

Memorandum

Topic Proposals safety improvement front office ESSC
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Background

Service desk staff at the Erasmus Student Service Center (ESSC) has student contact daily, at the service desk itself and online over the phone. Although these conversations generally go well, there are instances when service desk staff experiences communication with students as unpleasant, unwanted or even threatening.

Service desk staff has taken trainings on how to deal with unwanted behaviour during telephone calls, but there is a lack of concrete tools to respond and deal with this properly. For example, is a script desirable, that can be used to alert students about their behaviour? Are they allowed to make a personal note, to hang up the phone, and what role do the security officers play in the event similar behaviour (physically) occurs at the service desk?

We presented these questions to the service desk employees, who have experience with (severe) undesirable behaviour over the telephone, to security officers from EUR, who recognize these issues, to EUR Legal Affairs and to EUR Privacy Office. All input gathered result in the recommendations below.

As recommendation #2 (storing a notice of violation) and #5 (record phone calls) require balancing of interests due to privacy laws, we kindly ask the UC to give their feedback, as they represent EUR's staff and student interests.

Recommendations

To improve the safety and sense of security of ESSC service desk workers both on the phone and physically, we propose the following:

1. Training

The service desk employees attend annual/or upon the start of their employment training on how to deal with undesirable behaviour on the (online) telephone and at the service desk. In addition, we suggest that they also take the Active Bystander training, to learn how to respond as a "bystander" to an undesirable or unsafe situation.

2. Notice of violation

We are designing a Notice of Violation that points out the aggressive, discriminative or threatening behaviour and lists the possible consequences if a person expresses this kind of behaviour again. This document serves multiple purposes; (1) to protect the front desk staff by showing them that unwanted expressions (can) have consequences, (2) to deter the student who has expressed unwanted behaviour by pointing out the possible consequences of repetitive unwanted behaviour, and (3) to record the unwanted behaviour, for record keeping purposes (in a closed area in Osiris), and to prevent the same situation from happening to a fellow front office employee.

In the notice of violation, we refer to the order regulations, which state in Article 2.1 that "Everyone must act in accordance with legal duty and what is proper in society according to unwritten law."

→ in your perspective, what is the possible impact for students by issuing a notice of violation?

3. Attention button

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We are looking into placing an attention button under the front desk. When it is pressed, a security guard comes over and shows presence (no escalation yet). If the button is pressed twice (or again), security knows they need to act (i.e., take over the conversation and make the front desk employee leave). Part of placing an alert button is training on how to handle it. Agreements are necessary between the service desk and security officers.

4. Record phone calls

We are investigating whether the phone calls can be recorded so that we can use excerpts for reporting purposes if necessary. Proposal for a combined message so that we can use it for both training and security purposes and that it does not reflect negatively: *'This conversation is being recorded for training and safety purposes'*.

In consultation with DIM, the retention period is automatically complied with and limited to 48 hours. If any unwanted behaviour occurs (such as threatening an employee, to be decided by the head of the student administration), records will be saved 8 weeks.

Initially, these recommendations are intended as tools to prevent incidents from happening and to create a safe working environment for our employees. On the other hand, concrete measures can be taken when safety boundaries are overstepped, and incidents occur. Each year, we evaluate whether the recording of phone calls is still necessary.

→ *in your perspective, what is the possible impact for students and employees if phone calls to the ESSC are recorded?*