



MCAST

**ANNUAL
REPORT**
2021



MCAST

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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MESSAGE FROM

The Hon Dr Clifton Grima

Minister for Education, Youth, Sport, Research and Innovation

Malta's economic growth imposed a new mindset in the acquisition of skills and competences required by the labour market. The so-called traditional jobs are meeting the challenges of technology and innovation and the new jobs emerging from a knowledge society require new forms of education and training.

MCAST is Malta's response to these challenges. With over 190 full-time and over 300 part-time courses, the College is meeting these challenges with a clear strategy and an effective management and lecturing structure. This annual report is evidence to the enormous work that this public institution is fulfilling. It is to the credit of all workers at MCAST that employers are constantly searching for talent which has as its core element work-based learning. This is natural in an age where the 21st century skills are acquired through workplace learning.

I am particularly happy to observe regular dialogue between the College and employers. This is leading to two important aspects in the running of MCAST. The first is the writing of programmes that truly reflect the need of the sectors; and secondly, employers are finding access to the College much easier so that learners become efficient and effective workers in the shortest time possible.

It is my strategic orientation as Minister for Education to ensure that learning at the different levels of education is at all times relevant to the future career prospects of our young citizens and their quality of life. Education today is constantly under the threat of innovation and change. It is therefore institutions like MCAST and others that provide roadmaps that can assist educators and policymakers to design curricula that, on the one hand, attract learners to formal education while

the formal learning process, in turn, encourages them to become lifelong learners.

A quick look at this report shows that the College is moving in this direction. The strategic objectives for the period 2022-2027 as well as the clinical approach to achieve these goals indicate that this is an education institution in constant transformation whether this is pedagogy, infrastructure, quality processes, management as well as its governance and particularly its relations with all stakeholders. This last aspect is of paramount importance to my government.

As a public institution, we are obliged to serve people and to give each learner his or her entitlement. Learners and workers are the College's key clients, and I am pleased to note through this report that both groups are being served with a wide variety of education and training opportunities at all levels of our national qualifications framework with a particular emphasis on those levels that lead to technician and other semi-professional grades. In addition, MCAST is also growing into a higher education institution as requested by industry and jobs in the public and private sector.

Creating pathways to learning is a benefit to all learners. It avoids dead ends and gives each individual the space to grow as a learner and as a worker. This is what our country demands from our education system: an environment conducive to personal and professional growth and active participation in society for all its members.

As Minister for Education, I am determined to see vocational and professional education and training gain more visibility in our elementary and secondary schools so that all our children are given the skills and competences needed for their future based on their individual talent. This annual report shows that MCAST is geared to open its doors to a larger number of learners. It is time to change our mindset on jobs and offer to hundreds of young people new opportunities for employment. Similarly, the College is well equipped for the upskilling and the reskilling of our adult workforce. The Ministry will ensure adequate financial support to meet these challenges.



FOREWORD BY

Professor Ian Refalo

President of the MCAST Board of Governors

No one can stop learning. Life has shown me that experience is the best teacher in life. As a seasoned professor, I have come to appreciate the invaluable contribution that workers give to our quality of life. Therefore, when I was asked to act as President of the Board of Governors of MCAST I accepted this opportunity with open hands as I wish to continue supporting learners to become quality workers.

MCAST is growing into a very important education institution in Malta. More students are attracted to learning by doing. Employers, on the other hand, are offering new opportunities for working while studying. This combination of learning and working is the College's core business. As this annual report reveals, during the year under review, many activities involved our educators and our industry partners. Although in an ideal situation face-to-face meetings would have been more attractive, technology has been a positive platform for important gatherings that took place between the two sets of stakeholders.

Education has always been the platform for careers and quality of life. A person's identity, status and recognition largely depend on his or her education and the roles played during their working life. In fact, the challenge starts when

formal education ends. This has been my experience as a lawyer. What I have learnt at universities served to help me understand and meet the challenges in courtrooms and in lecture rooms when teaching university students. You learn while you work. You grow while you work, and this experience will carry you to higher goals and in many respects to a better quality of life.

This is what I augur all learners and workers that choose MCAST as their education and training institution. Over these last two years, during graduation ceremonies I have witnessed several happy faces of individuals who have accomplished their education dreams even if they entered the College with minimum or no qualifications whatsoever. This is, in my opinion, the greatest merit of this College: giving opportunities to learners whom the system of education (and often, unfortunately, family life) has failed during their early years of education. This report shows a myriad of activities that took place spread during the worst of times when all conventional and traditional systems of learning had to be readjusted and be served remotely. Even my experience as lecturer has not been easy. However, we have managed to overcome several obstacles and to ensure that learners receive the education that they deserve.

I wish to thank the members of the Board of Governors for their support as well as the Principal and all members of staff for their unfailing commitment towards the College.

2021 – A YEAR UNDER REVIEW

AN INTRODUCTION BY



Professor Joachim James Calleja

MCAST Principal and CEO

The experience away from campus has not been easy for anyone, particularly the lecturing staff who had to ensure that learning takes place in a qualitative manner. A policy backing learning processes supported everyone to deliver knowledge and skills in a more structured manner. Our governance and management systems have also enabled us to make the right decisions at the right time. With regular meetings of the Board of Governors led by Professor Refalo, we were able to keep members informed of the challenges we faced and acquire their direction to ensure that students get their full entitlement. Their support together with the unfailing support of our Line Ministry ensured that students finished the academic year 2020-2021 successfully and started a new year on a high note.

The most challenging factor for a College such as MCAST is the interaction between education and training on campus and the experience in the workplace. MCAST is about learning by doing; it is about integrating students during their life on campus with specific work environments, which in themselves are conducive to learning.

During the year under review, we have experienced days away and days on campus. It was quite prophetic way back in 2018 to convene a working group on AI to draft a strategy in which the College will invest a part of its applied research and innovation objective. The vision at that time was quickly implemented in March 2020 when the pandemic forced our hands to physically close the College and move to online learning. It was thanks to our experts in AI that we managed to guarantee business continuity at all levels but in particular with regard to students' entitlement to their education and training.

Indeed, Freshers' Week organised in October 2021 was perhaps one of the most significant events held on campus. Hundreds of students actively participated during that week which included events on our campus in Mosta and in Gozo. One could witness again the vibrant life on campus. It was the first sign of normality for a College that hosts over 8,000 full and part-time students every year. It was also the first time in over two years that visitors were able to mix with students, participate in debates, play games, share their experiences and interact with industry and non-governmental organisations stands all over the campus. My appreciation for such a massive

activity goes to the Student Council (KSM), the department for Events and Communication as well as to MG2i for sponsoring several features of the week. The focus was on learners' well-being, their education and training targets as well as their socialisation and future career prospects. Overall, it was a hectic but rewarding week for all.

This annual report gathers the key events that took place at the College during the year under review. For the first time we have organised this report under several overarching sectors which together combine learning, working and socialisation including relations with our increasing number of international students and events.

The learner is at the centre of our core business. The College offers support to all students irrespective of their capability and ambition. Our resources are spread into several units and facilities including the Learning Support Unit, the Inclusive Education Unit as well as a very well equipped library and resource centre. By the time this annual report is tabled in Parliament, the College has a new state-of-the-art Library and Resource Centre. This has attracted an increasing number of students using the library on a regular basis. Our ambition is to extend the opening hours, already happening on at least three days per week, to a 24/7 library for the public. The number of students benefitting from our services evidences our focus on learners. All Institutes are geared to provide the best education and training programmes. A review of each Institute including our Gozo Centre illustrates that activities are on the increase; participation in work places is growing and the presence of industry on campus is bearing fruit.

The increasing number of MoUs signed in 2021 and the revamp of our Work-based Learning Office, now under a new and highly committed director and her team, evidence the links with our stakeholders. Relations with stakeholders make or break the business of this College. In particular, employers are our key participants in the overall learning process of every student and worker. MCAST is moving towards a paradigm shift in our understanding of the superficial line that divides learning from working. Through the activities listed in this annual report, the reader can understand better why at this College working and learning go together at all levels and preferably at all times of the year. It is through such interaction that most students succeed, particularly those that the system of education has disheartened to the extent that they need to restart their education and training journey at MCAST.

It is for this reason that both in our Strategic Plan 2022-2027 (launched in November 2021) and in our regular meetings with higher authorities we stress the need to finish the campus infrastructure. The building of new Institutes for the Creative Arts and the Community Services is now long overdue. It is true that since Malta's accession to the EU, this College has benefitted from over €100 million as well as national funds to upgrade its premises, equipment and learning material. However, unless we sustain this growth we cannot claim to be a College of the 21st Century. Our students deserve a physical environment in which learning becomes an attractive and productive activity. Moreover, now that we have several state-of-the-art buildings it would be counterproductive to keep old and dysfunctional buildings next to them. Students and

staff members in such buildings feel demotivated and deprived of their right to proper infrastructure commensurate with the advancements in technology as well as the standards of educational institutions in Malta and Gozo.

2021 has also seen a leap of quality in the running of our company MG2i. The activities run by the company have supported several activities that the College organises from time to time including Freshers' Week and Open Days. In addition, the company has increased the College's visibility abroad and an increasing number of international students are now enrolled in the College. Over 18% of our student cohort are international students coming from 96 different countries in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, the Far East, America, Canada and South America.

Research has also seen huge leaps of quality particularly in the increase in the number of lecturers undertaking specific topics. The Research Expo which attracted a large number of participants and the regular publication of the Journal of Applied Research are regular features of this Unit feeding into the students' choice of their dissertation projects and thesis at the higher education level.

A College with such a high population of students and staff members requires a robust administrative and governing structure. The report illustrates that over these last few years both sectors have been strengthened and today we can ensure quality in our service, high levels of due diligence and accountability, and transparency in all processes of recruitment, procurement and stakeholders' relations. A culture of system operating procedures has filtered at all levels of the College. Although there is and will always be room for improvement, the foundations

have been laid and the standards set. This is thanks to the continuous support and diligence of all Deputy Principals as well as their teams and the lecturing staff both those on full-time and those on part-time assignments.

As a community college, we are now proud to support all students to undertake community work with NGOs and other organisations. The MCAST Students' Council has seen a new lease of life. Today it is ever more active and participative. Students are contributing to building a mindset that helps them understand better their voluntary role in society particularly with the vulnerable, the marginalised and the underprivileged. As a public funded organisation, MCAST believes that it is its obligation to enhance society in different ways. It is our philosophy to pay back to society with our expertise, our work, our talent and our desire to see all persons and organisations succeed. This formation is at the heart of this College and I augur that it will be the College's brand for the years to come.

OUR COLLEGE

AT A GLANCE

Students

7818

full-time and
part-time students



96

student
nationalities



1359

international
students

THE LARGEST
**VOCATIONAL
COLLEGE**
IN MALTA

2753 graduates
2021

42,315 alumni



Staff

1154

academic staff

476

administrative staff



2.6 MILLION

research funding

OUR GOVERNANCE

AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

MCAST Board —
of Governors

Strategy —

Data Analysis —

Data Protection —

Board Members



Top Row from left: Dr Amanda Bezzina, Ms Louisa Grech (board secretary), Prof Ian Refalo (President), Mr Brian Farrugia, Ms Marisa Xuereb and Prof Mark Borg (Deputy President).

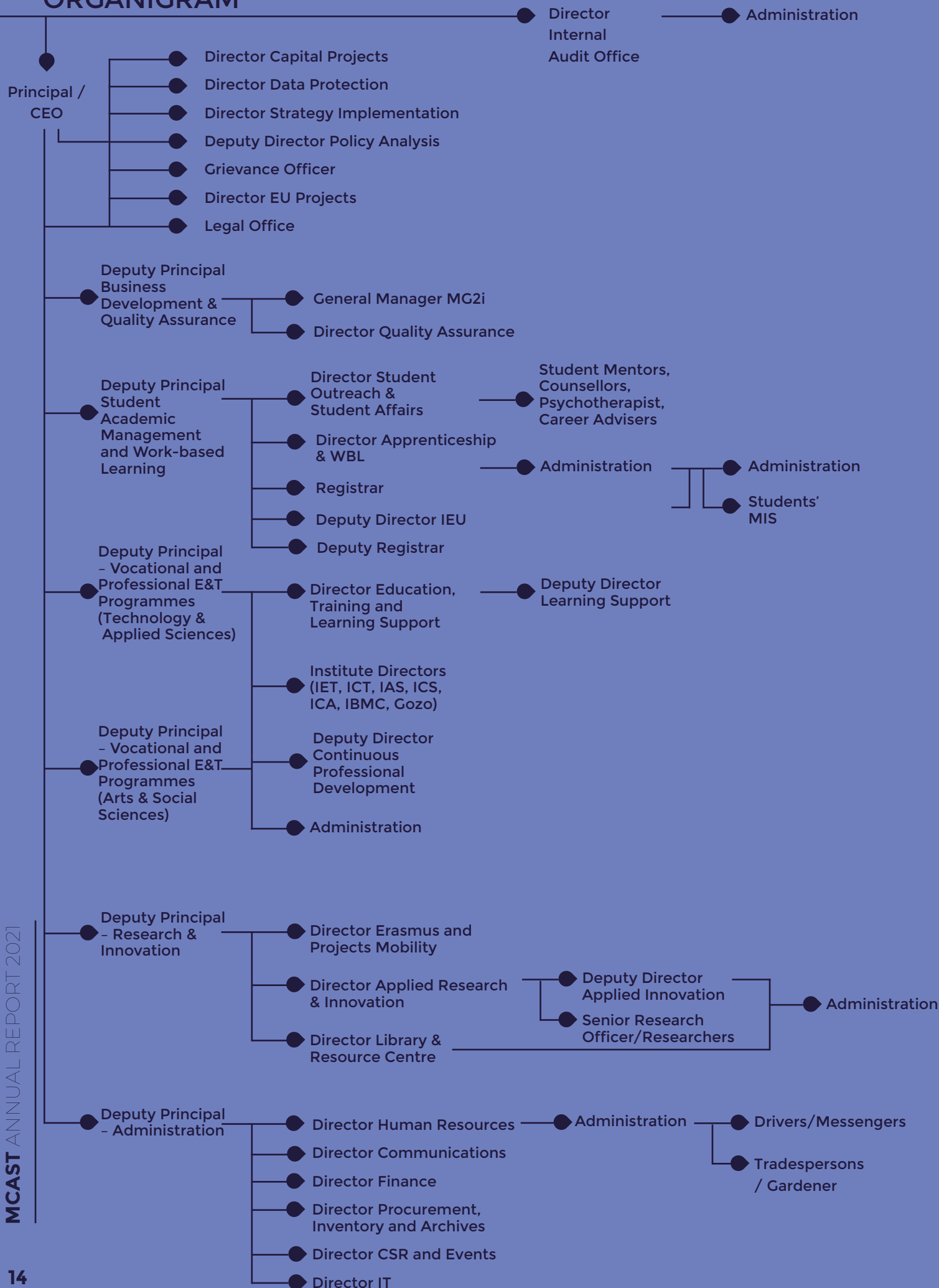
Bottom Row from left: Ms Rhoda Garland, Ms Marietta Lanzon, Prof Joachim James Calleja (College Principal and CEO), Ms Davina Sammut Hili and Mr Kurt Farrugia.

Principal and CEO with Deputy Principals



From left: Mr Stephen Vella, Mr Ronald Curmi, Dr Tatyana Chircop, Prof Joachim James Calleja, Dr Mario Cardona, Mr Philip Vella and Ing Pierre Dalmás.

MCAST BOARD OF GOVERNORS ORGANIGRAM



STRATEGY

During 2021 the Strategy Implementation Office oversaw the wrapping up of the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan and the planning for a subsequent strategic document.

In June and November 2021, the Board of Governors was informed of the progress made towards the targets set by the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan. The final report was presented on 25th January 2022. This report brought to a conclusion the monitoring process of the Strategic Plan 2019-2021. Any outstanding or ongoing initiatives dovetail into the Strategic Plan 2022-2027 and will continue to be monitored and reported through the respective monitoring mechanism.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic created ripple effects even in the targets set for 2021. This meant that some targets could not be fully addressed while others were speeded up. Challenges and delays resulted in the infrastructural targets for the MCAST Main Campus. Similarly, additional efforts need to be made to recoup the focus on international placements, students' placements abroad and the



hosting of bespoke training events.

In January 2021, circulars were sent out to all students and staff for the internal consultation to start on the Strategic Plan. Twelve internal thematic consultation sessions were held virtually, focusing on Inclusion, Staff Development, Infrastructure and Facilities, e-Learning and EdTech, Teaching, Learning and Assessment, Equality and Equity, Research and Innovation, Communication, Work-based Learning, Student Support Services and Quality Culture. More than





330 staff and students participated in these sessions.

Based on the internal consultation process, the first draft Strategic Plan was presented to the MCAST Board of Governors on 25th March 2021. Approval was sought to proceed with further consultation. Cabinet approval was achieved on 3rd May 2021.

The public consultation phase of the Strategic Plan 2022-2027 kicked off on 20th May 2021 with a ministerial press conference held at the MCAST Gozo Campus. The consultation period was closed off on 1st July 2021.

During this period, the draft document was available on the Government public consultation website and on the MCAST website. In this phase, MCAST widened the dialogue with stakeholders and the general public through meetings, employers' consultation events,

bilateral meetings with social partners, consultation with the Ministry for Education and policy stakeholders and staff (lecturing and administration) and students' satisfaction surveys.

Feedback was received through an anonymous online questionnaire, via a generic email address and during the events themselves. More than 1,720 persons provided feedback through one of these channels. All the feedback received was reviewed and consolidated in an updated draft Strategic Plan. This was presented to the Board of Governors on 28th July 2021.

The new Strategic Plan 2022-2027 will take forward these ongoing targets, build on the achievements of the past few years and focus on transforming VPET into a more community-based, sustainable, future-oriented and dynamic option to upskill and reskill the labour force.



