

STATUTE GOVERNING THE OPERATIONS OF RESEARCH CLUSTER

PROMISE: Poverty Research Observatory for Malta: Investigate, Synthesise, Engage

The University of Malta (UM) Research Cluster PROMISE (hereinafter “the Cluster”) is a multidisciplinary research initiative that works for the eradication of poverty in Malta over the next decade and to contribute towards the creation of a world free of poverty and inequality. The cluster will:

- Investigate: This emphasises the rigorous research needed to understand the complex causes of poverty. It encompasses a wide range of research methods, from quantitative analysis to qualitative fieldwork, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the issue;
- Synthesise: This highlights the importance of bringing together diverse sources of knowledge and evidence. It involves not only analysing research findings but also integrating insights from community members, policymakers, and practitioners. This synthesis is crucial for developing policies that are both evidence-based and contextually relevant;
- Engage: This reflects the commitment to co-production and collaboration. It means actively involving communities in the research process, from identifying research questions to interpreting findings and implementing solutions. This engagement ensures that research is not only for the community but also by and with the community.

The research cluster will aim to achieve the following objectives:

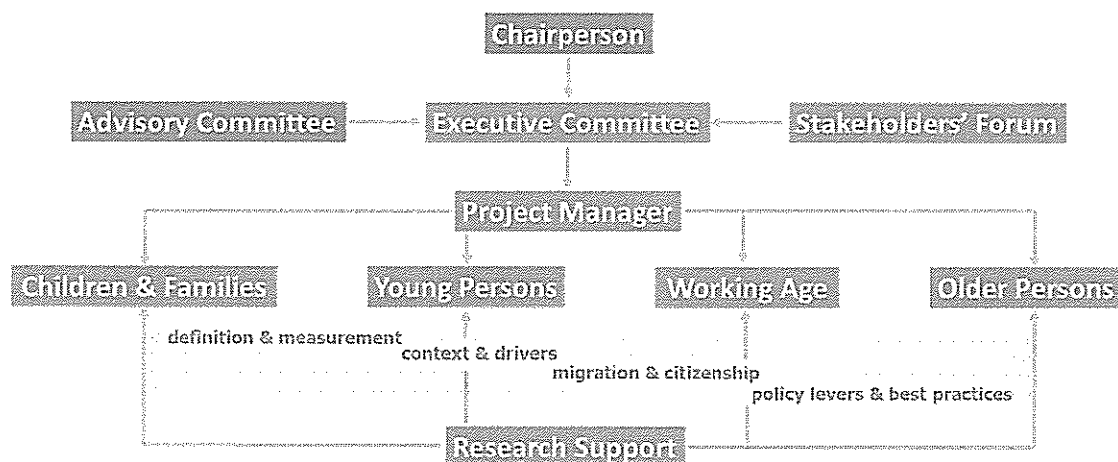
- To bring stakeholders together from academia, civil society and policy makers to understand the evolving nature of poverty in Malta and direct pertinent study of the sector in a timely and relevant manner, centred on the eradication of poverty in Malta.
- To establish a research cycle in the area of poverty that enables consistent exploration of the sector and to provide knowledge upon which to develop evidence-based policy in response to poverty.
- To establish the necessary infrastructure for a National Observatory for Poverty Eradication which enables the regular and consistent compilation and analysis of data that represents a wide variety of groups experiencing poverty within Maltese society.
- To understand the structural factors that perpetuate poverty in Malta and act as barriers to a cohesive society, with the scope of eradicating poverty and achieving a more inclusive society, as well as to understand the protective factors and trajectories out of poverty, with a view to supporting them further.



There shall be a Research Cluster, managed and overseen by an Executive Committee:

I. THE RESEARCH CLUSTER

1. The organisational structure of the PROMISE Cluster will be as follows:



The cluster will be managed by an executive committee, chaired by an academic expert in the area of poverty, and including members from the University of Malta and other stakeholders. The Executive Committee will be supported by a project manager. The project manager will oversee the four pillars, co-ordinating with each pillar's co-lead. Research support personnel will service the research pillars in their substantial work. An Advisory Committee will support the cluster through its input to the Executive Committee. The Stakeholders' Forum will provide its input to reflect the reality of the wider society to the Executive Committee at regular intervals.

