

FSIs and University Groups Awareness Concept Short Version English

Introduction

As student associations (FSIn) and university groups, you actively contribute to a vibrant, student-driven culture at FU. In such an environment, it is essential to ensure that all students feel as safe and valued as possible, and are encouraged to actively participate. The introduction of a comprehensive awareness concept serves this purpose and acts as the foundation for a culture of mindfulness, respect, and inclusion.

Awareness, meaning "consciousness" or "mindfulness" in English, in this context refers to the recognition of and active opposition to discrimination, exclusion, inappropriate behavior, and conflicts within university groups. Such a concept aims to heighten awareness of the diverse perspectives and experiences of students and create an environment that is as safe and welcoming as possible (we use the term "safer spaces" here, as guaranteeing a truly "safe space" is utopian).

At its core, awareness involves developing a deep understanding of the different backgrounds, identities, and needs of group members, and creating structures that actively counteract discrimination. Since university groups should provide a space for exchange and interaction, a sustainable awareness concept significantly contributes to the positive development of group dynamics. Through clear behavioral guidelines, preventive measures, and targeted conflict interventions, the concept aims not only to prevent issues but also to serve as a support system when problematic situations arise.

It is important to note that the concept outlined here is intended as a foundational guide to help you develop your own awareness structure. Simply copying this template will not suffice. It is crucial to come together as a group and determine what aspects you wish to adopt, what is especially important to you, and where you might have differing views (since I do not know your structure in detail).

Awareness is an ongoing collective process, not a one-time task.

Objectives of the Awareness Concept

The concept pursues four main objectives:

1. **Promoting an inclusive university group:** All members should feel respected regardless of origin, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or other characteristics.
2. **Creating a safe and supportive environment:** The goal is to establish an environment where members feel safe and can access support. Clear points of contact should provide preventive and immediate assistance.
3. **Encouraging respectful communication:** The concept emphasizes strengthening communication skills and fostering a culture in which conflicts are addressed constructively.
4. **Providing contact points for conflicts:** Awareness structures serve as contact points for conflicts and sensitive issues, offering support and appropriate interventions.

Why an Awareness Concept?

An awareness concept is more than a set of rules – it is an attitude. University groups bring together diverse individuals, and this diversity can lead to conflicts that require deliberate engagement. The concept aims to foster respectful and productive interaction while making it clear that your group actively opposes discrimination and (sexualized) violence and addresses these issues internally.

2. Principles and Values

Clear principles and shared values are necessary for a respectful awareness culture within university groups and student associations. These principles form the foundation for respectful interaction and create a positive atmosphere in which everyone can feel as safe and valued as possible. The key values in the awareness concept are **inclusivity and diversity, respect and mindfulness, and community and responsibility**. These values foster a fairer, open, and supportive environment and serve as a guide for awareness measures.

1. Inclusivity and Diversity

Inclusivity means that everyone is welcome regardless of origin, gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristics, and no one is disadvantaged. Creating an inclusive environment requires actively opposing discrimination and advocating for others' perspectives. This can be achieved through open communication, training, and conscious language use.

2. Respect and Mindfulness

Respect involves treating every person with appreciation. Mindfulness includes consciously recognizing and responding to others' needs to avoid subtle boundary violations. Respectful interaction and mindful communication contribute to a trusting and open atmosphere, supported by clear communication rules and regular feedback.

3. Community and Cohesion

A strong sense of community is essential for collaboration. Everyone should feel part of a supportive community. Responsibility is shared collectively, addressing challenges together while considering others' needs. Community builds trust and contributes to the positive development of the group, reinforced through joint events and team activities.

4. Collective Responsibility and Engagement

Collective responsibility means each member actively contributes to the awareness culture and works towards a respectful environment. It involves reflecting on personal biases and behaviors. Responsibility is also taken by awareness officers and teams who provide support in critical situations. Training and workshops help understand and implement the principles. An awareness code of conduct can serve as a guide for aligning with the values and reflecting on behavior.

3. Structure of Awareness Work

For a successful awareness concept, a clear structure is necessary that allows all involved parties to act effectively and foster a culture of mindfulness.

1. Forming Awareness Teams

The foundation of awareness work can be specific teams of trained members who act as contact persons. These teams take responsibility for awareness topics and are regularly available. They should be continuously educated through training and workshops.

