

P5

Coaching



What do I want? What can I do? Who am I? UM researchers wrote a book on coaching students.

Photo: Shutterstock

P6 Student association

No boozing

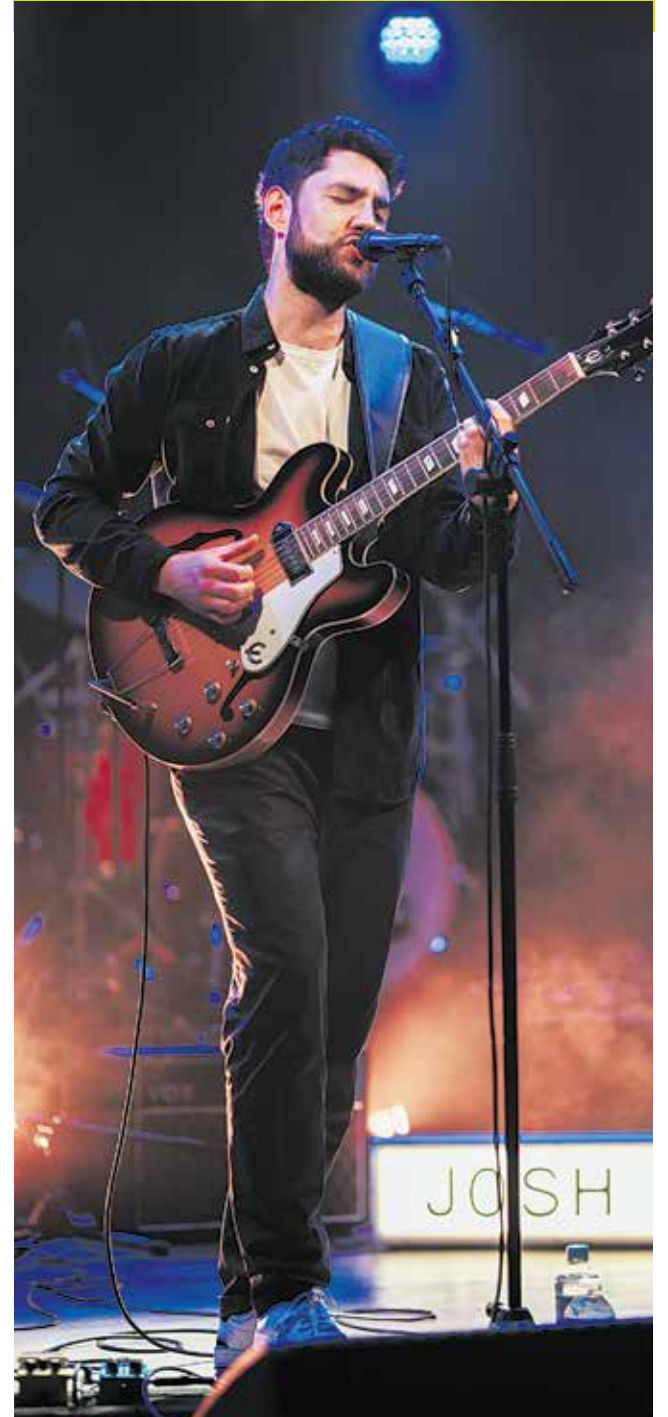


New student association Fugax is different: No weekly drinks or excessive partying, but a book club and board game nights.

Photo: Joey Roberts

P8

Josh Island



He skipped lectures because he had to be on stage. **Former student and musician Josh Island releases first CD.**

Photo: Jake Gilroy





Riki Janssen

editorial

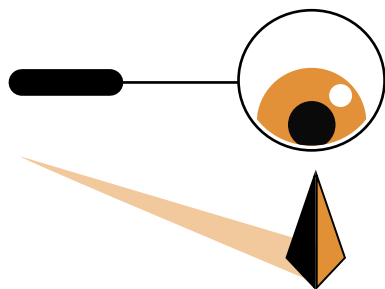
A kick up the backside

One day, we were goofing around in the office. Everyone was trading wisecracks and poking fun at each other, me included. At some point, I playfully gave one of my colleagues a kick up the backside. Just a little one, all in good fun. We burst into laughter and eventually got back to work. This happened years ago. My then colleague is one of my good friends today. The kick didn't harm our relationship – if anything, it strengthened it. But it does cross my mind from time to time. Like this week, when I read my colleague PD's article about the annual report issued by the UM confidential adviser for students. She received 67 reports of inappropriate behaviour in 2022, ranging from remarks that were not meant to be offensive to sexual misconduct. The kick was meant to be all in good fun, but my colleague could've taken offence. I wouldn't do something like that

today. The world has changed, and so have I. I've become much more aware of how my behaviour may affect other people, no matter how harmless I feel it is. I keep this in mind and my colleagues do, too. But some of them think I'm overly cautious at times. Like the other day, when a female student came in to discuss an article with one of our male colleagues. We didn't have any free rooms, so they sat down in the small layout room where we literally put together our print newspaper every Wednesday. There's not a lot of space in there. After a few minutes I got stressed, thinking about how professors never close their office door when meeting with students to avoid any accusations or allegations. The door to the layout room was closed. I knocked and came up with an excuse to open it: wasn't it too hot in there?

