



**Universiteit  
Leiden**  
The Netherlands



# Declaration of Equity

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR STUDY ASSOCIATIONS

Drafted in 2022-2023

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## Preface

This document is the collective effort of the Study Associations Consultation Platform (StOP), the Leiden Assessor's Council (LAssO) and the Advisor to the Executive Board of the University of Applied Sciences Leiden (UAS Leiden). Most importantly, however, the efforts of the StOP are most present through its members, the study associations from Leiden University and the UAS Leiden. Through regular working group sessions with experts on topics relating to *diversity, equity and inclusion*, these partners have finalised a Declaration of Equity.

The declaration shall function as a pledge to shape any association into one that is accessible, inclusive, and safe. This declaration can be used by both boards and members of associations to show as well as make sure that the D&I values described herein are actively represented within the association and its documents. Furthermore, the declaration offers specific directions for an association to follow in order to become one where equal opportunities for all are at the foundation. This declaration will serve as an impulse for any signatory to work towards and see their organisation become one where more people feel welcome, can actively participate and are able to flourish.

Although this declaration was created under the supervision of various actors from within the University of Leiden and UAS Leiden it is in no way regulated by these institutions, it is entirely between an association and its members. This declaration will be signed as an association, not as an individual board. It is therefore important to check any bylaws and/or statutes to make sure that not only do these reflect the D&I values stated in this declaration, but also to check the proper process for signing the declaration. Once this declaration is signed, it serves as a letter of intent on behalf of the whole association and can be used by its members to keep all functioning organs within the association accountable for the dissemination of the D&I values. It can also be used to serve as a guide to deal with situations that go against the D&I values, both between members, between members and organs or within organs of the association.

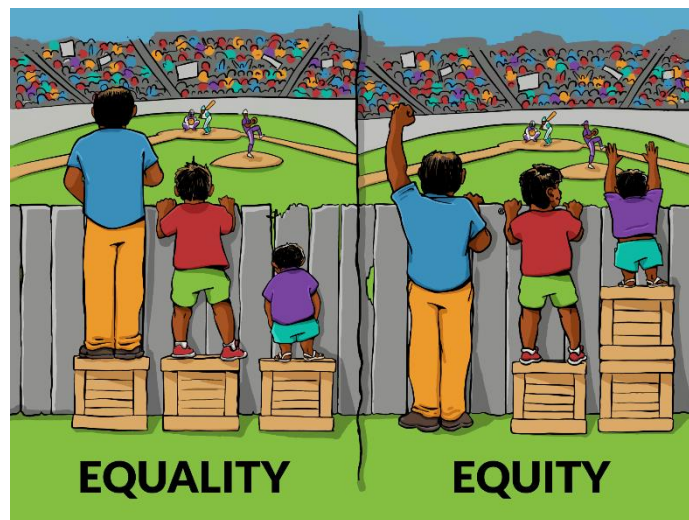
It is important to note that this declaration was drafted by people from different backgrounds, but that blind spots will most likely have remained. It will remain a continuous effort to remedy blind spots in this document, not just through gaining knowledge and setting goals, but through dialogue and understanding fellow humans.

## Importance of reflection on Diversity, Inclusion and Equity

Inclusion is a goal that is often set within organisations in order to embrace diversity, but often remains vague and theoretical. This declaration encourages associations to actively reflect on their diversity and inclusion policies and really put them into practice. Thereby making it easier to take steps to make the association more inclusive and equitable not only in theory, but also in practice.

### a. Equity and Equality

When talking about Diversity and Inclusion, terms that generally come up are 'equality' and 'equity'. These terms are used pretty similarly to each other, but actually entail quite different ways of going about D&I practices. Equality speaks to the goal of everybody being equal to one another and receiving equal rights, possibilities, etc., while equity speaks to the belief that everyone should be treated in a way that levels the playing field. Equality would mean to give everybody the exact same, while equity looks at the person and see what they would need to be on the same level as the rest. See the image below for a clear visual image of these two terms. Because we believe that we should strive for students that can flourish within our associations, we think we should strive for equity where possible instead of equality, hence the name of this declaration.



