

VUB INITIATION FRAMEWORK

SAFETY AND CONDUCT RULES AT PLEDGE
ACTIVITIES

ACADEMIC YEAR 2026 - 2027

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Context

Student life and student folklore have been closely connected for centuries. Student folklore aims to bring students into contact with one another and with older generations, thereby fostering friendships. In recent years, however, student folklore has come under pressure, both internally and externally, as a result of several regrettable incidents.

For this reason, the initiating student organisations, the Student Council and VUB decided to come together to reflect on the current practice of student folklore and the issues surrounding it. The result is this initiation framework, which aims to prevent undesirable behaviour during student initiation activities and to create a safe environment for all participants, without detracting from folklore traditions.

The student organisations are committed to bringing the initiation framework to the attention of their members and to signing it on an annual basis. By doing so, the organisations demonstrate that they wish to maintain student folklore in harmony with the whole VUB community.

Definitions

Pledge (schacht)	A student who joins a student organisation with the aim of becoming a fellow member, but who has not yet completed the full student initiation programme.
Student initiation activity	An activity organised for pledges, at which attendance may or may not be obligatory and at which they have to carry out a task as part of the programme leading to the status of fellow member, such as a student tour, pre-initiation, initiation, hat initiation, post-initiation activities and cantus. This is a non-exhaustive list.
(post)initiation	A student initiation activity in which students are initiated in the folklore part of a student organisation.
Pledge sale (schachtenverkoop)	An activity where a bid is made for a student - in kind (e.g. alcohol) or with drink vouchers, money etc. – with the expectation of a gesture in return by the student.
Person responsible for initiation	A committee member who is jointly or individually responsible for organising a student initiation activity and who assumes ultimate responsibility for it. The person responsible for initiation can never be the trusted person.
Intoxicating substances	Substances that affect judgement, such as alcohol, drugs, certain medicines (e.g. sleeping pills and tranquillisers), etc.
Togas	The umbrella term for Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and a third committee member, such as the person responsible for folklore, the master of initiation or cantor.
Schachtenkot (Demarcated zone)	A demarcated zone during an initiation that acts as a safe space for students.
Standard glass	A standard glass is equivalent to 25 cl of beer with an alcohol content of 5%.

Abbreviations

BOS	Begeleidingsorgaan Schachtenactiviteiten (Supervisory Body for Student Initiation Activities)
BSGgtgv	Brussels Studentengenootschap – geen taal, geen vrijheid (Brussels Student Organisation – no language, no freedom -)

General

Article 1 Values and code of conduct

§ 1 All organisations that are active on VUB campuses, organise activities on VUB campuses and/or make use of VUB facilities always adhere to this framework and respect internal and external legislation.

§ 2 In accordance with the VUB Code of Conduct, all students are expected to behave responsibly in their capacity as members of the VUB community, both on and off the VUB campuses. They treat one another with respect and show consideration for each other's mental and physical well-being. This means that they respect each other's boundaries and dignity. They respect everyone's private life and do not intrude upon it any further than is functionally necessary. They bear in mind that boundaries are individual and vary from person to person, and that personal perception is an important factor in how boundary-crossing behaviour is experienced.

Respect also means that they use the name, form of address and pronouns that a person themselves prefers.

Any form of inappropriate behaviour – bullying, verbal and physical violence, racism and sexual misconduct – and discrimination or disadvantage based on gender, financial means, marital status, political beliefs, trade union affiliation, language, socio-economic status, class, philosophy of life, religion, nationality, skin colour, ethnicity and migration background, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, physical and mental abilities and disabilities – will not be tolerated. This applies to communication in person or via images, to actions or behaviour, including online, and both directly and indirectly.

Article 2 Members

§ 1 The organisation informs all members about this initiation framework in writing and sets the acceptance of it as a condition for membership.¹

§ 2 Participation in student initiation activities may never be set as a condition for membership.

Rights and obligations

Article 3 Viewing the initiation framework

§ 1 The organisation informs the pledges about the content of the initiation framework. The pledges are entitled to access the initiation framework at any time if there is any doubt about the correctness of a specific task or action by the person(s) responsible for the initiation.

§ 2 A pledge who judges that a specific task or action of a person or persons responsible for initiation is in contravention of the initiation framework is entitled to contact the BOS at any time, maintaining anonymity where appropriate.

