



L-Università ta' Malta
Faculty for Social Wellbeing

Connect NEWSLETTER

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Welcome

Welcome to the 14th edition of the Connect Newsletter issued from the Office of the Dean. These have been extraordinary times yet somehow, we have managed to see it through as all the Faculty community dug in. Many thanks to the leadership shown by the Deputy Deans, Faculty Manager and Heads with the continuous support of the admin, RSOs and all the academic members of staff. Without everyone's contribution we would not have managed to keep offering the sterling service we gave to our students.

Prof. Andrew Azzopardi | Dean

Would you like to link up with the Faculty 'socials'?

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um.edu.mt/socialwellbeing/notices/connectnewsletter

Faculty activities in brief:

- ④ The Faculty slogan for this year, which happens to be the run up to the 10th Anniversary (August 2022) is, 'Hear' to engage. Over the past decade, the Faculty has made good on its objective to strengthen links with society, by developing partnerships with national and international stakeholders, including government entities, social services, businesses, civil society, and other institutions. All the while, the Faculty for Social Wellbeing is rooted in a primary commitment to academic freedom and institutional autonomy, with care for staff and students as a top priority. In taking a visionary approach to education, research, and innovation, and by bringing these together to strengthen social wellbeing, the Faculty has proven itself a valuable pioneer for wellbeing in the Maltese society.
- ④ In the run up to our **10th Anniversary**, the Faculty will be organising a number of special events to celebrate this day - more on that soon.
- ④ **Congratulations** to Prof. Joanne Cassar (Head, Department of Youth and Community Studies) for being **promoted** to Associate Professor.
- ④ The Faculty for Social Wellbeing is providing training to candidates contesting the **General Elections** in the area of social wellbeing.
- ④ Prof. Mary Anne Lauri (Department of Psychology) together with the Dean, Prof. Andrew Azzopardi continue to represent the Faculty on **Senate**.
- ④ Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane (Deputy Dean and Head, Department of Disability Studies) has been appointed **Head, Department of Gender and Sexualities** to replace Dr Marceline Naudi (Department of Gender and Sexualities). Kudos to Dr Naudi for services rendered.
- ④ Dr Mary Grace Vella has been **appointed as lecturer** with the Department of Criminology.
- ④ A **new academic** will be appointed with the Department of Psychology as from early next semester.
- ④ Ms Nicole Casha has been appointed as **administrative secretary** with the Department of Disability Studies, Ms Amira Rose Mamo and Ms Michaela Magro with the Department of Social Policy and Social Work, Ms Kristina Dimic with the Department of Youth and Community Studies and Ms Lucienne Gellel will be part of the Dean's Team within the Faculty Office.
- ④ Ms Stephanie Galea and Mr Claude Ebejer are two new **Faculty RSOs** working on a number of projects the Faculty is working on and which you can find on um.edu.mt/socialwellbeing
- ④ A new call for more **RSOs** to work with the Faculty has been issued as we are looking at new projects in the environmental, child protection, educational, domestic violence and voluntary sector.
- ④ Ms Charmaine Agius (Department of Gerontology and Dementia Studies) is the administrative lead of FREC. Ms Shirley Gilson (Faculty Office) together with Ms. Nicole Casha (Department of Disability Studies) are also acting as administrative support of FREC. Dr Ruth Falzon (Department of Counselling) has agreed to be nominated as Chair of the **FREC Committee**. I would like to thank the Deputy Dean, Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane for services rendered.
- ④ A **new Faculty collaborative research agreement** was signed with the Ministry for Social Accommodation.
- ④ **CROM** is a Child Observatory that has been set up in conjunction with *The Malta Trust Foundation and The Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society* in collaboration with the Faculty for Social Wellbeing and supported by the UM.
- ④ The **Dean's Award ceremony** will be taking place on line (Facebook Live) due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

