University of Amsterdam



2025 annual report of the confidential advisers

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By: Arjen Berkvens, coordinating confidential adviser at the UvA

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1. Introduction

This annual report sets out the findings and recommendations of the UvA's confidential advisers. The report was drawn up by the coordinating confidential adviser and is based on 30 individual reports from confidential advisers for the University of Amsterdam's faculties and service units.

The task of a confidential adviser is essentially to assist individual staff members and students, offer a sympathetic ear and help them find a solution to the situation they have found themselves in. Confidential advisers also provide information on their role, as well as drawing management's attention to ongoing forms of abuse within the organisation. Although cases are often highly personal in nature, events and trends in society can have a major impact on the well-being of everyone in the UvA community.

The confidential advisers saw another decrease in the number of reports of transgressive behaviour by students and staff. At the same time, there were almost twice as many staff and students who came to a confidential adviser to report something other than undesirable behaviour. These were mostly requests for advice, which usually led to a referral. More detailed information on the figures can be found in the rest of this annual report. We saw that the majority were reports made by staff about their supervisor, and in the case of PhD candidates, more than two-thirds of reports concerned their principal supervisor.

On the positive side, the workload of the confidential advisers has fallen further to an acceptable level over the past year. Only one of the confidential advisers reported being overburdened. In any event, the confidential advisers deserve to be congratulated for their efforts and thanks are hereby extended to everyone who contributed to a more socially safe UvA over the past year. Special mention must also go to the excellent cooperation with the ombudsperson and her team, the confidential adviser on individual legal status, the confidential advisers for academic integrity, the staff of the Communications Office, student counsellors and study advisers and the many dedicated HR staff at both the central and decentralised levels.

This year also saw further investment in the UvA's Social Safety Hub. Early this year, for instance, Dutch universities adopted a joint whistle-blower scheme, which complies with the latest legislation in this field. An external whistle-blowing committee was subsequently appointed. Furthermore, the Regulations concerning Confidential Advisers were amended for two reasons: firstly, to expand the mandate of confidential advisers to include integrity and, secondly, to allow the appointment of confidential advisers for accused persons. The latter happened in November.

This annual report is about cases of undesirable behaviour reported to the confidential advisers. It is important to distinguish between reports made to the confidential advisers and reports submitted to other individuals, such as a supervisor, study adviser or lecturer. The difference is that reports to a confidential adviser do not necessarily require follow-up action. It is the reporting party who decides whether any follow-up steps are to be taken. A registered report involves at least an intake interview with the reporting party. The annual report describes the nature and number of reports submitted to the confidential advisers, by category of undesirable behaviour. This makes it a limited substantive analysis of the background of the undesirable behaviour cases. The information required for a more extensive analysis is confidential pursuant to the duty of confidentiality.

The functions of this annual report are to:

- *inform*: about the registered number and nature of cases of undesirable behaviour;
- *identify*: the number of cases may be an indication that parts of or the implementation of existing policy on undesirable behaviour need to be modified;
- *justify*: it enables the confidential advisers to justify the use of time and resources.

2. Key findings

- There was a fall in the number of reports from both students and staff members (including PhD candidates). The number of reports fell by 17% for students and 12% for staff members.
- In the case of staff members, 69% of the reporting parties were female and 31% male. Among students, 73% of the reporting parties were female and 27% male.
- For the 116 reports made by staff members, it is worth noting that 64% made a report about their own supervisor. Of the 19 PhD candidates who made a report, 74% made a report about their principal supervisor.
- The service unit with the most reports was the University Library (3.6% of staff members), which also includes the Allard Pierson Museum (5.9% of staff members).
- The faculty with the most reports from staff was ACTA with 3,3%, followed by FgW with 2.7% of staff.
- The faculty with the fewest reports was FMG, with 0.9% of staff.
- The student reporting percentage was highest at ACTA with 1.22% and lowest at FMG with 0.1% of students.

3. Confidential advisers for undesirable behaviour and integrity

Confidential advisers for undesirable behaviour and integrity serve both students and staff. Staff members who work for the UvA but are not on its payroll can also consult the UvA's confidential advisers. The confidential advisers offer a sympathetic ear and help find a way to end or de-escalate the undesirable behaviour. They guarantee confidentiality and will never take action without the consent of the reporting party. The confidential advisers document cases of undesirable behaviour in such a way that they cannot be traced back to the reporting party. If necessary, confidential advisers refer people on to professional sources of support within the UvA or externally. They can also help students and staff submit a complaint to the Complaints Committee.

Positioning/appointment/facilitation

Every faculty and shared service unit at the UvA has at least one confidential adviser for undesirable behaviour and integrity, appointed by the dean or the Secretary General of the UvA respectively. Confidential advisers are appointed for a period of three years and can be re-appointed without limitation. Confidential advisers are formally facilitated by the Secretary General/dean so they can fulfil the role of confidential adviser effectively within their existing position.

Freedom of choice

The confidential advisers do not just provide support to students and staff from their own units: any student or staff member, wherever they study or work, can consult one of the UvA's confidential advisers. Consequently, students and staff have a choice as to whom they contact and can choose to consult someone who is either close to their own unit or indeed slightly more distant from their own unit, for example.

