

University of  
Applied Sciences

**Windesheim**



# INAPPROPRIATE INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY

Adopted: 2 July 2020

*In the event of discrepancies or ambiguity between the original Dutch version of this document and the English translation presented here, the Dutch text shall prevail.*

## 1. Introduction

Windesheim University of Applied Sciences aims to offer its students and staff a safe study and work environment, free from inappropriate interpersonal behaviour as an obstacle to full and equal participation in educational and labour facilities.

In order to achieve this, it is important to pursue a policy based on a culture of *appropriate* interpersonal behaviour, respect for and between students and staff members and prevention of inappropriate behaviour. A culture in which not only all staff members and students contribute to a good atmosphere, but in which the management of the University of Applied Sciences also bears a specific responsibility.

It is a statutory obligation of the university to adopt a policy on inappropriate interpersonal behaviour. This obligation stems from the Working Conditions Act and the collective labour agreement for higher professional education.

This document contains the current policy of Windesheim University of Applied Sciences regarding inappropriate interpersonal behaviour. It was adopted by the Executive Board in July 2020, with the approval of the Central Participation Council, and is relevant to both students and staff. Previously, documents adopted in 2005 and 2012 were in effect.

The document clarifies what is meant by inappropriate interpersonal behaviour, what the consequences may be and what options and facilities are available to address and stop inappropriate interpersonal behaviour. The main points of the inappropriate interpersonal behaviour policy are summarized at the end of this document.

## 2. What is inappropriate interpersonal behaviour?

Inappropriate interpersonal behaviour as defined within the scope of this policy – and in accordance with the Working Conditions Act – covers the following behaviour:

### 1. Discrimination:

Situation in which an individual is treated differently from the way others have been, are or would be treated in a similar situation, based on religion, personal philosophy, political persuasion, ethnicity, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, marital status, age, disability or chronic illness, or a situation in which an apparently neutral provision, standard or course of action particularly affects individuals of a certain religious conviction, personal philosophy, political persuasion, race, ethnicity, nationality, marital status, age, sexual orientation, disability or chronic illness.

### 2. Sexual harassment:

Any type of verbal, non-verbal or physical behaviour with sexual connotations aiming to or resulting in affecting an individual's dignity, especially if an intimidating, hostile, offensive, humiliating or hurtful situation is created.

### 3. Aggression and violence:

Incidents in which an individual is psychologically or physically harassed, threatened, intimidated or assaulted under circumstances directly related to the performance of work or study.

### 4. Bullying:

Any type of intimidating behaviour of a structural nature, by one or several individuals directed to a single other individual or several other individuals who is/are unable to defend themselves against this behaviour.

If the inappropriate interpersonal behaviour specified here takes place digitally/online, it also comes under the scope of this definition of inappropriate interpersonal behaviour.

Inappropriate interpersonal behaviour causes:

- an unpleasant, intimidating or hostile work/study environment; and/or
- disruption of work/study performance of the individual suffering this behaviour; and/or
- the individual suffering this behaviour to be impeded or prejudiced in the full and equal enjoyment of labour/educational facilities, benefits or opportunities; and/or
- the full and equal enjoyment of labour/educational facilities to be made conditional.

Inappropriate interpersonal behaviour – digitally/online or otherwise – may occur anywhere and at any time; during meetings or work discussions, during lectures or individual tutoring sessions, during internships, in school restaurants, corridors, offices etc. Anybody can cause it to happen (sometimes unintentionally) and it can happen to anybody. However, this does not mean that inappropriate interpersonal behaviour is acceptable as part of a proper work and study environment.

The starting-point is the subjective experience of the individual to whom the inappropriate interpersonal behaviour is directed.

Anyone who is bothered by interpersonal behaviour because (s)he would prefer a different type of interpersonal behaviour or finds a certain type of behaviour unacceptable, would do well to point out how (s)he feels about this right from the start.

Even if you are not the direct object of inappropriate interpersonal behaviour yourself, you can show your disapproval of this type of behaviour. This may be difficult, especially when different levels of authority or dependence are involved. For example in the relationship of manager vs staff member, lecturer vs student or group vs individual. In situations like this, it is possible to talk to others, e.g. a colleague, a manager, an HRM consultant, a general student counsellor or a confidant(e). This way you can take immediate action to do something about inappropriate interpersonal behaviour.

### **3. What does the inappropriate interpersonal behaviour policy entail?**

Prevention of inappropriate interpersonal behaviour is obviously better than stopping it. That is why prevention is a key element of the policy. However, where many people meet and work together in person and also online, it is unrealistic to expect that inappropriate interpersonal behaviour can be prevented altogether. For situations involving inappropriate interpersonal behaviour, provisions are in place to help stop it. These are the Confidant(e)s and the Complaints Committee for Inappropriate Interpersonal Behaviour. The confidant(e)s, in particular, have an important role to play in receiving and supporting those who are confronted with inappropriate interpersonal behaviour.

