

## PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS POLICY STATEMENT AND PROCEDURE FOR DISCLOSING RELATIONSHIPS OR TO RAISE CONCERNS

*(Staff & Student Relationships)*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The University aims to establish and maintain a positive, safe, supportive and inclusive environment in which staff and students can achieve their potential whilst working and learning.

Staff members have a professional and ethical responsibility to protect the interests of students. It is vital they demonstrate professional behaviour and act in accordance with the University's Values and Behaviours. This policy statement and procedure sets out the expectations, responsibilities and obligations of all staff members with respect to personal relationships with students, and also acts as a reminder and guide to our student community as to what they can expect if there is a relationship with a staff member. It is also intended to comply with regulatory requirements under [Condition E6: Harassment and sexual misconduct - Office for Students](#).

The University is committed to fostering an environment where students and staff feel confident to report an incident. In line with the Condition E6, the University has introduced a comprehensive single source of information webpage to ensure all University information relating to condition E6 is easily accessible to students.

#### 1.1 Purpose

1.1.1 The University strongly discourages personal relationships between staff members and students as outlined herein. However the University acknowledges that, from time to time, personal relationships may form, or may pre-exist, between members of staff and students and in such circumstances there must be early, open and honest disclosure of such relationships to ensure any necessary steps and/ or mitigations can be put in place to avoid any potential conflicts of interest and to safeguard all parties involved. The University recognises that family relationships may exist between staff members and students and such relationships must be disclosed. Definitions of personal relationships are provided in section 1.3.

1.1.2 Personal relationships between staff and students have the potential to attract allegations of bias or conflict of interest and are also open to allegations of abuse of trust, authority and power and may have a detrimental impact upon the student and staff experience. Whilst personal relationships between any staff member and student are strongly discouraged, the University disapproves of relationships between staff members and students where the staff member has direct academic responsibilities, or other direct professional responsibilities, in

relation to that student. Where a relationship pre-exists or develops, the relationship must be reported immediately in order that the line manager or appropriate senior manager can take appropriate steps to ensure that, where possible, the member of staff is not involved in academic, professional, pastoral or any other university activity with the student and suitable mitigations are made. Definitions of such activities can be found in Annex A.

1.1.3 The purpose of this policy is to ensure fairness and consistency in the disclosure and management of personal relationships between staff members and students, and in such circumstances, to protect the wellbeing, welfare and interests of students and staff. It aims to protect the integrity of all students and staff from allegations of actual or perceived abuse of trust, authority or power, as well as avoid complaints and potential disciplinary action. This is particularly significant where there could be an actual or perceived imbalance of power.

1.1.4 The purpose of this policy and procedure is to:-

- articulate clear standards of behaviour regarding relationships between staff and students;
- provide guidance where personal relationships occur or pre-exist between staff members and students;
- provide that if a personal relationships pre-exists or develops between staff and students, that appropriate action is taken;
- set out the framework for raising concerns about personal relationships;
- outline that appropriate action should be taken, in accordance with the relevant University Staff Disciplinary and Appeals Procedure, where any of the following are alleged to have taken place:
  - personal relationships are not declared in accordance with the procedure;
  - there is an actual or reasonably perceived abuse of trust, authority or power;
  - there is a pattern of behaviour and relationships.

## **1.2 Scope**

1.2.1 This policy and procedure applies to all University staff with respect to personal relationships with students. This includes any activities carried out by staff members on behalf of the University, whether on or off University premises and extends beyond the normal business hours of the University. Staff and students are also required to comply with any professional guidelines and professional registration requirements.

1.2.2 For the purpose of this policy the term 'staff' is used broadly and includes any individual who is engaged to carryout work for the University, including employees, workers, contractors and title holders. The term 'student' is used to identify all registered students of the University.

1.2.3 For the purposes of this framework, individuals with dual roles (e.g. Graduate Teaching Assistants or students undertaking a demonstrator role) may be defined as a student or staff member. It is therefore a requirement that such individuals with dual roles declare any relationships with students in order that appropriate precautionary steps may be taken.

