

# Reflections of a Lecturer at the University of Malta Gozo Centre\*

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## Introduction

I have been engaged as a lecturer in Economics at the University of Malta Gozo Centre for the past two years. As I will show in this brief write-up, the Centre is a great place for students and lecturers alike.

## Location

The Centre is housed in a building in Xewkija. Most lecture rooms are reached from corridors which overlook a relatively large internal courtyard. This courtyard is really beautiful, with well kept colourful plants and wooden benches. The place is full of light and is very welcoming.

## The Ferry Crossing

As a lecturer at the University Gozo Centre, I cross over to Gozo very frequently. This has its pluses and minuses. Lectures are usually held on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings. When I have lectures in Gozo, I generally try to take the 3.45 p.m. ferry on Friday. During the winter months the

weather is often windy and cloudy, which means that I have to stay inside the ferry during the channel crossing and in inclement weather this is not always a nice experience. However, when the weather is fine, I stay on the deck and admire the breathtaking sea views. Unfortunately nice weather often means long car queues at Ċirkewwa, and I usually have to be there at around 2.30 p.m., thus spending an hour or so in the queue.

## Good Organisation

The Centre is very well organised and efficiently run, even when it comes to details. For example, as soon as a lecturer or a student enters the main door on a Friday evening or a Saturday morning, he/she is greeted by a board with a printed list of all the lecture themes, the name of the lecturers and the room numbers. No time is therefore lost wandering around looking for the lecture venue.

When a lecturer enters the lecture rooms, he or she finds all the student chairs neatly organised in place and the students' attendance lists on the lecturer's desk.



With the introduction of new ferries, crossing over to Gozo has become less time-consuming for lecturers.

\* This article appeared in the commemorative booklet *The University Gozo Centre: Fifteen Years On*, published by the University Gozo Centre on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of its establishment.

What struck me when I started lecturing at the Gozo Centre is that the white boards are always wiped clean and board markers in different colours are made available near the board. So a lecturer need not remember to bring markers with him or her or to wipe the board before the start of the lecture. If equipment is needed, such as a computer projector or a video player, all one has to do is advise the Gozo Centre Office beforehand, and this is invariably prepared for the lecturer. All rooms are connected to the internet, so there is access to web resources during class.

Another example of good organisation relates to the manner in which lecturers are advised of their time table. At the beginning of the semester, the administration of the Gozo Centre sends a schedule to all lecturers, with lecture dates and times. The lecturer is asked to confirm whether he/she will be available on the dates assigned. A few days before the lecture is due, the lecturers are reminded of the arrangement and asked as to whether they wish to have a hotel booked for Friday night.

Paradoxically, even though most lecturers have to

travel from Malta, lectures are very rarely missed, even when the Ferry service is suspended. In such cases, arrangements are made to have the lectures postponed. In certain instances, when the lecturer finds it difficult to cross over to Gozo, video-conference facilities are utilised.

The Gozo Centre has a small library which is also very well organised. It permits students to borrow textbooks or to browse through the shelves. The book collection is not large but it contains up-to-date titles related to the courses offered in Gozo. The library assistants interact with the lecturers to order recent publications, where funds permit.

Another sign of good administration relates to the upkeep of the premises. They are well maintained, and kept really clean. The rooms and facilities are very well signposted.

### **The Students**

The students at the Gozo Centre are different from the ones I usually teach at the Malta campus, in



Some of the University of Malta lecturers who offer their services at the University Gozo Centre.



Gozitan students just after the conferment of the Diploma in Commerce in November 2004.

more ways than one. For a start they are part-time students, meaning that they work during the days and very often come to the Gozo Centre straight from work. They also tend to be older than the full-time students who attend the University in Malta, with many of them being married and with families to look after. In fact, I am younger than many of the students I teach at the Centre.

But it is not age that really characterises the Gozitan students. It is their motivation and drive for learning and knowledge. They are very eager to learn, and very interested in the subjects taught. They really appreciate the value of knowledge, the importance of life-long learning in today's competitive world and the benefits one reaps from acquiring new skills. These students dedicate most of their weekends to attending lectures and spend a considerable proportion of their free time during the week to study and prepare assignments. They are generally very cooperative students and are very much aware of and grateful for being given the opportunity to follow University courses in Gozo.

### **Weekend Lectures**

The success of the University Gozo Centre experiment is of course mainly due to the work and creativity of its director and the administrators of the Centre.

Another reason is that lectures are organised during the weekends. Had it not been so, very few lecturers would have been willing to offer their services in Gozo. This "weekend University" arrangement does not disrupt the weekly lecturing routine of visiting lecturers from Malta. It would be difficult for most lecturers to travel to Gozo and back on a weekday evening, given that a normal working day ends late afternoon or early evening.

When the lecture is over on Friday evenings, lecturers usually stay overnight at a hotel booked for them by the administration of the Centre, to enable them to continue with their lectures on Saturday morning.

### **A Lovely Experience**

Even though crossing to Gozo repeatedly and very frequently has its downsides, overall lecturing in Gozo is a lovely experience. It provides the right combination for every lecturer: excellent administrative facilities, well-organised premises, attentive and motivated students and nice colleagues, with whom I often share dinner on Friday nights.

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