

ISSUE 63

MCAST
Graduation
Ceremonies

MCAST LINK

A team of
MCAST students
WINS
an International
Robotics
Competition

contents

EDITORIAL	2
MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL & CEO	3
NEWS	5
GRADUATION CEREMONIES	25
MCAST COMMUNITY GATHERS AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	29
MCAST STUDENTS SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCH A BALLOON TO THE STRATOSPHERE	30
A TEAM OF MCAST STUDENTS WINS AN INTERNATIONAL ROBOTICS COMPETITION	33
INTERVIEW WITH MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SPORT, YOUTH, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION, THE HON CLIFTON GRIMA	35
MCAST TEENS SUMMER CAMP	39
ERASMUS+ PROJECTS & MOBILITY OFFICE	45
APPLIED RESEARCH AND INNOVATION CENTRE	50
INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	52
INSTITUTE FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS	54
INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY	60
INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING & TRANSPORT	65
MCAST GOZO CAMPUS	73
THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOR THE THIRD AGE	81
LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCE CENTRE	83
SAMANTHA JANE CURMI, MCAST JOURNALISM STUDENT INTERVIEWED JAD MUSALLAM WHO IS CURRENTLY CARRYING OUT A THREE-MONTH ERASMUS INTERNSHIP	85
MCAST HOLDS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH CONFERENCE	87



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Editorial

This MCASTlink edition wraps up 2022 by including several news events that show how the College is constantly buzzing with activity. These events included the inauguration of the new Centre for Maritime Studies (CMS), the opening of the new Centre for Learning and Employability, the signing of several MoUs and agreements with different organisations, the hosting of the annual EAIR Forum 2022 and the celebration of the success of 2,411 graduates during the Graduation Ceremonies.

The College is incredibly proud of its students that have participated, competed and excelled in national and international competitions. These include the team of Engineering students that won the IEEE Region 8 Robot Championships 2022 and the ICT students that participated in the Global Robotics Competition in Geneva. Stories can be found inside the magazine. Well done to all involved.

The MCAST Teen Summer Camp was a great success. Chris Grech takes us through the reasons why teenagers should attend the MCAST Teen Summer Camp and make the most of their free time during summer. The pictures portray the variety of educational and fun activities that were organised.

MCAST caught up with Hon Clifton Grima, Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research, and Innovation to discover more about his vision and ideas about vocational education and training, research and innovation and sports.

May I take this opportunity to wish all readers a peaceful Christmas and a lovely New Year full of happiness and good health!

Message from the Principal & CEO

**PROFESSOR JOACHIM
JAMES CALLEJA**



2022 has been a good year for the College and its subsidiary company MG2i.

The year started with the opening of the MCAST Resource Centre a complex building that hosts the Library, a Centre for persons with learning difficulties, the Learning and Employability Centre as well as the Applied Research and Innovation Centre (ARIC).

In 2023, plans are to inaugurate an exhibition and interactive Centre managed

by MG2i, which will incorporate a coffee bar, open to the public. In summer, we are also looking forward to the opening of the new Information and Communication Technology Centre which will host over 1000 ICT students and staff members as well as other students wishing to use the over 35 IT laboratories and lecture rooms. Improving the infrastructure of MCAST is one of the top priorities of the College. Our students and staff members deserve the best learning and working environments and the latest equipment.

The increase of 36% of students using the new library since February 2022 is enough proof that new physical environments matter. We shall continue to strive for new buildings to host on the Paola Campus the Institute for the Creative Arts and the Institute for Community Services. Together these two institutes have a student population of 2700 students besides lecturing and management staff members. The overall 7% increase over 2021 in enrolments means that the physical space will play a pivotal role in retaining students and staff at MCAST. Plans to build a students' residence, refurbish the former St Joseph Hall to accommodate first class performances and graduation ceremonies together with greener and sustainable landscaping are ready for funding.

A striking feature during 2022 has been the organization of several events by the College or at MCAST among which the EAIR Forum that attracted more than 150 academics from applied universities from all over Europe. Almost a weekly event have seen the implementation of several ERASMUS projects that lecturing staff

members either lead or actively participate. Fresher's Week has also been a huge event for MCAST attracting hundreds of students to our campus sites in Paola, Targa Gap and at the MCAST Gozo Centre. The research community has been very busy during November and December organizing two key events attracting lecturing staff and international speakers.

The inauguration of the new Centre for Maritime Studies (CMS) at the Institute of Engineering and Transport is another milestone for 2022. With over 100 full-time students, the CMS aims at expanding its learning capacity and attracting more local and international students. The MG2i has in fact been instrumental during 2022 in attracting a record number of international students and in forging new agreements with foreign vocational and professional institutions.

Today the College has over 1600 foreign students from 91 different countries. The Institute of Applied Sciences has been a major attraction to international students. This intercultural dimension of MCAST is creating a new ethos that promotes diversity as a value that unifies differences and mutual respect. MCAST is in the forefront in organizing for the Ministry for Home Affairs, Security, Reforms, and Equality several courses in the I BELONG programme.

The College has also embarked on promoting through MOVE a culture of fitness and exercise. More students and staff members are joining the various activities held on and off Campus. The Community Social Responsibility (CSR) programme has engaged students in over 75,000 hours of

voluntary work with NGOs. The fund raising activities held at the Gozo Centre are also positive initiatives worth mentioning. The significant increase in numbers of elderly learners in the College of the Third Age is a noteworthy milestone for the Curriculum Team.

Another milestone for 2022 has been MCAST agreement with The Arts Council. The College now hosts Teatru Malta. The presence of Teatru Malta on campus gives MCAST students in the performing arts many opportunities to grow and flourish in the sector. Similarly, our increasing cooperation with Heritage Malta will culminate in a new Bachelor's degree in Heritage Skills. The agreement also gives students and staff free access to HM sites.

Students are increasingly active in competing in national and international competitions such as in the Global Robotics Competition in Geneva and in early December in the IEEE Region 8 Robot Championship Malta 2022. The achievements of the College have never been without challenges. However, teamwork continues to be a driving force for the vast majority of students and staff members. The newly set up Social Committee has also been a formidable unifying factor. Although bigger tasks lie ahead, there is a sense of confidence and trust that empowers all to achieve higher and qualitative targets.

To our students, staff members, industry partners and other stakeholders as well as contributors and readers of MCAST Link a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2023.

NEW MCAST CENTRE FOR LEARNING AND EMPLOYABILITY	6
MCAST HOSTS THE 44TH ANNUAL EAIR FORUM 2022	7
MCAST AND PwC MALTA SIGN A COLLABORATIVE AGREEMENT	8
POVE WATER SCALE-UP PROJECT KICK-OFF MEETING HELD AT MCAST	10
MCAST OPENING CEREMONY: CELEBRATING THE NEW ACADEMIC YEAR	11
PRIME MINISTER ROBERT ABELA AND THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION CLIFTON GRIMA VISIT MCAST	13
A VIBRANT START AT MCAST FRESHERS' WEEK	14
MoU ENVISAGES MCAST COURSES IN CONSERVATION AND FREE ACCESS TO HISTORICAL SITES	18
MCAST PARTICIPATES IN PLAYCON 2022 EXPO	21
MCAST HOSTS FINAL MULTIPLIER EVENT CONFERENCE OF COACHED6	22

New MCAST Centre for Learning and Employability

On 14 July 2022, the MCAST Board of Governors approved a resolution for the set-up of the Centre for Learning and Employability, which has replaced the Learning Support Unit at the College.

The Centre has continued to build on the achievements of what was previously known as the Learning Support Unit. This Unit was set up in order to offer support to students across MCAST's Institutes. Through tailor-made services, students are equipped with the necessary skills to become autonomous independent learners.

The Centre offers one-to-one support and small group mentoring to students in order to help them become high achievers. Among other student support services, the Centre offers vocational units support, assignment writing practice, academic and dissertation tutorials, research-related help, and holds workshops on study skills and time management.

The Centre for Learning and Employability aims to accommodate the current programme portfolio and give rise to new programmes. Importantly, the Centre aspires to develop further the range of personalised and group-targeted support services while ensuring more visibility of services and programmes in conjunction with the relocation to the new Resource Centre. Moreover, the Centre is focused on growing the College's Third Age initiative and seeking new ways of reaching out to neighbouring communities.



MCAST hosts the 44th annual EAIR Forum 2022

MCAST hosted the 44th edition of the European Higher Education Society (EAIR) Annual Forum 2022 at the College's Main Campus in Paola in September 2022.

The Forum attracted over 165 participants from 90 higher education institutions in 26 countries, including countries outside Europe like Australia, Canada, Chile, Malaysia and the United States.

With the theme "Accelerating the Future of Higher Education" this year's EAIR forum is pivotal in supporting research and development in higher education research, policy and practice to the general benefit of higher education locally and internationally.

During the Forum, discussions about the best ways to disseminate information that supports policymaking, policy

implementation, and good practice in higher education were held. The EAIR Forum also served as a good networking opportunity within higher education.

In the Forum's opening address, the Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research, and Innovation Clifton Grima said, "If we wish to accelerate the future of higher education, we need to bring down institutional barriers that make learning in practice difficult. Education is all about applied learning. Fora such as this contribute to embark on the much needed transformation process to narrow the gaps between the world of education and the world of employment."

MCAST Principal and CEO Professor Joachim James Calleja said, "MCAST is a unique example of an educational institution that provides programmes of education and

training at all levels of our qualifications framework, including higher education, to the extent that last year the College launched its first doctoral degree. We have strengthened the research element over the past years and want to ensure that research is attractive to prospective students. MCAST's mission blends well with the EAIR's overall educational objectives."

The plenary session also included speeches by Dr Nicoline Frolich, EAIR Chair and Dr Mark O'Hara, EAIR Vice-President. The

keynote speech was by Professor Rosalind Pritchard, Emeritus Professor of Education, former Head of School and Distinguished Research Fellow of Ulster University.

The EAIR forum aimed to encourage higher education research and promote institutional management, planning and policy implementation development. The Forum was supported by The Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, MG2i, APS and the HSBC Malta Foundation.



MCAST and PwC Malta sign a Collaborative Agreement

MCAST and PwC Malta have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which will further strengthen the spirit of collaboration between the two organisations.

Through this new agreement, both parties will collaborate to design and review study programmes offered by the College. This partnership also aims to ensure the offering of more industry relevant study programmes offered at MCAST.

MCAST Principal and CEO Professor Joachim James Calleja explained, “At MCAST, our strong collaborations with industry partners and understanding of future needs means our diverse courses are created with students’ careers in mind. We look forward to this collaboration with PwC as we continue our pro-active approach to build strong connections with the business world where teaching and learning activities have a professional and entrepreneurial focus.”

On its part, PwC has agreed to further increase its apprenticeships and internship opportunities to MCAST students. Additionally, a structured student summer programme to widen the hands-on approach experience of MCAST students will be launched. The College students will be able to gain industry experience with PwC.

Moreover, industry experts from PwC will also be delivering thematic lectures to

MCAST students in diverse areas of expertise as may be requested by the College.

David Valenzia, PwC’s senior partner stated, “PwC believes that it is the responsibility of the industry to invest in the student population as the future of our society lies with its youth. We will continue to support students to the best of our ability, and, with MCAST, we are excited and look forward to working with both the educators and students, who are the workforce and leaders of tomorrow”.

MCAST has also agreed to design, furnish and equip a dedicated PwC space on campus. MCAST student organisations are also set to receive support from PwC.

This agreement and the strong ties established with PwC will continue to ensure that MCAST moves ahead in its quest to become an industry-driven educational institution and a community college for all.



POVE Water Scale-Up Project Kick-off Meeting held at MCAST

MCAST hosted the Platform of Vocational Excellence (POVE) Water Scale-Up project on campus on 14, 15, and 16 of September 2022.

