

Annual Report 2024

Social Safety

Social Safety Team for students



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1. Introduction

1 Introduction

This is the 2024 annual report of the Social Safety Team at Maastricht University (UM). In 2024, social safety once again featured prominently on the agenda, both within and beyond the university.

The Social Safety Team focuses exclusively on students at UM and offers an accessible, confidential point of contact where students can turn with concerns or experiences related to social safety. The team supports students in exploring next steps and finding the appropriate support.

In 2023, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science presented a plan to enhance social safety in higher education, in collaboration with students, staff and institutions. The intention was announced to introduce a statutory duty of care for institutions through a nationwide programme. In addition, the Government Commissioner for Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Violence devoted considerable attention to higher education.

Building on earlier steps, the UM Executive Board took several additional measures to promote social safety, including mandatory training for managers and the establishment of the Social Safety Team. The Executive Board takes a proactive approach and is open to suggestions and recommendations. It recognises the independent position of the Social Safety Team and acts accordingly.

This annual report outlines the activities of the Social Safety Team as well as the nature and scope of student reports filed in 2024. Responsibility for compiling this report, originally assigned to the team coordinator, later shifted to the confidential advisers following the coordinator's departure. As a result, the report has been prepared on the basis of information available to the confidential advisers; it excludes data that was accessible only to the coordinator.

For information on the follow-up of reports referred to the CCP and the ombuds officer, please refer to the 2024 Annual Report on Social Safety for staff and to the ombuds officer's annual report, which under the UM Ombuds Officer's Charter is submitted each year to the Executive Board.

Reading guide

Chapter 2 describes the organisation, the mission and activities of the Social Safety Team. Chapter 3 outlines the nature and number of reports, the background of the individuals who reported them, and way in which the reports were handled. Finally, Chapter 4 presents an overarching analysis and recommendations aimed at strengthening policy and safeguarding social safety within the university.

2.

Social safety team for students

2 Social Safety Team for students

It has been decided to separate the support structures related to social safety for UM staff and for students. As a result, since September 2023 there has been a Social Safety Team for students and a Concerns & Complaints Point (CCP) for staff. These teams work together wherever possible and necessary. This annual report focuses on reports submitted by students to the Social Safety Team.

For the majority of 2024, the Social Safety Team comprised:

- coordinator Ivanka Smitsmans, 0.8 fte
- ombuds officer Claire Essers, 1.0 fte (total for Social Safety Team and CCP)
- four internal confidential advisers: Wendy Geijen 0.2 fte, Romy Beuken 0.2 fte, Tessa Fox 0.1 fte, Wendy Brandt 0.1 fte (0.6 fte total).

2.1 Roles and working methods

UM has various support structures in place for students. The Social Safety Team plays an important role in supporting and guiding students who experience socially unsafe situations or inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying, discrimination, intimidation, aggression and (sexual) violence. In addition to providing a listening ear and individual support, the team contributes to training courses and campaigns aimed at promoting social safety. The team is also available as a sounding board to UM staff who wish to seek advice, share concerns and discuss or prepare for discussions related to social safety.

The Social Safety Team identifies and reports on patterns, broader trends and developments related to social safety as well as any other notable findings. On this basis, it makes recommendations – solicited or otherwise – to the Executive Board. The team operates as an independent unit within the university.

Responsibilities within the team are divided across three roles: the coordinator, the ombuds officer and the confidential adviser, each with their own tasks and responsibilities.

The coordinator

The coordinator is responsible for raising awareness among students and promoting and facilitating dialogue on the theme of social safety. This involves keeping the website and tools up to date, providing information and advice, and ensuring that students and staff with a support role or frequent contact with students can access relevant training. The coordinator contributes to the development of (preventive) guidelines at the management level and acts as a sounding board for colleagues who wish to discuss individual cases or social safety more broadly.

Students who need advice, who are trying to locate the appropriate support, or who wish to develop a plan of action to improve a particular situation are free to approach the coordinator. The coordinator refers them to a confidential adviser or another relevant colleague, such as a faculty director or (student) dean, and ensures that reports are followed up appropriately and with due care. In certain cases, the coordinator may intervene or play a mediating role in discussions between (alleged) victims and defendants. Additionally, the coordinator reports on the work of the Social Safety Team and the reports filed, identifies trends in the reports and organises the discussion of cases. The coordinator acts as the first point of contact for reports of concerning and/or inappropriate behaviour, and works closely with the confidential advisers and other relevant staff.

