

Social Safety in Dutch Academia

From Paper to Practice



The workplace culture



A vision for the future



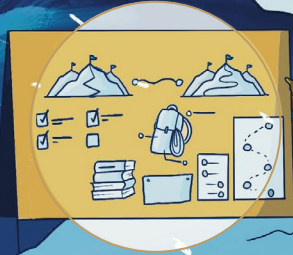
Organisational structure as a breeding ground



The system for correcting behaviour



Reader's guide



Premises



About this report

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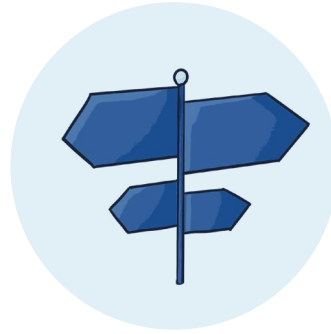


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Overview



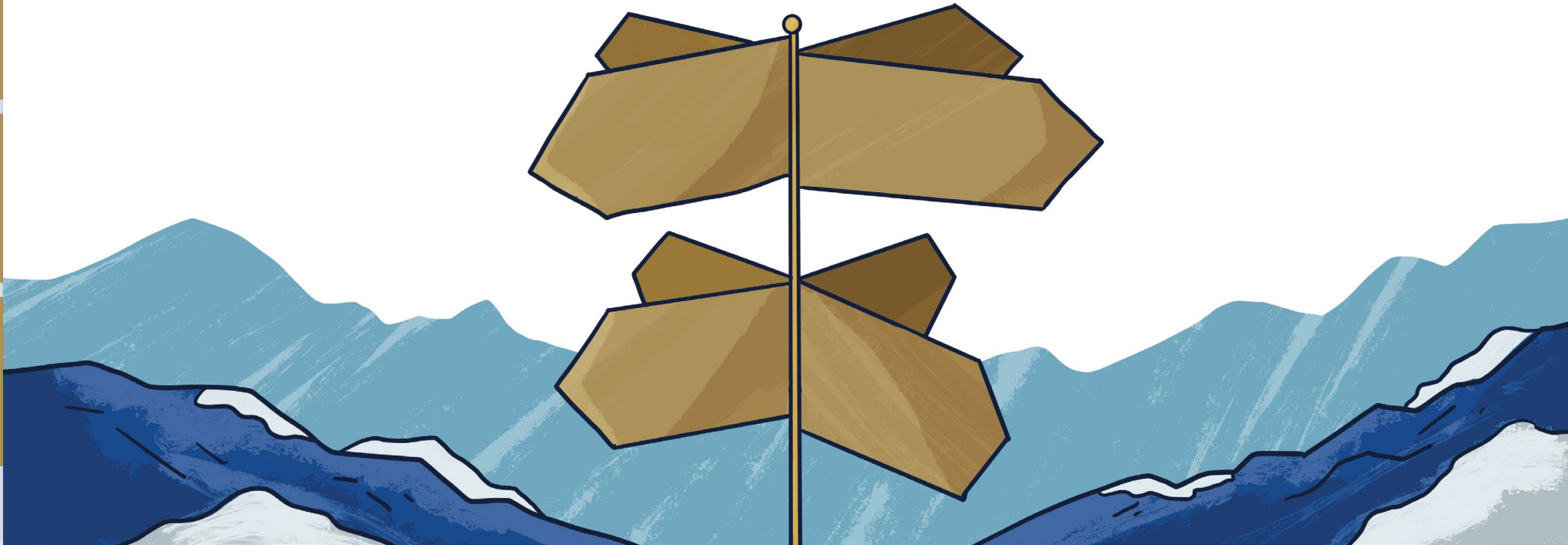
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Social safety is a prerequisite for good science

But in practice it often goes wrong, and that has major consequences for all parties

Whereas on paper a lot is already being done to counter inappropriate behaviour

To progress from paper to practice, this advisory report identifies invisible forces and shows how to organise counterforces

That demands an integrated approach: a culture change anchored in structures and systems, involving every actor and addressing all forms of inappropriate behaviour

A culture change requires paying attention to the process: it will only succeed through ongoing consultation, taking one step at a time, and by constantly making corrections

Organisational structure as a breeding ground

The organisational structure is currently putting social safety under constant pressure

Scarcity of resources and workload endanger the quality of the work

Power differentials and dependencies put cooperation to the test

The complex organisation makes it difficult to identify and coordinate behaviour

Changes in organisational structure can neutralise the pressure on social safety

Investing offsets the negative effects of scarcity and workload only if it also improves cooperation

Organising responsible leadership counters abuses of power

A fine-mesh structure for identifying behavioural risks does justice to the complexity of the organisation

The workplace culture

The workplace culture is not conducive to discussing behaviour

Behaviour is regarded as a given and not a subject of discussion

The ability to talk about behaviour is lacking and is not prioritised

But the idea is still maintained that everyone can speak up

Many problems can be prevented by talking to one another about desirable behaviour

Talking about behaviour clarifies its causes and consequences

The organisation has a responsibility for the development of skills that contribute to social safety

Giving everyone a voice enables unwritten rules to be questioned

The system for correcting behaviour

The current approach focuses on handling complaints rather than on prevention, which leads to escalation of problems and loss of trust

Prevention doesn't really get off the ground because the duty to ensure social safety is not worked out clearly enough, either on paper or in practice

In the event of inappropriate behaviour, the employer faces a responsibilities dilemma

It's difficult to strike a balance between these responsibilities, and as a result none of those involved feels treated properly and fairly

With a systematic approach, geared to prevention and timely correction of behaviour, you can take care of all concerned

Jointly working out guidelines will bring codes of conduct to life

Preventing escalation requires timely correction of behaviour

Linking up people to collectively solve problems provides a safety net for all involved

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The board member: I don't really have it properly under control

The HR director: We aren't properly prepared for reports of inappropriate behaviour

The head of department: By seeking a solution, I became the problem

Director of operations: Not discussing the problem led to a lot of harm

The dean: I never learned how to handle this

The person complained about: I didn't see it coming and couldn't defend myself

The successful woman: Are they trying to pester us into leaving?

The person filing a complaint: I want it to stop

The confidential counsellor: I know a lot but I can't do much about it

A vision for the future

This advisory report is intended as the start of a process of change

The committee has already initiated this process

Matters meriting further attention

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First-aid kit

What questions can you ask yourself and others so as to get started with this advisory report?

Getting started with the organisational structure

Getting started with the workplace culture

Getting started with a system for correcting behaviour

What's next? The University of the Future

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What is the purpose of this advisory report? How can it be used (or not used)? How is it structured?

This advisory report is intended as a kind of guide. Its purpose is to initiate a process for increasing social safety in Dutch academia. Previous studies and reports have convincingly revealed the nature and extent of recurrent problems of inappropriate behaviour at academic institutions in the Netherlands. As in other countries, those reports show how damaging such behaviour is, both for the individuals involved, as well as for the quality of scientific and scholarly work. There was therefore good reason for the Minister of Education, Culture and Science to request advice on the underlying mechanisms (the breeding ground) and prevention of inappropriate behaviour.

The recommendations made in this report offer no guarantee that problems will never again arise in the interaction between individuals in Dutch academia. They will, however, assist academic institutions to prevent such problems as much as possible, to act appropriately if they do occur, and to learn lessons when attempts to do so fail. **These factors are characteristic of an organisation within which social safety is firmly anchored.** We will have achieved our goal when priority is assigned to professional interaction with one another and inappropriate behaviour has visible consequences.

There are of course kinds of behaviour that are unacceptable in any situation and that require judicial intervention. It is not the purpose of this report, however, to draw up an exhaustive list of behaviours that are acceptable or unacceptable. What matters is not only the specific behaviour concerned. Whether behaviour is experienced as unacceptable changes over time; it also depends on who exhibits the behaviour, in what context, and how often. **A socially safe environment is characterised by constant attention being paid to the question of what behaviour is or is not desirable.** This can have a preventive effect and guard against nascent problems from escalating.

In preparing this report, the committee consulted with numerous relevant parties. These make clear yet again how difficult it is to guarantee social safety, and how great the impact is when this fails. Ongoing themes during the interviews

were **the awkwardness, the uncertainty regarding what action to take, and the feeling of powerlessness among all involved, including the board members and managers.** A recurring question is how those in charge can gain greater control of the behaviour of the people within their organisation. Key quotations from the consultations can be found at various points throughout the report. Although anonymised, they were noted down during the consultations and thus serve to illustrate frequent problems identified by the committee.

Behavioural research makes clear that the powerlessness that people experience can originate from invisible forces within the organisation. **This advisory report therefore aims to make visible how those forces are embedded in the structure, culture, and system of the organisation – and how one can work, a step at a time, to counter them.**

Board members and managers have a special responsibility to engage with the recommendations and guidance in this publication at their own institutions. That means not just ticking off lists, but by setting an example in acknowledging mistakes and doing what is necessary to prevent and solve problems. But **everyone** can work with this guide within their own particular work environment and utilise its recommendations as a guideline for raising questions regarding that organisation. That also applies to **students**, although this report is not aimed specifically at them; that is because of the different legal relationship the institutions have with their students on the one hand and their employees on the other. Nevertheless, it is expected that students too will benefit from the proposed changes.



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This report can be read in a number of different ways. The aim is to tackle the various sub-problems in conjunction. However, the initial situation is not the same everywhere, and not everyone has the same powers and opportunities. Nonetheless, one can always start somewhere or make progress with what already exists. The report therefore comprises a number of separate components, between which one can navigate in different ways:



The **Overview** provides a broad outline of the advisory report at a glance.



The **Premises** describe the committee's starting point and approach.



the **Structure** of the organisation



the **Culture** at the workplace



the **Systems** for reporting and correcting behaviour.



For each of these core components, the report offers an **Analysis** of invisible forces and **Recommendations** for countering them. Both the Analysis and the Recommendations include a summary and further elaboration



The **Perspectives** sections show how people with different roles experience the current situation. Their accounts reveal the recurring patterns and problems in the way academic institutions currently deal with inappropriate behaviour.



In **A vision for the future**, the report provides suggestions for the intended change process.

Guidance for progressing from paper to practice comprises:



Questions you can ask yourself and others so as to **Getting started** with the recommendations



A '**First-aid kit**' for dealing with undesirable behaviour



A method for working out the recommendations in greater detail and coordinating them at national level (**What's next?**).

The **Sources** and **Appendices** provide a scientific basis and the administrative background.



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Preface

High-quality, sustainable science is a dependable foundation for a knowledge-based society. But it requires a system that does not simply rely on occasional individual excellence. It flourishes only in a context where researchers always join together in attempting to do what is right. The quality of the workplace culture is a crucial precondition for this. In a socially safe environment, the different qualities and talents of all team members come into their own, and research integrity is respected as a matter of course.

We are well aware of this. Unfortunately, however, we have also seen in recent years (perhaps decades) what happens in an academic system that is increasingly under pressure. Within the organisational structure, we observe a permanent lack of resources, (major) power differentials and dependencies, and an environment that has become so complex that the human dimension is under pressure. Too little attention has been paid to questions of academic culture and to possible corrective mechanisms, although that is precisely where the keys lie for preventing malpractice and correcting behaviour in good time.

The Academy's Board attaches great importance to this advisory report, which views social safety as a precondition for an outstanding academic culture. The report aims to render visible the invisible forces within the university system. It indicates the way towards options for organising counterforces at an early stage.

Like many other subjects, the topic of social safety itself benefits from a solid knowledge base. That makes it possible to set up an integrated process, in consultation with the field and recognising the great efforts that have already been made in this area in recent years. Local differences in culture and approach must remain possible.

It would be illusory to think that with this advisory report the problems can be solved overnight. The solution should be sought in a step-by-step process, for which this report offers a starting point and a guide – a process that requires patience and constant adjustment. The Board hopes that devoting attention to culture and social safety, combined with the necessary improvement of the financial basis for our academy, will promote the enduring flowering of Dutch science and scholarship.

Ineke Sluiter

President of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences





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Perspectives

Recurring patterns and problems in dealing with inappropriate behaviour

Previous reports and advice have focused mainly on the experience of those reporting a complaint. These provide a clear picture of the obstacles that people typically encounter when drawing attention to problems. Identifying patterns and bringing unknown facts to light have already ensured significant progress towards a general awareness that this is a widespread and complex issue, one which is by no means always adequately addressed.

The justifiable attention paid to the perspective and feelings of those who report a problem can easily create the impression that they are the only ones dissatisfied with the current state of affairs. It is tempting to think that all the problems can be quickly solved once all those involved recognise and acknowledge that the current system for dealing with complaints does not work well, and are offered suggestions for improvement. That has, nevertheless, proved insufficient.

This report focuses on the question of **what more can be done** to put existing and new arrangements regarding social safety into actual practice. In order to complement and reinforce all the efforts that have already been made, we devote explicit attention to **all the parties concerned and all the actors** who play a role in tackling issues of social safety. This approach also makes it possible to take action at a much earlier stage and to prevent problems or nip them in the bud as soon as they arise.

When preparing this report, we therefore **collected the accounts and experiences** of the different types of parties concerned. The recurring themes that emerge from those accounts can be found at various points throughout the report. They make clear that **even those who attempt to solve problems also experience powerlessness and frustration**. They show where things keep going wrong, and what the broader consequences are for others within the organisation – regardless of the precise facts or the content of the chosen solutions.

When one considers people's **experience with the process for handling complaints from different perspectives**, it becomes apparent that new solutions are possible once actors have greater clarity as to their own task and role, and how they can thus support one another.

Procedure

During preparation of this report (December 2020 – March 2022), confidential interviews were held with numerous parties in the field. Some of those were with groups but most were with individuals. The individuals involved came from various different departments and job levels, from different disciplines, and from different universities. The total number of discussion partners was 39. Due to the confidential nature of the interviews, their names are not provided.

The advisory committee's chairperson was present at all the interviews and took personal notes of them. It was often the case that different people described almost identical experiences, or made almost literally the same observations, even though talking about a completely different case at a different institution.

To convey the essence of these impressions, a number of typical 'stories' have been constructed. . These have been compiled from various interview reports, with complementary quotations from different people being combined into a running text. To protect the privacy of those involved and to make clear that these are shared experiences, each 'story' is a synthesis of the experiences of several different people who outline their perspective on the situation from a similar role.

These stories are intended to illustrate and support the factual analysis and recommendations and to indicate what problems different actors with different roles find themselves facing in the current situation. It was made clear to all the discussion partners that their perspectives would be used so as to better understand the issue concerned, not to highlight a specific case.



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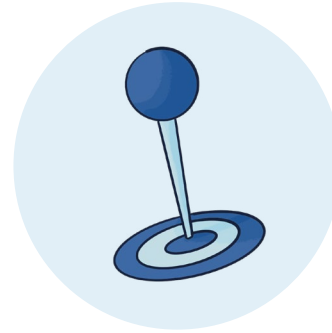


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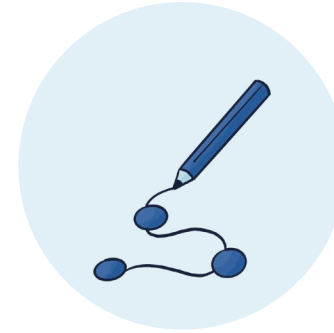
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Starting point



Approach





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The board member: I don't really have it properly under control

In a big organisation like ours, you can't keep track of everything, which is a risk factor. Surveys show that people regularly encounter unpleasant incidents. There are also departments with a high level of absenteeism, or very low scores on satisfaction surveys. And still, zero complaints have been filed. Surely that's not possible?

People don't know what they need to do, and the files are often inadequate. But a lot of researchers also think performance appraisal interviews are nonsense and don't want to accept criticism from anybody. And not all of them think it's important or urgent either. It's then pretty difficult to get anything done. In any case, it takes a lot of time. The power differential in itself isn't the main problem – in a position of power you can also coach or help another person to be successful. It goes wrong when it degenerates into abuse of power.

If problems have been ignored for too long, then others have become complicit. I know of cases where everybody was involved in addressing it but still nobody was satisfied with the final result. There's also quite a bit of crap from the past that needs to be cleaned up first.

The HR director: We aren't properly prepared for reports of inappropriate behaviour

HR isn't always aware of there being problems with inappropriate behaviour – not all managers come up with the idea of asking for advice from one of our department staff. But even if they are aware of such behaviour, many colleagues don't know what to do about it. HR consultants work a lot with staff appointment systems, and the training and job requirements are nowadays also geared to that. As a result, a lot of colleagues focus mainly on implementation issues – that used to be different. Sometimes it's possible to get those involved to talk it over and for us to handle problem situations effectively. That's then appreciated, but not everyone is robust enough to deal with something of that kind. And not everyone recognises its importance.

It's also pretty complicated nowadays. A whole lot of parties and persons are involved, perhaps too many. There are various different confidential counsellors

for different groups of people: students, PhD candidates, employees... There's an ombudsperson. Then there's the manager, someone from HR, and sometimes a coach. Everyone has their own role but also follows their own procedures. Those procedures aren't subject to any supervision, and that also creates ambiguity, because who does what?

Sometimes everyone is waiting for one another and nobody feels responsible for solving the problem. In the meantime, we've paid hundreds of thousands in lawyers' fees.

The head of department: By seeking a solution, I became the problem

I'd been aware for quite some time that there were problems because of a certain colleague and I wanted to deal with them. People tell me they trust my leadership style, so I thought I could handle the matter effectively. I know the rules and the people, it's part of my position and responsibility to do that, and I understand how the organisation works. If I set a good example, it can inspire others to do the same. So I submitted a formal complaint, which was investigated by the Executive Board. I'd prepared myself well, sought advice, and coordinated with my manager. People thought it was a good idea for me to do this and wanted to support me. I was confident that I'd be successful and I really wanted to make a difference.

