

Personal Relationships Policy

February 2020/Version 1.0

Supporting materials:

This document outlines the policy. We've kept it brief to give you the key details but if you need further guidance and support on application please refer to the following guidance:

- Personal Relationships Guidance

You may also find the following helpful:

- Dignity at Work and Study Policy
- Dignity at Work and Study Guidance
- Safeguarding Policy



University of
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MANCHESTER

1.0 Introduction

The University of Salford recognises the importance of promoting and preserving the integrity of professional relationships between colleagues as well as with students, and third parties.

Where a personal relationship overlaps with a working relationship, this may give rise to an actual or perceived conflict of interest, compromising the integrity of the parties and undermining our reputation.

This policy seeks to identify appropriate behaviours in such situations.

2.0 Who is it for?

This policy is applicable to all University colleagues. It applies to all personal relationships, including:

- Family relationships
- Business, commercial or financial relationships
- Sexual and/or romantic relationships (both current and former)
- Friendships, including friends of family members and neighbours
- Property sharing or any instances of cohabitation

The policy also applies to relationships conducted face to face as well as virtually, e.g. via social media or any other electronic means.

3.0 Purpose

This policy supports the welfare of all colleagues and students. It helps colleagues to focus on what is in the best interests of the University and its students whilst enabling everyone to demonstrate appropriate behaviors. It aims to protect the integrity of everyone in the University community from allegations of actual or perceived conflicts of interest. This is particularly significant where there is an imbalance of power.

Such conflicts may arise in relation to the following areas:

- All aspects of teaching and learning
- Access to student services including financial assistance, counselling or any other services
- Management and supervision of staff
- Deployment of financial and other resources
- Access to confidential information
- Employment matters including recruitment, development opportunities, placements, complaints and discipline

For the avoidance of doubt, this is not an exhaustive list.

4.0 Prohibited behaviour and relationships

The University recognises the inherent imbalance of power between many colleagues and students. Those who work for the University must not abuse their position in any way. This includes making any form of sexual advance towards students, pressurising students into intimate relationships, or through any form of sexual harassment, coercive, controlling or predatory behaviour.

Relationships involving students under the age of eighteen or vulnerable adults fall within the scope of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, relating to persons in positions of trust having sexual relations with children under eighteen or vulnerable adults. Members of staff must not enter into a close personal or intimate relationship with a student under eighteen years of age or a vulnerable adult. This is because the member of staff is in a position of trust and the young person or vulnerable adult may be at risk of exploitation.

For clarity, vulnerability is defined as a person who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation (Department of Health, 2018). For further details including examples and practical guidance please refer to the 'Personal Relationships Guidance' which accompanies this policy or the University's 'Safeguarding Policy'.

All forms of prohibited relationships and behaviours will be dealt with under the disciplinary policy and procedure and may be subject to criminal investigation.

5.0 Principles

Relationships between colleagues and students

The University **strongly discourages** colleagues entering into personal relationships with students. Colleagues should recognise a professional and ethical responsibility to protect the interests of students, respect the trust involved in the colleague/student relationship and accept the constraints and obligations inherent in that responsibility.

All personal relationships (intimate, friendship, family) **must be declared by the member of staff involved**. This includes intimate or romantic relationships which are casual in nature. Pre-existing relationships e.g. family relationships, must be disclosed at the point of enrolment or appointment. A declaration must be made in order to insure that appropriate action may be considered to protect the integrity and welfare of all involved. Declarations and any subsequent actions to deal with conflicts of interest will be dealt with in confidence and as sensitively as possible. Examples of action may include (but are not limited to) ensuring that the member of staff does not have sole responsibility for aspects of the student's work and is not the sole decision maker in respect to decisions which have a potential effect on the student, as well as ensuring that the relationship has no adverse impact on other students and staff. For further guidance on how to address conflicts of interest, please see the Personal Relationships Guidance which accompanies this Policy.

Colleagues who experience unwanted advances and other unwelcome behaviour should raise the issue with their appropriate manager or head of service/school.

Colleagues should not enter into a business, commercial or financial relationship with a student which could compromise, or could be perceived to compromise, the objectivity and the professional standing of a teaching relationship.

Failure by a member of staff to declare a personal relationship with a student within a reasonable timeframe may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Relationships between postgraduate and undergraduate students

Where a postgraduate student has responsibilities for supervising undergraduate students, intimate relationships between these students are strongly discouraged. The University considers that such relationships are likely to give rise to a conflict of interest and may be an abuse of authority.

Where there is a pre-existing personal relationship or one develops, the postgraduate student is required to declare this. Failure to declare a personal relationship with an undergraduate student where there is a conflict of interest may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Relationships between colleagues

Whilst most social and personal relationships between members of staff promote good working and academic relationships, there are occasions where a personal relationship may result in an actual or perceived conflict of interest. Therefore, staff members who have a relationship, other than a professional working relationship, with another member of staff should consider whether or not, in the interests of transparency and openness, they should declare that relationship.

Where a personal relationship exists between employees who also have a line management or supervisory relationship, disclosure is mandatory. In such instances alternative line management arrangements will be considered.

Members of staff who experience unwanted advances and other unwelcome behaviour should raise the issue with their appropriate manager or head of service/school.

Failure by a member of staff to declare a personal relationship with another member of staff, where there is a conflict of interest, may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Recruitment

If a member of staff becomes aware of a job applicant with whom they share a personal relationship, disclosure is mandatory. The member of staff will be required to remove themselves from any involvement in the recruitment and selection process e.g. as a member of the recruitment and selection panel or acting as a referee for that person. Failure by a member of staff to remove themselves from any involvement in the recruitment process and to declare the nature of their relationship with the candidate may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Relationships between colleagues and third parties

Where a member of staff has a relationship, other than a professional working relationship, outside work (e.g. with a third party connected with work) that may result in their objectivity or integrity being challenged, then the employee must declare the relationship. Such relationships must be declared from the outset. Failure by a member of staff to declare a personal relationship with third party connected to work where there is the potential for a conflict of interest may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Declarations

All declarations must be submitted via the online 'Personal Relationships Declaration Form'. Completed forms will be kept on a centralised register held by HR. Information required for the purposes of the declaration includes the nature of the relationship and the names and positions of those involved. Details of the declaration will be shared in confidence with the relevant manager to ensure that any actions to mitigate conflicts of interest are put into place. Declarations and all associated information will be held on the register for 6 years from the date of the employee's contract termination date.

6.0 Procedure

The procedures and associated arrangements in relation to personal relationships are outlined within the detail of the Personal Relationships Guidance which accompanies this Policy.

7.0 Equalities

The University of Salford wholeheartedly supports the principle of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Our aim is to create an organisation that values diversity and promotes equality of opportunity, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, HIV status, Trade Union Membership and any intersections. Our purpose is;

“To create an inspirational, inclusive learning, research and working environment, celebrating the diversity of our University community in our everyday conversations”

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on this policy to identify and remove any negative impact for protected groups and to find ways to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people. For further details please contact Human Resources.

Status and reason for development	
Status:	Agreed Policy and Guidance
Reason for development:	Existing 'Consensual Relationships' Policy 2010 in need of review with clar

Revision History			
Date	Author	Summary of changes	Version No.
February 2020	HR Division	Replaces 'Consensual Relationships Policy'	V1.0

Policy Management and Responsibilities	
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Author:	Human Resources Division
Others with responsibilities (please specify):	

Assessment	Tick relevant assessments	Tick if not applicable
Equality Assessment	✓	
Legal	✓	
Information Governance	✓	
Academic Governance		✓

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