



Introductory Meeting for University first years

An introductory meeting was recently organised for a number of young Gozitan students, who will this year begin courses at the University of Malta after successfully completing their courses at the Sir M.A. Refalo Centre for Further Studies.

The students attended the meeting on the invitation of the Gozo University Group (GUG) and it took place at the Exhibition Hall of the Ministry for Gozo

This is an annual activity organised by the GUG in collaboration with the Ministry for Gozo and it enables students to gain valuable information about the services and support that may be of benefit to them during their study years in Malta.

During the meeting representatives from GUG provided information on some aspects of the university life that these new students will experience in the coming weeks, including tips on leading an independent life in Malta and about apartment sharing possibilities.

In her address to the students the Minister for Gozo, Giovanna Debono, expressed her satisfaction over the continuous increase in Gozitan students who are choosing to further their studies at university. During the 2011-2012 academic year there were 1,035 Gozitan students attending courses at the University of Malta, twice as many as ten years ago. Another 181 students were on courses at MCAST Centres and ITS in Malta. Other increase was seen in students who continued their studies in Gozo, with 243 attending courses at MCAST Centres, against only 44 in 2002. ITS students in Gozo numbered 82, up from the 26 who had attended in 2001.

The Minister went on to say how all of this is the result of a collective effort that included the Government's commitment to increased accessibility to more courses and strengthen education. That of the Ministry for Gozo for keeping the education sector in Gozo a priority, the commitment of educators and all those engaged in the educational services, as well as the interest of Gozitan parents seeking to give better opportunities to their children.

The Minister explained how besides the stipend given to each student on a national basis, the Ministry for Gozo offers additional assistance to Gozitan students to cover part of the study costs in Malta.

The students were given information about applications that can be made to the Ministry for Gozo in respect of additional assistance to students of € 400 every three months which is apart from the stipend.

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The application is now made only at the beginning of the academic year and the application form can be downloaded from the website of the Ministry for Gozo. This meeting was addressed by the current GUG President GUG, Ryan Mercieca. He explained how the GUG is representative of all students both in Gozo and Malta, who are following courses at the University as well as attending other institutions such as MCAST and ITS.

Ryan explained how had GUG strengthened its commitment to assist these students in various aspects relating to student life away from home. He said in recent months that the organisation had worked to improve the transport services between Cirkewwa and the University and also for the possibility that students from Gozo could sit their exams on the island. All of which, he said, had encouraged students to join the GUG and seek its services. These services also include among others, support and information on studies related difficulties, as well as guidance to help students find accommodation.

Other information given was linked to the activities that the GUG organises throughout the year both on campus as well as social activities.

Other speakers included Fr Giovanni Curmi who explained how the Diocesan Youth Commission (Gozo) maintains a continuous contact with these young people through activities that are regularly organised in Malta.

EUPA representatives also participated in the meeting and urged Gozitan students to take part in EU funded programmes such as the Youth in Action Programme and ERASMUS. The GUG is working alongside EUPA to facilitate the participation of its members in these programmes.

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