

# Staff and Student Personal Relationships Policy

## Ownership

Document Ownership	
Policy/Procedure/Guidance owned by:	People Team
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Ratified:	07 May 2025 – Students & Teaching Committee

## Version Control

### Version Control Table

All changes to this document are recorded in this table.

Date	Title	Officer
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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The University acknowledges that professional relationships can enhance collaboration, teamwork, and a positive work environment. It is necessary to maintain appropriate professional boundaries to prevent potential conflicts of interest or abuse of power to protect students and members of staff.
- 1.2 This policy aligns with the requirements stipulated by the University's regulator, the Office for Students, under condition of registration E6. The policy sets out the University's approach to managing personal relationships, ensuring that students and staff are protected, and that the University is compliant with the Office for Students requirement.
- 1.3 Capitalised terms used throughout this policy are defined in paragraph 4.

## 2. Principles

- 2.1 With the exception of Excluded Relationships, Staff who would be considered a Relevant Staff Member for an individual student are prohibited from establishing, or attempting to establish, an Intimate Personal Relationship with that Student.
- 2.2 Where a conflict of interest (whether real or perceived) may occur, the University will put any measures in place as are necessary to ensure such conflicts are removed. The protection of Students from any actual or potential conflict of interest and/or Abuse of Power, and the academic integrity of the University, is imperative.

## 3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all Staff and Students. The policy addresses personal relationships between Staff and Students.

3.2 This policy applies to current Intimate Personal Relationships, and Intimate Personal Relationships which have come to an end but where the Student is still studying at the University.

#### 4. Definitions

4.1 For the purpose of this policy, the term “Staff” includes the following:

- i. current staff of the University;
- ii. new starters in receipt of a formal offer of employment;
- iii. leavers during their notice period;
- iv. research supervisors;
- v. staff paid by the hour;
- vi. members of the Board of Governors;
- vii. members of the Vice Chancellor’s Group;
- viii. external examiners;
- ix. adhoc workers (except current students);
- x. external consultants;
- xi. secondees;
- xii. agency workers; and
- xiii. external contractors.

4.2 Existing Students who undertake paid work on an adhoc basis with the University are not considered Staff for the purposes of this policy.

4.3 For the purpose of this policy, the term “Students” refers to all students and apprentices enrolled on a University programme.

4.4 “Relevant Staff Members” are Staff who have direct academic responsibilities, or other direct professional responsibilities, in relation to the Student with whom they wish to enter into an Intimate Personal Relationship. The following sets out an illustrative and non-exhaustive list of the types of staff members that are expected to be captured by the definition of Relevant Staff Member:



- i. teaching Staff, such as lecturers, apprentice educators or graduate teaching assistants;
- ii. dissertation or project supervisors for taught postgraduate Students or research Students;
- iii. Staff who assess or grade the Student;
- iv. Staff providing student support to the Student;
- v. safeguarding leads;
- vi. Staff who are involved in the award and processing of bursaries and grants;
- vii. Staff who handle student casework;
- viii. personal tutors and pastoral support Staff;
- ix. directors of service, School management teams and members of the Vice-Chancellor's Group; and
- x. security staff.

4.5 An "Intimate Personal Relationship" means a relationship that involves one or more of the following elements:

- i. physical intimacy including isolated or repeated sexual activity; or
- ii. romantic or emotional intimacy.

4.6 "Excluded Relationships" means any ongoing Intimate Personal Relationship that:

- i. existed before the date the Office for Students Condition E6 came into force and that remains in existence; or
- ii. existed before the date that the Staff member became a Relevant Staff Member in relation to that Student.

4.7 It is acknowledged that Staff may have platonic friendships with Students which exist outside of the workplace and unless they also meet the definition in 4.5 (i) or 4.5 (ii), these would not be considered an Intimate Personal Relationship for the purposes of this policy.

