

May 2023

Dear students and colleagues,

With interest we have read of the annual reports 2022 from the confidential advisors, the ombuds officer for students and the ombuds officer for staff. All three reports show that responding promptly to signs that something is not going well in the work or study environment is not yet a matter of course. Everyone associated with TU Delft should be able to work or study in a safe and inclusive environment, with room to develop themselves. Therefore, we consider these three reports together to be an important, compelling recommendation for further improving the work and study environment.

The team of confidential advisors reports an upward trend over the past year in terms of the number of reports and signals. The reporting figures from the annual reports of the two ombuds officers are somewhat more difficult to compare with those from earlier years. Expansion of the team of confidential advisors at the end of 2021 may have influenced the number of reports to the ombuds officers. In addition, the ombuds officer position was itself redesigned in 2022. Generally speaking, an increase in the number of reports and signals is good news if it means that issues that were not on the table previously are now getting the attention they deserve.

A supervisor or academic counsellor is often the first person to be made aware of an incident, problem, dilemma or conflict in the work or study environment. It is important to act carefully at such a time and be able to find your way to the right information if necessary. Providing information regarding social safety, integrity and the availability of various 'desks' for advice, support or complaints will remain high on the agenda throughout the university in the coming period. Also, TU Delft's internal regulations and formal procedures for reporting, investigating and, if necessary, imposing sanctions due to (possible) integrity violations are being reviewed and better aligned. It has been found that this system is not always clear to those involved. More clarity is needed to ensure that complaints and reports can be dealt with carefully and lessons learned on the organizational level.

We are concerned about the persistent signals that staff members sometimes do not dare to contact a confidential advisor or the ombuds officer, fearing damage to their position, career or well-being. We expect supervisors to help prevent the perception of a 'blame culture'. As the Executive Board, we are open to conversations about this. We encourage staff to make themselves heard. A confidential advisor is on your side by definition, and an ombuds officer, who is impartial, will not intervene without consulting you either. Added to this is the fact that maintaining confidentiality is a fundamental rule for both confidential advisors and ombuds officers.

Having a strong team of confidential advisors and two ombuds officers at our university is a great asset. In addition, both study and student associations have their own student confidential counsellors. All of their efforts will continue to be valuable. A proposal by the confidential advisors to have some additional employees trained for this role in the course of 2023 will be fulfilled by the Integrity Office. Contact information of the team of confidential advisors and both ombuds officers, as well as a number of frequently asked questions, can be found on the TU Delft website. Not only employees, but also students are most welcome.

Lastly, things can always go wrong where people work or study together, even when prevention is given top priority. Safety nets are therefore necessary, but they do not relieve us of our own responsibilities. Whether you are a student, a staff member, a supervisor or an administrator: this requires attention and efforts from all of us.

Kind regards,

Executive Board TU Delft,

Tim van der Hagen

Rob Mudde

Marien van der Meer