

# IAS students organisation

## Annual Report 2015-2016

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## The IASSO Exec Team 2015-2016

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James Gabarretta  
President



Danika Formosa  
General Secretary



Neil Joseph Tirchett  
CAAAS Representative

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## President's Report

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James Gabarretta

President

### Introduction

IASSO has matured another year; a year of learning, progress, and hard work. Our executive committee was voted in with 5 members on the team, but only 3 of us remained as active members. This was a difficult process but one that has thought us much. This year we worked more closely with the Centre for Agriculture, Aquatics and Animal Sciences (CAAAS), a centre which falls under the Institute of Applied Sciences, by having a member of our team from the very institute.

IASSO worked on improving its relations with students; student organisations; the MCAST administration and participating in student politics whilst retaining a neutral stand in all these affairs. IASSO hosted several events including fundraising ones and worked hard on improving its social media platforms including launching a revamped website which is constantly updated. We look forward to another year of further collaboration, and making the IAS an enjoyable and fruitful institute. We look forward to achieving more student engagement and more collaboration between the various entities of the college.

### Our biggest challenges and our way forward

(A note about student engagement is that we have failed) We have failed to engage ourselves to the extent we desire, to develop our relations to the extent we hoped for and to fulfil the organisation's expectations. This constitutes our room for improvement, to focus more on our attainable goals and move in the direction that can allow us to make progress.

We are also becoming increasingly aware of the academic situation of MCAST in that it we are experiencing a deterioration in certain aspects which we hope to address collectively as the users of the college. This is something which has troubled us on a personal level; academically and as an organisation. We feel that students' views on extra-curricular activities are directly related to their perceptions on the curricular activities; and that therefore we shouldn't expect students to be interested in our organisation if there isn't an existing interest with the college itself.

With that being said; we are looking forward to this prospective year. We feel that there is a lot of opportunity for us to take and that our work throughout the past year will help us lay the next brick this year. The time is high for us to get together, understand what the challenges are; at MCAST, nationally and globally and face them head on, in an aim to develop ourselves into better individuals and be of better service to our society.

With or without us, MCAST will still be there, and therefore we need to make sure that our operations do not hinder in any way the progress that needs to be made; but instead ensure we are there to help develop our institute and college in the fullest way possible. We aim to destroy the perception that MCAST is a passive place with little opportunity but instead incubate the life and activism that its deserves.

This year we hope to take on two new members on our exec, Aimee and Jessica who will be helping in the organisation. I will be stepping down from the role of president of IASSO due to a conflict of interest with another initiative I am involved in; and from the role of sec gen I hope to fulfil my duties as the predecessor Danika has done so well. I hope that together the four-man team which we hope to expand will enable us to fulfil this year's expectations and possibly also exceed them and not repeat the mistakes we did last year.

We look forward to a year of activity, hard work and results. We promise a humble yet assertive approach in our organisation and invite all Institute of Applied Sciences, staff and students to take an interest in our work and to approach us with their ideas and feedback as we are always open to these.

## Conclusion

I will take the opportunity to thank everyone who has helped us out and supported the organisation in some way or another; to the staff who have gone out of their way to spend time debating with us and to all our student colleagues who have contributed in any way to the organisation. I would like to say a big great thank you to Danika, the president-to-be of IASSO, for her relentless work as secretary general for the past two years, her unmistakable dedication to the organisation and passion for getting things done. Without her I don't think IASSO would be 10% of what it is. Also a great thank you goes to Neil who could not make it today due to other commitments; and his work at the CAAAS. Thank you goes also to those who are here and I look forward to working with you as the next Sec-Gen in the coming weeks.

