



UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
L-Università ta' Malta



Forging Ahead Beyond 2016

THE PLAN FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

Alfred J. Vella

Rector

University of Malta

July 2016

Copyright © University of Malta, 2016

The right of Alfred J Vella to be identified as Publisher of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright Act, 2001.

University of Malta, Msida, Malta
Tel: (356) 2340 2340
Fax: (356) 2340 2342
www.um.edu.mt

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purpose of research and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

The publisher has used its best endeavours to ensure that the URLs for external websites referred to in this magazine are correct and active at the time of going to press. However the publisher has no responsibility for the websites and can make no guarantee that a site will remain live or that the content is or will remain appropriate.

Every effort has been made to trace all copyright holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked, the publishers will be pleased to include any necessary credits in any subsequent issues.



UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
L-Università ta' Malta

Contents

Executive Summary	5
1. Introduction	6
2. Teaching and Learning	8
3. Internationalisation	13
4. Research and Knowledge Transfer	15
5. Service and Outreach	19
6. Junior College, Matsec and Related Issues	21
7. The Campus, Finances and University of Malta Act	22
8. The Administrative Structure	24
9. Work Ethic	25
10. L-Aħħar Kelma, B'islienna	26

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the University of Malta is to serve the aspirations of the people of these Islands through locally and globally significant research and provision of higher education of quality in the arts, sciences and the humanities as required for Malta's economic, social and cultural development, via the scholarship of discovery, teaching and service to the community. These functions shall be delivered in a sustainable manner that is responsive to this country's present and emergent needs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Being the only national university on the territory, the University of Malta (UM) shall continue to provide higher education of quality in a wide span and variety of disciplines needed to ensure wellbeing, prosperity and functionality of the country.

Practices that conduce to excellence in teaching and learning shall be promoted, including digital education. Since a large number of courses are already on offer, approval of essential new programmes shall take place in a manner that does not jeopardise and render unsustainable the entire provision. A Teaching and Learning Support Unit shall be established as soon as practicable and the educational experience at UM of all students, including vocational and employed learners shall be improved as far as possible. All faculties shall be urged to send students on Erasmus exchanges in order to improve their educational experience.

I shall strive to ensure that students become more involved in governance. A system of appeals from administrative decisions will be introduced.

The research scholarship will be promoted and supported especially through facilitation of the effort required to compete for external funds. Doctoral students and post-

doctoral researchers will be better integrated in the community of learners and scholars and the setting up of a Doctoral School will be considered. Initiatives shall be supported intended to advance corporate research and knowledge transfer.

A University Outreach Forum shall be set up to provide a meeting place for discussion between academics and stakeholders from Government departments, industry and civil society.

As an interested stakeholder, UM shall offer its help to the Ministry for Education and Employment with the aim of salvaging those learners that drop out from secondary school and are lost to the system.

The physical development of the University campus will continue as planned. With regards to financing, discussions with Government will proceed with a view to changing the funding model to give the institution more autonomy and better sustainability.

We look forward to the new University of Malta Act and expect this development to improve governance and to better equip the institution to meet the challenges of the future.

INTRODUCTION

This vision statement describes what I stand for and presents my ideas and proposals for the next five years.

At the outset I would like to emphasise that I recognise the difficulty of planning for a future that may not come about in the manner predicted by the recent past and the current realities: thus, any plans, be they in the short or long term, have to respond quickly to developments in order that novel situations are exploited advantageously, turning challenges into opportunities. Thus, **a strategy of flexible adaptation** to secure best achievable outcomes in evolving or abruptly changing scenarios shall characterise my style of management going forward. Decisions would, in the main, be taken after meaningful consultation with significant parties, proper reflection, impact analysis and suitable risk assessment of the alternatives. I will not however hesitate to take decisions when time is of the essence, and a rapid and firm decision becomes incumbent upon me as Rector.

The University of Malta (UM) is the only national university on the territory which is largely publicly-funded to provide all manner of higher education; the provision includes bachelor to doctoral level degrees, in a variety of disciplines and a wide span of subjects as required in the support and continued creation of an intelligent, diverse and adaptable workforce which Malta's growing economy requires for sustenance, consolidation and future-proofing.

This University is proud of its four centuries of history, longer lasting than that of any of the potentates who have ruled this fair land of ours: of course, the role of a university is not to govern but to serve and to be a beacon in our community. The UM has indeed provided and continues to provide not just the principal professionals but also the intelligentsia of Maltese society by being the *alma mater* to the leading lights in government, business and enterprise. During the past 40 years or so, this University has responded admirably to the need to expand from the few hundreds

of Maltese students in the 1980s to today's international community of scholars numbering over 11,000. This increase has had significant implications on teaching and learning on campus. The educational provision now has to be suitable to meet the needs of a much wider range of abilities and talents than that which may have been sufficient for an elite few of the not so distant past.

