



# Utrecht Debating Society

## Code of Conduct

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<https://www.utrechtdebatingsociety.nl/en/>

# Introduction

Before you lies the code of conduct of the Utrecht Debating Society, established in 2024 following the [Declaration of Student Wellbeing](#). This code of conduct is based on the VIDUIS code of conduct, and was established by board 31 of UDS. This code of conduct describes the expectations and rules to which people involved with UDS are expected to adhere. In addition, this document provides tools for situations in which the rules of conduct are violated.

UDS strives for a safe and enjoyable student life for everyone who debates in Utrecht. This code of conduct is the first step in ensuring the well-being of members and others involved with the association. However, it is important that this document remains active and is not shelved until something goes wrong. Only by making uncomfortable situations, unpleasant experiences, and the scope of this code of conduct discussable can cultural change take place.

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# 1. Definitions<sup>1</sup>

The Association	Utrecht Debating Society
The Members	All who are members according to Article 5 of the <a href="#">statutes</a> of the association or by a subsequent rule.
Undesirable behaviour	Action or failure to act that is experienced as negative having physical, psychological, or social consequences. This includes but is not limited to forms of (sexual) transgressive behaviour, discrimination, aggression, violence, and bullying.
Transgressive behaviour	Any form of verbal, non-verbal, or physical behaviour that aims to compromise or results in compromising the dignity of a person or creating an unsafe situation.
Sexual transgressive behaviour	Behaviour or advances that are sexual in nature and cross the social or physical boundaries of a person.
Discrimination	Making distinctions without justification, uttering insults, or acting violently against persons due to religion, belief, political inclination, race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, marital status, age, disability, chronic illness, or any other ground.
Aggression and Violence	Psychologically, physically, or verbally harassing, threatening, or attacking a person.
Bullying	Intimidating behaviour with a structural character from one or more person(s) against one or more person(s).
Equity officer	A point of contact and support for if you feel uncomfortable or in cases of undesirable behaviour with whom contact is confidential. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The definitions in this code of conduct have been based on the definitions of the code of conduct from Utrecht University. [Code of conduct for preventing and combating violations of interpersonal integrity \(inappropriate behaviour\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> More information about equity officers can be found in section 4 of the code of conduct

Imposed Clash	A sanction where two people are not placed together in a team, are not judged by each other and are placed within the same debate as little as possible. <sup>3</sup>
Suspension	A sanction by which a UDS member is temporarily denied all UDS membership rights such as for instance participation in UDS organised events. The maximum duration of suspension is 5 weeks. Found in article 6 of the statutes.
Cancellation	A sanction by which the membership of a UDS member is cancelled. This is done either because they do not fulfil the statutory conditions for being a member of UDS anymore or when the association cannot reasonably be expected to allow membership of this member to continue. Found in article 7 paragraph 3 and 4 of the statutes.
Expulsion	A sanction by which the membership of a UDS member is revoked because the behaviour of the member is contradictory to the statutes, bylaws, code of conduct or decisions of the board. Unlike cancellation, expulsion has a disciplinary character. Found in article 7 paragraph 5 of the statutes.

## 2. Scope of the code of conduct

This code of conduct applies to all members of UDS. Furthermore, the code of conduct applies to all attendees of UDS activities, even if they are not members. This includes but is not limited to debate activities, social activities and trips.

The code of conduct plays a role in the following situations.

1. At activities organised by UDS.
2. At activities of third parties where members are present on behalf of the organisation or when they actively express being a member.
3. In situations that do not fall under the two situations listed above, but do have an effect on (how members feel in) the two situations listed above.<sup>4</sup>

If this code of conduct in any way contradicts the statutes, then the statutes will apply.

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<sup>3</sup> An imposed clash differs from a regular clash. An imposed clash is a sanction that is given after a complaint has been filed. A regular clash is not a sanction. Any member can confidentially ask a board member or equity officer for a regular clash if they do not feel comfortable debating with someone or being judged by someone. The person that is being clashed is not informed in the case of a regular clash, but is informed in the case of an imposed clash

<sup>4</sup> This is a situation between members of UDS in which they do not relate to each other as members of UDS and therefore meet in a personal capacity (as is not the case in situations 1 and 2). However, the consequences of this situation influence, for instance, how a member feels or behaves in future situations 1 and 2.

### 3. Content of the code of conduct

1. UDS is an open, accessible, and inclusive association, and wants members to respect each other. Discrimination on any ground is not tolerated.
2. Undesirable behaviour in any form is not tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to, (sexual) transgressive behaviour, aggression, violence and bullying.
3. As a member or attendee of an activity, you ensure that your behaviour contributes to a safe atmosphere within and around the association and that you treat others with respect.
4. At UDS, we look out for each other. When possible, we address undesirable behaviour when we see or experience it.

