

# Diversity at the CORE

## Diversity and Inclusivity policy at Maastricht University

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### 1. Introduction

In spring 2016, the central HR-department launched 5 working groups as part of the revitalization and revision of the university HRM-policy "Create (y)our Future"<sup>1</sup>. The working group '**Diversity**' was one of these groups and received the instruction to work on the development of a university diversity-policy and to focus on gender, age and nationality as indicated in the policy document.

In March 2017, the working group 'Diversity' submitted their advice '**Diversity at the CORE**' to the Executive Board for further consideration and decision. The advice discussed the role and importance of diversity and inclusivity for the UM community. It provided both insights into the conceptual foundations of a UM diversity policy as well as operational recommendations as to what is needed in terms of HRM and other investments to develop a robust and long-sighted diversity policy.

The Executive Board and Management Team took note of the advice and decided to adopt it with some adjustments regarding the governance structure (establishment of an Advisory Council) and the budget (additional funding to support research in the field of diversity and inclusivity). In the next sections, the foundations, rationale and approach for a diversity and inclusivity policy at Maastricht University are presented.

### 2. What is Diversity?

In its strategic programme *Community at the CORE*, UM formulates as one of its aims: "To provide an inclusive environment in which students and staff feel at home" and states that "Diversity of staff and students (including, but not limited to nationality, age and gender) is essential to provide the Maastricht University community with a thriving learning and working environment".

The accompanying action point "increase diversity", leads to the question 'What is Diversity?'

**Diversity** is interpreted by most people as referring to ethnicity, race and gender. However, when looking at aspects that constitute objective differences between individuals and groups, factors like **gender, ethnicity, nationality, age, religion, LGBT, occupational disability or chronic illness** and **social status** are elements that can connect individuals to a certain group as well. In an academic environment, diversity

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<sup>1</sup> "Create (y)our Future" - Adjustments to the HRM policy of Maastricht University, for 2016 and beyond

can also be related to many other perspectives such as **academic staff versus administrative staff**; staff carrying out mainly **educational tasks rather than research, alpha versus beta** etc. When considering Diversity, there are multiple elements to be found that can be at the base of inclusion/exclusion dynamics and determine participation of individuals (and groups) to the academic community or to its sub-groups.

It would be impossible to address all possible elements, or groups or individuals that in one way or another can cause exclusion or the feeling to be excluded. Moreover, research and practice has shown that it is not effective to *only* develop policies or measures for specific groups or minorities<sup>2</sup>. It is more effective to focus on and exploit **individual differences** as such by means of a **constructive and positive community effort**<sup>3</sup>.

A diversity-policy should therefore:

- **Consciously and explicitly** pay attention to the **complexity of cooperation** between **people who differ from another**.<sup>4</sup>
- Aim at optimal use of all different talents of **individual employees** regarding the **services and results of the organisation**.<sup>5</sup>

Based on the considerations above, UM **diversity-policy** will first focus on specific target groups or minorities to catch up on the existing lag. However, in the long term the focus will widen and the inclusive approach will be based on individual talents and differences. The use of the term **inclusivity** connects very well with the universities strategic programme and the CORE-concepts: **welcoming diversity and fostering inclusivity is in fact crucial in creating a community!**

### **3. Why pay attention to diversity?**

*Increasing diversity is a process aimed at building a context that offers equal opportunities for all; diversity-policy therefore, is part of the overall institutional policy.*

Before outlining a diversity-policy, it is important to discuss and identify the argumentation behind UM's wish to increase diversity and to define the objectives of such a policy. In other words:

- a) Why is development and implementation of diversity-policy necessary for Maastricht University?
- b) What are the goals and concrete benefits?

