

MCAST LINK

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



 **MCAST**
MALTA COLLEGE of ARTS, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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Thea Cunningham at the Institute of Applied Science

EDITOR'S MESSAGE



Caroline Balzan
Communications
and PR Manager



I would like to welcome you to the start of another academic year which I am sure will be full of exciting and challenging moments!

This year the College is celebrating its 10th Anniversary since its inception in 2001. Ten years ago it started off with 1559 full-time students and now boasts of 6000 full-time and 4000 part-time students. It has grown to include not only more students but also more quality courses at different levels ranging from Level 1 to Level 6 (degree level), more Institutes and Centres, more state-of-the-art facilities and learning environments and more support services for students and staff. To celebrate the College's success an organising committee has been set up to co-ordinate and organise several activities and events across the College.

A new chapter in the history of education in Malta has begun with the construction works on the new €120 million MCAST Campus, which will bring all ten Institutes on one campus. Work on Phase 1 of the project, which includes the building of three new blocks, is expected to last two years to complete. The College has planned out the construction works in detail to ensure that the students and staff will be least disrupted.

MCAST has launched 11 new degree programmes this academic year, so now all MCAST students have the opportunity to further their studies up to degree level. The subject areas include Biomedical Engineering, Marine Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Electronic Communications, Power Generation and Renewables, Media (Moving Image), Construction Engineering, Health and Social Care, and Animal Management. Further details on these new degree programmes can be found inside the magazine.

The new Institute of Applied Science is introduced in this issue. The courses delivered by this new Institute, including laboratory and industrial science, health and social care and pharmacy studies, have been carefully designed to suit the needs of the local industry and state. Details on the Institute and its new Director are featured in this magazine.

The College places a lot of importance on the professional development of its academic and non-academic members of staff. Mr Anthony Saliba, Deputy Principal, contributes an interesting article on the College's past endeavours to provide staff training and also delves into the new Training Needs Analysis project which is currently being carried out by EMCS Ltd.

The annual Exhibitions by the Institutes of Art and Design and Electrical and Electronics Engineering once again fill up the pages of the Summer edition of MCASTlink. Several high-quality projects can be viewed inside the magazine. Well done to all the participating students!

Your contributions are welcome! Kindly send any stories on your achievements, projects you are working on or have completed, interesting educational experiences, etc. to caroline.balzan@mcast.edu.mt.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Caroline Balzan'.

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WELCOME!



Professor Maurice Grech,
Principal and CEO

Dear staff and students,

Welcome to a new academic year at MCAST. It is right to point out that this year the College celebrates the 10th anniversary from its founding in 2001. And yet this is only the beginning of what we consider to be a long journey. This notwithstanding, during these last ten years, thousands of students have attended technology-oriented and other usefully relevant courses at MCAST. We are pleased to note that those students who worked hard and completed their studies successfully found work in an increasingly competitive job market.

I hope that those of you who are returning to their Institute to progress further, have had a relaxing summer vacation, and that those who are newly arrived are settling in well. My staff and I are all looking forward to yet another exciting year and I am confident that, particularly if you are new at MCAST, you are keen to find out how and to what extent the course of your choice is going to match up to your expectations.

Even before the publication of this year's prospectus, a good number of students would have already decided which Institute to join and which course to apply for. Others would have carefully scrutinised the prospectus page by page and gone through the descriptions of the courses on offer in the various institutes, before making a final decision. In both cases this is perfectly normal and I sincerely hope that you will be able to make the best of your time studying the subjects that make up your preferred vocational calling.

Year after year, the College has seen increased investment as a result of which society expects us to meet the personal, educational and training needs of individuals and the prospects of our present and future economy. This can

only be achieved through you and with you as students. We know that both employers and students are becoming more and more discerning and more demanding, which is both right and desirable.

While we are determined to continue enhancing the quality and service that we offer, we also expect students to collaborate with us so that together we shall be able to satisfy, in an effective way, the teaching and learning that is expected from the various programmes of study. All students are to ensure that they receive a copy of the Student Handbook which is revised on a yearly basis. The handbook contains useful information on college procedures and may be considered to form part of your induction.

Students attending the MCAST Institutes in Corradino are now aware of the large-scale European Regional Development Fund project involving the demolition of the old institute buildings and the reconstruction of a new state-of-the-art vocational complex which will bring all nine Institutes together on one main campus.

I am sure that, at one time or another, we have all experienced construction works. We know that such works are bound to cause an element of discomfort. As the saying goes there is no rose without thorns. From our side, we have ascertained that the contractors responsible for the works will follow strict guidelines. MCAST too will continue to do its utmost to ensure that any inconvenience or disruption caused will be minimised as much as realistically possible.

I wish you all a most successful year and a pleasant stay at MCAST.

APPRECIATION JOHN WALSH

I do not remember exactly when I got to know John but it was way before he became a Sports Lecturer within the Institute of Community Services. It must have been at some athletics event at the Marsa Athletics Track or possibly at the Commonwealth Games in Manchester in 2002 when his partner Carol was running in the marathon.

John was not a man of too many words; he was a hands-on person, he would get down to business wholeheartedly and do what it takes to get things done. This was something I admired greatly in him... in fact many a time he helped me to get things done in my department when things seemed to get stuck somewhere. John would often come to my office, with a cup of coffee in one hand and a chocolate in the other (yes he loved that piece of chocolate!) to discuss how we could improve things for our sports students. He would help me in running events both on and off campus. I recall many a time when he would push me out of the office and into the weights room with the students and get me to be a 'guinea pig' for their personal training sessions! I used to enjoy discussing new fitness techniques and new research findings with him. I also used to enjoy discussing the Malta marathon with him, which he was so much involved in.

I remember the students discussing the weight plan, the body fat tests they would do at the gym and how he would push them to continue striving for lower fat levels, for more fitness, for a more muscled or leaner look. How ironic he had to pass away whilst working towards what he himself preached.

John's encouragement and enthusiasm were an inspiration. He was committed to helping all students and athletes become the best they can be. The event I remember the most with John is when we took two groups of sports students to the army. John and I had got into the army feeling too and had our face painted in camouflage. I will remember John by his smile and laugh that day especially when the army personnel 'punished' students with sit-ups and push-ups for... wearing an ear-ring, having long hair, not shaving, laughing etc. Together we pushed the students to their limit that day and even participated in a couple of rounds of boxing with them!

John taught me how to set higher standards, how to not give up or give in but keep striving for what I believe in and also how to be more assertive. Thank you John for regularly giving me those few minutes of your time to sit down in my office and chat. You were a colleague I could share my thoughts and frustrations with. The Sports Department at MCAST, your colleagues at the Institute of Community Services and all your students will greatly miss you.

Sincere condolences go out to his wife Carol, his family and friends.

Adele Muscat
Sports Co-ordinator



INFORMATION

CONSTRUCTION WORK ON THE NEW €120 MILLION MCAST CAMPUS BEGINS



The first phase of construction works on the new €120 million MCAST campus has now started. During a visit on Wednesday 3 August 2011, the Prime Minister Dr. Lawrence Gonzi stated that this project is a 'new page in the story of education in Malta.' He also mentioned that it is the next biggest educational project after the University at Tal-Qroqq.

The first phase of the project will involve the building of three blocks: one which will house the Institute of Business and Commerce (Block D), one to house the new Institute of Applied Science (Block J) and one to house the Students' House (Block F). Demolition, excavation and construction

works for the blocks, which are to form part of the new campus, will take around two years to complete.

The Institute of Business and Commerce will be built over the new 630-space underground car park, which will be built instead of the disused football pitch within the College grounds. The first phase is expected to cost around €30 million, two thirds of which will be forked out by the government and the remainder to be funded by the European Regional Development Fund. The same funds will be used to equip the Institute of Applied Science's laboratories with modern, state-of-the-art equipment. Besides the Students' House, the third block, which will



Demolishing of Institute of Business and Commerce (Block B)



Prime Minister Hon Dr Lawrence Gonzi, viewing the plans of the new Campus



be situated over the new car park, will house several facilities and services, including the Flexible Teaching Lecture Rooms, a canteen, the Inclusive Education Unit, an Information Centre, a clinic, the International Programmes Office and the MCAST Chaplaincy.

Double glazed windows, insulated roofs, solar water heaters and photovoltaic systems are just a number of the green initiatives to be installed on the new campus. Rain water from roofs will be collected in underground reservoirs and used for cleaning and flushing purposes, and water collected from the campus grounds will be stored in separate underground reservoirs for irrigation purposes.

An Energy Building Management System will be installed to monitor the consumption of both electricity and water. The new blocks will be installed with an intelligent lighting system which will measure the natural light levels and control the lighting output from luminaires to achieve an acceptable lighting level. The system will switch off the light automatically when no one is there.

Once completed the campus will sprawl over Corradino Hill down to the seaside where the new Maritime Institute, currently in Kalkara, will be located. The College's sport facilities will be located on the other side of Corradino Hill, on the current Gaddafi Gardens.

MCAST LAUNCHES 11 NEW DEGREE COURSES IN ITS 2011/2012 PROSPECTUS

The MCAST Prospectus 2011/2012, launched on 17 June 2011, introduces several new courses, including 11 vocational degree programmes.

Through the new degree courses, all of MCAST's 10 institutes are now offering students the possibility to continue their studies at degree level (Level 6). The new degree courses include a BSc Honours in Animal Management, BA Honours in Media (Moving Image), BSc Honours in Construction Engineering, BA Honours in Health and Social Care (Management), BSc Honours in Health and Social Care (Practice), BSc Honours in Electronic Communications, BSc Honours in Power Generation and Renewables, BSc Honours in Biomedical Engineering (Mechanical or Electrical), BSc Honours in Mechanical Engineering (Plant), BSc Honours in Mechanical Engineering (Manufacturing), and a BSc Honours in Marine Engineering. MCAST is now offering a total of 19 vocational degrees.

The College is also introducing new courses at lower levels, including the MCAST-BTEC Diploma in Fish Husbandry, the MCAST-BTEC Higher National Diploma in Photography and the MCAST-BTEC Higher National Diploma in Advanced Studies in Early Years. Two new courses will be offered by the College's Gozo Centre – a Diploma in Hairdressing and an MCAST-BTEC Diploma in Mechanical Engineering.

During the launch, Prof. Maurice Grech, MCAST Principal and CEO, explained that last year's degree graduates have been very successful and some of them are presently reading for Masters degree programmes at prestigious UK universities including Cranfield. Others are working at ST Microelectronics and with other local and international companies. "Following this major success, MCAST is now introducing another 11 degree programmes so that all students within the College will have a progression route to further and higher education," Prof. Grech said.

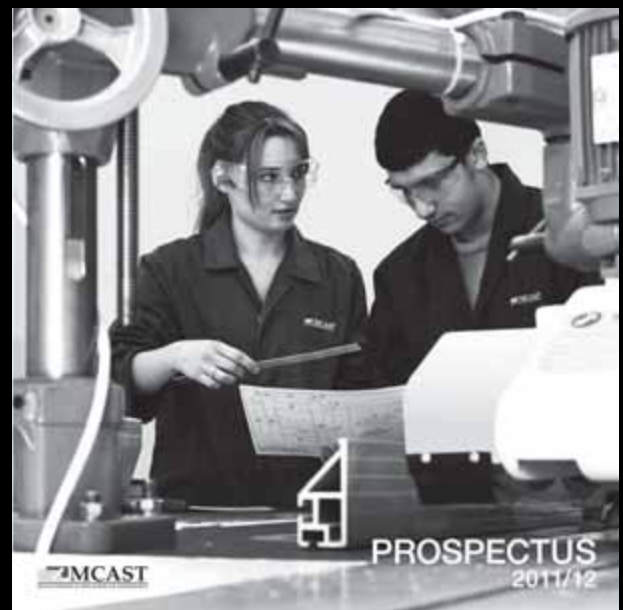
The MCAST directors, lecturers and students present during the launch were also addressed by Mr. Claudio Grech, Chairman of the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA). "Year on year we have witnessed an increase in students at the MCAST Institute of Information and Communication Technology," Mr. Grech said, "and this increase, together with the additional courses for the upcoming academic year, are a testimony of the efforts and resources which both Government and key industry stakeholders have invested to instil in students a drive for an ICT vocational career. We will continue supporting MCAST to provide high-calibre students who satisfy the technical skills required by the ever-changing needs of the ICT industry."

This collaboration between MCAST and the industry is an ongoing process that takes place not only at the ICT Institute, but also between all the other Institutes and the respective industries in which the students will eventually be pursuing their careers.

This year the College will once again be encouraging adult learners (aged 21 and over) to take up a full-time course at MCAST under the Maturity Clause.



From left: Mr Ray Farrugia, Registrar, Prof Maurice Grech, Principal and CEO, and Mr. Claudio Grech, Chairman of the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) during the launch



NEW GERMAN AMBASSADOR VISITS MCAST

HE Dr. Hubert Ziegler, the new German Ambassador to Malta visited the College on Monday 8 August 2011. Prof Maurice Grech, Principal and CEO, welcomed the new Ambassador and congratulated him on his appointment. He explained that MCAST has several collaborations with German organisations, namely the partnerships with Fraunhofer Gesellschaft and with Max-Born College to offer vocational degrees and courses in alternative energy sources, respectively.

Dr. Ziegler expressed his satisfaction at this high level of collaboration between MCAST and the German institutions. He explained that Fraunhofer Gesellschaft has a very good reputation in vocational education and training as well as industry research and development.

Prof. Grech invited Dr. Ziegler to visit MCAST again once the upcoming academic year begins, to meet the students and to witness some of the College's projects with German organisations.

Prof Maurice Grech, Principal and CEO, with HE Dr Hubert Ziegler, new German Ambassador



TRAINING MCAST ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF



by Anthony Saliba
Deputy Principal

“CPD (Continuous Professional Development) is quite simply a means of supporting people in the workplace to understand more about the environment in which they work, the job they do and how to do it better. It is an ongoing process throughout our working lives.”
Plymouth University (www.plymouth.ac.uk)

In a fast changing world where CPD is gaining more weight, people engaged in education are no exception: they need CPD to keep abreast of times. Many times, teachers/lecturers are criticised positively when they demonstrate a high level of mastery of their subject content, and more positively when they are capable of transmitting this knowledge in ways which captivate their learning audience in such manner that they make the teaching-learning continuum an unforgettable experience. Similarly, ineffective teachers/lecturers are often the subject of harsh criticism when their delivery lacks substance, colour and communication that reach the mind and the heart of students. The same attitudes apply for other professions.

A child, Sylvia Chidi, wrote a poem which supports the general public perception of teachers/lecturers. The poem opens with the following lines:

“A bad teacher is negatively pessimistic
A good teacher is positively optimistic.”

