

**Code of Conduct
for Social Safety
WUR**

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1. Introduction

Wageningen University & Research (WUR) aims to provide a safe and inclusive work and study environment that brings out the best in people, with respect for the diversity within the organisation. Only in this way can WUR, as a university or research institute, offer the greatest benefit to employees, students, clients, and partner organisations.

WUR is a diverse and inclusive organisation. This means that there is room for differences in the broadest sense of the word. We are proud of the diversity among our employees and students, and we feel it is important that people are treated honestly and with respect. We therefore do not tolerate any form of exclusion, racism, discrimination, intimidation, threats, bullying, or sexual harassment.

Inclusiveness also means that there is room for every WUR employee and student to express their views, regardless of their hierarchical position or place in the organisation. Everyone is heard and taken seriously in a respectful manner in this, and we discuss the content with respect for the individual.

A safe and inclusive work and study environment requires an active contribution from everyone who works or studies at WUR. This not only concerns personal behaviour, but also involves a vigilant attitude towards any form of undesirable behaviour.

The WUR Code of Conduct for Social Safety aims to promote a safe and inclusive work and study environment by:

- providing a clear definition of undesirable behaviour;
- providing support for employees and students to hold others accountable for violation of the rules of conduct;
- paying attention to the enforcement of the rules of conduct and the sanctions attached to any violation;
- supporting the professional attitude of employees and students by describing the organisation's expectations.

2. Scope and definitions

2.1 Scope

This code applies to:

- Employees: those who have or had an employment contract in accordance with the [CAO-NU](#) or the [CAO-WR](#) at Wageningen University (WU) or Wageningen Research Foundation (WR), or who otherwise work or worked under the responsibility of WU or WR: this also includes all PhD candidates with or without an employment contract at WU or WR;
- Students: student, future student, former student, course participant, student solely taking exam(s), intern at WUR;
- Third-party employees who conduct work activities in or at WUR buildings or sites, including temporary and seconded workers;
- Visitors to WUR.

Hereinafter collectively referred to as “persons involved with WUR”.

In case of any inconsistency between the original Dutch version of this Code of Conduct for social safety and the English translation the original Dutch version will prevail.

2.2 Definitions

Undesirable behaviour

Behaviour that is perceived as unwelcome or offensive and which has the purpose or effect of making persons involved with WUR no longer feel safe in the workplace/study area.

Types of undesirable behaviour:

Aggression and violence

Undesirable behaviour in which a person is psychologically or physically harassed, intimidated, threatened, or assaulted (in person, online, by phone) in circumstances directly related to their employment or in their pursuit of a study programme at WUR. Aggression and violence includes swearing, throwing objects, pushing, pulling, hindering, grabbing someone and/or blocking their way, grabbing, spitting, and hitting or destroying another person's items and/or property.

Aggression and violence can take the form of threats: the threat of negative consequences, such as death or physical or mental violence, or the — potentially unjustified — filing of a complaint, about a person, the person's loved ones, or the person's property. Threatening behaviour can also include blackmail. Threats can be made with words or through the use of physical force. The purpose of the threat is to influence someone's behaviour by instilling fear.

Discrimination

Undesirable behaviour in which improper distinction is made between groups or individuals with regard to religion, world view, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, political affiliation, disability, skin colour, age, education level and appearance or otherwise as referred to in Article 1 of the Constitution that is unwelcome or unwanted, or is reasonably perceived as such by the person confronted with it.

Intimidation

Undesirable behaviour that has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating a threatening, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.

For example:

- Putting unacceptable pressure on someone;
- Abusing a position of power in relation to career and opportunities for promotion;
- Publicly embarrassing someone.

Stalking is a specific form of intimidation. Stalking is deliberately and systematically harassing and/or intrusively following someone with the result

that the person no longer feels safe. Stalking can take place at work, at home, online, or in public.

Examples of stalking are:

- Following someone or threatening with violence;
- Unsolicited phone calls and messages;
- Ordering something in someone else's name.

Sexual harassment

Undesirable behaviour in the form of any unwanted sexual advances (verbal, non-verbal, or physical) or behaviour with sexual connotations. The basis of sexual harassment is the absence of consent. Sexual activity requires consent, which is defined as a positive, unambiguous, and voluntary agreement to specific sexual activity during a sexual encounter.

Examples of sexual harassment are:

- Sexually-oriented comments and swear words;
- Sexually-oriented jokes, messages, pictures, or gestures;
- Staring on purpose or asking intimate questions;
- Sending unsolicited pornographic images or texts or looking at the same deliberately within view of others;
- Grabbing someone, blocking their way;
- Sexual assault and rape.

