



Maastricht University

# UM Career Development Policy 2023-2028

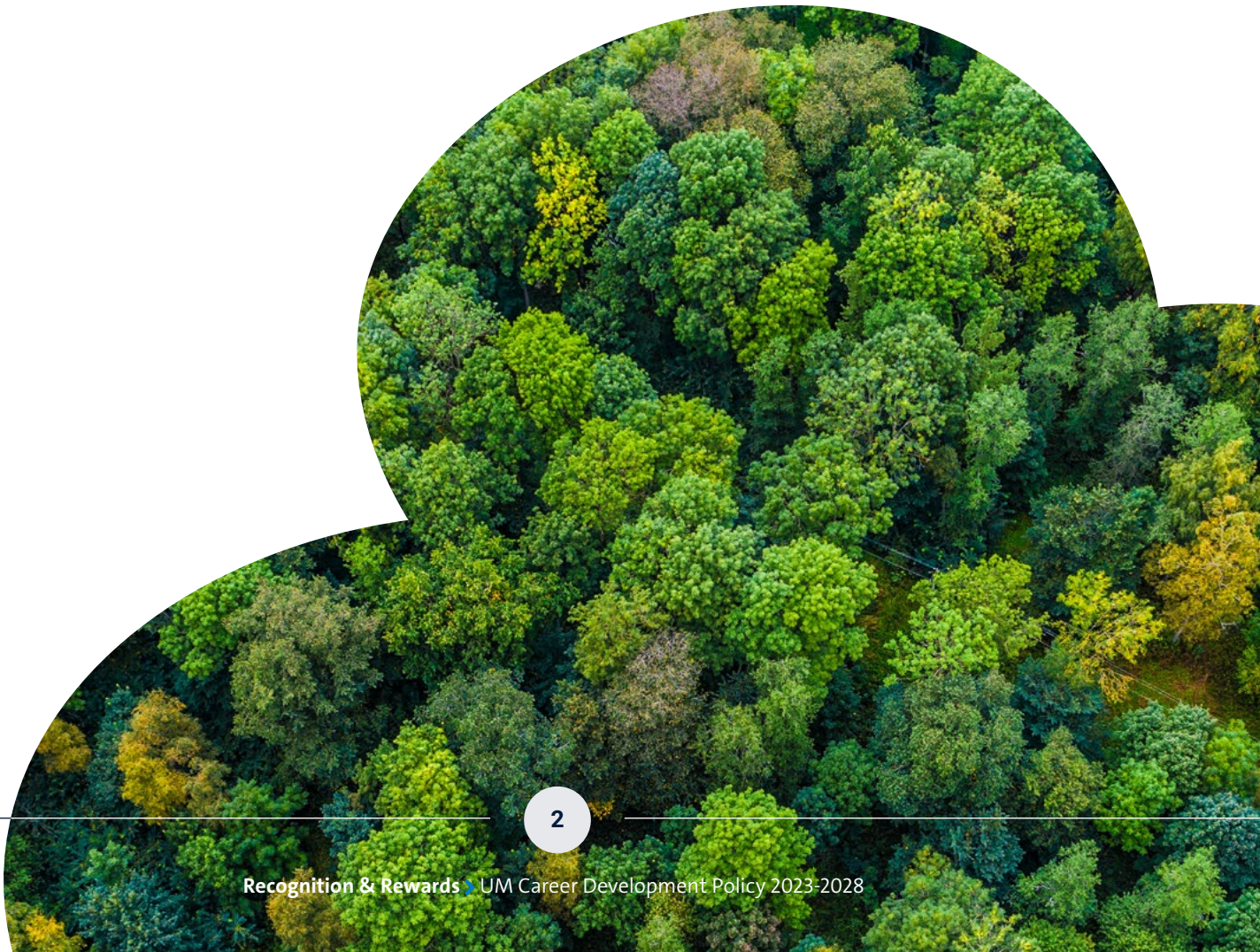
Recognition & Rewards



**Room** for  
everyone's  
talent

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# Our new UM Career Development Policy – How did we get here?