The ombuds officer

The ombuds officer is an independent and impartial discussion partner for UM staff and students. Since January 2024, students have been able to approach the ombuds officer directly. The ombuds officer provides a listening ear, advises on regulations, procedures and rights, and refers individuals to appropriate support. Additionally, the ombuds officer facilitates discussions, identifies trends and may independently investigate systemic issues either on their own initiative or in response to reports. Findings and recommendations are reported directly to the Executive Board.

The confidential adviser

The confidential adviser is an independent, confidential discussion partner who provides initial support, a listening ear and guidance to individuals reporting undesirable behaviour. The adviser acts as a sounding board and sparring partner, and informs the reporting party about possible next steps, procedures, routes and regulations. Additionally, the adviser can offer support in preparing for and carrying out any follow-up steps. Where desired, the adviser accompanies the reporting party to meetings or refers them to other organisations and support services. The reporting party retains control at all times; the confidential adviser takes action only with the reporting party's consent.

Students who are accused of undesirable behaviour ('defendants') can also turn to a confidential adviser for support and guidance. The adviser provides a listening ear and offers emotional and substantive support, for example during an investigation or procedure. This support may include preparatory discussions and debriefings, attendance at meetings or interviews, and aftercare. No action is taken without the defendant's consent.

Discussions with the confidential adviser are always confidential, except in cases involving a criminal offence or when the safety of others is at risk. In cases such as murder, manslaughter or rape, there is a legal obligation to report the matter to the authorities. In all other situations, information is shared internally or with third parties only with the explicit consent of the reporting party.



2.2 Mission, principles and objectives

The Social Safety Team was set up in 2023 to strengthen social safety for students and to promote a culture within UM in which students can learn and develop in a safe, supportive environment. Social safety is a key part of student wellbeing and helps to create a positive, respectful student community. When students feel safe, they tend to thrive and perform better, making social safety a basic condition for a stimulating and enjoyable learning experience.

Although the Social Safety Team primarily focuses on students, creating a safe environment requires a collective effort from both students and staff, including lecturers and other colleagues who work with students on a daily basis. The underlying principle is that staff, too, can help to recognise, discuss and prevent unsafe situations, and thus have a crucial part to play in fostering a culture of respect, openness and inclusivity. Enhancing social safety is therefore a shared responsibility and a joint investment in a learning and working environment in which everyone can feel seen, heard and supported.

The establishment of the Social Safety Team marked an important change in the way UM supports students in terms of social safety. Before the team was set up, the focus was mainly on handling individual reports of inappropriate behaviour and providing a central point of contact where students could share their concerns. Since then, the objectives have been both broadened and refined. They now encompass:

- Creating a knowledgeable, confidential and accessible team that students can approach for a discussion, advice and/or guidance.
- Setting up a low-threshold contact and information point, so that students can easily reach the team and schedule an appointment independently.
- Increasing awareness of social safety among students, student organisations and staff.
- Strengthening the team's visibility, name recognition and findability within the UM community.
- Applying the core values of confidentiality, accessibility, reliability, transparency and expertise in achieving these objectives.

2.3 Developments

In 2024, the Social Safety Team worked on further defining the roles and strengthening collaboration within the university. The main focus was on increasing the visibility of the confidential advisers and improving coordination within the team. This process took longer than expected, meaning not all planned objectives could be fully completed. Peer consultations and theme meetings were held to strengthen expertise and share experiences. In 2025, changes to the team's composition and working methods will help to optimise collaboration and student support.

2.4 Activities

The work of the Social Safety Team can be divided into several focus areas. Internally, the team focused on increasing visibility and awareness of social safety, including by actively strengthening connections within the university. Efforts were also made to build knowledge and strengthen collaboration beyond the university through various networks and consultation bodies.

Internal activities

Network meetings and internal consultations

Throughout the year, the Social Safety Team maintains contact with internal partners on both a regular and an ad-hoc basis, including the CCP for staff, the Sexual Safety Team, Integrated Security, Diversity & Inclusion, the student deans and the coordinators of FHML master's programmes when inappropriate behaviour is flagged during internships and placements. This collaboration contributes to an integrated, coherent approach to social safety at UM.

