# DAE MISSION STATEMENT

## 2025-2026

At Digital Arts and Entertainment, we believe that great professionals are made through hard work and dedication. Our goal is to help you succeed in the world of games, animation, or VFX by offering a curriculum that meets industry standards, while also teaching both technical skills and important teamwork abilities.

We're here to support you, and to build a strong community made up of students, teachers, and industry professionals.

Being part of the DAE community means sharing a love for the digital entertainment industry. It's about being excited to work with others, create amazing projects together, and reach shared goals.

It's also about being part of an inclusive, respectful, and open-minded community. Here, you can be yourself while showing respect and kindness to everyone around you. These are the core values that keep our community strong, and we're excited for you to help us grow even more.

We can't wait to see what you'll achieve.

 See you soon!


**Regis Le Roy**
Academic Director, DAE

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

DAE is more than just a degree; as you enter our campuses, you become a member of the community – a vibrant, international community that promotes mutual respect and collective growth.

**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.

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

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.

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

**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

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 behavior – and what may not be – when we have varying opinions of what we can accept as *good*. Through this document, **we aim to sort through different behavioral situations possibly encountered at DAE, with the main goal of setting guidelines for acceptable behavior 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 behavioral expectations and disciplinary rules of the greater Howest community **(see page 74-79).**

Howest has also launched a Code of Ethics for students and staff alike. This framework acts to serve as a guide to act with integrity.

When you sign the OER and agree to the Howest Code of Ethics, you agree to a particular set of rules as part of your learning agreement with Howest. All OER frameworks – and the framework of the Howest Code of Ethics – apply to our DAE Community, and to this Mission Statement. Given the distinctive qualities of our student community, we opt to offer additional guidelines.

**It is our goal that this Mission Statement actively lives within our community** – after all, a document tackling topics of ethics, behavior, and well-being only truly exists if its contents are reflected through action. It is our aim and our invitation to you 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.

**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.

**\*Please keep in mind that this code applies to all DAE-related spaces, both physical and digital, including lessons, events, internships, study trips, Discord servers (official and unofficial, i.e. class group Discord servers), social media when representing DAE, and informal gatherings where DAE community members interact.**

## 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). By aiming to use correct pronouns, we show the other person that we respect their identity and are committed to an inclusive campus environment.

## 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 harassment (and/or assault)
- Prejudicial bullying (i.e. usage of slurs)
- Making threats
- Continued attempts toward unwanted contact

If you witness something (either online or in-person) that might resemble bullying and/or harassment, please immediately notify **Allie Weis**, Ethics Coordinator in International Game Development (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
- Surrounding yourself with positive influences – "You are the sum of the five people you spend the most time with"
- Steering clear of pressure, manipulation, and/or exclusion in group work – this, too, is cross-boundary behavior
- 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 important to establish these for online behavior. While there is much overlap between the two, **we find it important to explicitly highlight our expectations for online communication.**

Discord, for example, has been a great tool for community at DAE – and it is wonderful to see the connection that online platforms are able to foster. We want everyone to have a positive experience online; in order to do so, it is important that you comply with Discord's Community Guidelines. If online behavior 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 online communication guidelines:**

Please keep the following in mind:

- *Discord is NOT an official communication platform* at DAE (official communication platforms include Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Teams, LEHO).
- On LEHO, Outlook, and/or any other official Howest communication platform, **use an appropriate photo** of yourself (full face visible, no memes).
- **Use the name you go by in class** in the DAE Active Discord server.
- Turn your camera on if your teacher has requested it during a virtual lesson or examination (only for extenuating circumstances in which an in-person lesson and/or examination is not possible).
- Do not @ (or "ping") a teacher in a public Discord server.

- Do not private message a teacher on Discord (send your teacher an email from your Howest student email address).
- **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, username, and server profile).
- **When you reference DAE on social media**, communicate in a responsible, respectful, and professional manner.
- 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 the DAE Active 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.

**Sharing screenshots or excerpts of private conversations and/or recording conversations, lessons, etc. (audio/video) without consent is not permitted.** Do not share, forward, repost, or publish recordings, screenshots involving others outside the context of the initial context unless you have clear permission to do so.