‘Help your employees grow, or watch them go’ is a befitting quote for today’s labour market situation. Also a sad one if we need reminding of this. Personal and professional development are crucial aspects of a happy work life and a successful organisation. We make up a unique, diverse, and talented group here at this university. It’s time we up our game and set our minds and spirits to how we can improve our learning and work climate. To get us going, this new UM Career Development Policy is geared towards our professional staff but open to all. Our basis for this policy is a deep trust in the capability and discipline of our employees: we see an intrinsically motivated, committed and trustworthy staff. Lengthy policy documents can quickly gather dust, and words are only words in the end. So, let’s turn this into a live-action policy together. We start by establishing our framework here in this policy. Then we ask each other to make it come alive, because it will benefit you as an individual, your colleagues, and the university we are proud to be a part of.

*“A mind that is stretched by new experiences can never go back to its old dimensions.”*

Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.

As you probably know, we started our policy development process by gathering information from different, relevant sources: like conversations with a diverse group of staff members and other employers and experts, inspiring scientific and professional literature and desk research. This process has shown us that there are certain key elements to a successful career development policy and more importantly to the creation of a culture that is fueled by development. In short, a successful career development policy today:

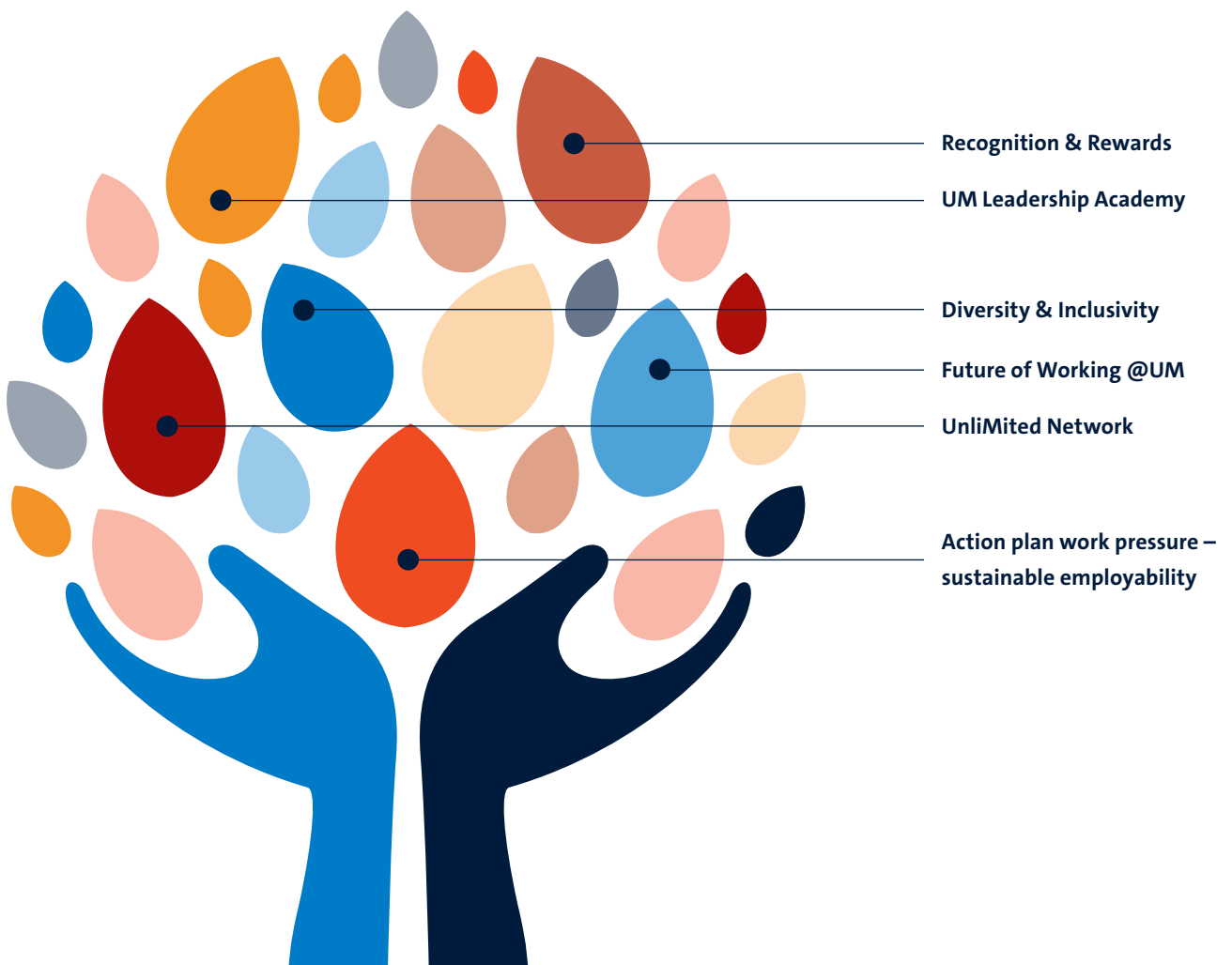
1. must tailor to the needs of the individual. No one-size-fits-all approach;
2. should remove barriers to participation;
3. must encourage education and bringing outside knowledge in;
4. looks to the future workforce needs and share this knowledge with the staff for their development goals;
5. offers training that grows with employees (tapping into one’s curiosity);
6. knows fluidity, so measure, evaluate and adjust;
7. needs patience. In today’s world where results are measured by the hour and ‘long term’ most of the time means ‘next week’, patience can be in short supply. And to really make a difference and create an improved learning and working culture together, we –at times– need a little patience.