Should I leave the door open? The question was met with two puzzled faces. They were engrossed in their work and wanted to finish it in peace and quiet. No, it wasn't too hot, the window was open – please leave the door closed. Afterwards, my behaviour was discussed in the office kitch-entette. Have I become overly cautious? Then again, you can never be too careful in dealing with others, can you? We didn't reach a conclusion. But later, when the same colleague had to discuss another article with the same student, I let them use my larger office and spent half an hour working in the small layout room myself. Personally, I'd rather be too careful.

Every week, the editor-in-chief writes about what has been happening at the Observant office



splinters

A funny incident, a striking piece of news, something interesting that happened elsewhere in the country: it is in this column. Contributions: Lotte van de Loo, Simon Wirtz, HOP

Swinging professorship

Let's dance! As of last week, the Netherlands has a professor of dance and ballet at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). Such a chair is new to our country, sister newspaper *Folia* reports. The honour goes to Gabriele Klein, one of the co-founders of dancing studios in Germany, where she was also one of the first with a chair in Dance. She delivered her inaugural lecture at the University of Amsterdam last Thursday. Why a separate chair was needed for dance? "Dance is a very specific art form, in which the body is the instrument," Klein says to *Folia*. "It is a completely different language, which we don't learn to read at school." Klein's wish for the future is that dance becomes a separate academic discipline. She would also like to see more social and cultural acceptance. "Dance is not just entertainment, but also a powerful form of knowledge production and cultural heritage. When you dance, your body understands itself and others in a completely different way. Rock-'n-roll, for example, created a new understanding of sexuality." For those who have now developed a spontaneous desire to dance: coming week are the Dutch Dancing Days, including workshops in Maastricht.



Need a challenge?

Dissatisfied with education at UM? Then you may find the AppChallenge@UM, set up by education institute EDLAB, interesting. During the second edition of this competition, they are looking for fresh ideas to improve education with an app. No programming experience? "That is not a problem," says Ellen Bastiaens, director of EDLAB. Participants create the app on a so-called 'low-code platform', which can be used by people who have no knowledge of programming. There are also professionals who can offer help. "It is important to us that everyone is allowed to participate, we need input from everyone". The winning idea will ultimately be developed into a real app. At least, that is the intention. "The winner of the first challenge - the 'Study Buddy' app, which helps students find a study buddy - was unfortunately never developed," says Bastiaens. "The number three from that project was created, by the way." Ideas can be submitted until 8 October. After three rounds, a winner will be chosen at the end of November. Bastiaens: "The jury members will pay special attention to user-friendliness, feasibility, impact and also what value the app actually contributes to our learning or teaching experience."

For sale: study drugs

One in 20 students sometimes use 'study drugs' - ADHD medication like Ritalin - without a doctor's prescription, a study by the RIVM, the Municipal Health Service and the Trimbos Institute revealed last year. This is dangerous, the RIVM warns, as the drugs can have side effects. Users may suffer from insomnia and heart palpitations, and the medication can also have a negative effect on their mood or cause depression. There is even evidence to suggest a link with suicide. The RIVM wanted to find out how students are getting hold of the drugs. For one week, sewage water in Amsterdam, Utrecht

and Eindhoven was tested to measure the levels of ritalinic acid, a substance found in ADHD medication. The results showed that the concentrations of the substance roughly matched the amount of medication prescribed to people with ADHD. This makes it unlikely that the drugs are currently being imported illegally on a large-scale, according to the researchers. Instead, they suspect that people are giving away or reselling their doctor-prescribed medication. The RIVM says that more research is needed to further substantiate this theory.

Confidential advisor for students' annual report 2022:

67 reports of unacceptable behaviour

From remarks that were well meant, but taken amiss, to sexual misconduct: the annual report shows that the UM's confidential advisor for students received 67 reports of unacceptable behaviour in 2022.

Fourteen reports (21 per cent) concerned physical sexual misconduct, 11 times (16 per cent) complaints were made of 'unethical/unprofessional/fraudulent/disrespectful behaviour'. In 32 cases (48 per cent) the accused was a fellow student, most of the other cases concerned a university employee.

The number of reports submitted is almost the same as in 2021 (66). Even then, there was a considerable rise compared to previous years (36 in 2019 and 37 in 2020). According to confidential advisor and psychological counsellor for students Wendy Geijen, this has to do with greater visibility, more attention for the theme and a lower threshold for approaching

a confidential advisor. Still, she suspects that this is just the tip of the iceberg: "Research into sexual misconduct shows that not everyone who is the victim of this, reports it. I hope that more and more people will do so."

Apart from students, UM employees also reported cases of undesirable behaviour in 2022. They did so 99 times, shows the annual report of the university's Social Safety team. In 12 of those cases, the undesirable behaviour was of a sexual nature.

After a report has been made by a student, various things can happen. In 2022, Geijen gave advice about follow-up steps and help in thirty cases. In ten cases, the student felt that filing a report was sufficient. "This is helpful to a lot of people. They want to be heard and then it is over and done for them."

"If they want more, the first step is to speak to the accused, if that is possible, either in my presence or not. Not all cases are very seri-

ous; sometimes there is a misunderstanding, such as a remark from a lecturer that hit home harder with the student than was intended. We aim for informal solutions like that, but, if need be, we will help students issue a formal complaint with Complaints Service Point."

Four students did so in 2022. Three of them jointly, against a UM employee for physical and verbal sexual misconduct. The complaint was found to be legitimate and the employee was sacked. Whether this concerned the FHML professor who was sent packing after complaints last year, Geijen cannot say: she is not allowed to reveal the content of cases. The fourth complaint, submitted because of discrimination, is still being dealt with.