But now I'm really disappointed in the organisation. It all took far too long. It ended up with legal proceedings, during which a lot of mistakes were made. The Executive Board never made a public statement and the perpetrator left with a pile of money. So no standard was set and it wasn't possible to solve the problem properly. I feel let down, and I don't trust these people any more. By wanting to solve the problem, I myself became the problem. It literally made me ill and I couldn't work properly for a time.

Ultimately, the situation only got worse for everyone. Colleagues know that I tried and they see that it didn't work. What exactly had happened? I'm not allowed to say. But everyone knows that if I couldn't do it, then who could? So now nobody is going to try to tackle these problems anymore.



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Social safety is a prerequisite for good science

Without scientists, there is no science. They are the ones who generate, acquire, share, and propagate scientific knowledge. It is they who perform experiments, study archives, write articles, deliver lectures, and give tutorials. Moreover, they don't do this all on their own. Scientists build on the work of others; perform experiments in teams; can access collections thanks to archivists; are judged by peers for their articles and proposals. They don't only lecture new generations of students but are also expected to keep abreast of new developments, constantly challenging one another. Human behaviour and relationships between people are thus at the heart of scientific work.

Social safety concerns those interpersonal relations. In a socially safe learning and working environment, people do not feel threatened by the behaviour of others and can be confident that they can express a different opinion or bring forward new facts without being insulted, humiliated, intimidated, or silenced. What is needed in order to achieve this depends on the precise situation, and it may change from time to time.

'Academic freedom is at stake. Problems with research integrity may turn into problems with social safety. And vice versa too.'

For every academic organisation, it is worth investing to ensure social safety in the long term, not only with a view to the well-being and job satisfaction of the employees but also as regards the quality of the scientific work. In a socially safe environment, people are better able to learn from one another and to develop new insights. They are less afraid of making mistakes and more willing to explore new possibilities. It has been shown time and time again that this is a prerequisite for individuals and groups to work, learn, and perform together effectively. Social safety is not therefore incompatible with scientific quality. On the contrary, it is an essential feature of an environment that makes possible the free exchange of ideas and in which scientists and science can flourish.

The committee therefore considers social safety to be a core precondition for good scientific practice, as well as for research integrity. In the Netherlands, there is broad agreement as to what constitutes research integrity, what professional standards it entails, why it is important, and what is necessary to uphold it. It is striking that this is not (yet) the case everywhere when it comes to social safety. At the same time, a number of incidents have shown that scientific integrity and academic freedom can be jeopardised when social safety is not up to standard. In short: to achieve scientific ideals, it is necessary to invest in social safety.

Everyone involved in academia therefore has a responsibility to contribute to proper behaviour and productive relationships in the workplace. Key figures such as board members and team leaders have a special role in that regard.





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But in practice it often goes wrong, and that has major consequences for all parties

Various studies, reports, and media coverage show that inappropriate behaviour occurs in Dutch academia too, ranging from implicit exclusion, intimidation and explicit discrimination to sexual misconduct and scientific sabotage. The policies that are currently in place are therefore inadequate. Various parties have publicly expressed their concern about this. For the purpose of this report, a large number of individuals and groups with different positions and roles were also consulted, ranging from persons who had submitted a complaint and 'onlookers' to confidential counsellors and board members. The interviews make clear that those involved are all too often unhappy with the current state of affairs; a number of them regularly mentioned almost literally the same problems. **This report includes illustrative key quotations from these consultations.**

The world of academia is not unique in this respect; inappropriate behaviour occurs in other sectors as well. Nevertheless, the (current) scientific sector in its own way provides a fertile breeding ground for inappropriate behaviour; this will be explored in greater detail in this report. Every discipline and every category of staff can be affected by socially unsafe behaviour, even if such behaviour manifests itself in different forms. In smaller disciplines, for example in the humanities, inappropriate behaviour often has major consequences – and the threshold for reporting it is high – because a specialist career path can be shaped or disrupted by a single individual. Inappropriate behaviour occurs in large scientific laboratories where people work closely together, sometimes outside office hours. Disrespectful treatment of colleagues in support services and non-academic staff occurs in all workplaces. Students often suffer the consequences of a lack of social safety, but they can also be the cause of it. At university medical centres too, scientists have to deal with inappropriate behaviour – not just from colleagues but also from patients and visitors. During on-site fieldwork, it can be almost impossible to escape from unwanted interactions. Transgressive behaviour occurs during scientific meetings outside the walls of the university and during collaboration beyond the Dutch borders.

Research shows that inappropriate behaviour generally does considerable harm to the well-being and functioning of staff. A lack of social safety also has a negative impact on researchers and research, as previous reports

and interviews conducted for this report have shown. Talented but disillusioned young people leave the world of science, relevant arguments and ideas are not heeded, and unworkable situations sometimes drag on for years. The costs resulting from tolerating inappropriate behaviour are not always clearly apparent, however, while the efforts of people who invest in social safety all too often go unnoticed. At any rate, the time and effort they put into this is generally insufficiently appreciated. A lack of social safety thus leads to a waste of time, money, and talent. Moreover, the costs – including in terms of a loss of trust and reputation – are much greater if action is taken only after problems have escalated.

'The heads of department failed to shoulder their responsibilities. They knew things were not right but did nothing.'

The attention paid to inappropriate behaviour in the media and the previous reports show that Dutch academia increasingly recognises this problem. It has not (yet) been possible, however, to bring about (sufficient) improvement everywhere and in all cases. The many interviews conducted by the committee during preparation of this report make clear that people on all sides experience a great deal of powerlessness and frustration. Those who submit a complaint too often find that despite their doing so the behaviour concerned is not remedied; it may even get worse. Colleagues hear gossip, but don't know exactly what is going on. Those who are the object of a complaint say they didn't see it coming, and that they didn't have a chance to explain themselves or to mend their ways. Department and team leaders do not know how to deal with inappropriate behaviour or what resources are available to them, while board members indicate that they only become aware of problems at a late stage and have insufficient control over how they are dealt with. Confidential counsellors, legal staff, and HR advisers often feel that they cannot really do anything. Despite many parties considering this to be an important issue and doing their best to address it, they have not yet succeeded in anchoring social safety firmly in scientific practice.



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Whereas on paper a lot is already being done to counter inappropriate behaviour

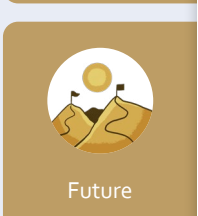
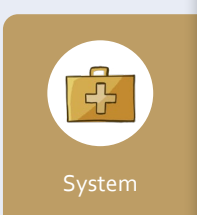
A lot of attempts have already been made to counter inappropriate behaviour. To begin with, there are a large number of **policy frameworks and regulations in the field of social safety**, with the latter sometimes being the main topic of these documents and sometimes a sub-topic. They may be intended for board members, staff, students, or the entire academic community. Moreover, one policy document or code may concern the entire sector, while another concerns a specific institution or a particular level, such as a faculty or a study programme. They therefore do not necessarily form a systematic whole. Moreover, setting out policies on paper does not automatically change anything in actual practice. In addition to these policy frameworks and regulations, a number of universities have therefore implemented their own campaigns to improve social safety.

'Reports tend to be shoved away in a drawer.'

There are many people in Dutch academia whose position assigns them explicit **tasks and responsibilities** regarding social safety. These too are not easy to identify. At all levels – from the Executive Board to chairs of department – board members and managers have the task of promoting a safe learning and working environment. They are supported in this by HRM and legal affairs staff, and the employee participation body has a say regarding policy. There is also a reporting system in which many people play a role, for example confidential counsellors, ombudspersons, and inappropriate behaviour committees. At some distance from the university, there are people who monitor social safety in academia, for example the Supervisory Boards and the Inspectorates. These persons in different locations do not always know how to link up with one another. Besides the allocation of explicit tasks, there is a lot of 'invisible labour' regarding inappropriate behaviour, for example by onlookers and by informal leaders who invest in social safety without their position assigning them a specific task in that regard. These people often remain unnoticed and their important work is undervalued within the organisation. They are sometimes simply viewed as a nuisance.

In response to the lack of social safety in Dutch academia, a large number of **reports, studies, and surveys** have been published in recent years, including by the Dutch Network of Women Professors (LNVH), the Dutch Student Union (LSVb), the FNV/VAWO union, the Dutch PhD Candidate Network (PNN), Amnesty International, the Dutch Labour Inspectorate (ISZW) (in response to the concerns expressed by national WOinActie campaign group), and by various universities. These reports are aimed at identifying the extent and nature of the problem. They view the competitive climate, the rigid hierarchy within the universities, and the heavy workload as important underlying mechanisms (i.e. a 'fertile breeding ground') in inviting inappropriate behaviour. These reports also highlight forms of exclusion in the workplace and the lack of an inclusive culture. A number of them reveal how the reporting structure is lacking in clarity as to where someone can turn regarding a problem and how procedures are conducted. In addition, the support provided in the case of an (informal) notification or during a complaints procedure is insufficient. A sustainable improvement in social safety at academic institutions will require a major change that will take a long time and is not easy to make specific or quantifiable. This report therefore builds on the findings of previous reports, with the aim of linking them up and taking the next step.





To progress from paper to practice, this advisory report identifies invisible forces and shows how to organise counterforces

All the insights that have already been developed and the many arrangements that have been put in place have yet to have the desired effect on social safety in academia. Further action is required so as to progress from paper to practice.

The core question in this report concerns how to link up and activate all these different elements in an effective manner.

'There isn't any silver bullet. You have to twist all the knobs at once.'

The committee collected information in various ways, both within the Netherlands and internationally, regarding existing arrangements, problems, and previously proposed solutions. To arrive at the present advisory report, previous reports were studied, policy frameworks and regulations were identified, codes of conduct were compared, and relevant insights from the research literature were integrated. **In addition, numerous individuals and officials were consulted;** their input and observations form an integral part of this report. Preliminary findings were submitted to individuals with personal experience of the problems concerned and specific information was collected from experts. The committee

is deeply grateful to all these people and hopes that this report does justice to the knowledge, experience, and observations they have shared.

The report complements previous analyses by dealing more deeply with **unconscious processes and invisible forces**. These form part of an organisation's structure, culture and systems, and they contribute to the emergence, tolerance for, and continuation of inappropriate behaviour. By identifying these forces and making clear how they can be compensated for, this report offers pointers for getting down to the work of **organising counterforces**. Responsibility for this lies primarily with the board members and managers within the organisation.

The process and the approach adopted are at least as important as the specific measures that are taken. The proposed approach draws on scientific insights and empirical knowledge about organisations and human behaviour. This offers a different perspective on what drives people within organisations and what they need in order to change their behaviour. This report does not offer any ready-made solutions. It does make clear, however, what steps are necessary in order to develop effective measures or to make better use of existing arrangements, and it indicates what questions are important in this regard.

Frustration at every level <i>Nobody is satisfied with the way things are going</i>		How about this? <i>Everyone has their own role – together we can do it</i>
After the complaint, it just got worse	Complainants	I speak up in time
I wasn't warned	Persons complained about	I can learn from this
I do hear gossip, but I don't know exactly what's going on	Onlookers	I understand the approach
I don't really know how to handle this	Managers	I know what to do
They don't listen to me	HR advisers	I record arrangements and results
There's not much I can do	Confidential counsellors	I keep track and adjust course
By seeking a solution, I myself became the problem	Heads of department	It's my job to resolve this
I'm not in control of the process	Board members	I think it's important, and I make sure the system works properly



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Elaboration

That demands an integrated approach: a culture change anchored in structures and systems, involving every actor and addressing all forms of inappropriate behaviour

Randomly tackling isolated elements of the problem makes little sense. Because so many forces contribute to the emergence and continuation of inappropriate behaviour, social safety in academia can only be sustainably established by examining all the various forces as a whole. **An integrated approach is therefore necessary, one that involves all parts of the organisation, all the different actors, and all forms of inappropriate behaviour.**

This advisory report therefore focuses on a change in culture. The workplace **culture** is formed by the interplay of all the unwritten rules, habits, and assumptions that guide people's day-to-day behaviour. This is supported by defining experiences at work, such as stories about role models and symbols of success. These are anchored in the **structures** that the organisation employs to develop, assess, and reward behaviour. This is because the unwritten rules of the workplace also reflect the criteria that may or may not apply to recruitment and promotion procedures. The culture is also maintained by the **systems** deployed to correct and amend inappropriate behaviour. They are not sufficiently effective as long as managers are not seen to take action, officials are not properly able to assist when reports are submitted, and reputation concerns prevail in the handling of complaints. An integrated approach therefore means that the workplace culture and the organisational structures and reporting systems are all tackled.



The aim of bringing about a culture change also means that **all those concerned** have a role to play in that process. Because the culture is sustained by everyone, everyone can contribute to changing it. If enough people, parties, and organisations in academia recognise and assume their own role, they can help one another implement such a sweeping shift in the culture. This goes beyond merely the organisation itself; it also involves the way research is funded and the criteria for allocating funding.

'You can't simply talk about perpetrators and victims. It's also about gossip, bullying, exclusion.'

Finally, this report is of an integrated nature because it aims to help counteract **all forms of inappropriate behaviour**, regardless of who exhibits it, who suffers the consequences, and how serious it may seem. After all, even 'minor' problems can have a major impact. Ongoing exposure to small-scale 'needling' such as inappropriate teasing has been shown to have the same long-term effects as an incident that everyone immediately realises is serious, such as rape. If nobody says anything about those 'minor' matters, that contributes to a culture in which 'looking the other way' is the norm. And failing to take visible action against behavioural problems – whether intimidation, sabotage, or discrimination is concerned – conveys the message that the organisation seemingly does not make a socially safe working environment a priority. For these reasons, it was decided not to make a distinction between different forms of inappropriate behaviour and between different groups of victims. A socially safer working environment benefits everyone.



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Elaboration

A culture change requires paying attention to the process: it will only succeed through ongoing consultation, taking one step at a time, and by constantly making corrections

Analysing what is wrong and what needs to change is an important initial step. But in order to establish effective counterforces, it is at least as important to focus on the process by which change can be achieved. As the scientific literature on change management also shows, this is particularly applicable in the case of a change in behaviour and culture.

A sustainable change in behaviour cannot be achieved by designing solutions at the administrative drawing board. One cannot 'roll out' the right policy all at once. But what one can do is outline the final objective and indicate the route for getting there. That makes it possible to develop workable solutions together, step by step, test whether they are effective, and if necessary fine-tune them. Such an approach also makes it easier to do justice to the various preconditions, realities, and experiences within different parts of the university. If one builds this up step by step, one can evaluate how effective each step is and then elaborate further improvements until one is satisfied.

'The couleur locale is very important. In evaluating where you stand you also need to look forward and assess what to develop further.'

The merit of this approach is that it makes use of the knowledge and experience of those in the workplace. This method assigns them an active role in defining the desired outcome and what is required in their situation in order to achieve it. The role of management and leadership is to take the lead in initiating this change, to make clear why it is important, and to enable employees to work towards it by providing sufficient scope and support.

Past experience of inappropriate behaviour and deficiencies in how it was dealt with has caused some of those involved to lose confidence in the possibility of improvement. Committing to a process in which everyone can participate also gives them the chance to regain confidence that they will be listened to and that the situation can be changed for the better.

It is only by continuing to talk to one another that it becomes possible to recognise invisible forces and to ascertain whether the measures that have been developed are sufficient to counteract them. People often wonder whether there hasn't already been enough talking; they press for rapid action to be taken. This advisory report indicates how one can get to work immediately – in consultation with the parties involved – on the process of energetically developing and implementing an integrated package of changes. The report offers specific pointers for doing so.





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- Appendix II: List of reports (national and international)
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Appendix II: List of reports (national and international)

Appendix III: Overview of policy frameworks and regulations

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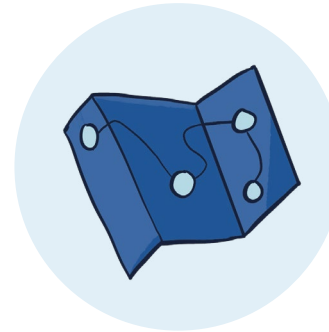
Organisational structure as a breeding ground



Perspectives



Analysis



Recommendations



Getting started





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Perspectives

Director of operations: Not discussing the problem led to a lot of harm

A project leader was highly motivated to bring a research project to a successful conclusion, but was also very nervous about it. One effect of this was that discussions with project staff often turned into a shouting match.

People became afraid to talk to her and they no longer enjoyed working on the project. This was known in the workplace, pointed out, and discussed at various levels. Nevertheless, nobody knew what to do about it.

Nobody talked to the project leader about her behaviour and the impact it was having on the project staff. In the meantime, some of them called in sick or left for a different job. Needless to say, it was the best people who left first. The progress of the project was thus jeopardised and it was necessary to approach the Dutch research funding organisation NWO for approval of an amended project proposal.

All this led to a loss of personnel, wasted time, and loss of project funding. The project deliverables could not be achieved. That was detrimental to the department's reputation within the university and its relationship with NWO. So in the end, the problem only became worse by failing to deal with it right away – despite the project leader meaning well but simply handling things in the wrong way.

The dean: I never learned how to handle this

It's kept me awake at night. It concerns people I've known for a long time, and the problem turned out to be much bigger than I first thought. The procedures take too long and the communication isn't always appropriate. It's also a dilemma: you want it to be properly investigated and remain confidential for all those involved. You don't want there to be gossip, but you also don't want it to take too long before someone hears something.

The senior members of the department naturally also need to take responsibility themselves and speak up if anything odd happens. But it's very difficult to discuss the topic of behaviour. If something is left unmentioned for so long, then harm is done – and it's far worse than if you'd engaged with the problem straight away. Submitting a complaint is a pretty big step – maybe you just want to be able to ask someone for advice. There's currently no provision for doing that.

