



SOCIAL SAFETY POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The 77th Board prepared this document to create non-binding guidelines on how to execute our Social Safety Policy. This document serves as a guideline for upcoming Boards, every case that threatens someone's social safety is completely different and should be treated as such. This document will not be able to capture every possible scenario, so the current Board is always authorized to make definite decisions. The 77th Board hopes that this document will help future Boards in making decisions related to the issues captured by this document.

The goal of this document is to make the reporting procedure as accessible as possible, with an important principle being that a solution is reached that is acceptable to the person that has reported the issue, from now on referred to as the reporter. We aim to ensure a safe and secure environment for your academic studies. This document delineates the appropriate channels for seeking guidance, assistance, or lodging reports on incidents.

At the start of the year, the Board assigns three Student Confidants of the VSPVU. To maximize diversity, at least one of them is required to identify as a man and at least one of them is required to identify as a woman. One student confidant is required to be a current Board member. One of them is required to be an 'external student confidant', which is a person who is not involved in the VSPVU. The external student confidant is required to be involved in a study association, preferably from our neighboring associations VIB or MFVU. The other student confidant is required to be involved in the VSPVU, but not as a Board member. All Student Confidants are expected to follow a student confidant training.

It is important that the members of the association will be introduced to this document on a yearly basis, to ensure they are aware of the guidelines that should be followed.

CONTACT

In case of an event as mentioned in paragraph 3, any person can make a complaint to one of the following contacts:

1. The Board

The Board can be reached through the general Board email address:

Board - board@vspvu.com / bestuur@vspvu.com

The individual Board members can be reached through their individual email addresses:

Chairman – chair@vspvu.com

Secretary – secretary@vspvu.com

Treasurer – treasurer@vspvu.com

Commissioner Communication and Media – promotioncoordinator@vspvu.com

Commissioner External Contacts - external@vspvu.com

Commissioner Education - education@vspvu.com

2. The Advisory Board

The Advisory Board can be reached through the Advisory Board email address:

Advisory Board – advisoryboard@vspvu.com / raadvanadvies@vspvu.com

3. The Student Confidants

The Student Confidants each have their own student confidant emails, through which members can contact them to discuss any issues they are experiencing.

Board student confidant - studentconfidant1@vspvu.com

Internal student confidant - studentconfidant2@vspvu.com

External student confidant - studentconfidant3@vspvu.com

For anonymous reporting, the reporter can fill in the online form on the VSPVU website.

WHAT CASES DOES THIS DOCUMENT ADDRESS?

Cases that may be addressed in this document are listed below. This list does not encompass the complete list of cases of the underlying purpose of this document. The Board, Advisory Board or the Student Confidants may decide which cases to process.

1. Discrimination - can be characterized as treating people differently, negatively, or adversely because of one or more of the following prohibited grounds of discrimination. Examples:
 - a. Race, color, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, or pardoned criminal conviction.
2. Sexual harassment – can be characterized as a form of discrimination that involves unwanted or non consensual sexual advances, comments, gestures, or physical contact of a sexual nature. Examples:
 - a. Unwanted sexual advances or propositions
 - b. Physical touching or assault
 - c. Making sexual comments or jokes
 - d. Sharing sexually explicit materials or pictures
 - e. Staring or leering in a sexually suggestive matter
 - f. Making sexual gestures or facial expressions
 - g. Making unwanted physical contact of sexual nature.
3. Physical bullying – this type of bullying can be characterized as physical violence or aggression, such as hitting, pushing, or theft. Examples:
 - a. Hitting, punching, or slapping someone
 - b. Pushing, shoving, or tripping someone
 - c. Kicking or stomping on someone
 - d. Pinching or pulling someone's hair
 - e. Spitting on someone
 - f. Damaging or stealing someone's property
 - g. Intentionally bumping into or crowding someone
 - h. Restraining someone or holding them against their will
 - i. Making threats of physical harm or violence
4. Verbal bullying – this type of bullying can be characterized as the use of words to hurt or intimidate someone, such as teasing, name-calling, or threatening. Examples:
 - a. Name-calling or using derogatory language
 - b. Insulting someone's appearance, intelligence, or abilities
 - c. Making fun of someone's ethnicity, religion, or cultural background
 - d. Spreading rumors or lies about someone
 - e. Mocking or belittling someone's interests or hobbies
 - f. Using sarcasm or mocking tones to humiliate someone
 - g. Threatening someone with physical harm or violence
 - h. Criticizing or shaming someone for their behavior or actions

