# Maastricht University

# Room for everyone's talent at Maastricht University

UM vision on Recognition & Rewards

# Contents

# Summary

**Based on the national position paper Room for everyone's talent, this document sets out Maastricht University's vision for the Recognition & Rewards programme. This programme will build on our existing practices of fostering academic citizenship, student-centred education, interdisciplinary research and a diverse and inclusive university with impact in the wider society. The programme is dedicated to creating a new balance in the recognition and rewards of academics through:**

- diversified career paths with transparent and fair procedures and guidelines for each path,
- an emphasis on personal growth, and
- a focus on the needs of both the individual and the organisation.

The Recognition & Rewards programme is about modernising academic careers. It is about creating diversified and vitalised career paths that are rooted in an individual's attributes and preferences. It is about developing a mindset that promotes personal growth. It is about fair and transparent guidelines that provide space for flexibility in academic careers, while at the same time supporting the university's overall goals and ambitions.

Our vision for Maastricht University's Recognition & Rewards system encompasses education, research, impact, leadership, and when relevant, patient care. Our vision has a focus on quality over quantity, includes Open Science, updates our PhD track assessment criteria and further defines academic citizenship while balancing the needs of the individual and the organisation.

In embarking on this process of modernisation, we want to strengthen the culture change which is already underway at UM. Over the course of 2020, our Recognition & Rewards committees crafted narratives on the key domain areas of the programme.

Now, we look to our community to engage in a dialogue on the committees' work and the ensuing implementation of new policies. This vision document, the accompanying narratives and the resulting dialogue will serve as the basis for new processes and guidelines for employee recruitment, selection, assessment, development and promotion at UM.
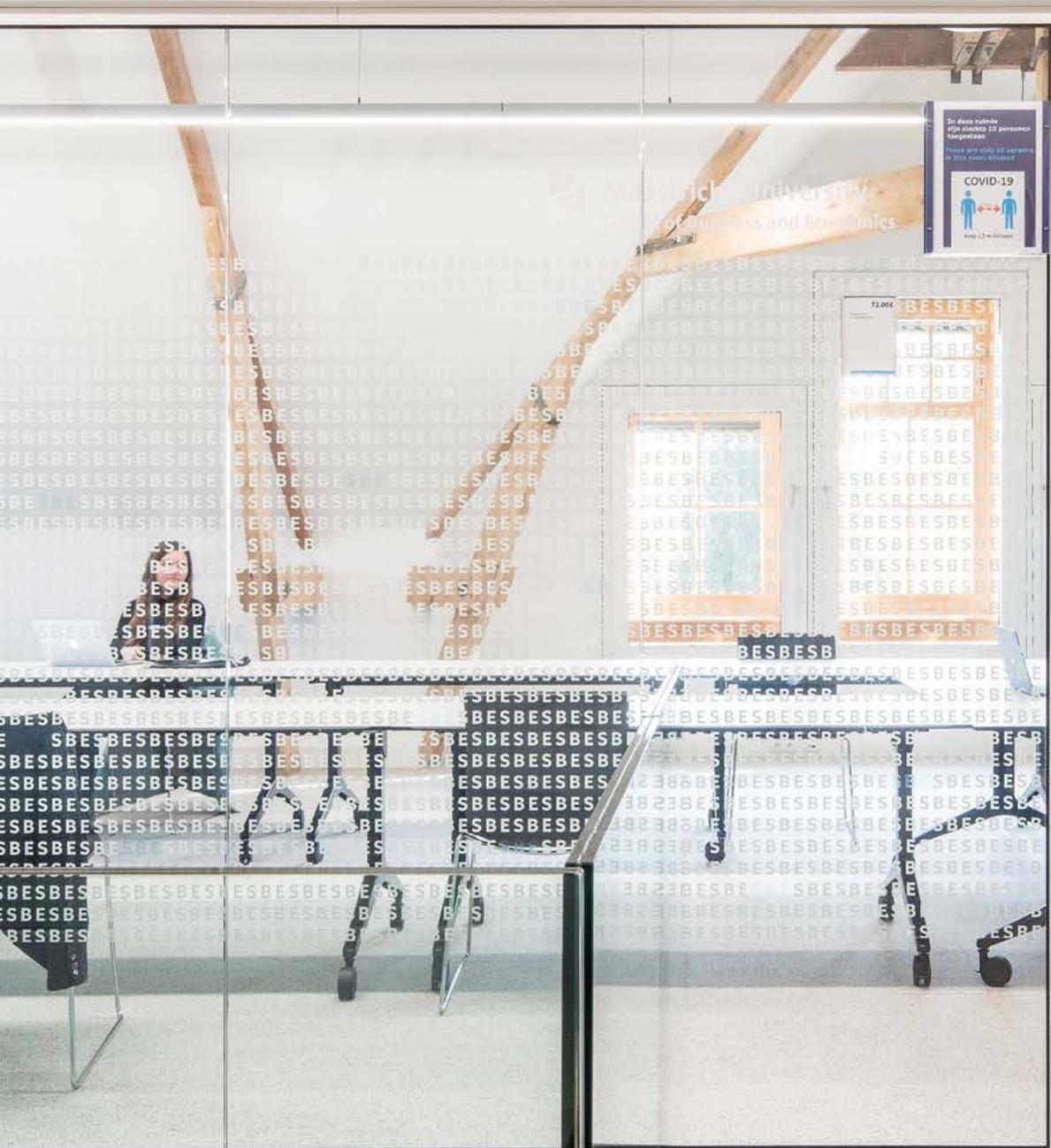
# 1. Towards a new culture of recognition & rewards

