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mcastlink

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE MALTA COLLEGE OF ARTS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



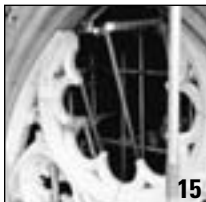
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Troika Zammit,
MCAST Institute of
Art & Design

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MCAST has made great strides and achieved much in such a short period since its foundation and the College is determined to move forward to fulfil its vision. In this regard it is proud to announce that it will pilot the first vocational degree in 2007 and in doing so is embarking on the next important phase of its development. This will mark another significant and progressive milestone in the College's short history. Initially, the areas being considered are Art and Design, Business and Commerce, Electrical and Electronics Engineering and ICT, however other areas will be included to match the requirements of the economy.

An important event for MCAST was the launch of the "Employer's Guide to MCAST and Vocational Education and Training". This Guide, the first of its kind, is aimed at bridging the understanding between MCAST and employers and to pave the way for further collaboration and build on the already excellent working relationships that exist between employers and the College. Among the many benefits of such links will be the common understanding

that the knowledge, skills and competencies within the curriculum are appropriate and relevant to a changing economy. For further information or a copy of the Employer's Guide kindly send an e-mail to partnerships@mcast.edu.mt.

This October the Vocational Teachers Training Unit (VTTU) witnessed the awarding of certificates to its first cohort of graduates. Forty full-time assistant lecturers from various MCAST Institutes received the internationally recognised BTEC Certificate in Further Education Teaching. During the Graduation Ceremony held at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Mdina, it was stated that one of the main aims of this programme was to impart to MCAST lecturing staff the necessary pedagogical skills in order for them to hone their teaching skills and adopt a holistic teaching approach with young people and adults. It was also stated that this development was a significant contribution to the development of a quality assurance framework across all MCAST courses.

This edition introduces the Health and Safety Week entitled 'SAFE START' organised by the recently established MCAST Health and Safety Office. The aim of this campaign was to create awareness on health and safety issues that young people might face while at work. The Health and Safety Office is responsible for the promotion and awareness of all health and safety issues and to ensure that all College sites comply with the statutory health and safety regulations.

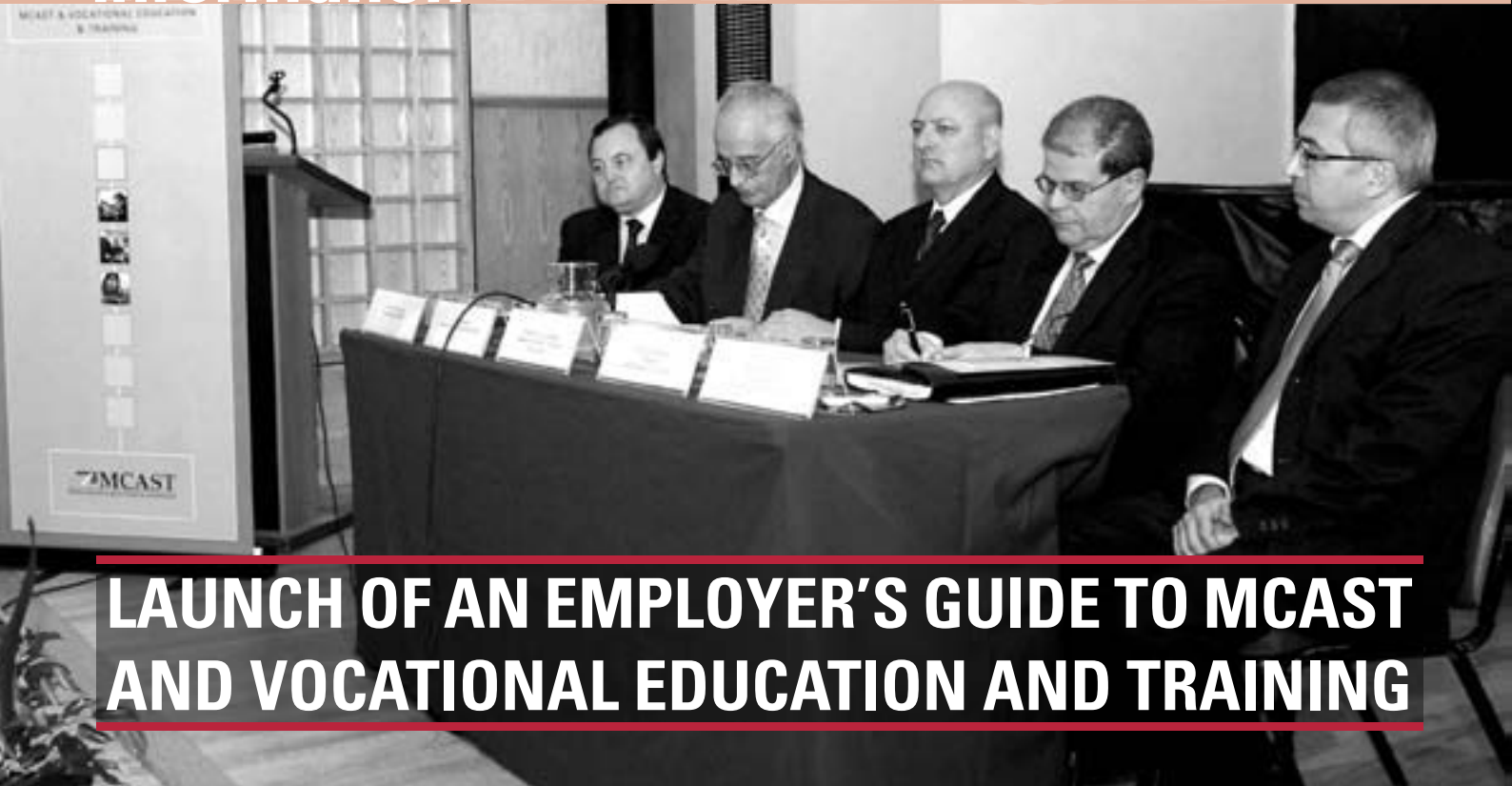
MCAST is striving to provide students with more opportunities to acquire entrepreneurial skills and knowledge and in this regard has embarked on several entrepreneurship initiatives. This magazine features an article submitted by Malta Enterprise on Business Set ups. It provides students with information on the schemes and assistance available to them in order to facilitate the start up process. These schemes are in line with the College's vision as they contribute to students' holistic development and entrepreneurial ethos.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to all readers and contributors. The success of the MCASTlink would not be possible without your valued support and contributions.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you and your families!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Caroline".

Caroline Balzan
Communications Officer



LAUNCH OF AN EMPLOYER'S GUIDE TO MCAST AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) with the support of the Federation of Industry (FOI) has produced a publication specially tailored for employers – An Employer's Guide to MCAST and Vocational Education and Training.

This Guide will continue to improve and strengthen the already established links and relationships that the College has with industry, business and commerce. It also aims at providing a clear picture of the way employers can develop a healthy relationship with the MCAST and make use of the initial and continuing vocational and training programmes that the MCAST already provides or can develop to cater for the particular needs, including emergent needs of industry.

During the launch, Education Minister Louis Galea said that MCAST's responsiveness, flexibility and close links with industry ensures that the knowledge, skills and competencies within the curriculum are both appropriate and relevant for a changing economy. These strong and robust links with industry are evidenced through the provision of specific tailor-made courses. Two such courses are the MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Aircraft Maintenance and Service Engineering and the MCAST Diploma Course for Pharmacy Technicians. Besides these two courses the College also organises several part-time/ad hoc courses that have been specifically designed for industry. Such courses include an Aluminum Welding Course

and an Engine Management Course for Mizzi Organisation, CSharp.net fro Crimson Wing, a course in Offshore Oil-rig Painters for Offshore Manning, a course in Basic Finance for Enemalta and a BTEC Customer Care Course for Terranet.

Minister Galea also spoke about the benefits of partnering between MCAST and Industry and other economic sectors. He said that firms stand to benefit from partnering with MCAST primarily because of the strong knowledge base that exists at the College and also through the fresh ideas of its students. MCAST can also benefit from such partnerships as it can make the educational experience of its students more relevant to the workplace whilst also tapping into the resources available at such firms. Minister Louis Galea said that the guide is an excellent opportunity for prospective employers of MCAST students to see what MCAST is doing and how it can help their organization move forward. Major companies in Malta have already worked with and are endorsing MCAST as is the Malta Federation of Industry who is encouraging all employers to sustain this success story by establishing closer contact with the relevant Institutes at the MCAST.

Further information and copies of the Employer's Guide to MCAST and Vocational Education and Training may be obtained from the MCAST Main Campus, Administration Building, Corradino Hill, Paola or by e-mail from partnerships@mcast.edu.mt.

MCAST TO START OFFERING VOCATIONAL DEGREES ANOTHER MILESTONE FOR THE COLLEGE

MCAST has applied for European funds under the 2007-2013 funding mechanism to start offering vocational degree programmes by 2007.

The College already offers several Higher National Diplomas in various Institutes. The Higher National Diplomas are equivalent to the first two years of a first degree. The offering of this vocational degree is therefore a natural step for MCAST.

MCAST has had many students that further their studies to degree level at foreign Universities. Due to the introduction of the top up degree, MCAST students will now have the opportunity

to further their studies and obtain a degree here at the College. The areas being considered are Art and Design, Business and Commerce, Electrical and Electronics Engineering and Information and Communication Technology.

The College has already established links with a number of higher education institutions, including the University of Malta. This will ensure that the College has the required staff development and the quality assurance systems.

The degree is planned to be launched in 2007 and delivered between next year and the first part of 2008.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR



During one of the workshops

A Staff Development Seminar on substance abuse was held at the start of the new academic year. The aim of this seminar was to raise staff and student awareness about substance abuse and the issues involved.

MCAST strives to educate students beyond the vocational training and the implementation of theory into practice. It aims at fostering learning and caring community that understands social responsibility and is determined to do its best to protect young people and provide them with a safe and professional education and training environment.

The College is also formulating and gradually implementing a plan of action that includes information, awareness and education on substance abuse, primarily addressed at both College staff and students.



Mr Frank Edwards MCAST Principal/CEO
and Ms Doris Gauci, Richmond Foundation CEO

MCAST AND RICHMOND FOUNDATION MALTA SIGN MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

On 8 November 2006 the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Richmond Foundation Malta.

The MCAST and Richmond Foundation Malta agreed to co-operate for the benefit of both institutions. This collaboration will provide a structured and formal environment that will provide students access for work placements and also offer students the opportunity to voluntarily contribute to a charitable institution.

The scope of this joint initiative will include the collaboration on joint projects related to the delivery of vocational educational training programmes/services for diverse client groups through the participation in European Union projects. The MCAST will assist the Richmond Foundation with the tailoring of curriculum to meet their specific requirements. Richmond Foundation will also provide advice and consultancy services to the MCAST relating to the services that are specific to all aspects of special needs provision related to vocational education and training. This includes curriculum, equipment provision, facilities, human resources and staff development and advice relating to real-work environments.

Any voluntary contribution by MCAST students will be used as evidence that will be credited for achievement purposes in order to obtain the MCAST Award in Enterprise, Leadership and Social Awareness. Mr Frank Edwards, Principal/CEO of the College mentioned that this is important for students as they are given the opportunity to do extra-curricular activities from which both they and the community will benefit from. He also

stressed that Richmond Foundation provides students with character building opportunities in particular helping them develop their leadership, management and personal development skills.

Richmond Foundation is a non Governmental non profit making organisation working in the field of community mental health. It provides various services to people experiencing mental health problems. It also provides services to prevent people from developing mental health problems.

Since its inception in 1993 the Foundation started implementing innovative programmes in community mental health which at the time were non existent. It opened its doors to the very first rehabilitation facility in the community on the Island for people experiencing mental health problems in 1996. Since then the Foundation has come a long way. It is now providing a Home Support Service, a Supported Housing Scheme, a Supported Employment Programme, and Staff and Organisation Support Programme. Preparations are also in the pipeline for the implementation of a programme addressing children with sever challenging behaviour.

Richmond Foundation looks forward to further collaboration with MCAST as it believes that the two organisations, from their different perspectives, can actively support each other to provide good quality services to the Maltese community.



MCAST IS YOURS!

This academic year the MCAST is hosting the largest student population to date. The MCAST has established itself on a solid foundation as a centre of excellence in the field of vocational education and training through its very wide range of courses at the different levels. It has become a valid alternative to the university education route.

It is attracting an increasing number of young people for its full-time courses, even though there is no limitation of age for any person who would like to follow a course. During the evening hundreds of students follow the different courses offered for self-improvement, re-training, re-skilling and upgrading or for sheer enjoyment. Besides, hundreds of adults follow the courses held also in the morning, free of charge and sustained through the European Social Fund.

During the last few years, the College has been investing heavily in new, state-of-the-art equipment for its workshops and laboratories. Facilities and services have increased in order to ensure quality education and training. A new canteen for students was opened at the beginning of this academic year. A number of Institutes have been enlarged in order to accommodate the growing student population. The Institute of Community Services will be joining the Main Campus at Corradino during this academic year.

