains.

Partnerships with industry remain one of MCAST’s defining strengths, and both Deputy Principals are determined to deepen them further.

Sammut believes collaboration should extend beyond placements and apprenticeships into curriculum design, specialised training and applied projects. Industry, he says, should help shape not only what students learn, but how they learn it.

“Consolidating and further developing this network remains a priority for the College with a lecturing team that works in tandem with professionals in the field for sound, relevant professional formation,” she says.

Pushing this network further through MCAST’s increasing number of international partners, and providing learners with work-based experiences beyond local shores, translates into learners equipped with a more extensive professional repertoire.

He also sees MCAST playing a vital national role in building talent pipelines for higher-value sectors such as intelligent systems, sustainable technologies and semiconductor-related activity.

“Strong partnerships benefit everyone. Students gain experience, direction and opportunity, employers gain access to talent and relevant training, and the country benefits from a workforce that is better prepared for future challenges.”

Cassar speaks of partnerships in equally purposeful terms: “This is the true meaning of partnerships, rather than mere administrative agreements - working together to strengthen each profession. This requires working closely together to look beyond current procedures, effectively question what we do and how we do it, and work towards heightened standards.”

When discussing legacy, both leaders return to the same point: the students.

“Sammut says that he would like MCAST students to leave the College as capable, grounded and adaptable individuals who are ready to contribute with confidence.”

He would also like more of them to feel ready to step into fields linked to science, engineering and technology, not with hesitation, but with ambition.

“If more students leave MCAST believing that they can build, design, solve, innovate and lead, then that would be a legacy worth leaving,” he says.

Cassar hopes to bring the “personal back into the professional”, helping to build long lasting connections with present cohorts, alumni, educators and industry partners.

“Mentorship programmes work on various levels, between veteran educators and newly appointed lecturers; between alumni, older students and freshmen; between SMEs and larger corporations - the same principle of meaningful exchange for collective growth applies. This is the collaborative philosophy I aim for,” she concludes.



Doctorate Development at MCAST

Advancing Applied Research and Industry Collaboration

CORYSE BORG, CONTENT WRITER

In recent years MCAST has been steadily carving out a place within the country's research landscape, investing in doctoral education and creating stronger structures to support academic inquiry and innovation.

According to Dr Neville Schembri, Senior Lecturer II and Programme Coordinator - Professional Research Doctorate, one of the most significant milestones in this journey came in 2021 with the launch of the institution's first doctoral-level qualification.

This marked an important step in strengthening research capacity within the College.

“The MCAST Professional Research Doctorate (DRes) on the Competitive Behaviour of Small Organizations continues to reflect the institution's applied and vocational nature, with projects focusing on real-world challenges and industry collaboration,” he explains.

For Dr Schembri, the significance of the doctorate signals a broader institutional shift towards embedding research more deeply into the academic culture of the College while remaining firmly grounded in practical relevance.

“The establishment of the Applied Research and Innovation Centre (ARIC) and the implementation of the MCAST Research Framework have also contributed to a more structured and supportive research environment,” he says.

MCAST has taken several important steps to strengthen a research-driven culture while maintaining its strong vocational identity. But building a research culture within such an environment inevitably comes with its own challenges.

Dr Schembri notes that MCAST has approached this evolution strategically, introducing systems that encourage academics to engage more actively in research without losing sight of the institution's vocational identity.

Support for academics has become a central part of that effort.

“Academics are increasingly being encouraged to engage in research through initiatives such as research contact hours, internal research funding schemes, proposal-writing support, and other research capacity-building opportunities,” he says.

At the same time, visibility around research activity has also increased considerably within the institution itself.

Research is also becoming more visible through conferences, expos, publication opportunities, and interdisciplinary research groups, such as the Interdisciplinary Research Community of Practice (IRCoP).

The importance of this evolution extends beyond the walls of the College.

According to Dr Schembri, doctoral programmes can play a very important role in contributing to Malta's knowledge economy by developing advanced research expertise, innovation capacity, and evidence-based practice across different sectors.

He believes one of MCAST's key strengths lies precisely in its applied approach to research, where projects are often closely linked to industry rather than to purely theoretical inquiry.

“At MCAST, doctoral research is closely connected to applied and professional contexts, which means that research outcomes often have direct relevance to industry, especially in relation to the competitive behaviour of small organisations,” he explains. “This helps strengthen the connection between academia, industry, and society.”

Doctoral programmes also contribute by developing highly-skilled researchers and professionals, supporting novel contributions.

In a rapidly changing global environment, doctoral education is becoming increasingly important for strengthening national resilience, competitiveness, and sustainable development.

One of the main challenges, Dr Schembri explains, is balancing lecturing commitments with research activity. Building a sustainable research culture requires time and resources.

Another challenge is securing research funding and increasing international visibility in a highly competitive research environment.

Addressing these issues requires long-term investment, both financially and institutionally.

These challenges can be addressed through continued investment in research infrastructure and support systems, capacity-building activities, international networking and partnerships, interdisciplinary collaboration, and research dissemination and publication support.

“Importantly, MCAST's vocational and applied focus should continue to be viewed as a strength, particularly in research areas that aim to solve practical real-world problems,” he remarks.

Collaboration, both locally and internationally, is expected to remain one of the defining features of MCAST's future research ambitions.

Dr Schembri emphasises that the increasingly interconnected nature of global challenges makes partnerships not only valuable, but necessary.

“Collaboration will continue to play a central role in shaping the future of research at MCAST,” he says. “Many of today's global challenges require interdisciplinary and international approaches, and collaboration allows institutions to combine expertise, resources, and perspectives.”

In Malta, partnerships with industry, public entities, NGOs, and community stakeholders help ensure that research remains relevant and responsive to societal needs.

“Locally, collaboration with industry, government entities, NGOs, and community stakeholders helps ensure that research remains relevant and impactful,” he explains. “It also creates opportunities for students and researchers to engage with real-world challenges.”

International collaboration, meanwhile, opens the door to larger networks, broader academic visibility, and funding opportunities such as Horizon Europe and other collaborative programmes.

Dr Schembri says that these collaborations also support mobility, knowledge exchange, and the development of new research networks.

“Moving forward, collaboration will remain one of the key drivers for strengthening MCAST's research culture and enhancing the institution's contribution to both national and international research ecosystems,” he concludes.



BA (Hons) Social Work: Shaping Tomorrow's Professionals in a Changing Society

DR BEVERLEY ABELA GATT, MCAST SENIOR LECTURER

Responding to the developing needs of society and the aspirations of its students, MCAST introduced the BA (Hons) Social Work in the academic year 2024–2025. This four-year, warranted degree programme marks an important development in the educational journey of the Institute of Community Services, building on the strong foundations created through the social care courses that MCAST has successfully delivered for a number of years.

As a recognised pathway to becoming a warranted social worker, the course provides students with a clear, structured route into a respected, much-needed profession.

The introduction of this programme represents an academic progression for students who wish to further their studies within the helping professions. For many years, graduates from social care programmes expressed a strong interest in continuing their academic journey in social work. While their passion and motivation were visible, the opportunity to pursue this path at MCAST was not yet available. The launch of this degree programme, therefore, reflects the Institute's commitment to listening to its students and creating meaningful opportunities for their academic and career growth.

This programme has also been shaped by ongoing dialogue with stakeholders and professionals in the social sector. Feedback highlighted the growing local and international need for qualified social workers. As societal challenges become more complex,

investing in well-prepared social work professionals is crucial. Through this programme, MCAST is directly contributing to addressing this need while continuing to strengthen the professional workforce within the social sector.

The philosophy of social work closely mirrors MCAST's educational mission. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) defines social work as *"a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities are central to social work."* This definition shows the balance between theory and practice, which is core to vocational education.

As a vocational College committed to applied learning, MCAST is uniquely positioned to deliver a programme that bridges academic knowledge with professional practice. The BA (Hons) Social Work reflects this approach by preparing students not

only to understand social realities but also to actively engage with them professionally and ethically.

Spanning four years, the programme offers a comprehensive, carefully structured curriculum that equips students with the knowledge, skills and professional values required in the field. Students are introduced to core academic areas, including social work theories, psychology, law, research methods and academic writing. These areas provide the essential theoretical framework that helps students understand human development, behaviour, social systems, and the legislative context within which social workers operate.

What makes this programme particularly distinctive, however, is its strong focus on the development of professional practice skills. Students are not only taught *what* social work is, but also *how* to practise it. Through specialised study units, they develop essential competencies such as effective communication, professional ethics, social work interviewing skills, assessment and intervention planning, and reflective practice. These skills are fundamental for professionals who work closely with individuals, families, and communities facing a variety of life challenges.

Central to the programme is its emphasis on experiential learning. Students are required to complete two apprenticeship placements during their studies. These placements provide them with the opportunity to experience real practice environments. Under the supervision and mentorship of warranted social workers, students are supported as they begin to translate theory into practice.

These placements offer students the opportunity not only to develop professional skills but also to build confidence, resilience and professional identity. Working alongside experienced practitioners allows



students to observe best practices and understand ethical decision making in real situations. Students also appreciate the importance of teamwork within multidisciplinary settings.

Beyond the technical knowledge and skills, these experiences also help students develop essential transferable skills such as problem solving, adaptability, professional communication and critical thinking. Such attributes are indispensable for professionals who must often navigate complex and sensitive situations while upholding professionalism and empathy.

Upon completion of the programme, graduates are awarded a BA (Hons) in Social Work, enabling them to begin their professional careers within the sector. As stipulated by the Social Work Act, graduates may then work towards obtaining their social work warrant after completing two years of supervised practice. This

important stage in their professional development ensures that graduates continue to refine their skills while gaining valuable field experience before achieving full professional recognition.

The introduction of this programme, therefore, represents more than just a new degree. It is an investment in the future of social services and in the communities that these future professionals will serve. By preparing graduates who are both academically knowledgeable and practically competent, MCAST is helping to ensure that the social work profession continues to grow with individuals who are committed, skilled and ready to make a difference.

“Equally important is the programme’s focus on values. Social work is not simply about qualifications; it is about commitment to people.”

Throughout their studies, students are encouraged to embrace the profession’s core values, including respect for human dignity, social justice, advocacy and inclusivity. They are encouraged to see themselves not only as future professionals but also as advocates for positive social change.

In today’s rapidly changing world, social work is also evolving in response to new and emerging challenges. Issues such as mental health awareness, migration and integration, digital wellbeing, ageing populations and community resilience, are increasingly shaping the field. Social workers are now required to engage with

diverse populations, navigate complex systems, and adapt to new forms of service delivery and community-based interventions. For students entering this course, this evolving landscape presents a wide range of opportunities to specialise in and innovate. Whether working in child protection, domestic violence settings, mental health services or community development, graduates can explore diverse career pathways while contributing to meaningful and lasting social change.

The BA (Hons) Social Work also reflects MCAST’s broader commitment to creating accessible pathways in higher education. By providing clear progression routes from vocational to degree-level studies, the Institute continues to empower students to reach their full potential while responding to national workforce priorities.

As the first cohorts advance through the programme, the course is already opening new opportunities for students who are passionate about supporting others and contributing positively to society. It offers a meaningful pathway for individuals who aspire to pursue a profession that is both challenging and deeply rewarding, while preparing them to make a real difference in the lives of the people and communities they will serve.

Ultimately, the BA (Hons) Social Work reflects MCAST’s continued dedication to educational innovation, professional relevance, and social responsibility. Through this programme, MCAST is not only opening doors for its students but also developing professionals who will play a vital role in building a more just, inclusive, and compassionate society.



Trades Make a Comeback in MCAST: The Future of Trades

EMILY MICALLEF, MCAST JOURNALISM STUDENT

In the past, hands-on and vocational careers were overlooked as a career option in Malta, with students encouraged to follow more traditional academic paths. However, this perception is slowly changing. At MCAST, new trade programmes are giving students the opportunity to explore practical careers while combining traditional skills with modern industry demands.

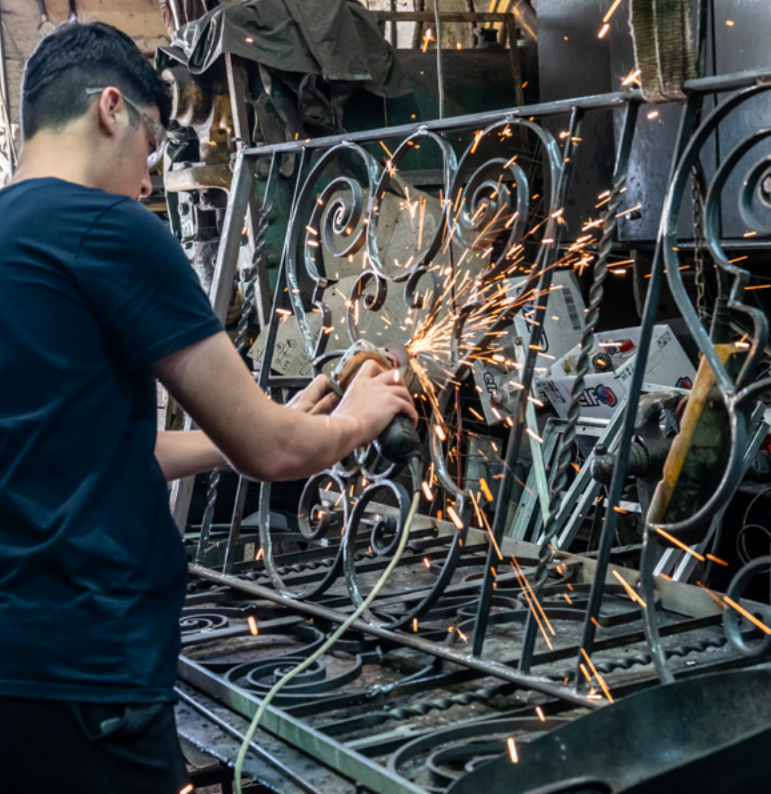
These programmes aim to fill a gap that has existed for over three decades, following the closure of trade schools in Malta. The trade programmes at MCAST follow a holistic and structured approach, combining practical training with essential skills. According to Ms Amanda Cassar, Director at the Institute for the Trades, the courses are designed to equip students with both technical knowledge and life skills. She explains, “Courses such as Metalworks, Textile Techniques, Tile-Making and Stonework, and Trowel Trades focus on workshop-based learning while also developing communication, numeracy and health and safety awareness.”

