

THE KSU
BUDGET
REPORT
2026

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STUDENT DRIVEN.







OPENING ADDRESS

For 125 years, KSU has consistently stood as Malta's foremost representative body for students. It continues to offer its service to the student, institutions, and successive governments with the aim of advancing education, opportunity and quality of life for youth.

Now representing over 13,000 University students, we continue to respect that historic responsibility, by basing all our comments on the impact that initiatives have on the day-to-day life experiences of students. Our efforts in this regard take us away from any ideological or partisan point of view and simplifies our work to ensuring that students can expect a better future in real, tangible terms.

In reviewing this Budget, KSU fulfils its duty to scrutinise how national decisions shape the opportunities and living realities of Malta's student population.

This remains an important exercise for KSU, being conducted now for the last few years, as the Budget remains a document which demonstrates Government's direction and values.





KEEPING GOVERNMENT TO ITS PROMISES

KSU recognises that students deserve and desire that promises made to them are honoured. Over this term, we have placed a premium on this. Throughout the past year, we have worked to improve our own follow-through, especially on long outstanding promises. Some goals have been achieved, while others continue to require time and effort.

Evidence of our work this year in that respect can be seen in the fact that the promised Abortion Debate on Campus has finally been fulfilled. We acknowledge that more remains to be done, and we will continue to use our limited resources responsibly to ensure that commitments made to students become realities.

The Government's declaration of Budget 2026 as "*the best budget ever*" provides an opportunity for similar accountability at national level.

Such a claim sets a clear benchmark of performance which may only be judged through delivery and evidence. KSU's role, therefore, is to assess whether the measures and allocations presented truly meet that promise and produce meaningful outcomes for Malta's student population.





The Budget is often seen as an inaccessible document for most students, despite its importance. To counteract this, our analysis will first start with the more universally impactful measures related to the general student, before delving into the impact of certain specific measures from the perspective of some common sub-groups of students. It will conclude with a smaller section on other positive and negative measures as perceived from the general student's point of view.

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POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE AVERAGE FULL-TIME STUDENT

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POSITIVE: GENERAL STIPENDS

Many students, particularly Freshers, do not work throughout their studies.

This is expected, since full-time study at University of Malta typically involves classes and academic responsibilities from early morning to late evening, leaving little room for part-time employment. Moreover, national regulations limit working hours for full-time students to a maximum of 30 hours per week.¹

For this reason, the 15% increase in stipends (amounting to approximately 6-million-euro total) announced in this year's Budget is a warmly welcomed improvement.² It helps students meet rising costs of food, study materials, and transport at a time when inflation has eaten away at the real value of stipend.

KSU has argued for this increase before, in its policy statement on the 27th September of this year,³ as well as through previous Budget statements.⁴ We believe that such an increase is necessary as it allows for an educative experience which does not exclude additional work but ensures that such work is a choice rather than a necessity to survive.

Moreover, over their lifetimes, graduates contribute far more to Malta's economy and society than they ever receive in stipends during their studies. Protecting this system, therefore, should not be viewed an act of generosity or a mere hand-out, but in its rightful light as an investment in the nation's future.

[1]<https://stipendsandgrants.gov.mt/en/resources/overview/>

[2] Budget Speech Page 71

[3]<https://www.facebook.com/ksumalta/posts/pfbid02sJSXYAT3TQT6fpNcQboXsbXDFvkgVPHGJUirFmbEnAcSMnAydHK8RA6icq2TURwWl?rdid=pnf7H2qq4jVrtwv#>

[4] KSU's Budget 2023 Reaction page 2 and ^[2] KSU's Budget 2024 Reaction page 2 and ^[2] KSU's Budget 2025 Reaction page 1





POSITIVE: **HOUSING SCHEME**

KSU also welcomes the continuation of housing and rental-support measures, including first-time buyer assistance. Moreover, it approves of the decision to extend the equity sharing scheme to those aged twenty-five. These initiatives, while not new, provide support for students facing record housing costs.

