

# observant



P. 6-7

## CAN LAW STUDENTS USE AI FOR THEIR THESIS?

To look up articles, yes, that's allowed. But asking ChatGPT to come up with a research question? That's not permitted, according to the new guidelines

P. 3

## LOVE

For Victor Boerekamp, it was love at first sight, though Clara Kinsella wasn't so sure at first. Now, the second-year Business Engineering and MSP-student have been a happy couple for over a year

P. 5



editorial

# True colours

I don't know any better than that just about everybody in my hometown voted for the CDA. Not that we spoke about politics much in my family, but if the subject ever did come up, it was always the party that so many Catholics in Limburg have supported for decades. I can't actually remember whether I voted for the Christian Democrat party leader that first time, as an eighteen-year-old election debutante. Probably, 'because everybody else does'. Besides, what did I know about social issues such as healthcare, education and poverty, or what the parties thought about them?

Strangely enough, we don't really talk about the party manifestos much at the office. We're too busy writing (about things like polarisation and extremism, see our centrefold), dealing with printing problems, student freelancers, editing. And yet, it hasn't escaped anybody's notice what happens on television, on social media, or in the newspapers, who said something controversial this time, or who is angry at whom. On Tuesday morning, colleague Cleo Freriks said: "Have you read how many political parties have a manifesto that conflicts with the rule of law? Twelve!" Few editors will have missed the report from an independent commission for the Dutch Bar Association – for some, this anti-constitutional aspect may be the final straw when it comes to casting their vote on Wednesday, 29 October.

Other issues colleagues consider important (I did a quick survey): a party that is pro-Europe – "Vot! But they're so small that I worry I'm wasting my vote" –, that is really interested in combating climate change, and offers a solid safety net for people who are less well-off or struggling. Another prefers a party who doesn't want more cuts to primary or higher education ("please don't stuff 33 kids into one classroom!"). "Mostly, I just want a stable cabinet," says the person in the next office along. "And what is on the editor in chief's mind?" his roommate wants to know. "Healthcare, the fact that some politicians want to limit basic health insurance so that no new medicines or better treatments will be covered." This week, several patient and client organisations sounded the alarm about these proposed austerity plans. Three years ago, I probably wouldn't have thought about it, but when someone in your family is dependent on expensive medicine, your point of view changes. Next week, I won't be voting strategically, and certainly not out of habit, because everybody 'in the village' does it. This time, I will be voting with my heart.

Wendy Degens

The editor-in-chief gives a look behind the scenes at the editorial office



series the times they are (not) a changin'

# Maastricht pulls out all the stops to attract students



# 1985 and beyond

Using newspaper adverts, radio spots and TV commercials to woo students? That's beneath our dignity, thought Dutch universities well into the twentieth century. But by the mid-1980s, Maastricht had no choice but to reconsider. The Netherlands was in the grip of an economic crisis, and Minister of Education Deetman had introduced severe budget cuts.

Enrolment rates in 1985 were falling short of expectations, to university rector Vic Bonke's concern. There were doubts about whether Law and Economics would meet their targets of five hundred first-year students per year, he said at the start of the academic year, when Maastricht enrolled just over eight hundred first-year students in total. Only Medicine was attracting sufficient student numbers. To achieve its goal of growing from roughly three thousand to six thousand students by 1995, Bonke added, the university would step up its recruitment efforts beyond Limburg. Not long after, full-page adverts began appearing in national and regional newspapers. One read: "In Maastricht, you learn how to deal with problems. Isn't that right, Prime Minister Lubbers?" Another proclaimed: "Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht, Leiden, Groningen, and so on – but Maastricht is the real treat." The campaign, which cost over two hundred thousand guilders, soon proved money well spent. By January 1987, pre-enrolment figures had risen by nearly 30 per cent. The University Council decided to allocate an additional three hundred thousand guilders to student recruitment – due to popular demand, as they say.

