
ISSUE 64
MCAST LINK
The Maker Culture at MCAST

contents

MCASTlink is produced by the
MCAST Communicaions Office.

Produced and Edited
Caroline Balzan
Communications and PR Manager

MCASTlink Editorial Team
Daniela Blagojevic
Natalino Fenech
David Kenely
Nikita Pisani
Stephen Vella

Design
Fullphat Media

Print
Tik Print

Photography
Jonathan Borg, Mark Micallef, Austin Tufigno, James Perry Zammit

MCAST Communications Office,
Main Campus,
Corradino Street,
Paola PLA 9032, Malta

+356 2398 7200 |+356 9988 4914
mcast.edu.mt

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Editorial

Trades and crafts are major representative of our culture and tradition. They preserve rich heritage and culture, traditional skills and talents which are associated with people's lifestyle and history. They tell a story. They all represent the identity of the person or people who made it, and are a sneak peak into their lives, stories and values. They are also a source of pride of character and of rich traditions.

Welcome to this themed edition of MCASTlink entitled 'The Maker Culture at MCAST'. This edition is the first of its kind and focuses on trades and crafts as one of MCAST's languages. It illustrates the value of trades and crafts in our society. It's the economical, social, historical and political attributes which make them so valuable and it's this that we want to keep alive!

Our very own Journalism students reading for a BA (Hons) in Journalism at the MCAST Institute for the Creative Arts have, for the first time, contributed to this publication by identifying and interviewing different persons related to the 'maker culture', including carpenters, ceramists, jewellery makers, leather crafters and civil engineers. Every article is a showcase of the value of the trade/craft, its creator and its value in society.

Another first in this publication is the contribution by content writer, Ramona Depares. Ramona also interviewed persons related to trades including MCAST Senior Lecturer Engineer Tania Briffa on her passion for welding, blacksmith Patrick Scerri and MCAST lecturer and jewellery maker Charles Pace Briffa. Our own in-house photographer, James Perry Zammit, captured the great pictures inside the magazine.

We hope you enjoy reading this magazine as we have enjoyed producing it! Wishing you all happy and blessed Easter holidays.

Message from the Principal & CEO

PROFESSOR JOACHIM JAMES CALLEJA

Trades, crafts and professional careers: MCAST hallmarks!

This edition brings alive the true meaning of vocational educational and training. The various stories of creators of trades makes this edition a unique invitation to learners who wish to express their talent through some of the most interesting qualifications that MCAST offers today.

Trades as we knew them in the 20th century are still alive but wearing a different and a more sophisticated character largely conditioned by the developments in technology and artificial intelligence. Similarly, many traditional crafts can still be found in our country.

One aspect is a certainty: that a world without trades and crafts would be a much poorer planet. Humans are by nature creative. They have the capacity to imagine, design, form, build, decorate, imitate and express themselves through several materials.

When using their hands, people must also use their brains. Their wisdom is expressed through their capacity to read, write, use technology and be able to measure. Some older generations may not be able to possess all the basic skills that we ought to acquire today in compulsory education but yet, this lacunae is backed by apprenticeship and long years of experience.

This edition celebrates the wealth of talent people express through trades. Today's carpenter, plumber, mechanic, jeweler, welder, mason, painter, tile layer...are valuable occupations which are dying and at the same time re-establishing themselves as well-paid, rewarding and highly sought skills and competences.

At MCAST, all of these trades are already part of our curriculum. In addition, we offer professional careers in several other vocational occupations such as nursing, engineering, IT specialists, educators, careers in the maritime sector and the care sectors and in financial and business sectors that provide immediate employability for our young and older learners and workers. We also offer courses in crafts that provide a platform for a creative and entrepreneurial mind. Education and training efforts at MCAST constantly adopt this three-pronged approach to promote trades, crafts and professional careers.

The features in this edition pay tribute to our talented lecturing staff and their students. We will be strengthening this approach in the near future. Our plans are to reinvent trades in an age of technology. We are moving in this direction because trades and crafts spell our identity. Trades can be a good source of income. Knowing how to fix gadgets at home saves time and money. Nevertheless, more that too. Employers for instance, are constantly requesting talent that matches hands with a persons' capacity to work autonomously and with responsibility.

Today and tomorrow's trades will require a sophisticated approach that matches creativity with technology. MCAST is brimming with such talent. Recognizing and reestablishing dignity to trades will be MCAST's next hallmark. However, no trade or craft can be truly rewarding unless key skills are acquired as early as possible.

The Maker Culture at MCAST

The Science of Practicalities

TANYA BRIFFA'S ENGINEERING JOURNEY STARTED OUT WATCHING YOUTUBE VIDEOS ABOUT WELDING AND FINISHED WITH A SENIOR LECTURER ROLE AT MCAST. RAMONA DEPARES TRIES TO DISCOVER THE SPARK BEHIND THE TRADE.

When finishing post-secondary education, Tanya Briffa couldn't decide which career path to follow - becoming a vet or an engineer. While she had always been scientifically minded, she was not quite sure what an engineering profession would entail on a practical level. So she found a practical solution to the dilemma, by visiting an engineering firm to understand exactly what the job involved.

"I realised that this was what I wanted to do almost immediately. It felt like home. I have always been practical and hands-on, and I was very much into the McGyver style of doing this, being a big fan," Tanya starts out with a chuckle.

McGyver, for those who aren't in the know, is the protagonist of an action series. IMDB explains his style beautifully: "he applies his scientific knowledge to ordinary items to create a means of escape for himself and others from impending doom".

After that fateful visit, there was no looking back. Since her graduation she has worked

in the industry, as a lecturer at the University of Malta and obtained a Masters in Birmingham. Today, Tanya is a senior lecturer in fabrication and welding at MCAST.

"I suppose I did get some weird looks and comments back when I told family and friends that I was opting for engineering. And it's always fun to see the surprise on a few of the students' faces when they realise I'm a woman. It doesn't last long though and, to be fair, gender prejudice is not really something that I have encountered within the profession," she says.

Tanya spends most of her time in the workshop while lecturing, with MCAST courses tailored as much towards practice as they are towards academia. A good part of it also involves working on actual sites so as to offer students a realistic feel for the field. This is precisely why she feels the role is such a great fit for her.

"I've always wanted to combine both aspects of the profession, so I was thrilled when I realised that this was exactly it. It was a learning process for me too, in a way. At University you do study welding, but only theoretically. So I learnt most of the practicalities from YouTube videos, which is a bit different from the reality of the workshop," she says with a smile.

Welding is one of those trades that I find somewhat scary. I ask Tanya if she was nervous to do find herself doing the practical side of things. She shakes her head, explaining that the process is actually very safe, as long as you follow health and safety protocols and you know what you are doing.

Are students required to have some form of basic knowledge before they enrol? The answer is no, as all the basics are covered.

"All they need is an enthusiasm for the subject, really. It's not like they have to get here already able to weld. It's the opposite, in fact, as we really make it a point to start from scratch even with students who tell us they're already confident, particularly to ensure that they are doing everything safely. Of course, it helps if you're good at working with your hands, because ultimately this is what the job entails. And you need to enjoy it, most of all."

The demand for qualified welders and steel workers is particularly high, she tells me, with the industry always needed more human resources. There are also opportunities to work abroad, particularly in the Netherlands, after one particularly fruitful exchange with the country left a Dutch firm very impressed with Maltese standards of work.

What is her advise to those who, like herself, are in two minds about whether this is for them?

"If you've got even half an idea that this might be for you, drop in at our annual open day at MCAST. This will give you a very good indication of what the course involves, so you can take an informed decision. At the end of the day, there is nothing to lose by trying," she concludes.

The Institute of Engineering and Transport offers the Diploma in **Welding and Fabrication** and the **Advanced Diploma in Welding and Fabrication**.

A hub for makers and creators

DANIELA BLAGOJEVIC, DIRECTOR COMMUNICATIONS, INTERVIEWS IL-LOKAL AND 2POINT3

Along Old Bakery Street in Valletta, one will discover il-lokal, a hub for creatives. Il-lokal started as an online enterprise and is now a retail shop showcasing a variety of work by Maltese and Malta-based artists, designers and makers, including several MCAST alumni.

Here's another link to MCAST. Il-lokal founder Karolina Rostkowska teamed up with 2point3, a local graphic design studio, that relocated to the studio above the shop. 2point3 is led by MCAST Institute for the Creative Arts alumni Luke Caruana and Nigel Anastasi.

The two met at MCAST and are now running an independent design studio and an online shop showcasing their graphic prints and objects collection. They are also the creative minds behind the vibrant design of the two recent editions of the College prospectus.

Daniela Blagojevic met the team and asked them questions about their experience as they set out to promote the local creative talent and the maker culture.

HOW WAS IL-LOKAL DEVELOPED? TELL US WHO YOU ARE AND A BIT ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND.

Karolina: I came to Malta in the summer of 2017 to work on a project, and quite early on, I realised that I was enjoying the islands way too much to just simply leave after a few months. So I cancelled my plane ticket, found a job, and called my family in Poland to break the news to them. If you're an ex-pat, you're starting completely fresh. One of your first real tasks is to develop new friendships. From the start, I was lucky to work in the local creative industry and get to know some Malta-based creatives. The connections and conversations with these artists and makers inspired il-lokal.

