

NEWSLETTER

MALTA UNIVERSITY HOLDING COMPANY LIMITED

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CEO'S CORNER



Lessons from COVID-19

No one would probably blame me if this piece were a litany of moans and groans about the enormous financial and operational difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Hardly surprising given that our main business activities providing accommodation, tuition and ancillary related services are primarily aimed at both foreign and local student communities staying at our facilities and attending University.

However, I truly believe that every difficulty is an opportunity to learn and to improve the capacity to adapt, both as a person as well as an organisation. So, I prefer to use this space to highlight the resilience and inventiveness shown by the MUHC family to keep our doors open to business.

Whilst our accommodation facilities remained open for business with the necessary precautions being taken, within a few weeks of the onset of the pandemic our language school was providing on-line classes to students both during the day and for evening classes. Training programmes usually delivered from our Conference Hall at the Residence in Lija similarly started being delivered on-line. Administratively the Group practically reinvented itself in a short period of time with full use of technological tools and widespread teleworking arrangements being put in place. My schedule, for one, remains as full as ever with meetings through Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Hangouts amongst others.

These adaptations, in such special and trying circumstances have, in fact, opened the eyes of the business community, MUHC included, to the opportunity of important market segments (international or otherwise) remaining interested in on-line delivery of services even after the pandemic has passed. In our case, the international tuition services lend themselves easily to this new scenario. But the lessons do not confine themselves exclusively to future new revenue streams. This challenging period has surely made businesses appreciate operating with leaner cost models and faster, yet more customised, delivery with less and less bureaucracy involved.

It is only by accepting these lessons that the horrendous COVID-19 experience will not remain just a nasty memory best forgotten, but rather as a doorway to new, and more rewarding, opportunities.

New faces

Our new Group Financial Controller is Terry Galea who joined us in March this year. Certainly a baptism of fire for Terry but with the help of all and sundry I am sure he will prove to be a valuable asset for the Group.

Welcome also to Pierre Cassar who joined as Interim Station Manager at Campus FM in March. Pierre brings with him a vast baggage of experience within the broadcasting industry and he will oversee the day to day operations of the station and the implementation of its strategies until a permanent Station Manager is appointed.

Cheers

Joe



An extremely positive and promising start for MULS took place in the beginning of the year!!

In January and February, we had a hundred and four students attending our morning courses and a record number of 39 participants on our evening courses that started in February.

COVID-19, however, changed all this. In March, numerous students that were due to arrive in the following months, cancelled their bookings due to fear and uncertainty of the situation. Changes, new procedures and official regulations were progressively increasing day by day and in a blink of an eye, the majority of the students that were studying at our school, decided to abruptly stop their tuition as they were called back by their families to return to their countries. In a matter of days only a handful of students remained in Malta. They could not attend classes physically at MULS however, due to the legal notice issued by the Ministry of Education stating that all schools and University had to close its doors overnight.

Our reality at MULS changed from day to night. In a matter of a week, we put our heads together to rise to the occasion. We re-organised ourselves and our courses. Our first priority was to engage the students that were left “stranded” here in Malta. We wanted to assure them that they were still part of our school and would resume their lessons as soon as possible. The way forward was to offer them online lessons. It required a team effort and a change in mindset to set this up and start these lessons going. Staff and teachers were trained and with everyone onboard and pitching in, we had our first online classes after only being closed for a week. Apart from the handful of students that were still in Malta, we also offered our online classes to our students who were meant to arrive from Colombia and China. Students that returned back to their countries were offered the opportunity to join our online classes too. Although the time differences proved to be very challenging, we’ve made it!! We had all our courses up and running as soon as it was possible.

We are currently in our 4th week of offering online lessons and I can confidently say that the teachers at MULS are doing an excellent job. The natural progression was for us to also offer the option of online lessons to our evening courses participants. This was received well by the participants and those courses have also resumed online in March.

Looking ahead, our evening courses scheduled for May and the IELTS exam preparation course starting in April have been adapted to online courses too and we are currently promoting and receiving applications for these sessions. Having lost all of our summer bookings, and all our groups, and given the uncertainty of how long the current situation will last, we are currently looking at adapting our morning courses to online courses so that we will be able to offer them as a separate product in the coming months, this will hopefully widen our horizons and students who cannot travel to Malta for one reason or other will be able to take part in our courses too



Scan to view our current Italian promotion on Facebook for our English online evening course starting in May.