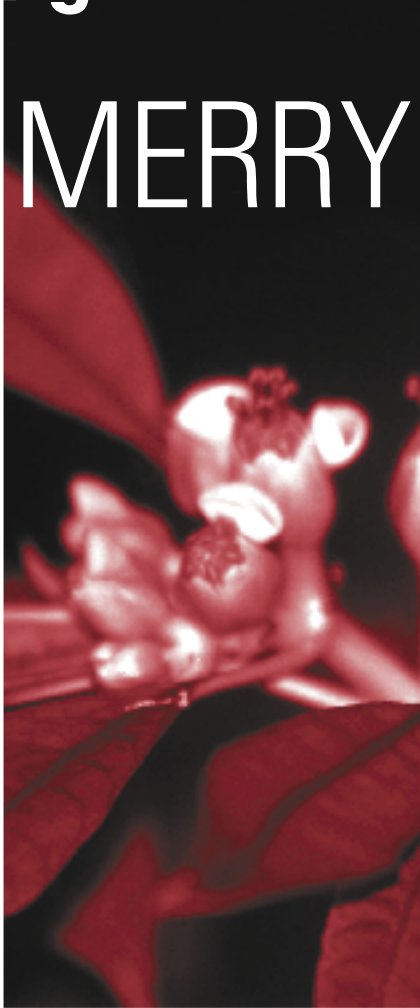
Moreover, the MCAST is planning for future growth through the preparation and gradual implementation of a master plan to satisfy the demands from students and the Maltese economy up to 2015. In fact, the State will be investing heavily in the infrastructure of the College both through its own financial contribution and, especially, through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The main aim is for the College to make its solid contribution to the development and promotion of a knowledge-based society and economy so that Malta will continue to attract knowledge-based industry and provide the employment opportunities for our young people. The MCAST is working very closely with Malta Enterprise and industry itself in order to satisfy the current and emerging needs. The prospects are very bright for those students who work hard throughout their stay at the MCAST, proceeding from one level to another to obtain higher qualifications.

We are sure that our students appreciate what the country is doing for them through a holistic approach to education and training at the MCAST. What the country asks of our students is to be quality students, ambitious, hard-working and determined to succeed for their own benefit and the good of our country.

Paul A. Attard
President
Board of Governors

MERRY CHRISTMAS



by Maria Pia Gauci

I often heard you people tell each other to “say it with flowers”... so here am I, very much in season, encouraging you to do just that. I am a full-bloom poinsettia and I want to tell you a few things about myself.

Allow me to introduce myself. My scientific name is *Euphorbia pulcherrima*. Okay, okay, I know that sounds pretty hard to remember so I don’t mind you calling me Poinsettia. Hey, watch out please, because so many of you mistake my name. You like to call me Ponsietta and I don’t like it. You see I’m proud of my authentic name because it was chosen by Mr. Prescott, a prestigious

historian and horticulturist, in honour of the first US Ambassador to Mexico, Dr Joel Roberts Poinsett, who had discovered me.

In the 1820’s Mexico was involved in civil war and Dr Joel spent some time there. He was very interested in botany so he often went out into the countryside looking for new plant species. One fine day, way back in 1828, he noticed a beautiful red-leaved shrub that fascinated him. That was my ancestor! On his return to South Carolina he took some cuttings to plant in his greenhouse. That’s how I came to be a native of the United States!

I am also proud of the legend that tells of how I came to be associated with Christmas. I’m sure you’ll like it. On Christmas Eve, many years ago, a young Mexican girl by the name of Pepita, was going for the Midnight Mass with her cousin Pedro. On their way to church she saw many children carrying beautifully wrapped gifts for Baby Jesus. She was too poor to afford buying a gift. She was very sad. Her cousin tried to comfort her saying that even the humblest of gifts, when given in love, would be appreciated by Jesus. On hearing this, Pepita ran to collect some leaves from a shrub by the wayside. She knew her gift looked cheap in contrast to the other children’s gifts.

As Pedro had told her, Jesus greatly appreciated her gift because he knew the love that filled the heart of Pepita. As soon as she placed her shabby-looking bouquet at the foot of the crib, the leaves burst into a brilliant red. That was the Christmas Miracle that impressed all those present. From that day on, the Mexicans nicknamed me Flor de Nochebuena – Flower of the Holy Night.

Have you ever bought a Poinsettia for the Christmas Season? Do you know how to go about selecting the best among the many in the Flower Shops? Let me help you.

Choose one with dark green foliage down to the soil line but with bracts (the modified leaves) that are completely coloured.

It should be 2 1/2 times taller than the diameter of the pot and looking attractive and balanced from all sides.

Make sure that the plant you choose has not been on display in a plastic sleeve for a long time nor was it among those crowded together on shelves.

A Poinsettia’s actual flowers are those located at the base of the red leaves. Check that they are green or red-tipped.

Season’s greetings, Friends! Enjoy me and please take good care of me!



Visit to artist Luciano Micallef's studio. Students and staff from the MCAST Institute of Art and Design and students from York St John University (first and second from left) with artist Luciano Micallef.

ART & DESIGN

SOCRATES ERASMUS STUDENT EXCHANGES

The MCAST Institute of Art and Design and York St John University in England are presently benefiting from Socrates Erasmus EU funding for tertiary level student exchanges. Two second-year students, namely Caroline Eberlein and Simon Gornall, who are registered on the three-year B.A. Honours course in Art and Design in York, have been attending the Targa Gap Institute since the beginning of the academic year, alongside MCAST Higher National Diploma final year students. Study modules covered centre around a given theme, namely "Limestone Connections" and include specialist studies and applications for 3D materials with an emphasis on limestone. Support studies include autoCAD and 3D model-making.

In January 2007, two HND Maltese students will in turn travel to York to join the University course of studies. The focus then will be on specialist practice in design and will include specialist research and communication skills.

The Socrates Erasmus initiative involving student exchanges is a first for MCAST. It follows five years of collaboration between the two above-named institutions and augurs well for future initiatives. In this regard, the head of art and design, Martell Linsdell from York St John University visited the MCAST Institute of Art and Design and held discussions with Frank Edwards, MCAST Principal and Donald Friggieri, Director of the Institute of Art and Design, who was responsible for the exchange programmes.

MEDITERRANEAN SCIENCE EXPO 2006

During the week between the 13th and the 17th of November, a number of students following courses at the Institute of Art and Design were invited to participate in the International Mediterranean Science Expo organised by the National Student Travel Foundation (NSTF). >>



Ruben Caruana (HND1)
One last block!



Coordinated by Mr. Mark Theuma, MCAST lecturer, Art and Design students were responsible for managing various hands-on activities for participating primary school children.

Activities included the construction of science toys such as Kaleidoscopes and Periscopes, but also Tower Building, Pendulum Painting, and the construction and launching of popular Water Rockets.



From left: Elaine Vella, Martina Vassallo Eminian, Vanessa Galea and Ruth Curmi (HND1) practising tower building.



Victoria Pisani and Nadya Coppini (HND1) – pendulum painting



VISIT BY PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR SMALL BUSINESSES AND THE SELF-EMPLOYED

On the 9th of November 2006, the Hon Edwin Vassallo, Parliamentary Secretary for Small Businesses and the Self-Employed gave a talk on Entrepreneurship and Starting Your Own Business. The introductory talk was aimed at students in their final year of

studies, highlighting the prospects and benefits available for small business start-ups. As outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding, the Secretariat agrees to provide free start-up mentoring services to all students wishing to set up their own business.

COMUNIO LAUNCHES PROGRAMME OF EVENTS AND INITIATIVES FOR ACADEMIC YEAR



*Back Row: Justine, AnnMarie, Gwen, Jessica
Front Row: Michelle, Amanda, Elaine, Bernice*

Through a Media Event held on Monday 23rd October 2006, Comunio launched its programme of events and initiatives for the coming months. Mr Paul A. Attard, President of the MCAST Board of Governors, Mr Frank Edwards, MCAST Principal / CEO, and Ms Yvonne Pulis, Director of the Institute of Business and Commerce, were also present for this event.

The Working Plan for 2006 / 07 was presented in the light of the aims and objectives each initiative bears within the organization.

Emphasis was placed on how the various activities fit in within Comunio's mission and vision. The organization's mission statement clearly indicates Comunio's commitment:



Comunio is a students' voluntary organization active in the field of socio-spiritual initiatives.

The main focus of commitment lies within the Institute of Business and Commerce.

However through the variety of socio-spiritual actions undertaken by Comunio, a vast spectrum of youth needs are being approached.

To enhance one's personal development and the formation of the character whilst generating a spirit of dynamic creativity.

To propagate spiritual values and social awareness through the promotion of various initiatives, highlighting skills and talents put at the service of all members of society.

Through an operational structure made up of four working teams and ministries, Comunio networks its various initiatives through the following:

YOUTH SHINE

The Music Ministry is responsible for musical animation of various events especially events of a spiritual nature. This working team also prepares Spiritual events with a difference, wherein young people are invited to explore their inner peace and spiritual dimension through activities of a varied nature - also including youthful Celebration of the Eucharist. The team is also working on a sequel to last year's successful initiative whereby Comunio circulated a ReCharge Kit which included a CD with some original tracks with Christian Spiritual Inspiration. The **Dawl Żghożiti Project** was an interesting initiative which was warmly welcomed by young people who received their own personal ReCharge Kit.

SPARK

The Formation Ministry is responsible for education, creative expressions, debates and character formation and personality enhancement. Various initiatives are being planned through the work of this Ministry. These include Debating Societies, Food for Thought Campaigns, Creative Expression Exhibitions, Awareness Campaigns (focusing on Healthy Lifestyle, Peace and Mutual Respect and the Value of Life), and the publication of "*Footsteps*" magazine (later on in February 2007).

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The Social Care Ministry focuses its commitment on voluntary work in Children's Residential Home through a regular schedule of assistance as well as through Aid Stunts wherein students carry out manual work such as refurbishment projects in homes and other assistance as will be suggested by the same Residential Homes with whom the students work. From time to time, Comunio organizes Charity Campaigns aimed at providing opportunities to enhance the value of altruistic assistance to others.

COME AS 1

The Social Events promotions team, organizes a variety of events wherein clean and alternative entertainment is high on the agenda. Events being planned include a Battle of the Bands (end November 2006), Treasure Hunts, Sports Festivals, Get Togethers and the like. The team's slogan for this year is one of commitment and unity: "**We're all in this 2gether**".

Various initiatives are on Comunio's agenda for the coming months. The first major project was a Celebrate Life Week held during the last week of November, as well as Celebration 2006, an evening of creative talent planned for mid-December 2006.

Both Mr Attard and Mr Edwards shared with those present their experiences of events similar to those being planned by Comunio. The concept of holistic education was high on the agenda of the short messages given at the end of the event by the College's President and Principal.

If in need of further information regarding the different initiatives taken up by Comunio, one is invited to get in touch through electronic mail: comunio@mcast.edu.mt

COMUNIO AT GEN VERDE WORKSHOPS

by Amanda, Gwen & Michelle

Amanda, Gwen and Michelle – three active members within the Comunio Working Team – have had a unique opportunity to participate in workshops organised by Gen Verde when the latter were in Malta in the first part of November 2006. Here is their experience.

Twenty four young women coming from 14 countries with different cultures and social backgrounds. One common ideal forms the basis of their lives and inspires their art... to contribute to universal brotherhood. They communicate their message through a variety of expressive genres from modern dance to drama and styles from jazz-rock to world music.

One cannot imagine the unity and the amount of positive energy that these women transmit through their performance. With the use of narration, songs, dances and acting, they accurately deliver a message of peace and harmony. Not only do they show their talents in a professional manner, they also take time from their busy schedule to teach and share the knowledge they have built over the years.

The workshops were held at the St Joseph School, Blata l-Bajda, where the main hall was used as the meeting place and later on, as one of the many workshop areas. As a warm up they performed an item from their repertoire. They faced technical difficulties during this performance but at no point was there a hint of panic. The show continued as if nothing happened; the synthesizer was switched for a piano, the dancing continued smoothly and the singing went on marvelously. It was clear through this mishap that all performances and rehearsals were done with the utmost heartfelt commitment. All Gen Verde members were then introduced to the students present and the workshops divided accordingly. The workshops consisted of singing, dancing, acting, narration and instrumental. The instrumental was divided into two categories, percussions and other instruments. All were sent to their respective workshop area and thus the fun began.

Each area was given an item to work on and exhibit at the end of the day. One thing that ought to be said about this is that not only the item was a new concept for the students to learn, the members of the workshop had to integrate and form a union to achieve the best possible outcome. Thus, it all started with a brief introduction of every individual. Immediately, each Gen Verde member leading a workshop shared out information (e.g. lyrics, music scores or dance moves) to the members. Workshop participants were encouraged to take an active part through sharing of creative ideas and were even given advice on the techniques being used. All the items were being taught and practised in no time. After a brief intermission the practising continued until the item felt complete, both to the workshop facilitators and to the participants.

At last, after a day's joyful hardship invested on all the items, the time came to perform them. All gathered back in the main hall. Everyone was excited to show the others all that they had learnt and practised throughout the day. The show began, one by one all the workshops performed their piece from which a moral could be taken.

The work done by Gen Verde is truly inspirational. The art that they share with their audience is not simply visual or auditory but can be extended to an intense spiritual energy of love and unity. At the end of the day, this was the main aim of the workshops. The real lesson we feel we learnt was that without working with one another and loving thy neighbour as yourself, nothing can ever be achieved!



Clockwise from left to right: Ange Kim, Nancy Uelmen, M. Therese Henderson, Gwen Sciortino, Amanda Cachia, Michelle Dimech and Diane Greogory.



WORK EXPERIENCE IN SCOTLAND

The Maltese and Scottish teams posing for a photo

A delegation from a well established Scottish company, the Laing Traditional Masonry, visited the Institute of Building and Construction Engineering and the Heritage Malta Centre. Laing Traditional Masonry are one of the preferred contractors for The National Trust for Scotland and are accredited by bodies such as the Safety Association of Federated Employers (SAFE), the Scottish Building, the Stone Federation Great Britain and the Construction Licensing Executive (CLE).



Larbert Church Rose Window

This summer, three lecturers that have been working on the Heritage Skills Course for the past six years were invited to carry out a work experience at the Laing Traditional Masonry. The lecturers, Alex Caruana, Victor Camilleri and Mario Schembri had to gain work experience with this company and gather as much knowledge regarding materials and techniques so as to evaluate and discuss the possibility of adopting these techniques to the Heritage Skills Course in Malta.

