



LEEDS
BECKETT
UNIVERSITY

Policy on Personal Relationships at Work

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Personal Relationships at Work

Purpose and Core Principles

We recognise that socialising on a friendship basis for staff and students can be a positive aspect of being an active member of the University community. We also recognise that the nature of our community means that members of staff may be in, or may develop, personal relationships with other members of our community, or work with other members of staff or students with whom they have a family relationship. We are committed to creating and maintaining a safe, welcoming and inclusive community which nurtures a culture of respect and consideration for all. As part of this, we feel that it is important to set out expectations, boundaries and safeguards with respect to personal relationships between students and staff, and between colleagues, to prevent potential abuses of power. Such safeguards will also help protect staff from potential allegations of impropriety, bias, abuse of trust/authority, discrimination or favouritism.

What is meant by a 'personal relationship'?

In the context of this policy, a personal relationship is:

- a close family relationship
- a romantic/sexual relationship, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression
- or any other personal relationship where there is a potential conflict of interest.¹

Relationships between staff and students²

Relationships between staff and students have the potential for abuse of power (or the perception of abuse of power) due to the inherently unequal positions of teacher/supervisor and student. They have the potential to put students in a difficult and compromising position where they feel they have no choice but to agree to socialise/meet.

The University does not allow close personal and intimate relationships between members of staff and students where the staff member has direct professional responsibility for, and/or involvement in that student's academic studies and/or personal welfare.³ Such situations will be treated as a disciplinary matter and, subject to investigation, could result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

The University strongly discourages any member of staff from having or pursuing a personal or intimate relationship with any student. Where there is a pre-existing relationship, or one develops, you must declare the nature of the relationship to your manager and Dean/Director or the Employee Relations Team (employeerelationsteam@leedsbeckett.ac.uk) immediately (and always within one month). A discussion will take place to agree appropriate action and safeguards to protect your integrity, the interests of the other person and of the University using the form at Appendix 1.

¹ Our Procurement Financial Procedures provide more information about declarations of interest in relation to purchasing goods and services. The University's Conflict of Interest Policy includes information about both financial and personal conflicts of interest.

² This includes students who are working at the University (e.g. on a student placement year or as a casual worker)

³ Teaching of a close family member is also not allowed.

Relationships between colleagues

In many cases a personal relationship between colleagues will not interfere with work. However, sometimes a personal relationship will be or become problematic because it adversely impacts on other colleagues or negatively affects our services. Further information on the risks and issues we are seeking to address are included in Appendix 2.

Where you have a 'personal relationship' with a colleague with whom you work closely (for example, in the same team/project or management structure), or one develops, and there is a conflict of interest (or the potential for a conflict of interest) you should inform your manager immediately (and always within one month and prior to relevant activities). Conflicts of interest include personal relationships between a manager and their direct report, and involvement in activities such as (but not limited to) recruitment, selection, progression, bids, academic outcome, or formal processes (e.g. disciplinary investigations, PDRs) for a colleague with whom you have a 'personal relationship'. It is not appropriate for you to approve expenses or bids, or to assess performance, for someone with whom you have a 'personal relationship'. Necessary fair and appropriate action will be taken to protect everyone's integrity. This may include reorganisation of duties and/or alternative management/supervisory/approval arrangements. This discussion and action are important safeguards for you, the other person in the relationship, and for the University. Where action is necessary, a short file note (titled Confidential Disclosure) of the agreed changes/actions will be kept on your HR file.

Importance of respecting professional/personal boundaries (including where relationships break down)

All members of staff are expected to behave in an appropriate, impartial, and professional manner whilst at work. Where relationships break down you should have a further discussion with your manager (or the Employee Relations Team) about appropriate changes to previously agreed actions and safeguards.

Confidentiality/Privacy in Personal Affairs

We fully acknowledge the right of staff members to privacy in their personal affairs, and that some relationships may have additional confidentiality complexities (for example, linked to sexual orientation or religion and belief). Confidentiality will be maintained as requested, except in cases of misconduct linked to the relationship, where information may need to be shared in confidence with relevant individuals (e.g. an investigating manager and/or disciplinary manager).