#### **a) Why does Maastricht University need a diversity-policy?**

- Maastricht University has a **global perspective**, which entails a diverse student and staff population, and preparation of its students for this globalizing society (with regards to knowledge and skills, diversity-sensitive research, inclusive teaching).<sup>6</sup> A diversity-policy supports the concept of CORE: benefitting from cooperation between

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<sup>2</sup> G. van Geffen, Verschil moet er zijn, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> See: Jeanette Vaessen "Iedereen INC".

<sup>4</sup> M. Meerman, e.a., De kracht van verschil, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> G. van Geffen, Verschil moet er zijn, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Maastricht University, Community at the CORE. Strategic programme 2017-2021, August 2016

diverse disciplines, and **building bridges** (that will foster inclusivity) between the diverse 'worlds' of education and research.

- Maastricht University mentions Diversity as one of the central topics in the university HR-policy "Create (y)our Future" (2016); gender, nationality and age were highlighted as core-criteria.
- It is known for a long time that diversity in people's backgrounds leads to better team-results (higher creativity, more innovation, multiple perspectives, higher efficiency), provided the diversity is *explicitly* managed.<sup>7</sup> At Maastricht University, this applies to both students and staff members. In the educational context students from different backgrounds collaborate and learn together in PBL teams, guided by **a tutor who should be 'diversity-sensitive'**. The principles of PBL, the development of an International Classroom and enhancement of intercultural competencies are all outlined in the university strategy programme 'Community at the CORE'. The positive effect of diversity also applies to diversely composed teams of staff members, who work together striving for excellent research and educational quality, supervised by diversity-sensitive managers, coordinators, directors, board members, etc. The Strategic Programme notes the importance of developing 'diversity' (or 'intercultural') awareness and competencies of staff members.
- Maastricht University wants to be a **socially engaged** university both at a regional as well as global level, where all students and staff members feel at home (organisation culture).<sup>8</sup> Given the diverse backgrounds of the student and staff population, the university needs to **take these diverse expectations and wishes into account** at all levels of the organisation (facilities, languages, interior design, services, website, schedules, catering, etc.).
- **Placing diversity and inclusivity at its core will reflect in the reputation** of Maastricht University and subsequently in its attractiveness for both students and staff. They will be increasingly able to identify themselves with Maastricht University, resulting in a greater influx, more satisfaction, and better study results.<sup>9</sup>
- **Development and use of all individual talents and competences of students and staff**, will lead to a better study- and work-climate, higher motivation and commitment, having a positive effect on absenteeism and personnel-turnover.<sup>10</sup>
- Taking into account political and external considerations: both at European as well as national level, there is increasing attention for diversity-policy; very recently the Dutch minister of Education made funds available to appoint 100 additional female professors at Dutch universities.

### **b) What are the goals and concrete benefits?**

A diversity-policy needs to aim for **clearly defined goals**. To retrospect conclude that a policy was successful implies that the starting- and the endpoint of the journey should be very clear. Therefore, before defining goals, it is vital to know the facts and to have a baseline-measurement. Facts can be both quantitative (administrative and survey statistics) and qualitative (results from interviews and case studies). Goals will be defined at different levels (university, faculties/service centres, institutes, cap groups,

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<sup>7</sup> For example: J. Kramer, *Managing Cultural Dynamics*, 2009

<sup>8</sup> Chapter 4, 5, 6 Strategic Programme.

<sup>9</sup> G. van Geffen, *Verskil moet er zijn*, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Chapter 9 UM Strategic Programme.

etc.) together with relevant timelines: after-all the different bodies within UM all start from different points.

The Executive Board and Management Team consider that the topic deserves a clear-cut policy at Maastricht University, together with dedicated expertise and long-term dedication. Relevant roles, expertise and responsibilities will be added to the organization to further develop and implement the diversity and inclusivity vision discussed in this document.

