



Royal College of Art

Postgraduate Art & Design

Personal Relationships Policy

1 Introduction

The College values and relies upon the professional integrity of relationships between members of staff and students. In order that the College operates and is perceived to operate in a professional and proper manner in compliance with UK legislation and sector regulation, it is necessary to recognise, and take account of, personal relationships which overlap with professional relationships.

The College believes that the professional relationship between a student and members of staff is vital to the student's educational development and affirms that the teaching relationship is based on trust. Although students join the College as mature adults, any staff/student professional relationship embodies an imbalance of power. Additional issues can arise when a relationship ends or if a consensual relationship later becomes non-consensual or a case of harassment.

This policy includes guidance set out in the Office for Students Condition of Registration E6: Harassment and Sexual Misconduct.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all staff and is designed to provide guidance to ensure the safeguarding of students and to enable the correct procedure to be followed so that members of staff are not open to potential, perceived or actual impropriety, bias, abuse of authority, discrimination, conflict of interest or favouritism.

It applies to relationships between staff and students, and those between members of staff as well as staff and third parties such as suppliers where there may be a business, commercial or financial relationship.

In the context of this policy a personal relationship includes the following:

- A family relationship including a spousal, civil or other enduring partnership or a relative
- A business/commercial/financial relationship
- A sexual/romantic relationship
- A close friendship

A professional relationship between staff and student is defined as one where there is an assessing, supervising, tutoring, teaching or pastoral role or a role providing administrative or technical support. In the context of staff, a professional relationship is a general working relationship, including line manager/supervisory activities.

3 Relationships Between Staff and Students

3.1 Prohibition of Personal Relationships

Staff members are strictly prohibited from engaging in personal relationships—defined as romantic, sexual, or other close personal associations including those of a business nature—with students for whom they have academic or pastoral responsibilities. This includes roles involving teaching, supervision, assessment, tutoring, or pastoral care.

3.2 Declaration of Pre-existing Relationships

In instances where a personal relationship between a staff member and a student predates the commencement of the staff member's academic or pastoral responsibilities, the staff member must disclose the relationship to their line manager. The College will then implement alternative arrangements to mitigate any potential conflicts of interest, such as reassigning tutoring or supervisory duties.

3.3 Mandatory Disclosure and Disciplinary Measures

All staff members are required to declare any personal relationships with students to their line manager, regardless of whether a direct academic or pastoral relationship exists.

Information provided by staff about personal relationships at work will be treated in a sensitive, respectful and confidential manner.

Failure to disclose such relationships may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, in accordance with the College's disciplinary procedures.

4 Relationships between members of staff

Where a personal relationship develops between members of staff who are in a line management or supervisory relationship, involvement in appraisal, promotion or any other management activity or process involving the other party must cease.

Additionally, staff in a personal relationship should not work together in any circumstance whereby a breach of financial control may occur.

5 Additional support

Staff may seek guidance on the implementation of this policy, on a confidential basis, from their line manager or People and Culture.

Students may seek guidance on the implementation of this policy on a confidential basis from the Student Support team or from the Students' Union.

Staff and students can also use the [Report + Support portal](#) to raise concerns.