5. Social bullying – this type of bullying involves damaging someone’s reputation or relationships, by ways such as spreading rumors, excluding someone from social groups, or manipulating friendships. Examples:
 - a. Excluding someone from a group or activity
 - b. Spreading rumors or gossip about someone
 - c. Ignoring or giving someone the silent treatment
 - d. Insulting or mocking someone in public or on social media
 - e. Undermining or sabotaging someone's accomplishments or reputation
 - f. Encouraging others to shun or reject someone
 - g. Threatening to end a friendship or relationship as a form of control
 - h. Creating a negative image of someone through manipulation or false information
6. Cyberbullying – This type of bullying takes place online or through technology, such as using social media to spread rumors or harass someone or using text messages to threaten or harass someone. Examples:
 - a. Sending threatening or abusive messages via text, email, or social media
 - b. Sharing private or embarrassing photos or videos of someone without their consent
 - c. Posting hurtful comments or messages on someone's social media accounts or online forums
 - d. Creating fake profiles or impersonating someone online to humiliate or bully them
 - e. Spreading rumors or gossip through email, social media, or messaging apps
 - f. Participating in online shaming or mobbing, where a large group of people publicly attacks or humiliates an individual
 - g. Using technology to stalk, harass, or intimidate someone
 - h. Encouraging others to participate in cyberbullying through likes, shares, or comments on social media
 - i. Using social media to manipulate or control someone, such as threatening to share embarrassing information unless they comply with certain demands
7. Psychological bullying – this type of bullying can be characterized as manipulating someone’s emotions, such as playing mind games, intimidating someone, or undermining someone’s self-esteem. Examples:
 - a. Belittling or minimizing someone's feelings, thoughts, or ideas
 - b. Gaslighting, which involves manipulating someone into doubting their own perceptions or reality
 - c. Threatening to harm someone's reputation or relationships
 - d. Using guilt or manipulation to control someone's behavior or actions

- e. Ignoring or rejecting someone to make them feel isolated or unwanted
 - f. Insulting or criticizing someone's appearance, personality, or abilities
 - g. Intimidating or making someone feel afraid through verbal or nonverbal cues
 - h. Using sarcasm or passive-aggressive comments to undermine someone's confidence or self-esteem
 - i. Mocking or ridiculing someone in front of others
 - j. Blaming someone for things that are not their fault or accusing them of wrongdoing without evidence.
8. Abuse of authority - can be characterized as an individual improperly using the power and authority inherent in a position to endanger a person's functioning, undermine the performance of their function, or in any way interfere with or influence a person's work or personal life. Examples:
- a. Intimidating by using fear to control others behavior
 - b. Threats that involve an intention to harm or cause distress to manipulate someone into compliance
 - c. Blackmailing by threatening to reveal damaging information unless demands are met
 - d. Coercion by forcing someone to do something against their will through pressure or manipulation.

HOW TO REPORT

The reporting party can be the victim directly affected by the incident or anyone else involved. If a report is made by someone other than the victim, permission from the victim is necessary before proceeding with the handling of the report.

To keep the barrier for reporting as low as possible, reports or complaints can be made via telephone, email, online form, or in person. When reporting by phone or in person, it's important that the recipient writes a detailed report. An online form on the website is available for anonymous reporting. Following an anonymous report the Board will follow the same procedures as closely as possible.

The report may include, if available and desired to be shared:

1. Date/time/location.
2. Parties involved.
3. A (detailed) description of the event including involved parties and possible witnesses.

