



Students partying on the Market at the Opening of the Inkom 2018. In addition to Band with Benefits, the Lawineboys and DJ duo Dirtcaps entered the stage. For more pictures of the Inkom, see page 6-7 Photo: Loraine Bodewes

Another record number of Inkom participants: 3000

The 2018 Inkom was more popular than all previous editions. With no fewer than three thousand partakers – the maximum, the introduction week was ‘sold out’ - it was the busiest ever.

Last year's edition was also a record-breaker, with 2,900 registrations.

After weeks of tropical heat, the weather gods looked favourably upon the Inkom organisation. Nice temperature, sun and an occasional cloud, anything but wet. The outdoor programmes on the Markt (a well-attended opening on Monday), in the city park (Ozon Festival on Tuesday), at the Griend (sports event on

Thursday) and the Maasboulevard (picnic down the river on Wednesday), could all take place.

For a moment, it was uncertain whether a thunderstorm would disrupt the plans for Friday, but the Beach Lounge in Fun Valley was held as planned.

In keeping with tradition, the Inkom was brought to a close with the final party in the Mecc.



It was with great enthusiasm that students joined the dance work-out at the Sports Event at the Griend on Thursday Photo: Loraine Bodewes

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Who is Observant?

- ▶ We are the editors of *Observant*, the independent weekly paper and website – in English and Dutch – for Maastricht University. From this week onwards, you can read a new printed copy of the paper every **Thursday morning**. Get your copy from the special trays at the entrance to your faculty building. It is full of news about the university, student life, background stories and columns.
- ▶ On our Dutch/English website www.observantonline.nl you can find daily updates of the news, columns, stories about student life, event, debates, interviews, et cetera.
- ▶ For the latest news and interesting info, check out www.facebook.com/ObservantUM, follow us on Twitter [@observant_um](https://twitter.com/observant_um) or on Instagram [@observant_um](https://www.instagram.com/observant_um).

Our team

Our team consists of five professional reporters, a secretary, a freelance team of columnists, students who are learning about the profession of journalism from us, draughtsmen and a graphic designer.

Journalistic ambitions?

If you want to try and see what it's like to be a journalist, we can give you the opportunity to gain experience. Check www.observantonline.nl/English/Contact for more information.

Come right in

Whether you want to gain some experience, have questions or news, just e-mail us or visit us in person! Our editorial office is located in the centre of town. At the top of the Minderbroedersberg (side street to Tongersestraat) is the university's administrative building. Do not enter, but turn right and pass through the glass door of the red-bricked building. You will find us on the second floor.

Colophon

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Do it yourself!

You recently finished high school. The diploma is in your hands, you're ready to tackle your next academic challenge. Or you just came back from your jaw-dropping, horizon-widening volunteering experience in South America. Either way, a new chapter starts. Friends and family are full of well-meant advice on how to make the most of your university experience. Like, eating healthy and joining clubs but not too many because you'd otherwise over-load yourself, and study but not too much, because you also want to make friends and.... I guess you get the idea.

My well-meant advice – a product of the wisdom I acquired the last three years – is to simply do things yourself. You might have just rolled your eyes. Of course, you will now do things yourself, you live alone (or at least without your parents). You cannot avoid it, right? Wrong. Looking around my peers, I can assure you that the list of people who changed a lightbulb on their own is shorter than the one of those who did not. The same with those, who tried to change a tire of their bike. And there are those people who are still not registered at the municipality. After three years. Let it sink in. Or those who proudly announce, that they have not learnt to cook in those three years. Probably they have spent the money worth a fairly decent car by eating out instead, because it was apparently too much to learn some basic meal planning



and prepping. Maybe something in your flat will break, but you never really have to deal with it because you have this one (probably Dutch) housemate who always takes care of stuff. You get in the habit of running to this housemate when the water boiler breaks. I've been there, don't do it. Whenever something comes up and you want to rely on others, try to figure it out yourself first. You can still ask for help afterwards. This aspect of "university life" is not the sexy, free and wild version that BuzzFeed videos sell you in their "10 things you have to do in college"-lists. But thinking back on my university experience, the most lasting and versatile skill you (should) learn in university – from academia to house work – is to figure out how to do stuff yourself. And once you master that, you're ready to kick-start your almost-adult-life.

