



**Hiding Under the RUG: Sexual Harassment within the RUG a Policy Analysis and
 Recommendations**

Capstone Project

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addition to the research report of Nini Schick will be used to improve the RUG's policies on sexual harassment.

Thank you in advance for reading my Capstone Research Report and please reach out for any questions or requests

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“UNESCO has always believed that all children and young people must have access to safe, inclusive, and health-promoting learning environments and this has been our priority. A crucial commitment of the United Nations Sustainable Development goals (SDGs) is to leave no one behind, and in that spirit, let us ensure that we offer truly safe and inclusive educational environments to all learners, so that they may access equal opportunities and achieve great success” (Eric Falt, UNESCO New Delhi Director)



Abstract

Sexual harassment in higher education is a known crisis which also affects students and staff of the RUG. One out of ten female students in the Netherlands have become a victim of rape during their time studying in the Netherlands (Amnesty, IRO, 2021). Furthermore, only three percent of these students knew how to reach out within their higher education institutions. In addition, globally one in three women have become a victim of sexual harassment as an employee on the workforce (ILO, 2022). This research report analyses the policy documents of the RUG regarding sexual harassment to answer the research question (RQ): *What are the policies RUG has in place to prevent, respond, react to episodes of sexual harassment?* Included the theory 1975 of Brownmiller, the first in history to change the perception of sexual assault in academia: she explained rape as a socio-political problem rather than an ‘individual crime of passion’. In addition, the literature review discusses terms as ‘rape culture’, ‘victim-blaming’, ‘party-rape’, ‘second rape’, and ‘rape myths’. Lastly, the regulatory and legislative frameworks regarding sexual harassment in higher education relating to the RUG are included.

The analysis of the RUG’s policy documents contained an abductive approach in which some premature themes were taken into account and when new themes occurred while reading the policies, these were allowed to be added. The themes on which the analysis focused were visibility & accessibility, preventive measures, first response, and general and follow-up response. Accessible and clear policy documents are essential to prevent and not sweep the responsibilities of campus staff and students under the RUG. This report includes recommendations for both further research and changes to RUG’s policies.

Keywords: sexual harassment, university campus, rape culture, victim-blaming, party-rape, second rape, rape myths, campus harassment, students, policy analysis, preventive measures, first response, general response, follow-up response, academic support

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Acronyms

C190	ILO's Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019
DIHOO	(Committee on Diverse and Inclusive Higher Education and Research)
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GRL	Global Responsibility & Leadership
ILO	International Labour Organization
IvhO	Inspectie van het Onderwijs (inspectorate of education)
RCGOG	Commissioner for Sexual Transgressive Behaviour and Sexual Violence
RUG	Rijksuniversiteit Groningen
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
STBSV	Sexual Transgressive Behaviour and Sexual Violence
UCF	University Campus Fryslân
UCG	University Campus Groningen
USV	Universities Supporting Victims of Sexual Assault
YAG	Young Academy of Groningen
WHO	World Health Organisation

Hiding Under the RUG: Sexual Harassment within the RUG a Policy Analysis and Recommendations

Sexual harassment in higher education is a known crisis which also affects students and staff of the RUG. One out of ten female students in the Netherlands have become a victim of rape during their time studying in the Netherlands (Amnesty, IRO, 2021). Furthermore, only three percent of these students knew how to reach out within their higher education institutions. In addition, globally one in three women have become a victim of sexual harassment as an employee on the workforce (ILO, 2022). Moreover, the Young Academy of Groningen released their social safety report about at least 27 victims of gender based violence (GBV) from the past two years among RUG employees (YAG, 2021). The YAG, Dutch government and associations as Amnesty International demand a change of culture and improved measures to resolve this crisis. Thus, it is important that staff and students feel safe in the study/work and living environment during their higher education journey with clear policies from their university. Therefore, this research has three aims. Firstly, it aims at understanding the policies RUG has in place regarding sexual harassment, resulting in the first research question (RQ): *What are the policies RUG has in place to prevent, respond, react to episodes of sexual harassment?* (RQ1). Secondly, it aims to keep track of accessibility to these policy documents in regards to both preventing and in case of sexual harassment to reach out and become aware of RUG's resources: *Does RUG promote and raise awareness on social safety and their policies on social safety and sexual harassment, and does RUG have a clear guidance on how to reach out and make use of their resources?* (RQ2). Thirdly, this study aims to suggest improvements by analysing what is missing and/or what can be improved, in addition, by comparing UCG and UCF to other university campuses in the Netherlands: *To what extent do RUG policies comply with national and international regulations for sexual harassment in higher education?* (RQ3). Therefore, this research report first analyses studies on sexual harassment in academia and policy analyses regarding sexual harassment in academia. Second, this report provides a brief overview of legal frameworks and policies in place from governmental institutions and associations Amnesty International and Uni-Safe. Lastly, before the policy analysis, the case of the RUG will be provided to understand the urgency and the context of the RUG.

This research report understands sexual harassment as the following definition provided by the UN Women (UN-Women, 2020). *“Sexual Harassment is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that results in physical, psychological or sexual harm, that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment may occur in the workplace or in connection with work.”*

In addition, this research report understands the actors involved in cases of sexual harassment, which are the victim, the perpetrator, the RUG as work- or studyplace, and possibly bystanders. The latter is important to add since they should as well reach out to undesired behaviour and research shows that different factors play a role for a bystander to reach out (Latané & Darley, 1970). To clarify the bystander, this is someone who was nearby and observing a case of sexual harassment without participating in it. The five stages of the model of the Bystander are: *“(1) noticing the event; (2) deciding if it is an emergency; (3) deciding on the degree of personal responsibility; (4) deciding on the specific mode of intervention; (5) and implementing the chosen intervention.”* The bystander effect can be tackled with training on *“diffusion of responsibility, pluralistic ignorance and audience inhibition”*.