Currently, an academic can be successful in many areas, but not all activities and achievements are recognised and rewarded equally. Research performance, in particular quantitative measurements such as research output, citation analyses and acquired grants, has predominantly determined the career path of academics for many years. This has led to the undervaluing of other key domains that belong to the core tasks of academic institutions and to increased work pressure and competitiveness among academics.

In 2019, Dutch public academic institutions and funders of research (VSNU, NFU, KNAW, NWO and ZonMw) launched a nationwide initiative to redefine the recognition and reward of academics. As part of an international and national scientific community, Maastricht University wholeheartedly joins this programme and is dedicated to creating an environment that does justice – in a balanced way – to academics' achievements in the areas of education, research, impact, leadership, and for those working in our academic hospital, patient care.

The position paper Room for everyone's talent, published in the autumn of 2019, describes the main goals of the initiative:
1. **Diversification and vitalisation of career paths:** enable more diversity in career paths and profiles for academics
2. **Balance between individuals and the collective:** assess academics based on both their individual performance and their team performance
3. **Focus on quality:** provide a better balance between quantitative and qualitative assessment tools
4. **Stimulate Open Science:** disclose research designs, make data publicly available and encourage academics to put additional effort into making their research outcomes more accessible to society
5. **Encourage academic leadership:** invest in good leadership at all levels, from young academics to established professors

In early 2020, the nationwide position paper *Room for everyone's talent* was translated into an extensive national Recognition & Rewards programme in which all Dutch universities are participating. Our rector is co-leading the implementation phase for the entire university sector together with the rector of the Technical University Eindhoven.

With this document, Maastricht University shares its vision on the modernisation of recognising and rewarding academic staff. We want to start a dialogue with the university community on the steps we need to take on this challenging journey towards sustainable change. In specifying our position, we link *Room for everyone's talent* to the values and strategic position of Maastricht University.

Building on the individual initiatives of the Dutch universities, the VSNU is developing a national framework of core principles for the Recognition & Rewards programme. Based on UM's vision, and in close alignment with the national framework, we will move forward in developing an elaborate implementation plan, one consisting of a careful balance between institution-wide guidelines and possibilities for faculty-specific elements.

# 2. Maastricht University's organisational culture and identity

The ideas expressed in *Room for everyone's talent* resonate with Maastricht University as a young, pioneering university in the heart of Europe. UM has always been ambitious in the areas of innovative small-scale education and interdisciplinary research with demonstrable societal impact. The strategic alliance with MUMC+ is evidence of the value we put on the relationship between research and high quality patient care. UM's organisational culture is best described using several key concepts; the specific combination of which form the core of our identity.

## Academic citizenship

The UM community exemplifies the concept of academic citizenship.
- Our employees demonstrate high resilience, teamwork, professionalism and a dedication to reach common objectives.
- UM academics perform a wide range of essential and sometimes under-the-radar tasks — alone or within a team — for their institution, the scientific community and society at large.

