

2026-2027 PREMIUM CLIENT HANDBOOK

EXCELLENCE PROGRAMME
PREMIUM
MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction 3
2. General information 4
   - 2.1. Learning objectives for the students 4
   - 2.2. Time investment for the students 4
   - 2.3. The structure of PREMIUM – in a nutshell 4
   - 2.4. Selection of students 5
3. The role of the PREMIUM client 7
   - 3.1. Your PREMIUM project team 7
   - 3.2. Team formation 8
   - 3.3. Project Kick-Off meeting 8
   - 3.4. Execution of the project 8
   - 3.5. Midterm review meeting & Midterm Presentations event 9
   - 3.6. Closing session with the client 9
   - 3.7. PREMIUM Closing Event 10
4. Your PREMIUM project 11
5. Other points of interest 13
   - 5.1. Financial aspects 13
   - 5.2. Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) 14
6. Contact information 15

1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to PREMIUM! PREMIUM is Maastricht University's excellence programme for talented and high performing master students. PREMIUM aims to bridge the gap between academia and business and prepares students for the labour market by having them the chance to work on an actual case for an external client. PREMIUM provides students with an extracurricular challenge, as they do this programme alongside their regular master programme.

In this handbook, you will find useful information about the PREMIUM programme, including the learning objectives, the different programme elements, the selection procedure, and final student assessment. You will also read about your role as a PREMIUM client and the PREMIUM project approval procedure.

More information on PREMIUM is available on our website: www.edlab.nl/premium.

Thank you once more for providing our students this unique learning experience!

PREMIUM Central Management Team

Fabienne Crombach & Anna Ivanova



2. GENERAL INFORMATION

PREMIUM is Maastricht University's extracurricular excellence programme for talented and motivated master students and carries a total workload of approximately 250 hours per student.

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE STUDENTS

In more detail, PREMIUM aims to enable students to:

- gain insight into their personal strengths and development areas;
- improve their performance and competencies;
- learn how to work as part of a multidisciplinary team;
- learn how to work with a tight schedule and manage their time and tasks accordingly;
- learn how to manage a client's expectations.

PREMIUM also provides students with advice and tips on how to succeed on the job market.

2.2 TIME INVESTMENT OF STUDENTS

PREMIUM is a demanding extracurricular programme for students. It carries a total workload of approximately **250 hours per student** spread out over the course of 5 months (from January until the end of May), of which:

- 150-175 hours are allocated for the project,
- 75-100 hours are to be spent on personal development (i.e. working on the Personal Development Plan, coaching, attending masterclasses/workshops).

2.3 THE STRUCTURE OF PREMIUM – IN A NUTSHELL

After the recruitment and selection phase of PREMIUM, all PREMIUM students and clients meet each other during the ***programme Kick-Off Mix Match,*** on **January 6th.** During this event, both students and clients are to make well-informed decisions about their preferred projects/team members. Only after this event will the Central Management Team form the final teams.

Once the project teams are formed, the programme starts with a general ***Project kick-off meeting,*** to bring the different parties together: students, the Project Mentor and the client. During this meeting, you will get to know each other, set up rules for constructive communication and collaboration, make the first arrangements for the project's initiation, and agree on the definite project scope.

One of the first things students do in PREMIUM, is setting up a *Personal Development Plan., attend a workshop on discovering their strengths and weaknesses, and undertake a couple of team building activities.*

Along the way, the team will start to take shape and students will develop an increasing in-depth insight into their development areas.

After the team kick-off meeting, students start working on several PREMIUM programme components simultaneously:

1. Coaching (all project teams have their own personal Coach to help students further develop certain competencies during the programme);
2. Attending workshops and masterclasses to gain useful professional skills;
3. Project execution (guided by a Project Mentor and documented on an Instagram page);

Halfway through the programme, all PREMIUM students, Project Mentors, clients and Coaches will meet for the ***Midterm Presentations event*** taking place on **March 17th and 18th**. At this event, the project teams will present their development in project execution so far. Additionally, around this time, the client, Project Mentor, and student team may decide to schedule a midterm meeting in order to reflect on their performance and possibly make adjustments for the remainder of the programme.

The PREMIUM programme ends with a ***Closing Event*** on **May 26th** for students, clients, Project Mentors and Coaches. This festive Closing Event aims to provide students with a chance to present their project outcome to the community, and festively close PREMIUM together with all the participating students, clients and staff.
Finally, all students who have met the programme requirements receive their PREMIUM certificate and the day is concluded in a festive manner.

