

# Pascal Delwit

Candidate to the position of Rector - 2020 - 2024



Experience, integrity, loyalty  
For a strong and committed university

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Dear colleague,

On 12 and 13 May 2020, you will elect the next rector of the ULB. There is much at stake at a time when significant external constraints weigh heavily on the way we carry out our three goals on a day-to-day basis. Allow me to share with you the broad outline of my programme (a more detailed version will be published on my site). It is the result of many meetings which I have held with ULB staff. Its implementation will involve finding how we can best allocate our resources and make more efficient material and non-material investments. People view the ULB as a civic university, there to serve the public, with a European dimension. Our university has a unique meaning, history and mission, all defined by the ideals which went into founding it. I wish to be the person who delivers a transparent, rigorous and collaborative project. Working alongside everyone who would like to be involved, I'd like to promote a dynamic and harmonious university.

### *A committed, rigorous, trustworthy and experienced man, dedicated to our *alma mater**

Having given more than 30 years' service to the ULB, I can offer it my skills in institutional policy and my mastery of the challenges facing the Wallonia Brussels Federation at both university and political level. In my capacity as a Professor of Political Science, I and my colleagues set up the *Centre d'étude de la vie politique* (Cevipol), which is now renowned for its academic authority. Thanks to my leadership in the fields of research and teaching, I helped make the political science department one of the 100 best of its kind in the world. As part of my community outreach work, I will also use my skills to better acquaint the public with the political challenges facing us all at present. I attach genuine importance to making sure our students are well taught and go on to succeed in their studies. I shall see to it that they are granted the tools they need to flourish and learn, whether they be embarking on an undergraduate or postgraduate course. I believe deeply in the inclusive values of the university, its emancipatory purpose and efforts to help people get on in life. My own trajectory continues to motivate me, as indeed it always will.

I have learned a great deal from my past experiences; both the successes and the failures. I am convinced that dialogue must play a central role, that decisions should be reached collectively and compromises must be brokered. This leads me, more than ever, to back the process of listening and sharing ideas in the pursuit of one single goal: defending the shared interests of the university whilst still holding on to those aspects which make it unique. Throughout my career, I have made respecting rules and procedures a personal and professional badge of honour. By applying to become rector, I hope to use my mastery of numerous policy areas, my capacity to lead and my negotiating skills to make the ULB a great university at the heart of Europe.

### *A university facing up to challenges and vulnerabilities*

Operating to a tight budget at a time when the number of students is increasing, the current way that universities are funded does not allow us to carry out our three missions in the way we would wish and leaves us unable to get on with renovating our infrastructure as much as is needed.

- With the other rectors, I will encourage political actors and public authorities to grant sufficient funds to higher education and academic research.
- Given the risk of the regionalisation of community competences which could have an impact on university and hospital funding in the Brussels Capital region, I will stand up for our unique position as a Brussels and Walloon university, with our campus at Charleroi and our offshoots in Mons.

The ULB has never been the only university in Brussels. More and more Belgian and foreign institutions are putting down roots in Brussels. I intend to strengthen the ULB's identity as the largest university in Europe's capital.

- In debates on the landscape decree, I will defend the role that the ULB plays in Brussels and point out that we do not wish to compete with new offshoots of other universities in the Wallonia Brussels Federation.
- Buoyed by the success of trying out the Polytechnic School with the VUB, I will ensure that we increase the number of joint training programmes we offer with our preferred partner, the VUB, and other universities: specialised Master's, bilingual programmes and joint Master's.

The increasingly precarious conditions in which some people are living have affected many of our students.

- An in-depth awareness-raising exercise on this situation will be carried out. The ULB will always be more attentive to the ways in which such students can be supported by offering student social support worthy of the name, and I will make sure more student accommodation is built.

Within the ULB, I have observed a certain degree of weariness when it comes to participation. The members of the university community are always ready to roll their sleeves up and get involved. However, they'd also like a better work/life balance and do not necessarily wish to be tied up with projects for years, across a number of issues. What we need to do is introduce initiatives in which people can get involved in specific subject areas for a limited period of time. The ULB has several researchers who have become experts in new forms of participation. I suggest that we call on these experts in order to test new ways to manage our university.