- 4.8 It is acknowledged that Staff and Students may be members of sports clubs or societies. If there is any risk of Staff having conflicts of interest regarding their membership of a club or society, this must be disclosed.
  - 4.9 Before establishing a new Intimate Personal Relationship, it is expected that Staff take reasonable steps to determine the potential student status of that person.
  - 4.10 If a member of Staff is in any doubt as to whether the relationship would be covered by this policy, they should contact the People Team for guidance.
  - 4.11 "Abuse of Power" refers to a situation where a somebody exploits a position of power in relation to another, applying pressure that may result in actions or inactions that fall within the scope of the personal relationship.
  - 4.12 If existing Students are in an Intimate Personal Relationship, and one of the Students becomes employed by the University (i.e. has a contract of employment rather than undertakes ad-hoc work), in a role which would fall under the definition of a Relevant Staff Member, that relationship is an Excluded Relationship for the purposes of this policy.
  - 4.13 Where a member of Staff is in an Intimate Personal Relationship with another member of Staff, and one of the parties commences a programme of study at the University in addition to their employment at the University, that relationship is an Excluded Relationship for the purposes of this policy.
5. Safeguarding

With the exception of Excluded Relationships, Staff must never establish, or attempt to establish, an Intimate Personal Relationship with a Student who is under eighteen years of age, or who is considered to be a vulnerable adult at risk (as defined in the Safeguarding and Prevent Policy). Failure to adhere will be investigated as a potential breach of the Safeguarding and Prevent Policy and Procedure, and action will be taken accordingly which may

include action under the disciplinary / dismissal procedures, and referral to the appropriate external authorities such as the Police.

## 6. Declaring a Personal Relationship

- 6.1 Staff members who are not Relevant Staff are required to declare an Intimate Personal Relationship with a Student where any conflict of interest exists or there is potential for a conflict of interest to arise.
- 6.2 Where an Intimate Personal Relationship is an Excluded Relationship under this policy and a conflict of interest exists or there is potential for a conflict of interest to arise, the Staff member is required to declare that relationship.
- 6.3 Declarations under 6.1 and 6.2 must be made to the Staff member's line manager (or their manager's manager).
- 6.4 The requirement to declare a relationship pursuant to 6.1 and 6.2 also applies where that relationship has ended and the Student is still a Student of the University.
- 6.5 The member of staff is responsible for advising the student that their relationship must be disclosed. A member of the People Team will contact the student confidentially to verify the relationship.
- 6.6 Upon disclosure of an Intimate Personal Relationship, the University will take all reasonable steps to manage and address any actual or potential conflict of interest and/or Abuse of Power. A risk assessment will be carried out by the line manager to ensure that any decisions are made in a transparent manner and are clearly explained to both parties. All reasonable steps include, but are not limited to:
  - i. allocating an alternative individual to undertake the activities where conflict may occur;
  - ii. putting in place appropriate contractual arrangements (for example, reallocation of work activities, or of line management responsibilities) and enforcing any breaches of those arrangements;

- iii. where it is not possible for the member of Staff to be assigned alternative duties within the scope of their role, they will be placed on the redeployment register and in accordance with the Redeployment Policy; and
  - iv. in the event it is not possible for the member of Staff to be redeployed, action may be taken under the Dismissal policy.
- 6.7 In accordance with the Office for Students Regulations, the Student will not be required to change their programme of study or suffer any detrimental impact as a result of the impact of the mitigations.

## 7. Record of Intimate Personal Relationships

The University will maintain a confidential record of all disclosed Intimate Personal Relationships between staff members and students. This record will be held and managed by a highly restricted number of staff within the People Team.

## 8. Confidentiality

Information about Intimate Personal Relationships will be handled sensitively and will only be available to those who have a need to know the information.

## 9. Reporting

Staff and Students are encouraged to report any concerns they have about a potential or actual failure to comply with this policy. Reports can be made to the relevant manager, the People Team, the Student Complaints team or via Report and Support. All such reports will be considered to be confidential; however they will be shared – in part or in full – with relevant colleagues where necessary to take action under this policy or related University rules, regulations, policies and procedures, for example where there is a



safeguarding concern for any party as a result of the information which has been provided.

## 10. Sanctions

Any violations of this policy will be considered misconduct and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### **Other relevant policies**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

[Disciplinary Procedure](#)

[Dismissal Procedure](#)

[Social Media Policy](#)

[Whistleblowing Policy](#)

[Student Complaints Procedures](#)

[Dignity at Work – Addressing Harassment and Bullying Policy](#)

[Safeguarding and Prevent Policy](#)

[Management of Placements, Field Trips and Travel](#)

### **Other resources:**

[Staff and student relationships - Office for Students](#)

[Report and Support](#)