It also has to remain relevant to students deriving from and forming a critical part of a society which is rapidly changing and in which technology is more pervasive but also more enabling than was true before. One principal challenge is that quite a few of our lecturing staff (myself included, of course!) have themselves been moulded and formed in an environment of cultural and social realities which have transmuted into almost alien others forming the actuality of our students today. Even and especially the technologies of teaching and learning have morphed with the advent of digital education and the genie-like powers provided by the Internet and information technology have enabled us to re-assess delivery of knowledge. If we are to remain relevant, appealing and useful to the new generation of learners, we need to learn how to rapidly adapt to ever-changing higher educational scenarios and I intend to be a strong supporter and leader in guiding the movement towards meaningful higher education in the first quarter of the 21st century.

The key strategic objectives in this plan are summarised in a **mission statement** that I propose for this University:

"The mission of the University of Malta is to serve the aspirations of the people of these Islands through locally and globally significant research and provision of higher education of quality in the arts, sciences and the humanities as required for Malta's economic, social and cultural development, via the scholarship of discovery, teaching and service to the community. These functions shall be delivered in a sustainable manner that is responsive to this country's present and emergent needs."



TEACHING AND LEARNING

The question is often posed as to whether a university should focus more on the research activities than its teaching. I suggest the answer to the question should be that in most universities, both activities are intertwined inextricably: in our case, given that UM has the mission to educate and train most of the high level talent in the country, it cannot be otherwise. UM has to be strong on its teaching mission and equally robust on its research endeavours. I am of the firm view that a weak researcher is also a poor university teacher and that the two facets of scholarship, namely teaching and discovery (research), are not mutually exclusive and incompatible but actually complementary and synergistic. So, therefore, the foci of this University should be equally on teaching and research and our academic, administrative and technical staff should be supportive and geared to both endeavours in equal measure.

At UM, we must continue to deliver the teaching provision with an even keener eye on quality of service and strive to promote and reward practices that conduce to excellence.

As the foremost academic body in Malta we must remain sensitive to the country's emerging needs and be both ready and flexible to provide new programmes as required in



support of novel developments; at the same time, however, we have to realise that our compendium of courses, currently running at over 700 offerings, cannot continue to grow and multiply indefinitely. Table 1 displays a five year trend in the number of the courses of study approved by this University's Programme Validation Committee. Growth was indeed required, especially in certain previously neglected

Year of Approval	No. of new UG Courses	No. of new PG Courses	Total
2010/11	9	12	21
2011/12	12	25	37
2012/13	7	20	27
2013/14	8	28	36
2014/15	10	28	38

Table 1: Number of new undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) courses approved by Programme Validation Committee between 2010 and 2015.



← 414 Seminar Room
↘ 415 Design Studio
416-421



areas like the performing arts, knowledge science and entrepreneurship education, but there is now a need to consolidate and utilise available resources sustainably and to their maximum effect.

There is a need to rationalise and moderate this University's course offerings in an effort not to jeopardise the existing high quality and sustainability of the whole operation. This is especially so in light of the drop in the sixth form populations caused by demographic shift.

I propose that the **principles** that should guide our actions in providing teaching and learning that is stimulating, interesting and useful to our students would be the following:

- commitment to teach with passion, dedication and vitality as befits one of the core missions of our work intended to make the University of Malta a regionally-significant provider of higher education of quality, using the English language as medium of instruction;
- determination to teach in a meaningful manner that is respectful of the students' maturity and aiming to promote their self-confidence as learners;
- commitment to act collegially and sustainably in order to maximise the benefits from available resources;



- emplacement of the research experience as an essential component of our teaching activity.

My plan is to ensure that we do not deviate from this central mission and to continue to safeguard quality of teaching and learning at the University: this provision must remain sound, relevant and informed by the latest research findings.

For this purpose, I will give priority to the setting up of an in-house **Teaching and Learning Support Unit** whose remit it will be to provide academic staff with (a) courses and workshops intended to help them become better and more effective teachers; (b) information and training on course design, curriculum reform and testing, including the proper construction, implementation and validation of assessment techniques. The Unit will also play a key role in promoting **digital education** at UM by training and helping staff create multimedia materials for educational use, including conversion of traditionally-taught courses into blended and online products. This service will replace and augment considerably the present limited service of teacher training for young academics that we have been buying in for the last three years from academics at University of Toronto.

This University shall strive to use technology to showcase the excellent qualities of our best teachers to a global student audience via the strategic production of a number of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs): this would help to entice students to our lecture rooms and laboratories. Clearly, we shall have to reflect on the effects on our limited resources which such an initiative might have as an attractant of overseas non-fee-paying EU students although this concern would be at variance with our mission to become a regionally-significant provider of higher education of quality.