2. Membership of the Cluster shall proceed as follows:
 - i) All academics who are Council-appointed University of Malta members of staff having a proven research track or interest in the subject matter of the Cluster, are eligible to become members of the Cluster;
 - ii) To attain membership, the applicants require the approval of the Executive Committee. Such approval shall not be unreasonably withheld and the Executive Committee shall adopt the following criteria for membership approval:
 - (a) The academic is to put forward their name, together with a cv detailing their research interests



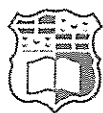
- (b) Research interests are to show a direct or indirect link with the theme of poverty, and aspects relevant to its understanding or contribution towards efforts for its eradication
 - (c) A motivational note about how they envisage their contribution to the cluster, to outline relevant expertise, ideas for further investigation of the topic, specific contribution which they wish to make, any other relevant contribution which they consider themselves able to contribute
 - (d) An indication of their availability or otherwise to be active members (eg on the advisory board) or observers.
 - iii) The Executive Committee will consider all requests to join the cluster and provide a response to the applicant within two weeks from the expression of interest being received. Individuals who join the Cluster as members may be invited to form part of the Advisory Board or to take an active role in one of the studies of the Cluster, depending on the expressed interests of the member and the works taking place within the Cluster.
 - iv) Members of the Research Cluster will be associated with the Research Clusters following the standard procedures of association approved by the UM.
 - v) Cluster members may be removed for:
 - (a) Inexcusable failure to attend at least four meetings out of six consecutive ones; or
 - (b) For failing, without justification, to produce agreed outputs within reasonable deadlines. In such cases, the process to replace the member will commence.
 - vi) The removal of a cluster member will require a majority vote among the ExCo members; should the member in question be an ExCo member, they will absent themselves from the vote and the Chair shall have a casting vote.
- 3. The Research Cluster will initially comprise four pillars as approved by the Research Cluster Committee.
 - i) The pillars will focus on the four key stages within a life-cycle approach to poverty:
 - (a) Children and Families
 - (b) Young people
 - (c) Working age
 - (d) Older people
 - ii) Each pillar will comprise between three and six members, one of who will be designated as the lead of the pillar.
 - iii) The pillar leads will be ex officio members of the Executive Committee.



- iv) The first pillar leads are being nominated from among the academics within the Faculty for Social Wellbeing, each having pertinent expertise in the area of the relevant pillar.
 - v) The pillar leads will retain their position for a term of four years, following which a call for expression of interest will be issued to identify new leads from among the membership of the cluster. Five years of research experience in the area of the respective pillar will be a criterion for selection.
 - vi) The Executive Committee will appoint the pillar leads from among members who have expressed their interest, on the basis of their research experience and relevance to the particular area.
 - vii) The Executive Committee will draw up the criteria and procedure for the appointment of the pillar leads.
4. Four horizontal perspectives will be applied to the four pillars.
- i) The horizontal perspectives will ensure a consistent and rigorous approach, and comprise:
 - (a) Definition and measurement
 - (b) Context and drivers
 - (c) Migration and citizenship
 - (d) Policy levers and best practices
 - ii) Each horizontal perspective will be represented by an academic in the area to be appointed by the Executive Committee from among the cluster members. Their area of specialisation and research interest will determine them as an expert in the horizontal measure, who can serve as consultant to all the four pillars. The main aim is to ensure that the horizontal perspective is adequately represented in the work of the pillar
 - iii) Up to three experts in the area may be identified to contribute to any horizontal perspective.
 - iv) Each group of experts forming a horizontal perspective will determine their own work procedures.
 - v) There will be no definite term for the consultants serving in a horizontal measure position.
5. During the course of its work, the Research Cluster may identify the need to establish additional pillars to cover emergent and important aspects of poverty, or the need to remove an existent pillar. At no point will the cluster entail more than six (6) pillars. Any new pillar will follow the procedure established in Clause 3 above.



- i) In order to establish a new pillar:
 - (a) A proposal is to be submitted to the Executive Committee, justifying the new pillar and the key areas of focus within it;
 - (b) The Executive Committee will, following consultation with the Advisory Committee and Stakeholders' Forum, approve or otherwise the setting up of a new pillar.
 - ii) A pillar may be removed from the Cluster on grounds of limited output or on grounds of redundancy (for instance, if subsumed into another pillar). In order to remove a pillar:
 - (a) A proposal is to be submitted to the Executive Committee justifying the removal of the pillar;
 - (b) The Executive Committee will, following consultation with the Advisory Committee and Stakeholders' Forum, approve or otherwise the removal of a pillar.
6. The Research Cluster must maintain an up-to-date webpage, within the UM website framework detailing, among others, the statute, the organisational structure, current and past research projects, achievements, and deliverables.
7. The Cluster is subject to appropriate fiscal controls and audits that ensure that it remains true to its approved mission. All the UM's financial, human resources and research policies, IP policy, regulations, SOPs etc. shall apply to the Research Cluster.
8. The University Research Clusters Committee will review the Cluster every three years to decide whether it shall be allowed to continue its operations if an updated proposal for cluster continuation is submitted.
9. The Research Clusters Committee retains the right to dissolve the Cluster and/or the right to remove a cluster member for valid grounds, including among others, mismanagement, significant deviation from objectives, significant under achievement of targets/deliverables, and transgressions related to research integrity.
10. Without prejudice to the fact that the funding of these Research Clusters by the UM is wholly dependent and subject to the availability of governmental funding, the PROMISE Research Cluster will operate as a revenue centre with the ability to raise its own funds, subject to the UM's financial regulations. Any revenue generated by the Research Cluster shall be used solely for re-injections into that same cluster fund.



