



# Owning what we do

## RIDT

Thomas Huxley wrote, 'The medieval university looked backwards; it professed to be a storehouse of old knowledge.

The modern university looks forward, and is a factory of new knowledge.'

Research is undisputably an essential part of any modern university. But research costs money. In Malta, this work is funded by the government, EU, private companies, as well as communities all over the island. However, for those who want to play a part in building the future of this country, the Research Trust (RIDT) of the University of Malta (UoM) set up the Staff Contribution Scheme.

Launched in January 2015, the scheme has succeeded in persuading university staff to donate and, in so doing, finance valid, ongoing projects.

Senior lecturer at the Institute of Linguistics, Dr Albert Gatt, is enrolled in this scheme. On the matter of research and contribution, he said, 'I view research as an academic's primary activity. Of course, this isn't the only thing we do. Teaching and administrative duties are an integral part of the job, but research is the fundamental property that distinguishes a university from, say, a training college or a school.'

Dr Gatt is convinced that the quality of what lecturers impart to their students depends on the extent to which they actively engage with their chosen subject(s). 'Our university is going through an interesting and exciting phase. It seems to me that research endeavours are being given greater priority than they used to. But such endeavours cost money. While I certainly believe the state has a duty to invest in such activities, the current level of investment is clearly insufficient. Perhaps this is simply a question of time: policy will eventually "catch up" with the culture change that has gradually been taking root in academia. Be that as it may, we cannot afford to wait.'

The RIDT plays a crucial enabling role in this respect. Its fundraising activities are based on the notion that research funding is a long-term investment by different players, be they social or industrial partners. Dr Gatt iterates that, in his view, the Staff Contribution Scheme is another solid step in this direction. 'Where our research is concerned, we are all stakeholders and, the scheme is ultimately about "owning" what we do. This is why I support it.' **T**

The scheme is accessible to all UoM staff members online: <http://researchtrustmalta.eu/university-staff-contribution-scheme>