If you are concerned about disclosing the details of your personal relationship (or are uncertain if you need to inform the University of the relationship), you should speak to a member of the Employee Relations Team.

Failure to Disclose a Personal Relationship

Failure to disclose a personal relationship as required by this policy will be treated as a disciplinary matter and, subject to investigation, could result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Preventing and Addressing Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy

Our Preventing and Addressing Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy aims to ensure that students, colleagues and third parties can report any unacceptable behaviour and be supported in the process of resolving it.

Support

If this policy relates to you, and you would like support with any issues raised in the policy, you may find it helpful to contact our [Dignity and Respect Advisers](#), our [Employee Assistance Programme](#), [Chaplaincy](#) or [Colleague Equality and Inclusion networks](#) (including Rainbow Rose and Faith and Belief Forums). Supporting guidance is also available on our HR webpages.

Related Policies and Documentation

[Anti-bribery and Corruption Policy](#)

[Colleague Privacy Notice](#)

[Conflicts of Interest Policy](#)

[Counter Fraud Policy](#)

[Disciplinary Rules](#)

[Disciplinary Policy](#)

[Financial Procedures](#)

[Information Governance Policies](#)

[Preventing and Addressing Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)

[Recruitment and Selection Policy](#)

[Policy on Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups](#)

[Record Retention Schedule \(tab 4, Human Resources\)](#)

Reviewed October 2023

Appendix 1

Strictly Private and Confidential

To be completed by the line manager or Employee Relations Team (copy to be provided to the employee, Dean/Director and kept on the HR iTrent personal file – email a copy to EmployeeRelationsTeam@leedsbeckett.ac.uk). Further guidance is available in the Guidance and Scenarios document. The record will be maintained in accordance with DPA 2018/GDPR and the University's Colleague Privacy Notice.

For the purpose of this business activity the legal basis relied upon for processing your personal data is Legitimate interests. Your personal data will be managed within the iTrent system for the period specified below. The [LBU Records Retention Schedule](#) provides full details in relation to how long we retain information. The University embeds the GDPR data protection principals in the management of personal information. For more information on these principals, how to exercise your rights and freedoms and how to contact us please visit our privacy webpage at <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/our-university/public-information/information-compliance/privacy-your-rights-and-freedoms/>

Form to declare personal relationships with students

| | |
|--|---|
| Name of employee: Job title: School/Service | Name of other individual in the personal relationship: School/Service: |
| Nature of relationship (tick as appropriate): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• family connection• romantic/sexual relationship• other (please indicate nature of relationship) | |
| Note below any potential or foreseeable conflicts of interest and actions taken (to include consideration of the current situation and potential future study interactions (e.g. academic cover arrangements, student potential future option choices)). Action must be taken to mitigate any potential academic detriment to the student | |
| Potential or foreseeable conflicts of interest | Actions taken |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| Name of manager/member of Employee Relations Team: Name: _____ Date: _____ | |
| I confirm that this is an accurate record: Employee Name: _____ | |
| Expected date of deletion of form from iTrent file (graduation date of student, plus 6 months): _____ | |

Appendix 2 – Colleague Relationships

In many cases a personal relationship between colleagues will not interfere with work. However, sometimes a personal relationship will be or become problematic because it adversely impacts on other colleagues or negatively affects our services. Personal relationships can be particularly problematic where they involve members of the same team or are between a supervisor or manager and subordinate.

This means that personal relationships are potentially a legitimate management concern. In issuing this policy, we seek to address the following, non-exhaustive, issues which may arise where there is a personal relationship:

- Lack of transparency in relation to workplace matters.
- Risks to the confidentiality of business information.
- Legal risks regarding discrimination and harassment.
- Potential conflicts of interest of those involved in personal relationships.
- Actual or perceived bias regarding recruitment, promotion, annual leave allocation, appraisals, discipline and grievance and other operational matters where staff in a personal relationship are also in a direct reporting or subordinate relationship.
- Potential for negative effect on general public perception of fairness, objectivity and impartiality.
- Embarrassment of other staff.
- Fear of favouritism by other colleagues.
- General adverse impact on team dynamics and reduction in team morale.
- Outputs may be disrupted in the event of relationship breakdown.
- Increased legal risks in the event of relationship breakdown