



## **Right of Initiative**

Sleep pods on Campus Woudestein

**DRAFT VERSION**

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## Introduction

The pressure on students and staff in academia is high. The mental well-being of students is still under strain, as evidenced by the results of the 2023 Monitor on Mental Health and Substance Use of Students in Higher Education (RIVM & Trimbos-instituut, 2023). The first national Monitor on Mental Health and Substance Use of Students in Higher Education already showed that the mental health of students is under pressure (RIVM, Trimbos-instituut & GGD GHOR Nederland, 2022). Half of the students (51 percent) experience psychological complaints (such as anxiety and depression), of which 12 percent are severe. Their mental well-being (that is: resilience, positive mental health, and life satisfaction) is out of balance. Students experience a lot of stress, pressure to perform, and sleep problems, and that there is a strong correlation between these factors and poorer mental health.

In 2021, over 40% of higher education students (applied sciences or university) reported that they had (very) severe sleep problems in the past four weeks. These problems include difficulties falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up too early. These sleep problems indicate the quality of sleep. Nearly half of the students with sleep problems state that the coronavirus crisis or measures have contributed to their sleep problems, see appendix 1 (RIVM, Trimbos-instituut & GGD GHOR Nederland, 2022).

New figures from the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) show that young people up to 25 years old increasingly say they have sleep problems or depression, based on the Health Survey from the Annual Youth Monitor Report<sup>1</sup> (CBS, 2023). In 2022, 22 percent of young people aged 12 to 25 said they had experienced sleep problems in the past two weeks. This was 14 percent in 2017. The proportion of young people who felt hindered by sleep problems in the past two weeks was twice as high in 2022 as in 2017 (see appendix 2 & 3).

A study by the Dutch Society for Sleep and Wake Research, Leiden University, and the Brain Foundation from 2016 has shown that sleep deprivation and sleep problems can lead to concentration issues and poorer academic performance. Lead researcher Dr. Kristiaan van der Heijden from Leiden University states, "It has been known for some time that sleep deprivation and sleep problems can lead to concentration issues and poorer academic performance, but now we are showing this for the first time among students in Dutch higher education."

Student and employee well-being is a high priority on the university's agenda. The university does several things already to promote student well-being. There is a platform for student well-being<sup>2</sup>, a personal support hub, and a living room on campus<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.erasmusmagazine.nl/2023/11/10/steeds-vaker-depressies-en-slaapproblemen-onder-jongeren/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.eur.nl/en/education/study-rotterdam/student-wellbeing>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ocw-verhalen.nl/verhalen/kwaliteitsafspraken-erasmus-universiteit-rotterdam>

## Proposal

The purpose of this initiative is to advocate for the creation of designated sleep pods on campus Woudestein. This initiative aims to support the well-being and academic performance of students and staff by providing them with a place to rest and rejuvenate during the day. It is important to note that these sleep pods are intended for short naps only, lasting 20 to 30 minutes, and are not meant for extended sleep periods. Other universities in the world and in the Netherlands like Leiden University, TU Delft, Radboud University, Twente University and VU Amsterdam already installed sleep pods during the past years. This proposal fits perfectly within our policy and strategic goals in the field of student and employee wellbeing. The proposal suggests beginning with a pilot project involving one sleep pod, preferably placed in the library. There are several research studies that highlight the correlation of mental health and sleep, so part of the intent to offer sleep pods is to provide a unique mental health resource to our students. I hope that students using these will benefit from an increased concentration in the classroom, a reduction of stress and a positive enhancement in their overall emotions.

A short power nap can be of great value to both students and employees. In the context of student well-being and the experienced study pressure, a power nap can be incredibly helpful. One is more productive and sharper after a power nap. It also fits well with good employment practices. At the VU, over 90 percent of the students appreciate it.

Short naps have been proven effective in mitigating the disruptive consequences of a lack of sleep. A study conducted among young adults reported improved performance on tasks such as addition, logical reasoning, reaction time, vigilance tasks and symbol recognition following a nap (Milner & Côté, 2009). Similarly, increased attention to detail and decision-making proficiency have been measured (Smith-Coggins et al., 1994). Short rest is also successful in improving memory and it can help remember things learnt earlier in the day as much as a full night's sleep (DerSarkissian, 2020). Further, it has been found to be more effective than caffeine supplements (e.g. energy drinks) in improving productivity among undergraduate and graduate students (Mednick et al., 2008).

