



EDLAB

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| 2018-2020 |

## Mission

EDLAB is the Maastricht University institute for education innovation and promotes an optimal learning experience for students of Maastricht University, by advancing the field of teaching and learning for both students and staff.

Because of its central position, EDLAB can serve the UM community of learners and educators by fostering a culture of exchange and collaboration between educators, students, faculties and other stakeholders. To this end we initiate and coordinate UM-wide events and projects on educational development. EDLAB furthermore offers the UM community a physical meeting place and facilitates co-creation and collaboration in education innovation.

Through the UM-wide implementation of innovations and teacher-training services, EDLAB strives to make education innovation everybody's business, thereby increasing engagement of both students and staff with the education process. EDLAB has a strong focus on sustainable implementation of successful education innovations in order to improve and support the students' learning experience, employability and broad personal development.

## Vision

We define innovation as the process of creating new ideas and practices to address educational needs – to do different things, and doing things differently. Innovation is not necessarily radical or disruptive, but also exists in improving what is there and repairing what is broken. Innovation can be about educational methods and processes, about technology, or about spaces. It requires critical review of issues and potential solutions; it is an incremental process and a means to an end.

EDLAB is well-connected to the faculties and other internal and external stakeholders in the educational process. As such, it is uniquely positioned to recognise trends and needs as they may emerge in one part of the university community, and relate and relay them to other stakeholders. It offers a conduit for ideas and connects individuals who are seeking inspiration from colleagues they may otherwise not encounter. Through its events and projects EDLAB accumulates a body of knowledge and experience that allows it to be proactive and take initiative, taking into account the needs and ambitions of UM's community of learners and teaching staff, UM's strategic programme 'Collaborative Open Research Education' (CORE), and global trends.

EDLAB plays a vital role in ensuring momentum in education innovation for UM. Great ideas may come up in isolation, but they grow and prosper through collaboration, and they generate impact through sustainable implementation.

## Principles

**UM-wide approach:** EDLAB projects are defined on a basis of UM-wide consensus and require the participation of a majority of UM faculties.

**Sustainable innovation:** The sustainability of EDLAB innovations is key to the quality of education innovation at UM. UM-wide commitment for EDLAB initiatives allows for continued support and implementation efforts on institutional and faculty level.

**Spill-over effect:** EDLAB is an inter-faculty platform for exchange and reciprocity. This empowers spill-over of successful educational practices from one faculty to others.

**Scholarly approach:** EDLAB initiatives are grounded in theory, critical reflection and based on evidence. All EDLAB output is primarily designed for direct application and implementation in the teaching and learning environment.

**Independence:** EDLAB is positioned directly under the UM Executive Board. Its mandate is to initiate and support both bottom-up ideas and top-down activities for education innovation or support existing innovation and collaboration efforts.

## EDLAB 2020: 5 strategic goals

1. Amplify the role of EDLAB as a hub for education innovation and community development;
2. Design and coordinate staff education programmes;
3. Provide an up-to-date educational framework for UM;
4. Improve retention and student persistence;
5. Develop, improve and consolidate the PREMIUM, Honours+ and MaRBLe excellence programmes.

## **1. Amplify the role of EDLAB as a hub for education innovation and community development**

By 2020, EDLAB wants to have positioned itself as the knowledge hub for education innovation at UM. Its physical presence allows for interaction and activities that surpass the virtual networks on which education innovation at UM relied on before.

### *EDLAB operational structure*

EDLAB has the unique position to mediate between faculties and other experts within the UM teaching and learning community. It will continue to use and strengthen its connections with faculties through the faculty liaisons and vice-deans of education as assembled in the EDLAB Steering Group Education Innovation. The Steering Group allows grass-root ideas and top-down objectives to converge and can translate UM's educational ambitions as spelled out in CORE, into EDLAB activities. This structure finds its strength in reciprocity and has proven to be effective as it allows for early awareness of educational issues and needs within faculties, and provides a network for developing, implementing and monitoring educational innovation.

### *EDLAB communities*

Besides its inclusive governance structure, EDLAB has set-up a series of successful teaching community events through teach-meets and seminars. With a stable turnout of about 50 participants per session, UM teaching staff continuously connect and learn from each other on topics such as lecturing, participation in PBL and innovations in assessment. EDLAB is motivated to further intensify the organization of such sessions in the coming years. Every meeting attracts both new teaching staff as well as previous participants. This way, besides a core teaching-community, EDLAB sees the possibilities to also fuel multiple theme-specific communities and support their creative output and collaboration, such as the excellence programme-communities.