All three lecturers have over twenty years experience in the construction industry and have been to many countries carrying out training with the Heritage Skills Course students. At Larbert, Scotland worked on a 17th century church and the main focus for that week was to reconstruct the rose window in the fort façade, as this was totally deteriorated and structurally unsafe. The Laing Traditional Masonry team and



Larbert Church Rose Window

the Maltese team integrated very well and from the first day each and every one gave total support to one another making the whole experience beneficiary to both parts.

The first week of their stay ended very satisfyingly. The lecturers managed to finish the task of laying the rose window even though it was a challenge. Yet everyone was happy with the end result and secondly they had some free time to visit some interesting places during the weekend. Some of the places that they visited were: Edinburgh Centre, Fort Bridges, Scott Monument and the Royal Botanic Gardens.



Dundee Pointing

For the second week they traveled to Dundee where they met the site manager who explained what work has been carried out and the tasks planned for that week. As in Larbert they were introduced to the Laing Traditional Masonry team that was working in Dundee. The site was Gardyne's Land which is one of the oldest buildings in Dundee (early 1900's). Although there were some stone replacements due to high deterioration and unsafe structural defects the work was mainly pointing. While in Larbert the LTM team shared the experience the Maltese team had and adapted some of these techniques used in Malta, in Dundee the materials and techniques used for pointing were something different to the Maltese team and did their best to learn as much as they could in order to transfer this knowledge to their students when back in Malta. The pointing of the façade was carried out in a new technique for them where they flushed the mortar to give it the same finish it had originally. The second week came to an end and by this time the Maltese team was considered as one of the Scottish team and this was a huge satisfaction to them and the host Mr. Steven Laing. To recreate themselves for the weekend Mario, Victor, Alex and their family visited Dundee Centre, Perth, and Sterling Castle to name some.



Ballindalloch Castle

During the last week they were transferred to Elgin, because the third site was the Ballindalloch Castle which dates from at least the 16th century. Moreover, the date 1546 is carved on a stone lintel in one of the bedrooms, providing a more precise date for the construction of the Castle. Working here was something to remember, the location and the landscape that surrounded the castle was magnificent and to be working on such a historical treasure was even greater. As usual they were met by the site manager and the Laing team who explained the work to be carried out. The work consisted of cleaning and consolidating decorative parts of windows, pointing, reconstruction of the top part of a chimney and pointing between the wooden apertures and windows. As for cleaning the Maltese team explained and used the same techniques that they use on the Maltese stone. Yet when it came to injecting lime into cracks to consolidate the stone they used different materials. Another interesting kind of pointing that was new to the Maltese team was that of burnt sand and linseed oil which was used to point between the wooden apertures and stone.

In Elgin they only had time to visit the Ballindalloch Castle and few other places of interest because on Friday evening they were hosted at Mr. Lanig's house. The last weekend was spent in Inverness where Mario, Alex, Victor and their family visited some of the most wonderful places, one of which is the Loch Ness, where they took a three hour boat cruise hoping to see the Loch Ness Monster.



Ballindalloch Cleaning



THE NEW COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK

The Institute of Community Services which is currently situated in Sliema and Msida will shortly move to much larger and spacious premises on the Paola Main Campus. The new modern four storey block will house all courses offered by the Institute, namely Care, Health Studies, Sports, Hairdressing, Beauty and Early Years. All 400 students who are currently based either in Sliema or Msida will move to Paola.

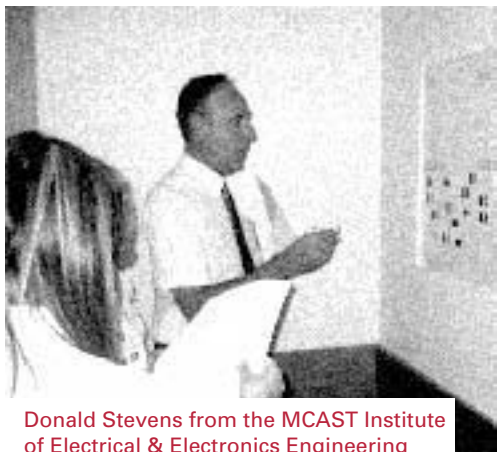
Situated right in front of the Library and Learning Resource Centre, the block will feature four floors with very spacious lecture rooms and workshops. Two hairdressing salons and a beauty therapy salon equipped with modern equipment and furniture will be situated at ground floor level. These salons will accommodate up to fourteen clients who will be offered hair and beauty services at nominal prices. MCAST students and staff will have the advantage of having a hair or beauty service at very special prices.

In the near future clients visiting the beauty salon will have the luxury of enjoying some relaxation in a sauna.

Lecture rooms and workshops which include a Science lab, a computer lab, two other hairdressing salons, a beauty salon and a multipurpose room make up the other three floors. The block will be equipped with all modern amenities, such as CCTV, accessibility for persons with special needs and all other equipment which conform to health and safety standards.

This new block will definitely help in giving the staff and students a more comfortable and healthy environment. Being right at the centre of MCAST campus, students will at last have accessibility to the Library and Learning Resource Centre and the Students' Canteen. It would also help the students meet other peers from different institutes and join in activities which are held from time to time.





Donald Stevens from the MCAST Institute of Electrical & Electronics Engineering

MCAST IN 'EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT'

Mr. Donald Stevens, Lecturer of Mathematics, Engineering Science and Management at the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering, participated in a course entitled 'Effective Professional Development'. The course was held in Lisbon, Portugal and was funded by the European Union under the Comenius programme.

The course was intended to create awareness of good practices in areas of staff development. It was aimed at enabling the participants to make informed choices of in-service training and aiding in the organization of staff development programmes. Participants had the opportunity to compare and contrast different staff development practices and contexts in various EU countries.

The methodology of delivery was based on the constructivist learning principle, which allows for active and interactive participation, as a result of which participants were able to integrate new knowledge and understanding into their existing repertoire.

The course was intended to meet both individual and institutional needs for head teachers, school management staff, teacher trainers, education inspectors and educational advisers. Participants from Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Malta and Romania attended the course.

In a globalized world, adult education centres have to face the needs for 'lifelong learning' and 'education for all'. Additionally, the European enlargement process demands the improvement of inter-cultural competences and inter-cultural learning. These challenges require the development and implementation of new learning methods, including the needs of learners in rural regions. The impact of this EU seminar has provided an open forum for participants to compare the work of their institutions and will show good practice examples in the field of continuous professional development.

MCAST is being run on high international standards when compared to developed EU countries such as Belgium and Finland.



Female students at the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering with the Director of Institute, Mr John Sciberras.

MORE FEMALE STUDENTS AT THE INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONICS ENGINEERING

The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering is striving to attract more females to enroll on its courses. The results have been very encouraging and this year, for the first time, there are twenty female students. This augurs well for the future.

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PAPER PRESENTED BY THE MCAST AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON 'WATER LOSS MANAGEMENT, TELEMETRY AND SCADA IN WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS', HELD IN MACEDONIA ON THE 21ST-23RD SEPTEMBER, 2006

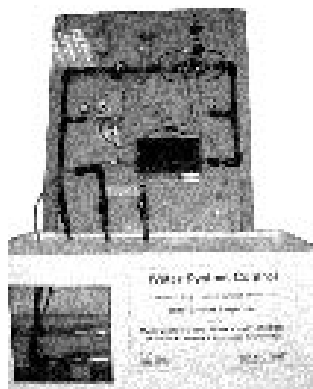
MCAST's Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering was represented by Director John Sciberras and Assistant Lecturer Alex Rizzo at an international conference held in Macedonia in September 2006. The Institute delivered a paper focusing upon the joint training and research being carried out as a partnership between two national institutions in Malta: the Malta Water Services Corporation (WSC) and the MCAST.

The training in question was aimed at various facets of water system management and water loss control. Two main objectives were defined:

- To build a better understanding and knowledge on various local problems and challenges, in particular: water logged leakage; variable pressure control; automated PRV control, etc.
- To allow for the training and education of technical students in the area of water system control. These students will form the backbone of tomorrow's water utility workforce.

An agreement was reached between the WSC and MCAST in 2005 for a joint training and research project in the general area of water system control. As a result of this joint venture, a compact test bench was constructed and commissioned at one of the Institute's laboratories. The main objective was to allow various MCAST students the opportunity to develop final year projects that complement and enhance the functionality of the rig. For all intents and purposes

the rig is a miniature replication of a fully fledged water distribution system, hence student projects would also relate to the real environment. A total of five student projects were designed and constructed under the requisites and guidance of the WSC. These were: a variable speed pump control system; a study of water logged leak noise; a low flow electronic water meter; a self-



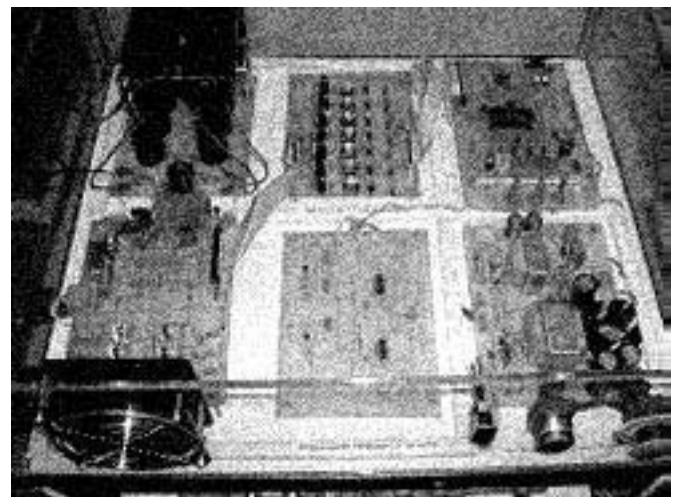
A compact Test Bench

powered electronic water meter; and an electronic PRV controller. All five projects have real life applications and provided the students with the challenge of electronically controlling a hydraulic water system. A quick overview of two of the projects follows:

PROJECT 1: VARIABLE SPEED PUMP CONTROL SYSTEM

The project consisted of the control of water pressure within the closed pipe system through the management of the speed of the pump feeding the system. When a water valve is opened the pressure drops, and the pump begins to work in direct proportion to the pressure. When the valve is closed completely the pressure increases and the pump is turned off. For this particular research a 3-phase 1.5Kw pump was utilized on the Test Rig. The end result is a constant pressure in the Rig, maintained at a target 1 bar notwithstanding variations in the water flow through the Rig. This is the ideal characteristic for a real water network; constant water pressure notwithstanding varying flow patterns.

The main aim of the project was thus to save energy on a water pumping system in which a three phase pump is controlled, depending on the status of the pressure in the water network. Because of the variable torque characteristics of the pump, the power required at a pump shaft is directly proportional to the cube of the speed, and the head provided is directly proportional to the square of the speed.



Variable Speed Pump Control

PROJECT 2: A SELF-POWERED ELECTRONIC WATER METER

The project consisted of the design and construction of a self-powered water meter (Figure 3), complete with an LCD interface in order to be user-friendly. The project aim was to transfer energy from the movement of water to electrical energy. This involved various electronic components, including the LCD interface and a microcontroller. It also included mechanical components such as the design and construction of the paddle wheel complete with a generator to produce the power supply needed. The fact that this project combines water, electronic and mechanical components made it both interesting and challenging.

The main objective of this project was to utilize microcontroller technology to read data from a sensor (paddle wheel designed and constructed by student), and transfer this same data to an LCD through the

microcontroller (PIC 16F84). In addition, as water flows through the sensor, supply is generated for the circuitry whilst charging an incorporated battery. The project included the design of the circuitry for the charging



Self-Powered Electronic Water Meter

of the battery and also for the PIC 16F84 to be used for interfacing to the LCD. This project also consisted of a mechanical component which involved the design and construction of the paddle wheel in question. Calibration and testing of the sensor were also a requisite to ensure accurate readings.

LECTURING STAFF FROM IEEE ON VISIT TO LEGRAND

During the month of October, two assistant lecturers from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Alfred Mizzi and Marjohn Demanuele attended a course organized by Legrand at their modern Innoval training centre at Limoges in France.

The MCAST staff followed an intensive four day course, which included a three day presentation of the new range of Legrand products. It also included some practical sessions with hands-on experience on the products. They were taken to a demonstration house which features most of the ALL IN ONE range of products in real life situation. Other visits included the central logistics warehouse just outside Paris and a visit to one of Legrand's production lines, where some of these new products are being fabricated.

Legrand are world giants in the business of domestic electrical accessories. They have recently launched

an innovative home automation system called "ALL IN ONE by Legrand". This system meets many aspects of modern homes and modifies the traditional approach to electrical installations. It provides highly improved comfort, security and flexibility.

This development activity was sponsored by Elektra Ltd, local representatives of Legrand. Such initiatives are of utmost importance for the Institute. The Institute strives to set up strong links with industry, in order to make the courses more relevant to what the market needs.

Mr Mizzi and Mr Demanuele were accompanied by Mr Thomas Zammit sales representative of Elektra Ltd. Special thanks go to Ms. Gabriella Cuschieri, director of Elektra Ltd for her interest in making this visit possible.



Group photo of Staff gone for training in Innoval Training Centre of Legrand

Left to Right: Marjohn Demanuele, Thomas Zammit, Alfred Mizzi

INDUSTRIAL SAFETY LINKS

The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering participated in the 'Safety Month' organised by STMicroelectronics Malta during the month of October 2006. The event consisted of a series of events spread over the whole month.

The Institute was invited to take part by sending a number of students having a Health & Safety unit as part of their curriculum. More than 60 BTEC National Diploma Electrical/Electronics Engineering students participated in these hands-on Safety practical sessions. The large number of students was grouped in uniform numbers for more effectiveness.

Each half day seminar at STMicroelectronics for each respective group included fire fighting experience, Basic First Aid and a theoretical lecture on Environment Health and Safety. Under the full responsibility of qualified personnel in the Safety field, all students were involved. Some students had the opportunity to perform a fire-fighting operation.

