

Research Support Assistants & Officers

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK



Welcome

Welcome to the employee handbook for Research Support Assistants and Officers at the University of Malta! We would like to take this opportunity to welcome any new employees and to thank all the existing employees for the valuable work you do and your contributions to the research being undertaken at the University of Malta. At our University, people work in a collegial and supportive manner, and we are passionate about research.

The University of Malta recognises the importance of supporting the growth of research. Providing employment opportunities for Research Support Assistants and Officers to engage in research projects and work alongside the Principal Investigator allows them to gain valuable experience and strengthen a specific skill.

This handbook is meant to outline the main aspects of the employee-employer relationship in addition to the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (EIRA) [legislation.mt/eli/cap/452/eng/pdf] and will hopefully answer any questions you may have. However, if you have a question or a concern that is not addressed in the handbook, please do not hesitate to contact a member of staff working at the Office for Human Resources Management & Development (OHRM&D). You can find our contact details on the OHRM&D page: um.edu.mt/hrmd/ourstaff.

Sincerely.



Ms Jacqueline Fenech
Director
Office for Human Resources
Management & Development



Professor Ing. Simon Fabri *Pro-Rector Research & Knowledge Transfer*



Introduction

This employee handbook is applicable to the Research Support Assistants and Officers employed by the University of Malta. It has been prepared to assist Research Support Assistants and Officers in finding the answers to general questions they may have and to familiarise them with the University of Malta's general approach to certain HR issues. Consequently, employees should read it carefully. This handbook is only intended to provide a general summary of information concerning certain HR issues. Neither the information in this handbook, nor any other communication by management with respect to this handbook or its contents, forms part of an employment contract with the University of Malta.

The University of Malta has the right to change any information set out in this handbook, without consulting, obtaining agreement, or providing notice of any kind to employees. For questions regarding an employee's personal employment situation or practices that are not addressed in this handbook, contact our office at hrmd@um.edu.mt.

Definitions

Management: is to be understood as referring to the Rector, Pro-Rectors, University Secretary, Deans, Directors and or such official of the University authorised to head the administration thereof.

University: This term refers to the University of Malta or UM, and is hereafter referred to as 'University'.

Principal investigator: is the Resident Academic responsible for a project and who is the lead researcher for the grant project on behalf of the University of Malta.

Post-graduate qualification: shall mean a qualification at level seven (7) or higher in the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) qualifications framework.

Post-doctoral experience: shall refer to experience obtained after a Ph.D. or equivalent research based doctoral qualification.

Research Support Assistant or Officer: a position that is funded either internally, or externally through funds awarded by any European, government agency or third party organisation where funds are directed towards research activities and administered through the Project Support Office or the central Finance Office. The Research Support Assistant or Officer is responsible to the Principal Investigator.

Resident Academics: academics from the grades of Assistant Lecturers to Professors.

Recruitment & Selection

During the recruitment and selection process of Research Support Assistants and Officers, the University of Malta is committed to hiring the best qualified person for the post. The University of Malta recognises the worth and dignity of all candidates by providing equal opportunity for employment, ensures fair, open and transparent competition, while ensuring all contractual and legislative requirements are met.

Hiring Process

The Principal Investigator in liaison with the HR Manager for externally funded projects is responsible for the recruitment and selection of Research Support Assistants and Officers. In the case of internally funded projects the Principal Investigator liaises directly with central HR. At the discretion of the Principal Investigator and as required by a project, a call for applications may be advertised to identify potential applicants.

The call for applications are always featured on the Office for Human Resources Management and Development website (um.edu.mt/hrmd/recruitment/projects), as well as on Euraxess, Facebook, LinkedIn and other portals as necessary. This generates a strong candidate pool.

Application Process

If a call for applications is advertised, applicants should submit an updated curriculum vitae with their application letter, a copy of their certificates and names of referees, as per the instructions on the call for applications by the closing date featured therein.

Selection Process

Candidates who do not meet the required qualifications will not be considered for an interview. The University of Malta will make its selection decision based on the applicant deemed to be most qualified with regard to the required skills, ability, relevant past performance, and qualifications, as outlined in the call for applications. Principal Investigators must adhere to the University of Malta's practices on nepotism and conflict of interest to ensure that employees are not directly supervised by a relative.

