



## Staff-Student Relationships Policy

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the expectations and obligations between members of staff and students where the staff member has any responsibility for the student. These include, but are not limited to marital, sexual, romantic, or emotional relationships whether they are conducted in person or online regardless of sexual orientation or identity. (Family relationships are covered under the College's Conflicts of Interest Policy).
- 1.2 For the purpose of this policy, a 'member of staff' should be understood as including but not limited to any individual who is working for the College under a formal contract of employment or as a casual paid worker and any other individual e.g., visiting Fellows to whom the College offers any privileges or facilities normally available to its employees, graduate students working as tutors, Junior Deans and Welfare Officers and 'external tutors'.
- 1.3 A student should be understood as any individual who is studying for an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification, or who is a Visiting Student registered at the College.
- 1.4 Responsibility for a student is to be interpreted broadly to include any teaching, professional, pastoral or administrative responsibility, whether temporary or permanent. This includes, but is not limited to lecturing, supervising, mentoring, overseeing or advising on projects, work or laboratory experience, fieldwork, internships or vacation study placements and the setting or marking of examinations or other assessments of any type.
- 1.5 The College regards the professional relationship between members of staff and students as central to the student's educational development and wellbeing. Professional relationships are any in which the staff member through their employment with the College has any educational, administrative, pastoral, or supervisory involvement with the student. The College reminds staff of the importance of maintaining academic and professional integrity and of their responsibility for the welfare of students.
- 1.6 This policy seeks to protect students and staff from allegations of actual or perceived conflicts of interest and to limit circumstances where a position of



## Staff-Student Relationships Policy

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power may be abused. In doing so it seeks to ensure a positive and supportive working environment where all are treated fairly.

- 1.7 Whilst the College does not wish to regulate the private lives of its staff, it strongly advises staff not to enter into a close personal or intimate relationship with a student for whom they have any responsibility and alerts them to the complications that may result.
- 1.8 Embarking on a close personal or intimate relationship with a student often involves difficulties rooted in the inequalities of power as well as problems in maintaining the boundaries of professional and personal life. In addition, these relationships could disrupt the teaching and learning environment for other students and colleagues and might lead to accusations of exploitation, favouritism or bias and undermine trust in the academic process.

### **2. Guidance for staff on relationships and the need for disclosure**

- 2.1 The College requires that any close personal or intimate relationship with a student for whom a staff member has any responsibility is brought to the attention of the Senior Tutor, Dean or HR Manager as soon as such a relationship commences or as soon as the staff member perceives the commencement of such a relationship to be likely (whichever is earlier) in order that action can be taken to mitigate any unintended consequences. The member of staff should also disclose any former relationship with a current student for whom they are given or are to be given responsibility. If the staff member is unsure if they have any responsibility for the student, they should declare the relationship to the Senior Tutor, Dean or HR Manager, in order that they can assess the risk of unintended consequences arising. Any declaration of this kind will, so far as possible, subject to the specific provisions of this policy, be treated in confidence, and every effort will be made to ensure that it does not disadvantage either party with regard to their professional advancement or academic progress.
- 2.2 Failure to disclose a close personal or intimate relationship with a student where there is real or perceived conflict of interest, breach of trust or confidentiality may be investigated under the relevant disciplinary procedures (academic or non-academic).



## Staff-Student Relationships Policy

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- 2.3 Members of staff must not be in, or enter into, a close personal or intimate relationship with a student under the age of 18, or an adult known or suspected to be at risk, for whom they have any responsibility for, or involvement in, that person's academic studies and/or personal welfare.
- 2.4 Staff must not engage in sexual behaviour with someone with whom they are in a position of trust. 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 offence 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.
- 2.5 Anyone suspecting a member of staff of acting inappropriately towards a student member under the age of 18 or an adult at risk should refer to the College's Safeguarding Code of Practice and contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer.
- 2.6 If a close personal or intimate relationship is pre-existing between a member of staff and a candidate for admission as a student, the member of staff must make the Senior Tutor aware of it at the outset of the admissions exercise, so that steps can be taken to avoid any conflict of interest arising. The matter will, as far as possible, be handled in confidence to ensure that there is no detriment to the candidate.

### 3. Responsibilities of the Senior Tutor, Dean and HR Manager

- 3.1 If such a relationship develops during the course of employment or study between a member of staff and a student for whom they have a professional responsibility, this must be disclosed by the member of staff to the Senior Tutor, Dean or HR Manager as early as possible so they can take steps to:
- Consult with the member of staff and the student to identify any impact their relationship may have within the College.
  - Facilitate the reorganisation of duties to minimise contact and to ensure the member of staff is not tutoring, supervising, assessing, providing pastoral care, or professionally responsible for administering activities in which the student is involved.



## Staff-Student Relationships Policy

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- Ensure that appropriate action is taken to minimise the potential effect of the relationship on other staff and/or students.

The Senior Tutor or Dean may ask the Tutor for Undergraduates or the Tutor for Graduates to take these steps (depending on the level of study of the student involved).

- 3.2 In the case of a student whose studies or research are in a very specialised area, such that no alternative tutor is available, the Senior Tutor and Dean should consider whether it would be appropriate to engage an alternative tutor in order to ensure that the member of staff does not have sole responsibility for supervising the student's work or for taking decisions that affect the student.
- 3.3 The Senior Tutor and Dean will deal with the situation in a manner that protects the dignity and privacy of all parties, and those involved will be expected to comply with any reasonable decision or action. There will be no obligation on the parties involved to keep their relationship confidential.

### 4. Guidance for students on relationships and the need for disclosure

- 4.1 The College strongly advises students not to enter into any relationship with a member of staff with any responsibility for them, as it may lead the staff member to compromise the integrity of their professional relationship. If such a relationship develops and the student is not sure that a member of staff has disclosed their relationship, they are encouraged to advise the Senior Tutor or Dean independently in confidence.

### 5. Non-consensual relationships or inappropriate behaviour

- 5.1 If any student finds themselves in receipt of unwanted or inappropriate behaviour or involved in a relationship that they do not consider to be truly consensual, or if they consider that they have been adversely affected by a misuse of power, authority, or conflict of interest, they should refer to the College's Policy and Procedure on Harassment.



## Staff-Student Relationships Policy

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- 5.2 Members of staff who experience unwanted advances and other unwelcome behaviour should raise the issue with the Senior Tutor, Tutor for Undergraduates, Tutor for Graduates, the Dean or the HR Manager.

### 6. Support and Guidance

- 6.1 Any member of staff or student who has questions about this policy and its application should discuss them with the Senior Tutor, Tutor for Undergraduates, Tutor for Graduates, the Dean or the HR Manager.

### 7. Relationships in a University Context

- 7.1 If a member of staff who has an appointment with the University in addition to their College appointment enters into a close personal or intimate relationship with a student for which they have any responsibility, then that member of staff will also be bound by the relevant University policy.

### 8. Review and Updating this Policy

- 8.1 This Policy can be found on the College's website. Copies in alternative formats are available on request.
- 8.2 This Policy will be subject to regular review by the Governing Body, on a three-year basis. The next review will take place in September 2025.

#### Version Control:

Version	Date Created	Created By	Authorised By	Review Date
1	07/10/2022	HR Manager/Dean/Senior Tutor/Vice Principal	Governing Body	01/10/2024