Number/recruitment/diversity

In 2025, the UvA had 31 staff members who fulfilled the role of confidential adviser. During the year, some confidential advisers quit and new confidential advisers were recruited. As at 31 December 2025, there were 26 active confidential advisers. Some of them act as confidential advisers for students only, some for staff only and others for both students and staff. Vacancies are filled through a process of open recruitment on the UvA's job vacancy page and through newsletters or an email to staff. The coordinating confidential adviser is involved in the selection process.

Table 1 Changes in and composition of the UvA's team of confidential advisers in 2022-2025

Confidential advisers	Total	Academic staff	Support and management staff	Female	Male	Non-binary
In 2022	20	5	15	15	4	1
In 2023	26	8	18	21	4	1
In 2024	24	8	16	18	5	1
In 2025	26	9	17	20	5	1
Started in 2025	7	3	4	7	0	0
Stopped in 2025	5	2	3	5	0	0

The UvA's confidential advisers

Arjen Berkvens, coordinating confidential adviser

Gerrie Veenstra	ACTA *(stopped)*
Marjan van Schijndel	ACTA
Myrthe van Amstel	Amsterdam Law School *(stopped)*
Daan van Versendaal *(started)*	Amsterdam Law School
Rosa Möhrlein *(started)*	Amsterdam Law School
Larissa Put *(started)*	Amsterdam Law School
Erik van Arkel	Amsterdam Law School
Karin Venetis	Faculty of Economics and Business *(stopped)*
Sanne Lagziel-de Munck	Faculty of Economics and Business
Lindsy Wongsopawiro	Faculty of Economics and Business
Eloe Kingma	Faculty of Humanities
Asli Özgen-Havekotte	Faculty of Humanities
Cock Dieleman	Faculty of Humanities
Beyza Sümer *(started)*	Faculty of Humanities
Charlotte Jalvingh *(started)*	Faculty of Humanities
Mirjam Koelewijn	Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences *(stopped)*
Els Veldhuizen	Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences
Joyce Helsloot	Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences
Loes van Rijn-van Gelderen	Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences
Diana Vos	Faculty of Science *(stopped)*
Joost Krijnen	Faculty of Science
Belle Jansen	Faculty of Science
Christina Santaka *(started)*	Faculty of Science
Sonja Cox *(started)*	Faculty of Science
Hélène Boeren	Executive staff
Rixt Polder	Executive staff
Marjan Alberda	Facility Services/ICTS
Enneke Tuinhof	Administration Centre
Henriette Reerink	University Library
Kasper Abcouwer	University Library

Confidential advisers are appointed with due regard for the composition of the team: the aim is to put together a diverse group of confidential advisers across the whole of the UvA (e.g. in terms of role, gender and background). The independent position of the confidential adviser is crucial to ensure effective performance of the tasks involved. Consequently, the role of confidential adviser must not conflict with any other position or task of the staff member concerned. Moreover, confidential advisers should keep their distance from the department where they work, as it is important to prevent close relationships with the reporting party or the alleged perpetrator. Of the 26 confidential advisers active in 2025, nine held an academic position and 17 a support and management position. It is also notable that out of those 26, only five confidential advisers are male. Furthermore, we have shared with UvA Pride which two confidential advisers have ties to the LGBTQI+ community. Four confidential advisers of colour are active within the team.

Number of cases and workload

Confidential advisers are asked each year how many reports they have received and the nature of the reports. In addition, they are asked to indicate how they experienced the workload and whether they observed any notable trends.

Table 2 Workload as perceived by the confidential advisers

(Too) heavy	1
Normal	20
(Too) light	5

Due to the increased number of confidential advisers compared to previous years, a clear improvement can be seen in terms of workload. A heavy workload can be due to too many reports, as well as labour-intensive reports. In 2025, only one of the confidential advisers reported being overburdened.

4. Legislative framework, code of conduct and regulations

The Dutch Working Conditions Act and the UvA Code of Conduct are decisive in determining whether any particular behaviour qualifies as undesirable. A key phrase in the Code of Conduct is: *undesirable behaviour refers to any situation where at least one person involved may reasonably feel that the behaviour is undesirable*. This sentence shows that undesirable behaviour is often very personal (an experience): what is undesirable for one person need not be for another. The word 'reasonably' refers to the assessment framework, such as the Code of Conduct and the Working Conditions Act. Under the Working Conditions Act, every employer has the obligation to implement policies that minimise the psychosocial workload of its staff members. This concerns the following categories:

Physical or verbal aggression: psychological or physical harassment, threats or assault possibly involving mental pressure, occasionally in combination with abuse of a formal or informal position (both verbal and non-verbal aggression and intimidation).

Sexual harassment: sexually transgressive behaviour is behaviour in which one person transgresses another person's boundaries. Examples: unwanted touching, online messages of a sexual nature, sexual harassment and sexual abuse. Such behaviour may inflict serious physical, psychological and emotional damage on the other person, their environment or the perpetrator himself or herself. Sexual harassment is often associated with abuse of power.

Discrimination: distinguishing between people on grounds of race (skin colour, origin), age, sexual orientation, religion and world view, gender, nationality, disability or chronic illness, political beliefs, marital status, type of employment contract and working hours where there is no objective justification for doing so.

Bullyin: a type of systematic psychological, verbal or physical aggression with the intention of hurting a person over and over again. Examples: making jokes at another person's expense, excluding a person, insulting a person or damaging their property. Bullying is seen both offline and online.

