

# UM Human Rights Due Diligence Assessment Framework

Final version, 24 February 2025

## Content

<b>1</b>	<b>Aim and Scope</b> .....	<b>2</b>
1.1	Motivation, values, and aim .....	2
1.2	Relation to related UM frameworks on sensitive partnerships .....	3
1.3.	Scope of violations.....	5
1.4	Scope of partnerships.....	6
<b>2</b>	<b>Human Rights Due Diligence Assessment Process</b> .....	<b>8</b>
2.1	Triggers and process.....	8
2.2	UM actions after assessment & advice .....	11
<b>3</b>	<b>Human Rights Due Diligence Assessment Committee</b> .....	<b>12</b>
3.1	Mandate .....	12
3.2	Composition.....	12
3.3	Selection and terms of office.....	13
3.4	Working procedures .....	13
3.5	Tasks Sensitive Partnerships Unit.....	14
<b>4</b>	<b>Implementation Plan</b> .....	<b>15</b>
4.1	Human Rights Clause in contracts .....	15
4.2	Implementation time frame .....	16
4.3	Pilot phase .....	17
	<b>List of abbreviations</b> .....	<b>18</b>

# 1 Aim and Scope

## 1.1 Motivation, values, and aim

Our University's Global Engagement Policy is based on a set of core principles including academic freedom, scientific integrity, protection of human rights, co-creation, mutual respect and mutual benefit. As autonomous knowledge institutions, universities have a certain space and freedom of manoeuvre for science diplomacy and academic cooperation that other organisations and governments may not have. Maastricht University uses this space for science diplomacy and international cooperation by sustaining relations or undertaking activities in line with our institutional mission.

In all our (potential) partnerships, including those in countries with challenging socio-political situations (e.g. relating to academic freedom or human rights), we carefully consider our participation in the context of our strategic goals and the added value to both UM and stakeholders in the partner country (such as students or academic staff). In making these considerations, we aim to find a balance between the importance of academic collaboration, the benefit that international cooperation can bring to academia and science diplomacy on the one hand, and academic freedom, scientific integrity, adherence to human rights and knowledge security considerations on the other.

We approach global engagement with countries where those values are under pressure with “yes, unless we have major concerns”. UM encourages global engagement in teaching, research and capacity and community building as international collaboration is crucial for the quality of our research and teaching. We are aware though that global engagement and international student and staff mobility may involve risks relating to academic freedom, knowledge security (e.g. development of knowledge and technologies that can in potential be misused for military or economic advantages by others), or other kinds of ethical risks (e.g. relating to scientific integrity or human rights violations). Our global engagement policy states that where we have concerns on these aspects when evaluating (existing and potential) education and research partnerships at central and decentral levels, extra checks will be carried out to limit such risks. At UM, the assessment of potential infringements on knowledge security dimensions (and ethical issues) are already included in the existing Assessment Framework International Collaboration and Knowledge Security – TISK.<sup>1</sup>

In June 2024, Maastricht University's Executive Board, in close consultation with the Deans and with the support of the University Council, decided to develop a Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) assessment tool to help make an informed assessment of whether, and if so, to what extent, partners with whom we enter into (a national or international) collaboration, are involved in human rights violations.

This HRDD assessment policy framework has been developed in close cooperation with interested members of, and experts within, our academic community, the faculties, the Management Team<sup>2</sup> and the University Council. UM staff and students have been invited to participate in the development of this framework through a series of dialogue and working group sessions, and their perspectives have, as much as possible, been included in this framework. The framework has also considered meaningful

elements that are part of other HRDD frameworks in the Netherlands and abroad (both existing frameworks and those in development).<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Relation to related UM frameworks on sensitive partnerships

The HRDD assessment framework is closely linked to the already existing *UM Assessment Framework International Collaboration and Knowledge Security* (in Dutch: *Toetsingskader Internationale Samenwerking en Kennisveiligheid, TISK*), a framework enabling UM to assess the added value of, and potential knowledge security risks involved in, an international collaboration. The framework is also closely linked to UM's new fossil industries assessment framework. The HRDD, TISK and fossil industries assessment frameworks help UM to make well-considered choices on the basis of which we can select our partnerships but also use them as a framework for dialogue with our partners.