Besides this official Closing Event, we also request that each student team schedules a separate ***closing session with their client and Project Mentor*** to present their final project outcome and receive feedback on the project execution.

2.4 SELECTION OF STUDENTS

Profile of the ideal PREMIUM student

PREMIUM selects students based on a predetermined student profile. Students that either 1) fit the profile, or 2) show enough potential to fit the profile through development and coaching, are admitted to the programme.

1) **A PREMIUM student is competent and proficient**: is highly capable, as evident in:
    a. Their GPA (a 7,0 Bachelor GPA, or higher, is required);
    b. Their academic history (e.g. skipping grades, double degrees).

2) **A PREMIUM student has an intrinsic drive to prosper**: goes the extra mile and makes use of opportunities to learn and expand their horizon. This should be evident in:
    a. the student's work/internship/volunteering history;
    b. involvement in extracurricular or community activities;

c. an enthusiastic, ambitious, motivated, and curious attitude indicating a clear eagerness to learn;
d. a wide and varied area of (academic) interests.

3) **A PREMIUM student is a true team player**: recognizes the value of teamwork and is serious about partaking in it, as evident in:
    a. a reliable, flexible, and dependable work ethic;
    b. a social and communicative disposition;
    c. an ability to reflect, and provide and receive feedback;
    d. evidence of team spirit.

4) **A PREMIUM student is dedicated**: takes their role and tasks seriously and acts accordingly, as evident in:
    a. an overall confident and professional approach and attitude;
    b. a preference for adequate, creative, and innovative solutions when faced with a challenge;
    c. a critical and conscientious mind-set.

Selection procedure

The PREMIUM selection procedure consists of two rounds, each including several components. In round 1, applicants are evaluated based on their Bachelor GPA, their LinkedIn profile or CV, an application essay, and scores on psychological tests measuring perseverance.

If admitted to round 2, applicants are evaluated based on their performance as both interviewers and interviewees at DIY speed date interviewing sessions (each applicant takes part in four 10-minute interviews), and on their performance in a team observation assignment.

3. THE ROLE OF PREMIUM CLIENT

The client plays an active role in all phases of the programme, and a crucial role in the PREMIUM experience.

As a client, you are the owner of the project. You are responsible for ensuring that the project contributes to the goals of the organisation. One single person (or max. 2 people), **never a committee or a group**, should always fill the role of client. Each project demands uniform and clear control, and a group of people or multiple clients have different voices with different interests and therefore cannot effectively act as a clear client. Moreover, a committee deals with a problem, but a client feels it. However, a committee or steering group can support the client. If various organisations initiate a project, the clients are responsible for appointing one representative who can act as their (delegated) client. This client will be responsible for all steering contacts with the project and has sufficient mandate to make decisions in certain phases of the project and to make the necessary resources available.

Generally, a client adopts the role of a more **formal client** or a **co-creator**.

A **formal client** provides an assignment and perceives the team of students as consultants doing a job for them. The formal client provides guidance and supports the team with feedback, but is not actively involved in project execution.

A **co-creator** might join the team for brainstorm sessions, meetings, and preparatory sessions. The co-creator is more actively involved in/during the project execution.

3.1 YOUR PREMIUM PROJECT TEAM

Generally, a PREMIUM project team consists of four to six students from various disciplines, depending on requirements set by the client in consultation with the Project Mentors, and taking into account student preferences.

PREMIUM is an educational programme, with clear learning objectives for the students. Therefore, **projects need to provide students with enough freedom to come up with innovative and out-of-the-box ideas and results.** However, results are not guaranteed.

PREMIUM selects students based on their academic achievements, motivation, and apparent ability to work in a team. This means that students and their mentor will do their best to provide valuable input for the client. In close consultation with the Project Mentor, the client is to describe the scope of the project. This will give both the client and the students (and the guiding Project Mentor) a clear idea of what is to be expected from the project.

!! Please note that sometimes it is necessary to redefine the project scope during the duration of the programme, due to unforeseen circumstances, setbacks or other external factors. It is important to remain in close contact with the project mentor and the students about the progress of the project and the intended goal and deliverable.

3.2 TEAM FORMATION

At the Mix & Match event in January, all clients get a chance to meet the selected students that have shown interest in their project, and inform the PREMIUM Central Management Team of any student preferences they may have, if any.

Because we would like you to have that opportunity and because we would love to welcome you into the PREMIUM community at this festive event, **your attendance is required and greatly appreciated.**

Based on both the students' preferences, and the clients' preferences, the teams will be formed by Central Management, the day after the Mix & Match Event.