MCAST has always invested heavily in its academic staff, since its inception in 2001. Since its foundation, the College offered the BTEC Teacher Training in Further Education programme for those who would have not yet experienced formal teacher training. This healthy tradition, which was always supported by a plethora of in-house and external seminars, conferences, workshops, training sessions and staff meetings, is reaching its climax through one of the components of the European Social Fund 1.36 Project (2009-2013). This ESF Project brings together the launching of nineteen vocational degrees in eight MCAST Institutes and CPD for academic and non-academic staff. In both Project objectives, MCAST chose Fraunhofer Gesellschaft (a German institution with an outstanding reputation for research and innovation) as its main stakeholder to meet the project targets.

Much, and quite rightly so, has been said about the vocational degrees. MCAST shall definitely manage to educate a greater number of vocational degree students

than it had actually predicted back in 2007, when the preliminary studies were carried out in view of this ESF Project. The simultaneous provision of vocational degrees with staff CPD was a natural tie between two inseparable sectors: provision of Level 6 degree programmes and staff CPD. A better-prepared staff augurs well for a quality driven delivery of vocational degree programmes. It is however important to highlight the point that lecturers' CPD was not restricted to Level 6 Programmes, as described hereunder.

ESF 1.36 funds have already been utilised to train staff in the following sectors:

- a. To train assistant lecturers at a post-graduate level in pedagogy (MCAST PGC in VET), where 84 MCAST graduate teachers completed this challenging experience in December of 2010. Meanwhile, about 25 other assistant lecturers are following the BTEC Teacher Training in Further Education programme.
- b. 15 lecturers have just finished a three-month research placement in Germany, Italy (Bolzano) and UK (Sheffield) as part of the MCAST Master's scheme. After finishing their postgraduate programme, they shall form part of the lecturing staff assigned for the vocational degree programmes.
- c. Another lecturer has successfully completed her Master's scholarship programme at the University College London, specialising in Psychology.
- d. Lecturers engaged in the Level 1 Foundation Programme were trained by two University of London experts in Embedded Learning, thus being more able to teach key skills subjects through the delivery of the students' vocational subjects.
- e. Other lecturers attended a number of Short Courses in a variety of topics related to their lecturing profession, including inclusion.
- f. A number of lecturers have been appointed to job shadow all the modules of every vocational degree in preparation for the second run of their Institute's degree programme/s, when they shall be directly responsible for the delivery of these degrees.

Administrative staff were also invited to participate in one or more of the CPD Short Courses, some of which are listed below:

- a. Managing stress
- b. Negotiating skills
- c. An introduction to Finance for the Non-Executives
- d. Conflict Resolution
- e. Leadership and Teamwork
- f. Managing Time
- g. Being of Service to People
- h. Communication Skills
- i. Behavioural and Intellectual Learning Disabilities
- j. Maxon Software Training
- k. Coping with Trauma and Youth at Risk.



MCAST PGC in VET Graduation

One of the most interesting ESF 1.36 Project components is the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) which MCAST is currently carrying out through the professional services of EMCS Ltd. In these coming six months, all MCAST academic, administrative and support staff shall be interviewed and invited to discuss in different consultation activities to help the College identify the training needs of its various employment sectors. Academic staff need the full support of administrative and support staff: both sectors require CPD and the resulting benefits of such training needs will facilitate each other's work.

In its TNA, MCAST shall ultimately know better the strengths and needs of its workforce. The TNA findings shall assist MCAST in planning the short-term and long-term CPD of all its staff. MCAST's strategic plan and its mission statement allow ample space for considerations about the best way of developing its community of academic and support-administrative staff: much of its future achievements depend on their motivation, self-fulfilment and achievements.

To conclude, it is relevant to highlight the benefits of staff training in the following quotation taken from one of Australia's Leading Job and Staff Training websites:

"According to studies and surveys, the following are the good results of staff training:

- * Improved quality of work
- * Increased productivity
- * Greater flexibility and responsiveness to change
- * Reduced insurance premiums
- * Less wastage
- * Reduced maintenance and repair costs
- * Greater commitment from staff
- * Higher staff retention rate
- * Improved morale.

Besides and perhaps topping the list of the benefits is that often overlooked fact that through these trainings, staff skills are recognized and they feel that they are being valued by the company." (<http://www.jobsstaffrecruitment.com.au/>)

CPD Short Course in Time Management and Technology



MALTESE FONTS ON YOUR COMPUTER

Have you ever needed to type something in Maltese but could not find any fonts? Or have you downloaded a set of Maltese fonts but then realised that these were useless, since every time you send your documents to other persons the Maltese characters change into strange symbols which make them difficult to read?

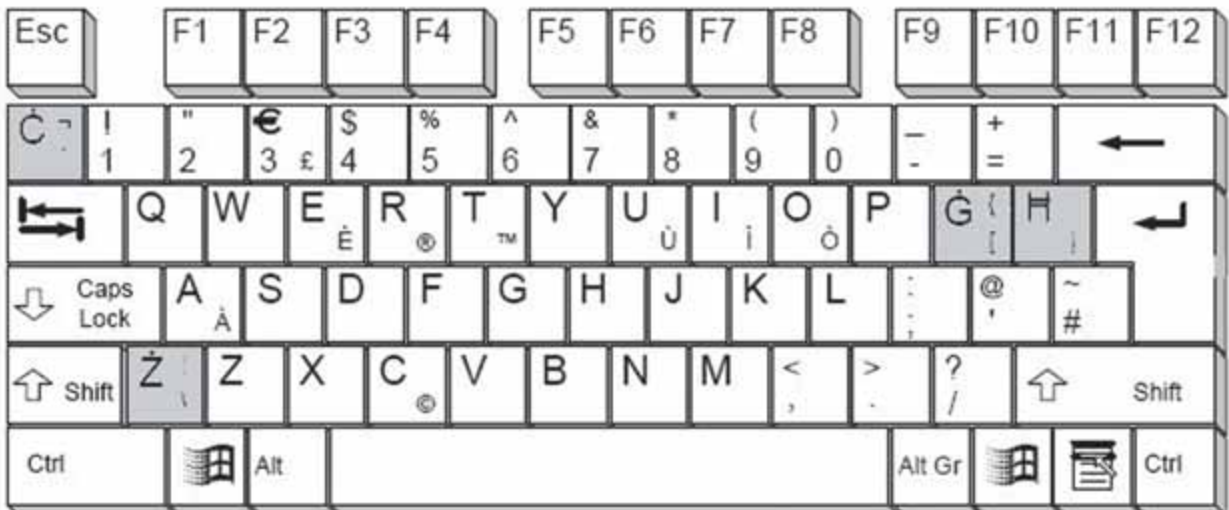
This happens because outdated fonts (like Arius, Tornado, Malta, Maltadel, Maltaard, Maltime, Maltnen and Malty) which used to be downloaded from the internet or shared between users, are not compatible with every computer and

cause undesired difficulties. Those receiving the document also need to have these fonts installed on their computers. Otherwise, they would find it hard to read your document.

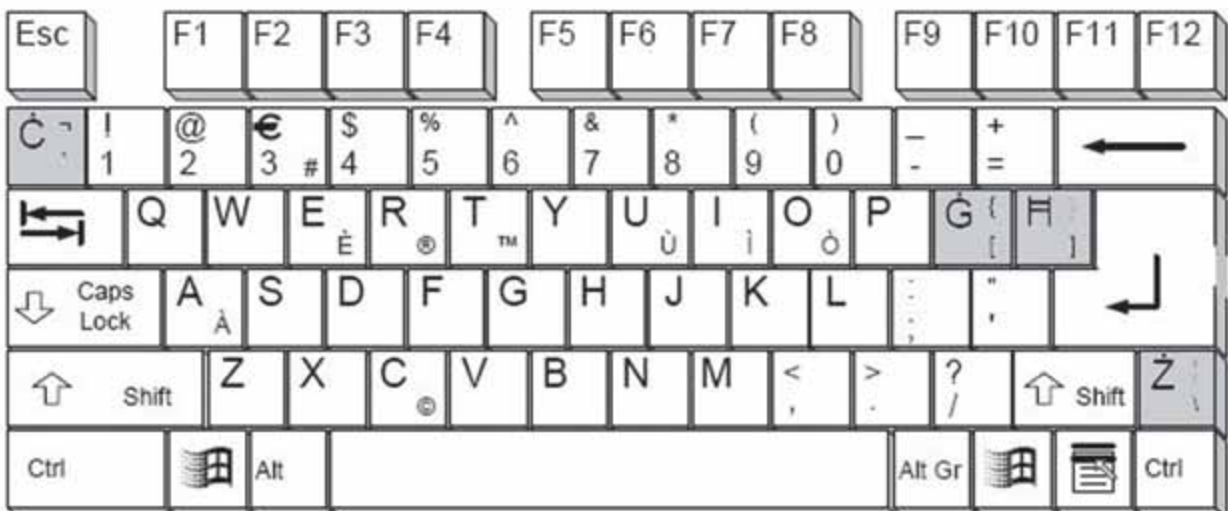
Is there a solution?

Typing Maltese does not require special keyboards, drivers or fonts. Today, all users are able to use such characters by adding another keyboard layout to their computer. This layout is based on the MSA 100:2002 Maltese Keyboard Layout Standard (see image below).

Standard 48-Key Layout



47-Key Layout



All you have to do is activate the language bar or its equivalent. This is found in various operating systems and it enables you to keep on using the most common fonts (such as Arial, Calibri, Comic Sans, Tahoma, and Times New Roman) with Maltese characters.

This is done through a straightforward procedure which you have to do only once. It will not slow down or crash your computer and you can still write documents and emails in English. Then you would be able to use Maltese characters

in documents, spreadsheets, presentations, websites, image editing applications, open source software, online forms, web browsers, chatrooms and social networks and even in your emails.

To help users type Maltese, the National Council for the Maltese Language has published a second edition of the user-friendly manual. This includes a step-by-step procedure, with screenshots, of how to activate the language bar together with various FAQs.



MATHEMATICS CORNER

REGULAR TILINGS



by Alexander Farrugia
MCAST Subject
Coordinator
(Mathematics)

A regular polygon is a shape whose sides and interior angles are equal. The equilateral triangle is a regular polygon having 3 sides, while the square is a regular polygon having 4 sides, as shown in Figure 1:



Figure 1a:
An equilateral triangle is a regular polygon having 3 sides



Figure 1b:
A square is a regular polygon having 4 sides

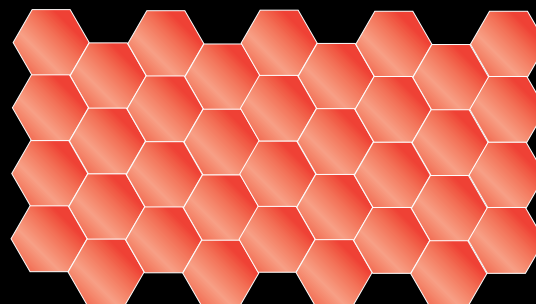


Figure 2c: A regular tiling using regular hexagons

A regular tiling or regular tessellation of a flat surface is an arrangement of identical regular polygons that completely cover the surface without any overlaps. In Figure 2, there are three different regular tilings: one consisting of equilateral triangles, one having squares and one containing regular hexagons (six-sided shapes).

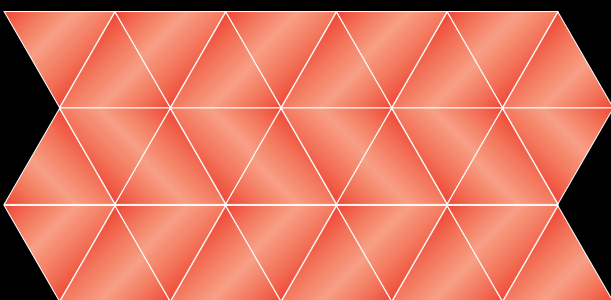


Figure 2a: A regular tiling using equilateral triangles

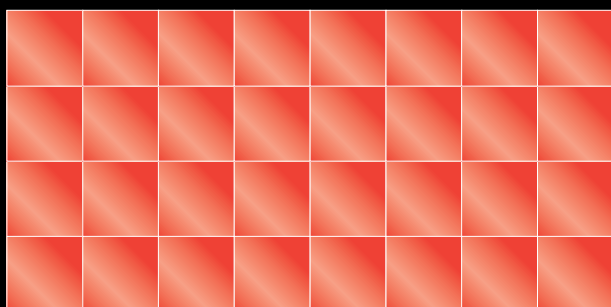


Figure 2b: A regular tiling using squares

Is there some other regular polygon that can be used to make a regular tiling? Perhaps surprisingly, the answer to this question is no. Here is the proof:

Suppose we have a regular polygon having n sides. The sum of the exterior angles of any polygon is 360° . Therefore, the size of one exterior angle would be $\frac{360^\circ}{n}$, and furthermore, the size of one interior angle would be

$$180^\circ - \frac{360^\circ}{n} = 180^\circ \left(1 - \frac{2}{n}\right) = \left(\frac{180(n-2)}{n}\right)^\circ$$

For example, in the case of a pentagon (a polygon having 5 sides), the exterior angles would all be, and the interior angles would all be

$$\left(\frac{180(5-2)}{5}\right)^\circ = \left(\frac{180 \times 3}{5}\right)^\circ = 108^\circ$$

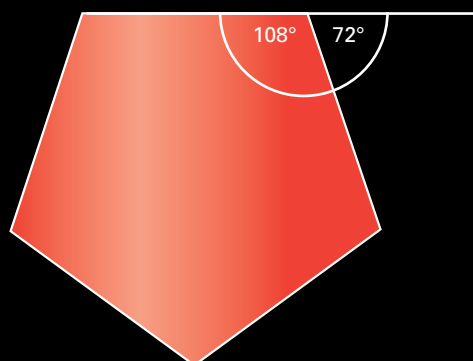


Figure 3: A regular pentagon's interior and exterior angles

shape to use for tiling, since when dividing 360° by its interior angle (108°), we get $\frac{360^\circ}{108^\circ} = 3.33$, which is not a whole number.