A few years later, no Dutch university would turn up its nose at PR activities any longer. As competition grew fiercer, UM's newspaper adverts began to lose their impact. The university decided to switch tack and try a different medium. Its first radio spot aired on 7 February 1994 on

Radio 3 and 538. It was broadcast around sixty times over a four-week period. An accentless (!) Dutch voice urged secondary-school students to "use [their] brains" and call a mobile phone number, where a friendly voice – again without a Limburg accent – invited them to attend the university's open days. This direct-marketing approach had been borrowed from the University of Twente, which enjoyed notable success with it in those years. It was never officially explained why Limburg accents were deemed off limits for the radio commercials – perhaps it was to avoid discouraging students from other regions.

Still, the spots, highlighting Problem-Based Learning and internationalisation, did the trick. Within six months of the first broadcast, the university had attracted a record number of 1,950 new students – a 7 per cent increase from the previous year.

By then, television commercials were also running. These featured "fake professors strolling past picturesque locations and cheerful students driving a 2CV from campus to a

It was never officially explained why Limburg accents were deemed off limits for the radio commercials

sunny Vrijthof square", as reported by *Observant* at the time. But after seventeen airings, only 240 prospective students had called the phone number – a disappointing first result, especially compared with the full-page newspaper adverts, which had generated 150 to 200 responses each.

The student recruitment campaigns had already peaked. Universities began to focus more on rankings in the Dutch University Guide. Around the turn of the millennium, Maastricht topped list after list. The university took pride in its rankings, but when *Observant* asked open-day visitors what drew them to Maastricht, the rankings were rarely mentioned. Prospective students were more likely to cite friends, the city or the appeal of a specific study programme as the deciding factor.

Riki Janssen

Maastricht University was founded fifty years ago. In this anniversary series, we delve into our own archives to rediscover memorable, funny, relevant and curious news stories from the past



Studying in the inner city library Photo: Observant

## UM student satisfaction score holds steady

# National Student Survey: English scores well, assessment falls short

Students at Maastricht University remain positive about the level of English spoken by teaching staff and how well their degree programmes prepare them for the job market, but assessment continues to be an area for improvement. These are among the findings of the latest Dutch National Student Survey (NSE), which show little change from previous years.

Differences from previous years in areas such as teaching quality, curriculum content and academic guidance are minimal – no more than a tenth of a point up or down. Some programmes, however, saw notable differences compared to last year. Circular Engineering has recovered from its dip in student satisfaction, as has the master's programme in Business Intelligence and Smart Services. Satisfaction is about the same for bachelor's and master's students, though master's students tend to be slightly more positive about their programmes. This difference mostly comes down to views on teaching staff. Bachelor's students rate their lecturers 3.73 out of 5 – below the national average of 3.82 – particularly in terms of expertise and knowledge about professional practice. They also feel they

don't receive enough academic guidance. Lecturers in master's programmes receive scores comparable to their peers at other universities, although students feel they could be more inspiring.

In addition to the usual topics, this year's NSE also included questions about student well-being. UM students are highly satisfied with the university's commitment to equal treatment and said they feel safe expressing their opinions. At the same time, many reported experiencing pressure to perform academically and believe the university could pay more attention to this issue.

The NSE results inform the *Keuzegids* Dutch University Guide, which compares higher education programmes across the Netherlands. The guide for bachelor's programmes is usually published in early December, followed by the master's guide in February or March. Participation among UM students fell slightly again this year: around 5,200 students completed the bilingual survey (22.1 per cent of the total student body of over 23,000), down from about 5,700 last year, when the response rate had already dropped by 5 per cent.

Cleo Freriks

## Manual for AI use in Law: “Although you can't possibly cover all bases”

What can and can't students use artificial intelligence (AI) for when writing their thesis and legal academic texts? The Faculty of Law at Maastricht recently published a manual that clarifies what and when. It is an ongoing project to determine what is preferable, said associate dean of research Anke Moerland, “but we have to move with the times, AI is a fact and it is being used”.

