

Relationships Between Employees and Students Policy

Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines the organisation's position on relationships between employees and students. It is intended to ensure that the employee-student relationship is one that is founded on mutual trust, confidence and respect.

In the context of this document, a personal relationship is defined as any one of the following, however this list is neither exhaustive nor exclusive:

- Physical intimacy including isolated or repeated sexual activity
- Romantic or emotional intimacy and/or
- Financial dependency
- A relationship with a family member or close family friend
- A very close friendship
- A close business, financial or commercial relationship

A professional relationship is defined as:

- A teaching, assessing, supervising, tutoring, mentoring role or
- A pastoral or welfare role or
- An administrative or technical support role

This policy applies to all employees, including hourly paid lecturers and other contracted employees employed directly by the organisation.

The policy also applies to employees who are enrolled as students.

Public sector equality duty

The Equality Act 2010 places a legal obligation on public bodies and organisations to give due consideration to the impact of their decisions and policies on individuals with different protected characteristics, either individually or in combination. The organisation is committed to advancing equality of access and outcomes for all individuals, promoting and valuing diversity, and fostering an inclusive environment for all students, staff, and visitors. In fulfilling its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty, the organisation will have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not—regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation

Relationships Between Employees and Students

The company expects its employees to apply the highest standards of professionalism in their relationships with students.

The employee-student relationship should be one of trust and confidence in order that students can benefit from the learning experience offered by the organisation. It is also vital that students benefit from equality of treatment and so it is important that a personal relationship between an employee and a student does not in any way prejudice that equality, in reality or perception.

Personal relationships between employees and students, raise questions of conflict of interest, of trust and confidence in working relationships and of equal treatment in teaching, learning, supervision, selection, assessment, research and pastoral support. Where a student is also an employee, their status as a student takes priority in this policy.

Employees are strongly discouraged from entering into a personal relationship with any student whom they are responsible for assessing, supervising, tutoring, mentoring, teaching or to whom they provide pastoral care or administrative and/or technical support. This includes employees who are also students themselves.

The organisation regards it as unprofessional for any employee to actively seek to initiate a personal relationship or to pursue such a relationship with a student in any circumstance. It has a duty of care to its students to ensure that they can study in a safe environment and that their welfare is protected. Employees behaving in a way that undermines this policy may face disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Examples of behaviour that undermines the professional employee-student relationship including texting, inappropriate communications, asking an individual to socialise or behaviour of a more serious nature such as asking for sexual favours or other forms of abuse.

Employees should be aware that inappropriate emotional intimacy—particularly when it develops gradually through increased attention, favouritism, or personal disclosure—can constitute grooming and a breach of professional boundaries. Such conduct may be investigated as a potential abuse of power under this policy, even if it does not initially appear to be sexual in nature.

Whilst the organisation does not impose a blanket ban on intimate relationships between staff and students, this policy includes robust measures—such as early disclosure, conflict-of-interest management, and disciplinary processes—that together aim to provide a credible and significant safeguard against abuse of power or conflicts of interest. These steps are reviewed regularly to ensure their effectiveness in protecting students.

Any relationships with students under the age of eighteen is regarded as a disciplinary matter under the organisation's [Safeguarding Policy](#). In particular, under the Sexual Offences Act 2000 it is an offence for a person over 18 to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if the relationship is consensual.

Declaring a Personal Relationship

Although the organisation regards it as unprofessional for employee to actively seek to initiate a personal relationship or pursue such a relationship with a student, it also recognises that such relationships may none the less develop.

An employee who is involved in a personal relationship with a student must notify their line manager as soon as reasonably practicable and no later than a month from the start of the relationship. The Line Manager must:

- Notify the People Team (people@walbrook.ac.uk) of the employee declaration immediately after they have been notified of the relationship
- Produce a risk assessment after a review of the teaching, tutoring, assessment, administrative or any other arrangements to protect the interests of the student is protected
- Provide the People Team with a copy of the completed risk assessment.

The People Team will maintain a register of any declared personal relationships that exist between an employee and a student, including the nature of any such personal relationships.

Failure to declare a relationship may result in an investigation and could lead to disciplinary action.

A Manager who becomes aware of a relationship that has not been declared should initiate appropriate action in conjunction with the People Team.

Any close personal or intimate relationships already existing at the time of policy implementation that has not previously been declared should be declared to their Line Manager or the People Team within 2 months of this policy being published.

If a Personal Relationship Ends

The employee should notify their line manager and the People Team, within 1 month, if their relationship with a student comes to an end, following which the People Team will update the register.

The organisation will review any academic, supervisory, or pastoral involvement to ensure:

- The student is not subject to disadvantage or adverse treatment
- The employee does not continue to influence assessments, academic decisions, or support affecting the student
- Appropriate alternative support or supervision is arranged to protect fairness and neutrality

These actions will be documented as part of the post-declaration risk management process.

Further Support

Students who are concerned about a relationship with an employee are urged at the earliest opportunity to consult their Personal Tutor, Student Support Officer, Academic Dean, Safeguarding Team, Tutor, Study Coach or the Professional Counsellor.

Employees who are uncertain about whether they should take action regarding a personal relationship should seek guidance from their Line Manager or the People Team. This might include advice on whether the relationship is considered to fall under the remit of this policy, the process that will be followed following a declaration, the possible options for managing a conflict of interest and the options should the other individual not wish to declare the relationship.

Training and Awareness

All staff with academic, pastoral, or professional responsibilities for students will receive training on:

- Active bystander
- Procedures for disclosure and reporting of personal relationships
- Sexual harassment
- Harassment and bullying
- Dignity and respect at work
- Freedom of speech

Training will be reviewed periodically to ensure awareness of policy updates and sector best practice.