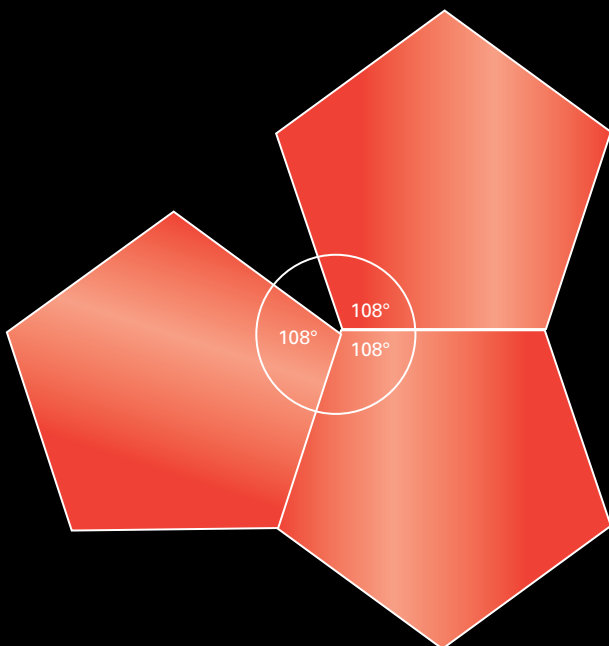


Figure 4: Regular pentagons cannot be used for tiling since 360° is not divisible by 108°

Thus, we need to find the polygons having number of sides n whose interior angle would divide 360° into a whole number of parts. That is, we need to find the values of n such that

$$\frac{360^\circ}{\left(\frac{180(n-2)}{n}\right)^\circ}$$

is a whole number. This simplifies to

$$\frac{360^\circ}{\left(\frac{180(n-2)}{n}\right)^\circ} = \frac{360n}{(180(n-2))^\circ} = \frac{2n}{(n-2)^\circ}$$

So our problem has reduced to finding all the possible values of n for which $\frac{2n}{n-2}$ is a whole number. To do this, we use the following trick:

$$\frac{2n}{n-2} = \frac{2n-4+4}{n-2} = \frac{2n-4}{n-2} + \frac{4}{n-2} = \frac{2(n-2)}{n-2} + \frac{4}{n-2} = 2 + \frac{4}{n-2}$$

Now if $n > 6$, the fraction $\frac{4}{n-2}$ would have a denominator that is larger than 4, its numerator, and hence $\frac{4}{n-2}$ would end up being a proper fraction. This means that $\frac{2n}{n-2}$ would surely not be a whole number as well, which, in turn, means that **all the regular polygons having more than 6 sides cannot be used for regular tiling.**

We are only left with the cases of regular polygons having 3, 4, 5 or 6 sides, and we shall consider these cases one by one.

If $n = 3$, $\frac{2n}{n-2} = \frac{2(3)}{3-2} = 6$, which is a whole number. Therefore, equilateral triangles can be used for regular tiling.

If $n = 4$, $\frac{2n}{n-2} = \frac{2(4)}{4-2} = 4$, which is a whole number. Therefore, squares can be used for regular tiling.

If $n = 5$, $\frac{2n}{n-2} = \frac{2(5)}{5-2} = \frac{10}{3}$, which is not a whole number. Therefore, regular pentagons cannot be used for regular tiling.

If $n = 6$, $\frac{2n}{n-2} = \frac{2(6)}{6-2} = 3$, which is a whole number. Therefore, regular hexagons can be used for regular tiling.

This completes our proof that only equilateral triangles, squares or regular hexagons can be used to cover a regular tiling completely.

INSTITUTE OF AGRIBUSINESS

TWO NEW COURSES AT MCAST INSTITUTE OF AGRIBUSINESS

The Institute of Agribusiness has launched two new courses namely First Diploma in Fish Husbandry and the Bachelor of Science in Animal Management. Both courses will start this academic year.

The First Diploma in Fish Husbandry will offer a sound overview of aspects related to the upkeep of fish and will delve into substantial detail about the biology and health of fish so as to give the student a thorough background on the general biological principles of the subject. Additionally, students will be offered units related to fish farming and the caring of ornamental aquaria. These will give the learner an applied approach to the subject and sufficient tools to enter the field of work.

The Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Animal Management is a one year course offered as a top-up degree for students who have successfully completed the Higher National Diploma. Together with Fraunhofer, Europe's largest application-oriented research organisation, the Institute will be welcoming foreign experts for each study-unit offered to provide the students with an in-depth study of the subject. The course will offer a variety of units related to livestock management, animal health, welfare and ethics. The degree will be completed with the presentation of a thesis by the student on a subject of his/her choice.



OPEN WEEKEND AT THE INSTITUTE OF AGRIBUSINESS

The Institute of Agribusiness organised an Open Weekend between Friday 10 and Sunday 12 June 2011. The aim of the Open Weekend was to introduce the public, particularly prospective students, children, teenagers and adults, to the wide variety of career and learning opportunities offered by the Institute of Agribusiness.

Visitors had the opportunity to gain a better understanding of several facets of the Institute's full- and part-time courses, from animal care to viticulture, from gardening to rabbit breeding.

They also had the chance to try their hands at different activities related to this sector. These included gardening practice, tours of the Institute's animal husbandry units and fields, free pet grooming and advice, poultry and rabbit shows, apiculture displays, horticulture and floriculture activities. The Institute also organised talks, discussions and workshops on various themes, including rabbit breeding and bird migration. Visitors could also purchase plants and local food products produced by the Institute.



Hon Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Employment and Family and Prof Maurice Grech, MCAST Principal and CEO with participating student



Hon Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Employment and Family and Prof Maurice Grech, MCAST Principal and CEO with participating student

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE

THE NEW INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE



The MCAST Prospectus for 2011-2012 lists ten Institutes and the Gozo Centre, among which there is the new Institute of Applied Science (pp. 46-49).

This Institute is offering three courses at Level 4 for this academic year: the MCAST Diploma for Pharmacy Technicians; the MCAST-BTEC Extended Diploma in Applied Science (Laboratory and Industrial Science); and the MCAST-BTEC Extended Diploma in Health and Social Care (Health Studies). These courses were previously offered by the Institute of Community Services.

The overarching goal of the Institute of Applied Science is to offer courses which are more attuned to the needs of both the private and state sectors, which need well-trained

MCAST graduates. Experience has so far shown that there is a growing interest in the potential of MCAST students within this sector. Discussions with local industry have already kicked off. This new Institute, in line with MCAST's mission statement, can truly "provide universally vocational and professional education and training with an international dimension, responsive to the needs of the individual and the economy" (in the Applied Science sector).

By now everyone is fully aware of the construction works under way at MCAST, which shall lead to the new MCAST Campus. The first building to go was Block B of the Institute of Business and Commerce, as shown in the picture below.



Pulling down Block B (IBAC) to make way for the new Institute of Applied Science

The new Institute of Applied Science shall be built on the same area within the next two years. By the time of the publication of this article, all preliminary works would have been concluded.

Very recently, Dr Ing Alex Rizzo has been appointed as the Institute's first Director. Born in 1964, Dr Rizzo graduated in Electrical Engineering at the University of Malta in 1989 and as a Chartered Engineer with the UK Engineering Council in 1992. He furthered his studies at Masters Level when he completed his Masters in Business Administration at the University of Malta in 2001. This was followed with his Doctorate in Business Administration at the Robert Gordon University of Scotland in 2011.

Dr Rizzo's main fields of specialization are in environmental technologies and in business strategy. So far he has presented twenty-five publications. The new Director has taken up various senior management positions in the public and private sectors over the years. He was also involved in the implementation of a number of national technology-based projects. Dr Rizzo is a fellow of the Chartered Management Institute (FCMI), a corporate member of the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET), and a reviewer for the International Small Business Journal (ISBJ).

INSTITUTE OF BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING

INSTITUTE OF BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING OFFERS DEGREE PROGRAMME

The Institute of Building and Construction Engineering is now offering students the opportunity to further their studies up to degree level. The Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Construction Engineering aims to provide learners with the management skills and technical knowledge associated

with the diverse and challenging industry of construction. The programme aims to equip students with the necessary design and evaluation techniques to make professional judgments on social and ethical issues during the planning and execution phases of the projects.



INSTITUTE OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE

WORK PLACEMENT EXPERIENCES BY BUSINESS AND COMMERCE STUDENTS

For the tenth year running, close to five hundred students carried out a work placement at more than a hundred organizations. Below are some comments from the participating students.

CHRISTOPHER BUTTIGIEG, CERTIFICATE IN INSURANCE

(one of the seven students placed at Atlas Insurance PCC Ltd)

On my first day of work I felt a bit afraid and shy to enter the office of a well-established insurance company in Malta. Yet as soon as I arrived, I was given a very warm welcome by the HR Manager who introduced me to the staff that I was going to work with in the Commercial Lines Department.

All the employees assisted me when necessary. During my work placement I learnt how to document recent files, archive files, as well as arrange and change old files. I also learnt a new process entitled 'doming'. This is a procedure where one creates or updates clients' information on the office system. After this procedure one has to scan all the clients' documents so that all information is electronically saved on the system. This was done because the insurance company was in the process of moving towards a paperless office.

Whilst working there I had the opportunity to learn about the different policies and also how to word particular policies. I also learnt how to deal with clients and offer them the best solution possible.

This work placement has also instilled in me a sense of responsibility and self-confidence. Before starting the course at MCAST I did not believe in myself and had doubts whether I will complete the course successfully. Yet, once I started the course, my perceptions started to change and I am now very satisfied with what I have achieved so far.

MONIQUE MUSCAT, CERTIFICATE IN MARKETING STUDIES

(one of two students placed at Youtheme Agency)

I carried out my work placement at Youtheme Agency which is linked to the website sayitmalta.com. It was a very interesting experience as I had the opportunity to learn many new things. I carried out a market research project, compiled their marketing profile and also created a presentation of their website that they can present to other organisations. I also gathered research on a list of organisations that could be potential clients and also competitors. Following this exercise I was in a position to suggest various marketing proposals.

I was also entrusted with the responsibility of drawing up and administering a questionnaire. The questionnaire was also piloted, which helped me better understand how persons respond to certain questions. Once the data analysis was carried out, several interesting facts emerged which will help Youtheme take well-informed decisions on their operations. I initially found this exercise quite challenging since it was my first time working on such a project. However I now have a better understanding of how questionnaires should be drawn up, designed, administered and evaluated.

JEFFREY FARRUGIA AND MARIA LISA ZERAFÀ, HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN BUSINESS AT CONSULTANCY AND TRAINING ACUMEN CENTRE LTD

Students tend to question whether vocational theory alone is effective enough to satisfy occupational criteria, though the majority seem inclined to agree that knowledge is best achieved through work experience.

At MCAST, this debate is tackled year after year through work placements which offer a golden opportunity to obtain experience through hands-on occupational activities. We were placed at an organisation that specialises in human resources development and strategic consultancy, named Consultancy and Training Acumen Centre Ltd. From the onset we must admit that we were given ample opportunity to put into practice the theory experienced in the lecture room.

We were given all the backing and encouragement needed by the Executive Director, Dr Vanessa Borg, certainly an expert in her own field. The attitude that prevailed by Dr Borg, exuded enthusiasm towards empowering us to take on interesting, yet again challenging projects, where we could actually measure the extent of value we added to each and every project we embarked upon. The various duties that we were assigned to complete, encouraged us to be more innovative, creative and confident, even when dealing with complex situations.

Admittedly certain solutions cannot be found in books but answers may be available from highly experienced guidance which was evidently clear in our case.

During our work placement we performed duties relating to:

- Idea generation in website layout;
- Developing and enhancing website content;
- Developing and fine-tuning of management presentations;
- Building a customer database through innovative ideas.

We certainly believe that nothing beats the useful experience that was gained, and we feel more than satisfied with our work placement.

"I extend to Mr Farrugia and Ms Zerafa my very best wishes for continued success and express heartfelt gratitude for the exemplary contribution throughout the full work placement. I am convinced that with Mr Farrugia's and Ms Zerafa's outstanding attributes, they will register continued success in attaining lifetime ambitions," commented Dr Vanessa Borg, Executive Director at Consultancy and Training Acumen Ltd.

YANIKA GRECH, HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN BUSINESS AT FIMBACK PLC

I had the opportunity to experience a work placement at FIMBank. FIMBank is a fast growing bank that specialises in trade services and offers trade finance related services, factoring and forfeiting.

During this work experience I had the opportunity to learn about the working environment and also about the importance of teamwork and collaboration between team members. Teamwork enabled us to be more productive and in fact my team members and I distributed the work so that the pressure was divided equally.

From this work placement I also experienced the pressure of deadlines, which is something that MCAST emphasizes a lot. Because of those strict deadlines at College, I was able to keep up with the set deadlines at work and thus work pressure was minimized.

I would like to publicly thank Ms. Christine Coleiro, Mr. Arnold Cini, Ms. Sylvia Schmitz and Mr. Michael Anastasi for the opportunity they provided me with.

"It was great to have Yanika and her colleagues as part of our project team for this summer. Besides being well prepared academically, our MCAST interns have shown that they are also focused proactive team players and their contribution has been much appreciated. MCAST students are always welcome as potential future FIMBank employees," commented Mr Michael Anastasi.

Yanika Grech at Fimbank



EDWINA GALEA, HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN BUSINESS

(one of the eleven students placed at Simonds Farsons Cisk plc)

The office quietness was disrupted by a splash of water in the aquariums located in the Quality Management Systems (QMS) office. It is not so common to find such colourful creatures within such a professional workplace although it was quite relaxing to stare at them whilst having a short break.

The QMS Department at Simonds Farsons Cisk plc consists of the QMS Manager, Mr Alistair Bondin, the QMS Keg Products Quality Officer, Mr Roderick Grech, and the Quality Assurance Technician, Mr Daniel J. Grech. All staff members treated me with great respect and integrated me as part of their team. My job consisted of several tasks from the simplest administrative ones to others which carried greater responsibility, such as the transferring of important documents from one place to another through the use of specialist I.T. software.

This experience is surely one to cherish since it gave me the opportunity to practice what I have been learning throughout my studies as well as to make new friends who have made this experience one to remember. I also look forward to apply what I have learnt in practice, when during the coming academic year, I will be studying Quality Management as part of the programme of studies.

“The work carried out by students is always a plus for both the company and the student. The company benefits from the presence of the student and the work carried out by the latter. It is worth noticing the enthusiasm of the students while carrying out the particular tasks assigned. On the other hand, the student gets a first-hand experience of a work environment which proves to be very useful in the student’s career development. It is always a win-win situation. On the job training proves to be a very different reality from college desk tuition and one should be capable to understand how to apply the theory into practice. Such experiences and opportunities should be grasped to build a brighter sustainable future towards achieving the desired goals,” commented Ing Alistair Bondin, QM Systems Manager.

OLIVIENNE FELICE, HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN BUSINESS

(one of the four students placed at Miller Distributors Ltd)

Miller Distributors Ltd is a market leader in the importation, distribution, marketing and retail of press products in Malta. The origins of the company date back to 1914. It distributes to over 2,000 trade outlets across the island seven days a week. The company is supported by a well-trained team of around 250 people. It represents all levels of publishing and supplies a wide range of local retail customers with their book requirements. The company’s website presents over 1.5 million books in English and Maltese. The company is divided into different sections including finance, accounts, IT, telephony and human resources. Each division has its main responsibilities and each employee is specialised in his/her area of work.