Naturally, we would like a good balance between this patience and action. Perhaps best summarised in a quote of Samuel Johnson *“Nothing will ever be attempted if all possible objections must first be overcome.”* So, let’s not dwindle.

## Where do we stand?

**In order to know where to begin, we need to know where we came from and where we stand.** Growing from a university of 50 people to a university of more than 25.000 in 40-some years with students and staff from all over the world makes it evident that UM does not stand still. We enjoy progress and the adventurous spirit that got this university started still rings in our halls. Too many developments to list here, but in the below picture we have plotted the recent ones you need to bear in mind in relation to this career development policy. Each leaf holds various (sub) actions, such as [abbreviating the academic year](#), building an improved career development center, [hybrid working](#), and a great offer for [developing your personal and professional leadership skills](#). This serves as a reminder for the context and environment in which we bring this career development policy and make it come alive.

## Where are we heading?





## **We now remember where we stand in our development. Where do we want to go?**

Recognition & Rewards (R&R) is a national programme which is meant to broaden career opportunities for academic staff members with diverse talents and ambitions (for the position paper and UM's vision on R&R, please visit [our R&R website](#)). Traditionally, excelling in research was the predominant way to make a career in academia. All other tasks, such as education, were as a result often considered of lesser value because they did not offer many career opportunities (in the customary vertical way). Recognition & Rewards changes this and challenges us to open up the

way in which we look at development, the way we value our diverse interests and talents and how we create career opportunities for our colleagues, both at a local and national level and – more and more – at an international level. It is a huge and impactful change and for several (internal and external) reasons, the focus of this programme has – until now – been on the academic staff members. The values and goals of this programme however of course also apply to all the other staff members at this university and are relevant to career development across the organisation. The [intent and the ideas of Recognition & Rewards](#) form the basis of this new career development policy. The way in which we make this intent a reality, is tailored to the needs of our support staff members.

*Find something you love doing and you will never work a day in your life again.*