## **1.3 Definition of Personal Relationships**

1.3.1 In the context of this policy and procedure, a personal relationship is defined as:

- a family relationship (see also 1.3.2);

- intimate relationships of physical intimacy (including isolated or repeated sexual activity);
  - intimate relationships of a romantic nature or emotional intimacy;
  - a close or private friendship (including financial dependency);
  - any relationship which could create a perceived or actual conflict of interest, breach of academic or professional expectations and standards, or any unfair bias or influences on University activities;
  - any other personal relationships where it is reasonably considered that there could be a potential conflict.
- 1.3.2 Family relationships may be defined as follows: spouse, civil or other partner, child, parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, auntie, uncle, niece, nephew, cousins or non-biological children of partners, and in-laws. This is guidance only and is non-exhaustive.
- 1.3.3 Reference to “personal relationships” relates to relationships as defined above. However, personal relationships are not restricted to these examples and anyone who considers that they are in a relationship which may be perceived as transgressing professional boundaries and may present an actual or perceived conflict should declare it.
- 1.3.4 Personal relationships can include cyber relationships through digital means such as social media, messaging apps, email or other online platforms as well as in person relationships.
- 1.3.5 Any staff member involved in a personal relationship with a student must behave in a professional manner at all times in connection with University business and should preserve a clear boundary in order to eliminate any scope for potential or actual conflict of interest between their personal and professional relationship.
- 1.3.6 Whilst all staff and student relationships are strongly discouraged, staff **must not** engage in sexual behaviour with a young person. Whilst a young person can consent to sexual activity once they reach the age of 16, the Sexual Offences Act (2003) makes it a criminal offense for a person to engage in sexual activity of any kind with a person under the age of 18, where the adult is in a position of trust. All staff must ensure they have read the University Safeguarding Policy in conjunction with this Policy.

## 2 POLICY

### 2.1 General Principles

- 2.1.1 The University strongly discourages any member of staff (regardless of seniority and position) from having, or pursuing a personal relationship, with a student. This includes during the period a student is applying for admission, full duration of studies and any period following completion of studies during which the staff member maintains a professional role, such as providing references. Where personal relationships occur, the University is committed to taking appropriate and necessary action to mitigate against any potential or actual advantage or disadvantage to that student.
- 2.1.2 Staff should not enter into a personal relationship with a student incompatible with the trust involved in the staff and student professional relationship. It is acknowledged that there is

often a power differential in a professional context i.e. between staff members and students, and staff members should not put themselves in a position where their behaviour could be construed as overstepping professional boundaries, thereby precipitating allegations (however unjustified) of inappropriate behaviour or abuse of power.

- 2.1.3 Relationships between staff and students have the potential to put students in a difficult and compromising position where they feel compelled to act in a particular way and/ or may be perceived as being based on an unequal balance of power in the context of the academic or professional relationship and as such entail serious risks to both individuals, and potentially to the University's reputation. Such relationships may raise questions of conflict of interest, of trust and confidence in working relationships and of equal treatment in areas including teaching, learning, supervision, selection, assessment, research and pastoral support. The University expects that the boundaries and moral obligations of the professional roles of staff must be fully recognised, respected and maintained in all situations where staff and students meet, be they academic, pastoral, or social. Such relationships can also disrupt the teaching and learning environment for other students and work environment for colleagues. It is for this reason that the University strongly discourages personal relationships.
- 2.1.4 The University regards personal relationships between staff and students for whom they have, or are likely to have, any direct or indirect academic or professional responsibilities, as an important professional issue and personal relationships are disapproved of and strongly discouraged. Staff members must not use their professional position to pursue a personal relationship with a student. It is wholly unacceptable for a member of staff to form, or attempt to form, a relationship based on an abuse of power such as an implicit or explicit promise of preferential treatment or on an implicit or explicit threat of detrimental treatment.
- 2.1.5 As staff members may be perceived to be in a position of authority over students, creating an imbalance of power, we strongly advise all staff members to avoid initiating or developing a personal relationship with a student even where there is no direct professional contact. Doing so could compromise the professional relationship making active consent difficult to obtain. For this reason, where a personal relationship exists or develops between a staff member and student and there is no professional relationship in existence, this must be reported in accordance with this procedure to ensure transparency and so the University can consider if it could be perceived to be an actual or perceived conflict and take appropriate steps.
- 2.1.6 The University does not permit personal relationships between staff members and students where there is academic responsibility or other direct professional responsibility. This includes selection, teaching, tutoring, assessment, research or pastoral support. This is not an exhaustive list and further information can be found in Annex A. It is therefore critical that relationships are declared early in order that appropriate steps can be taken.
- 2.1.7 Although personal relationships are strongly discouraged, it is recognised that there will from time to time be pre-existing or developing personal relationships. Where this occurs, it must be declared immediately in accordance with section 3.1. The disclosure and management of personal relationships is critical to ensure that appropriate action is taken to protect all parties should we need to. For this reason we seek the support of colleagues and students in

