



UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN

University Staff / Students Relationships Policy



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DEPARTMENT OF PEOPLE,
PERFORMANCE AND CULTURE

University Staff / Students Relationships Policy

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Table of Contents

1.	<i>Policy Statement</i>	2
2.	<i>Scope</i>	3
3.	<i>Definitions</i>	4
4.	<i>Roles and Responsibilities</i>	5
4.1	Employee Responsibilities.....	5
4.2	Line Manager Responsibilities	5
4.3	Responsibilities of the Department of People, Performance and Culture (PPC)	6
4.4	Responsibilities of Trade Union Representatives.....	6
5.	<i>Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students</i>	6
5.9	Declaration of Prohibited Intimate and Close Personal Relationships: Between Staff and Students	7
6.	<i>Personal Relationships Between Staff Members</i>	8
6.5	Declaration of Prohibited Intimate and Close Personal Relationships: Between Staff Members	9
7.	<i>Declaration of a Pre-Existing Relationship</i>	10
8.	<i>Prohibited Behaviour</i>	10
9.	<i>Obligations of Line Managers Upon Receiving a Relationship Declaration</i>	11
10.	<i>Reporting Personal Relationship Concerns</i>	12
11.	<i>Consequences of Non-Compliance</i>	13
12.	<i>Initiatives to Raise Awareness and Sources of Support</i>	13
13.	<i>Monitoring and Review</i>	14
14.	<i>Data Protection and Confidentiality</i>	14
15.	<i>Related Policies, Procedures and Guidance</i>	14
	<i>Appendix 1: Definitions</i>	15
	<i>Appendix 2: Guidelines for Maintaining Professional Boundaries</i>	18

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 All members of the University community are expected to conduct themselves with professionalism, integrity, and mutual respect in all interactions and relationships. This standard applies in all settings, including staff and student social events associated with the University.
- 1.2 The University recognises that personal relationships between members of the University community exist in many forms. Most social and personal relationships are beneficial, fostering valued working practices and positive academic interactions. In professional and academic settings, the quality of relationships between staff members, as well as between staff and students, plays a critical role in shaping the University's culture and effectiveness. This policy provides clear guidance to ensure that personal relationships enhance, rather than hinder, the professional standards and educational integrity the University strives to maintain.
- 1.3 The University recognises that personal relationships are a natural and important part of life, including within the workplace and academic environment. This policy is designed to support staff and students in navigating these relationships. It aims to promote mutual respect, trust, and professionalism by providing a clear framework for managing personal relationships appropriately.
- 1.4 Given the inherent differences in authority and responsibility, personal relationships between staff and students can present significant challenges. This power imbalance creates a risk of sexual misconduct in interactions between staff and students.
- 1.5 This policy reflects the University's commitment to inclusivity, equality, and the safeguarding of all individuals within its community. It aligns with the University's legal and ethical responsibilities, including compliance with the Office for Students' Condition E6 on Harassment and Sexual Misconduct, which sets out requirements for managing relationships between staff and students. Additionally, the policy supports the University's obligations under the Worker Protection Act (2023) to safeguard employees from sexual harassment in the workplace.
- 1.6 Staff are **prohibited** from engaging in **intimate personal relationships*** with:

- Any colleague or student who is under the age of 18 or is an adult at risk (vulnerable adult).

Staff are **prohibited** from engaging in **intimate or close personal relationships*** with:

- Students for whom they have **direct responsibility***; whether it be in their academic studies and/or pastoral care.

Relationships between staff are not prohibited, however staff are required to declare any **intimate or close personal relationship*** where a staff member has **direct responsibility*** for the other staff member, or where they are given such direct responsibility.

** Close personal relationships are defined as a relative or close friend, or a relationship where there is business/commercial/financial dependence. Refer to [section 3](#) for definitions of the terms used.*

Failure to declare the above specified intimate or close personal relationships would constitute a breach of this policy. Such a breach will be subject to investigation under the [Disciplinary Policy](#) and may result in dismissal.

Beyond this, the University **strongly discourages** staff from engaging in intimate personal relationships with **any** student, even where there is no direct responsibility, to avoid potential conflicts of interest and abuses of power.