Each programme is divided into vocational units that focus on specific areas. For example, Textile Techniques includes sewing, weaving, lace making and embroidery, while also integrating enterprise skills and modern techniques such as 3D printing, computer-controlled cutting machines and laser cutting. Students therefore gain both traditional and modern skills, along with the transferable skills required in the industry. Similarly, the Precious Metalwork programme focuses on gold and

silversmithing, including filigree, following the same structure. These programmes are currently offered at Level 1, with plans to expand to Level 2 in the coming year.

One of the main strengths of these courses is how they balance traditional craftsmanship with modern innovation. Students are encouraged to learn by doing, using both manual techniques and modern tools. For example, a student may learn embroidery by hand while also using modern machines, or design jewellery using traditional methods alongside digital tools such as 3D printing. This approach helps students understand both the origins and the future of their chosen field.

Despite the opportunities, Cassar points out that while students show interest in these courses, many are still unsure about where they can lead. She explains that greater awareness is needed, stating, “We need to promote more the trades that are being offered at MCAST as these have been missing for many decades.” She adds that there is still hesitation among students, as well as influence from parents



who often associate trades with a single type of job, highlighting the need for a clearer understanding of what “trades” involve today. Trades, however, can open doors to a wide range of careers, including self-employment and entrepreneurship.

Another important feature of these programmes is the introduction of micro-credentials. Cassar describes them as “building blocks, like LEGO pieces,” where each unit contributes towards a full qualification. This flexible system allows students to progress step by step.

Students who complete these courses have different options available to them. They can continue their studies within the Institute for the Trades or move into other MCAST programmes, depending on entry requirements. Others may choose to enter the workforce directly or even start their own business, showing the practical value of vocational education.

Before these programmes were introduced, MCAST carried out research and consulted with industry professionals, policymakers, and both local and international stakeholders. This helped design courses that reflect real workplace needs. Ongoing collaboration through workshops, industry visits, and guest speakers continues to keep the programmes relevant and aligned with industry expectations.

Technology is playing an increasingly important role in shaping the future of trades. While traditional techniques remain essential, modern tools are becoming part of everyday practice. Technology is not replacing traditional skills but supporting them,



Ms Amanda Cassar

allowing students to work more efficiently and creatively. Looking ahead, the skills required in the trades sector, such as communication, problem-solving, adaptability and digital skills, are becoming just as important as practical knowledge. These transferable skills help students adapt to different roles and prepare them for long-term career growth.

As MCAST continues to develop these programmes, it is helping to change how trades are seen in Malta. By combining tradition, innovation and flexibility, the Institute for the Trades is opening new opportunities for students and reshaping the value of vocational education today.



MCAST's First Doctorate Graduands

SHANNAH MUSCAT, MCAST JOURNALISM STUDENT

How two of MCAST's first Doctorate graduands turned decades of professional experience into research that is already reshaping industries.

When MCAST launched its Professional Research Doctorate (DRes) on the Competitive Behaviour of Small Organizations, it opened a door for Carmelina Frendo and Nadia Cauchi. Their fields—small business sustainability and mindfulness in the wellness industry—could hardly be more different. Yet their journeys share a common thread: years of professional experience transformed into rigorous research, driven by a desire to make a genuine difference.

After achieving her MPhil in 2000, Frendo's dream was always to start a doctorate programme. "I always postponed embarking on a doctorate journey for the simple reason that eventually I got married, I had kids, so I had personal commitments, which, as such, discouraged me from going abroad and taking up a doctorate programme in a foreign university. So, after all these years, when MCAST launched the DRes, obviously I saw it as a big opportunity," she reminisced. Research, she added, had never been far from her professional life: "Even before joining MCAST, I used to head a research department, so it was a very good opportunity for me."

Cauchi's research grew from a deeply personal place. As a holistic therapist and beauty lecturer

for 22 years, she had used mindfulness to manage her own anxiety. "As a lecturer, I encounter several students who also suffer from anxiety. Therefore, when I had the opportunity to pursue a Master by Research (MRes) degree, I knew that I wanted to explore and understand better how mindfulness can help educators and students manage their stress and anxiety."

Both named time as their greatest adversary. Frendo, who balanced her work with a full teaching load, family responsibilities and personal loss, took a deliberate approach: "I didn't look at the journey as five long years. I took it one step at a time, like going up the stairs. Once you reach one target, one step, you think about the next step." When her proposal was rejected twice by the Journal of Circular Economy, she revised it and resubmitted it. "You have to be perseverant — since I wanted to do it, I retried, and finally I succeeded."

Cauchi's tool for navigating the same pressure was, fittingly, the very subject she was researching. "When I felt overwhelmed and could not keep up with multiple pending tasks, a brief mindfulness meditation helped me quiet my mind." In moments of self-doubt, she returned to a phrase her supervisors offered: "Trust the process."



Carmelina Frendo

MCAST also played a big part in supporting these journeys. Both women speak warmly of the DRes team's support. Frendo describes it as extending well beyond the academic: "Although these people are obviously qualified and they themselves hold a doctoral level, they are human beings. With them you can share your emotions as well, and you get literally full support from them. If it wasn't for their support, especially personal support, the journey would have been much, much more difficult." Cauchi echoes this, crediting her supervisors Dr Rose Falzon and Dr Ronald Aquilina for going "above and beyond their duties," while also highlighting the GT Hub — a peer community platform for DRes candidates, MCAST's financial support for publication costs, and access to specialist research software. "I am so grateful," she acknowledges.

Besides being remarkable academic achievements, their research journeys also mean a lot to them personally. "Embarking on this journey helped me to rediscover a level of determination and resilience I did not even think I was capable of," Cauchi reminisced. Frendo shared a similar sentiment, emphasizing that this was a moment of self-accomplishment, as she finally reached her dream.



Nadia Cauchi

"I cannot imagine myself researching a topic I am not passionate about," stated Cauchi, when asked what advice she would give to students considering pursuing postgraduate research. "Consider the journey bit by bit as a series of steps and never give up because, as in every journey, you will have a lot of ups and downs. You have to persist," added Frendo. "In life, it is never too late to research, never too late to learn. If it is your dream, just do it, because once an opportunity goes, you lose it."

Frendo has already been contacted by Malta's Ministry for the Environment and by Circular Economy Malta to help inform policy. She is planning to bring her findings directly to small business owners across Malta and has won the best paper award in sustainability at a major UK conference. On her part, Cauchi is working towards embedding a dedicated mindfulness unit into beauty therapy courses at MCAST, with ambitions to present at international conferences and write an educational guide for the industry. As MCAST's first Doctorate graduands, Frendo and Cauchi's journeys are testaments to true perseverance and passion, leaving behind a blueprint for the researchers who will follow them.

Building Inclusive Futures:

What We are Learning through InclusiPHE and EngageALL

CHRISTIANNE GATT FENECH, CLAIRE SCIBERRAS AND HEATHCLIFF SCHEMBRI

As MCAST marks over 25 years of growth, it is natural to reflect on its journey, its programmes, its reach and its contribution to Maltese society. Yet, perhaps, the more pressing question is not only where we have been, but where we are heading.

Across recent years, part of that direction has been shaped through sustained engagement in European collaboration, particularly through two Erasmus+ funded projects: InclusiPHE (2020–2023) and EngageALL (2023–2026). These projects are not isolated initiatives. They form part of a broader institutional commitment to rethink inclusion, participation and the role of professional higher education in an increasingly complex and diverse society.

InclusiPHE: From Access to Participation

InclusiPHE brought together a consortium of European professional higher education institutions and organisations to explore how participation in higher education can be widened. The project focused on identifying barriers faced by students and developing tools to support institutional change. Through mapping exercises, self-assessment tools, policy-oriented frameworks and capacity-building resources, InclusiPHE encouraged institutions to move beyond a narrow understanding of access. The central

question became: what conditions are necessary for students not only to enter higher education, but also to participate fully within it?

At MCAST, this resonated with our own context. Our student body reflects a wide range of lived realities, including working students, mature students and individuals with migration backgrounds. Participation in student life often presupposes time, financial stability and familiarity with institutional systems, resources that are not equally available to all. This has prompted a shift in thinking. Inclusion is no longer understood as the presence of opportunities alone, but as the extent to which those opportunities can realistically be taken up.

EngageALL: Co-creating Engagement with Students

Building on this foundation, EngageALL extended the conversation by focusing on civic engagement, student participation and community connection within higher education. Funded through Erasmus+, the project brings together a consortium of partners,

including universities, applied research institutions, and European organisations such as EURASHE, the European Students' Union, among others.

At its core, EngageALL seeks to reposition engagement as a structured and supported dimension of learning. This includes the development of:

- a competence framework for student engagement,
- a service-learning toolkit,
- training programmes and resources for institutions, and
- the implementation of a Student Ambassador Scheme across partner countries.

At MCAST, this has translated into concrete and ongoing work. We have been actively involved in the design and piloting of the Student Ambassador Scheme, recruiting and training students, collaborating with associate partners and testing engagement activities within real community settings.

The process has been deliberately iterative. Training has included both shared European elements and locally adapted components, reflecting the understanding that inclusion cannot be standardised across contexts. MCAST also hosted a Transnational Project Meeting for EngageALL, bringing together international partners in Malta. This meeting provided a space for exchange, reflection, and consolidation of project work, further strengthening MCAST's role within the European higher education arena. The partners also had the opportunity to meet the MCAST EngageALL Student Ambassadors.

What are these projects teaching us?

Across both InclusiPHE and EngageALL, several insights are emerging. Such insights that extend beyond the projects themselves and speak to the future direction of MCAST:

1. Opportunity does not guarantee participation. Even when initiatives are well designed, they may remain inaccessible if they do not align with students' lived realities.
2. Time and resources shape engagement. In a professional higher education context, many students balance study with work and family responsibilities. Engagement must therefore be designed with flexibility and realism.
3. Recognition matters. Students are more likely to participate when their identities, experiences and contributions are acknowledged and valued within institutional spaces.
4. Inclusion requires design, not assumption. It is not enough to invite students to engage; institutions must create the conditions that enable engagement.



MCAST in a European and Local Context

MCAST's involvement in Erasmus+ projects such as InclusiPHE and EngageALL reflects a broader institutional orientation, one that recognises the value of collaboration, research-informed practice and international dialogue. At the same time, these projects are grounded in the Maltese context. The realities of a small-state system, characterised by close institutional relationships, diverse student populations and strong links to the labour market, make MCAST a suitable environment for exploring questions of inclusion and participation.

As MCAST looks towards the future, the challenge is not simply to innovate, but to do so thoughtfully. The lessons emerging from these projects suggest

that change lies not in adding more initiatives, but in rethinking how we design our systems, our practices and our expectations.

This requires a degree of humility. It requires recognising that inclusion is not an achievement, but an ongoing process. And it requires a willingness to question assumptions that may have long gone unnoticed. Ultimately, the future of MCAST will be shaped not just by what we build, but by how we build it and for whom.



Between Tradition and the Para-Baroque: A Conversation with Mario Abela, Gozitan Artist and Educator

CAROLINE BALZAN, COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

A Gozitan visual artist and MCAST lecturer at the Institute for the Creative Arts, Mario Abela's artistic practice centres on painting and drawing, often evolving through a process of sustained experimentation and exploration. Before dedicating himself to fine art, he spent over fifteen years working as a freelance graphic designer. This experience continues to influence his artistic approach, particularly in the way he examines how images are constructed, disseminated and interpreted within contemporary visual culture.

Over recent years, Mario Abela's work has gained international recognition. In 2025, he was awarded the CREA OPEN Prize in Venice and the PRISMA Art Prize in Rome, while in 2023 he was shortlisted as a finalist for the Hopper Art Prize. While appreciative of these achievements, he views such accolades less as final destinations and more as opportunities that allow the work to travel, connect, and enter broader international conversations.

Reflecting on the role of international platforms such as biennales and global art prizes, he believes Maltese artists and designers should approach them not as "Olympic podiums," but as starting points for dialogue and engagement. According to Abela, the real challenge is to remain authentic rather than attempting to imitate dominant international trends. Maltese creatives, he argues, should resist the pressure to dilute their identity in pursuit of visibility. Their greatest contribution lies precisely in bringing

something culturally and personally specific into the global artistic discourse. In this sense, events such as international biennales become meaningful not simply for the recognition they offer, but because they provide spaces where Maltese artists can actively participate in shaping conversations surrounding art, culture, and society.

Working across painting, drawing, and digital media, Abela also reflects deeply on the growing presence of artificial intelligence in contemporary visual culture. He sees AI as an inevitable part of the evolving visual ecosystem, much like photography or digital technologies were in previous generations. While acknowledging its ability to accelerate image production, he warns of the danger of visual homogenisation and the flattening of difference. For him, the central issue is not whether artists will use AI, but how consciously they engage with it.



Mario Abela

Abela believes image-making should first emerge from within the human psyche before encountering external tools. Once an image leaves the body, technologies such as AI can shape, transform or expand it.

However, if the image is generated entirely outside the human experience from the outset, something fundamental is lost. “You can no longer truly feel it,” he explains. In his view, the enduring value of artistic practice lies in slowing things down and allowing uncertainty to remain present within the creative

process. AI may become useful, but if every image becomes immediate and fully resolved, artists risk losing the very space where meaning is formed. Rather than replacing artists, he believes AI will ultimately force creatives to redefine what remains essential in their practice.

