



2022 Confidential Advisers' Annual Report

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University of Amsterdam

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Introduction

This is the annual report of the confidential advisers of the UvA. The year under review, 2022, was a special year. Incidents in several sectors of society generated a great deal of attention for the topic of social safety. This was also the year in which, after a hesitant start, we were finally able to end nearly all COVID-19-related precautionary measures. One important fact in connection with the UvA Social Safety Hub was that on 1 April the first coordinating confidential adviser, Arjen Berkvens, started his efforts to further professionalise the work of confidential advisers at our university.

Any inappropriate behaviour (sexual harassment, aggression, violence, bullying, discrimination) towards students or staff at the UvA will adversely impact the safety of their study or work environment. The consequences may be serious. Students and staff can contact one of the UvA's confidential advisers for inappropriate behaviour to tell their story and find help in seeking a solution to the problem. This annual report sets out how many times the confidential advisers provided support to students and staff in 2022 and discusses the types of inappropriate behaviour involved. It also looks at the role, position and professional training of the confidential advisers.

This annual report is about cases of inappropriate 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 manager or ombudsperson. The difference is that reports to a confidential adviser do not necessarily result in follow-up action. It is the person reporting who decides whether any follow-up steps are to be taken.

The annual report describes the nature and number of reports submitted to the confidential advisers, by category of inappropriate behaviour.

The functions of the annual report are to:

- Inform:* the registered number and nature of cases of inappropriate behaviour;
- Identify:* the number of cases may be an indication that (parts of or the implementation of) existing policy on inappropriate behaviour needs to be modified;
- Justify:* it enables the confidential advisers to justify the use of time and resources.

The annual report presents an overview of the number of reports to the confidential advisers, without seeking to provide a record of all inappropriate behaviour at the UvA. The reported cases should primarily be seen as an indication of the extent to which people know how to access a confidential adviser. The annual report only provides a very limited analysis of the background to the cases of inappropriate behaviour reported to the confidential advisers. The information required for a more extensive analysis is confidential and comes within the scope of the confidential adviser's obligation of secrecy.

1. Confidential advisers for inappropriate behaviour

Confidential advisers for inappropriate behaviour serve both students and staff. Staff members who work for the UvA but are not on its payroll can also consult a UvA confidential adviser. The confidential advisers provide a sympathetic ear and can help a person find a way to stop or de-escalate the inappropriate behaviour concerned. They guarantee confidentiality and will never take action without the consent of the person reporting the issue.

Following a concept developed in 2022, escalation ladders are available that can help the confidential advisers provide the most effective guidance for students and staff. The confidential advisers document cases of inappropriate behaviour in such a way that they cannot be traced back to the person who reports them.

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 the shared service units of the UvA have at least one confidential adviser for inappropriate behaviour, appointed by the dean or the Secretary General of the University 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 2022 the UvA had 20 employees who fulfilled the role of confidential adviser for inappropriate behaviour. Some of them act as confidential advisers for students only, some for staff only and others for both students and staff. Vacancies for the role of confidential adviser are filled through a process of open recruitment on the UvA's job vacancy page and through newsletters or an email to staff. Table 1 gives an overview of changes in the team of confidential advisers in 2022.

Table 1 Changes in and composition of the team of UvA confidential advisers in 2022

Confidential advisers	Total	Academic	Support and management
In 2022	20	5	15
Started in 2022	6	2	4
Stopped in 2022	0	0	0

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 person reporting or the alleged perpetrator. Of the existing confidential advisers, five have an academic role and fifteen have a support role.