### b. Incorporate into policy and multi-year plans

Study associations generally change their boards every year. Therefore, a plan that one board sets up can easily get watered down in the following year. The purpose of this declaration is to ensure that the diversity and inclusion practices of a study association will remain steady over the years and that the transition to a truly inclusive study association transcends individual boards and board members. Therefore it is important that current board members, apart from signing this statement, include diversity and inclusion in a multi-year plan so that the topic is not diluted after a board change. The inclusion in this multi-year plan can be as easy as adding a heading regarding the specific D&I values the associations wants to represent to its members and the outside world, or as complex as adding in a detailed step-by-step process of becoming more inclusive over a specific period of time. This all depends on how your association works and what you feel your association would benefit from the most in the long run.

c. Put it into practice

After the values of D&I have been included in your association's policies (and possibly in the bylaws and/or statutes), you need to implement it into the daily workings of your association. Associations that want to work on diversity and inclusion often lack the specific methods to apply this in practice. This declaration will therefore offer concrete examples for practically addressing diversity and inclusion, with specific reference to study associations. These specific examples will be made in collaboration with study associations, so that they correspond to the current situations of the associations. The most important note we will make however, is that you actively need to address D&I within your association and the organs that organise various activities for your members, so that the values slowly get into the core of your association and become something integral.

d. Making it discussable

Diversity and inclusion can be a sensitive topic for some. This makes the threshold higher for students to talk about it or report situations that are not inclusive to the board of their study association. It is therefore up to the study association itself to lower this threshold by creating a safe environment where diversity and inclusion can and will be discussed. It should also be clearly communicated that the topics of diversity and inclusion can be discussed and that there is room for an open conversation. It is up to your association to choose how to best address the topic of D&I and where that should be done. Some associations might choose to include a chapter on D&I in their policy and consequently discuss the topic during a general assembly, others might choose to have an activity where D&I can be openly discussed in regards to the study programme, the association itself or even within society as a whole and yet others might choose to integrate it in a more covert way by organising a documentary streaming, game night, training, lecture, etc. regarding diversity and inclusion.

e. Dealing with differing opinions

As study associations are a host to many different students, it might occur that within this student group there are vastly different opinions on certain topics. This can make conversations incredibly interesting, but can also lead to difficulties and possibly to heightened emotions and heated discussions. Sometimes it might even lead to (verbal) violence in some way. When dealing with differing opinions, it is important to have the value of respect as a steadfast pillar in the association. You need to make it clear that differing opinions are welcome and appreciated, as long as they respect the other's opinion and allow for an open discussion. As a board, or other organ dealing with these kinds of discussions, you also shouldn't be afraid to step up when a discussion is getting heated and remind all participating parties of this value of respect. If that doesn't work, it might be time to have a serious conversation with the parties that were not respectful and possibly take further action where necessary (think of banning from certain activities, suspension or even expulsion from the association).

When someone's opinion goes directly against the values you as an association dissipate, it might be good to start a conversation with that person and see if a bond of respect can be created. Otherwise further action might have to be taken as described above.

## Chapter 1: Accessibility

One of the most important topics within the discussion of inclusion is accessibility. Accessibility means that you actively think about your activities and the people that would not be able to join those for some reason, whether that reason is mental/physical disabilities, allergies, personal beliefs or any other reason, and adapt your activities to fit the most people. About 10% of our student body has any variation of an (in)visible disability.

It is almost impossible to conceive of all the issues your members might be dealing with that would prohibit them from joining an activity, but the most important thing is to ask around and make sure you take into account the disabilities (in the broadest sense) you know are present within your association and be open for any changes that occur within that.

Below there will be a list of helpful tips and easy fixes that will make your association and activities more accessible and thus more inclusive!

1. Make your activities as inclusive as possible from the start: wheelchair friendly locations, different dietary possibilities for food-related activities, activities both at night and during the day, always have non-alcoholic options, etc.
2. Communicate with your members and invite them for a discussion about the accessibility within your association! Also make sure that all the board members are clearly open to these discussions.
3. Have a space for comments on preferences and/or specific needs in registration forms for activities or the registration form for your association.
4. Create a clear and continued space where people can leave comments about accessibility and/or the inclusion within your association on your website, social media platforms, within WhatsApp groups, in your common room, or any other means of communication you might use.
5. Make it clear in the promotion if activities might not be accessible to some members (not wheelchair friendly for example) or specify how you will make an activity accessible to as much people as possible.
6. Have regular breaks during activities and excursions and/or communicate what the expected time period will be (give activities a start and an end time).
7. Make sure that your (disabled) members have a proper channel in your association to pinpoint and address issues they are experiencing.
8. Always try to deliver transcripts of videos (the university offers tools for this!).
9. Caption images with descriptions of the image.
10. Reassure your (prospective) members that your association isn't just about the "traditional association experience" of partying and drinking alcohol!
11. Organise activities during the day as well! It can take a lot of extra energy for people to join activities in the evening.

Furthermore, if you have any other questions or doubts, don't hesitate to contact Student Support Services and Fenestra for advice! Fenestra is the place to go for all students with any disabilities, they assist in getting all students the necessary coordination, facilities and equal opportunities.

## Chapter 2: Confidential Counsellors

To make diversity and inclusion discussable, two or more confidential counsellors can be appointed within an association. These confidential counsellors will need to be announced to and accepted by your member body and can receive an official training from Winston and Partners offered by StOP and Leiden University.

Confidential counsellors need to keep to a specific set of rules to ensure their credibility and safeguard the personal stories your members share. These rules include amongst others; confidentiality (not sharing what they hear with any external members unless explicitly discussed with the person in question), offering anonymity (if discussing these cases with external members, it will always be anonymous) and impartiality (being unbiased and objective in all cases).

The role of a confidential counsellor is to serve as a listening ear to members who simply want to get something off their chest, members who are not sure what to do with a situation that occurred to them and members that want to actively change the situation they're in or that occurred to them within the association context. The purpose of appointing confidential counsellors is to lower the threshold for discussing issues of, amongst others, diversity and inclusion. Allowing members to share their experiences anonymously can increase the likelihood of members sharing uncomfortable situations or altercations with other members. These experiences can be very valuable in increasing diversity and inclusiveness.

As association's confidential counsellor, or confidential contact person as it is officially called, you are not in any way a professional so it is very important to make it clear that they can offer a listening ear, help in getting into contact with the association's board about situations or refer the member to an external party that can do something about the situation. The confidential counsellor can also take some steps themselves, but only if they feel that the situation is dangerous to either the member reporting or any other involved party.

## Chapter 3: Standing against criminal behaviour

By signing this declaration, the association declares an explicit prohibition of any criminal behaviour, such as discriminatory policies or symbols, and will be processed as such in the statutes or bylaws. The association will also refrain from discriminatory attitudes or expressions in its communication channels, at activities and in its premises. Provided this pledge is violated, members may hold the board (or the person(s) in question) accountable by following the protocol below.

### Protocol (for specific cases)

Provided there is a violation of this prohibition, protocol may be followed by the appropriate member of the association who witnessed the incident.