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## Administrative Report

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Danika Formosa

Secretary General



*“Ever since we began setting up the Organisation, I have always offered my full commitment and dedication towards this initiative. We have worked hard to establish solid ground for students at the Institute of Applied Science to enhance their student life. I believe in all factors and aspects which the Organisation has to offer and I promise my full commitment towards working for a better Institute and a better student life for all students. I also believe that student’s education should not be based only on an academic syllabus but rather include fun and informative activities which will enhance student life and enable students to grow and learn”*

### Introduction

This has been IASSO’s second year running at the Institute of Applied Sciences. It goes without saying that the year has been very hectic at times and calmer at others; however, this is not to be complained about because we were faced with many challenges and opportunities which have helped us learn, grow and continue moving forward. We have a long way to go in terms of student participation however we are going to keep on working to engage as many people as possible.

The first half of the year was quite busy, especially since we had new members joining the IASSO Exec and the 2015 Christmas period was quite busy as well. Activities slowed down after February as we focussed more on structural academic issues and the Exec experienced changes in the team. Activities resumed again once school commenced in September. The run-up to the Christmas period is probably one of the busiest periods of the year which we have encountered so far.

Following last year’s activities, we decided to focus on different strategies this year. It was quite challenging for all of us to do all the things we wanted to do and we still have to put into practice most of the things we had in mind; this bearing in mind that we are all students and we volunteer our time, energy and efforts to run IASSO. Nonetheless, we have learnt many things through the challenges we faced and opportunities we were given. We seek to continue working to improve the Institute of Applied Sciences and IASSO and to reach as many students as possible through our activities and projects over the next year and the years to come.

## The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee for the term 2015 – 2016 was made up of five members initially – James Gabarretta, Danika Formosa, Neil Joseph Turchett, Diane Zammit and Kelsey-Ann Sacco. Kelsey-Ann Sacco was asked to resign from Executive Committee after a few weeks due to a conflict of interest and absence during all IASSO Meetings, while Diane Zammit resigned from IASSO early in the year due to personal reasons. Therefore, for more than half a year, the IASSO Executive Committee was run by three members whereby James and Danika retained their roles as President and Secretary respectively while Neil was a member on the Committee and the point of contact to the Centre of Agriculture, Aquatics and Animal Care (CAAAC). No members were replaced on the committee.

## Work by the Committee throughout the past year

As from September 2015, twenty-eight (28) meetings were minuted and these included meetings between the Executive Committee and with third parties such as with the MCAST Principal, Institute Directors, lecturers and staff, sub-committees, students, NGOs as well as other student Organisations.

Executive Committee Meetings were usually held once every fortnight during the first few months, then slowed down over the next few months and the summer period. Due to time limitations and tight schedules, communication between the Executive Committee was done online via email or through a Facebook group conversation. This was found to be the most efficient way to communicate. Decisions made during these discussions were taken in the best interest of the Organisation.

For the first time in three years, the first meeting with IAS Class Representatives was held. We aim to have more frequent meetings with Class Reps as we believe that they are a good point of communication with their classes and the rest of the IAS population.

## Online presence and marketing

We have increased our media platforms since last year. In October 2016 we relaunched our website which is updated on a regular basis and began to send out a monthly newsletter to students and any other persons who have signed up through the website. Our online sources still include the IASSO Facebook page and the Institute of Applied Science Facebook group. We share our posts in other groups such as MCAST Students and MCAST Friends. We also collaborate with the Institute Director who kindly forwards our emails to lecturers, students and other staff. We also have a notice board on the first floor for our perusal and put up posters according to the events we are organising. Posters have been put up on all other notice boards at the Institute of Applied Sciences.

The MCAST Link has stopped being published by MCAST and therefore we cannot use this media platform any longer and we no longer send our posts to the MCAST Marketing Office to share on the FB page.

We are aware that Facebook and E-mails only reach a small audience and that this has been one of the many challenges which we have been facing. In this regard, we seek to improve and find new ways of reaching a wider audience.

## Daily running of the Organisation

As the previous year, most of the work depended on three people who worked round the clock to get things done. This year things moved slightly slower in terms of events due to various factors however the work at the back-end of the organisation did not stop.