2. Contact Persons and Trust Offices

Central contact persons should be accessible to all members and guests to help with conflicts, discrimination, and inappropriate/abusive behavior. Their role and contact information should be clearly visible and easily accessible.

3. Awareness Training and Further Education

Regular training sessions raise awareness of discrimination, microaggressions, and prejudice. It is also important to offer specific further training for awareness officers, such as on conflict management.

4. Development of a Code of Conduct

A clear code of conduct establishes expectations for behavior and promotes respectful communication and conflict resolution. This code should be developed together with all members and communicated regularly.

5. Regular Awareness Meetings

Awareness meetings provide members the opportunity to exchange ideas and develop new measures. These should be open and take place in a respectful environment.

6. Documentation and Communication

Transparent documentation helps in evaluating measures. Regular communication of activities via social media and other channels strengthens awareness and visibility of the awareness work.

7. Rotating Roles and Opportunities for Participation

Through rotating awareness roles, more members can take on responsibility, which strengthens awareness of the topics and promotes the sustainability of the work. It ensures that different perspectives and ideas are brought in.

Often More Realistic: Voluntary Awareness Shifts as an Alternative

Instead of a fixed team, voluntary awareness shifts can be organized at events. The shift system allows members to contribute according to their capacities and

offers flexibility. All participants should be trained in advance to be well-prepared.

4. Awareness Rules and Code of Conduct

An effective awareness concept includes preventive measures to promote a respectful and inclusive environment, as well as strategies for responding to conflicts and discrimination. The goal is to create a culture of trust and openness that encourages all members to live up to the shared values.

1. Preventive Measures for Raising Awareness

Regular workshops on topics such as anti-discrimination, intersectionality, and mindfulness foster awareness of discrimination and prejudice. Reflection exercises and awareness campaigns raise awareness of one's own privileges and promote respectful interaction.

2. Guidelines for Respectful Communication

A clear communication code can help minimize misunderstandings and conflicts. Key points include active listening, constructive criticism, refraining from discriminatory language, and transparent communication to prevent conflicts.

3. Intervention Strategies for Conflicts

Clear interventions should be in place for conflict cases. Awareness officers act as the first point of contact and receive concerns confidentially. Mediation and conflict discussions can help find solutions, while in the case of serious incidents, a structured action plan for protecting those affected should be developed.

4. Follow-Up and Evaluation of Incidents

After each incident, an evaluation should take place to strengthen trust in the awareness work. Anonymous feedback opportunities and long-term adjustments to the strategies ensure that the concept is continuously improved.

5. Collaboration with External Counseling Services

External counseling services, such as anti-discrimination offices, can provide support in difficult cases. Exchange with other student groups also helps to share best practices and strengthen awareness work.

6. Prevention Through Regular Awareness Events

Regular events such as awareness days or guest lectures on relevant topics create space for exchange and awareness-raising and foster a sense of community.

5. Preventive Measures

Preventive measures are crucial for creating a respectful, discrimination-free environment. They strengthen awareness of mindful communication and inclusion, and help avoid conflicts. Key measures include workshops, an awareness guide, anonymous feedback options, and reflection meetings.

1. Awareness Workshops

Workshops raise awareness of topics such as discrimination, microaggressions, respectful communication, and conflict management. They should be held regularly and conducted by external experts or awareness officers.

2. Awareness Guide

A guide summarizes the group's values and provides clear guidelines for respectful behavior, conflict management, and contact with awareness officers. It should be accessible to all members.

3. Anonymous Feedback Options

An anonymous feedback system allows members to give feedback without revealing their identity. This helps continuously improve the work of the awareness officers.

4. Regular Reflection Meetings

Reflection meetings provide space for exchanging views on the group's dynamics. They help identify tensions and allow for ongoing adjustments to preventive measures. The meetings can be moderated to ensure respectful exchanges.

6. Intervention and Follow-Up

Intervention and follow-up are important to respond appropriately to incidents such as discrimination or harassment and prevent future occurrences. This includes both immediate actions and long-term support.

1. Immediate Intervention in Incidents

In cases of discriminatory behavior, quick action is required. Clear contact persons should be available to provide support on-site and ensure transparent communication.

2. Support for Affected Individuals

Those affected must receive confidential support, such as through conversations or external counseling services. They should be informed and supported throughout the process.