Through this 5-week work placement offered by MCAST, I learnt about the company’s objectives and services provided to the general public. I worked in the Human Resources department, where I had to sort out Curriculum Vitae’s as well as in the Accounts departments where I was responsible for the scanning of invoices, filling up bank deposit bags and receipting of payments. I also observed how the payment system works when customers pay their order.

Through this work placement I also had the opportunity to review and observe the company’s procedural system in terms of business etiquette, dress code, payment systems and human resources management.

LIFE AWARDS 2011

EUROPEAN YEAR FOR VOLUNTEERING

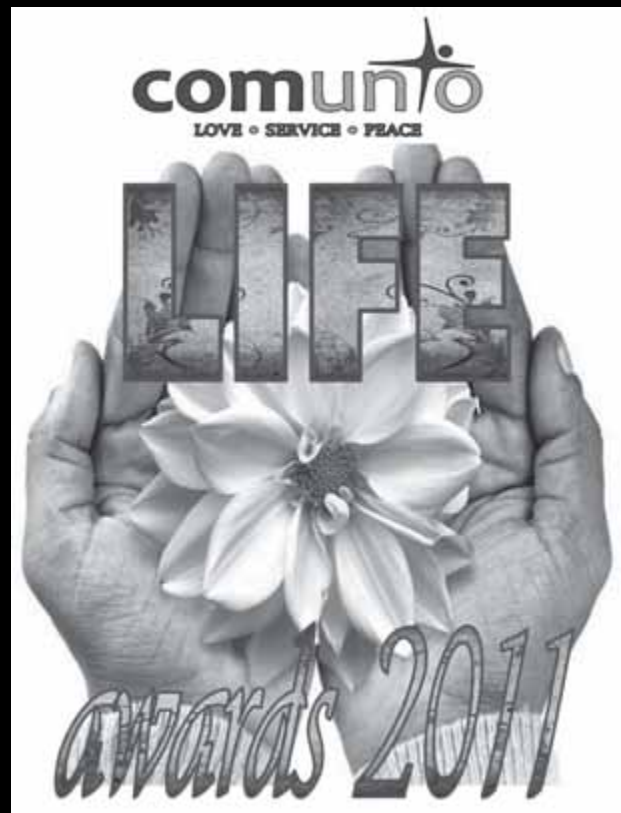


Comunio, a students' organization within the Institute of Business and Commerce, active in the promotion of values amongst young people, once again organised 'Celebrate Life Week'. This encompasses various events and initiatives held to promote life, namely;

- Life Encounters - sessions facilitated by various people and organizations who actively work to promote life in all its various facets
- Blood Donation Drive – the Mobile Blood Donation Unit was once again at MCAST Main Campus as part of this week of activities. The feedback was very positive and a considerable number of young people took up the opportunity to experience the wonderful feeling of donating blood to others. This event paved the way to an enhanced and enriched working relationship with the Malta National Blood Bank, with whom Comunio will be organizing other activities in the future
- Discussions - including DVD foras tackling subjects related to life awareness discussion
- Tree Planting events.

For the first time this year, Comunio published a Magazine entitled GOAL – gift of a life. This was the product of four Matriculation Certificate students who fielded this full colour, dynamic magazine as their Systems of Knowledge project. Comunio will be publishing GOAL on an annual basis, offering a mixture of articles and features which keep on ventilating a discussion about life matters and values. Another first, which was very warmly welcomed by the Maltese society at large, was the idea of presenting Life Awards. On Friday 25 March 2011, Comunio organized the first edition of the Life Awards. Eleven awards were declared and presented to different individuals and organizations, during an event held at the MCAST Theatre.

This initiative was also the result of Comunio's contribution to the European Year for Volunteering. The main aim underlying the Life Awards is that of granting awareness to all those who nurture a strong sense of commitment and work diligently so that in different methods and within varied circumstances, the precious value of life is enhanced and constantly safeguarded. A lot of this sterling work is the fruit of voluntary initiatives which many a time are taken up in silence and away from the limelight, at times even involving personal sacrifices. To this effect, Comunio felt that it is appropriate to have these Life Awards launched for the first time during this European Year dedicated to Voluntary work.



For the first 2011 edition, there were eleven nominations varying from individuals who work in different NGOs and voluntary organizations, right on to agencies and established organisations which are rendering a priceless service to society at large and which is vital in that the life of many will benefit from a better quality.

The Life Awards list follows:

- Albert Debono
- Caritas
- Civil Protection Department
- Fr Karm Debattista
- Footprints Band
- Foundation for Social Welfare
- Helen Muscat
- National Blood Transfusion Service
- Orsoline Sisters
- Puttinu Cares Foundation
- Thomas Cremona

During the Life Awards Night, the popular band Bletchley Park as well as singer Roberta Sacco entertained those present at the MCAST Theatre. The Orsoline Sisters choir (receivers of Life Awards 2011) presented a number of tracks from the CD they have recorded and published over the past months, an item which was warmly welcome by all present. Footprints Band (another Life Award 2011 recipient) also gave a mini-concert.

The feedback received about this initiative from various youth and social welfare organisations, clearly pinpointed the relevance of these Awards. Comunio is now planning to field the second edition of the Life Awards 2012, amongst a broader base of participants who will nominate and eventually indicate the organisations or individuals who will be receiving the Life Awards 2012.

Finally, all those reading this article and sharing the mission and vision of Comunio as indicated hereunder, are very welcome to approach us by first setting up contact through email address comunio@mcast.edu.mt.

Comunio's mission statement -

'To enhance one's personal development and the formation of the character whilst generating a spirit of dynamic creativity. To propagate values and social awareness through the promotion of various initiatives, highlighting skills and talents put at the service of all members of society.'



WANTED...

Dynamic Young People
with a Caring Vision
of Life



Social Care Projects
Spark – Debating Societies
Life Blocks Seminars
Celebrate Life
Treasure Hunt
Battle of the Bands
Comunio Charity Tournament
Values Focus
Celebrations
and much much more

*with a colourful calendar of varied initiatives
awaiting your direct involvement!*

CREATE A TREND...

SHOW YOU CARE!



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INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

NEW COURSES AT THE INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Institute of Community Services is launching several new courses this academic year. Amongst the new courses offered are the two specialised Higher National Diplomas and degrees courses in Health and Social Care - Management and Practice respectively. These courses were created due to a great demand from the sector.

The Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Health and Social Care - Management provides students with the managerial competencies required to work in the health and social care management sector. Students will be qualified to find employment as managers within residential settings for the elderly, children and persons with a disability. This qualification is aimed at those persons who have already had hands-on experience through course work placements and work as carers and senior carers in such settings.

The Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Health and Social Care - Practice provides students with the competencies required to work in close contact with clients making use of health and social care services. Both qualifications lead to a top-up degree course at MQF Level 6 which will also be offered during this academic year in conjunction with the Fraunhofer Consortium.

Another course which will be offered as from this academic year is the MCAST-BTEC Higher National Diploma in Advanced Practice with Children and Families. This qualification will eventually enable students to pursue the top-up degree in Early Childhood Education. On attainment of these qualifications, students would be able to work as child care centre managers and also within state, independent and church schools.



INSTITUTE OF ART AND DESIGN

NEW COURSES AT THE INSTITUTE OF ART AND DESIGN

The Institute of Art and Design is once again expanding its portfolio of courses, thus broadening even further the range of choices and opportunities for existing and prospective students wishing to specialise in the creative fields.

The first group of students finishing their Higher National Diploma in Media (Moving Image) can now apply for progression on to the level 6, BA (Honours) in Media (Moving Image), thus topping up their level 5 qualification. The launch of the top-up degree coincides with the inauguration of the newly set up, state-of-the-art TV Studio facilities, which come complete with twenty-five editing suites and a further six craft editing suites. Students following media courses, from level 4 to level 6, will now benefit from the opportunity to learn within a professional environment, using the latest equipment available in the media industry.

“Media as a programme of studies has been an instant success,” said Mr Stephen Vella, Director of the Institute of Art and Design. “Now entering their third year, media courses have seen an exponential growth, which is set to increase in the coming years. Students are trained

professionally not just from a technical perspective, but also from a creative standpoint. Our aim is to prepare learners to enter the local as well as the international arena of the moving image industry, and the new facilities are now available to help us achieve our goals.”

In response to the demand for recognized qualifications in the field of photography, the Institute of Art and Design is also launching the level 5 Higher National Diploma in Photography. This course is also set to be another success, and further enhances the possibility for students to work within an environment that provides opportunities for multi-disciplinary work.

The HND in Photography focuses on digital photography, and covers a broad spectrum of creative, theoretical and technical perspectives related to the sector, including Advertising Photography, Photo Journalism and Press Photography, Location Photography and Fashion Photography among others. A photography lab is being appositely set up to accommodate students following this programme of studies.



THE INSTITUTE OF ART AND DESIGN END-OF-YEAR STUDENTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION

The tenth Annual Exhibition by the MCAST Institute of Art and Design this year came with a major difference – location. In fact, for the first time, the exhibition has been hosted at the Institute premises in Tarġa Gap, Mosta. Displaying works by an unprecedented number of students, the exhibition was a feast to the senses with creative productions in a broad variety of traditional and contemporary media and materials.

Inaugurated on the 27 June 2011 by His Excellency Dr. George Abela, President of Malta, hundreds of people flocked to enjoy the show set up by the students and staff at the Institute of Art and Design. Among the audience were dignitaries, industry and business representatives, students, parents and academic staff. The exhibition thus gave participating students the opportunity to showcase their creativity, skills and talents.

One of the main hot spots of the inauguration was undoubtedly the international fashion event, where over fifty models paraded original fashion creations produced by local

students, together with works produced by students from Art and Design and Fashion schools in Scotland, Denmark and Italy. In fact this was the culmination of two EU programmes in which the Institute of Art and Design has participated over the past two years. Needless to say, spectators were dazzled by the array of forms, colours and materials on show. This event also merged talent in fashion design with creative hair and beauty, as students and staff from the Institute of Community Services gave a priceless contribution to this show through their specialist know-how.

Soon after the fashion event, the audience was ushered outside of the building to witness the next highlight of the evening. This took the form of an architectural mapping light show projected on the façade of the Institute of Art and Design. Once again, invitees were mesmerized by the site-specific artistic creation comprising of visual projections accompanied by original and appositely designed sound, all of which were received with several rounds of applause.

The Annual Exhibition was held at the Institute of Art and Design, Tarġa Gap, Mosta



“Planning for the exhibition is an arduous task,” said Mr Stephen Vella, Director of the Institute of Art and Design, “which begins months prior to the event itself and involves all staff members, as well as the majority of the students. Everyone has done a fantastic job throughout, from generating ideas through to developing concepts on how to best utilize the various spaces available to transform them from educational premises into adequate exhibition spaces”.

Particularly students finishing their Higher National Diploma or their top-up Degree were allocated specific areas for which they were responsible, from concept to realization, as part of their programme of studies. To this end, a diversity of materials was adopted by the different groups, who all gave

a show of dexterity in the use of unconventional materials to set up their exhibition spaces.

Exhibits on display were varied and included three-dimensional projects in various materials and finishes, as well as professional graphic design, interactive animations and projections, and audio-visual work, all carried out by students throughout the academic year. The work may also be considered to be a celebration of the success of the first graduates in the newly launched BA (Hons) in Fine Arts, as well as moving image productions from media students, both at National Diploma and Higher National Diploma level. Professionally edited sound features and apposite lighting complemented exhibits and installations to intrigue and stimulate the senses.



HE Dr George Abela, President of Malta addressing the audience



Mr. Stephen Vella, Director Institute of Art and Design, presenting a commemorative memento to His Excellency Dr. George Abela, President of the Republic



Model parades in an artistic dress made of recycled paper and plastic during the Fashion Event. Designer - Stephanie Micallef, B.A. (Hons) in 3D Design



His Excellency Dr. George Abela discusses "Malegole", mixed media, with its creator Jennings Falzon, B.A. (Hons) in Fine Arts



His Excellency Dr. George Abela with Mr. Stephen Vella as they tour the B.A. (Hons) in 3D Design exhibition



Mr. Stephen Vella demonstrates "Evolution Lamp" by Roberto Tweraser, B.A. (Hons) in 3D Design, to His Excellency Dr. George Abela



Mr. Stephen Vella demonstrates a 3D printed model of a bus shelter by Martina Fenech Adami, Higher National Diploma in 3D Design, to His Excellency Dr. George Abela and Mr. Joseph Farrugia, President of the Board of Governors



President of Malta admiring Jennings Falzon work of art, 'Malegole' with its creator Jennings Falzon, B.A. (Hons) in Fine Arts

WORKS OF ART PRESENTED



Dstretch
it makes all the difference

"D-Stretch", one of the joint projects carried out by B.A. (Hons) in Graphic Design and B.A. (Hons) in 3D Design students. The final designs for the fitness apparatus were submitted for Becker Contest, International Design Award 2011. The project was also featured on the Contest's official Documentary Report.



Various 3D works by National Diploma in Design Crafts students adorn the corridors of the Institute



Bus shelter design by Elisa Savona Ventura, Higher National Diploma in 3D Design



Ceramic pieces, Diploma in Art and Design



3D Product Design work by B.A. (Hons) in 3D Design students. Interior Design - Kurt Vella



"Portraits", mixed media by Miriam De Giorgio, Higher National Diploma in Fine Arts

DURING THE ANNUAL EXHIBITION



"Malegole", mixed media by Jennings Falzon, B.A. (Hons) in Fine Arts



Head piece in ceramics by Rachel Suban, Diploma in Art and Design



Portrait by George Micallef Eynaud, B.A. (Hons) in Fine Arts. Media - Oil on Canvas.



3D modelling work by Higher National Diploma in 3D Design students. Interior Design - Steve Vella



Soap holder in wood and acrylic by Christian Fenech, Higher National Diploma in 3D Design



"A Room of One's Own", mixed media by Sara Barnes, Foundation Diploma in Art and Design



Interior Design work by B.A. (Hons) in 3D Design students

INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

MCAST STUDENTS PRESENT PROJECTS TO ICT INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS

The Institute of Information and Communication Technology held its annual Students' Projects Day on Wednesday 15 June at the Institute in Paola.

During the exhibition, final year students from the National Diploma, Higher National Diploma and BSc Degree courses presented their final projects to major ICT industry stakeholders. It gave them the opportunity to meet various employers in the ICT industry and establish important contacts as they get ready to enter the workforce. Students who participated in past editions reported that this initiative helped them gain professional exposure and subsequently find employment within their chosen ICT field.

Mr. Mario Pace, the Institute's Acting Director, explained that "it is our responsibility as educators not only to make sure that our students reach the required academic levels but also to give them the necessary skills and experience to establish their careers in the industry without difficulties.

We achieve this goal through our curriculum as well as through such initiatives." He said that the Projects Day also helps the Institute and its lecturers get direct feedback from the industry stakeholders, thus reinforcing MCAST's mission to offer vocational education and training relevant to the constantly-changing needs of the economy.

