

Personal relationships with employees

In order to maintain the University's academic integrity and reputation for inclusion, it is necessary to acknowledge when personal and professional relationships overlap. While most personal connections will be positive, it is recognised that there will be some relationships that may create a conflict of interest, misuse of power or unfair bias situation. Our definition of a personal, professional and working relationship is outlined in [Appendix A](#).

If you are employed by the University of St Andrews or you have a student role that includes some employee responsibilities e.g. postgraduate research students who teach or have wardenial duties, then please refer to the [Personal relationships at work policy](#) for guidance on managing personal relationships in the workplace.

1. Student obligations

Students should declare any existing or new personal relationships with individuals of the [University community](#) which may give rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest, misuse of power or unfair bias. If a student does have a personal relationship with an individual to whom they have, or are scheduled to have any such professional or working relationship as defined in [Appendix A](#), the student should:

- Inform [Student Services](#) of this relationship as soon as it becomes known.
- This notification should include the name of the individual and the level of management/supervision the student receives from the individual that could potentially become a legitimate concern for the University.
- Once Student Services has been notified of the personal relationship, we will assess the situation and identify if there is a conflict of interest. If there is, this will be immediately reported to HR and the Head of School/Unit to manage directly with the member of staff.

In the event that a student suspects and/or witnesses that a personal relationship has overlapped with a professional or working relationship, the same process above must be followed. The individual can request to remain anonymous if they wish however if a student is found to have made a vexatious complaint will be dealt with in line with the [Non-Academic Misconduct Policy](#).

If you are unsure whether or not the personal relationship could give rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest, misuse of power or unfair bias situation, you should contact [Student Services](#) in the first instance for advice and guidance.

If circumstances change e.g. if there is no longer a personal relationship or if the personal relationship no longer bears any conflict of interest the student should notify Student Services of this.

2. Outcomes

The University will take appropriate action which will usually entail the identification of ways in which both parties can continue to work/study in the University albeit separately. This may include (but not limited to):

- Moving the student to study under another employee unrelated to the situation or;
- Amending the employee's duties so that they do not have sole responsibility for the individual's work or study.

Any action will normally be undertaken only after full consultation with the individuals concerned. However, should the situation be considered to raise legal concerns or constitute a disciplinary matter, then the University will take appropriate direct and immediate action.

Appendix A: Definitions

A personal relationship is defined as a romantic, intimate, sexual and/or exclusive relationship; a family relationship; a business/commercial or financial relationship; or a relationship which involves an emotional attachment. **This definition is not exhaustive and therefore anyone who considers that they may be in a potential conflict of interest situation should declare this to Student Services.**

- **A professional relationship is defined as** one where there is an assessing, supervising, managing, tutoring, teaching or pastoral connection with the individual; for instance a line manager or lecturer or a role that provides some other support such as mentoring, coaching or training to that individual.
- **A working relationship is defined as** individuals who are in a personal relationship and do not have a professional relationship, but could still be in a situation that would potentially cause a conflict of interest, misuse of power or unfair bias situation occurring. E.g. as a peer to peer relationship where the employees have to liaise and cooperate over work matters or an employee to student relationship where the employee has access to student information, for instance student expenses and bursaries.
- **Position of trust** is constituted where an individual (student) is receiving education in a further or higher education institution and another individual (employee) looks after that individual in that institution. (s.43 sub 5) "Looks after" is defined as cares for, teaches, trains, supervises or is in sole charge of the person, so long as the employee does so regularly. (S.43 sub 7); (Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009).
- **University Community** is defined as any employees, casual workers, agency workers, contractors and any third party engaged to work at the University, including students on work placements, visiting scholars and volunteers.