- ⊗ **Societas.expert** is in its third edition this time round focusing on 'intersectionality'.
- ⊗ The 5th edition of **Unity**, the Faculty magazine, is at the printers.
- ⊗ The **Dean's Forum** will be postponed to a later date due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.
- ⊗ The first edition of the **Faculty 'Journal on Social Wellbeing'** has been launched. We are starting work on the second edition. um.edu.mt/socialwellbeing/digitalarchive/weeklydigest/224/firstjournalissue
- ⊗ The **Professorial-Senior Lecturers** mentoring programme has been launched.
- ⊗ Prof. Marilyn Clark (Department of Psychology) delivered a paper in the **Professorial Lecture Series**.
- ⊗ **Prof. Maureen Cole** (Department of Social Policy and Social Work) and Prof. Joanne Cassar (Department of Youth and Community Studies) were promoted to Professor.
- ⊗ **2 Ph.D. scholarships** funded by CRPD have been issued and will shortly be awarded.
- ⊗ **2 Ph.D. scholarships** will be awarded in the area of addictions.
- ⊗ Dr Ruth Falzon (Department of Counselling), Prof. Marilyn Clark (Department of Psychology) and the Dean, Prof. Andrew Azzopardi, have **edited the text**, '*Perspectives on Wellbeing: Applications from the Field*' which will be published in the coming months.
- ⊗ Work on the new plans is developing nicely by the UM Periti for the **Faculty building**.
- ⊗ Apart from the **Vlog** and the **radio show Konnekt** we are also about to launch a **Podcast** that will be led by students of the Faculty. *More on this shortly.*
- ⊗ We are working on launching new **Faculty merchandise** for this coming academic year.
- ⊗ Faculty merchandise is also being sent to **secondary schools**.
- ⊗ The main **Faculty corridor** is undergoing a revamp with the setting up of a number of murals to celebrate the run-up to the 10th Anniversary.
- ⊗ Prof. Saviour Formosa (Department of Criminology) has once again submitted to the media a detailed **Crimemalta annual report**.
- ⊗ Academic staff have submitted around **100 papers** during this academic year.
- ⊗ Various members of the academic body sit on **Senate Committees** and **Joint Council/Senate committees**.
- ⊗ Dr Gianmarco Alberti delivered a session on **quantitative research** organised by the RSPC.
- ⊗ The **College of Heads, the Faculty Ph.D. Committee and the Faculty Board** kept meeting regularly notwithstanding the pandemic. Their operations have temporarily been transferred on-line.
- ⊗ The Ph.D. sub-committee made up of Prof. Mary Anne Lauri (Department of Psychology), Prof. Paul Bartolo (Department of Psychology), Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane (Department of Disability Studies and Deputy Dean) and Dr Clarissa Sammut Scerri (Department of Family Studies) organised a successful 'get to know me' seminar for all our **Faculty M.Phil./Ph.D. candidates**.
- ⊗ We have worked hard on **marketing** our Faculty and Departments with a fresh new design, new streamers, new billboards, new radio clips, articles on newspapers and new Facebook and Instagram content. An estimated 300 newspaper articles were posted on the Faculty during these 7 months – you can find most of them here: um.edu.mt/socialwellbeing
- ⊗ The project on **mapping out of the research gaps** – a major task being led by Dr Pat Bonello (Department of Social Policy and Social Work) and Dr Kristina Bettenzana (Department of Psychology and Deputy Dean) with the support of Ms. Dorianne Cortis will be launched shortly.
- ⊗ Dr Kristina Bettenzana (Department of Psychology and Deputy Dean) has presented a report on **plagiarism** to the College of Heads.