The effects on mental wellbeing and mood have also been measured. Napping for as little as 10 minutes improves mental state by increasing feelings of relaxation and joy while reducing sadness (Luo & Inoue, 2000). Moreover, it has been found to reduce impulsivity and promote tolerance for frustration, indicating an overall higher emotional regulation (Goldschmied et al., 2015). Finally, naps help relieve stress even after a disrupted night sleep (Faraut et al., 2015)

'Power nap specialist', and sports doctor Kasper Janssen says that facilitating power naps is part of being a good employer. After a short rest employees are allegedly alert for three hours longer than when they fight against tiredness. Other benefits include a better mood and greater attention to detail<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://northerntimes.nl/power-naps-between-lectures-can-be-very-beneficial-university-considers-day-beds-for-students/>

In a recent study titled 'Napping Areas and Nap Pods in Academic Libraries,' aimed at determining the importance of implementing napping areas within libraries, it was shown that providing a napping area as a temporary resting place for users needs to be facilitated by university libraries. This initiative is designed to make users feel comfortable and refreshed, enabling them to resume their academic tasks with renewed vigor and thereby enhance the quality of education. Furthermore, the implementation of napping areas in libraries can offer a unique experience and potentially increase visitor numbers. Additionally, it contributes to the learning commons by introducing an appealing innovation in the library through the establishment of napping areas (Hidayatullah et al., 2022).

## Practical matters

**Location:** The proposal suggests beginning with a pilot project involving one sleep pod, preferably placed in the library. Besides this location, if the library is not an option, other possible locations can be considered, such as the Polak Building and the Living Room in the Langeveld Building.

**Hygiene:** It is important that hygiene is safeguarded as well as possible. The proposal is to make good arrangements with the cleaning department and include it in the regular cleaning schedule. Additionally, paper in combination with a cleaning spray could be provided so that users can clean it if they wish. This information is based on the approach of TU Delft regarding their sleep pods. and to remind users to treat the sleep pods well and carefully.

**Safety and Misuse:** The proposed sleep pod is meant for just one person at the time. Security guards could keep an eye and walk by from time to time.

## Financial matters

The purchase price of a sleep pod is €8,995 or €9,950. In addition, there are variable cleaning costs. It is also possible to rent a sleep pod for a price of approximately €400 to €450 per month.

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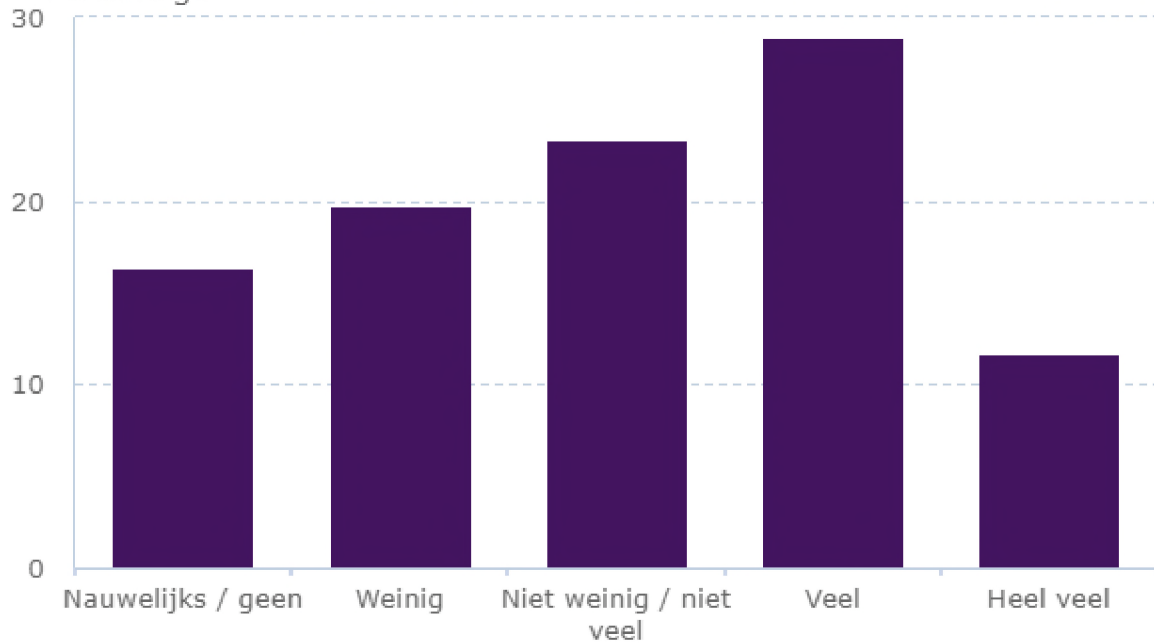
## Attachments