Probationary Period

From the first day of employment, newly hired Research Support Assistants and Officers, will be subject to a probationary period. The period amount will depend on the duration of the definite contract. The Principal Investigator should meet early in the employee's employment to establish mutually agreeable probationary goals. It is encouraged to hold meetings throughout the probationary period to review the employee's performance against those goals. If the employee's progress and performance is deemed to have been unsatisfactory or an additional assessment period is required, the Principal Investigator may discontinue employment.

Further information is included in the standard operating procedure ZPS-001-03: um.edu.mt/operatingprocedures/doc/ZPS-001-03

Starting your employment with UM

Your first task when starting your employment at the University is to get familiar with the new environment you will be working in.

On being selected for the position you will receive a nomination from one of our representatives from the Office for Human Resources Management & Development. Once this has been accepted from your end, your contract and a set of forms will be sent to you via email to be filled out and returned to our office.

We suggest that you prepare the following things in advance of your employment:

- Last payslip (if this is not your first employment)
- ID Card number
- National Insurance number / Social Security number
- Bank account details including name of the bank, swift number, bank account number and IBAN

The following is a list of forms that are required to start off your employment at the University of Malta.

Form checklist:

- Contract of employment to be signed by you and the Principal Investigator.
- Personal data card: This card contains your personal details and contact details
 in case of emergencies. Once this card is filled in we would be able to activate your
 account so that you will be able to access your UM account.
- Jobsplus Engagement Form: This form is required so that you would be registered with Jobsplus as an employee with the University of Malta.
- Commencement form: This form is provided to you on your first day of employment and needs to be filled by your principal investigator in order to confirm your commencement date and your office address.
- Link to parking permit self-service portal: https://um.unidesk.ac.uk/tas/public/ssp/
- Salaries forms: Once these forms are filled in, Salaries will be able to process your salary every four weeks. In the case of having a previous employment in the past 6 months, we would need the last payslip for tax purposes.
- Activation code: Once the data card is returned to our office, we will send you an
 email with the activation code and guidelines for activation of your UM IT account.

For further assistance in filling in the initial paperwork you can visit our office, Room 214 at the Office for Human Resources Management & Development located at the Administration Building, located at number 53 on the campus map:

um.edu.mt/campuses/msida/campusmap





Information for Expatriate Employees

Moving to Malta to work at UM?

The following tips should help you. We suggest you would read the following guide for foreigners: gov.mt/en/Life%20Events/Pages/Renting%20 and%20Purchasing%20Property/Moving-to-Malta-A-Guide-for-Foreigners.aspx

If you are a foreign national working in Malta our office will guide you to get started with working in Malta.





EU Nationals - Registration Certificate

- EU nationals staying in Malta for a period longer than three months are required to apply for a registration certificate.
- A covering letter is prepared by the OHRM&D to confirm your employment.
- You will be provided with a link to apply for a social security registration number. Once completed you will receive both your social security number and your tax details either by email or by post.

Third country nationals

- Employees moving to Malta must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 with a locally approved vaccine.
- Non-EU employees residing in the EU need to provide our office with a valid residence permit of the country they are living in.
- The rest of the Non-EU employees will be emailed by the OHRM&D with a form checklist from the OHRM&D.
- The OHRM&D will seek approval from Identity Malta.
- If you do not require a travelling Visa, you can proceed with travelling arrangements once approval is obtained from Identity Malta.
- If you require a Visa, please inform our office so the OHRM&D can obtain the go ahead from the Central Visa Unit in Malta before you can apply from a Maltese embassy.

Work/Residence Permit

- Potential employees who come from countries with high tuberculosis risk need to undertake a health screening test.
- Identity Malta will also require a lease agreement for a minimum period of 6 months from the commencement date.
- You will be required to fix an appointment with Identity Malta to get the biometrics
 done. Once this step has been completed you will get a temporary work permit which
 will allow you to start your employment with the University.
- The fees of the application form of Identity Malta will be covered by the University.
- If you are engaged as a key employee (at the grade of Research Support Officer III
 or higher), you will also need to apply with the Malta Qualifications Recognition
 Information Centre (MQRIC) to ensure that your qualifications are recognised.
- A full Health Insurance coverage will be required for the first year.