Study and student associations

There is also ongoing contact with the confidential officers of student organisations, as well as regular peer consultations to safeguard the quality of support. In collaboration with INKOM, the Social Safety Team plays an advisory role in supporting students who have experienced sexually inappropriate behaviour. The team attends events such as the More to Explore fair to inform students about the help and support available to them. Additionally, the team advises and supports the Commissie Kennismakingstijden Maastricht (KMTM committee) with a view to ensuring a safe and responsible introduction period within student associations.

Information provision

In 2024, the information on social safety was clarified and improved, both in terms of the website structure and its accessibility for different audiences. The updated page outlines situations in which students can contact the Social Safety Team and which internal or external services they may be referred to. Accessibility was also improved and services streamlined through the introduction of the Reflex booking tool, which allows students to view confidential advisers' availability and book an appointment directly. To keep the threshold for making contact as low as possible, all team members are shown with a photo and individual contact details, including email, phone number and office location.

External activities

Peer consultation and training

Team members regularly take part in training and peer consultation to further develop their expertise and professional skills. These activities follow the guidelines of the National Association of Confidential Advisers (LVV) and are also offered through other relevant organisations. They include the Sexual Safety Procedure training and courses in diversity and inclusion. The confidential advisers periodically take part in peer consultations to discuss practical experiences and dilemmas with colleagues from other universities and universities of applied sciences. To promote knowledge exchange and collegial support, they also join a monthly online get-together organised by the Network of University Confidential Advisers (NUVP), where current issues and cases can be shared informally.

National collaboration

In 2024, the coordinator was a member of the Social Safety Portfolio Holders Committee of the Universities of the Netherlands (UNL). She also took part in the national social safety knowledge hub for coordinators in higher education.

3.

Reports, reporting parties, nature and follow-up

3 Reports, reporting parties, nature and follow-up

Every initial contact by a student with a member of the Social Safety Team is logged as a 'report.' This includes complaints related to social safety, but also requests for an appointment, advice, guidance or intervention. Wherever possible, reports are handled informally. If a formal route is needed or preferred, the student is referred to the Complaints Service Point (CSP). If several reports point to a wider pattern, the ombuds officer may be involved, and this can also lead to unsolicited advice to the organisation.

3.1 Number of reports and reporting parties

The Social Safety Team recorded 127 reports in 2024. Of these, 102 were submitted directly by the person concerned. The remaining reports came via third parties: 11 via staff members, 7 via the CCP, 3 via members of the public (e.g. parents), 2 via boards or confidential contact persons and 2 via study advisers.

Students can use the Reflex appointment planner to schedule a meeting with a confidential adviser, choosing from different contact options. Of the 127 reporting parties, 57 opted for a personal meeting on location (at the SSC in the city centre or PHS in Randwyck), 23 chose an online Teams meeting, 29 reported by email, 17 by phone and 1 via WhatsApp.

The majority of reports concerned inappropriate behaviour between students. There were also reports about inappropriate behaviour between students and staff. Other reports related to alumni, groups, organisations or other parties.

3.2 Profile of reporting parties

The background characteristics of the reporting parties, including gender and enrolment status, were also analysed. Most reporting parties in 2024 were women (75 reports). A further 41 reports

came from male students, and 2 from students who identified as non-binary. The remaining reporting parties chose not to disclose their gender.

In terms of faculty distribution, the largest share of reports came from the Faculty of Science and Engineering (23%), followed by the Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences (20%), the School of Business and Economics (20%), the Faculty of Law (11%), the Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience (9%) and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (7%). A number of reports were not linked to a specific faculty (9%). This breakdown shows which groups within the university are reporting issues and can help to guide more targeted prevention, information and support. Figure 1 shows the percentages of reports per faculty.