PROCEDURE

The Board, the Advisory Board, and/or Student Confidants are entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining complete confidentiality and determining which complaints warrant further action, deliberating on which ones to take action on.

To ensure transparency and respect for all parties involved, it is necessary that the reporter obtains explicit permission from the victim before discussing the matter with any other entities within the association. Moreover, individuals involved in the complaint process—the reporter, victim, or accused—retain the right to request the exclusion of specific members of the Board, the Advisory Board, or Student Confidants from the discussions or handling of the report or complaint.

Recognizing the significance of impartiality and support, individuals involved in the proceedings—the reporter, victim, or accused—have the prerogative to request the presence of an independent external advisor during discussions. Should the victim grant permission, the Board may engage the expertise of an independent outside counselor to further enrich these deliberations. In case professional expertise is deemed necessary by the Board they are authorized to contact the Social Safety Coordinators of the VU for professional expertise without permission of the victim. In this case anonymity of the victim and accused is ensured.

Following each discussion, it is obligatory upon the informant to accurately document the proceedings in a comprehensive report. This report serves as a foundation for transparency and accountability. The reporter, victim and accused are authorized to request sharing and confirmation of their own documentation . However, dissemination of this report to other entities within the association necessitates the explicit approval of the victim or accused, safeguarding their privacy and dignity.

Ultimately, the decision-making authority resides solely with the Board, underscoring the importance of their discernment in resolving complaints effectively and fairly.

A clear disclaimer highlights the need for sensitivity and permission: should the Board and the Advisory Board bear witness to a situation as outlined in paragraph 3, seeking permission from the expected victim becomes a prerequisite for subsequent actions on the matter, reinforcing the commitment to upholding the rights and autonomy of all involved parties.

It is important to note that if a reporter shares information that makes an informant believe one of the parties involved are a direct threat to themselves or others, the informant may contact first responders without permission of the involved parties. It is up to the informant to decide whether or not this is the case.

TIMEFRAME

It is important to establish a timeframe that balances the needs and interests of all parties involved, ensuring that justice is served while upholding procedural fairness. Sufficient time must be allocated to conduct a thorough investigation, adhering to all procedural principles meticulously. However, promptness is equally crucial to prevent undue delay in resolving matters. Therefore, within one week after the initial report, the informant will send a confirmation email to the reporter stating that the procedures have commenced. Afterward, the informants will aim to complete the procedures within 4-6 weeks.

IF A COMPLAINT HAS BEEN MADE TO A BOARD MEMBER

After the complaint has been made, the informed Board member will have a conversation with both the victim and the accused to gather a complete story. Anonymity will be guaranteed for all involved parties. After gathering all the required information, the Board Member is in charge of completely anonymizing the complaint. The informed Board member will then explain the complaint in the manner requested by the informant. Depending on the preferences of the informant, anonymity will be guaranteed.

Following this, the Board will hold a discussion and decide on further sanctions. Board members should strive to be as objective as possible during this process, to reach appropriate repercussions. After all the details are discussed and appropriate repercussions are decided, the outcome of Board discussion and/or possible decisions by the Board will be communicated in person, or if not possible via phone call.

Additionally, an email confirmation with the result of the discussion by the Board and/or possible decisions by the Board will be sent while maintaining anonymity of all parties. Furthermore, we may also consult or collaborate with the Social Safety Coordinators from the VU, further enriching our approach to addressing the matter.

IF A COMPLAINT HAS BEEN MADE TO AN ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

If the complaint has been made to a member of our Advisory Board, this person gathers the required information from both the victim and the accused and informs (part of) the

Board if given permission by the victim. They will explain the complaint in the way that has been requested by the reporter. If no permission is granted by the victim, the Advisory Board is solely authorized to take an advisory position towards the reporter.

After all the details are discussed and appropriate repercussions are decided, the outcome of the Board discussion and/or possible decisions by the Board will be communicated in person, or if not possible, via phone call. Afterwards, an email confirmation with the outcome of the Board discussion and/or possible repercussions by the Board will be sent.