1.7 The purpose of the policy is to:

- Support positive, professional interactions among staff, and between staff and students across all campuses.
- Protect students and staff from actual or perceived conflicts of interest.
- Protect students and staff from inappropriate behaviour which may include violence, abuse of power and trust, controlling/coercive and predatory behaviour, and sexual exploitation.
- Ensure staff know what relationships are prohibited.
- Clarify the expectations for staff conduct, including:
 - Avoiding any abuse of their position of power, trust or authority.
 - Maintaining professional boundaries, especially with those under their responsibility and trust.
 - Acting fairly, without bias, favouritism, harassment or victimisation.
- Promote a safe and respectful environment where concerns about inappropriate behaviour can be raised and addressed with confidence.
- Uphold the University's reputation as a safe, equitable, and welcoming place to work and study.

1.8 This Policy should be read in conjunction with the University's [One Community Values](#) and [The Student Charter](#), which clearly set out the University's expectations around how staff and students should behave with each other and with the wider community.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all members of the University community, including both staff members and students. It covers personal relationships between staff and students, as well as between members of staff. Specifically, it addresses intimate and close personal relationships, as defined in [section 3](#). For the purposes of this policy:

2.1.1 **"Member of staff"** refers to any individual either employed or engaged by the University to carry out work for the University. This includes individuals who are indirectly employed by the University (e.g. agency workers, campus jobs, casual workers, visiting academics), and individuals employed by partner organisations whilst working with the University (e.g. contractors).

2.1.2 **"Student"** refers to any individual studying on a course with the University, including:

- Students who have accepted an offer and arrived on campus to start their programme, even if the formal registration process is not yet complete.
- All students studying at, residing on, undertaking placements at, or visiting University campuses.

- Students at all levels of study (e.g. undergraduate, postgraduate, or apprenticeship programmes), whether they are studying full-time or part time.
- Student officials holding elected positions.
- Students' Union (SU) Sabbatical Officers during their period of office.
- Students on short courses.
- Students studying for a University award who are temporarily off campus (e.g. on work placements, study abroad, or summer schools).
- Students who are registered as visiting postgraduate researchers.
- Students who have interrupted their studies, are suspended or excluded, or have a thesis pending.

2.2 Students employed at the University alongside their studies are considered staff when performing their job duties. If they have direct responsibility (as defined in [section 3](#)) for one or more students (such as postgraduate teaching associates), they will be regarded as staff in relation to those students. Similarly, staff members who study at the University alongside their employment are considered students in their studies but remain staff in all other contexts.

2.3 The principles outlined in section 5 and its sub-sections, regarding personal relationships between staff and students, should also be followed by third parties such as volunteers (including student volunteers), associates, secondees and placement providers. This policy also applies to contractors and sub-contractors. The individual or department engaging with external individuals or agencies is responsible for ensuring they are aware of this policy.

3. Definitions

3.1 Whilst it is not possible to define all circumstances where personal relationships will arise, in the context of this policy the following definitions apply:

- 3.1.1 **"Close personal relationship"** refers to a relative or close friend, or a relationship where there is business/commercial/financial dependence e.g. landlord. These examples are close personal relationships which may give rise to conflicts of interest in the student experience and workplace, however close 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 in the policy below.
- 3.1.2 **"Intimate personal relationship"** refers to a consensual emotional or romantic relationship (whether sexual or not), which goes beyond the normally accepted bounds of a professional relationship between staff, or between staff members and students. These relationships could be ongoing, short-term or limited to a single occurrence. They can be conducted in person or remotely e.g. via social media, email or text messaging.
- 3.1.3 **"Direct responsibility"** refers to where a staff member is directly responsible for supervision and/or management of another staff member, or a student; is involved in a student's academic studies; or has pastoral responsibility for a student.

Staff have direct responsibility for a student and/or staff member when engaging in the following activities:

- Recruitment and selection
- Teaching (formal and informal)

- Supervision (formal and informal)
- Assessment
- Welfare or pastoral support beyond signposting
- Programme leadership
- Personal academic tutoring
- Coaching and mentoring
- Addressing student complaints or conduct issues
- Considering extenuating circumstances
- Issuing references
- Awarding bursaries, grants and funding

This list highlights key areas of responsibility but is not exhaustive. Staff should remain mindful of potential conflicts of interest in any relevant situation.

