



Personal Relationships Policy

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Personal Relationships Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The University values and relies upon the professional integrity of relationship between members of staff and staff and students. In order that University business can be conducted in a professional and proper manner, it is important to distinguish between, and take account of, personal relationships which overlap with professional ones.
- 1.2 The University aims to promote the highest standards of conduct and integrity among members of staff and students, whilst not interfering unduly in their private lives or to infringe on personal freedoms but taking legitimate action when personal relationships at work have an actual or potential impact on the integrity of the University.
- 1.3 Staff are expected to acknowledge their professional and ethical responsibility to protect the interests of students and accept the obligations and constraints which are inherent in that responsibility.

2.0 Definition of Personal Relationship

- 2.1 For the purpose of this policy a personal relationship is defined as one which goes beyond the normal level of relationship which exists between individuals in similar circumstances.
- 2.2 This includes any relationship where a reasonable person may believe that power and influence could be exerted leading to personal gain or loss (more favourable treatment or patronage) or adversely affect normal processes for other people within the working environment (i.e. that sometimes a personal relationship can lead to an individual who has less power feeling persecuted as a result of the relationship).
- 2.3 This includes relationships which are marital, sexual, romantic or familial.

3.0 Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all University staff, students, contractors and consultants of the University.
- 3.2 This policy applies to all areas where personal relationships could raise issues of conflict of interest, trust and/or confidentiality which may occur at the outset, during

or on the termination of a relationship. Such conflicts may arise in relation to the following areas (these are key examples but do not represent an exhaustive list):

- Management and supervision of staff, including career progression and staff development;
- All aspects of teaching, learning and assessment;
- Access to confidential information;
- Contractual matters including employment, appointments and promotions, placements, discipline and grievance;
- Assignment of work and facilities to students; and
- Access to Student Services, including financial assistance, accommodation and other services.

3.3 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Press and Social Media Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Academic misconduct regulations and the Rules for Student Conduct.

4.0 Personal Relationships Between Staff members

4.1 In most circumstances there will be no workplace problems as a result of personal relationships between staff members. However, individuals in these situations must always be mindful:

- that the relationship does not create an atmosphere of exclusion of other colleagues;
- of the potential perception of favouritism by other colleagues;
- of the potential for advances to be unwanted;
- that a future breakdown in the relationship could affect the professional relationship; and
- of the potential for a conflict of interest to occur.

4.2 Where a personal relationship exists or develops such that under the policy it needs to be disclosed, it is the responsibility of the member(s) of staff affected to inform their line manager who will ensure a record is made and retained in HR.

4.3 Other staff within the department who become aware of a personal relationship between members of staff and who are concerned, regarding perceived conflict of interest, may approach their line manager or a member of HR.

4.4 If the relationship is between a line manager and a member of their staff they must not be involved in:

- Decisions on appointment;
- Performance development reviews, promotion or other processes where it may be perceived that an unfair advantage may be gained over other members of staff;

- Any circumstances where a conflict of interest may exist; and
- The allocation of the balance of duties.

4.5 It may be necessary to look at the relevant reporting structure and make alternative arrangements.

4.6 Failure to disclose a personal relationship where there is a line management or supervisory relationship may result in the University's Disciplinary Procedures being invoked.

5.0 Personal Relationships between Staff and Job Applicants

5.1 If a member of staff has a personal/familial relationship with an applicant for employment, it will be necessary for the member of staff to declare that relationship and avoid any involvement in the appointment process including participating in any of the selection exercises. If the applicant is subsequently appointed, changes to the reporting structure may be necessary, to avoid potential conflict of interest.

5.2 Where a change in reporting structure is not practical and a potential conflict of interest is identified this may result in the job applicant being declined.

6.0 Personal Relationships between Staff and Students

6.1 Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is an offence for anyone over the age of 18 working with young people (for example teachers, student mentors, academic staff etc.) to have a sexual relationship with a young person under the age of 18 who is in full time education. This is applicable even if the relationship is consensual and the person does not teach the young person but works in the same institution where the young person is studying. The University considers such a relationship to be gross misconduct by the member of staff concerned and will consequently invoke the disciplinary procedure if such a situation arises.

6.2 The University will report, as appropriate, any offences of this nature and will cooperate fully in any subsequent criminal proceedings.

6.3 Members of staff are strongly advised not to enter into a personal relationship with a student over the age of 18 for whom they have responsibility in the areas of: teaching/learning; technical instruction; assessment; selection; pastoral care; research. Such relationships can lead to perceived or actual conflicts of interest, which can have a detrimental effect on the teaching and learning environment for other students and colleagues.

6.4 Where personal relationships do exist or develop between a member of staff and a student or where they have a familial relationship, it is the responsibility of the member of staff to inform their Head of School or Department Manager as soon as they are aware of the personal relationship, to ensure that any potential impact can be avoided.

The relevant manager will then consider the necessary action with advice from Human Resources and the Head of Quality, where appropriate, to protect the integrity of teaching, learning and assessment.

6.5 In the following circumstances, action may be necessary to reduce or eliminate any potential conflict of interests:

- the staff member teaches the student;
- the staff member marks or assesses the student's work;
- the staff member has a duty of care towards the student;
- the staff member has a safeguarding duty; and
- the student has made a disclosure to the staff member

6.6 Failure to disclose such a relationship or failure to co-operate with any reasonable arrangement to manage the situation may result in the University's Disciplinary Procedures being invoked.

6.7 Staff members should also be careful when pursuing friendships outside of the University setting (including via social media) with students. In all cases the staff member should not take the lead in initiating or pursuing a friendship with a student and should ensure they maintain professional boundaries. In all cases staff should adhere to the Press and Social Media Policy.

6.8 Staff members should communicate with students using workplace communications (email, desk phones, work mobile, MyUCA etc) rather than by personal email or phone numbers. Student phone numbers can be used for study-related purposes where they have been provided to the University.

6.9 If a member of staff is uncertain about whether they should declare a personal relationship in accordance with this policy and procedure, they may seek advice from HR.