3. Consequences for Discriminatory Behavior

Clear consequences must be established for discriminatory behavior, such as discussions with the perpetrators, warnings, or exclusion from the group. Mandatory training may be useful (this is a group decision, depending on how you want to handle it).

4. Follow-Up and Reflection of the Incident

After an incident, the awareness team and those affected should reflect on the situation. Feedback from the affected individuals helps improve the handling of incidents.

5. Preventive Measures After Incidents

After an incident, additional preventive measures such as workshops or revisions to the code of conduct should be considered to prevent similar occurrences.

7. Evaluation and Adjustment

Continuous evaluation and adjustment of the awareness concept are crucial to ensure its effectiveness and adapt it to the group's needs.

1. Purpose of Evaluation

The evaluation assesses the effectiveness of the measures, identifies weaknesses, and adjusts the concept to changing conditions.

2. Evaluation Methods

Methods such as interviews, reflection meetings, and anonymous surveys help gather direct feedback and capture the perception of the measures.

3. Involvement of Group Members

Members should be actively involved in the evaluation process to continuously improve the concept and foster an open feedback culture.

4. Adjusting the Concept

Based on the evaluation, measures can be adjusted, topics can be expanded, and responsibilities can be redistributed to increase effectiveness.

5. Long-Term Effectiveness

Evaluation must be ongoing to ensure the long-term quality of the measures. Regular training is crucial.

6. Evaluation of Incidents and Conflicts

Each incident should be reviewed and reflected upon individually to learn from it and take preventive action.

8. Communication Plan

A well-structured communication plan is crucial for the implementation and acceptance of the awareness concept. It ensures the dissemination of information, gathers feedback, and raises awareness among members.

1. Communication Goals

- **Awareness:** Education on discrimination, respect, and inclusion.
- **Transparency:** Clear communication of responsibilities and measures.
- **Dialogue:** Promotion of continuous exchange.
- **Cohesion:** Strengthening trust and respectful interactions.

2. Communication Channels

- **Social Media:** Quick dissemination of information and campaigns.
- **Information Events:** Direct introduction to the concept.
- **Workshops:** Education and active participation.

3. Communication Strategy for Target Groups

- **New Members:** Introductory events and welcome materials.
- **Active Members:** Regular training and interactive communication.
- **Affected Individuals:** Empathetic communication and anonymous feedback channels.

4. Feedback Mechanisms

- **Surveys:** Anonymous feedback to improve the measures.
- **Open Meetings:** Reflection meetings for ideas and feedback.
- **Follow-Up After Incidents:** Feedback on handling conflicts and incidents.

9. Consideration of Smaller Groups

For smaller university groups or student initiatives (FSIn), adapted approaches are necessary to make the awareness concept practical. These groups often have limited resources and structures.

1. Minimal Awareness Structures

- **Contact Person Instead of a Team:** A trained person takes responsibility for awareness topics.
- **Rotation Principle:** Responsibility is shared within the group on a rotating basis.

2. Utilizing External Support

- **University-Wide Teams:** Use of external resources such as training or counseling services.
- **Cooperation with Other Groups:** Joint use of awareness structures by multiple groups.
- **Existing Materials:** Use of centralized resources such as guides or brochures.

3. Focus on Prevention

- **Low-Threshold Measures:** Simple measures such as codes of conduct or brief workshops.

- **Integrated Decision-Making:** Considering awareness aspects in decision-making processes.

4. Support Through Digital Tools

- **Online Platforms:** Provision of materials and feedback options.
- **Anonymous Reporting Channels:** Setting up channels for anonymous feedback and incidents.

5. Fostering an Awareness Culture

- **Integration into Group Culture:** Awareness as an integral part of the group's values.
 - **Peer-to-Peer Approach:** Regular discussions and awareness-building among members.
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Conclusion

I realize that it can be overwhelming to develop your own awareness concept from scratch as a student group. The hope is that this overview can provide you with an initial insight into likely relevant points and simplify this process for you. At the same time, I want to emphasize that this document is not a substitute for an independent internal discussion on the topic of awareness and your own expectations of yourselves, as it is quite generic (after all, I don't know you or your group). But you can do it! I wish you the best of luck with your own awareness work! If more structural questions arise during your process, feel free to contact the AStA Awareness Team by email, and I will do my best to support you as much as I can (awareness@astafu.de). Additionally, we have a few other awareness offerings/fundamental content on our website that may be helpful to you.