

VISION 8.0

During a policy weekend held in March 2012, a group of NovUM members worked to give the NovUM vision document a fundamental overhaul. The authors decided to abandon the classical five-pillar structure of NovUM and to integrate these pillars and new fields in a meta-structure composed of four points that symbolize the four corners of our square. In March 2015, the vision was reviewed extensively by all NovUM members, leading to several substantive changes within our four major themes. These cornerstones of our work in everything that we do should be:

The Quality of UM
Accessibility
Integration
Sustainability

The vision describes Maastricht University (UM) as we would like to see it in an ideal world. For more concrete details of how we propose to improve our University, please examine the party manifesto as well as the current candidate manifestos.

Maastricht, March 2015
Board of NovUM

I QUALITY OF UM

Quality of UM refers to the education and study environment. These aspects have to go hand in hand to ensure the availability of serviceable education. A good university should not confuse and frustrate students who want to focus on learning and their personal development. We want to assure that UM continues to adhere to a high standard, and at the same time also acknowledges students' ideas on how to improve procedures and infrastructure wherever necessary.

1. Teaching and education

a) Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

NovUM supports PBL as a method of learning. It leaves room to exchange ideas, to engage in discussions, and triggers an independent study process. Nevertheless, NovUM does think a critical view on PBL is crucial. It has to be ensured that prospective students are familiar with the practice of PBL before their enrolment at the University. As we believe that PBL offers students at UM a competitive advantage in comparison to students from other universities, we would like to have the importance of having PBL at UM highlighted more.

b) Tutors

When choosing tutors, the main focus should be on their in-depth knowledge of the subject in question, their teaching skills and language proficiency. We demand a proper introduction to the PBL system, also for prospective professors and tutors from other universities teaching at UM.

c) Binding study advice (BSA)

We generally favour the idea of having a BSA at the end of the first year. We believe that this stimulates students to make an effort in class and therefore contributes to a productive study atmosphere. For these reasons, NovUM wants to see BSAs implemented across the entire University. At the same time, ECTS requirements should remain reasonable at all faculties. The existence and criteria of hardship clauses must be well communicated to the students and applied in a transparent manner.

d) Evaluation

The students' course evaluations at the end of each period are valuable contributions to the assessment of study programmes. The results of such evaluations should be public and transparent, allowing students to be informed about changes subsequently implemented. The University should ensure a high participation rate of

students by either setting incentives or by making them mandatory.

e) Feedback and exams

NovUM considers it of utmost importance that students receive a detailed and frequent feedback on their academic work. The decision of how to implement these requirements should be left to the faculties as different courses might require different assessment methods. In order to foster the individual learning process and improve students' skills, meaningful feedback on their performance and concrete advice for improvement are essential. Course assessment should always be adequate to its respective content. Moreover, it should encourage the acquisition of deep, sound knowledge as well as academic skills. We believe that fairness in exams is paramount. Grading needs to be transparent and should give the opportunity to learn from mistakes. Grades should however be private.

f) Interdisciplinary education

NovUM encourages interdisciplinary education, which can most effectively be achieved through implementation of cross-faculty minors and a healthy exchange between different study programmes. We favour a centralized organisation to provide easier access and better information to students about their options of taking courses at other faculties.

2. Services

a) Opening hours

The opening hours of both University libraries and all faculties should be flexible and oriented along students' needs. Especially during exam time, extended opening hours are necessary.

b) Cultural and sportive activities

NovUM believes that extra-curricular activities are closely connected to students' well-being and integration, and have an effect on their overall study performance. We support associations and organisations that contribute to the cultural, intellectual and sportive life of Maastricht and constitute a valuable addition to the students' curricula. Hence, the University should support such events by promoting and supporting them by offering facilities (e.g. lecture halls). To further ensure the participation of students on a large scale the University should ensure that the activities remain affordable.

II ACCESSIBILITY

This section deals with accessibility in its broadest sense. Firstly, it refers to the social accessibility of education. Secondly, it addresses the extent to which students have access to participate in the organization in regards to student employment. Thirdly, it discusses the accessibility of representation for students. Lastly, we refer to the accessibility of the University facilities.

1. Socially accessible education

Access to education should exclusively be dependent on the merit and will of the students to study at UM. We believe every student has a moral right to higher education. Further, we value the benefits gained from a diverse student body. There should be neither financial nor physical barriers to access UM. NovUM expects the University to offer a broad base of possibilities for students facing these difficulties.

2. Student employment

NovUM deems UM to be an institution focused on students, but also carried and managed by students from any background as much as possible and feasible. We highly value student involvement in all processes of the organization, as we believe that students as the main target group of UM should be integrated in education, research, as well as tasks outside of the academic core business like promotion, web-management, facility management and quality control.