In order to lower the burden of administrative processes for our staff and organisation as much as possible, we propose to align the processes of the three frameworks as much as possible. In concrete terms, the three UM frameworks will be aligned in the following ways:

1. The existing Knowledge Security Desk will be reframed into a 'Sensitive Partnerships Unit', which will become the first point of contact for the UM community to ask advice or raise concerns on a (potential or existing) partnership, for any questions/concerns on knowledge security, human rights violations, or partnerships with fossil industries. The Sensitive Partnerships Unit will function as a 'gatekeeper' and advisory unit, making an initial assessment of the risks involved in a partnership, and – where necessary – passing the case on to the relevant knowledge security, HRDD, or fossil industries advisory committee<sup>4</sup> for a more elaborate assessment.
2. We will create one core committee – the Sensitive Partnerships Committee – that will oversee three sub-committees for Knowledge Security, Human Rights Due Diligence, and Fossil Industries (see *figure 1*). The overarching Sensitive Partnerships Committee will include four members: the chairs of the three sub-committees and an ethical expert. It will be supported by a secretary.
  - The chair of the Sensitive Partnerships Committee is a member of one of the subcommittees and appointed by the Executive Board.
  - The ethical expert (who is already part of the existing Knowledge Security Committee) and the secretary (the Advisor Knowledge Security, who already functions as the existing secretary of the Knowledge Security Committee) form the linking pin between the three sub-committees: the ethical expert is a member of each sub-committee, ensuring that similar ethical considerations are taken into account in each sub-committee. The secretary ensures that the same process is followed.

- Each sub-committee will have a flexible layer of approximately 5 *ad hoc* experts that can be asked for advice on a case-by-case basis.
  - The three sub-committee chairs meet twice a year as the sensitive partnership committee to discuss their working principles, and to ensure that they continue to follow the same processes. The use of one core committee helps the sub-committees to follow the same process. It also allows each committee to deal with the different content of their partnership cases; their members must have different kinds of expertise. For instance, there is a Dutch national guideline on the specific type of experts that ideally should be included in the Knowledge Security Committee. So far, half of the cases that are assessed by the Knowledge Security Committee concern the hiring of individual staff members – which is an issue that is not relevant for HRDD or fossil industries committee members. By using three sub-committees, we can keep the committees focussed, small and efficient.
3. The HRDD assessment tool (which is provided in Template Parts I, II and III<sup>5</sup>) has been aligned with the TISK checklist, both in terms of approach and focus. As is the case with the TISK, the HRRD assessment tool does not take the form of a ‘decision tree’ (in the form of ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions with a standard outcome) as considerations will often not lead to a clear ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer.

More details on the establishment of the mandate, composition, selection and working procedures of the HRDD Assessment Sub-Committee are given in Chapter 3.

**Figure 1: The Sensitive Partnerships Committee**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sensitive Partnerships Committee</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Members:</i> Chairs of the three sub-committees and an ethical expert  <i>Support:</i> Secretary (i.e. the Advisor Knowledge Security)  <i>Role:</i> Ensuring alignment between the subcommittees</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Sensitive Partnerships Unit</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Members:</i> Coordinator Knowledge Security, the Secretary (Advisor Knowledge Security), plus additional staffing  <i>Role:</i> Gateway to the subcommittees, data collection for assessment (with MUO-AA)</p>		
Knowledge Security	Human Rights Due Diligence	Fossil industries
KS1 ( <u>chair</u> ) Coordinator Knowledge Security	HR1 ( <u>chair</u> ) (to be selected from list of applicants)	F1 ( <u>chair</u> )
KS2 Ethical expert	HR2 Ethical expert	F2 Ethical expert
KS3 Information Expert	HR3	F3
KS4 Internationalisation Advisor	HR4	F4
KS5 HR staff member	HR5	F5
KS6 Vice-dean research		
KS7 Legal Advisor		
SPU Secretary	SPU Secretary	SPU Secretary

*N.B. 'KS' refers to a member of the Knowledge Security sub-committee; 'HR' refers to a member of the HRDD sub-committee; and 'F' refers to a member of the Fossil industries sub-committee.*

### 1.3. Scope of violations

Maastricht University will apply the HRDD assessment tool when there are serious indications that **international crimes and serious violations of human rights** are taking place in a specific country in which the (potential) partner is located. International crimes are the four crimes defined by the International Criminal Court<sup>6</sup> and include:

1. **Aggression**
2. **War crimes**
3. **Crimes against humanity**
4. **Genocide**

