



Balanced Compensation for Course Expenses and other Stipend Amendments.

A KSU Report to the Ministry for Finance and the Ministry for Education and Employment

Preamble

The KSU office has always striven to work on improving students' conditions and any point related to stipends and conversation at University and this report has been compiled to reflect a number of issues revolving around stipends and balanced compensation for University courses. Each and every point is a reflection of the students' opinions which were collected during Education Commission meetings from student representatives of each Faculty. The main aim of the Education Commission is precisely to provide a platform for all students to voice their opinion on educational matters.

For this reason we ask the relevant authorities to consider the points underlined in this report and we encourage them to work with us on these matters as it is only through open-minded discussions that we can find solutions through compromise.

Very thorough annexes are have been attached to this document and such would not have been possible without the students representatives' and students organisations' contributions. These particularly include the Malta Medical Students' Association (MMSA), Malta Association of Dental Surgery (MADS), Society of Architecture and Civil Engineering Students (SACES), Ms Amy-Christina Slater, Mr Nathan Grech and all students who contributed in some way or the other to this report.

Report Outline

The main points which will be expanded on in this report is:

- (i) **Balanced Compensation** for course expenses
- (ii) Criteria for identifying **prescribed courses**, as mentioned in the Students Maintenance Grants Regulations¹
- (iii) The regulation on the **working hours limitation** in the Students Maintenance Grants Regulations²
- (iv) The stipend situation for students going into a second undergraduate course following successful completion of a previous one.

In annexes A to E of this report, further details about course expenses can be found and proof of quotations have been attached to substantiate the need for **balanced compensation** for students enrolled in certain courses.

¹ 7. The Minister may, in concurrence with the Minister for Finance, determine those courses at Higher Education as prescribed courses and for which a special rate of students' maintenance grant is to be paid as indicated in the Schedule.

² 10. Students who are in full-time employment or part-time employment of more than twenty hours a week or on paid leave by their respective employer, or who accept an offer to enter into a contract with an employer whereby they bind themselves to work for that employer following the completion of their course, and who would therefore benefit from a pay or an agreed remuneration whilst following the course of studies, will not be considered eligible for the students' maintenance.

- A. Masters in Dental Surgery, BChD in Dental Surgery, BSc (Hons) in Dental Technology and BSc (Hons) in Dental Hygiene
- B. BA in Early Childhood Education and Care, MTL - Masters in Teaching and Learning
BSc (Hons) in Earth Systems
- C. Bachelor of Science in the Built Environment
- D. Doctor of Medicine and Surgery
- E. BSc. Home Economics
- F. BSc. Human Language Technology (Hons.)
- G. BSc (Hons) in Earth Systems

(i) Balanced Compensation for course expenses

During Education Commission (KE) meetings and discussions between the student representatives, courses that require payment for mandatory expenses which amount to a substantial sum of money in order to be able to complete it successfully, were identified. The relevant lecturing staff were also consulted about these expenses and confirmed the need to purchase, for instance the necessary equipment. From these discussions it was concluded that students enrolled in such courses should be compensated appropriately, the reason being that these students are burdened with much higher expenses than students enrolled in other courses and this should be reflected proportionately in the maintenance grant.

This would in turn create a level playing field for any student, wishing to pursue any course at University, without having to burden themselves with paying for such extra expenses considering that they might not have the necessary means. Students enrolled in a full-time course are currently not allowed to work for more than 20 hours and sometimes lecturers also advise them against doing so to be able to keep up with the course work.

A list of annexes including the expenses from local quotations for a number of courses including Doctor of Medicine & Surgery, Bachelor of Science in the Built Environment, Bachelor of Science in Human Language Technology (Hons), Bachelor of Science in Earth Systems (Hons) and the Doctor of Dental Surgery, is also attached to this document as proof of what is being stated here.

(ii) The Nature of Prescribed Courses

One of the points which we came across during these discussions was how prescribed courses are identified.³ According to the Students Maintenance Grants Regulations, there are no public nor official guidelines regarding how these courses are selected, creating confusion and frustration amongst the student body. Clear indication as to how these courses are selected should be publicly available. The current prescribed courses are the following:

- a. Bachelor of Science (Hons) - Biology
- b. Bachelor of Science (Hons) - Chemistry
- c. Bachelor of Science (Hons) - Mathematics
- d. Bachelor of Science (Hons) - Physics e. Bachelor of Science (Hons) -Statistics & Operations Research
- e. Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (Hons) – Artificial Intelligence; Computing and Business; Software Development

³ 7. The Minister may, in concurrence with the Minister for Finance, determine those courses at Higher Education as prescribed courses and for which a special rate of students' maintenance grant is to be paid as indicated in the Schedule – *Students Maintenance Grants Regulations*

- f. Bachelor of Science (Hons) - Computer Engineering; Computing Science
- g. Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) – Electrical and Electronic Engineering; Mechanical Engineering
- h. Master of Science in Information and Communication Technology - Microelectronics and Microsystems; Computer Information Systems; Telecommunications
- i. Bachelor of Science - Business and Computing
- j. Bachelor of Science (Hons) - Business and Information Technology
- k. Bachelor of Education/PGCE - Biology
- l. Bachelor of Education/PGCE - Chemistry
- m. Bachelor of Education/PGCE - Mathematics
- n. Bachelor of Education/PGCE - Physics
- p. Bachelor of Education/PGCE - Computer Studies
- o. Bachelor of Science (Hons) - Nursing
- p. Bachelor of Science (Hons) - Mental Health Nursing
- q. Bachelor of Science (Hons) - Midwifery
- r. Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Science for Education and Communication with specialisation in Biology.

(iii) Increased working hours for students

Currently, the main stumbling block students are finding is the **limit** on their full-time employment or part-time employment of twenty hours per week according to the **Students Maintenance Grants Regulations**⁴ in order to still be eligible for a maintenance grant and a stipend. Whilst the motive for such an article was to ensure the fullest possible participation in the students' academic course, in actual fact, good time management allows the student to fulfil both their academic as well as their working responsibilities. Obviously, one needs to keep in mind that different courses might require a greater level of commitment than others, however we believe that University students are responsible enough to be able to juggle both. **We believe that extending this limit to at least 30 hours will allow students to be more active in their place of work, more employable, more self-sufficient and also prevent abuses of the system currently in place. Furthermore, the students can start understanding the challenges and rewards of the labour sector while studying at university.**

⁴ Article 4(e)

(iv) Stipend for students following a Second Undergraduate Course

It has come to our attention that there are inconsistencies with regards to stipends given to students who enrol to a second undergraduate course at the University of Malta. There are instances where students who are in the same course are given a stipend whilst others are not simply because of having previously completed a different course. This case is most notable in the Doctor of Medicine & Surgery course where students who completed certain health sciences courses previously are given a stipend whilst those who prior to their entrance in the medical course pursued a different university degree are not. This situation should be rectified immediately as it is a gross inequality and we are of the firm belief that students pursuing their career aspirations and undertaking a second undergraduate degree should be given a stipend, regardless of what their first degree was.