Personal Relationships Policy – Staff

HARROW, RICHMOND AND UXBRIDGE COLLEGES POLICY AND PROCEDURES

HRUC

Policy No:	P18
Subject:	Personal Relationships Policy – for Staff
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Person responsible:	Assistant Director - Employee Experience and Compliance
Approved by:	People Board
For action by:	All Staff
For information to:	All Staff

1. Introduction

1.1 The College recognises that in its working environment personal relationships may develop between staff and that applicants or prospective workers who are in a close personal relationship or who are related to staff, may seek employment with the College. This policy applied in the workplace and any settings outside the workplace.

2. Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this procedure is to assist management in dealing effectively, but sensitively, with situations where employees have, or form a close personal relationship with someone with whom they work or whom they may wish to employ.

2.2 This procedure is intended to avoid the possibility of allegations of impropriety, favouritism, abuse of authority or conflict of interest from arising. It is also intended to ensure that all employees are confident that they will receive equal treatment without the fear of a close personal relationship impacting on the way they are treated and/or viewed by all College.

3. Scope

This procedure applies to all employees or workers of the College and should be read in conjunction with the College's Values.

4. Definition of Close Personal Relationships

4.1 Close Personal Relationships are defined as:

- Employees who are married, dating, in a partnership or a cohabiting arrangement or other similar relationship
- Immediate family members of the applicant or employee e.g. wife/husband, parents and son/daughter, brother/sister, grandparent/grandchild etc.
- Other relations of the applicant or employee e.g. extended family, such as aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, stepparents etc.

4.2 Any other individuals with whom there is a close professional relationship e.g. business associates.

This list aims to cover all eventualities but is not exhaustive and covers relationships that are undisclosed to the College.

5. Principles

5.1 Employees who are related or have a close personal relationship with a colleague or prospective employee must declare their relationship to their Line Manager who will inform the relevant Director/ Principal and People and Organisational Development (POD) department.

5.2 Employees who embark on close personal relationships with work colleagues need to be aware, at all times, of how their behaviour towards each other could impact on or be construed by other colleagues and learners when they are at work.

5.3 Employees must not be involved with any informal/formal procedures if they have a close personal relationship with the individual concerned.

5.4 Employees must not be involved in any decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any employee where there is a close personal relationship.

5.5 In all cases, managers or supervisors should not in any circumstances be responsible for any financial process, which could benefit the other party with whom they have a close personal/outside business relationship.

5.6 Where a close personal relationship involves the manager and a team member, operational issues will need to be considered, specifically, those in relation to duties and probity.

5.7 In exceptional circumstances and in order to avoid a situation in which an employee has managerial authority over another with whom they have a close personal relationship, the College reserves the right to transfer one or both of the employees involved in the relationship to a job in another department/section or negotiate alternative line management arrangements. In these circumstances, the College will consult both employees before any changes are implemented.

5.8 Similar principles apply to an employee who begins a close personal relationship with a client, customer, contractor or supplier. If the employee's job has authority over the client, customer, contractor or supplier (for example if the employee has the authority to decide to whom to award contracts), the relationship must be declared to the employee's manager. In these circumstances, the College reserves the right to transfer the employee following consultation with them.

6. Recruitment and Selection Process

6.1 An employee, who has a close personal relationship with a candidate, should declare this to POD as soon as they are aware of the candidate's application. They will then have no further involvement in the recruitment process.

6.2 A close personal relationship may not be a bar to employment, when making the decision to appoint, management will need to consider any resulting risks or conflicts of interest and put in place suitable action to address these.

7. Relationship breakdown

7.1 If a close relationship breaks down the individuals concerned remain in the same team or College campus, there may be a potential impact on the team relationships and delivery of service. In such cases use of the Occupational Health Service may be useful to the individuals as an initial approach. If it is envisaged that the breakdown if the relationship is or will cause on-going workplace issues, these should be addressed sensitively in discussion with the employees. If it is not possible to facilitate a professional working relationship, consideration may be given to transfer one or both of the employees where possible.

7.2 Employees should be aware that where a close personal relationship results in the display of improper, inappropriate or unprofessional behaviour this may result in disciplinary action being taken.

