



**S**tudenten  
**O**rganisatie  
**G**roningen

*Active Bystander Trainings for Student  
Boards*

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*Making Groningen safer and better. Together.*

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It is without a doubt that Student Boards contribute immensely to this city. Student culture and participation gives the University of Groningen a unique character and the possibility to develop yourself beyond your studies, a value the active student party in this council applauds. In this University and in our city, socially unsafe and unacceptable situations are still taking place. For this reason, the SOG wants to introduce the idea that student boards should be given the opportunity to follow active bystander training, to at least give the students that govern the organizations in this city the possibility to recognize and actively engage to prevent socially unsafe situations. This is in-line with the UG Well-being vision “ensuring a safe learning environment”.<sup>1</sup>

### *Active Bystander Training: the why, how and what?*

#### *How (many)?*

Currently, the UG offers active bystander training (ABT) to students and employees. In October this number was at around 1500 people, following from 60 trainings, a number the CvB aims to increase.<sup>2</sup> There are 103 student organizations taken up into the Profileringsfonds, whose student board members receive a board grant.<sup>3</sup> If we assume there are 6 members in each board, it would amount to 618 students that have to follow these courses. So, there would be a yearly need for approximately 25 ABTs, based on the numbers that were mentioned earlier. These are numbers for all student organizations: “gezelligheid, sport, studie, studenten, culturele en overige” student organizations. We recommend that these sessions are divided into September and February, as some Boards are switching half yearly and having the ABT at the beginning of the year will generate maximum impact.

#### *Training the Trainer*

Increased capacity will also result in a higher demand for trainers. This demand can partially be met by training student(s) (assistants) to give these training sessions. Having a larger pool of trainers will make it easier to give all student boards the opportunity to follow these trainings and in time make student organizations self-sufficient in their need for ABTs.

#### *What?*

The UG has a page in the Corporate Academy on ‘Active Bystander Trainings’. They give the following explanation: “Active Bystander Training will provide you with tools for improving social safety”. It goes into competences such as communication, social awareness, adaptability and self-reflection. Essentially, it will help passive bystanders to become active and speak up in an effective way. This can be done in multiple ways and the training goes into several methods that bystanders can choose out of, to fit their own way of communication.

#### *Why?*

By speaking up, bystanders can show the actor that their behavior is unacceptable and not tolerated by the group. It is important to have the conversation about what feels inappropriate as well as when to speak up and how to recognize when someone is uncomfortable in a social situation.<sup>4</sup> Having a

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rug.nl/about-ug/policy-and-strategy/strategic-plan/strategisch-plan-eng-2021.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://rug.my-meeting.nl/Documenten/Social-Safety-reactie-aan-Uraad-oktober-2022.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>

<https://www.rug.nl/about-ug/organization/administrative-organization/advisory-committees/cuos/pf-22-23-deel-b-financiele-ondersteuning-bestuur-medezeggenschap-topsport-def.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.breakingthesilence.cam.ac.uk/prevention-support/be-active-bystander>

conversation about boundaries and defining them will inflict a cultural change within an organization.<sup>5</sup> Actors might not be aware that their actions and behavior are perceived as inappropriate and having the conversation can give clarity.

### *Why include Student Boards?*

Student organizations give students the opportunity to develop beyond their studies. Outside of the classroom, students spend much of their student time at their associations or their events. But they also are an integral part of the integration process of the student body and are for many students a support system. Student boards are visible and present at events that students go to. They have responsibility for their events and to a certain extent for the safety of their members. Within associations we notice a trend of organizations asking their members to sign a code of conduct, which signals a willingness and commitment within organizations to a socially safe environment. Boards know their members and are a first point of contact for many. ABTs for boards will give students the tools to actively intervene in socially unsafe situations happening at their events. As the capacity for ABTs is limited, we find that it is essential to at least train our boards in being an active bystander.

### *Recommendations:*

We find all three of these recommendations important and in this memo we specifically focus on the Active Bystander Training for student boards, yet we believe that for this responsibility and investment, boards should be fairly compensated.

1. Increase the capacity for Active Bystander Trainings
  - a. This would entail at least 25 trainings per year to be able to host all student boards
2. Central communication to boards about the existence of the Active Bystander Trainings
  - a. Make clear to boards when and where these training sessions will take place and how they can indicate their attendance.
  - b. Reaching out to the organizations should be done via a logical way, e.g. faculties to study organizations, ACLO to sports associations etc.
3. Stimulate the ‘train the trainer’ principle, so student boards can in time be self sufficient in doing these ABTs.

We would like to be in conversation with the CvB about this proposal and share the student board perspective. We hope to see this implemented at the start of September 2023 for the first student organizations to enjoy the benefits of having followed an Active Bystander Training.