POVE is a platform of vocational excellence. The main leads in this project are the Institute of Applied Sciences (IAS) and the Institute of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at MCAST.

A total of 23 partners from different countries participated in the kick-off meeting. These included representatives from academia, water utilities corporations, vocational education and industry.

The kick-off meeting served as a springboard which acted as a perfect networking opportunity for all partners, and a chance to discuss and create a working plan focused on reaching the goals of this “Water Scale-Up” Project.

Institute of Applied Sciences Director Ms. Paula Grech Bonnici said, “This innovative project is a follow up of another pilot project and, as a vocational college, MCAST will be providing valuable input as well as sharing educative material with other educational institutions in the Mediterranean.”

The main aim of the project is to integrate vocational excellence in the water sector thus ensuring high-quality skills and competences that lead to quality jobs and careers, meeting the needs of an innovative, inclusive and sustainable economy. It is therefore the scope of participating partners to educate VET students in becoming agile, digitally skilled and consciously oriented water sector professionals.



MCAST Opening Ceremony: Celebrating the new Academic year

On Monday 3 October 2022, MCAST organised its opening ceremony for the new academic year 2022-2023, welcoming students back on campus. This year the College received around 3819 applications from new prospective students, a substantial increase compared to last year. The number of international students applying for MCAST courses also increased considerably to 1,606 applicants from over 87 countries.

The Minister for Education, Sport, Youth,

Research and Innovation, Dr Clifton Grima, said, "The work of MCAST is reflected in the number of applications from prospective students, which are increasing year after year. This year, in two calls for application, MCAST received a 17% increase over last year's applications. This is good news for the work this College is carrying out and for the students who have chosen MCAST to continue their studies."

Principal Professor Calleja said in his

message to students, “We encourage you to make the most of your student experience. Campus life can help you acquire knowledge and skills to make a difference in our society. The world is facing challenging times, and change is happening whether we like it or not. Now more than ever, we need our youth to believe their ideas and actions can make a true difference.”

The President of the Board of Governors, Professor Ian Refalo, spoke of the importance of vocational and professional education in preparing tomorrow’s skilled workforce. The

Student Council President Bradley Debono spoke about the importance of inclusion, which will be further strengthened with the new equality policy being implemented at the College.

The ceremony closed with an interfaith ceremony led by representatives of different faiths. MCAST student Alexia Micallef presented, and violinist Bernard Curmi played the music during the ceremony.



Prime Minister Robert Abela and the Minister for Education Clifton Grima visit MCAST

Malta's Prime Minister Robert Abela and the Minister for Education Clifton Grima visited the MCAST Centre for Agriculture, Aquatics and Animal Sciences. During the visit, students spoke about their career paths in agriculture and animal sciences.

A total of 313 full-time students are currently following courses at the Centre for Agriculture, Aquatics, and Animal Sciences.

This new academic year, the Centre welcomed over 200 full-time students and 120 part-time students specialising in agriculture, aquatic and animal sciences.

The Centre provides training in horticulture, animal care and management, and fish management. It also organises several

bespoke courses for farmers. The Centre for Agriculture, Aquatics and Animal Sciences is located at the Qormi Campus.

The Centre is part of the Institute of Applied Sciences. Students learn to appreciate how the principles of science relate to the technological operations at the workplace while developing the skills to work in laboratories, hospitals, farms, and with environmental technologies and methodologies in industrial settings. All courses from the Advanced Diploma level upwards have work placements and internships, and all courses have practical sessions in both laboratories, on site, fieldwork, farms and as required.



A vibrant start at MCAST Freshers' Week

MCAST Freshers' Week was held in the first week of October 2022 at the MCAST Campus in Paola. New students who joined MCAST during the 2022-2023 intake received a warm welcome within the campus surroundings and got the opportunity to experience the lively MCAST atmosphere and excitement.

The President of Malta, H.E. George Vella, was welcomed at the College at the opening of the Freshers' activities. He was accompanied by the Minister for Education, Clifton Grima and the Principal, Professor Joachim James Calleja. They visited various stands and spoke to new and current students and College staff.

Over 100 companies and NGOs participated in the much awaited student-centred

activity. Over 40 educational talks took place at the new MCAST Resource Centre, which houses the College's impressive new Library.

With the theme "A Bright Future", the activities encourage students to explore different career pathways, understand the benefits of work-based learning and engage in student activism. Community Social Responsibility is the main focus of this celebration, encouraging students to participate in voluntary work opportunities and to commit to positive social change.

The Freshers' activities included orientation visits, talks, and demonstrations.







MoU envisages MCAST courses in conservation and free access to historical sites

MCAST and Heritage Malta have signed a Memorandum of Understanding that envisages, inter alia, the setting up of a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Conservation as full-time courses delivered by MCAST. The MoU also provides for the granting of free access, whenever possible, to MCAST students to Heritage Malta's museums and sites.

Through the MoU, both parties have agreed to establish a working group to collaborate on the setting up of the courses in Conservation, both of which will include academic content as well as a traineeship scheme. Heritage Malta, in collaboration with the Institute for the Public Services, has pledged to issue several scholarships in relation with these degrees and others, according to the needs that arise from time to time. The Agency will guarantee full-time employment to a limited number of sponsored students following the successful completion of their respective course.

Apart from free access to museums and sites to more than 8,000 MCAST students, Heritage Malta will give special discounts on its publications to MCAST students and lecturers and provide complimentary publications to MCAST's libraries. The Agency will also make available locations within its

remit to be used as classroom extensions by MCAST lecturers. It will support MCAST students in their research studies, mainly by ensuring access to research data and by encouraging them to carry out original research on museums, galleries and heritage studies in relation to Heritage Malta.

Whenever possible, practical and fieldwork sessions will be carried out at Heritage Malta sites, including its Conservation and Scientific Laboratories.

MCAST will consult with Heritage Malta on any requirements of particular expertise, professions and skills which are deemed to be absent in the local labour market, in order to conceive courses to mitigate such requirements. Whenever possible, MCAST will invite members of Heritage Malta's staff to participate in lecturing and fieldwork run by visiting scholars, so as to complement their continuous professional development.

MCAST has also pledged to encourage several of its departments and their respective students to focus their research, dissertations and projects on subjects and topics which are pertinent to Heritage Malta and its requirements. Additionally, the College will assist the Agency in the publication and presentation of research

papers, if and when requested.

The MoU, covering a six-year period, was signed by Noel Zammit, Chief Executive Officer, on behalf of Heritage Malta; by Professor Joachim James Calleja, MCAST's Principal and Chief Executive Officer; and by Permanent Secretary Dr Joyce Cassar on behalf of the Institute for the Public Services. Dr Owen Bonnici, Minister for the National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government, and Dr Clifton Grima, Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, were also present.

Minister Clifton Grima spoke about similar collaborations between MCAST and other entities that place students as a top priority. "Through the setting up of such courses, MCAST is making great strides in widening its prospectus to keep improving opportunities for its students so that they may achieve their aspirations," Minister Grima said.

Minister Owen Bonnici said that this MoU was an important step towards full collaboration between the national agency for cultural heritage and MCAST. "Education is crucial for the strengthening of the ecosystem that safeguards Malta's cultural heritage. Conservation is also a most

important field of study and in this regard MCAST will be contributing greatly towards the benefits that the country will reap in the coming years," Dr Bonnici continued.

Mr Noel Zammit said that this MoU aims to consolidate the long-standing relationship between Heritage Malta and MCAST through the sharing of technical, academic and human resources and supporting students and professional staff to keep abreast of the latest developments in the fields of cultural heritage and conservation. He expressed the hope that the memorandum will spur similar collaborations between the educational sector and Heritage Malta.

Professor Joachim James Calleja said that the College community may contribute through research and projects covering topics that are relevant to Heritage Malta. These include conservation, marketing, data collection, interpretation, design, creative art, visitor experience, IT, finance and science. MCAST believes in teaching that goes beyond the classroom walls and therefore welcomes free access to historical sites and museums as an alternative educational opportunity for students to discover more about our history and culture.



MCAST participates in Playcon 2022 Expo

MCAST participated in Playcon, one of the largest international game development and e-sports Expo.

Participants from the Institute of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and from the Institute

for the Creative Arts (ICA) showcased work done by MCAST students following courses in game development and e-sports. MCAST education advisers provided information about courses offered by the College within these industries to prospective students.





MCAST hosts Final Multiplier Event Conference of CoachEd6

MCAST hosted the Final Multiplier Event Conference of the “CoachEd6 – Towards Quality Coaching Education” project.

CoachEd6 is a project led by MCAST together with Mugla Sltki Kocman University (Turkey), the University of Southern Denmark, and Reykjavik University (Iceland). In the absence of coaching education at higher educational institutions, the project’s main objective was to foster a Level 6 Award in Sports Coaching.

In the first phase of the project, the four educational institutions teamed up and

wrote a number of study units for the award. The International Council of Coaching Excellence (ICCE) assured quality across the development, delivery, and assessment of all units delivered in the Award.

MCAST Principal and CEO Joachim James Calleja said that, “The Institute of Community Services (ICS) is growing by the minute. Having 513 MCAST students following qualifications in sports is quite something for Malta. At MCAST we are keen on teaching sports at an academically professional level.”



During the second phase of the project, the academic Award was launched and simultaneously delivered in the same way to students in all four educational institutions. The Final Multiplier Event hosted at the College provided the perfect platform where both students and lecturers shared their learning and teaching experiences.

Dr. Renzo Kerr Cumbo, Senior Lecturer at MCAST's Institute of Community Services (ICS) said, "I believe that the most important element of this project was that students had the opportunity to gain diverse knowledge on sports from different cultures. It also was an enriching learning process for lecturers because of the international nature of the project."

Parliamentary Secretary Chris Bonett said,

"I am very proud of this venture, and I was elated to hear that EU funds, more specifically the Erasmus+ programme, made this project possible. It is easy to associate EU funds with large infrastructural projects and whilst those do and will continue to play an important part under my tenure, we will be working to make EU funds closer to the people."

Besides hosting various stakeholders from the field of sports coaching, the conference also welcomed international experts together with the students who were part of the Award in Sports Coaching between 2021 and 2022.

A total of 20 learners were awarded during the conference.



Graduation Ceremonies

MCAST HOLDS GRADUATION MASS FOR NEW GRADUATES

MCAST held a graduation mass at St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta on 14 November 2022 to celebrate the success of new College graduates.

The ceremony honoured graduates from all of MCAST's six institutes.

President of the Board of Governors, Professor Ian Refalo, Principal and CEO Professor Joachim James Calleja, Deputy Principals, the Registrar, lecturers, and MCAST Directors also attended the celebratory mass.

The mass was celebrated by Archbishop Charles Jude Scicluna and members of the MCAST Chaplaincy Team.

In his homily, Archbishop Charles Jude Scicluna congratulated the new graduates for their success in their studies. He urged them to "follow God's teachings within your respective professions and make it your main aim to work towards society's common good."

In his address, College President Professor Ian Refalo encouraged the new graduates to value honesty in their future careers. He further elaborated that this year's graduation "highlights MCAST's valuable mission to prepare students not only in an

academic manner but to prepare them for life's hard challenges".

MCAST Chaplain Father Antoine Farrugia highlighted how the College is being transformed into an international educative hub where diversity is celebrated daily. Fr Farrugia thanked the MCAST staff for "constantly helping in spreading the Christian message, which contributes to the overall mission to help each other succeed, which is so important in a tertiary level educational institution like MCAST".





MCAST GRADUATION CEREMONIES

The College celebrated the success of 2,411 graduates. This year, around 621 students graduated at Master's and Bachelor's levels, while 708 and 112 students have completed Diplomas at Levels 4 and 5. At Levels 1, 2, and 3, another 937 students completed their studies.

