

Personal Relationships in the Workplace Guidelines

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) These guidelines support the [Code of Conduct](#) and [Conflict of Interest Procedure](#) by providing further details about expectations of staff regarding workplace relationships to ensure these are conducted with professionalism and do not give rise to conflicts of interest.

Scope

(2) These guidelines have the same scope as the [Code of Conduct](#).

Section 2 - Policy

(3) [Code of Conduct](#)

Section 3 - Procedure

(4) [Conflict of Interest Procedure](#)

Section 4 - Guidelines

(5) All members of the University community are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that maintains the integrity and professionalism of the University. Personal relationships should not interfere with the duties and responsibilities owed to the University and its community.

(6) Personal relationships may include current or former:

- a. family relationships (e.g. spouse/de facto/partner, child/parent, cousins, relations by marriage)
- b. emotional relationships (e.g. close friends/personal associates, romantic, intimate or sexual relationships, or persons with a history of serious animosity or conflict), and/or
- c. financial relationships (commercial relationships where pecuniary interest is present).

(7) The [Conflict of Interest Procedure](#) Part A provides examples of situations where personal and family relationships, or relationships between staff and students, may create a conflict of interest. Part B sets out activities that should be avoided.

(8) Personal relationships where there is also an inherent power imbalance carry particularly high risks of a conflict of interest and must be carefully managed. This is due to the potential for undue influence, exploitation, coercive control, bullying or harassment. They may also compromise relationships with other staff or students, due to perceptions of favouritism and advantage.

(9) Such power imbalances exist, for example, between:

- a. staff and students
- b. research supervisors and candidates
- c. senior leaders/managers and other staff
- d. University staff and visiting/external student placements or other cadetship/intern etc. arrangements

(10) Due to these power imbalances, free and voluntary consent cannot be assumed on the part of a student or a junior staff member. Regardless of the nature of the personal relationship, the more senior staff member is responsible for acting with integrity and without bias, to avoid or otherwise manage any conflicts of interest.

(11) In particular, under Part B of the [Conflict of Interest Procedure](#), a conflict cannot be mitigated against and must be avoided where there is a personal relationship between:

- a. a staff member and a student who they directly teach or provide research supervision to, and
- b. staff members in direct reporting lines where one is involved in any way with the selection, appointment, probation, performance reviews, supervision etc. of the other.

(12) As per the [Code of Conduct](#), staff must disclose a personal relationship if it could result in a conflict of interest or affect the performance of their official duties. The [Conflict of Interest Procedure](#) Part C sets out the notification procedures for disclosing and managing conflicts of interest.

(13) Staff who fail to uphold the commitments to professional behaviour may be subject to disciplinary action, in line with the [Code of Conduct](#) and other relevant procedures.

(14) Where a person believes another staff member's personal relationship is or may be causing a conflict of interest, they should raise this with the staff member's supervisor (as per the [Conflict of Interest Procedure](#)) or, if appropriate, under the [Complaints Procedure – Workplace](#). In some circumstances, the conduct may also constitute serious wrongdoing under the [Public Interest Disclosure \(Whistleblowing\) Policy](#).

(15) Staff may seek advice on whether a personal relationship is causing an actual or potential conflict of interest from:

- a. Division of People and Culture
- b. Division of Safety, Security and Wellbeing
- c. [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#)

Section 5 - Glossary

(16) See the [Conflict of Interest Procedure](#).

Status and Details

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