Asena Baykal, alumna European Studies
This column reflects the personal views of the author



How to make your student room into your dream palace

At last, you're living on your own. There are disadvantages – you will have to do your own cooking, cleaning, and laundry from now on, and not to forget, pay your rent – but there are also lots of advantages. You decide at what time you come home, what you're having for dinner, and of course how you decorate your room. Here are some tips to make your room into a real home.

Make the most of a small space

Chances are that your student room isn't the largest of places. How do you prevent it from looking stuffed and cluttered?

- Look for practical furniture: a loft bed or sofa bed, folding chairs, stackable stools that can be used as both side tables and seating places.
- Consider an open wardrobe. This looks more airy than a big closed closet. Another idea is using a hanging rack for your clothes. If you want to secure it to the wall, first make sure the wall is strong enough.
- Light-coloured walls make a room look spacious. What also helps is letting as much natural light into the room as possible. If your room allows it: full-length curtains make a window look larger.
- Use your walls and ceiling to hang things that you would otherwise store in a cupboard or lay on shelves. Things like pots and pans, plants, shoes, scarves or bags.
- Try to keep your knickknacks in one style. A reoccurring colour, element or metal will make it look like they belong together, instead of scattered objects across the room.



Make the room your own

Your student room is a temporary home, but it's still worth the time and effort to make it your own. You will spend a lot of time here and making it into a place where you can unwind, feel comfortable and relax is important.

- Fill your space with memories. Pictures, souvenirs from your travels, an old chair that belonged to your grandmother, a print that your father made.
- If you're into scented candles or fragrance sticks, find one you like and make it your signature fragrance. If you're feeling a bit homesick, you could choose a smell that reminds you of your parents' house.
- Speaking of homesickness, hanging a familiar print in a place where you can immediately see it when you wake up, may help. Or try setting up your furniture in the same way as it was in your old room.
- Plants make a room look more friendly and homely. Not blessed with green fingers? Start simple, with some succulents or buy a terrarium. These plants in a bell jar don't need any looking after.
- Painting is a great way to make something to your taste. It's not just for walls and furniture – you can also paint cupboards, tiles and even floors. Go to a do-it-yourself store for advice on which paint to use for each surface.
- While you're readjusting, also think of changing the door-knobs of that IKEA-closet to make it more personal or upholstering an old chair you found in a second-hand shop.
- Lighting is really important to set the right ambiance. Think about which corners of your room you want lit and in what way. You may want a brighter lamp on your desk than on your bedside table. Several small lights usually create a cosier ambiance than a single big lamp.
- Don't feel overwhelmed by all the choices you have to make. You don't have to finish decorating overnight. As time goes by, you can add and change.

Don't settle for less

- If you don't like your room that much, but it's the best you could get at the time: keep looking. Moving again may seem like a hassle, but a nicer space, a more convenient location and better housemates will contribute to your happiness.
- Always sign up with the housing corporation for social housing. Even if you're in love with your space now, you may feel differently in a couple of years. By that time, you will have moved up enough on the waiting list to be eligible for a room.



The difference between secondary school and university: more discipline and responsibility needed

No longer pupil but a student

You no longer have a teacher urging you on and without self-discipline an exam is a tough hurdle. What is the biggest difference between secondary school and studying at a university, *Observant* asked employees and senior students. Read their answers and use them for your benefit.

