



Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students Policy

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Introduction

Purpose

1. This Policy aims to define the expectations of Northeastern University London (the University) regarding personal relationships between staff and students.

Scope

2. This Policy applies to all members of the University community including, but not limited to, staff (faculty and professional staff), and students at the University, and to individuals representing the University as volunteers or partners.
3. This Policy applies to all settings in and outside the workplace and all engagements including, but not limited to, those of academic, pastoral, and social nature.

Definitions

4. **Adult at Risk / Vulnerable Adult:** A person 18 years of age or older who may need help to take care of themselves due to a disability (mental or other), age, or illness. A person is also considered vulnerable if they are unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation, or if they are unable to report abuse.
5. **Student:** Any person on a programme of study at the University including, but not limited to, undergraduate, postgraduate, apprenticeship, diploma, certificate, and student mobility programmes. For the avoidance of doubt, this includes students undertaking a programme and/or course that is delivered by the University, but does not include students studying on a collaborative partner programme. Students include those under break-in-studies arrangements. Where graduate students have teaching or teaching-related duties, this policy also applies to them as a student. Students who have graduated or permanently exited the University are not considered Students under this policy. Where a student is also a staff member, their status as a student takes priority in this policy.
6. **Staff:** Any person who is engaged by the University as an employee, consultant, professoriate, guest/visiting academics, honorary posts, volunteer staff (including work experience), and mobility employees from Northeastern University. Where graduate students have teaching or teaching-related duties, this policy also applies to them as a member of staff. Where a member of staff is also a student, their status as a student takes priority in this policy.

7. Abuse of Power: When an individual uses their position of power or authority in an unacceptable manner. An abuse of power can be, but is not limited to, harassment, bullying, manipulation, grooming, coercion, intimidation, or pressuring someone to do something that is for one's personal gains. For further information, please refer to the Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy.
8. Grooming: A gradual process initiated by someone in a position of power, using techniques on another person such as manipulation or persuasion, and having them do things that they may not have initially been comfortable with doing. This usually starts with befriending and gaining the individuals trust and making them feel special, and progresses to abuse or exploitation.
9. Personal Relationship: For the purposes of this policy, a personal relationship is a consensual romantic or sexual relationship. An intimate relationship is a type of personal relationship that could include brief encounters and one-off occurrences.
10. University-Arranged Event: Events or activities arranged and/or approved by the University, recorded in timetables and/or invited by University calendars. These occur on Campus, or at other venues away from the University for the purpose of that event. Examples include end of term/programme/year functions (formal events and/or socials), subject socials, co-curricular trips, extracurricular trips, and day trips.
11. Position of Trust: For the purposes of this policy, any staff member working closely with children, or vulnerable young people or adults, is in a position of trust. The University treats all members of staff as being in a position of trust with all students under the age of 18.

Responsibilities

12. Staff: Staff of the University are required to disclose all personal relationships between themselves and students according to the Personal Relationships Disclosure and Conflict Management Procedure. Failure to declare a personal relationship will result in disciplinary action under the Disciplinary Procedure for Staff.
13. Students: Students of the University are required to disclose all personal relationships between themselves and staff according to the Personal Relationships Disclosure and Conflict Management Procedure. Failure to declare a personal relationship will result in disciplinary action under the Disciplinary Procedure for Students.
14. The University: The University has a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of any child and vulnerable adult who is identified as

at risk, and who participates in organised or regulated activities or services at the University.

15. The University has a general duty of care to all its students. There may be occasions where an adult student, due to illness, mental health, or personal circumstances, may become vulnerable and at risk of harm. In these circumstances, this policy may also be applicable.
16. Anyone who suspects a member of staff of acting inappropriately toward a person under the age of 18 years or an adult at risk, must immediately refer to the Disciplinary Procedure for Staff to report the incident(s).

Resources

17. Sexual Offences Act (2003)
18. Children Act 1989 and 2004
19. Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
20. Disciplinary Procedure for Staff
21. Disciplinary Procedure for Students
22. Students Under 18 Policy
23. Safeguarding Policy
24. Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy
25. Related Documents
 - 25.1. Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students Disclosure Form
 - 25.2. Personal Relationships Disclosure and Conflict Management Procedure
26. Contacts for Reporting and Support
 - 26.1. The University has designated the following two contacts to support and guide the community through this procedure. Any concerns regarding adherence to or the applicability of the Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students Policy and associated procedures should be directed to the following contacts as soon as is reasonably practicable.
 - 26.1.1. [Academic Registrar](#)
 - 26.1.2. [Human Resources Manager](#)

General Principles

27. The University is committed to protecting the welfare of all its students, staff and visitors who access its services and activities. The University recognises that the best protection for children and students participating in its programmes is the vigilance and forethought of staff in preventing circumstances where abuse of trust could occur.
28. The University is committed to an inclusive, respectful, and considerate community. All members of the community are expected to conduct themselves in a way that upholds the integrity and good standing of the University, by respecting boundaries and maintaining professional interactions with each other.
29. This policy looks to safeguard all members of the community, to prevent misuse of authority and power, to avoid complex conflicts of interest, to enable trust and confidence in all relationships, and to preserve equal treatment in teaching, learning, supervision, selection, assessment, research and pastoral support.
30. The University seeks to identify, assess, and manage any perceived, potential, or actual conflicts of interest. The University's teaching style, interdisciplinary approach to subjects and the size of the departments and the University, makes conflicts of interest more likely to occur during a student's time at the University than in a larger institution. A conflict of interest exists even where the personal relationship occurred in the past. A conflict of interest will only cease at the point where one of the individuals is no longer a member of the University either as a student or a member of staff.

Restrictions on Personal Relationships

31. The University prohibits personal relationships between staff and students where the staff member has, or has had a direct responsibility for, or involvement in that student's academic studies and/or personal welfare. That prohibition extends after an academic/welfare relationship may have ended.
32. The University strongly discourages staff from having a personal relationship with any student, for whom they do **not** have direct responsibility, or involvement in that student's academic studies and/or personal welfare. This is especially the case where there is a reasonable expectation that such a direct academic/welfare relationship could arise in the future.
33. The University prohibits staff from having a personal relationship with a student under the age of 18, or an adult at risk. Staff must not engage in sexual behaviour with someone with whom they are in a position of trust.

While a young person can consent to sexual activity once they reach the age of 16, the Sexual Offences Act (2003) makes it a criminal offence for a person to engage in sexual activity of any kind with a person under the age of 18, where the adult is in a position of trust. The University treats all members of staff as being in a position of trust with all students under the age of 18.

Reporting, Monitoring and Reviewing

34. The Human Resources Manager and the Academic Registrar will review statistical information relating to the Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students Policy and associated procedures on an annual basis.
35. The Human Resources Manager and the Academic Registrar will monitor the data and make recommendations to Executive Committee as appropriate.
36. Executive Committee will review this Policy and associated procedures for their effectiveness.

Version History

Title: Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students Policy				
Approved by: Executive Committee				
Location: Academic Handbook/ Policies and Procedures/ General/ Student Welfare				
Location: Staff Handbook				
Version Number	Date Approved	Date Published	Owner	Proposed Next Review Date
1.0	August 2022	August 2022	Director of Resourcing and Operations	January 2024
Referenced documents	Personal Relationship Disclosure and Conflict Management Procedure; Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students Disclosure Form			
External Reference Point(s)				