The Development of the MCAST Strategic Plan 2022 - 2027



Internal Thematic Consultations contributed towards the first draft of the Strategic Plan 2022-2027



The draft document was approved by the Board of Governors on 25th March and by Cabinet on 3rd May



The Public Consultation was launched on the 20th May until the 1st July



After the feedback was consolidated, the Board of Governors approved the final text on the 28th July



The new Strategic Plan was launched during an event held on the 28th July

**January
2021**

**March - May
2021**

**May
2021**

**July
2021**

**November
2021**



**Internal Thematic
Consultation
Sessions**



**Staff and
Students
consulted**



**Persons involved in
the Public
Consultation
Process**

The new Strategic Plan 2022-2027 is available on the MCAST web portal.

DATA ANALYSIS

Established in 2020, the Data Analysis Unit (DAU) represents the MCAST core hub for processing internal and external stakeholders' queries focusing on statistics and data requests with a particular focus on students.

In 2021, the DAU was responsible for producing and disseminating MCAST official statistical reports to national key actors such as the National Statistics Office, Jobsplus, NCPE and the Malta

Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA). To align MCAST data with key external stakeholders at EU level, the DAU collaborated with the Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Learning Analytics for Education Project (DEAP) and the European Graduate Tracking Initiative (EGTI) for testing data strategies and emerging research questions.

The DAU assessed potential pre-awarding and post-awarding labour

supply gaps at national level through the analysis of its own student population. The Unit actively provided data to internal decision-makers for them to formulate research-based policy recommendations and define key interventions for strategy implementation accordingly.

The DAU provided answers to more than 50 parliamentary questions, ministerial requests, and internal and external on-demand data requests. The

DAU was also responsible for facilitating the dissemination of research instruments among the student population and for liaising with researchers for the provision and safeguarding of data. In 2021, the DAU guaranteed the dissemination of more than 30 research instruments.

DATA PROTECTION

In 2021, the MCAST Data Protection Office focused its attention on two major issues: the consolidation of the MCAST Data Protection Policy and Procedures and the carrying out of audits to ensure that all the College sections were compliant with the GDPR requirements.

The MCAST Data Policy and Procedures, including the Privacy Statements for both, were made available to all MCAST staff and students. This policy delves into how MCAST processes the personal data of its community and how one may secure all the entitlements as established in the GDPR.

Between November and December 2021 legal representatives from Camilleri Preziosi Ltd delivered training on Data Protection to five groups of MCAST administrators. These training sessions revolved around the significance and relevance of the GDPR to the administrators' responsibilities when handling personal data.

The Office produced two tool kits to assist auditees in preparing for the GDPR Audits, which were planned to cover all MCAST sectors. Tool kit 1 is a brief document to explain what and how a GDPR Audit is carried out, while Tool kit 2 lists all the areas discussed during a GDPR Audit. During these Audits, an inventory of all MCAST databases and their relevant Risks Management was developed to ensure that the targeted compliance flows seamlessly across MCAST.

During the second part of 2021, thirty-six individuals sought the advice of this Office regarding Data Protection.

Apart from increasing online and face-to-face consultation sessions, the Data Protection Office received one data subject request and one request for data erasure.



OUR

LEARNERS

- Registrar
- Quality Assurance
- Education and Training Programmes
- Learning Support Unit
- Inclusive Education Unit
- Outreach and Student Affairs
- MCAST Student Council
- Library and Learning Resources
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Post-graduate Programmes

REGISTRAR

The Office of the Registrar is responsible for several functions, including local and international student admissions and records, non-MCAST examinations, certification and the publication of transcripts and Europass Certificates/Diploma Supplements.

Admissions and Records

During the academic year 2021-2022 the Admissions Section processed the annual intake through the Content Management Interoperability Services. In December 2021 a total of 9,496 applications were received, of which 2,132 were international applications and 7,364 were Maltese.

Of these 9,496 applications, a total of 7,818 students registered for a course at MCAST. Of these 1,359 were international registrations and 6,459 were Maltese registrations. The international applications included 96 different nationalities.

Registration Rate per Type of Applicant
Academic Year 2021-2022
(as at December 2021)

	Number of Applications Received	Number of Applications Registered	Registration Rate
New Applicants	5,504	3,994	73%
Applications under the Maturity Clause	194	130	67%
Progressing to higher level course	1,237	1,196	97%
Continuing subsequent year of course	2,089	2,061	99%
Repeating unit/s	472	437	93%
Grand Total	9,496	7,818	82%

Registration Rate per Type of Applicant Academic Year 2021-2022 (as at December 2021)



Records

This Office is responsible for issuing and filing all records related to the academic performance of students and letters of reference, transcripts of achievement and other academic references. It also keeps records of all Council of Institutes, Boards of Studies, and Admissions Board meetings.

Ten Council of Institutes meetings were held between January and December 2021. These were held once every six weeks.

Forty-seven Board of Studies meetings were held across all the six Institutes, including the Gozo Campus and the Learning Support Unit. These were held at least once every six weeks for all Institutes, the Gozo Campus and the Learning Support Unit.

Both the Registrar meetings and the Admissions Board meetings were held on a weekly basis.

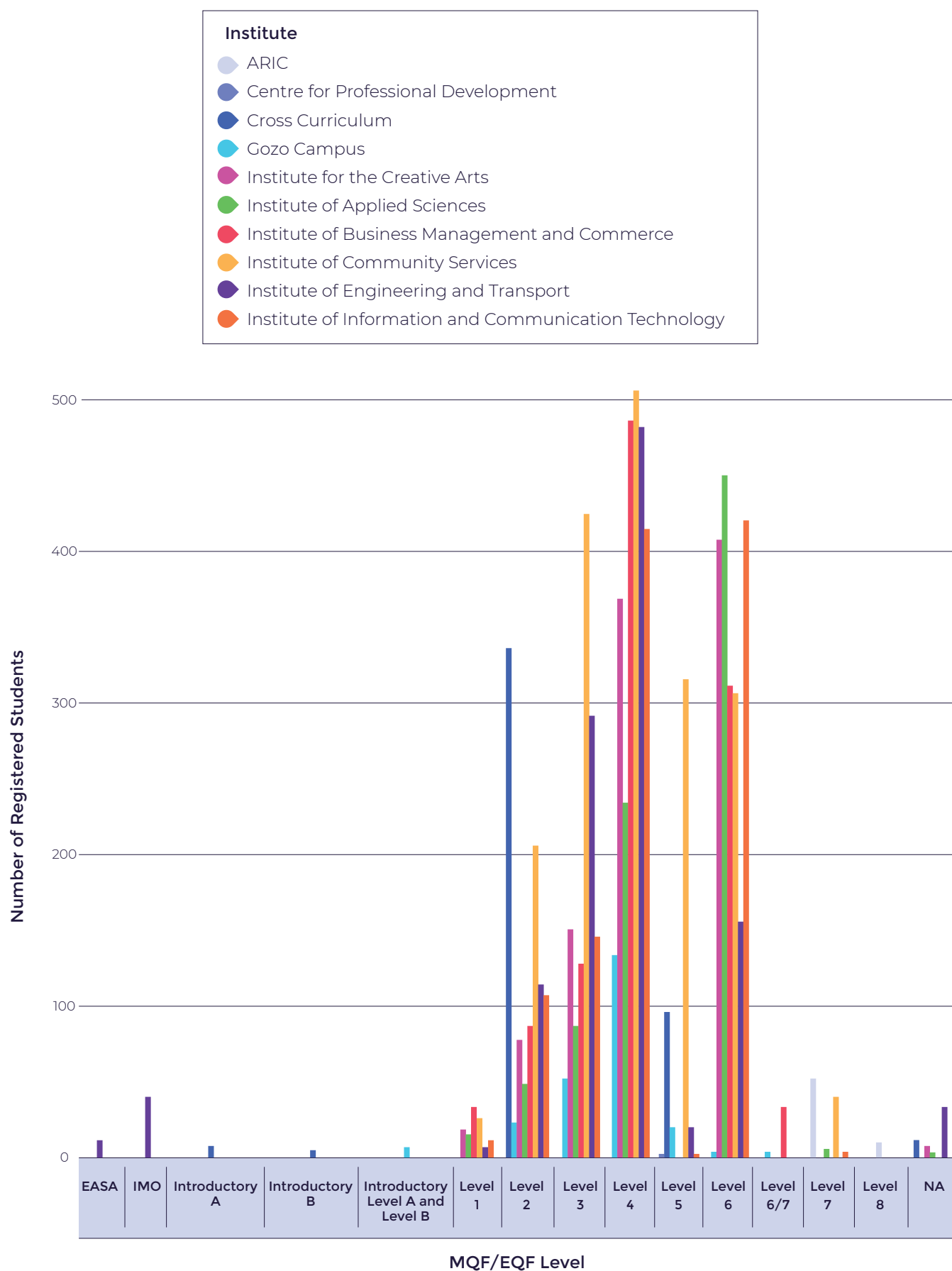
Courses

The Office of the Registrar is responsible for the publication of the annual Prospectus. In 2020-2021, the College offered around 190 registered courses ranging from Intro A/B to MQF Level 8, distributed across all the six Institutes and the Gozo Campus.

As at December 2021 students were registered across the different MQF/EQF levels as follows:

Registered Students Academic Year 2021-2022 per MQF/EQF Level and Institute (December 2021)	Introductory A	Introductory B	Introductory Level A and Level B	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 6/7	Level 7	Level 8	NA	IMO	EASA	Grand Total
ARIC											53	9				62
Centre for Professional Development								1								1
Cross Curriculum	8	4			336			95					12			455
Gozo Campus			6		24	52	135	20	4	4						245
Institute for the Creative Arts				18	78	150	370		408				5			1029
Institute of Applied Sciences				15	48	87	235		451		7		4			847
Institute of Business Management and Commerce				34	87	129	487		309	34						1080
Institute of Community Services				26	203	427	506	315	304		43					1824
Institute of Engineering and Transport				8	116	294	486	20	156				33	39	11	1163
Institute of Information and Communication Technology				11	111	145	418	2	421		4					1112
Grand Total	8	4	6	112	1003	1284	2637	453	2053	38	107	9	54	39	11	7818

Registered Students Academic Year 2021-2022 per MQF/EQF Level and Institute (December 2021)



Examinations

The Examinations Department within the Office of the Registrar processes registrations for examinations, manages examinations and issues the respective results in accordance with the regulations stipulated by the respective foreign/local awarding body. Below is a table of the number of students who sat for the different examinations managed by the Office of the Registrar:

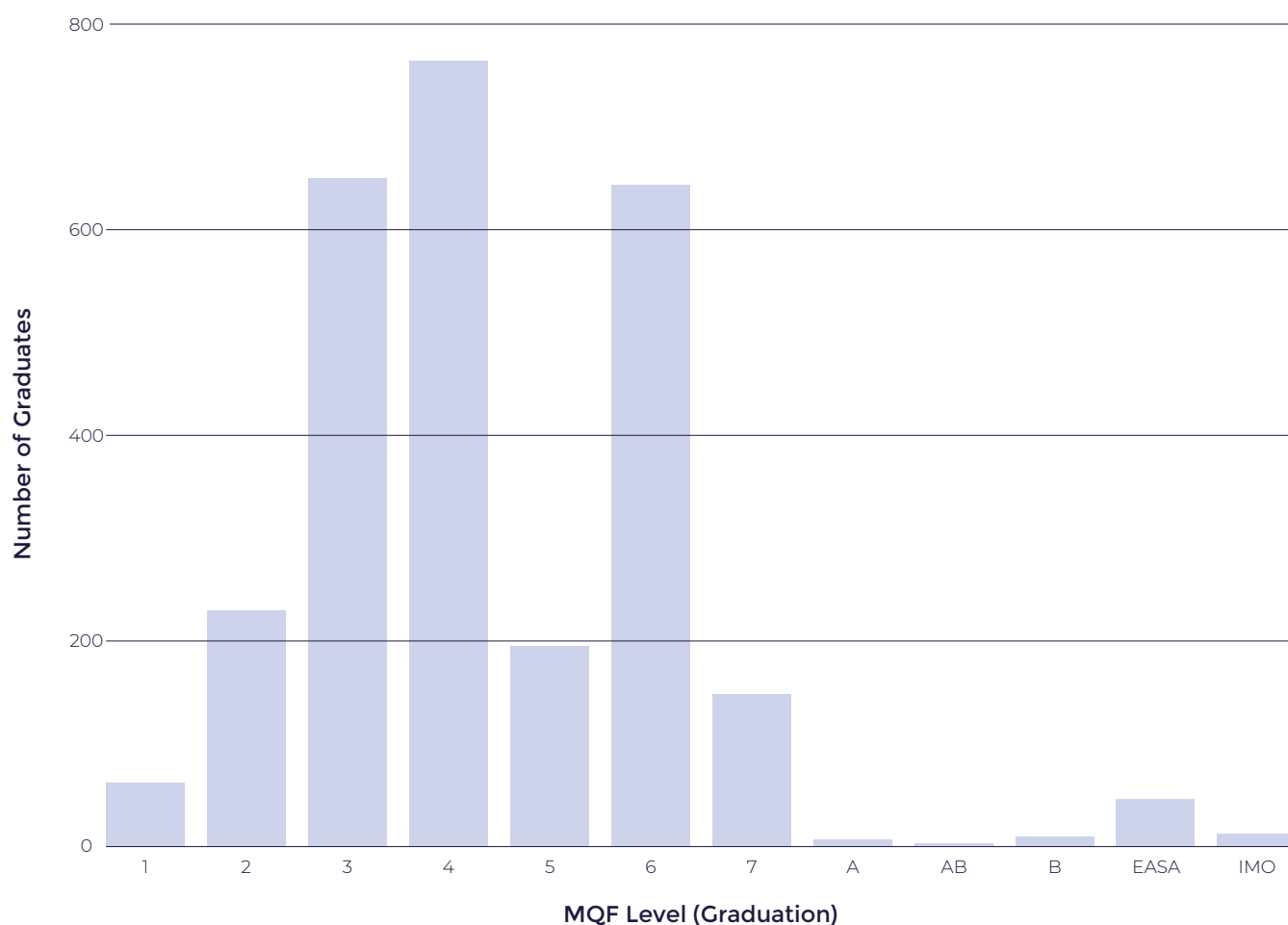
Foreign/Local Awarding Body	Number of Student Examinations / CBE sessions
Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT)	158
Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)	134
Chartered Institute of Insurance (CII)	2
Transport Malta Examinations	200
● OIC Navigational Watch Phase 1 ● OIC Navigational Watch Phase 2 ● OIC Navigational Watch Phase 3 ● Chief Mate ● Master Mariner	38 48 74 35 5
Transport Malta/ SQA Examinations	0
Total	494

Certification

2,753 students completed their programme of study and graduated during the graduation ceremonies held between January 2021 and December 2021. These ceremonies were all held on the MCAST premises in Malta and Gozo. A breakdown by level can be found hereunder:

MQF/EQF Level	Number of Graduates 2021
1	60
2	230
3	648
4	763
5	195
6	642
7	149
A	4
AB	2
B	5
EASA	44
IMO	11
Grand Total	2,753

Graduates 2021 per MQF Level



2,293 Europass Diploma and Certificate supplements were issued to all candidates who completed an MCAST accredited full-time programme of study.

Number of Europass Supplements issued per MQF Level

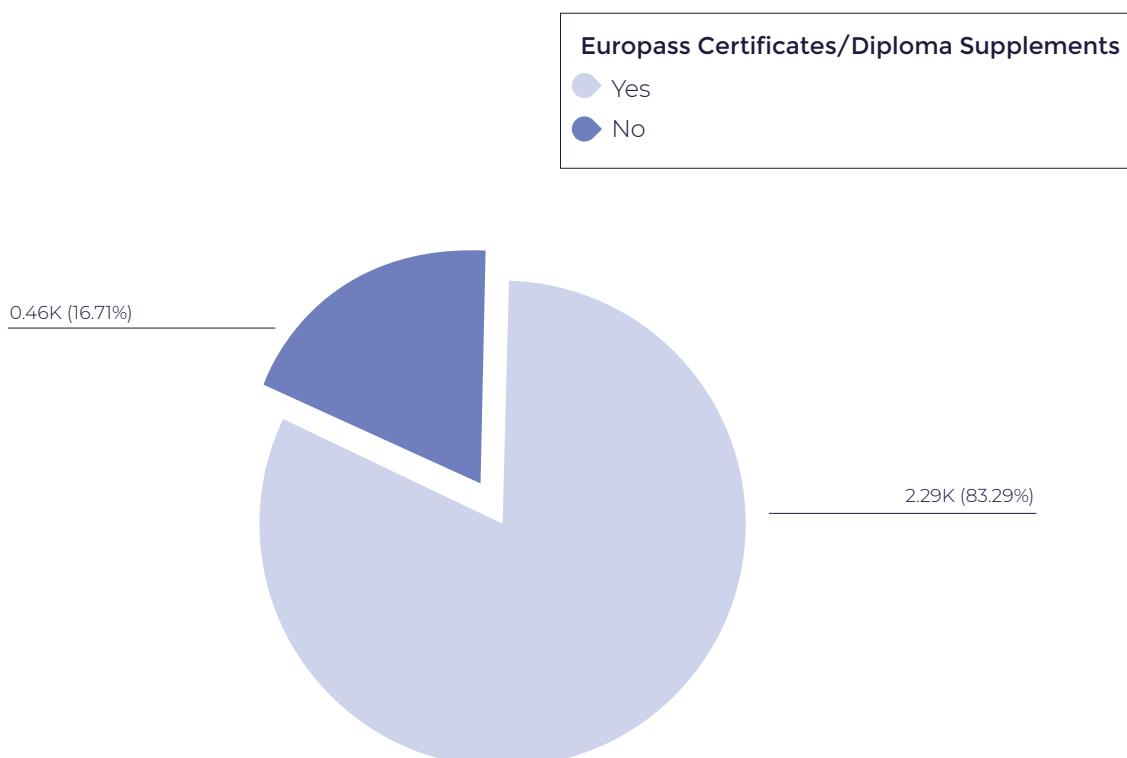
MQF Level	Registered
1	60
2	230
3	648
4	763
6	547
7	45
Grand Total	2,293

Europass Certificate Supplements (for MQF L1 to L4) issued = **1,701**
 Europass Diploma Supplements (for MQF L6 and L7) issued = **592**

Other Certifications included:

- ◆ Part-time courses certificates: **2,398** (including Higher Certificate in Inclusive Education)
- ◆ 'I Belong' Pre-Integration Course certificates: stage 1 – **914**; stage 2 - **199**
- ◆ Maritime certificates: **102**
- ◆ Maritime Examination Eligibility Letters: **57**
- ◆ EASA Part-66 Category A module certificates: **2**
- ◆ MCAST Aircraft Maintenance Technician Course (leading to EASA Part-66 CAT B 1.1 Examinations) certificates: **1**
- ◆ Reprinted certificates: **76**
- ◆ Reprinted completion letters: **18**

Number of issued Europass Certificates and Diploma supplements out of total Graduation certificates



Blockcerts

Candidates receiving MQF level-rated certificates were also issued digital certificates Blockcerts on the blockchain. This service enables candidates to have their certificates easily and efficiently level-rated and verified when applying for employment or higher-level studies in Malta and internationally. These certificates can be verified on any Blockcerts verification portal apart from that offered by MCAST.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

The Office of the Registrar played a crucial role in the setting up of the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy for MCAST. This policy sets out the concept and the process which enables individuals to have their prior learning evaluated and recognized for a number of purposes which can benefit the individual, employers and the economy. RPL can have multiple purposes, including:

- RPL to gain entry to an Award or Qualification
- RPL for the award of ECTS or ECVET points to gain exemption from parts of an existing programme of study.