“You have to take your own responsibility,” says **Floortje Wijnands**, second-year research master’s of Business Research from the Netherlands. “You can choose to do very little, but it is wiser to start studying immediately.” She actually had no idea what to expect when she started her bachelor’s of International Business. She had been to the open day, had heard about PBL, but in her first group tutorial “everyone was nervous and nobody really dared to speak”. The fact that the language used was English also took some getting used to. “A bit strange, reading the literature in English also slows you down at first, but you get used to it.” Wijnands liked being able to manage her own time and not having to be at school every day at eight-thirty. “Lessons for only two hours a day, that is really great.” During the first block, she became friends with **Esma-**

ralda Muije, now a master’s student of International Business. It is very important to make friends, both of them say. “Make sure you integrate in university life. You can give each other support and you are doing something other than just studying. Some students focus too much on studying, they only think about

getting good marks. They are the people crying in the library because they are afraid that they won’t pass an exam.” Another final tip: find the right study method. One person may benefit from drawing up a list of questions, another may use summaries; Wijnands creates mind maps. “Not long pages of text, but a

“There is less pressure to study, but eventually there is an exam lurking”

He acquired one education prize after another and may call himself the most popular lecturer at the School of Business and Economics. **Christian Kerckhoffs**, co-ordinator of the QM2 block (Statistics and Mathematics), feels this is an awful lot of praise. “I am the most well-known lecturer among bachelor’s students,” he says in his study on the Tongersestraat 53. The transition from secondary school to university is a hard and abrupt one, Kerckhoffs knows. “It is a leap towards adulthood.” Suddenly, you are living by yourself and find yourself having to cope with extra tasks - cooking, washing, and shopping. The protective environment of home is no longer there. At the same time, there is “a sudden and fantastic increase of

individual freedom, and an equally sudden appeal to personal responsibility. After all, you have far fewer contact hours than at secondary school and fewer subjects per block. And if you want, you don’t have to do very much. After all, there is no teacher going on at you. The pressure to work is much less at university, but eventually, there is still an exam lurking. So, it is a case of dealing with that freedom properly.” Kerckhoffs tip: start studying in the first week. Don’t ignore your books for weeks on end, or things will really go wrong with the exam, so you will have a rest after the following block or a year later. “You will be dragging that along with you.” Something else: “Don’t fall for some senior student telling you over a beer that QM1 is impossible to pass. Take that with a grain of salt, it is possible to pass, otherwise it would be very empty here after the first year.” And lastly: “Don’t rely on a QM crash course with one of those commercial clubs. They are very clever; you lose your money and fail. If you do pass QM1, then you will still be in trouble with QM2. Those crash courses only teach you tricks, it has nothing to do with real understanding.”



Illustration: Janneke Swinkels

sketch that shows what is related to what.” “You have a lot more freedom at university,” says **Hannah Bettenhausen**, master’s student of Management of Learning. She went to secondary school in Germany and did her bachelor’s in Frankfurt. “There are a lot of choices to make: what are my ambitions, what do I find interesting, which course would suit me? You have to take a closer look at yourself than you ever did before. You are confronted with your expectations and with reality. Sometimes, they overlap and sometimes they don’t.” It is important to talk to a lot of people and ask for advice. “You need people who ask the right questions. Keep listening to others. Use your freedom to hear other ideas, step out of your comfort zone.” “You need to motivate yourself and find out a lot on your own,” says **Christopher Hagemann**, master’s student of International Business, from Germany. The time when your teacher broke everything down for you has gone. Moreover, the pressure of work is much greater than at secondary school. “You need to discover how to study, what is important and what is not. Lecturers at university won’t tell you that.” Living in digs? “Washing and cleaning wasn’t a problem. Cooking was the hardest, but I can handle that now.” **Anne de Groot**, graduated from the bachelor’s of

Health Sciences, from the Netherlands, lived with her parents for the first six months. “Student life only really begins when you live in digs. You enter a completely different world. If you go home every day, you don’t really get to know that world.” According to **Valentijn Verberk**, third-year student of Economics, from the Netherlands, it makes a great difference whether you live in a room on your own or not. “At home, my dinner was waiting for me on the table and my washing was done. Suddenly you have to do all that stuff yourself. You quickly get used to it, you have to.” Where it concerns studying, the biggest difference between secondary school and university is taking responsibility. Verberk was well able for that, completing the propaedeutic programme in one year. “You have your first exam after eight weeks, you don’t know how difficult it will be, how comprehensive. I prepared myself for it really well. After a couple of exams, you get better at dealing with them.”