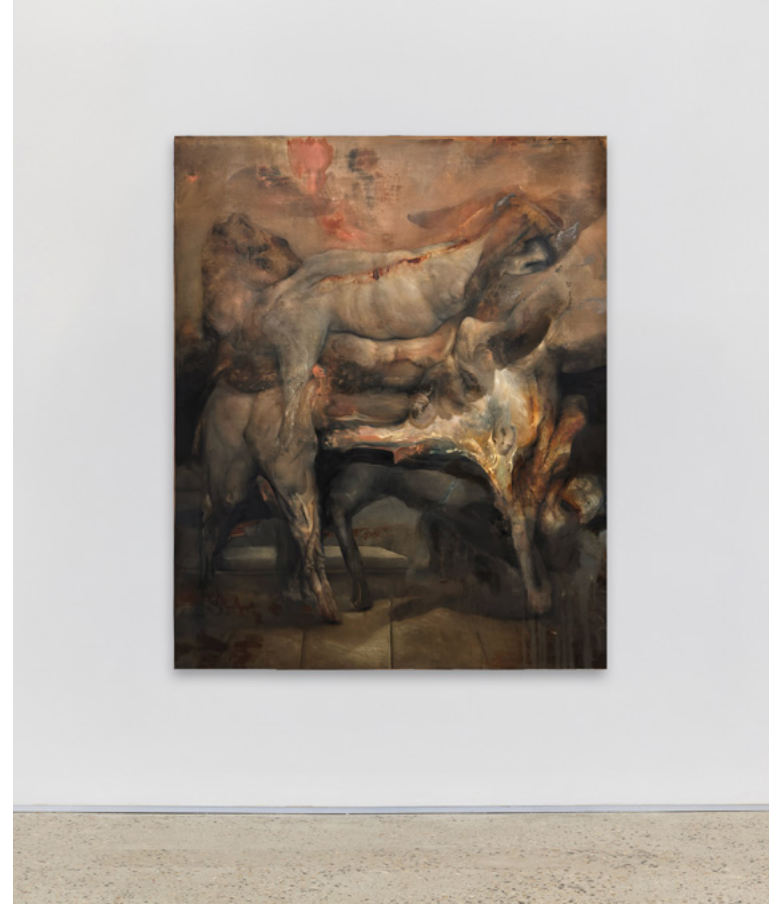
This philosophy also informs his teaching approach at MCAST, where Abela works to balance traditional design principles with contemporary digital experimentation. He sees technical skill and experimentation not as opposing forces, but as inseparable components of creative literacy. Drawing, composition, and software proficiency provide students with the necessary foundation, while

experimentation allows them to push boundaries and engage critically with emerging technologies, including AI-driven workflows.

For Abela, the balance comes through structure and critical thinking. Students are encouraged not only to master techniques, but also to question the systems and processes behind image-making itself. The ultimate goal is not simply technical perfection, but the development of individuals capable of critically understanding both the images they create and the broader systems in which those images operate.

Looking ahead, he envisions his own artistic practice becoming increasingly distilled rather than merely expanded. The themes that already define his work, namely ambiguity, contradiction, instability and the tension between image and meaning, are likely to deepen further over time. He is particularly interested in creating works that resist immediate consumption: images that unfold gradually and remain unresolved rather than fully explained.

Central to this evolving vision is a concept he refers to as the “para-baroque.” Rather than reviving the historical Baroque style, he describes it as a condition that mirrors the instability of the present era. Just as the Baroque period emerged amidst religious conflict, political tension, theatricality and excess, he sees contemporary society as similarly saturated with spectacle, fragmented realities, emotional overload and an endless flow of images and information. In his words, the para-baroque, reflects how individuals attempt to navigate and make



sense of this instability while constantly confronting fractured realities.

As his practice evolves, he hopes his work will continue to engage with these conditions in increasingly demanding ways. Rather than offering definitive answers, he seeks to create spaces where uncertainty, tension, and reflection can coexist.

Beyond his personal artistic career, Abela hopes his teaching and practice will contribute to a broader shift in mindset among the next generation of Maltese creatives. He encourages students and emerging artists to move away from the constant pursuit of

approval and instead cultivate a more self-aware and critically engaged approach to making art.

In today's fast-paced creative industries, he believes younger artists are particularly vulnerable to consumerist pressures: the demand to constantly produce, remain visible, follow trends and endlessly reinvent themselves for attention. However, he argues that longevity in art does not come from chasing novelty, but from sustaining

an authentic voice over time. That voice may evolve naturally, but it should never be compromised by external systems, markets, or expectations.

If there is one lasting impact he hopes to leave behind, it is the cultivation of resilience: the ability to sustain a practice across decades, embrace uncertainty, and remain intellectually honest. Most importantly, he hopes younger creatives learn to protect their voice at all costs.



“In the end,” he says, “that voice is the most valuable thing an artist truly owns.”

Following his recent international success, he also hopes to see broader opportunities emerge for Maltese artists and designers. For him, visibility should not simply mean exposure, but access: access to networks, institutions, residencies, and critical conversations that allow artists to develop meaningful international connections.

At the same time, he cautions against viewing awards and biennales as declarations of artistic superiority.



Their real value, he believes, lies in the relationships and dialogues they generate long after the event itself. International prizes become meaningful when they help create long-term structures that support artistic continuity and development, rather than isolated moments of recognition.

Ultimately, Abela hopes future international attention directed towards Maltese artists will contribute not only to individual careers, but to strengthening Malta's wider creative ecosystem for generations to come.



A Journey of Inspiration and Innovation in Singapore, 16-20 March 2026

DARREN DUNCAN, SENIOR LECTURER AND INSTITUTE COORDINATOR

There are moments in education when learning extends far beyond the classroom, when ideas are experienced at first hand and inspiration is shaped by new and unfamiliar environments.

The recent mobility visit to Singapore from 16 to 20 March 2026 by Course Coordinators Anna Ancilleri, Senior Lecturer, Fashion, Darren Duncan, Senior Lecturer, Graphic Design and Interactive Digital Media, and Dominic Tringali, Senior Lecturer, Animation and Game Art, from the MCAST Institute for the Creative Arts, was one such experience. It brought together culture, creativity and collaboration in a way that resonates strongly with both students and industry.

Singapore is, above all, a nation shaped by its people. Diverse, disciplined and deeply respectful, its social fabric offers a compelling example of harmony in motion. Walking through its streets, one encounters a seamless coexistence of tradition and innovation. This balance is not accidental. It is intentional, carefully designed and purpose-driven. For students and professionals alike, this offers a critical lesson: great design is not just aesthetic; it is cultural, social and most importantly human-centred.

Cultural immersion formed a cornerstone of the programme. Visits to districts such as Little India and Chinatown, alongside institutions like the Indian

Heritage Centre, the Peranakan Museum, the National Museum and the Asian Civilisations Museum, all provided a deep understanding of how identity and history inform creative expression. These experiences were not just passive observations; they were active engagements with a living culture. Exposure to local food, community spaces and heritage walks revealed how design intersects with everyday life, reminding us that creativity does not exist in isolation; it reflects and shapes society.

Parallel to this cultural exploration was a rich academic exchange with Temasek Polytechnic's Design School. Attendance at the annual design show offered a window into contemporary student practice. Students explored themes rooted in their environment, from wellness solutions for taxi drivers to apps navigating local food culture. This demonstrated an essential truth for industry: the most impactful design emerges when creativity meets relevance.

The visit extended beyond exhibitions into the heart of the institution. Touring studios, workshops and prototyping labs revealed structured, production-oriented environments where ideas are developed

with precision and purpose. One particularly striking initiative was the school's gallery space dedicated to alumni work, an environment that bridges education and industry by showcasing products alongside direct access to designers. It is not merely a display, it is a platform for opportunity, reinforcing the idea that education must prepare students not just to create, but to connect, interact and contribute.

Equally impactful was the integration of emerging technologies within student practice. The interaction between human creativity and AI tools was not treated as a novelty, but as an embedded, ethical component of the creative process. Students collaborated across disciplines, particularly in areas such as film production, where clearly defined roles reflected real industry pipelines. This emphasis on teamwork and specialisation offers a valuable direction for future curriculum development, one that mirrors professional practice and prepares students for collaborative environments.

At the core of this mobility was a shared ambition to build meaningful partnerships. Through presentations, campus tours and roundtable discussions, both institutions explored their respective strengths and identified common ground for collaboration. The outcome was the co-development of a joint creative project, pairing students across disciplines and institutions to produce work that will be exhibited during the Malta Design Week which takes place later this year post summer. This initiative goes beyond exchange: it is co-creation, fostering international dialogue and shared authorship.

The support of the Malta Consulate in Singapore further strengthens this collaboration, with plans to exhibit selected projects in both countries. The agreed next steps, student meetings, mentorship structures and collaborative platforms ensure that this partnership is not a one-time event but hopefully



the beginning of a sustained ongoing relationship. Notably, the best six projects will lead to reciprocal student travel in September 2026, reinforcing the value of global exposure.

For students, this experience sends a clear message. Your creative journey must be outward-looking. Engage with different cultures, challenge your assumptions and embrace collaboration. The future of the creative industries lies in your ability to adapt, connect and innovate across borders.

For industry, the implications are equally significant. Institutions like MCAST are not only educating



What is the Vision of the MCAST Deputy Principals?

Ann Marie Cassar

MCAST provides learners with possibilities, regardless of where they are in their life journey. A strong sense of belonging and community is the cornerstone of effective learning, supporting each individual student to reach both academic success and personal growth.

When students feel seen, valued and connected to their peers and educators, the barriers to engagement, such as the fear of failure or social isolation, slowly dissipate. This supportive system fosters a space where learners are more likely to take risks, ask critical questions and collaborate. In a community-centric environment, education shifts from a solitary pursuit to a collective journey of discovery, with shared goals and mutual accountability. This allows learners to aim for a strong professional formation.

Vocational education through work-based learning provides learners with a networking experience that helps cultivate a community of practice. Through real-world professional environments, vocational programmes bridge the gap between theory and application. This hands-on approach ensures that students do not just learn about a profession but begin to identify as members of that profession. Consequently, vocational pathways produce better-equipped professionals who possess not only the technical knowledge required for their field but also other skills, such as teamwork, communication and adaptability.



These graduates enter the workforce with a high degree of professional identity and confidence, ready to contribute immediately to their industry. Ultimately, when community and practical application intersect, the result is a resilient, skilled workforce capable of navigating the complexities of the modern global economy.

students but actively shaping the future workforce. By aligning academic practice with global standards, integrating technology and fostering international partnerships, we are preparing graduates who are not only skilled but also culturally aware and industry-ready.

Perhaps one of the most symbolic aspects of the trip was the very first experience upon arrival, a visit to a vast, nature-infused architectural space within the airport facilities or premises. It set the tone for everything that followed: a city that feels designed in every detail, where systems are efficient, environments are immersive and creativity is intentional. This sense of purpose resonates deeply with the vision for the future of MCAST, particularly as new facilities are developed. There is an opportunity

not just to replicate such models, but to leap forward, to design spaces that will serve generations to come.

Even the lighter moments, such as the unforgettable encounter with the infamous durian fruit, played a role in this journey. They reminded us that true immersion involves stepping outside comfort zones, embracing the unfamiliar and finding meaning in every experience.

Ultimately, this trip was more than an academic visit. It was a catalyst for reflection, a source of inspiration and a call to action. It challenged us to think bigger, design better and collaborate more deeply. For both students and industry, the message is clear. The future of creativity is global, connected and full of possibility.

Tatjana Chircop

As the leading vocational education institution, MCAST looks at expanding and promoting its research endeavours, increasing engagement with innovation-driven national stakeholders and international partners. Over the coming years, MCAST looks forward to strengthening its drive for interdisciplinarity, impact research and knowledge valorisation in line with national and European targets. Apart from innovative research study programmes, supporting structures will be developed over the coming years for the fast-growing rate of research, innovation and policy development within Research and Innovation, so that MCAST will continue its steady growth as a strong reputable research entity.

While embracing societal changes, industry needs and rapid technological advancements, the College remains committed to the ethical use of technology within vocational learning and applied research. Underpinning all innovation, MCAST will continue shaping its distinct identity as a College that remains committed to our student-centred approach, to giving the opportunity of a quality education to students from the time they show interest in joining MCAST to the time they successfully graduate. Whilst embarking on innovative initiatives that will increase efficiency and enhance the students' learning experiences, MCAST will remain a College known for valuing students as individuals and not as numbers, a College that values human interaction and diversity. MCAST will enhance its welcoming environment and its drive to be a space for knowledge sharing. The sharing of knowledge will develop in various aspects,

including through the introduction of an open access repository. The MCAST Library will continue serving not only MCAST staff and students but the general public as well, making MCAST a College embedded within the community it serves and an integral part of it.



Ronald Curmi

As MCAST continues to evolve as Malta's leading institution for vocational and higher education, its future success must be underpinned by strong and forward-looking corporate services. My vision is for Human Resources, Finance, Procurement, Health and Safety, Inventory and Facilities Management to operate not as separate administrative functions, but as integrated strategic enablers of MCAST's core mission. By strengthening collaboration and synergies across these areas, the College can more effectively support teaching, learning, research, industry engagement and institutional growth.

A key priority will be the continued digitisation and optimisation of processes wherever this delivers tangible value. Smarter digital systems can enhance efficiency, reduce duplication, improve transparency and provide greater visibility for informed decision-making. They can empower staff and management with timely access to information, strengthen performance monitoring, improve resource management and enable a more responsive approach to the needs of the institution.

At the same time, innovation in corporate services must remain firmly grounded in the values that define MCAST: respect, integrity, accountability, impartiality, trust, quality, loyalty and equal opportunity. Digitisation is not simply about adopting new technologies; it is about designing systems and processes that are fair, reliable, transparent and capable of withstanding scrutiny, while placing people and service excellence at their centre.