RPL is only being used for the two above-listed purposes and MCAST will not provide programme certificates as part of this process.

MCAST supports and recognizes learning which takes place in different contexts. Knowledge and skills can develop from many types of formal, non-formal and informal learning. The College recognizes the fact that current and prospective students may acquire learning and skills in a formal learning environment, in employment or in other working/voluntary contexts.

All formal, non-formal and informal learning may be directly relevant to the vocational or professional education and training programme which a student seeks to follow at the College.

Recognition of Prior Learning can take many forms and definitions. At MCAST a distinct and separate process is adopted for RPCL and RPEL and the document structure is organised as explained below.

The RPL policy document is divided into three parts:

- Doc 358 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy considered as the overarching framework for all RPL at the College;
- Doc 360 Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL) Policy for Exemption, focusing specifically on the concepts, policy, and procedures for RPCL; and
- Doc 361 Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) Policy for Admission and Exemption, focusing solely on the policy, procedures, and guidance for RPEL.

All three documents need to be read in conjunction with each other.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

MCAST has devised a Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) built on leadership and strategy, teamwork, customer focus, systems, processes and procedures. The QAF follows guidelines, indicators and criteria established by institutions such as EQAVET, the National Quality Assurance Framework issued by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority and best practices as mandated by the international quality management system standards.

Documentation

Over the years, MCAST has developed an Integrated Quality Management System that is supported by a comprehensive set of academic policies, regulations and procedures as well as a detailed Manual of Administrative Policies and Procedures. The Quality Assurance Department ensures

that these documents are regularly reviewed and updated. A total of one hundred and seventy-six new/revised documents were discussed, approved and released during the period under review.

Internal Verification and Lead Internal Verification (LIV)

The findings from various LIV initiatives of assessment tools and decisions carried out by the Quality Assurance Department have indicated that a number of quality practices were predominant, in that several observations showcased good practice

of the internal verification process underpinning its credibility and validity in assuring the quality of programmes. LIV was conducted on samples taken from the six Institutes.

MIS Use Check

Auditing the rigour of the assessment process from the uploading of the front sheet/assignment brief to the results and feedback was the aim of a sample Classter Check, MCAST's Management Information System, to ensure that

the internal verification process is meticulously reflected in the Workflow Log. Classter is MCAST's Management Information system. Classter Checks were carried out on samples taken from three Institutes.

Internal Audits

The main objective of internal audits is to identify good practices and opportunities for improvement of educational and operational processes within and across MCAST and the way in which these processes impact the quality of the service delivered to the students. A corresponding and equally important goal of this exercise is the delving into the areas that present risks

to the smooth running of the processes. This necessitates the delineation of possible strategies for corrective and preventive actions. A total of six quality reviews of key processes were conducted during the year 2021, the 'plan', 'do', 'check' and 'act' continuous improvement cycle.

Appraisal

A lecturer teaching appraisal exercise of face-to-face and online teaching, learning and assessment is also integral to the system. MCAST's QAF serves to propel quality in relation to all matters affecting the educational and operational aspects of student-centred learning and programme delivery,

ensuring the validity and transferability of MCAST qualifications. The QAF acts as a catalyst, encouraging staff and students to inspire and aspire to an innate quality culture. A total of twenty-three appraisals were conducted during 2021.

QA of New and Cyclical Review of Programmes

Internal cyclical review of programmes is conducted at the end of the first programme cycle, at a frequency of at least once every three years, or as the need arises, taking into account feedback from internal and external stakeholders. The process of new

and cyclical review of programmes is quality assured through structured methods that are measured, monitored and reported. A total of twenty-eight programmes underwent review during the period of this report.

External Peer Reviews

External Examiners were hosted by MCAST as part of the external peer review of MCAST qualifications. The External Examiners' reports are integral to the management review process and key learning points from these

reviews are regularly communicated to both academic staff and students. In 2021 a total of fourteen foreign External Reviewers were invited to the College to conduct peer review.

External Quality Assurance

In February 2021, the College received notification from the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) that MCAST will undergo its second External Quality Assurance Audit during 2021. The College is required to conform to Internal Quality Assurance Standards of MFHEA's National Quality Assurance Framework. The College has developed and implemented several measures to gauge and assure quality in line with the ten Internal Quality Assurance Standards.

In fulfilment of the requirements of Annex 1 of the 'MFHEA EQA Provider Audit Manual of Procedures', MCAST submitted a Self-Assessment Report (SAR) in June 2021 with updates as necessary. The SAR provided a

comprehensive narrative of the key processes at MCAST, an overview of the institution and an explanation of how it manages its core responsibilities for teaching, learning and assessment, as well as student support. At the end of each IQA standard, a list of documents provided the Peer Review Panel with evidence of implementation of the processes described in the SAR. This evidence included various MCAST policies, procedures and regulations, information, data and additional reports. In view of the length of the SAR, the strengths and weaknesses of the current systems for assuring the standards of vocational programmes and the quality of the learning experience as well as the proposed developments and best practice

were covered and forwarded under a separate document. The SAR was published both in hard and soft copy by 29th October 2021. A digital copy was also sent to the panel reviewers. This is available via <https://www.mcast.edu.mt/selfassessmentreport/>.

The external review took place in November 2021 and included a visit of two days during October 2021 followed, in the first week of November 2021, by a five-day audit by a panel of seven external assessors, six of whom were foreign reviewers. The scope of this extensive audit covered the review of the MCAST Integrated Quality Management System that included the academic and administrative procedures.

MCAST is committed to maintaining and upgrading the dynamic nature of the quality assurance (QA) measures described above and the supporting documentation emphasising the constant current relevance of its processes and procedures.

The scope of such internal and external Quality Assurance measures is to reinforce the strengths of the legacy accumulated over the past twenty years since MCAST's inception. It also aims to identify the opportunities, anticipate the threats, and address the weaknesses through an open and transparent encounter with personnel, an overview of related documentation, and by observing the interactions of those involved.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES

In 2021, the Education and Training Programmes Office was strengthened by the addition of three new team members. This improved the efficacy of the services provided to the College and to all MCAST Institutes.

In line with the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education (NQAF) requirements and as per MCAST procedures, another programme cyclical review process was undertaken, whereby the Quality Cycle was used to monitor and periodically review various accredited programmes which are currently being offered by MCAST. Throughout this process, the Office collaborated with the respective MCAST Institutes and other stakeholders to ensure that all programmes developed and offered by MCAST remained relevant and corresponded to the learners' and industry's needs.

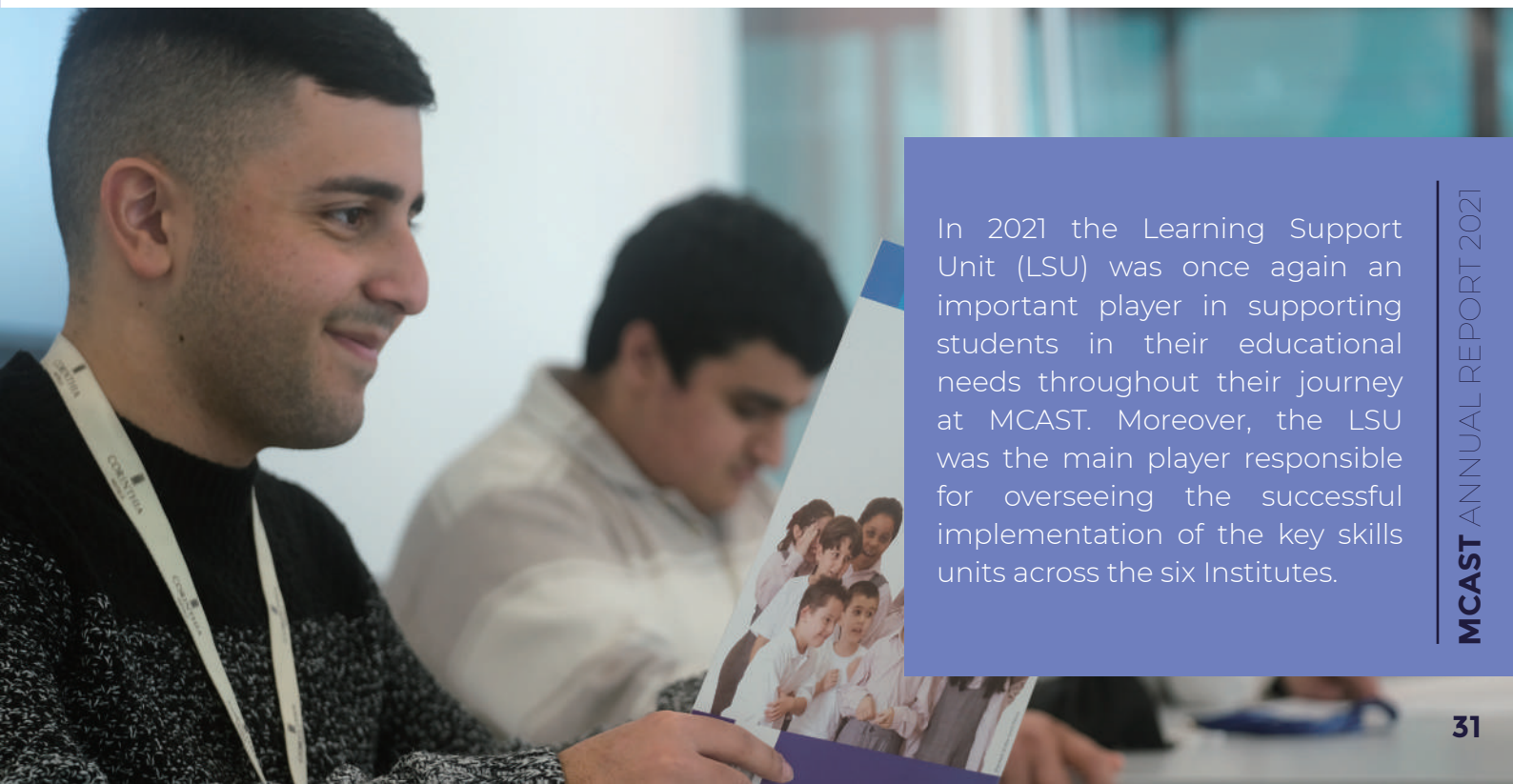
In total, 28 programmes and 179 units were reviewed and updated as part of the programme cyclical review process. In addition, eight new programmes were introduced in the MCAST 2021-2022 full-time Prospectus, together with various other short courses and awards developed specifically for industry and other external clients. The Office was also involved in the development of MCAST's first Professional Research Doctorate, titled 'Professional Research Doctorate on the Competitive Behaviour of Small Organizations', which was launched in June 2021.

MCAST policies and procedures for the design, approval, and review of accredited programmes were also updated to reflect the internal processes and practices being implemented. This was accompanied by revisions and modifications in the existing templates and guidelines for the proposal and development of accredited programmes. Such changes were carried out to ensure that quality standards are maintained and that all MFHEA regulations are adhered to. The existing reporting system of the Office was also revised to strengthen the internal monitoring, tracking and reporting of the progress and status of various tasks and projects being undertaken.

The Office was also involved in the preparation of documentation and other relevant information regarding MCAST accredited programmes, which were made publicly available on the MCAST website to ensure that prospective learners have sufficient information and are able to make informed decisions about the programmes that they wish to enrol in.

Members within the Education and Training Programmes Office were also involved in the delivery of various training sessions carried out throughout the year to guide and support prospective and current unit writers in the development of accredited units and programmes. In collaboration with other departments within the College, the Office also administered the implementation and migration of the programme and unit repositories to the College's Information Management System which is better suited for all users and internal stakeholders involved. A new Curriculum and QA module was created within this system. The Office was responsible for setting up curricular structures together with the uploading and verification of over 2,500 documents and files pertaining to all programmes and their respective units.

LEARNING SUPPORT UNIT



In 2021 the Learning Support Unit (LSU) was once again an important player in supporting students in their educational needs throughout their journey at MCAST. Moreover, the LSU was the main player responsible for overseeing the successful implementation of the key skills units across the six Institutes.

Extra Support

The Extra Support Unit is one of the main deliverables of the Learning Support Unit. In 2021 the Unit catered for 72 students.

In the summer of 2021, the Extra Support Unit.

- (i) Restructured its services;
- (ii) Introduced more services and promoted them in the Institutes;
- (iii) Produced and distributed a poster with the help of the Communications Department;
- (iv) Held various meetings with Directors/ Deputy Directors, Student Mentors and Student Support Services Coordinators.

Language Courses

In 2021 the Unit delivered Foreign Language Courses at Subject Proficiency Levels 1 and 2. These courses were promoted internally and externally and were held between March and July 2021. The courses delivered and the number of students successfully completing these courses are shown below:

Language	SPA Level 1	SPA Level 2
French	7	4
German	9	6
Italian	9	-
Spanish	22	1
Total	47	11



The intention is to widen the number of foreign language courses on offer, including Arabic.

Community College for the Third Age

The Community College for the Third Age, previously known as 'Ibqa' Attiv Magħna', served as a social support network. A voluntary outreach programme was delivered on a vast range of topics.

The Unit delivered two courses, namely Health and Well-Being, which was completed by four students, and Learning and Doing which was successfully completed by eight students.

Both courses offered sessions on interesting topics including health, cultural, recreational, academic and sports education.



Pastoral Care

This programme aims to support learners in developing their self-awareness and self-esteem through the practice of self-empowerment. This Unit focuses on the personal journey of each learner, and it is delivered according to the learners' needs and abilities.

As of 2021, the Pastoral Care programme was officially recognised and timetabled and offered to all Level 2 students across all Institutes. In total, 228 students completed the sessions by obtaining 70% attendance.

This unit was developed within an Erasmus+ project a few years back and

it is offered to Level 2 students at MCAST. It is delivered by LSU staff who receive ongoing training and also meet regularly to analyse how to best support students within this journey. Students who complete the programme and attend at least 70% of the course receive a Certificate of Attendance apart from their Foundation Certificate. At the end of the year an analysis of the programme together with feedback is gathered by the coordinator from the students directly.

Initial Assessment Tests

The Initial Assessment Tests are carried out at the start of the academic year to determine whether students should start their journey at MCAST at Level 1 or 2. The tests are carried out in the three basic subjects - Mathematics, English and Maltese.

In 2021 the Unit devised new assessment tests that were vetted internally. A total of 400 students sat for these tests.

Preventive Classes

The Preventive Classes Unit provides a second chance opportunity to over a hundred students who did not manage to complete their course successfully. Through this EU-funded scheme entitled Youth Guarantee, students (up to Level 3) are given the opportunity to

successfully complete the units once they fulfil certain eligibility criteria.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION UNIT

The Inclusive Education Unit (IEU) supports students with special educational needs (SEN) across all College Institutes and MQF Levels. Support is provided in complete liaison with the students and the respective stakeholders in order to provide reasonable accessibility to an enhanced learning experience. The IEU engaged in the following activities along with various ancillary initiatives:

	January - August	September - December	Totals
New IEU Registrations SEN students registered with the IEU through an individual meeting addressing the students' needs and support required.	126	148	274
Active IEU Students IEU students enrolled in courses at the College. IEU services listed were provided accordingly.	754	746	not relevant
Access Arrangements Requests Requests for access arrangements in Time Constrained Assignments include the provision of readers, scribes and individual arrangements according to the student's particular needs.	236	695	931
Transport Students with mobility impairments were provided free transport to access lectures on campus as well as placements or apprenticeships in industry.	1	8	9
Personal Assistants Students with mobility impairments benefitted from a full-time personal assistant, thereby ensuring their effective engagement in daily activities on campus and a meaningful learning experience at the College.	2	9	11

Individual Support Sessions

An average of 120 sessions per week were provided to all applicants both on campus and online in Mathematics, Maltese, English and General Support. Such sessions were delivered on an individual basis and scheduled weekly for a duration of one hour or more depending on the student's needs.

In-Class Support Sessions

Class groups in MQF Levels Intro A, Intro B, 1 and 2 which required additional support during lectures were identified at the beginning of the academic year and class LSEs were assigned in Mathematics, Maltese, English and other subjects as required. Support was provided on campus and online.

MAP Sessions

Various meetings were held to discuss student challenges, collect lecturers' feedback and devise a support way forward. Such meetings involved students, parents, student mentors, support services coordinators, LSEs, lecturers, management staff and other stakeholders. Benefitting students followed courses across all MQF Levels. Further liaison with respective professionals was carried out where necessary.

Reasonable Accommodation

Students requiring unconventional support due to uncommon disabilities were supported through reasonable arrangements in liaison with the respective stakeholders. Care was taken to respect all assessment criteria, thus driving students to exploit their potential and achieve complete qualifications.

