Utrecht University

SOCIAL SAFETY

I filed a complaint. What is next?

This information is for people who have filed a complaint with the Interpersonal Integrity Committee. Below we outline the process and what you can expect from it.

COMPLAINT OR NOTIFICATION

You can report (alleged) cross-border behavior or file a complaint with the Interpersonal Integrity Committee. A notification is registered, but usually not further reviewed or investigated. With a complaint, it works differently. When the committee receives a complaint, it first assesses whether the complaint is admissible.

ADMISSIBILITY

After studying the complaint, the committee issues an admissibility recommendation to the Executive Board. To do so, it considers whether the complaint complies with the definitions of the regulations, has been submitted in time, contains sufficiently concrete facts and circumstances, who has submitted the complaint, to whom the complaint relates, what type of conduct is involved and whether it took place within a work or study context. The Executive Board then decides whether the complaint is admissible. If the board says "yes," then the committee begins its investigation into the merits of the complaint.

START OF THE INVESTIGATION

Usually, the first thing the committee does in the investigation is to notify the accused. The accused party is then given an understanding of the complaint and an opportunity to defend themselves against it. Initially in writing and secondly in an interview. The committee shares the written defense with the complainant. At this stage, the committee also informs those involved about the procedure and is available for questions. If the accused is a UU employee, the supervisor is usually informed as well.

HEARING

If the complaint and defense have been exchanged, then the complainant and accused are invited for an interview. The complainant and the accused are each heard separately. They may be assisted by, for example, a confidential advisor.
Interviews are with usually three or four committee members assigned to the investigation. They usually last one to one and a half hours and are recorded. In the interview, the parties are given the opportunity to explain their views and provide additional information to the complaint or defense. The committee also asks questions about the documents provided (complaint, defense, supporting evidence, etc.) with the primary goal of gaining deeper insight into the case and come to a better understanding. Often these are open-ended questions that give the interviewee space; sometimes they are more direct, probing questions. Of course, parties are also given time to raise their issues to the committee, provide witnesses, and so on.

INTERVIEW REPORTS

The committee makes a report of the interviews, which the interviewee checks for factual inaccuracies and then signs. These reports are not further shared with the parties; however, together with the complaint and the defense, they form the basis for the advice to the Executive Board.

WITNESSES AND EXPERTS

Both complainant and accused are given the opportunity to present witnesses or experts who can further substantiate or illustrate their views. The committee ultimately determines whether they will be heard. Witnesses are often heard by the committee in person (or in Teams), but the committee may also ask for written statements, possibly based on specific questions.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SESSIONS

As a result of the interviews or after reviewing submitted documents, the committee may decide to schedule additional rounds of information. These may include additional interviews with the complainant, accused, witnesses or others involved (such as supervisors). But it also happens that the committee submits written questions to individuals.

THE RECOMMENDATION

When the committee completes its investigation, it writes its recommendation to the Executive Board. This includes arguments as to whether the committee considers a complaint to be founded or unfounded. In doing so, it uses relevant data it has gathered from the interviews, documents and other additional evidence, laws and regulations, etc. Sometimes (parts of) that advice are submitted to the parties to make factual corrections or to ask for a response. The advice is then sent to the Executive Board, which decides whether or not to follow the committee's advice. The Board is advised by Legal Affairs. In addition to opinions on the merits of the complaint, the committee may advise in a separate document the Board on, for example, measures or sanctions needed to improve social safety in the organization.

THE COMMITTEE IS INDEPENDENT AND IMPARTIAL

The committee can conduct its investigation autonomously. It is bound by the regulation Procedural Policy for Notifications and Complaints Regarding Violations of Interpersonal Integrity (Inappropriate Behaviour), but it is not directed or controlled by Utrecht University. It is explicitly committed to carefully safeguarding the interests of both the complainant and the accused. The committee herein operates independently and impartially. It bases its judgment solely on the information gathered during its investigation.

WHERE SHOULD YOU DO AND NOT DO?

When you have filed a complaint, a few things are important:

- Study the Procedure for Reporting and Handling Complaints about Violations of Interpersonal Integrity (undesirable behavior). If you have questions about this, please contact one of the confidants.
- The entire procedure is confidential; so, do not share confidential information with others, nor try to win people over to your "position" in advance. That hinders an objective investigation. Leave the investigation in the hands of the committee.
- Do not seek contact with the accused about the complaint procedure or their supervisor or colleagues. And do not take any actions that could potentially affect or influence the accused.
- If you have questions about the procedure during the investigation, you can always contact the committee.
- Share with the committee the *concrete, factually* supporting "evidence" with which you wish to substantiate or illustrate your views, experiences, perceptions.
- Prepare well for the interview. Have information ready, and facts in order. Think about what questions you want to ask yourself. If you have questions about the interview beforehand: feel free to ask any questions!
- If necessary, seek professional help and support (for example, from company social work or the confidential advisor), because these kinds of procedures are emotionally taxing. The committee cannot provide that support; after all, it is impartial.