Each half day program included the following:

- Practice on how to distinguish between the various types of fire extinguishers
- Basic First Aid and demonstration on how to take care of injured people
- Fire-Fighting in a controlled environment, using the right fire fighting equipment tools and material.
- This included the experience on how to handle fire hose pressure.
- Use of Fire Blankets
- A theoretical Health and Safety lecture
- Tour of the STMicroelectronics premises

MCAST Board of Governors President Mr Paul Attard, the Principal/CEO Mr Frank Edwards and the Director of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering Mr John Sciberras were invited for the conclusion of the events. During this occasion they had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Gene Gretchen – Group Vice President and Managing Director Malta, Mr. Tonio Portuguese – HR and External Relations Director and Mr. Charles Tedesco - Health and Safety Manager. Together they observed a group of students during one of the practical training sessions.

The visit enriched the already good links that the company had with the Institute and paved the way for further improved relations.

Thanks go to the organisers of the event especially Kenneth Azzopardi from STMicroelectronics who was responsible for liaising with the Institute. The idea of the October Safety Month was a complete success not only for the company's employees but also for the students who benefited from the training provided.

ST sponsors around 71 apprentices for its customised training programs, the majority of these apprentices successfully embark on long-term careers.



MCAST Chairman and Principal, and Mr Tonio Portuguese, Human Resources Director STMicroelectronics together with students that are currently following the BTEC National Diploma in Electrical / Electronics Engineering 1st Year

MCAST IN E-LEARNING 'COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE'

Mr. Ronald Curmi, Deputy Director of the Institute of Electrical & Electronics Engineering, participated in a course entitled 'E-learning for interactive training: methodologies, tools and best practices'. The course was held in Bari, Italy and was funded by the European Union under the Comenius programme.

The training was intended to create knowledge and professional competences in order to set up a "Community of Practice" for study and research activities in the field of E-learning. This was achieved through the analysis of specific material content and through a methodology strongly connoted by an active role of course participants. The course was based on both theoretical and practical sessions involving the learning design of e-learning units and courses. Participants had the opportunity to investigate different tools that can be used for the production of e-learning objects that can be loaded onto any SCORM compliant e-learning platform. The course also catered for the deployment of e-learning platforms.

Participants also had the opportunity to visit the Tecnopolis park in Bari and the University of Lecce where they observed real applications of e-learning for both the educational and industrial training environment. Visits to Bari and Lecce were organized to promote the Italian culture and allow the participants to socialize and exchange views and ideas. Participants from Chzec Republic, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Romania and Malta attended the course.



Ronald Curmi (third from left) from MCAST Institute of Electrical & Electronics Engineering

ARMED FORCES OF MALTA COMPLETE VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICE TRAINING COURSES

Twenty-one members of the Armed Forces of Malta have completed a basic course run during the Summer months by the Maritime Institute on Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) and they will shortly be working in a VTS Centre being set up by the Malta Maritime Authority.

During a certificate presentation ceremony at the MCAST Maritime Institute on Wednesday 8th November 2006, Captain Reuben Lanfranco, Director, Maritime Institute, spoke about the training provided to the AFM on Vessel Traffic Operations and was then followed by a speech by Mr. Charles Schembri, Executive Director, MMA Ports Directorate and President of the MCAST Board of Governors Mr. Paul A. Attard. Later Mr. Paul A. Attard presented MCAST certificates to the course participants.



VTS course participants together with Mr. Paul A. Attard, President of the MCAST Board of Governors and MCAST Directing Staff

OFFSHORE PERSONAL SURVIVAL COURSE FOR ROYAL MALTA YACHT CLUB MEMBERS

Thirty-four members of the Royal Malta Yacht Club, recently attended courses in Offshore Personal Survival Techniques, held at the Maritime Institute during the month of September. These courses were organised in preparation for crews participating in offshore

sailing events and emphasised on offshore safety and survival techniques. The course consisted of both theoretical and practical training sessions; the latter were conducted at the Maritime Institute Shore Training Centre at Haywharf, Floriana.

PRESENTATION ON ST. JOHN RESCUE CORPS FOR MARITIME INSTITUTE OFFICER CADETS

On the 12th October 2006, Officer Cadets at the Maritime Institute were given a presentation on the St. John Rescue Corps by Mr. Andrew Grech, who is Staff Officer (Training and Development) with St. John Rescue Corps.

During the interesting presentation, Mr. Grech spoke about how students at MCAST may join the St. John Rescue Corps and participate in the wide variety of activities this voluntary organisation offers to its members. Mr. Grech also mentioned that through the Memorandum of Agreement which was signed this year between MCAST and the St. John Rescue Corps, MCAST students would be able to participate in activities and training organised by the St. John Rescue Corps and also be able to obtain the MCAST Award in Enterprise, Leadership and Social Awareness. Further information on the St. John Rescue Corps may be found on the Corps' website: www.stjohnrescuecorps.org



St. John Rescue Corps members including MCAST students, carrying out a high-angle rescue exercise using a Larkin Frame at the Fort Madalena ditch.

OFFICER CADETS AT SEA

The Following Officer Cadets were at sea or were about to embark on the following vessels during the period this article was written:

MSC Boston	Officer Cadet Emanuel Gatt
MV Costanza Star	Officer Cadet David Calleja
MV Grande Atlantico	Officer Cadet Matthew Vella and Julio Caruana
CSCL Yantian	Officer Cadet Roderick Borg
MV Grande America	Officer Cadets Francesca Galea and Steve Azzopardi
CMA CGM Sambhar	Officer Cadet Steve Gauci
Eurocargo Valencia	Officer Cadet Elenio Sciberras
Maersk Itaqui	Officer Cadet David Mercieca
CMA CGM Verdi	Officer Cadet Pauline Bonnici
MV Grande Francia	Officer Cadets Carmen Darmanin and Mark Mercieca
MV Grande Buenos Aires	Officer Cadets Jonathan Zahra and Remy Van Rooy
MV Grande Africa	Officer Cadets Gabriel Agius and James Spiteri



The BALSTA group in Marseille

The second year of the BALSTA Comenius project kicked off with the third project meeting held last October in Marseille, France. BALSTA – Bridging Academically Language and Skills Training Agendas –aims to bring together the teaching of technical subjects and the promotion of the English language.

Language and technical teachers from the five partner countries, Malta - the coordinating country, France, Slovenia, Finland and Italy attended the meeting together with the directors of all the participating schools who were briefed about the progress of the project. Moreover, the directors also presented the educational system of their respective countries and their schools.

The discussions during this meeting were focused on the final product of the BALSTA project, which will be a manual for both technical and language teachers. The manual will contain co-tutored/ co-planned lesson plans which would have been tried and tested during the three years of the project. Each partner was assigned specific tasks to complete so that a first draft of the manual will be ready by the next project meeting to be held in Slovenia next March.

The BALSTA group was officially welcomed in Marseille by the local education authorities and also had a meeting with Mme. Vlasto, European MP and Deputy Mayor of Marseille.



Mr. Lino Zahra, Director of IME with Mme Vlasto, European MP and Deputy Mayor of Marseille

A MEMORABLE TRAINING EXPERIENCE

by University of Malta students
Clayton Galea and Sephora Galea



Adrian Borg demonstrating how to solder on sheet metal to a group of University students

The Faculty of Engineering at the University of Malta and the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), conceived a brilliant idea through which Engineering students following a course at the University of Malta had the opportunity to learn skills which they study the theory about at University.

While the University of Malta offers a vast range of theoretical syllabi, MCAST gives plenty of background to practice and hands-on experience, something that we feel we are less exposed to. The recent co-operation arrangement between the two institutions made it possible for us to follow a six-week program at MCAST during which we developed our skills and knowledge to perform actual processes used in the Electrical and Mechanical Engineering field.

Students in the Mechanical stream, started the first week with welding practice and sheet metal working. It was a tremendous experience! We learnt various types of welding and cutting processes. The lecturer was really helpful and patient and explained each necessary step. Obviously, we were also given the opportunity to try it all on our own! As beginners, we had the experience to operate workshop machinery for the first time. Considering that we had never done any of this before, it turned out to be quite positive!

As the course progressed, we were introduced to several automobile parts: the engine, the driving axle, camshafts, bearings, suspensions and the whole list of car parts and functions. Before we had never seen someone dismantle an engine. Thus, for most of us this was our first opportunity to see how a real engine works. Their interior components, and the way everything is connected to the entire car system, was something absolutely extraordinary. We were even invited to dismantle and rebuild a particular engine together with a gearbox all by ourselves – something which we had never dreamt of doing!

The following two weeks were dedicated to the bench fitting processes. Once again, this module turned out

to be very interesting. We had to manufacture a tool clamp comprising all the parts necessary to assemble it. At first, it seemed an impossible task. However, when we were given the proper instructions how to use the equipment and the tools, we succeeded in producing the clamp. Of course, we operated lathes, milling machines, drilling machines and even grinding machines. The satisfaction we felt when we saw the end result is hard to describe.

Even though we are studying Mechanical Engineering, it was important that we broaden our minds in the Electrical Engineering field too. Thus, we had the last two weeks devoted to Electrical Engineering practice. One of the two weeks was dedicated to electronics. We must consider ourselves fortunate to have been able to receive all the knowledge in such a short period of time. We even built some circuits on the verroboard – one of which was an amplifier circuit! Moreover, we learnt how to find different faults in a circuit, and we must admit that this was very interesting!

During our last week of training, we had to learn how light installation in a house is carried out. At first we thought it was something we would not be able to do. Still, with the help of our lecturer, and a bit of good will on our side, made it possible to light our flat, as it was being referred to! The electrical department resulted in being one of the most interesting fields during our six-week training at MCAST!

Unfortunately, time flew and our six-week training came to an end. Besides our practical experience acquired, we will surely carry the memory of a great experience spent at MCAST! We would like to thank all the people concerned in making this training...a success!



Drilling for rivets



Cutting with the oxy acetylene torch

COMENIUS IN-SERVICE TRAINING COURSE



A picture of the city, taken from Castle Hill

During the month of September 2006, Assistant Lecturer Ms Claire Tanti participated in a Comenius In-service Training course held in Budapest, Hungary. The course was entitled 'Developing Leadership Skills with Coaching'.

Ms Tanti's participation was possible through a Comenius grant allocated by the Maltese National Agency through MCAST, as part of in-service training within the Institute of Community Services.

Together with the other four participants from England, Belgium, Romania and Malta, Ms Tanti benefited from an increased insight into the way of working, including decision-making styles, feedback techniques and conflict-management strategies. By sharing different experiences participants learnt a lot about organisational management, structures and cultures.

Participants also developed a 'European feel' within the group and had the opportunity to discuss different educational systems within the European Union. This was also aided by the fact that the course organisers also included a cultural and historical tour of the city and visited several places of interest in Budapest, including the Parliament Building, Castle Hill and Jewish Budapest.

Through the experiential learning strategies adopted in this course, delegates also gained knowledge on how best to teach different life skills to students and also learned to use certain tools. Importance was given to a holistic education, where the academic aspect of learning needs complements the students' personal and social development.



Above Left: Matthias Church, in Castle Hill



Above Right: The Raoul Wallenberg Memorial Garden, in the Jewish Quarter



Course participants: (Left to right) Ms. Dorottya Dubecz, Course Trainer, Ms. Karine Dekeukebere, Mr. Sorin Sandu, Ms. Emily Attard, Ms. Claire Tanti and Mr. James Dawson.

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RELIGIOUS COUNSELLOR FOR MCAST GOZO CENTRE

Fr Alfred Farrugia MSSP has recently been appointed Religious Counsellor by HG Mgr Mario Grech, Bishop of Gozo, for the MCAST Gozo Centre in Xagħra and Xewkija.

Fr Alfred was born in Valletta. He attended primary school at St Joseph School, Blata I-Bajda and completed his secondary studies at St Paul's Missionary College in Rabat. He joined the Missionary Society of St Paul back in 1976. This religious society was founded by a Maltese priest, Mons Joseph De Piro in 1910 with the specific aim of evangelizing those countries which had not yet had the opportunity of hearing the Good News. The Missionary Society of St Paul at present works in Malta, Gozo, Rome, Australia, Peru, the Philippines, Canada and the USA. During his philosophic and theological studies, Fr Alfred went for a missionary experience in Pakistan and was ordained priest in 1986. After his ordination, he graduated Bachelor of Arts in History and Geography

from the University of Malta. In 1985, he joined the teaching staff of St Paul's Missionary College. In 1997 he was assigned to work among Maltese migrants in Melbourne, Australia and in 2002 he was appointed Director of "Dar Stella Maris" in Zebbug, Gozo.

Fr Alfred loves working with youth and he has accepted his new mission with enthusiasm. He will be available for spiritual guidance and support for all the Gozo Centre students. The Centre management is also organising specific classroom sessions, that will be held by Fr Alfred every two or three weeks, in which socio-religious issues and other related aspects will be debated in class.



Fr Alfred Farrugia with students

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YOUR PRO

by Julian Portelli

Back row, left to right: Paul Bonnici (Social Politics Coordinator), Giovanni Galea (Culture and Entertainment Coordinator), Cladonia Scerri (International Coordinator); **Front row left to right:** Luke Cassar (General Secretary), Wilfred Buttigieg (President), Paul McAlister (Financial Officer)

This year, for the first time, students will be representing their fellow students within the MCAST administration. This is done through the new Student Council.

The members are full of ideas and have in store some creative and innovative ideas. We took some time and caught up with them. The first MCAST SC President Wilfred Buttigieg [Institute of Information and Communication Technology] stated: >>

“We are here to help improve the life of the students at College, whilst studying, to help them develop into good citizens and professionals in their fields, and to create a positive social atmosphere with their fellow students whilst relaxing in the activities we plan to organize.”

