

Election program

2020-2021

Faculty Council of Psychology and Neuroscience

SHAPE

Election Program SHAPE

SHAPE, founded in 2018, is a representative party that offers an experienced and fresh look at the state of affairs at Maastricht University (UM). All SHAPE representatives are actively involved in developments within the university, which gives them a lot of **knowledge** about the state of affairs. This active involvement allows us to respond **constructively** to current topics. This year, our list of candidates consists of new candidates who provide a **fresh perspective** on the one hand, while on the other hand, the list consists of students with Faculty Council experience to guarantee **continuity**. This variety allows SHAPE to offer new innovative ideas while preserving the continuity of past initiatives. Currently, continuity is particularly important, as a new dean will head the faculty from June 2020. In this election program, you will find our vision on developments within our faculty. Through our **close ties** with fellow students, associations and student representatives within and outside the Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience (FPN), we make a difference **together**.

Vote SHAPE, to shape our university

Education improvements

The education at FPN is under constant development. And while students are meant to benefit from these changes, in practice, they can sometimes put an additional burden on them. SHAPE members are aware of these changes and can improve on the situation by introducing ideas and opinions of students. With this in mind, representatives can set realistic goals that satisfy all stakeholders within and outside the university and work **together** on achieving them. We specifically define four areas that we believe we have a realistic change of improving upon: digitization, PBL quality, employability and career counseling.

If the COVID-19 outbreak has taught us anything, then it is that while online education at FPN is possible, it has a lot of room for improvement. Online education is a relevant topic right now and will stay relevant even after the initial lockdown will be over. This is why we want to put more effort into the digitization of our faculty. SHAPE believes that **all lectures should be recorded** and be made available online. If a lecturer refuses to be recorded, then it is the responsibility of the course coordinator to provide a suitable alternative. Furthermore, **online testing procedures** need to be optimized to allow for a more flexible, yet secure and reliable examination alternative that both students and examiners will feel comfortable with. Finally, the development and introduction of **e-modules** such as knowledge clips and online assignments could prove to be a valuable addition to the current education programme.

Another focus of us is the current state of the PBL system at FPN. In general, PBL sessions are a productive and efficient way to teach the content of a course. However, the quality between different PBL groups does vary significantly. One of the reasons for this are the tutors of these groups, who differ greatly in their ability to guide a tutorial session. We think that this is unfair, not only for students, but also for tutors, who should not be given this important task without better preparation for their prospective roles. It shouldn't be the responsibility of a tutor to teach themselves the additional soft-skills necessary for such a position. That's why we think it is important to **give tutors a more intensive training** and allow them to develop both their hard- and soft-skills necessary for their role. Furthermore, to ensure the continuous quality of PBL sessions, we propose to introduce a **third party to evaluate tutors** during a tutorial and make a decision whether the overall performance of that tutor is sufficient or still needs improvement.

Since Maastricht University is a research university, it is not surprising that many students at FPN also show interest in gaining experience in different fields of psychological research. But actually finding a place to further develop these skills is more difficult than it has to be. Most laboratories are happy to take on students as research assistants or interns, but that isn't necessarily well communicated to the general student population. Students can feel lost when searching for these intern positions. We want to help mediate these internship positions between researchers and students by creating an online platform which advertises the vacancies in different laboratories. There, students have an easy and accessible overview of which positions are offered in different fields of research and acquire valuable research experience. On the other side, researchers have an easy way to find motivated interns to help them with their experiment and get an opportunity to teach them more about their own projects and help them acquire additional experience in their own respective field of research.

Finally, the transition **from bachelors to masters** is a difficult decision for most psychology students but it is a topic first and second year students should be made aware of. To **help students with making the right choice**, we are in favour of providing the students already at an early point of time with the information they need to further engage in their favorite domain. Therefore, we believe that providing "orientational-lectures" would make students earlier involved and thus make it easier in finding their master program of choice. A special career counsellor could then help students where and how to further engage in their favorite field.

Healthy campus

Learning about the worth and importance of well-being is a core subject in our studies. The next step would be to practice what you teach. We know that our faculty has put great effort and enthusiasm into supporting us students and our mental health, but that doesn't mean that system isn't without its flaws. It is our responsibility as student representatives to ensure that we create a healthy and better environment in which students are being well taken care of.

As probably all of us know, being a full-time student can be very **stressful**. As a result, students can suffer from burnouts, which can happen more often than one would think. Furthermore, a lot of students do not seek help for their problems, sometimes because they feel uncomfortable to do so or because they don't know where to turn to. FPN has worked hard on this issue, implementing study psychologists, study advisors and introducing events focused on well-being, such as the Well-being Week. We want to expand on the advertisement of these services and let students know that these options are available for them. Not only that, but we also want to work on **expanding the capacities of the mental health services** to increase availability, individual care for students and to decrease waiting times for these types of appointments. Furthermore, we would like to organize more events and workshops that focus on the improvement of students' well-being.

Another stressor for many students is their living condition. The **housing situation** in Maastricht is really difficult especially for prospective international students. Therefore, we want to collaborate with the University and Municipality to provide the international students with a temporary accommodation for the first months to make them able to find an accommodation while already living in Maastricht. Maastricht University already offers help at the **housing help desk**. To get the help to the people that need it, we want to increase its visibility especially for prospective first-year students who struggle to find housing or need a briefing in dutch law.

Community feeling

Over the last year, the Student Council has gained more attention from students and has become a more visible organization for them. We want to keep this momentum and work on our **transparency** and mediation role as Student Representatives. We want to let students know that we are here to **listen** to them and voice their concerns before the Faculty Council, if needed. That's why we want to introduce **additional contact hours** where students can come to the FPN Student Council Office and tell us about their issues. We also have to keep in mind that communication always goes both ways. Seeking information about Faculty developments shouldn't be a tedious hassle for students, but readily available, easy to find and presented in an understandable manner. Therefore, we also want to **keep students updated** about the current developments at the faculty by making use of all of the media platforms available to us.

We also believe that studying at a university and completing your degree there shouldn't be the only thing a university has to offer. There should be more **extra-curricular activities**, associations and courses that encourage the **personal development** of students. FPN should be able to offer students additional, non-mandatory courses and workshops that can facilitate individual growth and give students the possibility to shape their own learning path. The faculty should be a place where students can share their diversity of skills and be able to create a creative place that they feel they can be part of if they want to. We also think that in order to achieve this, it would be a great idea to collaborate with other faculties.

However, as it is right now, FPN is somewhat isolated from most other faculties. Not only geographically, but also socially. While there are certain events that a lot of faculties attend together and that strengthen the bond between them, FPN is usually unintentionally left out. A good, healthy relationship to the other faculties can lead to interesting, new projects, for example combined workshops, **joint courses shared between faculties** or interdisciplinary workshops. Those are events that students from various study programmes could find interesting, benefit from and strengthen the overall **university cohesion**. We want to work on this relationship and try to reinsert ourselves more actively in the overall university organization, and to increase our presence so that the other faculties won't forget about us.

In conclusion

Finally, we are looking forward to an active and productive year to achieve improvements in educational matters, student well-being, transparency and other current topics to get you the most out of your studies!

If you have any suggestions or questions, please feel free to contact us through [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [E-mail](#) or come for a chat at the Hub in UNS40 A0.763.

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