sharing information on personal relationships to ensure early and appropriate awareness. We understand that disclosing relationships may in some circumstances feel too soon or uncomfortable, but this level of transparency is necessary to safeguard parties involved. Managers must act in accordance with this policy and procedure and appropriately support parties involved. Where a relationship is disclosed this will include making any necessary changes to working practices to preclude any involvement or interaction between the staff member and student's academic studies or pastoral support.

- 2.1.8 Whilst personal relationships are strongly discouraged this should not prohibit staff members from fulfilling their professional academic or pastoral duties within appropriate professional boundaries and in accordance with the University's Values and Behaviours Framework. Whilst 'emotional intimacy' is a form of personal relationship and strongly discouraged, this should not prevent a staff member from engaging compassionately and considerately with a student on a professional basis and whilst fulfilling their professional role. For example, a personal connection with a student as part of their role as Academic Mentor.
- 2.1.9 Any allegation that a staff member has acted in breach of this policy and procedure will be taken very seriously, regardless of the seniority of those involved, and anyone found to have behaved unacceptably may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
- 2.1.10 Any member of staff or student who becomes aware of a personal relationship of others as outlined in this policy, or have concerns about the distribution of authority, may raise concerns. Further information can be found in sections 3.2 and 3.3.
- 2.1.11 Any information received will be handled with an appropriate level of confidentiality. Where personal information is shared or released, this will only be to ensure compliance with University policy and procedure. It is acknowledged that some relationships may have additional confidential complexities (for example, linked to sexual orientation, religion or belief). The University will always ensure reports are handled discreetly and with sensitivity. Any staff member or student concerned about a report can contact Student Services or Human Resources for advice and support.

### **3. PROCEDURE**

#### **3.1 Declaring a personal relationship with a student (staff member)**

- 3.1.1 It is important that all personal relationships between staff and students are disclosed without delay. This is regardless of the staff member's perception as to whether there is an actual or perceived conflict of interest. Staff members should declare to their line manager any existing or new personal relationships they have with a student by completing the Personal Relationships Form in Employee Self Service as soon as the situation arises. Where access to Employee Self Service is not available (such as titleholders) form PR1 should be used and emailed to their line manager and [hr.support@keele.ac.uk](mailto:hr.support@keele.ac.uk). The declaration shall set out the nature of the relationship and details of any professional responsibilities they have in relation to the other. It is the responsibility of the manager, Dean or Director to put appropriate safeguards in place, including facilitating the reorganisation of professional duties to preclude any involvement or interaction in the student's academic studies or welfare.