Dress Code

Kindly be reminded that when working on campus it is important to present a professional image at the workplace. You can refer to the following dress code guidelines.

- Employees are expected to be smart and neat in appearance and should wear clothes that are suitable for the nature of their work.
- Appropriate business attire for work excludes halter and strapless tops, spaghetti
 straps, tank tops, cropped tops, casual, denim or beach shorts, beach dresses, athletic
 attire (sweatshirts, sweatpants) torn clothing, clothing with holes in them, or which
 are tight fitting or revealing. All clothing must be clean, neat, and fit properly.
- Footwear such as flip flops, sneakers, gym shoes and beach sandals are not considered as appropriate.
- All members of staff must abide by the safety policies and procedures of their departments and wear the required protective clothing and safety equipment as directed.
- Members of staff who are required to wear a uniform must ensure that the uniform is worn in full and is kept clean and presentable.

Complaints & Appeals

The University of Malta is committed to maintaining a civil workplace. Promoting civility and respect and early intervention will reduce the risk of incivility. Whenever conflicts arise, employees of the University of Malta are encouraged to deal directly with the other person(s) who are involved to respectfully engage in dialogue to achieve resolution.

Documentation related to any concerns regarding disrespect and incivility will be kept strictly confidential within the Office for Human Resources Management and Development. Emails can be forwarded to hrmd@um.edu.mt

Disciplinary Action

At the UM, all employees are expected to act with responsibility and integrity. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to report incidents of suspected misconduct during work. Disciplinary procedures may be initiated against an employee who is alleged to have assisted in misconduct. The standard operating procedure XHR-007-01 outlines the disciplinary action process: um.edu.mt/operatingprocedures/doc/XHR-007-01

Salary & Timesheets

The University of Malta has established salary scales for Research Support Assistants and Officers based on the level of education obtained. An increment is offered after every year of employment, which is inclusive of the cost of living adjustment (COLA), for up to three years. Please refer to Appendix I for more information. In certain cases, the remuneration for candidates who already hold, or had held within the last six months, a Research Support Assistant or Officer post at the University of Malta will start at their latest salary scale in accordance with the salary structure for Research Support Assistants/Officers as indicated in Appendix I. All Research Support Assistants and Officers are subject to the payment of Maltese Income Taxes and National Insurance contributions where applicable.

In order for the Research Support Assistants and Officers to receive payment, a timesheet has to be duly filled and submitted.

For those working on externally funded projects, administered by the Project Support Office, staff are required to submit the timesheets online, on AIMS. Further information may be found in Appendix II.

In the case of those working on internally funded projects, administered by the central Finance Office, staff are required to fill in a manual timesheet. The OHRM&D provides support on how to fill in these timesheets.

Time & Attendance

Working Hours

Members of staff engaged on a full-time basis are expected to work a 40 hour week from 08:00 till 17:00, with a break of one hour, throughout the whole year. Research Support Officers do not work on half days during the summer period.

Part-time staff will be required to work hours as specified by their contract and according to the needs of the principal investigators.

Vacation Leave

In 2024, an employee working on a full-time basis is entitled to 240 hours of leave including the public holidays which fall on weekends. Part-time employees are also entitled to vacation leave on a pro-rata basis, according to their total hours of work. You can check your yearly entitlement and leave balance on the administrative information management system called AIMS. More details are available in this manual: um.edu.mt/l/qL2mq

Staff are required to apply for leave electronically on AIMS. Leave cannot be transferred from one year to the following year. Any unutilised leave at the end of the year will be lost.

Maltese Public Holidays

1 January New Year's Day

10 February Feast of St Paul's Shipwreck

19 March Feast of St Joseph
 31 March Freedom Day
 March/April Good Friday
 1 May Worker's Day
 7 June Sette Giugno

29 JuneFeast of St Peter and St Paul15 AugustFeast of the Assumption8 SeptemberFeast of Our Lady of Victories

21 September Independence Day

8 December Feast of the Immaculate Conception

13 December Republic Day25 December Christmas Day

Sick Leave

All Research Support Officers are entitled to 10 days of sick leave. Members of staff need to inform the OHRM&D when they are on sick leave and provide the office and social security with a medical certificate after resuming duties from sick leave.