3.2 A comprehensive set of definitions relevant to this policy can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Employee Responsibilities

Employees are responsible for:

- Acting with professionalism and integrity.
- Maintaining and respecting professional boundaries in all interactions. Guidelines on professional boundaries can be found in [Appendix 2](#).
- Identifying and avoiding situations that may create real or perceived conflicts of interest.
- Declaring personal relationships as outlined in this policy.
- Not engaging in intimate or close personal relationships with students for whom they hold direct responsibility.
- Consistently exercising judgment to determine whether their role entails direct responsibility for a student or staff member.
- Reporting any concerns about abuse of power or conflicts of interest arising from personal relationships at work in accordance with [section 10](#).
- Fostering a professional working environment where the development of intimate or close personal relationships with students is deemed unacceptable.
- Proactively seeking advice from their line manager or the Department of People, Performance and Culture (PPC) if they are unsure about any aspect of the policy or how it applies to specific situations.
- Collaborating in maintaining an environment where accountability is valued, and professional standards are upheld.
- Respecting the confidentiality of declarations made by others and refraining from speculation or inappropriate discussion about personal relationships.

4.2 Line Manager Responsibilities

Line managers are responsible for:

- Promoting this policy and the associated relevant mandatory training (as outlined in [section 12](#)).
- Making every effort to foster a workplace culture where interactions among staff, and between staff and students, are professional, respectful, and free from inappropriate behaviour.
- Helping to create an environment where staff feel comfortable disclosing personal relationships without fear of judgment or reprisal.

- Reminding staff of the importance of identifying and declaring conflicts of interest.
- Responding appropriately and confidentially to personal relationship declarations and proactively mitigating risks in line with the associated procedure.
- Being alert to actual or perceived conflicts of interest arising from personal relationships within the school/department.
- Escalating any undeclared relationships to PPC where they become aware of them, to ensure the University's responsibilities are upheld.
- Addressing any observed, reported, or suspected breaches of the policy promptly and appropriately with the staff member, in consultation with PPC and Student Wellbeing where necessary, and ensuring that concerns about unprofessional behaviour or policy violations are taken seriously and addressed in a timely manner.

4.3 Responsibilities of the Department of People, Performance and Culture (PPC)

PPC are responsible for providing advice, guidance and support in relation to this policy and its associated procedures to managers and staff. PPC also holds responsibility for monitoring and reviewing personal relationships in accordance with [section 13](#).

4.4 Responsibilities of Trade Union Representatives

Trade Union Representatives are responsible for providing advice, guidance and support in relation to this policy and associated procedures to their members. They are also responsible for contributing to the development of this policy through consultation and providing feedback on the application of the policy.

5. Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students

- 5.1 To engage in an intimate personal relationship with a student involves serious difficulties rooted in the inherent power imbalance, and hence choice, of the parties concerned, as well as real problems in maintaining the boundaries of professional and personal life. Such relationships can also disrupt the teaching and learning environment for other students and for staff.
- 5.2 Staff should always conduct themselves in ways that are consistent with their role and duties, adhering to all University policies, including those relating to equal opportunity, harassment and any codes of conduct. Recruitment, selection, treatment, development and promotion of staff should be based solely on evidence and not be in any way affected by personal relationships at work.
- 5.3 Staff should recognise that they have a professional and ethical responsibility to protect the interests of students, to respect the trust involved in staff/student relationships, and to accept the constraints and obligations inherent in that responsibility.
- 5.4 Staff should be mindful of how their actions may be objectively perceived by others, no matter how well intentioned, and give due consideration to what would be considered appropriate conduct in respect of the activities they are undertaking.
- 5.5 As outlined in section 1.6, the University prohibits intimate or close personal relationships between staff and students where the staff member has direct responsibility for the student.
- 5.6 For the purpose of transparency, although the University prohibits close personal relationships where there is direct responsibility, it is recognised that such relationships may occur, for example a student or prospective student is registered on a course that a family member teaches. It is the element of direct responsibility in such relationships which is prohibited. Employees in this situation

are required to declare the relationship, as outlined in section 5.9, to ensure that appropriate steps can be taken to mitigate any perceived or actual conflicts of interest that may arise.

- 5.7 Where an intimate or close personal relationship exists between students and one of the parties subsequently becomes employed or engaged by the University, the relationship will need to be declared as per the process detailed in section 7 of this policy.
- 5.8 Staff are encouraged to update their declaration if a previously declared relationship has ended. This allows the University to consider whether any changes to existing arrangements are necessary to ensure the continued safeguarding of all parties involved. Updates can be made by submitting a revised online declaration form in [MyView](#).