Wilfred’s work and dedication during the past months led to the formation of a statute by which this organization will work and develop.

To assist him in this task Wilfred will have a team of colleagues from the majority of Institutes, who have been chosen by the students to represent them. Luke Cassar [Maritime Institute] has been appointed General Secretary.

“We have a lot of tasks at hand which we plan to do this year. Our main objective will be to make MCAST students proud to be MCAST students!. By arriving at an agreement with various organizations we will hopefully have the funds to organize activities from which the students will benefit and why not, show their talents to the rest of Malta.”

The task to administer finances was given to Paul McAlister [Institute of Information and Communication Technology] who commented:

“Financial resources will always be a headache because we will always want to create more than the funds allow us. But nevertheless, we believe that a number of organizations believe in us and our work will be priced well from their side”

Delicate tasks are very often left in the hands of the ladies, and the only lady of the show, Cladonia Scerri [Institute of Art and Design] will have the delicate task of representing the MCAST SC internationally,

“There are a good number of European Student Exchange programmes which MCAST students will be benefiting from and through which a lot of knowledge can be acquired.”

Paul Bonnici [Institute of Building and Construction Engineering] will be coordinating the aspect of social

policy. Although his role will involve a lot of paper work, he has expressed these comments:

“To be able to write a realistic social paper as we plan to do, we need a lot of first hand information from the students. So please let us know all your problems and we can help you obtain first hand assistance where this is necessary, and be able to draw up the real scenario of the student situation at the MCAST”

“

Our main objective will be to make MCAST students proud to be MCAST students!

”

Julian Portelli [Institute of Information and Communication Technology] has a vast background of organization behind him. He has worked actively for the past years and, to add up some more hassle to his life, he has been appointed PRO.

“Communication within MCAST might look difficult because of various boundaries between students and Institutes. We plan on breaking down these boundaries through various initiatives we will be taking”

Giovanni Galea [Institute of Mechanical Engineering] will be the host to a lot of the social activities this MCAST SC will organize. Students love to party and relax with their friends during their free time:

“We want to be an alternative to other places of entertainment. We will not just copy other places but we will create our own, keeping in mind what students like.”

HOW ABOUT VOLUNTARY WORK



Voluntary work is something that we can all do. Its tasks cover a vast spectrum; from painting fences to coordinating fund raising events, from assisting persons with a disability to extensive data entry. The number of positions classified under volunteerism are endless and something that all can benefit from. Voluntary work is about giving back to the community. It is the humility and generosity of volunteerism that reaps rewards beyond comparison.

As well as greatly contributing to a civil society, volunteering also directly benefits the individual volunteer. The opportunities and experiences gained often open doors to new career paths, or help along ones already chosen.

“When I started volunteering, it was not to gain job experience, or create potential references. I started volunteering shortly after a very difficult time in my life and it was the support and care that my family and I received during that time that made me realize how easy it was to give something so important as my time. It was not until I had started volunteering that I realized there were benefits not only to my community, but to myself as well. Little did I know that volunteering could assist me down my career path.”

(Youth Volunteer)

Doing voluntary work is a win-win situation. The benefits that come along for both helper and helped are countless. Not only is there an improvement to the community, but there are also rewards to the individual volunteer in career opportunities. Volunteering shows a potential employer that you have a responsible, generous attitude, and it also shows commitment, which is a must at any job.

Although doing voluntary work has a higher inner purpose for the individual, here are a few benefits obtained from voluntary work when applying for a job:

It sets you apart from the other applicants

If you were ready to give of your own time and expect nothing in return, it is automatically implied that so much would be given with a payment incentive.

It helps you gain experience

Whether it is practical or theoretical, voluntary work could give you the experience you need which could be a stepping stone to your next job.

It gives you networking opportunities

The contacts established through a volunteer position are often very useful when looking to get a foot in the door of a company.

It prepares and trains you on issues like

Punctuality, dependability, responsibility and the capacity to handle pressure and to work efficiently in a team setting.

“

Little did I know that volunteering could assist me down my career path.

”

For non-governmental organizations such as ir-Razzett tal-Ħbiberija, voluntary work is considered a most vital human resource, without which most of the services given would not be offered, or perhaps offered to half the number of people who attend regularly.

At Razzett tal-Ħbiberija volunteers help the organization cater for people with disabilities in the best possible ways. Voluntary work at Razzett tal-Ħbiberija does not only mean working directly with people with disabilities. Although help and assistance in the disability services - like pottery, arts and crafts sessions, horse riding, animal interaction and multi-sensory sessions - is needed, most of the volunteers help out in the areas of Razzett such as in the animal park; which includes gardening, maintenance, animal care and feeding, in

the pool activities, in organizing and supporting functions and events, and in regular fund raising activities. All voluntary work received at Razzett tal-Ħbiberija is highly appreciated. Directly or indirectly, all volunteers work for the higher aim of helping out persons with a disability who regularly visit Razzett tal-Ħbiberija, and who receive the various services for free.

Razzett tal-Ħbiberija is a local charitable, non-governmental organization, which gives leisure, educational and therapeutic services to people of all abilities, but free of charge to people with disabilities. If you would like to become a volunteer, please contact Razzett on 21636526 or 21634412 or on info@razzett.org.

Your effort will be greatly appreciated.

CELEBRATION TIME... ENJOY IT TO THE MAX...



Martin Chetcuti – Sedqa Prevention Executive

The festive season is a time when most of us find time to socialize with our friends. It is a time when everyone exchanges greetings whilst wishing everyone the best for the coming year. During this time a lot of people make different resolutions for the New Year related to the improvement of personal attitudes towards personal matters. These things all contribute towards a positive atmosphere that instigates friendship amongst different people on various levels.

Fun to the Max... Investment for further partying..

Everyone likes to have fun and to party. Definitely this is an activity that gives an individual energy whilst allowing her/him to update the good memories related to these particular moments. It is essential though that one keeps in mind that the only ingredient which is essential to have fun and to socialize is friendship. True friends may create an

evening or an event full of fun without the need for the abuse of alcohol or other substances. Definitely it is worth celebrating as it is our right to do so, but it is also essential to celebrate and have fun till the end of the party!!! Healthy partying leads to further fun on other occasions where all that matters for those present is to enjoy the company of their own friends - a style worth keeping in mind and practice.

Keep in mind..

The amount of alcohol in a standard drink of beer, wine or distilled spirits (either straight or in a mixed drink) is the same. To a breathalyzer they are all equal. It is essential, especially when someone is going to drive, to keep in mind the responsibility s/he holds. Good friends never take risks in this regard, not even when someone is alone. Drink driving is not cool at all but may lead to serious accidents with a consequence to carry for all your life.



Ms Joyce Sheperd Thom, Director, with MCAST Counsellors and Pastoral Team

PASTORAL TEAM FROM STOCKHOLM ON MCAST MAIN CAMPUS

The pastoral team of AVA Gymnasium in Stockholm, Sweden spent a day on the MCAST Main Campus on Wednesday, 1st November 2006. The team, comprising of three careers counsellors, two personal counsellors and two school nurses, was accompanied by one of the three Principals of AVA Gymnasium.

This vocational college in Stockholm runs a wide range of both vocational and academic programmes for over 1100 students and each of the three principals is responsible for a number of these courses.

The team was welcomed in the Main Boardroom, where the latest material on MCAST as well as a copy of Prospectus 2006 - 2007 was given to each member of the team. After sharing experiences of good practices both in Stockholm and at the MCAST, Ms. Rose Anne Borg and Mr. John Bartolo, College counsellors, accompanied the team to the Institute of Information and Communication Technology. Mr. Mario Pace, Deputy

Director of the Institute, showed them round the Institute and gave an extensive explanation of what goes on at the Institute of Information and Communication Technology. In a conference room at the Institute of Business and Commerce, the MCAST counsellors gave a detailed presentation on Institutes and Centres of MCAST in Malta and Gozo. During lunch the team was also addressed by Mr. Frank Edwards, College Principal, and Ms. Joyce Shepherd Thorn, Director of Information and Student Support Services.

In the afternoon, the team toured the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineering and the Mechanical Engineering Institute. Both Mr. John Sciberras and Mr. Emmanuel Zahra, Directors of Institutes, welcomed the team, explained the opportunities at the Institutes, shared experiences and answered questions. At the end of the day, it was obvious that the Pastoral Team from AVA Gymnasium was very impressed by the way they were welcomed and the way we work. MCAST looks forward to follow their good practise of AVA Gymnasium Pastoral Team.

GRUNDTVIG COURSE IN ITALY

GUIDANCE AND CAREER SERVICES FOR THE FUTURE

MCAST Counsellor Ms Rose Anne Borg attended a Comenius / Grundtvig Course entitled 'Guidance and Career Services for the Future' between the 2nd and 8th of October 2006.

The course was organized by Uni.Versus CSEI and it was held in Bari, Italy. Uni.Versus CSEI is a Training and Innovation Consortium which includes the Universities of Bari, Lecce and Foggia. It is an accredited training agency which promotes training and research activities which focus on lifelong learning, innovation and networking between educational / vocational institutions and the world of work.

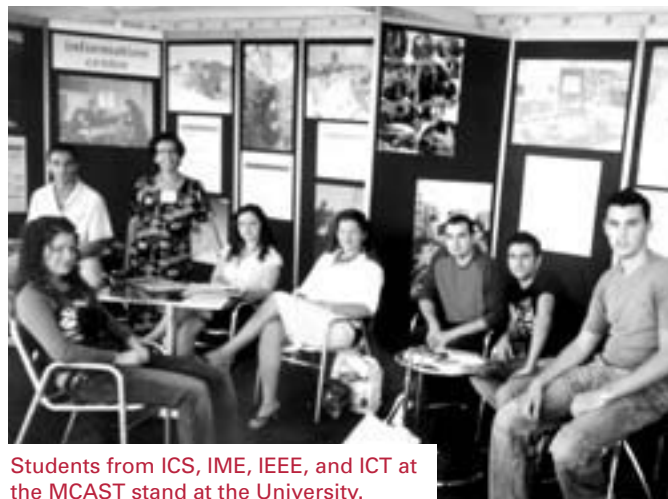
Both on-line and in Bari, the participants engaged in extensive discussions about topical issues such as labour market trends and projections, job mobility, transnational career guidance, career guidance tools, and the importance of European benchmarks to ensure an efficient and effective career guidance service in all EU member states. 'Careers Scotland' was used as the main module by lecturer Dr. Yvonne Gray. Lecturers and professors from the Universities of Bari and Lecce also gave their contribution and talked about good practice and research in their field.

During the same week Uni.Versus CSEI was running another two courses, an Arion course for Administrators and a course on Information Technology. Participants for these three courses came from Greece, Turkey, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Ireland, Spain, Romania and of course Malta. They formed one big group for all cultural activities.

Besides enhancing the professional competencies of the participants, the courses helped to establish friendships and work contacts with other European professionals in the field.



Participants in the Comenius / Grundtvig courses during a cultural activity in Alberobello in Bari, Italy.



Students from ICS, IME, IEEE, and ICT at the MCAST stand at the University.

MCAST STAND AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

AIIESEC and KSU of the University of Malta invited MCAST to participate in their Careers Convention. This was held on the University Campus between the 23rd and 27th October 2006.

Students from various MCAST Institutes had the opportunity to exhibit their projects in the Vodafone Room / KSU common room near the students' canteen at University. MCAST stand during the whole week was manned not only by counsellors and administrative staff, but also by a good number of students from nearly all the Institutes of the MCAST. These students had the opportunity to mix with University students and share their experiences. Stands at the Convention were visited not only by University students but also by a good number of lecturers, sponsors, participants and even secondary / post-secondary students.

Counsellors offer support to students whose parents are going through marital separation

Marital separation is often the end result of extreme emotional tension. Many adolescents come through marital separation already troubled and depleted because of the conditions in the family. In some cases, particularly when adolescents witness or experience violence in the family, they even express relief and welcome the decision reached by their parents. However many of the difficulties persist or consolidate after the separation, the reason being that the multiple and complex changes which separation brings to the lives of adults, adolescents and children, have extensive effects.

Through the whole process of marital separation all key players need continuous help and support. It is a time of drastic economic, social and psychological changes. In spite of all changes, separating couples will remain the parents of their own children. However, due to the turmoil the parents would be going through at the time, children and adolescents may feel neglected and isolated. Thus, counselling can be a substitute parenting and trusted companion during separation where one can explore alternatives on how to cope with the new circumstances.

The Counselling team can be contacted either by e-mail on counsellors@mcast.edu.mt or by Tel: 21665687

MCAST ASSISTANT LECTURER PARTICIPATES IN COMENIUS COURSE ENTITLED SALT – SCHOOL ACTION LEARNING TEAMS



From Left to right: Maria Rodriguez Martin (lecturer- Spain) Margaret Pace (Assistant lecturer – Malta), Inger Rydholm (Director – Sweden), Pedro Paulo da Costa Cerqueira (Director – Portugal)

Assistant Lecturer Ms Margaret Pace participated in a Comenius Course entitled SALT - School Action Learning Team. The course was held in Ljubljana, Slovenia between the 18th and 24th of September, 2006. Originating from the Learning Teacher Network, this course highlighted important areas to be considered when working in teams to promote school improvements.

The course was kicked off with a dinner that brought all the participants together. Experiences were shared throughout the week as the course went through the core themes including: Initiating School Improvement, Leading Change and Managing Development, Team Role and Interactivity, Evaluation – Process and Strategies and Evaluation Promoting Improvement. Throughout the course a balance among activities, sharing of experiences and theoretical highlights was reached. This gave each participant the opportunity to

discuss the education system in their country and to identify possible areas where improvement can be implemented. Simulation activities were prepared by the organizing team to bridge the theoretical phase with the possible scenarios that can occur in real life settings. All this took place in an atmosphere which fostered reflexive thinking by the use of a learning log that was specifically customised according to the theme discussed on each day.

