

Personal Relationships at Work

Policy and Procedure

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1 Introduction

- 1.1. The University of Greenwich is committed to fostering an inclusive culture and a working environment based on dignity, trust, and respect, where all are treated fairly.
- 1.2. This policy aims to strike a balance between the rights of staff to a private life, and the university's need to protect its business interests, whilst ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all students and staff.
- 1.3. This policy sets out the responsibilities and expectations of the University's employees regarding personal relationships:
 - a) between staff and students
 - b) between staff
 - c) between staff and third parties
 - d) between a line manager and their direct report
 - e) between a job applicant and a university staff member or governor
 - f) between a job applicant and a university student
- 1.4. The purpose of this policy is to ensure processes are in place to safeguard students and staff from abuses of power and sexual misconduct and to protect staff from allegations of actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may arise from personal relationships.
- 1.5. It is recognised and accepted that in a large organisation like the University of Greenwich, some staff are likely to be related to one another and some may develop personal relationships with each other and with third parties (a third party is a contractor, client, customer, supplier, or provider of services to the university).
- 1.6. For this policy a personal relationship is defined as any one of the following, however this list is neither exhaustive nor exclusive:
 - a) A consensual intimate, romantic or sexual relationship which goes beyond the boundaries of a platonic or working relationship, which could be brief, long term or a one-off occurrence, or
 - b) A relationship with a family member or close family friend, or
 - c) A very close friendship, or
 - d) A relationship where there is financial dependence, or
 - e) A close business, financial or commercial relationship

2 Scope

- 2.1. This policy and its procedures apply to all university employees including hourly paid lecturers, agency workers, self-employed contractors, staff on fixed term contracts and students who are also employees, regardless of sexual orientation or identity.

3 The Public Sector Equality Duty

- 3.1. The Equality Act (2010) requires public bodies such as the University of Greenwich to consider how their decisions and policies affect people with different protected characteristics (or a combination of these).
- 3.2. The university is committed to promoting equality of access and outcome for all, celebrating diversity, and providing an inclusive learning and work environment for all students, staff, and visitors. The university will ensure they pay 'due regard' to the need to:
- a) the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
 - b) advance equality of opportunity.
 - c) foster good relations between people, irrespective of their age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation'.
- 3.3. Paying 'due regard' means the university will consciously consider or think about the need to do the above.

4 Personal relationships between staff and students

- 4.1. University staff are not permitted to begin or pursue a personal relationship with any student at the University of Greenwich.
- 4.2. Any staff member found to be in breach of this will be subject to disciplinary action under the university's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- 4.3. If there is an existing personal relationship between a university staff member and a student who is due to join the university, the staff member is responsible for declaring the relationship without delay, regardless of the circumstances.
- 4.4. If a personal relationship has existed in the past between a university staff member and a student, which has ended but the student is due to join the university, the staff member is responsible for declaring the relationship without delay, regardless of the circumstances.
- 4.5. Details regarding personal relationships under 4.3 and 4.4 must be declared by the staff member, confidentially, to the Executive Director, Director, PVC, or Executive Dean and PVC prior to the student joining the university. They must complete the declaration form (located at [Appendix A](#) and on the university staff portal) and share this with the Head of People Operations in the People Directorate. It will be stored confidentially on the employee's file and all information declared in these circumstances will be treated respectfully and sensitively.
- 4.6. The relationship will be risk assessed by the Executive Director, Director, PVC, or Executive Dean and PVC, and the outcome confirmed by the DVC and Provost or the COO. The circumstances of the relationship between the staff member and the student will be considered on a case-by-case basis. There are certain circumstances that could

mean the relationship is considered acceptable by the university, for example, where the staff member does not teach, assess, or provide resources to the student.

- 4.7. If the declared relationship is not deemed acceptable by the university, the staff member will be informed by the DVC and Provost or COO that continuing the relationship whilst working for the university will not be permitted. If the student joins the university and the staff member continues the relationship, they will be subject to disciplinary action under the university's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- 4.8. If the declared relationship is considered acceptable the staff member will be informed by the DVC and Provost or COO and this will be recorded on the declaration form.
- 4.9. If the university becomes aware that a staff member has an existing personal relationship with a student which they had not declared, the matter will be investigated under the university's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- 4.10. If there is a past or existing personal relationship between a job applicant applying to work at the university and a current university student, the applicant is required to declare this during the application process (see also [8. Job Applicants in a personal relationship with a university staff member, governor, or student](#) in this policy).