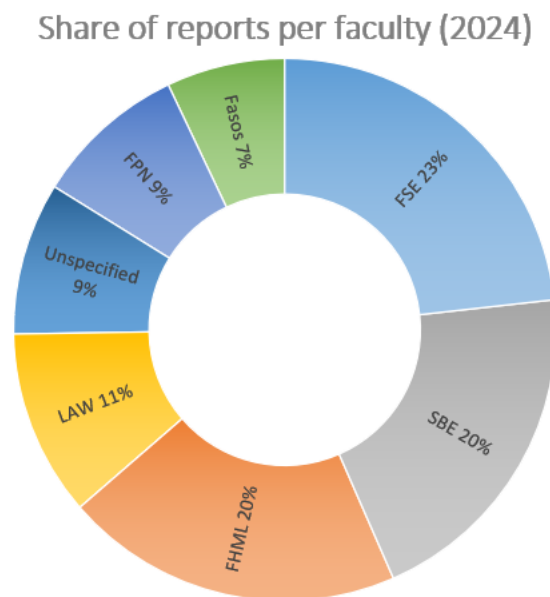


Figure 1. Share of reports per faculty. Percentages are rounded to whole numbers; as a result, the total may deviate slightly (approx. 1%).

3.3 Nature of the reports

Students can contact the Social Safety Team to report undesirable behaviour, for example if their integrity is compromised, personal boundaries are crossed or their sense of safety is undermined. This might involve discrimination, intimidation, bullying, aggression or (sexual) violence. The categories used to classify the reports are defined below, followed by the percentage breakdown for each category in 2024 (Figure 2).

Stalking

Stalking refers to a pattern of deliberate, unwanted intrusion into someone's life or privacy, intended to frighten or pressure them into doing something, not doing something, or putting up with something. It can involve behaviour such as following someone, making threats, sending unwanted messages or gifts, or otherwise acting in ways that make the person feel unsafe and disrupt their everyday life. In 2024 there were 5 reports of stalking, representing 4% of reports.

Unequal treatment

Unequal treatment means treating someone differently from others in a comparable situation without a reasonable, objective justification. This can involve differences in opportunities, recognition, treatment, or access to information or resources, based on personal preference, status or arbitrariness rather than relevant substantive grounds. In 2024, unequal treatment was reported 10 times, representing 8% of reports.

Unprofessional conduct

This refers to behaviour that falls short of the standards, values and expectations of a profession or workplace. It might involve a poor attitude, unreliability, disrespect or a lack of commitment, undermining the quality of work, the working atmosphere or trust. In 2024, unprofessional conduct was reported 15 times, representing 12% of reports.

Aggression

Aggression includes emotional abuse, threats of physical violence, the use of aggression to pressure someone, or the use of violence with the intention of causing physical harm. It can take many forms: physical or digital, verbal or non-verbal, by phone or via apps. In 2024, aggression was reported 12 times, representing 9% of reports. In 5 cases this involved physical aggression; in 7 cases verbal and online aggression.

Intimidation

This behaviour is a form of manipulation aimed at influencing someone else's actions by instilling fear. It often involves a power imbalance and may cause psychological or physical harm. It can take different forms, including physical, verbal, written and online behaviour. In 2024, intimidation was reported 13 times, representing 10% of reports.

Sexual violence

Sexual violence is an umbrella term for any sexual act a person is forced to carry out, endure or experience, including sexual assault, rape, sexual abuse or exploitation, or online abuse. In the reports, a distinction is made between physical sexual violence, such as (attempted) assault, rape or other physical contact, and non-physical sexual violence, such as verbal or online sexually inappropriate behaviour (including non-verbal behaviour such as sending unwanted images). More information can be found on the UM website on sexual safety. In 2024, sexual violence was reported 25 times, representing 20% of reports. In 15 cases this concerned physical sexual violence; in 10 cases, online sexual violence.

Inappropriate behaviour

Reports that do not fall under any of the other categories, but nevertheless do not align with accepted standards of conduct, are classified at UM as inappropriate behaviour. The nature of a report is not always clear-cut and often involves a combination of factors. In 2024, inappropriate behaviour was reported 10 times, representing 8% of reports.

Bullying

Bullying refers to repeated, intentional behaviour that causes harm, often carried out by an individual or group in a position of power relative to a more vulnerable person. It can take physical, verbal, social or digital forms and may result in psychological, social or physical harm. In 2024, bullying was reported 4 times, representing 3% of reports.