We do recognize that, in situations of cross-boundary behavior, students may need to document interactions in order to protect themselves or seek support. A student who experiences or witnesses cross-boundary behavior may keep/share (in good faith) screenshots, messages, or other digital proofs when this is necessary to:

- Seek help or advice from the Community Team, Ethics Coordinator, STUVO, and/or external support (legal authorities).

**Please also respect the privacy of others during DAE Community events.** Our Community team hosts events throughout the academic year during which students are encouraged to dress up or cosplay. Please respect the following during a special or themed event:

- o Always ask for consent before taking a photo of a peer. If someone declines a photo or interaction, please respect that.
- o Do not touch others or their outfits/costumes without permission.
- o Always lead with kindness – everyone has the right to express their individuality.

## 3.6.  RESPONSIBLE USE OF AI TOOLS

The impact of artificial intelligence (AI) is a rapidly evolving topic. At DAE, we recognize that AI evokes a wide range of emotions – from curiosity and experimentation to hesitation and concern about its ethical implications and impact on the workforce and the environment.

**Where does the industry stand?** As of 2026, professional sentiment surrounding use of AI tools in the audiovisual development space varies. According to the **GDC State of the Industry Report 2025**, 36% of developers reported using AI tools at their company/department and 16% reported that

some of their colleagues did. 27% of developers noted that they had no interest in using generative AI tools in their work.

Within the **animation industry**, 65% of animation studios across the globe have integrated AI tools into their production processes; this figure in the **VFX industry** is slightly higher (72%).

Some creatives/companies find that AI tools are a welcome assistant in increasing productivity or handling repetitive tasks, while others are much more wary of the **ethical implications** (in terms of the labor market, ownership/copyright, sustainability issues, etc.) of these tools. Some lie somewhere in the middle.

While sentiment varies, it is also crucial to note that AI tools are not a passing trend. They are rapidly evolving and reshaping the norm in industries, education, and everyday life. Ignoring this shift risks leaving us unprepared. As members of the DAE community, we share a responsibility to understand how these tools work and critically evaluate where potential and limitations lie, while holding true to ethical frameworks and making sure that any use aligns with core human values, fairness, and accountability.

**What we expect at DAE:** An informed, intentional, and ethical engagement with AI tools – including the choice to not use them in some contexts.

**What we do not expect at DAE:** Embracing AI uncritically or using AI tools by default instead of creating original work. Overreliance on AI to handle creative tasks from start to finish – as well as defining the narrative and intention behind the work – is not accepted.

### AI in Assignments

- o The use of AI tools in assignments **is not permitted** unless explicitly stated by a lecturer **(see OER, Article 79)**.

- o We strongly encourage you to **reflect critically** on whether and why AI tools are used in creative/technical processes, as well as reflecting on the influence this has on the creative ownership of the work.
- o If AI tools are allowed and used, **submitted work must clearly demonstrate your own understanding** and skills and must ultimately be original work. We also ask for **transparency when AI tools are used**; always report use explicitly: Report which tool(s) were used, for which part(s) of the assignment, and to what extent. Failure to use correct citations/references invokes plagiarism sanctions.
- o **Submitting AI-generated work as your own original creation is** *strictly* **prohibited** and conflicts with the core DAE values. Once again, if AI is allowed and used, always reference.
- o **Making assignments purely using AI-generated work without any personal/artistic/technical input beyond the prompting of the AI tool is not permitted.**

### AI in Communication

- o AI tools may be used for **language support** (including grammar and tone), though copying and pasting AI text and passing it off as your own writing (in email or assignment form) is unoriginal and intellectually dishonest – this is not accepted by DAE as proper communication.
- o In a nutshell: Authenticity is KEY – **AI tools should not replace genuine communication.** An AI tool, when appropriate/permitted, can be a trusty editor – but it should never be the primary author.