The confidential advisor does not carry out a personal investigation into the facts, by the way. "For us, the student's experience is our focal point," says Geijen. Whether that paves the way for false reports? "In theory maybe, but we assume that the person who submits the report, does so with good intent. They already have to cross a threshold to talk to us. In my experience, false accusations are rare."

Until recently Geijen was the only 'confidential advisor for students' at UM, with an appointment for one day a week. At the beginning of this year, she got a new colleague for one day a week, and as of this month, two new confidential advisors have started, each for half a day. "That addition was necessary," she said. "I managed to process everything, but after the increase in 2021, I was on the edge. There was very little time left for things like prevention and increasing visibility."

Peter Doorakkers



How to have a fellowship

“

In my career thus far, I've been lucky enough to win three opportunities for time and funding for my writing projects. The first got me half a year on a Texas ranch; the second brought me to the Netherlands; and the third, which I just finished, allowed me to finish a book (even though I lived at home). Across those experiences, I've learned a few things that I want to share, so that you use such time, if you have such good fortune, to maximum effect.

1. Take off your shoes. Whether literally or figuratively, move into the time. Take it over. It's yours.

2. There will never be enough time. Fellowship time is the same as any other: it drains away. Whether you get a week or a year, you'll always wish for more.

3. You'll be alone. You'll have no peers, no one around you doing the same thing as you are. If you had to move, your friends will be far away. Your colleagues, editors, neighbors all at home. This is good – no distractions. But it's not good if you have questions.

4. Stick to the work plan, throw away the work plan. The people who award such things know this about creative, ambitious people who win them, and if you do at least half of what you say you're going to do, you'll be successful. On the other hand, it's not like they're going to come after you, as long as you do the core thing. You're answerable only to yourself.

5. Get out of the office. Yes, time is limited (see #2), but don't take the openness for granted. Hang out in new places, go to that conference.

6. Brace for impact. As lovely as it would be to stay in orbit, floating free, you live on the surface of the planet of your life, and unfortunately there's no heat shield thick enough to save you from serious burns on re-entering the atmosphere. Fortunately, another rocket of a fellowship can take you back – you just have to be lucky enough to get on them.

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Michael Erard,
Funding Advisor at the Faculty of Law

Match Houses project ends



Building a chicken coop in 2020 Photo: Loraine Bodewes

Match Houses, an initiative in which students carry out voluntary work in exchange for cheaper rent, is going to be terminated. The reason is not a lack of enthusiasm among students, but a shortage of anti-squatting buildings.

For the past five years, students were able to participate in Match Houses. For Maastricht University, this was a way to involve students more in the city, by having them work together on a project with their 'Maastricht neighbours' – ranging from working in a vegetable garden to building a chicken coop. Students, in turn, would find a cheap roof over their heads in anti-squat homes offered by a housing corporation; they only needed to pay for gas, water, electricity, an Internet subscription, et cetera.

There were enough students who registered, says project leader Martijn Weyenberg. The past few years, there were about a hundred sign-ups. "The problem is in the supply of houses. Corporations have little to nothing available; the housing market is under pressure, also due to the tremendous influx of refugees," he explains. Although he appreciates the situation, he also regrets it, "the aim is to maintain continuity, to be somewhere longer as an organisation, so that things can actually be achieved." At the beginning of 2020, for example, three students helped to build a chicken coop together with inhabitants in the Mariaberg neighbourhood. They were all responsible for feeding the animals and cleaning. The students even won an award for it: 'We Build This City' by CODE043. The chicken coop is still there (although it changed in size).

The same applies to a 'Match' neighbourhood vegetable garden in Pottenberg.

Match has decided to change course, but what that will be is still unclear. Weyenberg hopes, at any rate, that another UM project *Brighter Futures* can expand. Students hold (free) homework sessions with Maastricht secondary-school pupils who have no money for extra tutoring. At the moment, this is done through and at schools, says Weyenberg, "but we receive more and more requests from community workers and from the mosque, whether we can do something for pupils in their neighbourhood. Match is all about connecting with the city, that is what we ultimately want to hold onto."

Wendy Degens

students about their future

“I’ve explained to my parents that I’m doing my best, but a 7 is not a bad grade in the Netherlands”



Cindy Ayubi Photo: Ellen Oosterhof

After graduating, she won’t be returning to Venezuela, the country where she grew up and which she considers her native country. “There’s no democracy there. In my opinion, President Maduro is a dictator, just like his predecessor Chávez. There are shortages of everything – food, medicine, electricity, you name it. Crime is rampant and the quality of life is poor. Almost all my family members and old schoolmates have left for the US or Europe.”

Cindy Ayubi (23), a third-year student of Biomedical Sciences, holds dual citizenship in the Netherlands and the United States. But the US doesn’t feature in her future plans either. “I don’t want to live there. Health care and insurance are unaffordable for most people. It has so many social and political issues, from racism to gun violence. It’s not my idea of a perfect society.” Five years from now, Ayubi hopes to have a job in the Netherlands or maybe in Spain, where her two brothers live with their families. “The Netherlands is the best choice. It has a good quality of life, good employment opportunities, and I like the people here. They’re not cold and distant, like I was told in Curaçao. Or maybe that’s just because I live in Limburg?”