E-Processes and Automation

The IEU has embarked on an internal project aiming at a complete digitisation of IEU application forms complemented with an automation of the processes currently in place. In 2021 the IEU has:

1. consolidated the online IEU Application Form along with the respective automation and data processing.
2. launched the IEU Support Sessions App available to IEU staff on both mobile and desktop devices which records the work carried out during Individual Support Sessions. Student attendance and other relevant information is also collected. The app enables LSEs to log in and retrieve support information more efficiently. Furthermore, the IEU management now has realtime online access to such data, thereby enabling informed and timely decisions regarding student support. This approach has increased efficiency in data collection and contributed to more effective decision-making.

EU Projects

The IEU has been involved in two EU projects:

1. STEAM4SEN: Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics for Special Educational Needs
2. GIVE: Governance for Inclusive Vocational Excellence.

OUTREACH AND STUDENT AFFAIRS

Wellbeing Hub

The Wellbeing Hub provides a holistic service to both students and staff. The services available include:

- Mental Health Services
- Addiction Related Issues
- Nutrition Advice
- Sexual Health
- Tobacco Cessation
- Therapy Sessions
- Educational Psychology Services.

All services are provided by specialised professionals in a confidential setting. Forty-six outreach sessions for students on addictions, nutrition, sexual health and tobacco cessation were held at the different Institutes/Centres.

180 referrals for therapy were submitted followed by intake sessions held in a timely manner for the benefit of the service users. 2,386 therapy sessions were provided by the team of five counsellors / psychotherapists.

Additionally, another 112 psychiatric appointments were provided by the visiting psychiatrist from the national mental health services.

Complementing the multi-disciplinary support to students, the educational psychologist received 37 different referrals that were followed by 332 sessions.

Student Liaison Office

2021 saw an increase in student requests for assistance. Assistance was provided to students through the loan of computers/laptops. 45 laptops/tablets were out on loan during 2021.

Other support was given through the Help Me Succeed Fund using the funds generated through staff and student donations. Primarily two full hairdressing kits were purchased and given to the Institute of Community Services for use by students who cannot purchase their own. Additional support in the form of material required for specific courses, food, medicines and

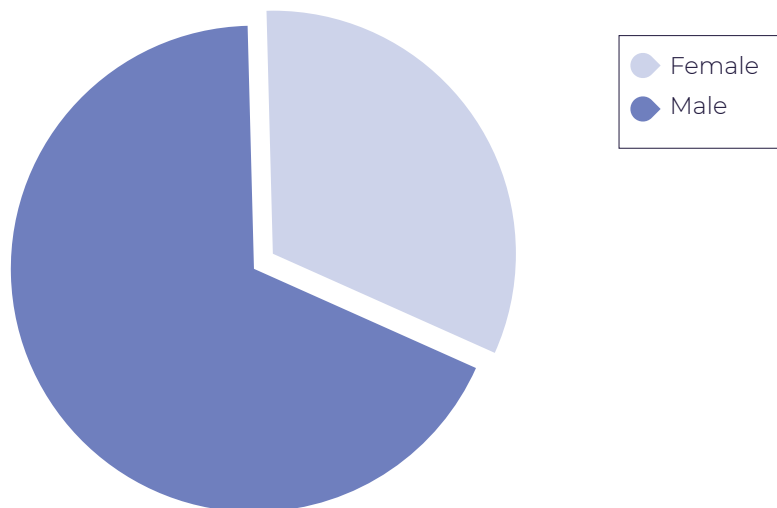
clothes were purchased from the same fund. Students were also assisted with stationery items which were donated.

The Student Liaison Office is committed to strengthening all forms of assistance required by students for them to be able to succeed in their future aspirations.

Career Guidance

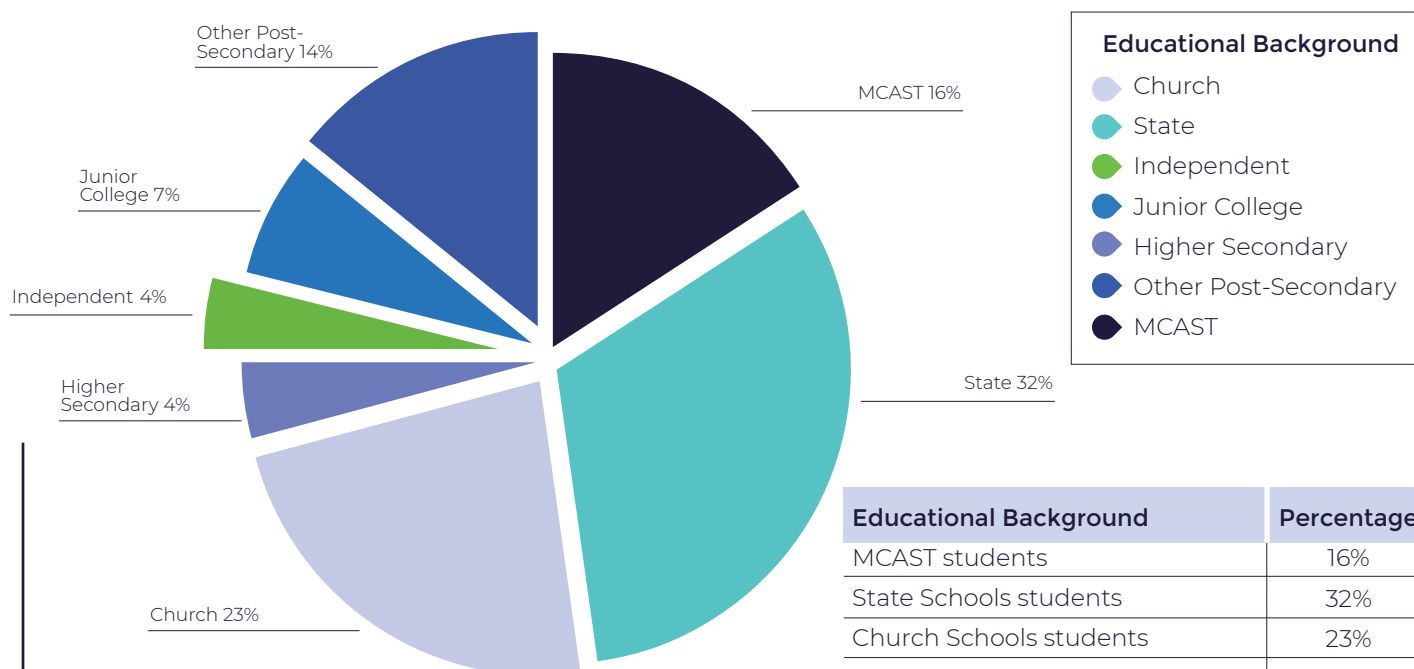
The following is a breakdown of the career guidance sessions held between January and December 2021;

1. Gender of clients:



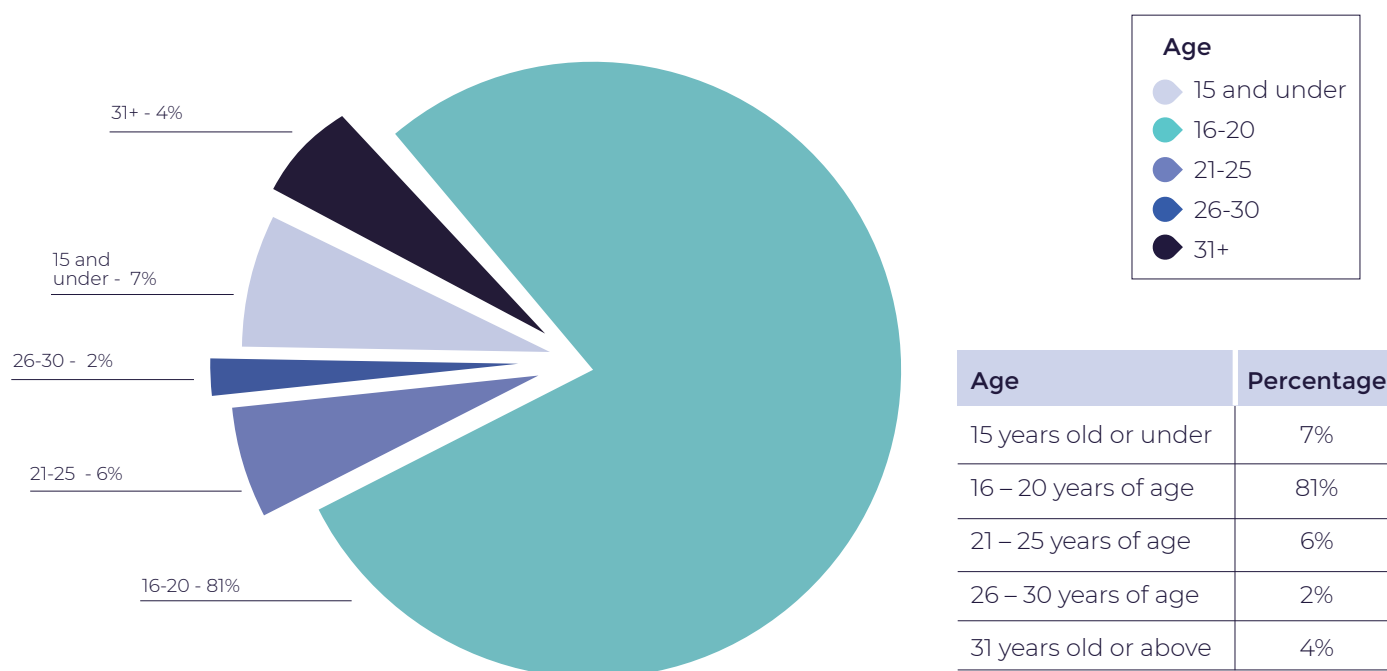
63% of career guidance clients were male whereas 37% were female.

2. Background of clients who benefitted from the career guidance services:



Educational Background	Percentage
MCAST students	16%
State Schools students	32%
Church Schools students	23%
Independent Schools students	4%
Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School students	4%
Junior College students	7%
Other post-secondary students (GEM 16+, ITS, Sir Mikelang Refalo)	14%
Employed	5.4%
NEET (Not in Education or Employment)	3.7%

3. Age of clients:



Outreach Events from January 2021 to December 2021

The following is a breakdown of the Information Talks held with Year 11 students in different schools:

	Outreach Visits	No. of schools	No. of events
1	Church Schools	13	25
2	State Schools	20	40
3	Independent Schools	3	4

1. The Career Guidance Team participated in the ICA Festival over five evenings.
2. The Career Guidance Team participated in fifteen virtual information talks delivered by MCAST Institutes to prospective applicants over the summer period.
3. Outreach for staff: The Career Guidance professionals participated and contributed to the CPD efforts of the College by providing CPD to interested participants. The career advisers delivered two CPD sessions to staff members, on 19th February 2021 and on 29th September 2021.

MCAST

STUDENT COUNCIL

Policy Amendments

The Council presented recommendations to amend the College's dress code policy. In 2021 the KSM began work on nine new policies that would eventually be published and implemented by both KSM and MCAST. The KSM worked with the Director of Student Outreach and MCAST's Student Liaison Officer to draw up a new

document entitled 'The KSM Student Charter'. The Council of Institutes has authorized this document.

In 2021 the KSM strived to raise as much awareness as possible about a variety of topics and situations.

Events and Collaborations

In 2021 the KSM had five official sponsors and worked with a variety of corporations and organizations on a variety of projects. KSM organized two charity events, 'Score for Charity' and 'Egg-citing Easter', in which KSM purchased and donated Easter eggs, toys, and books to children who spent Easter in Mater Dei Hospital.

KSM was a member of the Freshers' Week organizing team and presented three new proposals which were all implemented. Other events organised during the year 2021 included a Multiculturalism in MCAST event, Europegenix, a Webinar with the Principal, and a Halloween Treasure Hunt.





Closer to Students

The KSM has always valued the importance of student organisations and has always encouraged students to be more involved on campus. This led to four new sub-committees being formed in 2021.

In the year under review, the KSM elected

Student Representatives

Every year KSM becomes stronger and its voice becomes louder. The KSM is proud of the efforts and accomplishments of MCAST students

KSM's 15th Anniversary

To commemorate the KSM's 15th anniversary, the Council chose to rebrand itself as a brighter, fresher and more modern entity. The Council

its first ever Gozitan representative nominated by GUG. Once a month it also visited students on different campuses and, for the first time, it met students from all six Institutes, including from the Mosta, Qormi and Gozo campuses.

and promotes such accomplishments and initiatives through its social media.

also decided to develop a website with various student-friendly features.



LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCES

In the year 2021 operations at the Library were impacted by two significant events, namely the persistence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closing down of the old Library to move to the new MCAST Resource Centre.

In March 2021, Malta faced the second wave of the Covid 19 pandemic, and all classes moved back to online lessons. Since the students were not attending lessons on campus, a decision was taken to start the packing process for the eventual move to the new MCAST Resource Centre. All online resources were utilized during this lockdown period. Online training sessions from the suppliers EBSCO and ProQuest were organized for students from Level 4 upwards.

The Library produced 'how-to' videos for the Library's YouTube channel, and kept everyone up to date with news on the Library's Facebook page. In order to make the transition to the new MCAST

Library easier, a 'New Users' section was created on the webpage aimed especially at new users.

The implementation of OpenAthens Single Sign-On was completed in August 2021 and it changed the way that MCAST electronic resources could be accessed. This helped the students access various academic databases subscribed to by the MCAST Library, using their MCAST email username and password instead of individual usernames and passwords.

The Library published the study 'Responding to student needs through Library e-database investment - an MCAST journey'. The article, compiled by three staff members, namely Ms Liza Franco, Ms Abigail Agius and Mr Carmel Borg, encompasses the research, data collection and statistics performed by the Library team behind choosing the electronic resource IEEE database. The article was published on

the MCAST Journal of Applied Research and Practice, Vol. 5, Issue 1, 2021.

A survey entitled 'New MCAST Library - Your opinion matters' was conducted to understand the requirements and the expectations of the staff and students regarding the facilities for the new Library. One major point that was

highlighted through the survey was the request for a silent study area.

The move to the new MCAST Resource Centre started in November 2021. The process took two months and was completed before the Christmas recess.



CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Department provides MCAST students with opportunities to enhance their studies with life-enriching experiences that add value to their holistic knowledge base, with the aim of empowering them to become active and employable citizens.

The implementation of the CSR initiative has primarily encouraged personal development among students at MCAST while having a positive impact in the local community. The initiative has enhanced relationships with the CSR partners by supporting public value outcomes. All students can carry out community work at either non-governmental organisations, sports associations, or local councils as part of their training programme. The CSR programme includes a framework whereby any knowledge and skills acquired will be recognised and accredited as part of the College's formal programme of studies.

During the academic year 2020-2021, over 2,000 placements were provided to students. MCAST students had the opportunity to carry out community work in various areas such as the environment, animal welfare, culture, education, sports and social care. The activities included administration work, coaching in different sports disciplines, maintaining websites and social media platforms and helping NGOs in their daily work by caring for abandoned animals. Students have also come up with ideas of their own to help their fellow students or the community. The CSR department has worked closely with various organisations on different projects to help its student and staff populations understand better the importance of giving something back into society, investing in worthwhile causes, institutions and organisations, providing support to community initiatives and contributing towards environmental sustainability.

POST-GRADUATE PROGRAMMES AT MCAST

MCAST enhanced and extended its post-graduate remit of programmes with the launching of its first Professional Research Doctorate on the Competitive Behaviour of Small Organizations, the DRes, as accredited by the MFHEA.

This part-time programme runs over five years, supported in its first year by taught methodology components. The MCAST DRes operates with the support of two partners, the Malta Chamber of SMEs and the Richmond Foundation. Notwithstanding its novelty,

the programme was immediately saturated in 2021, with a maximum cohort size of 10 candidates in its first year of running. The programme takes on a specific remit to understand and build applied theories of small organization competitive behaviour within small island states, using the grounded theory method of inquiry and qualitative and mixed methods techniques.

In 2021, 149 students graduated at Level 7.

Further to the new DRes, the year 2021 saw the closing off of eight Master's programmes launched under ESF 3.003. Over a 100 Master's candidates concluded their studies in different programmes such as MSc in Environmental Engineering, MSc in Exercise and Sports Science, MSc in Information Technology and Systems, MSc in Mechatronics, MSc in Water Resource Management, MA in Product Design, MSc in Lean Enterprise and MSc in High Performance Buildings.



Together with these ESF programmes, MCAST also operated the annual Post-Graduate Certificate in Research Methods, Master in Research Methods, Masters by Research and MVEAR, which have proved highly popular over the years.

OUR

INSTITUTES

Institute of Applied Sciences —

Institute of Business
Management and Commerce —

Institute of Community Services —

Institute for the Creative Arts —

Institute of Engineering
and Transport —

Institute of Information and
Communication Technology —

MCAST Gozo Campus —



INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCES



Applied Science relates to the application of scientific knowledge to practical challenges and jobs. At the Institute of Applied Science (IAS) students are prepared for technological careers within the health, pharmaceutical, environmental, food and beverage or industrial scientific sectors. The students learn to appreciate how the fundamental principles of science relate to the technological operations of the workplace. They also learn the skills to work in laboratories with environmental technologies and methodologies and to apply basic principles in industrial settings. The Institute facilities include 11 fully-equipped laboratories for training and research in microbiology, chemistry, physics, environmental sciences and other specialized science and technology fields.

In 2021, 847 students were registered in 15 different courses ranging from Level 1 to Level 7.

The Institute also started work on two new master's degree programmes, namely the MSc in Advanced Clinical Practice and the MSc in Professional Health Practice. The MSc in Professional Health Practice is a multi-professional programme of study which is not only aimed at practitioners aspiring to develop and work at an advanced level of practice but is also tailored for those individuals who are already working at an advanced level within their area of practice. The MSc in Advanced Clinical Practice is intended for those qualified nurses who want to improve their skills across the four pillars of advanced clinical practice. Both programmes

will equip prospective candidates with the knowledge and skills to work at an advanced clinical level, exercise autonomy and decision-making in complexity, uncertainty, and varying levels of risk. Currently running are the MSc in Environmental Engineering and the MSc in Water Resource Management. This excludes the MRes and MVEAR programmes which are also supported by the Institute of Applied Sciences.