Over 50 students from the software, networks and multimedia streams exhibited their projects. These included various website applications to manage company, library and multimedia content, e-learning software, client subscription software, game character design, as well as unusual projects such as a calorie counter, a personal computer assembler for enthusiasts, as well as a virtual walk-in-wardrobe that matches one's clothes online via a customised database. Network students displayed network infrastructure proposals that can help local enterprises get faster data transmission and enhanced security while providing all-round efficiency of operation.



INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONICS ENGINEERING

NEW DEGREE PROGRAMMES AT THE INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONICS ENGINEERING

The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering is now offering students the opportunity to enrol in another three new degree programmes, namely the BSc Honours in Electronic Communications, the BSc Honours in Power Generation and Renewables and the BSc Honours in Biomedical Engineering.

The objective of the BSc Honours in Electronic Communications is that of producing professional engineers who are both academically prepared and trained to satisfy the needs of local industry. This course will provide students with a strong foundation in the fundamental concepts of communications in order for them to be in a position to further update their knowledge and skills.

The BSc Honours in Power Generation and Renewables provides students with a sound knowledge of both the traditional and modern power generation and distribution technologies. Students will focus on renewable energy sources and energy efficient technologies.

The BSc Honours in Biomedical Engineering gives students the opportunity to obtain a sound knowledge of the new advances within the biomedical engineering industry. These include the engineering of artificial valves, organs and prosthetic implants, amongst others. The course strives to provide a basic understanding of the functioning of the human body and combines this with a profound knowledge of biomechanics and other engineering fields.



ANNUAL ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONICS ENGINEERING EXHIBITION

The 10th edition of the Electrical and Electronics Engineering exhibition, held at the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, Valletta, was inaugurated by the Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Employment and the Family, on Friday 1 July 2011.

The Annual Exhibition brought together the technological research and innovations of final year students from various courses offered by the Institute, including those leading to the MCAST Diploma in Industrial Electronics, MCAST Diploma in Computer Engineering, MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Electrical/Electronics Engineering, MCAST-BTEC Higher National Diploma in Electrical/Electronics Engineering as well as two vocational degree programmes - the BSc (Hons) in Electronics Engineering and the BSc (Hons) in Electronics and Control Engineering.

Through the projects, the students identify an existing industrial or domestic operation and apply the skills and experiences gained throughout their studies to seek new or improved solutions. The final results are fully-functional models of these solutions, using hardware, software or a combination of both.

The majority of the exhibits involve the use of a microcontroller, which can be compared to an 'electronic brain' that can take certain decisions on how to control its outputs based on the information or signals it receives. In these projects the students have to convert analogue data such as temperature, weight or movement to digital signals that can be understood by the microprocessor. Projects of this type include automations for the packaging of products in factories and to test consumer electronic components for quality assurance purposes. Other projects of this kind are Proportional, Integral and Derivative (PID) controllers, which can track the position of a moving object. These technologies can be used to control a robotic arm.

Some of the projects looked into solar energy applications. In one of these works, the student developed a three-dimensional solar panel and investigated its efficiency when compared to the flat equivalents that are currently used for domestic and industrial photovoltaic systems. Other exhibits are related to biomedical engineering, with healthcare applications such as blood pressure metres. The students also worked on technologies for the entertainment industry, including a synchronous firework launching system and a music-to-score Digital Signal Processing (DSP) programme that can instantaneously convert music being played by an instrument to a printed music score.



The Annual Exhibition was held at the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry



Robotic Arm by Paul Bonnici



Comparing the Efficiency of 3D and 2D Solar Panels by David Emmanuel Grima



Engine Room Monitoring System by Melvin Azzopardi



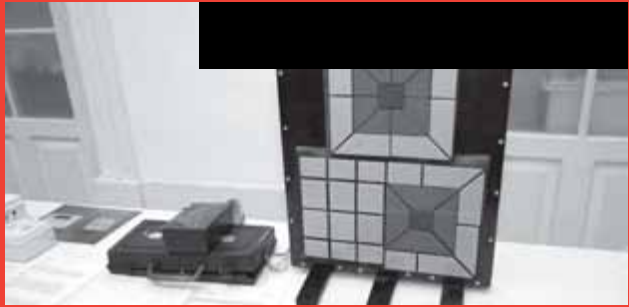
A model car operated by a 3G mobile phone by Clinton Mifsud

Digital Roulette by Charlot Zammit



Student John Paul Azzopardi explaining the Auto Dispense System to Operators Via Overhead Rails to (from left) Mr. John Sciberras, Director Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Mr. Joseph Farrugia, President of the MCAST Board of Governors, Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Employment and Family and Prof. Maurice Grech, Principal and CEO

Auto Dispense System to Operators Via Overhead Rails by John Paul Azzopardi



Drink Mixer by Mark Cuschieri



Multi-Touch Screen Table By Bernard Bondin



Bernard Bondin explaining the Multi Touch Screen Table to the Hon Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Employment and Family



BSc (Hons) students and lecturers



Key Cabinet Holder by Keith Cassar



Wi-fi controlled car by Joseph Martin



Automated ESD Management System by Antoine Sciberras



Four-level Mini Elevator by Adon Formosa



Computerised Bending Machine by Charlon Attard



INSTITUTE OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

NEW DIRECTOR AT THE INSTITUTE OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING



**Ing. Aurelio Micallef
Grimaud**

Aurelio Micallef Grimaud was born on the 23 October 1962. He received his primary education at Naxxar Primary School, his secondary education at St. Aloysius' College, B'Kara and attended Sixth Form in Valletta. In 1981, he furthered his studies at the University of Malta, from where he graduated Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering (Hons), in 1986, sponsored by Air Malta.

After graduation, Aurelio continued to work for the flag carrier, gaining experience in various sections in the engineering department, while continuing his studies in the aviation sector both in Malta and abroad. From 1996 to 1999 he was posted in Italy as Maintenance Manager for a regional airline, serving European destinations.

After his return to Malta, his main functions included maintenance contracts for the Air Malta fleet of aircraft. In 2002, he joined Lufthansa Technik Malta as Maintenance Manager, and was responsible for setting up the technical operations of this joint venture with Air Malta. In 2007, he took over the organisation of the business development function of the company, and in 2009, was nominated Chief Commercial Officer.

Aurelio is married to Giulia and has two children, André, aged 22 and Annaliese, aged 19. His interests include aircraft, travelling and reading.

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE TO STUDENTS

BY ING. AURELIO MICALLEF GRIMAUD

Dear Students,

It is indeed a pleasure for me to be writing my first contribution to our magazine MCASTlink. I used to go through every issue immediately after I received it, and after so many years, I now have the chance to be contributing.

I have spent my working life, since graduating from University in 1986, in the aviation business, working mainly in Malta, but also in many parts of the world. I have interviewed many MCAST students for jobs wherever I was working, and now I have the honour to be 'on the other side of the fence', preparing students for their future careers within the industry. This is a new challenge for me, which I am sure will be very rewarding. Together with all the team at the Institute of Mechanical Engineering, a very warm welcome.

A very hectic schedule has been planned for this coming academic year. It is our intention to provide all of our students with the highest level of technical skills and knowledge and a sound preparation for a career within the world of engineering. In an ever-changing globalised world, it is of utmost importance for MCAST not only to keep abreast of all the latest developments, but also to cater for the future trends of the industry.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank my predecessor Mr. E. Zahra, for all his valuable work within the Institute.

Progressing students, welcome back, and newcomers, I am sure that you will settle in quickly to make your experience with us a pleasant one.

LAUNCHING OF MCAST DEGREES IN MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

The Institute of Mechanical Engineering has launched four degree programmes in the following disciplines:

- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Mechanical Engineering (Plant)
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Mechanical Engineering (Manufacturing)
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Marine Engineering
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Biomedical Engineering

The awarding body will be MCAST in collaboration with Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft-Germany.

These are one-year top up degree programmes, with the entry requirements being the MCAST National Diploma in Mechanical Engineering, with the respective specialization.





MCAST LAUNCHES NEW DIPLOMA FOR POLYMER PROCESS TECHNICIANS

Following collaboration with the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, and the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), MCAST introduced the first specialised course aimed at process technicians for the plastics and rubber manufacturing sectors. No such course has ever been offered in Malta before, in spite of the fact that this is one of the largest sectors in the Maltese manufacturing industry.

The three-year 'Diploma for Polymer Process Technicians' programme includes a new apprenticeship scheme, where the employer will be giving apprentices hands-on experience in all processes involved in this sector, in strict adherence to a schedule designed and approved by MCAST as part of the course syllabus. Through this innovative system the work experience will be accredited as a study unit, and once complete, the student will be assessed to ensure that the targeted learning outcomes of the on-the-job experience have been achieved. Thus, the apprenticeship gains academic value as one of the study units required for the successful attainment of the diploma. The industry welcomed this new system, and several plastics and rubber manufacturing companies have already committed themselves to take on a number of apprentices. MCAST will be working closely with the ETC to extend this new apprenticeship system to other courses in the near future.

In all manufacturing industries, the operators who repeatedly follow the same steps, without understanding the basics of the process they are handling, are fast becoming a thing of the past. They are now required to assume a more responsible role. For manufacturing enterprises to be more efficient and to produce better-quality products, an operator must have a good background of the science of the materials and processes they are using so that when there is a malfunction, they will be able to swiftly understand what needs to be done and carry out real-time interventions. They must also be in a position to understand the dynamics of their operation to be able to accurately report any discrepancy they are not able to rectify, to make it easier for engineers to identify solutions.

To date, technicians and operators who are engaged in the plastics and rubber manufacturing sectors have no formal training to better understand the dynamics of polymer manufacturing (the transformation of polymers into finished plastic or rubber products). They would normally have been trained in general engineering or electronics, and then gain experience once they are employed in this sector. This system leads to a good level of knowledge, but the technician still lacks a background in polymer sciences and manufacturing technologies. The new course will be filling this void, to give prospective workers in this sector more rewarding careers, while providing the industry with the necessary human capital to stimulate efficiency and competitiveness.

The Diploma for Polymer Process Technicians provides a good level of knowledge in polymer sciences and manufacturing technologies, as well as a solid background in general engineering and management/business skills. It deals with the classification of polymers and their respective properties, the types of manufacturing processes involved, as well as the different machinery used, with training on its maintenance and repair. The course also includes study units on business and technical management as well as quality assurance.

Most of these aspects have never been included in an academic programme before. However, since the syllabus was designed in close collaboration with industry stakeholders, certain aspects, such as auxiliary (secondary) procedures which technicians normally only learn once they start working, are being tackled from an academic point of view. The synergy between vocational teaching on campus and structured apprenticeship will ensure that students first get a scientific grasp of the manufacturing process in class and then get a firsthand experience of these same processes in a real industrial setting. MCAST will constantly seek feedback from the sector's key players, to ensure that the course continues to reflect the latest technologies and trends, and that the apprenticeship remains a true reflection of the working world, to make it easier for students to establish successful careers once they leave the College.

Like all other MCAST courses, the Diploma is also offered to adult learners (aged 21 and over) under the Maturity Clause.

62 MCAST STUDENTS COMPLETE AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE COURSES

On 30 June 2011 the Institute of Mechanical Engineering presented certificates to 62 students who successfully completed several aviation maintenance courses. Half of the students who received the certificates completed the course leading to the attainment of the Aircraft Maintenance Category A Licence. Another 20 students completed the Aircraft Structure and Repair Course, while the final 11 were presented with certificates for the Aircraft Maintenance Mechanics Course.

MCAST's Aviation Maintenance Training Centre within the Institute of Mechanical Engineering offers several courses, including those leading to the attainment of the EASA Part-66 Category A Licence, as well as other programmes that constitute a part-requirement for the attainment of the EASA Part-66 Category B Licence. These are two of the three different levels of licences, known as the "EASA Part 66", required by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) from technicians or engineers in the aviation maintenance sector. The College is a Part-147 Approved Centre by the EASA to provide Part 66 Category A1 Training and certification. Its state-of-the-art aviation maintenance facilities are built in line with EASA specifications, and are approved to operate by Transport Malta's Civil Aviation Directorate. Some of the Training Centre's courses are co-financed by MCAST's EU project, ESF1.34 - 'Addressing Skills Mismatches in the Aviation Maintenance Industry'.

The Principal congratulated the students for their achievement, and encouraged them to continue their studies at MCAST to take their careers to the next level. Prof. Grech explained that MCAST's Aviation Maintenance Training Centre is the result of the College's excellent relations with all industry stakeholders. "It was, in fact, Malta Enterprise, which, a few years ago, informed us that there were several international aviation maintenance companies interested in opening up shop in Malta once the necessary human resources became available. MCAST collaborated with Lufthansa Technical Training, Hamburg, which provided us with the expertise and material required to start our aviation maintenance courses. Today, our own lecturers are fully-trained and experienced to deliver these courses, and we are recognised by the EASA." Stated Prof Grech. In this way, MCAST's efforts played a crucial role in the rapid growth of the aviation maintenance sector in Malta.

To guarantee that its courses continue to be relevant to the sector's needs, the Training Centre collaborates with all local stakeholders, including Lufthansa Technik Malta, SR Technics Malta, Medavia Company Ltd, the Armed Forces of Malta, Air Malta plc, Falcon Alliance, Malta School of Flying Ltd, Aeromaritime Mediterranean Ltd, Maintenance Centre Malta Ltd, and the Transport Malta's Civil Aviation Directorate.



Receiving his certificate from Prof Maurice Grech, Principal and CEO



Members of senior management staff and students during the Presentation of Certificates



TUHH – Technical University Hamburg – Harburg

MECHANICAL ENGINEERING STAFF ON A THREE-MONTH INTERNSHIP IN GERMANY

In preparation for the new degree programmes to be offered at the Institute of Mechanical Engineering, a group of seven members of lecturing staff had the opportunity to undergo a three-month internship in Germany, as part fulfilment of the MCAST sponsored Masters Degree Programme.

Co-organised by Fraunhofer and MCAST, the internships were held between the 1 June and 31 August 2011. Lecturing staff Ing. Charles Mangani, Ing. Ted Darmanin, Ing. Martin Mifsud, Ing. David Mifsud, Mr. Frank Farrugia, Mr. Angelo Borg and Ms. Mariella Fenech carried out internships in different Fraunhofer institutes.

Some of their experiences are featured below.

MS. MARIELLA FENECH ASSISTANT LECTURER

My three-month internship was held at the Technical University of Hamburg – Harburg (TUHH). The internship was held in order to carry out my thesis project which focused on manufacturing. My thesis dealt with CNC milling machining and dry machining versus cryogenic machining. Different machining processes were conducted and satisfactory results were obtained.

