



**University
of the Arts
The Hague**

Code of Conduct

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Manifesto

We represent the arts, music and dance. We stand for what the arts bring to our lives, such as beauty, comfort, joy, confrontation, and emotion. The arts help us to explore new paths, to offer alternatives, to reflect on what is now and what might be in the future. The arts reveal and enrich. The arts give meaning to the world and we believe art to be of existential relevance.

We are mindful of the unique needs and challenges of art, music and dance education. Our education is personal, the topics we deal with are emotional and the causes we pursue are existential. We play, we touch, we express. This all makes us vulnerable. We therefore continuously strive to create an environment that simultaneously nurtures learning opportunities, full engagement and social safety.

Our main focus is on fostering the growth and development of individual students, student groups and employees. While maintaining that focus we talk and listen to each other. We try to be understanding and empathetic. We remain self-aware and are self-critical. We learn to ask questions, express our opinions with nuance and always remain open to the possibility that we might not be 'right'. We try to see everything as a possibility to learn. We are caring and considerate in our dealings with one another.

We reject a profession that excludes, refuses to change or is unhealthy or unkind to the people working in it. We will not treat students as though they are working in the 'tough world' of the arts, telling them to 'get used to it' or advising them to 'prepare yourself for it now'. The purpose of art is to bring about change. To inspire. To provoke. To discover the unknown. To demonstrate the desirable. We can and shall bring change to every discipline that is not inclusive, safe or healthy through the combined strength of our creativity and passion. We consider a school to be the best place to start preparing and practising for that.

Our institute is a place to learn, play, experiment, work and discover. We create the room for this through our behaviour, by keeping an open mind and recognising that everyone has something to contribute, even if we don't immediately understand what it might be. We strive to be inquisitive, curious and supportive of each other. We believe in freedom of expression and are willing to accept the responsibility that comes with this freedom.

This Code of Conduct can be a tool and a resource to guide us on that path. It can support the self-awareness, humility and grace needed to understand the effect our behaviour has on each other and the impact it has on the environment we create together every day.

At the same time, we accept that there are certain red lines. We also accept that there are no legitimate reasons for inappropriate, or even unlawful, behaviour. At the same time, we remain curious about and look into possible patterns of (systemic) injustice, abuse or justified dissatisfaction and act to unravel and deconstruct such patterns.

We acknowledge that we will all at some time encounter situations where we will not yet have the skills needed to do the right thing. Here we support each other and never cease to seek new knowledge and training that takes us back on course.

As a University of the Arts, we search for meaning. In our pursuit of meaning, we want to be inspired and seek to inspire each other. Through our behaviour and our belief in art, we work closely together in striving to facilitate positive change within our own institute, and in society at large.

This code is written from the perspective of “we”. We, a community of individuals, students, staff, teachers, management, student groups, different nationalities, races, genders and generations.

By using “we”, we do not disregard you as an individual and your own personal responsibilities. On the contrary. By using “we”, we hope to encourage and strengthen our shared responsibilities as a member, whatever your role, who is part of the community of the University of the Arts.

2.1 LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Guiding ideas and principles

The learning environment in its broadest sense encompasses all aspects and types of formal and informal education and activities. We acknowledge that the learning environment is constantly evolving, growing and changing shape every day. We support each other in this endeavour and are willing to re/de learn on a constant basis.

We recognise that in most cases a safe learning environment is an engaging one. One where everyone feels safe enough to express themselves clearly and honestly, be vulnerable and display and address their insecurities. A safe environment is also one where we can celebrate, feel joy and connection without crossing boundaries or becoming unprofessional. As we strive for a safe environment, we keep equal priority on the learning environment being engaging for all involved. In rare cases, the two priorities might be at odds with each other. When this happens, we do everything we can to address the situation as learning groups, together.

Our shared responsibilities

Whatever our role is in the University of the Arts, we acknowledge that our actions, words and decisions have consequences and can affect not only those around us, but also the learning environment as a whole.

