



Students' House
University of Malta
Msida MSD 2080

356 2340 2104
info@ksu.org.mt



The University of Malta Act

Feedback on the Proposed Legislation compiled by KSU's University
of Malta Act Sub-committee
2nd Version – 13.04.18



Foreword

This document consists of the feedback gathered on the revised document 'The University of Malta Act'. The feedback was collected by the Sub-Committee set up by KSU.

The Council

The proposal to increase the number of student representatives from three to four is greatly welcomed by students as a positive step. However, there is some concern over the proposal to replace the president of the Council with a Chairman chosen by the Prime Minister. There is no explanation as to what criteria this choice will be based on. It is important that the president of the highest governing body of the University is competent and well suited for the post, while not having any conflicting interests. The president of the Council must keep the autonomy of the University as a priority.

Strategic and Financial Committee

The appointment of this committee is welcomed as a positive alternative to the previously proposed governing board. As it will be responsible for, among others, the academic plan of the University, it is appropriate that the Rector is to be appointed as the president of this committee. The member appointed who will be responsible for finance is a good measure to make sure that public funds are being safeguarded.

The Senate

While the proposed increase in student representation on the Senate is seen as a very positive step, it is believed that the previous proposal to have 2 *ex officio* positions for members of KSU should be introduced here.



The Electoral College and Election of the Rector

The inclusion of the four student representatives of the Council as well as six University students in the Electoral College is yet another positive step towards making sure that students are involved in all levels of decision making at the University.

The Election of the Dean

The treatment of the votes of student representatives on the Faculty Board as 10% of total valid poll ensures that students have a better say in the choice of Dean for their own faculty. This is welcomed by the sub-committee.

Previous proposals not included in the revised version of the Act.

Work-based learning and Increase in Research

The proposed increase in work-based learning as part of all academic programmes, as well as a focus on the value of increased opportunities for research, is a step in the right direction to ensure the quality of the education at the University of Malta.

However, it was noted that no concrete proposals related to work-based learning and research have been put forward in the consultation document. It is important that a detailed plan is drafted to include these initiatives as part of the courses available at University. Placements included as part of course work by University must be of high quality and relevant to the course. Furthermore, placements may not be limited to those provided by University as some courses may opt to allow their students to choose their own placements.



Accreditation for Student Activism

KSU has been making an effort to introduce accreditation for student activism and representation at University. The introduction of the new proposed Act is the ideal opportunity to tackle this proposal and prepare a structure for the sufficient introduction for accreditation for this vital part of University life. Undoubtedly, student activism benefits not only the students themselves, but the country in general. Graduates who took an active part in representing fellow students and helping out in organisations as part of their University experience, as well as taking part in voluntary work outside of University, gain skills such as time-management, communication and organisational skills, team work and much more. Upon entering the workforce, these skills will be brought with them and will contribute to their employability in the job market. Recognition in the form of accreditation of student participation in University as well as at other institutions, will encourage an ever larger number of students to be active at University and in the community.

'Assuring competence' of teaching staff

The proposed document points out the importance of the competence of teaching staff in order to upkeep the quality of teaching at University. It is acknowledged that full-time lecturers require a number of qualifications in teaching as well as expertise in their subject matter to be employed as staff. Casual, part-time and visiting lecturers, while knowledgeable in their subject matter, may not always be equipped with the necessary teaching skills.

Therefore, it is being proposed that part-time and casual lecturers are required to attend a seminar or workshop geared towards providing the necessary tools to ensure high quality teaching. Formalising a lecture structure, obtaining the best teaching strategies and a number of other important skills should be pre-requisites for lecturers to be employed on a part-time basis at University.



Student Feedback

Student feedback is a vital tool to constantly monitor the progress and effectiveness of courses and study-units offered at University. The effectiveness of student feedback is therefore an essential part of the educational system. Unfortunately, it has been noted that a very low number of students are responsive to the feedback that the University asks for, and much of the feedback gathered is usually focused on examinations. Students are showing concern about the anonymity of the feedback given. For this reason, it has been increasingly difficult to identify any issues which may need attention. Promotion of the anonymity of this feedback exercise with all students, as well as the issuing of reports on how complaints have been tackled, will encourage students to take part in this exercise.

Furthermore, in order to avoid feedback becoming focused solely on problems encountered in examinations, it is being proposed that a feedback exercise is carried out before the commencement of the January and May exam periods. This will ensure that the focus of the feedback remains on the course structure, content and delivery. E-sims has already proved to be an inefficient tool for this to be carried out, and it may be more effective to distribute feedback forms in the classrooms themselves and have students fill them in by hand. This will ensure anonymity as well as increase the amount of feedback gathered. Student representatives and organisations should facilitate the collection of feedback to make this exercise more successful.

Tracking System



The consultation document proposes a system where students are 'tracked'. However, it is unclear exactly how this system will function and what the purpose of this is. This kind of system cannot impinge on the jurisdiction of any other entity. Further clarification on the matter is required for appropriate feedback to be gathered.

Attendance

The issue of attendance of lectures is tackled differently by various Faculties and lecturers at University. It is believed that at such a high level institution, compulsory attendance should not be enforced. It is the responsibility of the student to attend lectures and make use of all the resources made available to them. Attendance should be taken by lecturers purely for statistical purposes, and for the University to be able to monitor patterns in attendance rates. Significantly low attendance for particular classes should result in a review of the method of teaching and content of the lecture in question to make sure that they reach the required standard.

It is believed, however, that attendance should be compulsory for practical elements of courses from which students acquire essential practical skills for their future careers.

Online lectures

The proposal regarding online courses as a part of the utilisation of online technology is another step in the modernisation of University education. Online lectures can be extremely useful especially in the case of inviting lecturers and professionals from other countries to contribute to a study-unit, without the University bearing the expense of their travel and accommodation.



Students' House
University of Malta
Msida MSD 2080

356 2340 2104
info@ksu.org.mt



However, in the case of using online lectures as a regular teaching method within University, it is feared that this may have some negative effects. While it is a resource that has great potential, it is believed that certain elements of a course can only be delivered face to face. Interaction between students and lecturers face to face encourages more participation and discussion from the side of the students.

Further details are still needed about the system which will be used if online lectures begin to be delivered at University.