5 Guidance for Staff – Maintaining Boundaries

- 5.1. All staff are responsible for maintaining clear boundaries and upholding ethical standards in all their interactions with students.
- 5.2. Staff in a teaching or supervisory position must uphold their duty of care and responsibilities for safeguarding student welfare, by ensuring that their behaviour and conduct is professional, and boundaries are always maintained.
- 5.3. Staff should always respect a student's personal space.
- 5.4. Staff should ensure that all their communications with students are professional and in line with the university's Policy for Acceptable Use of Email, Internet, and Cloud Facilities.
- 5.5. Where a one-to-one discussion with a student is required e.g. supervision, the staff member should ensure this takes place in a safe and neutral space, normally on campus.
- 5.6. If a member of staff is concerned that a student is presenting with behaviour towards them that they perceive as inappropriate for the student/staff relationship (for example aggressive or intimidating), they should raise this directly with their line manager or the nominated individual within their faculty or directorate immediately. Alternatively, they can confidentially contact the Head of People Operations in the People Directorate.
- 5.7. Staff and students can also use the university's online platform Report and Support to disclose any form of inappropriate behaviour. Further details can be found under [12. Complaints](#) and [13. Support and Resources](#) in this policy.

6 Personal relationships between staff and between staff and third parties

- 6.1. The university fosters a culture of openness and whilst staff are not required to declare their personal relationship at work, they are encouraged to do so. However, if a situation arises from a personal relationship which gives rise to a real or perceived conflict of interest at work, the staff member is responsible for declaring the conflict of interest to the university and withdrawing from a process or decision, or from undertaking a certain role. They should declare the conflict of interest to their line manager, panel chair, or individual relevant to the situation. See also [9. What is a Conflict of Interest](#) and [10. How to Declare a Conflict of Interest](#).
- 6.2. If the University becomes aware that a staff member has not declared a real or perceived conflict of interest, the matter will be investigated under the university's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Staff should also refer to the [Financial Regulations](#).

7 Personal relationships between line manager and direct report

- 7.1. Notwithstanding clause [6](#) of this policy, if a relationship develops between a line manager and their direct report, or a family relationship exists between a line manager and direct report, the line manager must declare the relationship to the Executive Director, Director, PVC, or Executive Dean and PVC. They must complete the declaration form (located at [Appendix A](#) and on the university staff portal) and share this with the Head of People Operations in the People Directorate. It will be stored confidentially on the employee's file and all information declared in these circumstances will be treated respectfully and sensitively.
- 7.2. The line manager will be informed that continuing line management of the individual whilst in a relationship with them will not be permitted by the university.
- 7.3. If the situation arises where a staff member becomes the line manager for a direct report with whom they have had a personal relationship in the past, even if that relationship has ended, the line manager must declare this to the Executive Director, Director, PVC, or Executive Dean and PVC, who will assess the situation for any potential conflict of interest. The staff member must also complete the declaration form (located at [Appendix A](#) and on the university staff portal) and share this with the Head of People Operations in the People Directorate. It will be stored confidentially on the employee's file and all information declared in these circumstances will be treated respectfully and sensitively.

8 Job applicants in a personal relationship with a university staff member, governor, or student

- 8.1. A job applicant applying for any position at the university is required to declare during the application process the details of any past or existing personal relationships they have with current university staff members, governors, or students.
- 8.2. If a job applicant is selected for interview and they have declared a personal relationship with a named member of university staff who is involved in the recruitment and selection of the role they applied for, the People Directorate will ensure that the staff member named on the application is withdrawn from the recruitment and selection process.

- 8.3. The staff member or governor named on the application will not be permitted to line manage a member of staff with whom they are in a personal relationship. Equally the applicant will not be permitted to line manage a member of staff with whom they are in a personal relationship. The People Directorate should refer to [7. Personal relationships between line manager and direct report](#) in this policy.
- 8.4. If a job applicant declares a past or existing personal relationship with a current university student, the People Directorate should refer to clause [4. Personal Relationships between Staff and Students in this policy](#).