Graduates ranged from diverse MCAST Institutes including, the Institute of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the Centre of Agriculture, Aquatics, and Animal Sciences (CAAAS),

the Institute of Community Services (ICS), the Institute of Applied Sciences (IAS), the Institute of Creative Arts (ICA), and the Institute of Business, Management and Commerce (IBMC).

Everyone at MCAST congratulates all graduates for reaching this important milestone and wishes them a very successful future within their respective industries.

CONGRATULATIONS to CLASS of 2022





MCAST community gathers against domestic violence

MCAST observed a two-minute silence in memory of Bernice Cassar and all victims of domestic violence. Students and staff gathered in front of Students' House in the presence of the victim's family members as a gesture of respect and a united stand against violence. Youth workers from Agenzija Zgħażaġh also performed a brief sketch inviting those present to draw a red mark symbolically.

The College community is deeply saddened and shaken by the murder, which took place in Kordin close to the campus gates. MCAST's Wellbeing Team has reached out to staff and students urging them to seek help and support. It is important to come together to raise awareness and take action against violence at this difficult time.



In a reflective note shared with staff and students, MCAST senior lecturer Janice Fenech Scicluna emphasised, "If you are noticing behaviours in yourself or others that make you suspect someone is experiencing abuse, do not just stand by, believing it will just stop. Instead, take action and seek help. Whether you are experiencing being a victim or noticing that maybe you are having anger or jealousy issues, find the strength within and speak up. It is never too early to get help."

Today 25 November, also marks International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which aims to raise awareness on the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls around the world, calling for global action to increase awareness, promote advocacy and create opportunities for discussion on challenges and solutions.

WHERE TO ASK FOR HELP

At the MCAST Wellbeing Hub
Tel: 2398 7188
email: counsellors@mcast.edu.mt

More info about services offered nationally:
<https://stopviolence.gov.mt>

MCAST students successfully launch a balloon to the Stratosphere

Students following courses at the MCAST Institute of Engineering and Transport (IET) and the Institute for the Creative Arts (ICA) successfully launched a special spatial balloon from Germany that reached the stratosphere.

This Erasmus+ project was led by the Senior Lecturer Dr Ing. Clive Seguna, assisted by technician Ivan Fabri. Students are currently following Advanced Diplomas in Robotics, Drone Technology, Automation, and Artificial Intelligence, and Advanced Diplomas in Industrial Electronics.

This mission was the College's first near-space launch with a prototype payload. The project's goals were to encourage students to participate in near-space-related activities and to open up more research opportunities within this industrial area.

The initiative proved to be a valuable learning experience for the students, as they gained





relevant industry skills they will use in their future careers. These include problem-solving skills, networking, application of design and construction skills, the building of experiments, and report writing skills.

This innovative experimental project will provide scientific data that students and academics will analyse from the IET. Through video data streamed from the stratospheric balloon, academics can gain various insights that can be applied to solve problems in diverse societal areas.

A team of students from MCAST's Institute for the Creative Arts also travelled with the IET technical team and produced a video recording of the mission.

The video was created by ICA students Laura Galea and Erica Lanzafame and showcased the work of the students and real-life footage from the stratosphere. Photos were taken on-site by MCAST student Nathan Camilleri.

MCAST partner Max-Born-Berufskolleg College hosted the students during their stay in Germany. German company Stratoflights assisted the MCAST team with project logistics. MG2I and MCAST's International Office were the strategic partners that helped this mission succeed.



A team of MCAST students wins an International Robotics Competition



Students following courses at the Institute of Engineering and Transport won the IEEE Region 8 Robot Championships 2022, organised by Dr Conrad Attard, Chair of IEEE Region 8 Professional and Educational Activities and the IEEE Malta Section.

Jean-Paul Bonavia, Gabriel Giordmaina, and Zack Farrugia, who are currently reading for a Bachelor of Engineering in Electronics and Control Engineering, designed, built, programmed and implemented a robot named 'Alpha Beetle' based on the competition rules and game challenges. Overall the competition offered stiff competition to MCAST from other educational bodies hailing from various Higher Education institutions and Universities from Dubai, Cyprus, Russia, Tunisia and Malta. Besides MCAST, Malta also participated through the University of Malta. The activity offered reciprocal learning opportunities to all participants and excellent networking for roboteers. MCAST won four out of eight top prizes and the overall award, placing first among all competitors.

The Roboteers' entry 'Alpha Beetle' also won awards for the best design, best-looking robot and branding (Judges' Choice), best pushing power and best effective add-on. The event aimed to promote science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) among members of IEEE and focused on STEM communication, entrepreneurship, creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork.

During the championship, the MCAST team set up a large area with various STEM activities for everyone to participate in. The College aims to encourage students to explore and

contribute to project-based international learning activities by participating in such competitions. These activities will help them bolster in-demand skills like networking, teamwork, and problem-solving, which will help them become skilled industry professionals in the future.

Sponsors that supported MCAST's robot include MG2I, JACAP Limited, Invent 3D, IEEE Malta Section, and Delta Steel.





Interview with Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, the HON CLIFTON GRIMA

NOW THAT THE BUDGET 2023 HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED, WHAT ARE THE MAIN INITIATIVES FOR VET IN MALTA?

As one would expect, the budget for the Education Ministry is one of the largest together with those for the Health and Social Policy portfolios. This clearly indicates government's attention to the quality of life of individual citizens. Education remains top priority for my government with various initiatives at all levels of education. Vocational education and training (VET) is no exception. MCAST has received a substantial current and capital budget of almost €44m. The College has also been allocated another €1m for three other special line votes to support apprenticeship programmes, doctoral degrees in vocational education and the development of the curricula in conjunction with industry. These three votes indicate the Ministry's but also my personal determination to support VET at both ends of the qualification spectrum – the apprenticeship level as well as the higher education research degrees.

THE MALTESE ECONOMY IS SEEING NEW JOBS EMERGING FROM A KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY THAT REQUIRES NEW FORMS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING. HOW DO YOU PLAN TO ENSURE THAT LEARNING AT THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION, SPECIFICALLY VET, IS AT ALL TIMES RELEVANT TO THE FUTURE CAREER PROSPECTS OF OUR YOUNG CITIZENS AND THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE?

Over these past ten years, Malta has seen a drastic drop in unemployment because of government's pro-business economic policies. The success of our economy cannot be taken for granted. We must

continue to invest in young people and there is clear evidence of this at MCAST with new infrastructure such as the Resource Centre, which comprises a state-of-the-art Library, and a new ICT Institute. Furthermore, a steady capital expenditure allocation ensures that equipment is up-dated from time to time and the MCAST outdoor campus improved. Research has shown that the physical environment plays a major role in retaining students in lifelong learning. In addition to this, the additional financial allocation to apprenticeship programmes and the development of the curriculum aim at making learning continuously relevant to the needs of industry and the individual.

TEACHERS ARE COMPLAINING ABOUT LOW SALARIES, DIFFICULT CONDITIONS AND LACK OF APPRECIATION. HOW DO YOU PLAN TO ADDRESS THESE PROBLEMS AND STRENGTHEN THE TEACHING PROFESSION?

The teaching profession is one of the oldest among many other professions. Yet over the years, it may have suffered from lack of appreciation due to other emerging professions that garnered more attention and returns on investment. New jobs and more attractive work environments are pulling learners away from the teaching profession. We need to do more to restore prestige, status and better conditions of work for teachers not only in Malta but also in many other European and non-European States. In our country, teachers still enjoy respect and good conditions of work. The Ministry I am responsible for, and also personally as the Minister responsible, have excellent relations with teachers' Unions and I shall continue to strive to

achieve for teachers' better conditions of work and career prospects. May I remind that come January, discussions will start for a new sectoral agreement for educators. I strongly believe in healthy discussions leading to ways forward, and in fact the very first meeting I held when I was appointed Minister for Education, was with the unions representing the educators. Technology has revolutionized pedagogy. In my view it is extremely important that the teaching profession is backed by continuous professional development so that teachers grow in their profession and increase their respect in society and among other professions.

WHAT ARE THE PLANS TO INCREASE THE INCLUSION IN THE MALTESE EDUCATION SYSTEM?

Inclusivity is one of the key policies of the Education Ministry. We are a society that for years paid particular attention to inclusivity in the wider sense of the word. Inclusion is also part of the strategic objectives of all educational institutions from pre-primary to higher education. I am particularly pleased that in the case of MCAST, one of the key strategic goals is inclusion (together with equity and excellence). No individual should be left behind or marginalized. Equal opportunities are regularly on my government's political agenda, from access to buildings to education and training programmes as well as sports and leisure activities. It is thanks to successive governments that inclusion became part of our culture. The way we support vulnerable groups or those who had their fundamental rights oppressed for decades is exemplary also for bigger and more advanced countries.

I know and applaud MCAST's excellent work on inclusion.

WE HAVE SEEN AN INCREASE IN MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES DURING THE LAST TWO YEARS. WHAT INITIATIVES IS THE MINISTRY TAKING TO EDUCATE AND SUPPORT STUDENTS?

COVID-19 has brought with it a number of changes to our way of living. One of the most negative effects of the pandemic has unfortunately been mental health. All the education sector's institutions are giving regular and particular attention to supporting learners and educators who experience mental health problems. At MCAST, for instance, I know that the Well-Being Hub has been very active over the last two years due to an increase in the number of young and older individuals needing support. As a Ministry, we ensure the adequate supply to educational institutions of psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists and counsellors as well as social workers to support staff and students.

YOU AIM AT PUTTING MALTA ON THE WORLD SPORTS MAP AND HOSTING COMPETITIONS ON AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL. CAN YOU PROVIDE US WITH MORE DETAILS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF MALTA'S SPORT STRATEGY AND THE MODERNISATION OF MALTA'S SPORT INFRASTRUCTURE?

I loved sports since I was a child. Sport disciplines run in my family's culture. I am pleased that my two children will continue to practise sport as I do. As Minister responsible for sport, I lose no occasion to support sports associations and individuals who take sport

disciplines on a professional level. The reform of the Sports School, the investment in sports infrastructure in schools and in other venues is evidence that together with education, sports is the means to a healthy body and mind. Lately with MCAST, the MFA and the Sports School a research study will be conducted with the aim of introducing in all schools (and hopefully in all other educational institutions) a one hour a day fitness exercise of sport disciplines. The initiative, which is entitled "Fun Fit Five", has the ultimate objective of promoting sports among the whole community as part of healthy well-being. I am also pleased to mention that the sports budget has also increased and that several plans are in hand to improve the infrastructure of sports facilities so that more families opt to practise a sport discipline or simply exercise for pleasure.

We are also heavily investing in all sport facilities to upgrade them to an international level. Just to mention two SportMalta projects, we are rehabilitating the Marsa Sports Grounds into a sports hub, and we are also in the last phase of construction of a new indoor pool in the south of Malta. These will definitely put Malta on the international sports map, especially with the upcoming Small Nations Games.

IN A RECENT EVENT YOU EMPHASISED "THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH IN RELATION TO EDUCATION IN MALTA". WHAT ARE THE PLANS FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION WITHIN THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SECTOR IN MALTA?

As I mentioned earlier, government allocated MCAST an extra €100,000 to promote doctoral research programmes. It is the Ministry's policy to flag the importance research receives from the College particularly that which industry requires. The technological developments in industry today require constant search for innovative approaches to production and the provision of services. Research on education is also a priority for the Education Ministry. As technology evolves so does our quality of life, our mindsets, as well as the way we communicate with each other. I think that researchers ought to explore these different aspects of our lives and recommend policies to improve our interactions. For instance, we are aware of the impact, which are certainly negative and positive, mobile phones and IT in general are having on current generations, young and old. It would be interesting to explore how education can retain such interest without individuals losing their desire to interact face-to-face and spend more time without the need to connect artificially. On the other hand, the gamification of education by using technology is keeping young learners, especially low achievers, in lifelong learning.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES AND MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS THAT YOU HAVE HAD SO FAR AS MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SPORT, YOUTH, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION?

