

**University of Malta**  
**Gender Issues Committee**

**Annual Progress Report**  
**Academic Year 2012-2013**

Members

During the academic year 2012-13 there were little changes to the composition of the Gender Issues Committee (GIC). Ms Zoe Farrugia was nominated as KSU Representative on the GIC in lieu of Ms Isabelle Camilleri, however Ms Farrugia attended only one GIC meeting.

The members on the GIC were:

- Prof. M.T. Camilleri Podestà – Chairperson (Faculty of Medicine & Surgery)
- Dr Andrew Azzopardi – Member (Faculty of Education)
- Dr Josette Farrugia – Member (Faculty of Education)
- Dr Ruth Farrugia – Member (Faculty of Law)
- Dr Georg Mallia – Member (Faculty of Media & Knowledge Science)
- Dr Patricia Micallef – Member (Department of French, Junior College)
- Dr Janet Mifsud – Member (Faculty of Medicine & Surgery)
- Ms Zoe Farrugia – KSU Representative
- Ms Anabel Mifsud – Secretary

A short profile of the incumbent members has been included in Appendix I of this document.

Meetings

During the academic year 2012-13 the GIC met approximately every month for Committee meetings that were held on the following dates:

- October 1, 2012
- November 13, 2012
- December 18, 2012
- January 14, 2013
- February 19, 2013
- April 29, 2013
- May 31, 2013
- June 27, 2013

Committee meetings start with the reading of the minutes of the previous GIC meeting, followed by a presentation of the progress report and a discussion of the items on the meeting's agenda. Salient items on the agenda were:

- Increasing the visibility of the GIC and promoting its role among University staff and students;
- The GIC seminar in celebration of International Women's Day 2013;
- The GIC study on the experiences of senior female academics at the University of Malta;
- The GIC study on work-life balance and career advancement among administrative and technical staff;
- The need to set up a Wellbeing Clinic on campus for students and staff;
- The gender balance on University boards and committees;
- Continuous professional development for academic members of staff;
- The composition and chairpersonship of the GIC;
- Increasing the involvement of students with the GIC; and
- The designing of two study-units to be offered as part of the Degree Plus programme.

Apart from the monthly Committee meetings, the Chairperson and the Secretary met on several informal meetings to discuss the progress of the initiatives and events organised by the GIC.

## Events & Initiatives

The following is a succinct description of the main activities and initiatives undertaken by the GIC during the academic year 2012-13.

### **1. *Increasing the Visibility of the GIC:***

During the academic year 2012-13 the GIC embarked on a number of initiatives targeted to increase the visibility of the Committee and to promote its function among members of staff and students. To this end, a communication was sent to all newly appointed academic members of staff to welcome them on board and to inform them about the presence and the role of the GIC on campus. Another communication was sent to all Heads of Department asking them to guide their staff on the use gender-sensitive language in their dealings with students.

At the beginning of the academic year, the Chairperson of the GIC gave a presentation to the representatives of the various student organisations about the Mentoring Scheme that is run by the GIC.

### **2. *GIC Seminar:***

The GIC Seminar in celebration of International Women's Day 2013 was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2013 at the Conference Room at the Student House. The presenters at the seminar were H.E. Ms Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, U.S. Ambassador to Malta and Dr Rita Borg Xuereb – Head, Department of Midwifery – who carried out her PhD study on parenthood. The opening address was delivered by Prof. Camilleri Podestà. During the seminar the GIC

launched its booklet entitled 'Modelling Behaviour: Brief Profiles of Women Academics at the University of Malta', on the experiences of senior female academics at the University of Malta. The launch was presided by Ms Jacqueline Fenech, Director – Human Resources Management & Development.

**3. *GIC Study on the Experiences of Senior Female Academics at the University of Malta:***

During the previous academic year 2011-12, the GIC launched a study on the career experience of female academics serving at the University of Malta from the grade of senior lecturer upwards. The aim of the study was to gather personal experience narratives of a number of female academics about their academic career progression. Prospective participants were invited to answer a set of open-ended questions. A total of 19 participants contributed to the study.