Literature review

Sexual harassment in higher education in academic literature

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2020, one in three women are a victim of sexual harassment and the first joint analysis of data worldwide from the UN International Labour Organisation (ILO) shared their results in 2022 with more than one in five employees have become a victim of sexual harassment in their workplace (WHO, 2020; ILO, 2022). In 1975, Brownmiller was the first in history to change the perception of sexual assault in academia, she explained rape as a socio-political problem rather than an ‘individual crime of passion’ (Brownmiller, 2016). She used the social-construction theory which she explains as society created the structures in which a perpetrator of sexual harassment has the environment to thrive and the victim to be neglected. This was also the first time the term ‘*rape culture*’ was used and which is still observed in societies globally. Perspective change was/is

needed since rape was often blamed to the victim '*victim-blaming*' or to alcohol '*party-rape*' (Oliver, 2016). Despite Brownmiller already arguing against victim-blaming in 1975, victim-blaming is still embedded in society and the language or perspective of causation used by some researchers. Victim-blaming is also called '*second rape*' since the victim is blamed of becoming a victim of rape and getting negative feedback from their environment (Campbell, 1999). This is very traumatic and therefore, documentary makers, sexual harassment associations, activists, and researcher try to change this culturally embedded victim-blaming.

An example from South Africa, in 2016 the hashtag *#EndRapeCulture* was created to raise awareness on campus harassment and to change the sexual harassment culture embedded in both society and administrators of their campuses (Gouws & Kritzing, 2007; Orth et al., 2020). Their policies reinforced victim-blaming and had a lack of institutional support, which was already shared as well in 2007. Another report and documentary explain rape-culture on campus in 2016 from the United States of America (USA), showing the campus being a dangerous place for women and it being the place with most '*rape myths*': the perpetrators and administrators are accusing the victims of 'asking for it' (Dick & Ziering, 2015; Oliver, 2016). The documentary called *Hunting Ground* also shows the testimonies of victims of sexual harassment stating that it was difficult for them to reach out at campus for support. The documentary makers were able to "*reveal an endemic system of institutional cover-ups, rationalizations, victim-blaming, and denial that creates perfect storm conditions for predators to prey with impunity.*" The predators do not define what they did as rape and others use argumentation of 'boys will be boys'. This shows a culture change is needed. In addition, a concerning statement on sexual harassment culture shared by them: "*On colleges campuses, predators learn they can force sex on girls and women and get away with it.*" This research also discusses '*partyrape*', and the rise of sexual harassment and pornography via cellphones makes campuses the hunting ground for sexual harassment predators.

This was also discussed in 2006 by Armstrong et al, in which they conclude that "*We show that partying produces fun as well as sexual assault, generating student resistance to criticizing the party scene or men's behavior in it.*" (Armstrong et al., 2006). Despite the outdated use of language in this article, it shows that alcohol and the thrust are abused in order to rape students at student parties. In addition, there was a lack of calling out their behaviour as a bystander since they blamed the victim or were not sure about consent or not. An important note on preventive

measures relating to victim-blaming, this article warns for preventive measures which imply the fault of a victim, e.g. limited alcohol consumptions and what not to wear. The focus should not be on the precautions possible victims should take, but on the education for change in behaviour for possible perpetration.

Campus Harassment: Sexual Harassment Policies and Procedures at Institutions of Higher Learning, a research article shared almost forty years ago highlighting the importance of policies in campuses regarding sexual harassment and whether universities took cases of sexual harassment serious (Robertson et al., 1988). The universities who demanded written complaints from the victim were assumed to scare away complainers who are afraid of retaliation. The evaluation on effectiveness of the policies shows that policy makers were most concerned about protecting the perpetrator's career considering the complaint might be a false complaint. In addition, they were concerned about the definition and understanding of sexual harassment. The study recommends higher learning institutions to actively monitor, by preventively collecting data : *"Initiate the study before (and not because of) such an incident."* Additionally, a full support of the board and staff is required to create a collective culture of not tolerating sexual harassment with a common understanding shared in a code of conduct, as well as shared agenda points, and access to guidelines of formal procedures.

A systematic literature review on research articles regarding sexual harassment at campus from 2019 analysed high severity of sexual harassment in higher education and low rate of reporting despite (mental) health consequences for the victim (Klein & Martin, z.d.). In addition to an overview of conclusions from the articles, they provided recommendations for further research and practical implications which add to the conclusions from the research described above.

To conclude, despite some outdated perspectives and use of language, since 1975 there is a change demanded for both culture and policies at campuses regarding sexual harassment. All articles recommend monitoring, providing knowledge and education on sexual harassment, providing accessible and explicit resources for victims and bystanders and changing the policies and formal procedures from victim-blaming to sanctions for perpetrators.

Regulatory and legislative frameworks

As results of research and cases of sexual harassment, the following frameworks are guidelines for policy making in higher education.

Global

Global	
ILO	Violence and Harassment Convention (2019)
UNESCO, Ireland	Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions (2017)

ILO

The ILO and Human Rights Declaration has adopted the new law of a safe work environment as a human right ((ILO, 2022)). In addition, the ILO’s Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (C190) and Recommendation have created a framework to prevent, alleviate and eradicate violence and harassment in the workplace globally. It emphasises the importance of systematically collecting data of nearly 75,000 employees from 121 countries (aged above 15) to become aware of the situation, evaluate their experiences and trace points of improvements.

UNESCO

UNESCO shared reports from different countries on higher education with new rules for prevention and responding to sexual harassment in higher education. Among others from Ireland which includes defining and recognising forms of sexual harassment, normative culture, and underlying causes as well as designated resources, complaints and reporting guidelines, interrim measures and special regulations, penalties and rights (Irish Department of Education and Skills, 2017) . UNESCO New Delhi Director adds “*UNESCO has always believed that all children and young people must have access to safe, inclusive, and health-promoting learning environments and this has been our priority. A crucial commitment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to leave no one behind, and in that spirit, let us ensure that we*

offer truly safe and inclusive educational environments to all learners, so that they may access equal opportunities and achieve great success” (Falt, UNESCO, 2019)

Europe

The European Commission is as well aware of the high rates of sexual harassment among students and therefore created a research and training cooperation called the *Universities Supporting Victims of Sexual Assault (USV) (USV, 2018)*. In addition, they have created the project called Uni-Safe in which they focus on the broader urgent crisis of gender based violence in higher education, which also includes sexual harassment (Uni-Safe, 2023).

