



**EUA Conference: “Research as a Key to a Europe of
Knowledge”
Maastricht, The Netherlands
28-30 October 2004**

***Speech given by Gerard Mols at the opening ceremony of the
Conference.***

Universiteit Maastricht

As the Rector Magnificus of the Universiteit Maastricht it is my pleasure to welcome you all in Maastricht today and especially at the Universiteit Maastricht, the number one university in the Netherlands. Before leaving the floor to the next speaker, Mark Rutte, Secretary of State for Education of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, I would like to introduce you to the Universiteit Maastricht.

Universiteit Maastricht is an international university in the heart of Europe. Of all Dutch universities, Maastricht has the largest number of international students.

This year, more than 36% of incoming students are from abroad.

Our academic education is demand-driven, interactive, covers all age groups and is 'problem-based', where 'problem' also stands for practice, patient and project.

Universiteit Maastricht is also a research university with an inseparable link between top-quality education and excellent research, in an innovative and international context. Research has a thematic set up, is society-oriented in its content, and multidisciplinary in its implementation. Based on its academic and social functions, Universiteit Maastricht is continuously interacting with its predominantly international environment.

Most bachelor-level students in Maastricht are European. The recently started master programmes have a major intake both from Europe and, depending on the nature of the programme, from elsewhere in the world. Students choose

from a wide range of programmes in English. Universiteit Maastricht has a student population of approximately 12,000, including more than 2,300 foreign bachelor/master students (23%) and up to 1,500 exchange or certificate course students a year from about 70 different countries. One sixth of the academic staff is of foreign origin.

Facts and figures UM

	2003	2002	2001
Students total	11.613	11.333	11.156
International students	2.649 (23,1%)	2.321 (20,5%)	2.002 (17,9%)
Master graduates	1.803	1.634	1.528
PhD theses	130	100	111
Staff UM	3.172	3.102	3.032
Fte	2.562	2.519	2.441

Throughout the university, internationalisation policies have become an integral part of education and research. The university encourages its students to acquire international experience through internships or periods of study abroad. Interaction with other cultures makes students aware of international differences; it prepares them for jobs on an international labour market.

The discovery of active knowledge acquisition in university education

When Universiteit Maastricht started in 1976, it introduced Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in Europe. Developing the PBL system over the years, Universiteit Maastricht has distinguished itself both nationally and internationally. The Maastricht model is centred around the student. Working in small groups, students tackle subject matters by formulating learning objectives, independently studying the literature and using the knowledge and understanding they have acquired to solve problems and cases or to work on concrete projects. Self-motivation is the cornerstone of this education system. The programmes of Universiteit Maastricht - all based on the PBL concept - are widely acclaimed by both education specialists and students. This is

testified by the results of investigations by independent auditing committees, and the appreciation expressed by students in national surveys. Recently, students lauded Universiteit Maastricht to be the best university in the Netherlands (Choice Guide Higher Education).

Universiteit Maastricht graduates acknowledge the effects of this approach. They are competent in ten professional skill domains, including problem-solving skills, the ability to work together, social skills (listening and summarising), making effective use of resources, the ability to work independently and coming up with new ideas. PBL is subject to constant review within Universiteit Maastricht. The development of student-centred education methods such as project-based education and virtual study groups is proof of this.

Knowing that there is no limit to knowledge

Today's problems and issues are no longer restricted to the domain of a single scientific discipline. Universiteit Maastricht has anticipated on this development. Research is carried out in multidisciplinary teams, combining the knowledge and expertise from various disciplines to approach socially relevant themes. This multidisciplinary, thematic approach yields more than the sum total of its constituent disciplinary components. Core thematic research issues include cardiovascular diseases, nutrition, healthcare, brain and behaviour, international and European law, and economics and technology as well as science and technology.

Most of these themes and main topics are embedded in institutes, which facilitates the development of research and collaboration with third parties in the Netherlands and abroad. Most research is part of research schools, centres of high-quality, recognised research. Under the umbrella of the Universiteit Maastricht Holding, businesses work on the commercial application of research results.

Employment prospect

Alumni have an excellent employment prospect. Recent surveys show that alumni from Universiteit Maastricht have a high employability grade. This is

partly thanks to the excellent links that Universiteit Maastricht has with leading industries, both within and across the borders – in which Universiteit Maastricht has found excellent partners to support the validation of knowledge and UM's innovation drive. Being more synergetic and selective, this partnership can have a greater impact on employment in the region and therefore, on prosperity.

