



STAFF AND STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

Director of Human Resources

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Staff and Student Relationships Policy and Guidance

1. Purpose

This policy details how the University expects all staff to behave in their relationships with students. It aims to limit circumstances where a position of power may be abused. Adhering to this policy will ensure that students and staff can work and study in a safe, positive, and supportive environment where everyone is treated fairly within clear professional boundaries. It seeks to protect students from harm and protects staff from allegations of actual or perceived conflict of interest, abuse, exploitation, favouritism, or bias. Definitions of terms used in this policy are given in [section 4](#).

2. Scope

This policy applies to all University staff as defined below and covers all areas of the University. It relates to students undertaking all modes of study.

3. Policy statement

3.1 Expectations of professional behaviour

The University has legal, regulatory, and ethical responsibility to provide a high quality, supportive, inclusive, and safe learning and working environment. We therefore expect staff to apply the highest standards of professionalism in all interactions with students. This will enable students to fulfil their personal potential.

The nature of staff and student roles means that staff are in a position of power relative to a student, irrespective of the student's age, maturity, and level of study. Staff must therefore maintain professional boundaries to avoid any misuse of trust or power differences that could lead to real or perceived conflicts of interest.

3.2 Intimate personal relationships between staff and students

All intimate personal relationships between staff and students are prohibited, except for excluded relationships and some types of student relationships. Specific rules apply for Norwich students that also work for the University; these are detailed below.

Excluded relationships are preexisting intimate personal relationships that were in place:

- before 1 August 2025; or
- before a member of staff or student joined the University

A member of staff should report an excluded relationship immediately to either:

- their Academic Director or Head of Professional Service,
- a member of SMT, or
- the University's Safeguarding Manager.

The person receiving a report, with input from the University's Safeguarding Manager, will assess the risk of conflicts of interest and, if necessary, put in place appropriate protective measures e.g. arranging for an alternative member of staff to mark the student's work and to give feedback on their performance. Human Resources will maintain a register of excluded

relationships, detailing the outcome of the assessment undertaken and any protective measures that have been agreed.

Norwich students who work for the University

We recognise that relationships between students are a common and normal part of many students' university experience. The University will only place restrictions on student relationships where it is necessary to protect students from potential misuse of trust or conflicts of interest, and to protect student workers from situations that could give rise to an allegation of inappropriate behaviour being made against them. On this basis relevant student workers (as defined in [section 4](#)) are not permitted to have intimate personal relationships with students that they come into direct contact with when undertaking work for the University. For example, a Student Resident Assistant is not permitted to have an intimate personal relationship with a student within the residence that they are responsible for. Similarly, a Student Academic Mentor is not permitted to have an intimate personal relationship with any student that they mentor.

There may be situations where a student worker and a student that they are in direct contact with through their role wish to develop an intimate personal relationship. In such situations, the student worker should speak with their manager or HR to explore whether it is possible to make appropriate changes to their working arrangements so that they can continue to develop their relationship. Examples could include assigning a Student Academic Mentor to a different mentee or exploring whether a Student Resident Assistant can be assigned to another residence. We will seek to manage these situations in a supportive way, however it may not always be possible to put in place alternative working arrangements.

If a situation arises where a relevant student worker enters into an intimate personal relationship with a student that they have direct contact with through their work without first letting us know, they should still update their manager or HR as soon as possible. In these circumstances the University's focus will be on managing any risks arising from the relationship, including potential power imbalances or conflicts of interest, and on exploring whether it is possible to make appropriate adjustments to the student worker's working arrangements.

These restrictions do not apply to Student Ambassadors and Festival Ambassadors.

3.3 Close personal relationships between staff and students

Staff should not (where possible) enter into a close personal relationship with a student for whom they have a professional responsibility e.g. where the employee is responsible for teaching/learning, assessment, selection, pastoral care, or research. Close personal relationships can lead to perceived or actual conflicts of interest, which can have a detrimental effect on the teaching and learning environment for other students and staff.

We appreciate that in exceptional circumstances, a student may opt to take a unit, attend a class, or engage in another activity organised by or delivered at the University that is offered by a member of staff with whom they have a close personal or family relationship. Whilst this

is not encouraged, arrangements should be made to assess the risk and accommodate the request if it is appropriate for the student to engage in that activity. The process outlined in 3.2 should be followed to assess the risk and put appropriate measures in place if needed.