Runs in the family

The third-year student speaks Dutch during the interview. “It’s my fourth language. Spanish is my first language, followed by English and Papiamentu.” She got a crash course in Dutch when her family emigrated to Curaçao when she was fifteen. After that – her parents insisted; the head of the language school thought it would be too difficult for her – she was placed in the middle stream of secondary school (havo), ultimately moving up to pre-university education (vwo). She wouldn’t

accept any less. She’d always been the best student in her class in Venezuela, and she’d known she wanted to go to medical school since she was twelve years old. It runs in the family: her father was a professor at a faculty of medicine in Venezuela and now works as a general practitioner and lecturer in Curaçao, and her grandmother is a pathologist. But once there, doubts began to creep in. What if a career in medicine wasn’t what she wanted after all? What if she was too impatient to work with patients? What if her real passion

was research? It was her mother who told her that she could study biomedical sciences in the Netherlands; the programme doesn’t exist in Venezuela, she says. She researched various programmes, including the UM curriculum. After a wonderful visit to the university, she was sold on the idea.

On track

She’s on track to complete her bachelor’s degree in 2024. It’s what her parents expect from her, she laughs. She’ll graduate on time, even if she doesn’t always get the highest grades. “I’ve explained to my parents that I’m doing my best, but a 7 out of 10 is not a bad grade in the Netherlands.” She has also explained to them that there are differences in assessment between Venezuela and the Netherlands. There, exams mainly focus on factual knowledge; here, inference skills are considered more important.

In September next year, Ayubi will start a two-year research master’s programme in biomedical sciences with a specialisation – she’s almost certain – in genetics and genomics. “Ultimately, I’d love to work in a lab where I can be involved in cancer research, for example. As a GP, you help people one by one. I want to make a difference for a large group of people.”

War

The climate crisis, the war in Ukraine, poverty, pandemics, refugee crises, political instability in various parts of the world... Is she worried about the future? “Actually, I’m hopeful. I see many positive initiatives to help fight climate change, like UM discontinuing the use of plastic coffee cups. It’s a small change, but it raises awareness. Or take the fact that schoolchildren start learning about sustainability at a very young age. Their generation will make a difference. As for war, there was already war in Venezuela before I was born. It’s stressful, but I’ve learnt to live with it. I feel deeply for the Ukrainian people. I hope the rest of Europe will continue to offer them refuge. Everyone deserves a good life. I know from experience that no one chooses to flee their country.”

Valuable advice

Wherever she may find herself in five or ten years, she’ll always hold on to one piece of valuable advice. “My father always says, ‘Stay true to yourself, even if the entire group has a different opinion. Never give up on your dreams. Don’t be afraid to think outside the box.’” She laughs. She talks to her parents on the phone at least once a day. “We’re very close. We talk about everything. I don’t have to hide anything from them. They always support me. In our culture, it’s uncommon to move out after secondary school. People usually don’t move out until they get married. They let me go, even though it was difficult. I miss them, and they miss me.”

In this biweekly series, *Observant* interviews students about their plans for the future – their hopes, fears, and uncertainties. To what extent does their past play a role in their future plans? And what about major social issues like climate change, war in Europe and elsewhere, political instability, increasing poverty, and so on?

A coach for every student

Coaching students is on the up and up, also at UM. Several faculties are looking into this. Two PhD students from the School of Business and Economics wrote an accessible booklet on the subject, which was published on Tuesday.

A search in the Chamber of Commerce register yields hundreds of student coaches, of all shapes and sizes. Most of these are one-man businesses, but also agencies that help students find accommodation, to study more effectively, to graduate, to develop socially-emotionally, to become mentally stronger. Others help students set up their own businesses or in finding the right job. Sometimes exclusively for 'high potentials', or only for foreign students.

In higher education, coaching is also becoming more popular. For years, students have been able to get help from the Student Services Centre with talks or workshops, but faculties are now also becoming more serious about it. Together with the law faculty, SBE is investigating how they can offer faculty-wide coaching. At the moment, there are mainly separate initiatives, for example at Biomedical Sciences and the master's of Learning & Development in Organisations at SBE.

Students have a greater need for it, says Wendy Nuis, researcher at SBE. "More so than before, they are looking for ways to develop themselves, as students but also as first-time employees. What am I good at? What suits me? How can I distinguish myself from others?"

Together with colleague Niels van der Baan, she carried out research for a PhD thesis on this subject. Nuis focused on coaching during the study period, Van der Baan on looking for a job. Their efforts are about to result in two PhD theses, but their more easily accessible booklet *Coaching op de grens van opleiding en werk*, was published on Tuesday. They wrote it together with their PhD supervisor Simon Beusaert and Belgian expert Johan De Wilde.

For what kind of student is coaching suitable? For those who have no idea what they want to do?

Van der Baan: "Coaching is useful for all students. It is about employability, usability, competences. It is good to become aware of such things as a student. What can I do? Employers are finding it more and more important too." Nuis: "They want to know if you can be a leader and how you then resolve conflicts. Whether you can work well with others and how you do that. In coaching sessions, you can think about those aspects. That is good for every student, also for those who do know what they want. Students may have a blind



Illustration: Simone Golob

*"What am I good at?
What suits me?
How can I distinguish myself from others?"*

spot, always thought that consultancy wasn't for them, but then change their mind."

Is a coach really necessary? Plenty of employment opportunities these days.

Van der Baan: "Students easily find jobs these days, but that doesn't mean that they are prepared for them. Sometimes, they already leave their first employer after a couple of months, because that is not the place for them. We are both coaches and help students discover what suits them. We see them six times a year."