The PREMIUM Mix & Match Event will take place
on Wednesday January 6th, after 17:00 hrs.
(Please check your email for further instructions and the exact itinerary)

3.3 PROJECT KICK-OFF MEETING

As indicated before, after the Central Management Team has formed the final teams, the actual programme starts with a Project Kick-Off meeting, during which clients will have to be present alongside all students, and the Project Mentor.

This meeting provides the first formal contact between the client, the Mentor and the student team and serves as a platform to get the project going. The Project Mentor will take the lead on scheduling this meeting and it will be scheduled to fit the agendas of all parties involved.

3.4 EXECUTION OF THE PROJECT

Due to the wide variety of projects, it is not possible to give a very detailed description of your role during the execution of the project assignment. Some examples of tasks are:

1) to provide the students with necessary background information and relevant contact data of persons to be approached;
2) to reflect on students' suggestions and ideas;
3) to facilitate meetings with members of your organisation;
4) to monitor and give feedback on the agreed milestones in the project;
5) to take decisions about deviation from the initially proposed project plan, within your mandate.

During the execution part, the client is expected to spend approximately 2 hours per week on the project.

Overall, experience has taught us that project execution works best if students can address one single representative for the client during their project execution phase. This person should have enough authority to deal with the student team's questions and proposals.

Please note that PREMIUM is not an internship. The students do not need a working space at your organization.

Also, please be aware of the fact that PREMIUM is not a fulltime job. It is an extra-curricular programme of 250 hours per student, next to the regular master education.

3.5 Midterm Project Review meeting & Midterm Presentations Event

Halfway through the programme, the Project Mentor and student team schedule a *midterm project review meeting*. Clients are optionally invited to join this meeting and to discuss the progress of the project with their student team and project mentor.

Additionally, all clients are invited to join the *PREMIUM Midterm Presentations event*, taking place on March 18th or March 19th. This is also a good opportunity to meet other clients and get inspired by other project examples.

The PREMIUM Midterm Presentations sessions will take place on March 17h or March 18th, after 17:00 hrs.
(Please check your email for further instructions and the exact itinerary)

3.6 Closing session with the Client

The formal assessment of each individual student's performance in PREMIUM will be partly based upon the performance of their team during the project execution phase, but also on their individual development and contribution to the team process.

In close consultation with the client, the Project Mentor will assess the quality of the project results and the learning experience and progress of each individual student.

The team, together with the Project Mentor, will also plan a closing session with the client(s). Some clients would like their team to present their project outcomes to colleagues or to set up a report describing their work. Each client may discuss their wishes regarding the specific project outcomes with the Project Mentor and student team.

3.7 PREMIUM Closing Event

The PREMIUM programme ends with a very festive Closing Event for all students, Project Mentors, Coaches, and clients. This festive Closing Event aims to provide students with a chance to present their project outcomes to the community and to festively close PREMIUM together with all the participating students, clients, mentors and coaches.
Finally, all students who have met the programme requirements receive their PREMIUM certificate and the day is concluded in a festive manner.

The PREMIUM Closing Event will take place
on Thursday May 26th, after 14:00 hrs.
(Please check your email for further instructions and the exact itinerary)

Pictures will be taken during all our plenary events, to be used for promotional purposes. In case you do not wish to have your image used, please send an email to premium@maastrichtuniversity.nl.

4. YOUR PREMIUM PROJECT

A PREMIUM project should:

1) be challenging;
2) push students out of their comfort zone;
3) call for an innovative solution and enough ownership for students to come up with their own approach;
4) allow and facilitate an interdisciplinary approach;
5) require an investment of 150 hours per student;
6) be flexible enough to expand or simplify, if necessary.

Since PREMIUM is a challenging programme for talented and ambitious master's students, the project should be challenging and innovative and leave enough space for students to formulate their own approach and set their own agenda.

Experience has taught us that the student team is best able to meet the client's expectations, when clients take the following into account when formulating the specific project assignment:

1. *What organisational issue/problem do I want the PREMIUM assignment to address?*
2. *Why are the possible processes or outcomes of the assignment important for my organization/the region/society?*
3. *How is my organization going to use the possible processes or outcomes of the assignment?*

Important content requirements for the project assignment:

- The problem of the assignment is solvable in the given time and setting;
- Clear and substantial relevance, innovativeness, value and impact of the possible outcomes for the organization, region or society;
- The possible outcomes or processes of the assignment are going to be used by the organization and possibly shared by other stakeholders and/or society;
- The possible outcomes of the assignment are sustainable, long-term solutions for the problem;
- Students from various academic backgrounds and disciplines can work together on the assignment. The project combines different subject areas and calls upon the prior knowledge and expertise of each student;
- During the project, students can connect with experts, stakeholders, client and an authentic audience;
- The assignment is inspiring and meaningful for the students that are interested in the specific field. The assignment intrigues the students enough to invest time, effort and creativity;
- Students can be embedded in the organization and experience the organizational culture.