Following the annual Comenius grant calls installed by the Dutch Ministry of Education and Culture, EDLAB has positioned itself as an advisory body to inform and assist applicants and, on request, provide feedback to UM-Comenius proposals. The instalment of the Comenius grants has had positive effects on staff engagement with education innovation. The allocation of a Comenius grant for the EDLAB project 'Self-regulated learning skills' also contributed to this. To further boost engagement, EDLAB has organised activities to connect UM-Comenius applicants, from current and previous years, to discuss educational issues and innovative ideas at UM. Irrespective of the Comenius grant applications being successful or not, such activities are a fruitful exercise for exploring which educational needs exist in UM faculties and what initiatives could be supported.

Last but not least, EDLAB aims to generate and utilise student input and involvement by structurally creating student-assistant positions as well as liaison and advisory roles for students, for example through the creation of a student advisory board.

### *EDLAB innovations and impact*

Through its reports, website and events, EDLAB shares the results of its various projects, both internally as well as externally. It will continue to disseminate knowledge and insights through these channels and explore additional new ways to provide the UM community with information about teaching and learning. Next to that, EDLAB wants to further broaden its external network, promote its innovations at education

conferences and learn from/collaborate with potential partners. EDLAB will particularly seek collaborations and partnerships where there can be meaningful reciprocity, in terms of both sharing and gaining knowledge that benefits the UM teaching and learning community. The institute's ambition to intensify its external activities also includes the exploration of additional funding opportunities.

Sustainable innovation is an essential part of EDLAB's mission and vision. In order to guarantee long-term relevance and success, quick fixes don't suffice. Durable solutions will often be found in the intersection between theory and practice. EDLAB is not a research institute, yet systematic inquiry conducted within the context of its projects, and awareness of research done within and outside of UM are an integral part of its mode of operation. Based on its connecting role and the knowledge and experiences from past, current and future projects and activities, EDLAB provides tailor-made advice and resources, and functions as a collaborative platform, both online and offline. Related to this, EDLAB is to develop a shared and adaptable practice for monitoring the implementation of innovations on a faculty level in order to offer support and guidance where needed.

### *EDLAB building*

In the upcoming two years EDLAB wants to transform its building into an inviting space, open to all members of the UM community and related stakeholders to meet, collaborate and co-create. EDLAB intends to make increased use of its building in terms of room and material design and offer a broader range of activities for staff and students, in line with successful EDLAB community events like the teach-meet, excellence community events and student think tanks.

## **2. Design and coordinate staff training programmes**

With the institute's increasing project output and its deepening knowledge of faculty educational needs, EDLAB wants to develop a UM-wide offering of educational services for the UM teaching community. Due to unforeseen understaffing and institutional staff-training policy discussions, EDLAB's effort regarding the provision of educational services has not grown with similar increments compared to the institute's innovation and excellence activities. In the coming years, EDLAB will refuel its educational services programme and develop and expand its offer regarding education innovation-related workshops, teacher-development trajectories and general professionalization programmes.

EDLAB aims to further expand its project output and, with that, create general, tailor-made and/or on-demand workshops for UM staff to enable them to apply EDLAB, internal UM and external innovations to their work.

A new ambition of UM is to provide continuous professional development (CPD) for UM teaching staff. Whereas part of the CPD offering will be within faculties, EDLAB intends to develop, deliver and coordinate a UM-wide training offer. EDLAB's offer will be complementary to existing faculty offers and serves those needs and requirements in teacher professionalization that are relevant to UM teaching staff, irrespective of educational discipline. Furthermore, in line with the university's strategic vision for collaboration and openness (part of its CORE philosophy), EDLAB's offering will be open to staff from all faculties and aims to bring this community together by providing a central arena for fostering peer support and collaborative, continual learning between all of those involved in UM education.

EDLAB also aims to further offer general professionalization trajectories for educational support bodies at UM. In the past, for example, all UM Boards of Examiners (BoE) have undergone positively evaluated trainings at EDLAB. EDLAB will collaborate with UM's Academic Affairs department to coordinate existing or new trainings for educational support bodies.

### **3. Provide an up-to-date educational framework for UM**

Since the foundation of Maastricht University in 1976, problem-based learning (PBL) has been the core of its educational philosophy. This student-centred approach to learning underpins all educational activities at UM, from the level of classroom teaching to curriculum design and management. During the past 42 years, the number of faculties and educational programmes at UM has grown significantly, and with it the variety of interpretations and implementations of PBL. Particularly, the different abstraction levels and intensity in which discussions about PBL have taken place, be it with a focus on PBL learning principles, its 7-step format or general prerequisites, deserves a structured follow-up. Next to that, contemporary changes in society, such as the increasing influence of technology, a changing international labour market and digitalization, emphasise the need for reflection on the university's educational perceptions and practices.