Besides these international crimes, this framework also includes gross and serious violations of human rights. Gross violations are perpetrated on behalf of a state or other entity and have a political purpose, and often require certain organisational structures (such as units, structures or services). Though serious violations of human rights cover violations of human rights that are international crimes, its scope is broader and includes serious violations of social, economic, and cultural as well as civil and political rights. In terms of criteria, it refers to a range of human rights violations and takes account of, amongst others, the nature of obligations engaged, the scale/magnitude of the violations and the impact of the violations on victims.<sup>7</sup>

When there are sufficient indications that international crimes or serious violations of human rights are committed in a country by state or non-state actors, this will trigger an HRDD assessment of the UM institutional strategic partnerships in that country (following the checklist provided in Template Part II: HRDD Partner Assessment Tool).

## 1.4 Scope of partnerships

The HRDD assessment will be applied to the following partnerships: Executive Board (EB) and Faculty Board (FB) institutional strategic partnerships.

- All **existing and future institutional strategic partnerships** with academic and non-academic institutions. An institutional strategic partnership is a partnership where the Executive Board or Faculty Board needs to agree upon the partnership that transcends individual collaborative activities between academics, often including strategic university and/or faculty strategic objectives and that is formalised through a contract signed by the Executive Board or Faculty Board.

It may include:

- Formalised UM-wide participation in academic networks
- Faculty-to-faculty partnerships
- Commercial partnerships
- Partnerships on student and staff exchange

With regard to **current and future individual activities** between academics (such as one-to-one joint research projects, joint publications, an individual guest lecture, and individual consultancies), the Sensitive Partnerships Unit will facilitate the self-assessment of potential implications of individual activities to the contribution of international crimes or serious violations of human rights, first of all by raising awareness that in certain contexts or countries institutional strategic partnerships of Maastricht University are being assessed, and secondly, by allowing individual staff members to use the self-assessment tool or directly ask for advice by the Human Rights Assessment Committee. Staff who start a new individual activity with an international partner and who take the opportunity to conduct a HRDD

self-assessment, will be able to receive support in doing the self-assessment: the Sensitive Partnerships Unit and the HRDD Committee will make every effort to support the self-assessment.

## 2 Human Rights Due Diligence Assessment Process

### 2.1 Triggers and process

#### 1. Current institutional strategic partnerships

As mentioned earlier, UM is required to conduct an internal overview of all partnerships that carry knowledge security risks. UM will add current institutional partnerships that carry human rights risks to this overview, based on an HRDD assessment.

##### *Process to be followed*

The assessment process of current institutional strategic partnerships starts with a first analysis of the Sensitive Partnerships Unit *as of Spring 2025*.

*Step 1.* (i) The Sensitive Partnerships Unit (SPU) provides the first **country** analyses of all our institutional strategic partners and (ii) the SPU discusses these analyses with the HRDD Committee, who will decide whether partnerships need to be assessed by the Committee. *If so:*

*Step 2.* When the Committee has decided under step 1 to continue further assessment of the **partner**, the Sensitive Partnership Unit will communicate this first step within the academic community.<sup>8</sup> This in order to raise awareness amongst our staff to consider conducting a self-assessment of the potential implications of their individual activities in view of potential contributions of these activities to international crimes or serious violations of human rights. Staff may also directly approach the Committee for advice.

*Step 3.* The Committee assesses partners' contribution to international crimes and/or serious violations of human rights, and formulates an advice to the Executive Board.

*Step 4.* At the moment when the HRDD Assessment Committee has determined that there are serious indications that in a certain country international crimes or serious violations of human rights take place, the UM Executive Board will contact the partner's Executive Board, in order to notify the partner institution that UM will carry out an HRDD assessment on the partner institution.

*Step 5.* The Executive Board presents the preliminary findings to the partner in order to allow a possibility for a response to these findings.

*Step 6.* The Executive Board takes a final decision on whether to continue the partnership (and, where relevant, under which conditions), based on the Committee's advice. If the Executive Board deviates from the Committee's advice, the Executive Board must present substantiated arguments for this deviation.

*Step 7.* the Executive Board will again approach the partner to communicate the final decision on whether the partnership will be continued and the considerations upon which this decision is based on.

*Step 8.* The Executive Board decision and motivation and the advice and motivation of the Committee will be published on UMPLOYEE and via student communication lines.