- ⊗ An **Open Dialogue** was held to discuss 'pro-life' and 'pro-choice' arguments.
- ⊗ An **on-line interview** was held with Daniel Holmes, an event held in collaboration with Lovin Malta.
- ⊗ Students and staff voted for the **Jacqueline's Social Engagement Award 2021** theme the Faculty should focus on. The chosen theme was 'social justice'.
- ⊗ Reb Xiberras was nominated by her students' colleagues for the **Social Engagement Award** and was the winner for this year.
- ⊗ The lifetime achievement award was given to **Sr Adele Baldacchino** (known as 'il-mama tal-prigunieri') for her incessant support to prisoners.
- ⊗ The Dean, Prof. Andrew Azzopardi has had **cordial meetings** with the new Commissioner of Police, Mr Angelo Gafa'. He was accompanied by Dr Sandra Scicluna (Head, Department of Criminology), Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane (Deputy Dean) and Ms Charlene Fabri (PA to the Dean)
- ⊗ The Faculty launched **Student Research Scholarships** for the first time.
um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/465385/studentresearchschorarship.pdf
- ⊗ The **Research and Publications Sub-Committee** led by Dr Ruth Falzon (Department of Counselling) and with the administrative support of Ms Lucienne Gellel (Department of Social Policy and Social Work) have worked tirelessly. Kudos also to Dr Ruth Falzon (Department of Counselling) for her work in leading the **B.A. (Hons) in Social Wellbeing Studies** with the support of Ms Dorianne Cortis and Ms Shirley Gilson (Faculty Office).
- ⊗ Prof. Marilyn Clark (Department of Psychology), Dr Sandra Scicluna (Department of Criminology), Dr Janice Formosa Pace (Department of Youth and Community Studies) and Dr Trevor Calafato (Department of Criminology) were involved in a consultative document commissioned by UREC on how to complete **ethics with inmates in prisons**. They have just submitted the reviewed version.
- ⊗ Once again, the Faculty organised the **Academics, Students and Administrators satisfaction survey**. Outcomes are on the public domain on the Faculty website.
- ⊗ An **Open Dialogue** was held called, 'Hands Off the Voluntary Sector!'. It was well-attended.
- ⊗ The **Let's Toast the Faculty** event will be organised once again this year.
- ⊗ A **Faculty Seminar: Suspended lives? The long-term impact of COVID-19 across the lifespan** was held in collaboration with the Office of the President of Malta.
- ⊗ 'Love, Connections and Relationships' is the second in the Webinar Series 'In search of community inclusion: young people with disabilities and relationships', organised by the Commission for the Rights of Persons of Persons with Disability, the Department of Disability Studies at the Faculty for Social Wellbeing and Opening Doors Association, Malta.
um.edu.mt/newspoint/events/um/2021/03/loveconnectionsrelationships
- ⊗ The Faculty for Social Wellbeing made its voice heard in a new memorandum as part of the **Rector's election** um.edu.mt/newspoint/news/2021/03/voices-heard-memorandum
- ⊗ A **Webinar** delivered by Prof. Mario Cardano was held Online on Qualitative Data Analysis and Textualization to UG & PG Students, academic staff and open for anyoneThe **2nd LGBTIQ Research Symposium** was held on the 21st and 22nd April, 2021.
- ⊗ Mr Paul Caruana (Department of Criminology) presented a paper on Stalking in Malta - From perception, to coping and support as part of the **Brown Bag Seminars**.

