

Personal Relationships Policy

Issue Date: 05.03.2023

In line with our Safeguarding policies and Code of Conduct, ELATT staff must ensure that they do not enter into personal or intimate relationships with students.

ELATT staff are in a position of trust, and no matter their intention, they should always take care to provide an appropriate environment marked by appropriate conduct.

Paramount here is to prevent any abuse of power between staff and students, or staff and staff.

Whilst socialising on a friendship basis between colleagues and staff and students is often a positive aspect of being an active member of the ELATT community, the nature of staff/student and staff/staff relationships imposes particular responsibilities and duties on staff.

In line with the Sexual Offences Act (2003), this policy requires that whilst a young person can consent to sexual activity once they reach the age of 16, it is a criminal offence for a person to engage in sexual activity of any kind with a person under the age of 18 where the adult is in a position of trust. This policy prohibits intimate relationships with staff or students who are under the age of 18 or who are an adult at risk. This policy prohibits close personal or intimate relationships between staff and students of any age where there is direct supervision.

Where a close personal or intimate relationship exists between a staff member and student with no direct supervision, or between members of staff where 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. Declaration of the relationship helps the organisation and staff members involved manage the risk of conflict of interest, exploitation, favouritism or bias, including the perception of such conflicts or biases.

Any staff member working closely with children, young people or adults at risk, is in a **position of trust**. Staff must not engage in sexual behaviour with someone with whom they are in a position of trust.

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 as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself 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.

An intimate relationship is a consensual romantic or sexual relationship which goes beyond the bounds of a platonic or working relationship. An intimate relationship could be brief and includes a one-off occurrence.

A close personal relationship is a relative or close family friend, or a relationship where there is financial dependence.

Once declared, a **conflict of interest management plan** will be made with your line manager. This plan will require that the member of staff must:

- maintain an appropriate physical and emotional distance from students and perform their ELATT duties in the best interests of the ELATT without favour towards any individual student over another student
- avoid creating special friendships with students as this may be seen as grooming.
- use an ELATT email account, ELATT telephone, ELATT software and applications and internet access for communications with students where possible, avoiding personal messaging
- set an example by writing and communicating with students in a professional 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
- not give students their private mobile or email address
- adhere to the same guidelines when participating in trips and events with a student, or whilst away from the usual workplace.

Where staff have a primary role of providing supervision, teaching, or pastoral care to students (including personal tutors), staff should:

- where possible, ensure that meetings and discussions occur in ELATT's approved premises, or at least in a public place
- refer students with support needs to a relevant ELATT support service and limit your role in providing personal support to a student where this is not part of your duties
- refrain from contacting students outside of reasonable working hours
- not seek personal information from a student except as relevant to ELATT processes and our duty of care to students.

Guidance on unacceptable behaviour towards students:

Please note that the below is not an exhaustive list of examples:

- Physical touching, that could be construed as sexualised (e.g. touches of the shoulder or squeezes of the leg), or comments or questions of a sexual nature (whether verbally or electronically)
- Paying undue special attention to a particular student, which may be seen as grooming
- Accepting gifts from a student, unless it is following final assessment completion and deemed to be a minor token of thanks in accordance with our [Anti-bribery Policy](#).
- Inviting an individual student to your private home or room without others present, or visiting their home or room.

Relationships between members of staff

Relationships between members of staff are not prohibited. However, in order to prevent potential abuse of power or perceived or real conflict of interest, staff must declare close personal or intimate relationships in either of the following situations:

- Where a relationship begins that may give rise to a real or perceived conflict of interest, exploitation, favouritism or bias
- Where a relationship already exists and a new situation arises that may give rise to a real or perceived conflict of interest, exploitation, favouritism or bias: for example, two staff members in a relationship who work in different departments who now work in the same department.

In order to maintain appropriate relationships with colleagues/peers, and help reduce the risk of abuse of power or conflict of interest, staff should:

- maintain an appropriate physical and emotional distance from other staff while working
- perform ELATT duties in the best interests of the ELATT without favour towards any individual staff member over another
- avoid paying undue special attention to a particular member of staff which may be seen as grooming
- where possible use their ELATT email account, telephone and internet access for work-related communications with staff and maintain professional communications
- be aware that any email sent to a staff member about a colleague may be disclosed to them or their advocate under the General Data Protection Regulations. All emails and work-related instant messages should be written in a professional manner
- establish boundaries between professional and non-professional communication with colleagues
- adhere to the same guidelines wherever possible when you and the staff member are participating in activities away from your usual workplace
- where possible, ensure that meetings and discussions about ELATT matters occur on site or other appropriate premises
- refer colleagues with support needs to a relevant ELATT support service, such as Babylon Health or Plumm Health, and be mindful to limit your role in providing personal support to a staff member where this is not part of your employment duties.

Where an intimate relationship ends it is expected that all parties will continue to conduct themselves in a professional manner in ELATT and avoid personal disputes which impact on the working environment or other colleagues and students. The staff members involved will be consulted and an agreed action plan established to facilitate this if necessary.

Breach of policy

An intimate relationship between a staff member and student with direct supervision is a breach of this policy and will be investigated under the disciplinary procedure. Failure to disclose a close personal or intimate relationship with a student, or with a colleague where there is a real or perceived conflict of interest, breach of trust or confidentiality, may be investigated under the disciplinary procedure.

Reporting

Anyone suspecting a member of staff of acting inappropriately towards a student or staff member under the age of 18 or an adult at risk should refer to our Safeguarding Policies for young people and adults and contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer.



Declaration of a personal relationship

Your name:

Is your personal relationship with a colleague, volunteer or student?

Colleague / student / volunteer / other (please state)

Nature of relationship:

Likely impact on work duties:

Agreed adjustments to working practices, if any:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Signatures:

Member of staff

Signature

Date

Line manager

Signature

Date