SME Internationalisation and Export Management Training Course

For the sixth consecutive year, Malta University Consulting in collaboration with TradeMalta organised and delivered the SME Internationalisation and Export Management Course. This annual training programme is mainly targeted at directors, CEOs and managers of SMEs operating from Malta who are already in the export business or are about to go international. Trainers are either academics at the University of Malta or industry professionals working in various export sectors. This ensures a balanced exposure to a mix of academia and real life experiences. This year's programme, which was delivered over a period of three months, consisted of nine lectures and two panel discussions. At the end of the training programme, participants were requested to individually present an export marketing plan which was followed by individual export clinics. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, the participants' presentation and export clinics were held via Zoom video calls. The training programme is planned to be concluded with a Panel Discussion and the distribution of certificates of award ceremony once restrictions related to COVID-19 are lifted.

Attendees to this year's programme work at different entities including Hili Ventures, Consolidated Biscuit, James Caterers, Construct Furniture, Powder Coated, Bortex, Novaric, Business First, Simonds Farsons Cisk, and Malta Foreign Affairs.



This training course is supported by HSBC Bank Malta p.l.c. and accredited under the University of Malta's Centre for Liberal Arts and Sciences.



When Covid gives you lemons...

The hopes for this issue of the newsletter were that we would be writing about what a success the BRND WGN and University Ring Road Races were this year, and how a good time was had by all. Unfortunately, this was not to be. We already knew about the Novel Corona Virus, and how it was moving closer to home. The MUHC was monitoring the situation: working closely with all stakeholders, including the University and the Health authorities, as well as those in the business. A few days before the actual races, the decision had to be taken to postpone the Races indefinitely to when things would be safer.

This was a decision that was not taken lightly. A lot of work and dedication goes into these Races, not only from the MUHC team, but also from the sponsors, other collaborators and the participants themselves. Once the decision was taken, it was communicated to everyone involved in all ways possible. The people and the entities involved, including the participants, the sponsors, and all those helping out in some way were obviously disappointed, but they all understood the gravity of the situation and all agreed that it was the best move. The next day, Malta started being advised to restrict all events, thus confirming that postponing was the best decision for everyone's safety. Even Murphy, BRND WGN's pink mascot whom you might remember from previous newsletters and the Roundabout Challenge last February,

had to hang up his running shoes.



Having said that, his campaign to help Hospice Malta is still open and you can donate on the page <http://www.zaar.com.mt/projects/murphy/>. There are rewards for people who make a donation. Check it out. We all know that Hospice are still helping out, in spite of the situation and they need all the assistance they can get, so please do take a couple of minutes to access the site and donate, and pass the message on to your family and friends.

Hopefully, this situation shall pass soon in the best way possible. In the meantime, most of us are working from home as much as possible to keep ourselves and others safe. The University campus is very quiet and desolate, almost like a scene out of a dystopian movie. The merchandise shop and the pitches had to be closed until further notice. However orders for merchandise and the Malta University Publishing books are still being mailed globally. These can be ordered from our online shop, and are being mailed periodically. Contact us on info@muhc.com.mt

We are doing our best to keep people entertained by posting on our Facebook pages daily. We feature posts about health & safety, information, things to do, self-care, positive posts, and also short and easy yoga sessions by our own Michela Checchi, which are having a good response. So continue to follow our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/UniversitySportsAndLeisure/>

Our brains' cogwheels have been turning, and we are working on a new, online project which for now should replace our usual offerings, but will later on compliment them. More on this at a later date, while we iron out everything.

We welcome any feedback and suggestions...

What do you want to see more of?

What are your comments and suggestions?

UPCOMING COURSES




Online via
ZOOM webinars

Pharmacognosy and Herbal Products



Dates: 16 June–23 July 2020

Venue: The University Residence,
R. Mifsud Bonnici Street, Lija

Lecturer: Prof. Everaldo Attard

Course fee: €360/€345 UM student
(Cheques payable to Malta University Consulting Ltd)

For further info:
tel: +356 21240746/99829244
email: maria.bugeja@muhc.com.mt
www.muhc.com.mt

This course has been approved by the
National Commission for Further & Higher Education
as equivalent to Level 6 (5 ECTS)
(Licence No: 2013-FHI-019; Further & Higher Education Institution)



MALTA UNIVERSITY CONSULTING

THE WAY FORWARD

**A Business Continuity Interactive
Webinar Workshop**



MALTA UNIVERSITY CONSULTING

Become a Better Condominium Administrator

6th May - 2nd June 2020

Time: 4.30pm—6.30pm

Being held online via ZOOM webinars



MALTA UNIVERSITY CONSULTING



DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY
16 Hour Course

Dates: Mondays & Wednesdays,
25th May - 17th June 2020

Time: 17:30– 19:30

Venue: online webinars using Zoom

Registration Fee: €270/245 (UM Students)