Europe	
European Commission	Universities Supporting Victims of Sexual Assault (USV) (2018)
European Commission, Uni-Safe	White Paper for Policymakers and Institutional Managers (2023)

Uni-Safe

Uni-Safe is a corporation created in 2021 by the European Commission in which nine European partners work together as a multi-disciplinary consortium tackling GBV in higher education (Uni-Safe, 2021). The cooperation includes researching GBV and its root causes, sharing data and in depth-knowledge, creating toolkits, and policy development. Quite recently, April 2023, they have shared their *White Paper for policymakers and institutional managers: “The goal of this document is to contribute to building a common understanding of gender-based violence. Specifically, the aim is to establish the root causes of gender-based violence in higher education and research and introduce the holistic 7P model, which has been developed and tested through research, as a starting point for further policy development.”* (Linková et al., 2023) The holistic 7P model includes the following targets: Policies, Prevalence, Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Provision of services, and Partnerships (see Appendix I).The model is based on the three Ps from the United Nations: Prevention, Protection, and Prosecution. In addition, the model is based on the 4Ps from Council of Europe Istanbul Convention in 2011:

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Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Policy (Uni-Safe, 2023). The Uni-Safe also provides webinars for policy-makers in higher education.

Netherlands

The Netherlands are not taking part in the USV and are not yet providing resources on Uni-Safe. However, the Dutch government and Amnesty International did start the following to prevent and respond to sexual harassment in higher education.

Netherlands	
Amnesty International	Let's Talk About Yes (2021)
Inspectorate of Education (IvhO)	Wet Veiligheid op school (Law for safety at school) (2015)
DIHOO	Nationaal Actieprogramma Aanpak seksueel grensoverschrijdend gedrag en seksueel geweld (National action programme to combat sexually transgressive behaviour and sexual violence) (2023)

Amnesty International Nederland

Amnesty International did research on how to improve students' safety and created the 'Let's Talk About Yes' manifesto for higher education institutions to sign (Amnesty International, 2023). (Amnesty International & I&O Research, 2021). Oudshoorn, Director of Amnesty Netherlands, says the following about the shocking results of their study: "*Higher education institutions need to take much more responsibility for the safety and well-being of their students. For a start, they should educate their students about consent in sex, provide clear information about available counselling, establish sound protocols and communicate clearly and regularly about this with their students.*" They concluded that the victims of sexual harassment were not aware of the policies in place nor how to reach out at their institution for help. These were urgent reasons for Amnesty International to write together with students their manifesto called 'Let's Talk about Yes' (Amnesty International, 2021). Together they start the conversation about sexual harassment in higher education institutions and provide them of suiting measures. 23 higher

education institutions have signed the manifesto, which means they pledge to work to combat sexual violence and among others implement measures for a culture where sex is based on consent.

Inspectorate of Education (IvhO)

The inspectorate of Education in the Netherlands (IvhO) provides a duty of care for social safety in schools (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2015). Since 2015, they have a law *Wet Veiligheid op school* (Law for safety at school) for primary, secondary and special education which expects schools to have policies in place for their students' safety. In addition they also provide laws for students and regulations for higher education. It includes annually monitoring their students' perception of safety and a coordinator of anti-bullying policies who also acts as a contact person. In May and June of 2020, the IvhO asked 10,000 students of higher education in the Netherlands in a survey about their perception and experience of social safety in their study environment (Ministerie van Onderwijs, 2022a). The factsheet of these outcomes was presented to the government and implemented in 2022 in the *Nationaal Actieprogramma Aanpak seksueel grensoverschrijdend gedrag en seksueel geweld* (National action programme to combat sexually transgressive behaviour and sexual violence) (Rijksoverheid, 2023b). “*The aim is to prevent, recognise, tackle and offer help to victims of sexual transgression and sexual violence*”.

National Action Programme to Combat Sexually Transgressive Behaviour and Sexual Violence

The title and motto of the recent National Action Programme to Combat Sexually Transgressive Behaviour and Sexual Violence (STBSV) of Advisory Committee on Diverse and Inclusive Higher Education and Research (DIHOO) states: “*Recognising each other's wishes and recognise each other's boundaries, acknowledge and respect*” (Rijksoverheid, 2023a). They assigned Mariëtte Hamer to the new position of Government Commissioner for STBSV (RCGOG)w. This report is based on the social safety in academia report from DIHOO and Tauber's advisory report (Dr. S. Täuber, 2022; KNAW, 2022; Ministerie van Onderwijs, 2022a). It guides the programme for the following three years to prevent, recognise and respond to sexual harassment. The programme is to include all citizen in changing the underlying cause of sexual harassment, which is a cultural concept that requires change in society. This programme must start the conversation between all citizen to raise awareness of the situation and how they treat

each other, respond and support victims of sexual harassment. In addition, this must target the bystander causing them to intervene and stand up for the victim. The government has established the following 5 lines of action with corresponding targets to contribute to the prevention and assistance of victims of sexual harassment.

- Norms and values
- Laws and legislations
- Organisations require to have measures and sources to provide prevention, reporting and follow-up assistance for events of sexual harassment
- Everyone recognises sexual harassment, targeting the bystander, and know how to react
- Providing suiting and accessible aid

Government Commissioner for Sexual Transgressive Behaviour and Sexual Violence

In April 2022, Mariëtte Hamer started as the Dutch Government Commissioner for Sexual Transgressive Behaviour and Sexual Violence (RCGOG) (Ministerie van Onderwijs, 2022b). This was established from the National Action Plan, initiated by ministers Dijkgraaf (Education, Culture and Science) and Van Gennip (Social Affairs and Employment). The government commissioner is an independent role with the assignment to provide solicited and unsolicited advice on tackling sexually transgressive behaviour and sexual violence, and to be a figurehead of the social conversation that should lead to a culture change. In her reflection report of June 2022, she also mentioned one of her agenda points to create a clear and accessible overview of good initiatives about STBSV.