Looking ahead, MCAST's continued growth will depend not only on academic and educational innovation, but also on the strength and resilience of the structures that support it. By modernising corporate services, investing in continuous process improvement and fostering a culture of collaboration across departments, we can build on the achievements of the past 25 years and further strengthen MCAST as an efficient, inclusive, accountable and future-ready institution that continues to meet the evolving needs of learners, staff, industry and the nation.

Pierre Dalmas

As MCAST continues to evolve as Malta's leading further and higher vocational education institution, the future of quality assurance and curriculum development must be guided by innovation, adaptability, inclusiveness and long-term relevance. Quality assurance should extend beyond compliance and become a culture of continuous improvement that supports excellence in teaching, learning, assessment and research across all MCAST Institutes and Centres. Reliable data, regular stakeholder feedback, strong industry collaboration and a commitment to student-centred learning experiences should influence and inform this approach.

At the same time, curriculum development must remain responsive, flexible and future oriented, ensuring programmes address emerging technologies, environmental sustainability, entrepreneurship and the rapidly changing demands of the labour market. By strengthening interdisciplinary learning opportunities, embedding digital tools and artificial intelligence within teaching, learning and assessment practices, and leveraging applied research and work-based learning, MCAST can better prepare learners for complex professional environments. Greater collaboration with local industries, international partners and professional bodies will also ensure that programmes remain locally and globally competitive and aligned with evolving professional standards.

Furthermore, promoting critical thinking, creativity, ethical awareness and lifelong learning will help



students become resilient and adaptable citizens. Through strategic investment in innovation and academic excellence, MCAST can continue to empower future generations with the knowledge, practical skills and confidence required to succeed in an increasingly interconnected and technology-driven world.

Equally important is the continuous professional development of educators and support staff, enabling them to adopt innovative pedagogies, integrate evolving technologies and support diverse learner needs. This will strengthen quality, improve engagement and reinforce MCAST's role as an institution.

Gerard Said Pullicino

In the context of the AI revolution, my vision for MCAST is "truth as a service." We live in a world where the empirical truth is in short supply, and it is hard for people to determine whether or not what they find on the internet or what they are told is the truth, or if it is contextual, targeted advertising. All academic institutions and all schools have a duty to society to work towards for the proper development of the society of the future.

It is my belief that MCAST can become an example of an institution that provides access to real information and real initiatives that push technological innovation into people's lives. The tradesman who needs to automate his billing processes, the small business that requires an IT security audit, all of these are Maltese citizens that require specific needs. MCAST is a microcosm of the real world. By addressing internal organisational problems and applying innovative solutions in those contexts, we can be an example for the forward-thinking businesses that will power Maltese society into the 21st century.

It is my hope and belief that if I manage to achieve the goals that I have set out for myself as Deputy Principal, I will leave the institution better equipped and more reflective of the new realities society is facing. A nimbler, faster, more proactive MCAST that can help our students understand the future is my sincere goal.



Stephen Sammut

As Deputy Principal with responsibility for leading all MCAST Institutes and the Gozo Campus, and as Director on the MG2i Board, I see the future of MCAST as one defined by excellence, innovation and national impact, but above all by the development of Malta's human capital. Our country's greatest resource is its people, and this means that not one student can be lost.

The future of MCAST must therefore be built on inclusion, opportunity and meaningful engagement, ensuring that every learner is supported to realise his or her potential. We must also continue to enhance the classroom and campus environment so that students actively want to come to MCAST every day, enjoying the process of enriching themselves with knowledge, skills and purpose. In doing so, we will help forge the highly skilled manpower needed to sustain Malta's competitive edge. At the same time, we must continue to shape an educational ecosystem where advanced technologies, applied research and innovative teaching methods are fully integrated across disciplines. This includes continued investment in state-of-the-art facilities and strategic areas such as semiconductor research within the Semiconductor Competence Centre, supported by specialised equipment such as laser vibrometers capable of measuring motion at microscale level.

It also means strengthening research, teaching and innovation across a wide range of sectors, including aerospace, biomedical sciences, arts and creative industries, information technology,



artificial intelligence, business, transportation, energy generation and distribution, healthcare innovation in nursing and veterinary science, advanced materials such as carbon fibre and composites, sustainable fuels such as hydrogen, and sustainability more broadly. Equally important is the way we teach through hands-on, project-based and interdisciplinary learning, simulation rich environments, industry-led challenges and advanced tools such as finite element modelling.

We must also continue to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy so that the time and expertise of our professionals are directed towards students, research and innovation, where they create the greatest value. By doing so, MCAST can further strengthen Malta's competitiveness, contribute to European priorities, and help build a more resilient, skilled and sustainable future for both Malta and the European Union.



How MCAST is shaping Malta's Future in Animal Health

CORYSE BORG, CONTENT WRITER

For many years, aspiring veterinarians in Malta faced a difficult choice. They had no option but to leave the island for years of expensive overseas study or abandon the dream altogether. Now, that is changing.

With the launch of a new veterinary course at MCAST in 2024, the first of its kind to be offered locally, Malta is taking a significant step towards building its own pipeline of veterinary professionals, researchers and specialists.

Speaking about the importance of the course, Malcolm Borg, MCAST Deputy Director of the Institute of Applied Sciences and the person in charge of the Centre for Agriculture, Aquatics and Animal Sciences, describes it as a strategic investment in the country's future.

"Historically, anyone wishing to study veterinary medicine had to spend five to six years abroad, which was not only expensive but also demanding on a personal level. For many, this effectively closed the door to the profession. Offering the course locally removes that barrier and opens access to a wider pool of capable students."

At the same time, the move reflects a broader reality within Malta's veterinary sector. Without a strong academic base, areas such as clinical specialisation, research and innovation have struggled to develop fully.

The sector has relied heavily on expertise from abroad and foreign facilities, and has lacked the scale needed to grow sustainably.

“By establishing this programme, MCAST is laying the groundwork for a more structured and self-sufficient sector. The timing,” Borg explains, “could not be more relevant.”

Veterinary medicine is increasingly recognised as a key component of the One Health approach, where animal health, human health, and environmental sustainability are closely linked. Issues such as zoonotic diseases, food security, and biosecurity are becoming more relevant, including in Malta's own context.

"Strengthening veterinary capacity locally is both a national priority and part of a wider international shift, and this course places MCAST at the centre of that development," Borg declares.

Launching a professional veterinary degree demands rigorous standards, trusted expertise and a curriculum aligned with international best practice.

For this reason, MCAST has partnered with Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), an established and highly respected institution in veterinary education.

“Rather than building a programme from scratch, MCAST has aligned itself with a curriculum that has been refined over many years and benchmarked against European standards,” Borg continues.

He emphasises that practical training is woven throughout the course.

“What further distinguishes the course is its strong practical focus. Practical work is integrated throughout the programme. Students apply what they learn in a range of settings, including laboratories, clinical environments and working farms,” he adds

This exposure allows them to build skills across different areas, from diagnostics and clinical examinations to animal handling and production systems.

The introduction of this course is expected to have a lasting impact on Malta’s veterinary and animal care sectors. MCAST is also making substantial investments in infrastructure to support the programme.

New laboratories, clinical training areas and dedicated animal handling spaces are being developed to create a modern teaching environment capable of serving both students and the wider sector.

Equally important is the development of expertise. The programme will produce a new generation of well-trained professionals while also helping to build specialisation within the existing workforce.

“Over time, this should lead to greater availability of specialised services in Malta, reducing dependence on external expertise and improving overall standards of care,” Borg asserts.

Together, these developments will strengthen the entire ecosystem. Practitioners will benefit from better support systems, improved diagnostic and treatment options, and closer links to research.

At the same time, animal owners and the wider public can expect higher standards and more reliable services.

“Students following the programme benefit from a strong combination of partnerships, facilities, and learning resources.”

Central to this is the collaboration with Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. In the early stages of the course, students have the opportunity to spend time at UAB, gaining experience in fully established teaching and clinical environments.

This ensures that all practical elements are delivered to a high standard while local facilities continue to develop.



Collaboration at a national level is equally important.

MCAST is working closely with the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights to ensure that the facilities, resources and stakeholder support required for the successful delivery of the programme are available whenever needed.

A Memorandum of Understanding has also been signed, reinforcing the connection between education, public policy and industry needs.

Borg says that the introduction of this course is expected to have a lasting impact on Malta’s veterinary and animal care sectors.

One of the most compelling aspects of the new programme is the breadth of opportunity it creates for graduates.

Graduates of the course will be eligible to obtain a warrant to practise as veterinarians and will have

access to a wide range of career opportunities in Malta and across the European Union.

“Some might go into clinical practice, working with companion animals or with livestock and equine species. These roles involve diagnosis, treatment, surgery, and preventive care. Others may focus on herd health and production medicine, supporting farmers in improving productivity, animal health, and biosecurity,” Borg states.

Public health is another key area. Veterinarians play a vital role in food inspection services, abattoirs and regulatory bodies, helping ensure that animal-derived products meet strict standards while safeguarding consumers.

Research also presents exciting prospects, particularly in disease control, animal welfare and epidemiology.

Overall, the qualification provides access to the full range of veterinary careers. Whether in practice, research, public health, or specialised fields, graduates will be well equipped to build careers both locally and internationally,” Borg concludes.

For MCAST, the introduction of veterinary education marks another chapter in its mission to respond to Malta’s evolving skills needs.

For students, it offers the chance to pursue a once-distant profession from home.

And for Malta, it lays the foundations for a stronger, more resilient veterinary sector.



Bridging Aviation Education and Industry at MCAST

CHARMAINE FORMOSA, MCAST JOURNALISM STUDENT

The transition from education to the professional world represents a crucial stage in every student's development. It determines how smoothly individuals adapt to industry expectations and workplace demands. The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) is widely recognised for its continuous efforts to innovate and develop practical solutions that support students' integration into real-life scenarios.

A key milestone in this mission was reached in March 2026 with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between MCAST, KM Malta Airlines and Centrecom Ltd. This agreement strengthens the important link between education and the aviation industry sector. Moreover, it opens new opportunities for students by creating structured pathways that offer practical experience, career readiness and long-term employment prospects. Careful planning ensures that this transition happens gradually, without placing unnecessary pressure on students. This article explores how the MoU was developed, the perspectives behind it and the opportunities it creates for students within this sector.

Mr Robert Tiscio, Deputy Director of the Institute of Engineering and Transport at MCAST (IET MCAST) explained that the MoU was developed through a series of structured meetings held in recent months. During these meetings, each organisation outlined its priorities and expectations for the collaboration. "In today's aviation industry, many companies

outsource non-core services," Mr Tiscio explained. "This collaboration aims to build on that model by extending our partnership with the national airline."

However, concerns were raised about whether negotiations might prioritise corporate interests over academic independence. Mr Tiscio clarified that this issue was carefully addressed. "During the meetings, where the principles supporting the MoU were defined, we discussed the key academic priorities to be upheld," he confirmed. He added that a holistic plan, addressing both academic and apprenticeship aspects, was designed to create a win-win outcome for students and the companies involved.

This formal MoU supports a long-term vision through ongoing collaboration. As a result, training remains aligned with real-world requirements and reflects current industry conditions. Apprenticeships are embedded directly into the programme, ensuring that students graduate with both theoretical knowledge and practical experience. Through this initiative, MCAST students can access entry-level



positions through Centrecom Ltd., which provides services to KM Malta Airlines.

Keeping the students as the main priority, the MoU aims to help them develop essential soft skills required for real work environments. In particular, it enables students to gain experience, build confidence and understand how the aviation industry operates. Furthermore, students benefit from hands-on training focused on back-office roles, where communication, teamwork, client-facing skills and problem-solving are essential. "This approach ensures there is no gap between academic learning and apprenticeship, as both are complementary and provide a solid 360-degree preparation for aviation students entering the industry," Mr Tiscio explained. Overall, this initiative supports the development of a new generation of motivated professionals while providing companies with well-prepared future employees.

Since the agreement was signed, the MCAST IET Aviation, Transportation and Logistics



Department has already begun implementing its principles. Both Centrecom Ltd. and KM Malta Airlines have started interviewing students for the apprenticeship programme.

Looking ahead, both MCAST and the aviation industry are expected to continue evolving over the next five years. Mr Tiscio emphasised the importance of adaptability noting that, "the industry will continue to evolve and MCAST must adapt its programmes accordingly to meet emerging needs and changes." New technologies, shifting operational models, and a growing demand for specialised skills are expected in the near future. Therefore, MCAST remains fully committed to continuously supporting students while adapting to these developments. Ultimately, this partnership highlights the importance of strong collaboration between education and industry in preparing students for highly successful and sustainable, real-world careers in aviation.



Arriving at MCAST: Dance, Environment, and New Forms of Research

SHUNTARO YOSHIDA, ERA FELLOWSHIP
RESEARCH OFFICER / LECTURER

When I arrived at MCAST from Japan in September 2025, I was struck not only by its scale and diversity, but also by the sense that research here is understood as something lived, practised, and negotiated across disciplines. As MCAST celebrates its 25th anniversary, this feels like an especially meaningful moment to reflect on what it means to carry out artistic and research-based work within an institution that continues to redefine its role in society.

I joined the Applied Research and Innovation Centre (ARIC) at MCAST as an ERA Fellow under the HORIZON TMA MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships - European Fellowships, leading a research project titled *Environmental Turn of Dance (ETD)* funded by the European Union. As the first ERA Fellow based at ARIC, the project explores how dance and embodied practices can respond to environmental crises, technological transformation, and social uncertainty. At its core, ETD asks a simple but urgent question: how can bodily practices help us sense, think, and act differently in relation to the Maltese environments we inhabit?

What immediately resonated with me at MCAST was the openness to research that does not fit neatly into a single category. Working at the ARIC, I found an institutional environment where artistic practice, technological experimentation and critical reflection are not treated as separate domains, but as interrelated modes of inquiry. This alignment has been essential for a project like ETD, which moves between ecosomatic dance practice, AI-assisted choreography, and community-based engagement.

