



TRINITY
HALL
CAMBRIDGE

Staff and Students Relationships Policy

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1. Statement of Policy

- 1.1. Positive professional relationships between members of staff and students are an essential part of supporting students' educational development and ensuring their welfare whilst at Trinity Hall (the "College"). However, when relationships between staff and students become personal in nature, they may lead to actual or perceived imbalances of power or authority, accusations of bias or exploitation, and questions about the nature of consent. This can undermine trust and confidence in the academic process, impair academic progress and negatively affect the welfare of the student. In the context of this Policy the term "staff" means:
 - i. any person who is employed by or works for the College and/or who holds a College office or post;
 - ii. any person to whom the College makes available any of the privileges or facilities normally afforded to its employees, including academic visitors and temporary, honorary, emeritus and volunteer staff;
 - iii. postgraduate students, whether paid or unpaid, when teaching, undertaking teaching-related duties, supervising or acting in a pastoral capacity.
- 1.2. To provide a positive, safe and supportive learning and working environment, this Policy sets out the College's position on personal relationships between staff and students, where these are of an intimate or close personal nature.
- 1.3. The Policy applies to all staff, but particular provisions are set out for those members of staff who have direct or indirect academic responsibilities, or other direct professional responsibilities, in relation to a student (referred to as Relevant staff members).
- 1.4. Relevant staff members are prohibited from pursuing or entering into an intimate relationship with any student for whom they have any direct or indirect academic responsibilities, or other direct professional responsibilities. Failure to comply with this Policy will be considered as a disciplinary matter.
- 1.5. Relevant staff members are strongly discouraged from entering into a close personal relationship with any such student for whom they have any direct or indirect academic responsibilities, or other direct professional responsibilities. When such relationships do occur, they must be declared so that an assessment can be made of any potential conflict of interest and influence. Failure to comply with this Policy will be considered as a disciplinary matter.
- 1.6. Relationships that are coercive, exploitative or sexualised are always unacceptable and must not occur. All staff have a duty to behave appropriately towards students, to act with integrity in their work and to avoid placing themselves in positions of actual or perceived conflict.
- 1.7. Where an intimate or close personal relationship exists when a member of staff is appointed, or when a student is admitted to the College, and the member of staff would ordinarily be a Relevant staff member to a student, it is the responsibility of the member of staff to inform the Senior Tutor in order that alternative arrangements can be made. Please refer to Section 6 of the Policy.
- 1.8. This Policy concerns consensual relationships between members of staff and students; non-consensual behaviour (or allegations of behaviour where consent has been put into doubt) is covered in the College's [Dignity at Work Policy](#).

- 1.9. This Policy is accompanied by guidance to support the implementation of the Policy. The guidance includes further information to support staff and students, including direction on staff responsibilities for a student, managing a declaration of a close personal relationship and details of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours.
- 1.10. This policy is not contractual and may be amended from time to time, in light of changes in legislation or operational requirements.

2. Purpose of this Policy

- 2.1. This Policy seeks to protect members of staff and students from misconduct and allegations of actual or perceived conflicts of interest by providing a framework of guidance and regulations and by ensuring appropriate safeguards and processes are in place to prevent abuses of power and sexual misconduct.
- 2.2. In particular, the Policy aims to prevent intentional or unintentional conflicts of interest or abuses of power that may occur within seemingly consensual relationships between students and Relevant staff members. Students could potentially experience the negative effects of an inherent power imbalance, even where a Relevant staff member does not seek to abuse their power. For example, a student may feel pressured to commence an intimate relationship with a Relevant staff member, take such a relationship further than they might otherwise wish, or not feel able to end such a relationship, on the basis that to do so may result in detriment.

3. Who is this Policy for?

- 3.1. This Policy applies to all members of staff as defined in Section 5.
- 3.2. This Policy does not apply to employees and workers solely engaged by the University of Cambridge (the “University”) or other colleges, who should refer to the University’s or the college’s policies and procedures on relationships between staff and students. University employees and workers and employees of other colleges are expected, however, to behave in a manner that is consistent with the [University Code of Behaviour](#) if undertaking their work or services specifically in the College environment.
- 3.3. This Policy does not apply to students. However, their attention is drawn to the Policy and the terms and requirements placed on members of staff as defined above.

4. Roles and responsibilities

- 4.1. All members of staff (as defined in Section 5) must act in compliance with this Policy.
- 4.2. The Senior Tutor and the Director of HR are responsible for providing advice and support in accordance with this Policy.
- 4.3. All those involved in providing direct guidance and support to members of staff and students are responsible for ensuring that information is handled confidentially. Further information about confidentiality is set out in Section 14.