4. Definitions

University staff: Any employee, worker (including relevant student workers), honorary or emeritus staff, relevant contractors, volunteers, and individuals seconded to work at the University.

Relevant student workers are students who also undertake work for the University that place them in a position of trust or influence over other students. The following roles are classed as relevant student workers:

- Student Academic Mentors
- Student Assistant Technicians
- Student Resident Assistants
- Graduate Academic Assistants
- Library Assistants (where this role is undertaken by a student)
- Festival Coordinators

Student Ambassadors and Festival Ambassadors do not have the same level of trust or influence over other students and are therefore not classed as relevant student workers.

Relevant contractors: Individuals engaged under a contract of service to provide academic or pastoral provision to students.

Intimate personal relationship: A romantic, sexual, or close emotional relationship.

Close personal relationship: A relationship with a relative or friend; or where there is a significant personal bond; and/or a relationship where there is financial dependence.

Excluded relationships: Pre-existing relationships (e.g. with a spouse or partner) that began before the student's enrolment or the staff member's employment with the University.

Adult at risk: Someone over the age of 18 who receives or may need community care services because of disability, age, or illness and who is or may be unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

Abuse of power: A situation where a staff member exploits a position of power over a student to apply pressure in a way that:

- may lead to a student to do something, or avoid doing something that they otherwise would not have done; and
- could result in behaviour that falls within the scope of an intimate personal relationship.

5. Responsibilities of university staff

To maintain appropriate relationships with students, all staff:

- must ensure interactions with students are always professional and appropriate, and avoid conduct towards students that is in any way sexualised;
- must maintain appropriate professional boundaries and relationships with students based on trust, confidence, and equal treatment of all students;
- must not promise or allude to rewards in return for favours, or suggest or threaten the withdrawal of teaching or other forms of academic support if these are not granted;
- must not connect with students when using dating apps nor actively seek student connections whilst on campus;
- should use University email or official channels for communicating with students;
- should adhere to the same guidelines, where logistically possible, when participating in University activities whilst away from the usual workplace; and
- should conduct themselves with common sense and act with professionalism and integrity when interacting with students on social media platforms.

Where staff are providing supervision, teaching, or pastoral care to students, they should:

- ensure that meetings and discussions occur on campus or other University-approved premises. Where this is not possible, ensure the meeting occurs in a neutral public venue;
- refer students with support needs that go beyond the level of pastoral care expected in their role to a relevant University support service;
- refrain from contacting students outside of reasonable working hours unless there is an urgent or emergency situation and contact needs to be made immediately;
- not seek personal information from a student except as relevant to a University process and in line with the University's [Data Protection Policy](#).

For relevant student workers, the expectations outlined above apply to the students that they encounter when undertaking work for the University.

6. How to raise concerns

All reports and disclosures from students about breaches or potential breaches of this policy should be made via the University's [You Report We Support](#) tool. Please note that when a student makes a disclosure about a member of staff via this reporting tool, they are consenting to the information being shared with Human Resources, who will take appropriate follow-up action.

Where a student is in a relationship with a staff member, or has experienced advances from a staff member, and would like a confidential discussion, they can seek advice and assurance from Student Support by submitting a query at our.norwichuni.ac.uk or emailing support@norwichuni.ac.uk.

Where a staff member has concerns about the conduct of another staff member with regards to this policy, they should speak to their Academic Director or Head of Professional Service and Human Resources in the first instance via humanresources@norwichuni.ac.uk.

7. Breach of policy

All breaches of this policy (including by relevant student workers) will be investigated under the staff Disciplinary Guidelines and Procedure. In some situations, a breach of this policy may fall within the scope of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Students who do not undertake work for the University will not be subject to disciplinary action under this policy.

8. Review and transparency

This policy will be reviewed after the first 12 months of operation and periodically thereafter. Historical versions will be archived and made accessible in accordance with the Office for Students' prominence principles.

9. Related policies

- [Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy for Students](#)
- [Child Protection and Adult Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Code of Practice for Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech](#)
- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- Disciplinary Guidelines and Procedure (available on the staff intranet)
- [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy](#)
- Harassment, Bullying and Victimisation Policy and Procedure (available on the staff intranet)
- [Student Regulations and Procedures 2025-26 \(section M\)](#)
- [Your Report We Support tool](#)