EDLAB has launched the EDview project to support and enhance the discussions mentioned above. The project naturally touches upon preconditions and important topics related to PBL-education, such as teacher training, assessment, curriculum design and management, and the roles of internationalisation and technology in learning. EDview takes a truly participatory approach and includes everyone from students, teaching staff, course- and programme-designers and managers, as well as from educational researchers through to experts and policy makers.

The main outcomes of the project will be integrated into an educational framework that remains relevant in a rapidly changing world and is based on a strategy that gives a clear direction, without limiting the creativity and motivation of our most important resources: UM's staff and students. This aspect is vital and does not only shape the research design but also the ultimate delivery. The position paper is accompanied by an open and interactive symposium that invites for discussion and constructive dialogue on how to work with such a framework in practice. Through EDLAB's communication and implementation channels, these project deliverables will provide ingredients for a shared, future-proof vision on UM education.

### **4. Improve retention and student persistence**

The first year is commonly acknowledged to be of pivotal importance when it comes to student success and persistence, and as such to retention. EDLAB is currently investigating in-depth and UM-wide potential causes for attrition during the first year of the bachelor, and identifying current as well as new interventions to address this issue. Looking at the entire cycle from early recruitment to the end of the first year, EDLAB aims to contribute to a better, holistic understanding of the phenomenon of first year drop-out, and make concrete recommendations for improvements.

In this project a conceptual framework of *student engagement* is being utilised through which the various structures, processes and activities that students encounter during the first year are being evaluated. Recommendations that follow from this evaluation will concern the way in which UM presents itself to

prospective students, determines objectives and procedures for selection and 'matching', introduces students to their faculties and to PBL, as well the manner in which students are guided through the first year itself.

In addition to formulating recommendations, EDLAB aims to actively support processes in and between faculties and other offices and services that contribute to a higher retention rate and more student persistence in the first year. It will organise 'development seminars' bringing together various stakeholders around specific themes, e.g. Introduction Days, Advising & Mentoring, PBL Introduction. Furthermore, the insights and expertise generated within and around this project will be actively shared with the UM community via the UM intranet and other means.

## **5. Develop, improve and consolidate the PREMIUM, Honours+ and MaRBLe excellence programmes**

To promote the quality of education, UM has developed a range of excellence programmes for ambitious, motivated and high-performing students. Since excellence programmes are often viewed as a platform for experimentation with new educational models, the coordination of these programmes fits well within EDLAB's mission. The programmes provide a fertile environment to test education innovations developed at EDLAB and, in turn, give insights in the educational needs of current and future students. The excellence programmes furthermore mirror UM's views on educational development, i.e. the so-called CORE concept (Collaborative Open Research Education) in UM's current strategic programme. Specifically, the excellence programmes facilitate interdisciplinary project work and integrate education with research and societal engagement, allowing projects to have actual societal impact on Maastricht and the region.

### *The programmes*

A common core for the faculty honours programmes has been developed and implemented in the Honours+ programme. In addition, the MaRBLe programme provides third-year bachelor's students with the opportunity to conduct their own academic research, while the PREMIUM programme enables Master's students from different faculties to work together on projects for (external) clients.

The applications and quality of the programmes have significantly increased over the past few years. PREMIUM and MaRBLe have been positively evaluated and are well known amongst both students and staff. Honours+ has been developed as an entirely new programme and after some start-up hitches, it is currently running for its third year, with promising results so far. Yearly, a total of 500 students participate in these programmes, supported by a large number of (academic) staff as supervisors, competence coaches and/or project mentors.

EDLAB has established a vivid international PREMIUM alumni-community, active on LinkedIn and Facebook, providing current students a network for future job opportunities and knowledge dissemination and serves as a source for future projects. Alumni activities are being set up to further nurture this community. For the other excellence programmes, EDLAB also aims to establish lively communities during the upcoming years.

Staff members from all faculties have joined in an excellence teacher community that regularly meets for intervision sessions, trainings and events. Next to that, a broad network of external partners has been formed to function as a source for new projects and training/job opportunities for UM's excellence students. EDLAB will continue to maintain and expand its network. Currently, valuable partners range from

governmental & non-governmental organizations to international corporations and local businesses such as the Maastricht municipality, PHILIPS and Accenture.

By means of regular evaluations, EDLAB will further improve, implement innovations, and expand the excellence programmes, and their respective communities.