9 What is a conflict of interest?

- 9.1. A conflict of interest is when a staff member's judgement, decisions or actions at work are, or could be, compromised by their personal relationship with another staff member or third party. Despite every effort of individuals in a personal relationship to maintain professional boundaries and remain unbiased, the potential for conflict between personal or family loyalty and work responsibilities may arise.
- 9.2. Where a member of staff becomes aware that a situation arising from their personal relationship may give rise to a real or perceived conflict of interest in the workplace, they must take immediate action to declare the conflict ([See 10. How to declare a conflict of interest](#)).
- 9.3. If a member of staff is unsure whether a situation arising from their relationship presents a conflict of interest, they are encouraged to seek advice confidentially from their line manager or alternatively a member of the People Directorate. Staff should also refer to the [Financial Regulations](#).
- 9.4. The following are some examples of conflicts of interest; however, these are neither exclusive nor exhaustive:
- 9.4.1. Nepotism is a type of conflict of interest, which occurs when an individual uses their position of power or influence to grant an advantage, privilege, or position to someone they know. This could mean evaluating a job description, hiring, promoting, or providing favourable treatment to someone they are in a personal relationship with, or a family member or close friend. The following are examples of situations or actions which could be described as nepotism:
- (a) *A hiring manager takes part in the recruitment and selection process for a role reporting directly to them, which includes an application from an external candidate who they are in a personal relationship with.*
 - (b) *A manager hires a family member in a supervisory role even though they do not have any experience and other candidates are better suited for the position.*
 - (c) *A senior manager doesn't take action to address a complaint of inappropriate behaviour as the person the complaint is against is a friend.*
 - (d) *A staff member is responsible for the tendering process for the procurement of services from a company which is run by the staff member's family member/close*

friend/partner. The staff member does not declare a conflict of interest and awards the contract to the company (See also the university's Financial Regulations).

9.4.2. To avoid nepotism the hiring manager should declare the conflict and withdraw from any conversation, process or decision related to the role or individual concerned. This includes, but is not limited to, job evaluation, candidate selection and interviewing, academic promotions, and any other reward related decisions, and tendering or procurement processes. See also [10. How to Declare a Conflict of Interest](#).

9.4.3. If an employee is approached by the People Directorate to participate as a witness, investigating officer or chair of a formal employee relations procedure, which involves a staff member with whom they have a personal relationship, they should declare they have a conflict of interest.

10 How to declare a conflict of interest

10.1. As soon as a staff member becomes aware that a situation may give rise to a real or perceived conflict of interest, they must declare the conflict and withdraw from the relevant conversation, process, or decision. The conflict should be declared in the first instance to their line manager or the relevant panel chair, or individual relevant to the situation. If in exceptional circumstances and for personal reasons the staff member does not wish to disclose the conflict of interest to their line manager or the relevant individual, they may alternatively speak to the Head of People Operations in the People Directorate.

10.2. The staff member must complete the declaration form (located at [Appendix A](#) and on the university staff portal) and share this with their line manager or the relevant individual and the Head of People Operations in the People Directorate. All information declared will be treated respectfully and sensitively and stored confidentially on the employee file.

10.3. The information declared will be risk assessed by the line manager, relevant panel chair or individual relevant to the situation for any potential impact on the staff member's work commitments and duties and they will work collaboratively with the staff member to make alternative arrangements where necessary. Dependent on the impact, the staff member's line manager may need to be informed.

11 Conduct at work

11.1. Regardless of whether there is a conflict of interest, if a staff member is involved in a personal relationship with another staff member or third party, they must not allow that relationship to influence their conduct at work.

11.2. Staff members are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate, professional, and responsible manner at work and ensure that personal relationships do not compromise these behaviours and values or have an adverse effect on their work.

11.3. Intimate behaviour during work time, such as holding hands, kissing, other close physical contact and discussions of a sexual nature will not be tolerated and will be dealt with under the university's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

11.4. Confidential university information must be always protected. Any breach of confidentiality will be treated very seriously, even if the disclosure was inadvertent, and dealt with under our Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

12 Complaints

12.1. The university is committed to promoting a working environment based on dignity, trust, and respect, free from discrimination, bullying, harassment, or victimisation.