- 3.1.2 The line manager (or an appropriate other) will treat these matters in confidence, and in consultation with the member of staff, will explore ways in which a potential conflict of interest can be avoided. Managers who are uncertain about whether there is likely to be any risk of a conflict of interest, should discuss this with their line manager and/ or seek guidance from the Employee Relations Team in Human Resources.
- 3.1.3 All declarations will be treated respectfully, sensitively and confidentially and the wishes of all parties will be respected as far as is possible. This includes same-sex relationships where parties may not be “out” publicly and also be respectful of the cultural values of the parties involved.
- 3.1.4 The line manager or other suitable management representative will approach the student to advise them of the disclosure, confirm the details of the relationship and advise of any relevant changes being made and why they are necessary. There should be no detriment to students in this process; its purpose is to confirm the information received, ensure the student is aware of policies, procedures and support services and also for transparency of any supportive action to be taken.
- 3.1.5 If at any time during this process concerns emerge about the relationship, for example, the time taken to report, risk of actual or potential conflict of interest, inappropriate behaviours etc, the matter may be investigated further and where necessary considered in accordance with the relevant University Staff Disciplinary and Appeals procedure. See section 4 for further information.
- 3.1.6 Where a personal relationship is declared the line manager should consider the processes in which the staff member is involved with the student. The line manager should ensure they engage with any relevant parties, such as the Head of School. The potential outcomes include:
- a) No action is required as there is no actual or perceived conflict of interest, or breach of policy and procedure.
  - b) Action is required to minimise risk. This may include, for example, changing duties to remove/ limit interaction with the other person, remove professional responsibilities or where this is not possible, putting a co-supervisor in place.
  - c) Action is required due to a breach of University policy. Where there is concern about the expected standards of behaviour of a staff member or that there has been a breach of policy, consideration will be given to whether this needs to be addressed through the appropriate University Staff Disciplinary and Appeal procedure.
- 3.1.7 Examples of student related processes to which these principles may apply are contained in Appendix A. However, the list is not exhaustive, and staff should exercise care in any circumstances where a conflict of interest may arise.
- 3.1.8 The line manager is responsible for ensuring that following disclosure there is clear professional separation between the staff member and student where necessary and appropriate. In such cases, the line manager should take the steps outlined to ensure that the member of staff is not involved in any relevant decision-making processes. For arrangements for relationships which exist on commencement of this policy, see section 6.

- 3.1.9 The line manager should make a record of the information reported and any actions which have been taken to ensure the staff member has no influence over the student's academic, social or pastoral life at University, on the Personal Relationships notification within Keele People. The completed notification of the disclosure will be retained on the staff members employment record in line with the University records retention schedule.
- 3.1.10 Should the nature of the relationship alter, for example a previously declared personal friendship develops into a romantic relationship, or a relationship should end, the staff member is responsible for submitting a new declaration detailing the updated nature of the relationship. Appropriate review will be conducted which may result in changes to previously agreed actions or safeguards.
- 3.2 Advice to students and notification of a personal relationship (student)**
- 3.2.1 Students should be aware of this policy and procedure and the terms and requirements placed on members of staff. The university is committed to taking measures to make a significant and credible difference in protecting students from any actual or potential conflict of interest and/ or abuse of power. Whilst the staff member involved is responsible for declaring a personal relationship, students are encouraged to inform their Academic Mentor or Head of School or alternatively any other senior members of staff who they feel able to approach. There is no obligation on students to do so, and there will be no repercussions, disciplinary action, or withdrawal of support, if a student chooses not to. Disciplinary action would only be considered if a reported relationship raised concerns of safety and/ or an offence of Regulation B1. In such cases the process detailed in the Student Non-Academic Code of Practice will be followed. Students are asked to share details of relationships to encourage transparency and appropriate open discussion about such relationships in order to help ensure students and staff are supported appropriately and that any inappropriate behaviours are addressed. It is important that awareness is raised about behaviours that may amount to abuse of power, coercion, or sexual and/ or romantic advances in the context of personal relationships and the University seeks student participation in building an environment where there is openness about personal relationships in order that any necessary and appropriate support or action can be taken.
- 3.2.2 Any person to whom a disclosure was made must report the matter to the Head of School. The Head of School will ensure that an appropriate declaration has been received and where necessary signpost to support as appropriate. Further support and advice in relation to sharing information can be obtained from Student Services or Human Resources. Alternatively, named or anonymous reports may be made via Report + Support (<https://reportandsupport.keele.ac.uk/>). Whilst reports will be considered, action may be limited by the restricted information provided through such a tool.
- 3.2.3 Students can and should refuse and/or report inappropriate behaviours from staff or students. This University's [NeverOK Hub](#) (Condition of Registration E6: Harassment and Sexual Misconduct single comprehensive source of information) provides further information and detail on reporting mechanisms and support. Staff should also refuse and/ or report inappropriate behaviours from staff or students and further information can be found in the University's Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy and Dignity and Respect Policy.
- 3.2.4 Students should not be at risk of detrimental behaviours as a result of reporting concerns. The University will ensure as far as possible that appropriate actions are taken to protect students. See also 3.3.8.

- 3.2.5 Students should particularly note the guidance and support available in any cases of non-consensual behaviour and further sources of support as outlined in the [NeverOK Hub](#).

