

Staff & Student Personal Relationships Policy

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Lead contact:	Head of Academic Registry & Compliance
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Further information:	

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Staff & Student Personal Relationships Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Every student should be safe during their time at university. This includes protection from harassment and sexual misconduct. As such NSCD has developed the Personal Relationship Policy to ensure there is a clearly defined policy on staff and student personal relationships.
- 1.2 Positive professional relationships between members of staff and students are central to students' educational development and welfare. However, intimate or close personal relationships between students and staff who have responsibility for them can cause significant problems because of conflicts of interest, imbalance of power and authority, perceived favouritism, and undermining of trust and confidence in the academic process. Being a member of staff brings with it certain duties and responsibilities. If a staff member behaves in an unprofessional way towards a student, it may have negative consequences for student welfare, and may cause risk to both the staff member themselves and the wider University.
- 1.3 This policy concerns consensual relationships - non-consensual behaviour is covered under the [Harassment, Sexual Misconduct & Related Behaviours Policy](#).
- 1.4 This policy should be viewed in the context of the Office for Students (OfS) Statement of Expectations for Universities and colleges¹. The statement of expectations is a consistent set of standards that universities and colleges should follow to develop and implement effective ways to tackle harassment and sexual misconduct.

2. Scope & Principles

- 2.1 The policy sets out the expectations and obligations of Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD) staff with respect to personal relationships between students and staff, regardless of gender, sexual orientation and identity.
- 2.2 This policy is intended to ensure that appropriate safeguards and processes are in place to prevent abuses of power and sexual misconduct.
- 2.2 To protect the welfare of students, and in the best interests of staff, NSCD:
 - a) Prohibits staff from entering into an intimate or close personal relationship with a student for whom they have any responsibility; and

¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/student-rights-and-welfare/student-guide-to-harassment-hate-and-sexual-misconduct/what-to-expect/>

- b) Prohibits intimate or close personal relationships with staff or students who are under the age of 18 or who are considered an adult at risk; and
- c) Strongly discourages any other close personal relationship between a staff member and student even when there is no direct responsibility.

All intimate or close personal relationships must be declared to ensure the boundaries of professional conduct are not transgressed.

- 2.3 NSCD staff are in a position of trust. It is important that they demonstrate exemplary behaviour. Staff should always give due consideration as to what is an appropriate environment and what is appropriate conduct in relation to the activities they are undertaking.
- 2.3 There is potential for abuse or the perception of abuse in any personal relationship between individuals in inherently unequal positions where one individual is expected to discharge their teaching or supervisory responsibility for the other, whether they are paid for their services (e.g. including honorary fellows and guest tutors). Such positions include, but are not limited to, a tutor and student, mentor and mentee, advisor and advisee, or support manager and student. This also includes support staff who report on progress of students or are influential to a student's development in any capacity.
- 2.4 Relationships in which one party is in a position to assess, evaluate the work or influence the career of the other, may also provide grounds for complaint by third parties when that relationship gives undue access or advantage, restricts opportunities, or simply creates a perception of these problems.
- 2.5 This policy seeks to protect students and staff from allegations of actual or perceived conflicts of interest, and to limit circumstances where a position of power may be abused. In doing so it seeks to ensure a positive and supportive working environment where all are treated fairly.
- 2.6 Students on a placement in an external organisation, and teaching students, must adhere to any policies on personal relationships within the external organisation. In the absence of a policy in the external organisation staff and students must continue to follow this policy and should not enter close personal and intimate relationships with their placement mentors or company members who hold mentorship status.
- 2.7 Where a close personal relationship exists between a staff member and student even when there is no direct supervision, the relationship may give rise to real or perceived conflict of interest, breach of trust or confidentiality, there must be a clear declaration of the relationship, **see Appendix A.**