## Educational approach

Since its inception, UM has been shaped by its focus on innovative, student-centered education.
- UM students actively work together in smalls groups in order to prepare for real-world settings.
- Our international classroom, dedicated to promoting diversity and inclusivity, provides an extra dimension to our students' development.
- Academic staff are well versed in didactics and supported in their professional development as scholarly teachers.
- Initiatives to increase and improve learning are in constant development, e.g., inventive forms of digital and blended education as well as new interdisciplinary programmes.

## Interdisciplinary research

Research at UM is mission-driven, and its integration of multiple disciplines helps to contribute to solving regional and international challenges.
- We believe a healthy balance between fundamental and applied research benefits society most.
- Open Science contributes to making knowledge more widely visible and accessible and is fully supported by Maastricht University.
- We are committed to a broader view on assessing academics by taking into account social impact, teaching, leadership qualities and more. Signing the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) in 2019 is proof of this.

## Societal impact

From the founding of the university in 1976, UM has been a vehicle for the economic and intellectual development of the Limburg region and beyond.
- UM demonstrates its strong dedication to regional impact through its involvement in the *Brightlands* campuses, where innovative ecosystems provide opportunities for business, research, education and society.
- Societal impact is a two-way street; we also gain knowledge through collaboration and co-creation with our research and education partners.
- Many UM academics provide services outside academia in functions such as clinical psychologists, substitute judges, accountants and policy experts.

## MUMC+ partnership

Our strong partnership with the MUMC+ academic hospital, its regional clinical care network and other local healthcare institutions, including those dedicated to mental health, is one of the pillars of our embedment in the local community.
- UM and MUMC+ share human capital in the form of academic clinicians.
- We collaborate in research on medical technology innovations and in healthcare implementation.
- MUMC+ is committed to working together with UM in order to align, recognise and reward the patient care activities of their clinicians on par with academic achievements.

## Diversity and inclusivity

UM strives to go well beyond quotas and compliance; we are determined to foster an environment in which everyone is and feels welcome. An environment in which the necessity and value of diversity is recognised and employed, and in which everyone can participate at all levels of the university.
- We are, and are dedicated to remaining, one of the most international universities in Europe.
- Our diversity takes shape in our international classrooms and in our collaborations with other research and education institutions.
- We acknowledge achieving true diversity and inclusion is a challenge. Our *Diversity & Inclusivity Office* is fully supported in developing effective initiatives and policies.

## Leadership

The Recognition & Rewards programme focusses on the different talents we need in order to achieve our ambitions in education, research, impact and patient care. Well-developed leadership is a precondition to succeed, and therefore also considered a key area in itself.

- We want to rethink how we define success in academia, and put in place supporting structures and incentives that empower individuals and teams to carry out the diverse and challenging tasks universities and society asks from us.
- We believe that such a supportive environment is beneficial for both academics' career paths and the organisation at large.
- Fundamental for this change in mindset is that UM fosters, develops and embraces the kind of leader who leads by empowering individuals to change the setting and culture in which they find themselves.

# 3. Ambitions and objectives

UM wants to ensure everyone has a fulfilling career in which their capabilities are used, seen and recognised by others – by students, peers and supervisors. By allowing diverse sets of talents to thrive, we will increase our ability to achieve excellence in the following key areas: research, education, impact, leadership and patient care. We strive to be an open, inclusive and diverse community of academic citizens who flourish through recognition of their talents and efforts, and are rewarded on the basis of their own merits. We believe this will foster a challenging work environment and increase job satisfaction.

The new approach towards Recognition & Rewards requires a culture change, a change in mindset and leadership that transcends human resource management, organisational structures and quality assurance. Such a change needs national and international efforts to ensure alignment throughout academia.

We believe the new way of thinking about academic careers must be built upon:
- diversified career paths with transparent and fair procedures and guidelines for each path,
- emphasis on personal growth, and
- focus on the needs of the individual as well as the organisation.

## Diversified career paths

It should be possible for individuals to develop their professional profile and set personal goals in one or more of the key areas, and that these can change over the course of their career. We can enable greater diversity in career paths and profiles by recognising and rewarding more diversity in competences and talents. Academics must be able to excel in one or more key areas (diversification) and their profiles (i.e., their unique combination of key areas) must be able to change throughout the course of their career (vitalisation). The interrelatedness of education and research, typical of the Dutch university system, requires academics have enough competences in these two key areas. These remain the foundation of an academic career, but academics do not have to excel in all areas. Within a team, department or faculty, the different profiles and backgrounds should be coherently integrated. The diversification and vitalisation of careers allows us to make better use of the natural talents and intrinsic motivation of academics.