My work at MCAST has unfolded through a combination of ethnographic research, fieldwork, and collaboration. I have explored how the meanings of technologies—traditionally shaped by human-centred perspectives—might be rethought through a post-anthropocentric lens, questioning what it means to capture movement when working with plants, environments, or multispecies contexts. At the same time, I have engaged in field-based practices of foreground listening, slowness, and sensory attunement, particularly in relation to Maltese landscapes shaped by ecological fragility under climate change.

This research has been made possible through close collaboration not only with colleagues at ARIC, but also with members of other departments across MCAST. In addition, I have benefitted greatly from exchanges with Malta-based movement local artists, ethnobotanists, arborists, and AI engineers. These cross-disciplinary and cross-sector collaborations have generated what I would describe as *composed mediated navigations*—entangled ways of thinking



and working that open up new challenges and possibilities beyond the boundaries of any single field.

One of the most valuable aspects of working at ARIC within MCAST has been the everyday encounter with colleagues and students from radically different backgrounds and areas of expertise. Conversations that move effortlessly from engineering to performance, from design to environmental studies, have repeatedly challenged my assumptions about expertise and authorship. These exchanges have reinforced my belief that the future of research—especially research addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and technological ethics—depends on spaces like ARIC, where different forms of knowledge can coexist without being forced into hierarchy.

Beyond research outputs, MCAST has also prompted me to reflect on the social responsibility of artistic research. In a time marked by war, environmental crisis, and shifting value systems, artistic practice cannot afford to remain detached. Through ETD, I have sought to frame dance not only as an aesthetic activity, but as a method for cultivating



environmental awareness and collective imagination. This perspective has been strengthened by MCAST's commitment to applied research that remains connected to lived realities.

From my position as an international researcher, what stands out most is the College's capacity to function as a meeting point: between local and global concerns, between practice and theory, and between established knowledge and emerging questions. This capacity feels especially crucial at a moment when uncertainty has become a defining condition of contemporary life.

For me, arriving at MCAST would have been about finding definitive answers, but it turned out to be an embodied experience of learning how to stay with uncertainty—how to think, move, and create within it under current conditions. While my research at ARIC is still at an early stage, I hope to deepen this inquiry through ongoing dialogue with colleagues, students, and communities at MCAST, and to contribute to the evolving role of the College as a space for experimentation, reflection, and care.

Pioneering a Sustainable Pedagogy: The GreenDale Handbook and the Future-Ready MCAST Graduate

ROBERT BUTTIGIEG, NADIA BOFFA, JOSHUA BUGEJA

In a world defined by climate change, technological disruption and evolving societal needs, education must extend beyond traditional technical skills to cultivate resilience, critical thinking and responsible citizenship.

At MCAST, this commitment to developing highly-skilled, adaptable professionals is reinforced by new initiatives, including the comprehensive GreenDale Handbook, officially titled *Teaching for a Sustainable Future: Integrating Sustainability Competences in Higher Education*. This document, produced as an Erasmus+ funded project, serves as a practical guide for Higher Education (HE) teachers across all disciplines who wish to prepare their students for a world where sustainability is not optional, but a professional and civic necessity.

The handbook's overarching goal is to support HE teachers in systematically and seamlessly integrating sustainability competences into existing units without compromising the integrity of their original learning objectives or disciplinary standards. This approach is crucial because sustainability competences encompass not just environmental knowledge, but essential skills, values, and mindsets needed to navigate complexity, make informed and ethical decisions, and contribute to positive change across social and economic dimensions. By developing these

capacities, MCAST graduates are prepared not only for success in their careers but also for active, responsible, and values-driven citizenship in an increasingly complex world.

Rooted in the European Sustainability Competence Framework (GreenComp), the handbook outlines twelve sustainability competences organized into four interrelated areas: Embodying sustainability values, Embracing complexity in sustainability, Envisioning sustainable futures, and Acting for sustainability. The handbook adopts a clear and user-friendly structure whereby each competence is introduced with a concise theoretical background, followed by hands-on guidance on revising learning outcomes, content, teaching strategies and assessment methods. Concrete examples illustrate how these changes can be applied across different academic contexts, making the material highly adaptable. For instance, the handbook illustrates how a business-related learning outcome such as "Analyse economic development theories" can be refined to "Analyse economic development theories through the lens of environmental sustainability and social equity,"



demonstrating how sustainability competences can be embedded through minor, purposeful revisions that maintain academic integrity while broadening students' professional perspective.

“The methodology proposed within the handbook encourages educators to adopt a step-by-step roadmap for unit revision, focusing on four key structural elements, namely learning outcomes, content, teaching strategies and methods, as well as assessment methods.”

Educators can opt for either direct interventions, such as creating a new unit specifically focusing on sustainability, or indirect, immersive interventions, which involve slightly revising existing learning outcomes and content to weave in sustainability competences. This commitment to continuous revision ensures that the curriculum remains relevant to the constantly evolving nature of sustainability challenges.



Furthermore, the handbook invites a pedagogical shift towards transformative learning, an approach that fosters deep and meaningful changes in how individuals think, act, and relate to the world. Transformative learning is especially effective in helping students internalise the GreenComp competences through dialogic, experiential, and reflective pedagogies, thereby fostering personal growth, besides knowledge retention.

Ultimately, this handbook is more than a manual; it is an invitation to embrace sustainability as a shared pedagogical ethos. It calls upon HE educators to recognise their crucial role in inspiring students and encourages a commitment to collaborative and institution-wide efforts towards embedding sustainability across curricula. By utilising the resources provided, such as the GreenComp Self-Assessment Tool and the Curriculum Mapping Tool, MCAST educators can strategically translate sustainability goals into tangible, measurable educational experiences. This focus on aligning curriculum and culture ensures that MCAST remains dedicated to shaping a skilled, resilient, and future-ready workforce.



Optimising Creative Engagement through AI Research

MAVERICK SPITERI, MCAST JOURNALISM STUDENT

While many fear that artificial intelligence will replace human creativity, Dr Ian Attard, a lecturer at MCAST's Institute for the Creative Arts (ICA), views it instead as a powerful partner.

His latest research explores how AI and digital tools can strengthen the connection between creators and their audiences. Through collaboration with industry experts such as Studioseven, Dr Attard demonstrates how technology can enhance the experience of live events without losing the essential “human touch.”

I interviewed Dr Attard to explore his methodology, his views on the future of digital literacy, and why he believes AI should be understood as a tool for augmentation rather than replacement.

At the core of Dr Attard's research is a strong belief in the irreplaceable value of human connection. During our conversation, he expressed concern about how technology is often framed in mainstream discourse. “Unfortunately, AI is sometimes marketed as a replacement tool, and that is painful to me. I am a strong believer in human-to-human connection and communication. Unless that remains central to what we do, what we develop through AI may fall short of expectations.”

His philosophy is clear: AI should be used to “augment our voices.” This shifts the focus away from

what machines can do instead of us, and towards what we can achieve with them. In live performance and creative media, this means using AI to manage logistical and structural complexity, allowing human creators to focus on emotional depth and storytelling.

When asked how we can build a better “tomorrow” in a digital world, Dr Attard emphasised the importance of looking to the past. His methodology involves training AI systems using parameters derived from “past exemplars”—historical peaks of human creativity and engagement. “We cannot build a better tomorrow unless we understand the good things we have already achieved as human beings,” he explained. By analysing these successful patterns, systems can be optimised to generate content that resonates more effectively with audiences.

In live event environments, this approach results in systems that do not simply broadcast information, but actively optimise audience reception. Whether in filmmaking, journalism or performance, the aim is to transform audiences from passive observers into active, engaged participants.



Dr Ian Attard



One of the most compelling aspects of Dr Attard's research is its immediate practical application. In collaboration with Studioseven, a leader in Malta's audiovisual and event production sector, a live demonstration has been developed to showcase these concepts in action. This bridge between academia and industry explores how real-time data and AI-driven systems can adjust elements such as lighting, sound and visual cues to better align with audience responsiveness. It represents a shift towards prioritising engagement from the outset, rather than treating it as an afterthought.

Dr Attard also challenges the assumption that “more” content automatically leads to “better” engagement. “The more words I write, the more people will engage? No, that's not true,” he argues. “Or the more decorative the visuals, the better? No.” He highlights that even strong headlines can fail if the underlying structure is not aligned with how audiences process information. His research suggests that meaningful engagement arises from systems that understand structure, tone and the specific conditions that make audiences receptive in real time.

Our conversation also turned to journalism, an industry often described as being under pressure due to automation. Dr Attard acknowledges these challenges but argues that AI can offer new possibilities if used correctly. “If you have a system that helps you develop an article using the right structure and language to generate audience engagement, then yes, I think there is a future in that.”

Ultimately, Dr Attard's work reflects the evolving role of MCAST in a digital-first landscape. It highlights an institution not only responding to change but actively shaping the future of Malta's creative and industrial sectors. His research underscores that being a professional today requires more than technical skill; it also demands the ability to collaborate effectively with intelligent systems.

Dr Attard's work serves as a reminder that technology is only as meaningful as the human intention behind it. By using AI to amplify the best of our past, we can create a more engaging and thoughtful future. “AI is not a replacement,” he concludes. “It is a tool to augment our voices and enable more effective engagement.”

Pathways to the World:

MCAST's Strategic Pivot to International Mobility and Employability

JUN ZHANG, MCAST JOURNALISM STUDENT

As MCAST celebrates its 25th anniversary, the institution is undergoing a profound transformation. It is moving away from being a traditional vocational training hub and becoming a proactive player in global education. For MCAST, internationalisation is no longer just an “add-on” to campus life; it is the core strategy for its future.

Louis Aquilina, Director of the Erasmus+ Projects and Mobility Office, notes that MCAST occupies a unique space in Malta. “Unlike traditional universities, we focus on applied learning,” Aquilina emphasizes. He explains that MCAST complements the university sector by providing direct pathways to employment. Today, as a founding partner of the EU4Dual (the European Universities Alliance), MCAST is proving that practical, industry-driven education has immense value on the international stage.

However, building a global outlook in a small island nation like Malta is challenging. Our geographic isolation can lead to an “insular” mindset—a tendency to focus only on local issues because of our physical distance from mainland Europe. Aquilina asserts that internationalisation does not happen by accident; it requires conscious effort. “Being small allows us to be agile. We use our size as an advantage to build flexible international collaborations that larger, more rigid institutions might struggle to manage,” he explains.

This shift is not just a high-level policy; it has changed how the College functions daily. Currently, 15% of Erasmus+ participants each year are MCAST staff members. These

educators are not just travelling; they are bringing back innovative digital tools and modern teaching methods that directly improve the local classroom experience.

The campus itself has become a “micro-society” with students from over 90 different countries. This creates what we call “Internationalisation at Home.” Even for students who cannot afford to travel abroad, the daily interaction with diverse cultures provides an invaluable global perspective. In this sense, the campus serves as a bridge, connecting local students to a “global electorate” of peers—a community of stakeholders from around the world who exchange ideas and challenge each other’s viewpoints right here in Paola.

For first-year students, such as those in journalism, the idea of “going global” can feel overwhelming. Aquilina suggests a practical, stepped approach, beginning with short-term traineeships such as brief Erasmus+ placements to build basic confidence, progressing to study mobility through a full semester abroad once students feel comfortable, and ultimately moving towards long-term placements in the form of international internships that can lead directly to enhanced global employability.



“As MCAST moves into its next 25 years, the goal is clear: to ensure that global awareness is a natural part of every student’s daily learning. It is a vision where local excellence and global connectivity are no longer separate, but two sides of the same coin.”



Looking into the Future of Research at MCAST

with Dr Lorna Bonnici West, Director for Research and Innovation

STELA VLADIMIROVA-IVANOVA, MCAST JOURNALISM STUDENT

Over the years, MCAST has grown steadily and gained recognition for its strong focus on vocational education. In 2019, with the launch of the Applied Research and Innovation Centre (ARIC) and the adoption of the MCAST Research Framework, it significantly expanded its research capabilities.

In this interview with Dr Lorna Bonnici West, the Director of Research and Innovation, we learn how these developments have impacted MCAST, which advancements have been most notable so far, and how the College can continue to strive for improvement every day.

The creation of the Applied Research and Innovation Centre (ARIC) was a significant milestone for MCAST, distinguishing it from other educational institutions by introducing research and establishing the necessary frameworks to support and develop it. With the Centre and the MCAST Research Framework, new opportunities arose for students and lecturers to participate in research more actively than ever before. Through this development, MCAST also expanded its presence on the European and international stages, with increased involvement in globally funded research projects. Applied research remains central to the College's core values, and is closely tied to its commitment to vocational learning and work experience.

According to Dr Bonnici West, MCAST has made significant progress, but there is still work to be done. "My vision is for MCAST to keep building momentum in producing impactful research that directly tackles real-world challenges," she said. As Director of Research and Innovation, she hopes that MCAST's future will include more collaboration between Institutes, greater involvement in European and global research projects, and further enhancement of the College's current research capabilities.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight the ongoing developments and innovations in research. The role of artificial intelligence (AI) in research was briefly discussed and Dr Bonnici West expressed her perspective on the issue. She argued that while AI can be extremely useful across many sectors, including healthcare, engineering, entrepreneurship, and the creative industries, it must be used ethically and in line with academic transparency standards. "Moving forward, AI should not replace critical thinking or creativity in research. Instead, it should

be viewed as a tool that supports researchers while maintaining strong ethical and scholarly standards," stated Dr Bonnici West. Artificial intelligence can be used responsibly as a research tool, especially in undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations, as well as in the research programmes offered by MCAST, including the Master in Research Methods, the Master by Research, and the Professional Research Doctorate.