Sexual Harassment and the University of Groningen

Rijksuniversiteit Groningen has been in the news recently relating to the concerning report released from Young Academy Groningen (YAG), the lawsuit of firing the researcher for social safety Susanne Tauber and the protests relating to these events for social safety in the RUG (Boomsma, 2021, 2023; YAG, 2021). In addition to the concerning report, the RUG has not yet announced signing Amnesty International's manifesto '*Let's Talk About Yes*' (Amnesty International, 2021). After the first protests, the RUG did start their social safety campaigns.

YAG report Harassment at the University of Groningen

In 2021, the YAG released an concerning report, *Harassment at the University of Groningen*, in which at least 27 employees of the RUG between 2019 and 2021 have become a victim of harassment, including among others gender based violence, discrimination, sexual harassment and power abuse.

RUG Mandatory Student Housing (UCF & UCG)

There are cases of sexual harassment in the RUG of which some took place in the mandatory student housing provided by the RUG. Despite the wealth of literature on the risks of predatory behaviour on campus, e.g. student housing and parties, courses like UCG and UCF do provide a mandatory student house for first years. This should not be discouraged completely, as it is a good way to build community and relationships between students. However, it should be accompanied by strong and clear policies and regulations that prevent any episode of sexual harassment. In addition, it should provide a clear blueprint of first responses and long-term responses to any accident or crime. Therefore this research analyses whether the RUG provides tin their policies regarding sexual harassment.

Methodology

Study design

To answer the research question *What are the policies RUG has in place to prevent, respond, react to episodes of sexual harassment?* (RQ1), this study analyses the policies of the RUG concerning sexual harassment, with an additional focus on student housing provided/mandatory by the RUG.

The primary Data-collection started on the 28th of March 2023 until 2nd of May. During the data-collection, harassment became a hot topic in the RUG and policies were being added, removed and updated. As of today, these are the policies I have gotten to analyse (see Appendix II).

The data was retrieved from analysing the RUG website, and by searching among others for the following keywords (also searched in Dutch): *sexual harassment, social safety, campus*

safety, policy, guidelines, . At the start of the data-collection, the visible link to social safety was not in place and it was thus difficult to search.

In addition, it includes an analysis of the emails the RUG sent out to students and staff with updates regarding social security and included guidelines/policy updates. The policy documents were both analysed in Dutch and English.

The search returned 21 results. All documents were read and analysed but only the documents that fit into the inclusion criteria: *documents that talked about sexual harassment and social safety, for faculty wide and university wide, for both staff and students*; were selected for data analysis. Data were extracted using an abductive approach consisting of an a priori coding (preventive measures, first response measures, and general and follow-up measures) but also allowing to use additional codes that might emerge from the analysis. Findings will be evaluated based on the regulatory and legislative frameworks presented in the introduction.

To process the data, this research used the thematic analysis with first a descriptive analysis of the results. Since it was difficult to find a framework from other studies analysing policies from educational institutions regarding sexual harassment, and based on the literature research, I created my own themes which are part of the RQ (the 7P framework of the Uni-Safe was published near the end of my data-collection). The research contained an abductive approach in which some premature themes were taken into account and when new themes occurred while reading the policies, these were allowed to be added. These themes are the following.

1. Student or staff or both
2. Prevention
3. First Response
4. General Response and Follow-up Response
5. Academic support

In addition to the thematic analysis, this data-collection also includes a logbook (see Appendix III) on the process of collecting the data. This includes notes on the steps of searching for and retrieving the data. The aim of this additional research was to observe the accessibility of

these policies, to assess the accessibility of policies, what observations stood out in the process, all the search steps were noted down.

Unit of analysis

The objects of this study are the guidelines, measures and normative statements of the RUG regarding sexual harassment. Since the victims, perpetrators and bystanders of sexual harassment can be both students and staff, policy documents regarding them both are included in the analysis.

Level of analysis

For this research project, the scope of the policy analysis is policies from the RUG for both staff and students. In addition, it focused both on policies for all faculties of the RUG and for UCF and UCG considering their possible policies regarding their student housing of the first years of among others GRL students. These policies are analysed based on a created framework since there was no suitable framework in combination with theories from literature research and legal frameworks of the IvhO and the DIHOO. The framework of the Uni-Safe was published later in the process of collecting the data and therefore solely used in literature review, and used as inspiration for the discussion.

Validity and reliability

The validity of this policy analysis is assured by the consistent analysis of the chosen themes within the policies collected and the notes kept in the process of finding the policy documents and analysing them. The research can and should be reproduced to ensure the policies of the RUG regarding sexual harassment to be evaluated, revised and renewed.

Measures

This research is conducted by analysing the policies presented on the RUG's website, analysing the visibility, access and the quality of their policies. To research visibility and accessibility, the choice of measures were made to only use the website of the RUG as a most important source of information.

Results

Descriptive analysis

The publication date of the analysed policies range from 2009 till 2023. All policies were targeted to all faculties of the RUG and all policies were for both staff and students besides one statement for only staff: *more information on the emergency phone number*. Despite the RUG website being both in English and Dutch, one policy document was only written in Dutch and not provided in English: the *Regeling Vertrouwenspersoon aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (RUG)* (confidential advisor arrangement).

Some policy documents are just statements of tolerance. They do not provide clear guidelines nor concrete measures. The statements include among other things the Zero-Tolerance Statement/Policy.

Visibility and accessibility of the policy documents

As stated in the Logbook (see Appendix III), the policy documents were not visible on the website of the RUG. It took effort to find the documents and not all documents were accessible to students or to non-Dutch speaking staff and students. For the student housing mandatory for first year students of e.g GRL, the RUG does not provide concrete guidelines regarding sexual harassment and what to do in case of an emergency. Informally, one of the students from the First Year Committee did share that mandatory consent workshops will be held in the next academic year for all new students.