Appendix 1

### Slaapproblemen bij studenten 2021

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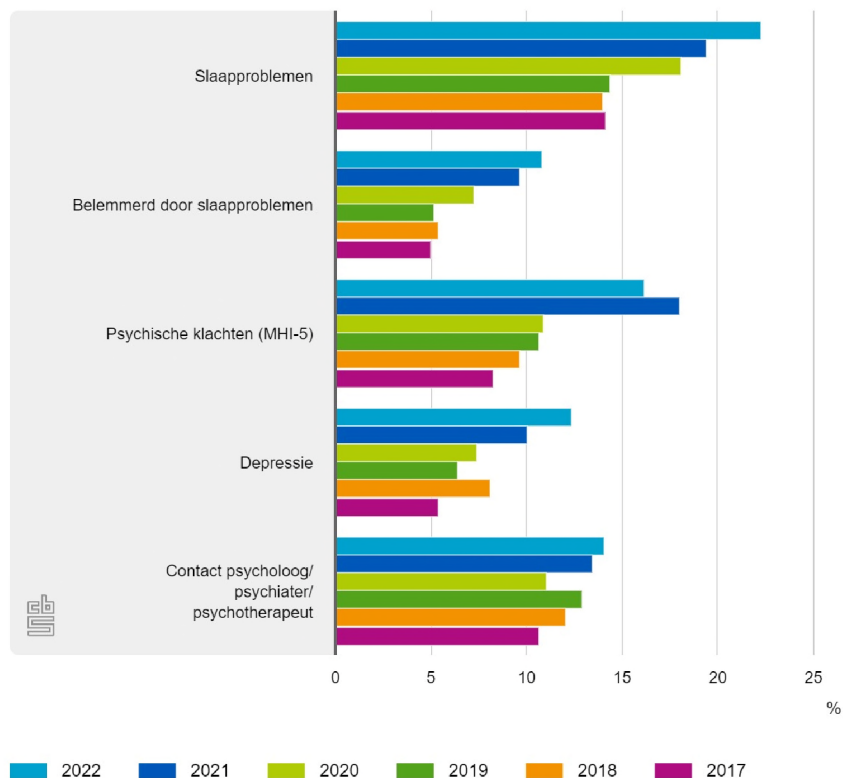
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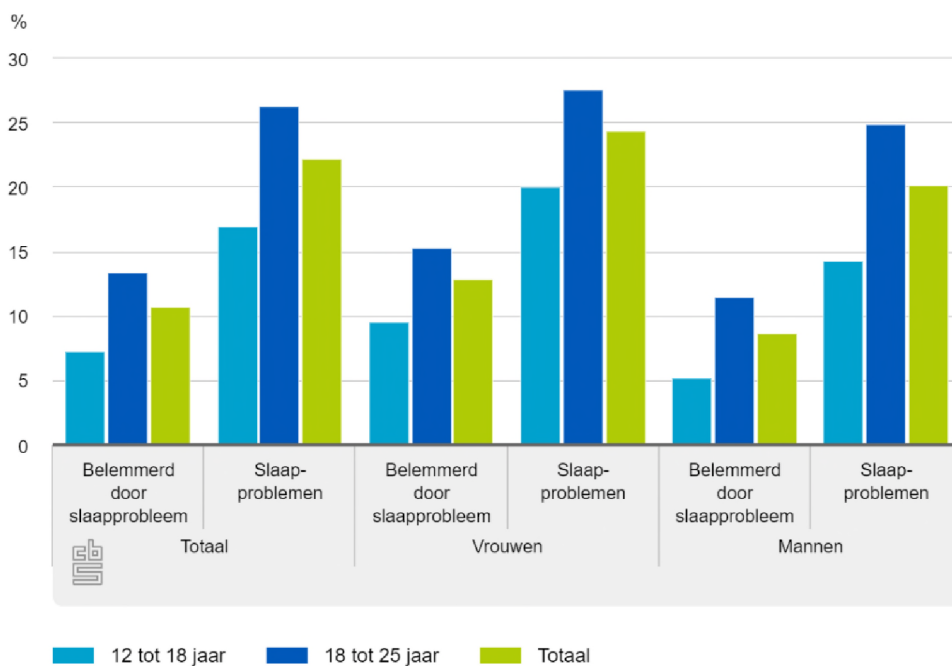
## Appendix 2:

Aspecten van psychische gezondheid onder 12- tot 25-jarigen



## Appendix 3:

Slaapproblemen en belemmeringen door slaapproblemen, 2022



Appendix 4:



Appendix 5:

