

Version Control Statement

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Staff and Student Personal Relationships Policy

Purpose

Futureworks acknowledges that professional relationships can enhance collaboration, teamwork, and a positive work environment. It is necessary to maintain appropriate professional boundaries to prevent potential conflicts of interest or abuse of power to protect students and members of staff.

This policy aligns with the requirements stipulated by Futureworks' regulator, the Office for Students, under condition of registration E6. The policy sets out Futureworks' approach to managing personal relationships, ensuring that students and staff are protected, and that Futureworks is compliant with the Office for Students requirement.

Principles

With the exception of Excluded Relationships, Staff who would be considered a Relevant Staff Member for an individual student are prohibited from establishing, or attempting to establish, an Intimate Personal Relationship with that Student.

Where a conflict of interest (whether real or perceived) may occur, Futureworks will put any measures in place as are necessary to ensure such conflicts are removed. The protection of Students from any actual or potential conflict of interest and/or Abuse of Power, and the academic integrity of Futureworks, is imperative.

Scope

This policy applies to all Staff and Students and addresses personal relationships between Staff and Students. It applies to current Intimate Personal Relationships, and Intimate Personal Relationships which have come to an end but where the Student is still studying at Futureworks.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the term **"Staff"** includes the following:

- current Futureworks staff
- new starters in receipt of a formal offer of employment
- leavers during their notice period
- staff paid by the hour
- members of the Board of Directors

- external examiners;
- adhoc workers
- external consultants
- agency workers
- external contractors

The term **“Students”** refers to all students and apprentices enrolled on a Futureworks programme. Existing Students who undertake paid work on an adhoc basis with Futureworks are not considered Staff for the purposes of this policy. **“Relevant Staff Members”** are Staff who have direct academic responsibilities, or other direct professional responsibilities, in relation to the Student with whom they wish to enter into an Intimate Personal Relationship.

The following sets out an illustrative and non-exhaustive list of the types of staff members that are expected to be captured by the definition of Relevant Staff Member:

- teaching Staff, such as lecturers or apprentice educators;
- Staff who assess or grade the Student
- Staff providing student support to the Student
- safeguarding leads
- Staff who are involved in the award and processing of bursaries and grants
- Staff who handle student casework
- personal tutors and pastoral support Staff
- heads of department and members of the Executive Team

An **“Intimate Personal Relationship”** means a relationship that involves one or more of the following elements:

- physical intimacy including isolated or repeated sexual activity
- romantic or emotional intimacy.

“Excluded Relationships” means any ongoing Intimate Personal Relationship that:

- existed before the date the Office for Students Condition E6 came into force and that remains in existence, or
- existed before the date that the Staff member became a Relevant Staff Member in relation to that Student.

It is acknowledged that Staff may have platonic friendships with Students which exist outside of the workplace and unless they also meet the definition of an Intimate Personal Relationship as described above. It is also acknowledged that Staff and Students may be members of sports clubs or societies. If there is any risk of Staff having conflicts of interest regarding their membership of a club or society, this must be disclosed.

Before establishing a new Intimate Personal Relationship, it is expected that Staff take reasonable steps to determine the potential student status of that person. If a member of Staff is in any doubt as to whether the relationship would be covered by this policy, they should contact the Vice Principal’s Office for guidance.

If existing Students are in an Intimate Personal Relationship, and one of the Students becomes employed by Futureworks (i.e. has a contract of employment rather than undertakes ad-hoc work), in a role which would fall under the definition of a Relevant Staff Member, that relationship is an Excluded Relationship for the purposes of this policy. Where a member of Staff is in an Intimate Personal Relationship with another member of Staff, and one of the parties commences a programme of study at Futureworks in addition to their employment Futureworks, that relationship is an Excluded Relationship for the purposes of this policy.

"Abuse of Power" refers to a situation where somebody exploits a position of power in relation to another, applying pressure that may result in actions or inactions that fall within the scope of the personal relationship.

Safeguarding

With the exception of Excluded Relationships, Staff must never establish, or attempt to establish, an Intimate Personal Relationship with a Student who is under eighteen years of age, or who is considered to be a vulnerable adult at risk (as defined in the Safeguarding and Prevent Policy). Failure to adhere will be investigated as a potential breach of the Safeguarding and Prevent Policy and Procedure, and action will be taken accordingly which may include action under the disciplinary / dismissal procedures, and referral to the appropriate external authorities such as the Police.

Declaring a Personal Relationship

Staff members who are not Relevant Staff are required to declare an Intimate Personal Relationship with a Student where any conflict of interest exists or there is potential for a conflict of interest to arise. Where an Intimate Personal Relationship is an Excluded Relationship under this policy and a conflict of interest exists or there is potential for a conflict of interest to arise, the Staff member is required to declare that relationship. Declarations must be made to the Staff member's line manager (or their manager's manager). The requirement to declare a relationship also applies where that relationship has ended and the Student is still a Student of the University. The member of staff is responsible for advising the student that their relationship must be disclosed. A member of the Vice Principal's Office will contact the student confidentially to verify the relationship.

Upon disclosure of an Intimate Personal Relationship, Futureworks will take all reasonable steps to manage and address any actual or potential conflict of interest and/or Abuse of Power. A risk assessment will be carried out by the line manager to ensure that any decisions are made in a transparent manner and are clearly explained to both parties. All reasonable steps include, but are not limited to:

- allocating an alternative individual to undertake the activities where conflict may occur
- putting in place appropriate contractual arrangements (for example, reallocation of work activities, or of line management responsibilities) and enforcing any breaches of those arrangements

In accordance with the Office for Students Regulations, the Student will not be required to change their programme of study or suffer any detrimental impact as a result of the impact of the mitigations.

Record of Intimate Personal Relationships

Futureworks will maintain a confidential record of all disclosed Intimate Personal Relationships between staff members and students. This record will be held and managed by a highly restricted number of staff



within the Vice Principal's Office. Information about Intimate Personal Relationships will be handled sensitively and will only be available to those who have a need to know the information.

Reporting

Staff and Students are encouraged to report any concerns they have about a potential or actual failure to comply with this policy. Reports can be made to the relevant manager, the Vice Principal's Office or via Report & Support. All such reports will be considered to be confidential; however they will be shared – in part or in full – with relevant colleagues where necessary to take action under this policy or related Futureworks rules, regulations, policies and procedures, for example where there is a safeguarding concern for any party as a result of the information which has been provided.

Sanctions

Any violations of this policy will be considered misconduct and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Other relevant policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Student Complaints Process
- Employee Handbook
- Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy
- Procedure for Reporting and Responding to Incidents of Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Domestic Abuse
- Safeguarding Policy & Procedure