

# St Peter's College Staff-Student Relationships Policy

Approved by the Governing Body on 16 May 2018.

## **A. Introduction**

1. This policy covers current and former close personal or intimate relationships, however brief, between members of staff and students where the staff member has any responsibility for the student. These include, but are not limited to: marital, sexual, romantic, or emotional relationships whether they are conducted in person or online. It also covers instances where a member of staff has a close family relationship with a student.

2. For the purposes of this policy, a 'member of staff' should be understood as including but not limited to any individual who is working within the College under a formal contract of employment or as a casual paid worker (including graduate students working as tutors, Junior Deans and Welfare Officers, as well as and other 'out tutors'), and any other individual (such as visiting academics) to whom the College offers any of the privileges or facilities normally available to its employees.

3. A student should be understood as any member of the College who is studying for an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification, or who is a Visiting Student registered at the College.

4. The College regards the professional relationship between members of staff and students as central to the student's educational development and wellbeing. Professional relationships are any in which the staff member through his or her employment with the College has any educational, administrative, pastoral or supervisory involvement with a student, or where the staff member has a governance or management responsibility at the College. The College reminds staff of the importance of maintaining academic and professional integrity and of their responsibility for the welfare of students.

5. Implicit in the professional role of members of staff is an obligation to ensure that conflicts of interest do not arise, and that relationships with students for whom the staff member has any responsibility remain strictly professional, respecting the trust inherent in them.

6. While the College does not wish to regulate the private lives of its staff, it strongly advises staff not to enter into a close personal or intimate relationship with a student for whom they have any responsibility, and alerts them to the complications that may result.

7. To embark on a close personal or intimate relationship with a student often involves difficulties rooted in the inequalities of power as well as problems in maintaining the boundaries of professional and personal life. Also, these relationships could disrupt the teaching and learning environment for other students and colleagues and might lead to accusations of favouritism or bias and undermine trust in the academic process.

## **B. Guidance for staff on relationships and the need for disclosure**

8. The College requires that any close personal or intimate relationship with a student for whom a staff member has any responsibility is brought to the attention of the Senior Tutor or Tutor for Welfare in order that action can be taken to mitigate any unintended consequences. The member of staff should also disclose any former relationship with a current student for whom they are given or are to be given responsibility. If the staff member

is unsure if they have any responsibility for the student, they should declare the relationship to their Senior Tutor or Tutor for Welfare, in order that they can assess the risk of unintended consequences arising. Any declaration of this kind will, so far as possible and subject to the specific provisions of this policy, be treated in confidence, and every effort will be made to ensure that it does not disadvantage either party with regard to their professional advancement or academic progress.

9. Disciplinary action may be taken against a member of staff who fails to declare a close personal, intimate or family relationship as required by this policy.

10. Attention is drawn to the fact that relationships involving students under the age of eighteen or vulnerable adults could fall within the scope of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 relating to persons in positions of trust having sexual relations with children under eighteen or vulnerable adults. Members of staff must not enter into a close personal or intimate relationship with a student under eighteen years of age or a vulnerable adult for whom they have any responsibility.

11. If a close personal or intimate relationship is pre-existing between a member of staff and a candidate for admission as a student, the member of staff must make the Tutor for Admissions or Tutor for Graduates (as appropriate) aware of it at the outset of the admissions exercise, so that steps can be taken to avoid any conflict of interest arising. The matter will, as far as possible, be handled in confidence to ensure that there is no detriment to the candidate.

### **C. Responsibilities of the Senior Tutor and Tutor for Welfare**

12. If such a relationship develops during the course of employment or study between a member of staff and a student for whom they have a professional responsibility, this must be disclosed by the member of staff to the Senior Tutor or Tutor for Welfare as early as possible so they can take steps to:

- consult with the member of staff and the student to identify any impact their relationship may have within the College;
- facilitate the re-organisation of duties to minimise contact and ensure the member of staff is not tutoring, supervising, assessing, providing pastoral care or welfare support, or professionally responsible for administering activities in which the student is involved; and,
- ensure that appropriate action is taken to minimise the potential effect of the relationship on other staff and/or students.

The Senior Tutor or Tutor for Welfare may ask the Tutor for Undergraduates or the Tutor for Graduates to take these steps (depending on the level of study of the student involved).

13. In the case of a student whose studies are in a very specialised area, such that no alternative tutor is available, the Senior Tutor should consider whether it would be appropriate to engage an external tutor, in order to ensure that the member of staff does not have sole responsibility for overseeing the student's work or for taking decisions that affect the student.

14. The Senior Tutor or Tutor for Welfare will deal with the situation in a manner that protects the dignity and privacy of all parties, and those involved will be expected to comply with any reasonable decision or action. There will be no obligation on the parties involved to keep their relationship confidential.

#### **D. Guidance for students on relationships and the need for disclosure**

15. The College strongly advises students not to enter into any relationship with a member of staff with any responsibility for them, as it may lead the staff member to compromise the integrity of their professional relationship. If such a relationship develops, and the student is not sure that a member of staff has disclosed their relationship, they are encouraged to advise the Senior Tutor independently in confidence.

#### **E. Non-consensual relationships or inappropriate behaviour**

16. If any student finds themselves in receipt of unwanted or inappropriate behaviour or involved in a relationship that they do not consider to be truly consensual, or if they consider that they have been adversely affected by a misuse of power, authority, or conflict of interest, they should refer to the College's Policy and Procedure on Harassment.

17. Members of staff who experience unwanted advances and other unwelcome behaviour should raise the issue with the Senior Tutor, Tutor for Undergraduates, Tutor for Graduates, Tutor for Welfare or the Dean.

#### **F. Support and guidance**

18. Any member of staff or student who has questions about this policy and its application should discuss them with the Senior Tutor, Tutor for Undergraduates, Tutor for Graduates, Tutor for Welfare or the Dean.

#### **G. Relationships in a University context**

19. If a member of staff who has an appointment with the University in addition to their College appointment enters into a close personal or intimate relationship with a student for which they have any responsibility, then that member of staff will be bound by the relevant University policy also.

#### **H. Review and updating of this Policy**

20. This Policy may be found on the College website. Copies in alternative formats are available on request.

21. This Policy will be subject to regular review by the Governing Body, on a three-year cycle. The next review is scheduled to take place in 2020-21.