

A vibrant, stylized illustration of a person in a blue suit and white shirt, sitting cross-legged and holding a large smartphone. The person is surrounded by various digital and social media icons, including a heart, a thumbs up, a speech bubble, a laptop, and a smartphone. The background is a dark blue gradient.



1. About the campaign and this toolkit

How we behave has an effect on others. Even when interacting online, for example in WhatsApp groups, discussion boards on Brightspace, or in chat during online lectures, we need to consider a number of guidelines. The university is an academic environment and as such, the guidelines for online etiquette (netiquette) may be slightly different to those in, say, private WhatsApp groups.

To make students more aware of this, Leiden University has launched a campaign entitled *Dignity and respect in the online learning environment*. Together with students, we have developed tips and illustrations to encourage everyone at the university to think about their online behaviour, and to help ensure a pleasant learning environment. It's not rocket science. By drawing attention to this topic and reflecting on our own behaviour, we can all contribute to a positive and respectful online learning environment.

To publicise these tips we need your help. You can draw attention to them during lectures, and highlight them in any online groups you manage. In this toolkit, you can find all the information and tools you need to spread the word.

Together, we can ensure a pleasant and safe learning environment. Both online and offline.

Who are these resources intended for?

The tips and illustrations have been created to share in any education-related online group. Anyone who manages one of these groups, for example lecturers, mentors and tutors, can make use of the tools. You can also use the toolkit if you are the administrator of an online group, for example, for a study association or a student support group. And when holding online lectures and meetings, you can share the tips via a PowerPoint slide.

Are you the administrator of a group that was set up in the past by someone else? You can still make use of the tips and illustrations.

2. Instructions

Online groups (such as WhatsApp and Discord)

If you are the administrator of an online group or community, you can share the tips and illustration in the chat. Preferably when starting a new group so that the house rules are clear from the outset. Write your own introduction first before sharing the tips and illustration. See the example below, which you are of course free to modify:

Welcome to this group. Together we ensure a pleasant and respectful learning environment at Leiden University. I would therefore like to share some tips for this [Whatsapp group/online community] that you might not have considered so often in your private online environments.

Then, in your second post, share the illustration showing the list of tips (Dos). That way they will be easy to find later by searching through the images shared in the group. The Dos are aimed at

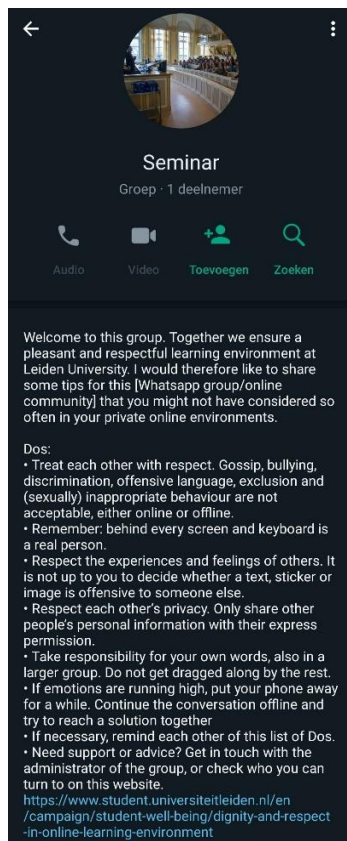
everyone, so you can copy them without editing. We recommend also copying the Dos to the group description.

Dos:

- Treat each other with respect. Gossip, bullying, discrimination, offensive language, exclusion and (sexually) inappropriate behaviour are not acceptable, either online or offline.
- Remember: behind every screen and keyboard is a real person.
- Respect the experiences and feelings of others. It is not up to you to decide whether a text, sticker or image is offensive to someone else.
- Respect each other's privacy. Only share other people's personal information with their express permission.
- Take responsibility for your own words, also in a larger group. Do not get dragged along by the rest.
- If emotions are running high, put your phone away for a while. Continue the conversation offline and try to reach a solution together.
- If necessary, remind each other of this list of Dos.
- Need support or advice? Get in touch with the administrator of the group, or check who you can turn to on [this website](#).

The goal is to make all group members aware of their own influence on the learning environment, how they can contribute in a positive way, and what is expected in an online academic setting. This begins with the principle that all students should be treated equally. Also consider the language of the group. If some group members don't speak Dutch, use English and state this in your opening message.

Should there be any inappropriate behaviour in the group, you can then remind each other of the list of Dos in a very concrete way. This can be done by you as group administrator or by other group members. If unacceptable or transgressive behaviour does take place, it is important that this is flagged. You don't have to judge or find a solution. Just state that you have seen it. By acknowledging that there is a problem, you are already supporting the other person. If you need further advice, contact the study adviser, director of the programme or a confidential adviser.