Course Coordinator:
Dr Franco Curmi Ph.D (Lancs), M.Res. (Lancs),
M.A. (Melit)

This course has been approved by the National
Commission for Further & Higher Education as
equivalent to Level 5 (3 ECTS) - Licence No: 2013-
FHI-019; Further & Higher Education Institution

This course has been approved by Malta Enterprise
under the Get Qualified Scheme

For more info: www.muhc.com.mt
tel: 9982 9244; e-mail: maria.bugeja@muhc.com.mt

More information on : <http://muhc.com.mt/category/consulting/current-courses/>



MALTA UNIVERSITY CONSULTING

New Innovative Course Alert!

Business Continuity Workshop

The reality of the Covid-19 situation is that all businesses need to adapt, evaluate and enhance their systems to increase resilience to such sudden changes. To this end, we have developed an online workshop that encourages dialogue and brainstorming to ensure Business Continuity. This 4-part workshop is given by Corinne Fenech MA Bus Ethics, MBA and is limited to 10 participants to ensure the greatest quality.

Part 1: Understanding the current changing scenario including challenges as well as opportunities

Part 2: Discussing who will be the customer of the future as we slowly first go deeper and then emerge from the current crisis

Part 3: Following our previous discussions, we come up with ideas that will enable our businesses to evolve whilst leaving a positive impact society

Part 4: Understanding the changing workplace. Who do we and our employees need to be in order to navigate in this changing scenario?

Who is Corinne Fenech?

Ms Corinne Fenech, MBA, MA Bus Ethics, is a consultant and trainer specializing in Innovation Management, Customer Experience, Employee Development, and Corporate Social Responsibility. She also holds 18 years industry experience which includes Operations and Strategy Management. With pride, she says that the fact that she has moved up the ranks step by step made her appreciate all types of work and the efforts of all team members at whichever rank. Corinne's educational background started from Hospitality Management Training at the Institute of Tourism studies and moved on to Diploma in Management Studies, Executive MBA, and Masters in Business Ethics from the University of Malta.

She is currently researching on her PhD in Management Project at the University of Glasgow, with particular focus on ethical decision making by management in organisations.

For details of the next iteration of this workshop see our flyer

MALTA UNIVERSITY CONSULTING

THE WAY FORWARD

A Business Continuity Interactive Webinar Workshop

May 5th, 7th, 12th and 14th 2020

Time: 10:00 – 11:30

Workshop will be held using Zoom

Trainer:
Corinne Fenech MA Bus Ethics, MBA

Registration Fee: €100
Limited to 10 participants

email: info@muhc.com.mt



MALTA UNIVERSITY CONSULTING

Dementia Care Giving in the Community

Malta University Consulting Ltd in collaboration with the Department of Pathology, University of Malta organised once again the course on Dementia Care Giving in the Community. This was the fifth time that MUC organised this short course. As in previous years the course was a success and well attended.

Professor Charles Scerri, the course co-ordinator during one of the sessions



Sex Education for Persons with Intellectual Disability



January and February 2020 also saw our improved and expanded course on Sex Education for Persons with Intellectual Disability, aimed primarily at social workers and other persons working in the field. The course focused on enabling participants to engage in sexuality related discussion with persons with ID and to approach the subject from a sexual rights perspective, thus providing the support for persons with ID to explore and experience their sexuality in an age appropriate and responsible manner.

Given by Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane, who specializes in the field of disability and sexuality, the course was well received by the attendees with great feedback.

“Very well organized and informative”



Public Speaking for Energy & Water Agency

Since January, members of staff at the Energy & Water Agency have been attending in-house training for the Accredited Award in the Art of Public Speaking with our well-established trainer Mr Joseph Agius. The aim of this training was to improve their communication skills especially when it comes to the use of simple effective non-technical language with customers.

The course was originally intended to conclude in March. However, due to the COVID-19 situation, the last three sessions had to be postponed. Following our adaptation to online provision of courses using Zoom software, sessions resumed in April and will be concluded this week. It was a pleasure working with the staff of this agency who showed themselves to be very eager to learn and advance in their public speaking skills.



The Baroque Feminine Ideal

During January and February, Dr Christine Muscat gave very interesting sessions on the role of women during the Baroque era.



The six lectures offered participants a comprehensive analysis of seventeenth-century European ideals of feminine beauty. They reflected a variety of approaches to the study of feminine beauty, including philosophical, sociological and cultural dimensions. Femininity was discussed as a means of patriarchal, social control, which shapes the socio-cultural, political context as well as the everyday lives of women.