### **3.3 Reporting of a relationship or raising a concern (by someone not involved in the relationship)**

- 3.3.1 Staff members and students are encouraged to report any concerns about personal relationships to their Academic Mentor or Line Manager. Individuals are encouraged to provide as much information as possible when raising concerns, preferably in writing. Alternatively, concerns can be raised anonymously via the University Report + Support platform (<https://reportandsupport.keele.ac.uk/>). Please note that any related reports will be reviewed and action taken as appropriate but it may be difficult without identification of and further information from the reporting party.
- 3.3.2 If a staff member is aware of a personal relationship they must report the situation to their line manager. If it is another student who is aware of such a relationship, they are asked to report the situation to their Academic Mentor. However, where a student does not wish to report a relationship, they are not compelled to do so and there will be no repercussions if they choose not to do so.
- 3.3.3 Reports will be handled with sensitivity and will only be shared with relevant individuals in accordance with this procedure. Individuals making a report in good faith will not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result. If they believe they have experienced any such treatment, they should inform their line manager, student services or the Report + Support tool.
- 3.3.4 The receiving manager will thoroughly consider each disclosure received, and where appropriate, will ensure any support and/or adjustments are considered according to the circumstances. Both the reporting party and any other individuals involved will be signposted to appropriate support services throughout any investigatory or enquiry process.
- 3.3.5 Students who wish to seek advice on, or are concerned about reporting a personal relationship may contact Student Services for support.
- 3.3.6 Where a report of a relationship is made, and no declaration has been received from the member of staff concerned, individuals involved will be made aware of the matter and will be asked to respond. No action will be taken against a student who previously chose not to declare a personal relationship. Disciplinary action may be considered however for the staff member, if they have failed to comply with this policy and procedure.
- 3.3.7 Anyone suspecting a member of staff of acting inappropriately towards a student or staff member under the age of 18 or an adult at risk should refer to the University Safeguarding Policy and contact the Director of Student Services, Head of Student Wellbeing or Deputy Director of Human Resources.
- 3.3.8 If a complaint is considered to be malicious or vexatious, this may result in disciplinary action being taken against the complainant. However, no action will be taken if an allegation has been made in good faith, even if it is judged to be unfounded. In cases where a complaint is alleged to be malicious or vexatious from a student then the complaint will be referred to the Student Discipline team for consideration under the Student Non-Academic Code of Practice. In complaints where the staff member is alleged to have raised a malicious or vexatious



complaint then the case will be referred to the appropriate Staff Disciplinary and Appeals procedure.

#### **4. NON-COMPLIANCE**

- 4.1.1 Staff members are expected to manage their own relationships without them impacting on the workplace and to behave in a manner which is consistent with the principles laid out in this policy statement and procedure. If the University believes that the behaviour of an individual has impacted on the work/study environment of others as a result of a personal relationship, then the University may investigate the matter in accordance with the relevant University Staff Disciplinary and Appeals procedure. This may be, for example, failure to declare a relationship, potential misuse of power or multiple relationships in the workplace.
- 4.1.2 Where it is identified that there may be a personal relationship that has not been declared, steps will be taken to investigate the situation. Failure by a staff member to declare a personal relationship with a student, regardless as to whether unfair advantage or disadvantage has occurred, will be considered a disciplinary matter and could lead to action in accordance with the relevant Staff Disciplinary and Appeals procedure.
- 4.1.3 A member of staff who declares a relationship in line with this policy will not be disadvantaged professionally by making such a declaration.
- 4.1.4 A disciplinary investigation may commence where it is considered that there has been a pattern of behaviour and/ or more than one relationship between a staff member and students, or if there may have been an abuse of power and the staff member has exploited their 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 a personal relationship.

Any such investigation would be conducted in accordance with the relevant University Staff Disciplinary and Appeals procedure.