Mark Twain

**Together, we are (already) moving away from an organisation that is steeped in columns and silos with brick walls in between.** Towards the future, we will become an organisation in which we together – across areas of expertise – work on our common goals. We will no longer follow traditional career paths, but open up these paths by focusing on knowledge, (21<sup>st</sup> century) skills, and (personal and professional) leadership. The career paths of the traditional *'functiehuis'* will become one of many suggestions, no longer the only way to shape your career path. We move towards team work, across the traditional organisational pillars of Finance, IT, educational logistics, student services, HR, library services, etc. We are all contributing to a common goal of being an efficient and well-run organisation delivering excellent education and research and having a meaningful impact on society. Each of our talents is needed. We want to **let go of the traditions of 'academic staff' and 'support staff' that no longer have a place in a modern university. We should better see, hear, value and help to develop all of our professionals.** If we are able to let go of these traditions and carry the responsibilities of this university truly together, the effect can be tremendous. We will become a less bureaucratic and more efficiently run organisation, able to offer more variety in work and opportunity to develop to the individual. Working towards such goals can perhaps best be described as a winding road with beautiful views and choices for stops and go's along the route. And luckily, we are in the driver's seat.



# What do we need to get there?

To begin, we need to talk about the driver's seat. Our 'live-action' policy only works if we *make* it come alive together. We already have a lot of the tools and instruments in our hands. And some we need to add.

If we break it down, we want each one of us to come to work experiencing these things:

**I am seen and I am heard; I see and I listen**

**I am trusted and I give trust to others**

**I am recognised and recognise others**

**I add value and I feel valued**

**I can grow and develop here; I help others to grow and develop**

This is not yet the case for all of us. And it will not be the case every day of your working life at UM. But let's make sure working here feels like this most of your days.

## **I am seen and I am heard; I see and I listen**

Together, we need to make an effort to really see and hear our colleagues. It sounds like a shoe-inn, but we want to mention it, because it is so important. Do you know your colleagues who live and work with a disability and do you know what they need? Do you know your colleague who could use a ride getting to and from work? In the rush of day, we often forget to check in with each other and the run-ins at the coffee machine no longer work since we are all working at different times and locations. So, we need to make a better effort and come up with simple and creative ways to be together in a meaningful way. All leaders within UM need to dedicate time for this by more team sessions, (small) group activities, or weekly check-ins or simply agree on certain moments to be together at the office and eat lunch together. And let's also help our managers a little if they need some inspiration in this area.

We also need some blurriness. Blurriness around divisions – rather than hard lines between departments and sections, we need leaders who can engage blurry vision from time to time. Because a leader able to do this, sees opportunities to collaborate. This leader can create opportunities beyond the lines of departments and divisions.

Furthermore, we need to make *ourselves* seen and heard. You don't have to wear a flashy light or use a horn, but make it your priority to engage with your colleagues, share what you're working on. And ask feedback from your manager and your colleagues at least once each year. Let's talk to each other and not *about* one another. You have a right to constructive feedback and it is your

*A person going nowhere can be sure of reaching his destination. Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase – just take the first step.*

Martin Luther King, Jr.



duty to actively gather this feedback. Use it to help yourself grow professionally and personally. Plan your annual development talk – you can also do that twice (or three or...) times each year. Demand this time to reflect on your development and prepare for it. A simple way to gather feedback is to ask your colleagues, customers, manager to answer a few questions, such as:

- › What should I keep doing?
- › What should I stop doing?
- › What should I start doing?
- › What do you appreciate in me and in the way I do my work?
- › What is your most important tip/advice to me?

*Trust is the highest form of human motivation.*

Stephen Covey

This may seem small and perhaps things you are already doing. But there is always room for improvement and each one of us has probably experienced that sometimes the smallest thing can make the biggest difference.

#### **I am trusted and I give trust to others**

In UM's strategy and in [our vision on leadership](#), leading with trust is a key element. Not always easy in practice, because you have to let go of control. And we like feeling in control.

Carrying the final responsibility in a leading position can feel like having to be in control of everything. And then we ask you to let that go and trust others to be in control. We can probably all agree that we can use a little more help here. The UM Leadership Academy therefore includes learning to lead with trust in all of its programmes and will also offer this for our colleagues not in managerial positions, because we all need to learn to better trust each other. Teaching, creating awareness and taking it in is step 1. Step 2 is bringing it into practice and there we need to help each other. Trust is not only from a manager to an employee, but also from one employee to another and from an employee to a manager. It is crucial to our success and at times still missing in our organisation.