- ④ Prof. Marvin Formosa (Department of Gerontology & Dementia Studies) has been elected as Fellow of the **Gerontological Society of America** on the basis that he *“has taken a major lead in the education of successive cohorts of gerontologists through his leadership of his home department. He has introduced new postgraduate degrees in ageing and dementia studies as well as re-visioning the focus of his academic location. He has introduced new postgraduate degrees in ageing and dementia studies as well as re-visioning the focus of his academic location”*.
- ④ Prof. Marvin Formosa has been re-appointed as **Malta’s Country Team Leader** for Wave 9 of The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE). He also acted as consultant to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in its drafting of the ‘Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing in Europe’. Prof. Marvin Formosa delivered a keynote titled ‘Lifelong learning in later life’ at the National Conference on Active Ageing organised by the Ministry for Senior Citizens and Active Ageing on 11th June 2021. Prof. Marvin Formosa participated in an international seminar on ‘Education and Learning of Older Adults’ organised by the Center for Research in Adult Education and Community Intervention, University of Algarve (23rd June 2021).
- ④ On the occasion of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, which fell on 15th June 2021, Dr Maria Aurora Fenech (Department of Gerontology and Dementia Studies) presented the paper, ‘Missing voices: Older persons’ insights’. The paper was presented during a webinar organised by the Maltese Association of Geriatrics and Gerontology (MAGG), in collaboration with the International Network for the prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA). Dr Fenech is an MAGG Council member. She is also INPEA’s National Representative. The presentation brought together a project which Dr Fenech coordinated with the students reading for the Higher Diploma in Gerontology and Geriatrics and BA (Hons) in Social Wellbeing Studies. The paper presented older persons’ narratives in respect of their experiences related to their breaching of human rights or otherwise during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ④ Prof. Angela Abela has been appointed **external examiner** at the School of Medicine, University College Dublin for the M.Sc. in Systemic Psychotherapy and Invited to be part of an expert group to give input on the current work and development of the International Commission on Couple and Family Relationships. She has also been appointed member of an international advisory board meeting of the International CopiaGloba Research project led by Prof. Anna Ronka of the University Yvaskyla Finland.
- ④ Prof. Angela Abela is **co-author** in this paper: Sargent, J. and Abela, A. Psychiatrists’ perceptions of schizophrenia and its recovery in the Maltese context: A thematic analyses in Borcsa, M.&Willig, C. (Eds.) (2021) Qualitative Research Methods in Mental Health: Innovative and Collaborative Approaches. Cham, Ch: Springer International.
- ④ Abela, A., Grech Lanfranco, I., Sammut Scerri, C. et al (2020-2022) **Pilot study** to evaluate the effectiveness of the screening procedures and some of the interventions which will be offered as part of the Positive Parenting Strategy. This pilot project focuses on mental health support for parents and the relationship between them, during the perinatal period, and is being led by the Department of Family Studies together with professionals within the Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, midwives, the perinatal mental health service. It is studying the efficacy of the measures provided and the innovative screening measures that are being adopted. This study is being led by UM with the support of the Ministry for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children’s Rights, the Ministry of Health and the Interministerial Task Force responsible for the implementation of the Positive Parenting Strategy.

- ④ Abela, A., Vella, S. & Piscopo, S. 2020 - 2023 Blended Families with Children in Malta with a Special Focus on Their Resilience. The **study** has been commissioned by the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society in collaboration with the University of Malta. The study will explore what is known about the different trajectories in the formation of blended families in Malta, the key stages and processes that such families navigate and how these differ from those in a traditional family; the experience of the various family members – the couple, the partners and the children - of living in a blended family and the challenges that blended families with children face in the various stages and processes of their blended family life trajectory and how they succeed in overcoming the difficulties that may arise
- ④ Grech Lanfranco, I., Sammut Scerri, C., & Abela, A. 2021-2023. in conjunction with VIDD Norway. Curriculum in Family Therapy and Systemic Practice: Students' Experiences and Competencies. This **study** aims to assess the students' experiences in their continuing education on the MFTSP course at the University of Malta, by exploring how the students perceive the usefulness, the applicability of the programme and as well as which competencies they are developing as they progress through the programme of studies.
- ④ Dr Clarissa Sammut Scerri (Department of Family Studies) was **Country representative** on the 2020 COST Action CA19106 Multi sectoral responses to Child Abuse and Neglect in Europe: Incidence and Trends (Euro – CAN) and member of the working group on Child Maltreatment in the time of Covid-19. She was also invited by National Statistics Office (NSO), to participate as EXPERT in 2nd focus group to pilot a Eurostat Survey questionnaire on Gender-based violence against women and other forms of interpersonal violence (EU- GBV) on 23rd April, 2021.
- ④ The Department of Family Studies academics were involved in a number of **professional development sessions**, namely; Grounded Theory Webinar held on the 12th of March, 2021 (4hrs) organised by the Coalition for Grounded Theory featuring presentations from the main proponents of Grounded Theory. Working with Trauma: Building stories of Hope and Resilience - a series of three, 2.5-hour webinars, during the week of the 15th of March, 2021 (15th, 17th and 19th) organised by AFT Manchester Branch, Virtual Symposium. Using all your colours - A creative course, aiming to be restorative and informative, through painting, group discussions and reflections, held between 11th March to 6th of May, 2021 organised for family therapists and systemic practitioners by Elaine Holliday and Chiara Santin, UK. Getting more research done – during Covid-19 by Prof Vernon Gayle, University of Edinburgh, and Co-Director of the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods, UK, held on the 30th of April, 2021. Teaching Research Methods in the Era of Covid-19. Learning through Doing by Prof Melanie Nind, Ms Debbie Collings and Dr Sarah Lewthaite, University of Southampton, organised by the National Centre of Research Methods, UK and held between the 4th of May to the 11th of May, 2021. Post Graduate Research supervision: Challenges and Styles a webinar (2 hrs) on the 5th of May with a Follow up seminar (2 hrs) on the 2nd of June, organised by the Doctoral School and the office for Professional Academic Development, University of Malta. Breaking the News – Virtual Master Class (2 hrs) by Prof Froma Walsh, Professor Emeritus, University of Chicago, Co- Founder and Co-Director, Chicago Center for Family Health, organised by the Positive Parenting Task Force, Malta on the 4th of June, 2021.
- ④ The Department of Counselling organised a **Summer School** in Transcultural issues in children and adolescents in July and August.
- ④ The Department of Counselling **launched** the M.Couns. (Gozo).
- ④ The Department of Counselling got approval to run the **PGC in Adlerian Counselling** to be launched in February 2022.