We still use google drive as a platform for internal file sharing. Records of all the events, documents and operational material are appropriately organised and easily accessible on Drive by the Executive Committee members. Two years ago we opted to go paper free and therefore the only records we have in hard copy format are the accounts of the Organisation.

## Events throughout the past year

Throughout this year, there was a significant decrease in the amount of events which we organised. Following the 2015 Annual General Meeting, we organised a welcome BBQ and a Public Lecture in collaboration with Friends of the Earth in October, the KSM Candidates Debate in collaboration with GuG and The Third Eye; a BOS Candidate Debate, both held in December; the Cake and Lemonade Sale in aid of Solidaritree and the Annual Christmas Party before breaking up for Christmas Recess. Over the first few months of the new year, we organised a Shark Awareness Day by Sharklab-Malta in January. No other events were held between February and September. In September 2016, IASSO participated in Science in the City, followed by European Week for Waste Reduction in November and organised another Cake and Lemonade Sale in aid of I-Istrina on the 19th and 20th December.

In June 2016, we sent a student to participate in an international training course in Turkey funded through KA2/Erasmus+.

During the period when no events were happening, we carried out a student satisfaction survey, the content of which needs yet to be followed up further. All members of the Exec also travelled during those months and gained experience in different fields overseas.

We are very glad that the first Class Representative meeting was held just last week and that the TV screens and IAS portal are being used as a guidance platform for students regarding timetables, documents and assignments; these were all ideas that we had put forward earlier last year and with the help of administration and the Director, they have been a success.

## The IAS Green Campaign

The IAS Green Campaign was not followed up beyond February 2016, due to other commitments and the lack of input from the members. However, we once again participated in European Week for Waste Reduction, with the theme of Packaging Waste Reduction; whereby we continued collecting Plastic Bottles for charity and also raising awareness through direct contact.

## The Upcoming Year

Over the past few weeks the necessity of an activity plan and calendar has been realised, which will be discussed together with the new Exec members. Our main aim, according to our mission statement, is to include as many students as possible through education by creating awareness on the fields of study, while maximizing student performance and personal development. Therefore, we will continue doing our best to reach this target.

Our upcoming events include but are not limited to the end-of year Treasure Hunt being held on Thursday 22nd December and a movie screening to take place during the last week of January, a photo competition in February and a Bicycle Course in collaboration with the MCAST Sports Department which will run throughout the month of March.

We would still like to organise public lectures, site-visits and debates, depending on the resources available. We also seek to collaborate with other organisations and NGOs to organise social events such as hikes, camping and other outdoor activities. A timeline of these events have been set however it not final and therefore open to any suggestions. We encourage anyone who has ideas or suggestions to come forward to discuss.

On a more technical level, the Organisation seeks to learn from the multiple challenges which we faced over the past year and try to come up with a viable solution to improve and do better.

## Collaborations

We have collaborated with GSAM, represented by Eman Borg, as well as Kooperattiva Kummerċ Ġust to organise more events in the coming months. We have teamed up with international organisations earlier this year and hope to be offering overseas training opportunities to students over the next year, provided that the projects are approved.

This year IASSO has expanded to the Centre of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Animal Care and the Institute was represented on IASSO by Neil. Students at the Centre are more than welcome to join in IASSO events and be part of the IASSO Exec Team.

As we have done so in the past year, we are looking forward to collaborating with MCAST entities such as the administration and Entrepreneurship office, as well as NGOs which have similar interests such as Sharklab-Malta to continue working together on events and initiatives.

## Conclusion

We know what our challenges are and there is still to learn, now is the time to start improving and finding better ways to deal with these challenges. We have made progress but there is still a long way to go, and we will definitely keep on finding new obstacles which need to be overcome. Three years ago we started this Organisation from scratch and we have come far, from long nights writing emails, to hectic times organising three to four events at the same time. It's hectic but we enjoy it simply because we want to improve the institute for ourselves and students to follow.