In research partnerships and academic participation, MCAST continues to expand its international presence. Dr Bonnici West highlighted successful initiatives so far, including the launch of the EdTech Hub, which has encouraged more students than ever to participate in academic projects and innovation. Additionally, ARIC and the MCAST Institutes have been involved in numerous research collaborations that have raised the College's profile, such as a project with Dublin City University in Ireland, and funded by Xjenza Malta, on AI-driven technology. MCAST has strengthened its position among European and international institutions through such research initiatives and by participating in various funding programmes. Some of these include initiatives by the European Space Agency, ERANET Med, Horizon 2020, and the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership. The College also solidified its role in many sustainability-focused projects, including the Horizon Europe-funded WATERLINE project and ProxIMed, both centred on water and sustainability.

All the above demonstrates that, although our College started modestly, it has grown into a prosperous, resilient institution with a strong reputation and a clear future. Dr Bonnici West highlighted the importance of MCAST's resilience through further research projects, stating, "...these collaborations demonstrate how MCAST is continuing to strengthen its international research presence while contributing to sustainability, applied research, and knowledge exchange at both national and international levels."



Dr Lorna Bonnici West

Ultimately, MCAST's combination of vocational education and applied research remains essential for securing more research opportunities, and expanding those facilities will be a primary focus of Dr Bonnici West's plans to foster a vibrant research culture for students and staff alike.



Shaping the Future of Digital Education at the Institute of ICT

CONRAD VASSALLO, DIRECTOR INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Today, the Institute of ICT serves approximately 1,450 students and 90 lecturers. Conrad Vassallo's leadership places strong importance on empathy, communication, trust and development, recognising that lasting innovation depends as much on people as it does on technology. Over the years, the Institute has expanded its academic offering to include degree programmes in Cybersecurity, Applied Data Science and Digital Games Development, reflecting both local needs and international demand.

Looking ahead, the Institute of ICT is actively shaping its future through a clear and forward-looking vision centred on innovation, relevance and impact. At the heart of this vision is a strong focus on pedagogy, ensuring that teaching, learning and assessment practices evolve in line with both technological advancement and the needs of students and industry. The Institute is committed to strengthening its role as a centre for emerging technologies by continuing to expand its academic portfolio in areas such as Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity, Applied Data Science and Digital Games Development, while maintaining a strong emphasis on how students learn rather than simply what they produce.

A key priority for the coming years is the continued development of a strong digital education ecosystem, supported by a shift towards experiential and work-based learning as core approaches to delivery. Teaching will increasingly focus on active

engagement through problem-based tasks, collaborative work and real-world scenarios that encourage students to think independently, justify their decisions and apply knowledge in practice. At the same time, the Institute is embedding the effective and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence across the curriculum, ensuring that students learn to use these tools as support rather than as a replacement for their own thinking. This includes developing the ability to critically evaluate AI outputs, refine prompts, and demonstrate transparency in how such tools are used.

Assessment practices are also being reshaped to reflect this pedagogical approach. Greater emphasis is being placed on assessing the learning process and student understanding rather than final outputs alone, with increased use of authentic methods such as scenario-based tasks, live demonstrations and follow-up questioning. Assignments are being redesigned into structured milestones with

continuous feedback, encouraging students to build and refine their work over time while demonstrating ownership and understanding. These approaches support academic integrity by requiring students to explain, defend and take responsibility for their work.

In parallel, the Institute continues to strengthen its focus on research, innovation and collaboration with industry, ensuring that teaching remains aligned with professional practice and future skills requirements. Real world relevance is embedded across the curriculum, while lecturers are encouraged to engage in applied research and industry activity to keep their knowledge current and impactful. At the same time, they are expected to undertake ongoing professional development and mentor support staff in adapting to new pedagogical approaches and emerging technologies, fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

Ultimately, the Institute of ICT aims to position itself at the forefront of digital education within MCAST by combining strong pedagogical practice with technological advancement. Through this approach, the Institute is not only preparing students for current industry needs but also equipping them with the critical thinking, adaptability and responsible use of AI required to succeed in an increasingly complex digital world, where human capability working alongside technology defines excellence.



Future-Proofing the MCAST Campus:

Designing the Smart and Sustainable Campus of the Future

DR BRIAN AZZOPARDI, SENIOR LECTURER III INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING AND TRANSPORT, RONALD CURMI, DEPUTY PRINCIPAL CORPORATE SERVICES, AND JESMOND ZAMMIT, DIRECTOR CAPITAL PROJECTS

As Malta and Europe continue to accelerate their transition towards digitalisation, decarbonisation and sustainable infrastructure, educational institutions are expected to move beyond traditional teaching environments into dynamic ecosystems of innovation, sustainability and applied research in the vocational context, thus operating as practical demonstrators of technologies, and behavioural and governance models required for a low-carbon future. The future MCAST campus has the opportunity to become far more than a collection of buildings and lecture rooms: it can become a fully integrated smart campus that actively demonstrates the technologies, systems and lifestyles of tomorrow. It should be developed as an integrated operational ecosystem where energy, water, waste, mobility, buildings and digital infrastructure are monitored, managed and improved through evidence-based decision making. This approach can support MCAST's environmental ESG objectives while also strengthening its triple bottom line reporting by linking sustainability performance to environmental impact, financial efficiency and educational value. This creates an opportunity to transform the campus into a smart and sustainable living laboratory that supports teaching, applied research, operational efficiency and environmental accountability.

This initiative, undertaken through collaboration between the Institute of Engineering and Transport, the Office of the Deputy Principal Corporate Services and the Capital Projects team, builds upon important foundations established through research and innovation activities linked to renewable energy systems, digitalisation, smart infrastructure and engineering education.

A significant milestone in this journey was the 3D Micro-Grid project, which explored and demonstrated advanced concepts related to distributed energy systems, intelligent monitoring, renewable energy integration, energy storage and real-time energy management within an educational environment. The project established valuable infrastructure, expertise and collaborative networks that continue to support ongoing smart-campus developments.

Building upon this foundation, the current initiative seeks to integrate campus infrastructure, renewable energy assets, digital monitoring platforms and educational activities into a unified smart-campus ecosystem. Through interdisciplinary collaboration between academic, operational and infrastructure stakeholders, the initiative aims to create a future-proof campus that supports research, teaching, operational sustainability and innovation.

The next stage should focus on moving from individual projects to a coordinated campus-wide sustainability model. Many of the newer MCAST campus buildings already incorporate Building Management Systems (BMS), providing valuable capabilities for monitoring and controlling lighting, ventilation, air-conditioning, energy consumption and overall building performance. These systems provide a strong platform for the development of a more intelligent and data-driven campus, particularly when integrated with renewable energy systems, energy storage technologies and advanced energy management platforms.

“Such integration would enable comprehensive monitoring of electricity consumption, renewable energy generation, energy intensity at building level and the environmental footprint of campus operations. Real-time data can support day-to-day operational decision making while providing valuable learning opportunities for students and researchers through access to live campus information.

A smart-campus approach would also strengthen sustainability reporting and strategic planning. Future reporting could be based on measurable

indicators such as energy consumption, renewable energy contribution, water use, waste generation, staff and student mobility patterns, and greenhouse gas emissions. The same datasets can inform long-term investment decisions by identifying high-consumption buildings, inefficient equipment and opportunities for improvements in HVAC systems, renewable energy deployment, LED lighting, occupancy controls and maintenance practices.

A step taken this year, namely the photovoltaic intervention on the Fellenberg Building roof (Block D), provides a practical example of how campus infrastructure can be used as both an operational improvement project and a learning opportunity. The assessment and dismantling of the roof-level PV system highlighted the importance of asset lifecycle management, safety, monitoring, technical testing and long-term maintenance planning. Future PV reinstallation or replacement should consider elevated and ventilated mounting structures, improved access for maintenance, safer cable routing, better thermal performance and coordination with roof waterproofing works. This can form part of a phased long-term PV revamping strategy across campus buildings aiming towards better maintenance, safety and efficiency. Such a phased strategy would allow MCAST to renew or expand photovoltaic systems in a controlled and financially manageable way. It would also provide direct educational value by involving students, under supervision, in renewable energy assessment, monitoring, testing, data analysis and system design. In this way, sustainability infrastructure becomes part of the curriculum, supporting practical learning while contributing to the College's environmental performance.



Dr Brian Azzopardi



Ronald Curmi



Jesmond Zammit

“Future-proofing the campus must also extend beyond energy. Rainwater harvesting, low-flow water systems, leak detection, waste separation, hazardous waste procedures, paperless administration, green spaces and green roofs, shaded outdoor areas and low-carbon mobility should all form part of the wider sustainability roadmap.

Staff and student commuting patterns should be studied while other transportation and business travel should be monitored to improve ESG Scope 3 reporting and identify realistic mobility improvements.

The social and educational dimension is equally important. A sustainable campus creates healthier, safer and more engaging spaces for students and staff, but also supports awareness campaigns,

interdisciplinary projects, industry collaboration, applied research, outreach activities and hands-on training. This strengthens MCAST's role not only as an education provider, but also as a national demonstration platform for sustainable technologies and vocational innovation.

The vision for a future-proof MCAST campus is therefore not simply about constructing new buildings or installing new technologies. It is about creating an intelligent, connected and sustainable educational environment that continuously measures, reports and improves its sustainability

performance. Building upon research, innovation and practical implementation activities undertaken across the Institute of Engineering and Transport, Corporate Services and the Estates Department, the initiative seeks to integrate education, infrastructure and sustainability into a unified smart-campus model. Through collaboration between academics, researchers, students, Corporate Services, Capital Projects and external stakeholders, MCAST can develop a campus environment that reduces its carbon footprint, strengthens ESG reporting, supports triple bottom line performance and demonstrates sustainable innovation for Malta's future.



Eight MCAST Graduates Awarded the Engineering Profession Warrant

MCAST congratulates eight alumni who were awarded the Engineering Profession Warrant during a graduation ceremony organised by the Board of Engineers on 25 May 2026.

The ceremony recognised 14 engineers who obtained their warrant, enabling them to practise as warranted engineers in Malta. Eight of these newly warranted professionals are MCAST graduates, highlighting the College's growing contribution to the engineering profession and the development of highly-skilled engineering practitioners.

This achievement builds on another important milestone for MCAST. Earlier this year, on 2 February 2026, two MCAST engineering graduates became the first alumni from the College to be awarded the Engineering Profession Warrant, marking a historic moment for both MCAST and Malta's engineering sector.

The Engineering Profession Warrant is awarded to engineers who meet the professional standards established under Maltese legislation. It serves as recognition of their technical competence, ethical commitment and readiness to assume professional responsibility within the engineering field.

During the ceremony, representatives from the engineering profession emphasised that the warrant is more than a professional qualification. They noted that it carries a lifelong responsibility to uphold the highest standards of integrity, competence, and service in the practice of engineering.



MCAST Marks 25 Years with Focus on Growth, Skills and Future Direction

MCAST launched its 25th anniversary programme on 25 March 2026, marking a key milestone in its growth and role in Malta's education sector.

Speakers described the College's development from its beginnings in 2001, with just over 1,000 students, to its current student body of more than 10,000. Over 50,000 people have graduated from MCAST since its founding.

The event also featured the unveiling of the official 25th anniversary branding, designed by students in MCAST's Bachelor of Arts in Design programme. Eliakim Gyan Aldea Mercado's concept was selected as the winner.

This logo represents the strength and legacy of MCAST over the past 25 years, as well as celebrates the solid foundations that have shaped the institution. The forward-moving arrows symbolise progress and direction, representing MCAST's continued focus on innovation, growth and preparation for the future.



MCAST and Studioseven Sign Memorandum of Understanding to Strengthen Audiovisual Industry Collaboration

MCAST and Studioseven Company Ltd have signed a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at strengthening collaboration between education and the audiovisual rental and production industries.

The agreement formalises a shared commitment to enhancing practical learning opportunities, employability and professional development for students pursuing careers in the audiovisual sector. Through this partnership, students will benefit from increased exposure to industry practices, hands-on learning experiences, apprenticeships and direct engagement with professionals working in the field.

The MoU also establishes a framework for joint collaboration on curriculum development in areas related to audiovisual production, project management, and the broader creative industries,

while ensuring that MCAST's academic oversight and quality assurance standards are maintained.

In addition, students will have the opportunity to participate in real industry projects and work-based learning placements designed to reflect the realities of the professional environment.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, MCAST Principal and CEO Mr Stephen Vella emphasised the importance of building meaningful stakeholder relationships that create tangible opportunities for students and the wider community. He noted that the agreement reflects MCAST's ongoing commitment to connecting education with industry and ensuring that students are equipped with the skills, experience, and professional exposure required in evolving creative and technical sectors.



MCAST Graphic Design Students Visit Malta Biennale 2026

On 26 March 2026, Graphic Design students from the MCAST Institute for the Creative Arts visited the Malta Biennale 2026 at MUŻA – The National Community Art Museum in Valletta. The group was accompanied by Ms Moira Scicluna Zahra and Mr Darren Duncan, who provided support and guidance throughout the visit.

During the visit, Dr Katya Micallef, Principal Curator at MUŻA, delivered an engaging and insightful overview of the exhibited works. Her presentation offered valuable context, helping students better understand the themes, concepts and creative processes behind each piece.

The visit proved to be a highly enriching experience. Students gained a deeper appreciation of the artistic journey, from initial concept to final execution, while also being exposed to a wide range of styles and interpretations. Overall, the visit served as an inspiring opportunity that enhanced both their academic learning and creative perspectives.

US Ambassador Visits MCAST

MCAST welcomed Her Excellency Somers Farkas, Ambassador of the United States of America to Malta, during an official visit on 18 May 2026.

During the visit, Ambassador Farkas met with MCAST Principal and CEO Mr Stephen Vella, Deputy Principal for Student Experience Ms Ann Marie Cassar, International Business Development Manager Ms Maxine Micallef, and Deputy Director for Policy Analysis Ms Francesca Attard.

The meeting centred on the evolving role of vocational and applied education in preparing students for a rapidly changing world of work, as well as potential areas of collaboration between MCAST and institutions in the United States. It was noted that in October 2026, MCAST will welcome its first Fulbright scholar, Dr Scott Kupferman, who will collaborate on the *Strengthening and Fostering Elementary Teacher Formation* project.