Prevention

For the prevention, two suiting policies provided by the RUG are analysed.

Policies and Regulations for Prevention			Dutch/English
Code of Conduct concerning Harassment, Sexual Harassment,	of 2009	Visible and informative Open emphasis during interviews Training for staff Monitoring compliance	both

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Aggression, Violence and Discrimination University of Groningen			
Zero Tolerance Statement/Policy	2023	Defining the broad understanding of Zero tolerance Normative statements Collective responsibility and particular responsibilities for managers and professors	both

The policy document of Code of Conduct states the importance of training for teachers and staff as part of the prevention of harassment. According to the policies, this adds to their importance of embedding the RUG values of zero-tolerance into teaching and learning strategies. The Zero Tolerance Statement/Policy focuses on taking responsibility for preventing any form of harassment and the understanding of individual behaviour. In addition, one must understand cultural differences and language barriers. Lastly, the individual is responsible for contributing to the normative values of behaviour of staff and students from the RUG.

First response

For the First Response, there are 2 suiting policies provided by the RUG are analysed.

Policies and Regulations for First Response			Dutch/English
Complaints Regulation concerning Sexual Aggression, Violence and Discrimination (SIAGD).	2023	Complaints to confidential advisor Victim of unwanted behaviour → written complaint Central Portal for the Legal Protection of Student Rights (CLRS).	both
Emergency number 8050	2023	More info accessible for staff More important than national emergency number 112	both

The university has an emergency phone number which is 8050 and according to the website on which this number of the RUG can be found, it is more important than calling the

Dutch emergency number 112 because the 8050 leads to the main control room in Groningen and they have a direct line to the emergency service.

When a student or a member of staff wants to submit a SIAGD-complaint (when they have become a victim of sexual harassment or have been a bystander) the RUG provides the possibility to reach out to the confidential advisor. The information provided around the regulations and services of the confidential advisor is not provided the same information for the English and for the Dutch language. Cases of sexual harassment are perceived best submitted to the confidential advisor according to the RUG: *“Such cases are referred to as ‘reports to the Confidential Advisor’ rather than official complaints to the Central Portal for the Legal Protection of Student Rights.”* However, if the victim still feels victim of transgressing behaviour, a victim can submit a ‘SIAGD-complaint’ to the Legal Protection of Student Rights. This can be lodged [online](#) with the *Central Portal for the Legal Protection of Student Rights*, or send a written complaint to their mailbox in Groningen.

It is not possible to submit an anonymous complaint, this was possible in the beginning of collecting the data and until the occupation movement of the RUG. This is because: *“Complaints cannot be lodged anonymously since both parties must be heard in order to satisfactorily solve a complaint.”*

General and Follow-Up Response

For the General and Follow-Up Response, one suitable policy provided by the RUG is analysed.

Policies and Regulations for General and Follow-Up Response		Dutch/English
<i>Regeling Vertrouwenspersoon</i>	As stated in code of conduct Confidential advisor and study advisor for academic support	Dutch

Upon the review of the policy documents, it appears that there are no clear guidelines nor general policy advice for general and follow-up response after a sexual harassment event. However, the Zero-Tolerance Policy does state the following: *“We have guidance, policies and procedures to support all students and staff who are affected by harassment, bullying or hate*

crime.” Therefore, among the guidance, the RUG does provide academic support from their confidential advisor. In addition to the confidential advisor, a victim can receive academic support from their study advisor. The study advisor provides support to students with their academic career, they can provide support to a student for the following problems that might come with becoming a victim of sexual harassment. In cases of study delay, choosing courses and notifying teachers of discussed information to share about the situation from the victim. From the collected data, the rights of the victim within the support of the study advisor are not provided.

Discussion

As stated in the results, the RUG provides a few important policy documents and statements regarding sexual harassment.. These included the Code of Conduct and Zero-Tolerance policy stating the normative culture aimed within the RUG, SIAGD for lodging complaints, RUG’s opinion on anonymous complaints, RUG’s 5080 emergency number, and information on confidential advisor and academic advisor. The results also include an analysis of visibility and accessibility of these documents, this will be discussed in the paragraph below.

Visibility and accessibility of the policy documents

Most of the policies were difficult to find, (policies on) social safety was not directly visible at the website of the RUG. During the data-collection process, due to circumstances of the RUG, the website did change a bit and the topic of social safety became more visible. It is permanently visible under the header ‘Integrity’, however this might not directly be linked to sexual harassment and or social safety. Since some documents were only provided under downloads and without a direct header leading to sexual harassment nor social safety, , they were too difficult to find. Moreover, the RUG website does not provide a clear overview of the existing policies and steps to take when becoming a victim of sexual harassment or being a bystander of sexual harassment. Neither for how the perpetrator can be held accountable.

In addition, on the webpage of UCF and UCG there are no policy documents or guidelines provided for the student housing regarding norms and sexual harassment. This should be made visible and accessible too, both on the website as in the student buildings. In addition, this should be introduced to the students when moving to these housing facilities.

More information on the emergency number was also only accessible for staff and research is necessary for awareness on this emergency number among students and staff. The emergency number is not introduced to new students and staff nor visible in university buildings. In addition, there is a difference in information provided by language, in particular the *Regeling Vertrouwenspersoon aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (RUG)* (confidential advisor arrangement).

Lastly, despite the recent updates from the RUG, most policy documents are outdated and require updates as the results of this research report and further data on Gender Based Violence in the RUG suggests. One reading the policy documents must have access to the version number and date of adoption. In addition, an expiration date/ revision date should be included in each policy document to systematically evaluate and update the effectiveness of the policies in place. With an 'expiration date', policies are required to be placed on the agenda for evaluation, revision and renewal.

Clarity

The policy documents are vague without concrete measures, this leaves room for interpretation. This complicates the monitoring of the implementation of the policy guidelines.

Prevention

The Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct has been in place since 2009 and therefore it may be outdated despite it not saying when it should be revisited and revised. Since 2009 there have been new research reports, frameworks, legislations etc released relevant to the Code of Conduct and thus the Code of Conduct requires updates. In addition, known cases of sexual harassment at the RUG confirm the Code of Conduct requires revision to change the outcomes of the policy document. The Code of Conduct does refer to the Zero-Tolerance Policy of the RUG, as referred to in other policy documents and vice versa. However, solely referring is not enough when providing guidelines. These should include concrete measures, referring as well to the specified training(s) and how they are enforced. Neither does it include outcomes nor evaluations with evaluation strategies. As stated in the literature research, this is important to create the required culture

change. With the vague phrasing of measures, it is difficult to enforce. The focus of the Code of Conduct (as well as other policy documents stated below) is on the individual responsibility and the difficult to enforce measures are left to the individual's interpretation. Additionally, it is not explained in the Code of Conduct how to monitor these measures, nor how and when the individuals can participate in training nor how they will be trained. Lastly, the student charter is not highlighted in this document.

The Zero-Tolerance Policy

It is important to indeed as well have a Zero-Tolerance Policy stating the point of view against sexual harassment and how the RUG prevents and treats events of sexual harassment. It creates a common understanding of the broad definition of Zero tolerance contributing to the normative culture. The Zero-Tolerance Policy is regarded more as a statement rather than a policy document, while referring otherwise. Especially, with stating the collective responsibility and particular responsibilities for managers and professors without stating how these responsibilities are fulfilled. Therefore, the same as for the Code of Conduct can be said for the Zero-Tolerance Policy regarding concrete measures and left to individual responsibilities and interpretation. In addition, the Zero-Tolerance Policy requires elaboration regarding the P of prosecution from Uni-Safe, what steps the RUG will take in case of an event of sexual harassment. Moreover, this framework from the Uni-Safe shows points of improvement for all policy documents of the RUG to prevent and respond to sexual harassment. There is a clear gap of policy implementation.

Student Charter

The Student Charter is brought to the students attention by an email at the start of the academic year , yet the question is whether this brings enough awareness of the existence of the Student Charter and the importance of the content. By only sending out one email, this can be missed by the students. Students will remember the content better when bringing it to their attention during their introduction week in an academic advisory session. This should be included in the measures of the RUG policies, since it also contributes to their norms and values, and their perceived knowledge of what to do as a bystander. In addition, the students should become aware of their rights when starting their education.

Mandatory Consent Workshop

The First Year Committee of GRL shared informally with this research project that they organised a mandatory workshop about consent for the introduction week of the new first year students. The topic of consent has not been discussed at the website nor a mandatory lecture on consent for the first years, this should be added too to their policy documents and in addition to reflective research on the workshop should be repeated annually.

First response

The emergency 8050 phone number

The website of the emergency number of the RUG 8050 has more information restricted to staff when opening the two links www.rug.nl/8050 and www.rug.nl/amd. These short links are not accessible for students or guests. The awareness on this hotline is questionable since this information is not visible in the university buildings for students nor teachers. Moreover, it has not been shared recently with students nor teachers. Further research of whether students are aware of this hotline is needed. After asking the staff at the reception of UCF, this emergency number is for all RUG and therefore also UCF. Important to add for students and guests in UCF, the emergency number requires the Groninger digits before dialling 8050. Thus in UCF for students or other mobile phone calls to the 8050 emergency number, the emergency number is (+31) 050 8050.

Confidential advisor

Beside reaching out to the Confidential Advisor, it is not clear what immediate emergency steps the RUG can take for the victim and the perpetrator. Nor for the safety of the environment is mentioned what actions the RUG will take as first response. One of the documents regarding confidential advisor and general/follow-up response was solely in Dutch.

Legal Protection of Student Rights

The RUG does provide an overview of the students rights, however they do not explain it with exact steps of how the RUG protects them. It also does not prioritise the victim's needs and discusses no sanctions for the perpetrator.

Anonymous complaint

The possibility of anonymously lodging a complaint has been removed offline during the protests of social safety and the occupation of the RUG. First the shortlink did not work, later it was removed completely and left with the following statement: “*Complaints cannot be lodged anonymously since both parties must be heard in order to satisfactorily solve a complaint.*” Despite a solid reason of ‘both parties must be heard’, lodging an anonymous complaint should be a possibility to reach out for help and raise awareness as a victim as well as a bystander. The possibility to do this anonymously would contribute to tackling the bystander effect of audience inhibition, as mentioned in the literature research. In addition, the literature research also suggests anonymous complaints can prevent (the fear of) retaliation.

General and follow-up response

Despite the academic support provided by the academic advisor, the RUG does not provide general and follow-up response after an event of sexual harassment policy documents nor information on the website. This is a concerning result. Especially since the Zero Tolerance Policy states the contrary: “*We have guidance, policies and procedures to support all students and staff who are affected by harassment, bullying or hate crime.*” Without access to clear guidelines and general policy advice, the RUG limits their strategies in providing resources to both support the victim and to raise normative awareness. The literature review emphasises the importance of having these guidelines visibly in place so that it contributes to the normative culture concerning sexual harassment on the work floor and access to support for victims.

The academic support provided by the study advisor is important for victims in case of study delay, problems with study financing, deadline extensions and other important matters to notify teachers, providing additional support resources and selecting/changing courses. Since there are no guidelines available for victims with their rights for the selection or changing of courses, this limits the possibilities in academic prospect for victims of sexual harassment. If for example, a victim of sexual harassment has to complete the same courses as their perpetrator, a special effort should be provided so that the risk of sharing the same spaces are minimised and the academic needs of the victim are protected and met. In this case, a solution could be to prioritise the victim of sexual harassment in their choice of courses. Some faculties of the RUG already do this informally, while others choose not to and rely more on a laissez-faire approach.