How do you recognise a good coach?

Nuis: "A good coach will not steer a student in a specific direction and will not force their ideas on the student. You primarily listen and ask critical questions. Sometimes, you

challenge your 'coachee'. If students find it difficult to approach an HR manager at a reception, I will give them a little push."

Van der Baan: "Empathy is important too. If students give the impression that they are stressed, I will ask them about it. What is causing it? Which emotions are they feeling? But we are not psychologists. If something

in their private lives is bothering them, I will refer the students to a social worker."

Lecturers are already at the end of their tether. Not everyone will want to embrace the idea of coaching students.

Nuis: "At the same time, coaching is often seen as one of the core tasks of a lecturer, both in the literature and in practice."

Van der Baan: "Not everybody may feel comfortable coaching, but that is exactly why we

have written this book, to provide them with firm handles."

What did your PhD research show?

Nuis: "In one of my studies, in which I followed 160 students for a whole year, it appeared that coaching actually contributes towards critical self-reflection and the development of certain competences, including flexibility and oral and written communication." Van der Baan: "My research shows that coaching is effective in preparing students for the labour market. Autonomy is important in this, having the freedom to set out lines yourself. I also looked at whether they found a job they wanted. That was the case for twelve students whom I interviewed. Coaching had helped the majority of them in this field, they said, especially the self-reflection."

Maurice Timmermans

The book *Coaching op de grens van opleiding en werk* can be ordered at Uitgeverij Lannoo Campus; Cost 29.99 euro

background

New student association Fugax opposes drinking culture

“At other associations, you don’t make friends if you don’t booze”

No weekly drinks or excessive partying, but a book club and board game evenings. For a year now, the ‘non-traditional’ student association Fugax has been focusing on students who want to socialise without boozing. “We have noticed that there is a lot of demand for this.”

Text: Dennis Vaendel

Photo: Joey Roberts



Board game evening on Wednesday

Jenga, Werewolves, Uno: the games table is well stocked on the top floor of tapas bar Que Pasa on the Tongersestraat this Wednesday evening. Some thirty students are sitting at two long tables, divided into groups – each with a different game. The waiter regularly comes up the steep stairs with a full tray. Mainly soft drinks, but sometimes also a beer or a glass of Sangria.

But to leave the building drunk? No, nobody will be doing that this evening, says student of Medicine Lars van den Eijnde, fellow founder and board member of Fugax. It has never happened during the board game evenings that they have held here every two weeks for nearly a year now. “The owner was even slightly afraid in the beginning, thinking he might not make much money from us,” Van den Eijnde laughs. “But fortunately, it turned out to be not so bad. Partly because we regularly order tapas, the *patatas bravas* is a favourite.”

Like-minded

You can also have a fun evening without alcohol, is Fugax’s motto. An idea that doesn’t seem to have sunk in with the larger more traditional associations, says Van den Eijnde, who himself was once a member of Tragos for half a year. “Nice people, but I didn’t feel quite at home there. Drinking a lot is not my thing. But if you don’t booze with them during drinks evenings, you don’t really make friends.”

There must be more students who feel like this, he thought a year ago. So did Anne Eggen, student of Biomedical Sciences who could not settle in with another student association, for the same reason. “Anne had the idea to set up a WhatsApp group for like-minded students, with whom we could do fun things together. Things moved fast from that moment. People passed it on to friends and fellow students. Within a couple of weeks, there were about 120 members in the group. Apparently, there was quite a demand. So much so that more structure was needed. So, an association.”

Shy

A month after the original idea, they already had a board; for almost a year now, there have been weekly activities on the agenda – from book clubs to watching films or the role play

game Dungeons & Dragons. “We also organise a biweekly ‘circle’, in which members can talk in a safe environment about subjects such as sexuality, parents and gender,” says Van den Eijnde. “The language spoken at all activities is English. Not that we focus exclusively on internationals – there are also a lot of Dutch members – but because we want to be inclusive.” They chose the name Fugax. “That is Latin for timid. As most of our members are slightly quieter or shyer than average.” Laughing: “It was only later that we discovered that it is also a name for all kinds of diseases. But anyway, we kept it as it was.”

Barrier

After the start-up year, the association now wants to become ‘mature’. Since the summer, there are now activities committees and new members – if they want – will receive an inauguration. A search is also on for an own accommodation. “It is nice to have one’s own space, a permanent place. At the moment, we regularly have to hold our activities outside. And sometimes even in my own apartment,” says Van den Eijnde. Another new development is the contribution for members, about 50 euro per year. “Last year, the board paid for practically everything from their own pockets, or we used our own stuff. But that has now become too expensive. A website, a bank account, board games: they all costs money. On top of that, we may also have to pay rent soon.” Although an annual contribution may be a barrier, Van den Eijnde has noticed. “Certainly for people who only come to an activity every now and again. Towards the end of last year, we had a group of about 150 people, at the moment we have only forty who have actually become members. But the deadline for signing up is not until mid-October. With the thought of paying, many students may put it off for a bit. This evening, not all of those present are members yet, some are actually here for the first time.” In the background, there is a peal of laughter. A group is playing a round of *Cards against humanity*, in which the rudest or funniest statement wins. In this case, a sentence with the combination Donald Trump and teen pregnancies. “Even though we are slightly more timid, that doesn’t mean that this is a sensitive club with people who can’t handle anything”, Van den Eijnde laughs.