Our excellent IT services and resources shall be utilised to urge and encourage our tutors to adapt their teaching to include blended learning without which we may not be able to increase the student population especially that of employed learners (evening and part-time students). To its credit, the University already attracts quite a number of such students: however it is important that we become even more accessible to this large swathe of potential learners if we are to reach European goals of graduate education and if we are to make our University a truly Life Long Learning institution. I am currently working with colleagues on the elaboration and the setting up of a system designed to **recognise prior**



learning (RPL) which aims at evaluating and giving formal credit to learning outcomes claimed to have been acquired by applicants from their place of work, other institutions or elsewhere. This system will better allow non-traditional learners to access University programmes via customised learning plans which will be designed to make up, where necessary, for any identified critical gaps in their knowledge that could hinder them from progressing with profit through a course leading to successful completion, even on a part-time day or evening basis.

Recognition of prior learning, including both experiential and certified knowledge, will also be a means of providing safe bridging arrangements for **vocational students** if and where these measures are required: these learners may find the academic environment of the University unfamiliar and perhaps not easy to manage and I feel strongly that we should help such students overcome the difficulties in order to make a success of their studies. We need to explore how best to go about this and perhaps invest money in the project in order to make it happen more effectively and it would be money well-spent. We should not stop vocational students at the door, and once inside, every effort should be made to counsel, support and encourage them.

At this point, I wish to assert most clearly my position on the relationship between UM and the local principal providers of vocational education, namely the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS). I strongly believe that these institutions have

a crucially important national mission, no lesser than that of the University. Our roles are different but complementary and the relationship should be synergistic not competitive. I will do everything in my power to ensure that there is no duplication of effort, hence cost, and to ensure maximum complementarity not least by paving the way to as seamless a transition as possible for students wishing to proceed from MCAST or ITS to UM.

Our commitment to quality assurance (QA) in teaching and learning must be unflinching and total and we would need to adopt, adapt or devise performance indicators that allow us to measure the effects that the QA effort would be expected to produce. We mustn't waste academics' and administrators' time and squander public money on perfunctory undertakings: meaningful QA measures have to deliver. I am not satisfied that we have managed to properly embrace and internalise the processes of quality assurance and we may need to perhaps explore new approaches in order to embed this culture firmly and permanently. The precepts of the Bologna Process have been and will remain our inspiration and guiding lights for the way forward.

Students should not be seen as customers or clients of our services but collaborators in the educational effort. When we teach them in the lecture rooms, in the field, at the bedside and in laboratories, we learn from this shared experience as much as they do albeit in a different way.

We shall ensure that **students with special needs** shall continue to be catered for properly and supported in a

manner that is truly beneficial for them through a policy of inclusion motivated by responsible assisted provision. Having managed to make it to university, no doubt impelled by greater fortitude and effort than others less encumbered and with fewer hurdles to overcome, these formidable individuals are entitled to continue to be helped to learn more, including that most important lesson of how to be as independent as possible. We owe them no less than that.

I believe that students have to become even more effective **partners in governance** of UM than is the case now. For this purpose, I shall lobby Government to change the law in order to allow a significant increase in the student membership on Senate. Moreover, I shall propose to Senate that the Admissions Board includes student members; and that graduate students sit and be an integral part of the Board of the Doctoral School which I propose should be set up to replace the current Ph.D. Committee (*vide infra*).

I would also engage in discussion with Government for a relative increase in student participation on the Council as part of the reform prospected by the University of Malta Act. Significant student involvement in university governance is a Bologna Accord precept and affirms the belief that students are not passive receivers of higher

education but intelligent cooperators and partners in communities of scholars.

The UM has a large student body and it is unlikely that the need of students to seek help from the Education Commissioner will be eliminated but we will strive to minimise student dissatisfaction and increase their confidence in the ability of the University to understand, be sympathetic and respond to their reasonable needs. Towards this end, I will ask Senate to consider providing students with a **system of appeals** from any administrative decisions including those taken by disciplinary boards.

In the quest for a more satisfied and larger student body, we shall not compromise our high educational standards: the degrees that UM awards must remain a guarantee that intended learning outcomes which reflect best practices and cutting edge knowledge have truly been acquired. We shall continue to use and bring over external examiners in order to ensure that our standards remain robust and of international quality. This is indeed the ultimate measure that assures us of the high quality of our degrees and explains why our graduates have been developing successfully and with ease their postgraduate education in the best universities in Europe, USA and Asia.





3

INTERNATIONALISATION

The University is currently hosting about 900 overseas students accounting for about 8% of the student body: the attraction of UM to **international students** is inextricably linked with that of Malta itself. The presence of overseas students is salutary for themselves and beneficial for campus life and the local student experience; it is also good for the general economy as resident international students are long-term “tourists” to the Island. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, international students who leave with a degree from UM remain the best ambassadors of the country, provided the experience is overall positive.

Students coming to UM on an **Erasmus exchange** were this year 335, making us a so-called “importer university”, i.e. receiving more than we send, a characteristic we share with UK and Irish universities. About 270 local students went abroad to other European universities during 2015, and we manage to spend all funds deriving from the Erasmus programme (around € 0.5 million) to maximize the number of outgoing students.