UvA confidential advisers

Arjen Berkvens, coordinating confidential adviser

Inge van der Stap: ACTA

Gerrie Veenstra: ACTA

Myrthe van Amstel: Faculty of Law

Erik van Arkel: Faculty of Law

Karin Venetis: Faculty of Economics and Business

Eloe Kingma: Faculty of Humanities

Marita Mathijssen: Faculty of Humanities

Asli Özgen: Faculty of Humanities

Mirjam Koelewijn: Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences

Barbera Rosenhart-Meurs: Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences

Marie Hoogstraten: Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences

Diana Vos: Faculty of Science

Kristien van Lunen: Faculty of Science

Belle Jansen: Faculty of Science

Hélène Boeren: Executive staff

Rixt Polder: Executive staff

Marjan Alberda: Facility Services/ICTS

Henriette Reerink: University Library

Kasper Abcouwer: University Library

2. Legislative framework, code of conduct and regulations

The Dutch Working Conditions Act (*Arbeidsomstandighedenwet*) and the UvA Code of Conduct are decisive in determining whether any particular behaviour qualifies as inappropriate. Inappropriate behaviour refers to any situation where at least one person involved may reasonably feel that the behaviour is inappropriate. Under the Dutch Working Conditions Act, every employer has the obligation to implement policies that minimise the psychosocial workload of its employees. 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 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: making a distinction between individuals on the basis of religion, beliefs, political opinions, race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, civil status, pregnancy or other characteristics where there is no objective justification for doing so.

Bullying: 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.

The tasks, working method, rights, obligations, workload and scope of duty of a confidential adviser are described in the Regulations concerning the UvA's Confidential Advisers for Inappropriate Behaviour 2021, which also contain exact definitions of the terms used.

While most of the UvA's confidential advisers have also been trained to deal with integrity violation issues, this category does not come within their current scope. In addition, the UvA's confidential advisers for inappropriate behaviour frequently use the UvA Code of Conduct and social safety guidelines.

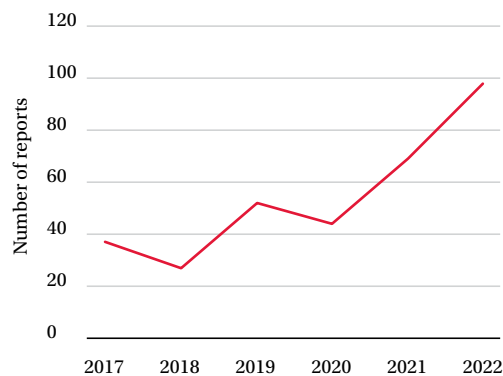
3. Cases of inappropriate behaviour reported by students and staff in 2022

In 2022, students and staff discussed a total of 202 reports of inappropriate behaviour with a confidential adviser. This represents a 33% increase relative to 2021 (Table 2).

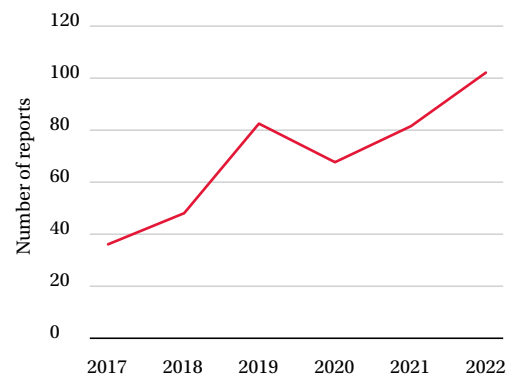
Table 2 Reports of inappropriate behaviour submitted to confidential advisers, 2017-2022

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Students	37	27	52	44	69	98
Staff	37	49	84	69	83	104
Total	74	76	136	113	152	202

Trend in reports by students



Trend in reports by staff



As shown in graphs 1 and 2, there has been an upward trend in the number of reports of inappropriate behaviour. One possible explanation is the considerable attention that the topic of social safety has attracted in the media and in society at large. Generally speaking, the rise in the number of reports is a positive development. It suggests that student and staff know how to access the university's confidential advisers and that they feel free to discuss issues. This helps to find solutions and further improve social safety.

Tables 3 and 4 provide an overview of the number of cases of inappropriate behaviour submitted to a confidential adviser by students and staff. 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 inappropriate behaviour.

The number of cases is documented on the basis of the work unit of the person reporting, even if they choose to consult a confidential adviser outside of their own unit. The cases are subdivided according to the nature of the inappropriate behaviour concerned.

Table 3 Number and nature of reports by students

Faculty	Sexual harassment		Violence and harassment		Discriminatie	Bullying	Stalking	Total	Percentage of staff (PID)	Other
	Verbaal	Fysiek	Verbaal	Fysiek						
ACTA	1		13					14	1.37%	1
Faculty of Law	1	2	1	1	4	3		12	0.24%	5
Faculty of Economics and Business	1		1		2			4	0.06%	1
Faculty of Humanities	3	3	10		3	3	3	25	0.31%	6
Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences	3		7		5			15	0.11%	7
Faculty of Science	6	2	7	4		2	4	25	0.34%	5
Unknown	1					2		3		-
Total	16	7	39	5	14	10	7	98		25

In 2022, 98 students (from a total of over 41,000) contacted one of the confidential advisers to discuss cases of inappropriate behaviour. The number of reports of inappropriate behaviour by students rose by more than 40% compared with 2021 (when 69 reports were submitted).

Other reports

The 'Other' category includes reports about issues other than inappropriate behaviour. In the case of the 25 reports in this category, the person reporting was generally referred on to another body within the UvA (e.g. study adviser, student counsellor or the Examinations Board) and/or the behaviour did not belong to any of the above-mentioned categories.

Referrals

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

Relationship between person reporting and 'perpetrator'

When documenting the number of reports by students, the relationship between the person reporting and the 'perpetrator' of the inappropriate behaviour was also registered. Of a total of 123 reports (including those in the 'Other' category), 44 concerned an issue between students and 60 an issue between a student and a staff member. In 19 reports this aspect was not registered.

Table 4 Number and nature of reports by staff members

Faculty	Sexual harassment		Violence and harassment		Discriminatie	Bullying	Stalking	Total	Percentage of staff (PID)	Other
	Verbaal	Fysiek	Verbaal	Fysiek						
ACTA			7		3	2	1	13	12.38%	8
Faculty of Law			1			2		3	0.57%	1
Faculty of Economics and Business		1	5		2	1		9	1.52%	2
Faculty of Humanities			19		1	5	1	29	2.79%	-
Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences	3		9					9	0.55%	7
Faculty of Science	1		9			2		12	0.60%	9
Staff departments and service units	2		14		1	12		29	2.60%	10
Total	6	1	64	0	7	24	2	104		37

In 2022, 104 staff members (from a total of almost 7,500) contacted one of the confidential advisers to discuss cases of inappropriate behaviour. The number of reports of inappropriate behaviour by staff members rose by 25% compared with 2021.

Referrals

In the case of eight reports of inappropriate behaviour, the person reporting was referred on by a confidential adviser to a professional source of support such as a doctor, psychologist or staff welfare service. In five reports, a formal complaint was made to the Complaints Committee.

Relationship between person reporting and 'perpetrator'

When documenting the number of reports by staff members, the relationship between the person reporting and the 'perpetrator' of the inappropriate behaviour was also registered. Of a total of 104 reports, 97 concerned an issue between staff members and 7 an issue between a staff member and a student.

Other reports

The 'Other' category includes reports about issues other than inappropriate behaviour. In the case of the 37 reports in this category, the person reporting was referred on to another body within the UvA (e.g. confidential adviser for individual legal status, P&O or manager) and/or the behaviour did not belong to any of the above-mentioned categories.

4. Providing information

One of the tasks of 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. Several activities were also organised at the central level. For example, the UvA confidential advisers had a stand during the annual Introduction Week market, which was held in the Amsterdam Beurs van Berlage on 31 August. Throughout the day, confidential advisers were available for students to discuss issues. They noted that while Dutch students are generally well aware of what confidential advisers do, international students are much less familiar with the concept.

SAFE SPACE, an interactive theatre production social safety in the lives of students, was staged on 22 November in collaboration with Stichting Time Out and in the presence of several confidential advisers. SAFE SPACE highlights issues and encourages dialogue with students, lecturers, confidential advisers, study advisers and education support staff. The play helps participants to discuss the topic and examines the various roles of individuals involved in socially unsafe situations. What can we learn from such a situation? What can you do yourself? How could things be improved? Time Out produced SAFE SPACE in a co-creation partnership with students to ensure a clear focus on practical situations that student can relate to. The performance was followed by a workshop on the topic of consent, organised by Stichting Gelijkspel, and a serious game by Talk That Talk.

Awareness of confidential advisers among students

In 2022, Student Services conducted a study on the level of well-being among students. A panel of 392 students from multiple faculties answered a variety of questions about their well-being.

The survey included three questions about students' awareness of confidential advisers:

- In a general sense, to what extent are students aware of the existence of confidential advisers at the UvA?
- How have students been informed about this?
- To what extent are students at each of the various faculties aware of the existence of confidential advisers at the UvA?

General awareness of the existence of confidential advisers

Of all students in the survey, 40% said they were aware of the existence of confidential advisers at the UvA. According to the party that conducted the survey, this can be considered to be a fairly high level of awareness (for the sake of comparison, the score among student counsellors was 46%). In their comments, many students said they believed it was 'logical' for an organisation such as the UvA to have confidential advisers.

Information channels

In the survey, respondents were asked to tick one (or several) of ten channels by which they had been informed about the existence of confidential advisers. The principal information channels were found to be the introduction period (16%), followed by the website (15%) and the newsletter (14%). In addition, the tutor and mentor also played an important role in alerting students to the possibility of contacting a confidential adviser (13%). As regards the introduction period, the answer did not distinguish between the general UvA introduction period or the introduction activities of the study programme concerned.

Awareness of confidential advisers by faculty

Student awareness of confidential advisers varies among faculties. Below is a list of the various faculties and the associated percentages of students who are aware of the existence of confidential advisers.

Faculty of Science: 50%

Faculty of Humanities: 50%

Faculty of Law: 37%

Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences: 29%

Faculty of Economics and Business: 25%

There appears to be a link between the level of awareness of confidential advisers per faculty and the number of reports at each faculty. The number of reports from students at the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Humanities is relatively high, and the number of reports from students at the Faculty of Economics and Business is relatively low. It appears that the higher the level of awareness of confidential advisers, the higher the number of reports they receive. This warrants the conclusion that we should continue to invest in communication about social safety and that the introduction period is very important in this regard.

5. Support for confidential advisers

The confidential advisers at the UvA are associated with a particular faculty of service unit, but they 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. They are granted 60 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. The ACTA is an exception: there, the confidential adviser is a 0.1 FTE position in its own right. One of the coordinating confidential adviser's tasks is to monitor the extent to which the

confidential advisers have sufficient capacity. Whether the available 60 hours are sufficient strongly depends on the circumstances in terms of time, location and the case concerned, and may also differ from person to person. This is why a tailored approach remains important. For further information about this, see 'Confidential advisers' findings and recommendations.'

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. A meeting organised in July featured three guests: the ombudsperson, the Central Diversity Officer and the secretary of the Complaints Committee. It is important for the confidential advisers to know the other residents of the Social Safety Hub. The meeting was greatly appreciated on both sides. Another new initiative are the monthly digital coffee breaks. These sessions are aimed to increase the confidential advisers' specialist knowledge, reflect on our work and meet relevant people, such as the President of the UvA's Executive Board.

- *Peer feedback*

Peer feedback sessions are held twice a year, under the guidance of the coordinator. In the past year the sessions were organised in four groups and held on 27 and 29 September and 6 and 7 October. One extra session was held on 12 December for those who were unable to attend in September or October. Each peer feedback session involves a discussion of two cases in accordance with the Peer Feedback Guide of the National Association of Confidential Advisers (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 review group that will meet four or five times a year. These activities are necessary for the purpose of recertification. The peer review group will begin in 2023.

- *Training and education*

Peer review initiatives can also be used to assess the need for in-depth training and education among the confidential advisers. For instance, peer review activities in 2022 revealed a need for specific refresher training on how to deal with reports from people with psychological problems. In response, the Student Psychologists Office will organise a half-day session on the theme of 'Self-care and setting limits' in January 2023.

6. Confidential advisers' findings and recommendations

The past few years have seen considerable investment in setting up the Social Safety Hub at the UvA. The code of conduct and various regulations have been revised. Several new positions have been created. However, we are not there yet: it is also crucial that we join forces and take steps to change the culture – which is a long-term effort. Below we present a number of findings and recommendations for each target group.