My challenges are also my opportunities to grow as an individual on a personal and on a professional level. In my portfolio one expects big challenges, for instance the increase of student services in all schools and educational institutions. Another

challenge is to ensure new infrastructure particularly of new schools and new equipment. Introducing new curricula in compulsory education, retaining students in formal education beyond 16 and spreading work-based learning and apprenticeship programmes in higher education are also top on the Ministry's priorities. Another commitment is that of preparing our students for new and emergent work exigencies, namely those in the digital technology sector. MCAST has set an example in 2019 when it launched its first apprenticeship degrees. Challenges in education are continuous because the demands on systems of education are always changing. For me the speed of change in education is, however, the biggest challenge. Therefore, the closer we relate education to practices in industry and other places of work, the more students and lecturing staff will be capable of raising their employability and expertise. For both cohorts it also implies a higher quality of life and more financial autonomy.

ONE FINAL QUESTION. HOW DO YOU MANAGE TO RELAX AND SWITCH OFF FROM SO MANY RESPONSIBILITIES?

My job is a 24/7 commitment, but when I am with my family, I do manage to relax and spend quality time with my children and my wife. Of course, I try not to miss opportunities of watching football abroad or other sport especially when Maltese athletes compete. Watching or participating in sports is my way of switching off for a while and relaxing. I also enjoy reading – I am an avid historiophile, amongst other interests.

MCAST Teens Summer Camp



SIX Benefits

BY CHRIS GRECH

Many parents think that school is the best opportunity for their teens to learn, grow, and figure out who they are and who they want to be.

Of course, the importance of a good education cannot be understated. However, what parents don't realise is that the time their teens spend outside of school is just as important as the time they spend in school.

Particularly, during the summer months, just like many other parents, one would think it's okay for their teens to just sit in front of screens all day, playing video games or watching TV. While teens certainly deserve a break from the hard work they put in during the school year, one shouldn't let them waste away their summers lounging around all day.

Instead, one should help them find ways to learn and grow, just like they do during the school year.

After a pandemic that halted the world and locked us all in our houses, MCAST Gateway to Industry Ltd (MG2i) came up with the idea to organise seven weeks Summer Camp for Teens. Summer camps tend to be fun, social and revolve around play. They are also often taught by non-teachers. Summer schools

tend to be taught by professional teachers and involve active, academic learning. We opted for a hybrid summer camp. All activities and lessons were delivered and coordinated by professionals but fun, social and play had to be given a top priority.

At the closing ceremony we dubbed three campers (participants) Luigi Said, Kate Giordmaina and Margarita Vasilets as MCAST Teens ambassadors. They received a gift, a voucher from MG2i and a certificate each. The group leaders were sending in scores for each activity to the Camp organiser. The scores were given on the best interest, participation and behaviour during each activity.

1. LEARN NEW PRACTICAL SKILLS

One of the best things about MCAST Teens Summer Camp is that it gives campers the opportunity to learn new skills he or she may have never otherwise had the opportunity to learn.

During the school year, your teen spends a lot of time learning about the same subjects, in the same type of environment. They take notes, memorise information, and then take a test on it.

At MCAST camp, teens got the opportunity to learn all sorts of new skills. They learnt archery, abseiling, woodwork, kendo martial arts, dancing, potting, photography, fashion, electronics, and the list goes on and on.

As you can see, many of the skills they learnt have nothing to do with what they learn during the school year, but that does not matter.

Learning is learning. No matter what they learn, they are expanding their knowledge in some way, and they are becoming a more well-rounded individual because of it.

Plus, every time you learn a new skill, your confidence grows.



2. FORM NEW FRIENDSHIPS, WITHOUT ALL THE SCHOOL DRAMA

There's a chance that your teen may end up making their best lifelong friends at summer camp. We did our best to make this easier for them and I am glad to say that we succeeded. We witnessed the campers breaking culture barriers. MCAST Teens Summer Camp is an incredibly easy place for making new friends.

First, it gives your child an opportunity for a “fresh start”. Every school has stereotypes, and every student ends up getting classified one way or another by their classmates. But at camp, no one knows who you are at school. And really, most people don't care.

At summer camp, you rarely see cliques or “popular groups”. This is because camp doesn't have the same competitive nature that school does. Everyone is just there to have fun, learn and grow. From day one each MCAST camper was assigned in three groups to make sure cliques are avoided.



3. LEARN INVALUABLE LIFE SKILLS

There are some invaluable life skills that simply just can't be learnt by reading a textbook. When your child is at camp, and without their safety net (you), they're kind of forced to learn some very important life skills on their own.

For example, without you around, they will learn that there are different ways of discipline. Summer camp is not a place where teens can just run wild, doing and saying whatever they want. If they mess up, their group leaders will hold them responsible for their actions. This is a great way for your teen to learn another very important life skill- accountability.

And, without you there to tell your teen what to do, they will likely make a lot of mistakes. But guess what? Mistakes are great because they can learn from them.

Many parents find that their teens' emotional maturity grows tenfold by the time they return from summer camp.





4. SLOW DOWN AND UNPLUG

As we talked about at the beginning, many teens, without anything else to do, end up wasting away their summer sitting in front of a screen.

During our MCAST Summer Camp teens had very limited cell service. MG2i made sure during summer camp that your teen will be encouraged to unplug and slow down a bit.

Many teens think that without their cell phones by their side 24/7, they would die. Summer camp is the perfect opportunity for your teen to learn about the beauty of unplugging, slowing down, and appreciating the moment.

5. TEAMWORK

MCAST Summer Camp is also a great opportunity for your teen to learn more about teamwork. Being able to work in a team is one of the most life invaluable skills in life, both in school and at work.

At camp, a lot of activities are group-focused. This will give your teen the chance to work with all sorts of people.

Most teens dread doing group projects at school. But after attending Summer Camp, your teen will probably find group projects to be a breeze.

6. EXERCISE

Did you know that 17 percent of adolescents and children are obese?

That's a staggering number. And sadly, it's only growing. Of course, a lack of exercise is a major cause of obesity in children and adolescents.

If you're worried about your child becoming obese, sending them to Summer Camp is a great idea.

At MCAST summer camp, they will spend hardly any time sitting around and snacking. They'll be outdoors, running around and exercising.

Chances are, when they get home, they'll probably be inclined to do less sitting around and instead will be looking for more ways to move around.



ARE YOU READY TO SEND YOUR CHILD TO A TEEN SUMMER CAMP?

As you can see, there are a lot of benefits that come with sending your child to MCAST Teens Summer Camp. To enroll your teen for coming year summer camp, follow us on

<https://www.facebook.com/mcastparttimecourses/>
<https://shortcourses.mcast.edu.mt/>
<https://www.mcast.edu.mt/>

Erasmus+ Projects & Mobility Office

CONNECTING VET SCHOOLS AND INDUSTRY 4.0 THROUGH MAKING. MAKE MY FUTURE



**Co-funded by
the European Union**



This project is being undertaken by a team of eight partners from five European countries under the banner name “Make My Future”. Its aim is to bridge the gap between what is expected by the manufacturing industry with regards to the preparation of students in Industry 4.0 and what is currently being done by the educational institutions.

Industry 4.0 technologies are considered by the European Union as horizontal technologies “enabling” multiple sectors that are expected to be decisive in tomorrow’s economy (EC 2019 Curriculum Guidelines for Key Enabling Technologies and Advanced Manufacturing Technologies). Despite the great potential of these technologies in supporting youth employment, there is

a lack of appropriate and multidisciplinary curricula providing the related digital skills. This is identified as a key barrier also to the development of innovation and digital transformation (EC 2020 Youth Employment Support: a bridge to jobs for the next generation).

Being one of these partners, MCAST is deeply involved by continuously providing ever better prepared students at all levels of qualification in new advancing technologies. To this end a questionnaire was distributed to all the stakeholders from both industry and educational backgrounds. This research focused on the establishment of what are the job profiles that are relevant to achieve a better understanding of what is Industry 4.0 by the stakeholders. This exercise was

followed by focused interviews to further concentrate on the stakeholders' input.

The results achieved thus far were discussed during the second transnational meeting held between 15 and 16 September 2022 in Krakow, Poland. During these meetings discussions were carried out on the Make My Future Competence Framework. From this the team identified the three modules that will be elaborated further to create relevant course material. This will be implemented in the Intellectual Output 4 (IO4). Ultimately this meeting resulted in a roadmap of the upcoming milestones, including the potential dates for the next meetings and training sessions to be carried out.

The progress so far will be shared with the public in an upcoming multiplier event to which all the current and potential future stakeholders will be invited to attend.

Make My Future Project number 2021-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000034613 is a Cooperation partnership in the vocational education and training sector (KA220-VET) funded under the Erasmus+ programme. For further information on the project's mission and progress please follow us on our website and our social media platforms.



CLIMATE CHALLENGE IN CONSTRUCTION – PASSIVE TECHNIQUES

The Climate Change in Construction (CCC) project provided us the opportunity to visit Tenerife and meet our four European partners. Our hosts provided the ideal setting for us to present our national effort. This involved using SketchUP 3D software to depict our proposed Maltese traditional house, which included passive techniques and the application of renewable energy technologies to mitigate both direct and indirect CO2 emissions. We had the opportunity to work/collaborate in international work groups. This was very fruitful and challenging. Our future meeting's target shall be identifying an ecologic and renewable insulation material and testing its thermal transmittance characteristics.

This project also allowed us to visit this picturesque island, learn about its culture and savour its delicious cuisine. Tenerife is the biggest island in the Canary Islands and has much to offer. Visitors will surely enjoy the old historic quarter at La Laguna, its beautiful black sandy beaches, its contrasting landscapes (ranging from tropical forests to deserts) and most of all, "Pico del Teide", Spain's tallest peak/volcano at 3,718m above sea level.

The most interesting experience was a lecture by Professor Jorge Heras on passive techniques used to retrofit old buildings from an energy perspective and on the difference between Near Zero Energy buildings and Energy Neutral

buildings. This can be summarised into efficient performance versus total renewable energy. Professor Heras stressed the importance of learning to acclimatise ourselves within our buildings at 25°C in summer and around 21°C in winter. Since many kilowatts are hidden in every degree Celsius, we decide to go below in summer or above in winter. In a nutshell, he highlighted the following five key principles to achieve passive buildings at the design stage and during the actual retrofit and/or construction:

1. Avoid Thermal Bridges (prevent condensation formation)
2. Instal reasonably sized Continuous Insulation around the whole building envelope
3. Select UPVC Windows with appropriate glazing and have them Installed by Professionals
4. Air Tightness Test Certificate the building and repair any infiltration or leakages
5. Instal a Heat Recovery Unit with ducted vents for the controlled Fresh Air supply and Extract Air throughout the building.

In the future, we might also start considering Bioclimatic housing, in which we shall return to basics where, like in the past centuries, we had no equipment to take care of our air-conditioning needs. This can only be adopted in places with a good climate throughout the year, buildings with heavy thermal mass, limited uncontrolled infiltration and an ideal exposure ... I guess our great-grandfathers knew better than us when they built houses that adorn our village cores.



TWO GERMAN INTERNS AT MCAST

Katharina Klaas and Inneke Küper report on their experiences during their internship in Malta.