Fewer new members for Maastricht student associations

“With few Dutch first-year students, there is a smaller pond in which to fish”

The four large Maastricht student associations all welcomed fewer new members than last year. Rowing association Saurus managed to recruit most (123); Tragos, Circumflex and KoKo dropped below the hundred newcomers.

Saurus also had the largest batch of first-year students last year, with 155 new members. So, this year the number drops by about 20 per cent. “That is certainly a difference, but it is not too bad,” says Saurus chairwoman Rosanne van Ballegooien. “Last year was a real peak, partly because there was a lot of attention for the anniversary year. The association normally ends up above 115 new members, and that is the case now too.”

KoKo has registered 90 new members. That is similar to the years before the Covid pandemic, according to secretary Joy Langewouters. “The situation is now back to normal. The past few years, the number of new members was actually absurdly high.” In 2020 and 2021, KoKo was even the leader with more than three hundred registrations during INKOM. Other social clubs also saw a considerable increase of first-year students who were looking for social contacts.

At Circumflex, the number of newcomers (95) is lower than usual. “Last year, there were 120, which was similar to the years before Covid,” says chairwoman Sarah Cox. Nevertheless, she is “very happy. It is a good batch, the total number of members has even risen slightly.” Tragos, with 87 new members, also has “much fewer first-year students than normal,” says chairman Max Beckers. “Last year, we had about twenty more.”

Fewer Dutch students

As an explanation for the decline in numbers, Circumflex

and Tragos refer to the increasing internationalisation of UM: of all first-year students this year, a mere 36 per cent is from the Netherlands this year. Cox: “It is nice that there are more foreign students, but we have noticed that fewer enrol with a student association. Even though they are certainly welcome.” The language often forms an obstacle: the great majority of the members speak Dutch. At Circumflex, the number of internationals among the newcomers “can be counted on the fingers of one hand”. Tragos has one new international member, all told. “At least, one new member who does not speak Dutch,” says chairman Beckers. “There are usually only one or two, and almost always people who want to improve their Dutch. That usually goes quickly, because speaking Dutch is a core value for us.”

At Saurus and KoKo, a larger number of the newcomers – around 20 per cent – is from abroad. Saurus chairwoman Van Ballegooien: “At the beginning, a lot is in English, but it is nice if the international students start to learn our language as the year progresses. It is always a good thing to hear them speak fluent Dutch when they leave the association a few years later.” KoKo has special English committees and activities, although part of the international members do also eventually learn Dutch here.

Bad image

Tragos appeared in negative news items last year, due to misconduct during hazing. Did this play a role in the decreasing registration figures? Chairman Beckers: “That is of course difficult to say, but we haven’t noticed anything at any rate. With regard to registrations, we are always in line with Circumflex, and we see that now too.” Despite the exclusion from official events, the association “did well at INKOM. Although not having a stand during the MECC party on Friday most likely had an effect – many students only make their decision at the end of the week.”

At Saurus, they have noticed that the image of associations has changed, says chairwoman Van Ballegooien. “It was more difficult to reach the usual number of registrations this year. More often, the new generation appears to have the idea that we are old-fashioned, static clubs where the

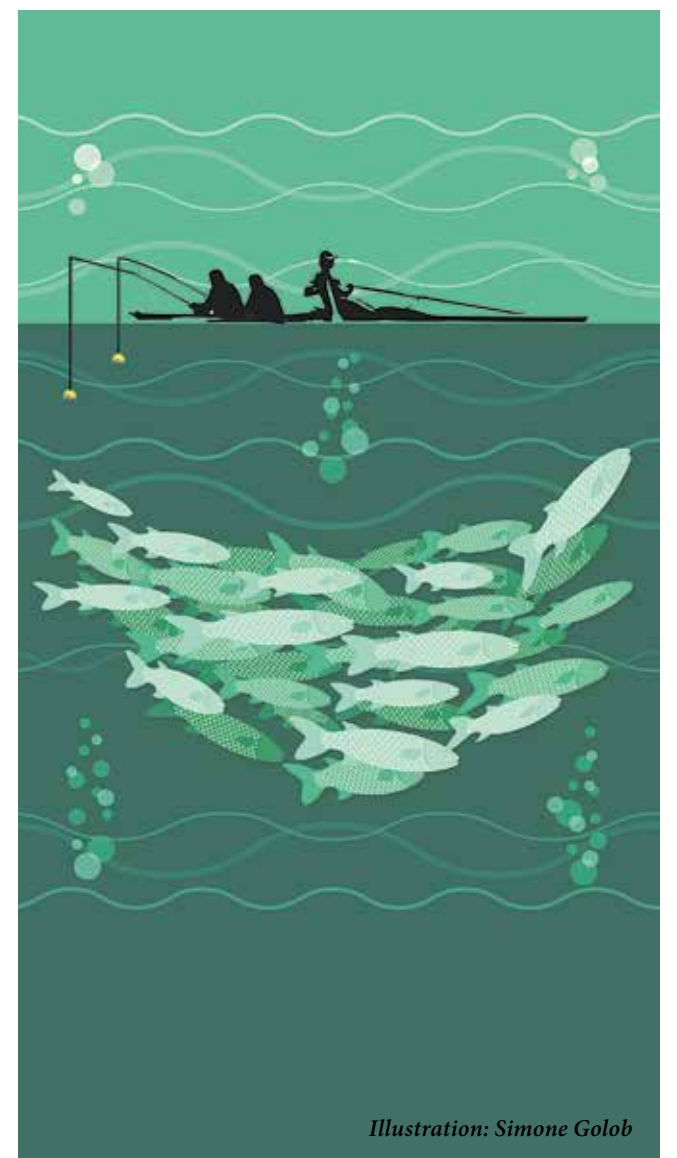


Illustration: Simone Golob

only thing people do is drink. It takes more time than before to make them see through that stereotyping.”

