



UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN

University Staff / Students Relationships Policy

V1.1 April 2023

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1. Policy Statement

1.1 Members of the University community are obligated to act with professionalism, integrity and respect towards one another in all relationships. This includes staff / student social events which link to the University.

1.2 The University recognises that personal relationships between members of the University community exist in many and varied forms. Most social and personal relationships will be beneficial, promoting valued working practices and positive academic relationships.

1.3 The University values and relies upon the professional integrity of relationships between staff members and students. In order for University business to be conducted in a professional and respectful manner it is necessary to distinguish between, and take account of, consensual / personal relationships which overlap with professional ones. It recognises that there may be occasions when staff members and / or students (or prospective students) have relationships with other members of staff and / or students. They may be faced with situations where personal interest may conflict with their professional duties and may be uncertain about how to deal with these circumstances. This policy seeks to establish acceptable treatment which raises awareness, fosters a positive and respectful culture and guides behaviour in such situations.

1.4 The University is not seeking to prevent relationships, however the purpose of the policy is to minimise the possibility of conflicts of interest and to ensure that there are appropriate safeguards in place to protect students and staff from inappropriate behaviour which may include violence, abuse of power and trust, controlling / coercive and predatory behaviour, and sexual exploitation. The University It also aims to protect individuals and the University against possible allegations of impropriety, bias, and abuse of power or conflict of interests, whether actual or perceived.

1.5 This Policy should be read in conjunction with the University's One Community values and [The Student Charter](#) which clearly set out the University's expectations around how staff and students should behave with each other and with the wider community.

2. Scope

2.1 This Policy was created to ensure:

- The safety and emotional wellbeing of members of the University's community across all of its campuses;
- Professional boundaries are maintained so that there are no conflicts which would potentially disrupt the teaching and learning environment;

- A campus environment that both facilitates and encourages prompt reporting of inappropriate behaviour by any member of the University's community affected by this;
- The correct procedure is followed so that members of staff are not open to allegations of impropriety, bias, abuse of authority, discrimination, conflict of interest or favouritism;
- Support of the fair and ethical treatment of all staff and students

2.2 This Policy applies to all staff and students, and relationships that may be between members of staff or between members of staff and students.

2.3 The University does not seek to regulate relationships between students. However, any student who behaves in a coercive, harassing or predatory manner towards another student, will be subject to the Student Misconduct Regulations (Part P of the University General Regulations), the consequences of which can include expulsion from the University. Concerns about the nature of any relationship between students should be reported through the Student Complaints Regulations (Part O of the University General Regulations). These shall be treated confidentially. If students prefer, they may raise such issues at local level in the first instance (Programme Leader, Personal Tutor, and Head of School/Department).

3. Definitions

3.1 Whilst it is not possible to define all circumstances where personal relationships will arise, in the context of this policy a personal relationship is defined as:

- Romantic / sexual relationship;
- Family relationship;
- Close friendship;
- Financial relationship, such as landlord;
- Commercial relationship.

The above examples are personal relationships which may give rise to conflicts of interest in the student experience and workplace, however personal relationships are not restricted to these examples and anyone who considers that they are in a potential conflict of interest should declare it as outlined in the policy below. Where personal relationships occur between members of staff or between members of staff and students, it is the responsibility of both individuals to avoid any actual or potential conflicts of interest.

3.2 'Member of staff' refers to any individual either employed or engaged by the University to carry out work for the University. It includes Undergraduate and Postgraduate students who work as employees, such as Graduate Teaching Assistants, Tutors and Demonstrators.

3.3 'Student' refers to any individual studying on any course of study at the University, including:

- Students who have accepted an offer of a place at University who have arrived on campus to start their programme and have not yet completed the formal registration process;
- Student officials in elected positions;
- Students on short courses;
- Students studying for an award of the University who spend any time off campus (such as work placement, year abroad, or summer school);
- Students who are registered as visiting postgraduate researchers.

3.4 Good practice is defined as: staff should conduct themselves at all times in ways that are consistent with their role and duties, and within all University Department of People, Performance and Culture (PPC) policies (including those relating to equal opportunity, harassment and any codes of conduct for particular occupational groups). The recruitment, selection, treatment, development and promotion of staff should be based solely on evidence and not be in any way affected by personal relationships at work.

4. Declaration of Personal Relationships – where conflict of interest exists

4.1 A conflict of interest between members of the community, and in terms of this policy, would include:

- Line Manager / supervisory role / personal tutor role;
- Recruiting a prospective staff member or student;
- Working in the same team (this could be at any level in the University, including interdisciplinary teams);
- Working on joint projects / partnerships between Schools/Departments / Research / Services;
- Being involved in decision making in relation to the other person (i.e. Assessments / Selection / Promotion / Funding application / appraisal schemes for Academic / Professional Services).