As part of the visit, Ambassador Farkas toured the MCAST Library, where she was welcomed by Library Director Ms Liza Franco. The visit highlighted the Library's role as a central learning hub supporting research, student development, and academic life across the College.

MCAST expressed its appreciation for Ambassador Farkas's visit and reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening international partnerships that create meaningful opportunities for students, educators, and the wider community.

MCAST Celebrates Hairdressing Innovation with “Silver Linings” Showcase

MCAST's Institute of Community Services hosted the “Silver Linings – A Legacy of Hair Artistry & Innovation” Hair Show on 25 May 2026 at the Paola Campus Main Hall as part of the College's 25th anniversary celebrations.

The event brought together students, alumni, lecturers, industry professionals and guests to showcase the evolution of hairdressing education and its future direction. Twenty-two Level 4 Advanced Diploma students presented creative projects developed through the Cultural Expression unit, combining hairdressing with fashion, make-up and accessories inspired by global cultural influences.

The show highlighted how modern hairdressing has become increasingly interdisciplinary, linking art, design, science, sustainability, media and entrepreneurship. Speakers, including MCAST leadership, emphasised the importance of adapting vocational education to industry needs and preparing students for future careers in the creative sector.

A panel discussion featuring professionals from trichology, policy, film and hairstyling further explored the role of Malta's creative industries and the need for adaptable, future-ready skills.





MCAST Institute of Applied Sciences Enhances Experiential Learning through Field Trip to Sicily

The MCAST Institute of Applied Sciences continued to strengthen its commitment to vocational and experiential learning through the organisation of a one-day educational field trip to the Iblean mountains in the Province of Ragusa, Sicily. The activity, specifically tailored for students reading the Bachelor in Environmental Science and Sustainable Technologies and the Advanced Diploma in Environmental Sustainability, took place towards the end of April 2026.

The initiative reflects the Institute's strong emphasis on applied learning, encouraging students to move beyond the traditional classroom environment and engage directly with natural ecosystems and environmental landscapes. Through a 15km guided hike between Monterosso Almo and Giarratana, students had the opportunity to experience first-hand the environmental features, ecological dynamics, and conservation value of the Iblean region.

Led by Dr Eman Calleja and Mr Juan José Bonello, the activity was designed to expose students to practical

aspects of environmental observation, sustainable land use, biodiversity appreciation, and field-based environmental interpretation.

The field trip, funded by MCAST's Erasmus+ Projects and Mobility Office, also highlights the Institute's ongoing investment in providing students with enriching educational opportunities that integrate academic knowledge with experiential learning. Such initiatives complement classroom-based teaching and laboratory work, helping students build the professional and practical skills required in the environmental sector.

Through initiatives like these, the MCAST Institute of Applied Sciences continues to demonstrate how vocational education can extend beyond the classroom and laboratory, transforming the natural environment into a dynamic and engaging learning space.



MCAST Hosts Seminar on Technologies for Future Sustainable Space Missions

The Institute of Engineering and Transport at MCAST hosted a seminar titled *Technologies for Future Sustainable Space Missions* on Wednesday 20 May 2026. This lecture was organised within the framework of the SUSTAIN project and in collaboration with the University of Padua. The seminar was delivered by Vincenzo Quitadamo and brought together students, lecturers and professionals with an interest in aerospace innovation, sustainable engineering and future space exploration technologies.

The session explored emerging technologies and sustainable approaches that are shaping the future of space missions, while also highlighting the importance of international collaboration in

advancing aerospace research and innovation. Discussions focused on engineering solutions designed to support long-term sustainability in space exploration, reflecting the rapidly evolving nature of the sector.

Students from Aviation, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, as well as the MSc in Aerospace Engineering, attended the session which was of direct relevance to their studies and future career pathways. The event also provided attendees with the opportunity to engage with current developments within the aerospace industry and gain insights into the technological challenges and opportunities linked to future sustainable missions.



MCAST Participation at EU4Dual Annual Conference

More than 500 delegates from across Europe gathered in Heilbronn, Germany, for the EU4Dual Conference Week 2026, held from 20 to 24 April 2026. The event brought together universities, researchers, students and industry leaders involved in dual higher education, a model that combines academic study with practical workplace learning.

Hosted by Germany's Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg (DHBW), this year's conference focused on the theme *Dual Innovation for a Healthier Tomorrow*, with discussions centred on applied research, sustainability, the future of work and enhanced cooperation between universities and industry.

MCAST, which was represented by a 33-member delegation, engaged in strategic meetings, underlining Malta's continued involvement in the EU4Dual alliance. The College's representatives delivered 10 presentations and presented 2 research posters covering themes such as healthy living, the green economy, the future of work, and dual higher education.

The first part of the week was dedicated to governance and planning meetings involving the alliance's councils, committees, and advisory groups. MCAST representatives participated at all decision-making levels, highlighting the College's active role within the European network.

MCAST also co-led the development of the alliance's Policy White Paper, which was presented during a plenary session for stakeholder feedback. The document is expected to be finalised and published later this year.

Students played a visible role throughout the week, with nine MCAST students participating in an Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme promoting international collaboration and mobility.



MCAST and the University of Malta Host Joint NurseAI Hackathon Focused on AI Innovation

MCAST and the University of Malta jointly hosted a two-day hackathon titled *NurseAI Hackathon: The Innovation Challenge*. The event brought together over 180 second-year nursing students to develop AI-driven solutions addressing real-world healthcare challenges.

The hackathon took place on 29 and 30 April 2026, with the first day held at MCAST and the second at the University of Malta's Valletta Campus. Academics from MCAST's Institute of Applied Sciences, the Department of IT and AI, and the Centre for Learning and Employability, together with the University of Malta's Faculty of Health Sciences, the Edward de Bono Institute, and the Faculty of ICT, were joined by industry experts in supporting the initiative, reflecting a shared commitment to innovation and collaboration in healthcare education.

The event aimed to promote the practical application of artificial intelligence in healthcare, while encouraging inter-institutional collaboration and empowering students to design inclusive and practical solutions to current challenges in clinical



practice. Participants worked in teams, engaging in idea development workshops and mentoring sessions with experts in healthcare, artificial intelligence, and education.

Opening the event, MCAST Principal and CEO Mr Stephen Vella emphasised the importance of integrating technology with human-centred care. Drawing on his nursing background, he highlighted that while healthcare systems continue to evolve, the essence of the profession remains unchanged.

During the hackathon, students developed and refined their ideas, ultimately presenting their solutions in a structured pitch format. A panel of experts evaluated each project based on originality, inclusivity, feasibility, and potential for implementation.

The programme included contributions from specialists in artificial intelligence, healthcare innovation, and education, who guided participants in translating ideas into practical solutions.



MCAST Showcases Agricultural Innovation at Malta AgriFair 2026

MCAST participated in the Malta AgriFair 2026, held between 17 and 19 April at the Malta Fairs and Conventions Centre. The three-day event, organised by the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Animal Rights, brought together key stakeholders from across the agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture sectors, with a strong emphasis on innovation, sustainability, and local produce.

Throughout the event, MCAST engaged with visitors through an interactive stand representing its Centre for Agriculture, Aquatics and Animal Sciences (CAAAS). The stand showcased the wide range of study programmes offered by the College, highlighting pathways that support skills development and expertise within Malta's expanding agri-based industries.



Visitors had the opportunity to learn more about career prospects in agriculture and related fields, as well as the role of education in driving sustainable and resource-efficient practices. MCAST representatives were available throughout the event to discuss study pathways, student experiences, and the College's contribution to strengthening Malta's agricultural ecosystem.

Malta AgriFair 2026 welcomed thousands of visitors and featured over 50 exhibitors, offering a dynamic programme that included livestock displays, food experiences, and family-friendly activities.

Guidance Professionals Explore Learning Opportunities at MCAST

MCAST welcomed over 75 guidance teachers, career advisers, and PSCD educators to its campus on 14 April 2026 for its annual guidance seminar. Organised by the Outreach and Student Affairs Department, the event provided attendees with updates on MCAST's programmes, student pathways, and admissions information.

Participants took part in a series of hands-on workshops across various disciplines, including Performing Arts, Textiles, Metalwork, Electronics, Coding, and Cryptocurrency, offering first-hand insight into the College's practical learning approach.

The seminar also highlighted new programmes for the 2026-2027 academic year, including the Master of Arts in Creative Expression, the Advanced Diploma in Farriery and Animal Care, and new courses in Disciplinary Forces, Safety and Protection. The event reinforced MCAST's commitment to equipping educators with the knowledge needed to guide students towards informed educational and career choices.



MCAST Creative Computing Students Visit BOV to Explore Innovation and User Experience

Students from the MCAST Creative Computing programme recently visited Bank of Valletta (BOV) to gain first-hand insight into innovation, user experience (UX), and digital transformation within the financial services sector.

The visit provided students with a valuable opportunity to explore how UX principles, accessibility, empathy-driven design, and innovation shape the development of modern digital banking services. Through this experience, they gained a deeper understanding of real-world industry practices and the importance of creating user-centred digital solutions.

Students also engaged with industry professionals, toured the Bank's UX Lab, and presented their own creative computing portfolios and projects.



Inside KampuSajf: MCAST's Festival for Work in Progress

With an abundance of summer festivals on the island, KampuSajf carves out its own distinct rhythm. Organised by MCAST and powered by APS Bank, it returns for its fourth edition from 6 to 8 August 2026, also coinciding with MCAST's 25th anniversary.

Held at the Mosta campus, home to the College's Institute for the Creative Arts, KampuSajf turns familiar spaces into something more open and shared. Instead of polished productions, the focus is on smaller-scale work often still in progress. It resembles a fringe festival more than a traditional programme, emphasizing experimentation, collaboration and trying things out.

Led by artistic directors Elyse Tonna and Justin Galea, this year's theme, *Playgrounds for Emergence*, centres on the early stages of making art. The programme explores how ideas develop through testing, reworking and collaborating. Lecture rooms,

studios and outdoor spaces open up so audiences can see not just finished pieces but how they come together.

The result feels less like a standard festival and more like a shared space. Students, alumni, emerging and established artists work together, often across disciplines. A strong outcome from last year was how many collaborations continued afterwards and the aim is to build on this in the 2026 programme.

KampuSajf is open to a wide audience. It is as much for artists and students as it is for anyone interested in contemporary work. The mix of disciplines means people can engage with it in different ways, without needing specialist knowledge.

Information about the call for artistic content, programme and tickets can be found on mcast.edu.mt

Students Meet Industry on Campus

MCAST hosted an Industry on Campus event at its Paola campus, bringing together more than 70 representatives from a wide range of industries for a business breakfast and onboarding session aimed at strengthening collaboration between education and the workplace.

The event provided students with a valuable opportunity to engage directly with employers, discuss apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities, and gain insight into potential career pathways. It also offered employers a chance to learn more about MCAST's work-based learning initiatives and explore opportunities for collaboration.

Proceedings opened with a presentation outlining MCAST's approach to work-based learning and the vital role industry partners play in developing the next generation of skilled professionals. Representatives from the Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA) delivered a session on legal requirements and recent developments relevant to employers hosting apprentices.

The event was supported through the *Encounter - MCAST Meets Industry* initiative, funded by the Ministry for Education, and forms part of MCAST's wider efforts to strengthen the connection between education and industry.





MCAST and Proximo Ltd Partner to Support Future Trades Professionals

MCAST and Proximo Ltd, agents for Milwaukee Tools in Malta, signed a Sponsorship and Collaboration Agreement aimed at strengthening practical training opportunities for students within MCAST's Institute for the Trades.

Through this agreement, Proximo Ltd provided a range of professional tools and equipment to support hands-on learning across trade-related programmes. The sponsorship reflects a shared commitment to ensuring that students have access to industry-standard resources that enhance their technical skills and better prepare them for employment.

The collaboration extends beyond the donation of equipment and includes initiatives designed to

strengthen the connection between education and industry. These include a student discount scheme on Milwaukee products, collaborative promotional activities, and opportunities to increase student awareness of professional tools and technologies commonly used within the sector.

This collaboration further reinforces MCAST's ongoing efforts to strengthen industry engagement and provide students with learning experiences that bridge the gap between education and employment.



MCAST Hosts Malta Unity Game Jam as Students Showcase Game Development Skills

MCAST's Institute of Information and Communication Technology (IICT) hosted the Malta Unity Game Jam, bringing together 50 participants for a three-day collaborative game development challenge. This year's edition marked a notable milestone, as it was organised directly in collaboration with Unity Technologies, making the event even more significant for the local game development community.

The event, held from 27 to 29 March 2026 at the MCAST Paola campus, was organised in collaboration with GamingMalta. It brought together participants from diverse educational backgrounds and institutions, who worked in teams to design and develop playable game prototypes under tight time constraints. By the end of the weekend, 11 games had

been developed, each expressing a different creative approach to the same challenge. Participants were able to test each other's work, giving insight into how teams tackled design, mechanics and storytelling in different ways.

Team Big Whale won with Couch Calcio, followed by Team Coffee Before Logic and Team Bilbo. Team Bingus INC and Team Yellow also received recognition.



MCAST and Beijing Polytechnic University Partner to Expand Aviation Education Opportunities

MCAST has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Beijing Polytechnic University to strengthen future collaboration in education, particularly in the aviation sector.

The agreement focuses on aviation studies and will provide students with opportunities to gain practical experience in the industry. It also opens the door for postgraduate collaboration, allowing students from China to continue their postgraduate studies at MCAST in Malta.

The partnership follows previous engagement between the two institutions. Last year, a second visit by Dr Stephen Sammut, Deputy Principal, and Mr Stephen Vella, Principal and CEO, created further

opportunities for discussions and the exploration of new areas of cooperation, especially within aviation education.