If you have any queries regarding time and attendance please contact the Personnel Management team on absence.hrmd@um.edu.mt

Harassment & Discrimination

The University strives to ensure there is no discrimination to any matter associated with terms and conditions of employment by reason of race, creed, colour, sex, gender, marital status, ethnic origin, ancestry, place of origin, political or religious affiliation, sexual orientation, citizenship, age, record of offences, family status, disability, or language (unless it is an occupational requirement of a position). The University of Malta recognises that institutional excellence can only be achieved by engaging with diversity at every level of the institutional activities.

It is expected that all employees act in accordance with the policies set up by the University. The following pages can give you a clear indication of the policies adopted by the University.

Harassment and Bullying

▼ um.edu.mt/services/harassmentandbullying

The Gender Equality and Sexual Diversity Committee

✓ um.edu.mt/about/gender

Committee on Race and Ethnic Affairs

✓ um.edu.mt/about/governance/committees/raceethnicaffairs

Good Practice in Inclusive Language

um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/425229/goodpracticeinclusivelanguage.pdf

Gender+ Equity Plan (G+EP)

✓ um.edu.mt/about/equity

Health & Safety

The University is committed to ensure the health and safety of its employees and in providing a safe work environment at all times in accordance with the **Occupational**Health and Safety Authority Act. The Health and Safety Services (um.edu.mt/services/administrativesupport/safety) is responsible for the planning, implementing and monitoring the University's health and safety programme according to established policy and legislative requirements.

All members of staff are provided with the necessary training on Health & Safety free of charge. A variety of courses in First Aid, fire prevention and basic life support are offered several times a year according to the training calendar: um.edu.mt/hrmd/trainingdevelopment. Certain training might be mandatory for staff working in laboratory settings.

Standard Operating Procedures for the use of equipment

As part of your work at the University of Malta, you may be required to use equipment or facilities in certain laboratories. In this regard, the UM has a repository (**um.edu.mt/operatingprocedures**) of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Any other information may be obtained by sending an email at **labsupport.rssd@um.edu.mt**

Health & Wellness

The Health and Wellness Centre was set up to cater for the wellbeing of students and staff.

It offers a range of professional services aimed at safeguarding the mental and physical health of the University community. These services include the **Counselling Services**, psychiatric support, sexual health advice, nutritional advice and support on matters related to substance abuse. The social workers also process applications for the **Student Solidarity Fund** (SSF). Most services are offered at the Health & Wellness Centre located at 42 in the campus map (um.edu.mt/campuses/msida/campusmap). You may contact the team on health-wellness@um.edu.mt

Other support is provided by the **Chaplaincy**, **Student Advisory Services** (that offers advice on career guidance and programmes of studies) and the **ACCESS Disability Support Unit**.

Relevant SOPs and Policies

- ✓ Supporting suicidal and/or severely distressed students Staff guidelines
- ✓ Complete guidelines for access arrangements at UM, 2018
- → Harassment and Bullying Policy



Training & Development

The University strongly believes in developing the skills and competencies of its employees through training initiatives.

As a result, the OHRM&D offers a multitude of training initiatives: um.edu.mt/hrmd/trainingdevelopment/coursesandresources

All courses are offered free of charge to all UM employees. In collaboration with the Doctoral School the OHRM&D also provides workshops for researchers, which are specifically designed for Ph.D. students and Research Support Assistants and Officers.

We encourage you to keep an eye out for what training is currently available and to participate in these training initiatives. The OHRM&D periodically sends mailshots with the training opportunities available for staff.

Working Conditions

Contract of Employment

Contracts of employment for Research Support Assistants and Officers are of a fixed term duration and are not converted into one of an indefinite duration if the employee is employed continuously for a period of four years. This is in view that the Research Support Assistant or Officer is specifically employed to perform tasks related to a project and other projects. This is in line with the Contracts of Service for a Fixed Term Regulation: legislation.mt/eli/ln/2007/51/eng/pdf

Reporting Line

All Research Support Assistants or Officers report directly to the Principal Investigator or other team members as directed by the Principal Investigator. Research Support Assistants or Officers are not to give access or any information to any third parties who are not associated with the project they are working on, about any work and/or data that relates to tasks directed by the Principal Investigator without the prior written approval of the University of Malta.

