



## **Scope and purpose**

The University is committed to the promotion of an inclusive, respectful and considerate community. The University expects every staff member and student to behave in a respectful, inclusive and responsible manner to all members of the University community in the UK.

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, recreational, or social. The University regards relationships between staff and the students (whether undergraduate, postgraduate, from other HEIs or on a placement) for whom they have, or are likely to have, any direct or indirect responsibility (particularly academic responsibility) as an important professional issue. Personal relationships between staff and students, raise questions of conflict of interest, of trust and confidence in working relationships and of equal treatment in teaching, learning, supervision, selection, assessment, research and pastoral support. Where a student is also a staff member, their status as a student takes priority in this policy.

## **Personal relationships principles**

### **Sexual relationships**

In order to maintain a professional relationship with students based on trust, confidence and equal treatment, staff are prohibited from entering into an intimate or sexual relationship with a student for whom they have a direct or indirect professional or pastoral responsibility, or interact with as part of their role within the University. Such relationships can lead to a lack of confidence in the integrity of due process and perceived or actual conflicts of interest, which can have a detrimental effect on the teaching and learning environment for other students and colleagues. This policy should be read with the [Staff and Student Personal Relationships Guidance](#).

Sexual relationships between staff and students are prohibited in cases in which the staff member has professional responsibility for the student or there is a power dynamic; this applies to all staff regardless of role or job family. If the staff member is unsure if there is a power dynamic, they should read the definitions in the Staff and Student Personal Relationships Guidance or seek advice from their Head of School/Department. A staff member who fails to withdraw from participation in activities or decisions that may reward or penalise a student with whom the staff member has or has had a sexual relationship will be deemed to have violated their ethical obligation to the student, to other students, to colleagues, and to the University. Failure to abide by this policy will result in an investigation and may result in disciplinary action.

### **Personal relationship**

A personal relationship is defined as a personal or family relationship eg partner, parent, child, sibling, or any other family member. The University recognises that personal or family relationships may exist either when a member of staff is appointed or when a student enrolls. Where a member of staff involved in such a relationship would ordinarily have a professional relationship with a student, it is the responsibility of the member of staff to inform their Head of School/Department (or nominated representative), in order that alternative arrangements can be made. Declaration of a relationship will also be required from the student where there is a power imbalance.

Staff members who have a relationship with a student should not have any influence over student-related processes to which the student is subject. This list outlines the main processes of relevance, although this is not exhaustive, and staff should exercise care in any circumstances where a conflict of interest may arise.

- recruitment and selection
- teaching – formal and informal
- supervision and assessment
- pastoral support
- student conduct issues (complaints against the individuals or complaints made by the individual)
- extenuating circumstances
- issuing of references
- the awarding of and processing of bursaries and grants

The University appreciates that in exceptional circumstances, a student may opt to take a module, attend a class, or engage in another activity organised by or delivered at the University that is offered by a member of staff who they have a personal or family relationship. Whilst this is not encouraged, arrangements can be made to accommodate the request if there is a case for the student to engage in that activity or the interaction is limited and providing that, where appropriate, alternative arrangements may be made for the student's work to be marked and feedback on their performance provided. This should be discussed with the Head of School/Department (or nominated representative).

## **Support**

There is support available for students who need guidance with this policy or to address matters where they feel that this policy or the Staff and Student Personal Relationships Guidance not been adhered to:

- Personal tutor/supervisors or another member of staff within the School
- School Postgraduate Student Adviser, for Postgraduate Research students
- A warden or Hall tutor
- Students' Union advice
- A School Welfare Officer
- [University Counselling Service](#)
- [Chaplaincy and Faith Support](#)
- [Dignity Adviser](#)

## **Procedure for declaring a personal relationship**

Where there are *personal* relationships between members of staff and students, which may be the case in exceptional circumstances as outlined above, staff are responsible for declaring and dealing appropriately with any potential conflict of interest. Where there are *sexual* relationships between members of staff and students, in line with the Staff and Student Personal Relationships Guidance and the limitations above, staff are responsible for declaring and dealing appropriately with any potential conflict of interest.

Staff should declare their relationship to their Head of School/Department or a suitable senior manager. Where this is not appropriate, or the individual feels uncomfortable with this arrangement, they should seek advice from or declare to their [HR Business Partner](#). Failure to declare a relationship may result in an investigation and could lead to disciplinary action.

Students should declare their relationship to their personal tutor or other suitable person within the School, for example, the staff member's line manager.

The manager, to whom the relationship is disclosed, should approach the student to confirm that the details of the relationship and request that both parties complete the declaration form. The declaration form will be stored in line with University policies and data protection. The manager should then make arrangements and confirm that the staff member has no influence over the students' academic career or their social or pastoral life at the University, including the consideration of the above. Where a relationship ends, the staff member and the student should advise their Head of School/Department who will ensure that there continues to not be any interaction.

### **Existing or previous relationships**

This section applies to relationships, which are in existence at the time this policy is published, and to relationships which have occurred in the past.

Members of staff must, within two months of this policy being published, declare any existing and/or previous close personal or sexual relationships with a student (who is still studying or working at the University), in confidence to their Head of School/Department or HR Business Partner.

### **Reporting**

Where a student feels that a staff member has not followed this policy, or the Staff and Student Personal Relationships Guidance, they should report this to [harassment@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:harassment@nottingham.ac.uk).

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