A cultural visit consisting of a walking tour of the small town of Ljubljana was organised to promote the exposure of different cultures across the various EU countries.

Participants from Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom participated in this course.



BASIC SKILLS INITIAL ASSESSMENT

BSU initial assessment tests are designed to help students and lecturers determine the approximate general literacy (Maltese and English) and numeracy skills level students are working at and therefore what basic skills support, if any, they require.

Before setting a learning programme or a scheme of work, it is essential for lecturers to identify students' strengths and weaknesses in literacy and numeracy. Through initial assessment one gets to know

what level of skill and knowledge the student has already achieved and what course the student is following. Initial assessment tests pinpoint as well students' underlying abilities.

In winter 2005 and spring 2006, the Basic Skills Unit took part in the trialing of a new set of screening and assessment tools developed by the Skills for Life Strategy Unit of the Department for Education and Skills, UK. Four hundred adult learners from 50 different institutions from across all the UK

participated in this project, out of which 25 students were from MCAST. The numeracy assessment test was translated and adapted to the Maltese context by Mr. David Muscat, the BSU Co-ordinator, and hence offered to MCAST students in both Maltese and English.

In these last few months, since the start of the new academic year, around 750 MCAST students sat for initial assessment tests in Maltese, English, Mathematics and Basic IT produced and run by the Basic Skills Unit at the MCAST.

SEMINARS FOR BASIC SKILLS LECTURERS AT THE BSU LEARNING SUPPORT CENTRE

As part of an ongoing staff development programme, in July and September 2006, Basic Skills lecturers attended several seminars at the Learning Support Centre, LLRC, Kordin.

The following seminars were held:

- Writing Language tests by Dr. Charles Mifsud, Head, Department of Arts and Languages in Education, University of Malta.
- Assessing Numeracy skills by Ms. Anna- Maria Gilson, Education Officer (Maths), Education Division.
- Dyslexia by Ms. Louisa Grech, Inclusive Education Unit (MCAST)
- Use of Multimedia Strategies and Online Resources by Ms. Marjes Zammit. E-Learning specialist, Department of Arts & Languages in Education, University of Malta.

Apart from the seminars, the BSU team visited on three occasions the Paulo Freire Institute, where MCAST Basic Skills tutors had the opportunity to observe closely good practices in the teaching of literacy to disadvantaged youths and adults.



SOCIAL INCLUSION: WORKING AND INTERACTING WITH DISABILITY

Everybody has different abilities but people tend to be surprised and modify their behaviour towards people that have limited or “obviously” different body functions (walking, seeing, talking, hearing, concentrating ...) or body structures. Often people think a disability is something strange. They might feel pity and want to jump in to help, or – on the contrary – hold back and avoid them because they never really learnt to interact with a person with a disability.

Neither the patronizingly pitying attitude nor the fear of interaction are very helpful or respectful towards the person with different abilities.

Imagine how you would feel if

- people ignored you, and talked to the person next to you instead, because you didn't know anything about e.g. cars or fashion
- people stopped talking and stared at you when coming into a room because you look different

- people were nervous and avoided eye contact when you were around them because you were wearing strange clothes or had a different hairstyle.

Persons with a disability often face these kinds of reactions. Everybody has different health conditions, but some disorders, traumas or diseases cause more or less severe impairments which result in different disabilities. But even though people see their physical or mental activity limited, because of medical conditions (impairments), this does not mean that they would not be able to participate in activities, should they be specially adapted. In this sense, disability does not only have medical but also has social causes. People with a disability are often excluded or given a different status by other people because they do not fit the social expectations, i.e. being able to do the same activities in the same way as other people. And this is often the biggest handicap, not the disability itself.

General Tips for Interacting with People with Disabilities

- When starting to interact with persons with a disability start from the assumption of the highest possible physical and intellectual skills and only if needed, adapt gradually to the disability. Don't assume that all people with a disability have limited intellectual skills, nor that people using a wheelchair are very slow, etc.
- When introduced to a person with a disability, do the same thing you would do with other people you meet. If you usually shake hands, then offer to shake hands.
- Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities in the same way as other people.
- If you offer help, ask first if the person with a disability wants help and wait until your offer is accepted. It is best to let the person with a disability give you instructions on how to assist (e.g. some parts of wheelchairs are fragile or detach easily).
- Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions such as “See you later,” or “Did you hear about that?” that seem to relate to a person's disability. They often use these expressions themselves. Don't try to be too politically correct and reflect days on end how to call a person with a disability – just ask him/her.

MY EXPERIENCE STUDYING ABROAD



by Kirsten Demicoli

Kirsten together with her family

It was always my wish, my dream and my aim to go and study abroad, and on the 22nd of September 2005 my dream came through, I was off to the UK!

During the scholastic year 2004 – 2005 I was finalising my 2 year course in a Higher National Diploma in Management & Business, at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology. By the end of summer, after receiving all my exam and assignment results, I knew that I surely had the opportunity to further my studies a step further.

Throughout the whole of summer 2005 I had done lots and lots of research, making sure to apply at every University which I liked, making sure they had the right course for me, and after getting accepted at quite a few universities, I had to check which was the most feasible, which had the best tutors, lectures, lodging, facilities etc.

After all the above research, my parents and I concluded that the

one year top-up, BA (Hons) in Management & Business Degree, at the University of Glamorgan, Wales was the best course and institution of higher education available out of all. When I visited the campus, it was like a small town incorporating everything around: halls of residence, cafeterias, restaurants, bars, shops, the gym, the train station, bus routes, internet ports. Everything was literally on campus, all surrounding the lecture rooms and the lecturers' offices.

After a whole day travelling, I settled into a room on campus. It was a lovely room, with a scenic view, though it was much smaller than what I was used to back at home. It incorporated one single bed, a mini fridge-freezer, a desk, one chair, a notice board, two shelves, a heater, a sink, a wardrobe, and two cupboards. A few doors down, I also had a fully equipped shared kitchen, and a shared common area, which was equipped with computers, internet, television, and a DVD player.

Once settled in, I introduced myself to my new friends on campus. We got on very well, and that same night, we were already off to the Students Union - which is a discotheque/bar just for registered students - in order to meet other new students who were also new to the area. During October, I had registered in my course, applied for my student cards, got to know all the information about how to get along, met my tutors, knew which rooms and which blocks I had to travel to, knew what time the bus arrived in order to go and do my weekly shopping, took various bus trips around Wales, went on sports activities, enrolled on different modules and curriculums, and most of all, I was enjoying my life to the maximum.

I was lucky enough to have lectures just on a Monday and a full day on Thursday. Lectures were fun, and students changed continuously; who had different courses, who changed subjects, and so on. Lectures were all presented on PowerPoint slides

which all students had an access to before the lesson in order to turn up prepared.

The lecturers were extremely kind, we had individual attention at times, and queries were always dealt with at the end of the lesson by email, by phone, or by turning up at the lecturer's office. At the end of my scholastic year, the lecturers had become friends rather than tutors, friends to whom you could tell any problem, friends who would listen attentively and were interested not only into the curriculum of the course, but also in one's life and state of mind, but most of all friends with whom I still correspond with today.

Living on campus and being independent is another issue when studying far away from home. It was hard at times, but it was fun, and one tends to learn how to grow up. I managed to clear my room often, since we had various room checks. I learnt how to organise my washing of dirty clothes, although a few times I did mix up some white clothes with coloured clothes, and ended up with a mess of coloured clothes. I also had to cook every day, though I must admit my cooking at times was just not edible. However it did improve, and it was fun, it was enjoyable, since my friends on campus made it such a wonderful experience. We really got along. We helped each other, we were just like one big happy family, sharing house cores and giving a helping hand to one another.

The friends I met on campus were incredible. I met friends from all social aspects of life. Two of my friends, Llinos and Sarah, came from Wales; Nicola came from Hampshire in London; Julie came from North Carolina in the USA; Asmau was from South Africa; Oyeenda was from Nigeria. Others came from France, Germany, China, Japan, and so on. I learnt about various cultures, native traditions, a few words in Chinese, Welsh, and South African. We also exchanged native recipes and tasted each other's home-made dishes. I also got to go home which a typical South African costume thanks

to Asmau. It was wonderful meeting all of them and having various conversations about each other's various lifestyles.

When it came to seriousness, I would just lock myself up in my room and not be disturbed, working extremely hard at my desk, occasionally getting up and making myself a cup of tea. Deadlines were always met, since I had so much time on my hands which I dedicated to my studies, and lecturers would give continuous feedback on the way one was getting on. Apart from sitting at my desk and working hard on exams or assignments, I also had my fun outings. My friends from halls of residence would often just start the car and go for a drive, or a walk, or a trip to the large superstores for our weekly or at times daily shopping trips. We visited castles, museums, beaches, shopping areas, fairs, the ice-rink, the cinema, bowling alley and anything else that was on at that moment.

“ It was always my wish to go and study abroad ”

At times, on weekends, my closest friends in the halls would go home to their family, but I was very much often invited over, especially to Llinos's house. Her family was lovely, they were just like a second family to me. Llinos lived quite far away from school, almost a 45min drive. Once there it was wonderful. Her family was extremely friendly. They went out of their way so many times, I was literally spoilt. One weekend during Christmas we all stayed at Llinos's house. During the day we went shopping and bought various Christmas presents for one another. Then on Saturday evening, Sue,

Llinos's mother, prepared a lovely Christmas roast dinner for us, which we all enjoyed.

Other times, I used to meet up with Dr. Elizabeth Muir. She was an acquaintance, as well as a lecturer at the University. Dr Muir and her friend Waldo, often went out of their way to take me round Wales, and show me its beauty, its countrysides and buildings. She made sure I fitted in well at the university, and always insisted that if I needed anything I would immediately go and speak to her.

All things come to an end. I achieved my honours degree, and I also had my graduation ceremony on the 20th of July. It was a lovely day, so organised, so professional, and so fulfilling. All lecturers and students attended fully dressed for the occasion. It was a ceremony which I will never forget for the rest of my life. It was the day which I had been looking forward to since the first day that I set foot at the university.

Looking back to the days I spent in Wales, I miss them dearly. I miss my friends there, the fun we had, the independence, though I must say, and must admit, when I was actually there, I did miss my boyfriend, my family, and my friends. But now I would do anything just to turn back the clock and go through it once again.

Last but not least, I would like to say a very big thank you to my parents for the great sacrifice they went through in order to be able to support me financially; a big thank you to my boyfriend David for having so much patience and waiting a whole scholastic year for me to return; a big thank you to all the lecturers and staff at MCAST, because without them I surely would not have reached my aims; a big thank you to Dr. Elizabeth Muir and Waldo, for having so much patience and taking me out to see more of Wales which I had not already seen; a big thank you to all my friends in Wales and surely not to be forgotten, Llinos, Lowri, Sue and Philip, the Pugh family, who treated me and took care of me, just like one of their daughters.



OUR EXPERIENCE IN THE WORLD STREET SOCCER TOURNAMENT

by Jean-Paul Scerri, Donnaliza Azzopardi, Mark Borg Spiteri, Daniela Micallef and Brenda Spiteri

This summer, five students enrolled in the National Diploma in Sport and Exercise Science, had the opportunity to take part in the World Street Soccer Tournament, held in Germany.

This was thanks to our lecturer, Ms Adele Muscat, who came with us as our leader. We take this opportunity to thank her again for this opportunity given to us.

The main aim of the street soccer is fair play and in each team there should be a girl playing at all times. This game is played without a referee and instead there are observers that help the teams give points for fair play to the opposite teams when the game is finished. The winning team takes 3 points, and the losing team takes 1 point. If the game finishes draw, each team takes 2 points. Besides these points, there are 3 other points for fair play, obeying rules that are set by the two teams before the game starts, and that a girl has to play at all times.

In this exchange, various countries took part such as France, Italy, Cyprus, Finland, England, Columbia,

Rhonda (Africa), Denmark, Greece and much more. Apart from the sport activities we made new friends from among the foreign participants and also learnt about other countries.

In the first tournament that was held everyone had to represent their own country. There were 74 teams taking part. The Maltese representatives, Jean-Paul Scerri, Mark Borg Spiteri, Donnaliza Azzopardi, Brenda Spiteri and Daniela Micallef, were eliminated in the quarter final stage.

Everyday there was a tournament of street soccer in which everyone could take part. The teams could be made up of a mix of people from each country. Two of our representatives, Jean-Paul Scerri and Daniela Micallef, took part in two of these tournaments with two other participants (one Polish and the other one German). They placed second in their first tournament and won the last tournament held.

This exchange was not just about street soccer but we also had lots of different activities to take part in, such



Daniela and Mark at the adventure park



Playing Street Soccer



Dragon Boat Race

as biking and canoeing. Sometimes there were also volleyball tournaments and also dragon boat races were held. In the 8 days of the exchange we also had the opportunity of experiencing different kinds of outdoor activities such as climbing.

We are trying to introduce street soccer for tolerance in Malta. It is very difficult but we would really like to share this experience with others. Together with Adele we will try to do everything in our power to do so.

TENNIS

Students are reminded that they may make use of the tennis courts near the Corradino Industrial Estate. Equipment may be borrowed from the Sports Co-ordinator's Office. For more details contact the Sports Co-ordinator at adele.muscat@mcast.edu.mt.



CANOEING

Lawrence, Mark, Daniela, Diane and Chris

Canoeing coaching sessions are being held on Saturday mornings or afternoons. These will continue to take place throughout the winter depending on weather conditions.