Data Protection

All data gathered and processed must be treated according to Maltese data protection legislation: legislation.mt/eli/cap/586/eng/pdf

Intellectual Property

Any intellectual property arising from the research is the property of the University of Malta. In the eventuality of Research Support Assistants or Officers utilising the data arising from their employment as partial fulfilment to their studies at the UM, their assessable student work will be covered by the UM IP Policy relating to students. Any other work they perform under their contract of employment which is not related to studies at the UM, is covered by the clauses in the UM IP policy relating to University Members of Staff: um.edu.mt/knowledgetransfer/docs/IP_Policy_2014.pdf

Email Account, UM Google Suite, and UM Library Services

For the duration of their contract of employment, Research Support Assistants or Officers are provided with a personal UM Email Account and access to the University of Malta Google Suite. The Research Support Assistants and Officers also benefit from access to the University of Malta Library Services.

Information, documents and data

All Research Support Assistants or Officers should treat all information, documents and data related to the project to which they may have access to in the course of their duties as confidential and will take all necessary and reasonable precautions to prevent unauthorised disclosure of the confidential information. This confidentiality may subsist for a number of years after the termination of their contract of employment. All information, documents and data belong solely to the University of Malta and the Research Support Assistants or Officers are bound to give all the information, documents and data to the Principal Investigator.

Teaching Duties

At the UM, Research Support Assistants and Officers are sometimes requested to provide assistance to a department or faculty with the teaching responsibilities. Research Support Assistants and Officers receive valuable teaching experience as they advance their education and further develop their skills.

Responsibilities may include one or more of the following:

- To conduct tutorial or lab sessions:
- To present one or more lectures in a class; and
- To supervise field trips.

Since teaching does not form part of the job description of the Research Support Assistants and Officers, the hours of teaching may be carried out when the employee is on vacation leave or outside their normal working hours. In view of this, teaching duties by Research Support Assistant and Officers are carried out on a casual basis against remuneration. Further information may be obtained from the OHRM&D at hrmd@um.edu.mt

Termination

In the event that the employment with the University of Malta is terminated, the Research Support Assistants or Officers are bound to give a successful handover to the Project Coordinator and other team members as instructed by the Principal Investigator.

Access to the UM account will be revoked on termination of the contract.

End of Contract

Once a contract is terminated, you will receive a letter from the Director for HRM&D along with a Jobsplus termination form and a return of material declaration form. Both forms need to be returned to the OHRM&D The Principal Investigator receives a copy of this documentation.

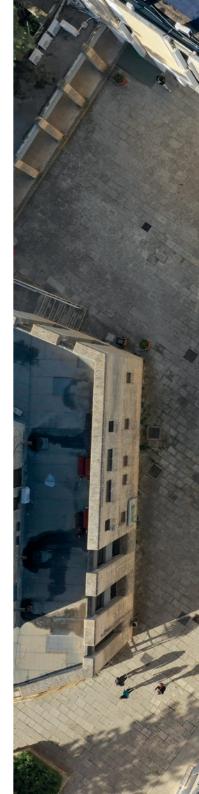
Resignation/Dismissal during probationary period

In the case of a resignation, the employee will be required to send a resignation letter to the Director for HRM&D, copying the Principal Investigator. If the employee's engagement is not confirmed during the probationary period, the contract is terminated during probation. In both cases, both parties need to be given one week notice and the contract will be terminated without any repercussions.

Resignation after the probationary period

If an employee wishes to resign after the probationary period, the employee will be required to send a resignation letter to the Director for HRM&D, copying the Principal Investigator.

If the Research Support Assistants or Officers terminate the contract of employment without a justifiable reason, the Party terminating the contract of employment is to pay to the other Party a sum equal to one half of the full wages that would have accrued in respect of the remainder of the time specifically agreed upon. These penalties are outlined in the laws of Malta under the definite contract regulations: https://legislation.mt/eli/sl/452.81/eng/pdf





Appendix I

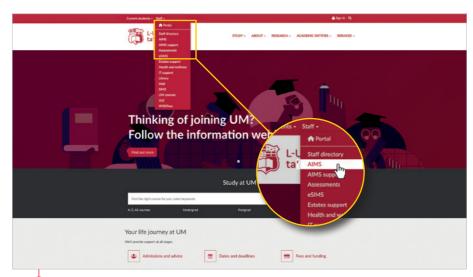
Approved hourly and annual equivalent rates for Research Support Officers and Research Support Assistants as from 1 January 2024

