

Board framework for rallies

Preamble

As a University, we are committed to an open dialogue about any topic, in which we freely explore issues together, develop knowledge, and share this knowledge with the outside world. We foster constructive and respectful dialogue, so that people feel safe and accepted as staff or students, and that they are empowered to speak up about inappropriate practices.

As the cultural landscape at our University is growing ever more diverse, with different nationalities, backgrounds, and generations, and in an increasingly polarizing society, it is imperative that we continue engaging in respectful dialogue. Regrettably, the UG has seen two instances of buildings being occupied, as well as multiple threats of occupations and demonstrations in University buildings, in a relatively short period (March to June 2023). Given that this is a nation-wide trend, Universities of the Netherlands (UNL) has come up with a joint baseline for how to deal with rallies. This baseline forms the foundation for the administrative framework set out below. The framework is meant to give the University the tools to respond adequately to a calamity or the risk of a crisis, and ensures seamless coordination with the triad of law enforcement agencies¹.

Rallies *in* and *outside* University buildings

There is a fundamental difference between rallies in and outside UG buildings.

Outside:

- Rallies (both sanctioned and unsanctioned) that are held outside on UG grounds are formally governed by the Dutch Public Assemblies Act (Dutch acronym: Wom). As such, they come under the responsibility of the Mayor of the City of Groningen.
- The Police or the City of Groningen's Department of Public Order and Safety will inform the UG of a planned demonstration and will coordinate with UG staff.
- If the demonstration causes a disruption to the UG's primary process, a representative of the Board of the University will contact the Police in order to gain control of the situation.

Inside:

- In its capacity as the owner of the buildings in the Groningen city centre, at the Zernike campus, in Leeuwarden, and Noordpunt at UMCG², the UG bears the main responsibility for the primary process of teaching and research, as well as for the safety of students, staff, and visitors in and near University buildings.
- In the event of rallies inside University buildings, the Board of the University is responsible for the decision-making process, including coordination with the triad.

¹ The Police, the City's Department of Public Order and Safety, and the Public Prosecution Service. ² This administrative framework has been agreed with Hanze University of Applied Sciences and UMCG.

Board of the University – basic principles

As the UG is responsible for making decisions regarding goings-on in University buildings, the Board of the University has defined the following basic principles:

- We take a de-escalating, open, and transparent approach to rallies. We enter into dialogue with the spokespersons or activists.
- We have clear boundaries regarding inappropriate messages; some messages or actions are unacceptable. These include violence, threats, vandalism, breach of the peace, intimidation, or anonymous messages. They are unacceptable to the University in other situations as well.
- If a rally is held in a University building, the UG will typically refer to this as an occupation since it effectively qualifies as a breach of the peace. The group of occupiers will initially be kindly requested to take their demonstration outside, either to the University grounds or elsewhere.
- If the occupiers decide to remain in the buildings, the UG is willing to facilitate this form of rallying in its buildings where possible. In doing so, the UG will accept the disruption and inconvenience that is inherent in an occupation. At the same time, the UG will have regard to the primary process and/or teaching, research, and operating processes, as well as the safety of all students, staff, and visitors.
- The UG has house rules, a written copy of which will be shared with the occupiers by, or on behalf of, the Board of the University every time a rally is held. The house rules can be added to depending on the rally or situation.
- The UG will allow rallies by UG students and staff in its buildings provided that the occupiers or their spokespersons are willing to engage with the Board of the University or its representative, and, if relevant, the faculty board.
- The UG will not allow occupiers to overnight in its buildings because of the risk of the rally culminating in an uncontrolled influx of non-students and other participants. What is more, the UG has limited security and other capacity to coordinate this properly. As a result, the safety of those present cannot be guaranteed.
- The UG buildings are not designed as overnight accommodation and they are not licensed for overnight use.
- As the owner of the buildings, the UG bears the main responsibility for the primary process of teaching and research, as well as for the safety of all students, staff, and visitors.
- In consultation with the triad, the UG will consider dismantling a rally prematurely if:
 - the occupiers are unwilling to engage in dialogue; and/or
 - the occupiers do not observe the house rules; and/or
 - the rally escalates into a disproportionate disruption of the primary process; and/or
 - the rally compromises the safety of students, staff, or visitors.

House rules for rallies in buildings

The UG asks the organizers of, and the participants in, a rally in a University building to observe the following house rules:

- The organizers of a rally will appoint a designated contact person for the Board of the University or, where relevant, the faculty board to contact during the rally.
- There will be marshals at a rally to ensure that the event proceeds in an orderly fashion. They will be identifiable as such.
- The marshals will bear primary responsibility for the peaceful, orderly, and safe conduct of a rally and they will make every effort to ensure this.
- During a rally, the organizers will make allowances for the other users of the University buildings.
- A rally will not jeopardize or unnecessarily compromise the UG's primary teaching, research, and operating processes.
- There will be no discrimination based on religion, personal or political beliefs, race, gender, or other grounds, nor any incitement to violence.
- Lectures, mid-terms, exams, PhD ceremonies, inaugural addresses, graduation ceremonies, meetings, and other sessions will not be disrupted by a rally.
- A rally will not result in damage to buildings and items of property, or cause harm to third parties.
- There will be no blocking of entrances, exits, and passageways, nor of any escape routes. Students, staff, and visitors will be allowed to enter and leave a building freely.
- The rally site will be kept clean.
- There will be no burning of objects prior to, during, or after a rally. Open flames are not permitted.
- Rally-goers will not bring their own household appliances, such as sandwich toasters, coffee machines, etc., for use in a University building.
- Alcohol and drugs are prohibited at a rally; rally-goers are not permitted to have these items in their possession.
- Any club-like objects, such as sticks, pipes, PVC tubing, chains, etc., that can potentially be used as a weapon are prohibited.
- Emergency and rescue services will be given priority and passage at all times.
- The House Rules and General Code of Conduct (see Appendix) will be in effect at all times.
- Rally-goers will follow instructions given by security officers or front-office staff in the interest of operating or primary processes, or for safety purposes.
- A rally in a UG building will end by 7 p.m. at the latest on the day it started, provided that the House Rules and General Code of Conduct – and these house rules for rallies – are observed.

Dismantling a rally

The conduct of a rally will be reported to the Police immediately, so that they can promptly free up capacity for providing any support that might be required to dismantle the rally. A rally will be dismantled if the group of occupiers refuse to leave the building after the specified end time of 7 p.m. Dismantling a rally is always subject to coordination with the triad.