



# Personal Relationships Disclosure and Conflict Management Procedure

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## Introduction

### Purpose

1. This document details the procedure at Northeastern University London (the University) for staff and students to disclose personal relationships, and for the University to assess and manage any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest that may arise as a result of those personal relationships.

### Scope

2. This Procedure 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 Procedure applies to all current personal relationships which are in existence at the time this Procedure is published.
4. This Procedure applies to all previous personal relationships which have occurred in the past and where both parties are still current members of the University.
5. This Procedure applies to all personal relationships that are established after this Procedure is published.

### Definitions

6. 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 Procedure also applies to them as a student. Students who have graduated or permanently exited the University are not considered Students under this Procedure. Where a student is also a staff member, their status as a student takes priority in this Procedure.
7. 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 Procedure.

8. **Personal Relationship:** For the purposes of this document, 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.

## Resources

9. Sexual Offences Act (2003)
10. Children Act 1989 and 2004
11. Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
12. Disciplinary Procedure for Staff
13. Disciplinary Procedure for Students
14. Students Under 18 Policy
15. Safeguarding Policy
16. Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy
17. Related Documents
  - 17.1. Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students Policy
  - 17.2. Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students Disclosure Form
18. Contacts for Reporting and Support
  - 18.1. 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.
    - 18.1.1. [Academic Registrar](#)
    - 18.1.2. [Human Resources Manager](#)
  - 18.2. Reports of non-adherence, enquiries, and disclosures relating to personal relationships are treated in the strictest of confidence.
  - 18.3. Anonymous reports may also be considered if substantial evidence is provided to enable a review and investigation. Anonymous reports and enquiries may be made using an imitation email address.
  - 18.4. Malicious and fabricated reports are subject to disciplinary measures.

## Responsibilities

19. Staff and students of the University are responsible for adhering to the restrictions on personal relationships as set out in the Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students Policy.
20. Unrestricted personal relationships are to be disclosed according to the Procedure set out in this document.
21. If a member of staff is unsure whether or not their relationship with a student is covered under this Procedure or associated policy, the member of staff should disclose the relationship.

## General Principles

22. Members of staff must, within one month of this Procedure being published, disclose any existing and/or previous personal relationships with a current student (including one on a break-in-studies) to their Line Manager and Human Resources.
23. All disclosures should be made as a matter of priority, but by no later than one month after a personal relationship is established or, if it is an existing relationship, within one month of either the member of staff or student joining the University.
24. Any inquiries or concerns regarding applicability of or adherence to this Procedure should be expressed to one of the Reporting and Support Contacts within one month of the publication date of this Procedure or within one month of the date of the event in question, whichever is later.
25. Disclosures will be handled with respect and sensitivity, and requests of both parties will be respected as far as is possible, without compromising the integrity of this Procedure. A disclosure of this kind is considered sensitive personal data in terms of data protection legislation.
26. Failure to comply with this Procedure or any arrangements that are put in place under it may result in disciplinary action.

## Procedure

### Personal Relationship Disclosure

27. All involved members of the University are required to disclose personal relationships between staff and students in line with this Procedure.
  - 27.1. The University expects the staff member to first disclose the personal relationship. This enables Human Resources to

establish the level of trust and sensitivity that is required when handling a disclosure of this kind.

- 27.2. This is not to discourage or prevent a student from first disclosing a personal relationship. Students are encouraged to disclose, especially if it were to become clear that the staff member was not willing to make the disclosure themselves.
28. Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students Disclosure Form is submitted to the relevant recipient:
  - 28.1. Staff submit this form to the [Human Resources Manager](#)
  - 28.2. Students submit this form to the [Academic Registrar](#)
29. The Human Resources Manager and the Academic Registrar may initiate a request to complete the form, where only one individual has completed the Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students Disclosure Form and where the identity of the other involved person is disclosed.
30. The Human Resources Manager or the Academic Registrar will initiate an investigation if one of the individuals either disputes the disclosure, or refuses to engage with this Procedure.
31. The Human Resources Manager or the Academic Registrar may need to discuss details of the form with those involved where clarity is required regarding information contained within the form.

## Conflict of Interest Assessment

32. The Human Resources Manager and the Academic Registrar will review the form and undertake a Conflict of Interest Assessment
  - 32.1. Where no obvious or possible conflict is identified (at that moment in time or in the future), the Human Resources Manager and the Academic Registrar will record this as the result of the Conflict of Interest Assessment, inform the involved parties, and close the matter.
  - 32.2. Where an obvious or possible conflict is identified (at that moment in time or in the future) the Human Resources Manager and the Academic Registrar will engage with the relevant Line Manager to consider what actions are required to manage or remove any potential conflict.
33. A third member of staff may be consulted if an agreement cannot be reached by the Human Resources Manager and the Academic Registrar.

## Conflict Management Plan

34. A Conflict Management Plan is necessary where an obvious, possible, or declared conflict is identified by the considering parties.

35. A plan is drafted and discussed in detail with the relevant Line Manager by the Human Resources Manager, who will jointly consider what actions are required to manage or remove any potential conflict. The following will be taken into consideration for both individuals:
  - 35.1. Any known vulnerabilities.
  - 35.2. Current personal circumstances, or relevant historical circumstances.
  - 35.3. The nature of the academic or professional relationship between them.
  - 35.4. Any supervision / oversight in place already, for unrelated reasons.
  - 35.5. The potential for influence on progression, favorable treatment, and the overall power imbalance between the staff and student.
  - 35.6. The potential impact of the relationship on others working or studying in close proximity.
36. Conflicts may be managed in line with the indicative list below (this is not an exhaustive list):
  - 36.1. Where the conflict is with the first marker of anonymous scripts, the student's work may be included in the sample of work to be moderated internally, and the sample sent to the External Examiner for moderation.
  - 36.2. Another member of Faculty may be recruited to mark oral presentations or vivas that the student is required to sit.
  - 36.3. Participation on committees and/or panels may be appropriately withdrawn where individual student progression is considered.
37. The Conflict Management Plan is then discussed by the Human Resources Manager and the Line Manager with the member of staff and by the Academic Registrar with the student. A copy of the Conflict of Interest Assessment and the Conflict Management Plan is placed securely on staff and student records, and accessible by all relevant parties.
38. Failure to comply with a Conflict Management Plan is a disciplinary offence.

## Reporting, Monitoring and Reviewing

39. 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.
40. The Human Resources Manager and the Academic Registrar will monitor the data and make recommendations to the Executive Committee as appropriate.
41. The Executive Committee will review the Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students Policy and associated procedures for their effectiveness.

## Version History

<b>Title: Personal Relationships Disclosure and Conflict Management Procedure</b>				
<b>Approved by: Executive Committee</b>				
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Referenced documents	Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students Policy; Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students Disclosure Form			
External Reference Point(s)				