



Intimate Personal Relationships Policy

1. Intimate personal relationships between staff and students

- 1.1 The Office for Students has specific registration requirements relating to the protection of students from incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct. These requirements are laid out in Condition E6 and include specific requirements associated with intimate personal relationships between staff and students as laid out in Condition 6.5. This policy is designed to ensure that the University is compliant with this element of the Condition.
- 1.2 For the purposes of this policy, '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 intimacy¹.
- 1.3 The University strongly discourages intimate personal relationships between all staff and students. Intimate personal relationships with students could involve serious complications rooted in an imbalance of power, make it difficult to maintain the boundaries of professional and personal life, and compromise the objectivity and professional nature of the relationship. Such relationships can also disrupt the teaching and learning environment for other students and for colleagues. Problems may also occur when a relationship ends or if a consensual relationship later becomes non-consensual or a case of harassment.
- 1.4 All intimate personal relationships between staff and students must be declared immediately, as set out in Section 2. A failure to declare an intimate personal relationship with a student will be investigated under the disciplinary procedure and could also result in disciplinary action even if the relationship is consensual and no complaint is made.
- 1.5 Some staff members carry particular responsibilities for the welfare of students and are therefore more likely to be in a position where a power imbalance exists between themselves and a student or students. These staff members are described as 'relevant staff' members in the Office for Students Condition E6 Requirement.
- 1.6 The University prohibits any relevant staff member from having an intimate personal relationship with one or more students. Any breach of this prohibition by a relevant staff member will result in the University taking appropriate steps in line with the Disciplinary procedure, up to and including the dismissal of the relevant staff member.

¹ 'Emotional intimacy' should not prevent a member of staff engaging compassionately with a student on a professional basis (e.g. engaging with students in distress). Staff should also be aware that 'emotional intimacy' may be formed through grooming behaviours.



- 1.7 This policy uses the Office for Students definition of ‘relevant staff’ meaning a member of staff who has direct academic responsibilities, or other direct professional responsibilities in relation to that student. The following sets out an illustrative and non-exhaustive list of the types of staff members that are captured in this definition:
- Teaching staff, such as lecturers or graduate teaching assistants
 - Dissertation or project supervisors for taught postgraduate students or research students
 - Personal tutors and pastoral support staff
 - Senior members of staff with responsibility or oversight of wider institutional strategy, processes and delivery, for example University Executive Board members, Faculty Executive Board members, Professional Services Directors and Heads of School
 - Security staff.
- 1.8 This policy uses the OfS definition of ‘students’ which includes, but is not limited to, persons who are registered on a higher education course and, at any point in time within the overall duration of that higher education course, are employed by, or otherwise providing services to, a higher education provider.
- 1.9 The Sexual Offences Act 2003 makes it an offence for a person aged 18 or over intentionally to behave in certain sexual ways in relation to a child aged under 18, where the person aged 18 or over is in a position of trust in respect of the child. All staff members are considered to be in a position of trust over individuals under 18 and this applies even where the relationship is consensual.

2. Declaring intimate personal relationships with students

- 2.1 Staff members must declare all intimate personal relationships with students immediately, whether or not the staff member concerned meets the definition of a relevant staff member as defined in section 1.5 of this policy.
- 2.2 Declarations should be made in writing by the staff member to their Head of School/PS Director. If for any reason they do not feel able to declare to their Head of School/PS Director, they should declare to the next level of authority, or their Faculty/Professional Service HR Manager.
- 2.3 Information provided by staff about an intimate personal relationship with a student will be treated in a professional, sensitive and respectful manner. Records of this information will be held securely and confidentially in line with University data protection guidance by the Head of School in School/Department.
- 2.4 Data relating to intimate personal relationships between staff and students are likely to remain relevant for conflict of interest purposes for a significant period of time even after



the relationship has ended.

3. Responding to a declaration of an intimate personal relationship with a student

- 3.1 Heads of School/Managers have an important role to play in ensuring that students are protected from incidents of harassment and/or sexual misconduct resulting from the conduct of staff towards students, as specified in the Office for Student Condition E6.5 requirement regarding intimate personal relationships between staff and students.
- 3.2 This section outlines the steps to be undertaken by a Head of School/PS Director on receiving a declaration by a staff member of an intimate personal relationship with a student. Such declarations will need to be considered promptly and handled with care and sensitivity and so Heads of School/Managers will be supported by relevant Professional Services colleagues in undertaking these steps.
- 3.3 The Head of School/PS Director has an important role to play in protecting the welfare of the student in question and so will meet with the student to
- Confirm the details of the intimate personal relationship as outlined in the declaration
 - Ensure that the student has an opportunity to raise any concerns about the relationship, is aware that they would not be penalised for participating in a relationship with a staff member and would be protected from retaliation if they reported harassment or sexual misconduct
 - Ensure that the student has access to support if required

Discussions with the student must not take place without first seeking advice and guidance from the Student Safeguarding and Welfare Team, the outcome of which may be that a member of the Student Safeguarding and Welfare Team is better placed to meet the student; for example if the declaration relates to a student in another Faculty or School.

- 3.4 The Head of School/PS Director is also responsible for the welfare of the staff member making the declaration. The following steps are designed to ensure that the declaration is responded to promptly, with care and sensitivity and must not take place without first seeking advice from Human Resources.
- 3.5 The Head of School/PS Director will meet with the staff member making the declaration to
- Establish whether the staff member qualifies as a **‘relevant staff’** member
 - Confirm the details of the intimate personal relationship as outlined in the declaration
 - Outline the likely steps to be taken following the declaration

Discussions with the staff member must not take place without first seeking advice and guidance from HR.



- 3.6 Where the possibility of a breach of University policy has been identified, the Head of School/Manager will initiate an investigation under the Disciplinary Policy.
- 3.7 In the event of a declared intimate personal relationship between a **‘relevant staff’** member and a student, the Head of School/PS Director will amend the responsibilities of the staff member so they no longer meet the definition of ‘relevant staff’ in relation to that student, whilst ensuring no disadvantage to the student involved.
- 3.8 The Head of School/PS Director will remove the staff member from any discussions or decision making relating to the student with whom they have a declared intimate personal relationship.
- 3.9 The Head of School/PS Director will consider whether other staff in the School need to be aware of the intimate personal relationship (subject to the wishes of both parties as far as possible).
- 3.10 It is the responsibility of the Head of School/PS Director to ensure that the information provided by a staff member about the intimate personal relationship with a student is treated in a professional, sensitive and respectful manner and in accordance with the steps outlined in 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5, above.

4. Third party reporting of intimate personal relationships

- 4.1 Staff members who are witness to an apparent intimate personal relationship between another staff member and a student should report this to their Head of School/PS Director. If for any reason they do not feel able to raise this with their Head of School/PS Director, they should declare to the next level of authority, or their Faculty/Professional Service HR Manager.
- 4.2 Staff members are reminded that any concerns about sexual violence/sexual harassment, harassment, bullying, discrimination or victimisation can be reported through any of the following routes:
- Through our online platform Report + Support;
 - Your line manager;
 - Another trusted manager or leader;
 - Human Resources contact;
 - For early career researchers, via your faculty lead or Early Career Researchers champion;
 - Head of School;
 - Your trade union representative (if applicable).



5. Further advice and support

- 5.1 Staff members and students can access support and contact details for appropriate services via the Report + Support platform. Staff members can also access advice and information on the staff [Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct policy and web pages](#), through the [Health and Wellbeing hub](#), or enquire via any of the reporting routes in 4.2.

Document control

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