



# DAE MISSION STATEMENT 2021-2022

*Welcome to the DAE Community!*

*Studying at DAE is about becoming the best possible version of yourself. This is absolutely true skill-wise, but this is also true in terms of you as a human being. We live in an increasingly complex society with a lot of challenging social issues to deal with. Topics like gender equality, diversity, extremism, climate change, intolerance... are everywhere in the media. In DAE, we choose not to ignore these topics but to take a stance!*

*Within our own DAE Community, we like to lead by example and offer our students a tolerant, respectful and open-minded community and campus atmosphere. Being able to be who and what you are – while respecting every other person for doing the same thing – is the foundation of our Community values.*

*We do preach tolerance and respect for one another, but we are, at the same time, extremely intolerant of people who do not respect these values. We've learned over the years that being a better person also makes you a better student.*

*Masterchief out,*

*Rik Leenknecht  
Academic Director, DAE*

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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DAE is more than just a degree; as you enter The Level, you become a member of the community – a vibrant, international community that promotes mutual respect and collective growth. Though this community is one with quite technical aspirations, we believe it is crucial that we do not lose sight of the social/ethical implications that will continue to shape your journeys in the game industry and beyond.

**Our community is *for and by* the students** – and to the students we pledge our commitment to upholding a campus culture of open-mindedness, inclusivity, acceptance, and connection. Each of us brings a different story to DAE – and we believe that stories are much more dynamic when they are brought together.

**We support an inclusive environment – one in which you can be unforgivably yourself.** We are fully committed to supporting each of you in realizing your fullest potential inside and outside of the classroom. In response, we ask for your commitment to the following ethical framework – shaped by your fellow students. After all, the Community would not exist without you.

This ethical code – what we like to call our **“Mission Statement”** – defines what we stand for, together. This Mission Statement also links seamlessly with Howest’s core values: Serve, Empower, Care.

We additionally include an overview of well-being support routes toward the end of this document, as we believe ethics and well-being are innately intertwined.

This is an invitation to commit, to support, to thrive – together. Ethics isn’t just an abstract idea – it’s something we can commit to in tangible ways. We look forward to exploring these topics with you – and remember, we’re always here to listen.

## 2. WE BELIEVE IN TALKING ABOUT ETHICS.

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**What *is* ethics, exactly? What does it *actually* mean for us? Why should we care?**

For us, ethics manifests itself through our behaviour; **almost all choices we make have an ethical undertone.** The way we present ourselves – and the way in which we show mutual respect – reflects our inner beliefs and values.

**As a student community, we hold the following to be central to our story: Respect, positivity, passion, and effort.**

Ethics doesn't exist in a vacuum – it's not a separate or independent entity. Rather, it's intertwined with almost everything we do – there's latent ethical content in the things we say, read, watch, study, etc. Given this, ethics is inevitably part of the culture at DAE.

**So – let's talk about ethics.** Let's rewrite the narrative that this is a supplementary idea, an afterthought of action. With a focus on prevention, equality, and well-being, we'll bring ethics to life on our campus.

## 3. WE BELIEVE IN COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

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In some courses, teachers start the semester by creating a “class guideline” together with students. The same happens in every workplace or organization. When different people from varying backgrounds come together, we are bound to experience some kind of confrontation with difference. It can be challenging to assess what might be acceptable behaviour – and what may not be – when we have varying opinions of what we can accept as *good*. Of course, we see that the division

of behaviours as “good” or “bad” is far too polarized – and, through this document, **we aim to sort through different behavioural situations possibly encountered at DAE, with the main goal of setting guidelines for acceptable behaviour in context.**

We encourage you to see this as **an invitation to demonstrate values in a positive way** – and, in doing so, contributing to the well-being of the greater DAE community.

The **Education and Examination Code (OER) of Howest** applies to all educational activities at Howest. In addition to providing a logistical framework (including information pertaining to education regulations, the general examination code, special provisions, etc.), the OER outlines behavioural expectations and disciplinary rules of the greater Howest community (**see page 77**).

When you sign the OER, you agree to a particular set of rules as part of your learning agreement with Howest. All OER frameworks apply to our DAE Community, and to this Mission Statement. Given the distinctive qualities of our student community, we opt to offer an additional guideline particularly targeting aspects of behaviour relevant in community discussion.

