

# The University of Malta **Strategic Plan 2026–2030**

*Advancing Knowledge. Empowering Students. Transforming Society.*



L-Università  
ta' Malta



# OUR VISION

***Advancing Knowledge that Inspires  
Empowering Students for Lifelong Learning  
Driving Change that Transforms Society***

At the University of Malta (UM), our vision is to advance knowledge that inspires curiosity, discovery, creativity and innovation, while empowering students to grow and develop as leaders, problem-solvers, and lifelong learners. Through excellence in teaching, research and engagement, we seek to nurture learning and learning processes that last and transcend the immediate learning spaces and to create transformative impact that strengthens communities and shapes a better society for future generations.

# OUR MISSION

We are committed to advancing knowledge through cutting-edge research and innovative teaching, equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and a mindset to lead, innovate, and learn throughout their lives and in spaces away from traditional learning spaces. Knowledge should arouse curiosity, creativity and discovery, guiding our students and scholars toward new horizons of understanding. Our commitment to learning extends beyond the traditional: through life-wide and work-based learning opportunities, occurring simultaneously across various social, digital, and physical landscapes, our students will develop lifelong skills that support personal and professional growth. By translating knowledge into real-

world solutions, we generate impact that transforms individuals, strengthens communities and contributes to a more sustainable, equitable and thriving society. By placing students, scholars and the entire University community at the heart of our mission, we nurture their growth as individuals. Through collaboration, inclusivity, and engagement within and across the University, with external stakeholders, nationally and internationally, we seek to shape our society by driving progress, fostering innovation and addressing the most pressing challenges of our time. Ultimately, we strive to forge a resilient university: one which can efficiently and promptly adapt, endure, and thrive amid disruption, rapid change, and global challenges.



# RECTOR'S MESSAGE



**PROFESSOR ALFRED J. VELLA**

Universities across the world continue to be important powerhouses of knowledge creation and innovation. Research remains a defining and vital *raison d'être* enabling these institutions to carry out their mission of advancing teaching and learning in communities.

Even before universities became important and respected creators of new knowledge through research, for hundreds of years they were already acknowledged as major seats of independent thinking, advanced teaching and learning. Today, some argue that this mission is being challenged by the advent of Artificial Intelligence. Universities are no longer the ultimate repositories and interpreters of knowledge but they are now facing challenges from powerful digital sources such as generative AI, including Large Language Models that answer queries, explain concepts and analyse information to solve problems of a varied nature. Most remarkably, answers are obtained within seconds of enquiring. This disruption in the traditional role of universities must be acknowledged and properly managed: despite referring to it as 'disruptive', simultaneously AI offers profound advantages to learning and teaching and also research.

Other serious challenges which need to be addressed include the planetary problems of

global warming and climate change, serious geopolitical instability and the financial sustainability of the universities themselves. This Strategic Plan is mindful of these challenges and, for this reason, it factors in all relevant considerations to keep our precious *L-Università ta' Malta* safe and relevant given its importance for the security and sustained economic prosperity of Malta. *L-Università ta' Malta* must remain responsible for the provision of knowledge leading to high-level skills and competences, including human, AI and collaborative skills. These are crucial for maintaining the sophistication and expertise of the entire workforce, particularly the managerial and professional categories which the nation requires to thrive. The mission of learning and teaching, embedded in robust ethical principles, is essential for fostering in students the critically-important skill of analytical thinking. This will enable them to distinguish the real version of 'truth' from the fakery peddled by online media and other sources of false information. In this sense, *L-Università* serves to nurture informed and empowered citizens, capable of sustaining and strengthening democracy in our society.

National universities like ours require considerable fiscal investment but support for the research mission is imperative if the investment is to yield significant and appreciable

returns in this area. *L-Università ta' Malta* owes Malta the benefits of its research and it shall continue to provide these to the best of its abilities, provided the funding streams from local government, European sources and other channels remain consistent, strong and sufficient.

We are conscious of the financial difficulties that European partners in higher education are facing and our University is not an exception. In view of these challenges, the Plan seeks to deliver expected outcomes to the best of its ability, as efficiently as possible, depending on resources and investment. Sustainability will be the clarion call to action in all our work which will also include that important mission of outreach. From providing a welcoming and creative learning environment to our diverse student population irrespective of country of origin, culture or creed, to fostering inclusivity by assisting students with special needs and providing an accessible and realistic diet of training and specialisation to those in the workforce who require upskilling or reskilling, *L-Università ta' Malta* will continue to perform its total mission as efficiently and effectively as possible. Our aspiration is to continue to improve our ranking position and high regard alongside the best Universities across the world.