Regulations concerning Confidential Advisers

The tasks, working method, rights, obligations, workload and scope of duty of a UvA confidential adviser are described in the Regulations concerning the UvA's Confidential Advisers for Undesirable Behaviour and Integrity 2025. The new regulations (the previous regulations dated back to 2021) were adopted in 2025. This was prompted by four developments:

1. Early 2025 saw the publication of the new whistle-blower scheme, in which the confidential advisers play a role. The whistle-blower scheme was developed jointly under the UNL umbrella.
2. As a result of the role assigned to confidential advisers in the new whistle-blower scheme, 'integrity' has been added to the confidential advisers' remit. A violation of integrity is an act or omission that violates UvA regulations or other ethical standards, rules or principles relating to honesty, trustworthiness and fairness, often with negative consequences for others or for the organisation of which a person forms part. This can include conflicts of interest, abuse of power, improper use of company resources, deception, theft, bribery, fraud or leaking confidential information. A violation of academic integrity as referred to in the University of Amsterdam's Academic Integrity Complaints Regulations expressly does not constitute a violation of integrity within the meaning of these Regulations.

3. Guidance for individuals to whom a report relates (accused persons) is now covered in the regulations. Separate ‘confidential advisers for accused persons’ have been appointed for this purpose. An accused person is a current or former staff member or current or former student who is accused of undesirable behaviour at the UvA and who seeks the assistance of a confidential adviser who specialises in providing guidance to accused persons.
4. Finally, to protect reporting parties and accused persons, the following clause has been included: Reporting parties and accused persons are free to contact a confidential adviser for undesirable behaviour and integrity and do not experience any adverse effects as a result of consulting a confidential adviser.

5. Cases of undesirable behaviour reported by students and staff

This year, students and staff (including PhD candidates) made a total of 215 reports of undesirable behaviour to confidential advisers. This represents a 14% decrease relative to 2024.

Table 3 Reports of undesirable behaviour submitted to confidential advisers in 2017-2023

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Students	69	98	142	95	80
Staff (incl. PhD candidates)	83	104	191	154	135
Total	**152**	**202**	**333**	**249**	**215**

In themselves, these reports do not provide sufficient ground for hard and fast conclusions about the level of social safety at the UvA. Students and staff are not obliged to consult a confidential adviser if they experience undesirable behaviour. The number of cases is documented on the basis of the unit of the reporting party, even if they choose to consult a confidential adviser outside of their own unit. The cases are subdivided according to the nature of the undesirable behaviour concerned.

October saw the launch of the Reporting Centre for Social Safety and Integrity, which works independently and handles reports confidentially. The reporting centre, which falls under the Office of the Ombudsperson, is an initial point of contact for students and staff. It is too early to say whether the reporting centre has had an impact on the number of reports made to confidential advisers. In principle, students and staff are referred on to the appropriate 'counter', which may be a confidential adviser. Of the 21 reports made to the reporting centre, 10 were referred on to confidential advisers.

Number and nature of reports made by students

80 out of a total of 40,648 students (all faculties minus Medicine) contacted one of the confidential advisers. Compared to 2024 (95), the number of reports of undesirable behaviour fell by more than 17%. Among the faculties, ACTA stands out with a high percentage (1.22%) of reports relative to the number of students. Below is the number and nature of the reports broken down by faculty. Further insight has been provided into how the number of reports has developed over the past year.

Table 4 Number and nature of reports made by students

Faculty	Sexual intimidation		Violence & intimidation		Discrimination	Bullying	Total 2025	Total 2024	Other	Percentage/ of students
	Verbal	Physical	Verbal	Physical						
ACTA			7			4	11	15	2	1.22%
FdR		3	3		1	2	9	14	5	0.17%
EB	2		9		2	5	18	11	7	0.22%
FGw	1	1	6			5	13	16	3	0.16%
FMG	2	1	3		3	1	10	19	11	0.09%
FNWI	3		6			6	15	18	3	0.22%
AUC					2	1	3		1	0.34%
FDG / other					1		1	2	5	
Total	**8**	**5**	**34**		**9**	**24**	**80**	**95**	**37**	**0.20%**

* This year, the FDG/other category concerns a report by a medical student. Medical students have their own confidential adviser at the faculty. They received a total of 26 reports in 2025. As this confidential adviser is not supervised by the UvA's coordinating confidential adviser, these figures are not included in the table.