- 4.4. The Statutes Ordinances Regulations and Policies Committee (SORP) is responsible for ensuring that this Policy is maintained and that appropriate explanatory guidance is provided to support its use.
- 4.5. The Senior Tutor is responsible for ensuring that members of the academic staff, plus any external or student members of College committees, are made aware of this Policy; ensuring that up-to-date records of declarations and conflicts of interests are maintained; and for determining and recording how to manage each. These duties will be delegated to the Director of HR in respect of operational staff members.
- 4.8. The Senior Tutor, with support from the Director of HR, will periodically review disclosures within the College relating to the Policy and any resulting protective actions and measures taken.

5. Definitions

- 5.1. **Abuse of power** is where a position of power or authority is used in an unacceptable manner. This can take various forms and may include, but is not limited to, grooming, manipulation, coercion and pressurising others to engage in conduct they do not feel comfortable with.
- 5.2. **Adult at risk** is someone aged 18 years or over who may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.
- 5.3. **Close personal relationship** excludes intimate relationships, but means a relationship where the nature, content, involvement and/or frequency of interactions and/or communications between a staff member and a student transgress the boundaries of professional conduct or may be reasonably perceived to do so.
- 5.4. **Grooming** is when a person builds a relationship with a child, young person or an adult who is at risk so they can abuse them and manipulate them into doing things. The abuse is usually sexual or financial, but it can also include other illegal acts.
- 5.5. **Intimate relationship** is a consensual relationship characterised by emotional, physical, and/or sexual intimacy, which may be conducted in person and/or online and/or via electronic or any other form of communication. This includes brief relationships and one-off occurrences, through to marriage or life partnerships, regardless of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation.
- 5.7. **Member of staff** includes:
 - i. any person who is employed by or works for the College and/or who holds a College office or post;
 - ii. any person to whom the College makes available any of the privileges or facilities normally afforded to its employees, including academic visitors and temporary, honorary, emeritus and volunteer staff;
 - iii. postgraduate students, whether paid or unpaid, when teaching, undertaking teaching-related duties, supervising or acting in a pastoral capacity.
- 5.8. **Relevant staff member** means a member of staff who has direct or indirect academic responsibilities, or other direct professional responsibilities, in relation to that student.

Where postgraduate students work for the College in a teaching or supervisory capacity this Policy applies to them in that capacity as members of staff.

- 5.9. **Responsibility for a student** is defined widely and includes any teaching, professional, pastoral or administrative responsibility or authority over a student, whether temporary or permanent, whether formally conferred on or voluntarily assumed by the staff member and whether the responsibility arises in a College or a University context. This includes but is not limited to lecturing, teaching classes or seminars, overseeing projects or fieldwork, supervising, and setting and/or marking of examinations or other assessments of any type. It also includes acting as a mentor or College advisor or having any form of pastoral responsibility, e.g. a member of the College Wellbeing team or Tutor.
- 5.11. For the purposes of this Policy, **Sexual Misconduct** means any unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and includes but is not limited to:
- i. sexual harassment as defined by section 26(2) of the Equality Act 2010;
 - ii. assault as defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003;
 - iii. rape as defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003.
- 5.12. **Student** includes any person currently matriculated or affiliated with Trinity Hall studying for an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification, or on any course arranged by or through the collegiate University, including visiting and exchange students, applicants, and offer-holders. It includes students from other Higher Education providers who are resident in College facilities. It covers all students who are registered for a course even if their status is suspended but does not include former students who have finished their courses, unless they are current applicants or offer holders for another University course.

6. Terms and Disclosure

- 6.1. With effect from the commencement date of this Policy:
- i. Relevant staff members are prohibited from pursuing or entering into an intimate relationship with any student. Failure to comply with this Policy will be considered as a disciplinary matter. (The provisions of 5.8 and 5.9 apply in terms of Relevant staff members and their responsibility for a student.)
 - ii. Relevant staff members are strongly discouraged from having any close personal relationship with any student and must declare if such a relationship has developed, is developing or appears likely to develop between them and any student. A failure to declare will be considered as a disciplinary matter.
- 6.2. With effect from the commencement date of this Policy Relevant staff members must not take on or assume a professional responsibility for a student:
- i. with whom they are in an existing intimate relationship or with whom they previously had such a relationship; or
 - ii. with whom they are in any close personal relationship or with whom they previously had such a relationship

without first declaring this to the Senior Tutor, to enable them to assess the risk of conflicts of interest and put appropriate measures in place as necessary.