5.9 Declaration of Prohibited Intimate and Close Personal Relationships: Between Staff and Students

- 5.9.1 As outlined in section 1.6, staff must not engage in intimate personal relationships with students over whom they have direct responsibility, nor should they have direct responsibility for students with whom they have a close personal relationship.
- 5.9.2 Staff must declare any such relationships with students as they may cause conflicts of interest.
- 5.9.3 It is the responsibility of the staff member to declare any intimate or close personal relationships with a student.
- 5.9.4 Staff are required to complete the declaration form via [MyView](#) as soon as possible but no later than one month from the start of the relationship. If the relationship involves a single interaction that could be perceived as a conflict of interest, it should be declared immediately. Failure to declare within the prescribed timescales may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.
- 5.9.5 To ensure confidentiality, individuals making a declaration will not be required to provide details about the nature of their relationship. However, they will be required to identify the student involved and outline any actual or potential conflicts of interest to enable the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures.
- 5.9.6 Line managers or Heads of School will handle declarations confidentially and mitigate conflicts of interest in consultation with the staff member.
- 5.9.7 Staff declaring personal relationships should be treated fairly and equally.
- 5.9.8 Staff who are uncertain about whether they have an intimate or close personal relationship with a student they have direct responsibility for, should discuss the matter with their line manager or Head of School.
- 5.9.9 Students are encouraged to declare any intimate or close personal relationships with a staff member who has direct responsibility for them to the [Student Wellbeing](#) team.
- 5.9.10 When a declaration of a prohibited relationship is made, measures **must** be put in place to prevent actual or potential conflicts of interest. Such measures may include:

- The member of staff will have no involvement in assessing the student, including Postgraduate Research (PGR) progression.
- The member of staff will not take any direct individual responsibility for academic, administrative and/or pastoral or other support responsibilities for the student. This will include direct seminar tutoring. It is recognised that, in some cases, it may not be feasible to assign a different lecturer due to the staff member's subject-specific expertise. In such instances, care must be taken to ensure the student is not disadvantaged, and additional safeguards may be considered.
- Where the relationship is between a supervisor and their PGR student, the supervisor should be removed from the supervisory team wherever possible. If removal is not feasible, supervisory responsibilities should be re-organised to ensure the staff member is not the primary supervisor (Director of Studies). It is crucial to ensure that the student has access to the necessary disciplinary knowledge and is not disadvantaged. Therefore, each case should be addressed individually to determine the best course of action. Safeguards must be established and co-created with the PGR student, their primary supervisor (Director of Studies) and the Head of School. If the staff member is the Head of School, the Head of College should be involved to ensure independence and impartiality.
- The staff member and student will be expected to comply with any reasonable decision or action.

5.9.11 For pre-existing relationships with students, refer to [section 7](#).

6. Personal Relationships Between Staff Members

- 6.1 The University values a respectful and inclusive culture where positive professional and personal relationships contribute to a supportive and collaborative working environment. It is recognised that, over time, friendships, family connections, and romantic relationships may exist or develop between colleagues. In many cases an intimate or close personal relationships between employees will not interfere with work. However, sometimes a personal relationship can become problematic because it adversely impacts on other employees or negatively affects work efficiency. Such relationships can be problematic where they are between a line manager and subordinate, which gives rise to an inherent power imbalance and a potential conflict of interest.
- 6.2 These intimate or close personal relationships between staff are not prohibited. However, to maintain a fair, respectful and transparent workplace, staff must remain mindful of situations where a personal relationship may give rise to real or perceived conflicts of interest, power imbalance, or the appearance of favouritism. This consideration applies to both existing relationships and those that may develop or end during the course of employment.
- 6.3 Staff are therefore required declare any intimate or close personal relationship where a staff member has direct responsibility for another staff member. Staff are required to complete a declaration form via [MyView](#). Further details on the declaration process can be found in section 6.5.
- 6.4 The University's principles regarding personal relationships between staff are as follows:

- Staff **must not** line manage or be line managed by anyone with whom they have an intimate or close personal relationship, as defined in the policy.
- Staff **must not** participate in decision-making processes related to the staff member with whom they have the relationship. These include decisions related to pay, reward or promotion/appointments of that staff member. The list is not exhaustive, and staff must exercise care in the discharge of any decision making where a conflict of interest may arise.
- Staff **must not** engage in practices that could be seen as favouring someone with whom they have an intimate or close personal relationship, such as recruitment, promotion, appraisal schemes or committee decisions where that individual or their work is discussed.