The prospect of owning a home continues to represent a central aspiration of today's generation of young people. Therefore, ensuring that young people can realistically plan for independent living after graduation remains essential.

KSU continues to emphasise the importance of further actions to curb the overheated housing market, in order to provide the necessary stability and incentives for ambitious, hard-working youths to settle in Malta.





POSITIVE: **OPENING OF THREE REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH HUBS AND SOCIAL HUB IN MOUNT CARMEL**

Similarly, we positively note the investment in the area of mental health services. These include the establishment of new regional centres and the expansion of free community-based support.

This marks genuine progress. Firstly, investments in healthcare have been and will always be welcomed by us, as they are vital for a better quality of life.⁵ Secondly, a move towards a model of providing high-quality mental health at a regional level is encouraging news.

We reaffirm that no system of holistic health care can be complete without sustained investment in mental-health services.

Physical and mental wellbeing are, after all, inseparable.

[5] KSU's 2023 Budget Reaction pages 3 and KSU's 2024 Budget Reaction pages 3 and KSU's 2025 Budget Reaction pages 6

THE IMPACT ON THE STUDENT WORKER

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POSITIVE: **STEPS TAKEN IN RECENT YEARS LEAD TO STUDENT-WORKERS' ABILITY TO ENJOY THIS YEAR'S TAX CUT**

KSU acknowledges that this year's Budget continues to sustain a stable labour market and provides broader support for working families. However, it does little to help a significant sub-set of the workforce which KSU is labelling 'The Student-Worker.'

Most students now balance studies with paid or unpaid employment. While the positives and negatives of this are arguable, it remains a truth that no one can deny.

Younger students face incredible increases in essential living costs when compared to stipend and great difficulties with the prospect of owning a home after graduation. Moreover, the job market is increasingly pushing students into joining earlier due to the intense competition for good positions. Meanwhile, older/mature and postgraduate students often must work to sustain themselves and their families.

Moreover, both younger and older students generally form part of an aspirational sector of our society which rightfully seek to advance their personal financial position. The lack of work opportunities around University's Campus generally means that they must leave campus to work during the day.





Therefore, just as we must tailor our organisational work to also include this sector, our Budget Analysis would not be complete without an evaluation from the particular point of view of Student-Workers.

Starting with the positives, KSU welcomes the removal of the €3,400 income threshold introduced by Act IX of 2025, a reform KSU itself proposed in its 2024 Budget Reaction.⁶ This measure brought an end to the needless penalisation of families of working students and recognises that part-time employment is part of the modern educational experience in Malta.

Through this change, parents of the Student-Worker making more than 3,400 euros per year can still benefit from this year's headline Budget Measure, the tax cuts for parents. This is a step which rewards, rather than punishes, any family with hardworking, aspirational Student-Workers. It is therefore to be commended.

Furthermore, it is a demonstration of both the benefits of having a long-term vision, which builds upon itself, and the benefits that may arise if Government opens itself up to working with Voluntary Organisations such as KSU and its member organisations. Just as KSU had recognised the necessity for this measure, KSU and its member organisations have many other ideas which can benefit the country. We reiterate our openness to working with all stakeholders for the benefit of all, and our commitment to not only criticise fairly but also provide solutions to concerns.

[6]KSU's 2024 Budget Reaction pages 2-3 and the Act IX of 2025 page 57

NEGATIVE: **NO VISION REGARDING REMOTE WORKING OR WORK FLEXIBILITY**

However, the long-term vision of Government is unfortunately not all encompassing, which leads to the negatives being suffered by Student-Workers.

Firstly, it is our opinion that in recent years Government squandered a unique opportunity in the area of implementation of remote-working. Student-Workers are struggling to balance work and study commitments, a fact particularly exacerbated by heavy traffic and inconsistent lecture timetables which make planning difficult.