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- 3.1 'member of staff' includes any person who is engaged by NSCD as an employee, worker or volunteer and/or who holds an NSCD post, as well as any person to whom NSCD makes available any of the privileges or facilities normally afforded to its employees, working with students either directly or indirectly. Where graduate students are working for NSCD in a teaching or related capacity, this policy will apply to them in that capacity as if they were employees of NSCD.
- 3.2 'student' includes any person pursuing a course of study leading to the award of a MA, degree, diploma, or certificate of the University.
- 3.3 'professional connection' means any arrangement where a person in their capacity as a member of staff has any academic, pastoral or administrative or similar responsibility for a student, including for supervising, tutoring, teaching, selecting, assessing, protecting, safeguarding, or providing a reference for, the student.
- 3.4 'Intimate relationship' includes sexual or romantic relationships, marriage or life partnerships, regardless of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation, including a brief relationship and one-off occurrences, and whether they are conducted in person and/or online and/or via electronic or any other form of communication.
- 3.5 'Close personal relationship' excludes intimate relationships but means a relationship where the nature, content, emotional involvement and/or frequency of interactions and/or communications between a staff member and a student transgress the boundaries of professional conduct or may be reasonably perceived to do so.
- 3.6 'Responsibility for a student' is defined widely and includes any teaching, professional, pastoral or administrative responsibility or authority over a student, whether temporary or permanent. Situations where a staff member will have responsibility for a student will include, but not be limited to where:
- I. there is any direct supervisory or teaching relationship (for example between postgraduate students and their supervisor, or tutors and their tutees)
 - II. a member of staff has direct or indirect responsibility for that student's academic studies (for example, assessor of a student's work)
 - III. a member of staff has direct or indirect responsibility for that student's personal welfare (for example providing welfare services or acting as a mentor or advisor).
 - IV. a mentor or making decisions over opportunities or work placements.
 - V. a member of staff is involved in the admission or selection of applicants or offer-holders.

3.7 'Position of trust' - any staff member working closely with children, young people or adults at risk, is in a position of trust.

3.8 'Abuse of power' is where someone uses their position of power or authority in an unacceptable manner. Abuse of power can take various forms and may include, but is not limited to, grooming, manipulation, coercion, putting pressure on others to engage in conduct they do not feel comfortable with.

3.9 An 'adult at risk' is someone over the age of 18 who receives or may need community care services by reason of disability or illness and because of those needs is unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. This can relate to physical, mental or psychological wellbeing or the potential to be drawn into sexual or criminal exploitation and activity.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 All members of NSCD have a responsibility to abide by and promote the principles in this policy in relation to their work and duties at NSCD:

- The policy is known, understood, and implemented.
- Individual behaviours take into consideration the impact it may have upon others.
- Everyone is treated with respect and dignity.
- Where a member of staff has concerns, they should raise this with their line manager or other relevant staff.

4.2 In order to maintain appropriate relationships with students, and to help reduce the risk of sexual misconduct, abuse of power or conflict of interest, staff should:

- I. maintain an appropriate physical and emotional distance from students and perform their NSCD duties in the best interests of the school without favour towards any individual student over another student.
- II. follow the [Safe Contact Principles](#) in all activities relating to NSCD.
- III. avoid creating special friendships with students.
- IV. use their NSCD email account, NSCD telephone, School software and applications and internet access for communications with students where possible, avoiding personal messaging (including on social media).
- V. set an example by writing and communicating with students in a professional and business style. Any email sent to a student or a colleague about a student may be disclosed to the student or their legal representative, for example under data protection law;
- VI. Staff should give careful consideration before giving their personal mobile phone number to a student. There may be occasions and circumstances however where this may be unavoidable. Staff are encouraged to use their work telephone numbers which may be diverted to the staff member's

personal mobile or access a school mobile phone for a period of time where possible .

- VII. The use of group messaging (i.e. WhatsApp) may be used by staff using personal mobile phone/s. On these occasions, staff should ensure this is for NSCD related activities such as; the planning/logistics for module activities or performances where it is deemed a more effective form of communicating to a group.
- VIII. where possible, ensure that meetings and discussions occur on campus or other NSCD-approved premises. Where not possible, ensure the meeting occurs in a public venue, such as a café.
- IX. refer students with support needs to the NSCD well-being team and limit the role in providing personal support to a student where this is not part of a staff members employment duties.
- X. refrain from contacting students outside of reasonable working hours.
- XI. not seek personal information from a student except as relevant to the NSCD process (e.g. medical information for special consideration, or personal circumstances information as part of an academic progress process). This should be accessed via the formal routes of Student Review Board, published Personal Support Plans and action plans.
- XII. adhere to the same guidelines, where logistically possible, when participating in fieldwork with a student, attending conferences and any other school-based activities whilst away from the usual workplace.