### 4. Equity officer

The equity officers are responsible for creating a safe and inclusive environment within UDS where everyone feels comfortable. The equity officers of UDS are the first point of contact for situations of undesirable behaviour or if you feel uncomfortable. They can be approached with any question or issue.

The equity officers are there to support the individual in any way necessary and help the individual find further help outside of UDS if necessary. Equity officers can also help a member formulate and formalise a complaint and/or file a complaint on behalf of a member. Any form of contact with the equity officers is confidential. An equity officer can only share information with others if the person who has contacted the equity officer, gives explicit consent. The equity officers act based on the wishes of the individual.

Each year, the board appoints who the equity officers will be that year. The current equity officers can be found on <https://www.utrechtdebatingociety.nl/en/onze-vereniging/equity/>

## 5. Complaint procedure

If someone believes that the code of conduct has been violated against them or another person, they may file a complaint to the board. The board can be reached via [udsutrecht@gmail.com](mailto:udsutrecht@gmail.com). Both members and non-members can file a complaint. A complaint can be filed by the person who believes that the code of conduct has been violated against them, or on behalf of someone else. When filing a complaint on behalf of another person(s) you are strongly advised to present the permission in writing of the person(s) you represent. Filing a complaint cannot be anonymous. The identity of the individual who believes that the code of conduct has been violated against them and the identity of the person who the complaint pertains to must be known to the board.

Only when the complaint is related to a violation of the code of conduct by a board member of UDS, the complaint must be filed with the advisory council (RvA). The contact details of at least one member of the advisory council can be found on [www.utrechtdebatingociety.nl/en/](http://www.utrechtdebatingociety.nl/en/).

When a complaint is filed the relevant body determines whether the complaint falls within the scope of the code of conduct and whether the complaint is justified. If so, it is determined what the appropriate sanction is. Within 10 weeks at maximum, it informs the parties involved in writing of the decision. Here, it carefully explains how it arrived at this decision.

### 5.1 Contents of a complaint

The ways in which a complaint can be filed include, but are not limited to, via email, via text message and direct conversation. A complaint that is filed must contain at least the following information

- The person who the complaint pertains to
- The reason for filing the complaint
- A description of the event(s) that the complaint pertains to
- The date(s) of the event(s)
- The consequences of the event(s) for the person filing the complaint

### 5.2 Guideline complaints procedure

Below can be found a guideline for the relevant body on how to process a complaint. The relevant body should try to adhere to this guideline as much as possible but is allowed to diverge from the guideline if it deems that to be better for processing the complaint. All steps here are confidential between the relevant body, the filer of the complaint and the person who the complaint pertains to. This means that all involved parties will maintain confidentiality. Board or RvA members that have or had a romantic relationship with the person(s) that filed the complaint or the person(s) who the complaint pertains to do not participate within the procedure.

1. A complaint is received by the relevant body. A complaint should be filed to the board. If the complaint pertains to a board member it should be filed to the RVA as stipulated in section 6.2 of this code of conduct.
2. The relevant body determines whether the complaint is within the scope of the code of conduct. In this meeting the relevant body votes if they can process the complaint.
3. If the relevant body decides it can not process the complaint further, the relevant body will justify this to the filer(s) of the complaint.
4. If the relevant body deems it necessary, at least two board/RVA members have one meeting with the filer(s) of the complaint to obtain further relevant information that was not yet included in the original complaint filed in step 1. If the complaint is filed on behalf of someone, this meeting will thus also be with the person who has officially filed the complaint to the relevant body.
5. The relevant body informs the person who the complaint pertains to about the existence of the complaint and its contents in writing. The board can suspend the member during the procedure if it deems this necessary using article 6 of the statutes. The relevant body sets a reasonable deadline for the person who the complaint pertains to, to respond. Should the person who the complaint pertains to not respond before the deadline, the relevant body decides on imposing a sanction without further consulting the person who complaint pertains to.
6. The person who the complaint pertains to gets to tell their side of the story. The relevant body sets up one meeting with at least two board/RVA members to get the perspective and relevant information of the person who the complaint pertains to. Should it not be possible to set up a meeting or should the person who the complaint pertains to want so, they can also tell their side of the story in writing.
7. The relevant body discusses all relevant information from the filer(s) of the complaint and the person who the complaint pertains to and based upon this information comes to a conclusion on whether a sanction will be imposed, and if so, which sanction. This is done by a vote within the relevant body which is decided by majority.
8. This decision will be motivated in writing by the relevant body to both the filer(s) of the complaint and the person who the complaint pertains to. No one else is informed of the decision taken.