¹ This provision must be included in the statutes of the organisation.

Article 4 Withdrawal

§ 1 Any pledge can decide to no longer participate in a student initiation activity at any time. This decision will have no consequences for the pledge in question with the exception of the stopping of the student initiation programme and removal of the exclusive rights resulting from being initiated.²

§ 2 Every pledge also has the right to refuse to perform a specific task during a student initiation activity. In such a situation, the organisation will provide an alternative task if necessary, and that alternative task must never be a hidden sanction linked to the original task. If the pledge continues to refuse without providing clear justification for this, the organisation may decide to remove the pledge from the student initiation activity and possibly stop this person's student initiation programme.

§ 3 The organisation informs the pledge in advance in writing of the rights stated in paragraph 1 and 2 of this article.

Article 5 Storage of possessions

§ 1 Pledges have the right to safe storage of their personal possessions and valuables during student initiation activities. The organisation makes clear agreements with the pledges about this and provides a secure storage space. Pledges can never be forced to have possessions put into storage.

§ 2 An organisation is not liable for possible damage to a pledge's personal possessions if the pledge does not adhere to the agreements concerning storage or refuses to have possessions stored.

Article 6 Educational activities

The organisation organises the student initiation activities for periods which do not overlap with educational activities to the extent that this is possible.

Article 7 Information

§ 1 The organisation communicates the contact details of the internal trusted person/persons, the central trusted person of the BSGgtgv, the VUB Reporting Centre and the BOS to the pledges in writing.

§ 2 The organisation informs the pledge about the outline of the content and the course of the student initiation activities so that they can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate.

Article 8 Health conditions

§ 1 The pledge is strongly recommended to inform the organisation in person about medical issues which represent a real and preventable danger for specific tasks so that these can be taken into consideration during the student initiation activities or the planning of them.

§ 2 The organisation is justified in refusing a pledge entry to a student initiation activity if this student's state of health gives rise to too many risks. In such a situation, the organisation will endeavour to implement the activity or task so that the pledge can participate.

Article 9 Underage pledges

The organisation may only allow an underage pledge access to the initiation on receipt of written consent from the student's parent(s) or legal guardian. It must be possible to present the written consent on request.

² Access to initiations or to committee functions which are statutorily reserved for those who have been initiated for example.

Article 10 Exclusion of participants

The organisation may refuse to admit or exclude pledges and other participants from a student initiation activity if their behaviour, including behaviour outside the organisation's own activities, poses a risk to the safety, integrity or well-being of participants. This measure must be proportionate to the behaviour in question.

Forbidden practices

Article 11 Prohibition of hazardous products

§ 1 During student initiation activities it is prohibited to

- force pledges to eat or to drink;
- use live animals, carcasses, blood and slaughter waste, including fish waste. Slaughter waste is matter which is not suitable for human consumption following the slaughter of an animal or is not available in regular food retail commerce³;
- use human and/or animal waste (e.g. urine, faeces, vomit, etc.);
- offer food for consumption (that is past its use-by date), or quantities that pose a health risk, such as raw meat, raw poultry and fish oil. This is a non-exhaustive list.
- use hazardous chemical substances (e.g. a harmful dose of methylene blue), risky mixtures and other hazardous substances;
- expose pledges to cold or extreme weather conditions for a long period without the necessary precautions.
- serve strong liquor to underage pledges.

§ 2 During student initiation activities it is essential that people handle products which are safe in themselves with great care if they can become dangerous in the event of excessive consumption (e.g. water). People must also be aware of the dangers associated with excessive consumption of alcohol, and strong liquor in particular.

Article 12 Use of alcohol by pledges

§ 1 The organisation will provide a low-alcohol or alcohol-free alternative during all student initiation activities, and it will actively offer it to participants.

§ 2 A student initiation activity must never be focused on getting a pledge drunk. The organisations therefore commit themselves to never offering alcohol to pledges who are at risk of exceeding the blood alcohol concentration of 2.0 promille⁴.

§ 3 Pledges must remain fully sober during the naked section of an initiation. During other initiations, pledges must not exceed the blood alcohol concentration of 1 promille⁵.

§ 4 The organisation is entitled and obliged to act in accordance with article 10 in the event of breaches of the provisions of paragraphs 2 and 3 of this article.