4.2 Staff are required to declare to their Line Manager or Head of School / Department any existing or new personal relationship they have with other members of staff, students, consultants, contractors or suppliers which may give rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest, trust or breach of confidentiality. The Line Manager or Head of School / Department will treat these matters in confidence and in consultation with the member(s) of staff, find ways in which potential conflicts of interest can be avoided and who may need to be informed to guard against any perception of impropriety relating to the relationship.

4.3 Staff who declare a personal relationship at work, should be treated fairly and with due regard to equality of treatment issues.

4.4 Staff who are uncertain about whether there is likely to be any risk of a potential conflict of interest emerging from a personal relationship at work, should discuss the matter with their Line Manager (or a manager higher within the management structure where the issue may involve the immediate Line Manager) or Head of School / Department. Staff should approach their Line Manager in confidence should a relationship develop that may potentially contravene the principles of this policy.

4.5 Students are encouraged to declare involvement in a relationship with a staff member to another member of staff in the University as soon as possible whether this is at any point during the relationship or after the relationship has ended. Students may approach any member of staff with this information at a local level (for example their Programme Leader, Personal Tutor or Head of School/Department) or if they prefer PPC or Student Wellbeing.

4.6 When a disclosure of a relationship is made, measures put in place to prevent actual or potential conflicts of interest may include:

- The member of staff will have no involvement in the student's assessment (including Annual Progress Monitoring for PGR students);
- The member of staff will not take any direct individual responsibility for academic, administrative and / or pastoral or other support responsibilities for the student or staff member
- Where the relationship is between a supervisor and their postgraduate (PGR) student, the supervisor should be removed from the supervisory team wherever possible. Alternatively, supervisory responsibilities should be organised to ensure that the member of staff is not the lead supervisor. If appropriate, appointing an additional member of the supervisory team should be considered. Where expertise is not available within the University, an external should be considered
- The member of staff and the student will be expected to comply with any reasonable decision or action.

4.7 Where either a personal relationship as defined above, or failure to comply with this policy (following investigation), results in an unfair advantage or disadvantage to either of the parties to the relationship, the matter will be considered seriously by the University. This includes investigation of the above in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy.

4.8 Failure to declare a personal relationship which creates a conflict of interest may result in disciplinary action. However, staff should not avoid reporting bullying or

harassment for fear of disciplinary action being taken for non-disclosure of a close personal relationship.

5. Prohibited Behaviour

5.1 Staff and students should, at all times, behave in a manner which is consistent with the expectations laid out in this policy and in any relevant University staffing or study policies including those relating to equality and diversity, ethics, safeguarding, harassment and associated University charters. Any prohibited behaviour by staff will be subject to the Disciplinary Policy and for students will be subject to the Student Misconduct Regulations (Part P of the University General Regulations), which can lead to consequences including dismissal or expulsion.

5.2 The University will not tolerate harassment and bullying at work or in the work or learning environment. Allegations against staff regarding bullying and harassment will be investigated in accordance with the University's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure or the Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure. Allegations against students will be investigated in accordance with the Student Misconduct Regulations (Part P of the University General Regulations).

5.3 All members of the University community should understand that initiating a relationship whether between staff or staff and students carries with it inherent risks of unethical conduct and an imbalance of power, where the nature of their professional relationship should be based on trust, a duty of care and professional behaviour. To safeguard that trust, all members of the University community should avoid making or responding to advances. All members of the University community are reminded that unwanted advances may be interpreted by others as harassment.

5.4 It is wholly unacceptable for staff or students to form, or attempt to form, a relationship based on an implicit or explicit promise of preferential treatment or a threat of detrimental treatment.

5.5 Intimate relationships between members of the University community can also give rise to situations where there is coercive or predatory behaviour. If intimate relationships arise between colleagues, and any person has concerns about any predatory or coercive element to such a relationship, they are encouraged to report or disclose this to their Head of School / Department / Service, or other relevant Senior Manager, who is obliged to ensure that such reports are recorded and dealt with in an appropriate matter in accordance with the University's Disciplinary Policy.

5.6 All forms of non-consensual relationships are prohibited and may be subject to criminal investigation.

5.7 Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 relationships involving students under the age of 18 or vulnerable adults could fall within the scope of the Sexual Offences Act (2003) in relation to persons in positions of trust having sexual relations with children under 18 or vulnerable adults. Members of staff must not enter into a close personal or intimate relationship with a student under 18 years of age or a vulnerable adult for whom they have responsibility.

5.8 Where a member of staff is registered with a Professional Body, compliance with the respective code of practice governing relationships between practitioners (or professionals) and service users should be adhered to at all times. In this instance and for the purposes of clarity, services users are identified as students.