Important formal requirements for the project assignment:

- The client provides the requested practical information (contact details, email address, phone numbers, etc.)
- The client confirms that they:
  - Can spend an average of 2 hours a week on PREMIUM, during the approximate 5 months that the students work on the project. The client is expected to provide active executive support with a shared vision throughout the project.
  - Intends to have effective communication and an effective working relation with the project team.
  - Intends to be present at the Kick-Off Event, the kick-off meeting with the assigned project team, the Midterm Presentations Event, and the official Closing Event in May.
  - Is the only representative during the project execution phase, and has enough authority to deal with the student team's questions and proposals.
  - Provides the students with the (minimal) resources, creates the conditions to allow the execution of the project.
  - Cover any travel expenses that students make on behalf of their project, and in accordance with the client.

PREMIUM students will have ownership of the project, which means they will be allowed to further define it by, for instance, connecting the project to the client's needs, exploring the needs of other stakeholders and using the team's expertise and knowledge. Intellectual property however lies at all times with the client.



5. OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST

5.1 FINANCIAL ASPECTS

Participating in PREMIUM is free of charge for every client. PREMIUM is an educational programme, with clear learning objectives for the students. Therefore, projects need to provide students with enough freedom to come up with innovative and out-of-the-box ideas and results. However, results are not guaranteed. We ask your guidance throughout the project, and if you request our students to travel due to your project, we request that you cover their travel expenses.

After completing the programme and experiencing its value, we invite organisations to consider making a voluntary donation to a dedicated PREMIUM fund. We want to stress that such a donation is by no means a requirement, we do not select organisations based on these donations, nor do we specify the exact amount.

These donations allow us to sustainably develop and strengthen the PREMIUM programme (from supporting high-quality interdisciplinary projects and expert guidance, to expanding opportunities for talented students and deepening our impact within the region). In this way, your contribution directly supports the development of future professionals and helps us continue building a strong connection between academia and society.

We share this in advance so you can potentially take this into account in your planning and budgeting. Donations are made through the University Fund Limburg. The Fund is the charity foundation of Maastricht University and recognised as a Public Benefit Organisation (Dutch: Algemeen Nut Beogende Instelling, ANBI). This means that organisations can make tax-efficient donations, with their contributions being fully or partially tax-deductible. At the same time, it offers a meaningful way to contribute to education, innovation, and societal impact, and to position your organisation as an active partner in shaping future talent.

In case your organisation would like to already budget in said potential donation, please use the following table as a suggestion only. We again want to underline the fact that PREMIUM does not stipulate that you need to make a donation, nor in which amount:

1) Multinational/large SME: Euro 1.000-2.500
2) Government/semi-government: Euro 750-1.250
3) Small SME/Start-up: Euro 500-1.000
4) NGO/Foundation/Association: Euro 250-750

PREMIUM itself will provide the students with a small budget in light of project execution (e.g. printing costs, team building activity etc.) of € 150 excl. transportation costs.

However, if a client requests students to travel for their project, we request that the client in that case covers those fees. We therefore request that the students draw up a project budget, and have their client agree to their proposed budget.

As a client, you will need to make agreements with your students on how to go about compensating their travel expenses.

Option 1 (PREFERRED): You use your organization's own methods for declaring travel expenses.
Option 2: PREMIUM will compensate the students and will send you an invoice for the total amount. In order to do so, you will need to send us the correct invoice details.

5.2 Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA)

In order to safeguard the information that you will give to the PREMIUM students, we will provide you upon request with the option to make use of a non-disclosure agreement. This legal contract between the UM and your company outlines that the confidential material, knowledge, or information that you wish to share with the PREMIUM students but not with any third parties, will not be published in any of their reports or their final products. This NDA will create a confidential relationship between the students and you as a client, and will make sure that everybody involved is aware of the restricted use of a specific part of the information provided by your company.

6. CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any further questions, feel free to contact the PREMIUM Central Management Team or the PREMIUM Coordinator at your faculty.

PREMIUM Central Management Team

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