# The University of Malta Strategy 2026–2030: Background and context

This Strategy builds on the strengths of our legacy and heritage, recent achievements and on-going developments and initiatives.

This Strategy seeks to embrace and articulate the feedback, contributions and aspirations of internal stakeholders, including students, academic members of staff, Deans, Directors, Heads of Department, administrative members of staff from entities and offices across University. Between October 2023 and August 2025, as Pro-Rector for Strategic Planning and Sustainability I held no less than 160 consultation meetings involving all internal stakeholders. A student survey was conducted between September and November 2024. External stakeholders' views, predominantly those of employers and industry partners, and government agencies/entities were also taken into consideration. These stakeholders respond enthusiastically when we extend our invitations to them to join us on campus as well as when University staff and students are invited to engage, collaborate and contribute to a wide-ranging variety of initiatives.

Our achievements are testament to the unstinting and collaborative work which is

undertaken by the dedicated and inspirational staff who embrace their mission of conducting research simultaneously encouraging, supporting and guiding students through the academic journey they have chosen to navigate. The overall aim of the University as a higher education institution is to nurture and support all its students. Offering high-calibre programmes requires the insights and intuition of academic staff, irrespective of their grade and who are in turn ably assisted and supported by administrative staff who ensure that operationally, the University of Malta remains a well-functioning and high-performing institution.

The 2026–2030 Strategy does not only look back to reinforce its achievements but aspires to be forward-looking. Locally, the University of Malta is the leading higher education institution: it is the country's national university, holding the status of a university by charter since 1769. As the nation's primary higher education provider, it must not only respond to changes in society but be agile and pro-active in addressing these shifts and challenges. The University must be a beacon for society and its conscience. It embodies principles of excellence, critical thinking, and democratic values, while advancing

knowledge and offering solutions to complex national and global challenges. University should be an anchor in the local community, promoting inclusivity, civil discourse and sustainable development to inspire and support societal progress.

We stand proud of our values which give us our organisational identity. At the heart of the Strategy are the people who come together to form communities of learners, willing to engage meaningfully for personal and communal well-being and achievements. This Strategy highlights five key values and related principles that are mapped onto three core themes. The operationalisation of these core themes will inspire, drive and support students, staff, the wider UM community and external stakeholders towards becoming enthusiastic life-long learners. This is key to advancing knowledge through research, transforming society and building a resilient University.

## **Professor Valerie Sollars**

Pro-Rector for Strategic Planning & Sustainability  
December 2025



# Taking pride in achievements...

We are proud of our achievements. Over the past five years (2020–2025) our achievements included:

**15%**

increase in our overall student intake

**180%**

increase in the number of international students who chose to come and study with us

**106%**

increase in our Ph.D. graduates

**€12,783,696**

awarded through agreements with local, national and international agencies and entities

**€113,136,565**

awarded for 1,128 competitive, externally-funded research projects, resulting in a 127% increase in the number of such projects

**€2,625,000**

of University's internal funds distributed as research seed funds to 1,600 projects

**€1,806,264**

of University's internal funds distributed to 36 research excellence projects

**€1,000,000+**

generated through the Research Innovation and Development Trust (RIDT)

The launch of Research clusters, promoting interdisciplinary research with each cluster being awarded

**€100,000/yr**

**35**

new patent filings stemming from the Engineering, Built Environment, Science, Medicine and ICT Faculties

## Two new companies

were spun out to commercialise innovations developed at the University as a result of work undertaken and supported by the Corporate Research and Knowledge Transfer Office and Malta University Innovation Portfolio Ltd. Both companies are still active in advancing the technologies.

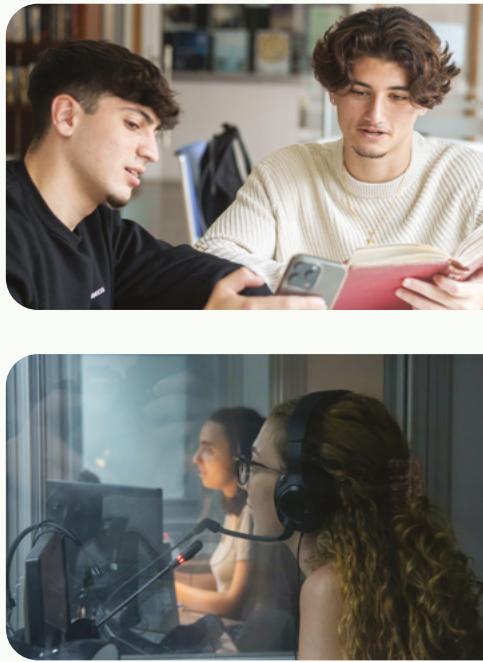
**52%**

increase in research support officers (RSOs)

**9.9%**

increase in administrative staff

**aiming for greater success**



# Taking pride in achievements...

— *continued*

We continued to invest in our University staff...