§ 5 If it becomes apparent that a pledge is no longer able to function normally and/or presents a danger to themselves or others due to (excessive) alcohol consumption, the organisation must remove this pledge from the student initiation activity and provide safe accompaniment to a safe location (e.g., student accommodation).

³ Unless proof to the contrary is provided – detailed proof of payment for the food item in question – foodstuffs which are not available as standard in regular retail food commerce (e.g. supermarket or butcher's shop) will be regarded as slaughter waste.

⁴ 2 promille equates to 8 to 10 standard glasses.

⁵ 1 promille equates to 3 to 4 standard glasses.

§ 6 The organisations provide still water for all student initiation activities. Pledges are entitled to ask for water at any time.

Article 13 Prohibited student initiation activities

§ 1 During student initiation activities the organisation takes care to ensure that the sexual integrity of the pledges is safeguarded. In addition, the organisation must not impose tasks of a sexualising and/or erotic nature (e.g. stripping, rowing, etc.).

§ 2 An organisation may not organise a pledge sale.

§ 3 The organisation is entitled and obliged to act in accordance with article 10 whenever the sexual integrity of pledges and other participants is at risk.

Organisation and safety

Article 14 Registration obligation

§ 1 The organisations must register their student initiation activities with the BOS by 1 October at the latest for the first semester and by 1 March at the latest for the second semester. The following information must be provided:

- Activity
- Date
- Time
- Location or planned route if several locations are involved
- Responsible person(s) at the location and their mobile phone number(s)
- If an activity takes place at various locations outside the campus: state assumed time of presence for each location

§ 2 Changes to the planning must be reported to the BOS by email 48 hours prior to the student initiation activity at the latest. If these notifications are passed on late or not provided at all, the organisation will face sanctions in line with article 32 and the BOS will bring the activity to a halt immediately once this state of affairs is established, except in the case of force majeure (e.g. weather conditions).

§ 3 If a student initiation activity takes place at a location outside the Brussels Capital Region, both the BOS and the student life coordinator must be informed of this by email.

Article 15 Waste and infrastructure

§ 1 Following completion of an initiation activity on campus, all the waste must be cleared up and disposed of at a location intended for this purpose within 12 hours. The organisations are obliged to request the correct waste containers from Infradesk or external partners at least 14 days in advance.

§ 2 Agreements are made between the organisation and the VUB on an annual basis regarding the assembly and dismantling of the initiation infrastructure. Additional costs can be charged to the organisation in the event of damage or failure to adhere to agreements.

Article 16 Access to student initiation activities

The organisations are obliged to refuse VUB staff⁶ and fellows⁷ access to the student initiation activities with a naked section, including initiation. Access control is determined annually in consultation with the BOS, the Faculty Convention and/or the relevant organisations and VUB.

Article 17 General security during student initiation activities

§ 1 All organisations monitor their student initiation activities to ensure they are conducted safely. This includes assessing and preventing health risks, both physical and mental, as well as other safety risks. Suitable (medical) support is provided during the student initiation activities, and the emergency services are contacted if necessary.

§ 2 The organisation will share all information concerning a student initiation activity with the emergency services, the BOS and third parties which guarantee the safety of the pledges, or which must be aware of the student initiation activity (e.g. the VUB campus security service or the student life coordinator).

Article 18 First aid

§ 1 At least one first aid box must be present and available during student initiation activities. The organisation will also provide sufficient thermal blankets. There must be at least one thermal blanket for every three students.

§ 2 Each organisation will appoint at least one person responsible for first aid who must remain present and not be under the influence of intoxicating substances under any circumstances. The person responsible for first aid can demonstrate that they have completed a first aid course offered via the VUB by producing a certificate⁸.

Article 19 Intoxicating substances

§ 1 Anyone who has direct contact⁹ with the students prior to, during or following the naked section of a student initiation activity must under no circumstances be under the influence of intoxicating substances for the complete period of contact.

§ 2 During student initiation activities other than those mentioned in § 1 of this article, the person or persons responsible for initiation will abstain from intoxicating substances for the complete period of the activity and the trusted person must not exceed the alcohol level of 0.5 promille.

§ 3 The BOS can subject committee members, pledges, other members and third parties who show signs of intoxication during a student initiation activity to a check by means of a breath test. If the rules connected to alcohol consumption are not followed, the BOS will impose a sanction at the location in accordance with article 29 or 30. In this process the BOS can decide to remove anyone who refuses a breath test from the student initiation activity.

