



## Personal and Professional Relationships Policy

As a University, we recognise the importance of preserving the integrity of professional relationships between staff and students and between members of staff and the prevention of the abuse of power.

### 1. Scope:

This policy applies to:

- **Personal relationships between a member of staff (academic or otherwise) and a student or potential student (undergraduate or postgraduate)**
- **Personal relationships between members of staff**

A student or member of staff involved in an intimate personal relationship which they do not consider to be consensual, or where there is an abuse of power has the right to complain under the [University's Dignity & Respect policy and procedure](#).

This policy comes into effect from **1 August 2025**.

### 2. Definitions:

**a. 'abuse of power'** – in line section E6.11 of the Office for Students Condition E6 this means a situation where a relevant staff member exploits a position of power in relation to a student so as to apply pressure in a way which:

- i. may result in the student doing something, or refraining from doing something, that they may not have otherwise done; and
- ii. that action or inaction could reasonably result in something that falls within the scope of an intimate personal relationship.

An abuse of power would also apply to a situation where a relevant staff member exploits a position of power in relation to another member of staff who they line manage or have other responsibilities over, so as to apply pressure in a way which i. and / or ii. could apply.

**b. 'excluded relationships'** – in line section E6.11 of the Office for Students Condition E6, this means any ongoing intimate personal relationship that:

- i. existed before the date condition E6 comes into force (1 August 2025) 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.

- c. 'intimate personal relationship'** - in line section E6.11 of the Office for Students Condition E6 this 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.

### **3. Personal relationships between staff and students:**

- 3.1 Ban on intimate personal relationships** - Staff are prohibited from entering into intimate personal relationships (as defined in section 2(c) above) with students over whom they have teaching, research, pastoral, wellbeing or other professional responsibilities. This includes where the staff member has responsibilities for the student's or potential student's admission, assessment, supervision, teaching, pastoral care and / or wellbeing or mental health support, or is expected to have this over the period of the student's study at the University.
- 3.2 Students in casual and low-fractional roles** - This ban will exclude members of staff where their primary status is as an existing student and who are also undertaking one or more casual worker or low-fractional employee contracts but will include PhD / postdoctoral students who are also working in Graduate Teaching Assistant and / or other teaching posts (on casual or employee contracts) where the intimate personal relationship is with an undergraduate student(s) who they are teaching.
- 3.3 Reporting an intimate personal relationship** - Where an intimate personal relationship does exist between a member of staff and a student, the member of staff is responsible for immediately informing the Director of Human Resources, their Head of Department, and if they are an academic member of staff, their Dean as well, without delay from the start or existence of that relationship. Any such disclosure will be treated sensitively and in strict confidence with full support to both parties in the relationship.
- 3.4 Excluded relationships** – where the intimate personal relationship meets the definition set out on section 2(c) above, the member of staff is still asked to report the intimate personal relationship. This will enable the actions set out under section 3.5 below to be put in place. Excluded relationships that are reported on or after 1 August 2025 would be recorded but with the clear confirmation that they are an exclude relationship.
- 3.5 Actions following the reporting of an intimate personal relationship** - The Director of Human Resources and the Head of Department (or the Dean, where the staff member is an academic) will be responsible for ensuring that, where an intimate personal relationship is disclosed, appropriate alternative arrangements are made without delay to the student's admission, assessment, supervision, teaching, pastoral care or wellbeing / mental health support to ensure that any actual or potential abuse of power is prevented and addressed. It is expected that the person to whom such disclosure has been made will seek and receive advice on a confidential basis from the relevant individuals in HR and Student Support & Safeguarding, so that they can best discharge their responsibilities and to ensure both parties in the relationship are best be supported.
- 3.6 Actions where an intimate personal relationship is not reported** - Failure to disclose the existence of such an intimate personal relationship without delay will result in formal

investigation under disciplinary procedures that could lead to disciplinary action being considered against the member of staff concerned for serious or gross misconduct, up to and including summary dismissal.

### **Confidential Register:**

- 3.7 In line with the Office for Students (OfS) condition E6, the University will maintain a confidential register of any intimate personal relationship that exists between a relevant member of staff and a student (including the nature of any such personal relationships) from 1 August 2025 onwards, along with any previously registered intimate personal relationships.
- 3.8 From 1 August 2025 onwards when a member of staff reports that they have entered into an intimate personal relationship with a student in any situation they are required to email the Director of Human Resources and also their Head of Department (and Dean if they are an academic member of staff) without delay.
- 3.9 The Director of Human Resources will ensure that the matters are checked and managed promptly and with dignity and respect to all of the parties. This process will check if the staff member holds the identified responsibilities for the student concerned that are set out in section 3.1 above and will put in arrangements that will ensure that there can be no abuse of power or the risk of it occurring.
- 3.10 The Director of Human Resources and their identified direct reports will be responsible for ensuring that the confidential register of intimate personal relationships ("the confidential register") will be maintained accurately and securely and with the level highest levels of confidentiality. The confidential register will be exempt from the disclosure of any personally identifiable information, through any Freedom of Information or Subject Access Request SAR (except for information on the requester of the SAR themselves).

## **4. Personal relationships between members of staff:**

- 4.1 Where an intimate personal relationship exists or develops between members of staff who also have a line management, supervisory or other professional relationship, whose integrity could be compromised, or be perceived to be compromised, by the personal relationship, the existence of that personal relationship must be disclosed in writing and via email to the Director of Human Resources and Head of Department, Dean or relevant director / senior manager for professional services staff without delay. Any such disclosure will be treated sensitively and in strict confidence and the individuals within it will be treated and supported with dignity and respect throughout.
- 4.2 The person to whom such disclosure is made is responsible for ensuring, where necessary, that appropriate alternative arrangements are made with respect to recruitment, selection, appraisal, promotion or other processes whereby unfair advantage may be gained, or be perceived to be gained, over another member of staff or where conflict of interest may exist.
- 4.3 The person to whom such disclosure is made is responsible for ensuring, where necessary, that any actual or potential conflict of interest and/or abuse of power is managed and

addressed. It is expected that they will seek advice on a confidential basis from HR, so that they can best discharge their responsibilities and the parties can best be supported.

- 4.4 If a conflict arises through a formal or informal complaint being raised about anyone with whom the member of staff may be in a relationship then the complaint must immediately be passed on to another appropriate person such as the Head of Department, Dean or other relevant senior manager.
- 4.5 Failure to disclose the existence of such an intimate personal relationship without delay will result in a formal investigation under disciplinary procedures that could lead to disciplinary action being considered against the member(s) of staff concerned, including for serious or gross misconduct, up to and including summary dismissal.

## 5. Advice

- 5.1 The identified members of the Human Resources Department will provide advice and support for managing staff through the processes under this policy.
- 5.2 The identified members of the Student Support and Safeguarding will provide advice and support for students affected by such processes under this policy.

## 6. Document control information

Owner:	Richard Brooks
Version number:	v2.5-final
Approval date:	10 July 2025
Approved by:	University Council
<b>Date of last review:</b>	10 July 2025