My experience at TUHH was a unique, enriching experience which has helped me on both an academic and personal level. I would like to thank Prof. Maurice Grech and all administrative staff who believed in us and I do believe that MCAST should provide similar international opportunities for both its students and staff.

MR. FRANK FARRUGIA ASSISTANT LECTURER

I was assigned at Fraunhofer Gesellschaft IAO in Stuttgart and also carried out research at an industrial company in Nürtingen due to Fraunhofer's IAO close links with industrial companies.

My role was to find ways and means to optimize the manner in which parts are ordered and transferred to particular assembly lines at Metabo Tool Company in Nürtingen. This case study gave me the opportunity to apply the Lean Engineering techniques that I had learnt during my Master Degree course. A few of these tools used value stream mapping (VSM), Just in Time (JIT), Pull system and Kanban.

Besides the valuable professional experience gained, these three months were an opportunity to open new

horizons overseas. I would like to thank MCAST for giving me this opportunity.



DAVID MIFSUD LECTURER



In collaboration with Fraunhofer IAO, I was assigned to the Fraunhofer Institute of Chemical Technology (ICT) in Pfinztal. This research institute is entrusted with a variety of cutting edge research including biotechnology, chemical processing, energy technology, explosives and fibre composite materials. I was assigned to the Polymer Engineering Department, in the fibre composite materials

field. This section deals with the development of fibre-reinforced thermoplastics and thermoset materials. This is done in close collaboration with industry, to further develop cutting edge fibre-reinforced composites.

My thesis focused on the design and comparative testing of various infrared heating systems. The final aim of this research is the identification of the best parameter setting for the adequate heating up of multiple layers and continuous fibre thermoplastic tapes. Multiple types of heating systems were also used as part of this testing to better carry out the comparative study. The results were very encouraging and this can only be attributed to the ongoing support that I received from my German colleagues and tutor.

MR ANGELO BORG LECTURER

My three-month research placement was carried out at Fraunhofer IAO in Stuttgart. The experience consisted of work carried out at Fraunhofer and also at a private company in Heimsheim. The private company, which supported me during my internship, specialises in rapid prototyping and vacuum casting. Vacuum casting is a critical process used to manufacture prototypes.



My study consisted of optimising a vacuum casting process using three different polyurethane (PU) resins. These different PU resins were operated with different processing parameters using different moulds. These experiments helped me establish the necessary results for my thesis.

This has been a great experience both personally and professionally. I would like to thank MCAST for giving me this fruitful experience which I will never forget.



From left: Ms. Mariella Fenech, Ing. David Mifsud, Ing. Martin Mifsud and Mr. Frank Farrugia

LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCE CENTRE

What does the Library offer?

The Library and Learning Resource Centre (LLRC) is your source of information, an essential element to improve the quality and depth of your studies. The LLRC offers information in different formats:

- print (books and magazines, several of which come with a CD or DVD),
- electronic (CD, DVD and on-line),
- film (DVD and VHS),
- music and sound (CD and cassette).

Besides information for study (text books and reference works) and edutainment purposes (fiction books and feature films) the library also offers:

- IT equipment (for internet access, practising MS Office and other programmes, keying in and printing assignments, scanning documents, etc.),
- Study spaces for group work and also for silent individual work,
- Audio visual equipment to watch films and listen to music,
- Assistance by qualified library staff on how to use the library.

All library collections can be viewed through the 'Search our Catalogue' or 'Your Course and the Library' pages found at www.mcast.edu.mt/llrc/.

So if you are new to any of our six libraries (Main Library in Paola, four Institute Libraries in Malta and one Gozo Centre Library in Xagħra) and want to use our collections or services, come and register at any of these libraries and you will be able to use them all. Read all about us at our home page at www.mcast.edu.mt/llrc/ which lists all library addresses and opening hours.

What is new this year?

This year for the first time the Institute of Building and Construction Engineering library in Naxxar will start opening three afternoons a week (Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays) in addition to last year's timetable. Also the Agribusiness library in Qormi will start opening two afternoons a week (Mondays and Fridays) in addition to last year's timetable.

In preparation for the new degree courses starting this year in all Institutes, over summer the library purchased many new titles in different formats. Find out about these titles by visiting our libraries or checking out our on-line catalogue.

We look forward to seeing you at the Library!



STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

LEARNING SUPPORT UNIT

THE SOCIAL PRACTICE OF LITERACY



by
Ninette Pace Balzan,
B Ed (Hons), M.Ed.

**Senior Lecturer,
Learning Support Unit**

Every new academic year we meet the progressing and new students, eager with aspirations and expectations. Yet a few of them stand out, or rather retreat, within an aura of anxiety and, sometimes, frustration. This minority lack schooled-literacy skills: basic, higher-order or sometimes both and cannot participate with their peers confidently, even though they are ready to take up the challenge.

Digital support such as the use of spell-checkers for spelling and electronic readers for decoding has taken the drudgery out of reading and writing, and made it easier for students to participate in the learning process even when certain underlying skills are weak. These students stand to gain by reinforcing these skills in the context of their learning, and often do well and continue studying, becoming life-long learners.

However, other students mentioned above cannot participate unless this process is mentored. A reading and writing programme that looks at literacy as a social practice, as a means of accessing learning in the vocational area, a way of finding out more about what interests them and showing what they have learnt and putting across their ideas, has success built in, giving the student an identity of a learner.

The notion of situated identities has been shown to have a strong bearing on student performance and attitude towards learning. The fact that these persons have chosen to study implies a motivational strength, and very often strengths which were not accessed during prior schooling may be present, such as an ability to learn visually and kinesthetically. A programme which combines the use of students' strengths and current practices outside MCAST together with the use of course material being used by the rest of the peer-group would create genuine and long-lasting literacy participation.

Not effecting such intervention, especially at the early stages of a student's career, impoverishes the learning process. Denying the student the ability to research new material and imposing reliance on auditory input during lectures without being able to access notes, curtails the expression of ideas and risks disenchanting and discouraging students who drop out.

MCAST is the bright new future, a way for all persons who want to learn and obtain qualifications and competencies much in demand by society and a promise of life-long achievement, barring none – that is what its mission statement promises. Let us not forget those for whom literacy is a challenge and make the dream come true for them too.

LANGUAGE POLICY: A HELP TO ALL OR A HURDLE TO SOME?



by
Nadia Maria Vassallo,
B Ed (Hons), M.A., PG
Dip. , AMBDA

**Senior Lecturer,
Learning Support Unit**

Today, when communication and mobility across the globe have become increasingly common, popular languages such as English are seen by many as the access key to the world. Maltese students are expected to reach a 'good' level of 'competence' in the English language by sixteen years of age. Unfortunately this is not always the case and some students are being marginalised by the system at a very early age. Very often policymakers are not recognizing that students coming from different backgrounds may hold different literacies and blame them and their background for failing at school. One example of this is the use of English as a medium of instruction in most of the content lessons. While the majority of Maltese people acknowledge that English is an important language worldwide, a significant portion of the population sees English as estranged from their home culture. Thus students find themselves in conflicting identities between the home and the school. Students' home literacy practices are not always acknowledged in school and so students start to think and eventually believe that they are illiterate.

Cummins (2001 p.650) argues that until policymakers continue to believe that interventions to improve achievement are a mere exercise of instructional technique which can be prescriptive and scientifically controlled, students will continue to fail. Many reforms continue to blame problems of underachievement on students' 'deficits' while ignoring any social and educational inequities. When we position ourselves in a discourse of deficits we fail to see the culture, identity, intellect and imagination as part of the child and as a result fail to be effective teachers because we exclude these important issues from our planning and teaching.

“Literacy is not developed in a culturally neutral way; rather it is interwoven with the enculturation of each child.”

Cairney 2003, p. 8

This recognition should help us move away from the perception of literacy as a set of skills associated with books and writing and acknowledge that literacy is socially situated. Thus while for some, schools represent a familiar continuation of the home culture, for others it is a sharp break creating dissonance. Students who may give proof of great intelligence and ability out of the school context appear to be quite incompetent while at school.

As teachers, we must do a rethinking of literacy and try to create a 'third space' (Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson 1995) 'where students can be supported to move their literacy practices into a schooled domain of knowledge' (Pahl & Rowsell 2005, p.121). This is possible if we look at the continuities between home and school and draw together our students' in and out-of-school literacy practices.

We often argue that the curriculum is so prescriptive that it leaves little room for teachers' personal initiatives in creating other activities. On the other hand, by sticking to the literacy curriculum as it is presented in text books, a good number of the pupils we teach are not being reached. Moje et al. (2004) looked at third spaces to see where the students' identities and practices were realised. They found that students' cultural resources from peers, families, community and the internet were a powerful fund of knowledge for learning in classrooms. Hence as teachers we should start looking at the students' different backgrounds and cultures as strengths not weaknesses. In this way all the students we have in our care will have the same chances of success in the academic world of schooling.

Empowering the Students

While everybody acknowledges the necessity to be able to communicate in English, many students rebel against the imposition of having to spend most of the day trying to speak, read and write in a language which is not their first language. Their resistance is often manifested through disruptions, swearing and actions that bring down the power associated to a classroom setting.

“Bilingual children find themselves in a context where they must use a language that they are learning to learn a subject that is new to them.”

Creese 2005, p.147

So the first few days of teaching are a negotiation with them, trying to find out who they are and where they come from in order to include their interests and experiences into the lessons. This is the time when mutual respect is built.

In Post-Secondary Vocational classes, once a relationship of trust is built, students start to open up and show that they have a number of skills on which to build. It is up to us, educators, to put the students in the centre of our teaching and challenge the status quo of prescribed textbooks and fixed structures of teaching which have already failed the students who come to us.

“Individual educators are never powerless, [] educators do have choices in the way they structure the patterns of interactions in the classroom.”

Cummins 2002, p.x

Biliteracy development is not an orderly, straightforward, uniform event. Students may be able to read at a level higher than they can speak. Hudelson (1984, p.234) argues that ‘the processes of writing, reading, speaking and listening in a second language are interrelated and interdependent.’ All processes may be at different levels but every experience whether receptive or productive, oral or written is an opportunity to make progress if not resisted by the students.

One way of reducing resistance is by allowing ‘translanguaging’ which is an arrangement that normalises bilingualism without linking languages to specific subjects or topics (Garcia et al. 2007). During translanguaging the skills and knowledge from the first language are transferred onto the second (Lanauze & Snow 1989).

Also, in the vocational class students’ interest increases when they can follow and understand what is being discussed. Thomas and Collier (2002) found that students are more likely to fail and quit school if they receive most of their education in a language other than their first language. Therefore in the best interest of the students languages should not be kept separate.

Metalinguistic abilities are evident in code switching (Carlisle et al. 1999) when students show awareness of a better word (with a more precise meaning) while expressing themselves because this reflects an ability of quick thinking and evaluation. This is a common practice in Malta even in everyday conversation. On the other hand students who are more fluent in Maltese find it easier to express their ideas in their first language. These instances can be opportunities for discussion and collaboration between students and teachers. In my experience it is rigidity that dulls the learning environment and eventually kills the students’ motivation. Teachers should keep eyes wide open to grasp every opportunity to move the students forward by building on their funds of knowledge rather than devalue their out of school practices.

Conclusion

Teaching has to be a negotiation between cultures, including languages, based on mutual respect. Students have a lot to offer and when we appreciate and try to make use of their knowledge we engage them in what becomes a marvellous learning experience not only for them but also for us. By giving our students the opportunity to reflect on and criticise what they are learning and the possibility to negotiate their learning environment, we would not only teach them content but empower them to make a difference in their sociocultural environment. We can make choices. We can choose to follow the books and try to force content onto our students and see most of them alienate themselves and drop out, or we can choose to construct knowledge with our students and make our classrooms ‘interactional spaces where identities are negotiated’ (Cummins 2002, p.x). We must never forget that as educators we have a huge responsibility towards our students and towards society. One way of securing effective education in the 21st century is by integrating Multilingual Education in educational policy and practice. This will indeed ensure ‘inclusion for all’ because,

Multilingual education is, at its best, (1) multilingual in that it uses and values more than one language in teaching and learning, (2) intercultural in that it recognises and values understanding and dialogue across different lived experiences and cultural world views, and (3) education that draws out, taking as its starting point the knowledge students bring to the classroom and moving toward their participation as full and indispensable actors in society locally, nationally, and globally.

Hornberger 2009, p.198

COUNSELLING DEPARTMENT

WELCOME TO THE NEW ACADEMIC YEAR



Counsellor
Silvia Galea



Senior Counsellor
Marthese Vassallo

MCAST Counselling Team would like to welcome all students, progressing and new, to the new academic year. Students are at the heart of our work and we augur success to all our students. Returning to College may bring some strain till one settles down, makes friends, meets new lecturers and gets accustomed to the system. Some students may find the adjustment easier than others and for those who suffer from anxiety at a time of change, we are giving some information and tips on how to cope better.

Anxiety

Anxiety and worry are very fundamental human emotions that we will all feel at times. Some people suggest that we only notice them when they occur in excess. Many people adapt to very high levels of anxiety and do not consider it a problem until they meet people who are less worried.

Anxiety has a very healthy purpose. If we do not feel anxious about certain situations, then we would risk falling over cliffs, stepping into fires and so on. Similarly, if we have no anxiety about ourselves in relation to others we might well behave with great insensitivity.

Sometimes anxiety can become excessive and unhealthy. In what follows we shall identify levels of anxiety and worry which are suitable for remedy and give some ideas about responding to them. However we do this bearing in mind that anxiety is a necessary feature of living.

Symptoms of Anxiety

1. Physical signs: racing heart, dry mouth, increased rates of breathing, increased sweating, headaches etc.
2. Imagery: When we are anxious our mind often produces sharp flashes of imagination with pessimistic

overtones. We become very negative. These can be very vivid and disturbing.

3. Thoughts: Anxiety tends to increase the amount of thinking we do in the area of concern. Usually the thoughts centre around one thing that is worrying us. We also magnify this to the worst situation.
4. Relations with others: The anxious persons can either isolate themselves and withdraw from people or increase dependency upon others - such as asking repetitive questions, looking for reassurance, or just needing to be in the presence of others.
5. Activities: We either become over-active or else more commonly, we avoid the source of the worry entirely. For example, a person who is worried about doing a presentation may decide not only to not do this, but also avoid imagining doing it and may even hide all the lecture notes associated with the subject.
6. Feelings: These can become pressured intense feelings. Such feelings interfere with everyday activity and take away the fun in life.