A structured policy regulation and guidance is therefore urgently needed to avoid an imbalanced study environment that favours the perpetrator in detriment of the victim.

Limitations

In this research project, there was a time constraint to study the policies of the RUG and there was not enough time to study those of other universities to compare them. In addition, this research project solely focused on the policy level and did not investigate how they are enforced. Therefore, this research did not include the key actors involved in drafting the policies. Thus, this limitation requires the recommendation of further research. Nevertheless, a similar capstone project ran parallel to this research focussing on the key actors involved in addition to a survey held at UCF on Gender Based Violence. In addition to time, the logbook was not finished near the end of trying to collect data, it lacks notes from a search attempt after 24th of April (see Appendix III).

The sudden change and updates of the RUG's policy documents regarding sexual harassment seems a limitation, yet it must rather be seen as a result of the policies requiring revision and change adding value to this research report.

Another result that might seem as a limitation which requires to be addressed is the fact that during the data collection it was impossible to find policy documents regarding sexual harassment for the UCF and UCG in relation to their student housing, and for policies regarding general and follow-up response.

Lastly, it is important to mention that the policy analysis was not about quantity of the policies but analysing the quality of RUG's policy documents. Despite not being able to find policy documents regarding the faculties UCF and UCG, the general policies could work for all faculties when including among others the student housing which makes UCF and UCG stand out. This as well seems a limitation yet it must be seen as a result.

Recommendations

- Improve visibility of the policy documents regarding sexual harassment by:
 - Having a visible direct link to a webpage of the policy documents regarding sexual harassment of the RUG on the Website of the RUG
 - Including adding it to the webpages for each faculty

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- Including adding it to the homepage 'Today' of brightspace for both students and staff
- An up to date hard copy in each faculty/university building and qr code to the up to date policy documents regarding sexual harassment on the information (bulletin) board
- Placing a visible qr code to the policy documents on the information bulletin board in the student housing provided by the RUG
- Introducing the policy documents in regards to sexual harassment to all new students of the RUG in the introduction week
 - Bring attention to the Student Charter next to the send out email in the start of the academic year
 - Use the Academic Advisement sessions to also introduce and discuss the policies
- Introducing the policy documents in regards to sexual harassment to all new staff when becoming an employee of the RUG
- Improving monitoring of the policy documents by
 - Adding the version number and date of adoption
 - Adding the expiration date/ revision date
 - Add these to the agenda of policy making
 - Use input from all target groups when reviewing and revising/updating the policy documents
 - Annually reviewing the visibility of the policy documents regarding sexual harassment by conducting surveys among both staff and students of all faculties
- Improving accessibility by
 - Providing all documents in both Dutch and English
 - As mentioned above with visibility, provide a clear overview of the policy documents regarding sexual harassment in one webpage which is visible on the website of the RUG and the websites of each faculty
 - This includes policy documents on
 - Prevention
 - First response

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- General and follow-up response
- Academic support
- And this includes an overview of the steps
 - The victim can take when becoming a victim of sexual harassment
 - The bystander can take when witnessing an event of sexual harassment
 - The RUG will take with the perpetrator of sexual harassment
- And this includes an overview of the services the RUG provides to a victim of sexual harassment
 - Also including external services such as
 - Reporting to the police, how to contact them and the importance of contacting them
 - How to apply for help from Slachtofferhulp and Centrum Seksueel Geweld
 - In case of the event of sexual harassment having happened less than 7 days, to contact the police and hospital for forensic and health research
- Improve the policy documents on prevention by:
 - Providing the definition and information of sexual harassment
 - Provide them in introduction week for students and when hiring new staff
 - Provide them in student housing provided by the RUG
 - Provide bystander-trainings to all students and staff when starting their academic time at RUG
 - Provide the steps the RUG will take
- Improve (the policy documents on) first response by:
 - further research of whether students are aware of this hotline is needed
 - Provide a first response plan for victims and bystanders
 - Provide mandatory bystander trainings for staff and students so that bystanders know how and when to intervene
 - Provide sanctions for perpetrators
- Improve (the policy documents on) general response and follow-up response by:

- Prioritising the victim's needs over the needs of the perpetrator by
 - Providing the option to victims to choose their courses first and by not letting the perpetrator in the same course electives and workshops etc
- Monitoring the environment of the event of sexual assault to find points of improvement preventing it to happen in the same context again

Recommended further research

1. Student housing provided by the RUG requires further research and policy guidelines for a safer student housing environment. In addition, it requires an evaluation of whether student housing should stay mandatory.
2. In addition to the first years' housing, further research is required on the *consent workshop* provided to the first years of UCF from next academic year on. The workshop could improve the current prevention strategies of the RUG and the safety in student housing.
3. Further research on how other universities (/campuses) provide support and prevent events of sexual harassment in both the Netherlands and members of the Uni-Safe.
4. Further research of whether students are aware of the 8050 hotline is needed.
5. It is recommended to keep checking whether the RUG evaluates and updates their own policies in time and structurally.

Conclusion

The RUG needs to admit that there is a problem of sexual harassment within the RUG, the policies are not accessible let alone visible and seemed to be swept under the rug; they require revision and change. Priority should be given to the victim. A structured policy regulation and guidance is therefore urgently needed to avoid an imbalanced study environment that favours the perpetrator in detriment of the victim.

There needs to be a policy on preventing and responding to sexual harassment since there are cases of sexual harassment known in the RUG showing the policy implementation gap. In addition to the main policy of sexual harassment, there should be a student housing based policy

on how to prevent and provide help to victims of sexual harassment in student housing and parties. It needs to be clear and accessible for victims, with a focus on protecting, supporting and trusting the victim. Therefore, when a perpetrator is not being expelled from university, the victim should receive the right of choosing their courses first with assurance of the university not having them two in the same courses and other lectures.