Recognition or extra support to someone in their work also comes in 'small' packages, for example through compliments, recommendations, awards, publicity and guidance.

## Fair and transparent procedures and guidelines

In order to ensure the increased number of career development possibilities do not lead to increased uncertainty and arbitrariness, a broad array of qualitative and quantitative performance indicators is required. These should be aligned with an individual's career goals, while at the same time maintain baseline competencies in the key areas of education and research. To avoid a checklist approach, these indicators should provide sufficient flexibility, for instance in the form of narratives or portfolios. The assessment procedure should be adapted to help set career goals, evaluate them and provide constructive feedback on the opportunities and potential to grow within the organisation. It could take the form of an open dialogue with a diverse assessment committee.

## Individual and organisational needs

It is important to emphasise that having more diversified career paths does not mean anything goes. In order to ensure a healthy organisation, there must be a balance between the needs of the organisation and the ambitions of the individuals in the community. Therefore, academics should be aware that pursuing a career at UM will have its limitations, just as it does within any organisation. Faculties and departments must think about the mix of competences and profiles needed in their team to achieve their objectives and develop their HR strategies and plans accordingly. Staff who commit their time to collective objectives by participating in working groups, committees, and so forth, should also be acknowledged for doing so.

## Personal growth

In this new approach, personal growth is not necessarily defined as reaching a higher academic position. It is also about learning new skills, having the opportunity to excel in the things one is good at and being appreciated for one's contributions. This type of personal growth not only increases job satisfaction but contributes to feelings of involvement and commitment. Depending on a person's current life or career phase, both vertical and horizontal career moves can give someone a well-needed opportunity for personal and/or professional development. Seemingly smaller instances of recognition can make a big difference.

# 4. Moving forward

In order to acknowledge different types of talent within our organisation, the UM Recognition & Rewards programme broadens the definition of a meaningful career to better reflect where value is created within academia day-to-day. Part of the next phase, and one requiring further discussion and operationalisation, is how to weigh achievements in and between the key areas so as to explore and determine subsequent career steps. This step will be the key focus of attention in the next phase. Important other programme milestones moving forward are the following:

1. We will define how we envision a more **inclusive culture**, one that accommodates the complexity and interdisciplinary nature of modern academia and society. This requires a greater balance between encouraging cooperation with and across domains and disciplines, and on the other hand, a stronger disciplinary basis which is necessary for meaningful translation across the boundaries of the disciplines.
2. We will outline the parameters of **academic citizenship** and the role it should play in determining development and achievements.
3. From 2021 onwards, the new **Strategic Evaluation Protocol** (SEP) which builds upon the Recognition & Rewards principles including DORA and Open Science will be implemented. In SEP, the assessment of academics shifts in focus from merely quantitative to qualitative criteria. It also takes the specific academic

discipline and international context in which the academic operates into account, as well as addressing Open Science, a crucial element in changing our evaluation system.
4. The criteria that apply to **PhD trajectories** must be adapted to fit the assessment criteria for research quality. They should take into account possibilities to develop skills in the other key areas and how these can be reflected in the ultimate assessment of the trajectory.

Further defining and implementing the Recognition & Rewards programme will require a different mindset for those in UM leadership positions. Their task is to enable the interplay of talents and skills of the individual staff member while at the same time ensuring the requirements in the key areas are met and in line with the strategy of the organisation as a whole. This requires supporting our leaders in enhancing their skills in a way that fits their personal leadership style and the requirements of the context in which they operate. Maastricht University will therefore invest heavily in leadership development and a culture of openness and transparency. A taskforce led by the rector is currently further developing the contours of this ambition.

Fundamental for achieving these milestones and making the Recognition & Rewards programme a success is a **culture change**, a long-term process that involves continuous dialogue, pilots, experiments and sharing

best practices both within and outside the university. It is also about meeting the expectations we raise and preventing that the change becomes cumbersome and slow.

## Where we stand

In 2020, Maastricht University formed four committees with representatives from each faculty for the key areas of education, research, impact and leadership. Their task was to think about and start a discussion about new ways of recognising and rewarding academics related to these specific domains. To take into account the perspectives of those who also provide patient care, staff members with clinical activities were included in the four committees. Each committee has developed a narrative to present a first approach on how to recognise and reward performance within each key area. The narratives should act as input to steer the university-wide discussion on how to move forward in the implementation phase. These narratives and the discussions within our community will serve as the basis for the next steps in developing a balanced framework for recognising and rewarding academics at UM.