Every day we work to build a culture that provides opportunities for learning and personal development through questioning, listening, (re)searching, making mistakes, showing vulnerability and accepting there are things we don't know yet.

We support our vision by:

- encouraging behaviour that supports the creation of a safe and engaging learning environment;
- playing an active role in the continued improvement of the learning environment
- communicating about the learning environment as an entity that we create together
- accepting that we can all have a different definition of success
- not putting undue pressure on ourselves or others for any reason
- being willing to change systems and/or long-held opinions in the face of societal change
- seeking help from the appropriate persons/bodies in resolving issues when they arise

2.2 A DIVERSE AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Guiding ideas and principles

We are a diverse and international community. This context requires specific care when it comes to our behaviour. We are committed to increasing diversity & inclusion at every level and improving our behaviour and communication to reflect that commitment. We endeavour to understand different cultures, backgrounds, political beliefs and identities. We embrace diversity as something to celebrate, learn from and that contributes to the quality of our art.

Our shared responsibilities

When it comes to systemic issues, such as racism, we do not assume that the University of the Arts is free from this. We remain open to the possibility of having been discriminatory and recognise that as an institution we are part of a society with flaws and injustices. We do not pretend to be above the fray and, whenever possible, take steps to tackle injustice.

We foster a healthy and safe international environment by:

- keeping an open mind
- transforming criticism or accusations of potential discrimination, however painful or confrontational, into opportunities for growth of the individual(s), the group, the community and our institute as a whole
- conducting research, being willing to learn and improving and revising existing patterns of behaviour
- admitting our ignorance, flaws and/or vulnerabilities
- continuously improving our communication skills to reflect the needs of the community
- committing to acknowledging and promoting diversity and inclusion

2.3 COMMUNITY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Guiding ideas and principles

We believe in cooperation and collaboration, as well as the ambition of the individual. We want to inspire the growth of the individual whilst encouraging a shared responsibility to the community. We strive to make this a vibrant and multi-faceted community, in which each sub-culture and group is valued equally regardless of ethnicity, religion, nationality, social standing, etc. The individual can only thrive in a community that is supportive, just as the community can only thrive when the individual is an active part of it.

We believe that the growth of the individual and the community can happen in parallel and in harmony. However, the freedom of the individual and the needs of the community can very occasionally be at odds with each other. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression and is entitled to exercise this freedom. But it brings with it responsibilities, and potential consequences if it is misused. We feel a sense of responsibility towards our peers, colleagues, the learning environment, our relationships and the general well-being of the community. The personal growth of the individual must not come at the expense of others or of the community. We are always accountable for our role within the community.

Our shared responsibilities

Our growth as individuals is paramount for the success not only of the community and learning environment, but also of the University of the Arts as an institution and its reputation. Our individual journey is unique, but is only possible by virtue of the constant efforts of everyone in the community.

We support our vision by:

- acknowledging that education is as much individual as it is communal
- recognising our own agency and autonomy as well as those of others
- accepting that we as individuals also have a responsibility to the community
- not prioritising the growth and development of one individual or facet of the community over others
- acknowledging and supporting the minority voice

2.4 COMMUNICATION

Guiding ideas and principles

We believe in clear, honest and respectful communication. Accordingly, we treat our words, conduct, attitude and actions with the same care and curiosity as we treat our art. We practice the skill of listening. This will enable others to feel heard. As we speak to each other, we recognise that words have meaning and that statements and reactions carry weight and can have consequences.

We are not afraid to ask about or discuss another person's preferred communication style or platform. We make adjustments if necessary, while still allowing everyone to communicate in a way that fits their personality and identity. However, this should not be at the expense of another person or a group of people within our institute.

We encourage public debate and complaints through official channels and advisory bodies where a wish for anonymity can be upheld if so desired. Through this dialogue, we are able to provide feedback on the discussions and solutions to those concerned.

We strive to find open and practical solutions for any issues that may arise concerning communication by the University of the Arts, by an individual or a group within the University of the Arts, or by outside parties. We are committed to establishing clear lines of communication to the advisory bodies, committees or persons involved in the complaints and support systems, and regularly reviewing whether these avenues of conflict management are appropriate and function properly.

