



Code of Conduct

Version 2025

Code of Conduct

Introduction

The Open University aims to offer innovative and flexible academic education for all, regardless of background or location. This requires a safe work and study environment, where staff and students of the university and visitors to it treat each other with respect. The OU Code of Conduct and all rules included in and related to it provide a framework for this.

The OU Code of Conduct applies to all conduct at OU premises, as well as conduct when working or studying online or off campus.

Not everything can be captured by rules. Collaboration usually goes well, but can sometimes require effort. Keep talking to each other. That way we will ensure a safe, respectful and inspiring environment.

Our conduct

The Open University is open, independent, accessible and innovative. Those qualities guide the conduct of staff and students, in all our forms of collaboration.

We collaborate: We are convinced that collaboration makes us stronger. That is why collaboration and connection are central to what we do: in research, including interdisciplinary research, in our teams, in the connection between education and research, with our students, our partners, other universities and with the region.

We are open: We are transparent in our communications and are open to different opinions and viewpoints, online and offline.

Everyone feels free to express his or her view. It is all right to make mistakes. We ask for help, help each other and share our knowledge. We give and receive feedback in an honest, clear and respectful manner. We do not shy away from difficult conversations. We are receptive when tackled about our own conduct, results or collaboration and are willing to reflect on this. We make a distinction between disputes about our role or how we are performing it and social and emotional disputes. We do not operate on the basis of assumptions or preconceptions: not when it comes to each other, nor as regards our work or studies.

We are independent: Academic freedom is the norm. We act ethically, professionally and responsibly, avoiding conflicts of interest, in accordance with the **Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity**. Staff and students have the space to develop their talents. We are ambitious, careful, reliable, critical and transparent. We respect each other and also learning and knowledge. We value personal initiative and entrepreneurship, and appreciate each other's achievements.

We are accessible: The Open University makes academic education accessible to all. We are actively inclusive.

Our student population is unique and diverse. We value the dynamism that this diversity brings and are sympathetic to and respect differences in opinion, learning style, living conditions or stage of life. We take needs and limitations into account, including in the workplace.

We are innovative: We are forward-looking and ambitious in the continuous renewal and improvement of the education we provide, digitally or otherwise.

When used, technology, including AI, is deployed transparently, ethically and responsibly by everyone at the OU in research, education and assessments.



Undesirable conduct

Undesirable conduct on the part of staff or students is stressful for the person concerned because it threatens or damages his or her physical or mental integrity. It also damages the organisation.

Undesirable conduct is not tolerated at the Open University.

Examples of undesirable conduct include:

- Insults, belittling or name-calling
- Discrimination based on gender, origin, age, religion or orientation
- Sexual harassment, including through messages or images
- Bullying or exclusion, online and offline
- Aggressive or threatening language
- Disrupting teaching, online or otherwise, or meetings
- Deliberately ignoring others in discussions, meetings, teaching or group assignments, online or otherwise
- Persistently avoiding feedback or corrective action because of 'feeling unsafe', without having been exposed to any form of undesirable conduct.

Needless to say, our conduct in online collaboration, on digital platforms and learning environments, and in the use of digital resources is in line with this Code of Conduct. **Specific conduct rules concerning digital privacy, AI use, plagiarism, deep fakes, cyber bullying and disinformation apply additionally.**

Doing nothing about undesirable conduct is not an option for us.
Take action if you are subjected to undesirable conduct, or if you see others being exposed to it. The **Undesirable Conduct Guide** sets out the action you can take. Discussing or reporting the conduct enables us as an organisation to learn from it and, we hope, prevent it in future.

Anyone working or studying at the Open University:

- Shows respect, commitment and responsibility towards staff, students, the university and society.
- Is free to think independently, but always meets the high standards of responsibility and integrity that come with this.
- Is prepared to test his or her own behaviour against that of others, and against this Code of Conduct.
- Is familiar with the contents of this Code of Conduct and complies with it.

This Code of Conduct was adopted by the Executive Board on 7 October 2025 following consultation with the Management Team. The Online Rules of Conduct are periodically evaluated and updated where necessary.