Example for the group description



Example for the chat message

Online education (such as Kaltura and MS Teams)

When teaching online, you can choose to share the list of tips (Dos) as text in the chat at the beginning of your lecture. Do you want to specifically talk about the Dos during a lecture or in the mentor group? Show the illustration (PowerPoint slide) at the beginning of the session.

Brightspace

Feel free to also share the list of tips (Dos) and the illustration in your Brightspace environment.

3. FAQs

What is the reason behind the campaign?

Unfortunately, unacceptable behaviour does take place in the online learning environment. Complaints have been made. For this reason, the university has decided to draw attention to the topic of dignity and respect in the online learning environment. This is with the aim of making everyone aware of their role in contributing to a respectful learning environment, as well as what to do if they experience unacceptable behaviour and where to turn for support. Dignity and respect is a prerequisite for a good study and work environment at the university.

Academic freedom and freedom of expression

Leiden University attaches great importance to academic freedom. Academic freedom ensures space for conducting research, reporting findings and developing teaching. There are a number of basic principles in place for undertaking research and teaching: honesty, diligence, independence and responsibility. For these, freedom of expression is a prerequisite. In this respect, a founding principle

within our university community is that statements and perspectives may not offend, humiliate, exclude or discriminate against others.

What should I say if people ask about the campaign?

Refer them to the campaign website. Here they can find further information on [dignity and respect in the online learning environment](#).

What should I do if I get negative reactions to the Dos and illustration

People can react differently to the tips in the campaign. Responses might also be negative. If this happens, indicate that the Dos were drafted by the university in consultation with student representatives. They were deliberately worded in a positive manner to encourage respect. The illustration is intended as an invitation to reflect and start a dialogue on social contact in the online learning environment.

What is discrimination?

The university community is diverse: staff and students have very different backgrounds and identities. At the same time, we are all equal under the law. Discrimination is about unequal treatment. In other words, treating people differently, disadvantaging them, or excluding them on the basis of personal characteristics or background. For example, receiving a lower grade for the same work because of assumptions about your identity or ethnicity.

Forms of exclusion are not limited to intentional unequal treatment. There are many forms of discrimination, both direct and indirect. Prejudice plays out in everyday life, also in online environments. Comments, jokes, and statements that reinforce prejudices and assumptions, in which one group is portrayed as inferior and another as superior, can have consequences for both you and others. Racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism and sexism are based on ideas that reinforce hierarchies between groups in the form of fear, prejudice, unequal treatment, aggression, and discrimination. Respect for one another means treating each other in an equal manner, and not, through behaviour or remarks, belittling people, treating them unfairly, or making jokes about them.

What is sexism?

Sexism is behaviour focused on assumptions and prejudices against women and men. For example, stereotypes about people's abilities and character based on their gender.

What is racism?

Racism is an ideology or view in which people are considered inferior based on their origin or appearance. Racism can manifest itself in both conscious and unconscious statements, actions and behaviour, and as an integral part of existing structures and institutions. Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and xenophobia are forms of racism. Examples of such prejudices include thinking that a person is less smart, or is not really a university student, based on their origin or appearance.

What is ableism

Ableism is discrimination, marginalisation and stigmatisation of people with disabilities. The assumption that a healthy body, mobility, vision and hearing are the norm, and those without them are inferior, is a form of ableism. Facilities for students and staff with disabilities are not an 'extra' but a way in which different needs are recognised and supported.

What is homophobia? What is transphobia?

Homophobia literally means fear of homosexual and bisexual orientations and behaviours. Transphobia means fear of transgender identities and other gender identities and their behaviour. Heteronormativity means seeing heterosexuality as the norm. For example, the assumption that

everyone falls for someone of the opposite sex. This leads to situations that can be perceived as exclusionary.

Where can I learn more about these topics?

Both study associations and student associations can follow training courses to learn more about different forms of exclusion and about creating safer spaces. Contact the D&I Expertise Office for more information: diversiteit@leidenuniv.nl.

What do we mean by sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is any form of sexual behaviour that is perceived as unwanted or coerced by the person experiencing it. It is also known as sexually transgressive behaviour or sexual violence. Online sexual harassment is, for example:

- Intimidating or transgressive comments or (online) messages.
- Spreading sexually explicit images or messages without consent, or threatening to do so.

Read here what to do if you experience [unacceptable behaviour](#).

4. Contact person for questions

For questions about the *Dignity and respect in the online learning environment* campaign, contact the student well-being team: studentwellbeing@sea.leidenuniv.nl

Attachments

- Illustration
- List of tips (Dos)
- PowerPoint slide of Dos - for online lectures
- Link to website