Bullying

Undesirable behaviour that involves systematically and severely hindering or harassing someone or causing physical or emotional distress, aimed at the same person, often over a prolonged period. Bullying within the organisation is the systematic action of causing psychological, physical, or sexual distress — orally, in writing, or virtually (cyberbullying) — by one person or a group, as a result of which the complainant can no longer function optimally within the organisation.

Bullying takes many forms including:

- Forcing someone into social isolation, such as by not inviting them for a department outing or by not talking to them;
- Making work or study impossible for a person, such as by withholding vital information, exaggerating mistakes, or sabotaging tools that are necessary for the work;
- Embarrassing someone;
- Spreading libel and slander or maliciously gossiping about someone.

Complainant/report

We speak of a "complainant" and a "report" of undesirable behaviour when those involved discuss or describe, in formal or informal contact with a manager (hierarchical or functional), study adviser, or an officer in the support structure, a concrete event in dealing with the other person that has been experienced as undesirable. The term "complaint" is only used when it is submitted in accordance with the Regulations on Complaints Procedure Undesirable Behaviour Wageningen University & Research.

3. Undesirable behaviour

WUR sees undesirable behaviour as behaviour that is perceived as unwelcome or offensive and which has the purpose or effect of making persons involved with WUR no longer feel safe in the workplace/study area. So it does not primarily relate to the intention of the offender, but about how the recipient perceives it.

Where the line is drawn between desirable and undesirable behaviour is different for everyone. It will therefore always be necessary to carefully and objectively determine whether unacceptable behaviour has actually occurred, and the behaviours will be tested against this Code of Conduct.

WUR rejects any form of undesirable behaviour. WUR implements a zero-tolerance policy on a number of specific behaviours. This means that these behaviours — independent of intentions or context — are never acceptable and that in the case of objectively established zero-tolerance behaviours, appropriate action in the form of a sanction will be taken immediately.

Zero-tolerance behaviour includes:

- *Verbal aggression*: yelling at a person or a group of people, swearing at a person or group of people;
- *Physical aggression*: every type of physical aggression;
- *Sexual harassment*: touching without consent of the person involved, looking at pornographic images in view of others, sending pornographic images, using sexually oriented swear words. Sexual assault and rape;
- *Stalking*: every type of stalking;
- *Discrimination*: every type of discrimination;
- *Threats*: every type of threat.

4. Expectations

WUR expects persons involved with WUR not to display undesirable behaviour. Undesirable behaviour should therefore always be addressed, and persons involved with WUR are expected to be open to being held accountable for their behaviour. This Code of Conduct provides a framework for assessing behaviour.

Persons involved with WUR play different roles. WUR is keen to specifically articulate the expectations in the context of social safety for a number of roles.

It should be noted that the relationships between managers and teachers, supervisors and evaluators and employees or students are by definition hierarchical. In this hierarchical relationship, it is obvious for an employee or student to be held accountable for improvements in their performance or dysfunction. Managers and teaching staff, supervisors and evaluators exercise this role without abuse of a position of power. Any possible measure that may result from assessing employees and students takes place within the frameworks of labour law and Student Charter.

Managers

Managers of a unit, group, chair group, department, team, or project team have to set an example. Managers are expected to be aware of the existing dependency and power inequality in relation to other employees, such as when their opinion is decisive in the employee achieving the next step in their career. Managers must ensure that private and/or professional relationships and interests do not mix (see also: Relationships at work code of conduct).

Managers are responsible for maintaining a safe and positive work environment in their group. They must regularly gauge the quality of the atmosphere at work and address employees about undesirable behaviour as well as being open to being held accountable themselves in this regard. This means: being open and approachable, asking for feedback, recognising undesirable behaviour and making it a topic for discussion, and, if necessary, initiate interventions aimed at stopping undesirable behaviour and towards structurally improving the work environment.

Managers will provide a safe channel for reporting, and will always take any type of formal or informal report of undesirable behaviour seriously. The manager will take responsibility for the report, will treat both complainant and defendant with respect, and will take appropriate measures in which the manager and complainant will protect the defendant by ensuring privacy and confidentiality, neutrality, and providing support. WUR will provide support if required.

Guidelines about what to do in case of undesirable behaviour can be found on the [Support and Mediation - WUR intranet](#) page.