	SALARY YEAR 2024		SALARY YEAR 2025		SALARY YEAR 2026	
	rate	annual equivalent	rate	annual equivalent	rate	annual equivalent
	per hour	€	per hour	€	per hour	€
Senior Research Support Officer I (Post Doc with 6 years *FTE research experience post-Ph.D. qualification)	25.38	52,791	25.76	53,581	26.14	54,372
Research Support Officer IV (Post Doc with 3 years *FTE research experience post-Ph.D. qualification)	21.88	45,511	22.26	46,301	22.64	47,092
Research Support Officer III (Ph.D.)	16.88	35,111	17.26	35,901	17.64	36,692
Research Support Officer II (Masters)	13.86	28,829	14.22	29,578	14.58	30,327
Research Support Officer I (Bachelor)	12.36	25,709	12.72	26,458	13.08	27,207
Research Support Assistant (no degree)	8.34	17,348	8.68	18,055	9.02	18,762

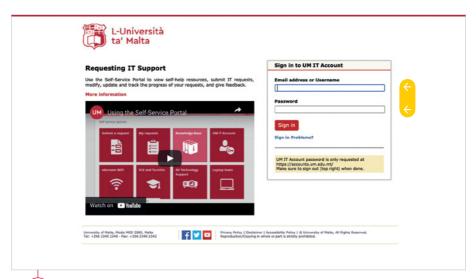
^{*}where FTE stands for full-time equivalent. Thus, for example, someone with 3-years **part-time** research experience post Ph.D. would not qualify for RSO IV since this would be equivalent to 1.5 years FTE.

Appendix II

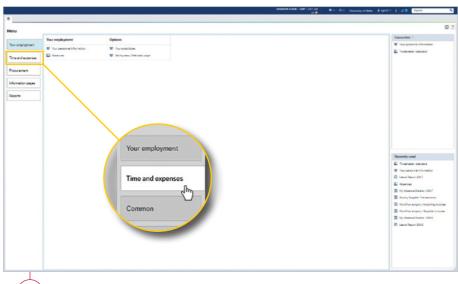
Timesheet tutorial



1 Select **AIMS** from drop down menu at **um.edu.mt**.



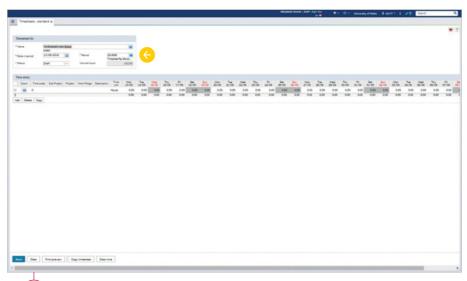
Insert UM account username and password.



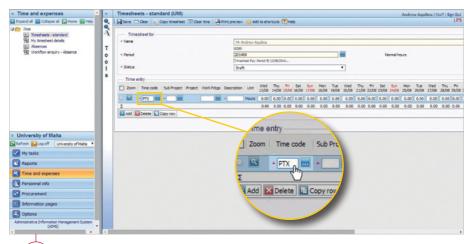
Choose **Time and expenses**.



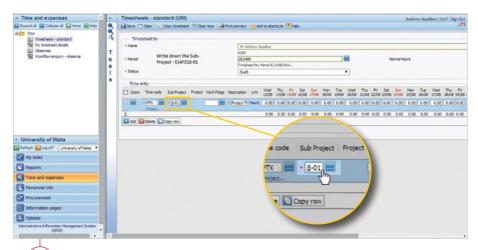
4 Click on **Time** and choose **Timesheets - standard**.



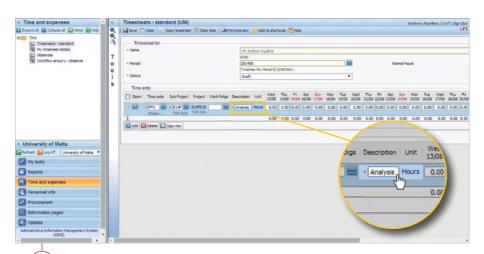
Select the **Pay Period**. If you wish to access a previous timesheet, simply click on the box as shown below, and manually change the date (202101, stands for pay period 1 - 01/01/2021 - 28/01/2021 and press **TAB**. You may also search the pay periods simply by clicking on the blue box.



