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Faculty of Laws Newsletter

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Comment from the Dean

From time to time an academic member of staff reminds the rest of us what a difference it would make to our students, if the first year of their law studies was a foundation year. I cannot but agree with the idea of our students dedicating the first year of their law studies to topics such as legal history and philosophy, how to research and how to study law, and brushing up on their language skills too. Surely this would help them not only settle down in university life, but also be in a different and better frame of mind when they commence the substantive topics? I also think that it does not make sense to try to teach them Introduction to Law to name but one introductory subject, during the very same weeks and months that they are already learning Criminal and Constitutional Law. I am quite sure that the current system is not of advantage to our students; indeed several other academics tend to agree with me, but higher authority within the UM have always shot down the proposal for a foundation course in law put forward both by the current Dean and Prof. Kevin Aquilina during his tenure.

At last perhaps this might be about to change. A recent meeting with newly appointed Pro-Rector for Strategic Planning & Sustainability, Prof. Valerie Sollars, in which this topic was but one of the items discussed, led to a meeting with representatives of the UM's own Foundation Studies School. At this last meeting, the UM officials from the foundation school were very enthusiastic about the idea of our LLB Hons students attending such a course and are willing to discuss further. This sounded promising, but requires a lot of thought and work, before we can actually make a concrete proposal to the UM Rector and Registrar without whose approval the matter will never reach UM Senate, let alone become reality.

On a final (unrelated) note, a small reminder when opening VLEs for assignments: the Turnitin upload areas has to be set, to not allow late submissions; however within the allowed time frame students may upload and re-upload their work as many times as they require (this applies to both the draft and to the final assignment area).

Periodic Programme Review

During this month some Academics, with the help of Admin members of staff, were busy compiling the *Self Evaluation Document* concerning the LL.B Hons, the M.Adv and M.Not courses. These had to be submitted by the end of the month to the Quality Support Unit, this being the first step of the PPR which all of our courses will be subjected to during this and the next academic year.

Faculty of Laws participation at the Parliamentary Ombudsman's conference

The Parliamentary Ombudsman organised an international two-day seminar on *The Right to Good Administration: Myth, Aspiration or Reality?* (31st October and 1st November). Dr Ivan Mifsud addressed the first panel, describing the Office of the Ombudsman and giving examples of past occurrences which indicate that perhaps our political class are not as keen on the ombudsman institution as they should be; on the other hand Prof. Kevin Aquilina went into great detail on how the Right to Good Administration can be incorporated into Maltese Law.



Photo: Prof Kevin Aquilina delivering his presentation

Dr John Stanton, who visited Malta that week and delivered three lectures (one on the Rule of Law to the LL.B. Hons 1, another on legal standing in judicial review cases in UK to LL.B. Hons 2, and a public lecture at Chamber Advocates on

Parliamentary Sovereignty in an Age of Populism) chaired the third working plenary panel on ‘Improving the relationship with independent offices of State and the Public Administration’.