There is currently no uniform, university-wide policy when it comes to the use of AI and tools such as ChatGPT – although there is a so-called policy framework with general guidelines, there is little practical advice – so the Faculty of Law decided to take the matter into their own hands. The result is a seven-page document to aid all the bachelor, master and PhD students.

### Acceptable

“Our focus is mainly on the use of AI in theses, what is acceptable and what isn't?” said Moerland, who in addition to being the associate dean is also a professor of Intellectual Property, Frontier Technologies and International Trade at the Faculty of Law. The manual, which according to Moerland is “a living document” that must be updated whenever there are new developments, contains examples of what is allowed (green) and what is not allowed (red). And in between those two sits the amber light: be careful. For example, if someone were to ask ChatGPT for a summary of a law or of court decisions, they would be on thin ice: if correct, the summary may be used to understand the material better, but it must not be included in the thesis. Anyone asking for a completely formulated research question or for analysis to be broken down into easily understood snippets is most definitely in the wrong. On the other hand, students are allowed to look up information and literature, and the definitions of words. Having a thesis checked for grammatical mistakes is also fine, although the student would not be permitted to accept any suggestions from ChatGPT how to rephrase the text.

### Critically

Moerland: “Maybe not every lecturer agrees with what is in the manual right now, but we have to move with the times: AI is a fact. And if students learn to use it critically, it may also be a good thing.” It means that so long as the thesis is not the main focus yet, there must also be room on the course for the use of artificial intelligence when writing legal texts. The faculty has no problem with students experimenting, but it does want them to develop their own writing abilities. “Lawyers depend on language and being able to formulate texts themselves. Before students start using AI tools, they have to know how to do that in the right way.” That is another job for the faculty (also described in the manual), as in the end, each student must become a responsible and experienced user. Are those assessing the work then sufficiently able to determine what was produced by a student and what by a machine? “Unfortunately, that isn't always immediately obvious. Some do have a feel for it, they see things, but you can never be entirely certain. That is why we demand transparency from the students when



## Some friends have jobs or even babies

“

I might be too optimistic, but I think some friendships really do survive every kind of distance and time. Every summer when I go back home, one of the things I look forward to most is meeting my best friends from elementary school. We've known each other for nearly all our lives, yet we only see each other a couple of times a year now. We used to share everything: classrooms, hobbies, inside jokes. But naturally, we have much less in common these days. Our lives rarely overlap like before. We live in different cities and countries, study completely different things, and some already have jobs or even babies, which still blows my mind. Meanwhile, I'm still a student, juggling deadlines and trying to figure out what comes next after graduation. But for a few hours, when we sit together, it's like nothing has changed. We fall back into the same familiar rhythm – like defrosting a memory we kept frozen for a year, still fresh and real, even if slightly changed. Same jokes, same stories we've told way too many times, and somehow, they never feel old. When I moved abroad to study in 2022, I missed them more than I expected. Seeing photos of them hanging out, laughing together, made me feel like I was missing out or even left out. Which was unfair, since I was the one who chose to leave. Sometimes I even felt guilty for not being there when someone was going through a hard time. But that feeling faded over time. Staying connected online and meeting again every summer made me realise that being apart doesn't necessarily make a friendship any less real, it just takes a different shape. Of course, I don't have the same kind of relationship with everyone I used to be close to. Some friendships have drifted, while others somehow feel even stronger now. It's only natural. I've learned that friendship doesn't have one shape, but rather is fluid. Some are loud and constant; others are quiet and occasional. Still, I'm lucky to have friends who stay in my life no matter the distance – they just become annual highlights in an otherwise predictable calendar.

