

Policy for social interaction for Vestjyllands Højskole

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Interaction policy at Vestjyllands Højskole

Vestjyllands Højskole is a place where people meet across age and cultural divisions, and the meetings between people are absolutely central to our educational culture at the school. Education and detailed rules for socializing and behaviour do not go hand in hand. There must be room to fail, to learn new things and to become wiser.

Therefore, the purpose of a policy for social interaction for Vestjyllands Højskole is to have clear guidelines for how we behave towards each other, what we can expect from each other in our community, what our responsibilities are - and what the consequences in case of offensive behaviour.

To put it briefly, it is about how we want to be towards each other, what values we appreciate and what culture we want to be part of and create together at Vestjyllands Højskole, both among staff, students and course participants.

The policy for social interaction has been drawn up based on the school's core values, as well as input from management, staff and student groups, among other things through a cultural mapping of Vestjyllands Højskole and several educational workshops with a focus on coexistence and values.

In order for the policy for social interaction to be transformed into a culture of education, it is necessary that the school's values are displayed for the people at the school at all times. It assumes that everyone, staff and students, knows and respects the policy. A culture where people meet will always be dynamic and developing, but the shared values are our reference.

The policy for social interaction must contribute to

- Creating a safe and pleasant atmosphere at Vestjyllands Højskole
- That there is a culture of togetherness based on mutual respect
- That students, course participants and staff agree that Vestjyllands Højskole does not accept violations such as racism, sexism, violent behaviour or other forms of physical, verbal or digital harassment
- That students, course participants and staff know how to act and seek help if they witness offensive behaviour
- That there are procedures for implementing sanctions if the policy for social interaction is not respected

Vestjyllands Højskole's values for interaction

Values foundational to the school include personal empowerment, the common conversation and the democratic process. Seeing one's fellow human being is central, and the school values curiosity, courage and seriousness, as well as knowledge, creativity and intellectual development - both in existential questions as well as daily life; in the day-to-day and in celebrations

This view of humanity, and the culture that supports it, is based on values such as:

- Inclusiveness, which requires trust, respect and friendliness even towards what you do not understand or can identify with
- Curiosity, which promotes bridge-building across cultural gaps of all kinds, so that you can put your points of view into play, while at the same time being curious about others people's opinions
- Care and respect for the integrity and personal boundaries of others, including respectful tone and attitude

Everyone is welcome at Vestjyllands Højskole, as long as you are prepared to navigate by these values.

In practice it means,

- That we take care of each other and thus avoid illegal and offensive behaviour
- That everyone can expect to be both respected and challenged on their views or their behaviour
- That you approach every dialogue with curiosity
- That a perceived offensive behaviour IS offensive behaviour for the person who experiences it. But that does not mean that it is a crime or that the person who is perceived as the offensive party, per definition is a violator in the legal or ethical sense

Indispensable rules for social interaction

- Physical intimate/sexual relationships between staff and students at Vestjyllands Højskole is not tolerated by the Højskole and can either be the reason for dismissal and suspension
- No forms of illegal or deliberate sexual, digital or verbal abuse, bullying, violence or physical force are accepted

Principles for dealing with offensive behaviour

- Students and course participants are encouraged to speak up or intervene if they experience or witness offensive behaviour
- Employees have a duty to intervene if they witness offensive behaviour unless they themselves are in danger
- Employees have a duty to pass on information about offensive behaviour to the management team
- Employees who have information about any infringements carries a duty of confidentiality towards everyone else, but is in return obliged to share information with the management team

Procedure for handling offensive behaviour at Vestjyllands Højskole

- a) If a student or employee has been exposed to or witnessed violations at the school or perpetrated by persons associated with the school, the person concerned should, report this to the school's management, alternatively to a member of the school's board
- b) The procedure will then be that the principal and deputy principal, as management responsible, together with two employee representatives from the working environment committee, hold an interview with the complainant and the alleged harasser (collectively or individually) to investigate the course of the case
- c) This must be done as soon as possible after the matter has come to the management's attention. In certain cases, several interviews may be necessary
- d) A memorandum is drawn up regarding the case
- e) The management has no authority to take a position on legal issues in concrete situations

Sanctions

If the report is found to be justified, the school's management must decide what sanctions should be applied against the harasser. Serious cases of violations result in permanent expulsion from school and a police report, while in other cases there may be a warning or periodic expulsion.

Implementation

The policy for social interaction and the values it is based on will become a permanent part of the culture at Vestjyllands Højskole, by

- orientation about the policy prior to employment
- introducing the policy on all courses
- taking the policy up for debate every approx. 6 months in connection with evaluations

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