12.2. If a member of staff is being treated in this way because of their personal relationship, they are encouraged to raise it with their line manager if they feel able to, or to contact the Head of People Operations in the People Directorate confidentially. Alternatively, they may wish to raise a complaint under the university's Bullying and Harassment policy and procedure.

12.3. Staff and students can also use the university's online platform to disclose how they have been affected by different forms of harassment, including bullying, discrimination, hate crime, and/or sexual misconduct. Any staff member or student can disclose anonymously, or they can speak to an advisor. The Report and Support service can be accessed either on the university staff portal or by clicking [here](#).

13 Support and resources

Report + Support	Report + Support can be accessed via the Portal , the SafeZone app , or type https://reportandsupport.gre.ac.uk/ into your browser.
Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)	The university provides a free and confidential Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), which is available to employees. Further information can be found here .
Refuge	National Domestic Abuse Helpline (Freephone, 24 hour) – 0808 2000 247 The helpline is run by Refuge and a live online chat is also available
Women's Aid	Women's Aid is the national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children. They provide local support services, training for organisations and information if you are worried about someone else . They also have a live chat facility.
Rape Crisis	Rape Crisis have a network of independent Rape Crisis centres that provide specialist support and services for victims and survivors of sexual violence. They have a National Rape Crisis Helpline – 0808 802 9999 and a live chat .

Respect – Men’s Advice Line	Help for male victims of domestic abuse. https://mensadvice.org.uk/getting-support/ Freephone 0808 8010327
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14 Other policies and forms

14.1. [Personal Relationships at Work Declaration Form](#)

14.2. Prevention of Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy

14.3. Grievance Policy and Procedure

14.4. Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

14.5. Financial Regulations

14.6. Student Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy

14.7. Policy for Acceptable Use of Email, Internet, Software and Cloud Facilities

14.8. Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Procedure

15 Appendix A – Declaration Form

Personal Relationships at Work Declaration Form

This form should be completed in accordance with the Personal Relationships at Work Policy and Procedure.

Name of the staff member completing this form.....

Please tick the appropriate box then complete the relevant form below.

- ☐ 1. Staff and Student (Existing or Past Personal Relationship)
- ☐ 2. Conflict of Interest
- ☐ 3. Line Manager and Direct Report (Existing or Past Personal Relationship)

PLEASE NOTE: For the purposes of this policy a personal relationship is defined as any one of the following, however this list is neither exhaustive nor exclusive:

- a. A consensual intimate, romantic or sexual relationship which goes beyond the boundaries of a platonic or working relationship, which could be brief, long term or a one-off occurrence, or
- b. A relationship with a family member or close family friend, or
- c. A very close friendship, or
- d. A relationship where there is financial dependence, or
- e. A close business, financial or commercial relationship

1. Staff and Student (Existing or Past Personal Relationship)

Part A: To be completed by the staff member who has an existing or past relationship with a student who is joining the university.

This form should be returned to the Executive Director, Director, PVC, or Executive Dean and PVC* and copied to the Head of People Operations in the People Directorate, to be stored confidentially on their personnel file.

***Note:** If the staff member declaring the relationship is an Executive Director, Director, PVC, or Executive Dean and PVC, they should declare the relationship and return the form to their immediate line manager.

Staff Member Details	
Name	
Job Title	
Faculty/ Directorate	
Staff Member's Line Manager	
Staff Member's Exec Director, Director, PVC, or Exec Dean and PVC	

Student Details	
Student's Name	
School	
Subject	
Start Date	
Nature of the Relationship	
Please describe the nature of the relationship, noting the definitions of a personal relationship at the beginning of this form and as described at 1.5 in the Personal Relationships at Work policy.	
Nature of the Relationship	
Existing or Past Relationship?	
Date of Declaration	

Part B: To be completed by the Executive Director, Director, PVC, or Executive Dean and PVC* who is risk assessing the relationship.

