



POLICY ON PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS

Date	Purpose of Issue/Description of Change
	Initial Issue
9 April 2008	Revision 1
25 January 2011	Revision 2
18 June 2012	Revision and approval by the University Ethics Committee
30 January 2017	Revision and approval by Compliance Task Group
3 June 2026	(Policy now owned by Human Resources) Comprehensive revision approved by EDI & Wellbeing Committee
8 June 2026	Approval by People & Culture Committee
11 June 2026	Approval by Compliance Committee

Policy Officer	Senior Responsible Officer	Approved By	Date
Senior HR Officer (Equal Opportunities)	Deputy Chief People Officer		

1. Purpose

Bangor University is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive learning and working environment in which academic and professional decisions are made with integrity, impartiality, and transparency.

Personal relationships may create actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest, particularly where a power imbalance, dependency relationship, or position of trust exists.

This policy sets out expectations regarding the declaration and management of close personal relationships to ensure:

- fair and objective decision-making
- protection of students and staff from undue influence or exploitation
- maintenance of appropriate professional boundaries.

This **Policy on Personal Relationships for Staff and Students** supports Bangor University's obligations to prevent sexual harassment and protect both employees and students, in accordance with the requirements of the **Office for Students** (applicable in England) and the statutory duties under the **Equality Act 2010**.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all Bangor University employees (academic, research, and professional services staff) regardless of their role or contract type at the University.
- Bangor University students, including undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students
- visiting academics, contractors, agency workers, and volunteers engaged in Bangor University activities.

The policy applies to relationships between:

- staff and students
- staff members where supervisory or managerial authority exists
- students where one holds a formal position of authority over another.

3. Definitions

Close Personal Relationship

A close personal relationship includes:

- romantic or intimate relationships
- sexual relationships
- family relationships

- close personal friendships in circumstances where one individual holds formal evaluative, recruitment, or line-management authority over the other where impartiality could reasonably be questioned.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest arises where a relationship may compromise, or appear to compromise, professional judgement, impartiality, or decision-making.

Situations where there is financial reliance may cause a power imbalance and/or a conflict of interest.

A conflict of interest may arise where two members of staff who are in a relationship are involved in authorising financial transactions, as the actual or perceived potential for collusion could compromise the integrity of the approval process.

Position of Trust

A position of trust exists where an individual has authority or influence over another person's academic or professional progress, including through teaching, supervision, assessment, employment management, or pastoral care.

4. Statement of Institutional Position on Staff–Student Intimate Relationships

Relationships between staff and students involve inherent power imbalances and positions of trust.

Bangor University's position is that staff must maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students.

The University strongly discourages staff initiating, pursuing, or maintaining an intimate or sexual relationship with a student where a position of authority, trust, or dependency exists.

Such situations may:

- undermine genuine consent
- create conflicts of interest
- result in real or perceived preferential treatment or undue influence.

Where a close personal relationship exists or develops that may create a conflict of interest, the staff member has a duty to declare the relationship at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate measures can be implemented.

Please see section 11. for how to declare a relationship.

Relationships between staff and vulnerable students or students under the age of 18 are prohibited.

Failure to comply with this position and expectations will result in action under the University's Disciplinary Policy, and significant breaches may constitute gross misconduct.

5. Duty to Prevent Sexual Harassment

Bangor University is committed to providing a working and learning environment that is free from sexual harassment, all forms of harassment, and other forms of inappropriate conduct.

In accordance with its obligations under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Equality Act 2010, as amended by the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, and the Employment Rights Act 2025, the University has a duty to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of employees in the course of their employment.

6. Policy Principles

All members of Bangor University's community must:

- maintain appropriate professional boundaries
- avoid situations that may compromise academic integrity or impartial decision-making
- ensure relationships do not result in preferential treatment or undue influence
- declare relationships where conflicts of interest may arise
- uphold safeguarding responsibilities and act with professionalism and integrity.