Table 5 Progression 2020-2025

Progression of reports by students

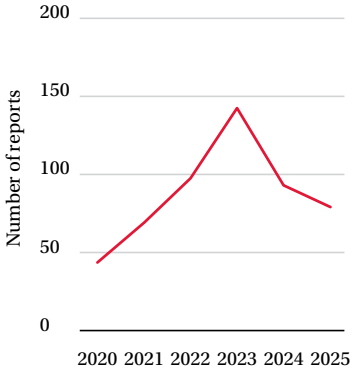


Table 6a Reports by category

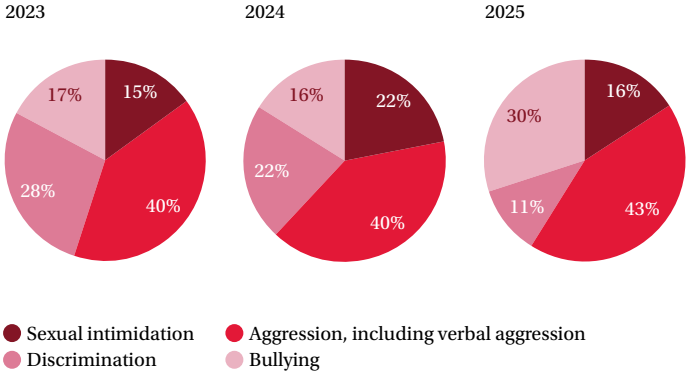


Table 6b Grounds of discrimination

Grounds of discrimination	Number
1. Origin	6
2. Gender (male, female, intersex, transgender)	
3. Sexual orientation	
4. Age	
5. Disability or chronic condition	
6. Political affiliation	
7. Employment status (full-time or part-time)	1
8. Employment contract (permanent or temporary)	
9. Marital status	
10. Nationality	
11. Religion	2
12. World view	

Other reports

The 'Other' category includes reports about issues other than undesirable behaviour. The confidential advisers saw a notable 105% increase in this category this year (from 18 to 37). Also notable was the increase in the number of students who got into trouble because of alleged AI fraud and male students who feared being accused of transgressive behaviour in the future.

Referral

In the case of 39 reports of undesirable behaviour and other reports, the reporting party was referred on to another body (e.g. study adviser, student counsellor or the Examinations Board).

In the case of nine reports of undesirable behaviour, the reporting party was referred on by a confidential adviser to a professional source of support, such as a physician or a student psychologist. In the case of two reports, a formal complaint was made to the Complaints Committee.

Relationship between reporting party and perpetrator

When documenting the number of reports, the relationship between the reporting party and the perpetrator was also taken into account. Of the 80 reports, 40 concerned an issue between students, 38 an issue between a student and a lecturer and two an issue between a student and another staff member.

What was the outcome of making the report?

Table 7a Outcome of reports made by students: **status**

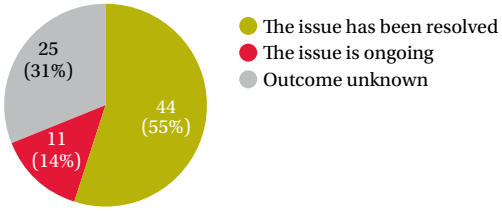
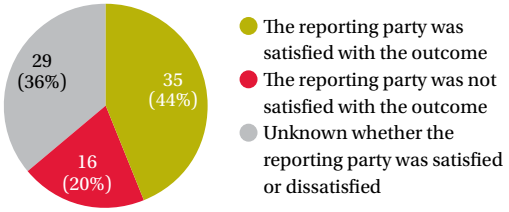


Table 7b Outcome of reports made by students: **satisfaction**



Number and nature of reports made by staff

In 2025, 135 staff and PhD candidates (out of a total of almost 8,000) contacted one of the confidential advisers to discuss cases of undesirable behaviour. Compared with 2024 (154), the number of reports of undesirable behaviour made by staff fell by 12%. Of the 135 reports, 19 were made by PhD candidates. Specific information on PhD candidates can be found below (Tables 11-13b). Of the faculties, ACTA stands out with a relatively high percentage of reports relative to the number of staff. Among the service units, the University Library (UB) and the Allard Pierson Museum, which falls under the UB, stand out with high percentages of reports relative to the number of staff. The figures are down from 2024, but still above average.

Table 8 Number and nature of reports made by staff

Faculty/Service	Sexual intimidation Verbal	Sexual intimidation Physical	Violence & intimidation Verbal	Violence & intimidation Physical	Discrimination	Bullying	Total 2025	Total 2024	Other	Percentage of staff (PID)
ACTA		1	10		3	3	17	23	12	3.26%
FdR		1	7		5	2	15	9	9	2.50%
EB	2		3		5	3	13	8	7	2.24%
FGw	1		11		3	14	29	13	8	2.73%
FMG	1		12		1	1	15	29	9	0.85%
FNWI			11	1	1	6	19	35	11	0.98%
AC								4		0.00%
FS	1				1		2	2		1.20%
ICTS	2		1				3	3		1.40%
UB			1		1	3	5	8	3	3.57%
Allard Pierson			2			2	4	7	4	5.88%
Other services and Executive Staff			7		1	5	13	13		2.41%
Total	**7**	**2**	**65**	**1**	**21**	**39**	**135**	**154**	**63**	**1.74**

Table 9 Progression 2020-2025

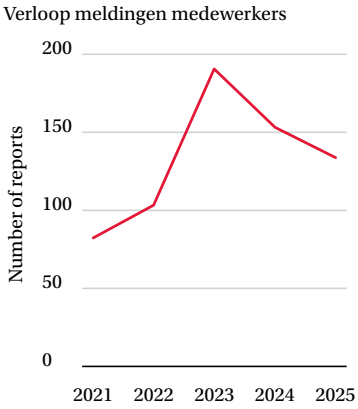
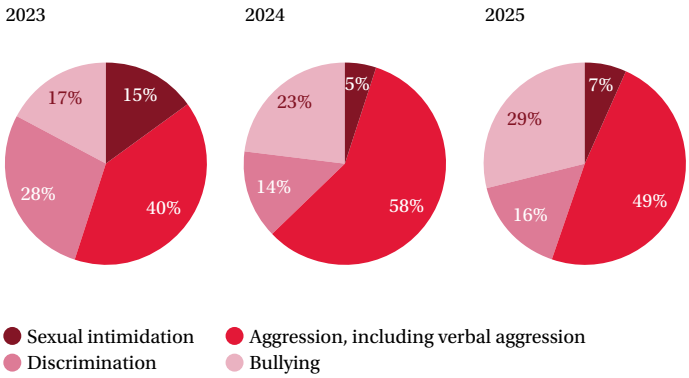


Table 10a Reports by category



The confidential advisers also record which forms of discrimination occur. They note that managers are not always well informed on this issue and are insufficiently capable of dealing with the complex dynamics of discrimination and power relationships. Moreover, discrimination is difficult to prove; it often involves conjecture.