At the beginning of academic year 2012-13 the individual narratives were published in a booklet which sought to encourage and inspire junior female academic members through the experiences of these role models. The booklet was titled designed by Dr Gorg Mallia. The foreword to the booklet was written by Prof. Camilleri Podestà and the introduction was authored by Prof. Mary Anne Lauri – Pro-Rector, Student and Institutional Affairs. The booklet was launched by Ms Jacqueline Fenech – Director, Human Resources Management and Development – at the GIC Seminar that was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2013. The feedback about the booklet was very positive and encouraging. Copies of the booklet were circulated both within and outside University. All female academics working at University of Malta were forwarded a copy.

**4. *GIC Study on Work-life Balance and Career Development among Support Staff:***

During the academic year 2012-3, the GIC held meetings with Ms Jacqueline Fenech – Director, Human Resources Management and Development – to launch a study on work-life balance and career advancement opportunities among administrative and technical staff. Further to this meeting, a questionnaire was developed to collect data about these areas of study.

**5. *The Need to Set Up a Wellbeing Clinic on Campus:***

The need to set up a Wellbeing Clinic on campus was discussed on multiple occasions. The GIC's vision for a Wellbeing Centre is to establish a safe place where students and staff could receive information and professional advice on keeping physically healthy and enhancing mental wellbeing. It is hoped that the Wellbeing Clinic would serve as a place where students, particularly overseas students, could be advised and referred to specialists in specific fields. With a population on campus of over 12,000, it is felt that such a centre

would greatly contribute to promoting a sense of wellbeing by providing first-line support to students and staff when needed. This is not intended to cope with any medical emergencies, which can so easily be directly referred to Mater Dei Hospital.

To this end, the need to set up a Wellbeing Clinic on campus was discussed with the Head of the University Counselling Services Unit, Fr John Vella, and with the President of the Kunsill Studenti Universitarji (KSU). During the meeting with Fr Vella it was agreed to synergise efforts in the promotion for setting up a Wellbeing Clinic. Meetings were also held with Dr Charmaine Gauci – Director, Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Unit – to seek her collaboration on this endeavour.

As an offshoot of the GIC's collaboration with Dr Charmaine Gauci and Dr Anna Vella (Substance Misuse Outpatients Unit) on the Wellbeing Clinic, the GIC was instrumental in setting up two study-units as part of the Degree Plus programme: one on healthy living (knowledge-based), and another one on sports and adventure (practical-based). These study-unit were offered at the start of academic year 2013-14.

#### **6. *Gender Balance on University Boards & Committees:***

During the academic year 2012-13, the GIC embarked on an exercise to assess the gender balance on University Board and Committees. The members on the GIC feel that it is important that the University of Malta leads by example on this matter by ensuring an equitable representation of the under-represented gender on all its Committees / Boards.

To this end, a list of all University Boards / Committees, that included their composition, terms of references and the tenure of their members, was compiled and reviewed. The gender balance on most Senate-appointed Boards / Committees was appraised as satisfactory, however it was noted that this did not apply for all Committees. Consequently, a meeting was organised with Prof. Alfred Vella to discuss this issue. Following the meeting, a letter was sent to the University Council recommending a review of the present situation in line with the objective proposed by the European Commission to have 40% of the under-represented sex on non-executive boards.

#### **7. *Lectures on Gender Issues to Academic Members of Staff:***

The importance of continued professional development for academic members of staff was debated on several occasions and plans to organise a set of lectures on gender issues were discussed. To this end, the Chairperson of the GIC and Dr Ruth Farrugia attended a meeting with Prof. Alfred Vella. During the meeting it was suggested that the requirement for CPD is introduced in the collective agreement. It was decided that the GIC will organise annual training on gender-related topics.

The GIC delivered two sessions on gender issues, sexual harassment and gender mainstreaming, as part of the University-run training programme to new academic members of staff that is being led by Prof. John Portelli. Ms Anna Borg, Dr Maureen Cole and Dr Sandra Scicluna Calleja were invited to present at the first session. In the second session, Dr Romina Bartolo – Executive Director, NCPE – gave a presentation about gender mainstreaming.

