

Learning to Govern the Ground

Author: **Timothy Alden**

*A new student-worker scheme between the **Lands Authority** and the University of Malta offers a structured entry point into one of the country's most complex administrative systems, combining legal, economic, and environmental perspectives on land. Aside from offering potential career opportunities at the Lands Authority, student trainees are equipped with multidisciplinary knowledge that ensures the course has something to offer everyone.*

Land in Malta is never just land. It carries legal title, economic value, planning restrictions, and environmental constraints, often layered into the same parcel. The institution responsible for navigating that complexity on behalf of the state is the Lands Authority, established in 2017 under Chapter 563 of the Laws of Malta to replace the former Land Department.

Its remit is extensive. The Authority administers public land, issues leases and concessions, manages state-owned property, and oversees the allocation of land through public tenders. These functions sit at the centre of how land is distributed and used across the country. Beyond its public-facing role, the Authority also handles the technical administration of government leases, rent revisions, and compliance monitoring, as well as managing encroachments on public land. Its work requires continuous coordination with other regulatory bodies, including planning and environmental authorities, situating it within a wider system of land governance.

In collaboration with the University of Malta, the Lands Authority launched a student-worker scheme in sustainable land management in 2024, combining employment with structured academic training. Initially designed for its own employees and trainees, the course equipped participants with a broad skillset tailored to Malta's needs. Following the graduation of 16 Lands Authority staff members, the programme was opened to the wider public in October 2025.

Comprising 16 ECTS, the Short Course Award in Land Management is delivered over two semesters at MQF Level 4. Coordinated by the Institute for Climate Change and Sustainable Development, the programme is designed and taught across multiple university departments, bringing together law, economics, spatial planning, and sustainability into a single course of study. Its structure reflects the realities of land management, where no single discipline is sufficient to tackle the subject comprehensively.

Each subject corresponds to a different layer of land governance.

A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

One of the clearest examples of this multidisciplinary approach is the Introduction to Property Law module. Rather than assuming prior legal knowledge, it introduces participants to the core principles governing ownership in Malta. This includes the legal definition of ownership, the right to peaceful possession, and the limits placed on that right through regulation and public interest. While the course introduces basic technical and foundational principles, it also offers learners the opportunity to delve deeper into the historical, cultural, and sociological contexts that have shaped Malta's landscape.

In their second semester, students will, for example, learn about the Socio-Spatial Influences in Maltese Spatial Planning. In practice, this module will take students on a journey beginning with the Order of St John

and extending beyond the British Period in Malta, explaining the planning principles behind the development of Malta's towns and villages. The module then covers policy developments since Malta's Independence, providing a holistic understanding while telling a national story, situating contemporary land use by placing it within its broader historical context.

The student-worker model combines employment with accredited study. Participants engage with administrative processes while completing the academic component, allowing theoretical knowledge to develop alongside practical experience. This format reflects a broader approach to skills development, where training is embedded within the workplace rather than detached from it.

CAREERS IN LAND MANAGEMENT

As for the sort of roles which await graduates at the Lands Authority, one may work as a **Senior Professional – Legal or Notarial**, a position that sits at the core of the Authority's legal and contractual teams. Professionals in this role support legal and notarial processes, ensure compliance with legislation, provide legal guidance across the organisation, and coordinate with internal directorates and external stakeholders. Their work ranges from legal research and litigation support to drafting and publishing deeds, advising on contracts, and overseeing notarial procedures.

Equally central to the Authority's operations is the role of **Senior Professional – Architect**, reflecting the technical and infrastructural dimensions of land management. This position plays a key role within the Valuations Unit. Professionals in this capacity oversee valuation review processes, ensuring technical accuracy, compliance with relevant legislation, and adherence to established guidelines. They collaborate closely with both in-house and external architects, contributing to the development of valuation frameworks and maintaining quality assurance standards.

As Malta continues to navigate pressures on land use, from development demand to environmental constraints, the need for structured expertise in this area remains constant. The student-worker scheme positions itself within that context, linking institutional responsibility with accredited training and creating a defined entry point into the administration of one of the country's most contested and valuable resources. **T**

The Short Course Award in Land Management falls under the remit of the Institute for Climate Change and Sustainable Development in collaboration with the Department of Spatial Planning and Infrastructure within the Faculty of the Built Environment, the Department of Economics within the Faculty of Economics, Management and

Accountancy and the Department of Civil Law within the Faculty of Laws. To learn more about the Institute, visit um.edu.mt/iccsd

For further information about this course, reach out to the Lands Authority: studentworker.la@landsauthority.org.mt

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➤ **Award in Sustainable Land Management**



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