

Participant details	
First name	Joseph Florian
Last name	Micallef
Erasmus+ Mobility details	
Organisation name	N.A
Mobility dates	10.04.2017 – 12.04.2017
Place of Mobility	Ljósmyndaskólinn, Iceland

Joseph’s Testimonial:

“My 3 days in Ljósmyndaskólinn proved to be highly beneficial as they allowed me to experience different teaching and education program methods in a small school within a small island that similarly to Malta, also has a small population and faces similar challenges.

Something positive I immediately noticed was the relatively few students in the very small school. Indeed the institute only offers a photography BA course to not more than 20 students yearly. From what I witnessed, this allowed the lecturers to have a very personal one on one relationship with the students. In the beginning, it was difficult differentiating between the lecturers and the students. I feel this element is important especially for students who wish to develop their artistic practice, and especially considering how many of the students (similar to our case in Malta) suffer from challenges such as dyslexia. In our case in Malta, every year it's becoming more and more difficult to provide that one on one attention given there are a large number of students for a variety of courses. In this sense, the school is definitely more focused, which also means that the lecturers (only 2 are full time in the school) are also very knowledgeable in a few areas. Of course, this close connection does at times have its downsides, as mentioned by the school administration as well. At times, providing feedback in such an environment is difficult because of bias. This has been becoming less of a problem in our school.

Students per se seem to have more of an artistic flair, and this is definitely understandable given the direction of the school. However I really felt the environment per se, despite being very small, caters towards this creative aura. Indeed, the design of the school is avant garde, while there are a number of working areas and libraries in which the students can work in a lot of space, and whenever they like. I found it impressive how administration gives all students a key to the building, inviting them to come work whenever they like. I feel this level of trust is missing in our school, which has become more and

more corporate and technical over the years. In this sense, the school acted as a reminder of what its like going back to the roots, something I truly miss and wish we had the time for in our institute.

Program wise, the school does not offer specific semester based units like we do. Instead they're focused on providing 2 or 3 week workshops that revolve around specific subjects such as photo journalism, fashion photography, video etc. Instead of having in house lecturers delivering these units, experts from the country or abroad are invited to deliver the workshop and then provide the students with an assignment they have to finish in those 3 weeks. Up to a certain extent this allows the students to focus on one thing at a time, and also allows them to be given knowledge from experts rather than in house lectures who might be more like jack of all trades. Of course the down side to this (and this is definitely a nod to our system) is that these external lecturers might have little time to actually get to know the students and the school system. I believe that in this respect, there is stronger communication between the lecturers, although we've started witnessing this as well with the employment of more part time lecturers who experience the same problems.

I was also very lucky to manage to attend some of the students' presentations. Overall, I was quite impressed with the final outcome presented by the students, and their approach to their work. For the most part, the students seemed very curious (something I look for in my own students' approach), willing to experiment and brutally honest with their assessors. I feel this is a result of the trust mentioned earlier, and also a sign of the students commitment and maturity. The fact that they have to pay substantial fees to undergo the course is probably a crucial factor. One thing I did notice, which is a challenge we both face as schools, is a general lack of a critical approach in their presentations. In fact I noticed that there was quite a number of students who did not really delve into the 'why' behind their work. This however¹ is not a reflection of a lack of passion, but rather a hurdle we both face as schools at BA level which was interesting to notice.

Overall I would say this was a pleasant experience for me as it allowed me to re witness what it's like lecturing in a small personal environment. Over the years, I feel MCAST has become more catered towards large quantities of students. This may work in other environments, but it became clear to me in my mobility how important that space and one on one connection is in the realm of artistic practice which we also aim for in the institute for the creative arts."