**It is our goal that this Mission Statement actively lives within our community** – after all, a document tackling topics of ethics, behaviour, and well-being only truly exists if its contents are reflected through action. It is our aim – and our invitation to all of you, who make this community so vibrant – to cultivate a Mission Statement that truly *breathes*. This is the section of this document that exists for and by the students of DAE, with a collective mindset toward respect and growth.

As members of the DAE Community, we are called to ask ourselves – what do we stand for? What makes an environment an inclusive one – one that celebrates difference while still finding unity? What standards can we expect each other to uphold in terms of ethical behaviour? What can we expect from

each other – and how can we ensure a mutually respectful and supportive environment, both on and offline?

**These Community Guidelines are not intended, by any means, exist solely as a list of rules. Rather, the following framework is a positive, additive one** – one that explains who we are as a community. It is an invitation for each person to exhibit values in a positive way – it is not an invitation to punish or an invitation to sanction. **A positive community is only established through a positive lens.**

Our Community Guidelines have been curated (with extensive input from fellow students) in order to build and support a thriving DAE campus.

### 3.1. RESPECT OF ALL IDENTITIES

**We respect everyone as they are – period!**

**We do not tolerate discrimination and/or hateful speech.** No matter your age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, or ability status, you are worthy – and will be embraced accordingly as part of the DAE Community.

**What we do tolerate:** *Respect and acceptance.*

Our students are unique and equally valid. Regarding gender, **we kindly ask you to use others' preferred pronouns** [i.e. She/her/hers, he/him/his, They/Them – this is a non-exhaustive list]. By aiming to use correct pronouns, we show the other person that we respect their identity and are committed to an inclusive campus environment.

If using pronouns does not feel comfortable to you, **please be patient and keep in mind that our student community is ever-growing and increasingly diverse.** Important: Everyone makes mistakes – and it's OK to do so if there is no malicious intent. If you misgender someone, apologize and simply try to get it right next time. If you are misgendered, politely correct the other party and move forward together. We're all learning – in the meantime, let's do everything we can to show respect and ensure comfort.

## 3.2. BULLYING & HARRASSMENT: NO TOLERANCE POLICY

**Bullying and harassment are not tolerated in any form.** Both can be detrimental to mental and physical health and are in no way constructive or restorative.

Do not organize, participate in, or encourage the bullying and/or harassment of others. This includes:

- Verbal bullying
- Relational bullying (emotional manipulation)
- Cyberbullying
- Sexual bullying
- Prejudicial bullying (i.e. usage of slurs)
- Making threats
- Continued attempts toward unwanted contact

If you witness something (either online or offline) that might resemble bullying and/or harassment, please immediately notify a member of the



Community team and/or **Allie Weis**, Ethics Coordinator in International Game Development ([allie.weis@howest.be](mailto:allie.weis@howest.be)). Be a positive influence and a source of support – not a bystander. **Let's take care of each other.**

### 3.3. POSITIVE COMMUNICATION & REINFORCEMENT

**We'll keep it sweet, simple, and to the point here - our community stands for Positivity.**

This means:

- Giving constructive feedback
- Reaching out to other student(s) if it seems that they are struggling
  - Want to learn how to detect signals and support others? Are you looking to make a difference in your student community? Become a 'buddy' with **Buddy & Mind**, a project designed by STUVO to increase solidarity and emphasize peer support & well-being.
- Surrounding yourself with positive influences – “You are the sum of the five people you spend the most time with.”
- Offering motivational messages and framing your communication in a positive way
- Referring others to external resources (study coaching and/or STUVO, for example) – be an ambassador of support
- Respecting personal boundaries (if you're not sure where these boundaries lie, just ask!)
- Keeping an open mind to topics of cultural sensitivity

## 3.4. ONLINE DO'S AND DON'TS

### *Cyber boundaries*

Let's be honest: your laptop is your best buddy. You likely have both online and offline lives, as it's inevitable to spend a significant amount of time behind your screen as a DAE student. Just as it's important to establish boundaries regarding in-person communication, it's equally as important to establish these for online behaviour. While there is much overlap between the two (\*ALL aforementioned guidelines apply in the virtual sphere), **we find it important to explicitly highlight our expectations for online communication.**

Discord has been a great tool for students and teachers alike – and it is wonderful to see the connection that online platforms are able to foster. We want everyone to have a positive experience on Discord; in order to do so, it is important that you comply with [Discord's Community Guidelines](#). If online behaviour does not comply with these guidelines, disciplinary actions will be taken.