- ④ The Department of Counselling will be hosting **Fulbright** Professor Fred Bemak starting in October 2021/22.
- ④ The Department of Counselling will be organising a **Departmental Research Conference** in October.
- ④ Dr Gianmarco Alberti (Department of Criminology) **published** a free and open-source software that models landscape/human movement interaction
um.edu.mt/newspoint/news/2021/05/open-source-software-movement?utm_source=update&utm_campaign=upd
- ④ The Department of Criminology led by Dr Sandra Scicluna were catalysts in the signing of an **MoU** with the Academy of Discipline Forces and the Malta Police Force.
- ④ Dr Anne Marie Callus (Department of Disability Studies) **published** an article in the December 2020 edition of 'Societas.Expert' magazine bearing the following title: 'Working with persons with intellectual disability through self-advocacy' (pp. 27-28).
um.edu.mt/socialwellbeing/digitalarchive/weeklydigest/195/societasexpert2
- ④ Ms Amy Camilleri Zahra (Department of Disability Studies) **published** an article on the British Journal of Guidance and Counselling bearing the title: 'Enabling counsellors: The social construction of disability among Maltese counsellors'. tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03069885.2020.1856782
- ④ Ms Amy Camilleri Zahra (Department of Disability Studies) was invited by the Gender Issues Committee of UM to attend a **round table discussion** with Minister Carmelo Abela. The meeting, held on the 29th January 2021, was set to discuss issues related to the new employment law.
- ④ Ms Amy Camilleri Zahra (Department of Disability Studies) contributed to an **article** about the role of the Department of Disability Studies in Newsbook by means of an interview which was carried out by the Dean, Prof. Andrew Azzopardi.
- ④ Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane (Deputy Dean) was part of **panel** in MFOPD a webinar - Voice of persons with disability
- ④ Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane (Deputy Dean) gave a **keynote** at the Webinar: Love, Connections and Relationships
- ④ Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane (Deputy Dean) **presented** the final report on the research conducted as part of the MOU with Agenzija Sapport. The research project is entitled 'Positive Parenting Project' and addresses experiences of disabled parents and supports required.
- ④ Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane (Deputy Dean) **chaired** the Malta LGBT Right's Movement's (MGRM) AGM
- ④ Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane (Deputy Dean) published an article in ToM re Women with Disability
- ④ Dr Anne Marie Callus (Department of Disability Studies) **presented** in the 'Improving accessibility to cultural heritage in the streets of Valletta: online public discussion' on the 24th March 2021. Organised by the Department of Conservation and Built Heritage, Faculty for the Built Environment
- ④ Dr Anne Marie Callus (Department of Disability Studies) presented in the webinar on Employment Research on the 26th March 2021 organised by the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability
- ④ Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane (Deputy Dean) **writes** a monthly short informative page on disability issues for the online platform Skoperta. skoperta.net/author/claire
- ④ Prof. Mario Cardano gave online lectures to M.A. and Ph.D. students of the Faculty.