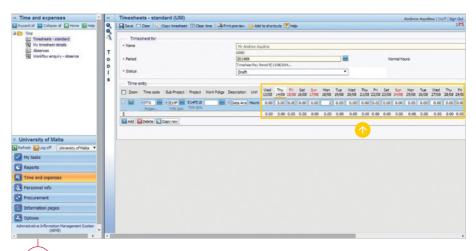
List time code – **PT** and press **TAB**.



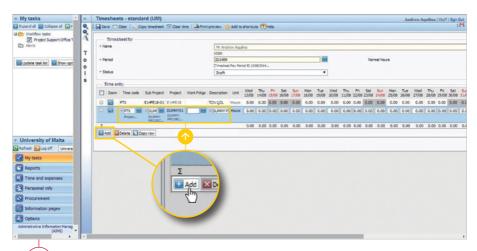
(7) Write down the Sub-Project E21LG80-01 (Project code) and press TAB.



(8) Under the Description Area – List the tasks carried out and press **TAB**.



9 Always press **TAB** after each input.



(10) Click on **Add** to add a new row.

Add new row for other PT or PTX hours on a different WP, for other sub-projects or to add the public holiday sub project (PUBHOL1-01) and insert the hours accordingly.



If the time-sheet is not yet finalised, the status needs to be **DRAFT**. Press **SAVE** before closing window.



Once the Time-sheet is finalised and you have confirmed that all details and hours are correct, change the status to **READY** and press **SAVE**.

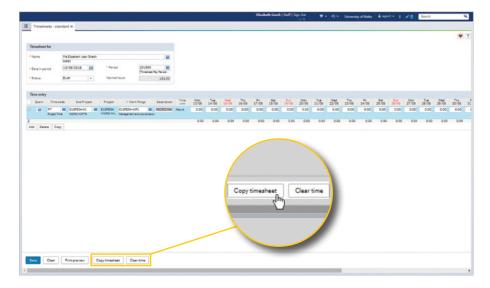
Notes



Select **Subproject** – If you press Search you are able to see the whole list of projects you are connected to.

Time booked	Subproject to use	Paid Upon Timesheet	Time-Code
Dummy	DUMMY01-01	N	PT
Research Time (academic non project)	RSRCHTS-01	N	R
Teaching Time (timesheets)	TEACHTS-01	N	Т
Administration Time (timesheets)	ADMINTS-01	N	A
Consultancy Time (timesheets)	CONSLTS-01	N	С
Productive Project Time	relevant subproject code	N	PT
Productive Project Time	relevant subproject code	Υ	PTX
PublicHoliday	PUBHOL1-01	N	PH
PublicHoliday	PUBHOL1-01	Υ	PHX
Vacation Leave	VACNLV1-01	N	VL
Vacation Leave	VACNLV1-01	Υ	VLX
Sick Leave	SICKLV1-01	N	SL
Sick Leave	SICKLV1-01	Υ	SLX
Special Leave	SPECLV1-01	N	SP
Special Leave	SPECLV1-01	Υ	SPX

Note that the time codes ending in X apply only to those employees who are paid strictly against timesheets.



For next timesheet you can click **Copy timesheet** at the bottom of the screen and click **Clear Hours** so that all sub-projects utilised in the previous timesheet would appear in the current timesheet.

Video Tutorials are also available on the following link:

▼ um.edu.mt/finance/aims/trainingmanuals

Full Timesheets

Per pay period:

- 160 hours which include, other than project work hours (PT):
- any public holidays during that period (PUBHOL1-01), timecode PH
- any vacation leave taken during that period (VACNLV1-01), timecode VL (these would be automatically inserted once applied from the Absence module)
- any sick leave taken during that period (SICKLV1-01), timecode SL (these would be automatically inserted once HR are informed)
- any special leave taken during that period (SPECLV1-01) (if applicable),
 timecode SP (these would be automatically inserted once HR are informed)

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