How do you ensure that people are treated with respect? How do you make sure managers are equipped for their tasks? Do you have to ban all kinds of things? We don't really talk to one another about these things. I myself never learned how to conduct that difficult discussion. Which is rather strange, actually.



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Summary



The organisational structure is currently putting social safety under constant pressure

This section of the advisory report explains how the way academia is organised in the Netherlands provides a fertile breeding ground for problems regarding social safety. Because the organisational structure is oriented towards a one-sided approach aimed at academic excellence, social safety as an essential precondition for the quality of academic work has not received sufficient attention.

'Whether it goes well depends on individuals; it's not anchored in the organisational structure.'

There are three main elements in the academic organisational structure that create a breeding ground for inappropriate behaviour. The structure is characterised, first of all, by the **scarcity of resources and positions, and by a heavy workload**; these have increased significantly in recent years.

In addition to the formal hierarchy, there are also differences in academic status and informal **power relationships**. These make it difficult to identify – and resist – abuses of dependencies, which are thus merely reinforced.

A third feature of the breeding ground is the **complexity of academic organisations**. Problems that arise in some places but also the solutions that are devised fail to become sufficiently apparent because universities have so many different departments and because researchers sometimes care more about the expectations of their (international) colleagues within their discipline than the guidelines of their own organisation.

As long as this fertile breeding ground remains, attempts to guarantee social safety will have little effect. This report therefore elaborates on these three types of invisible forces and provides recommendations as to how to counter them.



Scarcity/workload
Power differentials
Complex organisation

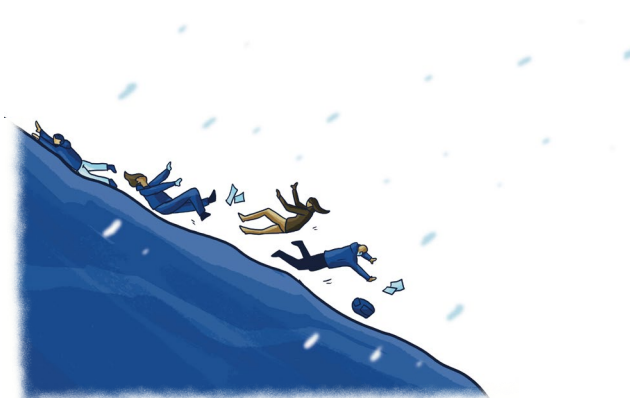
*Elaboration***Scarcity of resources and workload endanger the quality of the work**

Various reports have shown that there is insufficient funding to adequately perform all the tasks assigned to the universities. In the workplace, this has for a long time led to excessive workloads and uncertain career prospects – even for those who perform well. Previous reports have noted that research is constrained by the major task of teaching. Surveys have also shown that the workload leads to increased absenteeism due to illness and the outflow of young and talented researchers. In this way, competition in academia is clearly failing to achieve its aim.

‘Trust is really important but scarcity undermines it.’

As a result of this situation, the emphasis in managing and assessing staff is on achieving outcomes and performance. Moreover, what constitutes valuable performance is also defined in a highly one-sided manner. The emphasis is on activities that make a visible contribution to desired outcomes, for example publications that count towards international rankings and grants that create budgetary leeway. Little attention is paid to how this performance is delivered, to other important performance domains (for example teaching quality and good leadership), or to maintaining good relations. Nevertheless, **good relations and a willingness to help one another are necessary for all good performance, especially when the pressure is increasing.**

Various studies show how high pressure to perform fosters interpersonal competition and provokes feelings of jealousy and envy. These emotions have been found to be associated with inappropriate behaviour within countless organisations. Various reports and the interviews conducted by the committee make it clear that this also happens in Dutch academia. Assessing everyone on the same type of performance, while the resources to achieve that performance are so scarce, creates a zero-sum situation in which some people can only succeed if others fail. This kind of one-sided competitive system also contributes to people who excel in a different domain being viewed as losers. The jealousy and envy that all this incites constitutes a risk factor for the development of problematic behaviour. Competitive systems have been shown to thus encourage intimidation, sabotage, and other forms of misconduct between people in the workplace. Various studies also show that the emphasis on achieving desired outcomes without appropriate opportunities being offered can invite fraud and deception – including in academia.



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Elaboration

Power differentials and dependencies put cooperation to the test

Besides the rigid hierarchy within the formal organisation, academia is characterised by differences in academic status and informal positions of power. Academic status is closely linked to individual performance and much less to interpersonal skills. Who has the most publications? Who attracts the biggest grants? Those who don't excel at this kind of performance enjoy lower prestige and can therefore be less empowered, sometimes regardless of their formal position. Partly because of this, non-academic staff are often accorded only low status, which is not always apparent to the world outside.

'The hierarchical structure makes it difficult to bring up problems. The gap between academic staff and support staff is enormous. It sometimes seems like a feudal system.'

These differences in status and the dependencies they entail can have significant consequences. It is difficult for talented researchers to make progress in their career without the aid and support of those who hold key positions. Established academics also need the contributions of young researchers for their own work. These dependencies can be so extensive that they can make or break people.



As previous reports and the committee's consultations have shown, **people are not always sufficiently protected against the pernicious effects of these power differentials.** In practice, the consequences are often greatest for those with low status in a position of high dependence. There have been numerous cases in which a young lecturer without a permanent contract had to look for a different job, while the 'big name' was not called to account for transgressive behaviour.

Studies show what effect these kinds of power differentials can have on people; differences in power positions literally make people perceive, think, and act differently. That alone can provoke misunderstandings and mutual irritation. Those who are dependent on another person focus on that person's motives and wishes, and attends particularly to specific details, making him or her hesitant when it comes to making decisions, disagreeing, or criticising. Someone who finds themselves in a position of power focuses on achieving goals, and sees that as the main thing. It is then easy to forget that the (apparent) agreement of others can be traced back to the power differential and need not indicate approval of one's ideas or decisions. There is also less need for those in power to take account of other people's perspective and feelings, so that these tend to be overlooked.

Little structural attention is paid in academia to the effects of power differentials and how they can jeopardise cooperation. Extra care is required to ensure that those in charge take responsibility for the proper exercise of their leadership. That also includes supporting those who are dependent on them in setting and maintaining their personal boundaries. But if people are unaware of this and organisations do not aim to achieve it, then there is a danger of inappropriate behaviour.



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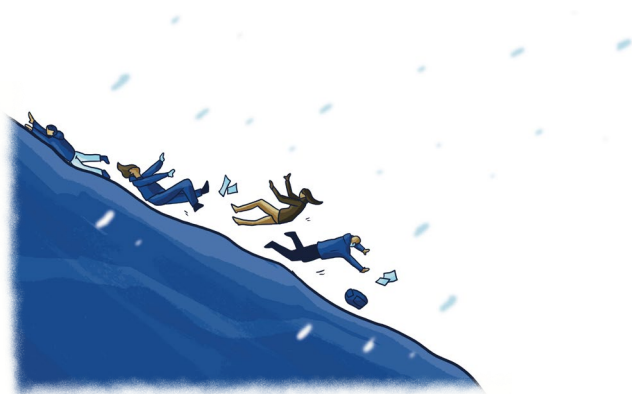
Elaboration

The complex organisation makes it difficult to identify and coordinate behaviour

A university is a complex organisation in which different entities and structures are interwoven. Formal and informal responsibilities by no means always coincide. The complexity of the organisation makes it difficult to identify and coordinate behaviour.

Overall responsibility lies at a high level within the organisation and at a distance from the workplace, which can lead to departments having their own dynamics and group norms, and not taking much notice of central policy. Moreover, the day-to-day work is organised through numerous collaborative structures inside and outside the organisation, in teaching, research, and other tasks where employees have varying loyalties. Many academics do not work at the same university for their entire career, and only feel connected with the organisation for part of their work. Because of all this, it is often unclear who is responsible for what, where one really belongs, and whose views one should be bothered about.

'The large size of many universities is a risk factor. In a small, "flat" organisation, you have a better idea of what's going on.'



This complexity means that people can do as they please unseen, and it makes it difficult for those with responsibility to keep track of everything that is going on. At the same time, it is difficult to achieve control of the behaviour of people who have competing loyalties. Researchers may, for example, value their international reputation more than the guidelines of their own employer. If people wish to be recognised first and foremost by their professional peers – domestic and foreign – then it is very difficult to monitor, control, and influence their behaviour from within the organisation. It may therefore easily be the case that signs of inappropriate behaviour that are apparent in one particular context are not necessarily recognised in other contexts, as a result of which problematic behaviour can be repeated elsewhere over and over again.

It also creates a certain tension between the administrative and academic components of the organisation. Opinionated researchers work towards deadlines. Many of them also feel that the university has become far too bureaucratic, regularly irritating them with formalities. If they discover at a late stage that those formalities still need to be attended to, they sometimes prefer to come up with creative solutions rather than follow the prescribed rules and procedures. Such an approach complicates the work of the non-academic staff, who feel bound by the rules or are required to ensure proper compliance. This is thus a source of mutual frustration, where emotions can run high and feelings of insecurity quickly arise.

Studies have also shown that the temporary nature of ad hoc collaboration partnerships and a lack of clarity regarding positions and roles can undermine feelings of social safety. Someone without a clear 'home base' often also has no clear guidelines for assessing the desirability of certain behaviour or bringing it up for discussion. Research shows that someone who is used to functioning in many different capacities and systems is more likely to downplay rules and be less motivated to comply with them.



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Summary



Changes in organisational structure can neutralise the pressure on social safety

In order to safeguard social safety as a precondition for good scientific practice, it is necessary to counteract the characteristics that make Dutch academia a fertile breeding ground for inappropriate behaviour. A counterforce can be deployed to oppose each detrimental characteristic.

'It's about awareness, but it also needs to be guaranteed structurally.'

This section of the report explains how the negative effects of scarcity and workload can be countered, to begin with, by **investing in improving cooperative relationships**. This requires a change in the organisational structure so that everyone's contribution to social safety is recognised and valued, especially in the areas of team science and leadership.

In order to neutralise the risks of unequal power relationships, the organisation should put safeguards in place against the abuse of power, for example by making the responsibility those in power have for the well-being and proper functioning of subordinates a key factor in the **selection and development of managers**.

In order to respond to the complexity of the organisation – which can easily allow matters to remain hidden – it is possible to develop a **fine-mesh structure for ensuring social hygiene**. For example, HR staff can be explicitly tasked with identifying behavioural risks and assisting managers to recognise patterns. Consideration should also be given to training people within all departments and staff categories to raise behavioural issues at an early stage and help others draw attention to them.



Investing in cooperation
Responsible leadership
Identifying behavioural risks



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Investing offsets the negative effects of scarcity and workload only if it also improves cooperation

Underfunding is a recognised problem in Dutch academia that calls for an effective solution. This makes it all the more ironic that money is now being wasted by tolerating unacceptable behaviour and by uncritically allocating resources to people who do not empower others or who even sabotage them. All the resources now used to reward certain 'stars' who make work impossible for others, or to resolve incidents after they have escalated, would be better spent on preventing problems. This can be done by systematically rewarding people who contribute to good working relations.

Additional funding to reduce scarcity and workload can have a greater impact if it is also aimed at improving collaborative relationships. **This requires a change in the organisational structure so as to recognise and value a wider range of competencies and contributions than is currently the case.** The 'Recognition and Rewards' [*Erkennen en Waarderen*] programme that has been initiated offers pointers for this. That programme can potentially have a major impact as regards improving social safety. Whether that will actually happen depends on how behavioural aspects that shape social safety are transformed into specific assessment criteria and career outcomes; this applies to both academic and non-academic staff.

In particular, the new criteria to be developed for team science and leadership provide an excellent opportunity for adopting a fresh approach. This requires paying attention to how one wishes to organise cooperation and to what is relevant in that regard; it applies to both researchers and support staff. The results of research into team cooperation show that people can only make an effective contribution to the team if there is a clear division of tasks and everyone is committed to an open, safe atmosphere. Research into the effects of leadership leads to the conclusion that the (model) behaviour of managers and supervisors in the workplace determines the way the team works. **Someone who neglects interpersonal relations needs guidance, while a top researcher who invests in effective cooperation deserves extra opportunities.**

'You need to look more broadly than just at the academic track record.'

Although committing to this approach is primarily a task for the academic institutions, other parties can support the policy. That applies, for example, to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science or the Dutch Research Council (NWO)/ZonMw (the Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development) when financial resources are being allocated; to supervisory boards when personnel policy is assessed; to the Academy (KNAW) when candidates are being selected for memberships or prizes; or to the inspectorates when assessing health and safety policy. This calls for effective coordination and pooling of efforts regarding assessment criteria in the field of behaviour that need to be further developed and validated, without losing sight of assessment of other scientific/scholarly qualities.



Elaboration

Calculation examples for costs of lack of social safety



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Case 1: 3 months followed by different job

Sexual advances by a supervisor. PhD candidate called in sick, investigation by Inappropriate Behaviour Complaints Committee. Temporary suspension from supervision duties. Change in supervisor's duties and coaching. Different supervisors for other PhD candidates. PhD candidate back at work 3 months after reporting sick.

Lost working time:
managers: day p/w (ave. € 80K p/y) € 4.000

Replacement:
€ 405 per day € 21.627

Internal advisers:
HR, CGM, Legal Affairs, etc. 2 hrs p/w (ave. € 80K p/y) € 1.000

Subtotal: € 26.627

Other costs: 10% of total € 2.663

TOTAL 'hidden' costs € 29.290
Still excluding medical expenses and absenteeism costs

Case 2: 6 months followed by departure

Situation similar to that of Case 1, but with different duration (i.e. 6 months) and outcome (i.e. departure of PhD candidate).

Lost working time:
managers: day p/w (ave. € 80K p/y) € 8.000

Replacement:
€ 405 per day € 43.254

Internal advisers:
HR, CGM, Legal Affairs, etc. 2 hrs p/w (ave. € 80K p/y) € 2.000

External advice:
mediation (10 hours), legal (10 hours), € 4.840
€ 200 p/hr excl. VAT

Exit costs:
transition allowance (average) € 30.000
Unemployment benefit (WW/BWNL) (80% 1 year) € 64.000

Subtotal: € 152.094

Other costs: 10% of total € 15.209

TOTAL 'hidden' costs € 167.303
Still excluding medical expenses and absenteeism costs

Case 3: 1 year followed by departure

Serious 'MeToo' complaints about a professor/research leader, with major impact on work and health of a university lecturer. After discussion with confidential counsellor and occupational health physician, the lecturer reported sick and the professor was placed on non-active status. Tasks (supervision of PhD candidates and teaching) taken over by colleagues. Internal investigation was followed by external investigation (in total 12 months), resulting in departure of the professor. After being off sick for 14 months, the lecturer decided to leave the employer. The case was reported in the press.

Lost working time:
managers: day p/w (ave. € 80K p/y) € 16.000

Replacement:
€ 405 per day € 86.508

Internal advisers:
HR, CGM, Legal Affairs, etc. 2 hrs p/w (ave. € 80K p/y) € 4.000

External advice:
mediation (10 hours), legal (10 hours), € 9.680
€ 200 p/hr excl. VAT

Exit costs:
transition allowance (maximum) € 85.000
Unemployment benefit (WW/BWNL) (80% 1 year) € 64.000

Subtotal: € 265.188

Other costs: 10% of total € 26.519

TOTAL 'hidden' costs € 291.707
Still excluding medical expenses and absenteeism costs



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Organising responsible leadership counters abuses of power

The organisation is responsible for protecting managers from themselves. The realisation that there is a danger of abuse of power as soon as dependencies exist – irrespective of the person concerned – means that when someone is appointed to a managerial or board position, safeguards should also be put in place to prevent such abuse.

Responsibility for the well-being and proper functioning of subordinates merits a central place in the structures used to recruit, select, develop, and reward managers. This means that readiness to accept that responsibility should be an important criterion when directing and assessing managers. It also means that these aspects should be central to the competence development of task-oriented and relational leadership behaviours. Finally, it means that the number of people for whom a manager can bear such responsibility cannot be too large.

'People aren't trained to be leaders. Training and evaluation of leaders can definitely be improved.'

Research on effective leadership shows that responsible leaders are the best leaders. They are people who are able to identify with the needs of their subordinates and who can motivate and enthuse them to work towards a common goal. This does not reflect a personal feature or a fixed character trait but a set of competencies that can, to a certain extent, be developed.

Actively listening to the concerns of others, actively organising debate, and actively inviting criticism are part of this. It is the subordinates who are in the best position to judge whether all this is actually successful (for example by giving 360 degree feedback, or by responding in targeted employee satisfaction surveys). This requires an open attitude that all managers can acquire, provided they are supported by the organisation in doing so and are given enough time. After all, providing effective leadership is not something you just do on the side.

New career paths require a clear, shared view as to what behaviours and performance people need to demonstrate in order to qualify for a leadership position. The relevant discussion can be raised to a higher level by also involving scientific experts on leadership effectiveness. The outcome of this discussion may, for example, be a set of demonstrable skills that constitute a basic or an advanced qualification for leadership positions. New challenges arise at every stage in someone's career and with every promotion, and expectations as to how an effective leader acts are also subject to change over time. This requires the organisation to ensure that managers continue to develop and update their skills throughout their entire career, for example with periodic refresher and intervision sessions. The organisation's top management can set a good example in this regard.