In Germany, we study at the Federal Employment Agency. Our specialisation is Education and Career Counseling. We were lucky to have carried out our internship within the College's Career Guidance Services Department. It was very exciting for us to get to know more about the College's career guidance services and be able to compare them to ours in Germany.

Getting to know the Maltese education system and way of working was also very exciting. By reflecting on this, we were able to take away helpful experiences with us to Germany. We also worked on polishing our English while in Malta – which was very beneficial to us. We held many conversations with our colleagues and clients and also acted as translators too.

One of the tasks that we were entrusted with was to carry out a survey on the Career Guidance Services users during the month of July. The short questionnaire for prospective students was in both Maltese and English. Results were very positive and the majority were satisfied with the services.

Our internship took place during July 2022. This was also a great time for us to enjoy Malta during the summer months. We felt warmly welcomed and everybody was willing to assist us during our one month stay.

During our stay we also learnt a lot about the Maltese culture and the country. The entire internship was an incredible experience that developed us professionally and personally.



Applied Research and Innovation Centre

MCAST PLACES THIRD IN EUROPEAN TRIPLE E AWARDS

MCAST placed third in the 2022 European Awards on Entrepreneurship and Engagement Excellence in higher education at an international competition for academic institutions, namely The Triple E Awards.

The awards were organised by the Accreditation Council for Entrepreneurial and Engaged Universities (ACEEU) during the 20th International Triple Helix Conference held at the University of Florence in Italy.

MCAST was represented by the management of the Applied Research and Innovation Centre (ARIC) within the College.

Participants submitted an application within the category of the “Triple Helix Collaboration of the Year – Project Level”.

In its nomination, MCAST outlined its work towards the special award dedicated to the Triple Helix collaboration cases. The nomination included research projects and outstanding outcomes undertaken over the past years within the EIT Climate-KIC Hub Malta and the EIT Urban Mobility RIS HUB Malta implemented by ARIC at the College.

In its category, MCAST participated with other educational institutions including the following finalists: the Strascheg Centre for Entrepreneurship (Germany), the University

of Stuttgart (Germany), the University of Strathclyde (UK) and the School of Engineering Jonkoping (Sweden).

The College's Deputy Principal for Research and Innovation, Tatjana Chircop, said: "This award, at a European level, gives deserved credit to the applied research initiatives and collaborative projects which MCAST, through ARIC and various Institutes, carries out with a number of stakeholders. Such collaborations are crucial within a reputable vocational college such as MCAST. Such projects ensure that research provides the basis for possible solutions to real-life issues. MCAST looks forward to continue working strategically on these lines to ensure quality

collaborations and, ultimately, quality services to the community."

The Triple E Awards are a global recognition of efforts towards the quest for entrepreneurship and engagement in higher education. Implemented regionally, the awards aim to foster change in universities and emphasise their role in their communities and ecosystems. Next to its focus on entrepreneurship and engagement, the 2022 European Triple E Awards put a spotlight on the Triple Helix collaborations, with universities, the government and industry working together to drive innovation and societal impacts.



Institute of Community Services

Launch of first MCAST Journal of Applied Research and Practice dedicated to Sports, Exercise and Health

On Thursday 3 November 2022 the first special issue of the MCAST Journal of Applied Research and Practice dedicated to Sports, Exercise and Health was officially launched at the CoachEd6 conference held on campus. Present for the launch of the journal were representatives from major Maltese sports and physical activity organisations, as well as international academic partners from Turkey, Denmark and Iceland.

Conceived within the Institute of Community Services under the guidance of Ann-Marie Cassar, the special issue features the work of local as well as international researchers, in the form of 11 peer reviewed academic papers on various aspects of local sport and physical activity.

Matthew Muscat-Inglott, one of the co-editors-in-chief alongside Renzo Kerr-Cumbo, gave a brief introduction to the scope of the special issue, which is intended to promote the creation of locally-contextualised knowledge, and address real-world problems in the unique circumstances of Malta and Gozo. With a platform to publish their work, local experts may be more likely to turn their attention to the research problems that matter most to their local communities. Given Malta's unique historical, cultural, and political circumstances, the special issue stresses, in its editorial piece, the importance of shifting

away from imported, off-the-shelf solutions, towards more indigenous approaches to addressing local underperformance (in sport) and devaluation (of physical activity and exercise) problems.

Papers in the special issue cover research on public health among student populations, local sports management structures and practices, outdoor sports, psychological aspects of sport, inclusion and disability sports, body image, data and technology in sport, and coaching science. The inaugural issue is intended as the first within a series of publications to follow in sport, exercise and health, as well as other fields of research currently underway at the Institute of Community Services.

Tatjana Chircop then explained how the special issue fits into a broader proliferation of research activities at the College. The MCAST Journal of Applied Research and Practice is now in its sixth year, she explained, with a total of four open access issues released this year alone, reflecting a growing body of work by over 100 active MCAST researchers.

Printed versions of the special issue were distributed to those in attendance. The online version is available at www.journal.mcast.edu.mt.

Institute for the Creative Arts



Agreement between MCAST and Teatru Malta

MCAST and Teatru Malta have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which will see Teatru Malta move to MCAST's Main Campus in Paola.

The agreement between both entities also ensures that MCAST students are exposed to the wide range of initiatives and projects carried out by Teatru Malta. This will prove to be a valuable industry learning experience for students following courses at the College.

The collaboration agreement was signed by MCAST Principal and CEO Professor Joachim James Calleja and Teatru Malta Executive Chair Mr Albert Marshall. Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, Hon. Clifton Grima and Minister for the National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government, Hon Owen Bonnici, attended the event.

MCAST Principal and CEO Professor Joachim James Calleja said that this agreement was highly beneficial for students following courses in Arts and Theatre Studies since they will be given the opportunity to, benefit from hands-on experience with one of the best local institutions within this arena, "Creativity and inspiration are at the heart of our community. As a community College this agreement will enable MCAST to open its doors to the artist community whilst providing students with the opportunity to succeed in their future careers," argued Calleja.

Meanwhile, Teatru Malta's Executive Chair Mr Albert Marshall noted the importance of maintaining this spirit of collaboration and said, "This agreement with MCAST will help Teatru Malta to evolve in a national company focused on theatre events in Malta."

Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation Hon. Clifton Grima said that, "This agreement shows synergy between all parties involved, which will help us strengthen education within this sector."

Teatru Malta will also be investing to help in better equipping and maintaining the College's theatre.

Minister for the National Heritage, the Arts, and Local Government Hon. Owen Bonnici, argued that, "The Theatre sector is extremely important for the development of our country and therefore, it is the Government's responsibility to help out."



MCAST students attend event called 'Young People And Information: It's Complicated'



WRITTEN BY MARIA BORG AND NICOLE GRECH

MCAST students following courses in Journalism, Creative Media and also Photography had the opportunity to participate in an event entitled 'Young People and Information: It's Complicated' held at the Excelsior Hotel between the 10th and 11th November 2022. The event was organised by 3cl foundation.

The main topics addressed by this event included Addressing Media Freedoms, Combating Disinformation and Understanding Online Behaviour.

Maltese speakers included Herman Grech, Times of Malta Editor in Chief, Matthew Xuereb Assistant Editor of the Times of Malta and President of the Institute of Maltese Journalists and Hon. Evarist Bartolo, former Minister for Education and Employment.

During an interview with one of the organisers, Dr Alex Grech, explained the importance of attending events like this conference as it is not common for so many professional, foreign journalist and speakers to gather in one place.

Foreign guests included spokespersons from Vice News, BBC, the Guardian Foundation and On Our Radar amongst others. Dr Grech explained that one of the main outcomes of this event was to turn things around, to show "young people that they really have a voice".

Our very own MCAST Senior Lecture Dr. Natalino Fenech was also part of a panel. Dr.Fenech, spoke about how his career started as a journalist, the relationship between the citizens and himself amongst other things. His message for journalists and journalism students was to always think outside the box because one can simply write a story about anything.



MCAST launches B.A. (Hons) in Journalism

MCAST has launched a new course, namely the B.A. (Hons) in Journalism. The course introduces students to the world of journalism. The objective of this course is to train students to become knowledgeable and experienced practitioners in analysing and reporting events that shape our lives as well as the world around us.

This undergraduate course gives B.A. Journalism students the opportunity to work on a wide range of life-changing experiences. Students can put in practice skills and knowledge in professional reporting by gaining first-hand experiences in various fieldwork.

These learning experiences involve students to work closely with media professionals for both local and international outputs. Students participate in work-intensive collaborations with various news outlets. Students will also have the opportunity to collaborate closely with local and international broadcast professionals and publish reports on various activities that take place during their learning journey.

The results from such learning experiences and a good reliable track record of professionalism, grant the journalism students a front seat in applying their knowledge in real-life journalism work.

MCAST also invests heavily in the development of media facilities and a specialised newsroom space for future journalists. Facilities include full access to TV and Radio recording studios, geared up with industry standard software and hardware. Moreover, a fully dedicated location is set up where students are able to plan, develop, produce and broadcast media content and publications.

Institute of Information & Communication Technology



Future ICT Professionals to benefit from State-of-the-Art MCAST Building in 2023

MCAST is developing a new state-of-the-art building for its Institute of Information and Communication Technology (IICT) as part of a €30.8 m EU-funded project. The Minister for Education Clifton Grima and the Parliamentary Secretary for EU Funds Chris Bonett visited the ongoing construction works on 26 July 2022.

The Institute provides diploma and degree courses leading to careers in software development, gaming, artificial intelligence, business analytics, computer systems and networks, multimedia and other sectors requiring digitally savvy and highly skilled graduates. Over ninety per cent of the Institute graduates find work related to their chosen area of study, and this year's admission data shows that this is one of the Institutes that attract the most applications.

Construction works are well in progress to provide an excellent academic building for the benefit of students and staff by June 2023. The new IICT building costing €13 m is part of the College's efforts to establish itself as an international centre of excellence in vocational education and training (VET). The building is situated at the Paola Campus opposite the new Resource Centre, housing the impressive two-storey Library. It will include 58 learning spaces, including computer and network labs and lecture rooms, 13 offices and a 500 square metre multipurpose space. The IICT hub is set on four floors, with a footprint area of 2,200 square metres and a gross floor area of 12,000 square metres.

The building is part of a wider project funded through the European Regional Fund (2014-2020) under the priority "Developing our

future through education, training and lifelong learning". The project includes the Engineering Building, completed in 2019, and the Resource Centre, inaugurated last February.

Energy reduction measures are also included in the building, including insulation (roof, wall, apertures), a building energy management system, rainwater harvesting, water conservation and timer and photocell control lighting and presence detectors.

The investment in public infrastructure aims to reduce early school leavers and improve tertiary education attainment. The project contributes to two development needs – the lack of physical infrastructure in tertiary education and the lack of physical infrastructure in VET education.

MCAST Principal and CEO Professor Joachim James Calleja said, "This is a really exciting time for the College, and the investment in purpose-designed buildings is unprecedented. The IICT building will help us nurture the next generation of professionals in the sector. We will continue to work with industry to ensure that the College plays a key role in shaping Malta's education and training and the future leaders and workforce. We now look forward to the project's next phase to keep offering our students first-class facilities and increase the number of learners who are making MCAST their first choice."



ICT students competed in First Global Robotics Competition in Geneva

A team of five MCAST ICT students were selected to compete in an international robotics competition which was held in Geneva, Switzerland between 13 and 16 October 2022. First Global, the main organisers of this event, invited 162 countries to participate in this competition. The aim of First Global is to encourage STEM education through the use of robotics; to motivate students from developed, poor and war-torn countries to participate and meet with other students from across the globe, and to raise awareness on current environmental issues.

