

ABOUT THIS MANIFESTO

Sexual violence is a human rights violation. The consequences are serious and often permanent. 11% of female students in the Netherlands experience rape during their time at university, and 1% of male students. 67% of them suffer from psychological, sexual, physical or social problems as a result.

Amnesty International calls on higher education institutions to take responsibility in countering sexual violence. Student life is and should be a key moment in sexual development and exploration, for which our university communities should provide a safe environment. Together we can build a support structure and culture in which sex is based on mutual, voluntary, ongoing, enthusiastic and freely given consent.

There is work to be done. The majority of students indicate that regarding sexual violence and rape, they do not know where to find information (65%), find help (61%), and where to file a report (64%) within their higher education institution. Most students do not turn to their institution for help (3%), even when an instance of sexual violence has a direct impact on their academic performance (14%).

It is also time to establish a culture of consent. 68% of male students believe their sexual partner should say 'no' if they do not want to have sex. It should be apparent for everyone that only 'yes' means 'yes', as all sex should be consent-based according to Human Rights treaties and standards.

We ask you to commit to human rights by making a promise to better protect our university communities against sexual violence. This manifesto outlines steps toward better prevention, support and policy.

PICTURING WHAT OUR UNIVERSITY COULD BE LIKE

#Let'sTalkAboutYES at university – a manifesto –

THE COMMUNITY

At this university, all members of the community feel responsible for the prevention of sexual violence and are knowledgeable and confident in addressing the issue. We strive for a university community where every member feels safe on campus, at home, at their student association and around town. Together, this is how we create a culture where consent is normalized.

STUDENTS

All students have learnt the facts and myths about rape and consent, including the social contexts and power dynamics in which sexual violence frequently occurs. They have followed an evidence-based introductory workshop such as bystander training, which has taught them how to recognize and respond to undesired sexual advances. They have further access to evidence-based gender transformative workshops that have been shown to significantly reduce the likelihood of experiencing or perpetrating sexual violence. As a result of this, all students understand their role in establishing a culture of consent and feel empowered to stop the perpetuation of a culture that tolerates sexual violence.

STAFF

Confidentiality persons and student psychologists in particular have been trained in sexual trauma intervention. They can adequately offer primary support to students who have experienced sexual violence and refer them to specialists. Moreover, teaching staff know how to respond to disclosures of sexual violence in a supporting manner. Additionally, when teaching staff teach about topics that include references to sexual violence they do so in a trauma sensitive manner, which is how they contribute to a culture of consent.

POLICY

The university's code of conduct includes a chapter on sexual violence and inappropriate sexual behaviour. There is a clear and publicly available protocol on how the university deals with reports of sexual violence. Additionally, the university facilitates ongoing awareness campaigns that shape and underscore the university's values and protocols regarding the prevention and after-care of sexual violence. Moreover, the university informs all incoming students on the law concerning this topic.

The internal report and complaint procedure guarantees the safety and well-being of students and staff who have experienced sexual violence. It ensures everyone involved in the procedure knows the facts and myths regarding sexual violence and victim blaming. Moreover, the procedure ensures that students have access to support in filing an effective and timely police report.

The university thoroughly and regularly evaluates all of the above and looks at best practices from higher education across the world regarding sexual violence reduction.

OUR PROMISE

Our higher education institution is committed to countering sexual violence. We want everyone in our educational community to feel responsible for building and promoting a culture in which sex is based on equality and consent. As an institution, we ensure that ...

1. each student has access to and is strongly encouraged to participate in an appropriate evidence-based introductory workshop such as bystander training, and has access to additional evidence-based gender transformative workshops that have been demonstrated to reduce sexual violence.
2. every student is well-informed about our support services and reporting procedures, our code of conduct, and the law regarding sexual violence. We do this through online and offline social awareness campaigns. These campaigns preferably involve external partners who provide support to students and staff who have experienced sexual violence.
3. key staff who frequently interact with students are trained in dealing with topics of sexual violence in a trauma-sensitive manner. We also train staff in dealing with disclosures and the effective referral of students and colleagues who have experienced sexual violence.
4. our reporting and complaints procedure is accessible to the whole university community. It is transparent and provides clarity and detail, so that students and staff who have experienced sexual violence know exactly what to expect from a procedure. This information is easy to find.
5. everyone who has a part in the reporting and complaints procedure, from confidentiality persons to members of the external complaints committee, will have appropriate training to ensure their actions do not perpetuate harmful rape myths. They are also aware of criminal legislation regarding rape and sexual violence. This is how we ensure the reporting and complaints procedure is trauma sensitive.
6. we involve students in the further development and implementation of this promise.

Signature institution