

Call to join the movement towards a new academic citizenship

Maastricht Young Academy

The academic world is changing. In the Netherlands, this change is fueled in part by the Recognition & Rewards movement, especially the discussion on leadership in academia. Many of us are beginning to ask what it means to be an academic. A central concept to this is academic citizenship, or how we see ourselves, how we relate to others, and especially how we mentor those around us.

An academic is no longer someone with an exclusive focus on competition and individual research. Instead, being an academic is a matter of possessing academic citizenship. Academic citizenship means that we all rise up and demonstrate leadership. That does not apply only to someone in a leadership position; it means leadership of ourselves and those directly around us. It means leading by example, leading with empathy and seeing the individual talent of those that we supervise, cooperate with, and mentor. Academic citizenship also includes service: things we do for others, our colleagues and our students that are an integral part of what we do. For example, we peer-review each other's work and we write recommendation letters to help our students advance their careers, but we are also there to support our colleagues, to act as a mentor, and do much more.

Academic citizenship is not yet another task for the already overworked academic; it is about the way in which each of us carries out our work.

The Maastricht Young Academy is launching a university-wide movement towards a new definition and implementation of academic citizenship. We invite all members of our University community, especially – but not exclusively – early career researchers to join us as we together will give shape to a new way of looking at academic citizenship.

To start the conversation, the Maastricht Young Academy will organise a series of events related to this movement at the start of 2021, beginning with a Growing Up in Science (GUS) event on mentoring in academia. We will follow this GUS event with a series of online discussions in which we explore and map our common understanding of academic citizenship.

The Maastricht Young Academy will also work with our university's senior management to begin addressing cases where a change in leadership or leadership style is urgently needed. Part of this conversation is the need to change leadership training at our university as soon as possible to align it with these new perspectives on academic citizenship. In 2021, we will launch a position paper in which we will address this common understanding of academic citizenship and make proposals on how to implement it at Maastricht University.

Follow the Maastricht Young Academy on Twitter (@MaastrichtYA) to stay updated on events to come.