Responding to Anxiety

- Do not consider complete relief as the only solution. Much anxiety is completely survivable and may even help you.
- Take an interest in exactly how your anxiety manifests itself. Modern thought would suggest that we might gain from being informed and monitoring ourselves.
- Identify what sort of worry you have.
- Talk about your worry to a counsellor so you can become more objective about it and begin to understand any contradiction.
- Look at the situations you are avoiding because of anxiety to consider how you could begin to expose yourself to these in small but increasing steps.
- Seek to learn more about your anxiety. Reading may be a tool that helps in this.
- Do not completely disregard general stress management and relaxation - they will not eliminate a specific anxiety, but they will make you generally happier and so more able to deal with the things you find difficult.
- Be very wary of using alcohol or non-prescription drugs to overcome anxiety as these will only offer an avoidant solution. It will come back.

ULTIMATELY IF ANXIETY PERSISTS, THE COUNSELLORS ARE THERE TO LISTEN AND SUPPORT YOU. YOU CAN CONTACT THE COUNSELLORS BY TELEPHONE OR THROUGH EMAIL.

marthese.vassallo@mcast.edu.mt | silvia.galea@mcast.edu.mt | counsellors@mcast.edu.mt | Tel: 23987133 | Tel: 23987129

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES OFFICE

A NEW INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES CO-ORDINATOR



Antoinette Cefai

Antoinette Cefai is the College's new International Programmes Co-ordinator - your key person to guide you and assist you in everything you may need to participate in an educational experience abroad!

She graduated in International Relations in

2010 from the University of Malta and is currently reading for a Masters degree by Research in the same field. She is also studying Accounts. She loves travelling, learning new languages and meeting new people. Apart from English and Maltese Antoinette speaks German, Spanish and Italian.

The International Office Co-ordinator is there to assist you enhance your educational experience through the available opportunities under the EU-funded Life Long Learning Programme (LLP). These opportunities are offered to both MCAST students and staff.

EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU

What is this Life Long Learning Programme?

The Life Long Learning Programme (LLP) includes four sub-programmes which fund projects at different levels of education and training. Each sub-programme is designated for different types of international exchanges. It is described as the single umbrella for Education and Training of the EU. The LLP does not only target students, but also academic and non-academic staff.

The four branches of the Life Long Learning Programme are Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig. A brief description of each programme is given below:

1. Comenius promotes school and colleges partnerships and in-service training, and is offered mainly to the lower levels, up to Level 4. Recent projects under the Comenius programme include Disturbia and SOS Fashion from the Institute of Art and Design, SchoolCom 2.0 from the Institute of Information and Communication Technology and BE in Europe from the Institute of Building and Construction Engineering.
2. Erasmus encompasses four branches in relation to students' studies and placements, academic staff and non-academic staff training. The Erasmus programmes are targeted to students undertaking Higher National Diplomas or Bachelor degrees, therefore Levels 5 and 6, and for staff who teach in these same levels. The suspension on Erasmus programmes has been fully lifted and it is now the ripe time to extract new opportunities!
3. Leonardo da Vinci (LdV) involves partnerships for best exchange of staff and skills in vocational education training (VET). This programme targets professionals under the branch of VETPRO meaning those people who are responsible for vocational training and human resources, <http://www.llp.eupa.org/> guidance counselling as well

as teachers. Students at the initial phases of undergoing vocational training mainly Levels 1 to 4 can apply under the branch of Initial Vocational Training (IVT). Another section is the Partnerships between organisations working in the field of VET cooperating on active participation of both trainees and staff. A recent partnership under the LdV was the CREATIVE EXCHANGE PROGRAMME from the Institute of Art and Design.

4. Grundtvig caters for the adult generation in the field of education such as teachers, trainers and other staff. Like the Comenius programme, Grundtvig offers the opportunity of in-service training (IST) and partnerships between organisations, but in relation to adult education including formal, non-formal and informal.

The LLP also offers the possibility of organising study visits offered by CEDEFOP, the European Centre of Development of Vocational Training. This caters for both the academic and non-academic staff with the aim of exploring a particular aspect of lifelong learning through workshops, seminars and various discussions.

The benefits of an experience under one of these programmes are large in number and well known among our society. This is proved by the popularity of such programmes with the students and staff. Keep an eye on your mailbox and on the notice boards to keep updated about calls for application and other valuable information from the International Programmes Office.

Anyone interested in participating in any of the above-mentioned programmes should pay a visit to the International Programmes Office, in the Administration Building, first floor, or send an email to international@mcast.edu.mt or antoinette.cefai@mcast.edu.mt or call on 2398 7219.

SPORTS

MESSAGE TO NEW MCAST STUDENTS



Adele Muscat

The MCAST Sports Department would like to wish all new MCAST students a warm welcome to MCAST and encourages all students to participate in the sport and exercise activities held on a regular basis both on campus as well as outside the College.

The MCAST Sports Department organizes a number of activities every year. These include sports leagues between teams from different institutes. Male and female students can choose from football 5-a-side, basketball, volleyball, table-tennis, darts and chess leagues. Mixed teams are welcome. Those students who may not like to compete can opt to borrow some of the sports equipment from the gyms in their free time.

Students may make use of the various gyms at MCAST. The main gyms are situated at the Corradino Campus where one can make use of the indoor courts, the weights room which has a number of cardiovascular machines as well as weights, the games area as well as the football pitch. A number of classes and introductory sessions into various sports are held regularly here too.

Those students who would like to represent MCAST at the School Sports events organized regularly against other post-secondary institutions should give their name to the Sports Co-ordinator. Every year MCAST participates in football, basketball, volleyball, handball, snooker, table-tennis and athletic events.

Students may also wish to participate in other activities organized by the Sports Department which take place outside the College. Such activities may include canoeing, sailing, climbing, abseiling, camping, trekking, karting and beach games.

Every year the MCAST Sports Department also offers students the opportunity to participate in national and international sporting events being held on the island. Any students wishing to volunteer to help out will greatly benefit from this experience. Students may also opt to enroll in one of the regular courses organized by MCAST Sports Department in collaboration with various sport associations. Courses may be on coaching, introduction to the sport and certificate in officiating.

Every year a number of students also have the opportunity to travel abroad on a youth exchange held in another European country. This is greatly enjoyed by all as various new sport activities are held during these exchanges. These may include floorball, ice-skating, Capoeira and Via Ferrata, to mention a few.

Students are to take note of the sport notices in their respective institutes and at the gym. Anyone wishing to receive emails regarding the events being organized are to contact the Sports Co-ordinator Adele Muscat at adele.muscat@mcast.edu.mt or on 23987367 or 23987382.

NEWS

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SPORT FEDERATION FXDD WORLD SCHOOL SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS

40 MCAST volunteers, 18 nations, student swimmers aged 15-18 years

During the last week of May 2011 around 40 MCAST students and staff members helped to run the World School Sport Swimming Championships held in Malta. There were 18 nations taking part in this high-level event with student athletes from places such as China, Chinese Taipei, Israel, Turkey, France, Austria participating. The Malta swimming team was representing both MCAST and St. Aloysius College. MCAST students all had a team from a particular country to look after apart from the everyday running of the event including helping in the opening, closing and prize-giving ceremonies, in the fun relays, in the swimming events themselves, cultural night and delegates' dinner. Sports Co-ordinator Adele Muscat was responsible for all volunteers and the smooth running of this large scale event together with St. Aloysius Sports Co-ordinator, David Azzopardi.

"Through volunteering in the ISF Swimming Championships I have been able to acquire a more firm and vivid grasp of the whole concept of these games and the purpose behind them. My main role was to take care of a particular country – Chinese Taipei and help them in anything they required. However, I also helped other countries apart from mine when their volunteers were not present on the day. What I particularly found amusing and remarkable was the fact that on the last day all 18 countries competed together in the friendship relay swimming games as mixed groups with participants from different countries. The whole occurrence made me feel the harmony built among different people and cultures which definitely has bridged gaps. I enjoyed the company of all the people including participants, coaches, delegations and staff and I am certainly looking forward to re-live this fantastic experience again next year commented Tiziana Apap, MCAST volunteer at this event.

"The ISF Swimming Championships were a unique experience that I will give anything to experience again. Apart from meeting wonderful people and making great friends, it was an experience which taught me about the organisation of sports events as well as the appreciation of different cultures. I was in charge of the Chinese delegation and my role was to assist them in anything they required. During the encounters I had with them, I learnt about their different views. Things such as how they see a competition, how they talk to people, their unique etiquette and their lifestyle was something amazing to experience and learn. Events like these are what makes sports so enjoyable to watch and perform and I hope that this kind of competitions will attract the younger generation to take up sports," stated Darren Bezzina, MCAST volunteer.



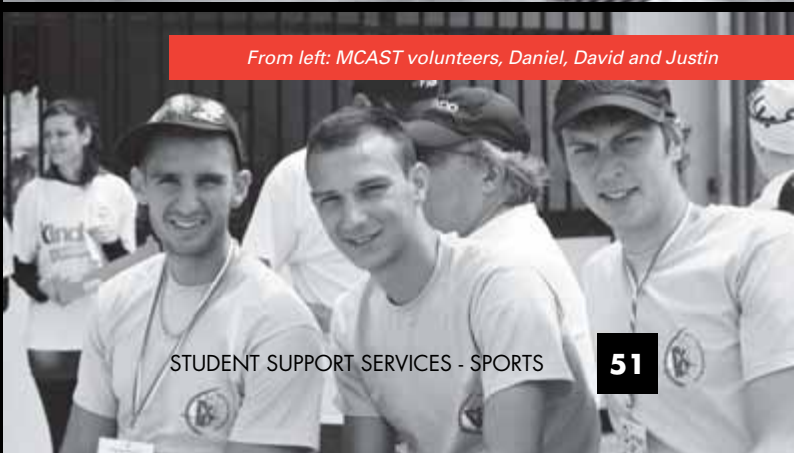
The Maltese team representing MCAST and St Aloysius College



Tiziana Apap was in charge of the Chinese delegation



One of the Maltese swimmers representing MCAST



From left: MCAST volunteers, Daniel, David and Justin



Jeremy Saywell and Brent Law with other team mates



Diane Borg, past MCAST student, was the star of the Maltese team



Games Mascot

MCAST STUDENTS WIN SILVER MEDALS DURING THE GAMES OF SMALL STATES OF EUROPE

LIECHTENSTEIN 2011

Between the 29 May and 6 June 2011 Malta participated in the Games of Small States of Europe held in Liechtenstein with a contingent of around 100 athletes and officials. Sports Co-ordinator, Adele Muscat was Assistant Chef de Mission at these Games.

Athletes participated in Athletics, Swimming, Squash, Tennis, Table-Tennis, Beach Volley, Judo and Air Weapons including Shooting and Cycling. The participating countries included Monaco, Montenegro, San Marino, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Andorra, Iceland and Malta.

Malta achieved the best result ever in these Games outside our shores. Two athletes, Jeremy Saywell (Institute of Mechanical Engineering) and Brent Law (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering) managed to secure silver medals. They participated in Judo in their respective weight categories.

OLYMPIC DAY RUN 2011

The Olympic Day Run 2011 was held during the third week of June as is the norm all over the world. The aim of the Olympic Day Run is to inaugurate the Olympic Games and encourage participation for all. A number of MCAST students and staff members participated in this event. A T-shirt, cap and certificate were given to all participants.



Jeremy Saywell, Mechanical Engineering student



Start of the Olympic Day Run

BEACH GAMES

In June 2011 students following the Pathway to Independent Living Course finished off the end of year with a day at the beach. Here they played a number of fun games together with the Diploma in Sports students who helped out on the day. This was an enjoyable day out for all.



Nigel Mc Cartey helping students



Spoon and potato race

END OF COURSE 3-DAY ADVENTURE TRIP

What better way to end your course than with a 3-day fun and adventure trip in Gozo? MCAST Diploma in Sport students recently spent 3 days in a farmhouse in Gozo cooking, cleaning and participating in adventure activities such as climbing, abseiling, beach games, pool games and night treasure hunt. Of course, undoubtedly there was also the 'imitate the teachers' moments as well as the 'who shall we pick on moments' where several students and a teacher got soaked in water, shaving cream, toothpaste and more! Any group that would like to organise a similar event is asked to contact the Sports Co-ordinator.



Team work



Beach games



All the group

YOUTH ON THE MOVE

FINLAND JULY 2011

Five students following the MCAST National Diploma in Development, Coaching and Fitness participated in a EU-funded project entitled 'Youth on the Move' in Järvenpää, Finland between the 22 and the 29 of July 2011.

The Maltese students were the last to arrive in Finland, but their presence was undoubtedly the most felt throughout the stay, not only because they were the most knowledgeable in the area around which this exchange was organized, but also because of their outgoing and lively personalities.

Soon after they settled in the central youth hostel, an ice-breaking game from each country was organised in order for the participants to get to know each other. After the jam-packed programme and various activities organised, the team learnt the names of their Spanish, Finnish, German and Polish team mates.

On Saturday the group, divided into six teams, participated in a treasure hunt around the beautiful village of Järvenpää. The students were led from one point to another by a series of photos held by a Finnish participant. They moved from one location to another once the question related to a particular area was correctly answered. In the afternoon, at one of the numerous free-to-all pitches, a yard game from each country was explained by one of the relative participants for the whole group to play. Malta's representation of "Iż-żunżana ddur iddur" was very well attended even though the foreigners were perplexed with our language as we tried to teach them just one line of the famous riddle.

During the afternoon the participants played 'Elephant Football' – considered to be the best activity of the youth programme. Elephant football is a normal 5-a-side football game yet is played with a huge plastic ball instead of a normal ball. In some cases the ball was even bigger than the players. All the players really enjoyed participating in this new game. In the evening, the groups met up and celebrated an intercultural night. The Maltese group was very well-prepared for this event as they presented plenty of traditional Maltese food, drinks and leaflets among others. This event was a great success, as apart from the fact that the youths had the opportunity to taste food coming from other countries, they could also socialise and talk about the way of living in the different countries, as well as learn catchment phrases from each language.

On Sunday, the groups gathered for the introduction of the project and its expectations. A total of six groups, including that of the leaders, embarked on a photo-orienteeing mission. During this activity the participants took photos of

negative and positive health experiences as they strolled along the roads of Järvenpää. After lunch, they gathered at the ice hall and each country delivered a pre-prepared presentation on 'Volunteering in Physical Activity'. After the presentation the participants engaged in a discussion with each country giving their own views on what could be done to improve the volunteering field in sport. In the afternoon, groups gathered to prepare for the climax of the exchange, the "Health Promotion Day". As outlined earlier the Maltese were the experts in the field, and their preparation before the exchange proved to be of a great benefit to the smooth running of the event on the day. The Maltese team emerged as the leaders during the exchange programme with each member leading a team. David Attard led his participants in the organisation of a motor skills development circuit for children; Mattheaus Grasso led his team on the promotion of good nutrition; Clare Degiorgio led her team on demonstrating accessible workouts for women using simple equipment like bottles of water and broomsticks; Daniel Warrington produced a body-weight training session for children, while Jurgen Pisani together with his team organised the photos taken during the photo-orienteeing session. After the hard work, it was then time for some fun at "Park Rantapuisto". The participants formed different teams and played sandball, streetsoccer and floorball for tolerance. Visibly tired but enjoying every minute, the participants settled for a relaxed evening at a famous youth hostel in the tranquil village.