- 6.3. If at the commencement date of this Policy, a Relevant staff member:

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- i. is already in an intimate or any close personal relationship with any student; or
- ii. has previously been in an intimate or any close personal relationship with any student:

they should declare that relationship to the Senior Tutor within one month immediately following the commencement date of this Policy, even if the Relevant responsibility for the student has ended.

- 6.4. If a member of staff is in an intimate or any close personal relationship with a student for whom they do not currently have any direct or indirect academic responsibilities, or other direct professional responsibilities, but where it would be reasonable to assume that the member of staff may in the future have responsibility for the student; the relationship should be disclosed to the Senior Tutor to assess the risk of any conflict of interest arising and put appropriate alternative and/or protective measures in place as necessary.
- 6.5. If it is found this Policy is breached unintentionally, for example where a member of staff is unaware that the other party is a student, and had no reasonable basis to suspect it, the member of staff should inform the Senior Tutor as soon as they become aware of the situation. If a member of staff is unsure whether a relationship with a student should be disclosed under this Policy, the member of staff should disclose it.
- 6.6. A declaration of any close personal relationship should be made using the Staff Declaration form in the Guidance.

7. Close Personal Relationships

- 7.1 The College does not seek to discourage positive relationships between staff and students, and it may be appropriate for staff and students for whom they have responsibility to jointly participate in informal, social or leisure activities, providing careful consideration is given to potential conflicts, professional norms and boundaries, and to how any such behaviour might be perceived.
- 7.2 Staff must be mindful of professional boundaries in all relationships with students and must act in a way which safeguards student welfare and ensures standards of academic integrity are upheld. Even where a staff member does not have and is not likely to have responsibility for a student, staff should be very aware of and consider the potential for an actual or perceived imbalance of power or authority, accusations of bias or exploitation, and questions about the nature of consent, before embarking on an intimate or close personal relationship with a student. The risks of such are likely to be heightened where there is a significant age difference between the staff member and the student; the student is an undergraduate; and/or the student is more vulnerable for any reason.
- 7.3 It is impossible to cover every potential situation which might involve, or be perceived to involve, transgression of the boundaries of professional conduct but any relationship which involves (or is perceived to involve) any of the following characteristics will be considered to do so and must be declared:
 - i. any form of dependence, whether emotional, practical, financial or otherwise, and whether the student appears dependent on the member of staff; or

- ii. favouritism towards any student (which might include, for example, circumstances where a student is treated in a way that is exclusive or exceptional).
- 7.4 If there is any uncertainty, the best course is to declare a relationship, or any interaction with a student that is of concern, so that appropriate measures (to protect both the student and the member of staff) can be considered.

8. Relationships with students under the age of 18 or Adults at Risk

- 8.1. Members of staff who have responsibility for any students must never enter into an intimate relationship with a student or any other person under 18 years of age or with a student who is an adult at risk, irrespective of whether the member of staff has any responsibility for the student or other person.
- 8.2. Staff are reminded that intimate relationships involving students (including applicants or offer-holders) under the age of 18 where the staff member is in a position of trust or where the student is an adult at risk could fall within the scope of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.
- 8.3. Anyone suspecting a member of staff of acting inappropriately towards a student or any other person under the age of 18 or an adult at risk should refer to the College's [Safeguarding Policy](#) and contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer, who may contact the local authority designated officer and/or the Police.

9. Relationships and the University and other Colleges

- 9.1. If a College Relevant staff member is also undertaking duties for the University or another college they may be subject to University's or another college's policies, additionally or alternatively to Trinity Hall's policies, depending on whether the professional connection arises in a College or University/another college context, or both.
- 9.2. The Policy applies to Relevant staff members of the College even where the responsibility for the student arose, arises or will arise solely in a University or another college context (e.g. in roles such as Director of Studies or undergraduate supervisor); such as where the member of staff has a separate University or college contract of employment or other form of engagement.
- 9.3. Where a person is both a University staff member or a member of staff at another college and a Relevant staff member of the College, irrespective of any action the University or another college may take, the College reserves the right to take action and/or put measures in place under this Policy and their College contract.
- 9.4. Where matters relating to this Policy cause any formal action to be taken by the College which may result in restrictions of the activities of the Relevant staff member, details of those actions and/or restrictions will be reported to (any or all, as necessary) the University/another college in the interests of safeguarding student welfare and ensuring high standards of integrity and professional behaviour across the collegiate university. For further information on confidentiality please see Section 14 below.