Staff must not abuse their position of authority or trust to pursue or maintain a personal relationship.

7. Staff–Student Relationships

The University strongly discourages staff initiating, pursuing, or maintaining an intimate or sexual relationship with a student where a position of authority, trust, or dependency exists. This includes circumstances where a member of staff:

- teaches or assesses the student
- supervises the student academically or professionally
- provides pastoral or welfare support
- has influence over the student's academic progression, funding, or opportunities.

Where a relationship exists or develops that creates a conflict of interest, the staff member must declare the relationship immediately.

Please see section 11. for how to declare a relationship.

Bangor University will implement appropriate mitigating measures or alternative arrangements, which may include:

- reassignment of teaching or supervision
- removal from assessment or examination processes
- transfer of pastoral or administrative responsibilities.

7.1. Relationships with Prospective Students or Applicants

Staff should not initiate or pursue a close personal relationship with a prospective student or applicant where they are involved in:

- admissions or recruitment processes
- scholarship or funding decisions
- outreach or widening participation activities involving the individual.

Where such a relationship exists, the staff member must declare the relationship and remove themselves from related decision-making processes.

Please see section 11. for how to declare a relationship.

7.2. Postgraduate Research Supervision

Supervisory relationships between staff and postgraduate researchers involve significant academic dependency and power imbalance.

Staff should not enter into or pursue a close personal relationship with a postgraduate researcher where they:

- act as supervisor or co-supervisor
- sit on the student's supervisory or progression panel
- are involved in assessment of the student's research or thesis.

Where such a relationship exists or develops, the staff member must declare it immediately.

Please see section 11. for how to declare a relationship.

Bangor University will normally require changes to supervisory arrangements in order to protect the integrity of the research environment and ensure impartial academic judgement.

8. Staff–Staff Relationships

Consensual personal relationships between staff members are recognised. However, where a relationship involves a power imbalance including line management, supervisory authority, or evaluative responsibility, or where both parties have involvement with financial approvals, it must be declared by both members of staff. However, the duty to declare is stronger for the more senior (in terms of grade) member of staff.

Please see section 11. for how to declare a relationship.

Appropriate measures may include:

- changing reporting lines
- removal from recruitment or promotion processes
- reassignment of supervisory responsibilities.

Such measures will be proportionate and will not result in any detriment to either employee's grade, pay, working hours, reasonable working conditions, or career progression opportunities.

9. Recruitment, Assessment, and Examination Processes

Individuals involved in recruitment, assessment, or examination processes must ensure that personal relationships do not compromise impartiality or academic integrity.

Staff must declare any close personal relationship with an individual where they are involved in:

- recruitment or promotion panels
- student admissions decisions
- student assessment or examination

- postgraduate research viva examinations
- disciplinary or misconduct panels.

Please see section 11. for how to declare a relationship.

Bangor University will make alternative arrangements to ensure that decisions are taken objectively and without bias.

10. Existing Relationships

Where a relationship already exists before the professional relationship begins, the staff member must declare the relationship immediately so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Please see section 11. for how to declare a relationship.

11. Disclosure Procedure

Staff have a duty to declare close personal relationships where a conflict of interest may arise. The relationship must be disclosed at the earliest possible opportunity via the following process:

1. The onus is on the staff member to declare the relationship to the relevant authority e.g. line manager, Head of School or Department, or Human Resources by completing the form at Appendix 1.
2. Students can disclose relationships to their personal tutor, senior tutor or Head of School by completing the same form at Appendix 1.
3. Bangor University will assess whether a position of trust, authority, or dependency exists and/or whether there is an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest.
4. Appropriate mitigating measures will be implemented.
5. A confidential record will be kept within Human Resources outlining the agreed management arrangements which will be reviewed periodically to ensure they remain appropriate.
6. All disclosures will be treated sensitively and confidentially. Information will only be shared with those who need it to manage the conflict appropriately, this is likely to mean the Head of School or Head of Department and line manager.
7. A confidential record will be kept exclusively by Human Resources. Local line managers will only be informed of the agreed mitigating actions, not the specific nature of the relationship, unless operationally essential. Records of declared relationships will be securely destroyed within 12 months of the relationship ending or the individuals no longer working at the University or in a capacity that causes a conflict.