It was clear to me that there's plenty of fantastic creative work in Malta, but if you don't know someone who knows someone who can point you in the right direction, you'd struggle to discover it. Getting together was the first step, and I thought my marketing background could help the creative community. This is how il-lokal came to be on Instagram, followed by the website and online shop.

I started contacting people whose work I admired to join the project, and 2point3 was my top graphic design. They believed in the concept from the start and trusted me with their products when il-lokal was about to open a shop in Valletta. We had a lot of fun organising a craft market called Nice Things together that same year, so when the opportunity of moving to a shared space came about, I didn't think twice. We're on the same wavelength with 2point3, and I think we both needed to create a space with a strong identity centred on collaboration, exchange and community.

WHAT'S YOUR PRIMARY MISSION AND INSPIRATION AS A CREATIVE SPACE?

Karolina: One of the pillars of il-lokal is to help artists get exposure and hopefully create a full-time living out of work that they are good at. I cannot understand buying a mass-produced candle from an international chain brand if you could purchase a sustainably produced soy wax candle hand-poured in Rabat for almost the same price. It makes a difference; simply, it's just a better product. This situation has had a lot to do with accessibility, and this is where il-lokal is trying to make a difference.

2point3: The aim is to push the limits in their own field, holistically engaging each project. Focusing clearly to communicate simple and vivid visuals that create unique experiences. For them, striving to look for colourful and exciting forms is important.

WHAT'S YOUR EXPERIENCE SO FAR? IS THERE A DEMAND FOR WORK BY MALTESE OR MALTA-BASED CREATORS?

Karolina: The locals are starting to see the value of innovative products and are willing to back up the artists. It's a market in the making, but we're moving in the right direction. Some of our customers pop by the shop regularly to check for any new ceramics or prints or if their favourite spicy sauce got restocked. They are part of the il-lokal family, and I find it extremely gratifying.

On the other hand, since Malta is a tourist hot spot, the shop allows local makers to access foreign customers. Coming from all parts of the world, this audience often has entirely different tastes and expectations. Seeing how Maltese contemporary craft and design resonate with these two groups is fascinating.

WHAT ARE INDIVIDUAL CREATORS' AND MAKERS' MAIN CHALLENGES, PARTICULARLY THOSE STILL STARTING OUT?

Karolina: The creative industry is really rewarding, but in my opinion, it is also one of the toughest. The creators not only have to produce all the time, but they also have to have the necessary entrepreneurial skills as if they worked in any other sector. So you're a solopreneur who needs to find enough time for everything, quite often a part-time job too, especially if you're just starting out.

The second most common challenge, in my opinion, is growing the audience. It requires considerable work (and, again, time) but often doesn't show in the number of followers on social media. My only advice would be to not give up and try to diversify. If you're consistent in your efforts and open to

trying new ways of reaching out to people, like craft markets, pop-ups, and teaming up with other small brands and makers, to name a few, you will eventually start seeing the difference.

WHAT TYPE OF PRODUCTS WOULD ONE EXPECT TO SEE ON SALE AT IL-LOKAL?

All our products go through a scrutinising process to ensure quality. This can sometimes be harsh, but it's vital to maintaining our identity. The products on display vary from ceramics, candles, beauty, notebooks, greeting cards, postcards, paper goods, jewellery, t-shirts, hoodies, swimwear, bags, footwear, accessories, prints, photography, pimited editions, original artworks and embroidery.

WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE TO OUR STUDENTS ASPIRING TO DESIGN AND PRODUCE THEIR WORK?

2point3: A deep understanding of the artwork or product you are creating ensures you start off on a sound footing. Having an excellent idea and a great design concept is one thing, but knowing how to produce it correctly is another. Identify a clear style for your work that genuinely excites you when designing and producing. If you aren't confident in your work, then it's unlikely others will be.

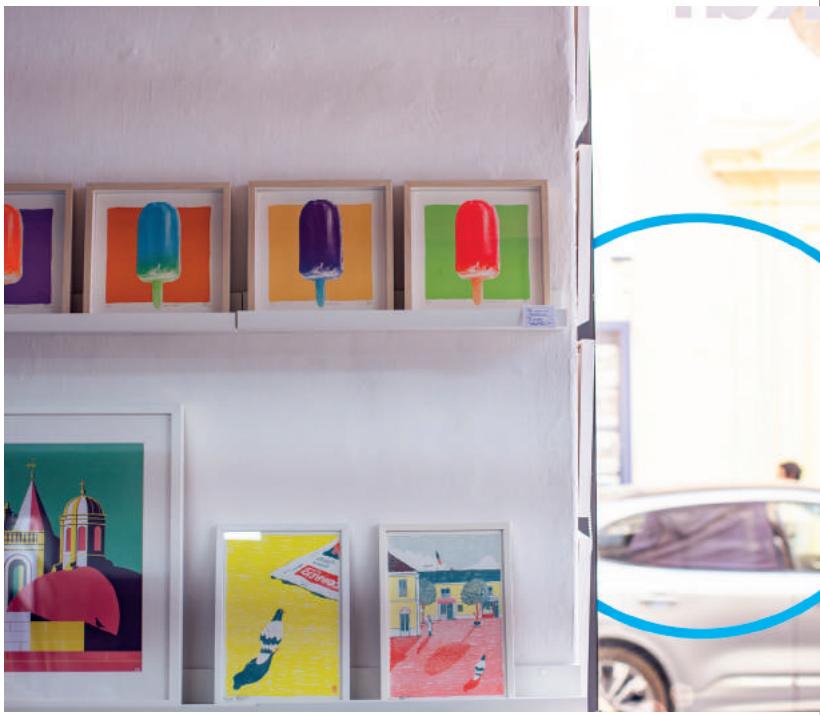
Karolina: I totally agree. From my perspective, I would add – get organised. Everyone knows they need to put in extra working hours to create something financially sustainable, but the skill of planning and strategic thinking will really assist in achieving that goal. It will make you more confident and will help avoid premature burnout. You'll also be seen as a valuable collaborator who gets things done, and that's often a key to advance.

ANY PLANS TO DEVELOP THE CONCEPT FURTHER? ANY EXCITING PROJECTS YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH OUR READERS AND US?

Karolina: One of the benefits of having Luke and Nigel above the shop is that we get more opportunities to talk about design. This is very inspiring.

2point3: There's definitely something to be done to increase the public's knowledge and appreciation of design and its role in creating a sustainable, just and joyful world. We're now looking into a structured initiative to celebrate design as a multidisciplinary form of creative thinking and making.


il·lokal



Fostering passion for a dying craft

PATRICK SCERRI, KNOWN AS IL-MUZZAN, IS ONE OF MALTA'S MOST RESPECTED BLACKSMITHS, HIS WORK GRACING CHURCHES AND PRIVATE HOMES. HE TALKS TO RAMONA DEPARES ABOUT MENTORING A NEW CROP OF STUDENTS INTO THE TRADE.

When blacksmith Patrick Scerri started working in the family forge decades ago, the craft was a very different one from that practised today. Back then, the town of Naxxar was known for its 30-odd blacksmiths, and the Xerri family - also known as il-Muzzan - was one of the most respected and known.

"I caught the passion at a very young age, with my brother and myself always wanting to spend time by the forge with our father. Our knowledge has been passed through generations - at the time, the training was mostly done on the job. And my father was certainly a strict teacher," he reminisces.

He recounts how his father insisted on near-perfection, even when they were still very young, making them destroy any work that wasn't up to his standards and start from scratch.

"My brother and I would always reply - but it's good enough, it passes! But my father didn't want us to create something that 'passes', he wanted us to create great work. And of course, today we realise that he was right," Patrick tells me with a chuckle.

Now, Patrick is passing on this invaluable knowledge to a new crop of future blacksmiths or heritage skills technicians, themselves students at MCAST. He speaks with pride about the enthusiasm that every student brings to the forge, taking newly-created works back home and enjoying a bit of friendly competition between them.

"It's one way of making sure the trade does not die out, which is something that I worry about. My own children did not inherit this love, but through these students I see a way for it to survive. The knowledge that past students are now practising the craft full-time fills me with joy, and I always make it a point to try and view their work whenever possible," Patrick tells me.

Meantime, the Muzzan forge continues to use traditional techniques that few other blacksmiths still employ. Patrick tells me that he still has a limited supply of coal that he keeps for jobs that involve very thick pieces of iron.

"In truth, a blacksmith's job is made easier when using coal. The temperatures are higher, the steel more pliant. It becomes like chewing gum. With gas you don't achieve

that softness, so you need to work harder. But coal is, understandably, on its way out, and I try to avoid using the remaining stock. There are some pieces of coal that are over a 100 years old at the forge," he reveals.

He stresses the importance of practising the craft for the younger generation, explaining that becoming a good blacksmith is a journey involving much trial and error, and discarding of work.

"You learn with practice, by applying your knowledge to actual work. This is how you find out that you need to allow the steel to cool down gradually, that if you get it wet it won't let you work it, that certain designs will never work. You need to repeat it until it becomes instinctive," he tells me.