#### **I am recognised and I recognise others**

Recognition and appreciation for your work is of great value. Most of us would not like having their praises sung every day, but every now and then, it is necessary. The pandemic for example has taught us to give a stronger voice to our recognition and express it better. We see that even a simple but true 'thank you' can already make a difference. But we can do better than that. We propose, in addition to raising awareness in the development of employees in a leadership role, to also set up a way in which it becomes easier for us to express our gratitude or respect. *See the section 'what else can we do' for more information.*



### I add value and I feel valued

Finding meaning in your work is essential for all of us. Our core tasks as a university are education and research.

To enable and facilitate doing education and research well, we need a sizeable professional staff to do all this work keeping the core tasks running. We cannot be a university without our academic staff, but we also cannot stand without our professional staff. Each employee adds their own value to our common goals. Together, we need to make sure that we see this value and express appreciation and respect towards each other. We do not need large instruments for this, it's in our own hands to create that necessary connection. An area in which we can do better is being explicit to one another about expectations and express when they are and are not met. At times, we avoid this conversation, but we owe it to each other to create a professional environment in which we can express appreciation and constructive criticism if needed.

*We must become the change we want to see.*

Mahatma Gandhi

*What would you attempt to do if you knew you would not fail?*

Dr Robert Schuller

### I can grow and develop here; I help others to grow and develop

A well-known quote by Dr. Robert Schuller. What do you see for yourself for the future? And how can UM help you in reaching your goals?

Let's remember the driver's seat here. *You* are in charge of your own development. UM can facilitate a lot: training, coaching, mentoring, modules, inspiring conferences, work visits or exchanges with other organisations. It's a challenge to get each initiative well-known to all our staff members, so talk to the Staff Career Centre, your manager or peers, your HR-advisor about opportunities that may help you in your career development.





# What else can we do?

In essence, the above shows us that a lot of the change we are looking for lies within our grasp: in our behaviour, in the way we handle our work and ourselves, and the ones around us. There is not one single instrument or one single effort that can magically catapult us to how we want the future to be. It's the coming together of the above factors that will enable us to change and develop – the organisation and ourselves. Giving everyone an individual development budget will not automatically lead to more development efforts, other companies have taught us. Offering a local career platform does not increase mobility on its own. A harmony of efforts and instruments is needed to make changes.

Knowing the above and what each of us can do and improve, here's our list of 'knobs to turn' on an organisational level (to start):

- We propose to make it **a requirement that each of us invests in a professional development activity each year (at least one, more is welcome) in line with our Collective Labour Agreement (art. 6.11)**. This can range from a complete programme to a meeting with an L&D-advisor to a conference, to a half day course to increase expertise and knowledge on a certain subject (and use your development days that you already have!). According to our Collective Labour Agreement, each employee has both a right and a duty to invest in their development. The employer is obliged to facilitate this (art. 6.10). We propose **to establish an individual yearly development budget for each employee (for smaller activities) as well as creating budgetary room for training and development in each department (in accordance with CLA art. 6.10)**. Make how you spend this part of your development talks with your manager and see how it can help you grow. One year you may not need to spend all of it, another year you perhaps need more. We can also explore team development budgets where your manager, you and your colleagues discuss the different development needs within a team in a certain time period and make choices in team development activities.
- **The options offered within for example the 'cao-keuzemodel' are in need of revision**. We propose to explore if we can include more development-oriented offer in this system or in another way if not befitting the 'keuzemodel', such as a literature budget, a contribution to exchange activities or study trips, etc. A way to show appreciation for development and facilitate it better.
- We will investigate if **we can set up a 'rewards programme'** which enables managers across the university as a whole to give performance-based rewards to colleagues. With such a system you can for example also send cards and messages – both one-on-one and for others to see your respect for your colleague. A new way to express our respect, appreciation both in a personal, public and/or a financial way.
- Special attention should go **to stimulating and rewarding teamwork across departments and disciplines**. We can and should no longer work in traditional columns; in order to do our work well, we need to work together across departments. We see some great examples already, such as the educational logistics efforts, and we can do more. We should explore ways in which we can stimulate and reward team work, both as a team but for example also make team work a part of a performance evaluation.