Our shared responsibilities

Should communication to or from ourselves result in conflict, disputes will be resolved through continued dialogue with the relevant support systems and bodies, however difficult this may be.

We support our vision by:

- being willing to engage in a discussion with others
- seeing all communication as an opportunity to learn
- being considerate in our choice of words
- remaining open to the possibility that the meaning we intended to convey was perceived differently by the recipient
- being understanding of the language and narrative of others, especially where they might differ from our own
- avoiding making assumptions
- not tolerating slander, libel, hate speech, calls for violence and all forms of speech, statements or communication that are or can generally be regarded as inappropriate, intimidating, hurtful or threatening
- respecting everyone's right to disconnect from work or study and not assuming that we should receive a response to our communications outside regular school or working hours

- using official supported channels for communication
- not making statements that will harm the reputation of the University of the Arts and its members, on social media or elsewhere

- ✓ *Instead of 'Yes, but ...', we will say 'Could you tell me more about that?'*
- ✓ *Instead of 'You have offended me', we will describe the effect particular behaviour, attitudes or statements have on our feelings.*
- ✓ *Instead of accusing, we will take responsibility for our own feelings and underlying needs.*
- ✓ *Instead of making demands for a final result or end product, we are open to discussion.*
- ✓ *Instead of saying we have never heard any complaints about something, we will show ourselves to be vulnerable and willing to learn.*

2.5 PROFESSIONALISM AND RELATIONSHIPS

Guiding ideas and principles

As a community we strive for healthy relationships that maintain professional boundaries and are based on mutual respect. Accordingly, we believe that while some boundaries are universal, many are fluid from day to day and from person to person.

- **Professional Distance**

We believe it is of the utmost importance that relationships within the community remain professional, especially between staff and students. We do not seek to encourage excessive formality, but rather the professional distance that is most effective for creating a safe and engaging learning environment and fostering the growth and development of individual students, groups of students and the community. We believe professional distance and kindness, humour and positive communication can go hand in hand.

- **Boundaries**

We acknowledge that each individual has the right to express their boundaries and to work and study within their limitations. We expect these boundaries to be respected by all. Where these boundaries create conflict amongst individuals or groups or affect the learning environment or education, steps will be taken to resolve the issue in a manner that does not adversely affect one party or the other.

- **Physical relationships**

We do not accept close friendships and intimate relationships between students and staff. We believe that the risk of abuse of power, manipulation, favouritism, conflict of interest, emotional and/or physical harm is too great to permit such relationships.

Relationships between students and staff and between two staff/teaching members should be reported to the respective Heads of Department and HR. Relationships between an adult and a minor or sexually transgressive behaviour towards a minor will always be reported to the police.

- **Proximity and physical touch**

Proximity, in both a physical and mental sense, is an important feature of art, music and dance education. There are certain departments where it is important and necessary to touch and/or be physically close to another person. This calls for awareness and alertness on the part of those who teach and guide students and pupils in ensuring that pupils and students feel safe and are confident enough to indicate their boundaries and consent.

We believe that an individual who feels uncomfortable after giving explicit consent has the right to withdraw their consent for any further physical contact.

- **Outside the University of the Arts**

Teachers and staff members are not permitted to invite individual students to their home or studio outside University of the Arts either to give private tuition or to work together. As a rule, they do not visit pupils or students in their homes. In exceptional circumstances, permission may be granted by the Head of Department or the Director of Education.

We support our vision by:

- recognising the existence of power dynamics, for example between students and teaching staff who are involved in assessments
- avoiding (perceptions of) favouritism at all times
- not assuming worth or lack of worth, based on titles, former titles, experience or background
- respecting our own boundaries and those of others
- not accepting inappropriate or sexual touching or intimidation between two or more individuals. Such conduct may be followed by disciplinary measures or even be reported to the police.
- committing to voice our concerns should we be affected by improper conduct or see that someone else is acting against the guiding principles and shared values of the University of the Arts

2.6 BEHAVIOUR

Guiding ideas and principles

Behaviour is a significant factor in creating the conditions that constitute an engaging learning environment. We endeavour to provide a learning and work environment in which we are mindful of how our own behaviour affects this environment and everyone in the institution.

