

INTRO

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document contains a proposal for reporting the negative effects on the well-being of members of our department, following the appointment of Dr. Nathan Cofnas.

On the basis of the meeting with Rector Petra De Sutter on the 17th of April, we aim to use these reports to strengthen the leadership of the Rector in undertaking action against this appointment. The Rector explicitly encouraged us to exert all institutional pathways available to us. These reports will be taken seriously and (hopefully) addressed with priority.

This document contains two sections:

- 1) A text that can be used as a basis for submitting a report.
- 2) A guide to submit your report which
 - a) lists the various options available to you when submitting and what these different options entail; and
 - b) offers additional information on what to expect after submitting.

With several colleagues, we will request a collective meeting with IDEWE (given the collective nature of the report). If you wish to join this initiative, this is perfectly possible. Let (one of) us know if you are interested.

In case you wish to submit individually or anonymously, but would like to stay informed about what happens with our reports afterwards and/or would like to receive support throughout the procedure, you can still let (one of) us know that you have filed a report.

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TEXT FOR REPORT

This text can be used as a basis for your report.

If you choose option (1) (an informal report with the Reporting Point, see 'Guide'), you arrange an appointment right away and you can copy this text under 'additional information' when doing so. If you choose option (2) (a formal request with IDEWE), you can use this text in your first email to IDEWE.

Feel free to alter this text yourself. The sentences highlighted in yellow are proposals for alternatives.

The recent appointment of Dr. Nathan Cofnas at my Department Philosophy and Moral Science has a tremendous impact on my well-being in the workplace. As a member of this department, I feel obliged to file a report. We are expected to accept as a colleague someone who endorses and spreads discriminatory and racist ideas, and who therefore clearly does not respect Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Through conversations with colleagues, I know that I am not alone in experiencing this impact. Our department can only function effectively and be a pleasant work space when all members regard one another as morally equal.

The impact of Nathan Cofnas' presence manifests on several levels. Firstly, our department currently suffers from severe reputational damage (due to the broad media coverage). As members of the department, we receive an extensive amount of questions from colleagues in other departments and universities, as well as from concerned citizens. I view those questions to be legitimate, but I often struggle to answer them appropriately, which leads me to feel helpless.

Secondly, I am concerned for the well-being of my colleagues. I cannot help but notice that the 'sense of belonging' has become absent for a vast amount of the employees at our department. On a daily basis, I come across colleagues alerting how this matter weighs on them, and several younger colleagues in precarious employment situations considering leaving the university. Constantly being confronted with the impact of tolerating racism leads to a waste of time, uncertainty about how best to support these people, and puts an enormous strain on my own well-being.

Lastly, I feel responsible for the well-being of our students, who wrote in Schamper that the matter "invokes a grim, restless atmosphere at the Department of Philosophy and Moral Science [translated from Dutch]" (Schamper 18/3/2026). **Even as someone who is not-directly targeted** by Cofnas' statements, I am left, as his colleague, severely shocked and persistently powerless. **[Alternative for the previous sentence: I am left severely shocked and persistently powerless by Cofnas' statements.]**

[This paragraph about Bouke de Vries can be left out if preferred.]

Consequently, we wish to raise attention to the breach of trust caused by colleague Prof. Dr. Bouke de Vries, the ZAP-member who has hired Nathan Cofnas. Bouke de Vries was in all likelihood fully aware of the massive consternation this would spark within the department, yet he has not involved any members of the department in the appointment procedure. He has been refusing for several months to answer the question of the department. Despite the commotion that was caused by the news in March 2026, Bouke de Vries has asked Nathan Cofnas to teach a guest lecture in the research master within that same month, without informing anyone of the department about that matter. These additional factors contribute to constant unrest within our department.

GUIDE FOR SUBMISSION

This is a guide to the various steps and options involved in filing a report.

There are two possible procedures:

- (1) Submitting a report to Team confidential counsellors/Reporting point for transgressive behaviour; or
- (2) Submitting a request for formal intervention to IDEWE.

Filing a report (1) is an informal procedure, contacting IDEWE (2) is a formal procedure. You can either first choose the informal way by submitting to 'Reporting Point' (which potentially leads you to IDEWE as well), or you can directly submit a formal request to IDEWE.

More information about the two options:

<https://ugentbe.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet-campus/SitePages/en/Procedure-psychosociale-risico%E2%80%99s.aspx?app=portals>

(1) TEAM CONFIDENTIAL COUNSELLORS / THE REPORTING POINT FOR TRANSGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR ('MELDPUNT') (INFORMAL PROCEDURE)

See also:

<https://ugentbe.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet-campus/SitePages/en/Meldpunt-Grensoverschrijdend-Gedrag.aspx>

Comment: this can be done anonymously as well as non-anonymously.

STEP 1: Making an appointment through Teams or at the office (see this link: <https://ugentbe.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet-campus/SitePages/Meldpunt-Grensoverschrijdend-Gedrag.aspx?app=portals>). When scheduling your appointment, you can add the 'text for report' to the 'additional information' section.

STEP 2: You are invited for a meeting, you can share your story. The Reporting Point registers reports. These registrations can happen anonymously. An anonymous report, however, has significantly less impact, although the existence of such a 'paper trail' could be meaningful for strengthening our case later on.

STEP 3: After this, you can opt whether you desire a follow-up action. The confidential counsellor starts no investigation on reports and does not evaluate them at all. When you request further investigation, the Reporting Point will redirect you to IDEWE.

(2) IDEWE (FORMAL PROCEDURE)

Comment: This can **not** be done anonymously.

See also:

<https://ugentbe.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet-campus/SitePages/en/Procedure-psychosociale-risico%E2%80%99s.aspx>

IDEWE is an external organisation (with a department at Ghent University) responsible for ensuring compliance with the Act on well-being of workers:

<https://employment.belgium.be/en/act-4-august-1996-well-being-workers-performance-their-work>.

STEP 1: Get into contact with PAPsy (prevention advisor) Evy Grootvriendt: evy.grootvriendt@idewe.be. For this, you can use the 'text for report'.

STEP 2: Within ten days of this first contact, you attend a meeting with Evy Grootvriendt. After making your appointment, you will receive a confirmation document from her.

STEP 3: You submit a request for formal intervention; this formal request has to be dated and signed. The document has to contain a clear description of your work situation. Such a description will be prepared collectively and you are very welcome to copy this if you wish. The formal request will also include a proposal made by the prevention advisor on possible measures.

There are three possible requests, **number 1 is applicable to us:**

1. Risks of a collective character: Organisational issues where several people are exposed to psychosocial risks.
2. Risks of an individual nature (excluding transgressive behaviour): Individual psychosocial risks that are not related to inappropriate behaviour at work.
3. Risks of an individual nature involving transgressive behaviour: Situations involving violence, bullying or sexual harassment in the workplace.

STEP 4: After an analysis provided by the prevention advisor, you will be notified within ten calendar days upon the decision as to whether your request has been accepted or rejected.