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## **UM Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity 2016-2021**

### **Introduction**

This sports strategy is designed to contribute towards the University of Malta's (UM) vision to enhance the educational experience of students and to promote excellence in teaching and learning. It also strives to achieve the UM's mission to be an important agent of change in society by extending and expanding the current University's outreach service in the area of sport and physical activity.

Through the provision of high standard facilities and opportunities, sport at University aims to improve the general health and well-being of students and staff, to increase the overall student experience and satisfaction of University life, to develop students' potential and the transferable skills that may increase graduate employability, and to attract more international students.

### **This strategy strives towards the UM's sport and physical activity *vision*:**

*"To make sport and physical activity a central component of the student experience and to encourage all the University community to be active for life."*

### **It strives to deliver the UM's sport and physical activity *mission*:**

*"To provide high quality facilities and opportunities for sport and physical activities at recreational and competitive level for the University community, promoting a healthy lifestyle and an enhanced student experience at University. It aims to develop students' transferable skills through different roles as participants or sport leaders, which may increase their employability".*

### **Strategic Areas**

***The five main strategic areas of this strategy are:***



## **Key objectives for each strategic area**

### **1. Development and allocation of facilities**

The UM will support sport and physical activity by providing high quality facilities which are essential to attract students and staff to engage in a wide variety of sports and physical activities both during and after academic hours, and both in co-curricular and extra-curricular work. The UM will:

- Develop and provide access to a diverse range of first class indoor and outdoor sports facilities.
- Provide sports facilities that are environmentally sustainable.
- Establish links with other entities to provide sports facilities which are not available on campus at affordable rates.
- Provide placement opportunities within these facilities, particularly for students reading for a sports degree.
- Attract more international students through the provision of high standard sports facilities.
- Develop a Sports Science and Research laboratory which is accessible to student and staff to undertake research and for learning purposes, and to test athletes.

#### **Projected actions:**

- Phase one of the development of University sports facilities will start in 2017 and will include a new eight lane IAAF approved athletics track, a full size pitch, and a new Institute for PE and Sports building with indoor sports facilities (see plan as Appendix).
- There are plans that phase two will include the building of the stands and an indoor track, a strength and conditioning gym and a performance lab.

### **2. Participation and Wellbeing**

The UM believes that students' participation in sport and physical activity will enhance their educational experience at University. It will also improve their health and wellbeing while building a range of personal and professional skills such as confidence, communication, teamwork and time-management. The main focus of this strategy is to increase the levels of participation in sport, particularly at recreational level and to eradicate any form of discrimination that prevents students and staff from taking part. The UM will:

- Promote participation in sport and physical activity in a fun and recreational setting across the whole University community, aiming to promote physical, mental and social well-being, reducing stress associated with studying, and increasing the productivity of staff.
- Launch a University wide campaign aimed at increasing participation.
- Provide option credits in sport to encourage more students to be active.
- Support existing sport clubs and assist in setting up new sports clubs, particularly kick start clubs in various disciplines.
- Ensure that students receive the right training by qualified personnel in UM sports clubs.
- Organise intramural tournaments and revive the inter-faculty competitions in a wide variety of sports.
- Work with the Students' Counselling unit to refer students to the sport and physical activity service.

- Establish the current physical activity levels of UM students and staff and set specific targets for improvement and measurement.
- Identify the needs of the University community in relation to sports provision.
- Identify any barriers to students' participation and endeavour to overcome them.
- Ensure that all sports activities promote inclusion and are accessible to all students at UM, irrespective of their gender, sexual orientation, nationality and physical disability.
- Promote participation in sport for international students as a means to accelerate integration with the local University community and to maximise cross-cultural engagement.

**Projected actions:**

- The Institute for PE and Sport will be introducing new elective units of 2 ECTS each in different sports starting 2017-18 and offer them to all the University students.
- On completion of stage one of the development of sports facilities, a newly set Sports Development unit will plan and deliver a promotional campaign, and provide sports programmes.
- Before setting targets for the provision of sports programmes, the Institute for PE and Sport will study students' and staff physical activity patterns, and the main barriers and facilitators to participation.

### 3. Performance Sport

The UM's priority to increase participation in sport will not detract from the support required by elite student-athletes who aim to achieve excellence. Students who are competing at national and international level will be encouraged to represent the University of Malta in national and international events.