The total experience gained by students on these 3 or 6 month study visits abroad is unparalleled and one hopes that the EU continues to increase the funds available for this programme as it will allow us to send more students and staff on these exchanges. It is notable that a few Faculties may not be promoting enough this excellent opportunity and I shall strive to convince them to review and change this situation, because all UM students should be given a chance to exploit the Erasmus experience and broaden their educational vistas.

We have managed to attract hundreds of (non-Erasmus) EU students to the University and several scores from non-EU countries. The latter, unlike the former, pay fees that have contributed significantly to earnings for the University that extended the State budget by a fifth (20%): no mean feat when one considers that EU universities (UK institutions excluded) generally manage to generate much less of their spend from self-earned sources. We need to improve this record to attract more fee-paying international students to our campuses. I intend to discuss with Government with a

view to finding a “smart way” forward to enable this influx to bring in needed funds to the University without harming in any way the interests of long-term resident learners.

We will continue to collaborate with prestigious foreign universities and important institutions in the delivery of **double and joint degree** programmes, especially at master and doctoral level, where such collaboration and double badging is salutary to our reputation and interest. Such initiatives serve to expose our students to a wider international faculty and can provide them with access to research facilities and educational experiences not available locally.

We will promote other initiatives intended to attract visitors and students from other countries with an academic or professional interest to whom we could offer our

academic expertise and fine logistical facilities for short courses (summer or winter “schools”) wrapped around a cultural programme that exploits the best of Malta’s touristic attributes. Where additional academic capacity would be needed, such initiatives would be organized in close partnership with higher education institutions from abroad.

In the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), an internationalisation strategy is also understood to imply the presence on the teaching staff of **international faculty**: in recent years, and stemming from the improvement of working conditions, including betterment of salaries, UM has managed to attract an important number of expatriate staff. International faculty now comprise about 10 % of the resident teaching staff.



RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The University of Malta is not just an excellent teaching institution which responds to national needs as and when required: it is also becoming a place of active and productive research which endeavour serves to justify its name and true pedigree.

More than ever before, through their research, our academic staff are producing significant bodies of new knowledge in the sciences, medicine and engineering as well as the arts, social sciences and the humanities. These achievements serve not only to develop the scholar, propelling her towards and up the professorial scales, but are intrinsically important and in the national and indeed global interest. Thus, for example, research in the social sciences and the arts has capacity to enrich the quality of life and cultural sophistication of the community through generation of information that informs decisions on challenging social, cultural or economic issues. Research in these areas will be as strongly supported as that in the science, medical and engineering areas.

The number of students enrolled on research-based degrees, both at master and especially at doctoral level, has been increasing steadily: the number of students doing a master by research currently stands at 438, while those following doctoral research degrees (Ph.D.s) amount to 307, i.e. a total of 7% of the student population is actively involved in discovery. While this number is vastly superior to that obtaining a decade ago, we definitely need to continue to escalate it, aiming to at least doubling the percentage of research students by 2021. I also feel the emphasis on research should shift away from master-level work to doctoral level research and from reliance on part-time to full-time work. Currently, only 35% of research master students and 40% of doctoral students work full-time on their degrees.





It is fair to say that the doctoral programme at UM has really taken off during the last few years, with 2015 celebrating 30 completed Ph.D.s. This record needs to be broken year on year and this can be done only if **more academics take on doctoral students**. Considering only doctoral level resident academic staff (i.e. excluding part-timers and assistant lecturer grade resident staff who are themselves still working on their own Ph.D.s and so cannot act as supervisors for other students), the research student (master + doctor) to staff ratio at UM is currently 1.3; however the doctoral student to staff ratio across the university is only 0.55 which compares poorly with research-intensive universities (where the ratio is typically about 1.3): I look forward to a target of at least doubling this ratio within the next 5 years.

This increase would clearly require increased funding, most of which having to derive largely from external national or international competitive sources. From its recurrent expenditure, the University reserves an extremely modest budget for research, which it tries to bolster by funds raised via the recently set up Research, Innovation and Development Trust. Unfortunately, local philanthropy is scant and there is no culture of endowment by alumni towards their University. One could explore ways to encourage people to gift their *alma*

mater as an investment in their future wellbeing. Meanwhile, the intensity of the research effort will likely remain critically reliant on external funds.

Doctoral students, upon which the bulk of the research effort rests, have to be financially supported because they also need subsistence while on study and at their stage in life, it is unreasonable to expect these students to remain entirely dependent on their families. Thus, until the question of the funding of doctoral students is properly addressed, one cannot expect to improve the research effort by much, even if physical space and powerful and expensive instrumental resources are acquired. Students working on funded research projects are normally reasonably well served from the specific funds allocated to the project; other students need to fend for themselves and, to boot, also have to pay registration fees.

