

Equality & Diversity Framework Element 3: Personal Relationships at Work Code of Conduct

1 Introduction

This Policy is part of the Equality & Diversity Framework which is made up of a number of elements which together encompass all formal policy, procedure and statement documents, including associated forms, relating to Equality & Diversity in Abertay University.

If you would like this document in a different format (e.g. large print, braille) or need any assistance to access or understand the policy/procedure please contact your School/Service designated HR Partner.

This procedure does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time. The University may also vary any parts of this procedure, including any time limits, as appropriate in any case. This procedure applies to all employees regardless of length of service.

2 Personal Relationships at Work

2.1 Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to provide guidance to all University staff regarding personal relationships within the University, in order to avoid any actual or potential conflicts of interest or misuse of authority.

Abertay University aims to provide a working and learning environment that promotes mutual respect, dignity, trust and equality, and as a consequence enable its staff and student community to integrate effectively and appropriately with constructive collaboration and professional camaraderie.

Whilst most social and personal relationships need not present a difficulty, and can be entirely beneficial in that they promote good working relationships, it is recognised that there will be particular circumstances where the employee(s) concerned will need to withdraw from certain decisions or from undertaking certain roles, in order to protect themselves and the University from any possible criticism of unfair bias.

In the context of this Code of Conduct, a personal relationship is defined as:

- a family relationship;
- a business/commercial/financial relationship;
- a romantic/sexual relationship.

The above definitions are examples of personal relationships which may give rise to conflicts of interest in the workplace, however personal relationships are not restricted to these

examples and anyone who considers that they are in a potential conflict of interest should declare it as outlined below.

The following principles provide a Code of Conduct which applies to all employees regardless of their job or level of seniority:

- Employees (academic or support) should not enter into a personal relationship with a student which could compromise (real, perceived or potentially) the objectivity of the professional relationship. Any employee who embarks on a personal relationship with a colleague working in the same department/section must declare the relationship to his/her Line Manager. Any relationship between a manager/supervisor and an employee, whom he/she supervises, must be declared to a senior manager. The information declared will be recorded and treated in confidence.
- Any employee who has a personal relationship with an employee outwith their own immediate work team must declare the relationship to their Line Manager where there could potentially be a conflict of interest situation with regards to, for example, recruitment panels, grading or promotion decisions. An employee who has a personal relationship with a client (including a student), customer, contractor or supplier must declare the relationship to their line manager if the employee's job allows him/her authority over the client, customer, contractor or supplier (for example if the employee has the authority to decide to whom to award contracts).
- If the employee feels uncomfortable in discussing the above matters with their Line Manager then he/she may inform their Head of School/Service, or instead notify the Head of HR and OD. The information declared will be recorded and treated in strict confidence.

The Line Manager, Head of School/Service or Head of HR and OD in consultation with the employee(s) will find ways in which potential conflicts of interest can be avoided.

3.2 Advice and Guidance

Line Managers and employees who are uncertain about whether they should take action regarding a personal relationship, or who wish to seek advice and guidance on this Code of Conduct, either in relation to their role or on a personal basis, should contact either the Head of HR and OD or the HR Partner designated to their School/Service. Such advice and guidance will be provided on a confidential basis.

3.3 Breaches of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct covers all staff within the University and it is intended to provide guidance in areas where issues of personal relationships overlap with working relationships. In providing such guidelines the University seeks to protect the interests and integrity of all staff and students from allegations of actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interests, etc., in order to avoid issues of complaints, grievances and other formal actions between members of the University community.

However, any failure to adhere to this Code of Conduct may result in the implementation of the University Discipline Procedure, and as a consequence formal disciplinary action being taken against a member(s) of staff.

Please refer to the Employee Relations Framework for a copy of the University Discipline Procedure.

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