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A fine-mesh structure for identifying behavioural risks does justice to the complexity of the organisation

The widely branched and complex nature of the organisations in which researchers work makes it difficult to identify behavioural risks from a central location. In some departments, leadership and group norms ensure that a lot of attention is paid to this issue. But the organisation has a responsibility to ensure alertness to behavioural risks throughout. **This means that throughout the entire organisation sufficient attention and competencies are focused on detecting indications of behaviour patterns that inhibit effective cooperation.** Collecting such indications is not an end in itself and is not meant to shame anyone. The main aim is to have a structure in place that allows early identification of units within the organisation where extra care is needed, so that proactive action can be taken to encourage professional behaviour

Research shows that problems regarding social behaviour – more so than problems of inadequate competencies – give rise to shame and guilt. This applies not only to those directly involved but also to others around them who are not in any way to blame. It means that one cannot assume that people will signal problematic behaviour of their own accord.

'The Executive Board can also collect information itself.'

It is therefore advisable to identify people – **in all departments and all categories of personnel** – who have a good understanding of behavioural issues and are able to draw attention to them, as is already often done informally by concerned colleagues. Such people can be assigned the formal role of '**social safety ambassador**'. By this we mean not only the existing officials within the reporting structures, such as confidential counsellors and ombudspersons; a more widely branched group (including, for example, members of the works council) can help identify and discuss potential behavioural risks at an early stage. They should be allocated designated hours for this in their work package, which they can also devote to competency development, coordination between them, and intervention.

In addition, **HR staff** can be assigned the explicit task of periodically and actively compiling indicators that provide insight into risk factors with regard to workplace behaviour. They can introduce these as a standard item in discussions about the functioning of teams or departments. In doing so, they can make use of existing HR data, for example regarding employee turnover, absenteeism, or employee satisfaction. **Confidential counsellors and ombudspersons** can also detect patterns based on the signs they receive.

An **integrated, anonymised report** of the findings and subsequent action on the part of HR staff, confidential counsellors, and ombudspersons in the area of social safety can form part of a **comprehensive safety analysis**. This will also indicate which indicators are used to identify behavioural risks, what the results of this analysis were, and how they were acted upon. This will enable the **Supervisory Board** to obtain clarity as to the system for identifying behavioural risks and how it is utilised. The aim is to determine whether the organisation is doing enough to detect behavioural risks; whether it is sufficiently prepared to learn from incidents; whether it communicates regarding what has been learned; and if necessary makes changes to the structures for appointing people, guiding them, and allocating tasks and responsibilities.





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Getting started with the organisational structure

The questions in this table offer a means of taking your first steps regarding the structure component, tracking how well you are doing, and making further progress. [See here](#) for more information and pre-conditions. And don't forget to work on the workplace culture and the system for correcting behaviour.



Aim:	Investing in cooperation	Organising responsible leadership	Identifying behavioural risks
How can you get to work on this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? What is needed within the unit so as to work well together? ? Are there people (academic staff/support staff) whose task it is to ensure effective cooperation and who are also allocated hours for doing this? ? What competencies do they need for this, do they have them, and how was that determined? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? What responsibilities do managers have for their subordinates? Is that clearly indicated to them? ? How and in what context is the development of leadership qualities monitored? Is an evidence-based method available for this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Are data and indications about behaviour used to clarify behavioural risks? ? Has it been clearly agreed who will do this and who will receive feedback? ? Which persons or organisations can provide further information?
Does it work as intended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? How is the quality of cooperation monitored? Is it apparent that this is improving? ? How is it determined that those who have to manage cooperation have sufficient support and the right facilities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Do managers receive development support if necessary, or will their duties be modified? ? Are there periodic checks as to whether managers are fulfilling their responsibilities effectively? Does this include collecting information from subordinates and colleagues? ? How is that information factored into career decisions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Is action taken on the basis of the risk analysis? If not, why not? ? Do the indicators used offer added value? Or are changes necessary? ? Do unexpected problems arise less often?
What's next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? What new requirements do changing circumstances impose for cooperation (for example impact on activities)? ? Are there people who contribute to cooperation in ways that have not yet been identified? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? What new challenges have arisen for leadership (for example Open Science)? ? What new tools have become available for developing and assessing leadership qualities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Is there a timely overview of the components that require increased attention? ? What new indicators are conceivable that could clarify this?



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Sources

Scarcity of resources and workload endanger the quality of the work

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Appendix II: List of reports (national and international).



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The complex organisation makes it difficult to identify and coordinate behaviour

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Investing only offsets the negative effects of scarcity and workload if it also improves cooperation

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Organising responsible leadership counters abuses of power

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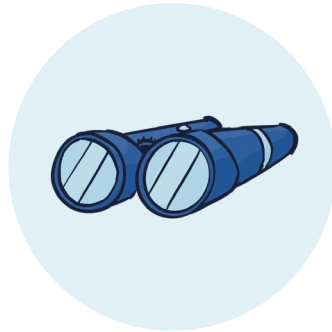
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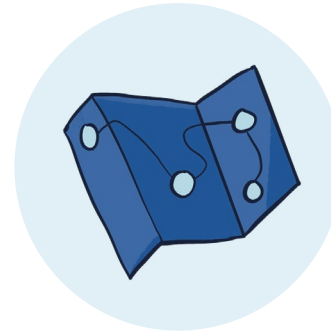
The workplace culture



Perspectives



Analysis



Recommendations



Getting started



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Perspectives

The person complained about: I didn't see it coming and couldn't defend myself

I always had the impression that I was doing my work well and that PhD candidates were satisfied with the supervision I provided. That was also what I was told, for example by other colleagues and based on evaluations.

When a complaint was made about me, I heard nothing about it, even though we talked to one another about all sorts of other things. Looking back, I found that very strange. It was never mentioned in my annual appraisals either. It wasn't properly investigated at the time, because not all complaints are dealt with. Perhaps the complaints committee also found that it was no big deal. But by doing that you trivialise the situation.

It was only afterwards that I heard what it was about and who had complained. It's true that we didn't get on well. She sometimes did things I didn't like and perhaps I was too hard on her. But nothing was really done to find out what had happened or how the matter could be resolved. Instead, all those involved were bought off and everybody had to keep quiet about it. But that didn't mean that the feelings aspect had been dealt with.

There was no open communication. Because the matter wasn't allowed to be disclosed, it wasn't clear to anyone what exactly was going on. Other members of staff who wanted to express their views weren't allowed to do so either. The individuals involved were bought off and left, but the problem was never really solved. It was an unpleasant way to leave.

The successful woman: Are they trying to pester us into leaving?

My research is going really well and I've secured some nice grants, but I have the feeling that they want to keep me 'down'. The rules regarding promotion are unclear and I'm always kept dangling. If I don't do precisely what they want, then they get angry. Are they jealous or something?

All the important positions here are held by men only. They constantly scratch one another's back and protect one another. They think what's happening to me is unfortunate, but they think it's just bad luck. Although a lot more cases are known about.

I tried to take the matter 'upstairs', but they wouldn't talk to me. I think they're afraid of dirty laundry and don't want me to mention it anymore. But if you aren't open about problems, you can't do anything about them. It is a sweep-it-under-the-carpet culture.

By the way, we had a number of successful women here, with big grants, and some of them from abroad. But they don't manage to build anything up here. They give up and one after the other they leave. I don't think they feel the need here for any new perspectives.



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Summary



The workplace culture is not conducive to discussing behaviour

The culture at academic institutions doesn't focus enough on social safety and good working relations. A common assumption is that research is a purely rational activity in which perceptions, emotions, and relationships are irrelevant. As a result, behaviour is hardly ever discussed – not even when it causes cooperation problems. Three specific features can be identified in this culture in the academic workplace.

To start with, **a lot of people consider behaviour to simply be a given** that cannot be changed. As a result, academic institutions pay hardly any attention to the way behaviour actually arises – for example, as a result of group processes – and people aren't confronted about modifying their behaviour.

In addition, **emotional and social skills are not automatically a factor in the recruitment, development, and selection of academic staff.** At the same time, those who do invest time and energy in such aspects say that their efforts often go unnoticed or unrewarded, despite their contribution being extremely important.

'There's no open communication.'

Finally, Dutch academia conveys the image of valuing diversity. Nevertheless, it turns out to be difficult to put this into practice systematically. Both previous reports and the consultations reveal **how unsuccessful attempts have been to ensure that people with different backgrounds can experience a safe working environment** in which they can demonstrate their qualities. They're expected to adapt to the prevailing modes of interpersonal behaviour without expressing too much in the way of criticism. The importance of social safety requires, however, that everyone should have a voice when behaviour is concerned.

In short, Dutch academic institutions do not yet have an open culture of accountability aimed at developing shared behavioural rules so as to ensure that everyone can work in a safe environment.



Behaviour isn't a topic of conversation

Skills are lacking

False idea that everyone can speak up



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Behaviour is regarded as a given and not a subject of discussion

The stereotypical view is that research is a purely rational, intellectual activity. At the universities, you do indeed find people who prefer to focus on substantive, technical problems rather than on interpersonal relations.

'There's nothing in the way of a frank and open discussion.'

And in addition to that there's a widespread tendency to view behaviour as an unchangeable given: something that's an inherent part of someone's character. This fixed-mindset approach leads to the conclusion that there's not much sense in talking about behaviour. Too little attention is paid to the influence of the organisation on the emergence and persistence of behavioural preferences, for example due to group processes or social norms.

The idea that behaviour is unchangeable creates a feeling that there's no point in calling people to account for their behaviour, or that you can't criticise someone's behaviour without rejecting the whole person. But if people are not told where they are going wrong, they don't get the opportunity to change. That way things can escalate unnoticed and nothing ever changes.

At too many places in academia, hardly any attention is paid to workplace behaviour, relationships, group processes, or emotions. Nevertheless, all these do play an important role, for example in recognising, acknowledging, and developing talent and in elaborating new ideas. After all, feelings such as pride, jealousy, overconfidence, insecurity, loyalty, or unease are important drivers of behaviour.





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The ability to talk about behaviour is lacking and is not prioritised

In developing professional skills, too little attention is paid to the possibility of also developing interpersonal skills and behaviours. **Not enough account is taken of emotional and social skills in the recruitment, selection, and development of academic staff.** Research shows, however, that with a 'growth mindset' everyone can to some extent acquire certain rules of conduct. Some people have a better feel for this than others, but those who want to be successful at it have to devote a great deal of time, effort, and attention to it – elements that are then not available for other tasks.

A number of those interviewed told the committee that **the ability to raise the issue of behaviour and discuss it is not assigned the right priority.** The efforts of people who put in the time to become good at this often go unnoticed or remain unrewarded. This aspect is also not systematically included as a criterion for talent and career development at Dutch academic institutions.

This creates the impression that it is not important to be able to discuss interpersonal behaviour. People in the workplace are also not used to that happening and are shocked when someone does start talking about it. By no means everyone has the skill to conduct such a discussion in a constructive manner. This leads to evasion, defensive reactions or escalation on both sides, instead of a willingness to take on board one another's perspective and find a solution together.

'People have a very short fuse. They don't know how to tackle one another about something in the right way.'

At the same time, it is more necessary than ever to develop this skill, if only because of the increased diversity and internationalisation of Dutch academia. When people from different generations, cultures and nationalities, men and women work together, one cannot assume that they have the same expectations and needs regarding behaviour in the workplace. This makes it all the more important to learn how to talk about implicit standards and whether these are (still) appropriate.





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But the idea is still maintained that everyone can speak up

The prevailing image of Dutch academia is that of an open, egalitarian, and meritocratic system in which everyone can speak up and is heeded, regardless of their position, origin, nationality, or identity. That is not the case in reality. There are ample studies that unequivocally show that precisely the same proposals or scientific/scholarly performance are valued and weighted differently if they come from women or cultural minorities. **The potential benefits of diversity for the quality of science and scientific work are therefore underused.** Divergent suggestions or perspectives are often viewed as a problem, rather than as enrichment that can yield a multiplicity of different voices and a broader horizon. This too often leads to people who do not fit the pattern feeling forced to conform or to their leaving disillusioned.

This also has repercussions as regards interpersonal behaviour. A relative newcomer who questions existing conventions (the departmental drinks get-together, forms of address) or work facilities (lack of access to buildings, the absence of a lactation room) runs the risk of being seen as a demanding 'international' or a nagging woman. Studies have shown that even justified complaints about unequal treatment or unfair lack of advancement are usually not well received. This raises the threshold for speaking out about prevailing workplace conventions. It also maintains the fiction that everyone is treated equally and that we all like things just the way they are.

'All the women left and no one thought that was strange.'

This fiction is also perpetuated by the fact that people systematically overestimate the likelihood that they will tackle colleagues in the case of racist, homophobic, or sexually transgressive remarks. As various studies show, they say they will do so, but in practice they do not. People also mistakenly assume that they will succeed in setting their personal boundaries. In practice, for example, saying 'no' to a romantic invitation from a colleague turns out to be much more difficult than everyone thinks. And, as research shows, the person who offers the invitation is not aware of this. Moreover, all these patterns are further reinforced if there are power differentials or dependence on the other person: many know of cases in which there is greater understanding for the behaviour of a professor than for the personal boundaries of an employee in the secretarial department or the canteen.

Dutch academia is not really an open system as long as there are no provisions to guarantee that different perspectives feature in the way we give shape to it.





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Many problems can be prevented by talking to one another about desirable behaviour

Many people assume that a conversation about behaviour in the day-to-day work of academic institutions is unnecessary or can't be helpful. That assumption needs to be contested. Three changes in the workplace culture can encourage broad-based early discussion of behaviour, contrary to current practice. This concerns not just what constitutes undesirable or transgressive behaviour but specifically what is desirable and how people can help and learn from one another.

'Really listening and saying "I'm sorry" already goes a long way, without talking about guilt or sanctions.'

To begin with, the organisation can actively initiate **discussion of behaviour**, with the aim being to make people realise that a better understanding of the causes and consequences of their behaviour can help them jointly come up with viable ground rules for cooperation.

The organisation can also do more about **competency development**, giving people in the workplace active support in talking about relationships and emotions, for example by teaching them how to deal constructively with irritation about others.

Finally, gains can be achieved by giving a voice to people who are not sufficiently able to participate in discussions about day-to-day matters, and the effect this has on them. Viewed from this perspective, **diversity and a multiplicity of different voices** is not a problem but a strength: people from different backgrounds are better equipped to question habitual behaviour and existing practices.



Understanding behaviour by discussing it
Developing skills
Giving everyone a voice



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Talking about behaviour clarifies its causes and consequences

The ability to talk about behaviour constructively is a professional skill that everyone in academia should develop. It forms part of a healthy workplace culture and is necessary for good scientific practice.

The way people behave reflects not only their character and their personal experience throughout life; it is also guided by unspoken norms, learned habits, and involuntary reactions to others around them. By talking about what these invisible forces and reactions involve and understanding how they affect others, people can become aware of the harmful effects of their behaviour on others, can gain insight into how they themselves contribute to the creation of a downward spiral, and can become motivated to change this. Someone who avoids addressing these matters – due to misguided loyalty or awkwardness – is not helping the person involved.

'It's a good thing if it's brought to light. It's also about values: how do you deal with one another?'

Engaging in discussion about behaviour is thus the core of the culture change. One regularly hears the lament that 'there's been enough talking' and 'something' needs to actually be done. However, the fundamental change that needs to take place hinges on developing a culture in which it is normal to talk to one another about behaviour. And sometimes the first step is to have an honest discussion about what is not going well. It helps to jointly explore where certain habits come from. It helps to tell one another what impact someone's behaviour is having on you. It also helps to display vulnerability by asking how things can be done better. Having a productive discussion with one another about behaviour and the culture and naming unspoken workplace norms is something we can learn together, and then continue to do – not defensively but focussing on learning and improving.

The aim of the discussion is to make specific the principles or premises of good science and shared codes of desirable behaviour.

Not everyone is equally talented or experienced in this regard. The organisation therefore has a responsibility to help people develop the necessary skills. Everyone can learn to do so to a certain extent, for example based on familiar ground rules for giving and receiving feedback, or information about the causes and functions of emotions that help identify them and recognise their effects. Watching a play or film on this topic together, reading a book or questioning one another about dilemmas can facilitate discussion.





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The organisation has a responsibility for the development of skills that contribute to social safety

It is naive to think that all will be well as regards a safe climate for learning and academic debate if people are simply smart enough. The organisation has a responsibility for specifying and developing skills in the area of relationships, emotions, and communication. These help lecturers create a safe learning environment, help researchers engage in constructive debate with room for dissenting opinions, and help facilitators contribute their expertise. These competencies are in fact part of the basic package of professional and academic skills that are also indispensable for giving shape to current aims regarding impact and open science. In order to safeguard research integrity, it is also crucial that people have the ability to express doubts and to pose difficult questions without this provoking a defensive response.

'Talking feels awkward; you need courage to do it.'

The standard package of development opportunities for all staff should include such components as giving and receiving feedback, recognising and naming emotions, mediating in and resolving an incipient conflict, and taking action when inappropriate behaviour is observed. To maximise the added value and impact of these types of courses for critical academics, development of such programmes should be carried out in close cooperation with academics who study these subjects and who can offer evidence-based approaches.

In order to guide behaviour in more complex situations, people can improve their abilities, for example with the aid of networks for intervention and further development. Staff members (in academic or support positions) who wish to prepare for a managerial position are expected to develop beyond the basic skills that apply to everyone.

This recommendation may well cause unease or consternation among those who do not feel called upon to develop these skills or who find, due to a work overload, that they do not have sufficient space for this kind of training. This highlights once more how important it is for an organisation that says it wishes to prioritise a safe working environment to actually allocate hours for employees to invest in it, and for managers to acknowledge and advocate for its importance.

Many of the board members and executives whom the committee spoke to find it difficult to affirm this priority. Investing in behaviour seems to distract from ambitions for teaching and research. These problems are genuine, but even in the current situation, there are costs associated with the choices that are now made. When aims in terms of productivity and quality of work do not fit within the possibilities available for realising them, then tough choices need to be made. This issue cannot be resolved by ignoring skills and development goals in the area of behaviour and social safety.





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Giving everyone a voice enables unwritten rules to be questioned

Those who are in charge where choices as to content and strategy are concerned have often earned their spurs in a system that they have made their own to such an extent that it has become self-evident for them. They therefore do not always see why people from a different background may feel excluded or misunderstood due to the current state of affairs. People who question existing practices and interpersonal behaviour can help determine whether current practices are still appropriate today. Rendering visible the invisible norms that perpetuate the culture is a first step towards adapting those norms and changing the culture. **The organisation and the managers have a special responsibility to invite those people who are less likely to be heard to express their views on prevailing behavioural norms and unwritten rules.**

'At a meeting about social safety, it was only the international researchers and the women who showed up. Not everybody finds it important.'

In the past, unsolicited initiatives have already led to important changes and major strides being made. The decision to commission this advisory report, for example, resulted directly from reports and recommendations by the Dutch Network of Women Professors (LNVH). Similarly, within some institutions, research reports and recommendations by young researchers or students have spurred improvements in social safety policies.

Even better than simply responding to initiatives and calls from such parties is proactively collecting information. This can be done by giving a voice to underrepresented and vulnerable people within the organisation by inviting them to offer a broader perspective. It is worth seeking input – more actively than is currently the case – on behavioural risks and norms from parties that are currently less easily heard, at all levels of the organisation. Numerous studies and practical analyses show that whistle-blowers are usually fiercely loyal and committed employees who are troubled by abuses and wish to improve the organisation to which they belong. Their first choice is to attempt to air their

concerns through the regular routes and channels for input. It is only when their constructive efforts are ignored that they go public with escalating and disruptive action.

A common approach when people do not feel at home within the organisation or have difficulty with the way cooperation works is to offer them a training session or a course, with a view to making them better equipped for what is asked of them and able to adapt to the organisation's requirements. That does not solve the problem, however. Studies show that it leads, above all, to the current culture being perpetuated and to people who do not 'fit in' leaving the organisation. If women are taught, for example, to report problems regarding a lack of social safety at an earlier stage, it turns out that this mainly provokes retaliation, with the women concerned leaving the organisation. Training programmes that make employees aware of undesirable aspects of their own behaviour are often counterproductive. The programmes that turn out to be most effective in practice are those that are targeted at managers and give them specific pointers for helping people who are experiencing problems.





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Getting started with the workplace culture

The questions in this table offer a means of taking your first steps regarding the culture component, tracking how well you are doing, and making further progress. [See here](#) for more information and preconditions. And don't forget to work on the organisational structure and the system for correcting behaviour.



Aim:	Understanding behaviour by discussing it	Developing professional skills	Giving everyone a voice
How can you get to work on this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Are available resources used to get discussion going (performances, books, films, reports, lectures)? ? Have specific rules of conduct been agreed upon? What are they? ? Are these agreements discussed and reviewed periodically? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? What skills are important for good cooperation? Are they clearly indicated? ? Are opportunities for developing these skills included in the standard package for all staff? ? How are employees encouraged to make use of those opportunities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Who engage in discussion of the desirability of prevailing behavioural norms? ? Have efforts been made to involve people who are less likely to be heard? If so, how?
Does it work as intended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Does discussion take place as to whether the rules of conduct are sufficient? How can the rules of conduct be altered? ? Are behavioural dilemmas regularly shared and discussed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Do enough people take the courses that are offered? ? Do those courses properly match employees' needs? ? Is behaviour discussed more often and more effectively? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Are different perspectives involved to a greater or better extent in decision-making? ? Are there any examples of new concerns that have been dealt with in this way?
What's next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? How can you refer to and test behavioural skills during selection procedures for vacant positions? ? Are there additional insights as to what skills are relevant? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? What else is needed to make people feel more capable? ? What measures will you put in place for people who are unwilling or unable to learn? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? What additional perspectives can be included? ? Are there new groups of people who have not yet been heard? How can you get them involved?



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The system for correcting behaviour



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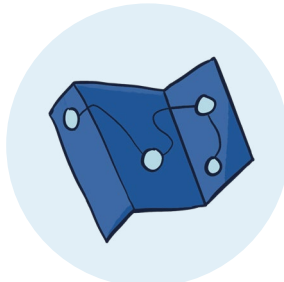
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Perspectives



Analysis



Recommendations



First-aid kit



Getting started





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Perspectives

The person filing a complaint: I want it to stop

What is transgressive behaviour? How can you recognise it? What can you do if it happens to you? Who can then help you? How do you know whether there have been other incidents? These are all questions that are not easy to answer.

Inequality forms a barrier: it's very important to talk about things that are not going well, but they aren't open for discussion. There's a competitive atmosphere and it seems as if some people can do anything they like. Where can you go with your story? Nobody dares to complain. So you bottle it up far too long.

I know you're now only collecting information and you can't do anything for me; you said that clearly at the beginning of the conversation. But I am glad I could tell you the whole story. That you just want to know what happened, without immediately passing judgment. That already helps. And maybe you can do something to make sure that other people don't have to go through this too.

To others it may seem harmless but it really upsets me. It would already be helpful if someone would just say: 'I apologise, I didn't do that right' or 'I'm sorry'. But I'd prefer not to file a formal complaint. I'm worried that would only make things worse. As far as I'm concerned, that person doesn't need to leave either. I just want the behaviour to stop! But how do I get it to stop?

The confidential counsellor: I know a lot but I can't do much about it

In most cases, the confidential counsellor is someone who does that job 'on the side', which is why some of them step down from their role. But if you want to do it properly, it needs to be your primary task.

If there is real malpractice, then someone does intervene but usually you find yourself in a grey area. You know something is going on, but what can you do about it? You're also bound by your duty of confidentiality and many people with a problem don't want to file a formal complaint. In a situation like that, everyone requires care; you don't want to think in terms of perpetrators and victims.

We can't really take any further action. We sometimes ask a colleague from the same faculty to mediate. We know who are good at it. But it's naturally not an official role. And calling in external investigators is often not a good solution; you'd like there to be more learning capacity within the organisation.

And sometimes you get a report about a dean or a member of the Executive Board. So who can you escalate then, the Supervisory Board?



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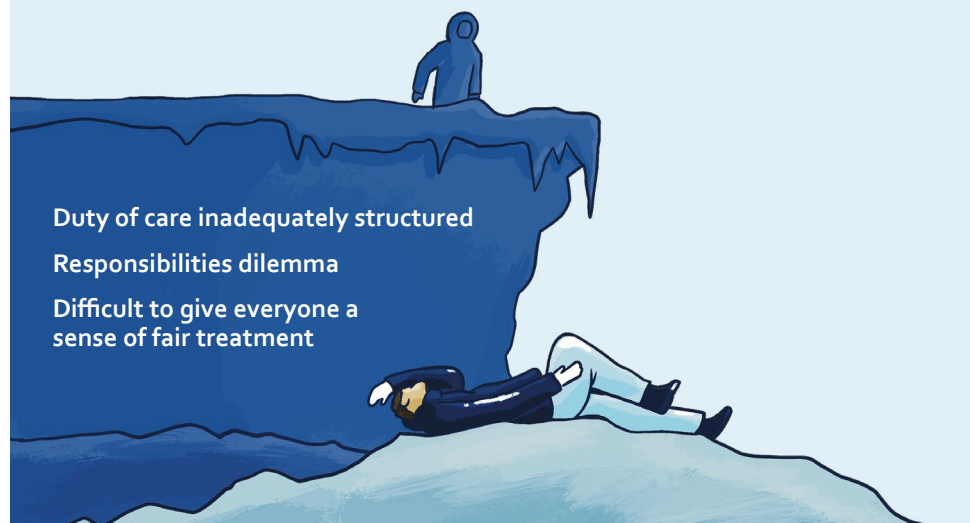
The current approach focuses on handling complaints rather than on prevention, which leads to escalation of problems and loss of trust

The organisation has the task of ensuring a safe working environment for everyone. All academic institutions therefore have facilities for reporting and handling complaints relating to social safety. **However, various reports and the many interviews conducted by the committee show that the relevant procedures focus more on dealing with formal complaints than on early identification or actual resolution of social safety problems.** As explained in this section of the report, that approach often proves counterproductive. Reticence about intervening causes problems to escalate, and it undermines confidence that the organisation is truly committed to social safety.

In practice, people repeatedly find that the duty to provide a safe working environment is jeopardised. There are a number of reasons for this. In general, codes of conduct are not formulated unambiguously, little attention is paid to them, and they therefore provide less guidance than, for example, principles of research integrity. In addition, the officials and the regulations intended to monitor social safety do not form a systematic whole. This is further compounded by the fact that adequate implementation and support are often lacking. The result is that prevention is not really effective because it is not made clear what social safety actually entails and why it is so important. Problems continue to simmer for too long because it is not clear who should take action and what exactly should be done.

‘There wasn’t anybody who really wanted to know what the problem was or really wanted to solve it.’

In the event of inappropriate behaviour, the employer also faces a **responsibilities dilemma**. An employee complains about the behaviour of another: how can one then ensure that the complainant knows – and other employees know – that the organisation takes the right to a safe working environment seriously, while also dealing with the person complained about with the due care required by law? The employer has to represent the interests of multiple parties involved, and it’s not always clear how those interests can be reconciled. **The committee has established that it is difficult in practice to strike a balance between these responsibilities.**





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Prevention doesn't really get off the ground because the duty to ensure social safety is not worked out clearly enough, either on paper or in practice

The organisation has the task of guaranteeing a safe working environment for all employees. This includes ensuring good relations between employees and the duty to prevent the psychological harm that can arise as a result of inappropriate behaviour. A great deal has already been done to comply with this duty of care. There are policy frameworks and regulations pertaining to social safety, and also persons with the explicit task of counteracting and tackling inappropriate behaviour. Nevertheless, previous reports and the many interviews conducted by the committee show that institutions do not succeed in offering a working environment in which all employees feel socially safe. **What is already available is therefore not enough, or is insufficiently utilised.**

Ideally, **codes of conduct** have a normative function. The existing university codes do not, however, reflect a common vision as regards core principles of social safety within Dutch academia, or how they can be put into practice in the workplace. The current codes do not provide sufficient guidance for questioning one another's behaviour or for appealing to people's intrinsic motivation. This may explain why social safety is not embedded as a core element of academic identity, whereas research integrity is.

Nor does the appointment of **officials** necessarily mean that social safety is guaranteed. In many places, relevant positions are not effectively aligned or it is insufficiently clear who is responsible for what. Those involved sometimes have little experience of complex cases, or are inadequately equipped to deal with them effectively. Moreover, officials, managers, and support staff with a task in the area of social safety often do not know how to join forces. As a result, reports are not always handled adequately and people feel they are being sent from pillar to post – especially if they wish to report behaviour that concerns both social safety and research integrity.

It is not always clear what everyone is expected to do because the many **sets of regulations** do not form a systematic whole. And even if it is clear what needs to be done, that does not always work out in practice. For example, people lose confidence in a complaints procedure if the response times that it stipulates are constantly exceeded. A complaints desk is of no use if nobody knows where to find it or is not referred to it. People will not raise the issue of someone else's behaviour if the body which they can address does not seem independent and therefore feels unsafe.

'How do you fulfil the duty of care? What provisions are there?'

The committee notes that in practice existing provisions for ensuring social safety fail to offer enough pointers for promoting common norms of behaviour or for calling people to account for inappropriate behaviour at an early stage. The preventive potential of what is already available is insufficiently exploited because people who experience inappropriate behaviour are often only heard if they file a formal complaint.





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In the event of inappropriate behaviour, the employer faces a responsibilities dilemma

When an employee experiences the behaviour of another employee as inappropriate, the employer faces a dilemma: how does one ensure that the complainant and the other employees are provided with the safe workplace to which they are entitled on the basis of the employer's duty of care, while at the same time offering the person complained about the due care that the law also prescribes?

As an employer, the university has to abide by the rules of employment law in its relationship with individual employees. Those rules mean that an employee is entitled to extensive protection by the employer, no matter how serious the accusations. At the same time, the employer is also obliged to guarantee a (socially) safe working environment for all its employees. This creates a complicated dynamic. On the one hand, the person complained about merits protection and confidentiality until the precise facts have been clarified and it is clear what action should be taken. The complainant, on the other hand, can expect signs of inappropriate behaviour to be taken seriously and tackled energetically so as to safeguard norms of behaviour. This dilemma makes it difficult to meet the diverging expectations of the parties involved.

'It takes a very long time, you can't say anything, and you don't know what they're doing.'



The wish to deal with the matter with due care can impede transparent communication about the approach to signs, reports and complaints, and hinders the setting of clear norms. Concern for damage to the reputation of the parties involved and the organisation can make people feel that no clear behavioural boundaries have been set. A confidentiality agreement fosters ambiguity and distrust. Studies show that a lack of transparent communication about how to deal with problem situations undermines feelings of procedural fairness. For onlookers, it raises the question of whether the organisation is serious about providing a safe working environment.

At the point when the situation escalates or is revealed only after many years, the question also arises as to whether the employer has fulfilled its dual role correctly. Was the priority perhaps too much on protecting the person complained about? Did the employer make sufficient efforts to take account of the perspective of the complainant and onlookers during the procedure? Has it become sufficiently clear to those in the workplace that the organisation takes its norm-setting role seriously?



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It's difficult to strike a balance between these responsibilities, and as a result none of those involved feels treated properly and fairly

It seems difficult in practice to strike a balance between the diverging responsibilities towards all the parties. In itself, it demonstrates careful legal management to call in external agencies in a complaints procedure to establish the facts carefully, to not communicate about the procedure in the interim or give extensive details afterwards, and to wait for a formal decision before taking action.

However, the priority thus assigned to the legal side of the matter easily leads to delays and a lack of transparency. **A lack of clear, timely information about where things stand, what steps are being taken, and when people can expect what, results in those involved experiencing the process as unfair.** They consequently feel unjustly treated by the organisation. This affects all those involved, as previous reports and the consultations for the present report have shown.

The organisation is not always aware of these negative effects and often fails to take sufficient account of them. This is also evident from the perceived lack of assistance and aftercare as regards reports of inappropriate behaviour and the handling of complaints. All in all, this encourages further escalation and makes people feel compelled to draw attention to their situation through the media.

'All the complaints were considered separately, not as a pattern.'

Given the potential public consequences, the individuals and institutions involved are often keen to protect their reputation. Concerns about reputation can, however, detract from transparency about the approach adopted, which is so important for communicating that the organisation does take social safety seriously. Moreover, such concerns distract attention from efforts to resolve the problem with an approach that is acceptable to all parties. For instance, the perpetrator of misconduct may receive a severance payment, while the person who reported it is sitting at home sick, with no one knowing exactly why. Colleagues then draw their own conclusions.

The committee sees all this as leading to a downward spiral: because the handling of reports of inappropriate behaviour fails to demonstrate that the organisation prioritises social safety, people cease to trust that something will change. This lessens the willingness to report problems and perpetuates a culture of not bringing problems into the open. The current approach focuses more on dealing with incidents than on organisational learning with a view to preventing similar problems from recurring. People elsewhere within the organisation do not know what has happened or how it has been handled, meaning that managers need to rediscover each time what approach they should adopt. As the cases examined show, all this means that there is a realistic chance that even if inappropriate behaviour has been proved, a perpetrator can still transfer to a position elsewhere with a clean slate, with unresolved problems thus being passed on to the next organisation.





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Summary



With a systematic approach, geared to prevention and timely correction of behaviour, you can take care of all concerned

Better elaboration of the duty of care helps strike a balance between the diverging responsibilities that the organisation has regarding social safety. This section of the advisory report explains how one can thus counteract the tendency to avoid problems until they escalate.

Ensuring social safety can be made more concrete by **employing codes of conduct in a different manner**. This can be done by discussing core principles of social safety at national level and by embedding them more broadly as part of academic identity – in just the same way as with research integrity. Elaboration of the principles can be improved by putting more effort into translating them into practical guidelines that map onto day-to-day dilemmas in the workplace. By regularly discussing the background and implications of these codes and if necessary adapting them, one can ensure they remain alive. Only in this way can they offer useful pointers for setting norms regarding appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

'There's no coordination: who is responsible for what?'

Moreover, **early discussion of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and correction of the latter** contributes to a better balance between the responsibilities that the organisation has towards all parties. Responding to low-threshold signs or informal indications by discussing them at an early stage may well make it possible to remedy the situation before it escalates into a sanctions procedure. In this way, a one-sided legal approach that focuses on due care but in practice mainly undermines procedural justice can be replaced by a transparent system involving a preventive approach aimed at learning and improving behaviour.

Finally, it becomes easier to balance the various responsibilities when the people charged with a task in the area of social safety are linked up more effectively and regularly share knowledge and experience of how to tackle and resolve problems. This can be done by creating **safety nets** at various levels (faculty, university, national) **in which officials and experts are brought together** and support one another so as to quickly assist those involved. They can also assist managers when they are first confronted with a difficult case.

Jointly working out codes of conduct

Timely correction of behaviour

Safety net for all parties involved





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Jointly working out guidelines will bring codes of conduct to life

In order to facilitate prevention and early correction of behaviour, the duty to ensure social safety needs to be further elaborated. **Among other things, this requires reviewing – and where necessary redesigning – existing codes of conduct that focus on social safety.** It can also be coordinated nationally – in parallel with the shared guidelines for research integrity – and in relation to regulations and provisions that oversee other forms of safety/security. The aim of such a review is to arrive at unambiguous guidelines offering clear pointers for setting norms of behaviour and for tackling people about appropriate or inappropriate behaviour. This increases the practical value of the code of conduct as regards timely intervention when attention is drawn to a problem. The added value of such a code is further enhanced if – when translating general principles into specific workplace situations – account is taken of individual and organisational factors that increase the likelihood of compliance.

‘There’s no practical “to do” agenda.’

A code that is in line with what research has revealed about intrinsic motivation also helps people stick to it, for example, because a clear connection is made between core principles for social behaviour and important preconditions for good science. It is also helpful if it is clear how these general principles can be translated into specific guidelines that everyone can apply in their day-to-day interactions at work. What that means in a specific workplace cannot always be determined or imposed on everyone from above. It is therefore worth having people in different parts of the organisation work together to define how they can turn the shared principles into practical norms of behaviour that are appropriate to their own situation.

Choices made in the language of these guidelines can increase (or conversely reduce) the likelihood that people will observe them. People are inclined, for example, to comply with guidelines that are formulated in terms of desirable ideals. Lists of obligations to which they are bound, prohibited behaviour, and corresponding sanctions tend to be counterproductive. Here, collaboration with behavioural experts can improve the quality of the guidelines offered.

Even if important principles, desirable behaviour, and concrete details are clearly set out on paper, it is important to keep them ‘alive’ as part of the workplace culture. By raising this issue at key moments and discussing it regularly within each department in response to day-to-day dilemmas, one can develop a common understanding of what exactly is meant and can provide a platform for discussion of the desirability or undesirability of specific behaviours. If this is done regularly, one can also prevent people remaining uncertain about expectations regarding behaviour, or being able to invoke uncertainty subsequently.

But even if all this has been arranged, there will always be ambiguities or grey areas. This only reinforces the need for keeping the code of conduct alive and periodically reviewing it, for example because the influx of new generations or international colleagues leads to shifting norms regarding acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.





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Preventing escalation requires timely correction of behaviour

Complainants are usually not out to punish the other person or damage the organisation, but they want the behaviour to stop. That behaviour often lies in a grey area, with it not being clear beforehand whether it is an offence that needs to be sanctioned or corrected.

What exactly happened, how can you prove it, and who broke the rules? Psychological studies show that the questions asked during a legalistic type of investigation of the facts do not necessarily help improve behaviour – regardless of whether such an investigation is internal or conducted by an external agency. This approach mainly causes stress and despondency because the past cannot be changed. People are more open to the question of how they can improve their behaviour if they are asked what they would like to do differently in future, what they hope to achieve by doing so, and how they can go about it. As studies show, threatening them with sanctions in advance does not motivate them to comply better with guidelines, and does not encourage them to improve.

Achieving improvements in behaviour requires a different approach that ensures that action is taken at the first sign of inappropriate behaviour. Quickly communicating and responding to these initial signs of such behaviour is not simply a question of blaming and penalising but a way of promoting professional interpersonal behaviour. The **first-aid kit** in this section of the report sets out specific steps and points to consider in this regard. **The aim is to quickly correct inappropriate behaviour and avoid further escalation**, with more options being available than merely imposing sanctions. Correction of behaviour may consist, for example, of the manager unambiguously specifying what behaviour is desirable or undesirable, explicitly pointing out to those involved that it is important to conform as regards that behaviour, and making it clear that contributing to social safety is a factor in the assessment of everyone's performance. **HR can play an important role in this by setting guidelines, helping to make arrangements or offering mediation, drawing up improvement plans, and documenting progress.**

Research into the effects of procedural fairness shows that adhering to such an unambiguous, fair, and transparent process has positive consequences for all concerned, regardless of the outcome. This means that formulating clear 'if-then' arrangements, communicating about them, and following them up and documenting them are at least as important as the issue of what exactly happened or what sanctions are appropriate.

'Files are often inadequate.'

If it is clearly evident that managers are shouldering their responsibility and making an effort to correct behaviour in a timely manner, this will also have a positive effect on the organisation as a whole. It allays the fear that a single lapse will immediately result in dismissal and increases confidence that the organisation will intervene to address inappropriate behaviour. Communicating and reporting on the number and overall nature of signs of inappropriate behaviour and how they were acted on can assist in setting norms of behaviour within the organisation and increase confidence in the operation of reporting systems.





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Linking up people to collectively solve problems provides a safety net for all involved

It became clear time and time again from the interviews conducted by the committee that the way the current arrangements for handling complaints are structured is frustrating for all concerned. There are no ready-made solutions, however, for striking the right balance between the various responsibilities vis-à-vis all parties in every situation. But if those with responsibility for social safety are linked up, supported, and given guidance, they can come up with more appropriate solutions to deal with the difficult realities.

'There has to be a clear framework: who does what?'

Such support can take the form of a network of people with a responsibility for social safety, such as managers, HR, the legal affairs department, and various officials. These form a collective safety net in which the various roles are properly aligned with one another under a coordinator, everyone knows who plays what role, and they are all sufficiently equipped to perform their roles. To test whether that is in fact the case and to prepare them for their tasks, it can help to periodically conduct and evaluate a kind of joint 'fire drill', based on a fictitious or previous case.

Effective coordination within this network can make it into a safety net through which everyone can be quickly provided with assistance. This can prevent people from being sent from pillar to post, and signs and reports of inappropriate behaviour from being repeatedly reassessed or not followed up; it can also quickly debunk unfounded complaints. If the safety net works well, it will not matter who someone approaches or what kind of problem they raise because there will always be proper follow-up. Effective interaction between the network members also aims to ensure that all those involved in a case receive adequate assistance and guidance, i.e. both the complainant and the person complained about as well as the onlookers. All in all, proper coordination within the network therefore contributes to a sense of fairness.

In this way, a safety net for support and intervention opportunities ensures that effective intervention – or better still, early correction of behaviour – does not depend on the qualities that a single individual may or may not have. It is a matter of arranging for people with tasks in the area of social safety to be able to advise and assist one another and to quickly interact. This also means that the organisation as a whole can learn from previous incidents and how they were handled.

Such a safety net therefore links together different components of the organisation, both within the faculties or departments and centrally. The field as a whole can further reinforce this network by also sharing expertise at sector level and between universities. In specific cases, experts from other universities (rather than external agencies) can be brought in as a form of peer review to investigate and/or advise from an independent position. The network can also be utilised to prevent problems addressed in one particular context from being repeated in another.





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First-aid kit

Board members, managers, and their support staff are often hesitant and uncomfortable about what to do when they hear about inappropriate behaviour: what can they do and what guidelines should they follow? The following tips set out the steps one can take towards correcting behaviour and what key points need to be considered. The exact details may vary depending on the particular situation.

Phase	Steps to take	Points to consider
Listen	Listen carefully – do not judge	Acknowledge feelings; do not be judgmental about perceptions; ask what is needed. Ask follow-up questions; summarise and check without expressing approval or disapproval
	Offer support for all parties	Check who is involved and offer them a discussion partner for reflection, information, mental support
Demonstrate responsibility	If so desired, withdraw those concerned from the problematic situation	Quickly put (temporary) measures in place to ensure safety (transfer temporarily to a different manager/supervisor/department; allocate leave; place on non-active status)
	Be transparent about <i>the responsibilities of the manager and the organisation vis-à-vis all parties</i>	Communicate as openly and quickly as possible about the action to be taken, the steps envisaged, and the time frame; be realistic and stick to what's been arranged. Indicate who will be informed, and at what point, including onlookers and any other parties involved such as the media
	Record the facts	If necessary, have the facts recorded by an independent third party (within or outside your own organisation); hear both sides; record in writing what has been shared with and by each party; ensure feedback to the parties involved
	Clarify the role of the organisation. Don't just focus on what has happened but also on the situation in which it occurred.	For example: Is there a code of conduct and are those involved aware of it, or should they have been? What does that code say about the behaviour reported?
Assess the matter	Combine the perspectives on the report for an initial diagnosis	Estimate seriousness and impact, based not only on facts and knowledge of the situation/organisation, but also on subjective experience (including the perspective of the person complained about)
	Involve higher ranking managers if necessary	If clearly necessary, escalate immediately or bring in specialists
	Seek an acceptable solution based on the combined perspectives	Don't just think about sanctions but also, for example, about acknowledgment of the lapse and apologies by the person complained about. Manager talks to parties separately to explore acceptable solution and the required preconditions





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Phase	Steps to take	Points to consider
Improve	Initiate the improvement process by making arrangements and recording them in the personnel file.	In consultation with HR, manager makes arrangements about: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> what behaviour is appropriate/inappropriate how this can be made apparent (indicators) and who will assess this the time period after which evaluation will take place perhaps a warning or reprimand
	Communicate about this improvement process	Focus on own action and timeline, without specifying content or persons
Complete	Evaluate the improvement in behaviour	Manager collects information on indicators and plans evaluation moment
	Conclude or escalate on the basis of the evaluation (for example sanctions after all)	Based on the authority relationship between employer and employee (see Section 7:610 and 7:660 of the Dutch Civil Code), the employer has the option of imposing increasing sanctions on an employee, even in the case of 'slight' forms of inappropriate behaviour. It is advisable to seek advice from an employment law specialist in this regard. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Warning Reprimand Withholding of periodic salary increase Withdrawal of certain powers, such as supervision of PhD candidates Transfer Fine Suspension Dismissal (in an extreme case with immediate effect)
	Provide adequate aftercare	Check with the complainant, the person complained about, and any onlookers whether the situation has been resolved satisfactorily, and be prepared to put additional measures in place, including over a longer period of time
Learn	Communicate about completion at organisation level	Provide information on numbers, overall nature, timeline, roadmap for ongoing and completed reports; not on exact content of reports or identity of those involved
	Learn as an organisation from this and previous experience	Keep a list of successfully completed improvement processes and the nature of the arrangements made; use this as input for training days for managers; consult this information for inspiration in new cases; adapt communication strategy on the basis of previous cases





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Getting started with a system for correcting behaviour

The questions in this table offer a means of taking your first steps regarding the system component, tracking how well you are doing, and making further progress. [See here](#) for more information and preconditions. And don't forget to work on the organisational structure and the workplace culture.



Aim:	Jointly working out codes of conduct	Timely correction of behaviour	Safety net for all parties involved
How can you get to work on this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Is there a code of conduct? Is it easy to find? Does everyone know what it says? ? Does it explain why the principles are important? ? Is it clear what specific behaviour follows from the principles? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? What support do managers receive in the event of reports and signs of inappropriate behaviour? What more is necessary? ? Is there a template that managers can use to make clear 'if-then' arrangements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Have people been designated throughout the organisation to assist in the event of problems? ? How are these people connected up in a network for advice or follow-up? Does that network make use of peer review? ? Is it clear for each problem who is in charge and what the division of roles is?
Does it work as intended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? When is the code of conduct in any case discussed in the workplace? ? Does the code help resolve day-to-day dilemmas? ? How is the code discussed with new employees? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Have the guidelines that managers can follow to correct behaviour been worked out sufficiently? ? How do others in the workplace know that behaviour is being corrected if necessary? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Does everyone do what was promised? ? Does everyone (complainants, those complained about, onlookers, officials) feel sufficiently informed and listened to? How is this monitored? ? Does everyone feel adequately equipped for their task? What else is still necessary?
What's next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Are there any developments that impose new requirements on the code of conduct or call for a new code or addition to the code? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Is there an intervention opportunity for managers? How is additional expertise obtained if necessary? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Is there regular practice with a previous or fictitious case, and are lessons learned from it? ? How is the handling of previous cases evaluated?



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Sources

Prevention doesn't really get off the ground

Appendix I: The consultation process.

Appendix II: List of reports (national and international).

Appendix III: Overview of policy frameworks and regulations.

In the event of inappropriate behaviour, the employer faces a responsibilities dilemma

Appendix I: The consultation process.

Appendix II: List of reports (national and international).

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Bouwens, W.H.A.C.M., D.M.A. Bij de Vaate & R.A.A. Duk (2020).

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It's difficult to strike a balance between these responsibilities

Appendix I: The consultation process.

Appendix II: List of reports (national and international).

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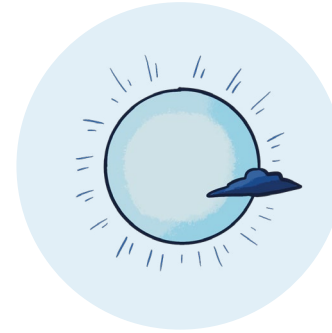
A vision for the future



This is the beginning



Getting started



What's next?



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This advisory report is intended as the start of a process of change

Social safety is a prerequisite for good scientific practice. It's not just something incidental; it is in fact a core element of scientific work, in the same way as research integrity.

If you wish to improve social safety in the workplace, it's not enough just to read this advisory report and implement a few of its recommendations. **The solutions described here are intended to be dealt with in combination. It's only in practice that can they be moulded and fine-tuned so that they have the desired effect.** So it's not only a matter of what you do, but also how you do it.

In **every organisation**, the nature of the current situation and the solutions needed will also differ. In order to specify and initiate the necessary changes, **broad involvement** is needed on the part of representatives of all layers of the organisation. And in every organisation there are also **scientists/scholars with relevant expertise** in the subject who can contribute their professional know-how so as to improve the organisation to which they belong. Some organisations have already taken more strides in this direction than others, which makes it impossible to indicate what everyone should do to achieve a **common standard**.



When the organisational structure neutralises pressure on social safety, there is a culture in which behaviour is discussed, and a system for timely correction of behaviour...

...this will ensure that everyone wins in a safe environment where talent and success are fostered.



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The committee has already initiated this process

In preparing this advisory report, the committee has already initiated this process, utilising various means to do so. In addition to delivery of the problem analysis and recommendations, various **pointers and supplementary products** have been developed; these can be found at www.knaw.nl/socialeveiligheid. They are intended to flesh out the recommendations and to clarify how they can be put into practice.

With a view to the necessary change process, information was also gathered during several rounds of **consultations and interviews** to check whether the analysis of recurring bottlenecks and problems was complete and correct. It was then ascertained whether the proposed solutions offered added value and appeared feasible. In doing so, the committee wished to already provide insight into the approach during the process in order to increase its utility and support base. Finally, in preparing this advisory report, the committee attempted to enter into dialogue with as many relevant umbrella organisations and parties as possible that can question and support the universities in implementing the recommendations outlined here.

The committee is impressed by the high level of engagement on the part of all these parties with the topic of the report, recognising as they do its urgency. The committee hopes that this marks a turning point in addressing the issue of social safety in Dutch academia.





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Matters meriting further attention

It is to be hoped that Dutch academia as a whole can benefit from the approach proposed by the committee. Nevertheless, some groups, contexts, and situations require additional attention.

This applies in particular to **students**. The focus of this report is not on them because they have a different legal relationship with the institutions. **It is advisable to look more specifically in the near future at the role and position of students as regards social safety.**

Institutions also have no direct or unambiguous control over certain behaviours and situations that nevertheless affect social safety in academia. The committee has not considered these problems in the present report. They are, among others:

- A lack of social safety due to intimidation by **other parties** (patients, the media/social media);
- A lack of social safety in the interaction with adjacent sectors and **practical training programmes** (training of pastors, hospitals and physicians' training, lawyers);
- A lack of social safety affecting employees and students in **external contexts** (student associations, conferences, fieldwork, app groups).

The committee concluded that these topics are beyond the scope or possibilities of its current assignment. **A number of important issues are nevertheless concerned that can be further elaborated in the future.**





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What questions can you ask yourself and others so as to get started with this advisory report?

This advisory report is a kind of guide, indicating what is necessary to advance from paper to practice as regards all components (organisational structure, workplace culture, and system for correcting behaviour). For each of these components, the advisory report provides a table of questions as an **aid** to taking the first steps, tracking how well you are doing, and making further progress. Basically, everyone can pose these questions, and you can thus encourage one another to get started.

To bring about real change, it is necessary to agree on the following for each course of action:

- Who is responsible for it;
- What the aim is;
- How to determine whether that aim has been achieved;
- What budget is available;
- How the expertise of scientists/scholars who have studied these matters is to be deployed;
- How all organisational units and job categories can be involved.

And in order to keep up your spirits: make use of what is already available and what you are already doing; keep talking about the final objective, the intermediate steps, and the timeframe; be happy with everything that is going well but don't forget to take further steps.



Organisational structure neutralises pressure on social safety



A culture in which behaviour is discussed



A system for timely correction of behaviour



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Getting started with the organisational structure

The questions in this table offer a means of taking your first steps regarding the structure component, tracking how well you are doing, and making further progress. [See here](#) for more information and pre-conditions. And don't forget to work on the workplace culture and the system for correcting behaviour.



Aim:	Investing in cooperation	Organising responsible leadership	Identifying behavioural risks
How can you get to work on this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? What is needed within the unit so as to work well together? ? Are there people (academic staff/support staff) whose task it is to ensure effective cooperation and who are also allocated hours for doing this? ? What competencies do they need for this, do they have them, and how was that determined? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? What responsibilities do managers have for their subordinates? Is that clearly indicated to them? ? How and in what context is the development of leadership qualities monitored? Is an evidence-based method available for this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Are data and indications about behaviour used to clarify behavioural risks? ? Has it been clearly agreed who will do this and who will receive feedback? ? Which persons or organisations can provide further information?
Does it work as intended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? How is the quality of cooperation monitored? Is it apparent that this is improving? ? How is it determined that those who have to manage cooperation have sufficient support and the right facilities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Do managers receive development support if necessary, or will their duties be modified? ? Are there periodic checks as to whether managers are fulfilling their responsibilities effectively? Does this include collecting information from subordinates and colleagues? ? How is that information factored into career decisions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Is action taken on the basis of the risk analysis? If not, why not? ? Do the indicators used offer added value? Or are changes necessary? ? Do unexpected problems arise less often?
What's next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? What new requirements do changing circumstances impose for cooperation (for example impact on activities)? ? Are there people who contribute to cooperation in ways that have not yet been identified? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? What new challenges have arisen for leadership (for example Open Science)? ? What new tools have become available for developing and assessing leadership qualities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Is there a timely overview of the components that require increased attention? ? What new indicators are conceivable that could clarify this?