After one year, 92% of alumni from Universiteit Maastricht are employed; only 1% is unemployed. After five years, the percentage is still 92%.

Only 24% of our alumni are employed within the region, 76% outside the region.

After one year, 50% of alumni from Universiteit Maastricht have a permanent appointment. At the start of their careers 70% have a job on higher education level.

18% of alumni from Universiteit Maastricht become researchers.

Total number of graduates from UM working as researcher, 1.5 years after graduation

(per faculty, survey 1999-2003)

	researcher (%)	other prof. (%)	number
(N)			
FdAW	29	71	24
FdCW	18	82	66
FdEWB	11	89	612
FdG	12	88	381
FdGW	28	89	825
FdP	51	49	121
FdR	3	97	442
Total UM	18%	82%	2.471

Alumni in research professions have about the same amount of working hours per week and gross monthly income as alumni in research professions from other universities.

Total working hours per week and gross monthly income of UM alumni in research professions

	hours per week	gross income
Medicine	36,1	1.815 €
Social science	35,8	1.750 €
Economics	37,5	1.955 €
Science	37,8	1.680 €
Organisation	36,5	1.710 €
Law	37,7	1.640 €
Other	34,7	1.840 €
Total	36,4	1.795 €

Total working hours per week and gross monthly income of alumni from other universities in research professions

	hours per week	gross income
Medicine	37,6	1.920 €
Social science	33,7	1.810 €
Economics	38,5	2.185 €
Science	38,1	1.670 €
Organisation	38,3	1.935 €
Law	36,5	1.810 €
Other	36,9	1.765 €
Total	36,9	1.800 €

Also, the number of alumni from Universiteit Maastricht in a research profession with a permanent appointment (19%) and the number with a profession that matches the study (90%) equal those of other universities (26% and 91%).

For a young university such as Maastricht this is quite remarkable!

Research Education

I mentioned already the research schools. At Universiteit Maastricht most of them are

inter-university associations, and in some cases like Ius Commune and Neurosciences with universities from our neighbouring countries. Not only they are centres of high-quality multidisciplinary research, recognized by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, they also perform doctoral education to PhD students on a high level within the domain of the specific school.

Since the introduction of the bachelor-master system, especially since the introduction of research masters of two years in The Netherlands, leading to the degree of Master of Philosophy, discussion started concerning the relation between these masters and the PhD education within faculties, research schools and their underlying institutes.

Some people believe that there should be a close organizational relation between masters, research masters and PhD training, leading to the establishment of independent graduate schools. They believe that - depending on the discipline - research schools focus more on research than on systematic and theoretical education. The close interaction between master students and PhD students within graduate schools or research institutes certainly could be in favour of both.

My colleague, Frans van Vugt, representative of the association of Dutch universities, will tell you more about the recent ideas of the association with regard to research training and the criteria of graduate schools.

And also the chairman of Universiteit Maastricht, Jo Ritzen, will examine this topic later on, that is, for example, how serendipity is boosted by focus and concentration within graduate schools.

Of course, my university too is discussing the topic of research training. Let me demonstrate this with an example of our medical and health faculties.

The faculty of medicine, the faculty of health sciences and the academic hospital Maastricht wish to cooperate more closely than before, by introducing a new concept of cooperation within multidisciplinary chains for care, education and research. The traditional, disciplinary approach should be replaced by an integral, process-oriented approach for care, education and research. There should be more attention for prevention and patient-oriented supply of care as well as cure. The main difference with University Medical Centres elsewhere in The Netherlands is the incorporation of care into cure, thanks to the presence of the faculty of health sciences.

We have selected four multidisciplinary chains, on the basis of the outstanding knowledge present in the faculties and the hospital, and the growing amount of people suffering from the diseases in question: cardiovascular diseases; mental health care; oncology; and chronic diseases. We have indicated common pathways for research in all chains, like the interaction between genes and the environment, and prevention and health care promotion. Within this new structure we wish to present all education in the field of medicine, health and health care. We believe that this promotes better interaction between different educations and will lead to a flexible and diverse flow of students. Students learn from different disciplines, and they can choose the education suitable for them more easily. In order to make the education efficiently and to guarantee the education continuum, the formation of one education institute should be appropriate and could lead to a graduate school for medical and health sciences, including masters, research masters and PhD students.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Again, welcome to the beautiful city of Maastricht. I hope that this will be a fruitful conference, and that we will learn a lot about the possibilities and challenges of research training in Europe. It's my pleasure to introduce our next speaker Mark Rutte, Secretary of State for Education of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.