



Professional Conduct Between Staff and Students Policy

August 2023

History of Changes

Version	Description of Change	Authored by	Date
1.1	Date changes and reference to policies updated. Introduction of form at appendix 1 and information on who completes the form and when and that it is held centrally by HR	Debbie Kerr	March 2015
1.2	Clarification added as per SQA requirements	Debbie Kerr	November 2015
1.3	Information on how long records are maintained and who is responsible has been added as recommended by SQA Systems Verification report at 3.2 and appendix 1	Debbie Kerr	January 2020
1.4	Update following recommendations from the O Gorman Report	Jayne Gracie	June 2021
1.5	Update following recommendations from SQA	Debbie Kerr	August 2023

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Inappropriate behaviour between staff and students can adversely affect the professional relationship that should exist in a working or teaching environment.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that staff and students benefit from fair and professional interactions at all times and to protect staff from unfair allegations of misconduct or inappropriate behaviour by students.

3.0 Key Principles

3.1 Personal Relationships

Staff are strongly discouraged from forming personal relationships with students, particularly when the staff member has direct responsibility for the learning experience of the student, delivers any part of the student's learning programme, or is involved in supporting the student through their programme of study. Should such a relationship develop, the staff member should inform his or her line manager immediately. Where possible, the staff member should be re-timetabled or replaced in the capacity of supporting the student, in order to remove all professional contact with the student. The staff member must not be responsible for the assessment, guidance or support of a student with whom he/she has a personal relationship. This includes Assessors, IVs and Invigilators. The line manager should keep a written record of the action taken.

3.2 Pre-existing Personal Relationships

Where there is a pre-existing relationship between a staff member and a student with whom he/she comes into direct contact, the line manager should be informed that the relationship exists as soon as the staff member becomes aware that the student intends to join the College. Arrangements should be made to remove all professional contact between the staff member and the student. The staff member must not be responsible for the assessment, guidance or support of a student with whom he/she has a pre-existing personal relationship. This includes Assessors, IVs and Invigilators. The line manager should keep a written record of the personal relationship and of the action taken on the form at Appendix 1. Staff are required to make a declaration if they are related to or have a private relationship, or have a close professional or business relationship with a candidate, and are currently deployed to:

- set assessments which this candidate will undertake.
- make assessment judgements on this candidate's evidence.
- internally verify assessment decisions on this candidate's work.
- invigilate an assessment which this candidate is sitting.
- The form must be signed by the line manager and sent to the People Services Department to be held centrally. The form will be held by the People Services Department on the personal file of the staff member and will be destroyed once the student has left the College.

- 3.3 Examples of 'personal relationships' would include: spouse or partner, parent, child, other family relationships, friendships where parties socialise together outwith the College and relationships of an intimate nature.

3.4 Physical Contact between Staff and Students

Staff should avoid physical contact with students. In one-to-one situations involving a staff member and a student, if either the student or staff member feels it necessary, they should ask for another responsible person to be present.

Staff involved in personal care should make themselves aware of the particular needs of the individual and of the protocols for personal care and any associated Codes of Practice.

If a staff member has any doubt about a particular situation this should be referred in the first instance to their line manager or alternatively to the Safeguarding Officer.

- 3.5 In some circumstances, for example, in a personal care situation or in the demonstration of activities associated with learning, appropriate physical contact may be necessary. Staff carrying out this role will have received appropriate training in order to carry out this role.

3.6 Diversity

Some religions expressly forbid physical contact between the sexes. In such cases, the student's wishes must be respected at all times and any resulting difficulties reported to the line manager.

3.7 References

References for students must always be fair, relevant, factual and accurate. If a staff member has either a personal difficulty or a personal relationship with a student, they should pass the reference request immediately to the line manager.

3.8 Socialising with Students

Staff should be aware that their professional relationship with current students is still deemed to exist outwith the College, and any report by a student of misconduct would require to be investigated. Staff are therefore advised to avoid one to one contact with students in social situations, including electronic media, outwith the College.

Staff should familiarise themselves with the Social Media Policy and Procedure, and due regard should be given towards this policy and associated procedures and guidelines.

In addition, staff should avoid using personal devices to contact students and must not retain students' contact details on their personal mobile phones or other personal electronic devices. If a device is required for work purposes, this should be raised with your line manager.

If, through personal choice, you do contact a student using a personal mobile device, in line with current safeguarding advice, it is advisable to bar your number from being visible when calling a student.

Where a pre-existing relationship exists between the two parties, which requires this information to be held in this manner (e.g. neighbours etc), staff members should inform their line manager in accordance with section 3.2.

- 3.9 It is recognised that some College staff can behave unacceptably, and have power to influence the academic career of a student, for better or worse. This may include threats, for example, or deleting and/or enhancing a student's grades or results, which is not acceptable.

3.10 Failure to follow the guidelines

Staff who fail to follow the guidance contained within this policy should be aware that, by their actions, they may place themselves in a position where they may be subject to allegations of misconduct, and disciplinary action could result.

4.0 Responsibilities

- 4.1 The Regional Board is responsible for approving this policy and for overseeing compliance with its principles.
- 4.2 The Director of People Services is responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- 4.3 All staff are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy.

5.0 Related Documents

- 5.1 Employee Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- 5.2 Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk of Harm

Staff member's name:
Student's name:
Course:
Relationship:
Details of action taken, or adjustments made:
Signed by staff member:
Signed by Line Manager:
Date:

This form must be sent to the HR Department to be retained in your personal file, and will be destroyed once the student leaves the College.

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