



PRIFYSGOL
BANGOR
UNIVERSITY

POLICY ON PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS

Rev	Date	Purpose of Issue/Description of Change
1.		Initial Issue
2.	9 th April 2008	Revision 1
3.	25 th January 2011	Revision 2
4.	18 th June 2012	Revision and approval by the University Ethics Committee

Policy Officer	Senior Responsible Officer	Approved By	Date
Gwenan Hine	Director of Human Resources	University Ethics Committee	9 th April 2008

Policy on Personal Relationships for Staff and Students

1. Introduction

The University is committed to the maintenance of the highest professional and ethical standards between members of staff and between members of staff and students. These relationships are dependent upon mutual trust and confidence. Actions or decisions that could affect professional judgement, or compromise integrity, should be avoided.

2. Context

This document, which complies with such relevant legal provisions as the Human Rights Act 1998, sets out the University's policy concerning personal, financial or family relationships between members of staff and between members of staff and students. Staff should be aware that such relationships may give rise to a conflict of interest¹ which could cause an imbalance of power. This is particularly relevant in relationships between members of staff and their students, which may also give rise to accusations of harassment or allegations of improper behaviour.

3. General Principles

- 3.1 All members of staff are required to disclose any evident, actual or possible conflicts of interest to the University immediately and, other than in exceptional circumstances, before any actions occur which may constitute a conflict of interest.

Members of staff in Schools should, in the first instance, raise the matter with their Head of School (as the appropriate authority) who should also inform the Head of College. Other members of staff should, in the first instance, raise it with the Head of their Department (as the appropriate authority) who should also inform the Registrar. In cases where the Registrar is the line manager, the matter should be referred to the Vice-Chancellor (as the appropriate authority). If the matter involves the Vice-Chancellor then the Chair of Council should be informed.

All disclosures (including any agreed actions) under this Policy should be notified, by the appropriate authority, as soon as reasonably practicable, to the Deputy Director of Human Resources (Operations) who should record the matter confidentially.

- 3.2 Staff are expected to disclose such relationships as any reasonable professional would regard as being at risk of impairing professional judgement or compromising integrity and potentially causing a conflict of interest. Examples of this would include:-

- Close familial relationships including any individual who is a spouse/partner, parent, child, stepfather/mother, stepchild, mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandparent or grandchild and/or any member of the same household;
- Romantic/sexual relationships;
- Close personal friendships;
- Business, commercial or financial relationships;
- Other relationships which may be relevant or perceived by others to be relevant.

- 3.3 The appropriate authority, as defined above, must then decide (following the procedures set out above) as to whether such a conflict is:

¹ See also the requirements of the University's Conflict of Interest Policy

- Marginal and thereby permissible;
- Significant but acceptable with appropriate management;
- Totally unacceptable and disallowed.

Such disclosure, and the management procedure for dealing with it, provides the University and its employees with protection from both an ethical and legal perspective.

- 3.3 Persons who omit or fail to disclose a possible conflict of interest of the kind defined in 3.2 above and who do not adhere to this Policy may be subject to the appropriate University disciplinary procedures relating to misconduct.

4. Staff and Students

- 4.1 If a member of staff has a relationship with a student as defined in Section 3 above which is categorised as being at risk of impairing professional judgement or compromising integrity, the member of staff has a responsibility to immediately inform the appropriate authority as defined in 3.1 above. The member of staff should separate themselves from any of their responsibilities towards that student. This action is intended to protect both parties. The Head of College will determine the appropriate action to be taken which will include ensuring that the member of staff concerned is not involved in the admission, supervision, assessment or examination of the student or in decisions relating to rewarding or penalising the student. Where the member of staff concerned is the Head of College then he/she should inform the Vice-Chancellor, who will be responsible for determining the appropriate action to be taken.

- 4.2 Staff should be aware that under section 3 of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000 it is an offence for any person aged 18 or over to engage in any sexual activity with a person under that age where they are in a position of trust in relation to the younger person. A position of trust includes looking after young people who are in full time education. Further guidance on this matter is contained in the University's *Child Protection Policy*.

- 4.3 Any such declared relationship between a member of staff and a student should not prejudice the lodging of a complaint under the University's Dignity at Work and Study Policy in the event of a relationship breaking down.

5. Relationships between Members of Staff

- 5.1 Members of staff must ensure that any close relationships are neither advantageous nor disadvantageous to any other members of staff or individuals. Where such relationships are between members of staff within the University, then both members of staff are responsible for disclosing such a relationship to the appropriate authority and ensuring that any conflict of interest is dealt with properly.

Members of staff must not be the line manager of another member of staff with whom they have a close relationship (as defined in section 3.2 above). If, in exceptional circumstances, such an arrangement were to arise, or be likely to arise, the line manager must ensure that a more senior member of staff, to whom they are themselves accountable, is aware of the actual or potential relationship, and has agreed the arrangement. Should such consent be granted, the line manager must ensure that they act impartially when line managing the person with whom they have a close relationship. Advice on how to ensure impartiality in such circumstances is available from the Human Resources Department.

Failure to disclose a close relationship between members of staff or failure to comply with action deemed appropriate to deal with such a situation may result in disciplinary action. In

addition staff who fail to comply with the action decreed by the appropriate authority and who do not withdraw from participating in activities which may cause conflict of interest as defined in Section 4.1 above will be considered to have breached their ethical obligation to other members of staff.

Any such declared relationship between members of staff should not prejudice the lodging of a complaint under the University's Dignity at Work and Study Policy in the event of a relationship breaking down.

5.2 Where the close relationship is with an applicant for employment within the same college / school or department or is already a member of that college / school / department, the relevant authority must be informed to minimise any potential conflict. The member of staff shall not be:

- involved in the selection/appointment procedure of the applicant. Canvassing on behalf of such an applicant is also disallowed
- involved in the assessment of the other person e.g. probation, appraisal, promotion or discipline, supervision of academic work
- responsible for the line management of the other, where there is a real or potential conflict of interest
- involved in the authorisation of any financial payment or transaction relating to the other e.g. time-sheets, expenses claims, and salary adjustments. Any such authorisation must be made by a line manager or other senior member of staff.

For members of staff who are grant holders or have external funding for an appointment, the appropriate authority must be involved in the appointment procedure if an applicant is defined as having a close relationship with that member of staff. If the appropriate authority is involved then the Vice Chancellor must be involved in the procedure. Where the Head of a College / Central Department is involved, then they should inform their immediate line manager who shall decide on the appropriate action.

5.3 Where the close relationship is with a member of staff from another College/ Central Department, the members of staff shall not be involved:

- in the selection/appointment procedures for any post within the University. Canvassing on behalf of such an applicant is also disallowed.
- in assessment processes for the other e.g. probation, appraisal, promotion or discipline, supervision of academic work.

5.4 Failure to disclose a close relationship in such circumstances as 5.2 and 5.3 above or failure to comply with action deemed appropriate to deal with such a situation may result in disciplinary action.