Feedback on the course was very positive.

“Very well structured with little background knowledge needed to follow”

“It was a very interesting course that gave me a better picture of the role of women in the Baroque era”



Trios Video-Conference of the INCOME Tourism Project

Following the launch of the Piloting Phase of the INCOME Tourism Project in December, during which the Trios (consisting of a student following the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) (Tourism Studies), a university tutor from the Institute of Tourism, Travel & Culture and a company tutor) were established, 8 students started their internships with the companies participating in the project. For each student, the Practical Learning Module forms were compiled by the company and university tutors.



It was planned that from the 9th to the 13th March, the Trios would travel to Ravensburg, Germany, for a week of mobility activities during which participants from all participating countries would share their pilot experience so far with the dual learning model as well as with the German DHBW who are the pioneers of this model.

Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the mobility to Germany had to be indefinitely postponed. The partners however agreed to hold a Zoom meeting during which a Trio from each country explained their experience so far with the pilot project. The meeting was held on the 12th March.

Six countries, namely Malta, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Croatia and Germany, participated in the video-conference. In the case of Malta, the following entities met at the University of Malta and participated in the video-conference:

1. Malta University Consulting
2. The Institute of Tourism, Travel and Culture at the University of Malta
3. The Malta Business Bureau
4. Westin Dragonara Resort
5. Students participating in the project



All participants shared their experience so far vis a vis the outcome of the pilot project. In general, the experience was very positive, with most participants stating that it is a win-win situation for all stakeholders.

1. From a students' perspective the acquisition of soft skills through an actual on-the-job placement made them more conscious of the importance of soft skills. The experience also gave them networking opportunities which could lead to employment opportunities, in some cases in the very near future, once they finish their degree course. Furthermore, even though the students were working with a specific company, the acquired soft skills could be applied in many different contexts because in many instances the soft skills are transferable even to different industries since these skills are mainly on how to deal with other people, which could be work colleagues, superiors, subordinates, customers or suppliers.
2. Businesses found it important to employ students who were motivated to apply in practice what they had learned academically. They also appreciated the feedback they were getting from the students in specific practical situations because this gave them a new perspective of looking at the issues that arose.
3. Universities appreciated the feedback they received from both the students and the companies which will enable them to tweak the courses they offer to cater for the needs of the industry. In some cases, based on the experience, universities are thinking of increasing the duration of the obligatory students' placements so that the students will have more time to spend in different sections of the companies and they can therefore acquire additional soft skills.

In general all stakeholders agreed that the dual learning model will prepare the students to be better equipped to deal with real life situations once they finish their courses and commence work.





FOCUS ON PERSONNEL

Daphne Deguara

**Manager - Entertainment
& Merchandising**

Malta University Sports & Leisure

Daphne Deguara joined the Entertainment & Merchandising team as Manager last November and, from the very start, was very excited about her new role as it is all about offering people quality entertainment and leisure events include sports. Daphne used to work at the University of Malta as Events Manager, which she loved, so this new undertaking is giving her the opportunity to take on new challenges in a job she finds passion in. She started by being thrown in at the deep end immediately, with the Graduation Gown rentals the week after she joined and, soon after, preparing for the BRND WGN and University Ring Road Races. However, after all the preparations were in place, COVID-19 stepped in and demanded they be postponed. It was like having sat for mock exams, Daphne joked.

Daphne first graduated with a B.A.(Hons) in Communication Studies, during which time she contributed at UniRadio, now CampusFM; since her current office is in the CampusFM premises, she says it feels like coming around full circle. She then went on a scholarship in *Giornalismo Radio Televisivo* at the RAI School in Ponte Felcino (Perugia) and in October 1996 joined the FIS in Valletta, now the Valletta Campus. She went on to work at the International Office in Tal-Qroqq while following a post graduate course in Translation and Interpreting. After obtaining her diploma, Daphne worked as Translator with the European Parliament in Luxembourg, a challenging yet very valuable experience, on all aspects. When she returned to Malta, and to the University, she joined the Communications office where she worked till she joined MUHC in her current role.

Daphne has always been fascinated by the flickering screen, and last November graduated with a Master of Arts in Film Studies at the University of Malta. She is also very interested in art (which she started at a very early age by decorating her mother's white sofa with a box of crayons), photography, reading, writing, crafts, cooking, and meditation, which should make Daphne a very relaxed person - but she is far from it... There are so many things Daphne would like to do, if only there were more hours in the day for them.