Risk Assessment of the Staff/Student Relationship	
Name	
Job Title	
Faculty/Directorate	
Outcome	
Is the declared relationship deemed acceptable?	Yes/No (delete as applicable)
If no, briefly explain why, how this has been communicated to the staff member and any permanent or temporary adjustments that have been made to remove any conflict of interest arising from the relationship e.g. will the staff member be redeployed.	
If the relationship is deemed acceptable, briefly explain why and how any risk will be mitigated.	
Tick this box to confirm the decision has been communicated to the staff member by the DVC and Provost or COO: ☐	
Name of DVC and Provost or COO	

Part C: To be completed by the staff member

- I confirm I am in agreement with the above. - I understand the above information will be stored securely by the People Directorate and managed in compliance with data protection legislation. - I confirm I have read and understood the Personal Relationships at Work Policy and Procedure.
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Name	
Signed	
Date	

2. Conflict of Interest

Part A: To be completed by the staff member declaring a real or perceived conflict of interest arising from their personal relationship with another staff member or a third party.

This form should be returned confidentially to the staff member's line manager or relevant individual e.g. the recruitment panel chair and copied to the Head of People Operations in the People Directorate.

Staff Member Details	
Staff Member's Name	
Job Title	
Faculty/ Directorate	
Staff Member's Line Manager	
Conflict of Interest	
Please briefly describe the real or perceived conflict of interest arising from your personal relationship. Note that you are not required to declare details of the relationship, however you must declare the conflict of interest.	
Date of Declaration	

Part B: To be completed by the line manager or relevant individual risk assessing the conflict of interest.

Risk Assessment of the Conflict of Interest	
Name	
Job Title	
Faculty/Directorate	
Outcome	
Briefly describe how the conflict of interest has been risk assessed, and any identified impact on the staff member's work commitments or duties arising from the situation. Please confirm any permanent or temporary adjustments that have been made and how the outcome has been communicated to the staff member.	
Tick this box to confirm the decision has been communicated to the staff member: ☐	

Part C: To be completed by the staff member

- I confirm I am in agreement with the above. - I understand the above information will be stored securely by the People Directorate and managed in compliance with data protection legislation. - I confirm I have read and understood the Personal Relationships at Work Policy and Procedure.	
Name	
Signed	
Date	

3. Line Manager and Direct Report (Existing or Past Personal Relationship)

Part A: To be completed by the line manager who has an existing or past personal relationship with a member of staff who is reporting directly to them and returned to the Executive Director, Director, PVC, or Executive Dean and PVC* and copied to the Head of People Operations in the People Directorate.

***Note:** If the staff member declaring the relationship is an Executive Director, Director, PVC, or Executive Dean and PVC, they should declare the relationship and return the form to their immediate line manager.

Line Managers Details	
Name	
Job Title	
Faculty/ Directorate	
Line Manager's Manager	
Line Manager's Exec Director, Director, PVC, or Exec Dean and PVC	
Direct Report Details	
Name	
Job Title	
Faculty/Directorate	
Nature of the Relationship	
Please describe the nature of the relationship, noting the definitions of a personal relationship at the beginning of this form and as described at 1.6 in the Personal Relationships at Work policy.	
Nature of the Relationship	
Date of Declaration	

Part B: To be completed by the Executive Director, Director, PVC, or Executive Dean and PVC*.

Name	
Job Title	
Faculty/Directorate	
Tick box to confirm you have informed the line manager that line management of their direct report whilst in a relationship with them is not permitted by the university according to the Personal Relationships at Work Policy and Procedure: ☐	
Briefly summarise any action being taken by the staff member and/or the university to manage the situation (<i>note that the Exec Director, Director, PVC, or Exec Dean and PVC should seek guidance from the Head of People Operations in the People Directorate</i>).	

Part C: To be completed by the line manager

▪ I confirm I am in agreement with the above. ▪ I understand the above information will be stored securely by the People Directorate and managed in compliance with data protection legislation. ▪ I confirm I have read and understood the Personal Relationships at Work Policy and Procedure.	
Name	
Signed	
Date	

Version No.	Purpose/Change	Author	Approved By	Date
1.0	First Draft	Vanessa Roots Senior Workforce Policy Officer	JNC	10 April 2024

This policy will be reviewed regularly.