”

Yuki Nakamura,  
third year bachelor student  
Arts and Culture

To be continued on page 8

## series sing, fight, cry, pray, laugh, work and admire



Rama Zouhair  
(Athens, Greece, 2004)

\ Second-year bachelor's  
student of Biomedical  
Sciences

\ Relationship status:  
single

\ Lives in:  
Maastricht

Photo: Joey Roberts

“  
It's so quiet here in Maastricht,  
I'm still not used to it  
”

**I feel...** mostly Greek. I was born there and lived there all my life until I moved to Maastricht last summer. My father is half Greek, half Syrian; my mother is from Lebanon. I've never been there, though – I only passed through the airport once on my way to Syria. My mother's family moved there years ago. And some of my father's relatives still live there. I used to visit regularly as a child, but we went less often after the civil war broke out. The last time I went was in 2018. Luckily, my family lives in a safe area.

**When we were younger, my siblings and I were always at each other's throats.** Not me so much, but my little brother and older sister were constantly arguing about trivial things. I usually stayed out of it. All three of us are completely different in terms of both personality and interests, so we clash sometimes. I'm a lot like my mother; I'm full of energy, and I talk and laugh a lot. My sister sometimes struggles with that. She's also studying in the Netherlands, in Wageningen, but we haven't visited each other yet. It's just never the right time. [Laughs] The last time we saw each other was during the holidays, at our parents' place.

**I always wanted to live abroad.** Yes, I knew quite early on that I wanted to leave Greece eventually. There's not much of a future for me there. Jobs are scarce, there aren't many options for studying what you want and the quality of education is poor. I was enrolled in a nursing course, but I never went to class, like many young people in Greece. Tui-

tion is free, but you get discounts with your student card. In the meantime, I looked at courses abroad – first in Italy, but I didn't get into medicine there. My sister suggested the Netherlands, and here I am.

**I like to listen to...** bands like Scorpions, Nirvana, Guns N' Roses, but also music from the 2000s or classical music. It really depends on my mood. I can't stand Dutch Carnival music, though. I celebrated Carnival last year and I had fun, but the music was awful. All I could think was, my poor ears!

**Athens or Maastricht?** Both are beautiful cities, but moving from Athens to Maastricht was a big change and not an easy one. In Athens, I lived near the centre, surrounded by constant noise and activity. I need to feel that hustle and bustle around me. Now I live in Heer, where it's so quiet most of the time. I'm still not used to it. Thankfully, I've made some good friends here, and we spend a lot of time together. Thanks to them, it's starting to feel more like home.

**I always keep up with the news.** Actually, no, not at all. Even when it's about what's happening in Lebanon or Syria. There's so much misery in the world, countries being destroyed. I don't like watching it. I can't change any of it anyway.

**I'm artistic.** Not particularly, though I can draw quite

well, especially when I'm copying. Drawing things like the human ear, heart or brain helps me memorise them for my studies. I sometimes draw random things when I'm feeling low – a mushroom, a clown, cartoon characters. When I draw, I'm completely focused and not easily distracted. It's a nice feeling, because I generally find it hard to concentrate.

**What do you miss about Greece?** The food, the weather, my parents and brother. And the cheap public transport – cycling isn't really my thing. I even miss the dirty streets and cockroaches. Don't get me wrong, I like how tidy and well-kept the Netherlands is, but there's just something about it. What I don't miss are the hordes of tourists in Athens. They walk so slowly, and I've got places to be. They get in the way – it's so annoying. Yes, there are tourists here in Maastricht too, but it's nothing like that. Would I ever go back to Greece? For holidays, yes, but not to work.

**Favourite film?** That's a tough one. I watch a lot of films, and there are still plenty on my to-watch list. If I had to pick, I'd say *What Dreams May Come* (1998) with Robin Williams. It's about a man who dies and goes searching for his wife in the afterlife. It's a sad film, but I love the idea that their love binds them together even in another life.

**Love comes to you.** I think so, yes. I'm not on any dating apps. You shouldn't go looking for love; it's supposed to find you.