I ask him whether there is any work which he is particularly proud of, and I'm amazed to learn that, together with his brother and father, he worked on the bells at St John's Co-Cathedral.

"I remember that my father charged a very low sum, and this wasn't the sort of job that could be done in a rush. My brother and I were incredulous, but my father's reply was that it's an honour to be the ones to work on these bells, and that we would be getting satisfaction from the job every time we passed by the Co-Cathedral. And once again, he was right."

He also mentions the Church of Our Lady of Victory, in Valletta, where the Muzzan family did more works, and again, refers to the joy that being able to view the work done affords him.

I ask him if he has any words of advice for students looking to learn the craft. Practice and passion are the two topmost requirements, he tells me.

"That's all it takes. You don't need any specific talent if you have a love for the forge and you are willing to practise until you get it right. And there are certainly no gender limitations, either," he concludes.

The Advanced Diploma in Cultural Heritage Skills is offered by the Institute for the Creative Arts in Mosta. This course addresses needs in the Cultural Heritage sector in order to support the management, conservation, preservation and care of such heritage. The programme of studies provides the necessary applied theoretical material and ethical background in technical aspects of cultural heritage and heritage skills including stone, wood, metals, books, paper and textiles heritage skills, with training being carried out in workshops, laboratories and on site. The course also has an apprenticeship, which will allow students the opportunity to work alongside professionals and immerse themselves in the world of cultural heritage while getting the necessary training in the learning environment.

The Veteran Carpenter

NICOLE SCIBERRAS BALBI, MCAST JOURNALISM DEGREE STUDENT, INTERVIEWS ANTHONY CIAPPARA ON THE CARPENTRY TRADE

Anthony Ciappara is an 80-year-old gentlemen hailing from Rabat. He has worked in the carpentry trade for almost all his life. He explained that his passion mainly came from his ancestors including his father, grandfather and great grandfather who were all carpenters. He is the fourth generation who has succeeded in this trade.

Anthony pointed out that his interests in carpentry started from a very young age. Being a carpenter was his part-time job whereas his full-time job was that of a post officer. He furthered his studies in this trade by attending St Joseph Secondary Technical School in Paola, where apart from carpentry, he also studied engineering. Anthony said that as soon as he retired from his main job as a post officer, 12 years ago he kept on working as a carpenter. His wife's health issues and added responsibilities at home has led him to take a step back from carpentry.

Anthony stated that he is currently working on a display cupboard which he is doing by hand since he does not have any machines. Despite his age he still manages to create different pieces on a small scale. His most recent work is a unit which can be used for kitchen utensils. This unit was created in a way where it can be disassembled. Among the many works that Anthony managed to create, the piece of work that has given him the most satisfaction once completed, was mainly the dining room which was designed and hand-made by himself. He also mentioned that in order to make certain parts of his work roundish and precise as possible, he used to make use of the bow saw which in Maltese is known as "Serrieq ta' San Ġuzepp".

When comparing this trade to 30 to 40 years ago Anthony states that there have been significant changes. He emphasizes the concept that performing tasks by hand without the aid of a machine can provide one the satisfaction of completing tasks that are typically completed by quick, contemporary machinery. Due to the introduction of several machines, many tools are no longer utilized. The plough plane is an illustration of such a tool. It was commonly used for drawer bottoms or back walls. Modern times saw the introduction of routers, which serve the same function as a plane plough but produce results much more quickly.

Aside from working his regular carpentry job, Anthony used to spend a lot of his spare time at the "festa" workshop in Rabat. Together with other members they carried out repairs and modifications for both indoor and exterior feast decorations and made new additions. During the days of St. Joseph's feast, they used to give their part to put up the decorations showcasing their skills.

Anthony claimed that despite his advanced age, he still wishes to continue creating small, manageable and useful inventions. He wants his creations to live on as something meaningful and heartfelt.

MCAST offers a **Diploma in Joinery and Furniture Making** and the **Advanced Diploma in Joinery, Furniture Design and Manufacturing**. For further information on the courses can be obtained from the College website www.mcast.edu.mt.

The Ceramic Designer's love for Clay

JADE DEBATTISTA, MCAST JOURNALISM DEGREE STUDENT, INTERVIEWS CHRISTBEL CACHIA ON HER LOVE FOR CERAMICS

Christabel Cachia is a 29-year-old software developer who discovered her passion as a ceramic designer. After reading for a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence at the University of Malta, Christabel explored her artistic side by creating one of-a-kind ceramic pieces.

Christabel has always had a deep love for the arts. As a child, she took interest in crafting, DIY projects, and even photography. After starting her full-time job, she sought out a hobby, and discovered the craft of ceramic making.

Her journey began at Space for Clay, a local pottery studio, where she learned the very basics of ceramics. She also spent several hours experimenting with clay on her own, which helped her developed a slew of new skills. "Nowadays I have my own wheel at home so when I need to learn something new, I either just go to my garage and spend hours practicing or I binge-watch videos of other potter's throwing/working with clay and try to mimic what they're doing," she continues explaining.

The young ceramicist enjoys working with the clay's messy texture, but she appreciates it most for the way it allows her to create pieces that are both functional and aesthetically pleasing. However, she admits that "there are times where it gets challenging, especially when trying out some new form for the first time or working with more clay than usual. There are days where all the pieces end up in the recycling bucket, just because the size is not right or the shape is not how I envisioned it. A lot of things can go wrong during the firing as well, so after having spent so many hours creating the pieces, it's a little nerve-wrecking to see the final result. However, in a way, this also adds to the excitement of the process."

Even though Christabel started experimenting with clay as a hobby, it eventually evolved into a business. "Initially there was no intention of starting a business, and it remains till now mostly a hobby," Christabel says. "The unfortunate side with ceramics though is that it's an expensive hobby and you end up with a lot of ceramics! So, I eventually had to find a way to clear the cupboards whilst also covering some of the costs, so I decided to start selling my art."

Christabel's pieces can be found on her Facebook shop and at some of the markets she participates in. The budding ceramicist dreams of opening her own studio where she can display and sell her artistic creations. Christabel's advice to anyone thinking of experimenting with clay is "go for it and embrace the feeling of messy hands, and sometimes hair too, even if it's just a one-time thing." She also emphasises the importance of considering the costs, time and space required if you intend to take it seriously. But most importantly, she advises to "not do it for the sake of creating a profitable business but to do it for the sake of being creative and enjoying the art form".

Leather Crafting: The Appreciation of an Ancient Craft

FEDERICA CARUANA, MCAST STUDENT CURRENTLY READING FOR A BA (HONS) IN JOURNALISM INTERVIEWED ITALIANS PIETRO AND ERIC ON THE ANCIENT TRADE OF LEATHER CRAFTING

Leather crafting, also known as leather working, is the art of turning leather into a functional product. This trade has existing since primeval times through evidence showing the findings of hideworks and tanning dating back 400,000 years ago and tools used for tanning dating back to the Stone Age. Hideworking, or the transformation process of an animal's hide into leather, produced shelters, apparel and shoes. This continues today, with shelters being ruled out of the equation and replaced by more accessories, including belts, necklaces, bracelets, straps, journals, keychains, bookmarks, wallets, handbags and cases fitting specific devices.

Pietro and Eric are both leatherworkers located in Trieste, Italy. I have interviewed them and they will be sharing their experience on the subject. Eric started working on leather twenty years ago, producing bags, belts, and bracelets as a hobby for medieval re-enactments; his works with leather persisted, eventually partnering with Pietro. According to the duo, this craft offers an extensive spectrum, and everything is dependent on what one desires to learn. Professional courses can be helpful in creating items like jackets and bags. This craft requires personal time dedicated towards research using various sources like videos, journals and books. It also requires perseverance and practice with easier or beginner-friendly products such as belts and bracelets.

The average consumer might think that leather is a limited option. The leather makers explained that there are several types of leather. The difference lies in the animal and the body part from which

the hide is extracted from, with the most popular being cows, sheep and goats. Exotic leather from animals like sharks, ostriches, crocodiles and snakes are rare but also available. The hide is first given a treatment also referred to as tanning, which consists of it being soaked in a chemical solution to transform it into leather and preserve its lifetime. It could either be vegetable-tanned leather or chrome-tanned leather.

The process continues with further treatments to give the leather a particular appearance; for instance, varnished leathers are used for a glossy look. What customers need to consider and look out for is that the quality of the leather may vary. There is top quality leather, like full grain leather, which consists of the whole hide, but there are others of inferior quality and are often marketed as genuine leather, which are formed by different leather crusts.

The grade of the leather is not the only factor why it is expensive. If a mistake occurs while working on it and the defect shows, the entire leather piece must be thrown away since it is an organic material, and it is difficult to restore. Leather conversion into a product begins by laying it flat on a surface, measuring the amount of leather required and then the leather is cut using scissors or a knife. The leather maker might require gluing, which is a way of joining leather parts together, casing to assist in shaping it, skiving to reduce its thickness, stitching to connect two pieces together and dyeing to give the leather or the product a colour.

Pietro and Eric pointed out that the product's sturdiness and lifetime do not solely belong in the crafter's hands, but it is the customer's responsibility to take care of it. Leather requires minimal maintenance, and it can be done by avoiding direct sunlight, watering it, and applying a conditioner. Its lifespan depends on the tan, where it is stored, and the climate to which it is exposed and that eliminates the misconception construed by many that leather can be of high quality and lasts for a long time only if it is thick and rigid.