- During the first year of my term of office, I will launch my first initiative: I will submit a proposal to the Plenary Assembly to draw up a randomly-selected assembly made up of members of the four bodies entrusted with the task of debating the terms and conditions according to which the rector is elected.

Finally, every five years, the drawing up of Faculty development plans results in very tense and frustrating negotiations for all of the Faculties. It's hard to sidestep any kind of tension or difficulty, but we can alleviate some of the stress.

- A monitoring system will be established. In consultation with the Faculties, a table of benchmarks for teaching and research will be provided on a periodic basis in order to plan for critical situations, take note of matters worthy of our attention and debate them as a group.
- A phase of reflection will be organised with the Faculty authorities and the delegation of the academic body to the academic council and the governing board regarding non-profiled chairs. Organising a contest on an annual basis is highly time-consuming for two posts. A contest for more posts, held every three to five years, could ease the level of recurring involvement. The phase of reflection will seek to pinpoint the advantages and disadvantages of every format.

## Supporting the ULB teacher

The ULB is growing ever more attractive. It is opening its doors to more students than ever before. We must continue to be worthy of the level of trust our students place in us. It's worth pointing out that the new *landscape decree* has done nothing to change the failure rate. On the contrary: it has risen. Periods of study are being extended and those left behind create inextricable problems.

- During discussions on the landscape decree with the Minister for Higher Education, I will argue in favour of a return to the study year, which will provide the students with a more readable, more understandable and more motivating study pathway.

The way students are guided towards university and helped to make the transition from secondary school will be reconsidered. Experiments on the 'New BA' have been kick-started.

- This experiment will be broadened if its evaluation proves conclusive.

The forms and timeframes of learning are changing. People rightly expect the ULB to become part of the change in order to improve the quality of teaching it offers.

- In future, we will tighten up the courses we offer, fixate less on the 'sage on the stage' and be more open to different teaching arrangements. This will help create a more interactive pedagogical dynamic between teacher and students. For teachers, what this will mean is a timetable made up of fewer, more interactive classes.
- I suggest that requests to the Teaching Support Fund (Fonds d'encouragement à l'enseignement or FEE in French) be geared primarily towards supporting the production of pedagogical innovations designed to operate on an inter-faculty and cross-cutting level. Several avenues were opened up in the 2030 Strategic Plan: moving towards more intensive study periods, holding some courses every two years, raising the number of teaching support services, project learning, acquiring knowledge outside standard hours, encouraging people to get involved with winter, spring or summer universities, distance learning, organising excursions, simulations, group projects, case studies, etc.
- Infrastructure will be renovated in order to make way for more interactive methods.

This collaborative approach will also lead to greater cooperation with the VUB and UMONS, as well as other universities in the Wallonia Brussels Federation and the Flemish community, our preferred university partners, universities included in CIVIS and so on.

Further training is here to stay. The ULB is fully signed up to it through its further training services and specialised Master's.

- Thought will also be given to developing further training in an effort to build bridges between initial and further training and allow students, doctoral students and the ULB's academic and scientific staff, as well as ATGS staff to become acquainted with new methods and techniques.

## Supporting the researcher and the research unit at the ULB

Research is at the heart of what universities do.

- I intend to remind people of the importance of research, in all its forms, when it comes to improving people's knowledge, increasing social capital and contributing to economic and human development in society. New initiatives on the part of public authorities to support research are possible; for example, why it's worth supporting strategic research. This approach would allow us to fund excellent projects in areas selected for the usefulness they provide to society. With my colleagues from other universities, I will invite several public actors to fund this new line of research.
- I will call on rectors in the Wallonia Brussels Federation to work more closely with me in order to come up with suggested improvements to the processes of regional decisions regarding research funding and increase the level of regional investment in research.
- *Open Science* will be promoted. We will make our work and publications as accessible as possible and we will also work towards extending *Open Access* to data so as to make it easier for the latter to be archived and re-used.

When seeking out subsidies, projects and grants, we will work in a more rigorous fashion. Undeniable progress has already been made. The *cellule Europe* (Europe cell), part of the research department, is of great help here. Those working in research logistics have been assigned to faculties and centres. This progress will be consolidated and built upon. We must face up to the sense of discouragement felt by academic and scientific staff when it comes to mounting a project.

- I plan to consolidate and increase aid to researchers. Every applicant will benefit from proofreading assistance for projects and will have access to a point of contact to answer his/her questions. When applying to FRS-FNRS, each member of the scientific community will be informed of the terms and conditions regarding aid.

- Administrative support will also be provided. The ULB must dive straight into the co-construction of a dossier: researchers, general administrative services and logisticians. For this to happen, what we need to do is develop the policy of allocating research logisticians to research units and faculties to lend their support to submitting the project or provide technical support to the platforms. Funds will be increased for the department of research in order to respond seamlessly and quickly to the ups and downs of scientific life and to the problems with which researchers find themselves confronted.
- When drawing up a project, the one-stop shop will be the work basis for all information of an administrative nature. Making this procedure systematic will save a lot of time, allow people to broaden their skills set, make it easier for people to submit files and improve the latter's quality. Project management will be approached from the same angle. Units and sponsors will work with clear and verified salary projections, able to benefit from daily, analytical accounting support.
- In order to facilitate and encourage the drawing up and management of projects, I will suggest that part of the overheads be returned to the laboratory of the person promoting the project: 1 percentage point for those projects which generate 15% of the overheads, 0.75 of a percentage point for projects generating between 10 and less than 15%, and half a percentage point for projects generating between 5 and less than 10%.

Some sectors in the higher education sector have joined or will join up with the universities.

- I will suggest that academics working in these sectors be given support in developing their research. A pro-active policy to initiate a scientific dynamic will be conducted. Attention will also be drawn to bodies which support scientific research so that new actors are able to submit projects with ease.

The Scientific Research Fund (Fonds de la recherche scientifique or FRS-FNRS in French) plays a decisive role when it comes to scientific outreach. The FRS-FNRS and universities in the Wallonia Brussels Federation have always enjoyed a close working relationship. If this thriving relationship is to continue, some expectations on the part of researchers, which have not, as yet, been met, will be taken into consideration.

- A period of reflection on various options as regards minimum financial guarantees when applying for a loan will be launched.
- Involving new sectors in the life of the universities will also be discussed in order to allow these fields to find their place amongst the FRS-FNRS financial instruments. Similar attention will be paid to the submission of cross-cutting and interdisciplinary projects.

Finally, the FRS-FNRS and the universities will work together to increase funding for the FRS-FNRS. I will support the philosophy of the FRS-FNRS's 20.25 flagship plan for public authorities, calling for them to be given greater support.

## Academic staff careers and well-being in the workplace

The careers of our academic staff, just like that of ATGS staff who report to the Director-General, is a matter of great concern, as well as being a sensitive issue. It will be partially rethought, with the aim of reducing competition amongst colleagues.

- The number of promotions to the rank of full professor is clearly too low. I will make increasing this number a political priority, and therefore a budgetary priority. I will increase by 50% the number of promotions programmed to take place over the next four years.
- The career note will be re-examined. A reflection paper will be sent to the faculties and the delegation of the academic body on the steps to take when submitting a file. The current situation has a regulatory effect but leads to strategic calculations when it comes to applying for a promotion. It gives rise to self-censorship, which affects women more.
- I suggest that levels of engagement be more closely monitored. Every newly-hired full-time member of staff will continue to be invited to a welcome day. S/he will meet the vice-rector and

dean in order adequately to think through how s/he can best proceed with his/her probation period from a pedagogical and scientific point of view. Every new FRS-FNRS agent who has a teaching load at the ULB will benefit from a flat fee. In line with FRS-FNRS rules, monthly flat rates will be compared with the maximum scale for a *chargé de cours* for a *chercheur qualifié* or *maître de recherche* and for a professor for a *directeur de recherche*.

- For those who so wish, the mentoring programme will be available to them. A five-yearly meeting will be held with the vice-rector and dean in order to take stock of pedagogical and scientific progress, deal with any problems which may have arisen, consider career prospects and look into the possibility of sabbaticals.
- A welcome session will also be held for part-time academic staff. The role they play in training students and helping them make the transition from university into the world of work are essential and will be better recognised.
- Working with the administration, I will ensure that we are better at responding adequately to all staff when it comes to well-being in the workplace, as well as in the fight against all forms of harassment, discrimination and psychosocial risks. I will focus my attention on three major areas: anticipating problems, not allowing difficult situations to fester and paying particular attention to staff facing stressful situations on a daily basis. The well-being of staff and students will be a priority at every stage.

## A university committed to serving its ideals

I intend to hold high the ideals for which our university stands:

1°fighting against any form of obscurantism through developing scientific knowledge and skills and ensuring these are transmitted throughout the student community and society;

2°demanding and guaranteeing for all that they may exercise free thought, which does not submit to any dogma or authority. Defending people's right to think, express themselves, teach and conduct scientific research freely, as well as in debates in the city, against threats that may arise:

a) by consistently educating our students to observe without prejudice, to critically analyse sources, to be mindful of bogus hypotheses and forms of argumentation;

b) by ensuring our university remains the place *par excellence* for diverse and pluralistic debate at costs;

c) by working relentlessly, today as in the past, to defend democracy and human rights against ideology and authoritarianism, violence, hatred and exclusion.

3°committing our skills and findings to helping serve a democratic society geared towards progress, which is based on the principles of fairness and solidarity and respects fundamental rights and the right for all to flourish, in a way which doesn't discriminate and looks after the most vulnerable.

4°the fight for equality and against discrimination, notably through guaranteeing real equality between women and men, offering effective protection to members of the university community who are victims of blackmail, harassment or pressure and by giving even better support to students experiencing financial hardship.

5°the ULB's utter commitment to the ecological transition, sustainable development, reducing waste and bringing down our levels of emissions.

## Renovated campuses and an environment where people can flourish

The success of a number of property projects decided upon by the governing board is crucial. I will ensure they are better carried out within the allotted time. These operations are a lever when it comes to implementing parts of the environment plan and offer a work environment where people can flourish.

- The working environment and well-being are also essential when it comes to us carrying out our work. The campuses will be developed so that academic and scientific staff and ATGS staff feel at

home there and in a way which promotes a collaborative style of work. A forum will be opened to collect proposals and collate people's experiences, which will allow us to enhance the sense of well-being felt by our staff in the workplace.

The property projects will create the conditions required to reduce the fragmentation between teams and hold, on a voluntary basis, more coherent meetings of units and researchers. The digitisation of campuses and the land register regarding room occupation will be completed in order to guarantee dynamic management.

- Nevertheless, property planning is not enough when one considers the level of need. Working with the other rectors, I will take resolute action vis-a-vis public authorities on imperative needs in the area. A one-off budget needs to be made available to respond to these demands.

### **A hospital network and a healthcare pole there to serve patients and the values which the ULB promotes, act as a beacon of scientific knowledge and train students in the various health fields**

The healthcare sector is in a period of great upheaval. On the one hand, greater know-how, the introduction of artificial intelligence and the improvements made to equipment have led to far less invasive medicine and are bringing about significant developments in out-patient care. On the other hand, the sector is under considerable pressure. The law governing the way hospitals are funded has been changed, cuts are being made to healthcare and political powers are pushing for downsizing without offering any incentives. Equipment is increasingly costly, whilst recruiting medical, caregiving and paramedical staff is complex.