#### **5. NON-CONSENSUAL RELATIONSHIPS**

- 5.1 If a student or staff member finds themselves in receipt of unwanted or inappropriate behaviour they should refer to the University Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy. Any complaint of unwanted or inappropriate behaviour will be handled sensitively and appropriately by the University. This document also details a range of support available via the University and externally. Details of support services available can be found in the [NeverOK Hub](#).
- 5.2 Students are actively encouraged to report and seek support if they consider a staff member has subjected them to harassment or sexual misconduct. Students should also report and seek support for harassment or sexual misconduct that occurs within a relationship with a staff member, regardless of whether that relationship is permitted under this policy. Support will be provided to students regardless of circumstances. Additionally, students will not be subject to any detrimental treatment or consequences arising from a relationship with a staff member and every effort will be made to protect a student from consequences arising from

a staff member if they reported harassment or sexual misconduct. Staff members are also encouraged to report and seek support if they consider a student has subjected them to harassment or sexual misconduct. Further information can be found in the University Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy.

## **6. EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS**

- 6.1** Where a personal relationship with a student as outlined in section 1.3 exists at the time of the policy's implementation, it should be reported within one month of the policy launch date. Failure to disclose a relationship as outlined within the policy and within the one-month timescale may be considered a disciplinary matter.
- 6.2** If a personal relationship exists before the staff member's engagement with the University it should be reported at the first available opportunity and in any event during the initial one-month induction period.
- 6.3** Where a personal relationship exists prior to the individual becoming a student, it should be reported as soon as the situation is known. Please note that a staff member should not be involved in the admissions or enrolment process of someone with whom they have a personal relationship.
- 6.4** Where an existing or preexisting relationship as defined in 1.3 is disclosed the steps outlined in section 3.1 will be followed.

## **7. DATA RECORDING AND RETENTION**

- 7.1** The University will treat declarations sensitively. Relevant information relating to disclosures will be kept electronically in accordance with the University's record retention schedule and will contain the following:
- Details of the relationship;
  - brief details of action taken to minimise any actual or potential conflict;
  - details of other parties. Where the relationship is with a student, personal details of the student will be redacted within 12 months of the student no longer being an enrolled student of the University.

## **8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 8.1** All members of staff are expected to behave in a professional and respectful manner at all times, maintaining appropriate professional boundaries with students and act in accordance with the principles of the Personal Relationships Policy Statement and Procedure for Disclosing Relationships or to Raise Concerns (Staff & Student Relationships) and have due regard for the potential impact of their actions on others.
- 8.2** Managers are expected to be open to receiving declarations relating to personal relationships and take appropriate action to address any concerns arising. Managers are also expected to take all reports of undeclared personal relationships and/ or complaints relating to actual or perceived personal relationships seriously and seek appropriate advice and support.
- 8.3** The effectiveness of this procedure relies upon all parties involved being open to reports of personal relationships and being willing to deal with such reports and/ or complaints in a

prompt and sensitive manner and to maintain, as appropriate, confidentiality within and outside the University.

- 8.4 The Chief People Officer has strategic oversight of this policy and University Executive Committee (UEC) members are equally responsible for ensuring that the policy and procedure is implemented in their areas of responsibility. Any questions on this policy and procedure should be directed to a member of the Human Resources Employee Relations team.

## **9. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

This policy statement and procedure should be read in conjunction with the following policies and procedures (as may be required):

- a) The NeverOK Hub (Condition of Registration E6: Harassment and Sexual Misconduct single comprehensive source of information)
- b) Disciplinary and Appeals Procedure for Academic Staff
- c) Disciplinary and Appeals Procedure for Staff
- d) Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy
- e) Investigation Guidelines
- f) Safeguarding Policy
- g) Bullying, Harassment and Victimisation Policy Statement for Students
- h) Dignity and Respect Policy Statement and Procedure for a Member of Staff to Raise a Complaint of Bullying or Harassment
- i) Conflicts of Interest Policy
- j) Conflicts of Interest Procedure and Guidelines

## **10. REVIEW, APPROVAL & PUBLICATION**

- 10.1 The University will monitor and review the number of declared relationships and number of reports of undeclared relationships to consider the effectiveness of this policy and associated procedure on an ongoing basis.
- 10.2 As a general principle, the Policy will be reviewed by the HR Department, in consultation with recognised Trade Unions after three years, or where operational and/or legislative requirements change. Any revisions will be approved in accordance with UEC and Council procedures, where applicable.
- 10.3 This Policy is not contractual and is not intended to be incorporated into individual terms and conditions of employment. It may be subject to review, amendment or withdrawal.
- 10.4 This Policy and Procedure is available on the University's policy zone webpage.
- 10.5 Equality issues have been taken into account during the development of this policy and procedure and all protected characteristics have been considered as part of the Equality Analysis undertaken.

