

Code of conduct for preventing and combating violations of interpersonal integrity (inappropriate behaviour)

Foreword

The Executive Board wants everyone at Utrecht University, both employees and students, to treat each other with respect and integrity, and to be able to work and study in a safe and comfortable environment. All interaction within a healthy and stimulating work and study environment should be based on collegiality, respect and mutual understanding, and violations of interpersonal integrity (inappropriate behaviour) require a prompt response. A climate of this nature is only possible if everyone who works or studies at the university is actively committed to its realisation: not only in relation to their own behaviour, but also by being vigilant to any form of inappropriate behaviour that they identify in their own environment. Violations of interpersonal integrity (inappropriate behaviour) should always be raised for discussion: by directly addressing those involved, either oneself or as a bystander, and/or by involving third parties. This requires an open culture, in which everybody feels free to report violations of interpersonal integrity.

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to bring all of the aforementioned principles to the attention of all levels of the university community.

The Utrecht University Code of Conduct provides a framework for behaviour and reflection in general. For matters regarding specific types of behaviour, the Code of Conduct refers to separate regulations. The present Code of Conduct is one such set of specific behavioural regulations. For staff, this Code of Conduct represents a detailed specification of Article 1.12 of the Collective Labour Agreement for Dutch Universities (CAO NU).

Scope

This code of conduct applies to:

- past and present staff and students of the university,
- other persons working under the university's responsibility as temp staff, interim staff or students on work placements

and their behaviour towards one another within the context of work or study situations and/or relationships.

Definitions

In this Code of Conduct, the following terms are defined as follows:

Violation of Interpersonal Integrity

(inappropriate behaviour): behaviour, actions, or omissions thereof that are experienced as negative and have physical, psychological or social consequences. This concept includes, but is not limited to: intimidation, sexual intimidation, discrimination, aggression, violence, and bullying, in the workplace or study contexts;

Harassment: any form of verbal, non-verbal or physical behaviour that has the object or effect of impacting a person's dignity, negatively affecting work or study performance or creating an unsafe work or study situation;

Sexual harassment: any form of verbal, non-verbal or physical behaviour with a sexual connotation that has the object or effect of impacting a person's dignity, negatively affecting work or study performance or creating an unsafe work or study situation;

Discrimination: drawing unjustified distinctions, issuing insults or performing violent acts against staff or students based on religion, worldview, political opinions, race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, civil status, age, disability, chronic illness, or on any other basis whatsoever;

Aggression and violence: harassing, threatening or attacking a staff or student using psychological, physical or verbal means;

Bullying: intimidating behaviour of an ongoing nature by one or more staff or students towards one or more staff or students;

Violations of interpersonal integrity (inappropriate behaviour) can take various forms. Some examples:

- it is used explicitly or implicitly as a condition for employment

- it is used as the basis for decisions that affect a person's work or studies
- it impacts a person's work or study performance (deliberately or otherwise) and creates an intimidating, hostile or uncomfortable work or study environment;
- it involves verbal or non-verbal behaviour inappropriate to a professional work or study situation;
- it involves verbal or non-verbal behaviour that stereotypes a person or group, placing an emphasis on inequality as a result.

Preventive policy

This Code of Conduct is intended as a form of preventive policy. Preventive policy on violations of interpersonal integrity (inappropriate behaviour) is part of overall university policy and is designed to ensure, among other things, the following:

- adequate dissemination of this Code;
- sufficient information on the policy and the risks of violations of interpersonal integrity (inappropriate behaviour) within the institution;
- the systematic identification of the risks pertaining to violations of interpersonal integrity (inappropriate behaviour) as part of Risk Identification & Assessment under the Working Conditions Act 1998;
- the elimination or mitigation of risks pertaining to violations of interpersonal integrity (inappropriate behaviour), including as these relate to HR policy and PhD-student policy; and
- monitoring compliance with the Code.

Confidential adviser for inappropriate behaviour

Utrecht University has at least two Confidential Advisers for inappropriate behaviour. These confidential advisers have an independent position within the university, and as such and enjoy protection from the side of the employer.

They represent the notifier/complainant, and are therefore partisan in the role they fulfil in the care system.

The confidential adviser's duties include, among others:

- acting as a point of contact for past or present UU students and staff who are/were confronted with instances of sexual harassment, violence, intimidation, bullying or discrimination;
- providing care and aftercare for these persons, and referring them to specialists as necessary;
- advising notifiers regarding any other steps to be taken, and possibly providing support to do so;
- explaining these regulations and the ensuing consequences;
- discussing steps aimed at finding a solution, and supporting this process;
- on request, providing support to those considering submitting a complaint to the Committee for Interpersonal Integrity (CII);
- providing solicited and unsolicited advice to the competent authority (mandated or otherwise) on matters pertaining to violations of interpersonal integrity;
- providing information and publicity about the role played by confidential advisers;
- registering notifications and issuing an anonymised report to the Executive Board about the number of notifications and their nature once a year.

An external confidential adviser is available for those who are the object of a notification. A standard agreement is in place with an external party for this purpose.

Committee for Interpersonal Integrity

The university has a Procedural Policy for Notifications and Complaints Regarding Violations of Interpersonal Integrity (Inappropriate Behaviour), and a Committee for Interpersonal Integrity (CII) appointed by the Executive Board charged with processing, investigating and advising on written complaints concerning violations of interpersonal integrity (inappropriate behaviour). Any person who experiences inappropriate behaviour can contact a confidential adviser or the CII and issue a notification, but it is also possible to submit a complaint directly to the CII, who will process it directly. After the CII has issued a recommendation to the Executive Board, the board will issue a decision on the complaint and any action to be taken. For more information, please refer to the notification information leaflet and the Procedural Policy ([link](#)).

Adoption

This code of conduct was adopted by the Executive Board as far as students are concerned with the consent of the University Council on 3 October 2022 and as far as employees are concerned on 19 October 2022 in agreement with the Local Consultation and replaces the previous Code of Conduct to Prevent and Combat Undesirable Behaviour dated 9 April 2019.