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Getting started with the workplace culture

The questions in this table offer a means of taking your first steps regarding the culture component, tracking how well you are doing, and making further progress. [See here](#) for more information and preconditions. And don't forget to work on the organisational structure and the system for correcting behaviour.



Aim:	Understanding behaviour by discussing it	Developing professional skills	Giving everyone a voice
How can you get to work on this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Are available resources used to get discussion going (performances, books, films, reports, lectures)? ? Have specific rules of conduct been agreed upon? What are they? ? Are these agreements discussed and reviewed periodically? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? What skills are important for good cooperation? Are they clearly indicated? ? Are opportunities for developing these skills included in the standard package for all staff? ? How are employees encouraged to make use of those opportunities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Who engage in discussion of the desirability of prevailing behavioural norms? ? Have efforts been made to involve people who are less likely to be heard? If so, how?
Does it work as intended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Does discussion take place as to whether the rules of conduct are sufficient? How can the rules of conduct be altered? ? Are behavioural dilemmas regularly shared and discussed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Do enough people take the courses that are offered? ? Do those courses properly match employees' needs? ? Is behaviour discussed more often and more effectively? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Are different perspectives involved to a greater or better extent in decision-making? ? Are there any examples of new concerns that have been dealt with in this way?
What's next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? How can you refer to and test behavioural skills during selection procedures for vacant positions? ? Are there additional insights as to what skills are relevant? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? What else is needed to make people feel more capable? ? What measures will you put in place for people who are unwilling or unable to learn? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? What additional perspectives can be included? ? Are there new groups of people who have not yet been heard? How can you get them involved?



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Getting started with a system for correcting behaviour

The questions in this table offer a means of taking your first steps regarding the system component, tracking how well you are doing, and making further progress. [See here](#) for more information and preconditions. And don't forget to work on the organisational structure and the workplace culture.



Aim:	Jointly working out codes of conduct	Timely correction of behaviour	Safety net for all parties involved
How can you get to work on this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Is there a code of conduct? Is it easy to find? Does everyone know what it says? ? Does it explain why the principles are important? ? Is it clear what specific behaviour follows from the principles? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? What support do managers receive in the event of reports and signs of inappropriate behaviour? What more is necessary? ? Is there a template that managers can use to make clear 'if-then' arrangements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Have people been designated throughout the organisation to assist in the event of problems? ? How are these people connected up in a network for advice or follow-up? Does that network make use of peer review? ? Is it clear for each problem who is in charge and what the division of roles is?
Does it work as intended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? When is the code of conduct in any case discussed in the workplace? ? Does the code help resolve day-to-day dilemmas? ? How is the code discussed with new employees? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Have the guidelines that managers can follow to correct behaviour been worked out sufficiently? ? How do others in the workplace know that behaviour is being corrected if necessary? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Does everyone do what was promised? ? Does everyone (complainants, those complained about, onlookers, officials) feel sufficiently informed and listened to? How is this monitored? ? Does everyone feel adequately equipped for their task? What else is still necessary?
What's next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Are there any developments that impose new requirements on the code of conduct or call for a new (partial) code? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Is there an intervention opportunity for managers? How is additional expertise obtained if necessary? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? Is there regular practice with a previous or fictitious case, and are lessons learned from it? ? How is the handling of previous cases evaluated?



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What's next? The University of the Future

Social safety – like research integrity – is a precondition for achieving scientific ideals and academic freedom. **The culture change needed to improve social safety therefore also involves what we want the university of the future to look like.**

This advisory report indicates the overall route and destination for this. It is now time to develop, test, and adjust the next steps in order to build structures and systems that actually facilitate that culture change. **This process of change can be given further shape in a national Social Safety Programme.**

The purpose of a national programme is to learn from one another's experience and from the solutions that have been implemented. This also makes it easier to coordinate intermediate steps and to develop a common standard. It is beyond the scope of this report to recommend new instruments for that purpose. Broadly shared frameworks such as the Collective Labour Agreement, the Strategy Evaluation Protocol (SEP) 2021-2027, and the assessment frameworks of the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) provide sufficient guidance for the time being. The current SEP, in particular, lends itself well to monitoring and focusing on social safety as part of the specific *Academic Culture* aspect.

If such a programme is to achieve maximum effectiveness, it is important to involve different types of parties in its design, at both national and local level. These are, firstly, the **younger generations** of staff (academic and support staff) whose future is concerned. Secondly, there is added value in deploying the expertise of **behavioural and organisational scientists** in shaping policy. This makes it possible to benefit from existing insights about what works and what does not. They can also help develop new interventions and tools to test their effects empirically, thus gradually creating an evidence-based programme. If they work from the beginning with **policymakers and executive staff** who are aware of relevant policy frameworks and preconditions (for example from HR and the legal affairs department), the institutions will more quickly achieve solutions that really work.

It is not only the universities and research institutes that have a role to play in this. **'The field', in the broad sense**, can be involved in the process, with coordination being sought with such parties as the Universities of the Netherlands (UNL), the Netherlands Federation of University Medical Centres (NFU), the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), the Dutch Research Council (NWO), the Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZonMw), the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW), and the various inspectorates.

Integrated analysis and combination of different types of recommendations implies that activities aimed at increasing social safety have the greatest chance of success if they are linked to other initiatives. For example, social safety merits a place as a standard theme within an integrated approach to safety/security risks and measures to overcome them.

This approach to social safety means that it is important to seek to link up with initiatives regarding such related themes as diversity and inclusion, safeguarding research integrity, development of academic leadership, the 'Recognition and Rewards' programme, and measures to protect knowledge security and digital security. An integrated approach of this kind increases the likelihood that achievement of all these aims will be brought a step closer.





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Appendix I: The consultation process

In preparing this advisory report, the committee consulted as many people as possible who are involved with the subject matter, ranging from students, lecturers, and researchers to managers and officials within the structures for reporting inappropriate behaviour. For certain specific components, advice was sought from relevant experts. Given the nature of the subject and the personal involvement of many of those interviewed, their names are not mentioned here. The committee is nevertheless deeply grateful to them and hopes that this report does justice to the knowledge, experience, and observations they have shared.

The consultations took various forms:

- A) Between the chairperson and individual persons concerned;
- B) General consultation meetings;
- C) With relevant (national) organisations.

A. With/by committee chairperson: During preparation of this report (December 2020 – March 2022), the chairperson held confidential discussions with numerous parties in the field. These mostly involved individuals, but sometimes small groups. The total number of discussion partners was 39. Those involved came from various different departments and job levels, from different disciplines and from different universities.

- Onlookers: n=5 (university lecturer, professor, adviser – 5 organisations)
- Heads of department: n=6 (professor, director – 3 organisations)
- Complainants: n=6 (student, PhD candidate, university lecturer, senior university lecturer, professor – 3 organisations)
- Board members: n=7 (Executive Board members – 7 organisations)
- Administrators: n=5 (dean, director, task force – 4 organisations)
- Persons complained about: n=4 (professor – 4 organisations)
- Confidential counsellors/ombudspersons: n=6 (3 organisations)
- Total number of universities: 8

B. General consultation meetings: The committee held two general consultation meetings: on 22 April 2021 (29 participants) and 26 April 2021 (28 participants). Participants were able to respond to the committee's preliminary findings by means of statements and open questions in the 'Mentimeter' program. The participants then split up into a number of breakout sessions for further discussion of the problem analysis and proposed solutions with one or two members of the committee. In addition, a catch-up session (7 participants) was held on 1 June 2021 and a follow-up session (3 participants) on 28 June with the chairperson only.

The participants were associated with the following organisations: 14 Dutch universities, 1 university medical centre, 1 research institute organisation, 2 national inspectorates, 4 external investigation/advisory agencies, 3 organisations representing specific groups within Dutch academia. There were discussions during these sessions with a total of 64 participants with, *inter alia*, one of the following (often overlapping) roles:

General

Student/ex-student
 PhD candidate
 Lecturer
 Post-doc researcher
 University lecturer (UD)
 Senior university lecturer (UHD)
 Professor
 Head of Department
 Director of research institute
 Faculty board members
 Secretarial staff member
 Head of HR/P&O (central)
 HR/P&O staff member/adviser (central/faculty)
 Head of Legal Affairs department (central)
 Legal Affairs staff member/adviser (central)
 Research and teaching policy officer (central/faculty)
 Student advisor
 Works Council member (student)
 Works Council member (faculty/central) (staff)
 Inspector (internal/external)

Positions specific to topic

Confidential counsellor
 Confidential counsellor (external)
 Research integrity counsellor
 Confidential counsellor (informal)
 Member of inappropriate behaviour complaints committee
 Employee of inappropriate behaviour complaints committee
 Member of committee on research integrity
 Member of national advisory body on research integrity
 (Social) safety policy and/or integrity policy officer
 Head/coordinator of (social) safety policy
 Diversity policy officer (central)
 Ombudsperson
 Expert/researcher (associated with university)
 Expert/researcher (external)
 Confidential inspector



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C. Discussions with relevant (national) organisations: The President and/or Director General of the Academy was also regularly present.

- Rectors' Conference (3 February 2021)
- Academy Board (9 March 2021 and 12 October 2021)
- Academy members (25 March 2021)
- Universities of the Netherlands (UNL) Business Operations and Finance Steering Group (7 April 2021)
- Academy's Council of Directors (13 April 2021)
- Dutch Network of Women Professors (LNVH) HR Platform Meeting (26 May 2021)
- National Advisory Commission on Diversity and Inclusion: chairperson (6 September 2021)
- Netherlands Federation of University Medical Centres (NFU): vice-president (26 October 2021)
- Universities of the Netherlands (UNL): president (27 October 2021)
- Universities of the Netherlands (UNL): administrative leaders for social and integrated safety/security (9 November 2021 and 1 February 2022)
- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (4 November 2021 and 22 March 2022)
- NWO/ZonMw (15 November 2021)
- Supervisory Board chairs consultation body (15 November 2021)
- University HR directors consultation body (19 November 2021)
- Academy psychology section (18 January 2022)
- Academy's Director General and Academy Board portfolio manager (18 January 2022)
- University Legal Counsellors consultation body (11 February 2022)

During the advisory process, there were also contacts at administrator level with the relevant organisations (in alphabetical order: Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), D&I, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Dutch Network of Women Professors (LNVH), Netherlands Board on Research Integrity (LOWI), Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZonMw), Dutch Research Council (NWO), Universities of the Netherlands (UNL)).



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Appendix IIa: List of reports (The Netherlands)

* The reports marked with an asterisk (16) were coded and analysed by Isabella Klaassens MA according to the themes dealt with, specific problems identified, and number and type of recommendations.

2022. Inspectie van het onderwijs. *Factsheet Sociale veiligheid in het hoger onderwijs*.

2021. Wellum, A., G. Lange, E. Adams & P. Hurks. *Sexual violence and sexual harassment among Maastricht University Students*. Maastricht University.

2021. Diversity and Inclusion working group of the Young Academy Groningen. *Harassment at the University of Groningen*. University of Groningen / Young Academy Groningen.

2021. Jerek-Zuiderent, S., J.A Brenninkmeijer, A. M'charek & J. Pols. *Goede wetenschap: Een visie van binnenuit*. Amsterdam UMC / Universiteit van Amsterdam.

2021. Hoogendam, J. & A. Brenninkmeijer. Waarborgen voor een veilig werk- en leerklimaat voor toekomstige artsen. *Nederlands Juristenblad*, 42, 3479-3486.

* 2021. Inspectie SZW. *Rapportage WO in Actie*.

* 2021. I&O Research, in opdracht van Amnesty International (Nederland). *Rapport. Studenten over verkrachting. Onderzoek naar verkrachting onder studenten, hoe ze ermee omgaan en hoe ze erover denken*.

* 2021. Universiteitsraad Universiteit Utrecht. *Adviesnota Melden (Seksueel) Wangedrag Universiteit Utrecht*.

* 2021. Bauw, E. & P.C. Schokker. *Evaluatierapport Klachtenprocedure*. Universiteit Utrecht.

* 2021. Social Safety Taskforce UvA. *Breaking the silences: Social safety at the University of Amsterdam*. Universiteit van Amsterdam.

* 2021. ScienceGuide. *Geneeskundestudent met migratieachtergrond voelt zich gediscrimineerd door opleiding en patiënt*. Nieuwsbericht.

2020. Stevenson, S. & D. van den Berg. *Evaluatie universitaire ombudsfunctie*. SoFoKleS. Sociaal Fonds voor de Kennissector.

* 2020. Atria. *Nationaal Actieplan: Diversiteit in de Wetenschap - Verkennend onderzoek naar internationale voorbeelden*.

* 2020. De Jonge Specialist. *Rapport Gezond en Veilig Werken*.

2020. Werkgroep Leerklimaat A(N)IOS Sint Antonius Ziekenhuis. *Verbetering Leerklimaat A(N)IOS. Aanbevelingen voor COC, opleiders, opleidingsgroepen en A(N)IOS*. Sint Antonius Ziekenhuis.

* 2020. Dutch Physics. *Improving diversity and inclusiveness. A collection of best practices*.

* 2020. Promovendi Netwerk Nederland. *PNN PhD Survey. Asking the relevant questions. Supervision and freedom*.

* 2020. Promovendi Netwerk Nederland. *PNN PhD Survey. Workplace malpractices: discrimination, sexual harassment, breaches of the code of conduct*.

* 2020. Eindhoven Young Academy of Engineering. *Maintaining Talent*. (ongepubliceerd)

* 2020. *Meldingen van discriminatie op universiteiten verdubbeld*. EenVandaag. Nieuwsbericht.

* 2019. FNV/VAWO. *Sociale veiligheid van medewerkers op universiteiten*

* 2019. M. Naezer, M. van den Brink & Y. Benschop, in opdracht van het LNVH. *Harassment in Dutch academia. Exploring manifestations, facilitating factors, effects and solutions*

* 2019. LSVb. *Informatievoorziening ongewenst gedrag*.



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Appendix IIb: List of reports (international)

2021. University and College Union. *Eradicating sexual violence in tertiary education. A report from UCU's sexual violence task group*. UCU.
2020. Agardh, A., U. Andersson, H. Björklund, E. Elén, M. Emmelin, L. Lindell, J. Palmieri, G. Priebe, P.-O. Östergren. *Tellus – Sexual harassment, harassment and victimisation at Lund University. Results based on data from surveys, interviews and focus group discussions with employees, doctoral students and students*. Lund University.
2020. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *The impacts of racism and bias on black people pursuing careers in science, engineering, and medicine*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, <https://doi.org/10.17226/25849>
2020. Government of Ireland. Department of Education and Skills. *Safe, respectful, supportive and positive. Ending sexual violence and harassment in Irish higher education institutions*. Government of Ireland.
2020. Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation. *Sexual harassment in research and higher education sector: National policies and measures in EU member states and associated countries*. European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC).
2020. Council of the European Union. *Mobilising to eradicate gender-based violence and sexual harassment: a new impetus for gender equality in the European research area*.
2020. The 1752 Group and McAllister Olivarius. *Sector guidance to address staff sexual misconduct in UK higher education*.
2019. Working Group National Institutes of Health. *Changing the culture to end sexual harassment*.
2018. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. *Sexual harassment of women*. Washington: NAS, <https://doi.org/10.17226/24994>
2018. Bull, A. & R. Rye. *Silencing students: Institutional responses to staff sexual misconduct in UK higher education*. University of Portsmouth / The 1752 Group.
2018. National Union of Students / The 1752 Group. *Power in the academy: Staff sexual misconduct in UK higher education*. London: Macadam House.



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Appendix III: Policy frameworks and regulations

It is difficult to provide a complete and systematic overview of all policy frameworks and regulations relating to social safety. An overall picture can be derived from the following documents, which either apply to the entire sector or have been drawn up for individual institutions.

Entire sector:

- **Collective Labour Agreement for Dutch Universities**, Article 1.12: the signatories declare their intention to eliminate inappropriate behaviour. It should be noted that the universities follow a different collective labour agreement in this regard to the university medical centres (UMCs)
- **Psychosocial workload section [deelcatalogus Psycho-sociale arbeidsbelasting]** of the *Health and Safety Catalogue for Dutch Universities [Arbocatalogus Nederlandse Universiteiten]*: the aim is to create a working environment with a clear sense of social safety and to respond adequately to inappropriate behaviour.
- **Code for Good Governance in Dutch Universities**, third principle: the university promotes the creation of a safe environment in which students and staff can thrive and develop professionally.
- **Strategy Evaluation Protocol (SEP) 2021-2027**: the specific aspect of *Academic Culture* (including *openness, (social) safety, and inclusivity*) as an integral part of research quality, societal relevance, and viability.

Individual institutions:

- Inappropriate Behaviour Complaints Procedure (in accordance with the Collective Labour Agreement)
- Codes of conduct for staff and/or students
- Umbrella integrity codes
- Additional guidelines, for example for working in a multicultural setting, use of social media, student organisations

There are also policy frameworks and regulations that relate to a level other than that of the institution – such as a faculty, department, or study programme – but research schools or scientific/scholarly associations, for example, may also have drawn up their own codes. The committee has been unable to draw up an overview of these.



