

Confidence, self-awareness and resilience in a safe learning environment

Vision of student welfare

ArtEZ University of the Arts
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Design: Simons en Boom
Illustrations: Amanda van de Meent & Marie Nacht

artez.nl



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Introduction

ArtEZ trains professional artists who are fully engaged with society and conducts research into their professional fields. 'Being fully engaged with society' demands a lot of our students. It is for good reason that ArtEZ wishes to impart confidence, self-awareness and resilience to our students during their courses. In doing so, we consider it important that students (learn to) take charge of their own development and well-being. That demands of ArtEZ a vision not only of education and research, but also of student welfare. The urgency of such a vision is visible daily: in the media, in national research and in the practice of our education.

We have worked to formulate this vision with a group of stakeholders from the student support chain, including study career counsellors, student counsellors, students and course heads and heads of staff departments. To do so, we started from the question: what does ArtEZ understand under student welfare? We then specified what responsibility ArtEZ has for student welfare, what the relevant national ambitions are and what aims we can derive from those ambitions for ArtEZ. The key concept here is the safe learning environment: what do we understand by that and what can we do to truly be a safe learning environment? It is clear that everyone has a role to play and a responsibility in this regard - ArtEZ staff, partners in our environment and our students themselves.

Sources

An important framework for the ArtEZ vision is the [National Student Welfare Framework 2023-2030](#), drawn up by the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, the Universities of the Netherlands, the student unions, ECIO and the national government. This framework, together with the ArtEZ [strategic plan Creating Futures Together](#), provides direction for the vision, ambitions and actions of ArtEZ in terms of student welfare. Other sources are mentioned in the footnotes.

Definition and ambition

ArtEZ understands the following under student welfare¹:

Student welfare is about mental, physical, social and cognitive welfare within a safe learning environment.

Student welfare occupies an important place in the ArtEZ strategic plan and is woven into the core values and aims set out in that document. Moreover, the strategic plan incorporates all the ambitions for student welfare in higher education listed in the National Student Welfare Framework. In the following paragraph, we give substance to our ambition by means of five pillars, which in turn form the basis for an action plan.

ArtEZ's primary ambition in terms of student welfare is (Strategic Plan, page 15):

“ArtEZ aims to give students **confidence**, **self-awareness** and **resilience** during their education. The aim is to train students to be professionals who stand firmly in their shoes, are secure and resilient and can look ahead.”

This translates into students who²:

- are capable of utilising their capacities;
- are able to handle the artistic education process (making, sharing, being assessed) with resilience;
- are allowed to make mistakes and dare to share doubts;
- work to maintain a balance between the positive and negative aspects of their time as students and the phase of life they are in;
- take charge of their own personal and artistic development.

How do we achieve this?

Regarding what is required to achieve the ambition, the strategic plan states (page 15).

“Only in a **safe environment** can you experiment and reach your full potential. In developing professional makers, attention to the inner process is as important as attention to the outer process. It is precisely creative makers who are often open to early signals from society. That sensitivity deserves protection. At the same time, we want our students to enter the field and shape its future with self-confidence - in themselves, in their work and based on the contribution they can make together. That is why a **safe learning and working environment** is essential for us, and not only for our students.”

What ArtEZ understands by a safe learning environment is expressed in the five pillars in the paragraph on page 9.

¹ Source: [Visie op studentenwelzijn_revRE.pdf \(universiteitenvannederland.nl\)](#) (March 2022) and ArtEZ strategic plan Creating futures together (2022 – 2026).

² Source: [Visie op studentenwelzijn_revRE.pdf \(universiteitenvannederland.nl\)](#) (March 2022) and ArtEZ strategic plan Creating futures together (2022 – 2026).

Student welfare: target groups

When we talk about student welfare, our primary target group are the students who are enrolled at ArtEZ. In addition, ArtEZ also has a - more limited - responsibility for the welfare of talented prospective students on the preparatory courses and the welfare of alumni. For the latter group, that may involve supporting them to find their way in the professional field and develop independent entrepreneurship.

Two groups of students deserve extra attention in this vision:

International students

ArtEZ has an international student population. That brings with it an added responsibility in terms of student welfare. International students are much less able to draw on support from their own networks, and at the start of their courses they often do not know how to find or access the available provisions within and outside ArtEZ. Challenges related to accommodation and the cost of living, for example, warrant extra attention for this target group. ArtEZ is not in a position to solve these problems, but it devotes specific attention to information provision for these students and their support needs - for example, through buddy projects, extra introductory days, information fairs for non-EU students and good information provision. In this connection, we seek to actively collaborate with external partners such as municipalities, care providers and accommodation providers. Moreover, in the education we provide, there is a focus on the dynamic and challenges associated with an 'intercultural classroom'.

