

Staff Personal Relationships Policy

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1. Introduction

At Strathclyde, we are committed to ensuring that we provide a safe, supportive and inclusive environment in which our staff and students can thrive. Relationships are at the heart of everything we do and drive our teaching, research and knowledge exchange activities.

This policy explains what qualifies as a personal relationship and provides guidance on how to disclose and manage such relationships.

Please note, if this policy refers to additional guidance, FAQs, online forms, or training, these are accessible to University colleagues on our [People Hub](#).

2. Who is Covered by this Policy?

This policy applies to all University employees who have a personal relationship with:

- Any current or incoming student
- Another colleague
- Contractors
- Other third parties who we do business with, or who have a commercial or educational interest in the University.

3. What is a staff personal relationship?

Personal relationships are considered to be:

- Intimate relationships which are sexual, romantic or emotional in nature.
- Family relationships including spouses, partners, children, direct relatives and relatives through marriage or partner.
- Close friendships or social relationships which involve frequent interaction outside of university.
- Financial and business relationships where one party is indebted to or dependent on the other.

Personal relationships can include cyber relationships through digital means such as social media, messaging apps, email, or other online platforms.

Any relationship which could create a perceived or actual conflict of interest, breach of academic or professional standards, confidentiality, or any unfair influence on University business.

Further details on conflicts of interest can be found in the [Code of Practice on Conflicts of Interest](#).

4. Relationships between colleagues

In most cases, we don't see a conflict of interest when colleagues are in a personal relationship. Perceived or actual conflicts because of a relationship may arise immediately or at certain points in time. However, you should be aware of the types of conflicts that can arise in the following situations:

- Where you are the manager of someone you have a personal relationship with.
- When you are involved in decision-making processes related to the employment of the person you're in a relationship with. This includes recruitment decisions, performance evaluation and promotions.
- Where your role involves close working relationships which may lead to operational challenges.

5. Relationships between staff and students

We trust our staff to safeguard the welfare of our students and maintain the highest standards of academic integrity with appropriate professional boundaries. We strongly discourage personal relationships between staff and students as these relationships can undermine the trust and confidence that is crucial to us providing a positive learning environment. These relationships can lead to concerns of:

- Staff members misusing their authority over students
- Conflict between job responsibilities and personal feelings
- Disruption to the studies of the student and their classmates
- Unprofessional behaviour by the staff member

Sexual relationships between staff and students who have not yet reached the age of 18 are completely prohibited. The University has a duty to safeguard such students and it is a criminal offence for an individual in a position of trust and authority to engage in any form of sexual activity with a person under 18 years of age who they look after. If you are arrested, charged, or convicted of such an offence, this should be reported immediately so that we are able to fully assess the situation and take appropriate actions.

6. Disclosing a staff personal relationship

Not all relationships need to be reported. However, if your personal relationship could cause a conflict or a perceived conflict because one person can make decisions affecting the other, you must tell someone. You should:

- Talk to your Head of Department or Professional Services Director about it.
- If you're in a senior position, tell a senior officer of the university.
- Do this as soon as possible and within a month of the intimate relationship starting, or in all other cases at the point where a perceived or actual conflict arises.

If you've already told the university about a relationship but no action was taken, you only need to report it again if things have changed and it could now cause a conflict of interest.

7. Raising a concern

Staff members, students, or third parties can raise concerns about a staff personal relationship if they believe it creates or could create a conflict of interest. Report concerns to the relevant contact or the Head of Department or Professional Services Director.

You're encouraged to provide as much information as possible when raising a concern, preferably in writing. You should outline details of the concern and why you believe this to potentially be a conflict of interest.

As part of Strathclyde Safe360°, disclosures can also be made through our online reporting facility [Report and Support](#).

8. Review of Information

We'll treat all declarations confidentially and sensitively, aiming to minimise any impact on careers or studies. When a declaration is received the person in receipt of the disclosure will review the details and if necessary, will seek assistance from our HR team. A meeting will be arranged with the staff member involved, and they may also discuss the situation with others in the relationship. During the review, we'll check for conflicts of interest, breach of integrity, trust, confidentiality, or undue influence on university business. The outcome of this discussion should be provided by the Head of Department to the HR team.

9. Potential Outcomes

9.1 Considered and no action required

Where there's no conflict of interest, breach of academic or professional standards, confidentiality, or any unfair influence on University business and no action is required. If the relationship changes in the future and has the potential to create a concern, a further disclosure should be made.

9.2 Action required to minimise risk

As a result of a disclosure or concern, we might take actions to reduce risks appropriate to the individual circumstances which could include:

- Changing staff duties to limit interaction with the other person.
- Removing responsibilities related to a student's work, like marking and assessment, or where this is not possible putting a co-supervisor in place.
- Removing responsibility relating to another staff member's work (e.g. recruitment, performance review and career progression).
- Ensuring the staff member isn't the sole decision-maker on issues affecting the other person.
- In rare cases, moving one staff member to a different department or area.

9.3 Action required due to breach of University Policies

If a concern has been raised which could be a breach of the standards expected of a member of staff, we may investigate this further and give consideration under another University policy. If you don't promptly disclose a Staff Personal Relationship, it might be addressed through our [Disciplinary Procedure](#).

10. Data Recording and Retention

We will treat declarations respectfully, sensitively, and confidentially. We'll keep relevant information relating to all disclosures made in the staff member's personal HR file until 6 years after employment ends.

The following information will be recorded:

- Details of the Staff Personal Relationship
- Brief details of any action taken to minimise the risk identified.
- Detail of the other participant(s) in the relationship will be anonymised as far as that is possible.

The Head of Department or Professional Service Director will keep a local record of the above information in those cases where actions have been taken to minimise risk. Relevant members of the department may also be made aware of any actions taken to minimise the risk but, unless required, they won't know the specific details of the relationship.

11. Complaints

If you're not satisfied with how we've handled a staff relationship disclosure, here's what to do:

- Staff Members: Talk to your Head of Department or Professional Services Director, or the Human Resources team.
- Non-Staff: Use the University's Complaints Handling Procedure.

I2. Further Information and Support

If you have any queries about this policy, please talk to your manager or contact [Human Resources](#). Further information and guidance, for both staff and managers, can also be found on our People Hub.

I3. Policy Review

This policy is reviewed by Human Resources on a regular basis. To see when the next review is due, please see our [Policy Review Schedule](#) (staff login required) on our People Hub.