11. Any grievances of any kind between the members of the Research Cluster and/or with the Executive Committee should be brought to the immediate attention of the Research Clusters Committee. The Research Clusters Committee will investigate the grievances and aim to settle the issue amicably; it may, if the need arises, propose remedial action where necessary for Council's approval.

II. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. The Cluster shall be managed and overseen by an Executive Committee approved by University Council on the recommendation of the Rector, and shall have the following structure:
 - (i) a maximum of 7 members who are Council-appointed University of Malta members of staff, one of whom is nominated to act as Chair of the Committee, which shall include, but is not limited to, experts in the following areas: (a) poverty, (b) children and families, (c) young persons, (d) the labour market, and (e) older persons.
 - (ii) The appointment of the nominated Chair of the Executive Committee needs to be endorsed and approved by Rector. The Chair will be a UM resident academic who is also an expert in the area. The Faculty for Social Wellbeing, as the seat of the PROMISE cluster, is nominating an expert in the area of poverty as the first Chair for the Rector's consideration.
2. The Executive Committee will serve for a term of three (3) years, after which elections will be held among the members of the cluster to appoint a new Executive Committee:
 - (i) Every member of the Executive Committee can be appointed for a second term after their first term expires;
 - (ii) After serving a second term, members of the Executive Committee are to step down for a whole term before being eligible for re-election;
 - (iii) Following a term when the individual is not serving as a member of the Executive Committee, the individual may be re-appointed as a member of the Executive Committee, for a 'first' term.
3. The procedure for the selection of the Executive Committee members and nomination of the Chair shall be as follows:



- (i) The first Executive Committee (ExCo) will comprise the Chair, the lead of each of the four cluster pillars, two members from among the collaborating IFS or Departments, and four members from among the external stakeholders.
 - (ii) The subsequent ExCo will be appointed from among the members of the cluster as follows:
 - (a) Seven elected members, three of which are elected from members of the cluster and four elected from the Stakeholders' Forum;
 - (b) The four pillar leads will be members of the Executive Committee ex officio.
 - (iii) For the election of the three members of the cluster, a member is to be nominated by another member and seconded by at least two other members;
 - (iv) For the election of the four stakeholders on the ExCo, the Stakeholders' Forum will put forward to the ExCo all interested candidates, and if more than four candidates are presented to the ExCo, an election will be held in which Cluster members will elect the four representatives.
 - (v) Following the first term, the position of Chair will be filled through an election among the members of the Executive Committee, who will forward their nomination for the Rector's endorsement.
4. The quorum of the Executive Committee meetings of the Board shall be 50% + 1 members.
5. Apart from keeping regular Agendas and Minutes of meetings, the Committee shall regulate its own procedures during meetings, provided that every decision requires the of the majority of members at said meeting. It is recommended that the Executive Committee should meet regularly and as necessary, but should hold not less than three (3) meetings annually.
6. Subcommittees may be set up at the discretion of the Executive Committee and shall be regulated internally by it.
7. The Executive Committee shall submit annual progress reports to the University's Research Clusters Committee. In this respect it is recommended that the Committee appoints a secretary for minute-taking and recording purposes.
8. Any grievances of any kind between the members of the Executive Committee and /or with the Research Cluster should be brought to the immediate attention of the Research



Clusters Committee, it may if the need arises, propose remedial action where necessary for Council's approval.

III. THE STATUTE

1. This Statute is without prejudice to the Research Clusters Launch Plan Document issued by the Rector, dated 11th July 2024.
2. This Statute and any subsequent amendments thereto must be approved by the Council of the University of Malta.

Executive Committee Members for 2024 to 2025

Prof. Angela Abela, Dr Christian Borg Xuereb, Mr Etienne Caruana (Director General, NSO) or his delegate, Dr Edgar Galea-Curmi, Mr Anthony Gatt (Director, Caritas) or his delegate, Dr Maria Pisani, Ms Alexia Vella (Director General, Strategy, Ministry for the Family) or her delegate, Prof. Sue Vella, Mr Noel Xerri (Chair, Anti-Poverty Forum) or his delegate, two members of the Cluster still to be determined.

Signed by:

Prof. Angela Abela

Angela Abela

Dr Christian Borg Xuereb

C. B. X.

Mr Etienne Caruana or his delegate

[Signature]

Ms Maria Ellul Desira as a delegate of Mr Anthony Gatt

[Signature]

Dr. Edgar Galea-Curmi (Chair)

[Signature]

Dr Maria Pisani

[Signature]

Ms Alexia Vella or her delegate

[Signature]

Prof. Sue Vella

[Signature]

Mr Noel Xerri or his delegate

[Signature]

On this date

31st October 2024