However, students are significantly more adept at remote-working due to their experiences with remote-learning during Covid. Therefore, we feel that Government could have been far more ambitious in this area.

From our end, KSU recognises that mandating a remote-learning space in every place of work is unfeasible, however, a remote-working space at University Campus is a possibility. We also recognise that this space cannot simply be UOM's Library or any other existing space on Campus, since remote-working necessitates certain facilities which are presently unavailable, such as private rooms for online meetings. However, such a space can be added with little capital investment and made available for use for the Student-Worker.





KSU in recent years has explored the possibility of renovating the Basement level of UM's Library to create a new study space. Such a renovation would have cost a total of 1,460,016 euros.⁷

Such a plan can be modified to become a remote-working space/multi-purpose space, thus accommodating Student-Workers and keeping them at University. As a result, this would allow them to attend lectures more easily and enjoy student life on Campus besides providing more flexibility, allowing for a long-term return on investment. Should Government be interested in undertaking such a project, KSU sees a potential avenue for this to work, particularly for students working in the public sector.

This feeds into one of our larger critiques of this budget and the political direction taken by Government in general. Full-time students, student-workers and the population at large have indeed had their quality of life improved but have little ability to enjoy it.

We stress that this ultimately weakens Malta's future workforce, as exhaustion and burnout take a human toll. This also eventually decreases productivity. Time-Poverty has become a fact of life in Malta, and it must be dealt with. We remain confident that this can be done.

[7]See Annex 1

MINOR SUGGESTION: A SMALL TECHNICAL AMENDMENT TO THE FAMILY TAX CUT

We are also proposing a technical adjustment to the family tax-cut framework, which currently applies for the first 18 years of a child's life (or up to age 23 if the child continues into tertiary education.)

Post-graduate and mature students with children should have the option to temporarily suspend the application of this tax benefit during their studies. This would allow them to benefit from the full duration of the tax-cut once they re-enter full-time employment, rather than losing years of eligibility during periods where they have a limited income.

Such a measure would be fiscally neutral while promoting fairness and long-term family stability. Moreover, it would not disincentivize any parent further from pausing work to enter education. Although delving into such detail is not typically our approach, our commitment to equity of opportunity led us to undertake a thorough assessment of the flagship Budget measure, to ensure no students are left behind.



THE IMPACT ON GOZITAN STUDENTS

Gozitan students' experience at University is shaped by a unique dual burden. These are the cost and time associated with daily commuting, or the expense of accommodation in Malta and the difficulty of adapting to this new lifestyle.

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POSITIVE: **INCREASE IN MONTHLY GRANT**

KSU has already commended the increase in Gozitan Student's monthly grant. It is a noteworthy recognition of the unique situation this particular group of students face and helps make tertiary education more equitable.⁸

NEGATIVE: **STILL A WAY TO GO TO SOLVE THE CONNECTIVITY ISSUE**

The Gozo Campus requires significantly stronger investment to match the full capabilities of the main Msida campus. Therefore, one cannot ignore commuting challenges faced by Gozitans who must attend lectures in Malta.

We acknowledge that Government has taken some good steps in this regard. The reintroduction of the X300 a couple years ago, achieved in part thanks to efforts by KSU's member organisation GUG, alongside the Gozo Fast Ferry have alleviated many difficulties.⁹ Nonetheless, adverse weather and service disruptions continue to hinder access to education for Gozitan Students who make the daily trip.

We therefore would like to take this opportunity to promote further investment in University's video conferencing capabilities via an earmarked fund, so that students can follow lectures from the Gozitan University Campus in such instances.¹⁰ In addition, KSU appeals to Government that their promise to find a replacement to the MV Nikolaos is fulfilled this year.

From our end, we remain committed to representing Gozitan students and to working directly with GUG, University and the Ministry for Gozo to come up with solutions that are practical, efficient and long-lasting.

