

What can you do when facing inappropriate behaviour?

Are you experiencing (cyber)bullying, stalking, doxxing, discrimination, sexual harassment, intimidation, aggression, or violence? Here's what you can do as a **PhD candidate**.

Engage in dialogue (if possible)



Take a moment to reflect:

- What exactly happened? What behaviour is affecting you?
- Why is the other person's behaviour unacceptable to you?
- What do you want to achieve? For example, do you want the person to stop the behaviour and offer an apology?
- Talk to someone you trust. Together, assess if you feel able to address the issue directly with the person involved, or whether you might need support.

Talk to the person displaying the behaviour:

- A calm and open conversation can often make a big difference.
- Use 'I' statements—for example: "I feel uncomfortable when you..."
- Describe how the behaviour affects you.
- Be open to the other person's response—they may feel caught off guard.
- Stay calm and clear in your communication.

Ask for help or report the issue



Reach out to your (Co-)promotor or PhD candidate advisor to discuss what is needed to resolve the situation.

Not willing or able to speak with them?

You can also report the issue to a confidential counsellor.

- Confidential counsellors offer support, inform you about possible next steps, and assist you in resolving the issue.

- All conversations with a confidential counsellor are strictly confidential. They will never take action without your knowledge and consent.
- The confidential counsellor can also refer you to other forms of support.

Contact the confidential counsellors:

- staff (for PhD candidates employed by VU Amsterdam)
- students (for external PhD candidates)

File a formal complaint



Would you like to file a complaint because informal mediation has not resolved the issue for you?

In that case, you must first report the matter to the central confidential counsellors.

They can support you in submitting a formal complaint. Your complaint will then be reviewed by an independent committee. The complaints committee will hear both you and the respondent, either

together or separately. Following this investigation, the Executive Board will determine whether your complaint is well-founded or unfounded, based on the committee's recommendation.

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