#### **8. *Composition and Chairpersonship of the GIC:***

The chairpersonship and the composition of the GIC were discussed on several occasions. Prof. Marie Therese Camilleri Podestà expressed her wish to step down from the role of Chairperson to give others the opportunity. It was agreed that she will stay on as Chairperson until December 2014.

As part on the discussions on gender balance on University Boards and Committees, the gender balance on the GIC was also debated. It was decided to put forward recommendations to Rector for another two male members of staff to join the Committee.

#### **9. *Increasing the Involvement of Students with the GIC:***

The issue of whether students perceive the GIC as relevant was discussed in a number of meetings. The issue was also raised with the President of KSU. In addition, it was decided to organise a meeting for students to invite feedback and listen to what they have to say about the subject of gender issues and the role of the GIC. The meeting was scheduled for the beginning of next academic year 2013-4.

### Participation at Meetings & Seminars / Conferences

The following is a list of initiatives undertaken and seminars / conferences attended by members on the GIC:

- Workshop on Gender and Research (MCST) – 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2012
- Lecture on Gender in International Affairs (UoM) – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2012
- NCPE Conference - Unlocking the Female Potential - 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012
- Meeting by the Organisation for the Promotion of Human Rights (OPHR) – 17<sup>th</sup> December 2012
- Meeting with Prof. Alfred Vella – 7<sup>th</sup> January 2013
- Newsbook (Radio Programme on RTK by Josianne Camilleri) – 30<sup>th</sup> March 2013
- NCPE Annual Conference – 24<sup>th</sup> May 2013

- 'Making a Difference' - Implementing Equal Treatment Legislation on Grounds of Age, Gender, Religion, Race, and Sexual Orientation (NCPE) – 17<sup>th</sup> July 2013

## Appendix I

### Profiles:

**Prof. Marie Therese Camilleri Podestà** is the Chairperson of the Gender Issues Committee. She has been working in the Department of Anatomy for the past 40 years, starting as a research assistant and currently occupying the post of professor. She has also held the post of head of department for several years. She has conducted numerous studies both locally and abroad, which have contributed to the knowledge on diverticular disease of the colon, bile acid secretion, as well the effects of plant products on cancer cell lines. Her work includes collaboration with other faculties within the University of Malta and the University of Pisa. She has also supervised several M.Phil. and Ph.D. students.

She was Chairperson of the National Commission of Mental Health. She is also a member on various other committees, including the ACCESS Committee and the University Research Ethics Committee, and is chairperson of the Faculty Admissions Committee. She also carries out forensic autopsies as requested by the courts.

**Dr Andrew Azzopardi** is Senior Lecturer at the University of Malta. His lecturing and research focus on inclusive education, sociology, critical pedagogy, disability politics, and youth & community studies. He has published extensively in the field of disability studies and inclusive education. He is a member of the Editorial Panel of the highly acclaimed International Journal of Inclusive Education and has edited a special edition called Creating Inclusive Communities. He has contributed extensively in a number of other applauded journals. Azzopardi has published the following texts: Career guidance for persons with disability (2008) (JP Advertising), Reading stories of inclusion – Engaging with different perspectives towards an agenda for inclusion (2009), Understanding disability politics in Malta (2009) (VDM Verlag Dr. Müller), Young people in Gozo: A study 2 (2011) (Artwork Publications), Roots to inclusive education – A question of wellbeing (2012) (Lambert Academic Publishing) and Youth responding to Lives: An international reader (Sense Publishers). He is the Co-Editor of Inclusive communities: A critical reader (Sense Publishers). He is Adjunct Professor with the Victoria Institute for Education, Diversity and Lifelong Learning, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia.