4.3 The list below provides some examples of unacceptable behaviour towards students, please note that the below is not an exhaustive list of examples:

- I. Physical touching deemed as unprofessional or inappropriate that does not follow the principles as outlined in the [Safe Contact Principles](#)
- II. Comments or questions of a sexual nature (whether verbally or electronically).
- III. Paying undue special attention to a particular student/s.
- IV. Accepting gifts from a student, unless it is following final assessment completion and deemed to be a minor token of thanks in accordance with the NSCD's anti bribery policy.
- V. Inviting any individual student to your private home without using the declaration form (appendix 1)
- VI. Inviting a student to another venue or room without others present, or visiting their home or room, including while at conferences, overseas trips, or on placement.

4.4 The Leadership Team and HR Manager will be responsible for:

- Overseeing the continuing application and development of the Personal Relationships Policy in line with legislation and strategic objectives
- Overseeing the Register of Declarations and subsequent actions.

- Reporting on Staff and Student personal relationships to the Board of Governors and Regulator (OfS) as appropriate.

4.5 The Quality Office will be responsible for:

- Overseeing the development of the Personal Relationship Policy in line with the regulator and sector best practice, ensuring regular reviews are embedded within the policy review cycle at Senate.
- Managing confidential student records with all associated paperwork.

5. Communication of Policy

- 5.1 This policy will be published in staff and student handbooks and posted on the NSCD Virtual Learning Environment and public website.
- 5.2 NSCD will endeavour to provide documents in different formats if requested by applicants, staff, and students.
- 5.3 The induction of all staff will include specific reference to the Policy and the responsibility of staff to reflect its principles in their own practice.
- 5.4 Training during each academic year will be available for all staff to ensure they are familiar with all relevant student-facing and whole school policies.

6. Procedure for the declaration of personal relationships

- 6.1 All declarations are to be made as soon as reasonably practicable and always within one month using Appendix A.
- 6.2 It is the responsibility of the staff member to declare a close personal relationship. Students will not be held responsible to declare such relationships.
- 6.3 As the declaration contains sensitive personal data it will be stored securely and managed in compliance with data protection legislation. Such declarations will be treated respectfully, sensitively, and confidentially, and the wishes of both parties respected as far as is possible.
- 6.4 If in doubt the best course is to declare a relationship, or any interaction with a student that is of concern, so that appropriate measures (to protect both the student and the member of staff) can be considered.

- 6.5 Staff and students must complete the Personal Relationship Declaration Form (Appendix A). This form should be completed even if the relationship was previously declared on a job or course application form.
- 6.5.1 Step 1 – Staff should submit the form to HR; who may need to discuss the details with the staff member or with the Line Manager or Leadership team. Students should submit the form to the Quality Office who may need to discuss the details with the students or with the staff member's Line Manager, HR or Leadership team.
- 6.5.2 Step 2 – HR and Leadership team will review the form and where appropriate and necessary, will consult the parties and the Line Manager on what actions, if any, are required to remove any potential conflict. The actions will be documented on the form and copies provided to the relevant parties. HR will store the form securely on the member of staff's central HR file.
- 6.5.3 Step 3 – Any unresolved matter may be referred to the Leadership team.
- 6.6 In placing measures to manage any conflict of interest, HR, the Leadership team and/or Quality Office may consider the following:
- I. any known vulnerability of the student.
 - II. the student's or colleague's personal circumstances at the time
 - III. whether there is a supervision or teaching arrangement in place
 - IV. the circumstances of the student when the close personal relationship commenced or was initiated (for example, if the personal relationship existed prior to the staff/student relationship);
 - V. any special family, kinship, and other significant relationships
 - VI. the nature of the two individuals' contact in study
 - VII. the potential for the staff member to influence the academic progress and outcomes or career progression of the student or colleague; and
 - VIII. the extent of the power imbalance between the two individuals.
- 6.6 Following disclosure, the person to whom the disclosure has been made will ensure as appropriate that the student is aware of the disclosure and that alternative arrangements are put in place to avoid the member of staff having any professional connection with the student.
- 6.7 Both the staff member and student will be notified of the conflict-of-interest management measures put in place.