“I still can’t cook”

Rector **Rianne Letschert** remembers her first year very well. She chose the study of Law at the University of Amsterdam. She doesn’t need to think very long to answer the question what the biggest difference was between secondary school and university: “That is the immense freedom that you suddenly have.” The first thing she immediately noticed was that there were far fewer contact hours and a lot more responsibility. “At secondary school, they tell you exactly what and how you should learn and when you need to know it.” At university, you are expected to found out yourself. “So, it is important that you find a good learning rhythm; don’t

underestimate then need to keep up with everything.” She found that out the “hard way”. “I didn’t pass my first exam; I started studying way too late. The next time, I started sooner. You get used to it. In the end, I passed my first year, so it worked out.” It’s not just in your studying but also in daily life that you have to deal with new things. “I was on my own in a room in Amsterdam (my classmates went to universities in other cities), had to find my way in a new social environment, do my washing and cooking. I absolutely could not do the latter; by the way, I still can’t, ha ha. That first year is mainly getting to know yourself and finding out what suits you.” The rector’s tip: “Try to enjoy those first few months a little. Besides studying, make time to participate in the fun things that are organised.”

Inkom 2018

Confetti, bouncing castles, bright colours, adventurous workouts, belly dancing, DJ's, a night at the museum, pub crawls, picnic in the park, party until dawn and T-shirt weather: this was Inkom 2018. *Photo's: Loraine Bodewes*



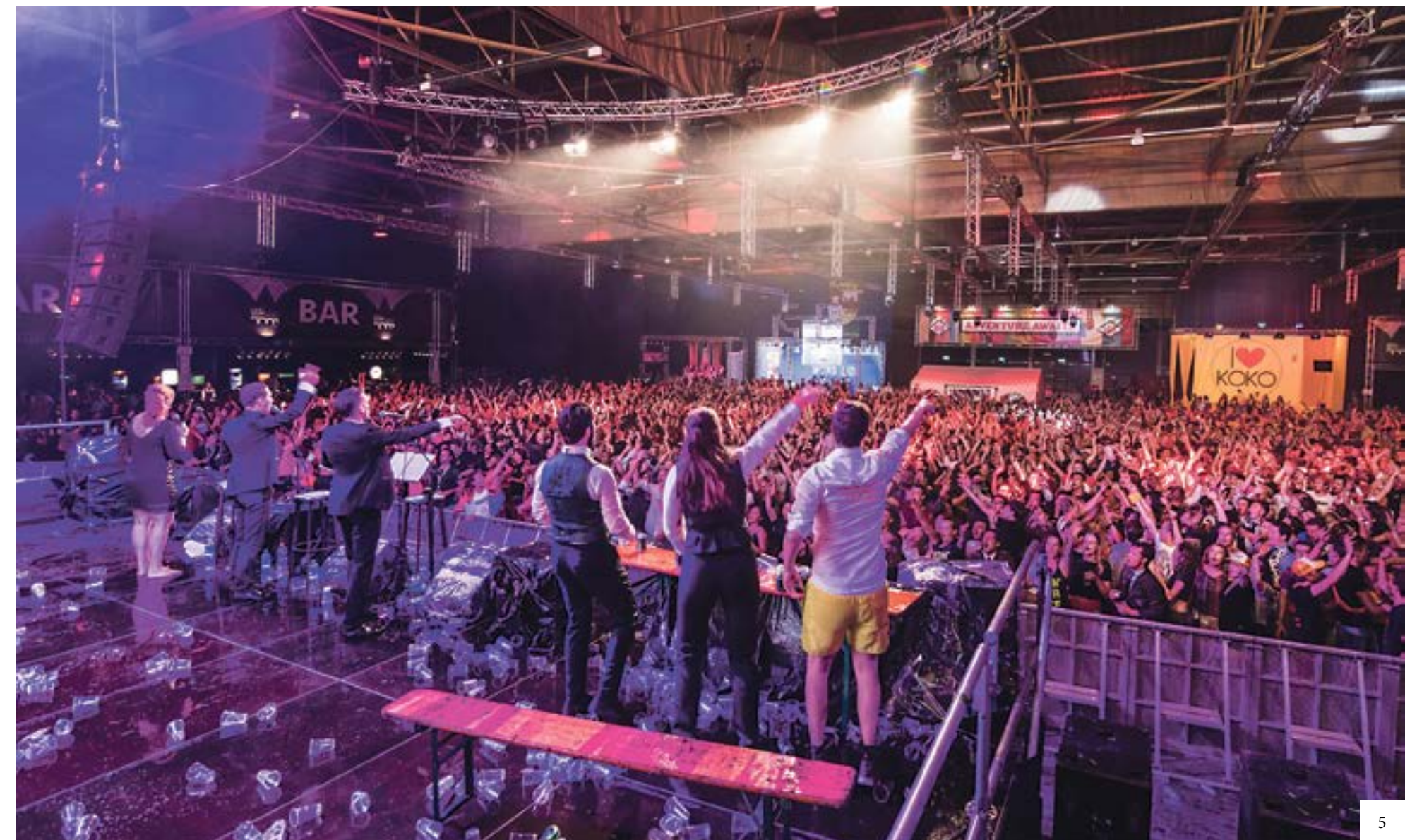
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Relax, take it easy