Concerning behaviour

This category refers to behaviour that is difficult for others to interpret, may appear confused, cause disruption or pose a potential risk to the person concerned or to others. It is often linked to underlying issues such as debt, addiction or mental health problems, where someone is losing their grip on everyday life. In 2024, concerning behaviour was reported 4 times, representing 3% of reports. In addition, several requests were received for advice on how to handle situations involving concerning behaviour, varying in complexity.

Discrimination and racism

This includes treating people unequally, disadvantaging or excluding them on the basis of personal characteristics that are not relevant to the situation, such as race, gender, religion, disability or sexual orientation. In 2024, discrimination and racism were reported 6 times, representing 5% of reports.

Other reports (not related to social safety)

In 2024, 23 reports were not related to social safety, representing 18% of reports. In 11 of these cases, there was nevertheless a logical reason for contacting a confidential adviser. These reporting parties were referred to the relevant support services. See also Section 3.4, 'Follow-up.'

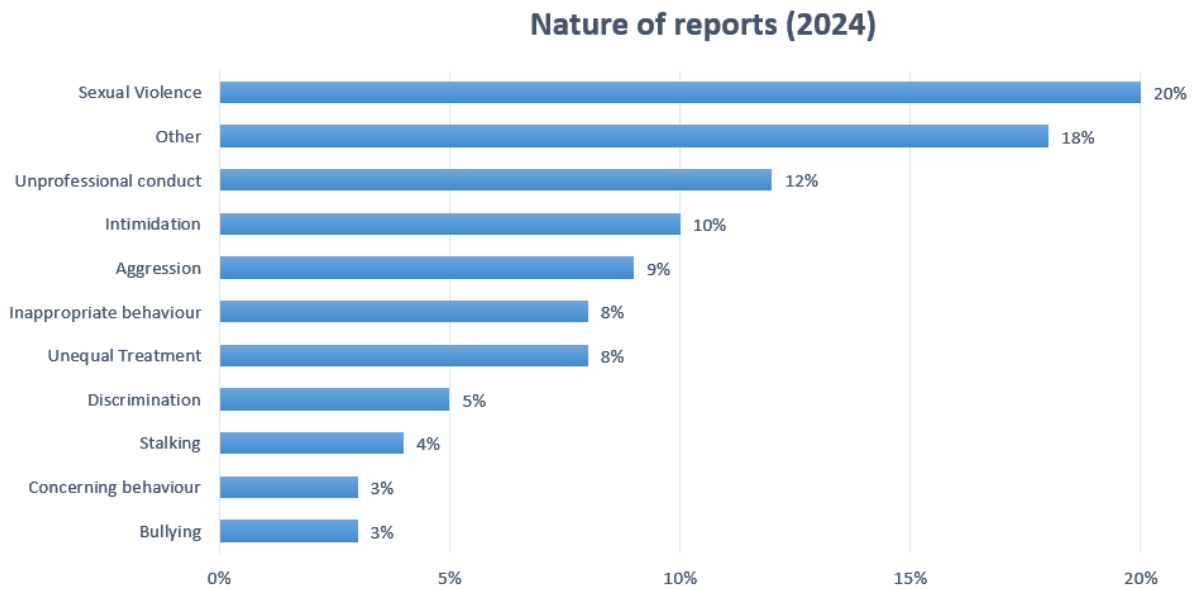


Figure 2. Nature of the reports in 2024: category breakdown

3.4 Follow-up

Reporting parties approach the Social Safety Team with different expectations and needs. Some simply want to share their story, seek advice or talk things through with someone. Others only want their report logged, for example in case the behaviour happens again or similar situations arise with others. Some want concrete action to be taken, in which case they are mainly looking to explore the possible routes and procedures, and to receive guidance and support along the way.

Reporting parties who do not (yet) want to take direct action have a range of reasons. Often they still require professional follow-up, for example in the form of a referral or further discussions. Because circumstances vary widely, follow-up differs from case to case and cannot be captured in a fixed protocol.

Where needed, students are referred onwards. Within the university, this mainly involves referrals to UM psychologists, study advisers or student deans. External organisations that may be involved or contacted include the police, Victim Support Netherlands, the Sexual Assault Centre and Discriminatie.nl.

For clarity, the follow-up handling of reports has been divided into seven categories, explained below. Figure 3 shows the percentages for each category.