## **2. Entering into new institutional strategic partnerships or partnership renewal**

### *Process to be followed*

The assessment process of new institutional strategic partnerships and such partnership renewals includes the following steps:

#### ***Step 1: Analysis at country level by the Sensitive Partnership Unit***

The Sensitive Partnerships Unit makes an initial assessment of the human rights risks involved in given country. It will conduct research to find the data needed for the HRDD country and partner assessment (data on the *partner institution* will only be collected when there are grounds for initiating an HRDD assessment at the *country level*) and submit the partnership case and research findings to the HRDD Assessment Committee. At the moment when the SPU starts a partnership analysis, the UM community is informed of the fact that UM starts such an analysis via a message on UMPLOYEE and via student communication lines.<sup>9</sup>

#### ***Step 2. Assessment by the HRDD Assessment Committee:***

- The HRDD Assessment Committee carries out the *country* and *partner* assessment by answering the questions in the country and partner assessment tool, considering the case, and formulating its advice.
- When the Committee has decided to continue further assessment at the partner level, the Sensitive Partnership Unit will communicate this step within the academic community. This in order to raise awareness amongst our staff to consider conducting a self-assessment of the potential implications of their individual activities in view of potential contributions of these activities to international crimes or serious violations of human rights. Staff may also directly approach the Committee for advice.
- The HRDD Assessment Committee submits its advice to the Executive Board.

#### ***Step 3. Decision by the Executive Board:***

- The Executive Board takes the final decision on whether to start or renew the partnership, based on the Committee's advice.

#### **Step 4. Publication of the decision and motivation**

- The Executive Board decision and motivation and the advice and motivation of the Committee will be published on Umployee and via student communication lines.

### **3. Changes in the geopolitical situation**

The SPU will – on a regular basis – monitor the changing human rights situations in the world, as is already being done with a view to monitoring the safety of UM students and staff who are studying or working abroad. The SPU may raise a concern on a country during its scanning of worldwide developments. The SPU can also be a trigger, as it may bring cases to the HRDD Assessment Committee.

### **4. A staff member considering working with a new partner**

A staff member who is considering working with a new partner but is insecure on the potential consequences for human rights issues, may ask for non-binding *advice* by contacting the Sensitive Partnerships Unit. The process is as following:

- The staff member contacts the Sensitive Partnerships Unit for advice.
- The staff member conducts a self-assessment of the *activity* by applying the individual activity assessment and submits the self-assessment to the Sensitive Partnerships Unit.
- The Sensitive Partnerships Unit then makes an initial assessment of the risks involved in a partnership. Only when the Sensitive Partnerships Unit finds the signals credible, the partnership case is submitted to the Human Rights Assessment Committee for a full assessment.

### **5. A whistle blower**

A whistle blower – i.e. a staff member, student or external stakeholder – can trigger a HRDD assessment when raising a human rights concern about a partner. These cases first go to a credibility check by the Sensitive Partnerships Unit. The unit functions as a ‘gatekeeper’, making an initial assessment of the risks involved in a partnership. Only when the Sensitive Partnerships Unit finds the signals credible, the partnership case is submitted to the HRDD Assessment Committee for a full assessment. At the moment when the partnership case is submitted to the HRDD Assessment Committee, the Committee informs the Executive Board and the UM community (via Umployee and student communication channels) that the partnership case will undergo a HRDD assessment.

## 2.2 UM actions after assessment & advice

### ***Standard procedure: dialogue with partner Executive Board***

In the case of Executive Board and Faculty Board institutional strategic collaborations: At the moment when the HRDD Assessment Committee has determined that there are serious indications that in a certain country international crimes or serious violations of human rights take place, the UM Executive Board will contact the partner's Executive Board. The aim of this meeting is to notify the partner institution that UM will carry out a HRDD assessment on the behaviour of the partner institution. UM will conduct its assessment regardless of whether the partner is willing to enter into dialogue. The Committee will also present its preliminary findings to the partner in order to allow a possibility for a response to these findings. After the committee's advice and Executive Board's decision, the Executive Board will again approach the partner to communicate the final decision on whether the partnership will be continued and the considerations upon which this decision is based on.

Following the advice given by the HRDD Assessment Committee, the UM Executive Board can decide to continue, temporarily put on hold, end, renew or (not) start a partnership. If the Executive Board deviates from the Committee's advice, the Executive Board must present substantiated arguments for this deviation. The Committee's advice, the Executive Board decision (and the substantiated arguments in case the Executive Board deviates from the Committee's advice) will be communicated to the UM community through Umployee and student communication channels.

