

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR A POSITIVE AND PRODUCTIVE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The VUB is a warm and open university, rooted in the principle of Free Research. Free research guarantees and encourages critical free thinking – free from dogma – and free judgement based on rational facts and arguments. At the same time, the VUB is a university where the humanistic values of human dignity, equality and solidarity are central. At the VUB, everyone is given the space to develop themselves, to ask questions, to doubt and to grow. That freedom always goes hand in hand with respect for others and care for the community.

A positive learning environment is created when we consciously exercise that freedom, when we are open to other perspectives and when we actively contribute to an atmosphere of trust, safety and cooperation. In order to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts and to be able to truly learn from and with each other, it is important that we clarify our expectations of each other.

We live in an open society in which people with different cultural, social, gender, philosophical and other identities inevitably differ in their customs, ideas and opinions. This can be particularly enriching. The university offers a great opportunity to learn to live together and work on connectedness. However, this requires *genuine* open encounters in which thoughts can be compared, critical awareness of one's own views can be sharpened, and reasoning skills can be practised in order to weigh up, judge and decide on the basis of facts. The intersection of different dimensions of diversity can create areas of tension, for example between respect for gender equality and religious beliefs. In such areas of tension, we are once again guided by respect for everyone's human dignity and freedom when formulating guidelines.

Society, families and often individual students themselves make a significant financial effort to enable study in (higher) education. It is our joint responsibility as a university community to ensure that these investments yield the best possible return. Positive engagement, a safe classroom environment, structure and as few distractions as possible are important for learning. Everyone in the classroom is jointly responsible for this. This code of conduct provides guidelines for achieving these basic conditions. All these rules regarding positive interaction apply to both teachers and students. For teachers, these rules are laid down in the employment regulations. For students, we apply the guidelines set out in this document.

1. Commitment and responsibility for academic success

Everyone takes responsibility for contributing to the best possible learning conditions for themselves and their fellow students during learning activities and is committed to achieving the intended learning outcomes.

2. Respect for diversity of opinion

No one expresses disrespect during teaching activities with regard to the opinions, backgrounds and identities of teachers and fellow students. This does not mean that opinions are on an equal footing with scientific insights. Discrimination, homophobia, racism, sexism and other forms of intolerance are not tolerated under any circumstances.

Students may have issues with certain course material due to their own beliefs, for example political or religious. If these are covered during mandatory teaching activities, these beliefs do not exempt the student from mandatory participation. Under no circumstances can these beliefs be invoked during assessments to avoid having to demonstrate competences in relation to that course material.

Hateful, discriminatory or derogatory language is not permitted, nor is preventing the smooth running of teaching activities on subjects that are sensitive to some people.

If a subject is too emotionally charged and triggering due to traumatic experiences, the student can report this to the teacher.

3. Collaboration

Collaboration is an essential part of the academic experience; it is a learning activity that contributes to the development of cooperation and respect for diversity of opinion. Students may not refuse to collaborate with certain fellow students on the basis of personal prejudices.

4. Respect for infrastructure and other property

Everyone treats the infrastructure and properties of the VUB with care. The facilities on campus are only used for their intended purposes. Everyone helps to keep our campuses clean.

5. Use of resources

Everyone remains sober during class activities, internships or other education-related and supporting activities. It is not permitted to be under the influence of alcohol, drugs, improper use of medication or other substances that may interfere with mental or motor functions. If it is determined that someone is under the influence, that person will be required to leave the activity.

6. Clothing and appearance

Students with different philosophical or religious beliefs are welcome at the VUB, as are outward signs of these beliefs, such as clothing or jewellery. Self-expression, cultural expression and religious expression in clothing and appearance are permitted within the appropriate context. In accordance with the

law, face-covering clothing is not permitted for reasons of identifiability. However, in situations where dress codes are functionally necessary for safety and hygiene reasons (e.g. safety clothing in laboratories, or dress codes to prevent infectious diseases in medical fields) or for official representations (e.g. internships, external presentations, etc.), we expect students to comply with these specific dress codes.

7. Safe space

The VUB strives to be a community in which everyone feels safe, respected and valued. No form of undesirable transgressive behaviour will be tolerated.

We have an accessible system of YANA (You Are Not Alone) welfare actors, confidential advisors and reporting procedures for everyone within the VUB community. This system offers support to anyone who has experienced or witnessed undesirable transgressive behaviour within the context of the VUB, takes all reports of undesirable behaviour seriously and treats them confidentially and appropriately.