In these situations, mitigation options **must** be considered. If the actual or perceived conflict of interest e.g. reporting lines, cannot be resolved by any other means and is interfering with the effectiveness of either individual, then it may be necessary to explore the possibility of moving one of the individuals to another area of work, or change the reporting line, where it is reasonable to do so. Staff members will be expected to comply with any reasonable decision, or action taken by their manager to mitigate any risks identified.

6.5 Declaration of Prohibited Intimate and Close Personal Relationships: Between Staff Members

- 6.5.1 The responsibility of declaring an intimate or close personal relationship with another staff member belongs to the more senior staff member, in terms of grade. However, this does not prevent the less senior staff member from also making a declaration.
- 6.5.2 Staff must declare the relationship via [MyView](#) at the earliest opportunity but no later than one month from the start of the relationship. If the relationship involves a single interaction that could be perceived as a conflict of interest, it should be declared immediately. Failure to declare within the prescribed timescales may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.
- 6.5.3 Where a staff member's intimate or close personal relationship with another staff member creates a conflict of interest in a separate process unrelated to daily duties (such as during a recruitment process or academic promotions), and this occurs as a one-time event, the declaration form requirement does not apply. However, staff members **must** proactively declare any real or potential conflicts to those overseeing the process to ensure transparency and proper management.
- 6.5.4 If a staff member changes roles and this results in them having direct responsibility for a staff member they have an intimate or close personal relationship with, they must complete a declaration via [MyView](#).
- 6.5.5 Staff are encouraged to update their declaration if a previously declared relationship has ended. This allows the University to consider whether any changes to existing arrangements are necessary to ensure the continued safeguarding of all parties involved. In such circumstances all parties are expected to maintain professionalism and avoid personal disputes that could adversely impact the working environment for themselves, other staff and students. Updates can be made by submitting a revised online declaration form in [MyView](#).
- 6.5.6 To ensure confidentiality, individuals making a declaration will not be required to provide details about the nature of their relationship. However, they will be required to identify the staff member

involved and outline any actual or potential conflicts of interest to enable the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures.

- 6.5.7 Staff should seek advice from their line manager, Head of School/Department or PPC if they are unsure about potential conflicts.

7. Declaration of a Pre-Existing Relationship

- 7.1 This section applies to situations where an intimate or close personal relationship already exists, and one party subsequently becomes a student or staff member for whom the other has direct responsibility.
- 7.2 Staff are required to declare any pre-existing intimate or close personal relationships with a student or staff member, if they subsequently acquire direct responsibility for them.
- 7.3 Where an intimate or close personal relationship exists prior to one party becoming a student at the University, and the staff member has or subsequently acquires direct responsibility for that student, the staff member is required to declare the relationship.
- 7.4 Where an intimate or close personal relationship exists prior to one party becoming a staff member at the University, and one staff member has or subsequently acquires direct responsibility for the other, the more senior staff member (in terms of grade) is required to declare the relationship.
- 7.5 Staff are required to complete the declaration form via [MyView](#) as soon as possible, but no later than one month from acquiring direct responsibility.
- 7.6 Failure to declare within the prescribed timescales may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

8. Prohibited Behaviour

- 8.1 Staff and students should always behave in a manner consistent with the expectations outlined in this policy and relevant University policies, including those on equality and diversity, ethics, safeguarding, harassment, and associated University charters. All staff are expected to act professionally and appropriately in all interactions with colleagues and students, in alignment with the University's [One Community Values](#). This includes treating others with respect and refraining from behaviours that could be perceived as bullying, harassment, favouritism, or exploitation.
- 8.2 The University will not tolerate prohibited behaviour, including bullying and harassment, in the work or learning environment. Any such behaviour by staff will be subject to the [Disciplinary Policy](#) or the [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#), which can lead to consequences up to and including dismissal. Prohibited behaviour by students will be addressed under the Student Conduct and Disciplinary Regulations (Part P of the University [General Regulations](#)), which can lead to consequences up to and including expulsion.
- 8.3 All members of the University community should understand that initiating a personal relationship whether between staff, or between staff and students carries with it inherent risks of unethical conduct and an imbalance of power, where the nature of their professional relationship should be

based on trust, a duty of care and professional behaviour. To safeguard that trust, all members of the University community should avoid making or responding to advances. All members of the University community are reminded that unwanted advances may be interpreted by others as harassment.