The three aspects mentioned are explained in more detail below, based on the following topics:

- Prevention policy
- Confidant(e)s for Inappropriate Interpersonal Behaviour
- Complaints Committee for Inappropriate Interpersonal Behaviour

#### **3.1 Prevention**

Windesheim, being an educational institution, is an organization in which people interact and collaborate closely and which may be expected to make inappropriate interpersonal behaviour a freely debatable subject and to pay attention to prevention.

University management bears a specific responsibility for the prevention policy. It can address the issue of inappropriate interpersonal behaviour in various ways:

- as part of the working conditions (ARBO) policy, more specifically in the ARBO annual plan, the Risk Inventory and Evaluation (RIE) and the annual report;
- by adding the subject to the students' charter and by bringing it up as part of the preparations for the internship and of the subsequent professional career;
- by discussing the subject in meetings with participation councils, degree programme committees and staff members;
- by organizing study days and courses about this subject;
- by promoting the expertise of the staff;
- by ensuring that relevant information is provided to students and staff members about this subject;
- By ensuring that the topic of inappropriate interpersonal behaviour is and remains a recurring item on the agenda in work perception surveys, training courses, work meetings and staff appraisal interviews.

### 3.2 Confidant(e)s

Windesheim has appointed confidant(e)s to whom students and staff can report any kind of inappropriate interpersonal behaviour.

The confidant(e)s serve as a point of contact for the reporting individual and offer him/her first-line support and assistance. If necessary and desired, the confidant(e) refers the reporting individual to specialized assistance agencies;

The confidant(e) provides assistance to the reporting individual and advises him/her on how to end the inappropriate interpersonal behaviour.

When a report has been dealt with, and certainly if it has been considered well-founded, this does not mean that the care provided to the reporting individual stops.

Any repetition of the inappropriate interpersonal behaviour needs to be monitored. Initially this is the responsibility of the management. The confidant(e) can play an important role in this. The confidant was usually the primary contact for the reporting individual, who also keeps in touch in the aftercare phase.

After the report has been dealt with, it is also important to find out to what extent the reporting individual needs specialized assistance, e.g. from a psychologist, a (company) doctor or welfare worker.

With inappropriate interpersonal behaviour the confidant(e) may be able to offer some temporary help as a sounding board and if necessary he/she can provide counselling when the victim decides to resume or continue work or study.

The confidant(e) can also play a role when the object of the report asks for help, or he can refer to external experts. The same confidant(e) cannot simultaneously provide assistance to the individual reporting an incident and the object of the report.

The confidant(e)s can also offer support to those who wish to submit or have submitted a complaint about inappropriate interpersonal behaviour to the Complaints Committee for Inappropriate Interpersonal Behaviour, both prior to and during the complaint procedure and afterwards. The object of the complaint can also turn to the confidant(e) for such support. The same confidant(e) cannot simultaneously provide assistance to a complainant and the object of the complaint.

In addition to inappropriate interpersonal behaviour, the confidant(e)s have two other areas of responsibility. The confidant(e)s for inappropriate interpersonal behaviour also fulfil the position of integrity counsellor and that of counsellor for signs of domestic violence and child abuse.

The activities and procedures of the confidant(e)s (with respect to their three areas of responsibility) are laid down in the Regulation Regarding Inappropriate Interpersonal Behaviour.

### **3.3 Complaints Committee**

Windesheim has set up a complaints committee whose task is to deal with complaints from students and/or staff members regarding inappropriate interpersonal behaviour and to give an opinion about this. This committee consists entirely of persons who have no connection with the university and are therefore completely independent.

Filing a complaint is usually a last resort. As a rule, undesirable behaviour is first reported to a confidant(e) and an attempt is made to find a solution. If this fails, filing a complaint with the Complaints Committee may be the next step.

As is the case for the confidant(e)s, the activities and procedures of the complaints committee are laid down in the Regulation Regarding Inappropriate Interpersonal Behaviour.

## **4. Summary of main points of inappropriate interpersonal behaviour policy**

- Inappropriate interpersonal behaviour must not be tolerated.
- Students and members of staff are allowed every opportunity to report inappropriate interpersonal behaviour to a confidant(e) and/or file a complaint about it with an independent complaints committee.
- The confidant(e)s shall treat all reports as confidential.
- Complaints filed are investigated objectively and meticulously by the independent complaints committee set up for this purpose.
- The act of reporting or filing a complaint must have no negative consequences for the reporting individual or the complainant, respectively; however, the above does not apply if it turns out that the report or complaint was submitted for the sole purpose of damaging the individual against whom it was directed.
- Windesheim guarantees that appropriate corrective measures will be taken as soon as possible against anyone in the organization found guilty of inappropriate interpersonal behaviour;
- The subject inappropriate interpersonal behaviour is brought to the attention of students and staff through the appropriate media at regular intervals.
- If the press gets involved in an instance of inappropriate interpersonal behaviour, Windesheim will use a single spokesperson to inform them, viz. usually the spokesperson of the Executive Board.