**Dream job?** Surgeon, cardiothoracic surgeon in particular. I sometimes watch surgery videos on YouTube. It's fascinating to see how surgeons can fix a problem within a few hours and completely change a patient's life. I'd love to do that myself. After completing my degree, I'd like to study medicine. I was planning to do the English-taught track, but I found out last year that it's being discontinued in Maastricht. So now I'm working hard on my Dutch.

**In ten years...** I'll maybe be in a relationship, but no children. I'm not interested in having kids. They need attention – they don't just raise themselves – and I don't think I'd have the patience for that. Nor the time, really, if I'm also pursuing my dream job. Where I'll live? Canada, maybe. I love snow.

Dennis Vaendel

Weekly personal interview with a student or employee

series about transnational relationships: the joys and difficulties

# “Victor has taught me it’s okay to do nothing”

Picture the scene: the ‘Heineken Party’ of the INKOM 2024 has just wrapped up and two teens are strolling with the bikes they just bought off Marktplaats through narrow streets of cobblestone. Sounds like a scene from a Dutch rom-com? Almost — it’s how Victor Boerekamp (18, Dutch) and Clara Kinsella (19, French-Irish) first met last year.

For Victor, a second-year Business Engineering, it was love on first sight, Clara, a second-year Maastricht Science Program, wasn’t immediately won over. “I had just moved to a new city, a new apartment, and a new community — jumping into a relationship straight away felt hasty.” The pair became official in late October, but only after a slow burning trail of picnic dates and dreamy walks on top of St. Pietersberg.

## Party culture

Clara grew up in the green suburbs of Dublin with a French mum and an Irish dad. Victor’s parents are both Dutch, but he grew up in Jette, one of the Flemish neighbourhoods in Brussels.

Ask Clara about her upbringing and this is what she’ll tell you: the Irish drink and party hard — at 13, she was already going to weekly soirées at her all-girls school. “For many young people in Ireland, going out and getting drunk is the only way to have fun.” Meanwhile, the only wild parties Victor remembers from his teens were those at his summer scout camps (full disclosure to all parents: your kids are not just learning how to light campfires...). But the tables have turned: Clara feels that she’s partied enough, and her ideal Friday nowadays looks more like a scene out of Gilmore Girls. Victor on the other hand is eager

to explore Maastricht’s nightlife and join in the odd bar-crawl. “Luckily we’re both open and mature”, Clara explains, “so this hasn’t been an issue.”

## No Irish or Dutch partners

Neither of them can really imagine being with someone from their own country. “Most Irish stay in Ireland”, says Clara, who attributes this to a mix of national pride and a limited interest in other cultures. This, besides the heavy drinking, has been a real “red flag” for her, turning her away from most Irish guys. For Victor, it’s the subtle condescension he feels from some Flemish girls towards the Netherlands that puts him off. And Dutch girls? A little too “direct” for his taste — he much prefers Clara’s alluring mysteriousness.

## Ireland and Belgium: two peas in a pod

“Ireland and Belgium are like two peas in a pod”, they say. In both countries the weather is bleak and the food is mid-range; but the people are for the most part tolerant and socially progressive.

Still, there’s very little flag-waving with the two, who feel more like “citizens of the world” than Irish, French, Dutch, or Belgian. Not fitting into the worlds they grew up in: it’s a shared feeling the two bond over.

## A great team

“We’re the only couple we know of who got together last year and hasn’t broken up”, Clara points out. Her point is well-made: INKOM-born relationships rarely outlast their first few weeks. Victor’s patience is important, she says. “My moods swing unpredictably, and I can be quite rigid, but Victor keeps the ship steady.” For Victor, this flexibility comes naturally. “I grew up around two strong-willed women: my mother and my sister”, he reveals. “Clara reminds me of them in many ways.” They have learned a lot from each other in the past year. “I admire Clara’s determination in everything she does”, Victor says, “if she wants something, she’ll work fiercely until she gets it.” This grit has inspired him to pick up one of Clara’s long-time hobbies, running. Although he says he’s nowhere near as strong as her, the journey has shown him the value of a personal challenge.