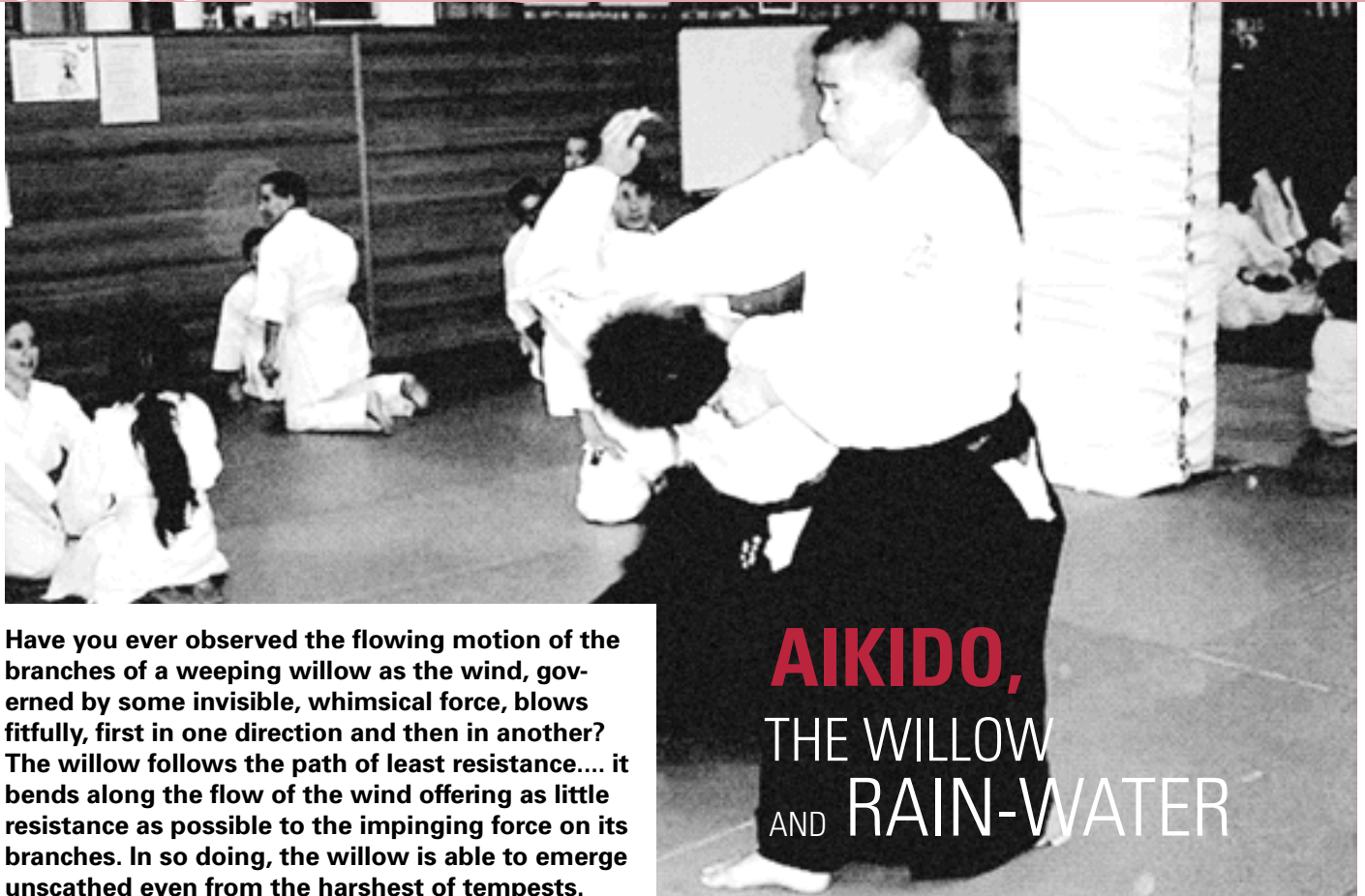
Sessions take place at the Canoe Club at Marsamxett and around the surrounding areas – Manoel Island, Sliema, Marsa, the Three Cities and Valletta. The fee is Lm2 per session or Lm18 membership for a year (Lm9 for under 18's). Staff members are welcome to join.

For more details contact the Sports Co-ordinator at adele.muscat@mcast.edu.mt.

BADMINTON

On Friday 6th October 2006, assistant national coach for Scottish Badminton Mr. Billy Fulton visited MCAST in order to hold a workshop on badminton with our students. This event was well attended by our students who enjoyed the session tremendously.

Thanks goes to Mr. John Attard of the Malta Badminton Association for making this event possible.



Have you ever observed the flowing motion of the branches of a weeping willow as the wind, governed by some invisible, whimsical force, blows fitfully, first in one direction and then in another? The willow follows the path of least resistance.... it bends along the flow of the wind offering as little resistance as possible to the impinging force on its branches. In so doing, the willow is able to emerge unscathed even from the harshest of tempests.

AIKIDO, THE WILLOW AND RAIN-WATER

Observe how rain-water flows down to the sea, finding the path of least resistance in its relentless journey to its source.

These are but a few examples from nature which teach us a very important lesson; follow the path of least resistance so as to sustain the least amount of damage, both physical and psychological.

Following the path of least resistance is a skill which can be learnt. This is the essence of the defensive art of Aikido, loosely translated as the Way of Harmony. This Art has been recently popularized by none other than Steven Segal, who is well known to execute the very effective and powerful techniques of the Art to the detriment of those on the receiving end of Mr. Segal's wrath! This is not emulated by Aikidokas (practitioners of Aikido) during the practice of the Art as there would then be no one to train with!

Who may benefit from Aikido? Anyone who is healthy enough to carry a mass of 8kg is eligible to enroll for Aikido lessons! Whether you are a young woman or a middle aged man (or woman for that matter!), you may start practicing the art of Aikido and reap the benefits associated with it. The most cherished benefit is the new sense of confidence this martial art will give you. The more you train, the more you will gain.

You are invited to experience first hand Aikido in action. An interactive demo is going to be held at the MCAST Main Campus gymnasium (ICT Institute) on Thursday, 21st December, 2006 from 09:30hrs till 1200hrs. Various real-life situations will be enacted and experienced Aikido practitioners will show those present how to apply Aikido techniques to diffuse potentially dangerous situations. You will get a taste of how Aikido can serve you best.

Those of you who are interested in practicing Aikido may be pleased to know that sessions are held three times weekly on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday at the main dojo (training hall) in Hamrun (Little Angels School Gym).

Further information may be viewed on our web-site www.aikidomalta.net or contact Mr. Kevin Bonanno on 9989 9733 or at info@aikidomalta.net

MCAST HOLDS THE BTEC CERTIFICATE IN FURTHER EDUCATION TEACHING GRADUATION CEREMONY



The graduates with Minister of Education, Youth and Employment, the Hon. Dr. Louis Galea, MCAST President of the Board of Governors, Mr Paul A. Attard, MCAST Principal, Mr Frank Edwards, Mr. David Bonello, VTTU Co-ordinator, Katya De Giovanni and Jacqueline Micallef Grimaud, VTTU Lecturers.

Forty full-time assistant lecturers teaching at various MCAST Institutes have successfully completed an intensive eighteen-month course in pedagogy at further education level, and which was specifically designed for a vocational education and training institution. The certification, which is a qualification at British National Vocational Qualification Level 5, is offered to MCAST assistant lecturers as part of their Continuous Professional Development. This is another milestone which MCAST had set in 2004 and achieved for the first time in 2006.

The BTEC Certification in Further Education Teaching is specifically geared for the Vocational Education field and it includes the following units: 'Induction, Initial Assessment and Support', 'Communication and the Teacher', 'Learning Theories and Teaching Techniques', 'Further Purpose and Use of Assessment', 'Teaching Practice and Resources', 'The Research Project', 'Further Education in Context', and 'The Professional and Reflective Practitioner'. Each unit consists of 30 or 60 guided learning hours involving the notional measure of the teaching, instruction and assessment, together with other structured learning time such as directed assignments or supported.

The graduation ceremony of this first cohort was held at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mdina. The ceremony started with an organ recital by Mr. John Aquilina who

is the resident organist of the Cathedral. A thanksgiving mass was then celebrated by Rev. Lawrence Zammit and this was followed by the presentation of certificates. The graduates and guests were addressed by Mr. Conrad Aquilina, a representative of the lecturers, Mr. Frank Edwards, the Principal of the College, Mr. Paul A Attard, the President of the Board of Governors, and by the Hon. Dr. Louis Galea, Minister of Education, Youth and Employment.



VTTU INDUCTION PROGRAMME

On the 2nd of October, 2006, the Vocational Training Teaching Unit within the Professional Development Centre at MCAST organised an induction programme at the New Dolmen Resort Hotel, Qawra, for candidates following the BTEC Certificate in Further Education Teaching. The professional's on-going search for continuous development is obvious and the demand for such a course is actually greater than the supply of places. Criteria set by the Principal's Office at MCAST establish eligibility for enrolment on this programme.



The induction programme kicked off with a welcome from the President of the MCAST Board of Governors, Mr Paul A Attard. Mr Frank Edwards, Principal/CEO of MCAST then delivered a speech on the importance of pedagogical training for Quality Teaching at MCAST. Mr Attard's riveting opening on the professional educator's qualities laid strong foundations for Mr Edwards' enthusiasm, encouragement, confidence build up and morale boosting, brilliantly rounded off with a solid wealth of knowledge when the candidates were addressed by Prof. Ronald Sultana, consultant to the VTTU, who focussed on the tradition and development of Vocational Education in the Maltese Islands.

The BTEC Certificate in Further Education Teaching is one of the many flexible programmes offered by the UK Edexcel. It is offered in three

stages. Stage 1 is offered to those individuals who lecture for a few hours a week. Stage 2 is available for those individuals for whom training is a prominent part of their role in an organisation, such as training managers within manufacturing companies. MCAST is offering its lecturers the qualification at Stage 3 since this programme is aimed at the training of those educators who are teaching or lecturing on a full-time basis.

A novelty in this run of the course will be the use of video conferencing in order to transmit lectures from Malta to the MCAST Gozo lecturers. In fact, seven candidates following the course are full-time lecturers at the Gozo MCAST Centre. MCAST has invested in the provision of video conference technology to facilitate learning and real-time communication wherever possible and practicable.

Furthermore, MCAST is working in close collaboration with the Education Division. Twenty-one part-time Instructors in full-time employment with the Education Division will follow this programme together with the MCAST lecturers, with special provision to satisfy their particular professional needs. Edexcel allows for the modification and fine tuning of content to serve a specific purpose with particular emphasis on primary and / or secondary education as the case may be.



by Ing. Mario Cassar

WHY? WHEN? WHAT? WHERE? HOW?

WHAT IS THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT?

When we say that some object is transparent because we can see through it, we don't necessarily mean that all kinds of light can pass through it. For instance, we can see through red glass, which is therefore transparent, but blue light won't go through it. Ordinary glass is transparent to all colours of light but it is only slightly transparent to ultraviolet or infrared radiation.

Now imagine a glass house standing out in the sunlight. The visible light of the sun passes right through the glass and is absorbed by whatever is present inside the house. The objects in the house warm up as a result, just as do objects outside the house exposed to the direct light of the sun.

Objects warmed by sunlight give off warmth again in the form of radiation. They are not at the temperature of the sun however, so they don't give off energetic visible light. They give off, instead, the much less energetic infrared radiation. After a while, they give off as much energy in the form of infrared as they absorb in the form of sunlight, and their temperature remains constant but obviously warmer than they would be if the sun were not shining on them. Objects in the open have little trouble getting rid of their

infrared radiation, but the sun-warmed objects inside the glass house are in another situation altogether. Only small quantities of the infrared radiation they give off will go through the glass. Most is reflected, so that energy accumulates within. The temperature of the objects inside the house rises considerably higher than does the temperature of the objects outside. The temperature inside rises until enough infrared radiation can leak through the glass to set up an equilibrium.

Because of this, plants can grow inside a glass house even though the temperature outside the house is cold enough to freeze them. The flourishing greenery inside such a glass house gives it the name of a 'greenhouse'. The additional warmth inside the greenhouse caused by the fact that glass is quite transparent to visible light and only slightly transparent to infrared is called the 'greenhouse effect'

Our atmosphere consists of almost entirely of oxygen, nitrogen, and argon. These gases are quite transparent to both visible light and to the kind of infrared radiation the earth's surface gives off when it is warmed. The atmosphere also contains 0.03 percent of carbon dioxide, however, and

this is transparent to visible light but not very transparent to infrared. The carbon dioxide of the atmosphere acts like the glass of the greenhouse.

Because carbon dioxide is present in such small quantities in our atmosphere, the effect is comparatively minor. Even so, the earth is a bit warmer than it would be if there no carbon dioxide present at all. What's more if the carbon dioxide content were to double, the increased greenhouse effect or global warming as it is now commonly called, would be enough to bring about a gradual melting of the ice caps at the poles.

An example of an enormous greenhouse effect is to be found on Venus, where the very thick atmosphere seems to be almost carbon dioxide. Astronomers expected Venus to be warmer than the earth since it is considerably closer to the sun. Not knowing the details of the composition of its atmosphere, they had not expected the additional warming of the greenhouse effect. They were quite surprised when they found that Venus's surface temperature was far above the boiling point of water and hundred degrees warmer than they had expected!

Question: Place a slice of hot toasted bread on a cold plate. That is, take a slice of toasted bread out of the toaster and put it on your breakfast plate which has been lying on the table waiting for you. In a few moments water gathers under the toast. Have you not seen this? Why is it?

Answer: However much toasted the bread, the fact is that water still abounds in it. This water is hot - it may be water in the vapour state locked up in the bread. This vapour is driven out and condenses on the 'cold' plate!