The Institute of Applied Sciences ran six bespoke full-time and four bespoke part-time courses. These courses were run in collaboration with governmental entities such as the Health Department. The Undergraduate Certificate in Nursing courses are aimed at non-EU Nursing graduates who are seeking to upgrade their degree qualification to EU standards to be able to register and work in EU countries.

The Institute of Applied Sciences was involved in four areas of research. 2021 has seen the termination of the ReNature project, which aimed at establishing and implementing a nature-based solutions research strategy with a vision to promote research and innovation and develop solutions in the pursuit of economic growth, whilst at the same time improving human well-being and tackling environmental challenges.

Two new research themes for the Institute of Applied Sciences were approved during the Board of Studies in 2021, namely 'Health Innovation' and 'SPIDEM – A research concept Studying Pollutants in Different Environmental Matrices'. Some examples of key projects evolving from these two themes are the development of an Integrated Simulation and Assessment in Donning and Doffing for healthcare professionals (ISADD) and Identifying Microplastic Hotspots in the Maltese Waters (IMPACT). The Institute of Applied Sciences led both these projects.

Five new projects from the Institute of Applied Sciences were submitted for external funding during 2021 under different calls, including MarTERA ERA-NET Cofund, the Research Excellence Programme and MCST-Tubitak.

By the end of 2021, four new projects were awarded external funding: the ISADD proposal, financed by the Malta Council for Science and Technology, for and on behalf of the Foundation for Science and Technology, through the Research Excellence Programme; the MED-WET project, awarded PRIMA; GNurseSIM, awarded Erasmus+; and the SMARTPOL proposal, supported by the MarTERA ERA-NET Cofund.

The following projects were also successfully concluded: IMPACT supported under the PARADISE Call for Start-up Actions 2020 by the Malta Council for Science and Technology, ReNature funded through the European Union's Horizon 2020, and Divercrop funded through ERA-NET Med.



The BSc Nursing and Advanced Diploma in Health Sciences students as well as their lecturers worked at the MCAST Vaccination Hub early in 2021. They were involved in the running of the Centre and also in the administration of vaccinations. Both students and lecturers have generously offered their services and performed their duties with enthusiasm and dedication. Their efforts were recognised by the MCAST Student Council during a Gala Night to commemorate the Council's 15th Anniversary.

During 2021, the Institute worked with the Health Department to develop one of its newest Advanced Diploma programmes, namely the Advanced Diploma for Dental Surgery Assistants (DSAs). Graduates from this course will be employed as Allied Health personnel who will play an important role in the performance of dental procedures. The aim of this course is to provide both the theoretical and clinical practical

techniques necessary for future dental personnel to be considered competent to assist the dental team.

The Institute was also actively involved in the outreach of STEM subjects. In April 2021, IAS lecturers held a practical and a demonstration session via the social media platform to explain scientific phenomena as part of the Tiny Teen Science Café. By using common household items and hands-on experiments, the lecturers aimed to spark students' curiosity in the natural world around them. This was an initiative organised by the Science Centre, within the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes, to promote the uptake of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects by school students.





Centre for Agriculture, Aquatics and Animal Sciences

Based in Qormi, the Centre for Agriculture, Aquatics and Animal Sciences is the major training provider in the agribusiness industries in Malta and has constantly exhibited its role as a central stakeholder in the fabric and thrust of these sectors.

In 2021, the Centre delivered eleven full-time courses to around 170 students in the three major areas of study - horticulture, animal management and fish management.

In the same year, the Centre offered 30 part-time courses to 140 students including a new Award in Horticulture at MQF Level 3. The Centre delivered six different courses to farmers as part of a project funded through the EU's Rural Development Programme for Malta. Two bespoke courses were also organized for the Environment Landscape Consortium (ELC).

Research at the Centre has been accelerating at a steady pace. Research lines related to the breeding of the Black Maltese chicken, the studying

of the correlation between sheep feed and milk quality, the effect of cetaceans on the fishing industry, the study of the Maltese wild rabbit and the use of simple technology to assist farmers in making irrigation decisions, have been attracting interest from the industry after the first results from this research were published and disseminated.

Together with the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Animal Rights, the Centre continued its research as part of an EU-funded project – AgriHub - through which MCAST researchers are investigating how to improve the quality of fodder production in Malta. The first trials were undertaken and subsequent results obtained. Moreover, after winning a project (MED-WET) funded under the PRIMA programme, the first meetings were held to kickstart the project. This project is related to the efficient use of water for irrigation and is being done in partnership with entities from Morocco, Egypt, Germany and Portugal.



The Erasmus+ project Aquaview progressed well during the year. The project is working towards creating qualifications in aquaculture to be offered and delivered by and at various Institutions across Europe. MCAST has been working with partners from the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Italy and Spain to achieve this objective.

The Centre was also entrusted with overseeing a scheme, funded by the National Government, through which experienced farmers started passing on their skills and competencies to young farmers.

INSTITUTE OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND COMMERCE

The Institute of Business Management and Commerce (IBMC) delivers programmes of study across MQF Levels 1 to 7. The areas of these programmes include Business Administration, Accountancy, Marketing, Financial Services and Retailing, Business Enterprise, Procurement and Finance, as well as the ACCA qualification. The IBMC collaborates closely with industry to ensure that its programmes of study provide its students with the knowledge and skills they require in order to work effectively and profitably immediately upon taking up employment in their respective area of competence.

During the reporting year 1,080 students were registered in 17 different courses ranging from Levels 1 to 6.



The Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Public Policy and Management was offered for the first time. This new programme was made possible through the Institute's cooperation with the Institute for the Public Services. This collaboration has resulted in the creation of three degree programmes, namely the BA (Hons) in Procurement and Finance (offered on both a part-time and a full-time basis), the BA (Hons) in Public Projects (offered on a part-time basis) and the BA (Hons) in Public Policy and Management offered on a full-time basis. The full-time degree programmes provide students with the possibility to join the public service upon successful completion of their course of studies.

Throughout 2021, preparatory work was also carried out on the restructuring of two Advanced Diploma programmes. The MCAST Advanced Diploma in Accounting and the MCAST Advanced Diploma in Marketing were upgraded to reflect the latest feedback from industry. The newly restructured courses were both launched in October 2021.

In the year under review, fourteen part-time programmes marketed by MG2i and administered by the IBMC were run successfully. These short courses reflect the general public's strong interest in seeking to remain abreast with the latest theory and practice in their respective area of business.



In 2021 a prize-giving ceremony was organized under the sponsorship of Fexserv, a local leading financial services organization. Prizes were awarded for first in the cohort and first in dissertation.

The IBMC block on the MCAST Paola Campus was officially named after Mr Louis Victor Farrugia, the visionary entrepreneur and architect who designed and directed the construction of the iconic Farsons Brewery located in Mrieħel.

A bicycle event was held in November 2021 during which several cyclists rode their bicycles to the IBMC to form a bike bus. The event aimed to raise awareness to the mental and physical health benefits of riding a bicycle to work/college.

Speakers from the industry were invited to address students during the October 2021 Freshers' Week. Additionally, several lectures were delivered to lecturing staff by industry exponents. This was a valuable opportunity for lecturers to be updated on several business-related topics such as cyber security, tourism, banking, voluntary organizations' finances and the EU's Parliament Office in Malta.

In 2021, two of IBMC's lecturers published research in the MCAST Journal of Applied Research and Practice. These lecturers were Carmen Frendo who published her paper 'System Mapping as a service for post-COVID Regional Transition' and Ivan Cauchi whose paper was entitled 'Happiness Economics: A brief on the validity of 'subjective well-being metrics'.

INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Institute of Community Services (ICS) offers courses and educational experiences which allow learners first-hand working experience within the community. The primary goal of the Institute is to ensure learners acquire class-based knowledge as well as the soft skills necessary to fulfil their role through work-based learning experiences. This ensures a smooth transition into the workplace, a vital component since ICS courses deal with people hailing from all sectors of society, many of whom are experiencing challenging situations.

In 2021, 1,824 students were registered in courses ranging from Level 1 to Level 6.



In the same year, the first cohort of students following the Top Up degree in Inclusive Education on a part-time basis graduated. 140 Learning Support Educators, all hailing from local schools, successfully completed the degree course. It was also the year during which ICS students who completed the full-time MCAST Diploma in Security, Enforcement and Protection joined the Malta Police Force after completing the necessary recruitment training.

The Institute offered 24 part-time courses to 390 students. These improve the quality of service provided to the community. Of special note are the courses in Maltese Sign Language and in Barbering.

The Institute organised a number of activities with industry to further consolidate the work-based learning component of each programme of studies. ICS alumni hailing from the Active Ageing and Community Care Department delivered a seminar to students following the Advanced Diploma in Health and Social Care and the degree in Health and Social Care (Management). A talk by Caritas further enlightened students on the daily requirements in social practice. The Jesuit Refugee Services were invited to provide insight into working with migrants and refugees. Sixteen days of activism on the fight against gender violence and domestic violence were also organised.



Research is a vital factor in education and many ICS lecturers were involved in projects. Twenty-three lecturers carried out research in different areas many of which were in direct collaboration with industry. In July, ICS lecturers held a seminar entitled 'Research Methodologies and Research Projects in Education, Sports and HSC'. Lecturers presented their ongoing research in the respective field focusing on the different

methodologies chosen. Students and fellow lecturers participated in a healthy discussion on research choices.

INSTITUTE FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS

The Institute for the Creative Arts (ICA), which is accommodated in the former 1950s Civil Defence headquarters, was established in 2001 under its earlier name – Institute of Art and Design. The name was changed in 2014 to reflect the broader portfolio of courses offered. ICA in fact offers a rich variety of courses ranging from Art and Design to Graphic Design, Game Art and Interactive Media, Creative Media Production, Photography and Journalism, Spatial and Product Design, Fashion Design and Performing Arts as well as Cultural Heritage Skills and, more recently, Digital Design and Graphic Printing. The levels at which these are offered, and the different progression routes, enable students to choose at what level to access an area of preference. All programmes have some connection with industry and the working world. Courses see learners do placements or apprenticeships with employers with whom they have the opportunity to learn how things are done outside the formal educational context. Other opportunities include doing real projects with clients through live cases and CSR experiences which are integrated into the learning process.

In 2021, 1,029 students were registered in 25 different courses.

A new full-time course launched in 2021 was the Advanced Diploma in Graphic Printing aimed at beginning to address the appropriate level of training required for employment in the printing industry. Also, the former Advanced Diploma in Graphic Design and Interactive Media was updated to be offered as the Advanced Diploma in Digital Design. The programme structure introduced streaming in the areas of Game Art, Graphic Design and Interactive Media, with work presented by students in their second year of studies showing better alignment with industry requirements. Moreover, it is worth noting that the first cohort of degree students in the Performing Arts graduated in 2021, having also piloted successfully the implementation of Practice as Research projects, a dissertation method which is now being considered by other Departments and Institutes. Also new in 2021 was the part-time Introductory Course in Ceramics.





Several other part-time courses were delivered, including a number of courses related to fashion design and manufacture, traditional painting and drawing, CAD, and interior design.

The main event held in 2021 was the MCAST ICA Festival. The 2021 edition, 'Diversify', branded by the final year Graphic Design students, was the 5th edition of the MCAST ICA Festival and was held between the 2nd and the 25th July 2021 at Spazju Kreattiv, Valletta. The festival showcased the creative work of the final year BA students and served as a bridge between MCAST ICA and the local arts and design community. It celebrated the students' creativity and hard work while highlighting its relevance to industry stakeholders. The

students worked on creative projects revolving around giving people hope for a better future, showing the diversity found within the Institute through various projects.

Where the Performing Arts are concerned, 2021 saw the production of no less than six performances, one for each of the six cohorts, including original works by four of the final year students at the MCAST ICA Festival. While some of these productions were held at the MCAST Paola Campus, an Art and Design exhibition was also held at the Mosta Campus.

The Fashion Department collaborated on the filming of project outcomes in collaboration with the Media Department. Moreover, it participated in a fashion show 'Walking around the World'. Fashion degree students followed a mindfulness based learning MVEAR Course meditation session.

While much effort was put into the preparation for long-term investment in Media and the Digital Arts, new equipment purchased included items for Photography, Ceramics and Product Design.

Also worthy of note was the securing of equipment from long-standing collaborator Toly Products for Product Design. Toly regularly recruits ICA alumni who undertake live cases with them in their student years.

Relations with industry encompassed the breadth of areas of studies, particularly where work-based learning is concerned. Regretfully, COVID-19 restrictions limited visits to various industry stakeholders during 2021. ICA lecturer Stefan Priehyba collaborated with Sefton Abela and David Agius from MCAST's Institute of Engineering and Transport to design and make a piece of sculpture and trophies for the Institute for the Public Services.

ICA has specific collaborations with the Arts Council Malta which supports ICA on many levels, from at Board of Studies level and through discussions in cyclical reviews, to active engagement in MCAST stakeholder events, including the MCAST ICA Festival and Spazju Kreattiv which hosts the annual MCAST ICA Festival. It also collaborates with Vogue Exchange and Valletta Design Cluster, JB Stores and Creative World, The Malta Crafts Foundation, Heritage Malta, PBS, Malta Today, and Infrastructure Malta, which saw the continuation of the 2020 outdoor

gallery project at a lay-by on the Marsa-Hamrun bypass. The outdoor gallery consists of ten large square frames, giving the Institute's students and their lecturers an alternative exhibition space that makes their artistic work easily accessible to thousands of road users who travel through this arterial south-central route every day. The second (2021) collection of works is a series of photography by MCAST student Nathan Camilleri. This series of works is inspired by the poem of Anton Buttigieg 'Il-Holma t'Alla' (God's dream).





An educational tool kit was also designed by Carmen Aquilina, Pierre Mifsud and Darren Tanti, aimed at giving clear insights on public art and how art educators can support their students to create murals, installations and also the possibility to work on public art works.

Furthermore, where live cases are concerned, a rebranding exercise was undertaken for Drachma. Also worthy of note is the involvement of ICA students in CSR activities as a result of collaborations with stakeholders such as De La Salle College where Art and Design students painted the junior

school grounds to facilitate interactive educational games.

Stakeholders are not only external but also internal. In fact, a number of MCAST promotional video clips, which served as a series of adverts for MCAST, were developed and produced by students following the BA (Hons) Creative Media Production programme.

INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING AND TRANSPORT

The Institute of Engineering and Transport is the leading Maltese institution focusing on research and training in the areas of Engineering and Transport. The Institute offers training in various fields such as Electrical and Electronics, Mechanical Engineering, Construction Engineering, Automotive Engineering, Building Services, Maritime, Aviation, Logistics, Transportation and Trades. The Institute of Engineering and Transport continuously invests in the latest equipment to be able to deliver focused hands-on training sessions.

In the year under review, 1,163 students were registered in 70 different courses ranging from Level 1 to Level 7.



Aviation, Transportation and Logistics

This Department equips learners with the necessary understanding, knowledge and skills for a successful career within the aviation industry.

In 2021, 200 students were registered at the Aviation Department.

A new Diploma in Aircraft Maintenance incorporating Part-66 Category A was designed and launched in 2021. This course allows students to achieve a dual certification, namely an EASA qualification from Transport Malta and an academic certificate from MCAST. Work on a new set of part-time courses

for professionals in the aviation sector will be launched.

This Department also offered the new MSc in Aerospace Engineering. To support the activities of this launch, during September and October 2021 a set of scientific seminars were organized on campus by eminent scholar Prof. Emeritus Cesare Barbieri and Dr Lorenzo Olivieri from the University of Padova. The Department also set up a team of researchers to conduct scientific research in the Aerospace sector.

Maritime Studies

The Centre for Maritime Studies (CMS) offers a range of educational maritime courses, both full-time and part-time, at different qualification levels in maritime deck operations and marine engineering. The CMS has set up three state-of-the-art simulators, namely the Bridge, GMDSS and ECDIS which have been recently upgraded to the latest technology. The Maritime Deck courses lead to an internationally recognized qualification namely the Maritime Certificate of Competency issued by the Shipping Directorate of the Transport Malta Authority.

In 2021 there were 125 students at the Centre for Maritime Studies. In the same year, the Centre provided six full-time programmes and seven part-time courses. Two new courses were offered in 2021, namely the Advanced Diploma

in Deck Operations and the Electrical Wiring Installation for Small Boats.

During the same year, the Centre worked on several projects, including the Hydro-Dynamic Water Tank Project, the Engine Room Simulator Project, the fourth floor at the CMS and the replacement of chart tables and the boat storage at the MCAST garage.

The CMS held several meetings with external stakeholders including Transport Malta, the Mediterranean Maritime Hub (MMH), VROON Oil and Gas Shipping Services Company, SL Management, AFM and a Libyan delegation.

Mechanical Engineering

The Mechanical Engineering Department is one of Malta's leading departments in the field. The team includes over 100 members of staff, most hailing from industry, which guarantees the Institute's strong links with industry.

177 students have followed courses

at the Mechanical Engineering Department in 2021.

The Department offered five courses in 2021. One new course was offered, namely the MSc in Mechanical Engineering and Sustainable Technology.





A number of audits were carried out by ASIIN as part of the Pre-Warrant Course Verification as requested by the National Board of Engineers. Each audit was successful and as a result the Pre-Warrant Qualification Course was launched. Successful completion of this course provides past graduates with the opportunity to apply for the National Engineering Warrant.

The new Bachelor of Engineering programmes, designed by the staff at the MCAST Mechanical Engineering Department, have been approved by the National Board of Engineers. From now onwards students enrolled in the new programmes will not have to undertake the PWQC in order to be eligible for the National Engineering Warrant.

Six part-time courses were designed specifically for the industry partners.

Three research projects were carried out by a number of lecturers and every effort was being made to increase this activity. In 2021 two lecturers attended a 3D Printing Technologies trade fair in Germany, while in-house lecturer training on health and safety, on the internal verification process and on dissertation SOI proposal writing were also held.