Table 10b Grounds of discrimination

Grounds of discrimination	Number
1. Origin	3
2. Gender (male, female, intersex, transgender)	4
3. Sexual orientation	1
4. Age	1
5. Disability or chronic condition	2
6. Political affiliation	3
7. Employment status (full-time or part-time)	1
8. Employment contract (permanent or temporary)	1
9. Marital status	
10. Nationality	2
11. Religion	1
12. World view	

Other reports

The ‘Other’ category includes reports about issues other than undesirable behaviour. such as issues around absenteeism and rehabilitation. In the case of 63 reports in this category, the reporting party was heard and/or referred on to another body at the UvA, such as a physician, psychologist or the staff welfare officer, and/or the behaviour concerned something other than the categories listed above.

Referral

In the case of 53 reports of undesirable behaviour, the staff member was referred on to their supervisor, HR, the confidential adviser on individual legal status or the ombudsperson. In the case of 23 reports, they were referred on to a professional source of support such as a physician, psychologist or staff welfare officer. In the case of three reports, a formal complaint was made to the Complaints Committee.

Relationship between reporting party and perpetrator

When documenting the number of reports by staff members, the relationship between the reporting party and the perpetrator of the undesirable behaviour was also taken into account. Of the 116 reports (excluding those made by PhD candidates), 74 concerned an issue between a staff member and a supervisor, 33 concerned an issue between staff members and nine concerned an issue between a staff member and a student.

What was the outcome of the report?

Table 11a Outcome of reports made by staff: **status**

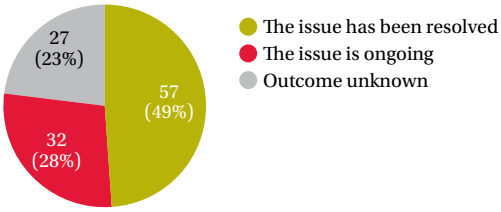
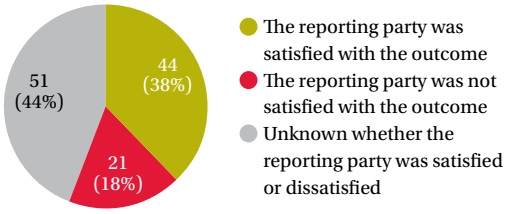


Table 11b Outcome of reports made by staff: **satisfaction**



PhD candidates

Table 12 Number and nature of reports made by PhD candidates

Faculty	Sexual intimidation Verbal	Sexual intimidation Physical	Violence & intimidation Verbaal	Violence & intimidation Physical	Discrimination	Bullying	Total 2025	Total 2024	Other	Percentage of employed PhDs
ACTA								1		0.0%
FdR		1	1		1		3	0	10	9.0%
EB	1		2		1	1	5	1	1	5.0%
FGw	1		1			1	3	1	1	2.5%
FMG			4				4	2	1	1.6%
FNWI			3			1	4	13		0.8%
AUC										
FDG/ other										
Total	**2**	**1**	**11**		**2**	**3**	**19**	**18**	**13**	**1.9%**

Other reports

The ‘Other’ category includes reports about issues other than undesirable behaviour. such as issues around absenteeism and rehabilitation. One of the confidential advisers at Amsterdam Law School is also a mentor for PhD candidates. This explains the high number of reports in the ‘Other’ category. This confidential adviser indicated that the reports concerned supervision; budget cuts and concerns about the future; workload (especially in terms of teaching); and authorship and publication disagreements.

Referral

In the case of five reports of undesirable behaviour, the PhD candidate was referred on to a professional source of support such as a physician, psychologist or staff welfare officer. In the case of six reports, they were referred on to a supervisor, HR, the confidential adviser on individual legal status or the ombudsperson.

Relationship between reporting party and perpetrator

When documenting the number of reports by staff members, the relationship between the reporting party and the perpetrator of the undesirable behaviour was also taken into account. Of the 19 reports, 14 concerned an issue between a PhD candidate and their supervisor and two concerned an issue between a PhD candidate and another staff member. Furthermore, there was one report concerning an issue between a PhD candidate and a student and there were two reports concerning an issue between a PhD candidate and another PhD candidate.