- 8.4 It is wholly unacceptable for staff or students to form, or attempt to form, a relationship based on an implicit or explicit promise of preferential treatment or a threat of detrimental treatment.
- 8.5 Intimate relationships between members of the University community can also give rise to situations where there is coercive or predatory behaviour. If intimate relationships arise between staff members, and any person has concerns about any predatory or coercive element to such a relationship, they are encouraged to report or disclose this to their Head of School/Department, or other relevant senior manager, who is obliged to ensure that such reports are recorded and dealt with in an appropriate matter in accordance with the University's [Disciplinary Policy](#).
- 8.6 All forms of non-consensual relationships are prohibited and may be subject to criminal investigation. The University reserves the right to report to the police any incident which it believes may constitute a criminal offence.
- 8.7 Where a member of staff is registered with a Professional Body, compliance with the respective code of practice governing relationships between practitioners (or professionals) and service users should be adhered to at all times. For the purposes of clarity, "services users" are identified as students.
- 8.8 It is essential that all staff understand their legal responsibilities under UK law. Individuals in positions of trust are prohibited from engaging in sexual activity with a child in their care who is under 18, even if the child is over the age of consent (16 or older). This includes relationships involving students under the age of 18 or vulnerable adults, which fall within the scope of the Sexual Offences Act (2003). Familiarity with the University's [Safeguarding Policy](#) is crucial to ensure these responsibilities are understood and upheld.

9. Obligations of Line Managers Upon Receiving a Relationship Declaration

- 9.1 Upon receiving a declaration of a new or pre-existing intimate or close personal relationship, whether between a staff member and student, or between staff, the relevant line manager must:
- Review the declaration and speak with the staff member(s) to determine whether there are any perceived or actual conflicts of interest, which may arise due to the relationship.
 - Identify and implement appropriate mitigation measures to protect the integrity and wellbeing of all parties. These may include, for example, changes to reporting lines or reassignment of assessment responsibilities.
 - Ensure the other party named in the declaration is made aware of any required measures to address any conflicts of interest identified.
 - Keep any mitigation measures under regular review to ensure they remain fit for purpose.
 - Consider the welfare/concerns of any other individuals or groups who may be affected by the relationship.
 - Consider whether it is necessary to inform others of the declaration in order to mitigate any potential conflicts of interest and ensure that both parties are aware of this need e.g. to explain why there is a change in reporting line/supervisor.

- 9.2 Given the highly sensitive nature of personal relationships, managers may wish to seek advice from their line manager, Student Wellbeing or PPC before dealing with any issues which may arise.
- 9.3 Any information regarding personal relationships is confidential and likely to be protected under data protection laws. Line managers are reminded about their data protection obligations under the law including ensuring the security of such information.
- 9.4 Line managers are also reminded that there is a duty to protect the health and safety of staff and students, and this includes their mental health. If a line manager has concerns regarding the health impact of a personal relationship on a staff member or student, they should bring this to the attention of a relevant member of PPC or the Student Wellbeing team without delay.