Teaching staff, supervisors, and assessors

Employees who supervise students, provide education and/or have a role in the guidance and assistance and/or assessment of internships, graduation and PhD programmes, lab and field research, theses and the like are expected to be professionally involved with students and PhD students. Teaching staff, supervisors, and assessors are responsible for a safe and inclusive study and work environment in which students and PhD candidates feel welcome, feel at home, and where they can speak freely. This means that they focus on the students' and PhD candidates' interests, are accessible and available, predictable and consistent, and fulfil their agreements. Their way of communicating is characterised by tact, empathy, and calmness.

Teaching staff, supervisors, and assessors of students and PhD candidates are aware of the dependency and power inequality in the relation with students and PhD candidates and will ensure that professional and private relationships and/or interests will not mix (see also: Relationships at work code of conduct).

Teaching staff, supervisors, and assessors of students and PhD candidates have an active role in detecting undesirable behaviour and will initiate interventions aimed at stopping undesirable behaviour, with support from WUR if required.

HR advisers

HR advisers are expected to provide employees with a safe reporting environment and to know what to do in case of undesirable behaviour and lack of safety in the work environment. The HR adviser provides advice on maintaining a safe work environment by helping the manager resolve issues related to undesirable behaviour, but also by critically holding the manager accountable if required. The HR adviser will inform themselves of issues on the shop floor and will take the initiative to improve the work environment in the organisation.

Students

Students are expected to be respectful towards fellow students, lecturers, and other employees. This applies to both educational and social gatherings and manifests itself in respectful communication, among other things.

Bystanders

Bystanders are asked to play an active part if they witness unacceptable behaviour. This includes actively intervening in the situation, such as by speaking out against the unacceptable behaviour or by persuading others to respond to the unacceptable behaviour.

There are situations where there is a culture of behaviour in which undesirable behaviour is normalised or does not seem to be perceived as undesirable. Some examples are sexually charged jokes and innuendo. In that case, bystanders can report to the manager or person responsible for this group or to their own manager.

5. Reporting undesirable behaviour

It is important that undesirable behaviour is addressed: either by addressing those involved directly or by contacting a third party. WUR places great importance on reports of undesirable behaviour and wants to remove any obstacles with regard to reporting. A report can be made in any formal or informal way and is not the same as a complaint. The term "complaint" is only used when it is submitted in accordance with the Regulations on Complaints Procedure Undesirable Behaviour of Wageningen University & Research. WUR takes every report seriously and encourages persons involved with WUR and bystanders to make a report. Every report deserves a follow-up, aimed at stopping the undesirable behaviour. In consultation with the complainant, only registration of the undesirable behaviour may be sufficient so that insight into patterns may be obtained.

WUR ensures the safety of the complainant so that complainants are not negatively affected by their report. Reporting anonymously is possible (as well as remaining anonymous). In the event of criminal offences, reporting to the police is strongly recommended.

Reports can be made to an employee in the support structure (see under 5.1).

More information:

- [Support and Mediation - WUR Intranet](#)
- [Social safety - WUR](#)
- PhD Guidance: [Help and support - WUR](#)
- [Student counselling - WUR](#)

5.1 Reports

Manager

For employees, the manager is the first channel for making a report, if this is safe enough for the complainant. The manager will take the necessary steps to stop undesirable behaviour.

Study advisers

Students will primarily contact the study adviser or exchange coordinator for making a report, if this is safe enough for the complainant. The study adviser or exchange coordinator will make a referral and mediate in consultation with the stakeholders so that the necessary steps can be taken.

Confidential counsellors

Students and employees, including third-party employees who conduct work activities in or at WUR buildings or land, can report undesirable behaviour to a confidential counsellor. The confidential counsellor will advise complainants and support them. The confidential counsellor has an independent position within the organisation, but will be on the side of the complainant. A confidential counsellor will always handle the information confidentially and will not take action without the permission of the complainant. Reports are saved anonymously and are untraceable. [Protocol Confidential Counsellor undesirable behaviour Wageningen University en Research.pdf](#)

Ombudsperson

The ombudsperson can provide support if it relates to structural problems and/or misconduct. The ombudsperson works independently, impartially and confidentially, can conduct (or commission) an investigation and provide solicited and unsolicited advice.

Others

In-house medical officers, HR advisers, occupational social workers, student deans and psychologists, PhD and postdoc advisers, and all other employees, who receive reports of undesirable behaviour, coordinate with managers or student advisers in consultation with the persons involved, and, if necessary, refer the complainant to the appropriate channels such as confidential counsellors and the ombudsperson or the central point of contact.

WUR social safety point of contact

The [social safety point of contact](#) is an addition to existing routes in the support structure aimed at making a report as easy as possible and for correct referrals. Visitors can also make a report to this point of contact.