[8] <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1239051668252912&set=pcb.1239052598252819>

[9] <https://timesofmalta.com/article/bus-service-cirkewwa-university-reintroduced.1057372>

[10] https://issuu.com/sdm-studentidemokristjanimaltin/docs/nibnu_fuq_li_ksibna_-_sdm_for_ksu_2025 page 20



THE IMPACT ON STUDENT ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR MEMBERS

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NEGATIVE: ANOTHER YEAR OF BEING FORGOTTEN.

The positive impact of student organisations within University and the country at large cannot be overstated.

Student Organisations do a lot more than just organise leisure events. They are singularly responsible for most of the non-formal educative opportunities available to students, the amplification of the student voice within University structures and the representation of students with outside stakeholders. Beyond this, they also remain a point of contact for all students on a daily basis for assistance and guidance.

Members of student organisations should be further recognized for the fact that, like many other voluntary organizations, they perform this necessary work with mostly minimal, self-generated resources and no financial compensation.

Despite this, it is disappointing to see that no assistance of any kind has been offered to student organizations through this year's budget.

While KSU itself annually offers a portion of its own self-generated income to its member organisations (with 12,000 euro being made available last year through a fund besides 3,000 euro during Freshers' Week), this can never match the scale of assistance that Government is capable of providing.¹¹

[11] <https://www.ksu.org.mt/kokka-fondi/what-s-kokka-fondi>





Presently, the little public funding that exists, is unfortunately accessible only through competitive grant schemes which Student Organisations must compete in with the far better equipped cultural and community organizations.¹²

This places student organizations at a structural disadvantage, despite their commendable social and educational value within University.

Certainly, a potential future opportunity for significant improvement here lies in the provision of common resources for Student Organizations. The University hosts a very high concentration of student organisations, many of which share similar operational needs.

Providing shared professional resources for them would allow Government to make a meaningful, yet cost-efficient, difference. For example, the allocation of a specialised lawyer, accountant and representative from OCVO,¹³ available to all registered student organisations on a periodic basis, would significantly ease the administrative pressures we collectively face. We are also at Government's disposition should they wish to undertake this initiative in the most cost-effective manner.

This measure would enable student organisations to devote more time and energy to their core purpose which is the maintenance and expansion of their free/affordable services and initiatives that enrich campus life and the wider community.

[12] https://maltacvs.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/A1_Final-Markings-2025.pdf

[13] Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations

OTHER MEASURES OF NOTE

POSITIVE/NEGATIVE:

EXPANSION OF FREE GYM MEMBERSHIPS TO INCLUDE TEENAGERS AGED 16-21 - This initiative still requires a complimentary long-term strategy to instil a wellness culture which goes beyond just a 6-month membership.

POSITIVE:

€500 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN YEAR 10 AND 11 FOR THE PURCHASE OF DIGITAL DEVICES

POSITIVE:

ADDITIONAL €500 ALLOWANCE FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

POSITIVE:

FREE COURSES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR AI SERVICES

NEGATIVE:

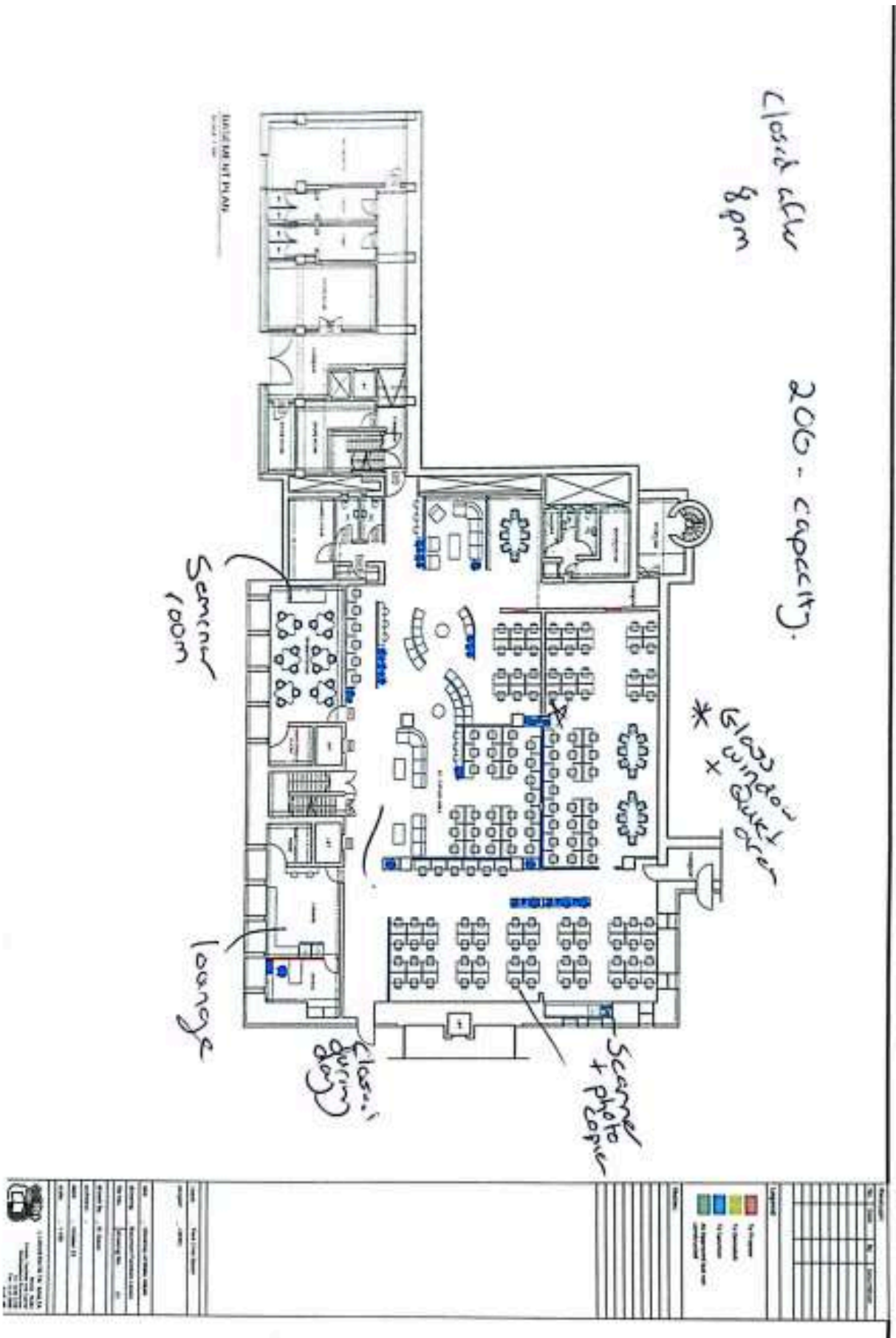
TOO LITTLE DONE TO EASE TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN THE LONG TERM - FAST FERRIES AND FLYOVERS CAN ONLY GO SO FAR

NEGATIVE:

ALMOST NOTHING FOR CULTURE AND ARTS SECTOR



ANNEX 1:



ANNEX 1:

Library Basement – 24x7 Study Area – Financial Costings

Library Basement				07.11.23	
Preliminary Estimate					
Excavation			Rate	Sub Total	Total
Dismantling					
Basement area	700 m2		€150.00	€105,000.00	€105,000.00
Finishes					
Basement area	700 m2		€650.00	€455,000.00	€455,000.00
M & E					
Basement area	700 m2		€650.00	€455,000.00	€455,000.00
Furniture	700 m2		€210.43		€147,302.31
AV & Network Equipment					€75,000.00
					€1,237,302.31
				VAT 18%	€1,460,016.72
				20% Contingency	€1,752,020.07



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