#### **4. Diversity and Inclusivity Policy at UM**

Maastricht University is known as an international university with a multidisciplinary approach and also the diversity-policy should reflect UM's identity. This implies that the policy will not just address women's representations and minority groups, but the whole community. **Creating a community requires fostering inclusivity.** Fostering inclusivity means creating an academic environment where people feel part of the UM-community and where individual talents, values and differences can be used to their advantage and to the advantage of the University. Increasing diversity and exploiting its benefits is a shared effort and a shared responsibility. Maastricht University can distinguish itself with a focus on inclusivity and does so by making the connection with the university's strategic plan and the CORE-concept.

#### ***General Implications for HRM***

The HR department will play an important role in strengthening the UM-community and increasing its diversity. It will facilitate the translation of the diversity-policy into concrete measures and instruments. The Executive Board has assigned MUO-HRM the task to further develop, implement and monitor the Diversity and Inclusivity policy of UM.

In this context, the HR department will:

- a) Make UM's ambitions (regarding diversity and inclusivity) an explicit part of its positioning on the labour market by integrating these into texts and other communications that are used in this context. This will be done both at the level of the UM itself and of its individual units. Several suggestions for such texts have already been made by an HRM "shadow-working group". These may serve as a basis to work from.
- b) Anchor diversity into the main process of recruitment – selection – on boarding.
- c) Make community building part of the leadership profile, the development programmes for management and the annual assessments with managers and directors.
- d) Bring in diversity and inclusivity as elements to be weighed up during strategic employee planning, to create a balanced employee population, now and in the future.
- e) Make training and workshops about inclusivity a permanent part of the curriculum.

With regard to these tasks a Programme Manager Diversity and Inclusivity will be appointed, funded from the Diversity- policy budget.

To **increase diversity and foster inclusivity**, the Executive Board and Management Team of UM will:

**I. *Take the following actions at the level of the organisation:***

- **Install an Advisory Council composed of internal and external members;**
- **Appoint the Rector Magnificus as chair of the Advisory Council;**
- **Appoint a Programme Manager Diversity and Inclusivity.** Diversity is a trending topic at most (inter)national universities. Focus is mostly (but not exclusively) on gender but – depending on the composition of the university community and the social context in which the university is embedded – other diversity themes play a major role as well.

As stated before, diversity is a comprehensive topic and increasing diversity is a process that will take time and needs prolonged attention and dedication. The Executive Board will appoint an Advisory Council composed of both internal and external members and chaired by the UM Rector. As Chair of the Advisory Council, the Rector will support diversity-policy by discussing the topic in the university bodies (faculty boards, university council etc.) and will participate in relevant meetings at national level to share best practices and keep track of the (inter)national developments. Together, the Rector and the Advisory Council are responsible for development, implementation and monitoring of the UM Diversity-policy (see also table below 'Roles and responsibilities of the Chair and Advisory Council').

The Programme Manager Diversity and Inclusivity will support the Chair and the Advisory Council. The Programme Manager will be responsible for daily activities and progress.

**II. *Implications for UM internal and external communication***

UM will disseminate, internally and externally, its commitment to Diversity and Inclusivity. To this aim, also the following actions will be undertaken:

- Creating UM webpages dedicated to Diversity and Inclusivity;
- Organizing events/symposia;
- Funding UM research on diversity and inclusivity.

**III. *Diversity-policy budget***

The Executive Board and the Management Team have decided to have a dedicated budget to support implementation of the UM Diversity and Inclusivity Policy. The budget (about k€ 250 each year) consists of structural means for support staff and an exploitation budget. The exploitation budget will be managed by the Rector, the Programme Manager Diversity and Inclusivity and the Advisory Council.

**IV. *Endorse Diversity Charter of the 'Stichting van de Arbeid'***

UM endorses the Diversity Charter of the Stichting van de Arbeid<sup>11</sup> and will spread it across the whole community. This Diversity Charter connects UM with the broader diversity movement in society (the CO of "Collaborative Open" in CORE) and will give us further impulses for diversity policies.

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<sup>11</sup> [www.diversiteitinbedrijf.nl](http://www.diversiteitinbedrijf.nl)