**500%+**

increase in the take up of  
Erasmus mobilities by our  
administrative staff

**185%**

increase in Erasmus+ staff  
teaching assignments

**260+**

Professional and Personal  
Development courses for academic  
and administrative staff

... and in improving learning spaces and resources

**€39,000,000**

were invested in facilities to expand  
engineering-related facilities and research  
on campus, resulting in the Transdisciplinary  
Research and Knowledge Exchange  
Complex (TRAKE) being awarded the Malta  
Engineering Excellence Award 2024

Reconfigured Library areas to maximise  
study spaces and functionality

**€1,100,000**

towards improving  
learning and  
teaching modalities

Developed Scholarly Information Resources and  
Information Literacy Skills. The University of Malta  
library boasts over 60,000 online journals and  
more than 450,000 e-books, constantly available  
remotely and simultaneously

As we celebrate these and other successful initiatives, we will strive with more  
resolve, commitment and determination to achieve higher and better outcomes.

## aiming for greater success

# Alignment with National and European Goals

The University of Malta's strategic vision clearly aligns with national and European policy priorities as articulated in key strategic documents<sup>1</sup>.

*Malta Vision 2050* refers to **transforming the educational system**, improving educational programmes leading to a highly educated workforce which engages in lifelong learning opportunities, particularly to address labour market demands.

*Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050* seeks to ensure healthy lives and **well-being**, and achieve **social fairness and prosperity** for all by transitioning towards a climate neutral green and blue economy, accelerating digital transformation and connectivity and preserving sustainable urban development and cultural heritage.

*National Education Strategy 2024–2030* identifies three key pillars putting the **learners and educators at the centre** of the strategy by focusing on the well-being of staff and learners, their growth and empowerment, and equity and inclusion to address social fragmentation and inequalities.

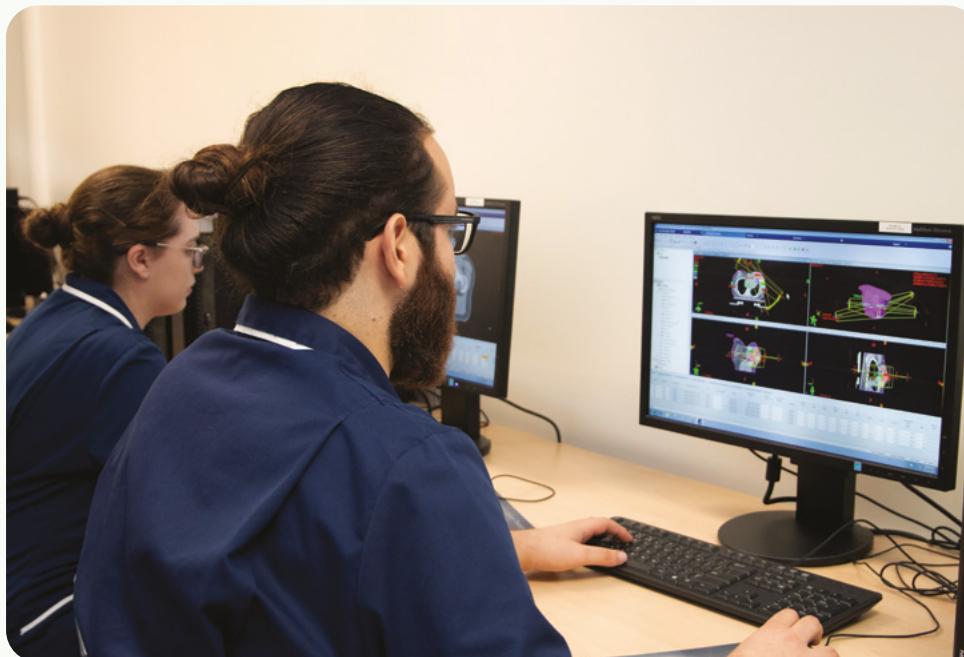
*Malta's Lifelong Learning Strategy 2023–2030* seeks to address the quality of **life-long learning opportunities** by providing for a variety of opportunities which are accessible, purposeful, personalised in order to equip learners with transversal skills, enabling them to make informed decisions.