## Next steps

Realising our vision of Recognition & Rewards requires a rigorous change in the way we think about academic careers, performance, leadership and HR procedures and amplifying the small steps that can make a big difference. Together, we can create a positive culture change at UM. This will not be achieved overnight, but we know it is possible because so many of our colleagues are already doing a fantastic job; they already mentor, supervise

and work in complete, or almost complete, alignment with the recognition &rewards objectives. We can and should learn from them.

We are taking the next step by inviting the UM community to join the discussion about this vision and the abovementioned narratives. Events are, and will continue to be, organised by the faculties and at UM-wide level to raise awareness and to ensure everyone has a chance to share their perspective.

The four narratives will then be translated into broadly-defined assessment criteria and quality indicators, reflecting the diverse traditions and requirements of different academic disciplines, as well as taking into account the national Recognition & Rewards framework. The recognition and reward of academics should be based on understanding their quality, not the extent to which they meet quantitative one-size-fits-all indicators. Teams and individuals will be evaluated according to narratives, assessment criteria and quality indicators based on personal goals and teams' aims and strategies. As Maastricht University has signed DORA, journal impact factors cannot remain the dominant indicator for assessment. While quantitative indicators are allowed, they serve to support rather than dominate assessment and need to be meaningfully related to and signal the quality of the academic process and output in relation to the mission, vision and strategy of the team that is the point of reference.

Eventually, these efforts will result in **new guidelines for employee recruitment, selection, assessment, development and promotion**. These guidelines will be presented to the participatory bodies and other

consultative bodies before final decisions are made. Furthermore, we anticipate additional positive, spill-over effects in the way we all work together, for example in the new career policy for administrative staff, and in other areas in which the personal development of our people can be encouraged and realised. Maastricht University has developed a project timeline consisting of three phases:

### Phase 1: Committee consultations (2020)

- Development of the project plan
- Installation of the four domain-specific committees and the overarching institutional committee
- Formulation of the four narratives and the overarching vision
- Collective committee meeting to share the four narratives and to answer fundamental questions for the overarching vision
- Development of the community dialogue plan
- Evaluation of existing initiatives (e.g., MERLN TT approach, FHML Education Profiles)
- New pilot initiatives (e.g., FSE's flexible performance criteria)

### Phase 2: Community dialogue and brainstorm phase (February 2021 – July 2021)

- Faculty level dialogue sessions on the aspirations and operationalisation of the four narratives and the overarching vision
- First translation of the narratives into broad-defined assessment criteria and quality indicators based on input from the community and the four committees

### Phase 3: Implementation phase (July 2021 – December 2022)

- The analysis and adjustment of existing policies (e.g., tenure track policies, UFO profiles) and development of new policies and HR instruments (e.g., education careers, new profiles)
- Translation of overarching vision and narratives into UM-wide and faculty-specific instruments and policies
- University-wide implementation

### Into the future

- Further embedding the change in our way of working. Continual evaluation and possible adjustments to the policies and instruments
- Ongoing dialogue to get feedback, share best practices and inspire others, UM-wide and at faculty level

# 5. Stakeholder engagement

At Maastricht University, the institutional Recognition & Rewards committee consists of the rector and the faculty deans, who together lead the programme's development. The institutional committee facilitates the discussion with the academic community and ensures coherence between the internal discussions and the subsequent proposals. Realising and safeguarding alignment with national developments is also the committee's responsibility.

The involvement of the entire Maastricht University community in the development of the Recognition & Rewards programme is key to creating a sustainable culture change. Sharing this vision document is an **open invitation** to join the discussion on Recognition & Rewards. Through dialogue sessions within the faculties and departments, all those who work within our walls have the opportunity to help shape and share the programme going forward.

# 6. More information

- The UM webpage on Recognition & Rewards has further information on the general set-up and purpose of the programme and regular updates on its progress: https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/about-um/recognition-rewards
- The four narratives on education, research, impact and leadership can be found on the UM Intranet: https://intranet.maastrichtuniversity.nl/en/recognition-rewards-um
- The national website for Recognition & Rewards has further information on the national programme and insights in to the approaches of other Dutch universities and research centres: https://recognitionrewards.nl