

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS

SUMMARY OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

General changes

This document has been reviewed in the context of the implementation of the University's revised internal organisational structure on 1 September 2012 and has been up-dated to reflect changes elsewhere in the regulatory framework.

(Amendments to version 01.0, UPR TL02 are shown in italics.)

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The University of Hertfordshire aims to provide Higher Education in an atmosphere conducive to high achievement. Although it has developed policies, procedures and good practices which promote academic quality, student welfare and fair treatment, the University recognises that the quality of students' educational experience depends not only upon these but also on positive relationships between students and staff based on mutual trust and confidence.
- 1.2 The University recognises that personal relationships between staff and students can give rise to serious questions of conflicts of interest, of bias, of breaches in confidentiality, of unfairness in teaching, selection, assessment and research and challenges of unprofessional conduct.
- 1.3 Such relationships may include family relationships; pecuniary/financial relationships, for example, money lending or tenancy; those of employee/employer in a context other than an authorised University of Hertfordshire employment relationship or relationships of an intimate sexual/personal nature.
- 1.4 In formulating its policy in this area, the University has considered the disparity of power and authority between staff and students; the disruptive effect that intimate relationships can have on other students and staff and the risks such relationships pose to the integrity of assessments.
- 1.5 This policy was originally approved by the Academic Board (Minute 408.1, Academic Board, 28 June 95, refers). This document has been amended subsequently to ensure consistency with the regulations relating to the declaration and registration of interests, benefits and gifts approved by the Board of Governors with effect from 1 August 2000 (Minute 435.2, Board of Governors, 29 June 2000, refers).

2 POLICY AND PROCEDURES

- 2.1 The University recognises the rights of staff and students to form voluntary personal relationships, the impossibility of banning these and the reluctance of some to challenge their consequences.
- 2.2 Relationships between staff and students, beyond the usual professional one, can compromise the professionalism of staff and the welfare of students.
- 2.3 Members of staff should recognise their responsibilities to protect the interests of students, to respect the trust involved in the staff/student relationship and to accept the constraints and obligations inherent in their role.

2.4 **Reporting requirements for members of staff**

2.4.1 Reporting requirements under the provisions of section 8.9.1, UPR GV12¹

“Family and close personal relationships that may affect students or the student experience

Any family or close personal relationship that affects or could reasonably be expected to affect the student experience or the relationship with students must be declared on a confidential, as follows.

Matters referred to in section 8.9.1		
How to make a declaration to Register C (members of staff):	by memorandum or e-mail or in accordance with processes determined locally by the Head of SBU	Declaration to be lodged with: Head of Strategic Business Unit (SBU) for onward transmission to the Head of Governance Services
How to make a declaration to Register A (Governors, Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Group Director of Finance, Director of Human Resources, Secretary and Registrar, company Directors):	by memorandum or e-mail	Declaration to be lodged with: Head of Governance Services”

2.4.2 **Additional reporting requirements under the provisions of section C1.13, UPR AS14²**

“In order to avoid any suggestion of bias or favouritism, any member of staff who is a member or officer of a Board of Examiners (or who is otherwise involved in the assessment of students' work) having a present or past relationship with a candidate beyond the usual academic one is obliged to declare such an interest in confidence to his or her Dean of School and/or the Chairman of the appropriate Board of Examiners. (This would include, for example, a family, landlord/tenant, financial or consensual sexual relationship.)”

2.4.3 **Additional reporting requirements under the provisions of the University’s research degree regulations**

Members of staff should refer to the appropriate regulations and procedures within the relevant University research degree regulations.

2.5 **Students**

2.5.1 Students who believe that *they have grounds to request a review of an assessment decision, for example, where they believe there has been unfairness or impropriety on the part of one or more of the Examiners*, should write to the *Chairman* of the Board of Examiners or the *Dean of School* as appropriate, at least five (5) working days before the meeting of the Board of Examiners (Appendix I, UPR AS12³/Appendix I, UPR AS13⁴, refer).

¹ UPR GV12 ‘Bribery and Corruption’
² UPR AS14 ‘Structure and Assessment Regulations – Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes’
³ Appendix I, UPR AS12 ‘Assessments and Examination – Regulations for Candidates (Including Requests for the Review of Examination Decisions (Appeals Procedure) (University and UK Partner Organisations)’
⁴ Appendix I, UPR AS13, ‘Assessments and Examination – Regulations for Candidates (Including Requests for the Review of Examination Decisions (Appeals Procedure) (non-UK Partner Organisations)’

2.5.2 Research degrees

Students should refer to the form 'Application for the Approval of Examination Arrangements for a Candidate on an Approved Programme of Supervised Research'.

2.6 Complaints

2.6.1 Complaints (other than complaints involving alleged incidents of harassment or bullying (section 2.7, refers) from students or staff, including third parties, with respect to staff/student relationships, may be made, as appropriate, either through UPR SA05⁵ or UPR HR03⁶.

2.6.2 Harassment and bullying

Students who feel that academic progress depends upon their consenting to a sexual favour, act and/or relationship with a member of staff have the right to complain of sexual harassment. Complaints involving alleged incidents of harassment or bullying will be dealt with in confidence in accordance with UPR EQ01⁷.

P E Waters
Secretary and Registrar
Signed: 13 August 2012

⁵ UPR SA05 'Student Complaints'
⁶ UPR HR03 'Grievance Procedures' (for staff)
⁷ UPR EQ01 'Harassment and Bullying'