During 2021 the Department purchased new strength of materials equipment, mechanical engineering equipment, 3D printers and other test equipment for labs. Works have also progressed on the completion of the new state-of-the-art Mechanical Engineering

laboratories with an investment of over over €80,000.

Fifteen meetings were held with industry partners. The Mechanical Engineering industry partner list comprises over 100 companies who regularly assist the Department through work-based learning programmes. Several student visits to industry workplaces took place in 2021 and these were highly appreciated by students.

Meetings have also been held with Farsons, Playmobil, Euro Supplies Ltd, Abertax, Uniplast, Enemed, Tekmoulds, Freeport and the Works Division to formalise an industry council operating inside the Mechanical Department.

Electrical, Electronics and Robotics

In 2021, 197 students were enrolled in one of the nine courses delivered by the Department.

Two new courses were offered, namely the Advanced Diploma in Robotics, Drone Technology, Automation and Artificial Intelligence and the PWQC (Electrical and Electronics Engineering).

In July 2021, the following activities were organised targeting secondary school students and teachers:

- ◆ Summer 2021 workshop for Python programming
- ◆ Summer 2021 workshop for Arduino programming
- ◆ Summer 2021 workshop for Robot programming
- ◆ Summer 2021 workshop for Microcontrollers
- ◆ Summer 2021 workshop for Electronics
- ◆ My Lab Idea workshop

The Department participated in the Science in the City 2021 event.

The new Theoretical Physics Lab was set up with the purchase of Comsol Software Licences installed in the desktop PCs of one of the Department's computer labs in Block N. Various software licences were procured following lecturers' requests.

One of the classrooms within the Department was allocated to researchers as a research lab where they can build and test prototypes.

The Department developed a solid relationship with eight industrial partners including Methode Electronics, ST Microelectronics, Water Services Corporation, Corinthia Group and Playmobil.

Four bespoke courses were also developed to cater for their specific requirements.

The Department collaborated with MITA, MFED, ST Microelectronics and the New York University, Abu Dhabi on specific projects and research projects.

The following are the research projects that the Department worked on in 2021:

- ◆ JUMP2Excel
- ◆ NEEMO
- ◆ CIXT
- ◆ AEROTOX
- ◆ PIXAM
- ◆ Bus ID System
- ◆ Stratospheric Balloon
- ◆ High-Speed Data Acquisition System
- ◆ High-Speed and Low-Power Electronics System
- ◆ Wireless Wearable Technology

Building Services Engineering

The Building Services Engineering Department continued to offer highly professional courses in the areas of welding and fabrication, HVAVR and joinery.

114 students were registered within this Department during 2021.

An important milestone reached within the refrigeration industry was the signing of an MoU with RefPro concerning CO2 refrigeration. This collaboration will give the opportunity to around 30 students to start using the latest technology within the industry. New courses for F Gas licence holders were also created.

The Welding and Fabrication Section worked on involving 50 students in small projects for the community. Ten students attending the Alternative Learning Programme (ALP) were integrated in the Extended Diploma in Welding and Fabrication.

The Woodwork and Joinery section started a project with the Malta Chamber of Commerce to market this industry with the target of attracting more students towards this trade by 2022.

Automotive Engineering

The Department of Automotive Engineering had 255 students enrolled in one of its three full-time programmes offered at either Level 3 or Level 4.

The Automotive Department launched the MQF Level 5 Undergraduate Diploma in Auto Electronics and Electrical Technology. This programme was offered on a part-time basis with a cohort of 20 students, all working in the automobile industry. Additionally, another two programmes were re-offered, namely the Motor Vehicle Basic Familiarization and the Electronics for the Automotive Industry.

The Department issued a tender for the procurement of a brand new Electric Vehicle. Simultaneously, the Department acquired two second-hand Electric Vehicles. Research is being carried out to transform the vehicle into a permanent EV (Electric Vehicle) which will act as a showcase for the students. The Department is also

carrying out research to set up an EV workshop. Research is being conducted in collaboration with the Malta Public Transport to explore the possibilities of aiding visually impaired commuters to use public transport.

The Department participated in the UNESCO Conference on 'Bridging Africa and Europe: New Qualifications and Competencies in TVET' held in June 2021. It also participated in the SMEs' National Forum organized in November 2021 by the Malta Employers' Association. In both conferences, the Automotive Department shared its experience and the way forward in the area of Electric Vehicles.

A competition for primary school children in Year 6 was launched. Students were asked to design the colour scheme for a Piper Seneca airplane. The winning design will be transferred to an actual airplane by students in the Diploma in Automotive



Repair (Body and Paint).

During 2021, two major projects consisted in the extension of the compressed air line system to serve all workshops at the Auto Yard, while at the same time, installation commenced on

an exhaust filtering system to enable cars to be serviced inside workshops while the ignition is switched on.

Construction

In 2021, 104 students were enrolled in Construction courses at the Institute of Engineering and Transport.

The same year saw the first cohort of BSc in Quantity Surveying course students graduating.

The Department has written a number of National Occupational Standards (NOS) issued by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) into units that can be taught at MCAST on a part-time evening course basis.

The Department has invested in new equipment including a large section of scaffolding and has improved the Masonry and Tile Laying Workshops.

The Department has continued to collaborate with local councils and other entities. Projects included the

restoration of St Catherine's Chapel in Gudja and a number of statues in B'Kara. The Masonry Heritage students carried out restoration works at Villa Guardamangia as part of their hands-on practical work.

As in previous years, external lecturers and speakers gave short presentations. Lecturers also organized visits to ongoing major infrastructure projects including the Central Link Project and the restoration of the President's Palace in Valletta. A trip to Rome was also organised for the Higher Diploma in Heritage Skills students. The visit has helped the students appreciate certain historical construction technologies and architectural features.

INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The MCAST Institute of Information and Communication Technology was setup in 2001 with an initial student population of around 80 students which today has increased to roughly 1,200. The Institute aims to provide opportunities to students to enhance their skills and employability in the ICT field by working in close collaboration with the local and foreign ICT Industry and by providing open, holistic and vocational education and training aimed at meeting and exceeding industry demands.

The Institute provides training in Software Development, Computer Systems and Networks, Multimedia, iGaming and Business Analytics. It is also actively working to expand its research and innovation team with particular focus on AI, Digital Games, Cyber Security and other novel emerging technologies.

In 2021, the Institute of Information and Communication Technology had 1,112 full-time students registered on its 12 full-time courses.

The Institute was very active in discussions with the Malta Gaming Authority to create and design the new Advanced Diploma in iGaming which was launched in October 2021. Through the introduction of this new diploma, students who were studying the Diploma in iGaming can now further their studies by following the Advanced Diploma. The Institute is now working on furthering the opportunities for these students also at degree level.

With regards to part-time courses, three new boot camps were introduced in 2021, namely Java Programming, Python Programming and Unity Game Development. These courses, which have a duration of 45 hours each, were designed with the mindset to start from zero to hero and the technologies were identified after carrying out a market research of which technologies are currently in heavy demand.

In 2021, collaboration with the Institute for the Public Services continued with the running of 42 ICT related short courses as a form of CPD for public service employees. The courses ranged from Cloud Computing to Databases,

Network Technologies, Sharepoint, Computer Technician, System Administration, Change Management, System Testing and GDPR Law.

Code Week is an annual event organised by the EU Commission in collaboration with the eSkills Malta Foundation. In 2021, the Institute organised a two-week programme to provide introductory short courses on emerging technologies to the general public for free. All fourteen sessions were fully booked and Malta once again placed first in Europe on the number of initiatives organised per capita.

In the same year, a team of three students, under the supervision of Mr Thomas Gatt, had the opportunity to participate in the First Global Robotics Competition. The students were required to build a robot from a limited number of parts and develop the software required to control the robot.



First Global Robotics – TEAM MALTA - Katryna Said, Antoine Spiteri and Matthew Bugeja

Two lecturers set up the MCAST HackSpace with the objective of going beyond the media hype and scary headlines and discussing the best practices for enhancing security. The group planned a series of workshops for students across MCAST to focus on cyber security. As a result of the collaboration with the eSkills Malta Foundation, the MCAST HackSpace obtained the necessary funds to be able to acquire the required resources to organise such workshops.

As one of the partners of the Erasmus+ Project 'Introducing AI', the Institute has been involved in developing a unit at Level 4 to teach Artificial Intelligence. The partner countries together with Malta hailed from Germany, Finland and Lithuania. Such teaching material covered the basic concepts of AI, Controlling a Robotic Arm with

Computer Vision, Autonomous Driving with Computer Vision, and Machine Learning Agents in Game Design.

In the period covered by this annual report, the management at the Institute of Information and Communication Technology was very busy preparing for the eventual move into the new ICT building. Various meetings were held with lecturers to identify the resources required. The necessary tenders were published and evaluation committees were held for the procurement of the furniture, computers and interactive boards. Interim meetings were also held with the architects to follow up the building process.

MCAST

GOZO CAMPUS

The MCAST Gozo Campus continued to improve and consolidate its role as a centre of excellence that offers quality opportunities in vocational education and training to Gozitan students in Gozo.

In 2021 the student population at the MCAST Gozo Campus was 245 students, the highest in a number of years, which is significant when one considers the local secondary schools' Year 11 student population. In 2021, the MCAST Gozo Campus delivered 22 full-time programmes, including the Certificate in Vocational Skills (Pathway) programme.

Through its course provision the Gozo Campus offered a wide selection of study programmes covering diverse vocational areas at different MQF levels.

In 2021, the MCAST Gozo Campus continued to upgrade its infrastructure and invest in new equipment to improve and upgrade its facilities. The major capital interventions for 2021 included the procurement of new electrical equipment, the PLC automation training equipment, renewable energies training equipment and the Fibre Optic Cable Splicing equipment; as well as the procurement of other engineering tools and ancillary equipment and the replacement of all the aluminium apertures in the old campus wing and all workshop doors.

Apart from outreach initiatives with feeder schools and prospective students, several outreach initiatives were undertaken with industrial stakeholders. Meetings were held with a number of industrial, business and educational entities including GO plc, Merit Precision Tools, Childcare Centres and Church Schools. These initiatives,

coupled with the networking held with industrial stakeholders present during the Gozo Campus Freshers' Day held in October, yielded new work-based learning opportunities for the students. Meetings were also held with the Gozo Regional Development Authority (GRDA) in relation to the Authority's proposed strategy for Gozo and to identify areas where MCAST can collaborate and work closely with GRDA and other Gozitan stakeholders on areas related to training needs and provision, scholarships and others.

In February 2021, the myMCAST app was officially launched at the Gozo Campus.

His Excellency Bishop Anton Teuma visited the Gozo Campus in December 2021.



OUR

STAKEHOLDERS

- Policy Analysis
- Work-based Learning
- Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)

POLICY ANALYSIS

The Policy Analysis Office has been operating since 2019. It aims to facilitate the incoming flow of policy-related matters to MCAST from various public entities and to support any other business falling under the remit of the Principal's Office.

In 2021 MCAST provided its position on the following policy-related topics: ERASMUS, Micro-credentials, EMN, Eurydice updates, COVID-19, Tink Tank recommendations, Upskilling pathways, enabling conditions on Education and Training, Diversity and Inclusion, Sustainable Development and R&I. Apart from the various requests received from the Ministry for Education on various policy matters, this Office assisted the Ministry to complete a CEDEFOP research report on vocational teachers in Malta.

In collaboration with the MCAST Equality Committee, this Office also contributed to drafting and finalising

the MCAST Equality Policy and the MCAST Anti-Harassment Policy to acquire the Equality Mark for MCAST 2022 through the NCPE.

This Office supported the MCAST Board of Governors in providing a periodical report of the latest and relevant statistics about MCAST. This report is compiled in collaboration with the input of various offices that handle students', employees' and administrative data.

Another significant achievement that this Office has also undertaken was the responsibility to provide the required initial coordination between the EAIR - The European Higher Education Society team - and MCAST representatives to organise an international conference at MCAST in 2022. This also included coordinating between MCAST experts to develop the essential topics for the forum.

WORK - BASED LEARNING

Work-based learning (WBL) is the proactive method to connecting the gap between education and skilled careers, providing students with the needed skills that are challenging to learn through classroom-based lecturing. MCAST work-based learning programmes help students develop an extensive understanding of industries and possible careers that are available to them. Students learn through practice and also develop social and personal skills to enter those careers later in life. Work-based learning is a methodology that can support learning for all

students through various approaches. Experiences of work-based learning may take the form of placements, internships and apprenticeships. Combining the components of College and work and providing work-based learning opportunities for all students requires a vision and commitment shared by all stakeholders including educators, employers and students.

MCAST is continuously increasing the number of programmes offering apprenticeship schemes to students. In 2021, over 1,900 students following



MQF Level 3, MQF Level 4 and MQF Level 6 courses benefitted from the apprenticeship scheme across different sectors, including aviation, heating, ventilation and air-conditioning, joinery and furniture-making, masonry, welding and fabrication, electrical and electronics, automotive, hairdressing, applied science, food technology, information technology, gaming, business administration and secretarial, finance and insurance, accounting, marketing, fashion and retail, cultural heritage skills, manufacturing, marine engineering, operations and maintenance, and biomedical engineering – with an extensive selection of over 1,900 industries and employers registered with MCAST as industry partners.

Work-based learning prepares students with the intellectual, technical, and social skills needed to compete and contribute meaningfully to the community. Higher-level knowledge and skills are acquired through

academic study and learning by doing at the place of work. Work-based learning assists students by learning in and from workplaces, focusing on critical reflection on this learning and its relevance to them in terms of enhanced skills, knowledge and understanding, and increased critical self-awareness. Work-based learning is also highly valuable for employers in terms of enhanced employment, innovative capacity and employee output.

There are several forms of work-based learning which include apprenticeships, paid or unpaid placements and internships. Work-based learning gives the opportunity to critically explore the curriculum and promote new teaching and learning. It also promotes active partnerships with employers and external organisations.

external organisations.

To comply with the provisions of the Apprenticeship and Work-based Learning Act, the Department has revisited all training agreements and restructured the Work-based Learning Operational Board.

MCAST is continuously working on extending its base of industry partners to provide high-quality apprenticeship opportunities. MCAST has also worked on a scheme to encourage more companies to recruit students in apprenticeship programmes whilst

also awarding those sponsors who engage apprentices. With the help of the Government of Malta, through the Ministry for Education and the Ministry for Finance, as part of the COVID-19 National Recovery Plan, industry partners, including companies and self-employed persons who retained apprentices on their books and had a valid contract at the 15th June 2021, received the sum of €500 per contract by the end of calendar year 2021, depending on the date of termination of the contract.

MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING (MoUs)

During the year 2021 18 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and agreements were signed, namely with the following -

Institute for Education (MEDE)
Scouts Association of Malta
Malta Chamber of SMEs
Alternative Learning Programme
Arts Council Malta
Vocational College of Medicine Joangsu Province of the People's Republic of China
Water Services Corporation
The Malta Police Force
Gozo Tourism Association
Institute for Education (IFE)
Armed Forces of Malta
Interreg V-A Italy-Malta
Lufthansa Technik Malta
Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ
The Correctional Services Agency
PoVE Water
Refpro Refrigeration
Mediterranean Maritime Research and Training Centre Society Coop, Malta Maritime Pilots Coop Services Ltd

These MoUs help to increase the cooperation between MCAST and Industry as well as other educational and non-educational institutions.



OUR

INFRASTRUCTURE

- IT Infrastructure
- Capital Projects
- Estates and Precincts

The mission of the IT Services Department is to provide secure and highly reliable technology infrastructure for the campus community with a focus on meeting the ever-changing needs and expectations of MCAST. Strategic planning, upgrades and implementations helped the IT Services Department respond quickly to the needs of students and members of staff as they transitioned to an online environment for lectures and telework respectively. During the year covered by this report, IT personnel collaborated with various departments to provide laptops, phones, headsets, web cameras, Wi-Fi hotspots, software and other resources.

In 2021 the IT Department worked on the configuration and installation of additional network routers at various remote sites, namely at the MCAST

Gozo Campus, at the Institute for the Creative Arts and at the Centre for Agriculture, Aquatics and Animal Sciences. This project was completed in very short time frames due to rapid technology developments.

The Department undertook the upgrade of various network backbones, enabling higher data throughputs across various buildings located at the Main Campus. It worked on upgrading the Wi-Fi main router to cater for increased Wi-Fi access points and load and the optimisation of various firewall configuration rules, hence reducing load quite significantly on such appliances.

The following software adaptations were carried out for home use:

- MaxQDA: setup and installation guides for lecturing staff and students.
- Various Autodesk products – installation of new licence servers for home use.
- Adobe Creative Cloud – implementation of a home use programme, thus enabling MCAST students to be able to use the aforementioned software from home.
- Proteus Software – obtained cloud licence for users to be able to run software from home.
- Didacto Festo – FluidSIM configuration and setup of a centralised licence server, including installation guides.
- IBM SPSS & SPSS AMOS – configuration and licence setup for on premises/home use, including dissemination of installation guides.

The Department worked on the implementation and configuration of a Single Sign-On solution (Open Athens) for online library resources. The main aim of this project was to address issues with multiple credentials to access various online library resources.

Office 365 licences were upgraded thus doubling the size of staff mailboxes.

Cluster

2021 saw the consolidation of the CMIS student management information system. Further training was provided to staff. Training courses were provided to new members of staff while training manuals and videos were produced and made available on demand through the LMS. Refresher courses and specific training were also offered to course coordinators, institute vocational coordinators and curriculum administrators.

Comparing the same metrics demonstrating the amount of effort put in by all staff members on the CMIS through the number of assignments administered through the system,

The new MCAST Resource Centre was connected with the main Data Centre, network backbones were installed and VLANS on the main switch were configured. The Department also installed additional Wi-Fi access points.

results in an increase of 22%.