- ④ Ms Solange Bonello (whose letter of intent was approved by the Faculty's Ph.D. committee) was awarded the **CRPD Ph.D. scholarship**.
- ④ The Faculty on behalf of the UM signed an **MOU** with CRPD that includes an award to be presented to a postgraduate Disability Studies student who obtains the highest mark for their dissertation during the Faculty's annual Dean's Award Ceremony, organising an annual conference on disability issues and a grant of €10,000 that will be used towards the funding of two new research projects; This academic year one will be investigating service provision in the disability sector, and another that will analyse the intersectionality of disability studies with gender and sexuality.
- ④ Ms Amy Camilleri Zahra (Department of Disability Studies) presented part of her Ph.D. research during the Faculty's **Brown Bag Seminar**.
- ④ Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane (Deputy Dean) gave a **keynote** at the launch 'Breaking the News' training project. This is a project involving two ministries; Ministry of Inclusion and Social Wellbeing and the Ministry for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children's Rights.
- ④ Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane (Deputy Dean) gave a **keynote** at the launch of the 'Positive Parenting Project', an action research project carried out as part of the MOU between the Faculty for SWB and Aġenzija Sapport.
- ④ Luke Buhagiar **defended his Ph.D.** successfully.
- ④ **Guest lecturer** Dr Simona D' Alessio gave 6 hours of lectures to students reading the MA in Disability Studies, and another 3-hour lecture open to the general public on the impact of COVID 19 on disabled persons.
- ④ Dr Vickie Gauci (Department of Disability Studies) and Ms Amy Camilleri Zahra (Department of Disability Studies) were **panellists** on an event organized by the Malta Health Students Association titled 'Disability Campaign: Accessibility for All'.
- ④ Ms Amy Camilleri Zahra (Department of Disability Studies) was one of the **panellists** during the third and final webinar organized in collaboration with CRPD and Opening Doors on the theme of Disabled Parents.
- ④ Ms Amy Camilleri Zahra (Department of Disability Studies) took part in a **campaign** organised by the Commission on Gender Based Violence and Domestic Violence on violence against persons with disability.
- ④ Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane (Deputy Dean) gave 4 hrs **training sessions** to youth workers at Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ on the topic of sexuality and disability.
- ④ **A CPD on Transcultural Issues in Counselling Children and Adolescents** was organised by the Department of Counselling, with Dr Anita M Pool as lecturer and Guest Presenters - Dr Matthew Lyons, Dr Katie Fetzer and Dr Rachel McRoberts.

Appreciation is extended to:

- ④ The **team of HoDs**, who are incredibly supportive, namely; the Deputy Deans, Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane (Head, Department of Disability Studies and Head, Department of Gender and Sexualities) and Dr Kristina Bettenzana (Department of Psychology), Ms. Alison Darmanin (Faculty Officer), Dr Christian Borg Xuereb (Head, Department of Gerontology and Dementia Studies), Dr Sandra Scicluna (Head, Department of Criminology), Dr Sue Vella (Head, Department of Social Policy and Social Work), Dr Dione Mifsud (Head, Department of Counselling), Dr Gottfried Catania (Head, Department of Psychology), Prof. Joanne Cassar (Head, Department of Youth and Community Studies) and Dr Ingrid Grech Lanfranco (Head, Department of Family Studies).
- ④ The **Faculty Board members** for their important role in running this Faculty.
- ④ The **academic members of staff**, whether resident full-time or part-time, casual or visiting, dissertation and placement supervisors and the **students** who make this a cohesive Faculty keen to respond to the challenges of society.
- ④ The **administrative staff** and **Research Support Officers**, both serving the Faculty in the Departments as well as in the Faculty Office, for their unwavering support and commitment.
- ④ The many **stakeholders** who are closely engaged with the Faculty.
- ④ Ms Charlene Fabri (PA to the Dean) for **her dedication and constant support**.



This is most certainly not all that has happened in the Faculty during these last months. If there is anything you would like to include in the future editions of **Connect** please send an email to socialwellbeing@um.edu.mt