If staff are aware of or have concerns about a colleague being in an inappropriate relationship with a student, they should contact the Chief People Officer or Senior HR Officer as soon as possible to discuss in confidence.

12. Non-Retaliation and Support

The University encourages individuals to disclose relevant relationships or raise concerns in good faith.

No individual will be subject to retaliation, victimisation, or adverse treatment for:

- disclosing a relationship in accordance with this policy
- seeking advice regarding a potential conflict of interest
- raising a concern regarding a relationship that may breach this policy
- participating in any related investigation or management process.

Bangor University will ensure that individuals who raise concerns are treated fairly, respectfully, and confidentially, and that appropriate support is available.

13. Breach of Policy

Failure to comply with this policy may result in action under the University's disciplinary procedure.

Serious breaches may include:

- failure to disclose a relevant relationship
- abuse of a position of authority
- preferential treatment or undue influence
- harassment, coercion, or exploitation.

14. Monitoring and Review

Human Resources is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy.

This policy will normally be reviewed every three years or earlier if required by changes in legislation, regulatory requirements, or sector guidance.

Bangor University Personal Relationship Declaration Form

This form is to be completed by members of staff or students to declare a personal relationship with another member of staff or a student, in accordance with the University's Policy on Personal Relationships.

1. Staff Member Details

- Full Name:
- Job Title:
- School/Department:
- Payroll number (optional):

2. Details of the Other Individual

- Full Name:
- Status (please tick):
 - ☐ Staff
 - ☐ Student
- If Staff: Job Title and Department:
- If Student: Programme and Year of Study:

3. Nature of the Relationship

- Please confirm the nature of the relationship (tick one):
 - ☐ Intimate / personal relationship
 - ☐ Close personal relationship (non-intimate e.g. family member)
- Date the relationship commenced (approximate if necessary):

4. Potential Conflict of Interest

- Do you have any direct or indirect supervisory, teaching, assessment, or pastoral responsibility for this individual?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
- Are you involved in any financial decisions, approvals, or resource allocations relating to this individual?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No

- If you answered 'Yes' to any of the above, please provide details:

5. Mitigating Actions

- Please outline any steps already taken or proposed to manage potential conflicts of interest e.g. reassignment of duties:

6. Declaration (staff member disclosing relationship)

I confirm that the information provided in this form is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand my responsibilities under the University's Policy on Personal Relationships and agree to comply with any measures put in place to manage conflicts of interest.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

7. For Manager / HR Use

- Name:
- Position:
- Date received:
- Action required:
 - ☐ No action required
 - ☐ Management plan required
 - ☐ Duties to be reassigned
 - ☐ Other (please specify):

Comments:

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Please email the completed form to Tracy Hibbert, Chief People Officer; Steffan Griffith, Deputy Chief People Officer; or Nia Blackwell Senior HR Officer.

Appendix 2

Policy on Personal Relationships for Staff and Students

Quick Guide: Professional Boundaries – Do's and Don'ts

This quick guide summarises practical examples of Bangor University's expectations. It should be read alongside the Policy on Personal Relationships for Staff and Students.