Monday started with a visit to the beautiful nearby city of Tampere. Amongst other places, the Maltese participants were happy to see the football stadium where a couple of months ago the Maltese U21 National Football team historically played against the hosts in a competitive European qualifiers game. In Tampere, they visited the UKK Institute and were also given a talk by a Health and Fitness professional. The talk was particularly informative for the sports students who got to see the professionalism, dedication and the money that the Finnish government and schools invest in sport. This presentation was coupled by statistics in health and physical activity among Finnish children and adults and the effect of positive dieting and exercise on the health and fitness of the participants. Later on in the afternoon they departed to a scenic cottage in Hämeenlinna where they had the opportunity to spend time in the sauna coupled with a swim in the lake some 20 stair steps down.

Tuesday morning was dedicated to the final arrangements for the very important "Health Promotion Day" due to be held the following day. Once this was over, they walked to the bike shop to rent some bikes. They cycled through the very organised cycling lanes around the city to their final

destination "Vanhankylänniemi Park" where they played the increasingly famous game in Scandinavia called "Frisbee golf". The huge park, lake and the innovative game itself made it a day to remember. In the evening, the countries competed head to head in the bowling alley until they settled down for dinner as they mentally prepared for the following day.

On Wednesday morning they played "Kin-ball" which is another innovative game which one can play with the whole family. Then after lunch, they went down to the Park and together with the organisers set up the different stations. A tent with nutritional information and products was built together with three other stations tackling kids' motor skills development, youth's body weight training and the area for women fitness. All the stations were led by the Maltese youths who then delegated work to their foreign friends to make this experience a valuable one for the Finnish visitors and participants. It was indeed a very successful day.

The participants were also given the opportunity to visit Helsinki. The time left for shopping was gloomed by the tears of the participants as they were gradually getting to terms that this was the last day spent together in this very successful youth exchange. All participants grew very close to each other and were sorry to leave, but Facebook friend requests eased the pain in the evening, as they assured each other that they will keep in contact. The Maltese also created a Facebook group for everyone to join so that they can share photos, experiences and maybe a possible reunion in the future. It was indeed an impeccable experience that all students treasured and an event that they will remember for life.



The Maltese group in Helsinki



The Maltese group in Tampere



The Maltese team representing MCAST

SPORTS FOR CHANGES YOUTH EXCHANGE POLAND JULY 2011

'Sports for Changes' was organised by the Polish volunteers at MSIS. The aim of this exchange was to promote fair play amongst youngsters. Five countries participated in this exchange, namely Poland, Finland, Italy, Germany and Malta.

Although none of us spoke the same language, or had the same background, we had one thing in common – our motivation for fair play. Each day we mixed with different people and made up new teams which helped us learn how to work together.

After an exhausting long trip through Dusseldorf, Germany we finally landed in Warsaw and then headed for a 5-hour drive to Mragowo, the place where we were going to stay. We spent the first five nights in a hostel called "Bursa". The place was always clean and boasted of a large backyard where we played futsal and even some floorball. One night the Polish set up a fire in this yard and we enjoyed a peaceful evening eating and mingling around it. The other days we were served a different soup each day and a second plate which mainly consisted of different kinds of meat and potatoes.

Ice-breaking games have always started a smile and chitchat with everyone in every exchange, nothing less different to this particular student exchange. After getting

to know each other through various individual as well as group activities, three of the participating countries presented one particular sport each. Germany presented Street Soccer, Finland presented Floorball and Malta presented Sandball.

A very impressive and unique fact of this trip was that by the second day everyone was already quite close and the bond between the different members grew stronger every day. The best part about this experience was that everyone was happy for each other when each one scored - it was not about winning or losing but about playing fairly and encouraging each other to do well. Sports does not always have to be a competitive activity. Fair play brought us together and made us feel like one big team, so much so that by the end of the visit everyone wanted to remain together!

We spent the last three nights in bungalows next to a lake, a few minutes drive away from Bursa. Close to the end of this trip a street soccer tournament was held. We got to create our own team t-shirt a day before the tournament took place. It was very amusing to see everybody's creativity and ideas in the making. Seven teams participated, and everybody enjoyed watching each and everyone's capabilities, talent, teamwork, and most of all fair play, which was our tournament motto that everybody stuck to.

Some of the Maltese and foreign participants



COWES WEEK 2011

Having been on the sailing scene in Malta for the past twelve years and having myself competed in a few dinghy and yachting races over the past years I was very keen to experience one of the largest events in yachting in the world - Cowes Week.

This is held every August in Cowes, Isle of Wight, UK. Here over 10,000 spectators attend this event held over a week. There are around 8,500 competitors, around 1,000 boats and 40 races a day for the different classes of boats.

Since two Maltese athletes I follow were going to be competing in the Extreme Sailing Series there, as well as the fact that I have family living on the island, I decided that it was the right opportunity to pop over there before my trip to Cuba later on that month.

Watching Malta holding its ground at such a big stage was great.... The Malta 49er's Benji Borg (incidentally an ex Art and Design student) and Sebastian Ripard were competing against a British team. There was some great exhausting racing for them, and the good thing was that racing so close to shore helps advertising the sport so much easier.

What most of the spectators go for most however is not just the partying which happens all around Cowes every afternoon and evening after the races but also the Extreme Sailing 40's. You can see these massive boats crashing into each other, capsizing, sailors being thrown off at high speeds and more just a few feet away from you. It is like the Grand Prix of yachting and very adrenaline fuelled. I will surely go again to such an exciting event!

Just a couple of days before this I had also attended the Pre-Olympic Sailing Test Event in Portland and Weymouth. This is like a 'dress rehearsal' of the Olympic Event to take place next year. All the top sailors gathered here to race against each other in order for the organisers to make sure that everything is on track for the Olympic Games. Though unfortunately the venue will be too far away for most people visiting the Olympics to go to, it will surely offer some of the best racing the world has ever seen.

On a different note, the Rolex Middle Sea Race is fast approaching and anyone wanting to get a glimpse of international yachting should make his/her way to the start of the race which will be at the Grand Harbour on the morning of Saturday 22 October 2011. Check www.rolexmiddlesearace.com for more details.

The start of the Extreme Series



Adele Muscat, Sports Co-ordinator in Weymouth, venue for next year's Olympic sailing event



EXPLORING CUBA

BY ADELE MUSCAT, SPORTS CO-ORDINATOR

How do you decide on a destination for your holiday? To this day I am still not sure how my friends and I landed in Cuba. Some of us had heard from friends who had already visited the country while others were intrigued by visiting a country which is still very much influenced by Communism. It somehow held some allure!

Whilst travelling with tour companies can guarantee a more hassle free holiday and save you precious time, we preferred to discover and explore the island on our own accord whilst mingling with the locals. This is surely a better way to learn about the particular destination. However try searching on the net for flights to Cuba and you will find out just how difficult this is due to the fact that it is impossible to fly to Cuba through the United States. Restrictions by the US are still in place due to the colourful history between these two countries. So inevitably we finally had to purchase our air tickets and visas through a British Company.

The best way I find to explore far off destinations is to invest in the well-known travel books, such as 'Lonely Planet' and read it from cover to cover. Then base your trip on what interests you the most. My friends and I – Nadia (lecturer at the Institute of Art and Design), Natalie (also lectured at MCAST part-time for a number of years) and Andrew, a fellow colleague in sport, got together a couple of weeks before we were to leave to discuss the intended programme.

Our first stop was to be Guardalavaca in the south of the island. A Good way to start our much needed holiday after a long hard year at work..... beautiful white sandy beaches, crystal clear turquoise waters, colourful Caribbean fish and palm trees wherever you look. From Guardalavaca we made our way to Baracoa, further south, where we were to celebrate Fidel Castro's birthday! The ex-Cuban capital which was discovered by Christopher Columbus and named by Diego Velazquez was also celebrating its own 500th birthday the same week we were there and this made this small village all the more interesting during these few days. Here too, the locals were so friendly. They took us under their wing and made sure we were not pestered too much by 8-pack Cuban men! Here too, we met an Italian guy who has been living in Cuba for the past 3 years and has no intention of going back! He was to be a source of great help in planning our stay in the country.

In Cuba most tourists do not stay in hotels since these are particularly rare and expensive. What is popular are the 'Casas Particulares' run by the locals and recognized by the government. Families rent out a room or two in their own home and even cook you dinner. The food was very good however you need to get used to eating the same thing....a choice of fish, shrimps, chicken or lobster!

In Baracoa it was great to wander the streets and look at the beautifully painted houses some with Cuban flags and inscriptions written on the Revolution. Stroll along the beach gazing at the locals having a good time because they are surely one of the nations who most know how to have fun! Evenings in Cuba for both locals and tourists are spent listening and dancing to sol and salsa in the typical bars and sampling the Pina Coladas or Mohitos.

Baracoa also had a lot to offer in terms of scenery. On one day we trekked to a waterfall and spent the day swimming and eating suckling pig by the river. After Baracoa we took off for Santiago de Cuba. It was a long drive there, however it was good to pass through Guantanamo and learn a bit more about this destination. Santiago was spent mingling with the locals playing dominoes in the piazzas and being serenaded by the musicians there. We also learned more about the ration system which the government here still engages in. Shopping anywhere in Cuba is out of the question too... enter any 'supermarket' and you will find half a dozen shelves with no choice at all..... one kind of shampoo, one kind of water, chocolate and biscuits are practically non-existent and the little you find is so bad you end up giving it to the local kids on the streets. Even for the tourist there is little Che Guevara t-shirts, Che Guevara caps, Che Guevara mementos, cigars and rum and that's about it!

Trinidad, which is the best preserved colonial city in Cuba, is another major destination for tourists. It's a quaint colourful town with even more interesting people. Here we stayed in one of its many beautiful colonial houses right off the main centre. After visiting one or two museums we spent a day on a sailing catamaransnorkelling in beautiful Caribbean clear waters, swimming and sunbathing on a deserted island and eating good food!

From here we took one of those typical old 1950's Cuban cars to Playa Larga. This unfortunately did not live up to our expectations since we had expected better beaches .

On our way from here to Vinales we came across the scariest storm I have experienced in my life. We were driving on the motorway when suddenly these grey clouds start rolling in front of us, lightning was striking the ground all around us and rain was pouring down like mad. What do you do? Nothing much... just keep on driving and hope that you are not involved in some big crash and that you are not struck down by lightning! The next day we were to experience something similar however whilst horse riding in Vinales Valley. How glad I was to ask for the quietest and smallest horse that day... though I must admit he did take me straight into a herd of four bulls with no room for escape at one point!



Che Guevara murals adorn the streets of Cuba



Il Capitolo – one of the landmarks of Havana



Typical Cuban car



Taxi!



Trinidad, the colourful town



Caribbean waters



Adele playing football with the kids



Musician

Vinales is an amazing place with lush greenery all around, the opportunity to swim in long winding dark caves and watch the locals roll the famous Cuban cigars. Doing all this on horseback was an experience and a good idea.

From here onto Las Terrazas where we stopped to swim in more waterfalls and on to the real Havana. Oh how I loved this city! Big piazzas with beautiful architecture which mirrors its rich and political history from the colonial and baroque periods to modern tower blocks, some similar to what can be found in Europe however with the Cuban touch. Meander the long

winding streets in between the piazzas and you find a different life here, broken down buildings, old but looked after Cuban cars and the opportunity to play football with the local kids in the street.

Our final day arrived too with the scary news that Hurricane Irene was to hit Cuba in the following hours. This brought some anxiety and spoilt our last day there. However Irene, having a mind of her own, decided to skip Cuba altogether and allowed us to fly safely back home!

CHAPLAIN'S MESSAGE

SOME THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY



Fr John Curmi
MCAST Chaplain

COURAGE



TERRY FOX

We need so much courage in life. When dreams are shattered, when we fail, when trouble or illness strikes home ... we tend to drop and fall. Courage becomes an asset, a source of survival!

The courage of Terry Fox can be very inspiring to us all. Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Terry was a boy of dreams. He dreamt of being a great basketball player and a successful athlete. As a child, Terry played baseball, rugby and soccer. Sports was his world! As a young man he became a basketball player.

On the doorstep of his success, Terry was taken to hospital with intense pain in one of his knees. He was diagnosed with osteosarcoma, a form of cancer that often starts near the knees. His leg had to be amputated. Terry braved through life with an artificial leg. While enduring with courage sixteen months of chemotherapy, Terry dreamt of embarking on a marathon of courage, conquering the haunting feelings of despair.

Terry's marathon was a voyage across Canada, hop-stepping on his good leg all the way! It was absolutely not an ego trip but one to collect money in aid of cancer research.



The marathon began on April 12, 1980. Terry dipped his right leg in the Atlantic Ocean and filled two bottles with ocean water, one bottle to be kept as a souvenir of the generous event, the other to be poured into the Pacific Ocean. Against wind, rain and snow ... against peoples' indifference ... and against knee inflammation, Terry struggled on and on towards his destination. Terry ran the equivalent of a full marathon every day for 143 days. But his cancer had returned and spread to his lungs. Terry was forced to end his run after 5,373 kilometres, raising 1.7 million dollars for cancer research. Canada acknowledged his courage and by the following April, 23 million dollars had been raised. What a story of courage!

In this regard, we Christians are lucky, as faith in a loving God is a bountiful source of courage. The story *Jesus Calms a Tempest* (Mt 8: 23-27) explains it all. Jesus was on the boat with his disciples. Jesus was asleep at the back while the disciples were rowing the boat. They were expert fishermen. Suddenly, without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake. The waves swept over the boat. The panicking disciples went to Jesus begging him : "Lord save us! We're going to drown!"

Jesus woke up, rebuked and stilled the winds and the waves to complete calmness. Then Jesus turned to his disciples and said : "*People of little faith, why are you so afraid?*"

Perhaps little do we know that this is our own story. We are all living on a boat. We do consider ourselves as experts and we row our little boats ourselves. We think we do not need Jesus. We think that we can do it all alone. So Jesus sleeps. He respects our self-esteem. But when a storm hits home we realise our limits and inabilities. Our courage breaks down and we fall and despair. Faith becomes our only light in the dark tunnel of life. Faith awakens us to the Lord and, once we open up to him, courage comes back to us and we start surviving the storm. We allow Jesus to take over, and thanks to his love and power, we start braving the invading waves.

Faith indeed is a rich source of courage. And we need courage a lot. I suggest this short prayer for each day : *Lord, give me enough courage to have faith in you and give me enough faith in you so that I never lose courage.* Let us open up to the Lord and let him lead the way. Pluck up courage!

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