The UM will:

- Facilitate the introduction of the Malta University and Colleges Sport games (MUCS).
- Establish and strengthen current international links with other Universities and with International bodies responsible for European and International University games.
- Support participation in international tournaments in individual and team sport.
- Support elite student-athletes where possible, particularly by encouraging academic flexibility to ensure they combine successfully their academic and sporting careers (dual-career).
- Celebrate the success of student-athletes in sport and enrol them as sport ambassadors who promote increased participation in sport at University.
- Promote high standards of ethical behaviour in sport.
- Contribute towards improving standards in local sport and increased participation in sport and physical activity through research carried out by the Institute for Physical Education and Sport.

**Projected actions:**

- The Institute for PE and Sport is currently working on an Erasmus+ project aiming at Developing an Innovative European Sport Tutorship model for the dual career of athletes (ESTPORT). Following an evaluation of this project, recommendations on how student-athletes could best be supported and guided will be put forward and implemented.

- The newly set up Sport Development unit will strengthen collaboration with international bodies and establish new links with other bodies to ensure increased participation by local athletes in International competitions.

#### 4. Volunteering and the Development of Personal Skills

Apart from acquiring personal skills through active participation in sport and physical activity, students at UM may obtain these skills through volunteering in the administration and management of competitions and events, through officiating tournaments, and in coaching various sports. Such an experience will allow students to develop important transferable skills such as leadership, communication, team work, and knowledge that are sought after by employers. The Sports Development Unit will provide opportunities for students to obtain qualifications by organising courses in collaboration with national sport governing bodies. Such expertise will be useful for the sport organisations, thus contributing towards local sport. The UM will:

- Provide opportunities for students to deliver sport and physical activity sessions, thus gaining important leadership skills, confidence and experience.
- Provide courses for students to earn a qualification in sports coaching and sport-related officiating.
- Create sport leadership programmes aimed at students who would help in promoting sport and engaging other students in sport and physical activity. These students can contribute in different ways towards sports development at University, for example in web designing and social media.
- Provide opportunities for students to contribute in the administration of sports clubs.
- Create placement opportunities for students, particularly those attending sport-related courses at IPES.

#### Projected actions:

- The Sports Development unit will create a sports leadership programme for volunteers in sport and liaise with sports association for the training of coaches and officials in respective sports. These volunteers will assist in the setting up and administration of sports clubs and events.
- The Institute for PE & Sport is currently participating in an Erasmus+ project – the European Sports Leadership Programme (ESLP) which aims to raise the students' participation levels and to work on the added value benefits of participating and volunteering as sports leaders, thus improving graduate employability.
- On completion of the sports facilities, students studying at the Institute for PE and Sport will carry out their work placement at this Sports complex.

#### 5. Community outreach

The UM believes that it has a fundamental role to play within the community. Through sporting activities it can contribute to reduce the high rates of inactivity in the Maltese population which are associated with increased risks of diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, cardiovascular diseases and certain cancers. The UM will:

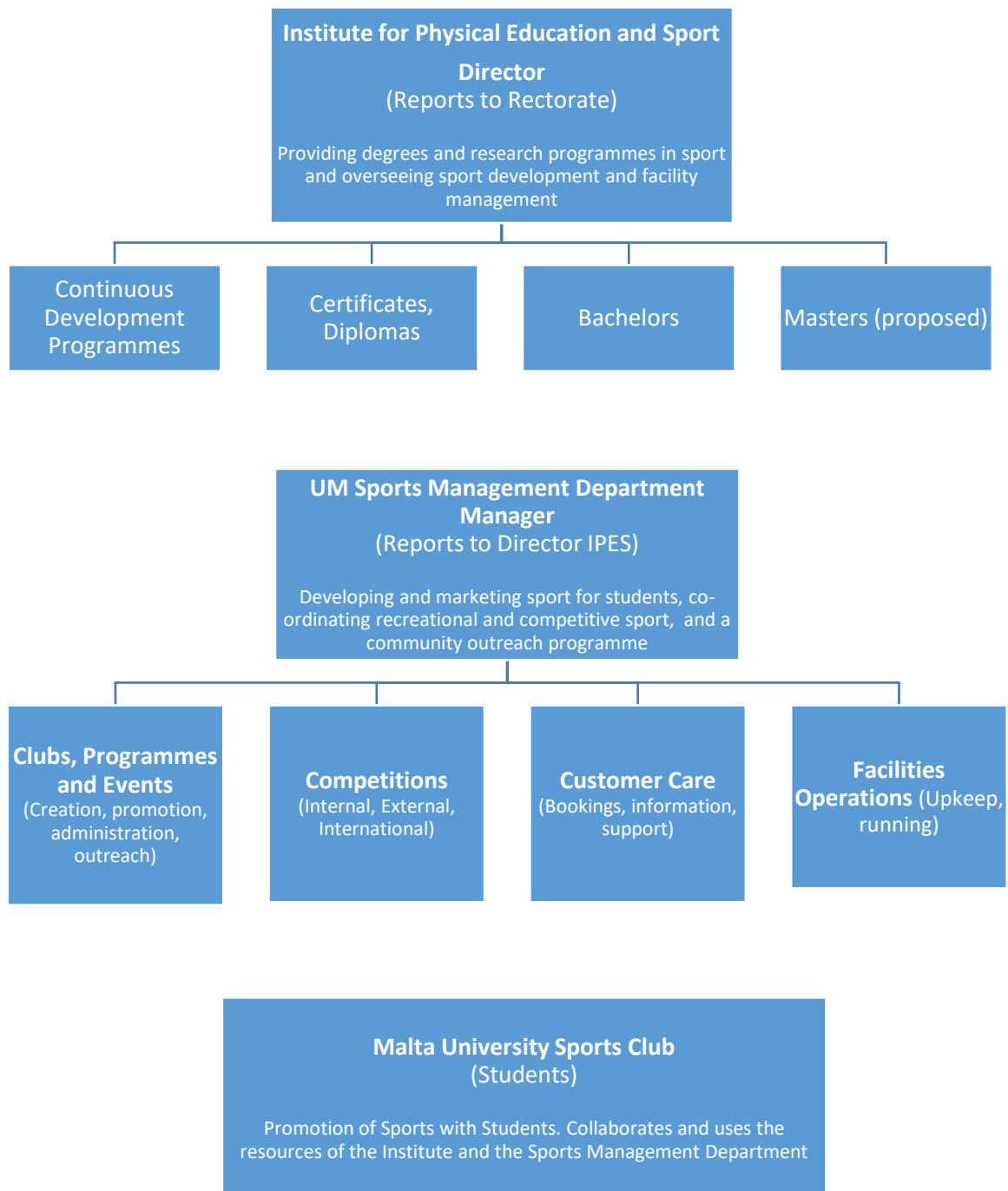
- Create a community outreach programme offering a variety of sporting and physical activities aimed at fostering lifelong sporting and active habits, while catering for disadvantaged groups.

- Promote University sport and physical activity research projects and initiatives through this outreach programme.
- Extend the use of its sports facilities to the community to dovetail with student priority uses, contributing towards increased levels of physical activity and sport in Malta and the health and wellbeing of the nation.

**Projected actions:**

- During academic year 2016-17 and the following academic years, students attending the B.Sc in Sport and Physical Activity course will organise various sports events in the community as an outreach programme.
- The newly set Sports Development unit will plan and deliver an extensive outreach sport and physical activity programme in collaboration with various sports entities and local councils.

## The structure of sport at UM



## **Delivering the strategy**

The strategy will be delivered by the Sports Development Department in partnership and collaboration with:

- The Institute of Physical Education and Sport (IPES)
- Internal departments such as the Staff Affairs Committee, faculties and Institutes
- Student bodies including the Malta University Sports Club (MUSC)
- External entities and stakeholders
- National governing bodies and sports organisations
- Local community groups
- SportMalta

## **Measuring Progress**

The Sports Development Department will oversee the implementation of the strategy. Within the first six months of setting up this department, specific objectives, performance indicators and a communication plan will be created following consultation with various departments and research carried out with the University community. The SDD will periodically report on progress to the IPES SDD board and the University management. Progress will be measured by:

- Seeking regular user satisfaction feedback from students and staff on sport programmes and sport facilities.
- Studying the relationship of sport and physical activity to the university experience of students.
- Regular consultation with University student bodies.
- Keeping records of attendance at sports facilities and sport programmes and demographic data of participants.
- Keeping records of referrals by the Students' Counselling Unit.
- Collecting qualitative data from alumni re graduate employability.
- Studying the participation levels of University students and staff.

## **Feedback about the strategy**

If you have any comments about the strategy, please send them to:

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*C – 17 February 2017*