### AI & Community Responsibility

- o When in doubt about appropriate AI use, please feel encouraged to proactively start a conversation with your teacher(s) and/or support team. Critical discussions are

welcome. As technology is constantly evolving, reflection and discussion remains an ongoing process, with understanding of the necessary nuances.

o Be aware that human creativity and critical thinking are central to DAE's values. At the same time, *ethical, intentional, and transparent use* of AI tools is supported (when permitted) and is, of course, context-specific.

o If using AI tools, follow the **Flemish government's framework of Responsible AI**:

1. Determine what you wish to achieve.
2. Consider whether you can achieve it with AI or if other means would be better.
3. Apply moral values, ethical frameworks, and regulations.
4. Collaborate with all parties involved.
5. Take responsibility together.
6. Regularly evaluate your AI applications.

o Inform yourself well regarding **ethical guidelines (EU) on the use of AI in learning**.

# 4. CROSS-BOUNDARY BEHAVIOR

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-boundary behavior. 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.

**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, contact Allie Weis (**allie.weis@howest.be**), Ethics Coordinator in International Game Development.** 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.

Please also refer to the Reporting Portal for Cross-Boundary Behavior for Students. You may wish to officially report the incident, with the possibility of remaining anonymous.



**Allie Weis**, Ethics Coordinator in International Game Development: 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.

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:

# 6. OVERVIEW OF SUPPORT ROUTES

## INITIATIVES

- **Community Corner**
  Each week, members of the Community team are available for open conversations and connection. Join us in the Community Corner (ground floor of The Level, next to the L.0.001 classroom)! Each member of the Community staff is available for a half-day during the week. Feel welcome to come by if you have a question, need guidance, or simply want to stop by for a friendly chat.



**COMMUNITY CORNER**

**Farah CLAESSENS**
Mondays | 13:30 -16:30
farah.claessens@howest.be

**Isabelle TASSAERT**
Tuesdays | 09:30 -13:00
isabelle.tassaert@howest.be

**Allie WEIS**
Wednesdays | 13:30 -16:30
allie.weis@howest.be

**Sofie RAMIS**
Thursdays | 13:30 - 16:30
sofie.ramis@howest.be

Feel free to use this area as a reading nook
outside of the above mentioned hours :)
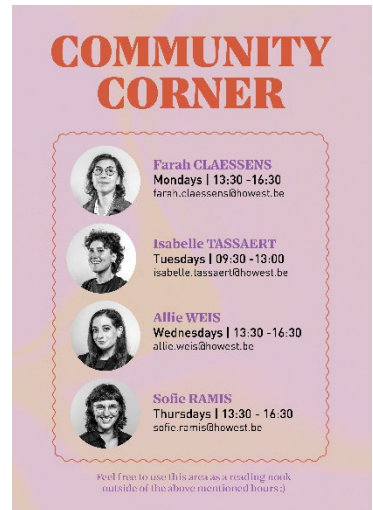
- **'Warm Onthaal' at STUVO**
  Every morning from 8 am-12:30 pm, you are welcome to drop by the 'welcome hours' or 'Warm Onthaal' at the STUVO Kortrijk office. If you have any questions or would like to book an appointment for a further chat, you are encouraged to come by! Further information can be found on **the STUVO site**.

- **Buddy & Mind**
  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.

# TOOLS

- **LEHO Community course**

  Be sure to join the LEHO Community course for all the latest information regarding the following subjects:
    - Information for international students
    - Buddies & Pals program
    - STUVO Connects
    - Campus activities and clubs
    - Announcements
    - …and more!

  Kindly note that you need to **add yourself to this course**; it will not automatically appear on your LEHO dashboard.

# HOTLINES

- **STUVO Cross-boundary behavior hotline**

  Within Howest & DAE, we feel strongly that – if you witness or encounter an incident of transgressive/cross-boundary behavior – you should be able to report such an incident with clarity and ease. With the goal of lowering the threshold of asking for help, STUVO has launched a **Reporting Portal for Cross-Boundary Behavior**.

  → **How to report, and more details:**
    - Submit your report via the following link.
    - Reports can be submitted anonymously, if preferrable.
    - Each report is taken seriously and treated confidentially and with respect by the confidant.
    - You will receive a confirmation email once your report has been submitted successfully. Your report will be received by our STUVO confidential advisor.
        - If not reported anonymously, you will be invited for an exploratory conversation in which further assistance options are presented, and a plan is made.