This research report analysed the policies in place of the RUG regarding sexual harassment; its policies for prevention, first response, general and follow-up response and academic support to answer the first research question: *What are the policies RUG has in place to prevent, respond, react to episodes of sexual harassment?* (RQ1). In addition, with collecting the data, the visibility and accessibility of the policy documents were analysed as well. This contributes to Q2: *Does RUG promote and raise awareness on social safety and their policies on social safety and sexual harassment, and does RUG have a clear guidance on how to reach out and make use of their resources?*.

Thirdly, this study aimed to suggest improvements by analysing what is missing and/or what can be improved, in addition, by analysing the RUG policies based on literature review and regulatory and legislative frameworks: *To what extent do RUG policies comply with national and international regulations for sexual harassment in higher education?* (RQ3). For additional input to improve RUG's policies in regards to sexual harassment, it is recommended to still do this research in which the RUG compares their policies and requests advicement from other universities. Nevertheless, this research report does include recommendations based on important points of improvement in their policy documents, in their visibility and accessibility to the policy documents and guidelines. Thus, this research report in combination with the advice is required to be evaluated for implementation and further research by the board of the RUG.

The most important recommendations are

- Visibility and accessibility
- Priority to the victim, provide clear and concise steps
- Explicit steps RUG, victim, and bystander can take
- Review and revise the policy documents, annually data-collection and add expiration/revision date
- Mandatory trainings for staff and students

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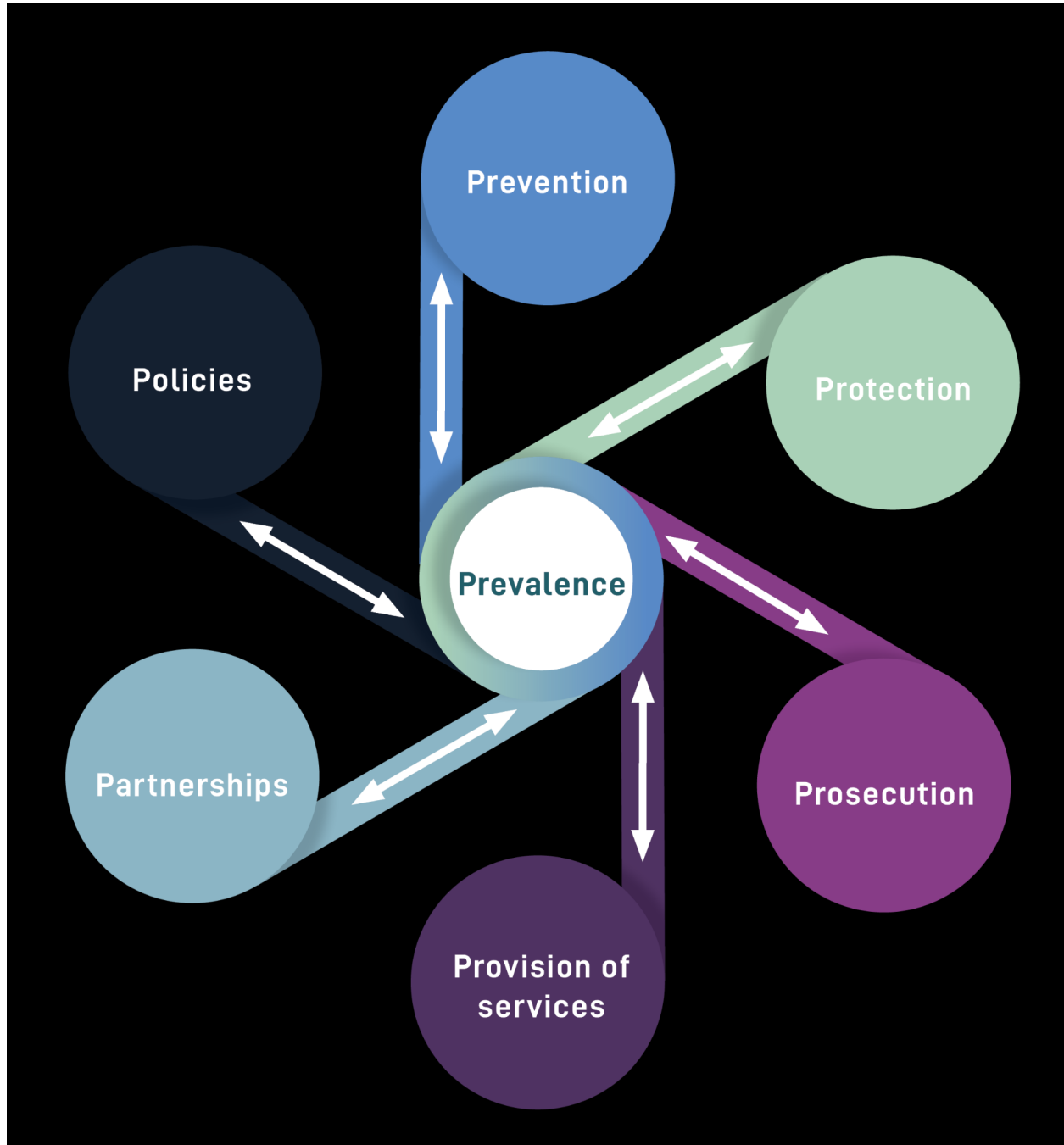
Appendix

In case someone wants to print out this research report, the appendixes are provided with short-links to a shared drive in which the documents can be found.

In addition, a QR-code to lead you to the shared folder in which you can open the appendix



Appendix I - 7P Model of Uni-Safe



Model retrieved from (Uni-Safe, 2023) and a video explaining the model can be found on their website or <https://youtu.be/wom6QqeSki8>

Link to Uni-Safe's White Paper for policymakers and institutional managers

<https://zenodo.org/record/7870610>

Appendix II - Overview of analysed policies

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1-S4tfT8VmLHxb_nCdseU2rhRDWEuZpIxQwd1KRBQ06o/edit?usp=share_link

Appendix III - Logbook data-collection process

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FpUt-IDKsl2ZXwszyqzDApBTzQYi6smcmZZhuzyz_P0/edit?usp=share_link