IF A COMPLAINT HAS BEEN MADE TO A STUDENT CONFIDANT

Student Confidants can discuss issues they find difficult with each other as long as they keep the involved parties anonymous. Additionally, with the victim's permission, the Board can be informed and advised. If no permission is granted by the victim, the Student Confidant is solely authorized to take an advisory position towards the reporter.

IF A COMPLAINT HAS BEEN MADE ABOUT A BOARD MEMBER

If a complaint is lodged against a Board member, the initial step involves a conversation with the Board. Reports and complaints regarding a Board member can be directed to various channels, including the Board itself, a delegation of the Board, the Advisory Board, or the Student Confidants. Should the severity of the situation warrant, a meeting with the Advisory Board will be convened to address the actions and potential sanctions concerning the Board member. With the victim's permission, the Advisory Board or Student Confidants may inform or consult the Board or its delegation. In instances concerning the Board as a whole, the reporter may approach the Advisory Board or the Student Confidants, or alternatively, a written request signed by a minimum of 10 members can initiate a General Meeting. Subsequently, a joint meeting involving both the Board members and the Advisory Board will be held to further deliberate on the matter. Should it be determined that the Board member's actions are indeed severe, they must adhere to the imposed sanctions.

TEMPLATE FOR WRITING A COMPLAINT

In the email it is important to be as clear as possible when the action has had happened, as well as providing the information about unwanted actions

Dear,

I would like to write a complaint regarding X actions,

This has happened at a Y event at Z time.

(Details about the actions of the offender).

WITHDRAWAL OF COMPLAINT

Anyone who files a complaint retains the fundamental right to withdraw it at any time, without needing to provide further explanation or justification. In other words, the individual's decision to withdraw a complaint should be respected unequivocally. However, it's essential to note that while the complainant has the autonomy to withdraw their complaint, the Board reserves the prerogative to assess whether to proceed with the case based on its potential impact on the association, even if the complaint has been withdrawn.

Regarding the process, the withdrawal of a report can take place through various means and channels, mirroring the options available for filing a complaint. This includes the possibility of withdrawing the report by communicating directly with any relevant party, such as the Advisory Board, Student Confidants, or the Board itself.

DECISIONS

Decisions by the Board may encompass the following:

1. Formal conversation: a conversation will be held by someone from the Board and victim and/or accused. .
2. Group discussion: a discussion will be held by the Board with all involved parties.
3. Referral to higher authorities (Social Safety Coordinators): the Social Safety Coordinators of the VU will be contacted in case the Board feels unqualified to deal with the case.
4. Additional measures: the Board may implement additional measures for the victim and/or accused during VSPVU events.
5. Suspension from the association: temporary suspension in the form of banishment from certain activities.
6. Expulsion from the association (Statutes: Article 5)
7. Discontinuation: the procedure may be discontinued when there is a lack of available information and/or the victim wishes to discontinue.

Note: every decision will be made based on the impact of the action and with consideration of the wishes of the victim.

PROCESS OF APPEALING

Both the victim and the accused have the right to appeal any decisions concerning their report or complaint made by the Board. This is done by responding to the email including the Boards decision. The appeal process involves separate meetings with both parties, with the presence of at least two Board members, and 1 member of the Advisory Board. The Board, with advice from the Advisory Board, will then determine how to proceed with the appeal. In case no agreement can be reached between all parties, VU Social Safety may be contacted for advice and guidance.

AFTERCARE

Following the handling of reported incidents, we recognize the importance of providing ongoing support to all parties involved. For cases under review, we offer the reporting party the option to engage in a follow-up discussion approximately one month after resolution, respecting individual preferences.

It's important to note that incidents resolved early in the investigation phase may not fall under this protocol.

EPILOGUE

The 77th Board will pass this document to future Boards. It is important that future Board members are introduced to this document. Upcoming Boards need to make sure that this document is being carefully read over by the upcoming Board during Transition Weekend. The upcoming Boards can expand and/or change this document to make sure it fits its time. The 77th Board hopes that this document will provide clarity about actions and procedures regarding Social Safety.