7 Breach of the Policy

- 7.1 Any instances of infringement will be investigated and where appropriate will be considered under the relevant complaints/grievance and disciplinary policy for staff

or students. Failure to comply with this policy, or any arrangements which are put in place under it, may be treated as a disciplinary matter.

7.2 Unprofessional or inappropriate conduct towards a student or staff member is not acceptable. This may breach the [Harassment and Sexual Misconduct & Related Behaviours Policy](#) and/or the [Staff Disciplinary Policy](#), and other school and HR policies and procedures.

7.3 A student should seek advice immediately if they feel they have been subject to unprofessional or inappropriate conduct, by speaking to the Quality Office, Student Services or the Student Support Manager to ensure appropriate advice and support is provided.

7.4 A staff member should seek advice immediately if they feel they have been subject to unprofessional or inappropriate conduct, by speaking to the Quality Office, line manager, Vice Principal, or HR to ensure appropriate support is provided.

7.5 Anyone suspecting a member of staff of acting inappropriately towards a student under the age of 18 or an adult at risk should contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) who will act within the [Safeguarding Policy](#). The DSO may contact the leadership team, HR and this may be referred to the local authority designated officer and/or the police.

7.6 A deliberate non-disclosed personal relationship between a staff member and student with direct supervision is a breach of this policy and will be investigated under the disciplinary procedure.

7.7 An unintentional failure to disclose a personal relationship with a student, where there is a real or perceived conflict of interest, breach of trust or confidentiality, may be investigated under the disciplinary procedure.

8 . Complaints

8.1 Staff, students or visitors who wish to make a complaint regarding a personal relationship should seek resolution through the complaints procedure..

- [Student Complaints Policy & Procedures](#)
- [Staff Complaints Policy & Procedures](#)
- [Public Complaints Procedure](#)

9. Related Documents

- [Harassment, Sexual Misconduct & Related Behaviours Policy](#)
- [Non-Academic Misconduct Policy](#)

- [Staff Grievance Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Learning Culture & Code of Practice](#)
- [Safe Contact Principles](#)
- [E Safety & Online Policy](#)
- [Acceptable use of IT Systems Policy](#)
- [Recommendations for safe use of social media & online platforms](#)

10. Key contacts

Human Resources Manager:	Geraldine.mcdowall@nscd.ac.uk
Head of Academic Registry & Compliance:	Hannah.perry@nscd.ac.uk
Quality Office:	quality.office@nscd.ac.uk
Student Support Manager:	Ali.coleman@nscd.ac.uk
Safeguarding:	Safeguarding@nscd.ac.uk

Appendix A: Personal Relationships Declaration Form

SECTION A: TO BE COMPLETED BY STAFF / STUDENT

This form should be completed in accordance this policy.

Staff: Please complete this form and send it securely to HR. Both parties must complete their own form.

Students: Please complete this form and send it securely to the Quality Office. The member of staff will also need to complete their own form.

Your Details:	
Name:	
Are you a student or member of staff?	
Line Manager / Head of Faculty Name:	
Other party's details:	
Name	
Are they a student or a member of staff?	
Nature of Relationship: <i>(Please state whether the relationship is of a close personal nature (for example a close friend or relative, or an intimate/romantic relationship).</i>	
When did the intimate or close personal relationship start (if relevant) (approximate month/year):	
<p>I understand the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <p>For intimate or close personal relationships:</p> <p>I have read and understood NSCD's policy on Harassment, Sexual misconduct & Related Behaviours Policy.</p> <p>Signed (electronic signature):</p> <p>Print Name:</p> <p>Date:</p>	

SECTION B: TO BE COMPLETED BY HR IN CONJUNCTION WITH LINE MANAGER AND EMPLOYEE FOR STAFF DECLARATIONS.

Has this relationship been declared within one month	Y/N
If no, why not?	
Is action or a conflict-of-interest management plan required?	Y/N
Reasons for recommended plan	
Details of action / plan	

STAFF DECLARATIONS:

1. Signature of HR Manger :

Print Name:

Job title:

Date:

2. Signature of Line Manager:

Print Name:

Job title:

Date:

3. Signature of Quality Office:

Print Name:

Job title:

Date:

HR Manager to upload this form securely to the employee's personal file.

Quality Office to store this form securely against student record.