Leather may not be the mainstream option because there is synthetic leather taking its place, but it will continue to remain the number one choice for those looking for a distinctive look and feel, durability and a personalised product.

The dream to be a Civil Engineer and give back to society

AALIYAH GALEA MELI READING FOR A DEGREE IN JOURNALISM AT MCAST INTERVIEWS ISAAC FARRUGIA, MCAST STUDENT, ON HIS CHILDHOOD DREAM OF BECOMING A CIVIL ENGINEER

Isaac Farrugia, a 19 year old MCAST student has chosen to pursue Civil Engineering thanks to the course that is provided by MCAST. He is currently in his second year. Civil Engineering is a profession which deals with the design construction and maintenance of the physical and naturally built environment like bridges, roads, sewages and other infrastructure.

During an interview Isaac was asked questions related to the course and the profession which he would like to pursue in the future. When asked about the subjects he is studying in the course Isaac stated that, "the course consists mostly of Pure Mathematics, Physics and Engineering Drawing". Other subject include Site Spatial Engineering, Engineering Geology, Soil Mechanics and Structural Analysis.

Ever since he was young he was always fascinated by structures and the concept of designing and creating something by himself so that one day he could implement it to the public. He hopes that this course could help him reach his goals so that he would be able to give a "gift" to the public.

MCAST is a College which grants student opportunities to be more hands-on with what they would like to achieve and in fact, Isaac has already carried out hands-on work at an apprenticeship through MCAST's industry contacts.

During this apprenticeship Isaac carried out various tests on rocks, aggregates and limestone in order to identify the different properties of various types of rocks. He also tested them and established the exact load that the rocks are able to withstand. These experiments are carried out using a hydraulic press. The rocks are saturated and then they see how much time is taken and how much force is used before the rock starts to break down.

Since Isaac is only in his second year, it's quite common for him to face hardships throughout the course. When asked about this he spoke out about how tedious it is for him to study the laws that have to do with civil engineering.

When discussing what he likes the most about his course, Isaac mentioned that he "enjoys the fact that there's a lot of mathematics and problem solving throughout the course". He also likes the fact that they get to practice on the software called CAD (Computer Aided Design) which helps them design a whole construction site

digitally, which Isaac thinks it's more efficient rather than using a pencil and paper.

Isaac would like to either continue his studies and get a Master's Degree or else he would like to find a job designing and helping to maintain structural works. He wants to help Malta to have better roads and he wants to try to encourage plans for more sustainable buildings while also proposing new projects that will benefit the public.

Civil Engineering is something that goes unnoticed in Malta but if we do not have civil engineers then we wouldn't have proper buildings across the islands.

The Institute of Engineering and Transport offers the **Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Construction Engineering (Civil Engineering)**. This degree course gives the learners opportunities to explore management skills and technical knowledge associated with the diverse and challenging tasks that are in continuous change with the introduction of new materials to meet zero energy building requirements and various integrated design concepts. In addition, the programme empowers one with the necessary design and evaluation techniques to be able to make professional judgements on technical, social and ethical issues during the planning and execution of construction projects.

The Construction Trade

RHIANYYD DEMANUELE, MCAST STUDENT FOLLOWING A DEGREE PROGRAMME IN JOURNALISM AT MCAST, INTERVIEWS HER FATHER ON THE CONSTRUCTION TRADE

Even though he is now in his fifties, and is getting tired, he still makes sure to make every day count. My father's name is John Demanuele and today, I decided to interview him about the time he worked in the field of construction.

When he was just 16 years old, John was chosen to do an apprenticeship as a construction worker, specifically, a builder. When asked about the apprenticeship, John answered that this was a government scheme during the 1980s where students who were interested in manual work were able to apply for this scheme which involved studying at school and working in that same sector at the same time. He continued explaining that he was an apprentice for three years and then, after successfully finishing the academic course, he continued to work full-time as a builder. When asked what working in construction was like, John answered that the work was quite tiring,however, it was also equally rewarding. With a smile on his face, John uttered that there is no better feeling than seeing the finished product and getting to tell people that you did that yourself.

John also conveyed that he feels disappointed because, nowadays, some people might assume that people who work in this trade are not well-educated,which is not the case. He went on to say that every job is equally important and no job should be disregarded. He also remarked that although he chose to pursue this trade, he still feels that he had gotten a good education and he still had the opportunity to study. He continued by saying that during his three-year apprenticeship, he went to school twice a week whilst he went to work as an apprentice three times a week.

I went on to ask him whether they studied core subjects like Mathematics during their apprenticeship. Whilst letting out a small laugh, John answered: "How else were we supposed to learn how to do bills or invoices? We sometimes had to be our own accountants as well!"

When asked if he was ever injured during his work, John immediately answered ''more than once!'' He exclaimed that he and all of his co-workers got hurt at one time or another whilst on duty; ''This work is quite dangerous. We usually used heavy tools, lifted heavy bricks and worked in height so it's no surprise that a lot of people got injured sometimes. Of course, being careful and taking extra pre-caution helps lessen that risk.'' He continued to say that despite all of this, he still thinks that it was worth it and he would definitely do it all over again. John does not work in construction anymore, however he still finds the skills that he gained during those times useful. He went on to say ''I still use those skills in everyday life. Whenever I need to reconstruct something in my own property or my children's, I do it myself and I still enjoy

it. Even though several years passed, I still feel confident in my work and I still have the same satisfied feeling whenever I finish a project, whether it's big or small.''

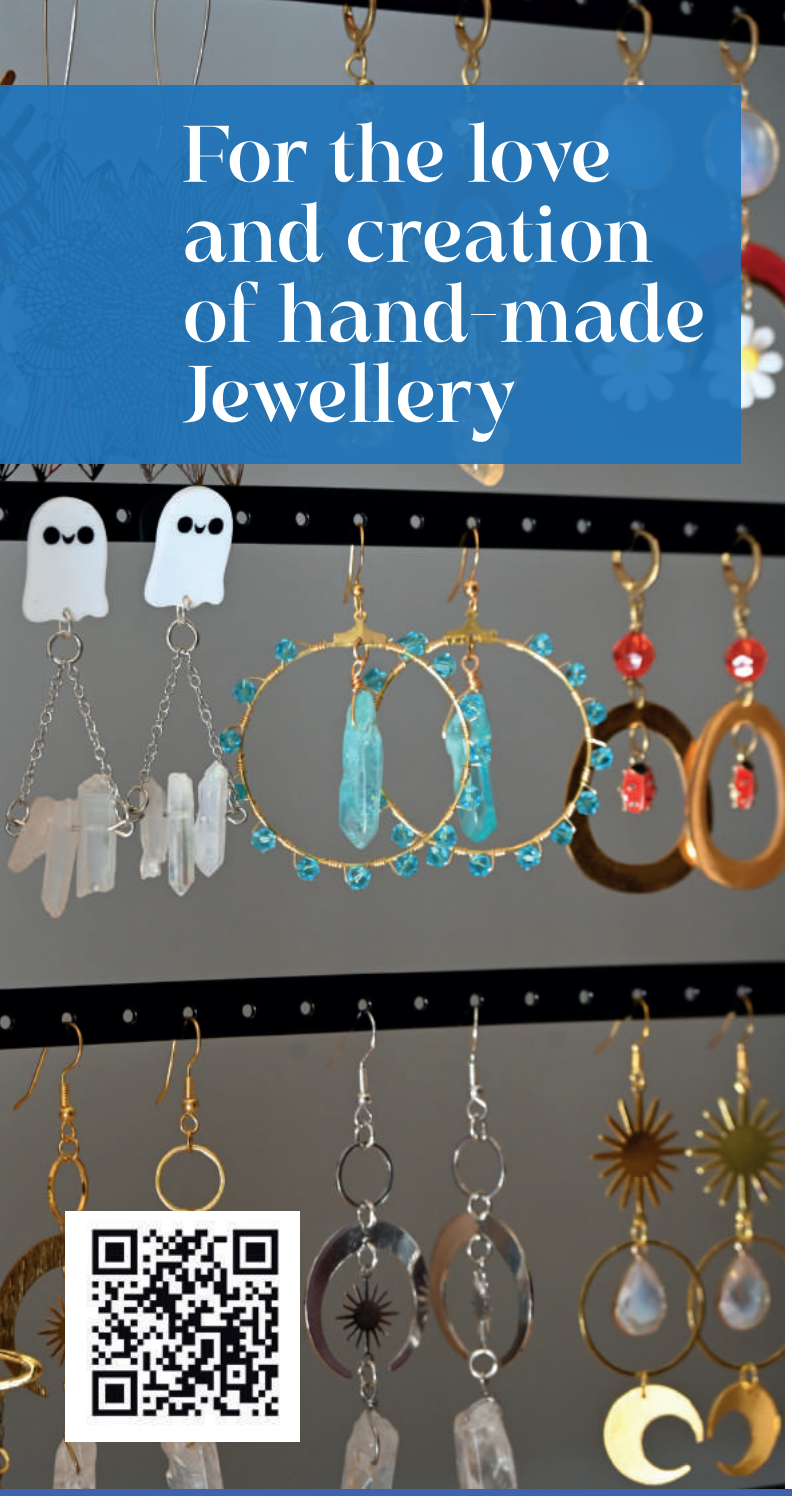
I asked John if there is something that he would like to say to those people who are interested in pursuing a career in trades,and his answer was:

"I encourage them to follow their heart and their passion. I know that these days it is less common for young people to be inspired to work in construction or manual work, but it is a very satisying and important job. Without these people, the world would not be the same. A builder's job is as important as that of a lawyer. No one is better than anyone else".

