



POLICY ON CONSENSUAL/PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University believes that the professional relationship between a student and a member of staff is an important part of the student's educational development. It is vital that trust and confidence exist between staff and students to ensure that students maximise their learning experience. In this context, a professional relationship is defined as one where there is an assessment, supervising, tutoring, teaching and/or pastoral role. The term "staff" applies to full-time, part-time, temporary, hourly paid, honorary and voluntary staff, as well as research students when teaching. This policy applies irrespective of sexual orientation.
- 1.2 Staff have a professional duty to develop their students' abilities and a responsibility to safeguard students' welfare. Given the imbalance of power between staff and students, any abuse by staff of this relationship will be viewed with concern.
- 1.3 Staff are strongly advised not to enter into a consensual personal relationship with any student they are responsible for teaching, supervising, assessing or for whom they have a pastoral role. A consensual personal relationship is defined as a sexual/romantic relationship that both parties willingly enter into and crosses professional boundaries. Such relationships could compromise the professional relationship and damage the teaching and learning environment for other students and staff.
- 1.4 However, the University does recognise that relationships may develop between a member of staff and student during the course of study without deliberate intent and that it is desired by both parties.
- 1.5 This policy outlines the conditions and boundaries of such sexual/romantic relations and all staff are expected to follow it for the protection of themselves, students and the University.

2. Procedure

- 2.1 Any member of staff who is currently or has recently been involved in a sexual/romantic relationship, or feels that such a relationship may develop with a student should declare their relationship (not necessarily its nature) in confidence to their line manager or appropriate senior manager. Any member of staff who suspects or is informed that a colleague may be in a non-declared relationship may also approach their line manager or senior manager in confidence.
- 2.2 The member of staff must ensure that s/he is not involved in the teaching and assessment of the student's work, nor is involved in their pastoral care. It is the responsibility of the member of staff to inform their line manager or appropriate senior manager immediately in order that alternative arrangements can be made, where possible and appropriate.
- 2.3 Relationships between staff and students where there has been or is no formal teaching or assessment relationship, nor a pastoral relationship do not need to be reported but any

exploitation of these relationships is liable to be dealt with under the University's sexual harassment and disciplinary procedures.

- 2.4 Staff who are uncertain about whether they should declare a personal relationship or the nature of the relationship in which they are involved can seek guidance from the Equal Opportunities Manager, Human Resources or Campus Dean of Students/Student Support Services. Staff and students should feel free to discuss the circumstances in confidence.
- 2.5 A student who is having or has had a sexual/romantic relationship with a member of staff has the right to ask that their work be marked/assessed by someone else, and is encouraged to do so.
- 2.6 Students who feel that academic progress depends upon their consenting to a sexual relationship with a member of staff have the right to complain of sexual harassment. Complaints involving alleged incidents of harassment or bullying by the member of staff will be dealt with in confidence in accordance with the Equal Opportunities Staff Complaints Procedure or under the Students Complaints and Grievance Procedures. For more information look at the Equal Opportunities Policy on the intranet under <http://www.intra.mdx.ac.uk/core/service/hr/docs/hrps8.pdf> or look at the anti-bullying policy at <http://www.intra.mdx.ac.uk/core/service/hr/docs/hrps18.pdf>.
- 2.7 In some circumstances, particularly where unfair treatment is alleged as a result of a personal relationship it may be necessary to take disciplinary action against the member of staff concerned. Declaring the personal relationship and following the guidelines set out in this code of practice will mitigate this.

This policy was approved by the Executive Committee on 13 May 2004. It is due for review in May 2009.

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