

Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students

UPR TL02 version 03.0

Policies superseded by this document

This document replaces version 02.0 of UPR TL02, with effect from 1 September 2021.

Summary of significant changes to the previous version

This document has been updated to reflect changes elsewhere in the regulatory framework.

Glossary

A glossary of approved University terminology can be found in [UPR GV08](#).

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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 The University requires all staff to comply with the principles of this policy. Failure to comply with this policy may be treated as a disciplinary matter.
- 1.6 This policy was originally approved by the Academic Board (see Minute 408.1, Academic Board, 28 June 95). 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 2021 (see Minute 169, Board of Governors, 13 July 2021).

2 Definitions

- 2.1 'Staff member' includes any person who is engaged by the University as an employee or worker and/or who holds a University post.
- 2.2 'Student' includes any person perusing a course of study.
- 2.3 'Professional connection' means any arrangement where a person in their capacity as a member of staff has any academic, pastoral or administrative or similar responsibility for a student, including supervising, tutoring, teaching, selecting, assessing, protecting, safeguarding, or providing a reference for a student.
- 2.4 'Personal relationship' means any association, however brief, of a sexual or intimate nature, either in person or remotely (i.e. social media, instant messaging, emails, etc.).

3 Policy and procedures

- 3.1 The University believes that the relationships between its staff and students are professional ones that depend on trust, confidence and fairness. Relationships between staff and students, beyond the usual professional one, can compromise the professionalism of staff and the welfare of students. Students are entitled to equality of treatment and it is important that a personal relationship between a staff member and a student is not prejudicing or perceived to be prejudicing that equality of treatment.

3.2 Staff are, therefore, strongly advised not to enter into a ‘personal relationship’ with a student for whom they have a responsibility for assessing, supervising, tutoring, teaching, for pastoral care, or for whom they are required to provide administrative or technical support. Further, staff should not enter into a business, commercial or financial relationship with a student which could compromise or could be perceived to compromise objectivity and professional standing.

3.4 The University, however, recognises that such relationships may exist when a staff member is appointed or when a student enrolls, or that a relationship may develop between a staff member and student during a programme of study. In such instances, staff must report the ‘personal relationship’ in line with the requirements set out in paragraph 3.6.

3.5 Members of staff can seek guidance from Human Resources. Students can seek guidance from the Academic Registrar.

3.6 Reporting requirements for members of staff

3.6.1 Reporting requirements under the provisions of section 4.3.2, Appendix II UPR GV17¹

“Immediate 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 (albeit that this should, where appropriate, be handled confidentially).”

(Note for guidance:

The declaration of information concerning personal relationships with students required under the provisions of the Conflict of Interest Policy and its appendices (UPR GV17) is additional to the University’s requirements, set out in UPR AS14, concerning the declarations which staff are required to make to their Deans of School and to Chairs of Programme Boards of Examiners.)”

3.6.2 Additional reporting requirements under the provisions of section C1.14, 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 their Dean of School and/or the Chair of the appropriate Board of Examiners. (This would include, for example, a family, landlord/tenant, financial or consensual sexual relationship.)”

¹ Appendix II UPR GV17 ‘Disclosure Procedure’

² UPR AS14 ‘Structure and Assessment Regulations – Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes’

3.6.3 **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.

3.7 **Reporting requirements for Research Degree Students**

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

3.8 **Requests for review of an assessment decision by Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate students**

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 follow the procedures set out in Appendix I, UPR AS12³/Appendix I, UPR AS13⁴.

3.9 **Complaints**

Complaints (other than complaints involving alleged incidents of harassment or bullying) (see section 3.10) from students or staff, including third parties, with respect to staff/student relationships, may be made, as appropriate, either through UPR SA16⁵ or UPR HR03⁶.

3.10 **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 EQ10⁷.

Sharon Harrison-Barker
Secretary and Registrar
Signed: **1 August 2021**

Alternative format

If you need this document in an alternative format, please email us at governanceservices@herts.ac.uk or telephone us on +44 (0)1707 28 6006.

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)’

⁵ UPR SA16 ‘Student and Applicant Complaints’

⁶ UPR HR03 ‘Staff Grievance Procedures’

⁷ UPR EQ10 ‘Bullying and Harassment’