During these discussions, an aerospace aviation course was highlighted. The programme combines both theoretical knowledge and practical training, giving students valuable insight into real-world aviation practices through internships and apprenticeship opportunities.

MCAST and STMicroelectronics Launch Upskilling Programme

MCAST, in collaboration with STMicroelectronics Malta, has officially launched a new upskilling programme aimed at strengthening workforce capabilities within the high-technology manufacturing sector.

The initiative marks an important milestone in the ongoing collaboration between the two organisations, reflecting a shared commitment to developing a future-ready, skills-driven workforce through continuous learning and closer alignment between education and industry.

The launch also highlights the longstanding relationship between the College and STMicroelectronics, a company with over 45 years of presence in Malta's engineering and manufacturing sectors. The partnership continues to play a key role in supporting the country's industrial and technological development.

The programme will offer structured learning pathways across multiple MQF levels, including Level

2, Level 3 and Level 5 qualifications in high-technology manufacturing and semiconductor-related fields. These include the Undergraduate Diploma in High Technology Manufacturing (60 ECTS) and the Award in High Technology Manufacturing (24 ECTS), alongside specialised training in semiconductor operations and team leadership.

Designed to support employees in balancing professional responsibilities with further education, the programme focuses on practical, industry-relevant skills development. It forms part of a broader effort to upskill the workforce in response to evolving technological demands and production environments.

This collaboration reinforces MCAST's strategic positioning as a centre for high-technology and semiconductor education and training, including its role within the Semiconductor Competence Centre, supporting Malta's contribution to this critical sector at both European and global levels.





Aviation Student Gains Valuable European Experience through EPAS and Euroscola

MCAST Institute of Engineering and Transport student Mackenzie Cassar recently represented Malta in a number of European Union initiatives, gaining first-hand experience of European democracy, cultural exchange and youth participation.

In April 2026 Mackenzie was selected alongside five other students to participate in EPAS Together in Madrid, where students from Malta, Spain and Cyprus came together to discuss European issues, take part in workshops, and experience a Model European Parliament simulation. The programme also included

visits to the European Parliament Liaison Office in Madrid, the Spanish Congress and discussions with Members of the European Parliament, including Thomas Bajada.

The following month, Mackenzie represented MCAST during Euroscola in Strasbourg and Paris. A highlight of the programme was visiting the European Parliament and participating in debates and workshops on democracy and disinformation. Students also explored major cultural landmarks in both cities.

MCAST Signs Collaboration Agreement to Bring Maltese Literature to Life

MCAST signed a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 19 May 2026 with the Centre for the Maltese Language (ĊIM) and the Ministry for Education to strengthen collaboration in promoting Maltese literature through creative audiovisual projects.

Through this initiative, MCAST students will produce audiovisual interpretations of Maltese literary works, including poetry, short stories, and extracts from novels in the secondary school syllabus. The project provides students with industry-based learning opportunities where they can develop skills in research, storytelling, media production, critical thinking, and creative communication, while also working alongside experts in the Maltese language

and education. It also aims to make Maltese literature more engaging and accessible to younger audiences.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, MCAST Principal and CEO Mr Stephen Vella highlighted the importance of linking education with culture and real-world experience, noting that the initiative supports both creative and professional development while promoting Maltese language and heritage. The agreement was signed by representatives of ĊIM and the Ministry for Education and further strengthens cooperation between the institutions, with the resulting audiovisual resources expected to be used in schools and showcased on national platforms.



Celebrating Diversity at MCAST

On 17 and 29 April 2026, MCAST celebrated Diversity Days at the Paola and Mosta campuses through a range of engaging activities. The aim of these events was to help students appreciate different perspectives and lived experiences, reduce prejudice, and foster mutual respect within the College community. Such initiatives also support the development of important workplace skills, including the ability to collaborate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.

In addition, diversity celebrations enhance learning and creativity, strengthen communication skills, build a stronger sense of belonging, and promote values of equality and fairness.

The activities, organised by mentors and Aġenzija Żgħażaġh youth workers, included an LGBTIQ Community Human Library, an Inter-Faith Human Library, Guess the Country, Diversity Canvas, Diversity Bingo, chess, Jenga and a trivia quiz, speed socialising, and an international food game.

Overall, celebrating diversity contributes to creating a more inclusive community while preparing students to succeed in diverse professional environments.



Launch of Women in Action Network

In March 2026, MCAST launched the Women in Action Network with a clear goal: to continue building an MCAST where everyone has the opportunity to grow, contribute and lead.

This network was created from a real need. At MCAST, women make up almost half of our staff and play an important role across administration, academia, leadership and support services. Women in Action was designed to provide a space where female colleagues could connect, share experiences, support one another and grow professionally.

The network focused on collaboration, mentoring, professional development and encouraging more women to take on leadership roles. Leadership was described not only as positions or titles, but also as initiative, vision and the positive actions taken every

day — which is why the network was called Women in Action.

This initiative also reflected the values of the MCAST Strategic Plan 2022–2027, particularly inclusion, leadership and community engagement, and was supported by both the MCAST Equality Consultative Committee and the Staff Social Committee.

Most importantly, the network was presented as a way of creating a stronger and more inclusive institution. With over 4,000 female students at MCAST, it was considered essential that they saw strong role models around them and felt confident that their voices mattered.

The invitation was simple: to participate, contribute and help shape the future of the network together.

MCAST Academic Dr Charles Daniel Saliba Featured on TVM’s #ajitna Ktieb

MCAST academic Dr Charles Daniel Saliba was recently interviewed by presenter John Demanuele on the programme #ajitna Ktieb, aired on Malta’s national television station. The programme focused on Dr Saliba’s academic research and his distinguished career, spanning over 25 years, of teaching Maltese as both a native and foreign language, as well as linguistics and literature, across secondary, post-secondary, and tertiary institutions.

During the interview, Dr Saliba and Mr Demanuele discussed the current landscape of Maltese as a Foreign Language (MFL) teaching in Malta, highlighting Dr Saliba’s pioneering work and professional practice in the field. They explored the

significant changes he has observed in the sector throughout his career. The discussion also centred on his latest textbook series, *Maltese as a Foreign Language for Juniors*, specifically detailing its methodology and pedagogical structure.

Reflecting on the experience, Dr Saliba commented: “Such programmes provide a healthy forum for authors to discuss their work and specific fields of study. In my case, alongside my academic career, we were able to discuss the vital MFL sector and analyse the *Learning Maltese / Nitgħalliem il-Malti* series. This programme serves as a valuable information tool for those teaching or learning MFL both locally and abroad, particularly within the Maltese diaspora.”



MCAST Participates in the 14th Philanthropy Lab Leadership Summit in Texas

The 14th Philanthropy Lab Leadership Summit was held in Fort Worth, Texas, USA, on 14–15 May 2026. MCAST was invited to participate in the summit for the first time, with Dr John Bartolo representing the College alongside philanthropy lecturers from 21 universities and colleges across the United States.

The Philanthropy Lab is an experiential education programme that partners with universities and colleges to teach students about philanthropy through hands-on learning. Students are entrusted with real funding provided by the Lab and are responsible for awarding grants to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at the end of the semester. The curriculum emphasises building relationships with community organisations and implementing equity-driven grant-making practices.

Throughout the course, students assess community needs, research non-profit organisations, conduct

site visits, carry out interviews, and review financial documentation to make informed decisions regarding the allocation of grant funding.

During the summit, participants shared best practices, exchanged resources, and discussed future goals and developments for the Philanthropy Lab programme. The event also provided valuable networking opportunities with representatives from leading universities and colleges across the United States. Furthermore, it opened avenues for future collaborations and partnerships with academics and philanthropy educators from across the country.

MCAST is committed to offering this pioneering educational programme as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, initially targeting students enrolled in the Bachelor of Business Enterprise programme within the Institute of Business Management and Commerce (IBMC).



MCAST Graphic Design Students Create Typographic Posters to Promote Children's Rights

Students from the MCAST Institute for the Creative Arts (ICA) have completed a typographic project in partnership with the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) Directorate for Alternative Care (DAC), producing a series of posters designed to communicate children's rights for use in care settings.

Led by Dr Kevin Borg, Consultant Community Paediatrician, the brief asked Graphic Design students to treat typography as the primary visual language, using letterforms, scale, spacing and contrast to convey messages about safety, dignity and the needs of children and young people in alternative care. The assignment aimed not only to develop technical design skills but also to encourage reflection on social responsibility and the lived realities of children in care.

Eighteen posters were initially submitted; following a collaborative review by ICA staff and FSWS representatives, sixteen works were shortlisted, enlarged to 50x70 cm, printed, framed and installed at the DAC's new premises. Institute and Subject Coordinator Darren Duncan and Senior Lecturer Matthew Mamo, who led the project, said the artworks have been placed primarily in clinical and counselling rooms to provide an intimate, supportive context for their viewing during health reviews and therapeutic sessions.

The project offered the students an opportunity to see their work applied in a real-world setting where it will be viewed by children, families and professionals, demonstrating how thoughtful design can serve storytelling, advocacy and emotional support within welfare services.

MCAST Students and Lecturers Restore St John's Co-Cathedral Wind Vane Damaged in Storm Harry

MCAST has completed the restoration of the south campanile wind vane of St John's Co-Cathedral after it was damaged during Storm Harry on 20 January 2026.

Lecturers and students from MCAST's Welding and Fabrication workshops, part of the Institute of Engineering and Transport, carried out the work in collaboration with the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation. The wind vane had been dislodged by severe weather and suffered substantial structural damage when it fell.

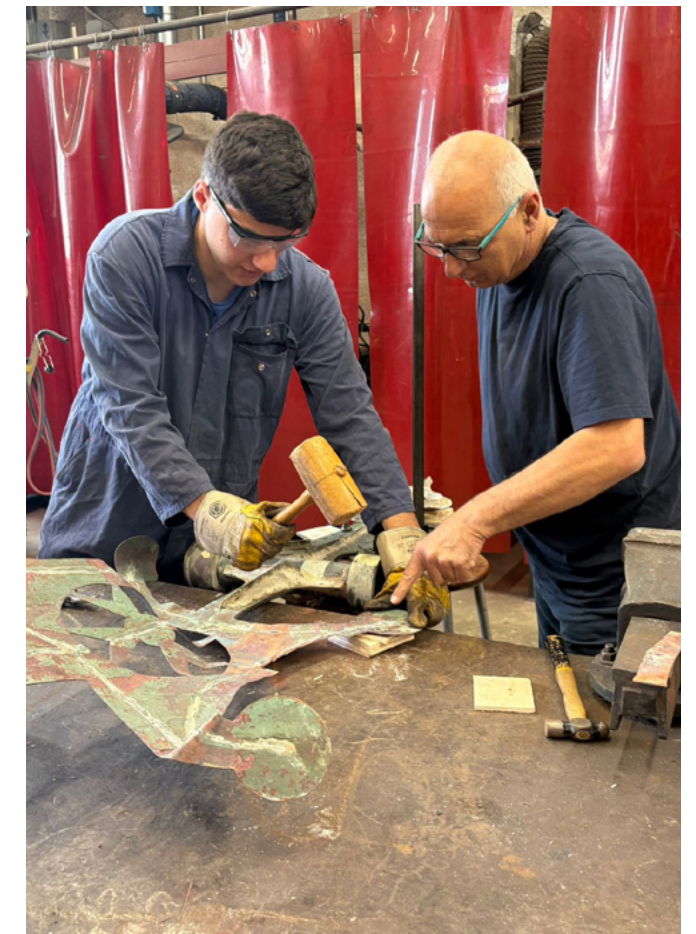
Within the technical scope of MCAST's workshops, the team performed welding and brazing, fabricated replacement and reinforcing components, and repaired deformed sheet metal panels. Additional flanges were manufactured and fitted to strengthen the main central shaft, while damaged sections of the vane were carefully restored and realigned.

All work was done voluntarily by MCAST lecturers and students, with materials supplied by the Cathedral Foundation. The project served as a practical learning exercise, offering students real-world experience in structural repair, metal fabrication, and problem-solving on a nationally significant landmark.

MCAST Principal and Chief Executive Officer Stephen Vella said:

"Projects such as this show the value of vocational and applied education. They provide students with the opportunity to work on real-world challenges while developing the technical skills, attention to detail, and professional standards expected within industry."

The restoration was recently showcased during MCAST's Open Day and is now nearing completion, marking the successful conclusion of a project that combined education, technical skill, and collaboration between MCAST and the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation.





MCAST ICA Festival 2026 commemorates a decade of creative achievement

The MCAST Institute for the Creative Arts (ICA) officially inaugurated the 10th edition of the ICA Festival on Friday, 3 July, at Spazju Kreattiv in Valletta. Running until 16 August 2026, the six-week exhibition celebrates the creativity, research and academic achievements of graduating students.

This year's festival showcases the final projects and dissertations of 119 students across 12 Bachelor (Honours) programmes: Conservation, Creative Media Production, Fashion, Fine Art, Game Art, Graphic Design, Interactive Digital Media, Journalism, Performing Arts, Photography, Product Design and Spatial Design.

The 2026 edition holds particular significance as it celebrates a decade of the ICA Festival while

coinciding with MCAST's 25th anniversary, marking an important milestone in the College's continued commitment to creative education. It also features the inaugural graduating cohort of the Bachelor (Honours) in Conservation, further broadening the diversity of disciplines represented in the exhibition.

The official opening was hosted by students Emma Browrigg (BA (Hons) Journalism) and Karl Azzopardi (BA (Hons) Performing Arts). Guests were welcomed by Dr Martina Caruana, Director of the Institute for the Creative Arts, and Sarah Borg, Programme Executive at Spazju Kreattiv, before the evening concluded with a closing address by MCAST Principal and CEO, Mr Stephen Vella.





MCAST

Communications Office,
Students' House, Level 1,
MCAST Main Campus,
Corradino Street,
Paola PLA 9032, Malta.

[MCAST.EDU.MT](https://mcast.edu.mt)