Supervisors

Findings

- The hierarchic relationship between supervisors and staff is a potential source of social unsafety due to the risk of undue dependence and abuse of power.
- Some supervisors remain insufficiently equipped to discuss social safety issues, handle reports and create a safe working climate. There are also supervisors that still fail to set the right example and visibly promote social safety in the work environment.

Recommendation

- Invest in training programmes and workshops that help supervisors develop the skills they need to be able to deal with socially unsafe situations and handle reports carefully and effectively.

Staff

Findings

- At present there is no desk or individual that persons accused of inappropriate behaviour can turn to when they hear they are the subject of a report or a complaint. A complaint can be quite stressful for the person accused. However, the confidential advisers are unable to shoulder this additional task.
- Some staff members distrust HR and see it as an extension of their employer.
- Among staff, there is no true culture in which they feel free to call each other to account on the subject of inappropriate behaviour.

Recommendations

- Provide active bystander training to give staff members a clear course of action in case they witness social unsafety.
- Organise a structure to ensure that persons accused of inappropriate behaviour know whom to turn to for guidance.

Students

Finding

- There has already been considerable investment in informing students about the system of social safety and the various support services available to them. Still, this issue requires permanent attention, especially for the benefit of international students.
- Responsibility for social safety issues among students has not been explicitly assigned within the UvA. In the past year the central HRM department did organise activities in this field, but HRM is not the obvious choice for performing such tasks on a permanent basis, if only because it has no policy responsibility for students.

Recommendations

- It is important to devote more attention to the range of cultural backgrounds of Dutch and international students and to ensure that our lecturers have inclusive teaching skills.
- Invest in information services for all students and use the Introduction Week as well as other activities for this purpose.
- Assign responsibility for social safety among students to a staff member that has the capacity to set up and coordinate relevant activities, and identify the most suitable department for accommodating this.

Confidential advisers

Findings

- It is important for confidential advisers to feel that they are part of a team, as they may sometimes feel isolated due to the confidential nature of the cases submitted to them.
- Students' and staff members' expectations of confidential advisers are not always realistic.

Recommendations

- There is a need for further investment in collaboration among all confidential advisers so as to promote their sense of being part of a team.
- It remains important to clearly explain to staff and students, through our UvA-wide communication channels, what confidential advisers are for and what they can and cannot be expected to do.

Vulnerable groups

Our confidential advisers have also identified a number of vulnerable groups that are more at risk of being confronted with inappropriate behaviour and/or to find themselves in a position of dependence. These groups call for permanent attention to ensure they receive extra support.

- PhDs remain a highly vulnerable group when it comes to social safety. Many PhDs depend on a single person or a small group of persons during their PhD programme and for a successful academic career. In addition, PhDs have relatively little legal certainty as they work on the basis of a temporary appointment.
- International students, and especially those from Asia, are another vulnerable group at the UvA. Chinese students in particular have suffered in recent years, when travel was impossible. In general, international students are more likely to face issues in connection with regulation and cultural differences.
- Many students and staff with a migration background are the first of their generation to pursue a university degree or career. Many things that are self-evident for other students and staff are not at all self-evident for them.
- Staff members on a temporary contract feel much more uncertain about their future than colleagues on a permanent contract. This increases their dependence, or makes them feel more dependent, on their superiors.
- Young new employees tend to have relatively little work experience and, as a result, are more likely to encounter adaptation issues.

Number of cases and workload*

According to two confidential advisers, the number of cases and the associated workload were too low.

According to seven confidential advisers, the number of cases and the associated workload were normal.

According to eight confidential advisers, the number of cases and the associated workload were too high. They said they spent more time (more than 60 hours) handling the reports. They attributed this to various factors, such as the large numbers of reports they received, a lack of experience meaning they need more time to deal with a case, the need for advice in highly complex cases and the insufficient time made available by their managers.

The fact that eight confidential advisers said their workload was too high is a point of concern. The team of confidential advisers will expand in the coming period. Eventually their number is expected to rise to 25, so the hope is that this will reduce the workload. The coordinating confidential adviser will closely monitor the workload and will propose measures should it become too heavy. In this connection it is crucial to adopt a tailored approach, for example by asking for more hours or spreading the cases more effectively.

* Not all confidential advisers filled in this section.