The partnership will be ended **for at least one year**. After that year, until the moment when a new partnership initiative has been proposed with this institution, a new HRDD assessment will have to be completed, after which the Executive Board will decide (based on the advice of the HRDD Assessment Committee) that a partnership may be initiated.

## 3 Human Rights Due Diligence Assessment Committee

A UM Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) Assessment Sub-Committee (hereafter, ‘the HRDD Assessment Committee’) will be established to carry out the assessment and provide advice. The mandate, composition, selection and working procedures of the Committee are as follows.

### 3.1 Mandate

1. The Committee has an advisory role on whether to start/renew/continue an institutional strategic partnership or not, both to the Executive and Faculty Boards, and to the Principal Investigator (or other type of UM staff member) involved in an individual activity.
2. Evaluate whether a partner is involved in violations falling under the HRDD framework.
3. During its research and assessment work, the Committee has the mandate to:
  - a. Gather relevant information from all UM staff and bodies;
  - b. Access documentary and correspondence that the Committee deems necessary;
  - c. If deemed necessary, the Committee can consult internal or external *ad hoc* experts. These *ad hoc* experts may include translators. The formulation of the final advice will be the sole responsibility of the five-member Committee (these additional *ad hoc* experts have a purely advisory role to the Committee);
  - d. Decide that it will not assess a case, based on a clear explanation of the reasons behind this decision.
4. The Executive Board takes the final decision on whether to start, end or continue an institutional strategic partnership. If the Executive Board deviates from the Committee’s advice, the Executive Board must present substantiated arguments for this deviation (as is the case with the workings of the UM knowledge security advisory committee and framework).

The Executive Board will communicate its decision and substantiated motivation directly to the relevant stakeholders, the UM community (via Umployee and student communication lines), and – where relevant – to the person who indicated the concern about the partnership.

5. The Committee and Executive Board make their findings public.

### 3.2 Composition

1. The Committee consists of five members, including a Chair and an ethical expert. The ethical expert – who is also a member of the UM Knowledge Security and Fossil industries Sub-Committees – functions as a permanent member of the HRDD Assessment Committee to guarantee alignment in approach and in the ways in which (ethical) considerations and advice are being shaped. Also, the

secretary that supports this committee, will also support the other two subcommittees and the overarching committee on sensitive partnerships.

2. The Committee must be broadly and diversely composed, and represent the different disciplines at UM as much as possible. Permanent members have at least expertise in international and human rights law, research integrity and/or ethics, political and social sensitivity. While not all UM faculties can be represented in the Committee simultaneously (to avoid the Committee becoming too large), an effort will be made to have diverse faculty representation in the Committee. If the request relates to partnerships involving one of the Committee members (and thus a potential conflict of interest), that member will abstain from participating in the substantive review.

### 3.3 Selection and terms of office

1. The Committee members are nominated by the Executive Board after an open application procedure. The Executive Board submits the proposed list of members to the Board of Deans for advice. After advice of the Board of Deans, the Executive Board takes the final decision on which members are appointed. The Executive Board may dismiss a committee member after proof of serious and consistent malfunctioning, preceded by a careful process in which this is assessed.
2. The Committee is supported by a Secretary (who is also Secretary of the Knowledge Security and Fossil industries Sub-Committees).
3. The ethical expert is appointed for five years, with the possibility to renew this five-year term three times. The Secretary is appointed for the duration of the Committee. The other three Committee members are appointed for a term of three years; their Committee membership can be renewed with a one three-year term.
4. In case a committee member leaves the Committee, whether or not at their own request, the Executive Board can select another member to join the Committee, following an open application process.

### 3.4 Working procedures

1. The Committee may receive input from the UM community.
2. The Committee members decide on the advice by majority vote.
3. The Committee follows the same principle as Knowledge Security Assessment Committee: “Yes, unless.....”.

4. The response time for submitting an advice is dependent on the scope of the partnership case, the number of partnership cases that are requested within the same time frame, and on the available capacity in terms of staff time. However, considering the sensitive nature of the committee's work and the impact on potential partners, the final decision should be provided within a reasonable time frame. The first year's pilot will provide further indication after which stricter time frames will be set.
5. The Committee will be asked to develop a further set of working principles in the first two months and will submit these to the Executive Board for approval. These working principles, when relating to procedural issues, will be developed in close cooperation with the other two subcommittees. Considerable additions or changes to the *scope of violations* and/or *type of partnerships* as presented in this document, or on the country, partner and individual activity tools (see further on) may be proposed by the Committee, but need formal approval by the Executive Board, after advice by the Management Team and the University Council.