We encourage behaviour that is supportive of each other and amplifies voices. We seek empathic and open-minded behaviour that is humble and inquisitive and are committed to acknowledging and correcting inappropriate behaviour.

We behave in a way that shows we are here to learn. We balance our identity as artists, designers, musicians and dancers with our identity as teacher, student or inquisitive colleagues. We behave and lead in a way that befits a learning institution.

We adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards transgressive behaviour, whether it occurs in person or online. Such behaviour includes, but is not limited to, violence, sexually transgressive behaviour, bullying, coercion, violence, threats, exclusion, discrimination, or racism.

We do not accept behaviour that causes or threatens to cause physical damage to any person, the learning environment or the physical or mental development or well-being of an individual. We do not accept behaviour from students, staff members or teachers that intentionally harms the reputation of the University of the Arts, either online or in person

Our shared responsibilities

We make responsible choices and do not allow ourselves or others to act in a way that harms the learning/work environment. We watch out for each other and help each other avoid unsafe conditions or behaviours.

We support our vision by:

- treating each other with dignity and respect
- dealing with conflict through reason and negotiation
- regularly analysing our behaviour to understand our impact on the learning environment and our relationships
- asking for feedback (as a teacher or tutor from your students, for example) on how our behaviour impacts on other people
- seeking help, direction, guidance, instruction and better information
- not retaliating against someone who has voiced a concern
- not manipulating or tricking people into desired outcomes for our own benefit
- reporting any transgressive or unwanted behaviour we encounter

2.7 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Guiding ideas and principles

We believe that there is room for discussion in every conflict. The basic premise for conflict management is that we will always endeavour to resolve a conflict in such a way as to preserve a dignified and workable relationship between the individuals concerned.

We acknowledge that all conflict, whether perceived or real, is legitimate and therefore guarantee a process of conflict resolution that does not place the burden of guilt on one party.

We support peaceful communication. We recognise that communication and maintaining respectful relationships takes practice and effort. If we fall, and we will, we will get back up again. We do not need to hide or avoid conflicts. Every (potential) conflict embodies information that can help us to make progress and improve ourselves and our artistic expression. We are therefore willing to acknowledge and explore our patterns of defensive behaviour as a logical element of our unique personal narrative. We are committed to constantly learning from this and improving our behaviour accordingly.

Complaints of inappropriate behaviour can be made anonymously to protect us from possible intimidation or corrupted power dynamics. That being said, if at all possible, we discourage both informal and formal avenues of conflict management being followed anonymously. In this way, we establish mutual trust and learn to build a safer and more friendly learning environment. In rare instances, conflicts might have to be settled according to the principle of 'we agree to disagree'.

Our shared responsibilities

Whatever our role in the institution, our voice has equal weight when it comes to discussions or conflict. We assume that everyone has good intentions, but where misguided behaviour leads to conflict we are all responsible restoring harmony to our community.

We support our vision by:

- doing everything possible to prevent behaviour that leads to conflict
- reporting and endeavouring to resolve any conflict to which we are party
- relying on our moral compass and common ethical standards

3. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

While this Code of Conduct is the reference document for desired and unwanted behaviour within the University of the Arts The Hague, its mere existence will not compel anyone to behave in a particular way.

This code will therefore be disseminated within the community, and from there we invite everybody to debate and interpret it with your colleagues and peers and within learning groups and working groups.

We are aware that society shifts and changes and that accordingly our thoughts, actions and expected behaviours might also need to change. While we believe this code is complete, should you feel there are any omissions or additions or changes that would improve it, we hope to hear from you.

*Decision taken by the Executive Board dated 28th June 2022
after the University Council's positive advice on 27th June 2022*