Participating countries received a robot kit composed of different parts together with a game manual. The team received the kit in July and started working on the robot during the summer months. During the matches, the countries were randomly categorised as alliance in a team of three to compete against three others. The theme

for this year's competition was Carbon Capture where robots needed to pick up as much 'carbon' (represented by black balls) and dispose of the balls through a shooting mechanism in a bin. The game ended with the robot lifting itself up and holding to a horizontal pole. Points were awarded as a team and several matches with different countries were played during the entire competition.

This event was sponsored by MITA, The Farsons Foundation, Malta Enterprise, CCBill and HSBC, and Erasmus+.

The student team was composed of Emanuel Vassallo, Nicholas Borg, Jean Paul Micallef, Daniel Dalli and Carl Lyon - all software students studying at Level 4. The team was mentored by Ms. Lucienne Micallef and Mr. Thomas Gatt - Senior Lecturers at the Institute of ICT.



Institute of Engineering & Transport



MCAST inaugurates the new Centre for Maritime Studies (CMS)

MCAST inaugurated new premises and facilities for the fully accredited Centre for Maritime Studies (CMS), which forms part of the Institute of Engineering and Transport (IET). Industry players were also invited to visit the new Centre and meet students.

The CMS offers a wide range of maritime programmes at different qualification levels, supporting both local and international demands in the maritime industry through proven, qualified, experienced lecturers and mentors.

The Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, Clifton Grima, was present for the official opening of the new Centre. The Minister said that this was an exciting time for the College, offering state-of-the-art facilities and leading in providing industry-relevant learning opportunities across various sectors, including the

maritime industry.

During the inauguration event, MCAST Principal and CEO Professor Joachim James Calleja said, "This Centre offers internationally recognised qualifications for students to work on ocean-going vessels and yachts. Marine engineering students are qualified to start careers in shipyards as travelling repair engineers and progressing to the level of surveyors and inspectors. This starting investment of 250,000 euro is part of our strategy to ensure that our learners have access to hands-on training facilities preparing them for the world of employment."

The new facilities on level four of the Institute of Engineering and Transport building include three new simulators: a Bridge Control, Global Maritime Distress and a Safety System in Radio Communication, and



an Electronic Charts Display Information System. The new seamanship workshop is equipped with all necessary tools and devices, including first aid and emergency wear equipment for emergency exercises. The Centre also has its lifeboat and fast boat.

Institute Director Ing. Stephen Sammut spoke about the CMS courses, which include full-time and part-time courses. One of the full-time courses is an introductory course leading to a Diploma in Deck Operations (MQF Level 3) with a study period of one academic year. Successful students may progress to a higher level leading to an Advanced Diploma in Deck Operations (MQF Level 4) and progressively ranking as Officer in Charge of Navigational Watch.



Concurrently with deck courses, the Maritime Centre also offers Marine Engineering courses. One can start with an Advanced Diploma in Marine Engineering, which can lead to a BSc (Hons) in Marine Engineering. Each course comprises three years of study. Workshops are also available for students to carry out practical exercises, including their thesis.



MCAST is building the capacity to deliver three courses related to the superyacht industry, with an Advanced Diploma in Yacht Deck Operations, an Advanced Diploma in Yacht Marine Engineering and an Advanced Diploma in Yacht Interior and Hospitality Operations. These courses will be pegged at MQF Level 4 and delivered in both face-to-face and blended learning modes. This project, named ProCrew, aims to provide participants with the qualifications necessary to work in the superyacht industry.

Around 60 full-time students are following deck courses, including the Advanced

Diploma in Deck Operations/Officer in Charge of Navigational Watch, Chief Mate and Master Mariner. Another 40 are enrolled in full-time courses in marine engineering, including the Advanced Diploma (MQF Level 4) and the BSc (Hons) (MQF Level 6).

In addition, the CMS offers STCW ancillary short courses and licences required to operate seacraft in local waters. These include licences for owners and operators

of all kinds of boats. Other short courses are intended for port workers and local maritime entities where a significant training level is required.

The Centre for Maritime Studies is committed to supporting and developing careers in navigation, marine engineering, ships management and exclusive maritime industry positions.

State-of-the-art Mechanical Engineering Labs inaugurated

MCAST has inaugurated two new laboratories at the Institute of Engineering and Transport's Department of Mechanical Engineering.

This €80,000 investment by MCAST will enable its students to perform didactic experiments and research in the fields of engineering mechanics, statics, dynamics, kinematics and vibration analysis.

All the equipment in these laboratories is manufactured in Germany and employs the latest state-of-the-art technology. Lab apparatus also comes complete with electronic data acquisition and evaluation modules together with connectivity capability for e-learning courses. A special feature of this equipment is the detailed accompanying courseware provided. These manuals detail not only the function of the apparatus but also the underlying theory and setups for each experiment.

MCAST Principal and CEO, Professor Joachim James Calleja, officially inaugurated these two laboratories during MCAST's Open Day. "I am extremely proud of the sterling work being carried out at the Institute of Engineering and Transport to further enhance the learning experience of our students. These new laboratories offer increased capabilities for Engineering testing and analysis, allowing for more advanced test platforms that are tailored to fit the demands of our curricula," explained Professor Calleja.

The Director of the MCAST Institute of Engineering and Transport, Mr Stephen Sammut, stated that "Ultimately, this investment will lead to a better understanding of the subject matter by our students. Our goal is to continue to invest in and provide the highest quality education to students and teaching facilities to our lecturers."



ST Microelectronics Awards at MCAST

MCAST and ST Microelectronics jointly held an award ceremony at the College's Main Campus in Paola.

MCAST students following engineering courses within the College's Institute of Engineering and Transport (IET) were presented with awards for their brilliant achievements within this sector. The awards were presented by MCAST Principal and CEO Professor Joachim James Calleja and Dr Laurent Filipozzi, General Manager, ST Microelectronics.

Professor Calleja expressed his pride and satisfaction in witnessing MCAST students being recognised for their efforts by top industry players. He said, "We are proud of each and everyone of you as we continue to prepare tomorrow's industry leaders. This recognition by a key industry player like ST Microelectronics shows the relevance of our teaching and learning to the world of work."

Gaetan Said and Samuel Bugeja, MCAST students following the Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Electronics and Control Engineering, placed first and second

in their respective categories.

Moreover, Kieran Desira, Luke Scerri, Jonathan Attard, and Jonathan Philip Magri, who are following Bachelor (Hons) Degree courses in Mechanical Engineering at the College, received awards for their commitment and achievements within the mechanical engineering arena.

Speaking at the award ceremony, IET Director Ing Stephen Sammut said, "The feedback we get from industry about our students and alumni is very positive. We are determined to keep growing as a hub for innovation and a centre of excellence in engineering."

The 2022-2023 student intake period proved to be a huge success for the Institute of Engineering and Transport, with a record number of applications from prospective students, received to follow engineering courses at the College.

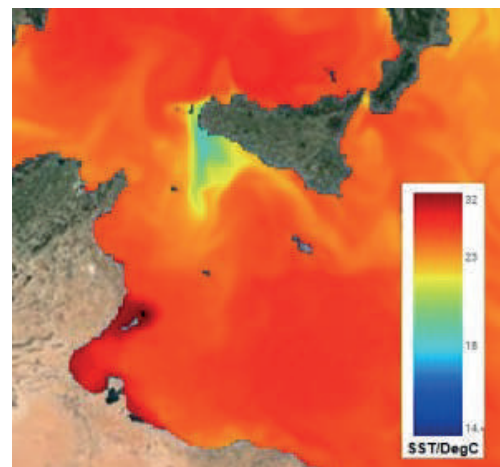
MCAST monitors the marine heat wave event in the Maltese coastal waters

Contrary to what has been written in the media, marine heat waves are a common phenomenon in the sea around the Maltese Islands. As in the rest of the Mediterranean Sea, these extreme sea temperature events have occurred in the past, only that in recent years they have become more intense (higher temperatures), of a longer duration and more frequent. A rise in water temperature is classified as a marine heat wave when the sea temperature remains above the climatological 90th percentile for more than five days.

Under the direction of Professor Aldo Drago, the Oceanography Section within the Institute of Engineering and Transport (IET) at MCAST is keeping an eye on the current surge in sea temperatures that have become a recurrent occurrence each summer, in particular towards the end of July and the beginning of August. Access to satellite data provides elaborated synoptic views of the variability in space of the sea water temperature at the surface. In addition to numerical models, these data provide a means of predicting how the sea temperatures are expected to evolve in the coming days.

The sea is not a single water body, and its dynamics lead to substantial differences in temperature, depending on location.

The implications and impacts of heat waves on the marine ecosystem are known, but we cannot manage and understand our local marine environment without direct measurements. Information is mainly gathered from the European Copernicus Marine Environment and Monitoring Service, but direct data are needed for local assessment at the appropriate level of resolution. Our country still lacks a permanent observing system to measure key essential ecosystem variables, including sea temperature. MCAST is engaging to invest in oceanography academically through dedicated courses and research mode by setting up targets for operational sea temperature measurements in Malta and Gozo.





800 Years of Space at the University of Padova

MCAST Senior Lecturer Dr Leonardo Barilaro was invited as Speaker at the “800 Years of Space at the University of Padova” Conference held in September 2022, where he presented the MCAST Aerospace Programme at Palazzo del Bo at the University of Padova.

The conference featured the professionals in the studies of space. Dr Barilaro was also invited by Professor Emeritus Cesare Barbieri to perform “Maleth” at the conference opening ceremony, the composition that was on board the International Space Station.

This conference was part of the programme of events celebrating the 800 years of the University of Padova. It was jointly organized by the Centre for Space Studies and Activities

“Giuseppe Colombo” (CISAS) of the University of Padova and by the INAF Astronomical Observatory of Padova, together with the EuroMoonMars programme.

During a special event at the Historical Astronomical Observatory “La Specola”, Dr. David Williams, Head of NASA Space Science Data Coordinated Archive at NASA Goddard Space Flight Centre and leader of “Apollo Moon Trees” project, donated Moon Tree seeds to the Botanical Garden of the University. Astronauts Maurizio Chieli and Luca Parmitano participated during the event “From Space Shuttle to the future Moon and Mars Exploration”.

73rd International Astronautical Congress – IAC 2022

BY DR LEONARDO BARILARO

MCAST Senior Lecturer Dr Leonardo Barilaro attended the 73rd International Astronautical Congress – IAC 2022 in Paris where, for the first time ever, MCAST was represented at the world's premier global space event (with more than 9,000 participants and 800 papers) with the presentation of the paper "Experiment design of a payload for a sub-orbital rocket to study spacecraft repair after space debris impacts". The project was developed in collaboration with Dr Mark Wylie of the South East Technical University (SETU) in Ireland and Dr Lorenzo Olivieri of CISAS – University of Padova (Italy).

Dr Leonardo Barilaro had the opportunity to visit the model of the Maltese experiment "Maleth II", led by Professor Joseph Borg of the University of Malta, that was exposed by Space Application Services, together with the interface installed on the International Space Station.

In relation to this Space mission Dr Barilaro was also invited by Professor Bernard Foing (ESA/Leiden University) to perform his space piano composition at the exhibition area of EuroMoonMars, an international cooperation focusing on the training of astronauts on Earth, as part of research efforts towards the colonization of the Moon and eventually the colonization of Mars.



MCAST Gozo Campus

Framework Collaboration Agreement and a Specific Agreement signed between the GRDA and MCAST

The Gozo Regional Development Authority (GRDA) and MCAST have signed a Framework Collaboration Agreement together with a Specific Agreement, covering a period of three years.

The first agreement shall endeavour to undertake collaborative initiatives in areas that are of common interest for both the GRDA and MCAST. The GRDA will be offering sponsorships from time to time for courses held at MCAST. The GRDA will also be offering the possibility of publishing any research or studies related to Gozo that is carried out by MCAST students or its academic staff in one of the GRDA publications including the publication "Perspettivi: A Gozo Review". MCAST will also be assisting and providing guidance to the GRDA when formulating policies and undertaking initiatives in line with the Gozo Regional Development Strategy.