For Clara, the most positive influence has come from Victor’s relaxed and laidback nature, a complete antithesis to her agitated mind. “I get restless if I feel that my day hasn’t been productive, but Victor has taught me that it’s okay to do nothing. Sometimes, rest can be as productive as ticking off boxes from a to-do list.”

## Brussels

In the weekends, Clara regularly accompanies Victor back to Brussels. By now, she knows his parents well and gets treated like family. Clara’s ambition is to improve her French enough so that she can enrol for a master’s in physiotherapy in Brussels. For Victor, who’s been getting headaches from hearing Duolingo’s Ding! every day for the past several months, that B2 certificate couldn’t come soon enough...

*Nora Grolig, student at the faculty of Law and freelancer at Observant*



Photo: Ellen Oosterhof

## How polarisation happens

# “If you disagree with me, you are a bad person”

On 29 October, the Netherlands will hold its latest general election to determine the new members of the House of Representatives. These elections will be held in a polarised country, where far-right and populist parties such as PVV and JA21 are ahead in the polls. We asked three researchers at Maastricht how that happened. “Even those who are doing well for themselves can become increasingly extreme.”

**Text:** Peter Doorackers

**Photo:** ANP – Josh Walet



Protesters take to the A12 motorway on 20 September during a protest against asylum policy on Malieveld. The protest was accompanied by riots

Is the writing on the wall for democracy in the Netherlands, following the anti-immigration riots in The Hague in which the D66 offices were also attacked on 20 September? **Jan-Willem van Prooijen**, Endowed Professor of Radicalisation, Extremism, and Conspiracy Thinking at the Faculty of Law, doesn't want to go that far. "There were riots in the Eighties, too, although unlike now, those came from the far-left," he says over the phone. However, he adds, the riots in The Hague are a symptom of a larger problem. "There has been an increase in 'us versus them' attitudes, based on strong ideas about where society should be heading and a huge confidence in one's own moral correctness: anyone who thinks differently is not just someone with a different opinion. No, they're wrong, they're a bad person. Look at the way Geert Wilders, leader of the PVV, labels Frans Timmermans, leader of GroenLinks/PvdA, an 'extremist.'" According to **Luana Russo**, Associate Professor in Political Behaviour at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, that is called 'affective polarisation': the extent to which people hate certain political parties *and* the members of those parties. "There has been a lot of research into this in Europe in the last five years, which shows that this is increasing across Europe."

### In control

At the heart of this polarisation lies a feeling, says Van Prooijen: "That there is a crisis in society, that there are wars everywhere, that we should be worried about immigration and the economy... It's all a very subjective view of this, as objectively, we aren't doing too badly in the Netherlands. Even those who are doing well for themselves can become increasingly extreme, fearing that it might get worse soon. It is definitely not just people from lower socio-economic backgrounds who are voting for populists. There is a relationship: the feeling things are getting worse makes populist leaders more attractive prospects, because these are people touting easy solutions to complex problems, but populists can also *make* people unhappy."

Expert in behaviour economics, **Giulia Piccillo**, Associate Professor at the School of Business and Economics, also points to the role of uncertainty about the future. People don't like that, and try to maintain control of reality by clinging tightly to their beliefs. "In one experiment we conducted, we found that people start feeling more confident when faced with uncertainty: 'This is the only cause of the problem that makes me feel uncertain.' It gives them a sense of being in control of the situation. But it also leads to people closing themselves off from reality if it doesn't match their views." What doesn't help is the time people spend in their social media 'bubbles', those notorious echo chambers that confirm their beliefs.

According to Piccillo, it would be going too far to claim Facebook, X and Instagram caused polarisation, "but they do amplify that bad way of thinking. For example, research carried out in the United Kingdom in 2022 showed that people mostly shared news online which they thought was true" – even if it was clearly fake news. "Add to that, that it has been shown that when you are repeatedly presented with the same point of view in a slightly different way in your echo chamber, you start to change your own opinion to match."