Onafhankelijk Maastricht (OM, or Independent Maastricht), the umbrella organisation of the 31 independent debating societies with a total of some 700 members, states that they will not have the registration figures until November. Last year, the total number of members increased by roughly thirty, says OM secretary Vera Broască. Sportraad MUSST, which covers the Maastricht student sports associations, will also know the number of new members in November.

Dennis Vaendel

interview

Former UM student releases first album

“I missed lectures in order to be able to perform”

Seven years ago, as a first-year student of *European Studies*, Joshua Oudendijk played his very first concerts in the living rooms of student houses for free. Now, his music is playing on the radio and he has just released his first album.

“I really had no idea how performing worked. I didn’t know anyone in the music industry, and I had no money either. But I could play the guitar and sing.” Oudendijk, stage name Josh Island, looks back on his first year of studying in 2016 with a smile. Even as a child, he was interested in music and by the time he was in his student room, he started to write his first songs and play his own melodies on his guitar. “Shortly after that, I asked on Facebook whether anyone had space in their living room for a free concert by me. Sitting together with a couple of friends or neighbours listening to music; that is good fun, I thought.” And that is exactly what it was. In addition to it being good fun and his first performing experience, it also meant something else to Oudendijk: contacts. “People thought that I was so good that they helped me get paid gigs. Very valuable for someone who is just getting started.”

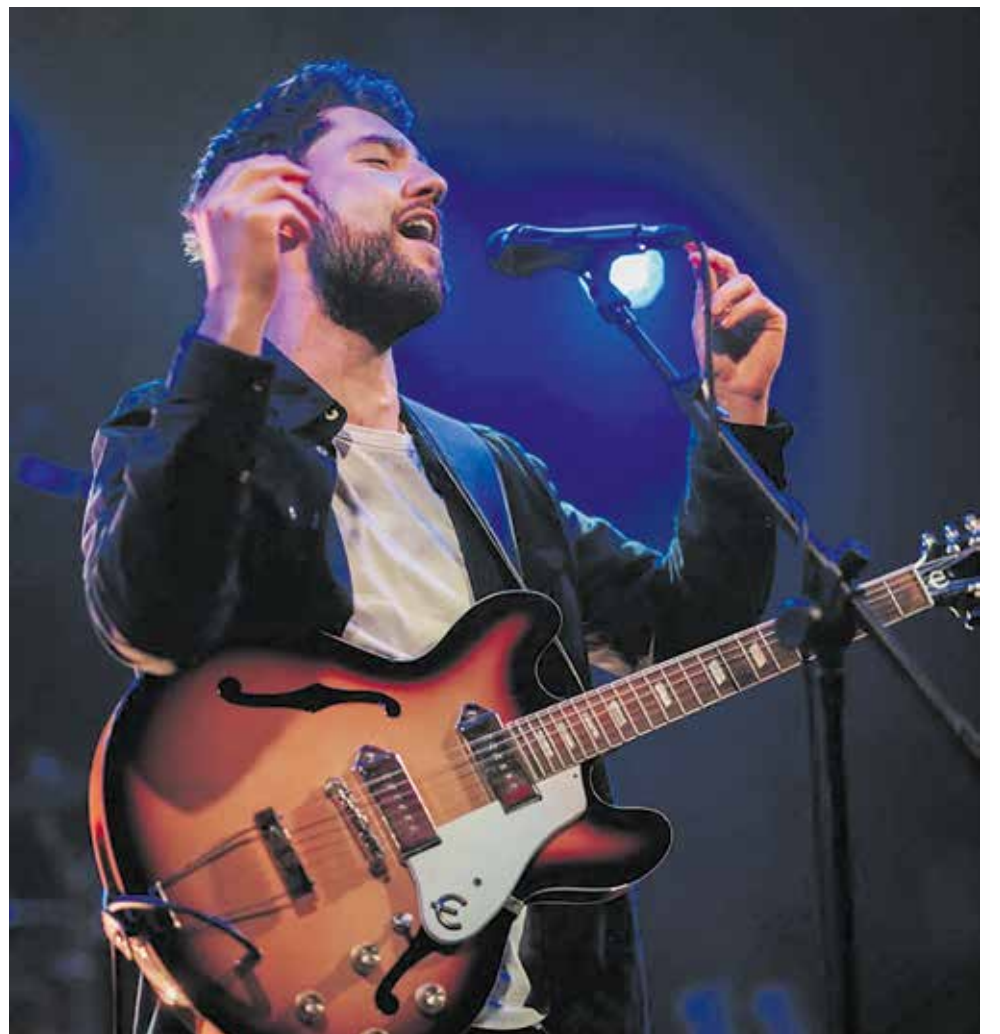
“I am a DIY artist”

At the conference for the 25th anniversary of the Maastricht Treaty in 2017, for example, Oudendijk played for important politicians in a festive atmosphere. But he was also able to prove himself during diploma ceremonies. “I also wrote a song for *European Studies*, but that is no longer appropriate. Too much has changed in the curriculum.”

