

Faculty of Laws

Newsletter

A comment from the Dean

From time to time I am asked by a member of Administration to carry out a task related to our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) ; sometimes I am asked to upload a document for an Academic, on many occasions I am asked to set up the Turnitin for our Students to upload their assignments. As Dean, I have access to all study units on VLE; when I requested such access I was met with concern and even suspicion as to why I needed such access but my intention was precisely to be in position to chip in where such help may be required, or where any issue crops up. I do not mind helping out my colleagues, but some of the requests I receive give rise for concern. When I am asked for example, to set up the Turnitin, I cannot help but wonder whether the Academic who is duty bound to set up the Turnitin but seeks help, does this because they do not know how to complete such a simple task, or whether they are simply trying to save time.

Time is a premium for all of us, but if this is the issue to the point that the Academic tries to avoid VLE-related tasks which let's face it take no more than a couple of minutes to complete, I wonder how far the concept of 'saving time' is taken. Do the same Academics actually check the assignments for plagiarism via Turnitin, or not? Do they investigate the percentage similarities, or do they not even bother to access the Turnitin at all? I cannot help be concerned; if the Students know that their lecturers will not bother to look into Turnitin percentages, then the Student may be even more willing to take shortcuts and perhaps even plagiarise their work.

If, on the other hand, an Academic does not know how to set up their Turnitin, this is even more concern, because I wonder whether the same Academic will know how to use Turnitin, how to interpret the percentages, etc. Worse than that I wonder whether such an Academic appreciates the importance, the value, of VLE as a tool to communicate with students, to upload useful documents for the students, and so on.

Another related issue concerns requests from Academics to Administration, to carry out VLE-related tasks for them, even querying why the Academic is supposed to do such 'administrative tasks' themselves. The answer is very simple: Faculty of Laws' Administration do not even have access to VLE, because this is an academic tool which the Academic is supposed to be in command of, and to use, and not the Admin member of staff. Such comments are still made by Academics, and I believe it is time to set the record straight: Faculty of Laws' Administrative Staff do not have access to the Academics' tools and these include the VLE. It is up to the Academic to first and foremost learn how to use VLE, secondly to undertake VLE-related tasks and lastly to make use of what it has to offer for example, to upload reading material or simply reading lists, and require the students to actually expend time doing such reading in advance of the lectures.

In view of this, Academics who perhaps have managed to get by making minimal use of VLE are invited to access their VLE and invest some time in exploring it, and its features. If they encounter difficulties, help is not far away: Ms Naomi Mifsud from UM's IT Services (email naomi.mifsud@um.edu.mt) is extremely helpful in this respect.

On a different note, I take the opportunity to send you my best wishes for 2023.

Dean's Awards Ceremony

Last year we missed the Dean's Awards due to Covid-19 restrictions. This year we made up for it and managed to organise a memorable event, in which four students gave a ten-minute presentation each, on their dissertation. These were the LLB.Hons students who obtained the highest mark in their undergrad dissertation in the last academic year (i.e.2021-2022), namely Ms Danika Cutajar (Practical Failures in Maltese Building Regulations resulting from Parallel Public and Civil Law Regimes in the Realm of Rock Excavation), Ms Martina Cassar (The Right to Liberty and Security safeguarded by the ECHR: how is the deprivation of liberty of Persons of Unsound Mind justified?), Mr Clyde Bonnici (How do Administrative Law and Human Rights Law bind Private Entities in Malta?). A fourth presentation was made by Ms Doreanne Caruana (Achieving Effective Capital Markets in Malta - the Legal and Regulatory Framework, Recent Developments and Suggestions for Potential Reform) who presented the best M.A. Financial Services dissertation in the last academic year.



Dean's Awards Ceremony (cont)

After the presentations, Ms Denise Xerri was awarded the prize for Best Student in the LL.B. Hons Course, Ms Stephania Attard (Best Student in the M.Not. course), Ms Jessica Formosa (Best Student in the M.Adv. course). These prizes were sponsored by University Chancellor Professor David J Attard. Ms Doreanne Caruana won the GM Corporate and Financial Services Limited prize for academic excellence in the MAFS course while Ms Rebecca Galea won the Malta Maritime Forum Annual Award Prize for Best Undergraduate Dissertation on a Maritime Law Subject.

We are pleased to report that the event was very well attended by academics, students, and family of the prize winners.

On a final note, special thanks are due not only to our Sponsors, but also to those Academics who very kindly donated complementary copies of their own publications for us to give out as gifts, and to Dr Tiziana Filletti, Dr Therese Comodini Cachia and Mr Robert Louis Grech who worked very hard to make the event a success.

Book launch at the President's Palace

In early December 2022, Professor Tonio Borg officially launched the second edition of his *Commentary on the Constitution of Malta*. This well attended event was held at the President's Palace in Attard. Professor Kevin Aquilina provided an overview of this book and of the constitutional developments which necessitated this second edition, while the Dean of the Faculty of Laws also delivered a short presentation in which he emphasised on the importance of updating this unique work in order to keep it relevant. Finally the author himself provided his own reflections on the recent constitutional developments which led him to having to update his book.