### 3.5 Tasks Sensitive Partnerships Unit

The Sensitive Partnerships Unit will have the task to:

- Conduct research that can support the Committee in answering the questions in the assessment tool, and send their fact findings to the HRDD Assessment Committee;
- Identify geographical areas where international crimes and/or serious violations of human rights may be taking place, and where UM collaborations should undergo an HRDD assessment; and to
- Raise UM-wide awareness of the importance and existence of the HRDD assessment framework.

## 4 Implementation Plan

This chapter offers the implementation plan for embedding the HRDD assessment framework in UM's regular processes.

### 4.1 Human Rights Clause in contracts

At this moment, the contracts of our administrative partnerships (i.e. the contracts signed by the Executive Board or Faculty Board for institutional or faculty-level partnerships) do not yet include a standard clause on human rights. They do include a specific clause on knowledge safety.

In the absence of a human rights clause in the contract, it depends on the form and content of a contract whether it can be terminated because of a serious human rights violation. However, in case a contract has been declared subject to Dutch law, there is a possibility to ask a Dutch Court to terminate the contract based on unforeseen circumstances. In case UM wishes to end a partnership contract during its running time for human rights reasons, and the contract is not based on Dutch law and does not include a human rights clause, UM is dependent on the willingness of the partner to end the contract early.

#### *New administrative partnerships and renewals*

From Spring 2025, all *new* institutional partnerships and renewals with academic and non-academic partners that are signed at the EB or FB level will have to include a human rights clause. This clause allows the cooperation to be discontinued when there are clear indications that either party is involved in international crimes and/or a serious human rights violation.

Legal Affairs has formulated two options to lay down the human rights requirement in future contracts. Option 1 concerns the extension of the knowledge safety clause, with a clause on human rights. Option 2 concerns adding a mutual declaration, for example in a standard preamble to our contracts, in which both parties declare not to engage in human rights violations. Option 1 is preferred, as the validity of option 2 may be challenged by foreign law.

#### Option 1 (preferred):

“Either Party is entitled to prematurely terminate this Agreement immediately upon notice to the other Party, and without prejudice to any other remedies a Party may have, in the event:

(...)

- the Dutch government informs either Party that the collaboration as laid down in this Agreement should be terminated pursuant to knowledge safety and/or any regulations in that regard and/or in case either Party is added to any sanctions list, such as but not limited to the EU sanctions list.

- that there have been serious indications that the party has contributed to serious human rights violations and/or international crimes as defined by international law.”

#### Option 2:

“Parties declare that they do not nor shall engage in human rights violations and/or international crimes as defined by international law.”

#### *Current institutional partnerships*

It is possible to include a human rights clause in an existing institutional partnership contract if the partner agrees with inclusion of the clause. The clause can then be added in an *addendum*.

## 4.2 Implementation time frame

	Timing	Activity	Process owner
1	Jan 2025	Discussion & approval of HRDD framework in MT (15 Jan), SBI (22 Jan), University Council (strategy committee 8 Jan; plenary 22 Jan)	MUO-AA
2	Approx. 22 Jan	Publication communication message on the establishment of SPU and subcommittees, on Umployee	M&C and MUO-AA
3	Jan-March	Finalise operational implementation issues, and involve the Education Platform and the UM research community in the implementation process to shape the operation in a clear, concise and workable way.	MUO, with Education Platform and faculty staff
4	End Jan-early Feb	- Invite applications for HRDD sub-committee members (incl. the chair) via Umployee, based on committee mandate and profile members. Applications open for 2.5 weeks.	MUO-AA
5	End Feb-early March	- MT formulates advice on selection of HRDD sub-committee members - Appointment HRDD sub-committee members by EB.	Executive Board and Management Team, supported by MUO-AA
6	Mid March	Selection of 3 pilot partnership countries	SPU and Committee
7	Mid March-June 2025	Start HRDD Assessment Committee & pilot phase (starting with the 3 countries)	HRDD Assessment Committee, supported by Sensitive Partnerships Unit
8	Jan-Apr 2025	Create platform on UM website/intranet with links to the assessment tools.	MUO/ Sensitive Partnership Unit