You may have heard on the news that many students feel pressured, stressed or anxious. Are you afraid that will happen to you too? Don't panic! We have laid out a plan – follow these tips and you will be one relaxed first-year student.

How do I study for an exam?

"Time management is essential," says **Lorena Ortiz Cabrero**, a third-year student at University College Maastricht and member of the Peer Point service (see box) in the previous academic year. "Start studying on time and make a realistic schedule. Studying with flashcards and mind maps works best. Write down a concept on one side of the flashcard and the explanation – or whatever you want to remember – on the other side. Make a stack and test yourself. A big mind map works best if you want to remember and see how theories are linked. I often have students coming in who know the different theories by heart, but don't know how they are linked."

Where do I study?

"In general, I would recommend studying in the library or in one of the other study places, because there is really a study vibe there. Only if people tell me that they can't concentrate because they are always talking with friends, I

recommend studying at home. Keep in mind that at home there are some limitations: You can't always reach the online databases at home and you probably won't have as many books as in the library, ha ha."

"When the library is full, you can go to plenty of other study places: Tapijn, Student Service Centre, UM Sports, the faculties and of course the public library. I find it hard to imagine that you wouldn't be able to find a study place at all!"

How do I write a paper?

"Don't start writing immediately. There is a research and a writing phase. Do your research thoroughly. If you start writing too soon, you'll miss parts of your arguments or it simply won't make sense. Also, it's very important to keep track of your research. Simply writing down which articles you've looked at, with a hyperlink, will do. If you want, you can add a small summary.

Tips for the actual writing process would be to always keep your research question in mind. Every paragraph should somehow relate to

your research question and only use one idea per paragraph. Be specific, not too broad. Furthermore, it's very handy to open a tab with words that are linked to make your text run smoothly and a tab for synonyms, so your text won't get boring by using the same words over and over again."

How to relax?

"When you have finished your scheduled work stop and do something relaxing. Try not to relax in the library or other study places. Go somewhere where there's no study atmosphere. I personally enjoy watching Netflix, reading (unrelated to the uni), going to the cinema, listening to some music or you could go to an event, there is always something to do in Maastricht."

How do I prevent stress?

"Before you start you should have a very clear overview of what you need to do. Make a realistic schedule and if you fall behind,

reorganize and prioritize. Accept that you cannot read everything about a topic. Skim the abstracts and conclusions of the articles that you have to read and pick out the most important parts."

I got a 4 for my exam, now what?

"Go talk to your teacher and discuss your study method. Find out what your weakness is and work on that. In my experience, teachers are happy to help you change your approach."

What is the biggest pitfall?

"Definitely procrastination. If you don't understand the material, go to your teacher or one of your fellow students. You will not get it by just waiting. If you hate the subject, see if you can drop the course and do a different one. If not, you have to plough through it. Just begin, there is no other way."



Illustration: Simone Golob

Feeling stressed – a millennials' problem?

