



**sirius program**

excellence in higher education



**Maastricht University** *Leading in Learning!*



## Excellence at Maastricht University

Stimulating excellence among students is a specific goal of Maastricht University, as defined in its Strategic Program 2007-2010. To this end, the University has developed and implemented a number of projects and initiatives. The most significant ones are listed below.

### MARBLE (part of the national Sirius Program)

MARBLE is Maastricht University's project involving Research-Based Learning (RBL) in the Bachelor's phase. Partially financed by a subsidy from the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (the Sirius Program), the goal of MARBLE is to stimulate excellence in higher education by involving small groups of students in research projects. The aim of MARBLE is also to explore the feasibility of applying RBL methodologies more generally across the curriculum, therefore emphasizing the research side of studying, in addition to Maastricht University's famous traditional teaching system, Problem-Based Learning. This year, various projects will start in all of the University's faculties. A kick-off conference, held at Maastricht University on April 1, 2009, marked the official beginning of MARBLE.

### Background to the project

- Maastricht University is one of the first five Dutch educational institutions (out of 37 applicants) whose Sirius application was successful (2008);
- Maastricht University will receive EUR 2 million for a four-year period (2009-2012) for its project on research-based learning (Project MARBLE).

### Facts about the project

- Maastricht University is internationally renowned for its educational innovations (such as problem-based learning). Research-based learning is a new form of education which the university would like to foster and expand with the Sirius program acting as an incentive;
- The focus of Maastricht University's MARBLE project is on research-based learning. Research-based learning means that small groups of students (about 12 students per group) work together with scientists and researchers on research projects for one semester;
- The connection between research and learning is emphasized in MARBLE;
- Social relevance also plays a role (the value of teamwork and collaboration, exchanging knowledge, the relevance of research to the wider community, etc.);
- Participating students are second- and third-year Bachelor's students;
- The activities related to MARBLE are embedded in the curricula of the study programs;
- The projects run for one semester (twenty weeks) and are worth 15 ECTS credits;



**platform**  
Delta Techniek

Lange Voorhout 20  
Postbus 556  
2501 CN Den Haag (NL) [info@siriusprogramma.nl](mailto:info@siriusprogramma.nl)

T +31 (0)70 311 97 11  
F +31 (0)70 311 97 10

For more information: [www.siriusprogramma.nl](http://www.siriusprogramma.nl)

- Students learn to think and act like a researcher in the process (e.g. by writing research proposals and learning research methodologies);
- The research projects are associated with existing research projects at the University;
- Interdisciplinary collaborations are encouraged and are very welcome;
- University College Maastricht uses a slightly different format, called PEERS: 10 ECTS projects with the possibility of adding more semesters.

### 3% scheme

Maastricht University wants to encourage talent, so attracting, cherishing and stimulating talented students are some of the main aims of the 2007/10 Strategic Program. We give the top 3% of students the opportunity to study at UM 'free of charge', for example.

As from the 2007/08 academic year, the 'best 3%' of students have also been eligible for a scholarship in the amount of their tuition fees for the following academic year, on condition that they continue their studies at UM. The amount from the final year of the Bachelor's program will be applied to the Master's program. Students in the final year of a Master's program will receive their tuition fee back in the form of an award instead of a scholarship. The best 3% of students from each year of study will be selected per faculty. Each faculty has its own selection criteria based on a number of UM-wide criteria. All students will be eligible to compete for a scholarship or award every year. This approach means that students who manage to stay in the top 3% throughout the entire course of their studies will finish their studies without having to pay any tuition fees. Other expenses and living costs are not covered by the scheme.

### Honors Programs

All faculties of Maastricht University offer extracurricular Honors Programs for the especially motivated and talented students. The small-scale Honors Programs of Maastricht University broaden and deepen students' knowledge. In most faculties, Bachelor's students are invited to join an Honors Program based on their study performance in the first year of the Bachelor's program. Upon successful completion of the Honors Program, students receive a supplementary certificate (alongside their Bachelor's degree certificate).

### The Sirius Program: Excellence in Higher Education

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) has created the Sirius Program to allow higher education institutions to experiment with a range of excellence programs between 2008 and 2013, involving their most talented and motivated students. By allowing research universities and universities of applied sciences to challenge their best students, the Ministry aims to gain an understanding of how excellence can best be achieved, and of the obstacles that currently exist. The largest portion of the budget has been earmarked for the Bachelor's program that was launched in 2008 (€ 48.8 million), for which 16 applications have been approved. Excellence is being promoted across the entire breadth of these university institutions, involving at least 5% of all students in each case. There is a lot of diversity, both in the chosen definitions of 'excellence' and 'excellent students' and in the activities being developed. Work is carried out based on performance agreements (high trust). Sirius organizes a learning program in which institutions learn from themselves and each other, and in which knowledge is also made available to the entire sector and the government. The Master's program, with a budget of € 12.2 million, will start in 2010.