We need to reflect on this matter if we truly want to help Malta reach EU standards with respect to Research, Technology, Development and Innovation (RTDI) targets. Thus, the University could mitigate the problem somewhat by offering Ph.D. students the opportunity to tutor undergraduates or help in other ways with the work of Departments and Institutes. Such experience is enriching

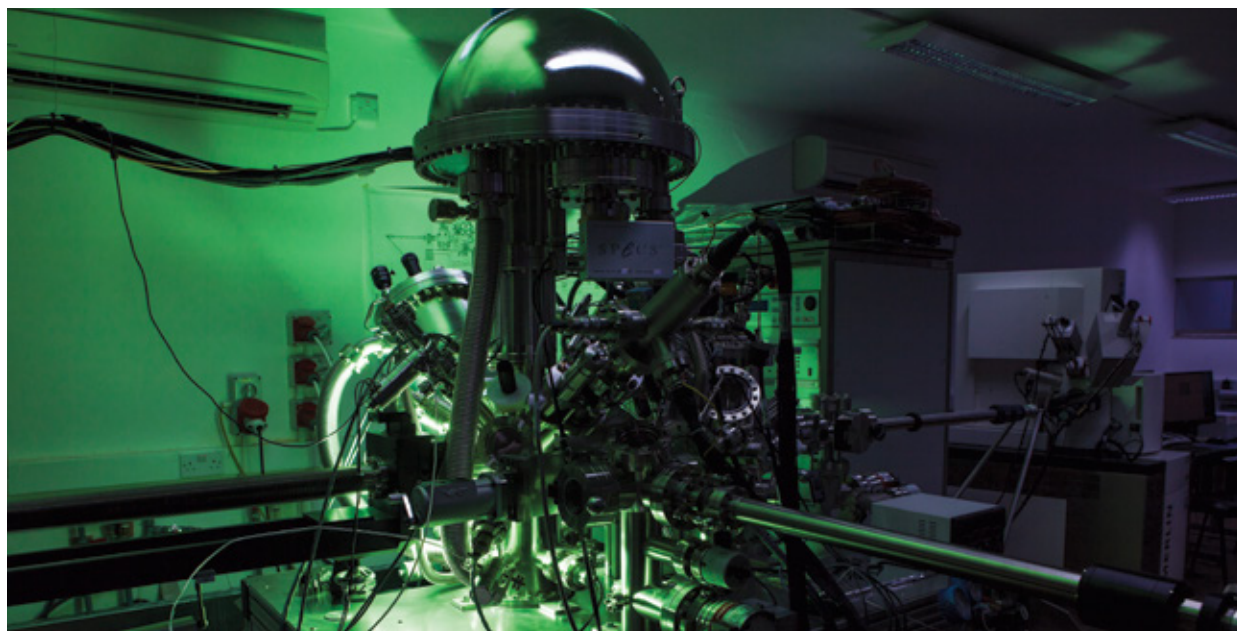
and would allow them additional and precious insights into the meaning of becoming a doctor of philosophy, apart from providing them with funds. The experience will also enhance their CVs and facilitate their eventual insertion in the work market. To help bring about this change, we should seriously consider shifting our reliance for certain auxiliary services away from casual and visiting part-time staff towards doctoral students to the extent that this is possible.

Our academics compete for European research funds and several have established centres of excellence built, partly, on such funds from where doctoral students are pursuing research degrees and publishing in top journals and participating at international conferences. EU funds remain our principal source of money for research but the associated bureaucracy required to compete for them is definitely deterring able academics from considering them: facilitating this process by providing all necessary assistance to busy academics is a priority and should substantially promote the research effort. To this end I had worked with my colleagues in the previous Rectorate on the setting up of a **Research Support Services Directorate**

intended to provide assistance to staff in competing for and winning funds for research. The directorate, which will be launched in the coming months, should help identify funding opportunities, develop research grant proposals, manage the financial and administrative aspects of gained projects and contribute to post-award evaluation. As Rector I now intend to ensure that this neonatal initiative blooms and flourishes.

I also mean to promote initiatives to increase the population of **postdoctoral researchers**, a very recent presence at UM. I am of the view that these researchers should be more actively involved in the training of master and doctoral students where they could participate in guiding the research effort or assisting resident academics develop the research agenda.

Besides additional significant money to support the researchers and their proximate needs, escalation of the research effort would also require improved library resources and more space. Some space should be materialising shortly as the Postdoc Centre nears complete refurbishing, thanks to the foresight and effort of the previous Rectorate.



A significant increase in research output will not only enhance the quality of graduate and undergraduate teaching, and also the national standing in the RTDI league table, but it would also improve the University's global ranking position (Webometrics presently places **UM in the top 5% of world universities**, conservatively estimated as covering 25,000 institutions): nevertheless to achieve a significant increase in research outcomes, requires considerably more funds than are currently available to UM. However and that aside, a university that does not display well and effectively its scholarly productions cannot expect to be appreciated as a research-producing university. We need to showcase more effectively the research productions of our staff.