### Pipe down

Van Prooijen also points to how manners in the political arena have grown courser over time. "There has been a growth in populist parties who use a polarising style. Over the past few decades, political debate has grown increasingly extreme." When in 1997, then-leader of the SP Jan Marijnissen told the Speaker of the House to 'pipe down', "it was still a huge deal", but nowadays, nobody would bat an eyelid. "People see authorities, such as elected politicians, as representative and echo their manners: 'That is apparently acceptable behaviour.' In this way, politicians contribute to a climate in which those riots could take place in the first place." Russo also thinks politicians should look in the mirror occasionally. "Ultimately, politics is about gaining the power to govern, so

## "Politicians contribute to a climate in which the riots in The Hague could take place"

that you can implement policies that match your views. But as those get more and more extreme, others will feel increasingly threatened and react more extremely. That flywheel effect drives polarisation." And that is problematic in a country such as the Netherlands, which, she emphasises, "was built on the ability to reach a consensus". It requires parties to make concessions, but would anyone still be willing to do that "knowing that it will cost them seats at the next election"? Just look at the last government. "The PVV wanted to keep its promise to do everything differently, but had trouble finding support for its plans. Because they were also unwilling to compromise, it led to a gridlock." Can that mechanism be overturned? It won't be an easy task, say all three researchers. "But the chance of it succeeding is better in the Netherlands than in, say, France", which doesn't have a culture of consensus, Russo believes. The Dutch have a relatively weak political identity, she says: they don't identify strongly with their political preferences and can be unpredictable in the polling booth. They are not stuck to polarising parties, she means.

### False solutions

"There isn't one single, simple solution to the problem of polarisation," says Van Prooijen. "It is certainly important that people are shown that simple solutions for complex problems are often false solutions, and that they have to look for nuance." And that they must learn to deal with uncertainty, adds Piccillo. "Maybe that should be taught to children in primary or secondary school. Just like we have started teaching them financial literacy nowadays. We also have to counter the impact of echo chambers. My current research shows that the more isolated people are, the more susceptible they are to uncertainty. We need places where people can come together and talk about things and hear from a diverse range of opinions. Physically, because online contact doesn't work in this case. I believe democracy is about maintaining the conversation. Not to change people immediately, but to find similarities. Not to exclude points of view, but to discuss them." Russo also thinks it would help if we changed the way we talked about politics: not in terms of 'winners' and 'losers', as if the party with the most votes on Wednesday is the only one in charge instead of having to form a coalition. "Other things, such as moderating fake news on social media, are probably out of our control at the moment."

## Campaigners to watch election debate together

WOinActie and the unions FNV and AOb, the organisations which for the past two years have led efforts protesting the budget cuts in higher education, are inviting people to watch the party leader debate together on Monday, 27 October.

On Monday evening, two days before the election on Wednesday, 29 October, party leaders Dilan Yesilgöz (VVD), Frans Timmermans (GL/PvdA), Geert Wilders (PVV), Rob Jetten (D66), Henri Bontenbal (CDA) and Joost Eerdmans (JA21) will face each other in Ahoy Rotterdam, during the EenVandaag election debate. The campaigners plan to watch the livestream on the Domplein in Utrecht. The evening will begin with a preview at 17.45. Afterwards, there will be an opportunity for discussion. It is as yet unclear whether there will be a delegation from Maastricht. The campaigners hope that a new government will undo the budget cuts.

CF

## news

# Potential fraud

Continuation from page 3

it comes to writing their thesis,” said Moerland. They have to show which prompts they gave ChatGPT and have to make clear arrangements with their supervisors what versions of their thesis they have to preserve. “If there are any doubts about potential fraud, then the supervisor has to speak to the student and record the necessary details for the Board of Examiners. And even then, you can’t possibly cover all bases, it isn’t perfectly black and white. Not even with this manual.”