Why is it specifically this generation of students who feel under pressure? **Peter Muris**, professor of Developmental Psychopathology at Maastricht University, notices that young people have enormously high expectations of their studies: "Everyone wants to get high marks, graduate cum laude, go abroad, have a rich social life, sit on a board, play sports. They're all students, they work together if they have to, but when it comes down to it, they're very focused on their own opportunities and grades." The role of parents should not be underestimated. "They want their child to be important, exceptional even, and in that sense, they stimulate that competitive element," Muris says. Not to mention the influence of social media: "You can constantly see what others are doing and compare yourself to them. People send all kinds of upbeat messages and beautiful photos out into the world, as if nobody's ever having a bit of a dip. To match up to that picture of others, you put more pressure on yourself. Of course, you can decide not to participate, but that's hard. It starts as early as puberty. It's natural to want to be part of the group." Finally, students are under pressure to choose the right study programme. With the binding study advice and student loans that need to be paid back, there's no time to make the wrong decision. So, don't compare yourself too much to others, stay focused on what you want out of life, talk to someone if you need advice and find out if you're eligible for financial aid if you need it.

Where to go for help

Peer Point is a free student-to-student service that helps students with academic research. Writing, searching for information and data, studying, planning, are all things Peer Point can help you with. They have walk-in sessions every day in both the inner city and the Randwyck Library and can also be reached via Facebook (www.facebook.com/peerpoint) and email (peerpoint-ub@maastrichtuniversity.nl). If they don't know how to help you, they can put you in contact with the right library specialist. Keep in mind that they only give advice; they won't do the work for you.

Heart to Heart is a peer-coaching system through which students (after being trained by psychological counsellors) provide help to other students who struggle with mental health issues, whether small or big. heart2heart.maastricht@gmail.com

The InnBetween (Student Chaplaincy) is an open student community that comes together to have meaningful experiences. They are driven by spirituality and organise events & projects focused on sustainability, arts & culture, science, social responsibility and community. www.innbetween.nl

Each faculty has its own **student adviser(s)**. The student adviser knows a lot about the possibilities within your study programme and faculty. He or she will help you determine how you can shape your study to your advantage. The student adviser will coach you and help you to make the right choices. He or she may also refer you to somebody else who can help you progress further. This could be a student dean, pastor, coach, a fear-of-failure expert, psychological counsellor or a doctor. Check www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/support/during-your-studies/student-guidance/study-advisers to find out how to contact your student adviser.

Psychological counsellors can help you with psychological problems and complaints such as anxieties, feelings of guilt, gloominess, stress symptoms, lack of self-confidence, difficulties making or keeping contact, problems and conflicts with parents, family or friends (boyfriend/girlfriend), or if you're having trouble dealing with a death. Contact one of the psychological counsellors, available Monday and Thursday between 16:00 and 16:30: +31 43 388 52 12

Student deans give information and advice about your legal position as a student. The student deans work throughout the entire university and are independent. They will be glad to help you find a solution. Naturally, all the information you share with a student dean will be treated confidentially. studentendeca-nen@maastrichtuniversity.nl

Which association should you join?

A list of pros and cons

Whether you are looking for a group of friends to have a beer with or want to volunteer for a good cause, the Maastricht associations have something for everyone. You have most likely seen some of what is on offer during Inkom, but for those of you who still don't know what to do, *Observant* has listed all the advantages and disadvantages.

The good cause associations

Are human rights close to your heart or do you want to do something to promote sustainability, then join an association.

Pros:

- ✓ You are making a contribution towards a better world.
- ✓ You learn more about a certain subject and search for possible solutions to the problems concerned.
- ✓ You can develop your organisational talents by arranging activities.

Cons:

- ✓ Meetings may be fun, but this association's line of approach is of course more serious than a social or sports association.
- ✓ As is the case with a good cause, you will try to keep costs of any activity as low as possible. This means that you are dependent on other people's goodwill and sometimes you will have to 'peddle' your good cause.