*National Strategic Action Plan for Further and Higher Education 2022-2030* specifies a vision of a 'dynamic **resilient knowledge ecosystem** by 2030, based on an innovative, inclusive quality-driven further and higher education sector, **inspiring individuals**, throughout their educational and life experience, to develop relevant skills, that allow them to contribute, as **community members and active citizens**, towards a fair, digital and green economy. (p.31).

*National Employment Policy 2021–2030* highlights recommendations for actions that prepare the workforce to be equipped to deal with the ever-changing economic landscape. Recommendations 9 (p. 234) and 10 (p. 235) call for **high quality and timely responses** from education institutions towards addressing future skills requirements and the **promotion of lifelong learning** and upskilling as non-negotiable. **Collaboration between industry and academia** should be labour-market focused.

*The European Commission's Vision for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)* has identified **six fundamental values** – academic freedom, academic integrity, institutional autonomy, student and staff participation, and public responsibility for and of higher education (p. 12) all of which are reflected in the values, principles and strategic commitments for the University of Malta's strategic vision and direction.

<sup>1</sup> The text in bold highlights the alignment between the national and European strategic documents with the University of Malta's strategic direction for 2026–2030.



## Our Values and Principles

## Our Values and Principles

As a member of the European Higher Education Area and signatory of the Magna Charta Universitatum, we are committed to academic freedom, institutional autonomy, good governance, accountability, equality and social responsibility. These fundamental values are embedded in our five, specific institutional values and reflected in our practice.

VALUES	PRINCIPLES
<b>Excellence and Integrity</b> <p>Striving for the highest standards in learning, teaching, research and engagement by upholding honesty, ethics and accountability in all academic and community endeavours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Commit to evidence-based and informed teaching, learning and research.</li><li>➤ Demonstrate accountability through transparent, fair and ethical processes.</li><li>➤ Regularly reflect, evaluate and improve institutional practices and outcomes with a view towards institutional sustainability and service excellence.</li><li>➤ Recognise and reward honesty, rigour and responsibility at all levels.</li><li>➤ Enhance a culture of quality.</li></ul>
<b>Creativity and Innovation</b> <p>Fostering curiosity, imagination and the courage to explore new ideas and solutions. Cultivating adaptability, curiosity and continuous personal and professional growth for learners of all ages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Encourage curiosity, promote autonomous but responsible experimentation and embrace constructive and calculated risk-taking.</li><li>➤ Support interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches to knowledge creation, contributing to professional and personal development.</li><li>➤ Provide safe spaces for free expression, dialogue, exploration and unconventional thinking.</li><li>➤ Promote opportunities for lifelong learning and discovery, enhancing critical reflection and adaptability.</li></ul>

**Our Values and Principles** ——— *continued*

## **Inclusive and Respectful Collaboration**

Nurturing an environment promoting empathy, dignity and mutual support across disciplines, cultures and communities ensuring equitable and accessible opportunities for all learners including university staff.

- Listen actively and engage with openness, empathy and humility.
- Promote equity in participation, resources and recognition.
- Celebrate diversity of thought, identity and perspective as strengths.
- Resolve conflicts constructively and respectfully.

## **Leadership and Empowerment**

Encouraging all students and staff to lead with vision, responsibility and a sense of service.

- Develop leadership skills, leadership knowledge and entrepreneurship training at all levels, from students to senior staff.
- Encourage decision-making that prioritises the wider service and responsibility over personal gain.
- Mentor and support others to realise their full potential with integrity, fairness and compassion.
- Empower leadership to optimise and sustain the effective use of all resources.

## **Community Engagement, Local and Global Responsibility**

Connecting knowledge with real-world challenges to strengthen communities and promote sustainable development, justice, and ethical citizenship for a better future.

- Co-create knowledge and solutions with local communities rather than for them.
- Foster the linguistic heritage through the active use and development of the national, official languages.
- Act with environmental and social responsibility in all institutional practices, always mindful of resource implications.
- Cultivate global citizenship through international partnerships and perspectives.
- Advance justice, sustainability and ethical practices in research, teaching and outreach.

# Our Core Themes



## Transformative Education for a Changing World

We will advance learning and teaching that prepares students to thrive in a complex, interconnected, and rapidly evolving global environment. Through innovative pedagogy, digital integration and use of AI, we will seek to personalise learning and promote inclusive practices. We will cultivate critical thinking, creativity and adaptability equipping graduates with the knowledge, skills, and values to lead and contribute meaningfully to society.