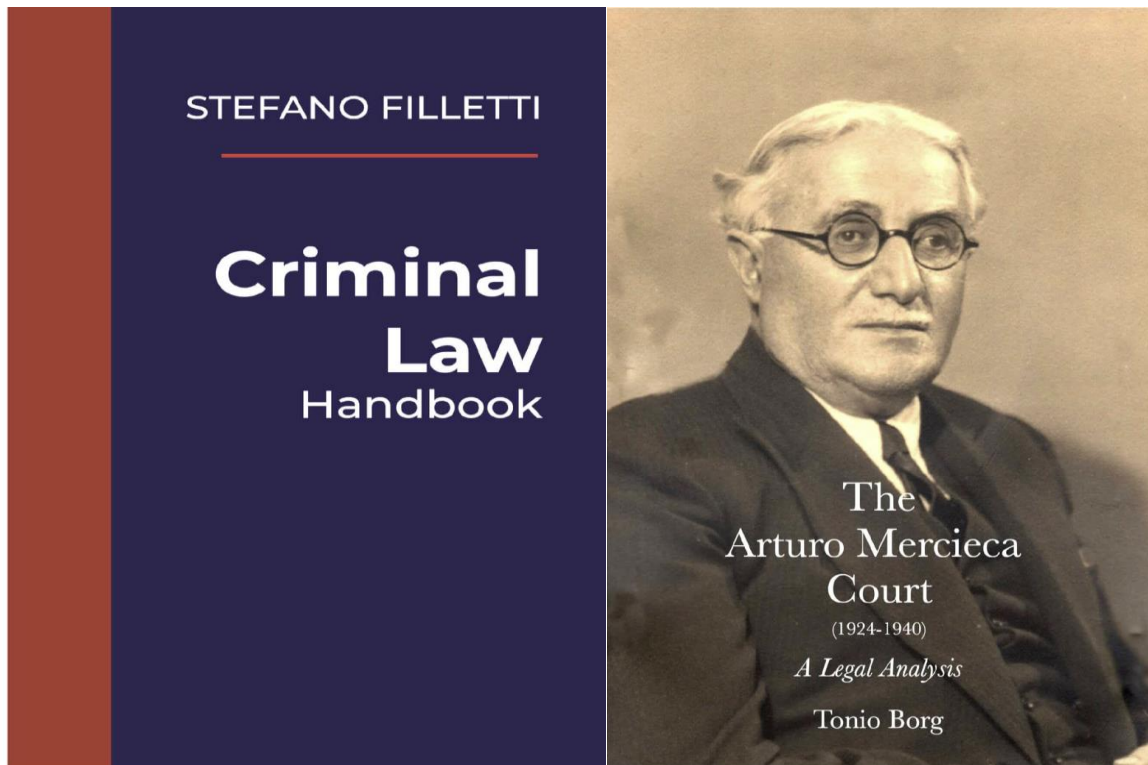


Photo: Dr John Stanton during the third working panel

One of the aims of this conference was to raise awareness on a domestic level, about the Right to Good Administration and about the need to introduce this right into the Maltese Constitution. This noble aim has been on the agenda of every Maltese Parliamentary Ombudsman since the inception of this institution back in July 1995, but to date Parliament remains to be convinced about the need to introduce this right into our Constitution.

Two book launches in November

During November two book launches were held, the first concerning Prof. Tonio Borg’s *The Arturo Mercieca Court (1924-1940) A Legal Analysis*. In this literary work, Prof. Borg studies and comments on a number of key constitutional court judgments including some very well known ones such as *Sammut v. Strickland* and *Cassar Desain v. Forbes*.



The second booklaunch was that of Dr Stefano Filletti's *Handbook on Criminal Law*, a very much anticipated work which the author publicly undertook to develop further and expand upon in coming years.

Both books are available for purchase from Kite Publishers.

Extract from Faculty Board meeting held on Friday 10th November

'163. Following discussion, the Board AGREED that in situations when students exceed the word limit with regard to dissertations, the respective Board of Examiners should award the student a 0Fail result and, if eligible and in terms of UM regulations, the student may then submit the dissertation for examination within six months under resit conditions from publication date.'

Reminder! Extract from Faculty Board meeting held on Friday 13th January 2023

'92. Following discussion, members AGREED that as per last academic year's decision, any wrong uploaded assignment available in the final container will only be reviewed if the correct assignment is available at least in the draft container. If the wrong assignment is available in both containers or if the student did not respect the submission deadline without seeking prior approval with valid

justification to the Faculty (not to the respective lecturer), the student will be awarded a 0 Fail.'

Season's Greetings

This being the last newsletter for this calendar year, the Editorial Board send you their best wishes for Christmas and for a healthy, prosperous 2024.

Have you got any news to share? If you have any item of relevance to this newsletter, feel free to inform us about it. You may contact any member of the editorial board, these being Prof Tonio Borg, Prof Ivan Sammut, Ms Rowena Leontijevic and Dr Ivan Mifsud. The Board reserves the right to refuse to publish an item submitted to it for its consideration.