The alternative associations

Then there are the clubs that can't be grouped together. For example, drama association Alles is Drama, or Student Radio Maastricht, a podcast platform for and by Maastricht students.

Pros:

- ✓ At last, this is where you meet people who also think your hobby is really terrific.
- ✓ For most of the members, their interest is their passion, so they are very enthusiastic.

Cons:

- ✓ What is on offer in Maastricht, is not inexhaustible. Maybe there isn't a group for your specific interest. On the other hand: you can of course always set up your own club.

The study associations

Psychology students have Luna-tik, Law students have Ouranos, every faculty has a least one study association.

Pros:

- ✓ Reductions! On books and other study materials, but also on access to lectures, workshops and parties.
- ✓ Most associations also have social activities, such as monthly drinks or an annual gala.
- ✓ You get to know people doing the same study programme; they can help you with difficult subjects and other questions. Most associations also have a Facebook page where students can exchange summaries.

Cons:

- ✓ The frequency of the meetings is usually lower than with a student association, so it takes longer before you get to know the members.



1 A live recording of Student Radio Maastricht, photo: archive Student Radio Maastricht 2 Partying sorority and fraternity members at the Inkom, photo: Loraine Bodewes 3 Students of Fossil Free Maastricht at one of their demonstrations, photo: archive Fossil Free Maastricht 4 Students playing football at UM Sports, photo: Joey Roberts

The student associations

Tragos, Circumflex, Koko, the independent fraternities/sororities, Saurus (for rowers), Kaleido (for international students) and Lux ad Mosam (for Christians). They are all different, but they have one thing in common: having a good time together is the reason to join.

Pros:

- ✓ You meet lots of new people quickly. The introduction camp, fraternity/sorority setting or year club means that you really get to know each other well. And not just first-year students, but also senior students who can help you later on.
- ✓ There is something to do every week: eating together, drinking together.
- ✓ The activities are diverse, from galas to collecting money for a good cause.
- ✓ You can gain committee and board experience.

Cons:

- ✓ Depending on the association, there are evenings that you are compelled to be present.
- ✓ Some associations practise hazing. If you then decide to join a fraternity/sorority, you will find yourself in your "A period", in which you often have to carry out 'frivolous' assignments.

The sports associations

From fencing to sailing and from climbing to rugby: it is all possible at the student sports associations.

Pros:

- ✓ Sports are healthy and as a team you can motivate each other to go to training sessions.
- ✓ You get to know people who share the same interest.
- ✓ The student sports associations also have a social aspect. After a training session, most people go for a drink; they organise an annual camp or other kind of trip, and some also eat together regularly or even live together in one house.

Cons:

- ✓ In order to become a member of a sports association, you first have to become a member of UM Sports. That costs 86.50 euro and on top of that you have your contribution of the sports association. A UM Sports Card also entitles you to participate in the group lessons (access to the fitness centre is extra), but if you are not interested in that, it is an extra expense.

For an overview of all associations in Maastricht, visit: www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/support/during-your-studies/besides-your-study/student-organisations/overview-student-organisations

Maastricht University & Studium Generale present

PAS

PLEASURE, ART & SCIENCE FESTIVAL

LINE-UP (SELECTION)

MUSIC

- Tamala – world music
- The Jolly Jackers Irish-Celticfolk punk
- DAAU classical, pop, rock and folk
- Afterpartees catchy rock 'n roll
- Barley Autumn – indie rock
- Naom Vazana – Sephardic music
- Kumbia Boruka Mexican cumbia
- Soprapella – classical a cappella
- Bruno Ferreira – classical guitar
- Gitta de Ridder singer-songwriter

LECTURES/LEZINGEN

- Does the aggressive brain exist?
- Sports nutrition
- Klopt het verhaal van deze asielzoeker?
- Limburgs als toontaal
- Crypto currencies and blockchain
- Hersenletsel
- Robots and microsurgery
- Blessures bij musici
- Pijnbestrijding
- The impact of Facebook on our happiness

SPECIALS

- Tour industrial heritage
- VR installation about schizophrenia
- The infinity games
- Data visualization
- STIL: het paviljoen