In addition to the Discord Community Guidelines, we would also like to introduce **DAE-specific Discord guidelines:**

Please keep the following in mind:

- Use the name you go by in class in the official DAE Discord server
- Turn your camera on if your teacher has requested it during a virtual lesson or examination
- Do not @ (or "ping") a teacher in a public server, unless otherwise stated by your teacher

- Only private message a teacher if they have given you permission to do so (some teachers prefer email communication, so make sure to establish a good agreement)
- Use professional communication (applies to both parties; do not write a message as if you were sending a text)
- Use common sense and maturity when posting in an official DAE Discord server. We ask that you please refrain from posting inappropriate content (including Discord status messages)
- Boundaries are extremely important in light of online communication. It can be easy for things to be misinterpreted – as tone and context can be tricky – so be sure to establish boundaries and be expressive of these.
- **Tone indicators** (i.e. /j → Joking) may be an interesting tool to use, especially if you are unsure if the tone in your online communication is clear. Tone indicators help to prevent misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

### 3.5. PRIVACY POLICY

**Please respect others' privacy online;** no one is obliged to provide identifiable information (aside from providing your real name on an official DAE server). Ask another student politely and privately if you need identifying information (as simple as asking for a friend's phone number or address online – keep this private). If an individual puts identifiable information online, do ask consent first before using this information.

## 4. CROSS-BORDER BEHAVIOR

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The aim of this Mission Statement is not – in any way – to penalize our student community or to assert rules or regulations without student input. **We prefer guidance and support over sanctioning.** With this being said, however, it is important to understand that there are consequences following inappropriate/cross-border behaviour. It is our utmost hope that every member of the DAE Community complies with our guidelines. However, if these are not complied with, further steps will be taken to ensure the well-being of self and other.

**It is important to understand that each situation will be handled on a case-by-case basis, as there is not a “one size fits all” solution for inappropriate behavior.**

**If you feel your boundaries have not been respected, immediately contact a member of the Community Team.** It is our responsibility to ensure the safety of our campus environment – and it is our role to ensure that DAE is a place in which every student can be themselves, comfortably.

If you feel violated in any way, please report the issue to Allie Weis, Ethics Coordinator in International Game Development: [allie.weis@howest.be](mailto:allie.weis@howest.be).

## 5. WE BELIEVE IN STUDENT SUPPORT & GUIDANCE

As mentioned previously, we find guidance and support more restorative than sanctioning. It's crucial to feel listened to as a student at DAE. After all, this is *your* community – and you deserve access to all resources possible in order to make your time at DAE a fulfilling one.

Our Student Support Team (see graphic) remains available to support you – both psychosocially and academically – on this journey.

**COMMUNITY**

- SOCIAL CONNECTION
- INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
- ACTIVITIES & EVENTS
- INCLUSIVITY

Isabelle Carlos Allie

**BUILDING. OUR COMMUNITY. TOGETHER.**

**STUVO**

- PSYCHOSOCIAL COUNSELING
- STUDY FINANCING
- STUDENT HOUSING
- AND MORE

**PEER SUPPORT**

- PEER-TO-PEER ENGAGEMENT
- DIALOGUE
- SMALL GROUP CONNECTION

Kateljne

**STUDY COACHING**

- STUDY PLANNING
- MOTIVATIONAL SUPPORT
- SPECIAL FACILITIES
- STUDY TRACK COUNSELING

Alexandra Marijn Jeffrey Kevin

howest university of applied sciences DAE DIGITAL ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Mistakes happen. If you slip up and break the Community Guidelines, we are also here to support you. We're all learning, together. With the right intentions and commitment toward respect, growth is always possible.

Looking to contact a member of the Student Support Team? Find our contact information below:

### **COMMUNITY TEAM**

- **Isabelle Tassaert**, Community Manager  
[isabelle.tassaert@howest.be](mailto:isabelle.tassaert@howest.be)
- **Carlos Taïpe Porras**, Community Assistant  
[carlos.taïpe.porras@howest.be](mailto:carlos.taïpe.porras@howest.be)
- **Allie Weis**, Ethics Coordinator in International Game Development  
[allie.weis@howest.be](mailto:allie.weis@howest.be)

### **PEER SUPPORT – STUVO**

- **Katelijne Hanssens**, Student Coach: [katelijne.hanssens@howest.be](mailto:katelijne.hanssens@howest.be)
- Join the [Buddy & Mind](#) Discord below:



**STUDY COACHING** (More information available within the [DAE Survival Guide](#); see pages 27-30).

- **Alexandra Mores**: [alexandra.mores@howest.be](mailto:alexandra.mores@howest.be)
- **Marijn Verspecht**: [marijn.verspecht@howest.be](mailto:marijn.verspecht@howest.be)
- **Jeffrey Declerck**, Special Facilities: [jeffrey.declerck@howest.be](mailto:jeffrey.declerck@howest.be)
- **Kevin Vroman**, Study Track Counsellor: [kevin.vroman2@howest.be](mailto:kevin.vroman2@howest.be)

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- **Jan Dauwe**, Ombudsperson: [jan.dauwe@howest.be](mailto:jan.dauwe@howest.be) (The primary duties of an ombudsperson are (1) to work with individuals and groups in an organization to explore and assist them in determining options to help resolve conflicts, problematic issues or concerns, and (2) to bring systemic concerns to the attention of the organization for resolution.)
  - Contact Jan if you need to investigate a complaint, but first contact a member our Community team. We will see what is possible and will refer you, if needed.

## **6. ENDNOTE: ETHICS AT DAE**

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It's true that our curriculum is a technical one – as is the digital entertainment industry itself – though **the importance of ethics is steadily gaining international attention**. The relationships we choose to engage in, the things we create, the stories we tell, the themes we choose to include in our narratives – it's all ethically infused.

What's the importance of this? We believe it makes for better content – for it has the power to demonstrate values in a digestible, visually-appealing way. People sometimes think that ethics and entertainment can't go hand-in-hand – **but the power of entertainment lies in its ability to share messages through a medium that is far more relatable – and far more accessible – than conventional educational tools.**

The ethics story is here and now – both in education and in the industry itself. **Consider this an invitation to allow topics of diversity and inclusion – equality and equity – to inform your work. Your work will benefit – as will you.**

A very special thanks to those who helped in writing this Mission Statement. This document – which we envision as a living and breathing guideline – was largely contributed to by the DAE Student Ethics Working Group. Sincerest gratitude is owed to the students who took time to contribute to the well-being, safety, and security of the DAE Community. It's your home away from home.

This Mission Statement will grow over time – as we all do. If you have feedback and suggestions – or would like to get involved with ethics at DAE – please send them to **Allie Weis** ([allie.weis@howest.be](mailto:allie.weis@howest.be)).

**Let's keep building our community – together.**



## 7. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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- Howest Education and Examination Code (OER) 2021-2022: <https://www.howest.be/sites/default/files/OND/OER%202021-22.pdf>
- DAE Survival Guide 2021-2022: <https://leho-howest.instructure.com/courses/4239>
- Buddy & Mind Project: <https://www.howest.be/en/node/2232>
- LGBTQ+ Meaning: <https://gaycenter.org/about/lgbtq/>
- Pronoun usage: <https://www.edi.nih.gov/blog/communities/what-are-gender-pronouns-why-do-they-matter>
- Discord Community Guidelines: <https://discord.com/guidelines>
- Tone Indicators: <https://toneindicators.carrd.co/>
- Grounds of Discrimination: Racism: <https://www.unia.be/en/grounds-of-discrimination/racism>
- Grounds of Discrimination: Religious or Philosophical Beliefs: <https://www.unia.be/en/grounds-of-discrimination/religious-or-philosophical-beliefs>
- Grounds of Discrimination: Disability: <https://www.unia.be/en/grounds-of-discrimination/disability>
- Grounds of Discrimination: Age: <https://www.unia.be/en/grounds-of-discrimination/age>
- Grounds of Discrimination: Sexual Orientation: <https://www.unia.be/en/grounds-of-discrimination/sexual-orientation>
- Grounds of Discrimination: Other Criteria: <https://www.unia.be/en/grounds-of-discrimination/other-criteria-of-discrimination>
- Grounds of Discrimination: More Info: <https://www.unia.be/en/grounds-of-discrimination/discrimination-a-few-clarifications>

- **Cultural Competence:** <https://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/html/g1375/build/g1375.htm>
- **Setting Healthy Boundaries:** <https://positivepsychology.com/great-self-care-setting-healthy-boundaries/>
- **Creating Positive Energy:** <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20141001173030-48724948-10-ways-to-create-positive-energy-in-your-environment/>
- **How to Respond to Bullying:** <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/communication-success/201611/8-keys-handling-adult-bullies>
- <https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/bullying/how-to-handle-adult-bullying/>