Registration

In 16% of cases, reporting parties only wanted to share their story and requested no further action. In some of these cases, they chose to report the situation and the defendant so that, if the behaviour were repeated or multiple reports were made about the same person, action could be taken more effectively. Reasons for not pursuing follow-up varied. Some feared being identifiable or worried about reprisals or possible consequences for their own reputation, studies or social circle. In a number of cases, reporting parties were concerned about the potential consequences for the defendant.

Advice

In 24% of reports, the reporting party requested advice only. This included people who wanted to handle the matter themselves without the confidential adviser becoming involved. It also included people who did not wish to escalate immediately, but first wanted greater clarity on the possible routes, procedures and processes. These conversations focus on the pros and cons of taking – or not taking – next steps, so the reporting party can make an informed decision about how to proceed.

Informal intervention

In 20% of reports, an informal intervention was used. This usually involves facilitating a discussion between the reporting party and the defendant, sometimes supported by a facilitator, manager, colleague (e.g. from People & Development) or (vice) dean. It can also involve a decision table. In most cases, reporting parties appreciated the confidential adviser being present to offer support and act as an observer.

Organising an intervention requires careful preparation and coordination. This includes scheduling the meeting, involving the right people (e.g. a facilitator, manager or (vice) dean) and preparing the reporting party. During this preparation, possible scenarios are discussed, such as the defendant being unwilling to engage or shifting responsibility onto the reporting party. Afterwards, a debriefing is held to reflect on the discussion, the reporting party's experience and whether the matter can be considered resolved.

Referral

In 15% of reports, the reporting party was referred to another service or contact point. In most cases this involved internal UM services, such as the CCP, the ombuds officer, student deans, study advisers or UM psychologists. These reports did not require direct action by the confidential adviser, but were clearly connected to the initial report. Some reporting parties, for instance, first needed support or psychological help before they could decide whether to proceed. This category also includes reports relating to political issues, concerning behaviour or, in one case, a missing student.

Guidance

In 15% of reports, either the reporting party or the defendant needed ongoing guidance and follow-up. Some reporting parties wanted to work towards a solution directly with the defendant, while others needed several discussions before deciding which steps to take, with or without the involvement of the confidential adviser. Sometimes they also consult others, such as friends or family, which can lengthen the process. In some cases, reporting parties do not actively pursue a solution but keep the confidential adviser updated as the situation develops.

Formal complaint

In 1% of reports, a formal complaint was submitted via the Complaints Service Point (CSP) and taken up for further handling.

Other

In 9% of reports, no action by the Social Safety Team was required. These reports were not related to social safety, for example cases for the Examination Board or reports from members of the public. A scheduled appointment that did not take place is also included in this category.