Change is definitely a theme for this young guy from Luxemburg. Until this year, he still lived in Maastricht, but now he is back with his parents in Luxemburg, because his relationship ended. But for Oudendijk that is not a reason to hang his head. “I learn a lot from what happens in my life. I am now really looking forward to going on tour, and to my first album. I have my hands full, because I do everything myself. I am a DIY artist.”

Very busy, but happy

When he started his studies, he quickly knew that he wanted to become a professional musician. Sometimes, he says, that got him in trouble. “In my second and third year, I had performances and so I had to travel, which meant that I had to miss lectures. Fortunately, my lecturers were not difficult, they understood.” But where exams were concerned, no exceptions were made for Oudendijk. “It was very busy sometimes, that is true”. Why continue on with the study, when future plans have been set? “I wanted to graduate, also just to have a serious diploma. I also really liked studying. I learned a lot during my time as a student, both inside and outside the lecture halls, and I wouldn’t have wanted to miss that. The European idea of open borders, that we can learn from each other in Europe, and that our different cultures and backgrounds are assets. I was fortunate to experience that every day during my studies. Theory becomes practice.” The singer is also very happy with the European regulations in his daily life: “I see all the problems that colleagues have when



Joshua Oudendijk/Josh Island Photo: Jake Gilroy

they perform in England, every instrument must be declared with customs, with their weight and everything. I am glad that we have the EU.”

‘In My Head’

And now Oudendijk’s first album has been released, *In My Head*. A selection of very special songs, you would expect. “Sorry, it is just the first ten songs that I wrote,” he laughs. “Still, it is a very special album for me. All those songs are about my thoughts, dreams and fears, based on my experiences and travelling. In short, it is about what happens in my head.” A good example is *How does it feel*, a melancholy number about an identity crisis.

“I now know who I am, fortunately, but as far as music is concerned, I am continuously looking for identity. And I know that this is an important subject for my generation.” According to the singer, *Rewind*, another song on the album, is for his generation too, and maybe for all generations: “It is about being courageous. Taking a step back, when you can go no further. Trying again. I had to do that often, and I know that I will have to do that often in the future too. Life is not always easy. But I am very satisfied with where I am now.”

Simon Wirtz

Agenda academic ceremonies Aula Minderbroedersberg 4-6

28-9, 10.00 h	Johan Martijn Nobel	16-10, 16.00 h	Radulfus J.S. van Mechelen
28-9, 13.00 h	Marieke van der Gaag	17-10, 10.00 h	Anjusha Mathew
28-9, 16.00 h	Cintia Denise Granja, Double Doctoral Degree University of Campinas and UM	19-10, 13.00 h	Ioannis G. Lempesis, Double Doctoral Degree Maastricht University and University of Birmingham
29-9, 10.00 h	Maite Machteld Schroor	20-10, 13.00 h	Martijn Randolph Mons
29-9, 13.00 h	Babette J.A. Verkouteren	20-10, 16.00 h	Prof. dr. Richard P. Koopmans, afscheidscollege
29-9, 16.30 h	Mr. drs. Joost Sillen, Inauguratie	23-10, 16.00 h	Isis B.T. Joosten
2-10, 16.00 h	Anna Maria Czepiel	24-10, 13.00 h	Steffi Kohl
3-10, 10.00 h	Danielle Ferreira Baptista	24-10, 16.00 h	Miriam F. L. Fichtner
3-10, 13.00 h	Jalal Dahham	25-10, 16.00 h	Lonne Heijmans
4-10, 10.00 h	Christoph Kuppe	26-10, 10.00 h	Fatma Bashir Abulgasem Mokhtar
4-10, 13.00 h	Joana Alves da Silva	26-10, 13.00 h	Luuk I.B. Heckman
5-10, 16.00 h	Julia Reinold	26-10, 16.00 h	Aline Mirella Elias Caldeira Dantas
6-10, 10.00 h	Jurriaan Brekermans	27-10, 10.00 h	Bart Johannes Hendrikus van Sloun
6-10, 14.00 h	Dr. Kasper Dziurdz, inauguratie	27-10, 13.00 h	Jules Robin Olsthoorn
6-10, 16.00 h	Laila Hasmi	27-10, 16.30 h	Dr. Federico De Martino, inauguratie
9-10, 10.00 h	Mathew Francis	30-10, 10.00 h	George-Mihai Irimescu, Double Doctoral Degree Maastricht University and Nicolae Titulescu University of Bucharest
9-10, 16.00 h	Samantha Pasca	30-10, 13.00 h	Michelle Roanne Baggerman
10-10, 13.00 h	Anna (Anique) M.J. van Oudheusden	30-10, 16.00 h	Irene Moll
11-10, 10.00 h	Pichaporn Sutthavas	31-10, 13.00 h	Adele Veronika Ruder
11-10, 13.00 h	Abdulrahman B.O. Mohamed	31-10, 16.00 h	Ruud F.W. Franssen
11-10, 16.00 h	Ronaldus M.J. Warnier		
12-10, 16.00 h	Simon Andreas Keek		
13-10, 10.00 h	Sara Zwier Kuiper		
13-10, 13.00 h	Saartje Straetemans		
13-10, 16.00 h	Prof. dr. Edwin C.M. Mariman, afscheidscollege		
16-10, 13.00 h	Cecilia Tetta		

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