If there is a violation by a board member:

1. (Addressing this person)
2. Approach a confidential counsellor and make a report of the incident
3. Discuss this at a General Assembly in consultation with the confidential counsellors
4. Contacting uni/hsl
5. Suspension as a board member

If there is a violation by a member:

1. (Addressing this person)
2. Approach the board and make a report of the incident
3. Approach a confidential counsellor and make a report of the incident  
(provided the board has not already done so)
4. Engage in conversation with the member in question by either the board, confidential counsellors, or both. This may include a possible warning.
5. Suspension

If there is uncertainty about the right action to take, help can be sought from the persons and agencies mentioned in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4: Approaching the learning institution for help

### Leiden university

#### a. Diversity officer

The Diversity & Inclusion expertise centre is not primarily there to deal with individual occurrences, but exists to prevent occurrences through preventive policies, workshops and meetings. If structural problems arise, the Diversity Officer Aya Ezawa or the expertise centre can be called in to help look for a solution.

#### b. Bodies

For individual incidents, the University has different bodies that can be approached to deal with them. There is currently no clear protocol for this, but this is currently being looked into within the University. Student Party LVS has drawn up a schedule of where people can currently go with complaints. Below is the schedule:

Type of complaint	Complaints coordinator	Contact address
Course content; lecturer attitude; choices of programme board; general complaints about programme or lecturer	<a href="#">Programme Committee</a>	See link
Choices of Faculty Board; events within faculty	<a href="#">Faculty Council members</a>	See link
Choices made by Executive Board; events within university	<a href="#">University Council members</a>	See link
General complaints concerning student coordinators; student advisors; inappropriate behavior between students; cases within a faculty	<a href="#">Assessor of the Faculty Board</a>	assessor@[insert faculty].leidenuniv.nl
Unfair treatment; bullying; harassment; discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, disabilities, political views and nationality; (sexual) harassment; aggression and violence	<a href="#">External confidential counselors: Marieke Brunings. Portia van Dorp website</a>	Marieke: mbrunings@winstonpartners.nl Portia: pvandorp@winstonpartners.nl
Exclusion; racism; problematic culture	<a href="#">Universitaire Diversity Officer (Aya Ezawa)</a>	diversiteit@leidenuniv.nl
Improper treatment by a university employee or governing body	<a href="#">Ombuds Officer (Eugène van der Heijden)</a>	ombudsfunctionaris@leidenuniv.nl
Unacceptable behaviour	<a href="#">Complaints Committee for Unacceptable Behaviour</a>	secretariaat-jz@bb.leidenuniv.nl
Confidential Counsellors of the University (unacceptable behaviour)	<a href="#">Marieke Brunings or Portia van Dorp</a>	<a href="mailto:mbrunings@winstonpartners.nl">mbrunings@winstonpartners.nl</a> or <a href="mailto:pvandorp@winstonpartners.nl">pvandorp@winstonpartners.nl</a>



## The university of Applied Sciences Leiden

Students of the University of Applied Sciences can contact the confidential counsellors with all types of complaints, including cases involving discrimination or racism. There are four confidential counsellors that can all be reached via [vertrouwenspersonen.bb@hsleiden.nl](mailto:vertrouwenspersonen.bb@hsleiden.nl). Employees and students can also find individual phone numbers, e-mail addresses and photos of the confidential counsellors through the internal website of the University of Applied Sciences.

## Signatories

Aesculapius



B.I.L.



Chemisch Dispuut Leiden



Clavis



CoDe



EMILE



Exon



FDL Gibaloux



Fortuna



GOSSA



HSVL



IESA SHIFT



IRSA



Itiwana



JFV Grotius



JHV Themis



JSV Liberi



JSV Libra



Juventas



L.A.S. Terra



Labyrinth



De Leidsche Flesch



Leidse Biologen Club



LKV



L.S.A. Custodia



L.S.K.



LSV Ingenium



LUNAS



Maktub



MFLS



MOST



MSVL Floris V



NNP



Nucleus



Pecunia non Olet



Pro Archia



Res Publica



S!MP



SBR Leiden



Sine Labore Nihil



Sophia Aeterna



SPIL



SSW



Studievereniging Epione



Studievereniging Intens



Suum Cuique



S.V. LIFE



S.V. MensSana



SVS



Symposion



T.W.I.S.T.