## 6. Sanctions

### 6.1 Possible sanctions

One or more sanctions may be imposed on those who violate the code of conduct. The list below is a list of possible sanctions:

1. Written warning;
2. Denial of further participation in the ongoing activity;
3. Denial of personal contact with an individual during future activities.  
This includes, but is not limited to, an imposed clash;
4. Denial of participation in a future activity or future activities;
5. Removal of the member from, for example, a committee or working group;
6. Suspension according to Article 6 of the statutes;
7. Cancellation of membership according to article 7 of the statutes;
8. Expulsion from membership according to Article 7 of the statutes.

If a sanction is not adhered to, the relevant body is capable of imposing further sanctions.

### 6.2 Which body determines the sanction?

In line with the above, it is the base principle that the board imposes a sanction when the code of conduct is breached. When the report or the complaint is related to a violation of the code of conduct by a board member, the advisory council (RvA) makes the decision on the sanction.

#### 6.2.1 In case of suspension, cancellation of membership and expulsion from membership

An exception to the above is in the event of suspension, cancellation of membership and expulsion from membership. Only the board can decide to suspend a member according to Article 6 of the statutes. Also, only the board can decide to cancel a membership according to article 7 paragraph 3 and 4 of the statutes and expel a member according to article 7 paragraph 5 of the statutes. When the suspension or expulsion pertains to a board member, the advisory council (RvA) must give advice to the board on this sanction decision. The board is strongly advised to follow this.

### 6.3 Appeal

If the member disagrees with the imposed sanction, the member can appeal the decision. This can be done by informing the board or the advisory council in writing within a month of the decision about the appeal and the reasons why the member is appealing. The body to which the appeal has been made will decide on the appeal. This body will reach a decision within 5 weeks. This decision will be motivated in writing by the relevant body to both the filer(s) of the complaint and the person who the complaint pertains

#### 6.3.1 In case of expulsion from membership

Only if the member is expelled from membership, the member can appeal the decision at the General Assembly (GA) according to Article 7 of the statutes. This appeal must be in writing.

## 7. Help

### 7.1 Equity officers

If you encounter undesirable behaviour or need help finding the right support, you can step to our equity officers.

We have different equity officers. On our [website](#), you can see which equity officer you could approach. The contact with an equity officer is confidential.

More information about equity officers can be found in section 4 of this code of conduct.

### 7.2 Help from educational institutions

- [Utrecht University](#)
- [University College Utrecht](#)
- [Hogeschool Utrecht](#)
- [HKU](#)
- [MBO Utrecht](#) (site in Dutch only)
- [ROC Midden-Nederland](#) (site in Dutch only)

### 7.3 Other websites

There are various sites where you can go if you have encountered unpleasant situations.

- <https://studentenzorgwijzer.nl/en/home-en/>, This website offers tips for various websites and organizations on different care-related questions.
- <https://centrumseksueelgeweld.nl/en/>, You can come here if you have experienced sexual violence. This is always free of charge.
- <https://art1middennederland.nl/>, You can report if you have experienced discrimination here.
- <https://www.slachtofferhulp.nl/english/>, Here you can go if you have become a victim of a criminal offense.
- <https://www.jellinek.nl/english/>, Here you can go if you are dealing with addiction. This concerns various addictions, such as alcohol, drugs, gaming, etc.

## Sources

Intentieverklaring Studentenwelzijn:

<https://vidius.nl/wpcontent/uploads/2https://students.uu.nl/en/university-college-utrecht/practical-information/advising-and-counselling022/08/Intentieverklaring-studentenwelzijn-1.pdf>

Statutes:

[https://www.utrechtdebatingsociety.nl/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Afschrift-akte-van-statenwijziging\\_Utrecht-Debating-Society\\_v4-AfschriftDigitaal.pdf](https://www.utrechtdebatingsociety.nl/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Afschrift-akte-van-statenwijziging_Utrecht-Debating-Society_v4-AfschriftDigitaal.pdf)

Code of conduct VIDIOUS:

<https://vidius.nl/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Gedragcode-VIDIUS.docx>

Code of conduct inappropriate behaviour Utrecht University:

<https://www.uu.nl/sites/default/files/Code%20of%20conduct%20for%20preventing%20and%20combating%20violations%20of%20interpersonal%20integrity%20%28inappropriate%20behaviour%29%202022.pdf>

Utrecht University:

<https://students.uu.nl/en/guidance-and-development/who-to-contact>

University College Utrecht

<https://students.uu.nl/en/university-college-utrecht/practical-information/advising-and-counselling>

Hogeschool Utrecht:

<https://www.internationalhu.com/student-support-and-guidance>

HKU:

<https://www.hku.nl/en/about-hku/social-safety>

MBO Utrecht:

<https://www.mboutrecht.nl/studenten/vertrouwenspersonen/>

ROC Midden-Nederland:

<https://www.rocmn.nl/hulp-info/alles-over-het-mbo/contactpersoon-ongewenst-gedrag>