6. Reporting Mechanisms for Prohibited Behaviour

6.1 Any member of staff who has witnessed or experienced any inappropriate, coercive or predatory behaviour are encouraged to report concerns immediately to their Head of School / Department / Service and / or PPC.

6.2 Any student who has witnessed or experienced any inappropriate, coercive or predatory behaviour are encouraged to report it to a member of staff (such as their Programme Leader, Senior Tutor, Head of School / Service or Student Wellbeing) or through the Student Complaints Regulations (Part O of the University General Regulations) through Secretariat. Concerns about sexual misconduct can be reported through the [sexual misconduct online reporting tool](#) which is supported by the University's Student Wellbeing Centre.

6.3 In some cases, incidents may have happened months or years previously. Both staff and students can choose to report an incident of prohibited behaviour regardless of the amount of time that has passed, and both will be offered appropriate advice and support. It may not be possible, however, for the University to investigate allegations against, for example, former students or former members of staff.

6.4 The University will endeavour, where appropriate to ensure updates of investigations are shared with the witness or reporter of the concerns.

7. Initiatives to Raise Awareness and Sources of Support

7.1 The University is committed to raising awareness amongst its students and to empower them to recognise inappropriate behaviour and intervene / challenge where it is safe and necessary to do so. As part of the commitment to raising awareness and preventing misconduct, sexual harassment and sexual violence, the University has a sexual misconduct module "No More" that provides information on how to advise and support a friend or student who has experienced sexual misconduct. The

University recognises that not all students will have experienced someone making a disclosure to them, but it is important to raise awareness about how to react in this kind of situation before it happens, so that the correct advice and support is given.

7.2 The University's approach to raising awareness and preventing prohibited behaviour in relationships within the University community feature in the Active Bystander and Safeguarding Children, Vulnerable Adults and Student Mental Health mandatory training for members of staff. In addition, key staff such as Personal Tutors, Programme Leaders and Student Support Officers and Student Wellbeing Advisors are provided with training on the best way to support students who have been affected by inappropriate behaviour.

7.3 The University recognises that it must work closely with the Students' Union in order to ensure all students understand what acceptable behaviour is within the University community. Joint working on this issue will be used to inform a review of the effectiveness of procedures and practices as set out in this document.

7.4 Support for students is available in a confidential setting include the Student Support Centre, Student Wellbeing Centre and the Students' Union Advice Centre. These services are available to students whether they decide to make a complaint or to make a disclosure but not take it forward through any formal procedure.

Support for members of staff is available in a confidential manner through the Employee Assistance Programme, line manager, Head of School / Department / Service. These contacts are available to students whether they decide to make a complaint or to make a disclosure but not take it forward through any formal procedure.

Support is available, but is not limited to:

- Student Wellbeing Centre - 01522 886400 or studentwellbeing@lincoln.ac.uk
- Employee Assistance Programme – 0800 3281437 or <https://hr-internal.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/employee-assistance-programme/>
- Lincolnshire Rape Crisis - 0800 33 4 55 00 or support@lincolnshirerapecrisis.org.uk
- Spring Lodge - Lincolnshire's Sexual Assault Referral Centre – 01522 524402 or lpft.springlodge@nhs.net or [Home :: Spring Lodge Centre \(lpft.nhs.uk\)](http://Home::SpringLodgeCentre(lpft.nhs.uk))
- The Survivors Trust – 08088 010818 or [The Survivors Trust](http://TheSurvivorsTrust)
- Rape Crisis - 0808 802 9999
- EDAN (Domestic Abuse Service) - 01522 510041 or <https://edanlincs.org.uk/>
- Stonewall – www.stonewall.org.uk
- SurvivorsUK – support for male rape and sexual abuse. Text 020 3322 1860 or 0203 598 3898 or SurvivorsUK
- Galop provides support to LGBT+ people who have experienced any form of sexual violence. Call 0800 999 5428 or Email help@galop.org.uk
- Victim Support - Lincolnshire specific number: 01522 947510 or National number: 0808 1689 111

- NHS - In a medical emergency you should call 999. For non-emergency medical advice you can call 111
- [Lincolnshire Rape Crisis :: A specialist support service for survivors of sexual violence Lincolnshire](#)

8. Monitoring and Review

8.1 Working with the Students' Union, the University will monitor levels of incidents of prohibited behaviour in relationships within the University community that are reported. This data will be used to inform a review of the effectiveness of procedures and practices as set out in this document.

9. Data Protection and Confidentiality

9.1 The University respects the confidentiality of those reporting prohibited behaviour perpetrated against them and will handle staff and students' data in accordance with the data protection principles set out in data protection legislation.

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