Table 13a Reports by category
PhD candidates

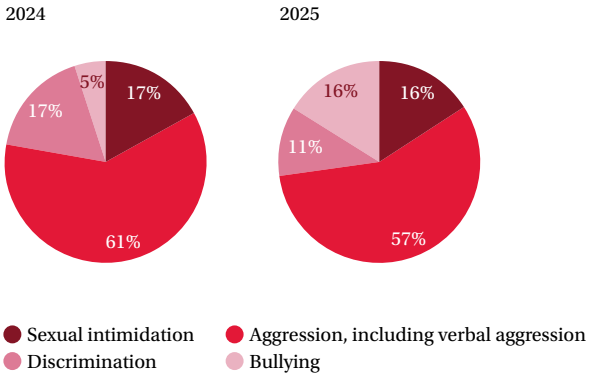


Table 13b Grounds of discrimination

Grounds of discrimination	Numbers
1. Origin	1
2. Gender (male, female, intersex, transgender)	
3. Sexual orientation	
4. Age	
5. Disability or chronic condition	
6. Political affiliation	
7. Employment status (full-time or part-time)	
8. Employment contract (permanent or temporary)	1
9. Marital status	
10. Nationality	
11. Religion	
12. World view	

Table 14a Outcome of reports made by PhD candidates:
status

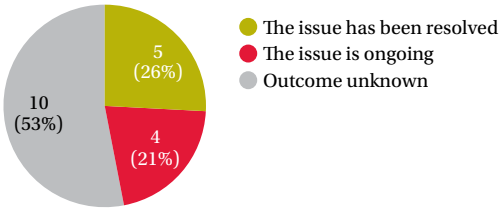
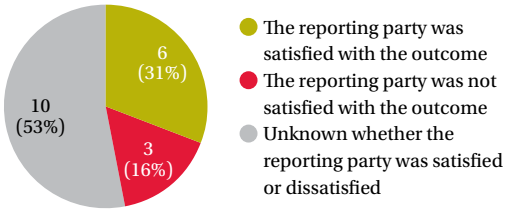


Table 14b Outcome of reports made by PhD candidates:
satisfaction



6. Information and activities

One of the tasks of the confidential advisers is to provide information. Every year, their own faculties or service units organise a range of activities to highlight social safety issues and the specific role of confidential advisers in this context. It is in that context, for instance, that the Faculty of Science confidential advisers were on hand at all staff meetings at all Faculty of Science institutes. In addition, several activities were organised UvA-wide. For example, the UvA's confidential advisers were present with a stand during the annual introduction week market. The coordinating confidential adviser was available again throughout introduction week this year for participating first-year students to interact with. In addition, the social safety campaign 'Looking out for each other' was conducted throughout the UvA once more.

Annual social safety event

A special annual social safety event was held on 17 June, at cinema Kriterion. In partnership with Cinetree and Kriterion, we organised a screening of an impressive short film about sexual violence in a university context: *Beyond Silence* by Marnie Blok. After the screening, there was a panel discussion with Marnie Blok, Lotte Toet (Gelijkspel Foundation), Liza Mügge (UvA professor) and Stefana Feciuc (chair of the UvA's Central Student Council), led by Sarah Bronkhorst.

Activities and workshops for students

The coordinating confidential adviser organised nine workshops for confidential advisers of faculty study associations and Amsterdam student associations in cooperation with the ASVA Student Union and the Amsterdam Chamber of Associations (AKvV). In recent years, many study and student associations have moved to appoint internal confidential advisers. After several discussions with this target group, it was found that there was often a lack of knowledge about the role of confidential advisers. The workshops aim to give students an understanding of the duties of a confidential adviser and addresses the skills needed. The intake interview is practised as well.

In addition, a workshop was held for the Introduction Week Committee in cooperation with Student Services. The Introduction Week Committee organises the induction of new first-year students. The coordinating confidential adviser also participated in a town hall meeting of FMG's Faculty Student Council. Furthermore, a social safety workshop was offered in partnership with the PPLE programme to all first-year students of this programme. This workshop (five sessions in total) provided insight into the dilemmas and situations that students may face on campus and at their study association. Confidential advisers also attended workshops of the Gelijkspel Foundation at the Department of Communication Science. Lastly, there was consultation and cooperation with the student psychologists, who gave workshops to first-year Faculty of Science students.

Activities and workshops for UvA staff

The coordinating confidential adviser contributed to various activities and workshops at the UvA. For instance, he contributed to the annual Iftar during Ramadan, Works Council Day and the Chief Diversity Officer's 'Orange the world' event on violence against women.

During the year, the coordinating confidential adviser hosted six workshops for supervisors as part of the UvA Learning & Development programme. In addition, the same workshop was given to faculty executives at Amsterdam Law School (three times), FEB (once), ACTA (twice) and FGw (once.) The target group of supervisors is very important for social safety. They represent the organisation, are responsible for handling reports and must set a good example. Finally, the coordinating confidential adviser attended a number of meetings, including of the Central Student Council, the Joint Works

Council and the joint meeting of the Executive Board and deans. The 13 workshops for supervisors had a total of about 240 participants.

Outside the UvA, the coordinating confidential adviser participated in various activities of the national Network of University Confidential Advisers (NUVP). He also contributed to a Ministry of Education, Culture and Science working group on recognising and combating anti-Semitism. In addition, he took part as a participant/expert in a visit by King Willem-Alexander to Leiden University at the invitation of Mariëtte Hamer, the Government Commissioner on Sexually Transgressive Behaviour and Sexual Violence. Finally, the coordinating confidential adviser served on an expert panel for the adaptation of a University Job Classification System profile for university confidential advisers.



