

Guidance on personal relationships at work

While the existence of a personal relationship between employees does not necessarily constitute a bar to the employment or promotion of either party, employees should disclose such relationships where there is potential for a conflict of interest or breach of trust.

Personal relationships and line management/supervision

Where a manager has a personal relationship with an employee that reports to him or her, this inherently poses issues of conflicts of interests and professionalism. In particular, the School considers it inappropriate for a manager to have a sexual/romantic or familial relationship with a person who reports to them directly or indirectly. Where there is evidence that the personal relationship has had a serious impact on the School's business then the relevant School disciplinary procedure may be used.

Where a manager has a personal relationship (or past relationship) with a person who reports to them they are under an obligation to inform their line manager/head of department of the existence of this relationship. This disclosure will be treated confidentially and sensitively. The manager may find it helpful to discuss the disclosure to their line manager/head of department beforehand with their HR Partner in the first instance.

The line manager/head of department, in consultation with HR, may consider transferring one party or both parties, making alternative line management or supervisory arrangements or implementing other appropriate arrangements to eliminate the conflict of interest, depending on the circumstances. In very rare circumstances, such alternative arrangements may not be feasible and the School may then have to consider dismissing one or both parties.

Failure to disclose a personal relationship in good time may be considered a disciplinary matter and could amount to a breach of trust.

Situations that pose issues of conflict of interest

Personal relationships may pose risks for employees and the School even where there is no line management relationship. Employees may be involved in employment decisions relating to the person with whom they have a relationship. Examples of such instances include:

- Participating in Recruitment and Selection activity where there is a personal relationship with a candidate
- Providing input to any type of performance appraisal
- Providing input to any type of recommendation for salary or reward
- Making a recommendation or decision in relation to an application for funds
- Providing a Reference

These examples are not exhaustive and employees who have a personal relationship with another School employee are advised to consider carefully whether there is a potential for conflict of interest. Where a potential conflict of interests arises, the person is under a duty to disclose the relationship to their line manager/head of department who can then take a decision (in consultation with the HR Partner) on whether the person can be involved in the relevant decision or what steps are necessary to manage the conflict of interest. Such a disclosure will be treated in confidence and sensitively.

Failure to disclose a relevant personal relationship in good time may be considered a disciplinary matter and could amount to a breach of trust.

Personal relationships with students

There is a conflict of interest where an employee has a personal relationship with a student for whom they have any sort of supervisory, pastoral care or assessment responsibility. In some cases, engaging in a personal relationship with a student may also be unprofessional and constitute misconduct.

Employees are under an obligation to disclose any such personal relationship with a student to their line manager/head of department in order that the conflict can be managed.

Harassment

Any sexual relationship which is not freely entered into is recognised by the School as a form of harassment and will be dealt with under the appropriate procedures.

Pre-existing relationships

Employees who currently have a pre-existing relationship that comes within this guidance and has not already been disclosed should inform their line manager/head of department as soon as possible. The matter will be treated sensitively and confidentially.

Advice

Employees can seek advice from their HR Partner on the interpretation and application of this guidance.

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