Deborah Blekkenhorst

## What other faculties do

The Faculty of Law is not the only one with its own guidelines. Other faculties such as the Faculty of Psychology and Neurosciences (FPN), Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS) and the School of Business and Economics (SBE) have also made it a priority. “Faculties working on their own guidelines is not that remarkable,” said Moerland. The Executive Board would have liked to develop a uniform AI policy for UM as a whole, but that had proved impossible, due to the different wants and needs and the implementation. So instead, it is up to the faculties to work out the exact details. Moerland: “There are certain aspects where you can make the same decisions, but in the end, a legal expert will need something slightly different to an economist or a psychologist.” For example, FPN is considering how students could use AI to test their own knowledge. In an effort to look beyond just ChatGPT, the faculty plans to compile a list of fifty AI tools – how do they work and what are the pros and cons. They have asked all the lecturers for input.

FASoS has created a document of nearly twenty pages which states, among other things, that lecturers can indicate in their own teaching material what is and is not allowed – for example, translating or rephrasing work, but also requesting analyses or interpreting research data. Students are always required to justify their use of AI tools.

# Allowance for students who struggle to focus on a laptop Printing on the university’s dime: FASoS to launch pilot

*No more constantly staring at a laptop screen, but having your course materials printed out in front of you. According to students at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS), this reduces distractions and leads to more productive tutorial discussions. For this reason, they have asked the faculty to cover students’ printing costs. Soon a pilot study will be launched, initially aimed at neurodivergent students.*

Currently, students must pay to print on campus – 5 cents per black-and-white page, 15 cents for colour. Before the summer, student representatives on the Faculty Council argued that these costs make studying less accessible for some students, such as those with ADHD. Many courses rely on online articles rather than textbooks, which means students spend long periods in front of screens full of distractions. Printed materials, they said, make it easier to concentrate.

The student representatives proposed giving each student a “printing allowance” to be more inclusive. They pointed to Utrecht University of Applied Sciences, where students can print up to €50 per semester at the institution’s expense. And the benefits would extend beyond neurodivergent students, they argued: FASoS tutors who have experimented with laptop-free tutorial group meetings reported considerably



Photo: Observant

higher-quality discussions and less use of AI. The representatives also noted that sustainability is not a strong counterargument, given how much energy AI use and cloud storage consume.

The Faculty Council welcomed the idea, though questions were raised about the costs. The Faculty Board suggested starting with students most likely to benefit from reduced screen time, such as neurodivergent students

or those with migraine. Student advisors would meet with students individually to assess eligibility. A pilot study will determine whether this system works and how much the printing allowance should be.

The pilot is set to launch early in the new year, the Faculty Board announced at the most recent Faculty Council meeting.

Dennis Vaendel

# OBSERVANT WRITING WORKSHOP FOR STUDENTS

PRICE: 25 euros WHEN: Thursday 30 October, 13.30-16.30 hrs.

SIGN UP: by mailing to [cleo.freriks@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:cleo.freriks@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

THE ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY, FACULTIES, SERVICE CENTRES AND STUDENT ORGANISATIONS CAN BE FOUND ON [WWW.OBSERVANTONLINE.NL](http://WWW.OBSERVANTONLINE.NL)

FOR SALE ready to move in fully renovated bungalow close to Maastricht University. Bids start at € 640,000. Request information at [bungalowcadierenkeer@gmail.com](mailto:bungalowcadierenkeer@gmail.com) Not on Funda.

## Agenda academic ceremonies

Aula Minderbroedersberg 4-6



SCAN THE CODE



## Maastricht University

### Vacatures

Werken voor de meest internationale universiteit van Nederland? Scan de QR-code voor ons actuele vacature overzicht\*.

Voor meer informatie over werken bij de Universiteit Maastricht, ga naar <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/nl/werken-bij-de-um>

\*Medewerkers van UM kunnen een volledig overzicht van interne- en externe vacatures vinden door in te loggen op SuccessFactors via Umployeee.



[www.maastrichtuniversity.nl](http://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl)