



Social Safety Annual Report 2022

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1 INTRODUCTION

This is the 2022 annual report of Maastricht University's Social Safety (*Sociale Veiligheid*, SV) team. In the course of 2022, the university took a number of steps to enhance social safety for staff and students. This report focuses on the activities aimed at employees and the results of those activities.

The themes of a socially safe work environment and (in)appropriate behaviour were topics of broad social debate in 2022. The previous year, the Executive Board of Maastricht University (UM) had commissioned an internal advisory report on how to improve social safety in the work environment. This led to the formation of the SV team in 2022. At the same time, the social debate on sexually inappropriate behaviour in organisations flared up due to the scandal surrounding the Dutch reality television programme *The Voice*.

Steps to improve the work environment have since been taken both at the national level and within specific sectors. The government appointed a commissioner for sexually inappropriate behaviour and sexual abuse. In June 2022, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) published a report confirming that inappropriate behaviour was present in various forms in Dutch universities and offering concrete instruments to enhance social safety in this sector.

The present annual report provides insight into the activities of the SV team; the number and nature of the reports received by the Concerns and Complaints Point (CCP), the ombuds officer and the confidential advisers; and the handling thereof. It also provides an analysis of and recommendations to enhance social safety and implement the 'zero-tolerance' policy for undesirable behaviour.

Pursuant to the UM Ombuds Officer's Charter, the ombuds officer reports annually on her activities to the Executive Board. The data from the ombuds officer has been incorporated into this joint annual report, in which

the anonymised summary, findings, trends and recommendations are integrated with those of the CCP and the confidential advisers. With this, the ombuds officer both complies with Article 4 of the UM Ombuds Officer's Charter¹ and fulfils the Executive Board's request for an integrated annual report on social safety. As the SV team has found over the past year, it is only through such a holistic analysis that robust and effective recommendations can be made.

1.1 READING GUIDE

The next section focuses on the SV team, outlining its composition, objectives, working method and step-by-step plan. Section 3 describes the reports received, the background of the reporting parties and the handling of the reports. Section 4 sets out a number of recommendations for the university going forward.

¹ Article 4 – Annual report

1. Once a year, the ombuds officer reports on his/her/their activities to the Executive Board. The report is objective in nature and, at a minimum, indicates the number of cases handled and provides an anonymised summary of the cases, findings, trends identified and recommendations made by the ombuds officer as a result.

2. The Executive Board sends the report to the Supervisory Board, University Council, Local Consultative Body, faculties and service centres, and publishes the report on the university website. The ombuds officer is available to discuss the report at the request of any of the aforementioned bodies.

2 ORGANISATION OF SUPPORT STRUCTURES

There are different definitions of social safety. According to the Dutch Centre for Labour Relations of Civil Servants (CAOP), '[a] socially safe and healthy work environment is one in which workers treat one another with respect, can be themselves, are physically and psychologically healthy, are allowed to make mistakes and can optimally contribute their skills and professionalism to meaningful work.' The KNAW report indicates that 'a socially safe work environment pays constant attention to the question of what behaviour is desirable or not.'

In late 2021, an internal advisory report was drafted at the request of the Executive Board with the aim of 'improving the help offered to employees who wish to file a report. The university aims to ensure that employees have the courage to break the silence and can safely file a report if something happens or has happened that is not right. [...] The recommendations seek to ensure that reports can readily be made and that guidance is provided in a sound and socially safe manner.'

The recommendations in the advisory report included:

- establishing a Concerns & Complaints Point (CCP)
- appointing an ombuds officer and drafting accompanying regulations and statutes
- expanding the capacity of the centralised confidential advisers.

As a result, the ombuds officer was appointed on 1 April 2022. As of 15 June 2022, the CCP has been set up, the CCP coordinator appointed and the capacity of the confidential advisers expanded. Together, these officers form the Social Safety (SV) team.

2.1 FUNCTIONS AND WORKING METHOD

The SV team is composed of four employees: the CCP coordinator, the ombuds officer and two confidential advisers. Employees can contact the CCP coordinator with questions or concerns about social safety, specifically undesirable behaviour and integrity. According to the Working Conditions Act, undesirable behaviour includes sexual harassment, intimidation, bullying, aggression or violence, and discrimination. In practice, this manifests itself in many forms, with abuse of power and workplace conflicts also playing a role. Conversations with members of the SV team are always confidential, unless a criminal offense has been committed or, in the case of the ombuds officer, employee safety is at stake. In these cases a

police report must be filed. In all other situations, team members only share information with one another or with third parties with the explicit consent of the employee concerned.

The CCP coordinator explains what the employee or reporting party can expect from a confidential adviser, the ombuds officer or an HR adviser or from a (formal) complaint procedure. If necessary, the coordinator refers the employee or reporting party to external assistance (e.g. the company doctor or company social worker). The ombuds officer is neutral and impartial and can advise, mediate or investigate. The confidential adviser represents the interests of the reporting party, offering a listening ear and discussing the situation with the employee in order to arrive at a suitable solution. When assisted by the confidential adviser, the reporting party always retains control of the proceedings.

The members of the SV team operate independently; i.e. they are not subject to a hierarchy or management, nor do they have a formal assignment. The advisory board installed pursuant to the UM Ombuds Officer's Charter evaluates the role of the ombuds officer annually and reports its findings to the Executive Board.

2.2 MISSION, PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

At the outset, the SV team formulated a mission, core values and objectives. Its mission is to enhance the social safety of UM employees with a view to creating a culture in which they can work and learn safely. The guiding principles are confidentiality, accessibility, transparency and expertise.

Accessibility entails that employees can approach the team members personally with their questions, complaints and/or concerns about social safety. An initial response is provided within 24 hours. Communication is transparent and the team discusses what can and cannot be done to advise and support the reporting party and manage expectations. Based on the professionalism of everybody concerned, the case is kept as small as possible and made as large as necessary.

The objectives are:

1. to increase the visibility of the CCP and the SV team
2. to treat individual cases with due professionalism
3. to raise awareness among employees and managers of the issue of social safety
4. to identify trends and make recommendations in clearly formulated annual and other reports.

2.3 STEP-BY-STEP PLAN

Enhancing social safety at UM is a step-by-step process that requires constant refinement. This is in line with the observation in the aforementioned KNAW report that behaviour perceived as unacceptable is not static, but subject to change. It is neither possible nor desirable to address all the recommendations from the report at once. The SV team aims to enhance social safety at UM using a step-by-step approach with ongoing refinements as needed. This includes proactively initiating dialogue among employees and managers, sharing experiences and narratives, developing managers' skills and updating the relevant regulations and statutes. In the first instance, directors and managers are expected to set an example when it comes to enhancing awareness of social safety.

2.4 ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIAL SAFETY TEAM

The activities of the SV team can be divided into internal and external activities. Within the university, various connections have been forged to increase the visibility of the team and raise awareness of the theme of social safety. The team also participates in committees and initiatives outside the university with a view to enhancing knowledge and relationships.

INTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Introductory talks

Following the appointment of the ombuds officer and the SV team, introductory talks were held with all deans, directors, heads of service centres and many managers. The aim of these talks was, on the one hand, to introduce the CCP and the SV team and to raise awareness of social safety. On the other hand, the talks provided the SV team with insight into the differences between faculties, the culture within the organisational units, the existing procedures and so on. In this way, the team began building a relationship with the university as a whole, which is essential when a case arises and parties need to be able to find one another quickly, enter into a dialogue or send a signal.

Presentations and workshops

In 2022, the SV team began giving presentations to various groups, both on the initiative of the team itself and by invitation. Often these presentations are followed by a group discussion. A start was also made with interactive

meetings and workshops. These experiences have already shown that sharing knowledge and increasing awareness lowers the threshold for reporting and prompts discussions about social safety. The meetings always result in follow-up discussions with individuals and/or reports.

Managers can also turn to the SV team for specific, ad-hoc questions.

Structural cooperation

The SV team has made agreements on structural cooperation with the 19 faculty PhD confidential advisers (18 internal, 1 external). These confidential advisers have indicated that they wish to receive training and discuss concrete cases as part of their own further professionalisation. The SV team will organise and facilitate meetings to this end as of 2023. The confidential advisers have committed to recording reports in the same way as the SV team and to providing input for the annual report on social safety 2023.

To stay abreast of UM regulations and developments in the HR field, consultations have been held with the Legal Affairs and Human Resources directors.

Communication

The SV team is now easier to find on both the UM website and the intranet. In collaboration with the Communications department, a Social Safety group has been created in which regular posts are published. Additionally, a visual for the SV team has been commissioned in order to increase its recognisability. This will be ready for use in the first quarter of 2023.

Education and training

In collaboration with the Leadership Academy, the SV team developed the training course Leadership and Undesirable Behaviour. This module will be mandatory for managers from 2023. It consists of a half day of e-learning and a half day of practising with cases. More attention will also be drawn to the Active Bystander training for employees. In addition, the SV team has started making an inventory of Good Habitz's offer of courses, master classes and other forms of training in the area of social safety.

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Peer review and training

The ombuds officer is a member of the Dutch Association of Higher Education Ombuds Officers (VOHO) and participates in peer-review sessions with ombuds officers from around the region. She has also started a course in Conflict Management. The confidential advisers are part of a peer-review group and one confidential adviser obtained certification from the Dutch Association for Confidential Advisers (LVV) in 2022.

University committee

The CCP coordinator is part of the Social Safety Portfolio Holders Committee organised by the Universities of the Netherlands (UNL).

National helpline WetenschapVeilig

The national helpline for academics who have been threatened or harassed, WetenschapVeilig, was launched on 7 November 2022. Reports from UM filed through this channel are forwarded directly to the CCP, which processes them immediately. In 2022, UM received no reports through this platform.

3 CONCERNS, QUESTIONS, REPORTS AND COMPLAINTS

This annual report is based on reports filed with the ombuds officer from 1 April 2022 to 1 January 2023 and with the CCP from June 2022 to 1 January 2023. It also includes reports from one confidential adviser from June 2022 to 1 January 2023; due to circumstances, reports filed with the other confidential adviser were not registered.

Every first contact initiated by an employee with a member of the SV team is registered as a 'report.' This therefore includes every request for advice, concern, report or complaint related to social safety. These reports are handled informally where possible and formally where necessary. In the latter case, employees are referred to the Complaints Committee for Undesirable Behaviour.

In addition to the data from the SV team, this annual report draws on reports filed with the faculty PhD confidential advisers, insofar as they have been registered and passed on. These are listed separately.

3.1 NUMBER OF REPORTING PARTIES

A total of 112 employees submitted a report to the SV team, i.e. just over 2% of the total number of employees (5,146). The number of reporting parties differs from the number of reports because in five situations reporting parties submitted a joint report.

Slightly more than half (53%) of the reporting parties were academic staff and 9% were PhD candidates (Figure 1). Eight reporting parties classed as academic staff reported on a situation that took place during their PhD, which they only dared to speak up about now. This points to an evident fear of repercussions; indeed, even after completing their PhDs, this group still believed their careers would be adversely affected. This is one reason why reporting parties approach the SV team confidentially—they do not want their name to be made public. In this respect, the SV team notes a university-wide pattern whereby employees are hesitant to raise issues with their managers. Because they tend to hold off, by the time they turn to the SV team the situation has often escalated and become increasingly emotional. This tendency is exacerbated by the fact that—as we have learnt from reporting parties and other sources—some managers actively discourage employees from approaching the SV team. One argument given for this is that reporting parties would thereby escalate matters themselves. Indeed,

in a number of cases, employees were explicitly warned that they could face consequences for turning to the SV team.

Five bystanders reported on behalf of a colleague or asked for advice on how they could act in a specific situation in which they were not personally victims of inappropriate behaviour.

Two reporting parties were former employees and one was an employee on secondment to UM.

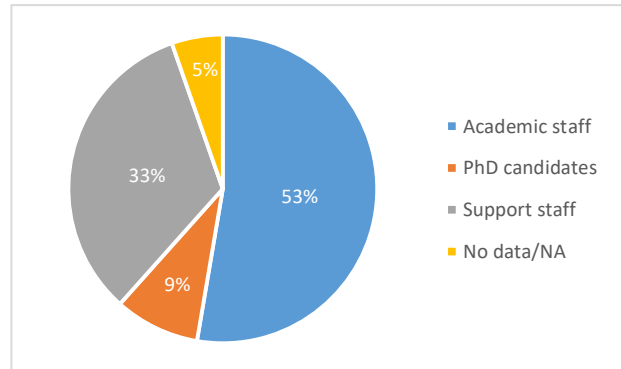


Figure 1 Profiles of reporting parties

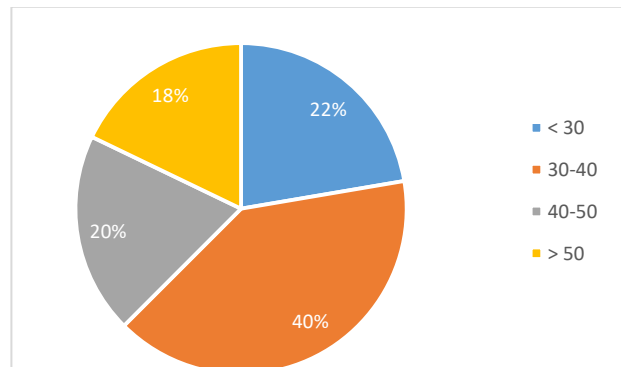


Figure 2 Age groups of reporting parties

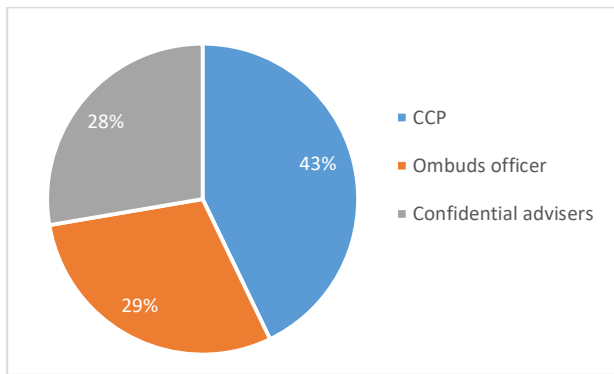
3.2 NUMBER OF REPORTS

Figure 3 shows the breakdown of the reports received by the members of the SV team (99 in total). As noted previously, all questions, concerns, reports and complaints are registered as 'reports.' On average, 2.5 conversations are held with each reporting party.

A total of 43% of the reports were filed through the CCP. Reporting parties have one or two discussions with the CCP coordinator, who then decides whether the reporting party will be referred for further steps or support.

The CCP coordinator referred two people to the confidential adviser, five to the ombuds officer and twelve to other people or bodies (a coach, the company doctor, the

company social worker, the police or other specialised assistance). A further 29% of the reports were received directly by the ombuds officer and 28% by the central confidential advisers.² No reporting parties were referred to the Complaints Committee for Undesirable Behaviour for a formal complaint procedure; i.e. all reports were handled informally. Some reports did, however, eventually lead to an investigation (see Section 3.6).



Figuur 3 Reports filed through various channels

Seven of the 19 faculty PhD confidential advisers (from FSE, FaSoS, FL, SBE and FHML) provided input to the SV team on the reports filed by PhD candidates. Of the total of 27 reports, 13 were filed with the only external faculty PhD confidential adviser (FHML) and 14 with the internal faculty confidential advisers (0 to 9 reports each). The high proportion of reports received by the external confidential adviser is striking.

3.3 NATURE OF REPORTS

Reporting parties can approach the SV team with reports relating to undesirable behaviour and integrity (Figure 4). Undesirable behaviour refers to acts committed by individuals as outlined in the Working Conditions Act, which contains definitions of sexual harassment, intimidation, aggression and violence, discrimination and bullying. The Act also stipulates that it is the prerogative of the receiving party to determine what he or she experiences as undesirable. Employees can also turn to the SV team to report threats (internal or external), questions or ambiguities surrounding employment law, workplace conflicts, cooperation issues and problems related to illness and reintegration. The nature of the reports is not always black and white; often they involve a combination of causes.

As opposed to undesirable behaviour, integrity issues relate to the organisation. They may concern fraud, theft or conflicts of interest.

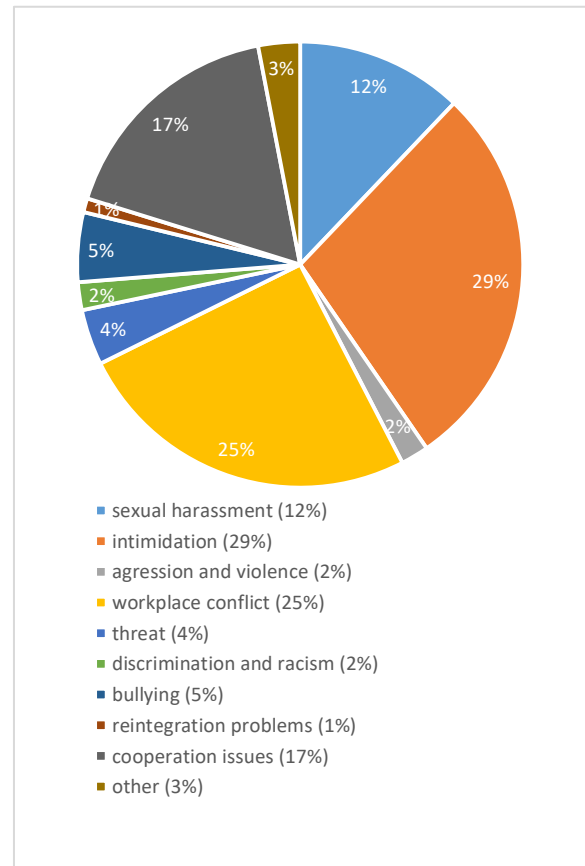


Figure 4 Nature of the reports

Intimidation

Almost a third of the reports (n=28) relate to intimidation, i.e. instilling fear by threatening negative consequences, such as dismissal. Intimidation can be physical, verbal or written. Ten of these cases concerned intimidation by a direct manager or (co)supervisor; nine cases involved a colleague. Two parties reported intimidation by students, while the other reports concerned superiors other than the immediate supervisor. Reporting parties who are confronted with intimidation by a colleague or another employee rarely dare to discuss this with their manager. The reasons given are that they feel that the manager trivialises the issue, fails to intervene and does not call the perpetrator to account for their undesirable behaviour. Reporting parties often do not feel genuinely heard and supported. The SV team learnt that on a number of occasions, managers had sent reporting parties

² Figures are known only from June 2022 onwards.

alone to talk to two or more superiors at once, apparently unaware of how intimidating this can be for employees.

Finally, seven employees reported intimidation by third parties relating to the academic research and publication process.

Workplace conflicts, bullying, workload and reintegration

A total of 25 reports (25%) concerned a workplace conflict between manager and employee. In 24 cases, the employee reported the situation; the remaining case was reported by a manager. Often several managers have been involved in a conflict but have failed to take adequate action to resolve it, leaving the issue to drag on for years. Five cases of bullying and problems surrounding reintegration were also reported, four concerning the reporting party's direct manager.

A work environment in which managers communicate poorly and fail to provide transparency can be a breeding ground for perceptions of bullying and the development of conflicts. Dysfunctional situations are avoided instead of discussed. Employees who approach the CCP, the ombuds officer or the confidential adviser are often dealing with a manager who is not playing his or her role properly. These are not always serious cases, but involve poor communication, clumsiness or a reluctance to intervene. Often there is a pattern involved, whereby multiple small incidents add up to have a major impact on the reporting party. The reports concerned managers and (co)supervisors who did not listen, failed to dedicate adequate time to supervision, made threats or imposed sanctions to get their own way or deliberately increased the employee's workload. They did not always appear to be aware of the HR policy on matters such as annual appraisals, assessment interviews and (temporary) employment contracts, or that their actions violated the applicable rules under the guise of faculty or department interests. Decisions contrary to the Collective Labour Agreement of Dutch Universities (CAO-NU) seemed to be financially driven instead of employee-oriented: the SV team came across employment contracts with pay scales that were too low, incorrect positions and salary scales, or other constructions to avoid permanent contracts. Employees had sometimes been languishing with unclear legal status for years, fostering a sense of insecurity. Reports from several faculties painted a similar picture: PhD candidates are left to fend for themselves, often have to chase up their supervisors and find doing so very difficult,

feel unsupported, or are treated as a nuisance if they request more supervision.

When asked whether they had informed HR of the situation, reporting parties often indicated that they had the impression that HR was on the manager's side. Occasionally this impression was based on concrete experience; in other cases it was just a feeling for no apparent reason.

Integrity and undesirable behaviour do not appear to be adequately taken into account in assessment interviews. Moreover, there seem to be few consequences associated with misconduct. Instead, managers prefer to minimise situations by ignoring the issues, paying too little attention to them and rarely involving experts. The consequence of this avoidant behaviour is that at some point matters escalate and spiral out of control.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment was involved in 12% of the reports (n=12). Five of these reports were made by 'bystanders' who approached the CCP or the confidential adviser, with or without the knowledge of the person directly involved, for advice on how to act in the matter. In all cases, the accused was a superior of the reporting party.

Cooperation issues

Cooperation issues were mentioned in 17% of the reports (n=17). These issues generally involved more people than the reporting party and his/her manager, although the manager always played a role. The cases varied from clumsiness and poor communication to irritations within teams and an atmosphere of gossip and backbiting. According to the reporting parties, managers often turned a blind eye and took little or no action to improve matters. As a result, the reporting parties felt that their complaints went unheard and unacknowledged.

Discrimination and racism

Two reports concerned discrimination against employees with a disability or chronic illness, who had received inadequate support to perform their duties properly. In addition, racism and threats to an employee outside of work were reported.

Other issues

The SV team was alerted to tensions between holders of scholarships from the China Scholarship Council (CSC) and non-CSC students from China. Added to this, reports from various faculties suggested that even as the Chinese

government appeared to pressurise students, the university was seen as valuing financial interests above individual welfare.

Reports to the faculty PhD confidential advisers

The common thread in the reports filed with the PhD confidential advisers concerned the supervision of PhD candidates and postdocs. Behaviours by supervisors ranged from dominance and bullying to ignoring and excluding PhD candidates. Often problems piled up and manifested themselves towards the end of the first year or the end of the dissertation. Presuppositions, poor communication and lack of time on the part of supervisors led to a sense of insecurity among PhD candidates. Furthermore, the power imbalance made it difficult for PhD candidates to draw attention to these issues. The nature of these reports echoes that of the PhD reports filed with the SV team.

3.4 HANDLING OF REPORTS

In almost 60% of the reports, advice to the reporting party sufficed and further referral or intervention was unnecessary. This suggests that in many cases, reporting parties simply wish to discuss confidentially a situation they are dealing or have dealt with, and are able to proceed on their own armed with the advice received. This category also includes bystanders, managers and HR advisers who requested advice regarding situations in which they themselves were not directly victims, but wanted to know what action they could take.

In just over 40% of cases, more than advice was needed. The interventions varied from guidance, mainly by the confidential adviser, to mediation, investigation or referral to more specialised assistance. In some situations, multiple interventions were required.

Guidance by the confidential adviser usually consisted of an intake and a follow-up session, as well as accompaniment to a meeting with a manager or an accused party. The confidential adviser also accompanied reporting parties, if they so wished, to interviews as part of an investigation or meetings in the event of reintegration.

Referrals were made to internal and external assistance and/or care providers, including an HR adviser, the company doctor, specialised psychological assistance, a coach, a counsellor for the accused, the police, legal assistance and Victim Support Netherlands. One reporting party was assisted by the SV team and Legal Affairs in reporting a criminal offense to the police.

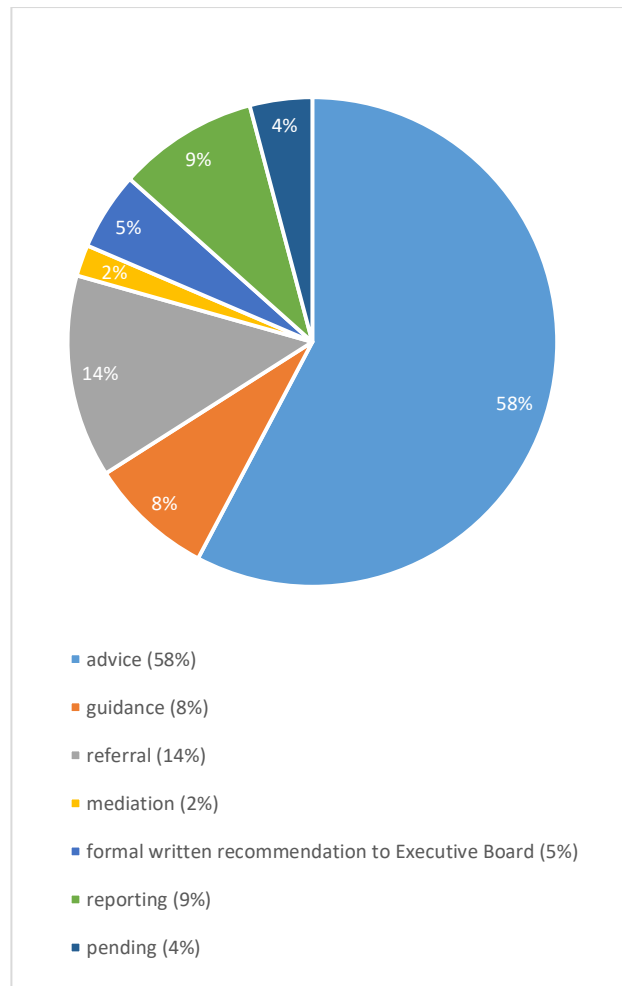


Figure 5 Handling of reports

Mediations were carried out by the ombuds officer. At the request of a reporting party, the ombuds officer approaches the other party involved in the conflict. With his/her permission, the two sides are given the opportunity to present their respective cases, after which one or more mediation sessions are held. The ombuds officer records all agreements between the parties.

Finally, several accused parties were referred to an external ‘counsellor for the accused’ to ensure that they received adequate assistance.

In two cases, the SV team issued a formal written recommendation to the Executive Board to initiate an external investigation in response to reports concerning sexually inappropriate behaviour and harassment. The Executive Board followed these recommendations on both occasions.

3.5 INVESTIGATIONS

Investigations are invasive for everyone involved: for reporting and accused parties, for bystanders and for the

departments in which they take place. The SV team never conducts an investigation merely at the individual request of a reporting party; it is not his/her prerogative to 'demand' an investigation. The team always checks first whether less impactful interventions, such as mediation or psychological support, would suffice. In the case of mediation, it is important that both parties are open to the intervention and participate on a voluntary basis.

The SV team was directly or indirectly involved in a number of investigations and notes that procedural lessons can be learnt from the investigations carried out in 2022. There are few, if any, frameworks and protocols for setting up an external investigation. There is a lack of knowledge about the criteria for conducting an investigation, the mapping of contraindications, the commissioning process, the involvement of experts and the choice of agency to perform the investigation. Protocols for internal and external communication are also lacking, despite the fact that careful, regular communication is of crucial importance for reporting parties, accused parties, their superiors and potential bystanders (the team or department as a whole). That cases may concern confidential and delicate information does not alter the fact that updates on the proceedings can and must be communicated to everybody directly involved. Uncertainty leads to insecurity; for example, if it is unclear what the nature of the investigation is, how it will be conducted, who can receive what assistance and guidance, where to turn with questions and so on. At an early stage, the consequences of any involvement of the press must also be identified.

We note that it can be very difficult for reporting parties to put their name to a statement during an investigation. There is a common perception that statements can be made anonymously. However, the accused party has the right to be heard and must be protected from the possibility of a false report. In practice, this reticence can mean that an investigation ultimately does not lead to a clear outcome.

3.6 CONCERNS

Concerns arising from individual conversations, presentations and workshops, and additional issues noted by the SV team, include the following:

- Employees often find it difficult to discuss even seemingly small issues, let alone complex matters, with their managers.
- The system of temporary appointments to department chair leads to unsafe situations and situations in which

it is difficult for professors to hold each other accountable for their behaviour.

- The faculty PhD confidential advisers combine this role with the position of PhD coordinator and occasionally also with that of department chair. This combination can pose problems for PhD candidates. The confidential adviser must be aware of the dilemma he or she may face: coordinators cannot guarantee confidentiality in every situation, whereas confidential advisers are obliged to do so.
- Many employees feel vulnerable due to concerns that students could easily submit a report against them if they are dissatisfied with a grade.
- Managers and HR advisers sometimes receive confidential information from employees. This presents them with a dilemma: their positions mean that in certain situations they have to act in accordance with the Working Conditions Act, but this can jeopardise confidentiality.
- Reports currently cannot be filed anonymously. This means reporting parties' identities are known to the SV team, which is responsible for guaranteeing confidentiality. In the future, we will consider whether establishing a helpline for anonymous reports is of added value.
- Some employees and managers are concerned about potentially unjustified accusations or the notion of 'playing the social safety card,' for example in the event of performance or reintegration problems.

3.7 EXPERIENCES OF THE SV TEAM

The following reflections draw on the experiences of the SV team over the course of 2022.

- Internally, the team maintains strict confidentiality when it comes to sharing reporting parties' identities and information. Experience has shown, however, that an overly strict interpretation of confidentiality hinders the team members' ability to identify patterns. Suppose reports from a single team or department are filed, independently of one another, with the CCP, the ombuds officer and the confidential advisers. It is crucial for the team members to be able to link these individual reports.
- Experience gained with the current UM Ombuds Officer's Charter and Regulations over the past year has led to a number of proposals for improvement.
- As there are currently no regulations for the position of CCP coordinator, the mandate and operational framework for this role remain unclear.

- The current Code of Conduct on Integrity and the Rules of Conduct for employees are not aligned on a number of points and need updating. A working group has been formed to revise these. The new code of conduct will include concrete examples of (un)desirable behaviour and make clear that such behaviours will result in sanctions.

Based on the above reflections, the following steps will be taken in 2023:

- expanding the advisory role of managers in creating a safe work environment, without jeopardising the independent position of the SV team
- strengthening the collaboration with the faculty PhD confidential advisers and jointly determining how these roles can best be assigned
- conducting investigations are in principle conducted internally. Where appropriate, an external agency is called in. Internal and external investigations are deployed by or under the supervision of the CCP
- deploying an external confidential adviser, who can also act as a counsellor for the accused.

In addition, several practical issues will be improved. A flowchart will be drawn up based on the FHML's example, showing employees where they can go with questions or concerns about social safety. The findability and visibility of the SV team will also be increased, in collaboration with the Communications department.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

As an organisation, we can learn from reports. Undesirable behaviour can always occur—the key is how such situations are resolved and what is done to prevent them from arising in the first place.

Here, managers have a crucial responsibility and role to play. Creating a safe work environment is one of their regular tasks, not something that should be solved by establishing an additional position, helpline or unit. After all, it concerns everyday interaction among employees. All employees should be able to be themselves, to speak up and be heard, and be treated with respect. This calls for inclusive leadership, which entails setting an example, providing sufficient information and transparency, communicating well, showing positive interest and fostering involvement. A lack of leadership creates a perceived lack of safety among employees, typically accompanied by uncertainty and fear.

Social safety is largely determined by the behaviour of managers and through the guidance provided by their own superiors. The recommendations set out below therefore emphasise the strengthening of leadership. Some of these recommendations will be implemented as early as 2023.

4.1 LEADERSHIP

A number of aspects are involved when it comes to strengthening leadership. UM's leadership philosophy and principles have already been set out in the Strategic Programme 2022–26 and the vision document on leadership. These principles have been incorporated into the following concrete recommendations.

- Make behaviour a structural component in (re)appointments, performance agreements and managerial assessments. One criterion to consider may be the extent to which a professor lifts PhD candidates up and offers them room to excel. This should be consistently discussed with managers and written agreements made.
- Raise awareness among managers about the impact of hierarchy and the sense of dependency experienced by their employees.
- Ensure that managers can devote adequate time to their employees, for example by supervising a realistic number of PhD candidates.
- Ensure that social safety is addressed in performance assessments along with research, education and Recognition & Rewards.

- Train managers in conflict management and bad-news conversations. They have a duty to provide non-functioning employees with timely feedback on their performance and behaviour, and not to leave them in a state of uncertainty.
- When an employee leaves, conduct an exit interview and use other exit data to identify the reason for leaving and any attention or support the employee may have felt was lacking.
- Develop a culture in which giving feedback and discussing limits is normal. This can be achieved by, for example, encouraging employees to follow the 'bystander' courses or taking part in team theatre.
- Include questions about social safety in the PhD track and make it a standard topic of discussion during evaluations.

4.2 THE ROLE OF HR

- Ensure that an HR representative is present during the assessment of professors and managers and included in the supervisory boards of professorial chairs.
- Ensure that the HR advisers are equipped to contradict professors and managers who fail to comply with the Collective Labour Agreement for Dutch Universities and UM regulations.
- Make integrity and behaviour a structural part of annual appraisal and assessment interviews and ensure that they are formally guaranteed through the HR procedures.
- Ensure that managers discuss expiring employment contracts with employees in good time, giving reasons for their decisions to extend or not extend these contracts.

4.3 EXTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS

The external investigations conducted in 2022 have led to a number of new insights. In situations in which an investigation is being considered, the SV team recommends forming an investigation committee consisting of qualified employees with the necessary expertise and skills to determine, in consultation with management, whether an external investigation is the best intervention. This committee should involve representatives of Legal Affairs, Human Resources and the SV team, as well as a spokesperson from M&C if needed.

The investigation committee assists the SV team in selecting an investigation agency, commissioning the assignment, drafting internal and external communications

and, if necessary, filing a police report. Afterwards, the committee evaluates the procedure and identifies lessons to learn for the future.

The involvement of the SV team in this process is essential; on the one hand, because of its expertise in conducting investigations and identifying potential alternatives, and on the other hand, because it is the first point of contact and advice for reporting parties and can arrange an external counsellor for the accused. The basic principle here is that both the reporting and the accused party have a right to adequate guidance.

In the first half of 2023, a manual will be drafted outlining the procedure for setting up external integrity investigations.

4.5 UM REGULATIONS

- Revise the UM Ombuds Officer's Charter and Regulations on the basis of the experience gained.
- Consider drawing up official regulations for the CCP coordinator.
- Draft a Code of Conduct for Integrity to replace the current Code of Conduct and Rules of Conduct.
- Amend the Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures Regulation for Reporting and Processing Inappropriate Behaviour: sexual intimidation, aggression, violence, harassment and discrimination towards UM students and staff (2019). This regulation contains outdated and incorrect information.