We would like to thank Mr. Cachia, Dr. Rizzo and Mr. Pace for their constant support, lecturers and staff for helping out and promoting IASSO and for everything we've done this year, I am grateful. Personally, IASSO has become part of my life and I am really glad to be doing everything that we are involved in. I offer my full commitment undoubtedly throughout the upcoming year, with the main aim to make student life on and off campus more enjoyable. Our thanks also go to all the students who have shown support throughout the year and believed in the things we do and our vision as a team.

May I also take this opportunity to, on behalf of the IASSO team, welcome the new members of the Executive to another year of working towards a better Institute and student life.

Thank you.

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## A report from CAAAS

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### Neil Joseph Turchett

#### CAAAS Representative and Exec Member

Following the restructuring of MCAST, it has been decided that CAAAS from the scholastic year 2015/2016 will become a centre under the remit of the IAS and this meant that the CAAAS students can now say that they are also IAS students. This gave me the opportunity to become a member of IASSO.

It was a great experience being part of the Exec. as during our meetings I learnt much about the IAS, including the courses it offers and the status quo of the institute that we form part of. Being part of IASSO Executive made me feel the connection as an IAS student and meet several students from IAS.

Throughout the past term as a member of IASSO, I was able to take part in initiatives which helped improve the environment for a better community. These activities include the cleaning of a camp site at L-Aħrax tal-Mellieħa, the recycling of plastic bottles and collection of plastic caps for L-Istrina.

As it was the first year of CAAAS being part of IAS, many students were unaware of IASSO and many of them till to date are still unaware of the organisation's existence. This can be due to many factors; including the fact that many activities which IASSO organized were carried out at the IAS Paola and this made it difficult for CAAAS students to attend these events and return to their lectures, a process which can be very hectic. I can say this from my own experience, as sometimes I had to miss lecture hours to be able to attend and take part.

For future reference, to get more attention from CAAAS students I suggest that more events, however small they may be being organized directly at the Centre. I suggest that IASSO, should take on the task of organising a tour around the IAS to help the students of CAAAS feel more welcome. IASSO should be the organization that helps to strengthen the link between the students of CAAAS and those of IAS.

As IASSO in the previous term we held discussions with the director to identify improvements which are required at the CAAAS. As CAAAS students study and live in different scenario, this was quite tricky and there is still room to improve this further. As I advised before IASSO should continue forming a bond with the students of the CAAAS.

In conclusion, IASSO helped me to develop a broader perspective and way of thinking as a student. IASSO needs to continue working on the CAAAS but on the other hand, if more fun and engaging activities are organized, there will be greater interest in IASSO and help it in achieving its goals.

I would like to thank the current members of IASSO Exec. and the previous ones for this opportunity and their sharing of ideas. Hope to see you in future activities and events.

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## Financial Report

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### Introduction

The IAS Student Organisation is a voluntary, non-profit making organisation, whereby any funds generated from its' events are reinvested in the Organisation. The financial controller of the organisation was responsible of ensuring that all accounts are in order, providing a clear indication of the income and expenses of each and every event. The financial controller resigned shortly due to difficulties working in the organisation. Since we did not have an acting treasurer, the funds were managed by the President and the Secretary of the Organisation.

### Current Balance of the Organisation

On the 29th October, 2015 the opening balance was that of €263.00. The current balance of the Organisation as at 29th October 2016 is that of €316.96. Our main and only source of income in the past year was the end of year Christmas Party.

### Main Sources of Income

Since the Organisation is neither a registered Voluntary Organisation nor dependant on the Institution it falls under, the main source of income is through the events organised throughout the year by the Organisation. Whilst funding has not been our main priority throughout the past years, we did not look into alternative funding opportunities and therefore spent money on the fundamental items necessary for the running of the events. Any other materials required for the organisation were purchased from the income generated by the events.

### Our way forward

It will be the treasurer's duty to compile a monthly report on the funds and the accounts will be reviewed on a monthly basis. This will enable the better tracking of funds in order to budget cost and analyse the trading, profit and loss accounts of every event.