- 9.5. Where a College Relevant staff member declares a close personal relationship, the member of staff should also share that same information with their department or faculty in the University, and the student's college if they are not a Trinity Hall member. In those circumstances, should the University or another college contact the College for further information, the College may consider providing this on a need to know and confidential basis.

10. Admissions and Recruitment

- 10.1. If an intimate or close personal relationship is pre-existing between any member of staff who has a role in the selection of candidates for admission to the College and a candidate seeking admission, that member of staff must inform the Senior Tutor at the outset of the admissions process so steps can be taken to avoid any conflict of interest. The matter will, as far as possible, be handled in a way that respects confidentiality to ensure there is no detriment to the candidate.

11. Advice to Students

- 11.1. Students should be aware of the Policy and the terms and requirements placed on members of staff. Rules of Behaviour for Trinity Hall students are set out in the [Code of Discipline for Students and PDRAs](#).
- 11.2. If an intimate or close personal relationship has developed contrary to this Policy, even if it predates the commencement date of this Policy, and/or the student is not sure that the member of staff has disclosed it, they are encouraged to advise the Senior Tutor or any other senior member of their College whom they feel able to approach. However, there will be no disciplinary consequences for the student if they do not do so.
- 11.3. The member of staff to whom the disclosure was made will be responsible for reporting the matter to the Senior Tutor to ensure that an appropriate risk assessment and resulting action is taken.
- 11.4. Students should particularly note the guidance and support available in any cases of non-consensual behaviour at Section 12, and further sources of support at Section 13. Regardless of whether a relationship has been disclosed, students are encouraged to seek support if they experience any inappropriate behaviour from a member of staff during that relationship.
- 11.5. Student behaviour/s towards members of staff that could be interpreted as flirtatious or making advances towards a personal, particularly intimate relationship should, except for trivial cases, be reported by the member of staff to the Senior Tutor and/or the Director of HR. In this event, following consideration and if appropriate, discussion with the Dean of Discipline and/or the [Office of Student Conduct Complaints and Appeals](#) (OSCCA), a record will be kept and measures may be put in place to separate and protect the parties or minimise the possibility of conflicts of interest, concerns or complaints over academic integrity or professional behaviour.
- 11.6. Inappropriate behaviour by a student towards a member of staff or another student that amounts to sexual misconduct, physical misconduct or abusive behaviour, or otherwise breaches the College's Rules of Behaviour as set out in the [Code of](#)

[Discipline for Students and PDRAs](#), may lead to action being taken under the [Code of Discipline for Students and PDRAs](#).

- 11.7. Students engaged in an arrangement in an external organisation must adhere to policies on personal relationships between members of staff and students within that organisation. However, if no policy exists, the clauses in this section will apply.

12. Non-Consensual Behaviour

- 12.1. If a student experiences inappropriate behaviour in breach of this Policy (see the Policy Guidance), is involved in a relationship that they do not consider to be consensual, or if they consider that they have been adversely affected by a misuse of power, authority, or conflict of interest, they should make a report to the Senior Tutor, their Tutor, or raise a complaint through the [Student Complaints Procedure](#).
- 12.2. Support and advice can be accessed from the [College Wellbeing Team](#), the student's Tutor, the [Harassment and Violence Support Service \(HVSS\)](#) or the [University Counselling Service](#). Students can also access external advice through the [Student Advice Service](#) or [Student Support](#) and are encouraged to access the support information on the [Breaking the Silence website](#).
- 12.3. Staff who experience inappropriate behaviour from and/or have a complaint against a student should contact the Director of HR who will liaise with the Senior Tutor to agree appropriate steps.
- 12.4. Support and advice for members of staff can also be sought from the Director of HR. Staff are also encouraged to access the support information on the University's [Breaking the Silence](#) website.
- 12.5. In such situations, measures may be put in place to separate and protect the affected parties or minimise the possibility of inappropriate behaviour or complaints, and, in serious cases, including where there has been a course of conduct over time, action may be taken under the Code of Discipline for Students and PDRAs.

13. Further Support available

- 13.1. The College is committed to ensuring the welfare of and providing support for its staff and students and the following support resources are available.
- 13.2. Help for any member of staff or student who has been subjected to sexual misconduct, including sexual assault or rape, is available through the College's [Wellbeing Team](#) or the Director of HR. The University's [Breaking the Silence](#) website also gives details of services provided by both the University and external specialist organisations.
- 13.3. Information about sources of support for staff is available on the College Intranet in the [Staff Benefits Section](#) (Wellbeing tab).
- 13.4. Members of staff can also access support from their line manager, the Director of HR and the Wellbeing Team.
- 13.5. Talking confidentially to the College's Discrimination and Harassment Contact may also be helpful, particularly if the inappropriate behaviour is perceived to be harassment or discrimination due to a protected characteristic.