10. Reporting Personal Relationship Concerns

- 10.1 Unprofessional or inappropriate behaviour towards a student or staff member is not acceptable. This may breach the [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#), the [Disciplinary Policy](#) and other University policies and procedures.
- 10.2 If a staff member feels uncomfortable with their interactions with another staff member, or witnesses any inappropriate behaviour at any time, they are encouraged to report their concerns immediately to their Head of School/Department, line manager and/or PPC.
- 10.3 Alternatively, should employees wish to anonymously report any concerns they may do so through the University of Lincoln's [Concern Line](#). The Concern Line is 24/7 and can be accessed by phoning 0333 2128056. Through Concern Line employees can discuss the incident and receive tailored support from trained counsellors. Further details about Concern Line can be found on the University PPC portal page.
- 10.4 Any student who has witnessed or experienced any inappropriate, coercive or predatory behaviour are encouraged to report it to a member of staff (such as their Programme Leader, Senior Tutor, Head of School/Department or [Student Wellbeing](#)) or through the Student Complaints Regulations (Part O of the University [General Regulations](#)) through Legal and Compliance. Concerns about sexual misconduct can be reported through the [sexual misconduct online reporting tool](#) which is supported by the University's Student Support and Wellbeing Centre.
- 10.5 Students will not be disadvantaged academically or professionally, or subject to disciplinary action for declaring or being part of a non-permitted relationship. The responsibility for upholding the policy rests with staff. Where concerns are raised, the University will respond sensitively and fairly, offering appropriate support to all parties involved.
- 10.6 In some cases, incidents may have happened months or years previously. Both staff and students can choose to report an incident of prohibited behaviour regardless of the amount of time that has passed, and both will be offered appropriate advice and support. It may not be possible, however, for the University to investigate allegations against, for example, former students or former members of staff.
- 10.7 The University will endeavour, where appropriate to ensure updates of investigations are shared with the witness or reporter of the concerns.

11. Consequences of Non-Compliance

- 11.1 If a staff member with direct responsibility for a student, as defined in [section 3](#), enters into an intimate or close personal relationship with that student, and fails to declare it within the timeframe specified in section 5.9.4, it constitutes a breach of this policy. Such a breach will be subject to investigation under the [Disciplinary Policy](#) and may result in dismissal.
- 11.2 Failure to declare an intimate or close personal relationship between staff members where there is a direct responsibility, as defined in section 3, within the timeframe specified in section 6.5.2, constitutes a breach of this policy. Such a breach will be subject to investigation under the [Disciplinary Policy](#) and may result in dismissal.
- 11.3 However, staff should not avoid reporting bullying or harassment for fear of disciplinary action being taken for non-declaration of a close personal relationship or intimate personal relationship.

12. Initiatives to Raise Awareness and Sources of Support

- 12.1 The University is committed to raising awareness amongst its students and to empower them to recognise inappropriate behaviour and intervene/challenge where it is safe and necessary to do so. As part of the commitment to raising awareness and preventing misconduct, sexual harassment and sexual violence, the University has a module called Respect, Awareness, Inclusion, Safety and Empowerment (RAISE). The training is aimed at students but is also accessible to staff members and can be accessed via the following link <https://lncn.ac/RAISE>.
- 12.2 The University's approach to raising awareness and preventing prohibited behaviour in relationships within the University community feature in the Sexual Harassment and Misconduct, and Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk mandatory training for members of staff. In addition, key staff such as Personal Academic Tutors, Programme Leaders and Student Support Officers and Student Wellbeing Advisors are provided with training on the best way to support students who have been affected by inappropriate behaviour.
- 12.3 The University recognises that it must work closely with the Students' Union in order to ensure all students are aware of the standards of acceptable behaviour within the University community. Joint working on this issue will be used to inform a review of the effectiveness of procedures and practices as set out in this document.
- 12.4 Confidential support for students is available through the [Student Support and Advice Centre](#), the [Student Wellbeing Centre](#), and the [Students' Union Advice Centre](#). These services are accessible to students regardless of whether they choose to file a formal complaint or simply make a disclosure without pursuing formal procedures.
- 12.5 Support for members of staff is available in a confidential manner through PPC, the [Employee Assistance Programme](#), line manager, Head of School/Department. These contacts are accessible to staff regardless of whether they choose to file a formal complaint or simply make a disclosure without pursuing formal procedures.
- 12.6 Support is available, but is not limited to:

- [Student Wellbeing Centre](#) - 01522 886400 or studentwellbeing@lincoln.ac.uk
- [Employee Assistance Programme](#) – 0808 168 2143
- Lincolnshire Rape Crisis - 0800 33 4 55 00 or support@lincolnshirerapecrisis.org.uk
- Spring Lodge - Lincolnshire's Sexual Assault Referral Centre – 01522 524402 or lpft.springlodge@nhs.net or [Home :: Spring Lodge Centre \(lpft.nhs.uk\)](#)
- The Survivors Trust – 08088 010818 or [The Survivors Trust](#)
- Rape Crisis - 0808 802 9999
- End Domestic Abuse Now (EDAN Lincs Domestic Abuse Service) - 01522 510041 or <https://edanlincs.org.uk/>
- Stonewall – www.stonewall.org.uk
- SurvivorsUK – support for male rape and sexual abuse. Text 020 3322 1860 or 0203 598 3898 or [SurvivorsUK](#)
- Galop provides support to LGBT+ people who have experienced any form of sexual violence. Call 0800 999 5428 or email help@galop.org.uk
- Victim Support - Lincolnshire specific number: 01522 947510 or National number: 0808 1689 111
- NHS - In a medical emergency you should call 999. For non-emergency medical advice you can call 111
- [Lincolnshire Rape Crisis](#) a specialist support service for survivors of sexual violence