We need to establish an IT-based system which captures and tracks all peer-reviewed publications of staff in the form of papers in journals, books and conference contributions, which system would be able to provide us with figures for each year. Information from such system would form the basis for a key performance indicator of the **research intensity** of the various departments within the University. Without such basic information, we cannot be sure whether and how we are performing in this crucial area of our core mission.

I shall be supportive of developing and adopting a policy of **'open access'** publication based on the placing on UM's institutional repository of all peer-reviewed research productions of its academics subject, where necessary, to periods of moratoria in line with the recommendations of the European Commission.

I will also strive to improve the research experience of our doctoral students through the setting up of a **Doctoral School** led by a Director of Doctoral and Post-Doctoral

Studies who would be academically and administratively responsible for graduate programmes and post-doctoral experiences; this academic will share responsibility for doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows with the Dean of Faculty pertaining to the discipline involved in the research programme. A dedicated Pro-Rector tasked with the job of promoting and improving the quality and intensity of the scholarship of research will work closely with the Director of the Doctoral School.

From high quality research may flow ideas and innovations that can be turned into commercial products and services that enrich both the researchers themselves and the institution; indeed, while personal or independent research is of benefit to the academic because it allows her or him to climb the academic ladder on account of the publications that flow from such work, at UM we have been supporting another style of discovery, namely, **corporate research**, undertaken in pursuit of some objective of national or even international importance. In 2009, the University established the Corporate Research and Knowledge Transfer Office with the mission of driving this agenda. We established on campus the first business incubator, dubbed TAKEOFF, tasked with bringing together researchers, innovators, aspiring entrepreneurs and investors in order that ideas in science, engineering, or other creative disciplines can be turned into knowledge-based startup businesses.

We shall undertake to help ensure that this and similar initiatives continue to develop and to spawn, eventually off campus, as fruitful and significant enterprises possibly in a fully-fledged science park that would serve to increase the productivity of the national workforce by high value-added activities.



5

SERVICE AND OUTREACH

I firmly believe that service to society forms an integral part of the scholarship of academics. The “ivory tower” picture of academics beavering away in their labs and other places of research at Tal-Qroqq is a parody of reality: those many of us who give professional services to society, government and private industry gain real-life experiences which enrich our teaching and research capabilities while contributing to development.

The importance of meaningful interaction and intimate contact between the University and society at large, including local industry, cannot be over-emphasised: I am indeed aware of the constant communications of several of our staff with industrial concerns including the manufacturing, financial and service industries. Academics’ contribution to the public discourse through the media is of course well visible and I would argue not sufficiently exploited: society is always interested in what professors have to say.

The commercial arm of UM, namely Malta University Holding Company (MUHC), is working reasonably well. MUHC and its subsidiaries are venturing into promising

new areas of business that could seriously boost earnings in future and I shall do my utmost to ensure that they continue to improve our financial sustainability.

I shall support the setting up of a formal **University Outreach Forum** that would provide a meeting place for discussion from which ideas would flow to influence development and adaptation of our teaching programmes in response to emergent needs as identified by industrial and other social leaders and government. Perhaps, even more importantly, such interactions would promote closer collaboration with the industrial sector through which we could convince Government to provide financial support for the establishment of **knowledge transfer partnerships** as happens elsewhere: this recommendation has been recently made to Government by the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry and I would be supportive of such an initiative.

The Forum will not only consider links with industry but others as well since at UM we have experts that can (and already often do) contribute to developments in such areas



as social work, health services, heritage, foreign affairs, tourism, libraries & archives, etc.

Outreach service goes beyond individual and corporate professional inputs and I think we need to do more in this area: both staff and students should participate in this mission that speaks to the University's role of being an important agent of change in society at all levels. Thus, emplacing our dental clinic and its students within a particular residence for the elderly was a powerful example of outreach service which should hopefully inspire similar initiatives, perhaps related to agricultural communities, youth work, sports, musical and other artistic environments, etc.

Another excellent initiative already in place is the work performed by the Cottonera Resource Centre: it is particularly painful to a Bormla-born person like me to see so few of the young men and women from that area making it to our University. And, of course, the Cottonera is symbolic of all those sections of our community for whom UM does not appear to exist. We must work with school leaders and local councils to find ways and means to make the University better known to these less-than-privileged members of our community. We need to facilitate to the greatest extent possible their aspiration for higher learning, and access to university, even if it involves targeted extra support at the Junior College and vigorous and meaningful encouragement in the secondary schools of the area.

