

## Facing the Climate's Future

### Creating an (in)formal support network between students and teachers

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### Project description

How can we face the catastrophic reality of climate change? How do we live with, or even make sense of, the sense of unavoidable terror ahead? How can we address rightful anxieties about climate change and other environmental threats? As universities, we do not do a good job helping students find answers to these questions. And yet, climate change disproportionately affects the young. They are acutely aware of this vulnerability. A 2021 study among 10.000 young people (aged 16-25) in 10 countries found that 59% were very or extremely worried about climate change (Marks et al., 2021). 84% was at least moderately worried. Troublingly, over 50% felt sad, angry, powerless, anxious, or guilty. For 45%, it affected their daily lives negatively. In our capacity as teachers and researchers, we observe increasing political disenfranchisement and despair among students. It is a mix of fear, anxiety, and anger that we recognise. In our view, universities today are neither able to address these concerns nor provide the support structures we need to alleviate the worst fears about the future. As one master student in the Geosciences faculty recently put it: students need support systems and education that *'takes emotional and psychological issues related to climate seriously'*.

In this project, we will be looking to set up a support structure for students and teachers collectively, a support network that helps students (and teachers) face the future. We aim to create an informal yet regular structure of meetings, conversations, (intellectual) resources, and get-togethers for students and teachers to discuss their fears about the future. Our meetings will centre on how to address those fears, and how channel our fear in motivating directions. To do so, we will need practical support. In this project, we are looking for a student assistant who would help set up the network, help to organise the meetings, identify useful resources, and handle invitations and administration. With the help of a student assistant, we hope to build a self-sustaining support network run by students and teachers together.

### Job requirements

For this assistantship, we will look for someone who cares deeply about the on-going climate crisis, and wants to help us build a support network for students of Utrecht University. As such, we would look to someone with organizational skills, as well as an interest in doing desk research identifying interesting, helpful literature, videos, exercises, or other materials.

In practice, the project would entail maintaining the network, organizing meetings, and planning forms of engagement that help people through their anxieties.