- 13.6. Support for students is available from their Tutor and the College [Wellbeing Team](#). Support available through the University is detailed on the [Student Support](#) webpages and includes the [Harassment and Violence Support Service \(HVSS\)](#), [Office of Student Conduct Complaints and Appeals \(OSCCA\)](#) and [University Counselling Service \(UCS\)](#).

14. Confidentiality

- 14.1. Concerns raised under this Policy should be treated in confidence as far as that is reasonably possible and consistent with safeguarding the welfare of students.
- 14.2. Information about an intimate or close personal relationship between a member of staff and a student may be placed on the member of staff's personal file. Communications regarding measures put in place as a result of this Policy should, as far as possible, be neutral, limited to essential facts, and without details published of the situation that gave rise to them. Records will be treated as confidential and be kept no longer than necessary in accordance with Relevant data protection principles.
- 14.3. There may be circumstances (as outlined in section 9.4) where it will be necessary for the Senior Tutor to notify a member of staff's University department or faculty, or another college. Consideration will be given to whether there is a potential risk to the student and/or other students arising from the nature of the allegations against the member of staff, the welfare of the student and the need to ensure that high standards of academic integrity and professional behaviour are maintained, while taking account of the data protection/privacy rights of the member of staff.
- 14.4. The Senior Tutor should consider whether it is appropriate to notify the student's University department or faculty where an intimate or close personal relationship is made known. In most cases this should only be done with the student's consent, unless there is a serious and compelling welfare concern or risk affecting the student and/or other students.

15. Malicious or vexatious complaints

- 15.1. A malicious complaint is one that is made with the intention to intimidate, to lower the reputation of, or otherwise injure or harm a person, through knowingly providing false or misleading information or withholding information about an incident or issue.
- 15.2. A vexatious complaint is either one that is made with the sole or main intention to harass, annoy or subdue somebody, or one that is unreasonable, without foundation, frivolous, repetitive, deliberately burdensome or unwarranted.
- 15.3. If it is found that a person has made a complaint that is malicious or vexatious, the College may instigate a disciplinary process against them. Disciplinary action will not be taken, however, if the matter is mistaken or otherwise ill-founded but not malicious or vexatious.

16. Failure to comply with this Policy

- 16.1. After the adoption of the Policy, Relevant staff members should not pursue or commence an intimate relationship with a student. Should this occur, this will be a

breach of the policy and the College will consider this through the relevant staff disciplinary action, grievances and appeals procedures.

- 16.2. Failure on the part of a Relevant staff member to declare an intimate or close personal relationship with a student will be a breach of the policy and the College will consider this through the staff disciplinary action, grievances and appeals procedures as set out in the [Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations](#) (Fellows) or in the [Staff Handbook](#) (operational staff and any academic staff who are not a Fellow of Trinity Hall).

Version	Date	Major Change	Approved	Owner
1	June 2024	Draft Staff and Students Relationships Policy	23 September 2024	SORP Committee

ANNEX 1

Staff and Students Relationship Policy

STAFF DECLARATION FORM

To be completed in conjunction with the Staff and Students Relationships Policy

SECTION A: TO BE COMPLETED BY MEMBER OF STAFF	
Your Details	
Name:	
Position:	
Line Manager <i>(if applicable)</i> :	
Student's Details	
Name:	
Course:	
Nature of Relationship	
<i>Close Personal</i>	
<i>Intimate</i> <i>(only in relation to section 6.3 of the Policy)</i>	
When did the relationship start (approx. month/year)	
<p>I understand the following:</p> <p>It may be necessary for permanent or temporary adjustments to be made to any supervisory arrangements or other conditions, to remove any real or perceived conflict of interest arising from the relationship. This information will be stored securely and managed in compliance with data protection legislation.</p> <p>I have read and understood the Trinity Hall Staff and Student Relationships Policy. I have read and understood the Trinity Hall Dignity at Work Policy. I have read and understood the Trinity Hall Conflicts of Interest Policy.</p> <p>Signed (electronic signature):</p> <p>Print Name:</p> <p>Date:</p>	

Completed form to be sent to the Senior Tutor who may discuss the contents with the Director of HR, with you, and other parties as necessary.