I hope that when I am in my 50s, I will have the same energy and willpower as John. He truly is an inspiration and I hope that after reading this article, he can be an inspiration to some of you too.

The Institute of Engineering and Transport offers the **Advanced Diploma in Masonry Heritage Skills (Mastru)**. This course of study gives learners the necessary knowledge and skills in the area of stone restoration and conservation. It offers learners the competences they will need in order to be able to analyse and generate solutions concerning typical restoration interventions. The practical training is carried out in College-based workshops and laboratories as well as on heritage sites. Throughout the programme learners will have the unique opportunity to work on historical heritage sites and structures to master maintenance, protection and preservation skills, and apply cleaning and testing techniques.

For the love and creation of hand-made Jewellery



YASMIN MIFSUD CARRIES OUT AN INTERVIEW WITH RACHELLE DEGUARA ON HER LOVE FOR THE CREATION AND DESIGN OF JEWELLERY.

MellowMoon launched in late January 2017 by its founder Rachelle Deguara who describes herself as a multi-passionate human. Her passion and inspiration to start the company and open up her jewellery store called MellowMoon rooted from her want to collect anything that caught her eye in which she could have used for material for any form of arts and crafts.

This then led to her collecting gemstones which raised her curiosity on how they would react to the sun and on their different textures. From here onwards Rachelle was obsessed with gemstones.

Rachelle's philosophy of life is," I love making sense of things, interpreting things differently and seeing how things can evolve." When It comes to designing and creating jewellery, her process of deciding which materials to use consists of going with her gut instinct and she relies on factors such as the materials she has available as well as the client's needs. Her main goal is to create something beautiful with the resources she has. Her favourite material to work with is brass due to its versatility, as one can polish it, allow it to oxidise or even gold plate it. One may be curious on how Rachelle tests the durability of the jewellery she designs. Although different materials require different testing, one way she found to be fool proof is to wear and test the jewellery on herself for two weeks. If it withstands this test of time, then she feels confident enough that it will last for her customers as well.

Every different jewellery piece is created in a unique way. If a customer requests a clay goddess pendant, she would get a chunk of clay, warm it up and start moulding it around the stone. If it's a pair of blood earrings Rachelle will start by conceptualising the different symbols and the relationship between them. She begins to see how to aesthetically balance them out and then starts planning out the materials. The process always differs as it depends on what the customer requests, sometimes clients request certain materials as they are allergic to the original material, so her priority would be different. When she would be working on larger pieces, she starts by collecting information about the client, then she sketches the design. Sometimes, if she does not have enough materials in stock, she sources the materials and then gets the tools to start forming the piece.

Rachelle's business, like many other companies, especially small companies were heavily effected by COVID-19 , but Rachelle did not let this terrible event taint her experience and growth within the company. In fact the time she spent in lockdown and in quarantine allowed her to experiment more and Mellowmoon expanded by incorporating tailoring as part of the process. Her mom is a fantastic tailor and together with her sister, they started handcrafting cotton masks and selling them. She stated that in the case of Mellowmoon she was lucky enough that sales had increased as people were buying more online during the pandemic.
When asked about her most memorable experience ever since she started her business , she stated it was in December 2022 , when all her family got together to help her build her Mellowmoon flagship store in Zurrieq . Her partner used her wood working skills to help her with the building of the shelves and tables and her mother assisted her with the soft furnishing. Another memorable moment was the first sale at the shop or the packaged order she first packed on the desk.

Rachelle has succeeded in keeping her store and her designs original and creative and so loved by her clients. As a jewellery designer she thinks the most important skill is to have a high creativity level and work ethic and she encourages practising and experimenting with different materials. With this practice and experimenting this allows one to develop whatever their mind creates and bring it into reality. After working in the business for five years, Rachelle's advice to small businesses is "Good things take time . See materials as an investment, experiment and trust the process."

The effect of different sheep feeding regimes on the physiochemical characteristics of milk and cheese production

BY JOSEPH JASON ABELA, SENIOR LECTURER AT THE INSTITUTE FOR APPLIES SCIENCES – CENTRE FOR CENTRE OF AGRICULTURE, AQUATICS AND ANIMAL SCIENCES

Malta has a long tradition of herding, with the earliest known references dating back to Punic times. Synonymous with such a tradition is cheesemaking and Malta is no exception to this practice. Throughout the ages, several references can be found to a handful of different cheeses, typically produced in various localities of Malta in different epochs and historical contexts. Probably the most well-known of these is the cheeselet, which in Maltese is called ġbejna. Cheeselets come in three forms: a fresh watery version stored in its own whey, friski tal-ilma; a sun-dried version, moxxa; and a cured version, usually with salt, called maħsula and/or the crushed black pepper version thereof, or tal-bżar, which in turn may also be pickled in vinegar, stored in oil or aged in airtight containers. It is known that this cheese was a staple in Malta for at least the past five hundred years.

According to the NSO Agriculture and Fisheries Census (2014), in Malta, there is a sheep population of around 10,526 heads and, between them, they produce around 1,546 tonnes of milk per year. 95.4% of this milk is transformed into cheeslets while the rest is used for own consumption. From this milk, the sheep farmers supply the market with around 6,000 tonnes of cheeselets per year. Most of the sheep farms are found on the island of Gozo while in Malta most of the farms are found in the southern part of the island. The most common ovine breeds found in Malta are the Comisana, the East Friesian, the Maltese and the Crossbreed.

This study used fifteen sheep farms scattered throughout Malta and Gozo with sheep being fed different regimes. The author studied the effect of four different feeding regimes, their effect on the sheep milk physico-chemical characteristics and the cheese products derived from such milk. The feeding regimes under study are a group which are fed forage and pelleted feed, another group is fed forage, pelleted feed and have access to a grazing land and

another group fed forage, pelleted feed and cut grass. Each group contains 5 farms. Milk samples are collected during early, mid, and late lactation. Samples are taken directly from the pail or milk tank before starting the process to transform this milk into cheeslets, i.e., exactly after milking. These samples are analysed the day after in the laboratory using the Lactoscan SP milk analyser. Data gathered include fat percentage, protein (casein), lactose, freezing point, and salts. All these characteristics can affect the cheese yield and all characteristics can be affected by the type of feed given to the sheep.

Another factor which is important for the cheese quality and taste are the microbial population found in milk and which later during the cheese manufacturing and maturation process have an important role. The microorganisms in question are the Lactobacillus, Lactococcus and the Streptococcus. All three have an important role in transforming the lactose found in the milk into lactic acid. This procedure will reduce the pH of the curd and therefore regulate which microorganisms can continue growing in the cheese during maturation and which affect the taste as well. Another microorganism which is being studied is the amount of E. coli found in milk as this can affect the maturation and longevity of the product. Yeasts are taken in consideration as well as not all moulds contribute to a better cheese.

This study has been ongoing for the past 2 years and the best milk fat results from this research were obtained by the group fed pelleted feed, dried hay and one hour grazing per day. The group fed pelleted feed and dried hay every day got the best results with regard to protein, lactose and salt content in the milk. This means that a good energy:protein ratio in the feed is important as all ingredients found in the raw milk have an important function. The difference between the three groups in terms of salt levels is minimal. Protein and lactose both got a difference of 0.22% and 0.27% respectively between the minimum and maximum levels recorded in this research. The greatest difference was recorded in the fats level, with a difference of 1.2% between the minimum and maximum levels recorded in this research. The highest protein level was 4.7%, lactose 4.47%, salts 0.73% and fats 6.6%. The result represents the mean of the three lactation stages together. Fats obtained a statistically strong significant positive relationship as well of 0.609 with the hay content in the feeding regime. This means that the higher fibre content in the feeding regime will, to a certain extent, result in a higher fat content in the milk. Therefore, reaching the best level of each is the main priority for the farmer to obtain a final product of excellent quality. When milk was transformed into cheese, the best yield came from the milk with the highest fat content as in milk there is always enough casein for cheese production. With regards to microbes this is being studied during this year and although the results looks encouraging, it is too early to discuss the outcome.

From the outcome of this research, the author came to the conclusion that the feeding regime to obtain a better energy:protein ratio, should include enough pelleted feed and soluble fibre which can be digested by the rumen of sheep. Such a change will result in a higher level of

protein, lactose and salts in the sheep milk. This will improve the quality of the milk, as well result in a higher cheese yield. Such improvements can lead to an increase in the farms' profit because it depends mainly on the cheese yield. Cheeselets are an important product for local sheep farmers. Some farmers are even venturing into new products and have started producing hard cheeses with traditional recipes, most of which are at risk of getting lost. For this reason, knowing the composition of the raw milk and the effects of the feeding regime on milk composition will help local farmers improve their management and be more efficient. Being more efficient with regard to feeding, especially on an island like Malta where feed is a scarce resource and must therefore be imported will result in a product with reduced food miles.