JUNIOR COLLEGE, MATSEC AND RELATED ISSUES

The University of Malta also includes within its fold the Junior College, having a dedicated teaching staff and administrative setup that delivers post-secondary courses leading to the Matriculation Certificate in several subjects: this certification is the main (but not only) passport to the undergraduate programmes at Tal-Qroqq. The Junior College is thus an important feeder to the University as are the several other Church and Independent sixth-forms that offer post-secondary education. Our mission at Tal-Qroqq can only succeed well if these partners-in-education are themselves successful in their work and it is in the University's and the national interest that we work together towards common aims, respectful of each other's place in the educational platform upon which rests the social and economic wellbeing of our community.

The **role of the MATSEC** certification and examination system needs to be reflected upon and, if necessary, modified to suit changing realities. We must tread carefully here because mistakes could produce undesirable long-lasting outcomes: such a project can only be undertaken fruitfully together with our partners in education, first and foremost, the Ministry for Education and Employment. There are other developments that need to be considered both for the secondary school examination (SEC) and the Advanced Matriculation system. In both SEC and Advanced Matriculation examinations, I will strongly support a system that rewards students and acknowledges achievement at different levels.

Moreover, we need to reflect on the reasons why we are failing to retain in education about one third of the cohort of potential learners at secondary school. In partnership with our colleagues at the Ministry for Education and Employment, we could help in the design of appealing curricula and bespoke assessment methods for these adolescents: together with the other stakeholders, we should strive to not leave any adolescent behind in education.



THE CAMPUS, FINANCES AND UNIVERSITY OF MALTA ACT

The campus is currently in the throes of development with huge and gaping holes being dug in the ground in preparation for new structures as planned for the Sustainable Living Complex and the Engineering Labs to emerge instead. These works will of course continue on schedule and I will be pushing to ensure that the buildings, which will enrich the University, are delivered on time.

Council has recently approved the private-public partnership agreement for the University Residence and Community Complex and this development, which should hopefully be completed by 2018, will enhance the quality of the entire campus and make studying and working at the University more convenient and enjoyable to students and staff alike.

The previous rector and his team have already planned and mapped out other new buildings, namely, the Postdoc and Creative Labs Complex and the Clinical and Healthcare Sciences Complex as well as several improvement works.

These plans are described in some detail in a document titled “Framework agreement to safeguard the autonomy and financial sustainability of the University of Malta” dated (in revised form) 14th August 2011 which Rector Camilleri had submitted to Government for discussion and which I endorse.

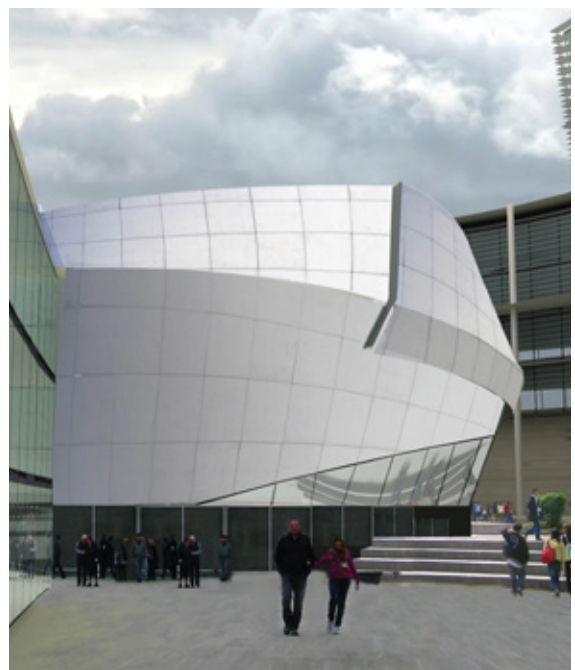
Having formed an integral part of the previous planning team I cannot but have a strong personal stake in ensuring that the plans for physical development of the campus will materialise broadly as described in that and other associated documents, subject to any changes as may be dictated by circumstances or new ideas that my peers and colleagues might propose. I will also pursue the issues identified in said document pertaining to the inventory of property of the University: again, this in order to place the institution on surer grounds that promise greater future sustainability and less dependence on direct state funding.

In pursuit of the same purpose, my team will engage further with Government over the method of financing of



the University and we will encourage to consider viable alternatives to the current model in order to give the Institution more financial autonomy and more impetus for faster and sustainable development.

Naturally, I am very much aware of the fact that the legislative framework that determines the governance of UM is being considered for change: I shall do my utmost to ensure that the **new University of Malta Act** will respect better the autonomy of the institution and allow it to develop and thrive in a manner that is less encumbered than at present. I feel confident that the mutually trustful working relationship I have with the country's educational authorities will translate into a constructive dialogue on this important subject. In a scenario where Malta is actively being turned into a hub of higher education services presumably targeting mainly international students, UM should not be left chained to a system which stifles any hope of it ever being able to leverage its assets in the competition for students in an effective manner.



THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

I have appointed five Pro-Rectors and shall also appoint Rector's Delegates and Representatives to assist me with administration. Delegates will have a more limited role than Pro-Rectors and will be mostly working in conjunction with a specific Pro-Rector, rather than on their own initiative, although the lines of communication between Rector and Delegate could be direct rather than always necessarily through the relevant Pro-Rector: this in order to avoid communication break-downs and other similar difficulties. Rector's Representatives will be appointed to deal with special commissions where the involvement of a Pro-Rector will not be necessary.

The Pro-Rectors will participate at Senate meetings together with the other representatives of this body. Pro-Rectors and Rector's Delegates will sit on the various committees of Council and Senate as are currently constituted.

The Rector and his team will need to work closely and in constant consultation with the fourteen Deans of Faculty and the Heads of the other entities. In particular, I would like to see continued and enhanced the productive relationship between the Rector and the College of Deans which relationship epitomises the fact that management of a complex organisation like a university cannot afford to be anything but collegial in nature.

The senior management structures of this University, as established to date will be retained and strengthened, unless a review of some of the functions would be called for in light of the forthcoming University of Malta Act. Thus, the Secretary, the Academic Registrar, and the eleven directors, namely for Finance; Legal Services; Human Resources; Procurement; International and EU Affairs; Estates and Works; Corporate Research and Knowledge Transfer; Communications and Alumni Relations; IT Services; Library Services; and the newly introduced (but not yet installed) Director of the Research Support Services Directorate will all continue to function as are in support of the range and



complexity of operations that characterise the University today. The work and personnel of the Project Support Office, which helps in the management of externally-funded research projects, will be subsumed within the Research Support Services Directorate.

The Administration Information Management System (AIMS) together with the Student Information Management System (SIMS) and its web portal (eSIMS) are providing an integrated and smooth platform for student and alumni records, human resources and financial and project management. As such, these systems will be consolidated and developed in the light of future logistic requirements.

We additionally need to have on board an IT-system to help manage lecture room allocation and time-tables in order to allow for best use of physical facilities and resources.

WORK ETHIC

The University is a small village hosting thousands of people between students and staff. My commitment is also that of ensuring a harmonious and happy workplace for all the staff, be they lecturers, administrators, technical officers or industrial employees. Together, we make up the top educational institution of the land and with the longest tradition: we have to work and cooperate together, respectful of each and every member of the organisation. All roles are important, in their own manner, for the smooth-running of this University.

Respectful also of our duties and obligations to the workplace and mindful of the fact that our students observe our acts and interactions with each other, which actions speak much louder than words, we should also educate within and beyond the lecture rooms by the way we work and interrelate together. We have a huge responsibility to our community of learners and the larger community beyond the campus: our mission is education and, to be taken seriously, we all need to work ethically and correctly.

And as the new Rector, I intend to lead by example.



L-AĦĦAR KELMA, B'ILSIENNA

Grazzi talli ħadtu l-hin biex taqraw dan id-dokument. Hu xieraq li l-aħħar kelma tinkiteb bil-Malti, ilsienna.

Jien inwiegħed li l-Università tibqa' tħares dan il-patrimonju nazzjonali prezzjuż, ċjoè, il-Malti, u tassigura li kull ċittadin Malti gradwat u edukat sewwa jkun ġie mogħni bl-għarfien xieraq ta' lingwitu li jagħtih timbru uniku u speċjali li jiddistingwih minn kull gradwat ieħor iffornat f'università li mhix l-Università ta' Malta. Iżda, irridu wkoll nagħrfu, kif jidhri li dejjem għamilna s'issa, illi fejn hemm ċirkostanzi serji partikolari jew diffikultajiet ikkawżati minn problemi reali li jimpedixxu lil dak li jkun li jissodisfa r-rekwiżit tal-Malti, allura tali persuna għandha tiġi mogħtija aċċess minkejja n-nuqqas li jkun hemm.

Nifhem illi istituzzjonijiet madwarna f'Malta m'għandhomx jew, jekk xi darba kellhom, abbandunaw din il-missjoni li jinsistu fuq il-bżonn li l-istudenti tagħhom ikunu tgħallmu l-Malti imma jien ċert u konvint li jekk l-Università ta' Malta tneħħi l-Malti mir-rekwiżiti li jgħoddu għall-istudenti tradizzjonali tagħha (ċjoè, dawk li ġejjin dritt mill-iskola post-sekondarja) allura dak il-pass ikun ifisser il-bidu tat-tmiem tar-rilevanza tal-ilsien Malti li f'qasir żmien jispiċċa mitluq mal-ilsna minsija jew mibdul f'xi balbuljata lingwistika li tifforna minflok ilsienna kif inhu llum.

Fl-aħħarnett nagħlaq billi nhegħeġ lil shabi kollha sabiex naħdmu bis-shiħ u bil-qalb flimkien mar-Rettoriat għaliex l-Università tagħna u pajjiżna ma jixirqilhom xejn inqas.



Prof. Alfred J. Vella