(STREET) THEATRE/DANCE

- Italian clown Leo Bassi
- Dance Company Gotra
- Dance School Reality
- Theatre Le Grand Café
- Comedian Bob Maclaren

FREE FESTIVAL

7-8 SEPT FROM 19:00 ONWARDS 'JEKERKWARTIER' MAASTRICHT

PASMAASTRICHT.NL

Maastricht University



Final sprint

The past semester has been intense. Heart palpitations, lack of sleep, puffy eyes and a short attention span. The consequences of writing a bachelor thesis. My housemate and dear friend described it as fighting a war. Every morning he wakes up with physically hardly enough energy to get dressed, however mentally prepared to combat the bulk of words accumulating on his laptop screen. Another friend illustrated our current situation as a very long and painful birth. Wide-eyed and coffee-fueled she sat at my kitchen table, looking back on her last six months of university. In case you wondered, I am not writing this as a warning to all you new students just starting at Maastricht University. Please don't occupy yourself with the final sprint when you just started to run this marathon. Because that's what university feels like sometimes: a long run with ups and downs, highs and lows.

For me, one of those highs was the moment I finally learned to call Maastricht my 'home'. For over a year I had felt torn between my previous hometown, Amsterdam, and this new and unfamiliar city in the south. The process of making new friends in high school was still fresh in my memory, and for a long time I secretly hoped I wouldn't have to go through it again. However, every new place comes with new challenges, and soon I found myself insecurely making small talk with peers in the courtyard. And at some undefined point in time, I felt it. This was where I belonged now. In contrast, one of the lows was the realization that just when I got comfortable, time was running out already. A three-year bachelor seems like an eternity when you find yourself in the first exam week of the semester. However, in reality it passes so quickly, and often leaves you wondering where the days went.

Back to that final sprint. Those writing their thesis had developed a secret language that only people involved in this war could understand. Passing each other on the street, we would exchange glances of empathy. Looks that said "we're in this together, pal." It made me realize that you're never as close to people as when you are going through something rough, despite all the happy moments you shared together. If I would have to do these three years again, would I have started writing earlier? Would I have done more work to save me the stress? Probably not, or I would have missed out on this extraordinary comradeship.

Cato Boeschoten

Some get them to cover up their scars, some to honour a special person or experience, and others as a reminder.

Last academic year, students and employees talked about the stories and motivations behind their tattoos in *Observant*. Why, when, and where did they get them? Any regrets? And what their thoughts are when they look at their tattoos?



Special tattoos: from courageous lions to jam making with grandma

Photos: Loraine Bodewes



Phil Blades (UK), a second-year student of Arts and Culture has a tattoo on the inside of his upper arm: a jar of jam and the words 'No more bad days', a song by the American band This Wild Life. "The jam jar reminds me of my grandmother; making jam was one of the things we often did together. My grandma used to help me through the bad days: when I was little she'd pick me up when I fell over, and she was very supportive when I moved away to study. I still listen to that song often." ►



◀ **George Srouji**, a first-year psychology student from Greece, was a hooligan of the AEK Athens football club during his early teens: "After matches we'd fight the supporters of rival teams or arrange to meet in quiet places to have a brawl. For the adrenaline and for fun. In 2013 we were taken by surprise in our clubhouse by other hooligans. I ended up with multiple screws, bolts and a metal plate in my arm, 32 stitches in my face, a body full of bruises, and two battered legs. My lion tattoo represents the strength and courage I needed to step out of that world and change my life."



◀ In 2013 **Nadine Hillwig**, a German third-year psychology student, took a life-changing trip to India. "My then boyfriend and I had booked a trip to India. Two days before we were due to leave, he sent me a text message saying he wouldn't be going. I decided to go anyway, on my own, and it turned out to be the trip of a lifetime. I was supposed to go for two weeks but I ended up staying for two months. I chose an elephant for my tattoo because I saw many of them in India and because the elephant is the most impressive animal on earth. I can't see the tattoo, since it's on my back, but I know it's there. That gives me strength." ►



If you want to see the full stories and more, check www.observantonline.nl/English/UMInk