## **11. ANNEXES**

Annex A Definitions and Examples.

## 12. DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Document Name</b>                                 | Personal Relationships Policy and Procedure  |
| <b>Owner</b>   | Chief People Officer   |
| <b>Version Number</b>                                | 1.0  |
| <b>Equality Analysis Form Submission Date</b>        | July 2025  |
| <b>Approval Date</b>                                 | 22 July 2025   |
| <b>Approved By</b>                                   | University Executive Committee   |
| <b>Date of Commencement</b>                          | 1 August 2025  |
| <b>Date of Last Review</b>                           | 22 July 2025   |
| <b>Date for Next Review</b>                          | 22 July 2028   |
| <b>Related University Policy Documents</b>           | <p>The NeverOK Hub (Condition of Registration E6: Harassment and Sexual Misconduct single comprehensive source of information)</p> <p>Disciplinary and Appeals Procedure for Academic Staff</p> <p>Disciplinary and Appeals Procedure for Staff</p> <p>Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy</p> <p>Investigation Guidelines</p> <p>Safeguarding Policy</p> <p>Bullying, Harassment and Victimisation Policy Statement for Students</p> <p>Dignity and Respect Policy Statement and Procedure for a Member of Staff to Raise a Complaint of Bullying or Harassment</p> <p>Conflicts of Interest Policy</p> <p>Conflicts of Interest Procedure and Guidelines</p> |
| <i>For Office Use – Keywords for search function</i> | <i>Relationships, personal relationships, sexual relationships, misconduct</i>   |

## Definitions and Examples

Academic, Professional or Pastoral Activities are considered to include and are not limited to:

- Admissions
- Teaching
- Academic Mentoring
- Supervision
- Assessment
- Student Services activities such as staff operating student conduct or disciplinary processes or appeals, student complaints processes student support activities and Counselling
- Extenuating circumstances
- Pastoral support
- Issuing references
- The awarding and processing of bursaries and grants
- Student records
- Ancillary support in student residency (when living in student halls)
- Senior responsibility or oversight of wider institutional strategy, processes and delivery.

This is not an exhaustive list and any academic, professional or pastoral activities should be included.

## Consent

Achieving consent is taken to mean that both parties must have the capacity to agree to a relationship or physical intimacy freely, and without fear of negative consequences. For active consent to be present, both parties must be able to withdraw from a relationship or physical intimacy at any time, without fear of negative consequences. Active consent can, therefore, be difficult to gain where there is an imbalance of power because the party with less power has less capacity to withdraw freely.

## Abuse of Power

Whilst not an exhaustive list and there are many and differing forms of unacceptable behaviour, detrimental or favourable treatment and abuse of power that can take place within personal relationships between staff and students, the following provides some examples:

- a) Flirtatious contact or messages or sharing inappropriate material (for example, pornographic or offensive material);
- b) inappropriate remarks, references, comments, messages or jokes (by any means and including face to face, electronically or via social media);
- c) inappropriate gestures e.g. gifts, favourable or detrimental treatment;
- d) grooming behaviours;
- e) deliberate meeting or contact with a student outside of the workplace or for purposes unrelated to work activity. Professional activity should be carried out at all times either in appropriate spaces (offices, meeting rooms etc) on campus or using University communication tools;

- f) receiving a positive review or reference, or receiving a negative review or reference;
- g) not receiving funding for research;
- h) restricting access to resources;
- i) restricting participation in aspects of a student's education;
- j) favourable treatment on academic assessments, for example greater access to support or feedback, more opportunity for extensions, higher grades or marks;
- k) unfavourable treatment on academic supervision and or assessments, for example restricted access to support or feedback, less opportunity for extensions, lower grades or marks;
- l) being promised access to funding and resources;
- m) being promised introductions to others who could advance their academic or professional career;
- n) withholding pastoral support for example by an Academic Mentor, Mental Health Advisor or Counsellor;
- o) favourable or unfavourable operation of student conduct procedures;
- p) favourable or unfavourable operation of out of hours or campus safety provision.