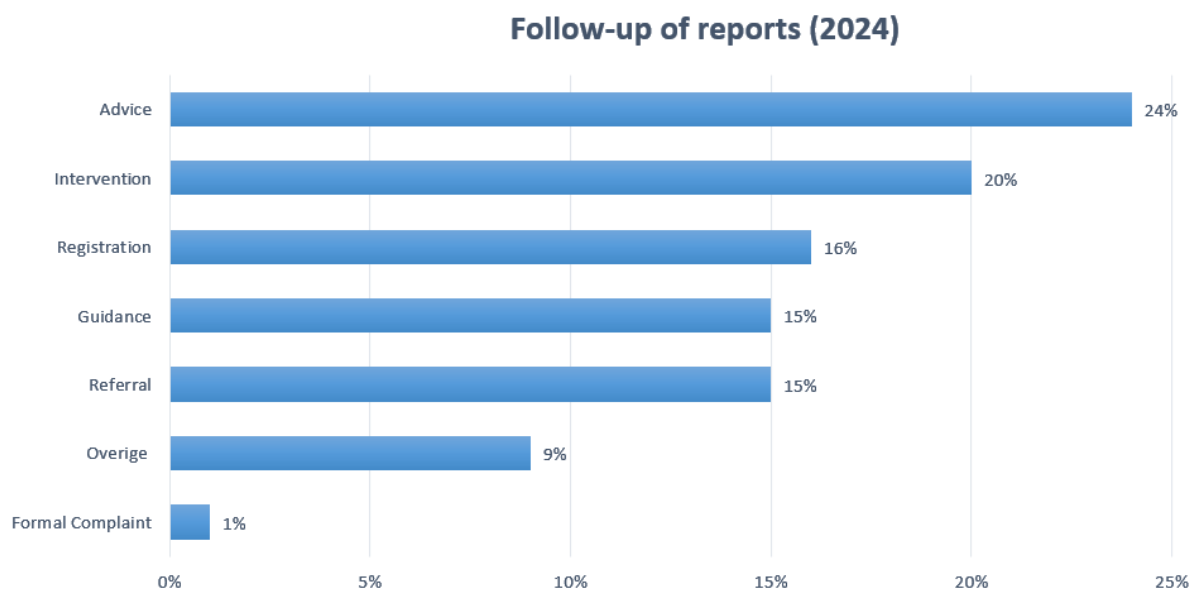


Figure 3. Types of follow-up

4. Analysis and recommendations

4 Analysis and recommendations

This chapter analyses the reports received by the Social Safety Team and sets out recommendations to further strengthen social safety and, in doing so, student wellbeing.

4.1 Findings

In 2024, the Social Safety Team received a total of 127 reports, although the true number is likely higher. Due to changes within the team, not all reports were fully accessible, and only those submitted directly to the Social Safety Team were recorded. It is known that reports of undesirable behaviour are also made through other channels, such as study advisers or UM psychologists, but these do not yet consistently reach the team.

The number of reports recorded in 2024 is in line with, or slightly higher than, those at comparable higher education institutions, such as Vista College, Zuyd University of Applied Sciences and the Open University in Limburg. This is supported by annual reports from other Dutch universities, including the University of Amsterdam, VU Amsterdam, Utrecht University, Radboud University, the Eindhoven University of Technology and the University of Groningen. At the same time, the number of reports received by UM is likely not yet a fully representative reflection of the findings emerging from earlier studies and student surveys. With the new team structure and continued efforts to improve visibility in the coming years, the Social Safety Team expects the number of reports to gradually align with wider societal developments and the growing willingness to report undesirable behaviour.

4.2 *Points of attention for the Social Safety Team*

Accuracy of reporting figures

Because reports are handled under strict confidentiality, it is not always clear in cases involving both students and staff whether a report is logged in both registration systems. This may vary from case to case. For example, when a student reports a staff member, it is not always clear whether the report is recorded by both the Social Safety Team and the Concerns & Complaints Point. It would be useful to explore how these registration processes can be better aligned. In doing so, it will be important to consider whether double registration is helpful or instead creates ambiguity in the figures. It should also be assessed whether it is practically feasible to record such reports systematically in both systems.

Increasing the team's visibility

Awareness of social safety among students is increasing noticeably, but the threshold for reporting remains. Students still experience barriers to taking follow-up action, including concerns about possible consequences or a desire to resolve situations themselves first. Uncertainty about boundaries and consent also arises regularly, sometimes in combination with substance use. This underlines the importance of a low-threshold reporting point, clear information and communication, transparent procedures, and trust in both the follow-up process and the confidentiality of reports.

Improving the visibility of the Social Safety Team, and strengthening alignment and collaboration with UM's wider support structures, remains a key theme and will play a central role in the team's reorganisation. The appointment of a support officer, planned for the final quarter of 2025, will help create a clearer profile and improve the accessibility of the Social Safety Team for both students and staff.

The Social Safety Team is also continuing to work actively on increasing diversity within the team. While this has not yet been achieved, it remains a key priority. A wider range of backgrounds and perspectives makes it easier for students to find a confidential adviser with whom they feel seen and safe, lowering the threshold to seek support. By maintaining this focus, the Social Safety Team aims to further strengthen the accessibility and effectiveness of the social safety support structure and to build long-term trust in the support it provides.

4.3 Recommendations for the Executive Board

Strengthening support for students during the reporting process

We note that, unlike staff, students are less familiar with the university's internal structure, such as formal points of contact, line managers and available support channels. Although students can use several routes to submit a complaint, when social safety is at stake – whether between students or in situations involving staff – they often experience a higher threshold to taking next steps. One reason is that the internal hierarchical structure (roles such as mentor, programme director, department chair and managing director) is less transparent to students.