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Appendix IV: Explanation of calculations for costs of lack of social safety

Per FTE	Time (assumed)	Costs	Case 1: 3 months followed by different job ¹	Case 2: 6 months followed by departure	Case 3: 1 year followed by departure ²
Lost working time managers	20% time (1 day per week)	Average staff costs = approx. €80,000 per year	€ 4.000	€ 8.000	€ 16.000
Replacement costs³	17.8 working days per month	€405 per day	€ 21,627	€ 43.254	€ 86.508
Internal advisers: HR, C&M, Legal, etc.	5% (2 hours per week)	Average staff costs = approx. €80,000 per year	€ 1.000	€ 2.000	€ 4.000
Advice from external advisers and/or mediators	10-20 hours mediation	Approx. €200 per hour ⁵ excl. VAT		€ 4.840	€ 9.680
	10-20 hours legal costs				
Exit costs	Transition allowance maximum	Average: approx. €30,000 maximum €85,000 (or annual salary if that is higher)		€ 30.000	€ 85.000
	Unemployment (WW)/ NL Universities Enhanced Unemployment Scheme (BWNU) benefit: 1 year: 80% salary			€ 64.000	€ 64.000
SUBTOTAL			€ 26.627	€ 152.094	€ 265.188
Other costs⁴	10% of the total costs (estimate)		€ 2.663	€ 15.209	€ 26.519
TOTAL			€ 29.290	€ 167.303	€ 291.707

- Sexual advances by a supervisor. PhD candidate called in sick, investigation by Inappropriate Behaviour Complaints Committee. Temporary suspension from supervision duties. Change in supervisor's duties and coaching. Different supervisors for other PhD candidates. PhD candidate back at work 3 months after reporting sick.
- Serious 'MeToo' complaints about a professor/research leader, with major impact on work and health of a university lecturer. After discussion with confidential counsellor and occupational health physician, the lecturer reported sick and the professor was placed on non-active status. Tasks (supervision of PhD candidates and teaching) taken over by colleagues. Internal investigation was followed by external investigation (in total 12 months), resulting in departure of the professor. After being off sick for 14 months, the lecturer decided to leave the employer. The case was reported in the press.
- Temporary, permanent, restructuring, job applications. Medical costs and absenteeism costs must also be added.
- Lost time, loss of experienced staff, reduced job satisfaction, overburdened colleagues, damage to trust and reputation.
- Costs for legal expertise possibly higher and those for mediation lower.



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Taking two fictitious cases (one with a shorter and one with a longer duration) as a basis, an 'invoice' was drawn up comprising calculations for three possible outcomes.

Shorter-duration case: A PhD candidate reported transgressive behaviour by a supervisor. This had been going on for some time and an untenable situation had gradually developed (grooming): from a relationship of trust, to creating a bond, to isolating the PhD candidate. At the point when the supervisor made sexual advances (ranging from apps, though touching at a drinks and snacks get-together to a sexually charged confrontation experienced as intimidating, from which the PhD candidate was unable to escape), the candidate called in sick. With the help of the confidential counsellor, the candidate then filed a report with the Inappropriate Behaviour Complaints Committee and the supervisor's manager was informed of this. The committee required eight weeks for its investigation: hearing the complainant and the person in question, hearing both sides, carrying out further investigation, and reaching a decision. The supervisory duties of the person complained about, who was also supervising three other PhD candidates, were put on hold during that period. The Executive Board adopted the committee's recommendations: the person in question was given other duties and coaching to raise awareness of how to behave with integrity vis-à-vis colleagues. All of the supervisor's PhD candidates were assigned to a different supervisor. The PhD candidate got back to work three months after reporting sick. The whole process from notification to resolution took 3,5 months.

Longer-duration case: A university lecturer reported serious and recurring 'me-too' problems about a professor/research leader. The lecturer was aware of the dependency relationship and did not know how the behaviour could be stopped without harm to the lecturer's own academic career. It was having a major impact on the lecturer's work and health. The lecturer confided in a number of colleagues, who recognised and disapproved of the professor's behaviour. After talking to the confidential counsellor and consulting the occupational health physician [*bedrijfsarts*], the lecturer called in sick. Immediately after the report

had been made and until the investigation was completed, the professor was placed on non-active status. His duties as a supervisor (six PhD candidates) and in the field of teaching (a master's degree course) were taken over by colleagues. The lecturer had already been off sick for nine months by the time the Inappropriate Behaviour Complaints Committee completed its investigation into the report. The Executive Board then decided to have an external agency conduct an investigation as well. That investigation took three months. On the basis of these investigations, the Executive Board decided to part company with the professor. The lecturer had by that time been off sick for fourteen months and decided to leave the employer. The press referred to this case in the context of public debate on transgressive behaviour.

The 'invoice' also includes an intermediate variant.

Tools for determining costs

A distinction is made between 'hard' costs and 'soft' costs. Hard costs are, for example, the costs involved in dealing with a conflict. According to research, managers may spend, on average, more than 40% of their time managing conflicts. The costs for external consultants are also categorised under hard costs. There are also the costs of sick leave, replacement, dismissal, and the recruitment and training of a new employee.

- Lost working time of manager and other persons involved
- Medical costs
- Replacement costs (temporary, permanent, restructuring, job applications)
- Absenteeism costs
- Internal advisers (including HR, C&M, Legal Affairs)
- Advice from external advisers and/or mediators
- Exit costs



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'Soft' costs – such as those due to poor decisions, organising work around a conflict, emotional harm and damage to reputation – are often difficult to quantify or to link directly to a conflict.

- Time lost
- Poor decisions
- Loss of experienced staff
- Sabotage/theft/damage
- Reduced enjoyment of work
- Work overload on colleagues due to sick leave
- Loss of trust in the organisation
- Damage to reputation

See, for example Dana, D. (2001). *Conflict resolution*. McGraw-Hill Education.

Assumptions:

- The costs for an employee being absent are estimated at € 405 a day (Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB) 2020). Assuming an average annual income in the Netherlands of €36,500 (CPB figures, 2019), that amount consists of the following components:
 - Continued payment of salary: € 153
 - Costs for replacement: € 191
 - Loss of turnover during absence: € 43
 - Costs for occupational health and safety services: € 10
 - Internal absenteeism guidance: € 8
- It has been shown that mediators require an average of 10 hours to deal with and wrap up a conflict. In the case of more complex business conflicts, that figure can increase to around 20 hours. It is certain, however, that the costs for mediation can be as much as 90% lower than those for a protracted legal dispute – with a lot of work by lawyers on behalf of both parties and the costs of the proceedings.
- Studies have shown that a conflict can take up to 42% of the time of the employees involved.
- Research shows that absenteeism costs (35%) and exit costs (56%) can together account for 91% of the costs.

Variables determining the costs:

- Type of conflict
- Duration in relation to absence and replacement
- Outcome: whether or not a party leaves (and exit costs)
- Primary parties involved
- Internal third parties
- External third parties

Multiple sources also indicate:

- Average costs of (employment) conflict: approx. € 27,000
- If a party leaves, the costs are often much higher

See, for example www.caop.nl/app/uploads/2019/05/Infographic-conflictmanagement.pdf



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Appendix V: Request for advice and inaugurating resolution



Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en
Wetenschap

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Datum **8 OKT 2020**
Betreft Adviesaanvraag voedingsbodem en preventie van ongewenst gedrag in de wetenschap

Geachte mevrouw Sluiter,

Het Landelijk Netwerk Vrouwelijke Hoogleraren (LNVH) publiceerde vorig jaar een onderzoek naar wangedrag en intimidatie in de wetenschap onder de titel 'Harassment in Dutch academia' – waarin een duidelijk beeld wordt geschetst: ongewenst gedrag komt regelmatig voor, kent vele vormen en het raakt alle wetenschappelijke functieniveaus van promovendus tot hoogleraar. Het onderzoek gaat in op de verschijningsvormen van ongewenst gedrag, de onderliggende patronen en de prikkels (binnen het wetenschappelijk systeem) die wangedrag in de hand werken. Verder roept het LNVH op dat er meer (en breder) vervolgonderzoek nodig is naar concrete instrumenten om ongewenst gedrag tegen te gaan in de wetenschap. Mede naar aanleiding van het LNVH-onderzoek (en dit verzoek) heb ik in de Kamerbrief 'Sociale veiligheid en ombudsfunctie in de wetenschap' (18 december 2019) aangekondigd met de KNAW en het LNVH hierover in gesprek te gaan.

Met deze brief verzoek ik de KNAW te adviseren over de preventie en aanpak van wangedrag en intimidatie in het onderzoek en daarvoor een commissie in te stellen. Middels deze adviesvraag vraag ik de nieuw op te richten adviescommissie nader in te gaan op de wijze waarop we de elementen in de huidige wetenschapscultuur (en -structuur), – die een voedingsbodem lijken te zijn voor ongewenst gedrag en intimidatie – kunnen veranderen. Zo kan op adequate wijze wangedrag worden aangepakt en in de toekomst voorkomen.

Deze adviesvraag vormt daarnaast een onderdeel van de acties die uitgezet zijn in het Nationaal actieplan voor meer diversiteit en inclusie in wetenschappelijk onderwijs en onderzoek. Het tweevoudige van een (sociaal) veilige leer- en werkomgeving is een essentiële basis voor meer inclusieve (en duurzame) wetenschap. Zodoende zal dit KNAW-advies bijdragen om het Nederlandse onderwijs- en onderzoeksveld meer toekomstbestendig te maken op het gebied van sociale veiligheid, diversiteit en inclusie.

Gezien uw rol als medeoprichter van *Athena's Angels* – een actiegroep die strijd voor gelijke kansen voor mannen en vrouwen in de wetenschap – ziet u het belang van een cultuurverandering in het wetenschappelijk stelsel. Daarnaast zet u het online platform van Athena's Angels in om wetenschappelijk onderzoek over (seksueel) grensoverschrijdend gedrag – naast #MeToo-ervaringen binnen het onderwijs en onderzoek – te delen. Hiermee draagt u eraan bij de omstandigheden die (seksuele) intimidatie tweevoudigen binnen de academische wereld, en de gevolgen die wangedrag heeft voor de slachtoffers, in beeld te brengen.

Onze referentie
25651327

Als hoofdvraag verzoek ik de KNAW om in kaart te brengen op welke wijze de structurele en culturele factoren – die ongewenst gedrag in de hand werken – doorbroken kunnen worden. Daarbij wil ik de KNAW vragen om dieper in te gaan op de onderliggende mechanismen – die in het LNVH-rapport zijn geïdentificeerd –, die bijdragen aan intimidatie en wangedrag binnen de academische wereld.

Daarnaast vraag ik de KNAW aandacht te besteden aan de volgende deelvragen:

a. Het eerder genoemde LNVH-rapport omschrijft de onderliggende factoren en mechanismen die de verschillende vormen van ongewenst gedrag bevorderen. Daarbij worden de hiërarchische lijnen binnen de universiteit, het hypercompetitieve karakter – naast de individualistische cultuur – omschreven als faciliterende elementen in de wetenschap die intimidatie en wangedrag tweevoudigen. Zodoende wil ik graag te weten komen welke (preventieve) maatregelen deze negatieve stimulansen kunnen doorbreken in het wetenschappelijk systeem. Om voort te borduren op de bevindingen in 'Harassment in Dutch academia' is het van belang om concrete maatregelen die deze perverse prikkels (zowel cultureel als structureel) kunnen wegnemen te benoemen. Hierbij ligt waarschijnlijk ook een link met het traject 'erkennen en waarderen van wetenschappers' – waarin wordt ingezet op een algemene cultuurverandering in de wetenschap.

b. Naast aandacht voor de oorsprong en het ontstaan van intimidatie en wangedrag, is het ook belangrijk om aandacht te besteden aan de *aanpak* van ongewenst gedrag – waaronder het ontoereikend reageren op casussen, en het (al dan niet opgelegd) zwijgen over gevallen van wangedrag. Op dit moment zijn er verschillende paden die slachtoffers kunnen bewandelen binnen de universiteit – er zijn echter tekenen dat huidige meldingsstructuren, die op papier in orde lijken, in de praktijk niet toereikend functioneren. Ik vraag de KNAW daarom ook om te kijken hoe het gehele systeem (ook de bestuurlijke lagen) verantwoordelijkheid kan dragen bij de melding, rapportage en aanpak van intimidatie.

c. Het manipuleren van onderzoeksmateriaal en verbale bedreiging zijn beiden vormen van niet-integer gedrag. Toch worden ze wat betreft handhaving als twee losse thematieken gezien. Dit roept de vraag op of integer handelen in het onderzoek (wetenschappelijke integriteit) en goed gedrag op de werkvloer (sociale integriteit) als gescheiden zaken dienen te worden gezien of juist niet. Deze integriteitkwesties kunnen nauw verweven zijn en in elkaar overvloeien. Bijvoorbeeld wanneer ongewenst gedrag plaatsvindt in een wetenschappelijke setting brengt het onderzoekspraktijken en het onderzoeks klimaat schade toe. Gezien bovenstaande, vraag ik de KNAW twee zaken te onderzoeken:



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- of we (wan)gedrag een evidentere onderdeel moeten maken van de huidige opvattingen aangaande wetenschappelijke integriteit.
- en of goed gedrag in de wetenschap integraal gehandhaafd kan worden.

Onze referentie
25651327

d. Om een veilige en duurzame wetenschapscultuur te faciliteren vraag ik de KNAW op welke wijze aandacht voor wenselijk gedrag structureel wordt geïncorporeerd in onderwijs en onderzoek, zodat we een veilige en duurzame wetenschapscultuur kunnen bevorderen. Welke randvoorwaarden of veranderingen in het wetenschappelijk stelsel zijn er nodig om een sociaal veilige academie te bewerkstelligen? Ik verzoek de KNAW om bestaande en nieuwe instrumenten te identificeren om goed en bewust gedrag in de wetenschap te integreren (met aandacht voor internationale literatuur en goede praktijken uit de buitenlandse context).

Ik vraag de KNAW te komen met concrete aanbevelingen die de cultuur en de structuur van de wetenschap kunnen veranderen en die maken dat er op een (meer) preventieve wijze gewerkt kan worden aan een veilig en duurzaam academisch klimaat. Daarbij vraag ik u ook om een duidelijke uiteenzetting van het verband tussen ongewenst gedrag, wetenschappelijke integriteit en integer handelen, op basis waarvan we een duurzame cultuurverandering teweeg kunnen brengen binnen het wetenschappelijke systeem.

Ik acht het van belang dat het LNVH betrokken wordt in het beantwoorden van de kwesties die hier boven zijn genoemd en de expertise binnen het LNVH-netwerk wordt benut. Het LNVH zal door mij per brief op de hoogte worden gesteld van dit verzoek en gevraagd worden hun deskundigheid in te zetten.

Ik verzoek u dit advies uiterlijk voor december 2021 aan mij uit te brengen.

Met vriendelijke groet,

de minister van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap,

Ingrid van Engelshoven



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KONINKLIJKE NEDERLANDSE
AKADEMIE VAN WETENSCHAPPEN

INSTELLINGSBESLUIT COMMISSIE VOEDINGSBODEM EN PREVENTIE VAN ONGEWENST GEDRAG IN DE WETENSCHAP

Het bestuur van de KNAW, gelet op artikel 5.1 van het reglement van de KNAW, besluit tot het instellen van de commissie *Voedingsbodem en preventie van ongewenst gedrag in de wetenschap*, hierna te noemen 'de commissie'.

Artikel 1. Taakopdracht

De commissie heeft als taak het verzoek van de minister van OCW te behartigen. Dit verzoek is beschreven in de brief van 8 oktober 2020 aan de president van de KNAW (bijlage). De commissie draagt zorg voor de aanbieding van een conceptadvies aan het bestuur zodanig dat het advies vóór december 2021 kan worden uitgebracht aan de minister.

Artikel 2. Samenstelling en instellingsduur

Tot lid van de commissie worden op persoonlijke titel benoemd:

Voorzitter

- Prof. dr. Naomi Ellemers (hoogleraar Sociale psychologie van de organisatie, UU)

Leden

- Prof. dr. ir. Frank Baaijens (hoogleraar Soft Tissue Biomechanics and Tissue Engineering, TU/E)
- Prof. dr. Huub Dijkstra (hoogleraar Filosofie van wetenschap en politiek, UvA)
- Mr. dr. Yvonne Erkens (universitair hoofddocent Sociaal recht, UL)
- Prof. dr. Halleh Ghorashi (hoogleraar Diversiteit en integratie, VU)
- Prof. dr. Sandra Groeneveld (hoogleraar Publiek management, UL)
- Prof. dr. Marian Joëls (hoogleraar Neurobiologie van omgevingsfactoren, UMCG/RUG)
- Dr. Michael Wise (directeur SRON Netherlands Institute for Space Research)

De commissie wordt ingesteld voor de duur van het adviestraject. Als portefeuillehouder namens het bestuur treedt op prof. dr. Linda Steg. Vanuit het bureau van de KNAW zullen dr. Chantal Bax en dr. Ammeke Kateman als secretarissen de commissie ondersteunen.

Artikel 3. Kwaliteit en integriteit

De commissieleden hebben voorafgaand aan de eerste vergadering van de commissie kennis genomen van de [Code ter voorkoming van oneigenlijke beïnvloeding door belangenverstrengeling](#) en dit in een schriftelijke verklaring bevestigd. De commissieleden hebben kennis genomen van de [Handleiding adviezen en verkenningen van de KNAW](#), die op 18 september 2017 is vastgesteld door het bestuur. Van het in deze handleiding beschreven beleid voor beoordeling van het conceptadvies wordt niet afgeweken.

Artikel 4. Werkplan

De commissie stelt een werkplan op met haar werkwijze en de communicatie- en implementatiestrategie.

Artikel 5. Kosten en vergoedingen

De KNAW keert aan de commissieleden een reiskostenvergoeding uit, maar geen andere vergoedingen.

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Artikel 6. Geheimhouding

De leden van de commissie nemen geheimhouding in acht ten aanzien van alle informatie die hun bij de uitvoering van dit besluit ter ore komt en waarvan vermoed kan worden dat deze vertrouwelijk is.

Aldus vastgesteld door het Bestuur van de Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen op 3 november 2020 te Amsterdam.

Namens het bestuur van de KNAW,

Mr. M. Zaanen
Algemeen directeur van de KNAW