3. Accessibility of representation

NovUM holds that good student politics requires representation organs and parties that are accessible to students, both as elected members and part of the electorate. Moreover, information on student representation must be easily accessible to everyone and actively proliferated at all faculties. NovUM supports free and fair, informed and anonymous elections. Further, we see it as a duty to make information about student representation and University governance available to all students. Real student awareness about representation requires active education on the part of the University, the councils and student representation parties. NovUM has been founded with the mission to open student representation to international students. Therefore, the party demands that English be the operational language in all organs that feature student representation. NovUM takes the stance that UM should officially become a bilingual university, with Dutch and English as official languages.

4. Accessibility of facilities

a) Accessibility without barriers

To guarantee equal treatment, the University should ensure the physical accessibility of all its facilities to every prospective student. NovUM deems it discriminatory that many of the facilities are currently full of barriers for people with mobility impairments/physical disabilities. This demonstrates an obvious denial of the right to education.

b) Housing

UM should guarantee exchange students accommodation. Those rooms should be available at a reasonable price and quality. The University should provide legal advice regarding contracts and prices, thereby helping and protecting especially foreign students who may be unaware of Dutch law.

c) Learning spaces

Our engagement in the past has shown that common rooms and silent study rooms are well visited and treasured by students. The University should provide even more space for studying and communication among students. In addition, the common rooms and study facilities available should be expressly promoted by the University.

e) Student media

We consider the existence of University media crucial to inform students about developments in their faculties, University and Dutch politics. Furthermore, we would appreciate the University more actively promoting student initiatives regarding media.

III INTEGRATION

1. From internationalization to integration

UM presents itself as the most international University in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, having an international student body does not guarantee a good interaction between the nationalities in the classroom and outside the University. NovUM is aware of this issue and wants to stress the need for integration, as it values internationality as an asset.

2. Integration between the nationalities at UM

Students sometimes find it difficult to fully benefit from the international character of the University due to language barriers. NovUM supports the university-wide accessibility and promotion of language courses, with a strong emphasis on English and Dutch. NovUM is also in favour of programmes that stimulate the intercultural exchange between students.

3. Integration between UM facilities

Students interact mostly within the realm of their own faculty, sticking to fellow students from their classrooms. NovUM aims to improve the permeability between courses offered at UM to facilitate academic as well as social exchange between different fields of study. Special attention should be drawn to the improvement of relations between the Inner City and Randwyck campuses.

4. Integration between the students and the city

To further increase the students' and local residents' quality of life, we are strongly in favour of maintaining the Student Council whose main task it is to facilitate a healthy dialogue between the city and the students. NovUM also offers assistance to other platforms creating similar opportunities for communication and exchange. We support the equal treatment of international and Dutch students. Therefore, incoming students should have access to all essential information in English.

IV SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability of both the ecological and the social dimension is a focal point of NovUM's work. The Green Office Maastricht remains an important strategic partner in the achievement of a more sustainable university and will be supported by NovUM. There are three components to a comprehensive sustainability approach of UM: Education, Operations and Community. Maastricht University was ranked the fourth most sustainable university of the Netherlands in 2014. Yet, it is important that these high standards are further improved. Becoming a frontrunner in sustainability standards moreover helps create a positive, innovative, and truly future-oriented image of Maastricht University from which both the institution and its students can benefit.

1. Sustainability in education

The University should incorporate more education on sustainable development in its teaching in every field of study. Further, UM should support extracurricular efforts towards sustainable education.

2. Sustainability in operations

UM should strive to operate in a more sustainable way. This means that all feasible means should be employed to reduce our CO₂ footprint, to reduce waste (especially biohazard waste), to introduce university-wide waste separation as well as a paper-free transmission of all documents, and to reduce water consumption. Further, the goal set by the Green Office of a University owned small-scale renewable energy production would be a big step towards the CO₂-neutral University which we highly encourage. NovUM is lobbying for the establishment of certain sustainability criteria by the Green Office which new buildings and new facilities should comply with to ensure the most sustainable outcomes. The ongoing process of making more sustainable adjustments in the old University buildings should be continued as far as possible. The availability of affordable sustainable products at student facilities such as the different canteens, vending machines and DOC shops are of utmost importance. Since all these services are outsourced, UM has to design its tenders in a way to reflect these sustainability requirements. Thus, we support the introduction of small-scale competitors to the big providers within the University, who are introducing more sustainable products.

3. Sustainability in the student community

In order to change behaviour, we also encourage the student community to commit to sustainability. All green University-related entities should work

closely together and be rewarded and motivated by the University. This includes financial support and the awarding of individual activities, which are beneficial for all students and promote sustainability. Moreover, UM should improve the facilities for such activities to take place

4. Sustainability in student representation

NovUM values the sustainability of student representation. To avoid the loss of prior work and knowledge, NovUM tries to smoothen the transition between two terms in office by enhancing the information transfer from one generation of student representatives to another.