- › Each department/unit/faculty/service centre should have an overview of their own ‘functiehuis’ – the way the departments and teams are organised and which tasks are done where. Let’s map these, so you can easily find opportunities based on your skills and competencies. **Employees need a better view of jobs available in the organisation.** It is too often unknown for an individual what opportunities are available in our large organisation. [Making this transparent and available](#) can help in increasing awareness and (horizontal) mobility. And perhaps there are more ideas on how to help improve the transparency of opportunities to our staff?
- › How wonderful would it be if **we could visit other universities and organisations more to learn how they work in our specific area?** This will give inspiration, new perspectives and ideas on how to improve our work. We would like to research how we can facilitate this more and better for our employees (in a sustainable manner of course). And perhaps there are more ideas on how to bring the outside better and more into our work?
- › We currently work **with ‘detacheringen’** within our own organisation. This is really meant for mobility between different organisations. **We need to rethink this construct**, because it can hinder employees in their mobility. We sometimes make complicated agreements on job-back guarantees and financial factors such as large amounts of leave. These should not hinder internal mobility for a staff member. We need to make better agreements to optimally facilitate internal staff mobility. Our efforts need to include more than better facilitating contracts, instead we should actively stimulate internal mobility (also see below).
- › We already offer a **good amount of development opportunities**, but not enough employees take advantage of these. This could be because we need to alter and develop the offer, but perhaps also because employees do not know about it. Improvement of visibility on our new intranet will be a priority and a communication approach which will reach people better. One idea is to explore offering ‘sabbatical leave’ also to our support staff. We have to research what is possible, but having more consecutive time to spend on your education and development could be a fruitful way to stay dynamic and help our sustainable employability. More and other ideas welcome of course.
- › **Sometimes a mentor from a different place in this large university can bring a fresh perspective to the table in your development.** Reach out to your HR-advisor, the Staff Career Centre or your manager to help you find a mentor. You can set it up professionally or just meet up for coffee and exchange ideas. We will come up with a (digital) way to make demand and supply meet, perhaps via our renewed intranet. We will explore if we can help you facilitate moments of meeting with a lunch or coffee contribution. So if you would like to be a mentor for one of our (new) colleagues, let your HR-advisor or manager know.
- › **Where are our traineeships?** We are a learning organisation and yet we miss traineeship programmes in many of our professional departments. In today’s labour market, the need for in-house training is not optional anymore. Let’s explore together how we can set up traineeships for graduates in different professional areas, for example policy, Finance, HR, IT, Law or the support offices.

# Let's start...

We hope the above has given you ideas and inspiration to get started yourself. Whether it's on checking in with your colleagues, actively gathering feedback, finally planning that development talk with your manager, finding a mentor, or signing up for that training that you had been planning to do. Let's also start together and here's what we propose:

1. We start by organising a 'World Café' to work out the above themes. Therefore, the directors are asked to invite a number of employees within their own unit to work all together in an informal setting around the new career development policy, to achieve shared (new) insights, to bring focus and to prioritise /make (policy) choices. So, let your director know if you would like to join. In addition, through the instrument of a World Café, we want to ensure a good organisation-wide kick-off that facilitates our leaders to be able to have a good dialogue within their unit and to give attention to the R&R philosophy for all employees of the UM. The Head of the Staff Career Centre and the HR-advisors will help prepare and facilitate this World Café.
2. Subsequently, each faculty and service centre organises a 'start and go gathering' to introduce and discuss this policy and translate it to your needs and wishes for yourself, your team or department. Map all these needs and together create an action plan on what to do first, second, etc. Also create a calendar to discuss this career development policy (at least) twice each year. You need to check in with each other and see how it's going. The Head of the Staff Career Centre and the HR-advisors can help prepare and facilitate this.
3. Throughout 2023 and years to follow, our goal is to each year have two new agreements or policies take effect that will help facilitate and shape our career development opportunities. From the above list or – if new ideas and suggestions come to light – we develop alternatives.

And finally – you may have noticed, we enjoy a good quote –

*“May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears*

Nelson Mandela