The Thrill of Creating

THIRTY YEARS OF TEACHING JEWELLERY-MAKING HAS GIVEN CHARLES PACE BRIFFA A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE ON THE CRAFT. HE SHARES SOME INSIGHTS WITH RAMONA DEPARES

Charles Pace Briffa started studying jewellery in the 1980s. His affinity for the art was immediate and today, more than 30 years on, he is responsible for instilling that same passion and technique in the next generation of Maltese jewellers.

"I always loved art and I was drawn both to jewellery-making and to fine art. Initially, jewellery-making won out for practical reasons, as I thought that it would be a more practical profession, one that had more market demand than there was for artists. I immediately realised that I had made my choice even from a different perspective, as jewellery-making incorporates the artistic element in 3D. I was totally taken by the idea of creating real-life art," Charles starts off.

This is a passion that he tries to instil into students who enrol for the course he teaches at MCAST, and it is clear he is succeeding. The course runs in the evening and currently caters for about 31 students, each of whom are given practical experience from literally the first lesson. Does this mean that those who enrol are expected to already possess an amount of knowledge?

"Not at all. We start from the basics. The students are a mix - some are already working in family workshops, and want to formalise their knowledge with an academic certificate. Others are simply interested in the craft and are starting from scratch," Charles replies.

Whatever the situation, each student walks out of the first lesson having crafter something they can wear. Charles stresses the importance of this, as he believes that the creative aspect is important to foster.

"It still gives me a thrill to hold the final product in hand. The jewellery-making art has evolved considerably through the years, of course. Take filigree, for example - nowadays there isn't much demand for this. And even though it's a quintessentially Maltese tradition, many people will simply buy imported work. There are only a handful of filigree jewellers left," he tells me.

Sad, of course. But Charles also stresses the need to evolve with the market, a belief he makes sure to import to students. The course work starts out using materials like bronze or copper, but students soon progress to silver and start practising how to mix materials so as to be in line with government regulations.

"The course leads to certification, and those who finish it can register with the Consul for Goldsmiths and Silversmiths to start hallmarking their own jewellery. This is how the value of the silver, or gold, is determined, according to the purity of the mix. There is a very specific formula and we cover this thoroughly in the course work," Charles explains.

His students eventually join an established jeweller, but some also choose to further their studies in Birmingham, the UK or Italy. Many others opt to start working independently as jewellery makers, something that Charles says has become more feasible thanks to the popularity of online stores.

"There is an expense to it, of course, as making jewellery does require you to invest in equipment and tools. Working independently also means that you need to be your own business manager and marketing manager. It's not just about making jewellery, it's also important to use social media to your advantage. Someone starting out on their own also has the challenges of working on new materials - such as stainless steel - to contend with. The market has changed considerably since I started, and I like to make sure that students are aware of all the different aspects of the trade," he explains.

His advice to new students is to start small and to build their way up, rather than being discouraged by attempting massive pieces from their first day.

"I love creating large scale pieces for example, but this comes with practice and expertise. At the course we start out by making a ring, but by the end of it the students' knowledge will have scaled up. Once they get the practice in, they can give free rein to their creativity," he concludes.

The **Award in Jewellery Making** is offered on a part-time basis at the Institute for the Creative Arts. This course is an Intermediate Level programme in basic Jewellery design as a three-dimensional art form. It also explores various materials, techniques and art concepts in jewellery design and small-scale metal artworks. The course introduces the student to the fundamental techniques used to make jewellery and small-scale artworks using copper, brass and silver metals and how to create a portfolio of work and design. Further information on this course can be obtained from:
shortcourses.mcast.edu.mt
or shortcourses@mcast.edu.mt
or by calling 2398 7116 / 2398 7777 / 2398 7777

Fish preservation, processing and the war on plastic use

BY KIMBERLY TERRIBILE
SENIOR LECTURER MCAST INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCES - CENTRE FOR AGRICULTURE, AQUATICS AND ANIMAL SCIENCES

The biogeographic location of the Maltese islands at the centre of the Mediterranean Sea acts as a sink for marine species that exist both in the Western and Eastern Mediterranean regions. Locally, consumption of food focuses mainly on mainstream marine species such as Bluefin tuna and seabass, and (sadly) on imported species, particularly salmon. Globally, the ever persistent overuse of mainstream marine species is resulting in tighter species quotas and supply shortages, consequently causing major difficulties for both fishers and seafood processors. This, therefore, calls for responsible consumerism, with underutilised marine species assuming an ever greater importance than ever before. Amongst the underutilized marine species in the Maltese islands, one mentions the bullet tuna or 'tumbrell' in Maltese (Auxis rochei), the Mediterranean moray or 'morina' (Muraena helena), and the Common two-banded seabream or 'xirgien' (Diplodus vulgaris).

The fishing market and the catering industry often focus on species which are in high demand. This particularly happens when consumers are not aware of the rich variety of species that may be found locally. It is therefore imperative that, the younger generation, particularly students who pursue education revolving around following biology, aquaculture or fisheries enrich their knowledge about food security issues, in turn impacting their decisions on food consumption and preferences.

During our lectures that focus on fish processing, quality and safety, students reading for a degree in Fisheries and Aquaculture learn about fish shelf-life, deterioration and its indicators. Parallel to this, students follow practical sessions on the importance of fish dehydration, smoking and fermentation as a means of preventing autolytic spoilage that effects the perishability of fish. Depending on the storage conditions, on the tissue and on the species, fish may undergo lipid oxidation, protein denaturation, vitamin loss, and go off-flavor. Chilling and freezing techniques are therefore essential methods that result in chemical and texture changes, with freezing effecting enzyme activity and having an inhibiting effect on the metabolism and reproduction of microbes.

Historical methods of food fermentation include drying, salting, sugaring or pickling, with drying and salting being the most popular two methods for fish

fermentation. Market forms include whole fish, dressed, butterfly, filleted, steaks, fish sticks (commonly known as fish fingers), breaded, patties, smoked, and in paella form. In addition to this, the fish processing and filleting industries turn out large quantities of fishery waste into 'fishmeal', which is a highly concentrated nutritious feed supplement consisting of high quality protein, minerals and vitamins.

Food preservation and food packaging not only delay spoilage, but also avoid contamination and may, at times, even improve tenderness. While food packaging may serve as a better platform for manufacturers to market their product, it also serves secondary purposes including that of being a barrier to light, oxygen, water vapour and aromas. Food safety and quality regulations, as well as marketing appeal and convenience are resulting in enhancements in seafood packaging. Students following our courses at MCAST, follow practical sessions on packaging methods such as modified atmosphere packaging, and vacuum packaging. In more recent years, students are also being introduced to the concepts of sustainable, biodegradable and edible films and coatings rather than the every-persistent us of plastic packages. Despite them being currently controversial and despite consumer resistance, manufacturers and scientists are exploring other alternatives, moving from a culture of plastic packaging to the use of bioactive seaweed extracts and edible algae, which are suitable for preservation of fish and which may conserve seafood products for longer periods of time. This helps promote the circular economy and a circular management system cultivating a generation that recaptures resources rather than promotes discards.