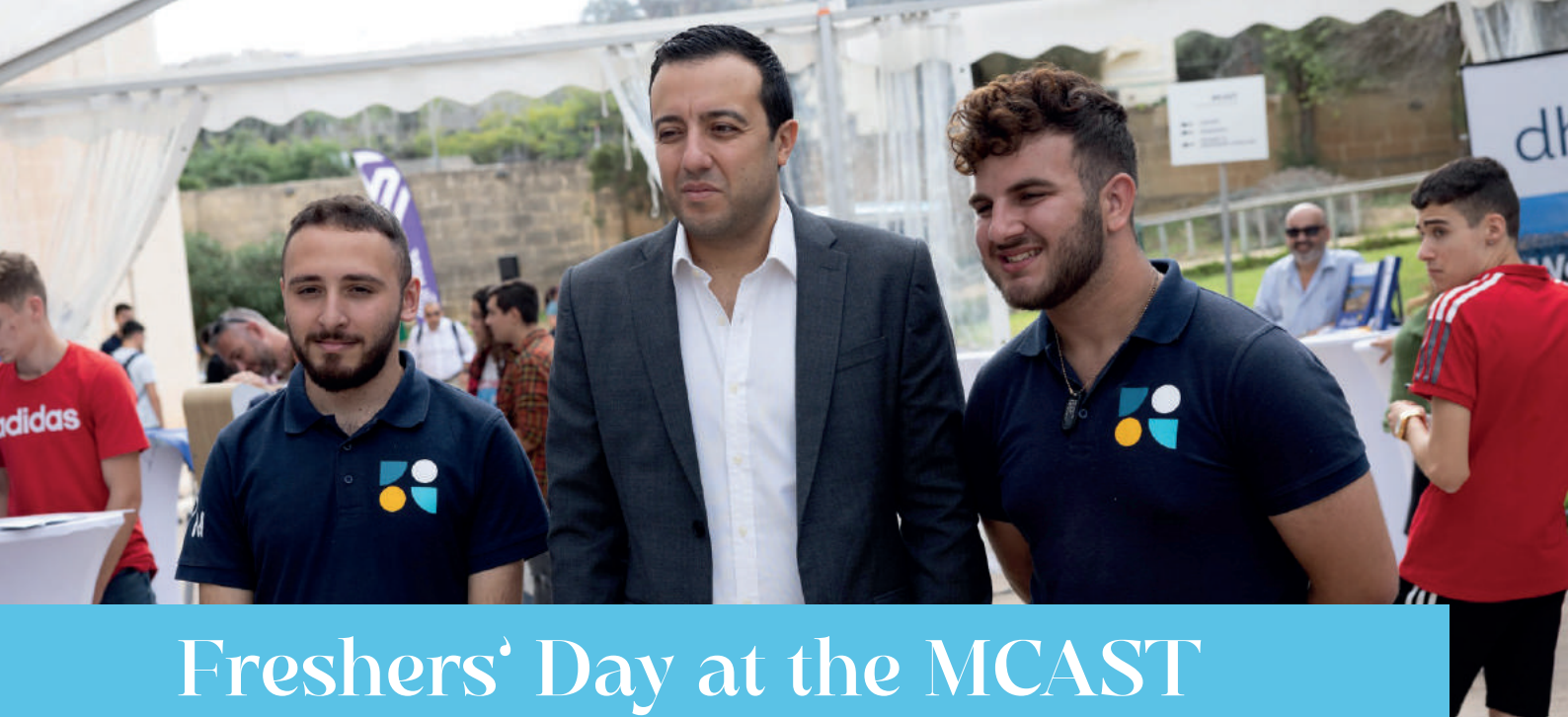
The Specific Agreement specifies the first collaborative initiative to be undertaken between the two sides. The GRDA will be sponsoring a scholarship that is being offered in the MCAST's Master's Programme for a maximum total amount of €6,500. The research theme will be chosen and

mutually agreed upon between the GRDA and MCAST.

Mr Mario Borg, CEO of the GRDA, stated that MCAST is an important player in the socio-economic development of Gozo, providing an essential link between education, training and their application. This agreement signals the intention of both GRDA and MCAST to collaborate and seek synergies that can be leveraged for the benefit of Gozo.

Deputy Principal Dr Mario Cardona said that, "MCAST looks forward to this collaboration with GRDA as we set out to keep strengthening the role of our Gozo Campus. The College encourages research that is diverse, applied and focused on the needs of the industry and the community, including the Gozitan community."

The Framework Collaboration Agreement and the Specific Agreement were signed by Mr Mario Borg, CEO of the GRDA and Dr Mario Cardona, Deputy Principal Arts and Social Sciences.



Freshers' Day at the MCAST Gozo Campus

For the second consecutive year, the MCAST Gozo Campus successfully held Freshers' Day for the students attending the Gozo Campus. This year the event was held on 14 October 2022.

Different organisations, both from the industrial sectors and NGOs, participated in the event and showcased their services. The students had the opportunity to visit the various stands and acquire knowledge on future employment and voluntary work opportunities.

On the day, employers, companies, industry representatives and NGOs were invited to attend a meeting organised by the MCAST Gozo Campus administration in collaboration with the Work-Based Learning (WBL) Department. During the

meeting, the Campus Director Ing Godwin Grech delivered a presentation about WBL as one of the pillars of MCAST's teaching and learning philosophy. Dr Romina Borg, Director Apprenticeships and Work-Based Learning, gave detailed information about the legal framework that regulates WBL as well as the rights and obligations of the three parties involved – the student, MCAST as the training provider, and the employer as MCAST's industry partner. The industry representatives had the opportunity to speak about their positive experiences with MCAST apprentices, providing valuable feedback about how apprenticeships can be more effective and beneficial to all parties involved. Ing Pierre Dalmas, Deputy Principal, also addressed the participants. Ing Godwin Grech said that there will be follow-ups to this meeting with specific sectors and also

with the Gozo Business Chamber and the Gozo Regional Development Authority.

Another initiative held on the day involved a formative session for students. The first part of this session was about Voluntary Work and the benefits that students gain from such enriching experiences. This was followed by an informative visual and hands-on session by the Emergency Response & Rescue Corps (ERRC), whereby the students gained information about the

services offered by this NGO, the opportunities it offers for students and young people and knowledge about life-saving measures in emergency situations.

Hon Clint Camilleri, Minister for Gozo, and Hon Justin Schembri and Hon Alex Borg, Shadow Ministers for Education and Gozo Affairs respectively, visited the Gozo Campus, where they had the opportunity to tour the stands and engage with students, staff as well as the personnel manning the stands.



Student Outreach in Gozo



As in previous years, Mr Matthew Xuereb, Student Support Services Coordinator and Career Guidance Adviser, visited the three secondary schools in Gozo, namely Gozo College Secondary School, Sacred Heart Minor Seminary and Bishop's Conservatory Secondary School, to deliver information and career guidance sessions to Year 11 students.

Mr Xuereb gave detailed presentations about all the MCAST programmes, their respective entry requirements, and especially higher-level programmes and employment/career opportunities. Additionally, Mr Xuereb provided ample information about other services offered at MCAST, such as Student Support Services, Work-Based Learning, CSR initiatives, extracurricular activities and more. Apart from communicating important information about MCAST with all Year 11 students in Gozo, these talks also serve as an introduction to the Open Day organised by MCAST Gozo Campus.

Fundraising Activities at the MCAST Gozo Campus

During the month of October 2022, MCAST Gozo Campus organised two fundraising/awareness activities.

The first initiative raised €100 to finance an oven for the missions in Guatemala managed by Fr Anton Grech. On Freshers 'Day, Ms Liliana Xuereb, lecturer at the Gozo Campus, gave a presentation about her personal experience after having spent a number of weeks doing voluntary work in Guatemala. Ms Xuereb took the initiative to collect donations.

A second fundraising activity was held towards the end of October 2022 with a dual objective. The first was raising awareness to "Pink October" and the importance of prevention and early diagnosis of breast cancer; as well as to promote "Movember" which raises awareness to men's health, specifically prostate cancer, testicular cancer, mental health and suicide prevention. A second objective of this initiative was to collect money for Puttinu Cares. Students and staff donating money were given a pink ribbon to be worn during these activities. The total sum collected in this initiative was €156.68.



Gozo Bishop's visit to the MCAST Gozo Campus





On Wednesday 2 November 2022, in commemoration of All Souls' Day, His Excellency Mgr Anton Teuma, Bishop of Gozo, celebrated the Eucharist at the MCAST Gozo Campus.

During the homily for students and staff, the Bishop spoke about our soul and made comparisons in relation to Dan Siegel's definition of the mind as an "emergent, self-organizing, embodied, and relational process that regulates the flow of energy and information." This definition clearly justifies

that although the human body dies, the "mind" still lives, and the Bishop continued to say that no wonder that we Christians still believe the same message given to us by Jesus Christ around 2,000 years ago.

Bishop Teuma said that he was humbled by the students' welcome and mass attendance and added that he looked forward to visiting the Campus again in his mission to maintain a constant dialogue with young people.



The Community College for the Third Age



RECORD APPLICATIONS AT MCAST'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOR THE THIRD AGE

The Community College for the Third Age has once again geared up to provide informal learning directed at seniors within the community. It received a record number of applications from seniors willing to join a new learning experience. This year the Community College for the Third Age received around 160 new applications, more than a 60% increase in applications received the previous year.

The Community College for the Third Age aims to encourage well-being and promote a positive quality of life for seniors within the community. This year marks the fourth year that the Centre for Learning and Employability, formally known as the Learning Support Unit, has provided education and, more importantly, a welcoming environment for seniors.

In September 2022, the Community College for the Third Age celebrated the International Day for the Older Person by hosting a Knowledge Café at MCAST's Main Campus. This event welcomed seniors and commemorated Seniors Day. The Café also welcomed a team member from the government entity, the Active Ageing Unit, that emphasised the importance of active ageing and the benefits of lifelong learning.

MCAST Principal and CEO Professor Joachim James Calleja stated, "The steady rise in applications and the positive feedback is encouraging as we set out to become a community college for all. Our aim is to reach out to all members of society. We need

to eliminate barriers and create lifelong learning opportunities for all. No one should be excluded."

CLE Director Ramon Mangion said: "Older people have a keen interest in learning and should be consulted about their learning needs. We are looking at creating programmes that are strategic in approach, fostering a culture where older people are encouraged to share their skills."

A total of 5 classes involving a range of speakers from different areas, such as history, media, health and well-being, general knowledge and more, will be offering lectures to attendees during this year's programme, the programme of activities. This year will also include a number of site visits. Participants will have access to the new Resource Centre and Library with over 65,000 publications by using their MCAST Friends of the Library card.



Library and Learning Resource Centre

MY JOURNEY AT THE MCAST LIBRARY

- MAY CALLUS, ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN, MCAST LIBRARY

My journey as a librarian started by sheer chance. I was a full-time stay-at-home mum dedicated solely to my two children. One day the Kalkara Primary School librarian approached me and asked me whether I could replace her. I was both scared and excited, but I decided to take on this opportunity since it was only one morning a week and close to home. Also, at the time my kids attended the same school.

I enjoyed working in this small quaint library in the heart of the Kalkara Primary School. I organized it, and patiently helped many students enhance their love for reading. This motivated me to learn the Library Science, so I enrolled for the DLIS Diploma at the University of Malta. The lectures were held three times a week and the course was very demanding. The course also included tours of other libraries, such as the University Library, the National Archives Library, the Public Library and the National Library of Malta. During the course I learned about acquisitions, circulation and cataloguing, besides other subjects regarding libraries. With a lot of support and encouragement, I obtained my diploma.