In 2021, a total of 16,229 assignments were managed through the CMIS as compared to 13,320 assignments processed in the first year of implementation. This included all the quality assurance audit trail exchange of information between assessors and verifiers as well as associated attendance records and publication of marks and feedback to students. The number of assignments processed by each Institute was as follows:

Assignments issued per Institute during the academic year 2020-2021

Institute/ Department	Number of Assignments
Cross Curriculum	91
Gozo Campus	996
Institute for the Creative Arts	4,065
Institute of Applied Sciences	1,520
Institute of Business Management and Commerce	1,497
Institute of Community Services	2,879
Institute of Engineering and Transport	3,163
Institute of Information and Communication Technology	1,981
Centre for Professional Development	37
Grand Total	16,229

During 2021, the following services were launched through the CMIS:

- First paperless publication of Final Results for Level 3 programmes - This concept was piloted in order to assess the effectiveness of such publication of results while being more environmentally friendly and saving on postage costs. The process was successful although MCAST did receive feedback that students still required original signed copies of their results when applying for jobs.
- Publication of Certificate supplements for Level 3 programmes through the CMIS - Europass Certificate supplements and respective transcripts were generated through the system for the first time in February 2021 thus consolidating the platform and phasing out former ad hoc systems.
- eIDAS integration - The MCAST CMIS was the first educational platform to be integrated with the Electronic Identification, Authentication and Trust Services of the European Union (eIDAS). This enables EU citizens holding digital authentication accounts in their home country to apply directly for courses at MCAST through the eIDAS authentication system (similar to applying with the Maltese eID).
- Improved Admissions Process - The Admissions Office worked hard to simplify the admissions process. The CMIS was also extended to the registration of part-time students.
- Curriculum integration - The second quarter of 2021 saw the integration of the curricular structure and management being migrated to the CMIS, phasing out former solutions.
- Mobile App – The Classter Mobile App was launched making data and communication available to students and staff through their mobile devices.
- Apprenticeship Portal – The apprenticeship module was specifically designed for MCAST and was delivered for testing.



CAPITAL PROJECTS

The main focus for the Capital Projects Office was the execution of the MCAST Campus Masterplan through the direct development of the ongoing construction projects and the creation of conceptual designs for Phase 3 of the Masterplan. The team issued a number of tenders intended to refurbish the available old stock of building to ensure a safe and more pleasant environment for students and staff in the interim, until full development according to the Masterplan is achieved.

The Department was heavily involved in two major construction projects which included the construction and

finishing, including the installation of infrastructural services, of the MCAST Resource Centre (MRC) and the Institute of Information and Communication Technology (IICT).

Works on the MCAST Resource Centre were substantially completed by December 2021 with snagging, commissioning and handing over taking centre stage as of January 2022. By the end of 2021 around 95% of the gross floor area of the IICT was constructed.

ESTATES AND PRECINCTS

Until the last quarter of 2021, these two departments were divided in functions and management. The Estates Department was responsible for preventive and corrective maintenance on HVAC systems, ELV systems, telephony systems, door access systems and other externally contracted work; whilst the Precincts Department was responsible for the day-to-day maintenance, construction of custom furniture, drywall partitioning, daily logistics and general maintenance of all MCAST buildings. As of quarter 4 of the year 2021, both departments were merged into one. This newly merged department is seen taking part in the migration of the MCAST staff from various departments to new state-of-the-art premises by carrying out logistics works to transport items from the old to the new building, helping set up newly procured furniture, and assisting in cleaning the new building from scrap materials. This Department is responsible for the embellishment works at the perimeter of the new

MRC building, such as plastering and painting of boundary walls, building the façade and other outdoor furniture in the area. During the migration process, the Department continued with its daily functions, such as day-to-day maintenance, logistics and auditorium setup works related to graduation and events.



OUR

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- MG2i
- International Office
- EU Projects



At the Dubai Expo 2021

MCAST GATEWAY TO INDUSTRY

MCAST Gateway to Industry is the College's commercial arm which supports, enhances and complements MCAST's commercial operations. Since its inception in 2008, the company has maximised its potential by providing part-time courses and offering training support to various industries.

In 2021, the company underwent a reorganisation exercise, which allowed it to offer a wider range of services to its customers, both locally and abroad. This was possible through the signing of a service agreement between MCAST and MG2i. The company increased its staff complement and started the process to upgrade its IT infrastructure so as to reach more clients through innovative marketing strategies.

MG2i presently handles the majority of the commercial aspects of MCAST. In 2021, the core business consisted of local vocational training provision to a broad target market. The company responded well to the high demand from international students. It adapted well and carried out the necessary

changes as it cruised through the COVID-19 pandemic. MG2i registered an increase in international students who decided to travel to Malta and further their studies at MCAST.

During 2021, MG2i issued two editions of the MCAST part-time courses prospectus. Over 290 courses were featured in both editions, out of which 62 courses were offered for the first time. MG2i marketed these courses through both digital and printed methods. The main business was generated through the provision of training courses offered locally. However, in 2021 MG2i registered an exponential increase in the number of MCAST bespoke courses offered to international students.

Although more travel restrictions were encountered during 2021, MG2i continued its internationalisation strategy by building improved relations and collaborations with reputable universities and colleges across the globe. MCAST and MG2i participated in the prestigious Dubai Expo 2021. The MCAST Principal and CEO, Professor

Joachim James Calleja, and Deputy Principal Stephen Vella hosted an MCAST Symposium at the Malta Pavilion on 14th December 2021. During the Symposium, priority was given to working with international partners to deliver MCAST programmes internationally and encourage student mobility.

MG2i has also been very active in expanding its portfolio to offer beyond

training provision. It focused its attention on other revenue generation streams, such as renting MCAST spaces and resources.

The aim of MG2i is to keep building on its success through the launch of new business ventures. In 2021 the company made several changes which will result in better outcomes during 2022.

ERASMUS+ PROJECTS AND MOBILITY

In 2021, the Erasmus+ Projects and Mobility Office continued its operation to increase the participation of MCAST students and staff in the Erasmus+ programmes in both Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) through a number of activities and promotional events.

The Erasmus+ Projects and Mobility Office worked incessantly to restart learner and staff mobilities to continental Europe as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic receded. 17

new Inter-Institutional Agreements (IIAs) and MoUs were signed during the year, bringing up the total Erasmus+ collaborative agreements to 115 for the new Erasmus+ programme period 2021-2027. The Office continued in its drive to expand its network of European universities and VET institutions in order to offer more mobility opportunities to learners and staff. In addition, these agreements serve to promote the College as a partner in new Erasmus+ project proposals.



The Erasmus+ Office set up and organised a total of 161 Erasmus KA1 mobilities during 2021. A total of 139 students (65 HE, 74 VET) and 22 staff participated. In addition, the Erasmus+ Office hosted 39 incoming Erasmus+ students and 41 visiting staff and academics during the same year. Although the numbers were significantly lower than in pre-pandemic times, they increased steadily month by month and this augurs well for the coming year as the pandemic recedes further.

The Erasmus+ Office was also very active on the Erasmus+ projects side. During 2021, seven projects were completed, and another nine new projects were successfully applied for and initiated, bringing up the number of active Erasmus+ projects to 28 at the end of 2021. This is the highest number of active Erasmus+ projects ever coordinated by the College.

Apart from this, the Office has thrived in its role as UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre for TVET in Malta and is participating and contributing towards the development of TVET internationally. The Office has also contributed to international networks such as the European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training (EVBB) and the European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EfVET). The Office also participated in numerous activities of UNESCO-UNEVOC and EfVET, contributing to various thematic discussions particularly in Greening and Sustainability in VET.

EU PROJECTS OFFICE

During the period January to December 2021, the EU Projects Office was responsible for the implementation of three major projects which are co-funded through the European Structural Funds 2014-2020.

Two of these projects, having a total financial allocation of €12.7 million, are being part financed by the European Social Fund (ESF). MCAST's ESF projects are important tools in the provision of educational services as they enhance academic achievement and help students secure better employment and life opportunities.

The third project, which has an eligible value of €30.9 million and is co-

financed by the European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF), focuses on the provision of educational infrastructure.

Expenditure for 2021 was €5.9 million. Up to end 2021, MCAST benefitted from €32.6 million in EU funding under the programming period 2014-2020.



ESF 02.058 Adding Value: Nurturing Learning

The main objective of ESF 02.058 was to set up state-of-the-art support structures for students with learning difficulties and individuals pertaining to vulnerable groups. During 2021, research, mentoring and development of software activities were implemented.

The overarching aim of this project is to create long-term structures that will provide support to MCAST students with different needs following courses at Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3. Extensive research has been carried out to identify the following: the typical barriers to training which are encountered by socially excluded individuals; challenges encountered by students during their educational journey; skills gaps; methods on how gamification can help students with

their studies; and the effectiveness of student mentoring. In parallel, student mentors have provided academic support, motivation, emotional support and guidance to students pertaining to disadvantaged groups, with the objective of making their learning journey more effective. During this period, substantial progress has also been registered on the development of the Operational Tools and Information Systems (OTIS) platform. Once completed, the system shall facilitate and support MCAST's students in a didactic and methodical way and assist in the development of the students' individualised pedagogical portfolio.

ESF 03.003 Development of Training Programmes

Through project ESF 03.003, MCAST consolidated the College's tertiary offers. Eight vocational programmes at MQF Level 7 in a wide range of subject areas were being delivered during 2021. During the year 168 students benefitted

from this project, with fifteen of them finalising their studies in the same year.

ERDF 9.036 MCAST Masterplan - Phase 2

During 2021, the main activities of ERDF 09.036 focused primarily on the infrastructure development of the MCAST Resource Centre (MRC) and the Institute of Information and Communication Technology (IICT) at Paola.

Works related to the MCAST Resource Centre (MRC) were substantially completed. The building has an overall footprint of 1,920m² and a gross building area of 7,920m². As of end 2021, migration was underway. All the supplies intended for the MRC building were contracted and the related contracts implemented. The total value of EU funded contracts related to equipment was €963,875.60. These included the supply of over 16,000 items. The overall investment in the MRC building co-funded by the EU is €9.3 million.

During the year under review, construction works related to the Institute of Information and Communication Technology (IICT) were being implemented. The IICT building has an overall footprint of 3,420m² and a gross building area of 11,900m².

The tender launched for the procurement of furniture and equipment for the IICT attracted fifty-seven offers. Four contracts amounting to €175,652.94 were signed. Another tender was published to procure the remaining supplies which were not awarded during the first call. Thirty-five offers were received.

A total of €4.4 million related to this project have been certified.



OUR

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FUNCTION

- Ongoing Research within Institutes
- Research Projects
- Expo 2021
- Innovation Initiatives

ONGOING RESEARCH WITHIN INSTITUTES

During 2021, the number of academics engaged in research has matured and gradually increased to 105 active research academics with 304 contact hours for research per semester across 29 research thematic areas.

These efforts were closely supported by MCAST's Applied Research and Innovation Centre, through the Office of Research and Innovation, the Institute Research Committees, the Senior Research Officers and various mechanisms designed within the MCAST Research Framework.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

In 2021 MCAST was involved in a research exposure of €24.3 million externally funded projects, where MCAST is contributing knowledge worth €3.3 million distributed over 30 current projects from different domains involving all Institutes as well as cross-collaboration between internal Institutes and external industry partners.



EXPO 2021

In December 2021, ARIC has once again supported the organisation of the annual MCAST R&I Expo held within the Institute of Applied Sciences. This event aimed to promote the work of over 105 academics/researchers/management. It featured industry stands for external partners, poster/exhibition setups for external projects and MRes students,

together with a published proceedings booklet providing insight into all research activities undertaken at MCAST. The event was presided by the Principal and CEO together with the Minister for Equity, Research and Innovation.

INNOVATION INITIATIVES

In 2021, MCAST formalized the establishment of the MCAST EdTech Framework and developed plans for the implementation of its first initiative EdTech Project 1 – which through institutional backing and in line with the MCAST Strategic Plan aims to support and catalyse the adoption of eXtended Reality (XR) across the organisation. The project serves to promote, develop, and sustain the introduction of Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR) and immersive applications within

the diverse curricula occurring within MCAST Institutes as a pedagogical tool to enhance and augment the VET training provided. Furthermore, in 2021, ARIC undertook the procurement of several state-of-the-art educational equipment which is to be housed within the MCAST Resource Centre in support of the Research and Innovation drive.

OUR

SUPPORT SERVICES

Finance —

Procurement —

Events —

Human Resources —

Centre for Professional Development —

Communications —

Grievance Office —



FINANCE

During the financial year 2021, the Finance Office continued to upgrade its finance systems and improve its relationship with existing and new suppliers. It has invested in improving its current payment system and embarked on a project whereby payments to suppliers are made through the SEPA bank payment system instead of the traditional cheque payment. This method has meant collecting data and ensuring the security and collation of such data, respecting the confidentiality of such information. The benefit of this new procedure is that it is less time-consuming and more secure and reliable since the payments arrive directly in the supplier's bank account.

The Office is continuously working on assuring the adherence to policies and procedures and, where required,

existing policies and practices are being updated to reflect changes in the work/business environment.

During the year 2021, a new employee joined the team. His primary focus is the funded projects. His role includes the supervision of all the Principal Investigators and Project Coordinators. He assists them in preparing the budgets to obtain new funding, leads them to ensure that the correct practices are used and guides them so that most of the financing available to MCAST for each project is exhausted.

During the year 2022, the Finance Office will be focusing on optimising the systems currently in place and automating its processes as much as possible.

PROCUREMENT

In 2021, the Procurement Office further strengthened its management team and role to ensure that all procurement procedures are adhered to by all. The Unit has continued to coordinate all associated procurement and tendering processes in full whilst ensuring compliance with Government processes and policies and drafting and finalising all documentation (approval forms/tender documents/evaluation reports and awards/contracts etc.). In addition, it liaised with the administrative and expert academic staff involved, including through coordination and active involvement in evaluation committees, to close off and publish the resultant outcomes on time.

During 2021, the activities of the Procurement Unit, as highlighted above, culminated in 1,642 Purchase Orders which amounted to €1.8 million.

Moreover, 22 Tenders and 48 Calls for Quotation were published through the Electronic Public Procurement System. During the year, 58 contracts, amounting to €5.28 million^[1], were successfully awarded.

Training for members of the Procurement Unit was sustained as in previous years. Specific training on using the Electronic Public Procurement System and the Evaluation Committee Procedures was delivered to all officers within the Procurement Unit.

[1] €3.68 million of the total awarded contracts during 2021 were financed from local funds; the rest were funded through various EU funds.

EVENTS

The Events Department manages and coordinates various events from proposal right up to delivery, including setting and maintaining project timelines and priorities.

In spite of certain restrictions being in place due to COVID-19, 60 events were organised during 2021. These included high profile meetings such as the MCESD meetings, official visits by dignitaries, MCAST projects related events, launch events, graduations, students and staff fundraising events and Freshers' Week. During the latter, around 80 organisations, including NGOs and companies, participated in a whole week of activities organised at the start of the academic year. Information talks on various topics were held

throughout the entire week. Students roamed enthusiastically around the Main Campus, the Institute for the Creative Arts and the Gozo Campus. The atmosphere was electrifying, especially when the Vibe FM (MCAST's official Radio Station) crew were present on campus to entertain the students. The feedback received was very positive and preparations for similar events at the start of the next academic year are already in full swing.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Following all the challenges faced and changes encountered in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the MCAST HR Office adapted adequately and has consistently thrived under the pressure of such challenges. The HR team has adopted a more hybridised attitude to work. The regular use of virtual tools such as MS Teams video calls and chat, Zoom, and other platforms have remained a large part of daily practice. Despite these changes, HR procedures were followed appropriately and efficiently.

In 2021 the Payroll Unit was created to facilitate the salary process. Despite the change of setting, the day-to-

day HR processes, including payroll, recruitment, employees' progressions, and any auditory prerequisites were processed quickly and meticulously.

The HR Office issued 521 calls for application for vacant positions, including 73 for full-time posts and 448 for part-time posts. The HR Office has followed the legislative procedures and updated all its records and processes per the GDPR provisions. It has worked and is still working on updating the related SOPs accordingly.

CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Centre organized forty CPD sessions which were open to all MCAST staff. Over 500 members of staff participated in these courses. In 2021 the Centre developed the Higher Diploma in Vocational Education Management Practice which was offered on a part-time basis.

Among the new areas introduced were those on the inclusion of migrant students as well as special attention to students having particular conditions. Specific sessions on dissertation supervision were organized for all Institutes.

The sessions and courses offered were categorized as follows: 1) curriculum drafting, implementation and review;

2) teaching, learning and assessment; 3) educational leadership and teacher/student/worker agency, and 4) ethos and the creation of a learning community.

A new series entitled MCASTalks was launched with the first two sessions commemorating two educational giants Paulo Freire and Manwel Dimech. Moreover, two Train the Trainer courses were held for Civil Protection Department personnel between October and December 2021, serving a total of 40 students.

BVET 4.0 and MVEAR 4.0

Handover of the Bachelor of Vocational Education and Training 4.0 and that of the Master's in Vocational Education Applied Research 4.0 continued with the Institute of Community Services. The Centre for Professional Development is now responsible for all the practice placements of both the Bachelor and the Master teacher education programmes at MCAST.

In May 2021, 9 students pursued their formal learning journey by following the Vocational Education Applied Research course at Post-Graduate Diploma level. For the first time, in April 2021, 11 participants started the final lap in their journey of the Master's in

Vocational Education Applied Research. The MVEAR is a part-time course which is very popular both internally and externally especially for those aspiring to specialize in vocational education and research.

During 2021, the Council for the Teaching Profession acknowledged that persons who are in possession of a level six qualification in a subject area taught in local schools and the MVEAR 4.0 in the same (or related) area will be eligible to apply for a teacher's permanent warrant.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications Office strategised and implemented key developments in internal and external communications ensuring clear and authentic information is disseminated to a wide range of audiences.

Rebranding

In 2021, the College celebrated its 20th Anniversary. At this important milestone, MCAST launched its rebranding to create a more robust and a clearer brand identity to be conveyed through all its communications. Through this rebranding, the College aimed to enhance its credibility as a key player in vocational and professional higher education.