⁶ All staff members who are employed by the VUB, including staff members in the capacity of working students, with the exception of staff members who are only appointed to the UZ Brussel (university hospital) on the condition that they are not involved in teaching activities and/or do not have direct contact with students within the framework of teaching.

⁷ Doctoral fellows and post-doctoral researchers who are linked to the VUB but do not have an employment connection with it.

⁸ Committee members who receive first aid lessons as part of their regular curriculum are exempted from this course.

⁹ Direct contact is (physical or verbal) contact in which one is actively involved in the imposing of tasks on students, leading to a power relationship.

Article 20 Trusted persons

§ 1 At least two trusted persons must be present and continuously available at the pre-initiation, initiation or post-initiation. At least one trusted person must be present and available at other student initiation activities.

§ 2 Before the initiation, the trusted persons organise a group discussion with the pledges where the initiation and the concerns regarding it are discussed in a safe environment – without togas, tamers of freshers (schachtentemmers) and initiation committee. The organisation is free to organise additional individual discussions.

§ 3 All those present check on the well-being of the students during the student initiation activities and intervene if the boundaries of the students are not being respected. There are sufficient committee members present at all student initiation activities who also supervise this.

Article 21 Integrity of pledges

§ 1 During activities with a naked section, including initiations, only the committee members of the initiating organisation, the controlling members of the BOS and people about whom the pledges and the BOS were informed in advance (e.g., initiation jury) may have direct contact with the pledges. Other members and third parties are in attendance at all times.

§ 2 During the naked section of an activity, including initiations, only the togas, the trusted persons, the person responsible for initiation and members of the initiation committee about whom the pledges were previously informed may enter the demarcated safe zone.

Article 22 Visual material

§ 1 All those present at student initiation activities will ask for the consent of pledges expressly and in advance for the taking of photos or making videos. The people who create this visual material will only distribute it with express prior consent via the channels stated to the student.

§ 2 In deviation from § 1, the presence of recorded material is not permitted at activities with a naked section, including initiations.

Article 23 Use of amplified sound

An organisation which uses amplified sound at its initiation must offer earplugs - available at the Student Information - to all participants free of charge.

Article 24 Bystanders

During student initiation activities, the organisation must always take into account passers-by or bystanders who are not versed in the folklore traditions, as certain actions or objects could cause confusion or concern.

Supervisory Body for Student Initiation Activities

Article 25 Supervisory Body for Student Initiation Activities

§ 1 The Supervisory Body for Student Initiation Activities (BOS) and the student life coordinator are responsible for the supervision and support of the organisations when student initiation activities are being organised. The BOS also takes care to ensure safe running of student initiation activities by means of checks.

§ 2 The operation and composition of the BOS is stated in the internal regulation, which is accepted by the initiation convention¹⁰ and safeguards the independence, integrity and functionality of the BOS. Each BOS member is presumed to be aware of the internal regulation and to apply it fully when carrying out checks. The internal regulation is also submitted to the Student Council by way of formal notification.

Article 26 Checking and control of student initiation activities

§ 1 The members of the BOS who are responsible for checking student initiation activities have the right to interrupt a student initiation activity to carry out checks at any time. If the BOS is not granted access or it becomes impossible to carry out a check, sanctions will be imposed in accordance with article 31.

§ 2 The BOS always carries out an unannounced check during an initiation. A student tour (schachtentocht), a pre-initiation, a hat initiation (klakkendoop) and a post-initiation can also be subject to on-the-spot checks. In addition, the BOS can decide to check student initiation activities other than those stated above if there is a suspicion or a report of infringements.

Article 27 Establishment of infringements

Infringements of the initiation framework must be reported to the BOS via email as quickly as possible.

Article 28 Complaints concerning the BOS

Complaints concerning the BOS (members and operation) must be submitted to the student life coordinator via email as quickly as possible¹¹.

Sanctions

Article 29 Infringements of the first degree

§ 1 Infringements of the first degree are slight infringements of the initiation framework which have minimal consequences for the general safety of the pledges, and which can easily be rectified. Examples of infringements of the first degree: failure to respect the deadlines set, forgetting to provide a first-aid box or earplugs, or one committee member that is under the influence of intoxicating substances. This is not an all-encompassing summary.