8. Declaration of Relationships

8.1 Declarations of intimate or close personal relationships must be made within one month and will be stored securely, managed in compliance with data protection legislation, and treated respectfully, sensitively, and confidentially.

8.2 This includes same-sex relationships where parties may not be publicly "out". Staff unsure about their relationship status should seek advice from their line manager, Head of Department, or POD department, especially if the other party does not wish the relationship to be reported. Learners should consult their personal tutor, head of department, or Student Services. Both staff and learners must complete the Personal Relationship Declaration Form, even if previously declared. Staff should submit the form to POD, and learners to their Head of Department. POD or the Head of Department will review the form, consult relevant parties, and document actions to remove any potential conflict. Unresolved matters may be referred to senior management. Measures to manage conflicts of interest will consider various factors, including vulnerability, personal circumstances, supervision arrangements, and power imbalances. Both parties will be notified of the measures put in place.

9.0 Personal Relationships with Learners

Purpose

9.1 HRUC recognises the importance of positive relationships within the community, including between staff and learners, but emphasises the responsibility to prevent abuses of power and ensure a safe, respectful environment. This policy aims to safeguard against potential conflicts of interest, sexual misconduct, and power imbalances by outlining expectations for conduct, including the prohibition of intimate relationships where there is a direct supervisory role or a risk of exploitation. It is crucial to declare any close personal or intimate relationships to allow HRUC to assess potential conflicts and take necessary actions.

Definition

9.2 A close personal relationship refers to relationships that may give rise to a conflict of interest, bias, or an abuse of power. This includes relationships between staff and learners, or staff members, where there is a position of trust or influence. HRUC defines key terms such as "abuse of power," "capacity to consent," and "grooming" to clarify expectations. Intimate relationships with learners under the age of 18 or those who are adults at risk are strictly prohibited, and any suspicion of inappropriate conduct should be reported immediately.

Appropriate Conduct and Reporting

9.3 Staff should maintain professional boundaries in all interactions with learners, ensuring that any relationship that could be perceived as inappropriate or abusive is declared and addressed. This includes avoiding physical contact, giving special attention to a particular learner, or engaging in personal communications outside of work-related matters. Any breach of this policy or concerns regarding misconduct should be reported to HRUC's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, where appropriate support will be provided.

For more information on this section, please see the Personal Relationships Policy – Students.

10.0 Confidentiality

Information concerning staff relationships will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. For advice, please contact the POD department.

11.0 Compliance

This policy adheres to the standards and requirements set forth to protect learners from harassment and sexual misconduct, while promoting a safe and supportive learning environment.

10.1 Compliance with Office for Students (OfS) conditions

This policy aligns with OfS conditions, by establishing clear guidelines to prevent conflicts of interest, abuse of power, and misconduct in staff-learner and staff-staff relationships. It supports a safe, fair, and transparent academic environment, ensuring that all members of the HRUC community are treated equitably and in compliance with regulatory expectations.

11 Review of Policy

11.1 This policy is not contractual and may be varied from time to time.

Appendix 1 - Personal Relationships Declaration Form

To be completed by the Staff Member:

This form should be completed in accordance with the Personal Relationships Policy.
Please complete this form and send it securely to the POD department.

Your Details:	
Staff name:	
Staff ID number:	
Line Manager:	
Position, Faculty/Division and Dept	
Campus:	
Other party details: (delete as appropriate)	
Learner / Staff Name:	
ID number:	
Tutor / Line Manager:	
Position/Department (Staff) or School/Faculty (Student)	
Campus:	
Nature of Relationship: (Please state whether the relationship is of a close personal nature (for example a close friend or relative, or an intimate/ romantic relationship).	
Relationship of close personal nature (if relevant) for example cousin, mother, friend etc.	
When did the intimate/romantic relationship start (if relevant) (approximate month/year):	
I understand the following: 1. It may be necessary for permanent or temporary adjustments to be made to any supervisory arrangements or other conditions, to remove any real or perceived conflict of interest arising from the relationship. 2. This information will be stored securely and managed in compliance with data protection legislation. 3. I have read and understood the Personal Relationships Policy. Signed (electronic signature): Print Name: Date:	

Staff to submit to the POD team who will discuss the form with your line manager and/or Head of Department, and with you if necessary.