

Policy on relationships involving staff, students and close personal or business associates

1. The University of Worcester aims to provide a supportive working and learning environment which enables staff and students to fulfil their full potential, thereby enhancing and enriching the lives and experiences of all those who come into contact with the University.
2. In all our dealings we subscribe to the following values, seeking to:
 - be open, honest, professional and transparent
 - actively promote equality and respect for individuals
 - be supportive and welcoming
 - proactively demonstrate understanding and respect in all our communications
 - create a climate of mutual respect, trust and confidence
 - take responsibility and accountability for our own actions
 - adhere to the highest standards of professional and ethical conduct
3. Whilst the University considers that consensual relationships between adults are a private matter between the people concerned and that it has no right to seek to regulate people's personal lives, it also considers that staff and students are required to respect and maintain the boundaries of professional and personal life.
4. The University therefore has a legitimate interest in the relationships involving staff, students and close personal or business associates and a duty to ensure the protection of all its staff and students.
5. The following policy has been devised where personal relationships develop and may overlap with professional relationships. They aim to protect staff and students from allegations of actual or perceived conflicts of interests and to avoid complaints between members of the University community.
6. Staff and students should be aware that it is a criminal offense under the Sexual Offences Act 2003¹ to engage in sexual activity with a person under the age of 18, *even where the person is of the legal age of consent*, where the adult is in a position of trust in relation to the under 18 year old.

Scope

7. These guidelines are intended to encompass all relationships including:
 - Family relationships
 - Intimate relationships (including marital, sexual, romantic, emotional, whether same sex or heterosexual relationships)
 - Pecuniary relationships
 - Contractual relationships
 - Close personal relationships
8. This policy aims to cover areas where the existence or development of such relationships could raise questions about real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest, trust and confidentiality at the outset, during or at the termination of the relationship.
9. The risks associated with potential conflicts of interest may arise in relation to the following:
 - Management, supervision, career progression and development of staff

¹ [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#)

- Contractual matters
- Deployment of resources
- All aspects of teaching, learning and assessment
- Access to and management of confidential information
- Access to support services, including financial assistance, accommodation and other services
- Assignment of work or other facilities or benefits to staff or students

Relationships between Staff and Students (Including Research Degree Students)

10. The staff – student relationship is one which should be characterised by professionalism, trust, confidence, and fair treatment. The boundaries of the professional role of staff must be fully recognised and respected.
11. When there has been, or is, a consensual or close family relationship between a member of staff and a student, which might lead to an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest or to a concern that the academic integrity of University processes might be called into question, each party is asked to make a disclosure. Details of the relationship are not required.
12. The member of staff should disclose the potential for a conflict of interest to their Line Manager. Observing the requirements of confidentiality, the Line Manager will consult with the member of staff and the student separately to ensure appropriate steps are taken for the student's work to be assessed fairly and objectively, and to ensure that the member of staff is not solely in a position to take decisions affecting the student, e.g. the allocation of scholarships or loans; the awarding of facilities or benefits of any kind. This should also address any possible concerns of fellow students and staff.
13. The student is encouraged to disclose their involvement to an appropriate member of staff, e.g. their Personal Tutor or Head of Institute. Any student who needs guidance or who is concerned about the potential for a conflict of interest in such circumstances should contact Student Services, or the Students' Union Welfare Officer.
14. All parties are asked to note that under no circumstances will it be acceptable for any member of staff to have a romantic or sexual relationship with a student under the age of 18.
15. Failure to disclose, which results in the University's academic, administrative or institutional processes being compromised, may result in disciplinary action.
16. In order to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding and to maintain a professional relationship, staff are strongly advised not to divulge personal information such as home addresses or telephone numbers to students.

Relationships between Members of Staff

17. Occasionally personal relationships between members of staff may lead to actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest, for e.g. if one member of staff develops a close personal relationship with someone for whom they have a line management responsibility. In such circumstances, members of staff are asked to disclose this to an appropriate manager of the University, typically a member of Personnel.
18. Where the University is made aware of such a relationship it will consider the appropriate action to take in order to protect the integrity and interests of all parties and the University.
19. Failure to disclose which results in the University's academic, administrative or institutional processes being compromised may result in disciplinary action.

Relationships between staff and close personal or business associates

20. If staff are involved in University business with organisations or individuals with whom they have a close personal or business relationship, they are asked to disclose this to their line manager.
21. Where the University is made aware of such relationships, it will consider the appropriate action to take in order to protect the integrity and interests of all concerned.