As soon as I graduated, a post for an Assistant Librarian at the MCAST Campus was issued. It was as though it was meant for me. It was not easy for me to switch to a full-time position, yet now every morning I feel fully geared up for my library work. I enjoy the work a lot and when it is time to go home, I prepare myself for the usual housework, which needs to be done every day.

I love working at the MCAST Library as books fascinate me. The Library is where I feel energized. I especially enjoy cataloguing and sorting all the different book genres. Library cataloguing is the process of creating and maintaining bibliographic and authority records in the library catalogue, which is the database of books, serials, sound recordings, moving images, cartographic materials, computer files and e-resources. Cataloguing involves recording, describing and storing the location of the collection in order for it to be easily retrievable and more accessible to audiences. In addition, I perform other tasks in the library, such as shelving, supervision of floors and conducting library tours.

My first post was at the Maritime Library

in Kalkara. This was very convenient for me since I live in the same village. In 2019, the MCAST Maritime Institute shifted to the Main Campus at Paola. In 2022, the Library moved to a new building, the MCAST Resource Centre. The team and I had the strenuous task of shifting the Library. We all worked hard, and now we are in the new Library enjoying the modern facilities.

And 17 years flew by, just like that. I have now reached retirement age and decided to continue working at the Library on reduced hours because of my love of books and my passion for helping students. I believe that I have really found where I belong!



Photo - DOI - Reuben Piscopo

Samantha Jane Curmi, MCAST Journalism student interviewed Jad Musallam who is currently carrying out a three-month Erasmus internship



Jad Musallam is a 23 year old Italian student who is reading for a degree in Aerospace Engineering at Politecnico di Milano. Jad has always had a passion for aircrafts. He says that his interest was sparked at a young age, while listening to his dad talk about different types of aircraft.

Jad is currently in Malta for a 3-month internship on Erasmus, working at Lufthansa Technik, which is situated right by Malta International Airport. He is there every weekday from 9am till 5pm and has been an intern with Lufthansa Technik since mid-October. The programme he is enrolled in is not through MCAST, however MCAST has assisted him in finding the internship with Lufthansa Technik.

Up until the end of October 2022, Jad had been assigned by a lecturer from MCAST to collaborate on a research project on Raman Spectroscopy. This is an analysis technique that uses a laser and scattered light to measure the presence and concentration of chemical species, in this case, exhaust gases.

Jad states that the research consisted of “developing a technique to sense the outgoing flow of turbo-fan engines in order to better predict their state.” This means that, through sampling an aircraft’s exhausts, it would be possible to work out its ‘state of health’. He said that, “a tool like this would be really useful for maintenance and repair operations, but currently there is none.”

During the first phase of the project, Jad was assigned to look into all the scientific literature that he could find about different methods used. He then determined the

pros and the cons, mentioned the phase that the research on the topic is at, and compiled all that into a report.

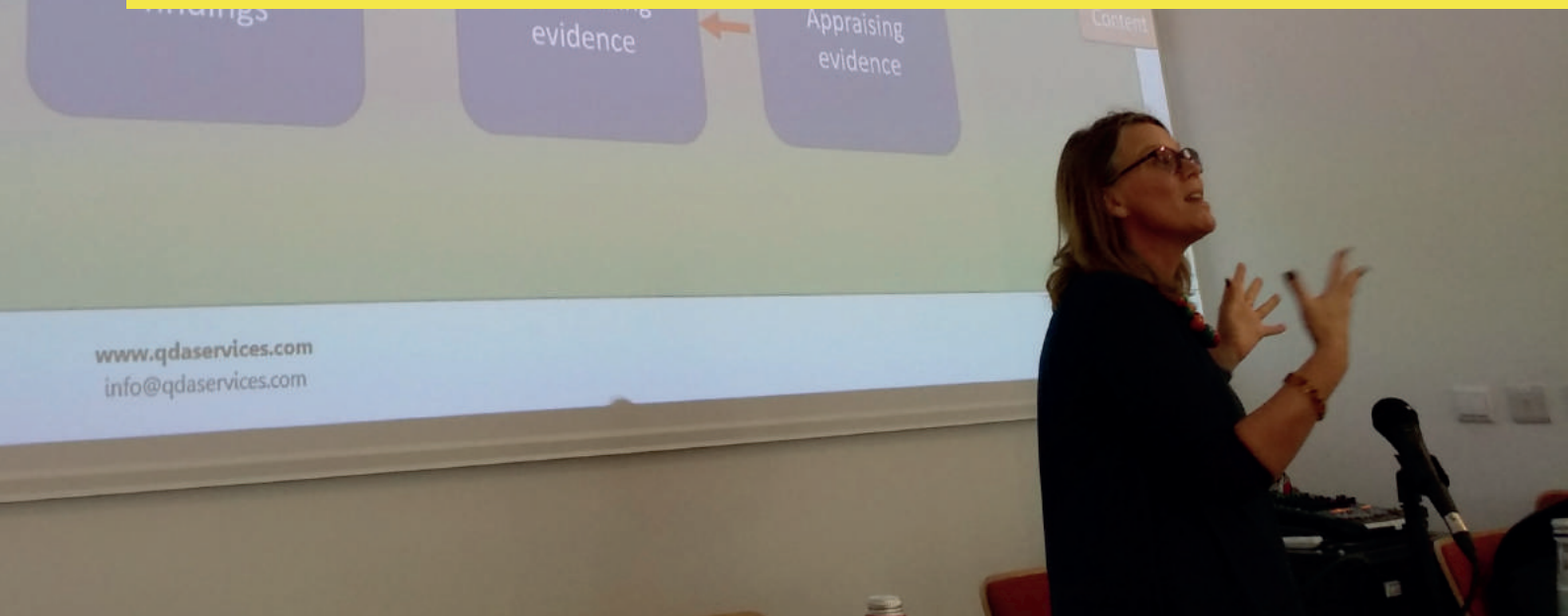
Jumping back to his internship with Lufthansa Technik, Jad is working in the Engineering Department, where he assists in production. His position is one of a supporting role. He finds this role very interesting especially learning about the technical side of the aircraft. Jad is loving his internship with Lufthansa Technik as he gets to see how all the operations are done and what goes behind an aircraft’s “layover”.

Even though Jad did encounter a slight difficulty at the beginning of his internship. He had initially found it difficult to understand the technical jargon and the acronyms yet he quickly got over it by taking notes and studying them. His favorite part of the day will always be when he goes down to the hangar where he gets to see many different aircrafts in their raw state, up close.

After his internship, Jad wishes to keep working within the aviation industry and with the help of this opportunity, he hopes to find himself working in an Engineering Department in the near future.

**SAMANTHA JANE CURMI
IS CURRENTLY READING
FOR A BACHELOR OF
ARTS (HONOURS) IN
JOURNALISM**

MCAST holds Qualitative Research Conference



MCAST held a research-themed conference, titled, 'Fueling Creative Minds Through Applied Qualitative Research' on campus in Paola.

A total of 113 delegates registered and attended this informative and educational conference. Through-out the conference local academics and students presented 25 paper presentations, and 18 poster exhibits. International academics also attended and participated in this event.

The qualitative research conference placed its focus on qualitative and mixed-methods research, and on the application of this research to solve real world problems within the small island state of Malta.

The conference aimed to introduce novelty in methodology implementation when conducting qualitative research, and the practical application of applied research within industry and society.

McAST welcomed Dr Christina Silver to the first MCAST Qualitative Research Conference.

Dr Silver provided a most dynamic workshop titled 'Reviewing the Literature using MAXQDA Software' to an audience of just over 80 delegates. In this workshop the delegates were encouraged and assisted to apply the learning and exercises being shown by Christina directly themselves, using MAXQDA2022 for which MCAST has a corporate licence. Dr Silver has vast experience in all major qualitative softwares, she is a global NVivo Certified Platinum trainer, a MAXQDA Senior Professional Trainer and an ATLAS.ti Certified Senior Professional Trainer, amongst others.

THE DELIGHTS OF RETURNING TO IN-PERSON CONFERENCES: CREATIVE AND INTELLECTUALLY-STIMULATING CHATS BY DR CHRISTINA SILVER

Last week was my first in-person conference since February 2020 and involved a flight to a country I'd not visited before, so to say I was looking forward to it is certainly an understatement. I was excited for sure, but what I wasn't prepared for was how much I enjoyed and got out of the experience - personally and professionally - from the sessions I delivered myself and from listening and learning from literally everyone I encountered.

The conference was organised by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and focused on 'Fuelling Creative Minds Through Applied Qualitative Research'. I was invited to give a keynote on the Five-Level QDA method and a MAXQDA workshop and was welcomed and hosted by Dr Ing Alex Rizzo, Dr Ronald Aquilina and Dr Rose Falzon.

I'm often heard saying how much I learn from those I teach and how much I value that this is the case. Early in my career this was a source of great stress as I felt an imposter, not sufficiently experienced

or knowledgeable to believe I was good enough to be imparting useful information, and concerned I'd be asked questions I didn't know the answers to. Luckily I was mentored by several people who helped me see things differently, and I was able to quickly embrace the dual learner-teacher role. Now I love a question I don't know the answer to...because it gets me to question my assumptions, stretch my boundaries...to learn....bring it on!

This week at MCAST has brought home to me yet again what a privilege it is to do what I do, and to be invited into environments where these values are so clearly evident. I get to stand in front of researchers at different stages of their careers, working in different methodological and disciplinary contexts and across a wide range of substantive topics and talk to them about the things I am most passionate about. And not only are they interested and engaged, but their questions and comments stimulate avenues for further thought and discussion. What more could you want?

What struck me most about this week was the atmosphere. It wasn't just that there presentations from students and researchers across the career spectrum, from masters students recounting their first foray into qualitative research for their dissertations, to professors imparting wisdoms generated from decades in the field. That's not so unusual. But the ease with which everyone took to the floor, the quality of the comments, questions and discussions, the compassion and constructiveness with which suggestions for developing a study were given and received. In the context of an explicit acknowledgment of differing philosophical and methodological, standpoints. This was refreshing and motivating.

I know from chatting to a few of the students that some of them were really nervous about presenting, but it hardly showed, and as I know myself, those nerves are always there to some degree, however many times you've stood in front of a sea of faces, to share your work. In fact they're a good thing, they show you care, they get you ready for the performance that sharing your work and thoughts is. Virtual conferences were a god-send over the past few years, and the definitely have their place, not least for opening up access and allowing us to meet people we wouldn't have the opportunity to otherwise. I doubt I would have had these sorts of chats if this had been a virtual event though. There really isn't anything like chatting over coffee and cake for delving deep into discussions.

At my workshop about harnessing MAXQDA for literature reviews there were approaching 70 participants, most were already using the

software but they were at different stages in their studies and with different levels of confidence with harnessing the software tools for their analytic needs. It's always tricky speaking to varied audiences, pitching the teaching to suit different prior experiences to make sure everyone gets what they need from the session. Luckily I've been doing this for a while so hope to be able to strike that balance as much as possible. I tried out a slightly different way of going about things in this session and was glad that everyone seemed engaged and the questions and discussions were intellectually stimulating. What I love most is when someone says "you showed us how to do abc, but couldn't we also do it xyz way, I think that would work better for my project because xxx". Yes! This shows creativity and flexibility in thinking about how software can be harnessed for analytic tasks that reflects exactly my mindset and ways of discussing and teaching tools and methods concurrently. These ways of thinking and interacting are fostered by being in environments that encourage creative and critical teaching and learning and the MCAST conference had this in abundance. Love it.



NOTES



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MCAST

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