

## *A Word from the Rector*

UNIVERSITIES have achieved a notable integration of those permanent values of the human spirit which has, over the years, permitted them to adapt themselves to a whole spectrum of changing circumstances and environments whilst at the same time retaining their identity.

During the last few decades, higher education systems have been continuously exhorted by both governments and by industry to make themselves more 'relevant', or, as Guy Neave has stated, to commit themselves further to the road that leads to the 'market place'. Universities have of course become more entrepreneurial and have travelled down this road in order to maintain sustainable growth.

The core mission of our University is thus, to continue with the creation of an open space of higher learning within a life-long perspective. This is based on equity of access and should be seen as an opportunity for individual development, allowing all those capable of benefiting from higher education to integrate better into the global knowledge society. Continuous learning is becoming a key issue in establishing the competitiveness of an individual, an organisation and even of a nation. Nowadays, the best job security is a knowledge base which allows one to learn the requirements of a new job quickly. Today's working population is in a new situation due to problems arising from an increasing mismatch between peoples' skills and job market needs. To remain employable people will need ongoing updating and upgrading to renew their knowledge and competence. We must further develop programmes and techniques to provide the knowledge needed during career cycles. It is with this in mind that universities must seek to create new and more study opportunities not only for its young students but also for its more adult members.

In the past few years steps have been taken to instill a pro-industry attitude at the University. Attempts are currently being made to further strengthen the links with the world of work through the improvement of regular communication among the various stakeholders. The development of our undergraduates' entrepreneurial skills and initiatives are major concerns on our campus. They are needed in order to facilitate their employability in a world where they will be increasingly called upon to be not only job seekers but, more importantly, also job creators. In order to achieve all this our University seeks to create new partnerships whilst strengthening existing ones, not just with government but also with industry and foreign institutions either as research partners or as funding bodies.

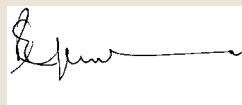
Our society is fast approaching the point at which the economy, so far mostly based on traditional capital and labour production, gives way to an economy based on the production and sale of knowledge and services. The University is an institution where 'production' is based precisely on these commodities and should increasingly come to occupy a strategic position of great significance. Ours is an era characterized by pressures which demand efficiency and effectiveness of rationalization in provision. The University is now meeting a much broader range of national needs than it has ever done before in its four hundred year history. The number of roles that it is taking over must be sustained and developed to better meet the demands of our society and its citizens. The University is fully aware of its social responsibilities and does its utmost to meet them. To do this even more successfully it needs to be adequately funded.

Bearing all this in mind, the University Annual Report for the last few years has tried to present something new, reflecting our efforts within the framework of this philosophy and at



the same time highlighting various areas of specialisation. In his article entitled: *Contributions to Enhance Manufacturing Industry's Competitiveness*, Dr. Ing. Jonathan Borg enumerates various projects being undertaken in collaboration with industry by the Department of Manufacturing Engineering whilst emphasising that members of staff who sit on various national boards and committees also contribute their expertise in the public interest. Professor Mario Buhagiar draws a link between the publication of his book on *The Iconography of The Maltese Islands* in 1988 which sought to provide a critical survey of the history of the visual arts in Malta between 1400 and 1900 and the subsequent establishment of History of Art as an academic discipline within the Faculty of Arts. The paper also takes a cursory look at his forthcoming publication on the story of art in Malta in the late medieval and early modern periods. Dr. Ivan Callus writes on the relationship between the University and its host society whilst pointing out the dangers of calculating its value in terms of returns, for the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake may still well be a worthwhile endeavour. Dr. Joseph Grima outlines research on auxetic materials being carried out in the Department of Chemistry in collaboration with the University of Exeter. He shows how materials that get fatter when stretched and thinner when compressed have multiple uses. Dr. Joseph Mifsud's *Building Bridges in a Multicultural European Arena* is a calendar of achievements and events outlining the promotion of the European dimension of scholarly exchange and academic cooperation in which the University of Malta has invested heavily. Professor John Portelli describes the eighth annual visit to Korce made by UoM's charitable student society, *Smile for Albania*, which has been providing humanitarian dental care to students at Preca College and children from state schools since 1994. Finally, Dr. Sandra Scicluna Calleja outlines the role of psychologists in supporting individuals and strengthening communities in an age of change unparalleled since the Industrial Revolution, highlighting the intervention made by members of the Department of Psychology in the Maltese context.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all those members of staff who contributed their time and expertise in the preparation of papers for this publication. □



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