- The Érasme teaching hospital and the ULB's hospital network are very much impacted by this upheaval. For more than fifteen years, the community of staff at Érasme Hospital has made sure the hospital has been able to escape its unbearable debt. From a financial point of view, the situation has markedly improved. However, this result was achieved by failing to invest enough in equipment and infrastructure, by pushing people to their absolute limits and by being less involved in the academic side of things. The time has therefore come for essential redeployment. To my mind, we can think of this in terms of a three-pronged approach: the relations the Érasme hospital has with the city of Brussels, the setting up of a loco-regional network and relations with the Hainaut network.
- The approach which would bear the most fruit seems to me to be the arrival of the du Grand hôpital universitaire de Bruxelles (GHUB), which was born out of the grouping together of the Érasme hospital, CHU Brugmann, the Hôpital universitaire des enfants Reine Fabiola, the CHU Saint-Pierre and the Institut Jules Bordet. Through clearly respecting certain conditions, the GHUB will be a hospital pole which will serve as a point of reference in Belgium and abroad: a point of reference in terms of healthcare, equipment, teaching, research, training and the carrying out of all healthcare professions, founded upon the ideals of the ULB in terms of the approach to health.
- For the project to succeed, negotiations must respect all parties involved. It will form part of efforts to harmonise the status of staff and will take care to place the academic dimension of the new entity front and centre. Managing bodies will be established, founded on the principles of good governance and professionalism.
- Finally, the GHUB will forge dynamic and mutually-beneficial relations with our expected partners from the locoregional network – Chirec and the hospitals IRIS Sud (HIS) – and with our partners from Hainaut.

The Érasme hospital is currently the ULB's university hospital, in line with the royal decree of 7 June 2004. Once the GHUB assumes its position as the new ULB university hospital, I will be the guarantor of the conditions pertaining to its academic nature, especially when it comes to teaching and research which respects the legal conditions which define the university hospital.

I will take part in a phase of reflection on how the Érasme hospital will be governed, in particular with a view to its expansion to the GHUB.

- I will play an active role in negotiations over the creation of the GHUB in order to guarantee, in particular, that the new entity obeys the conditions set down by law in terms of appointing hospital doctors.

### In the heart of Charleroi

Our presence in Charleroi is more apparent than ever before. The Biopark is a shining example of great work in molecular biology and medicine. With UMONS and the higher education institution Condorcet, we offer several study strands at Bachelor's and Master's level on the UCharleroi campus. What's more, several further training programmes are also offered. The ULB's involvement in Charleroi is a vital tool when it comes to supporting the social and cultural emancipation of young people from the region and the continued development of the ULB.

- On the Gosselies campus, it is important to keep the Center for Microscopy and Molecular Imaging going. More shuttle services will be laid on. Finally, a period of reflection will be undertaken alongside the Faculties of Science, Medicine and *Ecole Polytechnique de Bruxelles* on the added value of working with companies to provide some Master's courses.
- On the UCharleroi campus, I will support its research areas via, in particular, the research units TRANSFO (Research Centre for Social Change) et C3E2D (Centre of excellence in energy efficiency and sustainable development). We will keep on offering pedagogical support to the three new Bachelor's programmes and build on our student services.

### A foreign policy serving a university with an international dimension

The ULB can draw on key partnerships which are the building blocks of its international policy: preferred partnerships, UNICA and the *université européenne* CIVIS. This institutional structuring will be strengthened by avoiding too much dispersion.

- I plan to simplify international procedures for staff by applying a bottom up logic. Procedures making it easier and more flexible to take action will also be introduced in the external relations department.
- As part of the ULB's internationalisation strategy, more emphasis will be placed on making scientific research visible and appreciated on the global stage.
- The ULB is a major player when it comes to cooperation. I intend to strengthen that position, by offering special support to collaborative projects in Africa, especially in the health sector.

### Recognising the commitment of those involved in the ULB's outreach programmes

Many women and men participate in a daily basis in the ULB's outreach work, often in a voluntary capacity. From CEPULB to the Extension of the ULB via the UAE, our alumni and ULB Coopération, these structures and people are standing up for our ideals and missions and are bringing people closer to the ULB. I'd like to express our warmest gratitude to all those who through a sense of devotion, friendship or commitment, get involved in the day-to-day life of the ULB. We would also like to offer our thanks to retired colleagues who are involved in teaching and research, all of which help us extend our outreach.

Several reforms have been undertaken over the last few years, and the time has come for the ULB to consolidate its activities and soothe internal relations centred around a rallying project which improves people's daily lives. With this ambition in our sights, with a team made up of women and men who are devoted and competent, I am calling on you to choose a strong, committed and dynamic university.