**Ms Patricia Camilleri** (née Boland) was born and brought up in the UK. She left England in 1973 and spent a year working in Sicily. Following some months of study in Malta, she spent a year working in Rome, returning to live on the island in 1976. In 1988 she joined the University of Malta and read for a B.A. degree in Italian, Archaeology & Communication Studies. After her final exams in 1991, she started working at the University of Malta where she was entrusted with the setting up the Communications Office and went on to become Director of the Communications & Alumni Relations Office. Ms Camilleri has been a member of the Gender

Issues Committee for many years and has participated in many seminars and meetings concerning gender both in Malta and abroad. In 2001 she gained her Master of Arts degree with a thesis entitled: *L'analisi strutturale: verso una semiologia museale*. Her special research interests are museum theory and the catacombs of Malta.

**Dr Josette Farrugia** holds a B.Ed. from the University of Malta and a Ph.D. from the University of York. She has taught Chemistry at secondary and post-secondary level for a number of years. She has also worked as Principal Subject Area Officer for Sciences with the Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate Examinations Board (MATSEC) and is currently a Senior Lecturer in Science Education with the Department of Mathematics, Science and Technical Education of the Faculty of Education. Her research interests include various aspects of science education and educational assessment.

**Dr Ruth Farrugia** is an advocate and senior lecturer in the Faculty of Laws at the University of Malta. She studied at the University of Malta, University of Strasbourg, Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies and Metropolitan Ecclesiastical Tribunal. She is a former consultant to the deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Social Policy, the Social Affairs Committee in Parliament and UNHCR. She was commissioned to draft the Children Act, Commissioner for Children Act and Gender Equality Act for Malta and has worked as an expert for the Council of Europe on the Child Access to Justice programme, for the EU as an expert on the PRMIII group and in a number of other international drafting and academic commissions, including the EJJO academic council, focusing on Child Rights, Family Law and Human Rights. She has published widely in these areas and is currently working for the Council of Europe within the Violence against Children programme.

**Dr Gorg Mallia** is a communications academic, author and cartoonist working on the island of Malta. He is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Media and Knowledge Sciences, University of Malta. He has a B.A. (Hons) in English Literature and an M.A. in Communications, both from the University of Malta, and a Ph.D. in Instructional Technology, from the University of Sheffield, UK. He specialises in Print and Presentation Media, Personal Communications, Personal Branding, and Instructional Design and Technology (particularly Transfer of Learning and the Use of Social Media in Education). He is also researching graphic narrative and storytelling.

Dr Mallia has published books of fiction for children, which he has also illustrated, as well as books of experimental short stories. He has published extensively (in Maltese and English) both in his academic fields of interest and creatively, children's and adult fiction. For nine years until 2013, he was the Chairman of the National Book Council.



**Dr Patricia Micallef** is a Senior lecturer of French at the University of Malta, Junior College. She also lectures within the Department of Arts and Languages in Education, Faculty of Education, University of Malta.

Prior to this position, she has taught this language at various levels in different institutions. Her main area of study is French literature during the 17th and the 18th century, with particular interest in literature related to the period of the Order of Saint John in Malta.

Dr Micallef has published several papers on the Maltese islands as seen by the 17th and 18th century traveller and has also participated in international conferences on the subject.

**Prof Janet Mifsud** B. Pharm. (Hons), Ph.D. (QUB) is a member of the Department of Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics, University of Malta. She was appointed the Commissioner, National Commission for the Promotion of Equality for Men and Women between 2004 – 2010 and has represented Malta at several gender EU, UN and EuroMed policy meetings. She has been active in the gender and science field for several years. She has been invited by EU DG Research to attend Women in Science Fora held in Brussels, and she has also been appointed several times expert evaluator for proposals submitted under the Quality of Life and Marie Curie Actions FP5, FP6 key actions and FP7 calls. Locally, she has chaired the Gender Issues Committee for the University of Malta and was previously a member of the Public Service Commission.

Dr Mifsud has published extensively in the area of the therapeutic management of neurological disorders especially epilepsy. She was Secretary for the European Epilepsy Academy and is presently Vice-President for the International Bureau for Epilepsy.