For students with a support need

ArtEZ endorses the vision set out in the National Student Welfare Framework that a cultural change is required in order to achieve a different perspective on students with a support need (see illustration below). We make the point that we do not just regard people with an impediment as a variant subset of humanity whom we seek to enable to 'participate', but that we very much also see this area as an opportunity that - particularly in our field - can generate new avenues to explore.

MEDICAL MODEL (old)



A person with an impediment **deviates** from the norm of how **most people** are. The impediment must be **minimised** by doctors, care providers and other experts.

SOCIAL MODEL (new)



Like everyone else, a person with an impediment is **a variant** of humanity. Develop behaviour and environment so that as many people as possible **are able to participate**.

Pillars of a safe learning environment

It is ArtEZ's responsibility, together with our students and employees, to ensure a safe learning and working environment. In this connection, we define the **five pillars** that form the basis for our approach to student welfare. A key point is that the students themselves have primary responsibility for taking charge of their own lives and for their own welfare.



1

We constantly invest in a 'sense of belonging' and an inclusive community.

2

We offer students a safe start at the institution and a good introduction, with extra attention for international students and for students with support needs.



3

We make sure the curriculum is studyable, focusing on study skills and mental health and good preparation for the professional field.



4

We offer sufficient and clear supervision and provisions, geared towards prevention and support. In doing so, we work with and where necessary refer students on to external parties.



5

We make sure we provide clear, complete and timely information to students.



For the student, the safe learning environment does not end at the walls of ArtEZ. The five pillars are directly connected with the world outside: the city in which the student is studying, the professional field, care, government agencies, society. It is important to note that as an educational institution, ArtEZ cannot be responsible for the provisions and services of partners in the chain. However, we can help students and refer them on and actively seek to collaborate with partner organisations in the chain.

Safe working environment

A precondition for a safe **learning** environment is a safe **working** environment. In order to ensure that employees are able to perform their roles in this, it is necessary that ArtEZ **ensures**:

- Sufficient time, resources and knowledge for lecturers, supervisors and staff.
- Clear shared frameworks, principles and working methods.
A pedagogical-didactic climate that is supportive of students and employees.
- Good supervision and compulsory introduction and training for new lecturers and employees who have a role in the student welfare chain.
- Sufficient knowledge and skills among managers to adequately supervise and facilitate employees.
- Good and complete information provision to employees.
- Opportunities for employees to learn, ask questions and share knowledge and experiences.
- Job descriptions that set out competencies (knowledge and skills) for all employees in the student welfare chain.
- Buildings and facilities that contribute to student and staff welfare.

The elaboration of these preconditions should be part of the strategic HR policy, the job classification system, the professional development plan and the approach to diversity & inclusion.

Moreover, ArtEZ has an institution-wide manual on study career counselling that sets out the frameworks and guidelines laid down by the Executive Board for study career counselling, including the competency profile.

Guiding principles

The goal of this vision of student welfare is to provide direction for the policy on student welfare and for the actions of employees in the chain.

Apart from providing the basis for an action plan and for the organisational assurance of ownership, roles and tasks related to student welfare, this vision is also intended to provide a framework for action for employees in the chain. To this end, alongside the ambitions and pillars, we have also drawn up guiding principles for student welfare.

Guiding principles help direct the actions of all employees who, directly or indirectly, have a role in creating a safe learning environment and thereby contribute to student welfare.

Guiding principles are not intended to impose binding rules on people. However, they should help them make good judgement calls. They are intended as a compass and as the starting point for conversation.



Guiding principles for student welfare

1. Staff¹ and students of ArtEZ are familiar with the code of conduct² and the student charter, including the Course & Examination Regulation, act in accordance with those documents and raise for discussion relevant issues that arise.
2. Students are in charge of and responsible for their own welfare and development. Members of staff help and supervise but do not take charge or assume responsibility.
3. ArtEZ provides a studyable curriculum reflecting the values of confidence, self-awareness, resilience and self-management. We actively seek feedback from students on studyability.
4. Each ArtEZ student has access to the same supervision and provisions. Delivering that calls for a tailored approach.
5. ArtEZ ensures that each student is fully aware of the available supervision and provisions. During their first 100 days at ArtEZ, there is extra attention for a safe landing and introduction, with a particular focus on international students and students with support needs.
6. Students and employees are equal but not the same. Employees are aware of their positions of influence and power vis-à-vis students and act accordingly.
7. Where ArtEZ's responsibility for student supervision ends, we will refer students onto an external party.
8. Each employee with a role in the student welfare chain has received appropriate instruction or training. ArtEZ facilitates employees with time, resources and frameworks in order to be able to fulfil their roles in the chain.

¹ Employee: Everyone who works for ArtEZ, regardless of their position or the type of work activities they perform and whether these take place under an employment contract, for an employment agency or on a declaration basis.

² There is currently no ArtEZ-wide code of conduct for students, but such a code of conduct does exist for employees.