CHRISTMAS AROUND THE GLOBE

The festive season is here once again. Like every year, December brings with it a hustle and bustle of preparations for the jubilant celebration of Christmas. The most common Christmas clichés in the west are Christmas trees twinkling with fairy lights, a chubby Santa in his red suit, a lavish meal with a roast and the exchange of colourful Christmas cards and presents wrapped in wrapping paper and bows. Most of these traditions are the typical English Victorian Christmas as described vividly in Charles Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol'. Such preparations are taking place worldwide, especially where this style of Christmas was exported to colonies. However, Christmas traditions vary from one country to the next and in some places, from one region to the next or even one city to the next. ❄️

Christmas traditions are different because of different climates, different ethnic backgrounds and different histories. For example, whilst northern countries embrace the image of snow, reindeers and Father Christmas in red and white fur, warmer countries have altered this image to suit their climates. In Brazil, it is believed that Father Christmas comes from Greenland, but on the way down he changes his suit to a silk suit, which is more 'realistic' considering the climate. Down under in Australia, where Christmas is celebrated in summer, Christmas lunches with roasts are replaced with picnics, so that people can enjoy the blue skies and pleasant weather.

Traditions also vary in terms of who delivers Christmas gifts to children. Father Christmas coming down the chimney takes different forms in different countries. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, St Nicholas comes down from heaven by sliding down a golden rope and is accompanied by an angel and a devil. In Russia, 'Babushka' delivers the gifts; and in Italy, there is a similar image of 'La Befana'. In Norway, a gnome called 'Julebuk' delivers gifts to children. It is interesting to note how in different countries the imagery changes

from male to female and from 'human' to creature. Moving on from pagan traditions – in most countries the essence of Christmas is focused around the Christian spiritual aspect, which is where the roots of the Christmas celebration lie. Midnight mass is a common celebration across the globe. Countries which are predominantly Christian, such as Mexico, have very important spiritual traditions such as the nativity procession. In Mexico, even poinsettias (which in most countries are purely decorative) are linked to a legend with a religious theme. However, it is not purely a religious celebration, pagan traditions such as the piñata are not lacking during Christmas time! As far away as Brazil, the same tradition as the Maltese 'presepju' is cherished and similarly called 'presepio', coming from the Hebrew word 'presepium' meaning 'bed of straw'. ❄️

In several countries, Christmas is a time to wish for luck for the year to come, due to the fact that it is one week before the year ends. In Iraq, on Christmas Eve a bonfire of thorn bushes is lit. If the thorn bushes are burnt to ashes, then good luck will follow. Similarly the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland have a tradition whereby a cherry branch is cut and placed in water. If the cherry buds bloom before Christmas, then it will bring good luck.

If you are interested in learning more about Christmas in different countries, the best way would be to experience it first hand. NSTS strives to promote student and youth travel as a means to experience different cultures and enrich oneself. For more information on travel services, namely youth exchanges, flights, accommodation (including hostels), transfers and student travel insurance, log onto www.nsts.org



THE HAWTHORN AND THE AZAROLE – CRATAEGUS MONOGYNA / AZALORUS – IŻ-ŻAGHRUN / L-ANZALOR

by Ferdinand Demicoli - Assistant Lecturer

HARDY YET COLOURFUL

The Hawthorn and the Azarole are two closely related trees, forming part of the Rose family – or Rosaceae, which, of course, includes Roses. The rose family includes some interesting plants such as the Bramble (Għolliq), and the Evergreen Rose (Girlanda tal-Wied) – the plant featured on the reverse side of the 25c coin.

Such plants prefer valley-side habitats, where water is abundant in winter and drainage is good. The deepest part of the valley basin – the water-course – is generally taken up by the great reed, which is better adapted to that particular scenario or habitat.

The rose family forms part of an even larger grouping – the bountiful almond-family – providing us with the more familiar fruits such as apples, pears, plums, strawberries, apricots, almonds and peaches.

Like other Maltese wild-plants of the rose family, Hawthorns and Azaroles produce small flowers, with five petals underlying a circle of conspicuous match-like stamens (male organs). These surround the central gynaecium – the female arrangement. Hawthorn flowers each have a single style – or female organ – in the centre of the flower. Azaroles, on the other hand, can have up to three styles per flower. This is the most reliable way of discerning an azarole from a hawthorn. If all the flowers on a given plant have a single style, then, it is definitely a hawthorn.

All species of living organisms - including plants, are allotted a scientific name by biologists – this name is a binomial: it consists of two words, or terms. The first term is the generic name, the second the specific name. These indicate the genus and species, respectively, of the organism concerned. Scientific names are all in Latin.

Hawthorns and Azaroles originated in Crete. From that great island, they spread all over the Mediterranean, into most of Europe and much further afield. One must clarify that the word 'Hawthorn' can be used to refer to all the different plants – some 200 of them – in the genus *Crataegus*, or to the particular species *Crataegus Monogyna*, the Hawthorn proper.

These plants are interesting to keep because they are always active and changing. In autumn, they drop off their leaves, which take spectacular colours in cold climates. In late winter to early spring, the tree unleashes all the energy it had accumulated the previous summer, and withheld through winter and autumn. It sprouts bunches of white flowers, up to eighteen flowers per bunch. It literally gets covered with them. At this time it is breath-taking to behold. Insects visit the flowers and pollinate them. New leaves subsequently emerge from the branches. With the onset of summer, the petals dry up and wither away, leaving behind them a germinating fruit, which ripens to red or orange in the autumn.

The branches of Hawthorns and Azaroles are covered with formidable spines – each up to 2 cm long. A row of such trees makes quite a prohibiting boundary. Hawthorns can reach heights up to 10 metres, although in the wild Maltese countryside, they do not generally exceed 4 metres. Hawthorns are generally a bit taller than Azaroles. The branches and leaves of the Azarole have a thick covering of short hairs. Azarole leaves in fact look and feel velvety. This coating is also present in Hawthorns, but is not so thick.

The shape of the leaves is quite particular. The leaves are, overall, shaped like an elongated diamond. The leaf is however divided into three to five lobes, and each lobe is further toothed. The leaf looks like an open hand with webbed fingers and claws.

So how can I obtain one or more of these trees in my garden? Alas, the Hawthorn is considered as one of the most difficult trees to grow. Seeds can be collected from fruit, which ripen between late October and early November. One way is to sow the seeds and wait until they sprout out... they

do so after two years. A quicker way is to leave them for 24 hours in concentrated hydrochloric acid, rinse, and leave them in the fridge till March. In this way, the seed is convinced that it has been ingested by a bird or other animal, and subsequently wintered. Seeds treated this way should sprout after a month.

Though Hawthorns prefer moist habitats, they show great tolerance to soil alkalinity and to long periods of drought – two ever-present realities of virtually all Maltese habitats. This guardian couldn't be better suited to the Maltese valley.

The place most likely to meet this sturdy shrub and the unique and elegant appearance it bears is in rocky valley sides, as in Wied Inċita, Girgenti, Wied Hażrun and Wied Qirda. In Gozo it thrives in Xlendi and Nadur. Indeed, protecting this Maltese tree starts by enjoying its looks and partaking of its delectable fruits. Such that the generations to come might share with us the privilege of beholding it.



SO WHAT'S FOR STARTERS?

Whether you are a local start up, a micro enterprise, a small-to-medium-sized enterprise or a Foreign Direct Investment organisation, businesses in Malta deserve the best kind of business support. The Enterprise Support Division at Malta Enterprise provides a comprehensive range of support schemes and services aimed at making life easier for a wide variety of companies operating in or from Malta.

GETTING STARTED

Starting up a new business is a challenging, but also a very exciting and rewarding experience. The Entrepreneurship & Business Start-Up Unit within Malta Enterprise assists people wishing to start up their own business and to generate entrepreneurial skills. Their team of specialists can provide expert assistance in Support Schemes, Local Business Start Up, Entrepreneurship, EU Information and Tailored Training programmes, all aimed at making life easier for both local and foreign companies based in Malta. The aim is to assist individuals, entrepreneurs, employees wishing to go it alone.

Two schemes, START and STARTplus form part of the Innovative Start-up Programme and facilitate innovative start-ups in the industrial sector. These schemes promote innovation and innovative approaches, by giving priority to projects that encompass innovative elements and by supporting innovative enterprises in their initial years of operation. Through START, entrepreneurs with a viable business idea having innovative elements and a potential for internationalization, can benefit from training, capacity building and access to finances during their initial 18 months of operation.

(www.maltaenterprise.com/filebank/documents/startscheme.pdf).

The STARTplus scheme offers similar benefits, however the emphasis here is toward knowledge-based start-up enterprises, and at persons having technical knowledge and experience in the workplace, now looking to start their own business. Participants in this initiative must demonstrate an ability to support and develop new products and services based on innovative technologies and business models.

Malta Enterprise has two handbooks to assist those interested in starting their own business. Introduction to Business Planning highlights the main steps in drafting a business plan including

Marketing, Operations, Human Resources and Financial Projections. Roadmap for New Business Start-Ups is a guide for new entrepreneurs and provides useful tips on specific issues that they need to be aware of when embarking on a new business venture. Both of these documents are also available from www.maltaenterprise.com, or directly from the offices of Malta Enterprise in San Gwann.

BUSINESS INCUBATION

Because it is known that many potential new businesses fail before they even start, while many others during their first few years of existence, Malta Enterprise has set up Malta's first dedicated business facility aimed at hand-holding budding businesses during their difficult, early stages of development. Called business incubation, the idea is to play a nurturing role when businesses are possibly most vulnerable, and to improve the rate and chance of growth of these ventures. The Kordin Business Incubation Centre (KBIC) offers a portfolio of services, including access to finance, common areas, use of computers, telephony and network data connectivity, electricity and water supply infrastructure, back-office services, management counselling and the linkage to expert advice. KBIC is targeting the following industrial groups: Information and Communication technologies (ICT); Mechanical and electrical engineering design of equipment systems, as well as product design; Renewable energy resources; Biotechnology; and other innovative projects. Through the STARTplus scheme, knowledge based enterprises can also benefit from the services of the Kordin Business Incubation Centre (KBIC).

TAX CREDITS

Of course, tax incentives are always attractive propositions, and there are many schemes. Horse for courses. E-business tax credits, for example, encourage and support the development and uptake of e-commerce as a means to promote a modern and dynamic business environment. The aim is to encourage the development and hosting of electronic business services by supporting enterprises pursuing the development of e-commerce systems as well as users who introduce, or improve their electronic commerce facilities.

For more information contact Malta Enterprise on 2542 0000 or on info@maltaenterprise.com

HEALTH AND SAFETY WEEK FOR THE FIRST TIME ON CAMPUS

Every year during the month of October the European Agency for Safety and Health organizes the health and safety week with the coordination of agencies, trade unions, employers and even vocational Colleges like MCAST.

This campaign entitled 'SAFE START' is dedicated to the occupational health and safety of young persons. As a Vocational College MCAST feels responsible to raise awareness amongst young people regarding risks that they may face at work, and also to ensure a safe and healthy start to their working lives. Health and Safety is a primary issue at the MCAST because it is an integral part of each and every MCAST course and programme. As part of the Safe Start Campaign, a Health and Safety Week was organized at MCAST between the 23 and 27 October 2006. This was organized in conjunction with the European Agency for Safety & Health and the Occupational Health & Safety Authority. Information stands were put up during this activity and MCAST students from different institutes attended this activity. Various local organizations, Unions, and Government agencies, participated.



Fire Awareness Presentations

MEMBERS OF STAFF ATTEND FIRST AID COURSES

During the current year 46 members of staff had successfully completed the Lifesaver First Aid Course. The course was delivered by St John Ambulance and consisted of both theoretical and practical sections. Mr Frank

Edwards, Principal/CEO presented the certificates to the staff. This Certificate Giving Ceremony was held on the 25th October 2006 as part of the Health and Safety week which was organized on Campus.

“ *The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them.* ”
(Prov. 11,3)

by Fr. Carm Dimech

An emperor in the Far East was growing old and knew it was high time to choose his successor. Instead of choosing one of his assistants or children, he decided something different. He called all young people of his kingdom and said to them, “It is time for me to step down, so I decided to choose one of you.” The kids were shocked! But the emperor continued, “I am going to give each one of you a special seed. I want you to plant the seed, water it, and after a year from today come back with what you have grown from this seed. Then I will judge the plants that you bring, and the one I choose will be my successor.”

One boy named Ling was there that day and he, like the others, went home and excitedly told his mother the emperor’s invitation. She helped him get a pot and digging soil, he planted the seed and watered it carefully. After four to five weeks the other youths began to talk about their seeds and plants that were beginning to grow. Ling kept checking his seed, but nothing ever grew. A year finally went by and all the youths of the kingdom brought their plants to the emperor for inspection. Ling told his mother that he was not going to present himself with an empty pot, but his mother said to him that he must be honest about what happened. Ling

felt sick in his stomach, but he knew his mother was right, so he took his empty pot to the palace. When the emperor arrived, he surveyed the room, greeted the young people for their plants, trees and flowers they had grown, and said; “today, one of you will be appointed the next emperor”.

All of a sudden, the emperor spotted Ling with his empty pot and said, “Come in front. What’s your name?” “ My name is Ling.” All the kids were laughing and making fun of him. But the emperor looked at Ling, and then announced to the crowd, “Behold your new emperor because “Honesty is the Best Policy”: “Let what you say be simply “Yes” or “No”; anything more than this comes from evil!” (Mt. 5,37) Then the emperor said, “One year ago from today, I gave everyone a seed. But I gave you all boiled seeds, which would not grow. You substituted another seed for the one I gave you. Ling was the only one courageous enough and honest to bring me an empty pot.”

An author said, “Blest is the household where honesty reigns, where dad and mom practise the truth; Blest are the children whom God leads and trains, and are taught His Word from their youth”

Therefore if you plant honesty, you will reap trust, if you plant goodness, you will reap friends, if you plant humility, you will reap greatness, if you plant openness, you will reap intimacy, if you plant forgiveness, you will reap reconciliation. So be careful what you plant now, it will determine what you will reap tomorrow.

“Help me, dear Lord, to be honest and true in all that I say and do. Give me the courage to do what is right, to bring to the World a glimpse of Your light”





HEALTH & SAFETY WEEK

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