§ 2 In the event of infringements of the first degree, the BOS issues a reasoned warning in writing to the organisation concerned within 48 hours. A copy is also passed on to the student life coordinator.

§ 3 If the organisation refuses to rectify the infringement immediately and this presents a safety risk for the participants according to the controlling members of the BOS, the infringement is immediately classified as an infringement of the second degree.

§ 4 Following a third warning during the ongoing academic year, the organisation will be invited to a discussion with the student life coordinator and a delegate of the BOS.

¹⁰ The initiation convention is a convention in which all recognised initiating organisations at the VUB are represented. Initiating organisations which are not recognised can also be included in the convention following voluntary signature of the initiation framework. All members of the initiation convention have voting rights regardless of their recognition status.

¹¹ studentenwerking@vub.be

Article 30 Infringements of the second degree

§ 1 Infringements of the second degree are infringements which directly contravene the initiation framework. Examples of infringements of the second degree: making use of human and animal excrement, allowing unauthorised persons into the demarcated safe zone, organisation - at least two committee members - under the influence of intoxicating substances or the admission of VUB staff. This is not an all-encompassing summary.

§ 2 In the event of infringements of the second degree, the BOS will stop the student initiation activity immediately. As part of this process, a reasoned written report will be drawn up which will be passed on to the student life coordinator and the vice rector for Education and Student Affairs and/or their deputy within 48 hours¹². In the report, the BOS formulates a proposal for sanctions to the vice rector.

The vice rector decides whether sanctions need to be imposed on the organisation involved and which sanctions these may be once the organisation has been interviewed. When doing so, the vice rector can provide reasoning for deviating from the proposal of the BOS. The decision of the vice rector is then submitted to the Student Council by way of formal notification.

§ 3 If the organisation refuses to stop the student initiation activity, the infringement is classified as an infringement of the third degree.

Article 31 Infringements of the third degree

§ 1 Infringements of the third degree are infringements which endanger the safety of the students and/or which risk prosecution. Examples of infringements of the third degree: refusing access to the BOS, distribution of illegal substances, the refusal of urgent medical intervention, failure to provide assistance to people in need, the refusal of a request by a student to stop a task, or exposing a student to dangerous situations. This is not an all-encompassing summary.

§ 2 In the event of infringements of the third degree, the BOS stops the student initiation activity immediately and passes on a written report to the student life coordinator and the vice rector within 48 hours. The organisation is immediately rendered inactive in anticipation of the sanctions imposed by the vice rector. The decision of the vice rector is then submitted to the Student Council by way of formal notification.

Article 32 Appeal

§ 1 A student organisation can lodge an appeal against a decision of the BOS or the vice rector in line with the regulation concerning appeals against decisions in application of the Student Services policy¹³.

§ 2 The appeal must be submitted within a maximum of fourteen days following announcement of the contested decision by email or by registered letter¹⁴ for the attention of the vice rector for Education and Student Affairs. The applicant must include the following elements in the application at the very least:

- The identity: name (as stated on the identity card or passport), enrolment number and contact details of the applicant. If applicable, the applicant will also state which sui generis organisation or recognised student organisation he/she is acting for and in what capacity the applicant is doing so.
- A statement indicating which decision concerning which service or which sui generis organisation is involved, and the date on which the decision was taken.

¹² Within the framework of this regulation, the vice rector for Education and Student Affairs can delegate their authority to one of the members of the independent academic staff appointed for this purpose by the Executive Board on the recommendation of the vice rector. The vice rector is referred to on many occasions in this regulation and this means the vice rector for Education and Student Affairs or their deputy.

¹³ The regulation can be consulted [here](#).

¹⁴ Via vicerector.os@vub.be or to the vice rector for Education and Student Affairs, Pleinlaan 2, 1050 Brussel

- Clarification about why the applicant does not agree with the decision, to be documented with arguments and evidence (testimonials, letters, extracts, contracts, invoices).

If the requirements described in this paragraph are not met, the appeal will be considered inadmissible.

Article 33 Contravention of the Criminal Code

If possible, contraventions of the Criminal Code are established (e.g. possession of illegal substances), the BOS will inform the campus security service and/or the police immediately. The BOS must additionally inform the vice rector of its findings.

Article 34 Individual sanctions

A student who infringes the stipulations in this initiation framework also leaves himself or herself open to sanctions as stipulated in the code of conduct for students at Vrije Universiteit Brussel.