24 April: royal visit to Leiden *(Picture: Frank van Beek)*

At the UvA, the coordinating confidential adviser participates in various consultations. For example, there are two expertise teams made up of central HR staff and faculty specialists on social safety for staff and students. There is also a Social Safety Council with key stakeholders at the central level. This is chaired by the director of HRM. The ombudsperson, the director of Legal Affairs and the director of Academic Affairs also participate. The Council is responsible for an annual joint reflection report with recommendations that is sent to the Executive Board, the representative advisory councils and the deans. Lastly, the coordinating confidential adviser and the ombudsperson consult each other on a regular basis.

7. Support and professionalisation

The UvA's confidential advisers are associated with a particular faculty or service unit, but are available for the university as a whole. After completing a special training programme, they are appointed for a three-year term. The confidential advisers perform a specific role alongside their regular tasks. Generally speaking, they are granted 60-100 hours per year for their work as a confidential adviser, but the dean or the Secretary General of the UvA may decide to award an additional number of hours if necessary. ACTA is an exception: there, the confidential adviser is a 0.1 FTE position in its own right. It is part of the duties of the coordinating confidential adviser to monitor whether there is sufficient capacity available among the confidential advisers. Whether the available 60 hours is sufficient depends very much on the circumstances in place and time, and it varies from situation to situation and sometimes from person to person. This is why a tailored approach remains important.

The following efforts have been made to strengthen the position of confidential advisers and increase their level of professionalism:

- *Strengthening the team of confidential advisers*

  Various initiatives have been taken to strengthen the team of confidential advisers. The coordinator's role was to manage, stimulate and motivate the people involved in this process. There is an online 'coffee meeting' aimed at increasing the confidential advisers' specialist knowledge, reflect on our work and meet relevant people. This year's coffee meetings included interviews with President of the Executive Board Edith Hooge and FMG dean Christa Boer. Furthermore, Amsterdam Law School professor Klaas Roozemond was a guest to discuss his experiences with undesirable behaviour.

- *Confidential adviser training and certification*

  Confidential advisers must attend a training course with a trainer or institute certified with the National Association of Confidential Advisers (LVV). All certified confidential advisers are included on a list, which can be accessed on the LVV website. To be eligible for recertification after four years, a confidential adviser should meet the following requirements: a) membership of the LVV; b) continuing education and training for a minimum of 24 hours; c) peer feedback for a minimum of 32 hours; d) additional activities for a minimum of 16 hours. The UvA enables confidential advisers to meet these requirements.

- *Peer feedback*

  Peer feedback sessions are held twice a year, under the guidance of the coordinator. Each peer feedback session involves a discussion of two cases in accordance with the Peer Feedback Guide of the LVV. Participants also have the opportunity to ask pressing questions about their work.

  Alongside these peer feedback sessions, there is now also an option to join an LVV-registered UvA peer feedback group that meets four or five times a year. These activities are necessary for the purpose of recertification. This group started in 2023 and has met our expectations. Ten confidential advisers are now members.

– *Continuing education and training*

As described above, ‘integrity’ was added to the duties of the UvA’s confidential advisers this year. In the training courses taken by most confidential advisers, a full day is devoted to integrity. To revive the knowledge of the confidential advisers who completed their training course years ago, an accredited one-day in-house training was organised in which 12 confidential advisers participated.

As described above, two confidential advisers retrained this year to be able to provide guidance to accused persons. This year, accredited training courses were offered for that purpose for the first time. The coordinating confidential adviser and two confidential advisers attended this training.

8. Recommendations

Staff

Unsurprisingly, the confidential advisers indicated once again that it is essential to continue investing in the knowledge and skills of supervisors at the UvA. A confidential adviser wrote: Supervisors need to take their role more seriously and be aware of their responsibilities. *Specifically, we mentioned that they should learn to listen better and not jump straight to conclusions and solutions. Supervisors are too often focused on limiting reputational and other damage and less on the well-being of the staff member.*

Supervisors are responsible for psychological and social safety. They are also the first port of call for reporting parties within the organisation. That is a great responsibility. The UvA offers a range of training courses and workshops for this target group. Making the coordinating confidential adviser's social safety workshop mandatory has been an important step. In 2025, four faculties took the initiative to organise this workshop in-house for their own supervisors. By the end of 2025, almost half of all supervisors had attended the workshop and had been introduced to the social safety guidelines for supervisors and the social safety e-learning course. We also insist on training middle management and lecturers, tutors and teaching assistants. Furthermore, it is important that staff are clear about the rules in terms of social safety when they are onboarded and that teaching staff revise this throughout the year.

FGw has produced its own guidelines on social safety and reports of undesirable and transgressive behaviour. Similar initiatives have also been taken at other faculties, but there are still big differences in clarity, approach and professionalism. This should not be the case, as staff should be able to assume in principle that conditions are the same everywhere. You want to avoid, as one confidential adviser wrote, *that staff are unfairly thrown under the bus without both sides having been heard. Supervisors tend to overreact and then take unjustified measures, arguing that 'where there's smoke, there's fire.'*

A number of complicated reports this year concerned staff who became stuck during their rehabilitation process. These cases are usually complex, as they have a long history and involve multiple agencies/officials. This can include immediate supervisors, HR, the occupational physician, legal support and the confidential adviser. Although the causes of long-term absenteeism are often related in part to undesirable behaviour, other factors also come into play. These cases often have the characteristic of dragging on, which is not in the interest of those involved. Quickly facing the situation and taking decisive action could save a lot of misery and frustration. One confidential adviser wrote in this context: *I have noticed significant differences between supervisors in the way reports are handled. Some supervisors are very proactive, while others seem rather shy about taking action. Furthermore, I find conflicts in the workplace to be particularly complicated: such a conflict can always arise, and may not necessarily lead to undesirable behaviour. In practice, however, my impression is that conflicts in the workplace often involve aspects of social safety and that facts, intentions and perceptions are difficult to separate.*

Finally, the confidential advisers draw attention to the slow processing speed of official complaints. Processing complaints currently takes too long. This undermines confidence in the complaints procedure. Unfortunately, the time limits in the Complaints Regulations are regularly exceeded. This is very stressful for both petitioners and respondents. In any case, the confidential advisers do everything within their power to prevent a report from becoming a complaint, but if there is no other way, petitioners must be able to rely on timely processing.

General recommendation

Continue to invest in the visibility of confidential advisers. Ensure that confidential advisers always have access to rooms to conduct interviews. Communicate clearly and distinctly what the role of confidential advisers is and how this differs from the role of others, such as HR, study advisers and supervisors.

Recommendations for staff

Our first recommendation is to make sure that all supervisors attend the mandatory workshop in the new year and are able to work with the guidelines for supervisors. Then move on to training middle management and lecturers, teaching assistants and tutors.

The second recommendation is to actively encourage peer review between supervisors. Mutual exchange and reflection on social safety dilemmas is of tremendous value.

The third recommendation is to ensure that all faculties have an equal degree of professionalism when it comes to receiving and processing reports. It should not matter to a staff member to whom a report is made.

The fourth recommendation
Continue to pay attention to vulnerable groups such as PhD candidates, postdocs and those on temporary contracts. PhD candidates without a contract who come from abroad are in an especially vulnerable position. We also see vulnerability among PhD candidates who work in a niche field, work with few others and have a very close relationship with their principal supervisor.

The fifth recommendation
Invest in supervisors' ability to recognise discrimination and distinguish between the different grounds of discrimination. Think, for example, of origin, gender or employment status.

The sixth recommendation
The processing time of complaints to the Complaints Committee often exceeds the time limits in the Dutch General Administrative Law Act on which the UvA's Complaints Regulations are based. Invest in quick and adequate processing of complaints with, for example, fixed hearing dates and more committee members.

Students

A number of reports came in last year from male students who were afraid of being accused of undesirable behaviour. Many of these reports were characterised by a role reversal: although the cause of an undesirable situation was often the behaviour of the male in question, they reported it as undesirable behaviour by the other person, often a woman. For example: 'I found her dismissive reaction to my overtures very hurtful.' In such cases, a confidential adviser cannot do much except hold up a mirror. Fortunately, since November, there are now confidential advisers who provide guidance exclusively to accused persons.

There has also been an increase in the number of reports from students who are afraid of being accused of plagiarism or have been sanctioned due to misuse of AI. The consequences of a sanction can be very serious (especially for international students from outside the EEA). This can lead to distressing situations. For example, if you have a family at home who puts aside more than ten thousand euros for you every year, failure is really not an option and this can lead to great pressure, stress and psychological problems.

There has been a lot of talk about the house rules at the UvA, especially in the context of protests. Non-compliance with these house rules has caused ill feeling among some groups and individuals, for example when it comes to the use of face coverings that make identification impossible. The fact that

the new house rules are still not in place and therefore the old rules still apply creates a lot of ambiguity. Other questions that arise in that context are: what are the sanctions for not complying with the applicable rules and what is the UvA is doing to enforce those rules? Overall, it should be clear to everyone what the rules are and that the UvA enforces these rules and takes action if they are not complied with. Prosecutions under criminal law are difficult for obvious reasons, but universities can also invoke the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW). This allows universities to impose sanctions based on their own rules.

Students are often afraid to make reports. They fear retaliation from the lecturer concerned and negative consequences for their future career or their marks. The relationship of dependence between student and lecturer is a tricky one. It is important for students to know their rights and obligations. Make it clear that perceived arbitrariness can always be challenged and will be acted upon, should it occur.

As early as 2024, it was noted that more faculties are looking to invest in students' knowledge of social safety. Workshops have been developed and pilot programmes run at the Faculty of Science and the Departments of Communication Science and PPLE, among others. It is important that students know what is expected of them in terms of behaviour and etiquette. Unfortunately, the vast majority of students remain unaware of the existence of the UvA Code of Conduct, let alone its contents. The need for rules of conduct may be met by student bodies and some departments or faculties, but this is far from being the case everywhere.

Recommendations for students

The first recommendation is that every student be introduced to the UvA Code of Conduct, Students' Charter and house rules by way of an onboarding procedure. When students enrol at our university, they should be asked to endorse these UvA policies. This would also make them more accountable for violations. In that context, we should develop a handy overview of key points and distribute it on campus and through Canvas.

The second recommendation is to explore the desirability of developing a complaints procedure for students to submit reports about other students and for staff to submit reports about students. The experiences of other universities and Amsterdam University College (AUC) can serve as examples. Students and staff currently lack an escalation option.

The third recommendation is to put a long-term focus on social safety in the curriculum. This could be in the form of the workshops mentioned above, for example, or in the form of an e-learning course specifically aimed at students.

The fourth recommendation is to invest in gathering and sharing knowledge about the networks and existing sensitivities within groups of international students. This can help us better understand the context and take more effective (and preferably preventive) action.