Moreover, the confidential adviser's primary role is to act as a sounding board, with responsibility for taking action ultimately lying with the reporting party. In practice, however, students can lose track of what to do or simply do not know where to begin. As a result, even serious reports are sometimes not pursued.

To prevent students from disengaging because the procedures are unfamiliar or because they have to organise too many steps themselves, confidential advisers need timely access to basic information, such as the relevant manager or contact person. This would allow us to guide students more effectively without taking on an administrative or operational role. (See also Section 3.4, 'Follow-up,' under 'Informal intervention.')

For this reason, a request has been made to appoint a designated contact person who has access to the relevant centralised systems within the university. At the request of the Social Safety Team, this person can provide the information needed to make the reporting and intervention process more manageable and accessible for students, while keeping the confidential adviser's role clear and sustainable.

Systematic use of facilitators

The team also sees a need for experienced facilitators who can be called in for informal discussions between the parties involved. At present, a suitable facilitator is sought on a case-by-case basis, which can lead to delays and inconsistency in how reports are handled. A more permanent structure would contribute to faster, more careful and more consistent follow-up. Given the sensitivity of these situations, it is important that facilitators have experience and expertise in dealing with social safety issues and inappropriate behaviour.

4.4 UM regulations

Policy and regulations

A socially safe organisation needs clear, up-to-date policy frameworks. In 2024, UM began revising two key regulations: the Complaints Procedure and the Code of Conduct on Integrity. Both processes are still in the early stages and have not yet resulted in final versions. The Social Safety Team provided input to the working group responsible for revising the Code of Conduct.

In 2023, the Ombuds Officer's Regulations and Charter were extended to include students and the new decision-making process came into effect. As a result, since January 2024 the ombuds officer has also been available to students.

In addition, UM does not yet have an established Protocol for Concerning Behaviour. Its development was planned for 2024, but has not yet been completed.

Recommendations

The Social Safety Team recommends prioritising the following actions in 2025:

- Completing and implementing the new Code of Conduct on Integrity, replacing the current Code of Conduct and Rules of Conduct for students.
- Completing and implementing the Regulations on Reporting and Handling Inappropriate Behaviour (including sexual harassment, aggression, violence, bullying and discrimination) for staff and students.
- Developing and implementing a Protocol for Concerning Behaviour, so that cases involving heightened risks are handled consistently and carefully.
- Making an up-to-date organisational chart available to confidential advisers to promote efficiency and due care in the informal follow-up of reports.
- Aligning with the CCP and the Executive Board on optimising report registration, including safeguarding consistency across reporting points and registration systems.
- Keeping a close eye on whether roles and responsibilities within the team need further clarification or adjustment to improve service delivery and efficiency, and exploring ways to increase diversity within the team to improve accessibility for different groups of students.
- Safeguarding the resources needed to strengthen visibility, communication, information provision, awareness-raising and infrastructure, as well as collaboration with internal and external partners.
- Encouraging and supporting further development and professionalisation through training, peer consultation and ongoing promotion of expertise.

4.5 Conclusion

In 2024, the Social Safety Team received 127 reports. This number is broadly in line with other Dutch universities* and suggest that students are already finding their way to the team reasonably well. A substantial share of these reports concerned sexual violence, unprofessional conduct and intimidation, underlining the ongoing need for careful, expert guidance and support in the area of social safety.

In the year ahead, the Social Safety Team will focus on embedding the team more firmly within the university, improving internal information provision, enhancing visibility, further professionalising team members and safeguarding service quality. To this end, potential improvements in work processes, collaboration and capacity will be explored in more detail. Concrete steps include organising peer consultation more systematically and on a broader scale (e.g. with confidential advisers from other Dutch universities), strengthening expertise through further training in line with the guidelines of the National Association of Confidential Advisers (LVV), and improving internal collaboration and coordination with the CCP and other relevant partners.

Through these steps, the Social Safety Team aims to deliver on its objectives: greater professionalism, visibility and accessibility, and the safeguarding and continuous development of high-quality guidance and services. Confidentiality, accessibility, reliability, transparency and expertise will remain its core values.

** Based on the 2024 annual reports of other Dutch universities, as UM's own report only became available at a later stage.*