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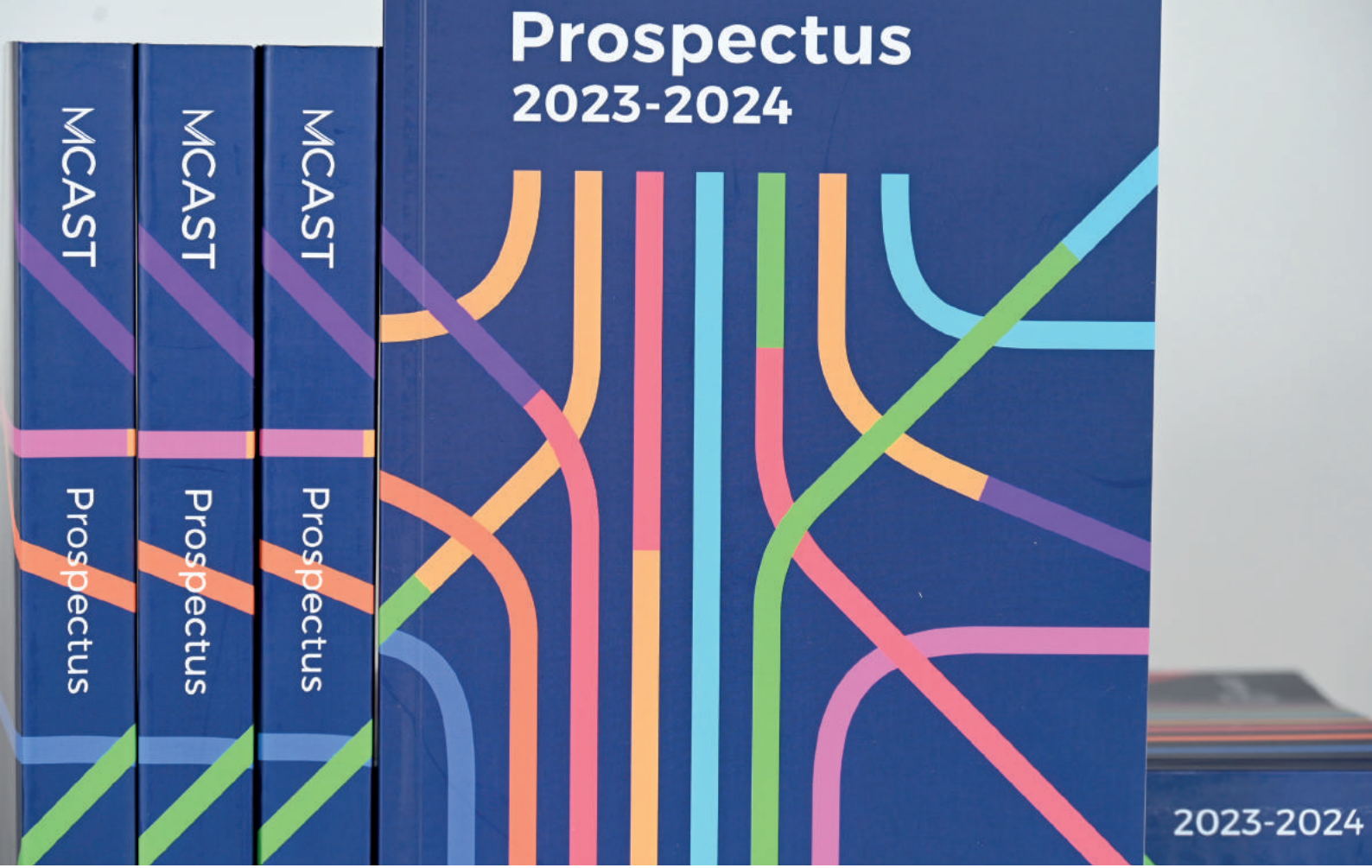


MCAST launches prospectus 2023/24

MCAST officially launched the new Prospectus for the academic year 2023-24 offering 200 courses from introductory level to degree courses. The vocational qualifications offered by the College include a strong element of work-based learning for students to enjoy practical, hands-on learning in various subjects, including creative arts, applied science, engineering, community services, information and communication technology.

The College announced that nine new courses will be offered from October 2023 in response to industry needs:

- Diploma in Early Years
- Higher Diploma in Transportation and Logistics Management
- Bachelor in Conservation (Honours)
- Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Digital Games Development
- Master of Science in Applied Environmental Science (General)
- Master of Science in Environmental and Water Resource Management
- Master of Science in Environmental Resource Management
- Master of Science in Urban Environmental Science Management
- Master in Conservation

Launching the new course offer, the Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, Clifton Grima, said, "Investing in education and skills is a priority. We are now seeing the first cohorts of students who chose vocational subjects successfully progressing to higher education. Our students need to develop skills to be creative, dynamic, problem-solvers, able to work in a group, self-direct and learn new things. The range of courses the College offers is impressive and a clear message to students to make the most of these learning opportunities."

MCAST and MG2i officials join Maltese trade delegation in Ghana

MCAST and MG2i officials have joined the Maltese trade delegation to Ghana. The business delegation was led by the Hon. Dr Ian Borg, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade. The trade mission visited Accra and Ghana and aimed to provide Malta-based businesses with the opportunity to expand into new markets or grow existing business relationships.

MCAST was represented by Stephen Vella, Deputy Principal of Business Development and Communications and Ing. Stephen Sammut, Director of the Institute of Engineering and Transport.

Deputy Principal Stephen Vella said, "We are committed to continue on its path to becoming an internationally leading vocational and training higher-education institution. Our international community is growing yearly, and we intend to keep strengthening our networks, placing Malta and MCAST as leaders in quality education."

MG2i assists companies' needs with constant upskilling and continuous professional development by building tailor-made courses for existing employees to fit specific requirements. MG2I trains workforces from all over the world through its network of international partners.

MCAST and the Western Regional Council sign Collaborative Agreement

MCAST and the Western Regional Council signed a memorandum of understanding which will strengthen the collaborative relationship between both institutions.

This collaboration agreement ensures that the area of vocational education, including life-long learning both on a full-time and part-time basis is strengthened.

Moreover, MCAST students shall now be able to follow internships and work placements with the Western Regional Council.

Speaking during an event MCAST Principal and CEO Professor Joachim James Calleja highlighted the importance of such an agreement in providing more internship opportunities for College students which will help them,

“become seasoned industry relevant professionals in their future careers”.

Areas of collaboration between MCAST and the Western Regional Council include communications, marketing, design, facilities and other project or services.

MCAST alumni successfully pass the Engineering Pre Warrant Qualification Course

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

This event underlined the alumni’s hard work and recognizes their important contributions to the field of engineering both nationally and internationally.

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

ASIIN noted that the Pre Warrant Qualification Course (PWQC) leads to results that confirm the engineering capabilities of the applicants and regarded this as “a reasonable justification for their eligibility for the award of the Engineering Warrant”.

The local Board of Engineers unanimously

approved the conclusions of the ASIIN's aforementioned report and confirmed its position in line with the ASIIN's recommendations.

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

New Frontiers Research on Ocean Observation – MCAST takes the Lead

The Journal of Marine Science and Engineering is an international open access journal reporting on marine science. A call for submission of papers to a special issue entitled "New Frontiers Research on Ocean Observation" has been recently published.

This initiative bears the MCAST flag through Aldo Drago, Professor in Oceanography at the Institute of Engineering and Transport, who launched the concept of the special issue, and is leading the guest editors composed of high profile scientists from Europe.

MCAST is engaging to invest in oceanography both academically through dedicated courses, and in research mode by engaging its academics in joint international collaborative funded projects. Our country still lacks a permanent observing system to measure key essential ecosystem variables. MCAST is contributing to support the design and implementation of the national marine observing system for the Maltese Islands in its various aspects concerning governance, infrastructure and the skilled workforce needed to implement and maintain the system.

Donation of EPOS (Electronic Point of Sale) Complete System to IBMC

On Thursday 19th January 2023, the Institute of Business Management and Commerce was presented by a generous donation of a complete EPOS system by Mr Gian Giorgio Galea, the Managing Director of JG Systems Malta - Electronic Cash Registers and POS Systems situated in Paola.

The donation included a new EPOS system, a cash register, a hand-held scanner, 12

labelling machines and spare rolls and ink pads, a till printer, a back office/order fulfilment printer, keyboard, spare rolls for both printers as well as the software to be able to manage any retail operation, from a simple shop, restaurant, to a multi-storey sales and inventory establishment.

Furthermore, Mr Galea out of his own time, presented a two-hour training demonstration to six members of the Institute's lecturing staff, namely Mr Paul Camilleri, Ms Nakita Grima, Mr Karl Vella, Ms Cristina Mizzi Alessandro, Mr Mike Scerri and Ms Mariella Grech.

Ing Karl Camilleri, Deputy Director and Mr Andrew Galea, Director of IBMC were also present for the donation. JG Systems also donated 5 licences worth over €250 each to the Institute for the use of the EPOS.

Mr Galea insisted about the importance that MCAST students should know about the flexibility and multiple functions that EPOS systems now possess and how these machines are essential in the day-to-day running of any business requiring inventory management, stock control, cash reconciliation and flexibility in sales management and order taking. These systems are able to work via Wifi and are the latest applications on the market.

JG Systems offers a complete service including sales, repairs, software and application management of EPOS machines.

This assistance is instrumental for MCAST to reach it aims and objectives, which is to prepare and train, educate and ensure that students are able to contribute to industry and society when leaving the College.

First Excellent Mediterranean Net Project Seminar held at MCAST

MCAST held the Blue Economy Seminar on MCAST Main Campus in Paola. The seminar was organised under Interreg Italia-Malta Project MEN (Excellent Mediterranean Net). Blue Economy was the first seminar out of the six seminars committed under the project that covers various sectors, including Environment Protection, Health and Quality of Life, and Services for Sustainable Tourism.

As a project partner, the College received 40 Italian interns for a 6-month mobility each year.The Blue Economy seminar, provided attending MCAST students with knowledge on the importance of cross-border work mobility through stable networks by listening to the key expert speakers and understanding the experiences of Italian interns who are undertaking these work mobilities in Malta.

The main objective of the Interreg Italia-Malta Project MEN is to generate knowledge on the Italian and Maltese labour market and establish a cross-border network to support the supply and demand of employment opportunities within the main sectors included in the project.

Other Italian project partners include Municipality of Acireale, as the acting lead partner, ITS Archimede, ITS Steve Jobs, Itaca, GAL terre di Aci, and ITS Mobilita Transporti.

MCAST joins the newly launched EU4Dual European University Alliance

MCAST has joined a consortium of Universities to create the first European University Alliance co-funded by the European Union ERASMUS+ programme. The EU4Dual European University, a Centre of Excellence on Dual Education,

will bring together academia and industry to collaborate in offering higher education programmes with a strong element of work-based learning.

The EU4DUAL European University Alliance brings together nine European multi-disciplinary universities or universities of applied sciences from Austria, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Spain and Malta. The project also includes companies from each participating country that want to promote innovative learning and the availability of future talent. MCAST has established a strong network of industry partners, some of whom will participate in this initiative.

