On behalf of all staff of the Department of Biology (DoB), I welcome first year students who have registered for an undergraduate (BSc) or postgraduate (MSc or MPhill/PhD), as well as those who have registered for one or more of the study-units offered by our department.

A main aim of the Department is to provide you with the best possible study programmes in order to ensure that you will receive a high level of training in both theory and practice, as well as equip you with the necessary skills that will enable you to contribute to Malta’s changing needs and requirements for knowledge in the biological sciences. Through its research programmes, the Department makes a direct contribution to new scientific findings and to the application of biology, such as applying knowledge and measures to ensure the sustainable management of natural resources. You will have opportunities to contribute directly to such research endeavours.

The scope of the present memo is to inform/remind students of various important points, which we hope will assist you in the following months.

1. **Indemnity Form**

   New students will need to sign an indemnity form (downloaded from the ‘important notices’ link on the DoB’s website at [http://www.um.edu.mt/science/biology](http://www.um.edu.mt/science/biology)) and submit it to the departmental secretary by 16th October 2019.

2. **Student Photograph**

   All students are required to provide the Department with a recent passport size-photograph (with their names and ID number written on the reverse side). New students should submit such photograph along with the indemnity form (as indicated above). Students for other course years are also required to submit the photograph to the departmental office by 16th October 2019. The photographs will only be used for internal administrative purposes.
3. **Website**

Most of the information you will be requiring is available at:

a) The departmental website (http://www.um.edu.mt/science/biology)

b) The **VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT** (VLE), which is accessible from the University’s main website

c) The **ELECTRONIC STUDENT INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM** (eSIMS) which is also accessible from the University’s main website.

**It is essential that you consult the DoB’s website, as well as the notice boards located within the Department.**

Most course information, such as practical handouts, assignment titles, etc. are available on the VLE, and it is your responsibility to download this, as instructed by the demonstrators and/or tutors.

Course descriptions, requirements and readings lists are available on eSIMS.

4. **Health and safety and Code of Practice**

We give high priority to the practical component of our courses and to the health and safety aspects of such programmes. **ALL STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO DOWNLOAD** the manual titled ‘**Safety Precautions and Code of Practice**’ from the ‘safety’ page available on the DoB’s website. You are required to print out a hard copy of this manual, include it in your practical reports file, and show it to the tutor/demonstrator during your first practical session.

5. **Attendance to lectures and practical sessions**

Attendance to lectures, practical classes as well as any other teaching/field sessions is obligatory. Attendance records are kept on the official Attendance Record Sheets issued by the department for each individual study-unit. It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet for such sessions. Students who fail to attend a lecture or practical session have to present to the departmental office a **WRITTEN MEDICAL CERTIFICATE** by their doctor as well the blue certificate. Such certificates must not be postdated and should reach the department not later than 3 days from date of issue. Furthermore, there is a limit to the number of medical certificates that will be accepted during the academic year.

6. **Absence from University**

Students are **expected to attend University throughout the whole academic year (i.e. during term time), except during the recess period for Christmas, Easter and summer.** This means that students will not be excused for going abroad during term time unless in extraordinary circumstances for which the Head of Department’s permission will be required.
7. Plagiarism

The University of Malta has issued guidelines on plagiarism and collusion – see http://www.um.edu.mt/science/plagiarism. You are advised to familiarize yourself with these guidelines.

Furthermore, a student may not make available any assignment, report of a practical session or any other course material to another student, even if the former has concluded his/her programme of studies at University. Making available course material includes, passing on soft or hard copies to another individual, uploading to an internet site where it will be available for other individuals to download, etc... Students are reminded of the following official University policies:

“The copyright on any Assessable Student Work shall be owned by the Student Originator/s.....under the following conditions:

..the Student is required to obtain written permission from the University in the event that he wishes to publish or otherwise commercially exploit his Assessable Student Work, whether in total or in part, at any time prior to or following the submission, for assessment, of the Assessable Student Work, until the lapse of two years from the date of its final submission to the University, which permission shall not be unreasonably withheld.”

Placing course material in the public domain constitutes publication, and the student, graduate or individual carrying out such an act will be deemed to have failed to observe the terms of the IP Policy.

Finally, when there is breach of University’s IP policy, disciplinary action may be taken against the individual who has breached UM’s IP policy.

8. Deadlines

Your academic progress will be assessed through periodic assignments, tests and various other methods as indicated in the descriptions of the respective study-units. You are required to observe the deadlines set by your tutors for handing in any assignments and reports. Deadlines for submission of written assignments are normally indicated in the study-unit description.

9. Submission of coursework/written assignments

- Students will be required to hand in their coursework/written assignments as indicated below.
- Students are to upload a digital copy of their assignments and practical/field reports to the VLE, as well as hand in a hard copy of same to the departmental secretary by posting such material in the deposit box located outside the departmental office.
- Students are required to fill in an information form and attach it to each written assignment. This form may be downloaded from the ‘important notices’ link of the DoB website.
- At the end of each day, the departmental secretary will collect any coursework submitted and will record the date of submission.
- Students should collect corrected assignments from the departmental secretary’s office between during specified hours.
10. **Submission and Returning of Practical Reports**

- Students may be required by the demonstrators to hand in their practical reports at the end of the practical session or by a stipulated date, as directed. Alternatively demonstrators may require students to hand in their practical reports by posting them in a deposit box located outside the departmental office. Please ensure that you comply with the demonstrators’ instructions.
- Students are required to fill in an information form and attach it to each practical report. This form may be downloaded from the ‘course material’ page on the DoB’s website.
- The departmental secretary will be collect any reports submitted and will record the date of submission.
- Students are to collect corrected practical reports from the respective demonstrator.

11. **Use of Laptop PC and other devices**

- Students who would like to make use of their laptop computers and/or voice/visual recording devices during lectures or during any other class, will need to obtain prior permission from the respective lecturer or tutor or demonstrator.
- Even if such permission is granted, students are to ensure that the use of such devices will not disrupt lectures or any other classes, or disturb the lecturer or other students, in any way.
- Only battery operated devices will be allowed and no device may be plugged into the mains electricity supply during a lecture. In the case of a practical class, such devices may be plugged into the mains electricity supply of the laboratory if prior permission is obtained from the Demonstrator.

12. **Biology Symposium 2019**

The Department organises an annual symposium, as well as evening lectures for the general public, seminars and other activities. Students are strongly encouraged to attend such activities. The BIOLOGY SYMPOSIUM 2019 will be held on 30th November 2019.

I wish all the very best for your studies during the new academic year and trust that you will embrace it with the necessary diligence and enthusiasm. In case of any difficulties or queries, you are encouraged to approach the departmental secretaries Mr James Fenech or Ms Michaela Stivala, or the undersigned.