9	Jan-Apr	Create UM-wide awareness of the HRDD, Knowledge Security and Fossil industries assessment frameworks	MUO-AA, M&C, and (from Feb also) the Sensitive Partnership Committee
10	March-May	Potential <i>Ask Me Anything Session</i> or a video clip on the HRDD, Fossil Industries, and Knowledge Security frameworks	MUO
11	May	Workshop on the operational self-assessment process of the three frameworks	MUO
12	Feb-June	Assessment of 3 pilot cases (3 different countries) of current partnerships	HRDD Assessment Committee, supported by Sensitive Partnerships Unit
13	Jul 2025-Feb 2026	Assessment of all other institutional strategic partnerships	HRDD Assessment Committee, supported by Sensitive Partnerships Unit
14	Sept-Nov 2025	Conduct evaluation of the HRDD pilot process, and formulate advice for the EB	HRDD Assessment Committee, Sensitive Partnerships Unit, and MUO-AA

### 4.3 Pilot phase

The HRDD Committee will be asked to:

- a. Start with an assessment of three institutional partnership cases – selected by the Executive Board – of current UM collaborations with partners in different countries, starting in March 2025. The choice of partnerships is confidential until the Committee has delivered its final advice to the Executive Board.
- b. Make an effort to ensure that all UM’s current institutional partnerships in all countries where there are indications that international crimes and/or serious violations of human rights are (or may be) taking place, are assessed by November 2025.
- c. Develop further working principles and identify what counts as ‘reliable sources’, and submit these to the Executive Board, Management Team and University Council for approval respectively advice.
- d. Formally evaluate the implementation of the HRDD assessment tool one year after implementation, in collaboration with the Sensitive Partnerships Unit and MUO-AA.

*Evaluation*

The evaluation that will take place in Autumn 2025 will (at least) take into consideration the following conceptual and operational elements:

- a. Working with one core committee, consisting of three sub-committees: what works well, and what should be improved and why?
- b. The assessment process: what works well and what does not work well. What should be improved, and how?
- c. The dialogues with the partner Executive Board: how did these go, and what did we learn from these dialogues?
- d. The scope of violations we encountered in the cases that have been assessed.
- e. The scope of partnerships we included.
- f. How many (and what kinds of) cases did the HRDD Assessment Committee assess, and what does this mean for the workload of staff involved?
- g. Are staff members able to conduct the (voluntary) HRDD self-assessment in a meaningful and efficient way? Is there a need for our researchers to have clearer indicators on which steps to take, and when?
- h. Is there a need to include a possibility to appeal, and if so, which board or committee should assess the appeal?

## List of abbreviations

EB	Executive Board
F	Fossil
HRDD	Human Rights Due Diligence
ICC	International Criminal Court
KV	Knowledge Safety
MT	Management Team
MUO-AA	Maastricht University Office, Department of Academic Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCW	<i>Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen</i>
SPU	Sensitive Partnerships Unit
TISK	<i>Toetsingskader Internationale Samenwerking en Kennisveiligheid</i> (Assessment Framework International Cooperation and Knowledge Security)
UM	Maastricht University
UN	United Nations

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> For the TISK Framework (consisting of 4 documents), see <https://umemployee.maastrichtuniversity.nl/en/research/research-support-um-wide/knowledge-security-yes-unless%E2%80%A6>.

<sup>2</sup> The Management Team consists of the Executive Board and the Deans.

<sup>3</sup> Examples from other universities and organisations include:

- [Human Rights Impact Assessment Guidance and Toolbox](#), The Danish Institute for Human Rights
- [Human Rights Policy and Assessment Framework, KU Leuven](#), Belgium
- [Human Rights Policy and Assessment Framework, Ghent University](#), Belgium
- [The overarching Flemish Human Rights Assessment framework](#), VLIR, Flanders (NL and ENG versions)

<sup>4</sup> A UM framework on partnerships with Fossil/sensitive industries is currently in the final stages of approval.

<sup>5</sup> The templates that are part of the UM HRDD Framework include:

- Template Part I: HRDD Country Assessment Tool,
- Template Part II: HRDD Partner Assessment Tool, and
- Template Part III: HRDD Individual Activity Assessment Tool (voluntary).

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.icc-cpi.int/about/how-the-court-works>.

<sup>7</sup> The Subcommittee members will be asked to further define and delineate the scope of violations falling under the category 'serious violations of human rights'

<sup>8</sup> Note that the list of partners in the respective country will not be communicated in this message.

<sup>9</sup> Note that the list of partners in the respective country will not be communicated in this message.