They can be contacted by phone or e-mail:

- Telephone number: 0317-(4)81774 (available on weekdays from 9:00 to 17:00)
- E-mail: socialsafety@wur.nl (reply on weekdays within 24 hours)

More information:

- [Support and Mediation - WUR Intranet](#)
- [Social safety - WUR](#)
- [Ombudsperson WUR - WUR Intranet](#)

5.2 Complaints

The above is without prejudice to the fact that employees and students can file a formal complaint about undesirable behaviour where a confidential counsellor can support the complainant. The complaint will be handled by an external independent committee in accordance with a set procedure.

A formal complaint can be lodged with:

- WUR complaints officer E-mail: klachtmedewerker@wur.nl

More information:

- [WUR Integrity grievance regulations - WUR intranet](#)
- [Social safety - WUR](#)

6. Compliance and enforcement

WUR does not tolerate, condone, or ignore undesirable behaviour. Displaying undesirable behaviour cannot be without consequence. Undesirable behaviour may result in different measures. Finding an appropriate measure requires careful consideration. Often a conciliatory meeting, making agreements, mediation, or an apology will suffice. Sometimes, labour-law related measures such as a reprimand, transfer, or dismissal are appropriate. The [CAO NU/WR](#) and labour law form the framework for this.

For students, the basis is Article 7.57 under h of the Higher Education and Research Act (*Wet op het Hoger onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk onderzoek*). The [Student Legal Protection](#) document (see [Student Charter WUR](#), under "Rechten, plichten en rechtsbescherming studenten" (rights, obligations, and legal protection for students) states that in the event of a violation of the regulations, the Executive Board can take measures such as a warning, reprimand, or (temporarily) refusal of access to the buildings and property of Wageningen University & Research, and in extreme cases, termination of the enrolment of the student involved.

People who are not students or employees can be refused access to buildings and property. For external parties, such as suppliers, clients, and contractors, extreme cases may result in the termination of the relationship.

Before a measure is taken, an investigation will always be conducted during which the facts must be properly established, relevant circumstances must be taken into account, and a hearing must take place. Depending on the severity and the context, the investigation will be conducted internally or by an external party (such as a complaints committee). If necessary, further measures such as suspension with pay during the investigation may be taken pending the outcome.

If there is a justified suspicion of a criminal offense, WUR may hand the matter over to the relevant authorities, such as the police. For some serious offences, WUR is legally obliged to report them to the police.

6.1 Assessment framework

When imposing an appropriate measure or sanction, it is not only about the objectively identified undesirable behaviour but also about the nature of the defendant, the circumstances under which the behaviour took place, and the impact on the victim.

In any case, the following aspects are weighed in determining an appropriate measure for persons who have demonstrably engaged in undesirable behaviour:

- The severity of the facts and the context in which the behaviour took place;
- The question of whether it relates to a single occurrence of behaviour or whether it is a repeat offence or part of a behavioural pattern;
- The question of whether the the defendant(s) can reflect on their own behaviour, are remorseful, and are able to learn a different behavioural pattern;
- The question whether the defendant(s) were held accountable or warned before;

- The extent to which the safety of others (students, employees, visitors) is at stake;
- Personal circumstances of the defendant(s).

7 Aftercare

WUR feels responsible for the wellbeing of employees and students who have or had to deal with undesirable behaviour. Aftercare is certainly not limited to the employees and students who had to deal with undesirable behaviour themselves. The manager, the team, the department where undesirable behaviour took place, and bystanders can also depend on aftercare. If the undesirable behaviour has been confirmed, defendants will always need guidance and assistance, such as to gain self-awareness and to develop a different set of behaviours. Aftercare may be compulsory in this regard.

Aftercare and guidance and assistance can include:

- Providing practical support to the complainant and defendant;
- Adjusting the work of complainant and defendant;
- Support from occupational social work;
- Guidance and assistance for teams after undesirable behaviour;
- Help with the communication to colleagues or teams;
- Funding for specialised care such as psychotherapy.

8. In conclusion

WUR sees social safety as a prerequisite for good education and research. Every involved with person WUR is personally responsible and accountable for their own behaviour. This Code of Conduct provides clear standards in relation to the norms for desired behaviour, but no Code of Conduct can include every situation that people may find themselves in. When faced with questions or dilemmas about what to do, the recommendation is always to coordinate internally and in a friendly, professional way whenever possible. The confidential counsellor, ombudsperson, or the WUR social safety point of contact can advise.