- If reported anonymously, you may contact the Student Support Services (STUVO) team at your own initiative. All reports help to shape prevention policy.

- For other **hotlines and emergency numbers**, see **Section 7. Emergency Numbers and Services.**

## COMMUNITY TEAM

**Isabelle Tassaert**, Community Coordinator: isabelle.tassaert@howest.be
**Sofie Ramis**, Community & Creative Admin: sofie.ramis@howest.be
**Farah Claessens**, Community Manager: farah.claessens@howest.be

## ETHICS
**Allie Weis**, Ethics Coordinator in International Game Development: allie.weis@howest.be

## STUVO & PEER SUPPORT

**Aline Devoldere,** STUVO Counselor: aline.devoldere@howest.be
**Marie-Laure Paermentier,** STUVO Counselor: marie-laure.paermentier@howest.be
**Emily Vanrobaeys,** STUVO Counselor: emily.vanrobaeys@howest.be
**Katelijne Hanssens**, Student Coach: katelijne.hanssens@howest.be
**Simon Clinckemaillie**,
Howest Student Activities: simon.clinckemaillie@howest.be
**Serjenka Rayee**, Student Housing: housing.kortrijk@howest.be

**Join the** Buddy & Mind **Discord server!**

## STUDY COACHING

**Marijn Verspecht,** Study Coach: marijn.verspecht@howest.be
**Anneleen Grootaert,** Special Facilities: anneleen.grootaert@howest.be
**Kevin Vroman**, Study Track Counselor: kevin.vroman@howest.be
**Katrien Verbrugge**, Study Track Counselor, Katrien.verbrugge@howest.be

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**Anne Dejager, Ombudsperson:** anne.dejager@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.)
   o   Contact Anne if you need to investigate a complaint, but first contact a member of our Community team. We will see what is possible and will refer you, if needed.

# 7. EMERGENCY NUMBERS & SERVICES

**Call/contact immediately if:**
   o   You or someone else is in danger
   o   There is suicidal intent or an attempt taking place
   o   Someone has been sexually assaulted or is at immediate risk of sexual violence
   o   There is a serious physical injury or medical emergency
   o   There are credible threats of violence toward others

- o You are unsure what to do, but feel the situation cannot wait

➢ **Police:** 101
➢ **Urgent medical assistance:** 112 (works across the EU)
➢ **General Practitioner on duty:** 1733
➢ **Poison Centre:** 070 24 52 45
➢ **Drug hotline:** Homepage - De Druglijn (Right click → Translate to English), 078 15 10 20
➢ **Psychiatric emergency intervention unit (Kortrijk)**
➢ **Suicide hotline:** 1813
➢ **Violence & abuse hotline:** 1712
➢ **Sexual Assault Centres (SAC)**
➢ **Tele-Onthaal** (24/7 conversational hotline): 106
  - o Topics include: relationship problems, loneliness, mental health, abuse
➢ **Kortrijk point of contact for reporting discrimination/hate crime:** Ferdinand Depypere (PZ Vlas); Call 1701 or email Ferdinand.depypere@police.belgium.edu
➢ **City of Kortrijk 'Over Your Boundaries' Info site (including reporting point)**
➢ **UNIA Reporting Point** (or call the free number 0800 12 800) (Flanders, Brussels, & Wallonia)

➢ **Moodspace:**
  - o MoodSpace is a place for students, which is packed with reliable information, tips and self-help tools to tackle emotional problems or to help you study confidently. It offers room for student stories and pep talks, and helps you find the help you need.
➢ **Centrum Geestelijke Gezondheidszorg (Center for Mental Health)**

# 8. ENDNOTE

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 created 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).

# 9. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: LEARN MORE!

- City of Kortrijk Inclusion & Diversity

- Avansa (Socio-cultural organization organizing trainings and workshops on various societally-relevant topics

- Çavaria (Flemish advocate for LGBTQI+ and umbrella organization of LGBTQI+ organizations)

- UNIA: What is discrimination? (Based on: Age, birth, civil status, disability, fortune, origin or social condition, physical characteristics, political conviction, protected gender criterion, racial characteristics, religious or philosophical convictions, sexual orientation, state of health, or trade union conviction)

- Ethical Games Initiative