## Excellence and Impact in Research and Innovation

We will strengthen our research capacity across disciplines to address pressing national and global challenges and contribute to the advancement of knowledge. By promoting collaboration, including multi-disciplinary research, open scholarship, and effective knowledge valorisation, we will ensure our academic research achieves real-world impact and informs public policy, industry innovation and societal progress.



## Partnerships and Societal Connection

We will deepen our engagement with communities, industries and global partners to foster shared growth and mutual learning. Students can transition from passive recipients of knowledge to active participants and co-creators in their learning experience through hands-on projects with community partners. Through outreach, service and collaboration, we will enhance the University's role as a catalyst for social, cultural and economic development nationally and internationally.

## ALIGNING CORE THEMES WITH OUR VALUES AND PRINCIPLES



VALUES & PRINCIPLES	TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION	EXCELLENCE & IMPACT IN RESEARCH & INNOVATION	PARTNERSHIPS & SOCIETAL CONNECTION
<b>Excellence and Integrity</b>	Fosters a culture of high standards of learning through academic rigour and ethical teaching.	Embeds integrity, ethics and quality in research practices and outcomes.	Builds partnerships based on transparency, trust, and accountability.
<b>Creativity and Innovation</b>	Promotes innovative pedagogies, digital learning, and flexible pathways to prepare learners for change.	Encourages original thinking, interdisciplinary research, and discovery.	Co-creates solutions with communities and industries, driving shared innovation.
<b>Inclusive and Respectful Collaboration</b>	Creates inclusive, culturally responsive learning spaces that value diversity.	Encourages diverse, cross-disciplinary research collaborations.	Strengthens partnerships through mutual respect, shared goals, and inclusivity.
<b>Leadership and Empowerment</b>	Equips students with skills and confidence to lead change locally, nationally and globally.	Empowers researchers, research managers and learners to generate impactful solutions.	Fosters shared leadership with communities to address societal challenges.
<b>Community Engagement, Local and Global Responsibility</b>	Connects learning to real-world issues, promoting sustainability, justice, and ethical citizenship.	Advances knowledge that benefits society and supports sustainable development and encourages research with international institutions.	Strengthens communities through engaged partnerships addressing local and global challenges.

# Our Strategic Commitments, Objectives and Key Performance Indicators

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES	CORE THEMES	STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Excellence and Integrity	Transformative Education	Commit to delivering high-quality, ethical, and globally relevant teaching and learning programmes.	Ensure that academic programmes meet international standards of quality and integrity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review programmes of study and study units to enhance efficiency and reduce unnecessary repetition</li> <li>Gauge student satisfaction</li> <li>Monitor student retention rates</li> <li>Maintain a robust internal quality assurance (APRs &amp; PPRs)</li> </ol>
	Research and Innovation	Uphold the highest standards of research ethics, integrity, and excellence to produce trusted and impactful knowledge.	Strengthen research governance, ethics, and quality processes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in indexed publications</li> <li>Increase in citations of our publications</li> <li>Compliance with ethical standards</li> <li>External benchmarking and rankings</li> <li>Valorisation of applied research that has societal impact</li> </ol>
	Partnerships and Societal Connection	Build partnerships that are transparent, accountable, and mutually beneficial.	Establish clear governance frameworks for partnerships.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote active formal partnerships including continued membership of a European University alliance</li> <li>Monitor the quality and quantity of successful outcomes from partnerships</li> </ol>



## Our Strategic Commitments, Objectives and Key Performance Indicators —— *continued*

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES	CORE THEMES	STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Creativity and Innovation	Transformative Education	Commit to designing agile, innovative curricula and learning models that respond to and meet the evolving societal and workforce needs.	Embed flexible learning pathways and digital innovation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Monitor new or redesigned programmes responding to societal needs</li> <li>2. Strengthen the uptake of blended/online learning</li> <li>3. Diversify the educational offer: micro-credentials, work-integrated learning towards upskilling &amp; reskilling, short-cycle programmes</li> <li>4. Monitor lifelong learning participation rates</li> <li>5. Promote curriculum design that fosters systems thinking and future-oriented competencies necessary to tackle sustainability matters</li> </ol>
	Research and Innovation	Invest in interdisciplinary and creative research especially that which drives discovery and has significant local impact.	Enhance support for innovation and knowledge transfer.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Record growth in interdisciplinary projects</li> <li>2. Promote patents, innovations, spinout companies or prototypes</li> <li>3. Monitor industry-funded research</li> <li>4. Focus on conducting research that addresses local problems</li> </ol>
	Partnerships and Societal Connection	Collaborate with institutional partners, communities and industries to share resources, where possible, and to co-create innovative approaches to mutual challenges.	Foster innovation hubs and collaborative initiatives.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Monitor the number of co-created projects</li> <li>2. Monitor/analyse partner and societal engagement</li> </ol>



**Our Strategic Commitments, Objectives and Key Performance Indicators** —— *continued*

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES	CORE THEMES	STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
<b>Inclusive and Respectful Collaboration</b>	Transformative Education	Ensure inclusive, culturally responsive education where all learners feel valued and empowered to contribute.	Strengthen access, equity and inclusion strategies.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enrolment and retention of diverse learners</li> <li>2. Maintain and strengthen student equity outcomes</li> <li>3. Inclusive pedagogy practices</li> </ol>
	Research and Innovation	Foster inclusive research ecosystems that amplify diverse perspectives and equitable collaboration.	Build equitable research collaborations and networks.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Monitor representation of underrepresented groups in research, where relevant</li> <li>2. Enhance networking opportunities for researchers and research managers</li> <li>3. Promote inclusive research training programmes</li> <li>4. Conduct equity impact assessments</li> </ol>
	Partnerships and Societal Connection	Build respectful, trust-based partnerships with communities, industries, national and international networks.	Establish co-governance and shared decision-making models.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community partner satisfaction</li> <li>2. Monitor shared agreements and outcomes</li> <li>3. Long-term partnership retention</li> </ol>



**Our Strategic Commitments, Objectives and Key Performance Indicators** —— *continued*

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES	CORE THEMES	STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
<b>Leadership and Empowerment</b>	Transformative Education	Commit to developing graduates who are ethical, confident and capable leaders in a rapidly changing world.	Embed leadership development in all programmes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creating and sustaining alumni networks</li> <li>2. Alumni in leadership positions</li> <li>3. Participation in leadership programmes</li> </ol>
	Research and Innovation	Empower researchers, students, and partners to lead transformative projects and influence policy and practice.	Increase capacity and resources for research leadership.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of research leaders and grants</li> <li>2. Student-led research projects</li> </ol>
	Partnerships and Societal Connection	Enable shared leadership models with communities to drive sustainable change and innovation.	Strengthen community-led initiatives and governance.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of co-led projects</li> <li>2. Evidence of impact on communities</li> <li>3. Shared leadership structures</li> </ol>



**Our Strategic Commitments, Objectives and Key Performance Indicators** —— *continued*

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES	CORE THEMES	STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
<b>Community Engagement, Local and Global Responsibility</b>	Transformative Education	Embed sustainability, justice, and global citizenship across all learning experiences.	Integrate global responsibility into curriculum and campus life.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of programmes and/or study units with sustainability, global citizenship or social responsibility learning outcomes</li> <li>Student participation in global or community responsibility initiatives (volunteering, SDG clubs, etc.)</li> <li>Number of UM academic staff trained in global responsibility integration</li> </ol>
	Research and Innovation	Align research priorities with local and global challenges and the public good to maximise social and environmental impact.	Foster the integration of social, environmental, community engagement, and ethical dimensions into research projects to drive responsible, inclusive, and sustainable innovation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of research projects that integrate at least a social or environmental dimension</li> <li>Valorise institutional research which integrates at least a social, environmental or ethical dimension</li> </ol>
	Partnerships and Societal Connection	Strengthen local and global networks to address societal issues collaboratively and responsibly.	Build strategic local and global alliances to advance shared goals.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of global or intercultural events and workshops held annually</li> <li>Number of partnerships with international universities/NGOs on sustainability or global citizenship projects</li> <li>Number of local projects aligned with UN SDGs</li> <li>Recognition of UM in sustainability and impact rankings</li> <li>Encouraging active student participation through commitments to, for example student societies; sports' events</li> </ol>



# Delivering the strategic plan

This document sets out the vision for the Strategic Plan 2026–2030 which the University of Malta seeks to implement. Moving forward, it will be translated into operational action through:

- leadership that will create enabling conditions for others to participate and share in the responsibility of carefully planning, articulating and implementing the strategic commitments;
- prioritising what to focus on and understanding how change will impact colleagues and students.
- exercising due diligence on the resourcing and financing of the undertakings, weighing the costs and opportunities in order to succeed.

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