The kick-off event of the Alliance was held in February 2023 at the Microkatu Campus of Savonia University of Applied Sciences in Kuopio, Finland.

MCAST presents Award in Communications to Malta Police Force members

MCAST held an award ceremony celebrating the achievements of 68 members of the Malta Police Force after obtaining their Award in Communication and Presentation from the College's Institute of Community Services (ICS).

The study programme provided the trainees with knowledge and skills on various subjects, including presentation techniques using different means of communication, public relations approaches, radio presenting as well as training for television appearances.

The College has a three-year agreement with the Malta Police Force to deliver the Award in Communications to 270 participants. Another nine student groups will be following the course in the coming months.

During the ceremony, Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation Clifton Grima explained, " The collaboration between MCAST and the police force is an example of how we can work together to encourage learning at the workplace for the benefit of employees. The private and public sectors need to encourage and incentivise professional development and lifelong learning. Courses such as this help improve personal growth as well while also improving career prospects. I congratulate you all on completing this course and

you all on completing this course and encourage you to keep taking advantage of the many learning opportunities available."

The Institute of Community Services also offers the Diploma in Security, Enforcement, and Protection, aimed toward students aspiring towards careers within the Malta Police Force and other related security agencies.

MCAST launches the STREAM Project

MCAST held an event to launch the STREAM Project. STREAM aspires to network key local players in satellite research to exploit synergies, and capitalise on past project deliverables. This forms part of the national research and innovation strategy to enhance access to and sharing of space-based data.

Speaking during the event, MCAST lecturer and project leader Professor Aldo Drago, said that there are numerous stakeholders that will benefit from the project's services including, "researchers using and exploiting satellite data, scientists, academics, students, and other foreign collaborators".

The project execution will be led by the scientific and technical inputs from the newly established oceanography section at the Institute of Engineering and Transport (IET) within the College.

The Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) Chairman Mr Tonio Portughese said, "we are proud to participate in the STREAM project. A project that brings together academia and private industry together, something which aligns with the vision of MCST. We are committed to promoting space-related projects for the benefit of the community, students, and private entities".

The STREAM project is an MCST Space Research Fund project intended to bring satellite earth observations closer to users by providing data on demand with access through dedicated downstream services over smartphones and iPads.

Partners in this project include MST Audiovisual Ltd and THINK Design Ltd.

MCAST Seminar for Nurse Clinical Mentors

MCAST has recently held a seminar for nurse clinical mentors on campus in Paola. Clinical nurses currently employed at the College, lecturers, and prospective mentors attended the event.

During the seminar, a number of panel discussions with key stakeholders within this industry were held. Clinical mentors share a vital responsibility in undergraduate nursing education because they act as gatekeepers to the profession and safeguard ongoing excellence in the delivery of patient-centered care whilst making a significant contribution to the future development of the nursing profession.

The seminar provided useful knowledge and information to practitioners which will help boost the BSc Nursing course offered at the College by helping clinical mentors carry out their roles more effectively and ensuring that a high-quality learning experience is provided to all nursing students. The seminar also served to strengthen the relationship between nursing academic staff and industry-practicing clinical mentors.

Indian High Commissioner visits MCAST

Ms. Gloria Gangte, High Commissioner of India to Malta visited MCAST.

During her visit to Main Campus in Paola, Ms Gangte met and held fruitful talks with the College Principal and CEO Professor Joachim James Calleja, and Deputy Principal for Business Development and Communications Mr Stephen Vella.

While touring the MCAST Campus Ms Gangte, met Indian students currently following courses at the College and congratulated them the best of success in their future endeavors.

MCAST lecturer's project nominated for the Engineering Excellence Awards 2022

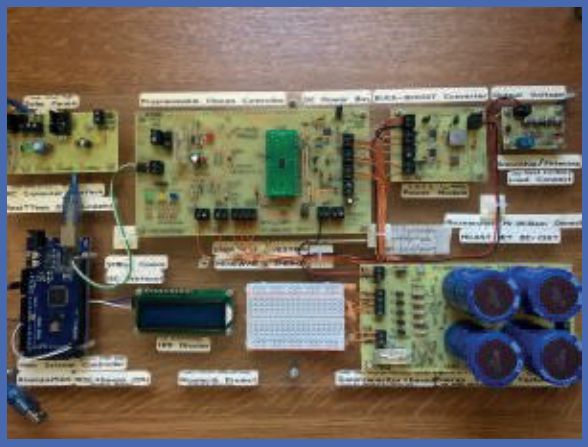
Mr William Dimech, a senior lecturer at the Institute of Engineering and Transport (IET) within MCAST has had his engineering research project nominated for the Engineering Excellence Awards 2022.

The nominated engineering project namely, 'Design and Implementation of a Solar Powered Programmable Electronic Charge Controller for Supercapacitor-based Energy Storage Technology and Power Backup Management System', has taken Mr Dimech two years of research and work to complete.

The project which was part of Mr Dimech's Research Masters' with MCAST, centers around the development of a sustainable system to charge supercapacitors from solar panels. The supercapacitors will eventually replace the chemical batteries used in weather stations that are remotely located.

Through such an experience, MCAST academic Mr William Dimech shall gain the opportunity to further his knowledge about solar panels, charge controllers, and new technology for energy storage. Academically, the research project will be presenting an opportunity for further study by trying to find more applications to the system created.

Mr Dimech looks forward to participating and collaborating with other MCAST academics and educational institutions on more research projects.



Celebrating the first graduates of the Master in Vocational Education Applied Research 4.0

BY REUBEN MIFSUD – DEPUTY DIRECTOR CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

MCAST is proud of its first cohort that graduated with a Masters in Vocational Education Applied Research 4.0 during the graduation ceremony of Wednesday 30th November. Besides the MVEAR graduates, the ceremony also celebrated graduates from 8 other Master degree programmes offered by MCAST.

The pride of having the first cohort of MVEAR graduates at master's level is further amplified when one considers that the group consisted of MCAST educators from different institutes as well as educators from other educational institutions. The participants' varied backgrounds made the sharing of practices truly an enriching experience. Through this master's programme, MCAST is proud to be offering yet another course targeting the national priorities and giving opportunities of lifelong learning to educators in general and educators of VET in particular.

National Sports Symposium

MCAST kicked off a two-day National Sports Symposium at the MCAST Paola campus on 23 and 24 February. Over 120 sports professionals, students and educators are participating in this event organised by the College's Institute of Community Services (ICS).

Titled 'Challenging the Status Quo: Inspiring a Legacy Beyond the 2023 Major Sports Events', the symposium provides an opportunity to showcase local and foreign sports best practices whilst offering the possibility to discuss common sports challenges.

Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation Clifton Grima explained, "The major sports events which will be organised in Malta, particularly GSSE 2023 and the UEFA U19, can be a game-changer for the future of Maltese sports. MCAST plays a crucial role in sports education, including this initiative to have meaningful conversations with all stakeholders. Everyone's participation matters."

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

International speakers included Alexandra Doncila, the UEFA Academy Programme Coordinator; Raymond Conzemius, Sports Director Luxembourg Olympic and Sport Committee and Tom Clift, Head University of Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Venue and Village Logistics.

Around 500 students follow sports courses at the College's Institute of Community Services. MCAST offers various sport-related programmes, including a Level 6 Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Sport, Exercise, and Health, a Level 5 Advanced Diploma in Sport, and a Level 3 Diploma in Sport.

The Partner Schools Project

BY AMANDA CASSAR

The need for more opportunities in Vocational Education and Training (VET) has been on the rise due to the high demand of skilled workers. The introduction of My Journey project in the secondary schools in Malta offered students the option to choose the vocational route, with the prospect to further their vocational education at MCAST. However, MCAST has seen the need to bridge the gap between compulsory education and post-secondary education by introducing the Partner School Project run by MCAST Centre for Learning and Employability (CLE) in collaboration with the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR).

The project started in 2017 with St. Benedict College, Kirkop, by giving the opportunity to secondary school students to achieve an MQF Level 3 Diploma in IT or a Diploma in Engineering. This partnership was created with the main aim to complement the vocational education followed during school hours in addition to the MCAST units, followed in the afternoon, which together, will complete the Diploma in their VET subject chosen in Year 9.

Since then, the project kept on growing and at present, over 170 students are participating in five secondary schools across Malta: St. Benedict College Kirkop, Malta Visual and Performing Arts, St. Thomas More College Zejtun and Santa Lucija, St. Margaret College Verdala. These schools in collaboration with MCAST, offer different MQF Level 3 diplomas: Diploma in IT, Diploma in Engineering, Diploma in Media, Diploma in Art & Design and Diploma in Performing arts.

Thanks to this initiative, students have an opportunity for a comprehensive understanding of their vocational route and equipped for the industry. With the Partner School Project, the students have a better vision and preparedness for their future studies and career.

In today's fast changing world, it is imperative that students understand the needs of the labour market and the skills shift, to choose wisely their career path and finally find opportunities for education and training. The Partner School Project is an opportunity to enhance the vocational education and training to develop employability, and personal and social skills leading to better transition to a skilled workforce.

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