The rebranding implementation included preparing and producing designs for a set of communications and marketing materials, including

stationery, printed and digital material, outdoor and indoor signage, events related material, social media marketing and the College website. It also included the creation of a communications tool kit, including brand guidelines and templates to be used by staff and stakeholders. Around 39,740 branded items to be distributed during corporate events and 20,000 stationery items to be used across College, were ordered.

Marketing Communications

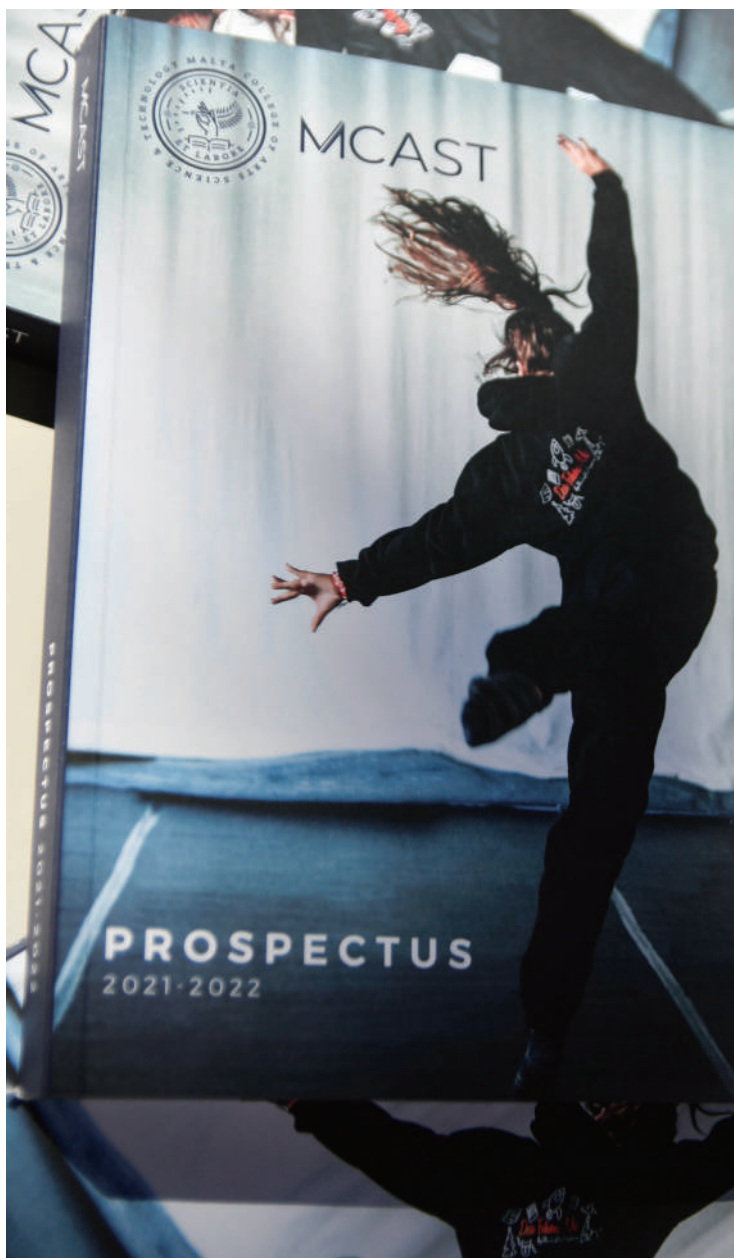
Several campaigns were implemented using a mixed media approach, including the intake campaign for student recruitment, the MCAST Appreciates Campaign and the Students' Success Stories. The Office continued to implement strategies to increase its digital presence with over 200,000 users visiting mcast.edu.mt in

2021. The social media presence and reach was also strengthened through organic reach and paid adverts. Over 500 posts were disseminated across the different platforms, and an increase of 18% in page views on Facebook was registered.

Media Relations

The Communications team monitors media coverage and manages all press enquiries, media statements, press releases, press conferences publicity, photo shoots and interview requests. In 2021, 65 press releases were issued by the Office, and 389 articles and write-ups mentioning the College were

published across different news media and platforms. The Office coordinated all VIP and ministerial visits including the visits of the President of Malta and of Members of Parliament during Freshers' Week.



Publications

The rebranding was also reflected in the College's printed publications. The Office coordinated the design, content and printing of the following publications:

- The Prospectus 2021-2022 was published in May 2021, and the Prospectus 2022-2023 was published in December 2021.
- The Annual Report was published in June 2021.
- The Student Handbook was published in September 2021.
- 4 issues of MCASTlink were published as follows:

- MCASTlink issue 56 – March 2021 – 33 articles
- MCASTlink issue 57 – June 2021 – 20th Anniversary Edition – 31 articles
- MCASTlink issue 58 – November 2021 - Success Stories – 30 articles
- MCASTlink issue 59 – December 2021 – 44 articles.

GRIEVANCE OFFICE

In 2021 there were 156 contacts by students and members of staff with the Grievance Office as shown in the table below:

	Staff (All categories)	Students (Part-Time and Full- Time) and ex Students	Parents or Relatives of Students	Others (Non- MCAST)	Total
Formal / Informal Grievances	11	57*	7	2	77
Seeking Advice / Seeking Information / Concerns / Clarifications / Referrals / Reporting	21	27	5	26	79
	31	84	12	28	156

*4 of the 57 cases lodged included the whole class or a group of students.

A more detailed analysis of the above data reveals that 67 out of the 77 submitted grievances (87%) were closed after the due investigation was completed, nine (9) grievances (12%) were discontinued by the complainants concerned, while one (1) grievance (1%) was still pending at the end of December 2021. 93.5 % of the complainants chose the informal route to settle the complaint raised, and this involved open dialogue amongst all parties concerned in the discussions to reach an agreement, often involving a process of active mediation between the Office and the parties concerned. 6.5% chose the formal route for the Office to investigate their case. The Office dealt with issues promptly and consistently, carrying out the necessary investigations through formal and informal routes.

Most student grievances concerned issues related to the assessment and delivery of their chosen programmes of study, entitlement to stipends and supplement allowances, certification of their acquired qualifications, dissertation outcomes, processes concerning the state of intent form (research proposal), attendance to the graduation ceremony due to COVID-19 measures and the commencement date of part-time courses. Non-grievances were generally related to seeking advice on various matters, requests for more timely communication of results, timetable issues, absences / excused absences, measures introduced concerning COVID-19, and part-time courses.

Staff grievances dealt mainly with progression, work practices and conditions, while their non-grievances revolved around issues associated with general enquiries for clarification purposes or to intervene for faster implementation of what they considered to be their contractual entitlements, COVID-19 measures, teamwork, and issues with fellow employees.

During this reporting year, key contributions involved enhancing the awareness campaign targeting both students and staff members, a priority that aligns itself with the MCAST Strategic Plan 2019–2021. The campaign's main objective was to increase awareness and create conceptual clarity on the MCAST Grievance Office's function.

In order to ensure accessibility within the community, the Office worked on reviewing its mechanisms and documentation. During this reporting year, work included translating to Maltese the MCAST Grievance Policy and Procedure and the MCAST Grievance Form for staff and students. This ensures that the Office is accessible to all the community.

This Office was regularly involved in various discussions with the Institutes' directors and the Quality Assurance Department in reviewing documents, procedures, and regulations to strengthen the standardised practices whereby all students are treated equally and fairly, thus ensuring that the same opportunities are provided to all the students.

The Office's other key contributions were its recommendations following the Office observations and findings on grievances raised, mainly of introducing standard operating procedures for MCAST academic staff progressions and

staff progressions and processes concerning the dissertation regulations and procedures.

Substantial work was involved in monitoring that recommendations made in the final reports had been successfully implemented.

During 2021 this Office was also involved in contributing to the Dignity at MCAST: Anti-Harassment and Equality Policy.

The Office's primary goal is to adopt a positive approach when handling concerns and complaints, whilst assisting and supporting the entire community. The promotion of dialogue between all parties combined with the established policies have yielded many positive results for the well-being of the MCAST community.

OUR

AUDITED ACCOUNTS

Report of the Board of Governors

The Board presents their report and the audited financial statements of Malta College Of Arts, Science & Technology ("the College") and consolidated financial statements of the College and its subsidiaries (together, "the Group") for the year ended 31 December 2021.

Principal activities

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) mission is to provide universally accessible vocational and professional education and training with an internal dimension, responsive to the needs of the individual and the economy.

To achieve this, the College and the Group provide full-time vocational courses at various levels leading to internationally recognised Certificates/Diplomas at further and higher education level as well as ad hoc courses to cater for retraining and up-skilling of the workforce, enhancing mobility, flexibility and employability to meet the challenges of restructuring and the development of the economy in a highly competitive world.

Review of operations

The College and the Group registered a surplus for the year amounting €281,948 (2020: €2,506,222) and of €624,941 (2020: €3,174,455) respectively.

Board of Governors

The following are the details of individuals who have served as Governors of the College during the year under review and up to date of authorisation of these financial statements:

Prof. Ian Refalo - President

Prof. Mark G. Borg - Deputy President

Dr. Amanda Bezzina

Mr. Brian Farrugia

Ms. Rhoda Garland

Ms. Louisa Grech

Mrs. Marietta Lanzon

Ms. Marisa Xuereb

Ms. Davina Sammut Hili

Mr. Kurt Farrugia

In accordance with the Education Act, 1988, the Board of Governors are appointed by the Minister for a period of three years and they are eligible for re-appointment.

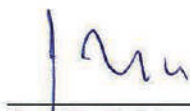
Registered Address

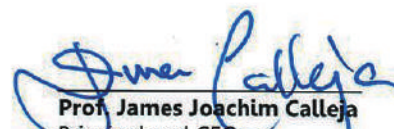
MCAST Main Campus, Corradino Hill, Paola, PLA 9032, Malta.

Auditors

Financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2021 will be the last set of financial statements audited by Capstone Assurance Ltd, Registered Auditors, in accordance with the contract agreement signed at procurement stage.

Approved by the Board on 06 June 2022.



Prof. Ian Refalo
President

Prof. James Joachim Calleja
Principal and CEO

Statement of Governors' Responsibilities

The Governors' of the College and the Group are required by the Education Act, 1988 and Companies Act, Cap 386, to prepare the annual financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the the College and the Group at the end of each financial period and of its surplus/deficit for that period. In preparation of the annual financial statements, the Governors' are required to:

- Select and apply appropriate accounting policies;
- Make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- Comply with International Financial Reporting Standards as adopted by the EU; and
- Prepare the annual financial statements on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the College and the Group will continue in business.

The Governors are responsible for keeping proper accounting records, which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the College and the Group and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Education Act, 1988 and Companies Act, Cap 386. The Governors are also responsible for ensuring that an appropriate system of internal control is in operation to provide them with reasonable assurance that the assets of the College and the Group are being properly safeguarded and that fraud and other irregularities will be prevented or detected.

Independent Auditor's Report

To the Governors of Malta College Of Arts, Science & Technology

Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements

Qualified Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Malta College Of Arts, Science & Technology (the College) and the consolidated financial statements of the College and its subsidiaries (together, the Group), set out on pages 3 - 24, which comprise the statement of financial position as at 31 December 2021, and the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, except for the effects of the matter described in the Basis of Qualified Opinion section of our report, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the College and of the Group as at 31 December 2021, and financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adopted by the European Union.

Basis of Qualified Opinion

As disclosed in Note 10, the College and the Group have buildings and improvements which were revalued as at 31 December 2021 with a revaluation gain amounting to €36,502,082 recognised in other comprehensive income and revaluation reserve. Prior to revaluation, up to 31 December 2019, buildings and improvements were depreciated over a period of 5 years which did not reflect the pattern in which the asset's future economic benefits were consumed by the College deviating from IAS 16 *Property, Plant and Equipment*. The Board of Governors updated the depreciation policy from 1 January 2020 bringing it in line with the said standard, however figures were not restated retrospectively resulting in overstatement of accumulated depreciation and understatement of carrying amount of the assets up to 30 December 2021. We were unable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to quantify adjustments necessary to the carrying amount of buildings and improvements amounting to €6,551,542 as at 01 January 2021 and corresponding revaluation gain for the year ended 31 December 2021.

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the College in accordance with the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants' Code of Ethics for our audit of the financial statements in accordance with the Accountancy Profession (Code of Ethics for Warrant Holders). Directive issued in terms of the Accountancy Profession Act (Cap.281) in Malta, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements and the IESBA Code. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our qualified opinion.

Other Matter

Our audit opinion on the component financial statements of MCAST Gateway to Industry Limited was qualified on refunds authorised and processed to foreign students who were unable to travel due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and related travelling restrictions. We were unable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence and perform alternative procedures to verify the accounting treatment of such transactions, also in view of COVID-19 related implications resulting in rescheduling of courses and other changes. As a result, we were unable to determine and quantify adjustments necessary to revenue, related deferred income and amounts due from/to foreign students. Our opinion on consolidated financial statements of the Group is not modified in respect of this matter.

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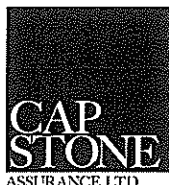
Ewropa Business Centre, Level 3 - 703, Dun Karm Street, Birkirkara, BKR 9034, Malta. T +356 2549 6500. F +356 2549 6555. E info@capstonegroup.com.mt
Registered in Malta C57993. Director Kris Baron FCCA, FIA, CISA, CPA.

www.capstonegroup.com.mt

Independent Auditor's Report (continued)

Other Information

The governors are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the Governors report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover this information, including the Governors report. In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.



In addition, in light of the knowledge and understanding of the College and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we are required to report if we have identified material misstatements in the Governors report. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Responsibilities of the Governors

The Governors are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with IFRS as adopted by the EU, and for such internal control as the Governors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Governors are responsible for assessing the College's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Governors either intend to liquidate the College or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditors' report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the College's and Group's internal control.

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Independent Auditor's Report (continued)

- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Governors.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Governors use of the going concern basis of accounting and based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the College's and the Group's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditors' report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditors' report. However, future events or conditions may cause the College and the Group to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- Obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the financial information of the entities or business activities within the College and the Group to express an opinion on the consolidated financial statements. We are responsible for the direction, supervision and performance of the group audit. We remain solely responsible for our audit opinion.

We communicate with the Governors regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Report on Other Legal and Regulatory Requirements

Under the Education Act, 1988 and Companies Act, Cap 386, we are required to report to you if, in our opinion:

- We have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.
- Adequate accounting records have not been kept, or that returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us.
- The financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns.

We have nothing to report to you in respect of these responsibilities.



Kris Baron
for and on behalf of
Capstone Assurance Ltd
Registered Auditor

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06 June 2022

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Statement of Comprehensive Income

	Notes	Group		College	
		2021	2020	2021	2020
Income		€	€	€	€
Funds allocated by Government	4	38,055,627	37,528,503	38,055,627	37,528,503
Course fees		2,382,374	3,203,858	547,093	641,390
Finance income		345	509	275	239
Other income	5	304,603	263,865	1,074,769	633,547
		40,742,949	40,996,735	39,677,764	38,803,679
Expenditure					
Recurrent expenditure		(39,842,838)	(37,239,307)	(39,272,050)	(36,155,985)
Pension contribution		(123,766)	(141,472)	(123,766)	(141,472)
Depreciation	6	(6,338)	-	-	-
Surplus before taxation	7	770,007	3,615,956	281,948	2,506,222
Taxation	8	(145,066)	(441,501)	-	-
Surplus for the year		624,941	3,174,455	281,948	2,506,222
Other comprehensive income for the year					
Gain on property revaluation		36,502,082	-	36,502,082	-
Total comprehensive income for the year		37,127,023	3,174,455	36,784,030	2,506,222

The notes on pages 7 to 24 form an integral part of these financial statements.

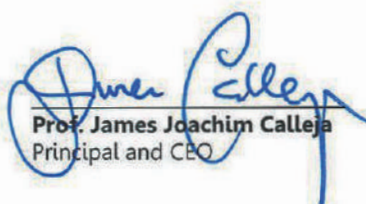
Statement of Financial Position

	Note	Group		College	
		2021	2020	2021	2020
		€	€	€	€
ASSETS					
Non-current assets					
Property, plant and equipment	10	57,494,857	15,738,750	57,462,334	15,738,750
Investment in subsidiary	11	-	-	1,391,759	1,999
Deferred tax		700	700	-	-
Total non-current assets		57,495,557	15,739,450	58,854,093	15,740,749
Current assets					
Trade and other receivables	12	4,980,455	5,167,505	6,489,395	7,065,923
Cash and cash equivalents	13	20,656,657	19,655,510	13,464,000	13,960,573
Total current assets		25,637,112	24,823,015	19,953,395	21,026,496
TOTAL ASSETS		83,132,669	40,562,465	78,807,488	36,767,245
RESERVES AND LIABILITIES					
Reserves					
Endowment capital		232,937	232,937	232,937	232,937
Revaluation reserve		36,502,082	-	36,502,082	-
Other reserves		29,809,191	23,763,111	29,809,191	23,763,111
Retained earnings		2,360,922	1,735,981	623,083	341,135
Total reserves		68,905,132	25,732,029	67,167,293	24,337,183
Liabilities					
Non-current liabilities					
Other payables	14	1,359,540	1,903,356	1,359,540	1,903,356
Provisions	15	329,489	304,000	329,489	304,000
Total non-current liabilities		1,689,029	2,207,356	1,689,029	2,207,356
Current liabilities					
Provisions	15	-	382,334	-	382,334
Current tax payable		-	444,297	-	-
Trade and other payables	14	12,538,508	11,796,449	9,951,166	9,840,372
Total current liabilities		12,538,508	12,623,080	9,951,166	10,222,706
Total liabilities		14,227,537	14,830,436	11,640,195	12,430,062
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		83,132,669	40,562,465	78,807,488	36,767,245

The notes on pages 7 to 24 are an integral part of these financial statements.

These financial statements on pages 3 to 24 were approved by the Board of Governors on 06 June 2022:


Prof. Ian Refalo
President


Prof. James Joachim Calleja
Principal and CEO



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