DO: Professional and Appropriate Conduct

Maintain Professional Boundaries

- Meet students in **Bangor University settings** (offices, teaching spaces, online platforms)
- Keep interactions with students **focused on academic or professional matters**, or for senior tutors, focused on providing support to the student
- Use **University communication channels** (email, Teams) especially with students

Be Transparent

- Hold meetings with students in **appropriate, visible, or recorded environments** where possible
- Keep a clear distinction between **professional and personal interactions**

Act Fairly and Impartially

- Treat all students and colleagues **consistently and objectively**
- Ensure decisions (assessment, opportunities, references) are **fair and evidence-based**

Declare Conflicts Early

- Disclose any relationship that could create a **conflict of interest**
- Seek advice if you are unsure

Use Professional Judgement

- Consider how your actions might be **perceived by others**
- Ask: *"Is this appropriate in a professional university context?"*

DON'T: High-Risk or Inappropriate Behaviour

Do Not Blur Professional Boundaries

- Do not ask students to **meet in your home or private accommodation**, especially where you hold a position of trust
- Do not arrange **one-to-one meetings in informal or private settings** without clear justification
- Do not share **overly personal or intimate information**

Avoid Inappropriate Social Interaction

- Do not engage in **one-to-one social meetings involving alcohol** with students
- Do not create situations where **professional boundaries may be compromised**

Do Not Use Personal Communication Inappropriately

- Avoid **excessive, informal, or late-night messaging** especially with students
- Do not use messaging apps in ways that become **personal or secretive**

Do Not Show Preferential Treatment

- Do not give **special treatment, opportunities, or support** to individuals due to a relationship
- Avoid situations that could create **perceived favouritism**

Do Not Abuse a Position of Trust

- Do not pursue relationships where you have **authority, influence, or responsibility**
- Do not place individuals in situations of **dependency or pressure**.

THINK Before You Act!

Ask yourself:

- Would this be appropriate if **observed by others**?
- Could this be seen as **favouritism or undue influence**?
- Does this maintain **clear professional boundaries**?
- Would I be comfortable explaining this in a **formal review or investigation**?

If you're unsure, **seek advice or declare the situation**.

Appendix 3

Policy on Personal Relationships for Staff and Students – example scenarios and required actions

Scenario	Is the relationship permitted?	Action Required
A staff member enters into a relationship with a student they directly teach or supervise.	No, not under the current arrangements.	The staff member must declare the relationship immediately. (The student is encouraged to declare relationships too.) Alternative supervision/teaching arrangements will be required.
A staff member enters into a relationship with a student in a different department with no academic connection.	Yes (although strongly discouraged).	The staff member must declare the relationship immediately. Any potential conflicts must be reviewed and managed.
A staff member enters into a relationship with a student they may reasonably be expected to teach or assess in future.	No (while that possibility exists).	Must be declared; steps taken to ensure no teaching/assessment responsibility or any other influence.
A staff member enters into a relationship with a former student (graduated within one year).	Yes (with caution).	The staff member must declare the relationship. Conflicts (e.g. references, ongoing influence) must be considered.
Two staff members in a direct line management relationship enter into or are in a relationship.	Yes (with restrictions).	The relationship must be declared immediately. Reporting lines must be changed to remove direct supervision.
Two staff members in the same department (not in the same reporting line) enter into or are in a relationship.	Yes.	The relationship must be declared in a timely manner. Conflicts of interest to be assessed and managed if necessary.
Two staff members involved in joint financial approvals enter into or are in a relationship.	Yes (with restrictions).	Must be declared immediately; financial approval responsibilities must be separated.
Two staff members in different Schools or departments enter into or are in a relationship.	Yes (with potential restrictions).	Must be declared when a potential conflict arises e.g. where one is on a promotion or regrading panel considering the application of the other, or during a grievance or disciplinary process where investigators are from a different area etc.

A member of staff's partner joins the University as a student in the same School.	Yes (with restrictions).	The staff member must declare the relationship immediately. (The student is encouraged to declare relationships too.) Supervision/teaching arrangements will be checked to ensure no contact or influence.
A member of staff's partner joins the University as a student in a different School.	Yes.	The staff member must declare the relationship immediately. Any potential conflicts must be reviewed and managed.
A staff member enters into a relationship with a student who is either under the age of 18 or vulnerable, and fails to declare the relationship.	No, not under any circumstances.	Disciplinary action will follow.