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August  
2023  
Edition

# Faculty of Laws Newsletter

Issue  
No. 11

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## Message from the Dean

Summer is always hectic within the Faculty of Laws: we rush to correct literally hundreds of scripts, and when this is done, we have to deal with Revisions of Papers (RoPs), student feedback, and if that was not enough prepare the September resit paper. A very tough time indeed, and also, with all the new procedures we are faced with, it is turning out to be a considerable learning curve: we must continue with the implementation and utilisation of marking schemes and learn how to master them and utilise them properly, if necessary we must simplify the format of exam papers thus making the marking schemes more manageable. For example: set three questions, with no Parts A & B, thus making the allocation of points easier.

Importantly, when it comes to learning curves, we must all also learn how to use the student feedback correctly, efficiently and effectively. We must find a way how to get the message across to our students, that it does not make sense to ask for a detailed Revision of Paper now that they have the possibility of receiving student feedback. The examiner will have nothing to add at the feedback session that they would not have written in the RoP detailed report. We must get the message across that a non-detailed RoP will suffice to check the exam script for any errors in marking (e.g. a mathematical error, or a quick overview to verify that the script was marked correctly); this will take us much less time to carry out, and the students will benefit from individual student feedback much more than from a detailed report, especially when the examiners have literally dozens to write and quite naturally are not at all happy about doing all that work in August when they are supposed to be enjoying the *ferjat*. Also, if we are flooded with detailed reports, as happened in certain exams, it will take the students much longer to get their feedback and naturally they will also get less feedback, because the examiners will simply tell them to refer to the detailed report. A non-detailed report plus student feedback is the way forward; this is literally a win-win situation and we must work to get the students to understand this. Recently I received an email from the three law student organisations collectively, in which they rejected the above completely, insisting that the students are entitled to both the detailed reports and the student feedback

before the September exam and that we have no right to even suggest otherwise. They literally rejected any idea of working with us to make this system workable on the above lines, in the interest of both the students and the academics; thankfully a significant number of well-meaning individual students were more understanding than GhSL, ELSA and JCA and accepted to work with us on the proposed basis (i.e. going for a non-detailed report and getting detailed individual feedback in good time before the September exam, instead of insisting on a detailed report which will take forever to conclude considering the large number of requests we had, and then expecting effective feedback in good time before the September exam).

On a different matter, I think it is time that assignments are anonymised, just like exam scripts. It simply does not make sense for us to talk about anonymity when assessing students, which anonymity is beneficial to both the student and the academic, and not extend the same anonymity to assignments.

On a final note, I wish to thank all staff, both academic and admin, for their hard work, determination, dedication and sacrifice, without which we would not manage to get all the work done. Thank you All: try to enjoy summer, or at least the upcoming Santa Marija week!

### **Book launch at President's Palace**

The Research Handbook on Ocean Governance Law edited by Professor Simone Borg, Professor Patricia Vella de Fremeaux and Dr Felicity Attard was officially launched on 12th July at San Anton Palace Attard under the auspices His Excellency President George Vella, who hosted the book launch and UM Chancellor Prof. David Attard who was the guest speaker.

Both the President and Judge Professor Attard lauded the editors who were also among the twenty-three contributors to the Research Hand book, in their endeavour to continue with Malta's long standing tradition in legal research and teaching on the law of the sea as well as the governance of ocean space.



His Excellency The President highlighted the urgent need to protect the oceans from environmental harm inflicted by humans and from illegal activities at sea and the transgression of human rights at sea. Prof Attard referred to the ever urgent need of excellence in legal literature as a source of knowledge and discernment in safeguarding the Rule of Law on the Ocean. He referred to the Internationally - renowned expertise of the three editors in the fields of marine conservation law and maritime security.

The book has recently been reviewed and acclaimed by Professor Jason Lauter from the University of Plymouth.

### **Meeting at UM Law Library**

On 17th July 2023 the Dean attended a meeting held at the Law/Theology library, which meeting mainly concerned the digitisation process which is now well underway. At the same meeting some very important points emerged namely:

1. the importance of promoting the use of online law databases. The Director Libraries informed the Dean, not for the first time, that the UM library spends about three million Euro annually on online subscriptions (as opposed to about 150,000 Euro on physical books), and that from time to time it checks the statistics to see how many are actually using the online databases. He warned that if very few people are using them, then at some stage the UM Library will stop the subscription in order to funnel the money to other areas where a better return will result.

Therefore, if we wish to continue having access to the law online databases, we must use them as much as possible, and promote their use amongst students and other researchers;

2. the issue concerning non-academics using the UM library. This is an issue which often arises: the Faculty has often received several requests e.g. from the Attorney General's office, and from the Judiciary, to make use of UM Library. The truth of the matter is that the UM library gets preferential rates on its subscriptions because it is an educational institution. If it had to open up its services beyond students and academics, for example to the Judiciary in general, the UM library would find itself in breach of contract and risks being penalised for this. Therefore, such requests are always refused. There is however a practical partial solution: non-academics are welcome to come over and to use the UM Libraries (whether the main library, or the Law Library); they may even use the dedicated station at Melitensia to gain access for example to our dissertations.

### **Prof Joseph Micallef prize award**

On Friday 21st July, Brendan Rhys Hewer received the Prof Joseph Micallef prize for the 2022 edition of this annual competition. His winning essay was called 'Poisoned Chalice: Will Anti-Money Laundering Legislation Kill off the Trust?'



The prize was awarded at a brief ceremony held in the Faculty of Laws & Theology Boardroom. Dr Anton Micallef and Dr Peter Micallef gave Brendan his prize, in the presence of his proud parents and fiancée', the Dean, and Deputy Dean. The Faculty has also announced the competition for 2023, with submissions to be sent in by the end of August 2023.

## Member of the Department of International Law delivers a lecture for the Max Planck Foundation for International Peace and the Rule of Law.

On 24th July, Dr. Felicity G. Attard was invited to speak at a workshop organized by the Max Planck Foundation for International Peace and the Rule of Law, in cooperation with the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka.



The event focused on cooperation for maritime safety, which is a priority area for the IORA. In her presentation, Dr. Attard examined the legal regimes regulating maritime search and rescue, with a focus on the Indian Ocean. She addressed obligations to render assistance at sea under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue and the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, as well as the contributions and status of the MoU between the Governments of the Member States of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for the Coordination and Cooperation of Search and Rescue Services in the Indian Ocean Region. The lecture was followed by an active Q&A session with IORA Member State officials and dialogue partners from all around the world. Dr. Arron N. Honniball, Senior Fellow (Law of the Sea) at the Max Planck Foundation for International Peace and the Rule of Law, thanked Dr. Attard for sharing her expertise on the topic.

### Taking a break

Since we are supposed to be on holiday during the month of August, it is being presumed that there will be nothing to report during September, and therefore no newsletter will be published in September 2023. The newsletter will however resume in October 2023.

**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.