

CONSENSUAL RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

Purpose of Policy

1. The University expects employees to conduct themselves in a manner that is professional and reflective of its Vision, Mission, Values and aims. However, the University recognises that close personal relationships may develop or have existed prior to joining, and the below provides guidelines, applicable to all employees and students, on how to manage situations should they arise.
2. A personal relationship can be defined as follows:
 - 2.1 Business, commercial or financial partner
 - 2.2 Close personal friendships / social/ on-line relationship outside the normal University activities
 - 2.3 Virtual or online relationship of an intimate nature
 - 2.4 Family or associated member working or studying at the University
 - 2.5 Current or previous intimate relationship with another employee or student

Employee and Student Relationships

3. Employees should maintain relationships with students that are based on trust, confidence and equal treatment. Employees are strongly discouraged from entering into personal relationships with students generally and not permitted to enter into relationships with students for whom they have academic, pastoral or administrative connections to ensure there is no potential abuse of power.
4. Employees are not permitted to connect with students under the age of 18 on personal social media platforms, including but not limited to "friending," "following," or linking on networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. This restriction is in place to maintain professional boundaries and ensure the safety and well-being of all students and employees.
5. For students aged 18 and over, employees should exercise discretion and adhere to the University's broader policies on professional conduct and consensual relationships. Employees are strongly discouraged from engaging with students on social media.
6. Should a personal relationship develop at any time, the employee must disclose this immediately to their manager, or equivalent person with supervisory responsibility. The student must be made aware that a declaration has been made and both parties should be reassured that any declaration made will, so far as is possible be treated in confidence.

7. The person dealing with the disclosure must ensure that all aspects potentially impacted by the personal relationship are adjusted to ensure there is no possible perceived or actual conflict of interest. This could involve, but is not limited to reassigning teaching, academic assessment, research activities and pastoral support.

Employee Personal Relationships

8. The University recognises that there will be a variety of relationships that exist amongst employees that will be of differing natures depending on the role they undertake. Whilst social relationships can be of benefit to the University, where personal relationships exist, these could lead to perceived or actual conflicts of interest. Any personal relationship should be declared to the line manager who will ensure that the integrity of University activities is not impacted. This could involve but is not limited to adjusting work duties.

Applicable Procedures

9. Failure to declare a personal relationship could result in formal action in accordance with the University's Disciplinary procedure.
10. Where employees or students feel they are potentially being adversely affected by an existing personal relationship, they should initially raise this with their manager, HR or student affairs as appropriate. The University is committed to providing an environment where everyone is treated with Dignity and Respect, and to treating those who raise concerns with sensitivity. It will seek to offer appropriate support. Should it be necessary, complaints can be raised formally through either the University Grievance procedure or the Student Complaints Procedure once informal resolution has been exhausted.

VERSION MANAGEMENT

Responsible Department: Human Resources			
Approving Body: University Board (on recommendation of Operations Committee)			
Version no.	Key Changes	Date of Approval	Date of Effect
1.0	Initial Version	July 2021	July 2021
1.1	Addition of clause 4 and 5	10 February 2025	10 February 2025
1.2	Formatted and reapproved for 2025-26 AY	24 July 2025	September 2025
1.3	No changes to the policy; reviewed and approved by University Board for AY 2026–27.	19 May 2026	September 2026
		Restricted Access? <i>Tick as appropriate:</i> Yes ☐ No ☒	