13. Monitoring and Review

Compliance with this policy will be assessed by PPC through regular monitoring of personal relationship declarations, gathering feedback via reporting mechanisms, and reviewing incidents related to undeclared relationships. Training participation will also be used to gauge understanding and adherence. All compliance measures will be conducted with sensitivity and confidentiality to maintain trust and encourage adherence.

14. Data Protection and Confidentiality

The University will handle any shared information with sensitivity and care, adhering to its responsibilities under data protection principles set out in data protection legislation. Access to the declaration will be strictly limited to those with a legitimate need to know for the purpose of assessing and managing the conflict of interest and determining mitigation measures.

15. Related Policies, Procedures and Guidance

- [Standard Single Source of Comprehensive Information](#)
- [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)
- [Disciplinary Policy](#)
- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- Student Conduct and Disciplinary Regulations (Part P of the University [General Regulations](#))
- Student Complaints Regulations (Part O of the University [General Regulations](#))
- [Social Media Policy](#)

Appendix 1: Definitions

Abuse of power	The misuse of authority by an individual in a position of power in a way that is considered inappropriate or unacceptable. Abuse of power can take many forms, including but not limited to, grooming, manipulation, coercion, or exerting undue pressure on others to engage in behaviour they are uncomfortable with. This may lead an individual to act against their own wishes or refrain from actions they would otherwise take.
Adult at risk (vulnerable adult)	This is someone who is aged 18 or over and requires care and support from the local authority e.g. community care and as a result of those care and support needs, is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or experience of abuse, neglect, harm or exploitation. Additionally, there may be times this term could be applied to an adult who does not meet this first definition but deemed to be vulnerable due to a health concern they present e.g. undergoing treatment and support for trauma.
Close personal relationship	A relative or close friend, or a relationship where there is business/commercial/financial dependence e.g. landlord.
Conflict of interest	<p>A conflict of interest may arise when an employee has a personal or private interest, which may conflict with their official or professional responsibilities, as a person in a position of trust or authority.</p> <p>A conflict of interest between members of the University community, and in terms of this policy, would include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line Manager/supervisory role/Personal Academic Tutoring role; • Recruiting a prospective staff member or student; • Working in the same team (this could be at any level in the University, including interdisciplinary teams); • Working on joint projects / partnerships between Schools/Research/Services; • Being involved in decision making in relation to the other person (i.e. Assessments/Selection/Promotion/Funding application/appraisal schemes for Academic/Professional Services).
Consent	Having the freedom and capacity to agree to something by choice. Consent is not present when an unwilling participant submits, as a result of the exploitation of power, coercion, or force, regardless of whether there is verbal or physical resistance. Coercion or force includes any physical or emotional harm or threat of physical or emotional harm which would reasonably place an individual in fear of immediate or future harm, with the result that the individual feels compelled to engage in a sexual act. Those who are seeking consent should ensure that it is being given freely and recognise that it can be withdrawn at any time.
Direct responsibility	Where a staff member is directly or indirectly responsible for supervision and/or management of a staff member or student; is involved in a student's academic studies; or has pastoral responsibility for a student.

	<p>Staff have direct responsibility for a student when engaging in the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and selection • Teaching (formal and informal) • Supervision (formal and informal) • Assessment • Welfare or pastoral support beyond signposting • Programme leadership • Personal academic tutoring • Coaching and mentoring • Addressing student complaints or conduct issues • Considering extenuating circumstances • Issuing references • Awarding bursaries, grants and funding <p>This list highlights key areas of responsibility but is not exhaustive. Staff should remain mindful of potential conflicts of interest in any relevant situation.</p>
Exploited consent	Consent which appears to have been freely given but would not have been given if one party did not hold a particular position of trust, power or authority.
Grooming	A gradual process that someone in a position of power uses to manipulate someone to do things they may not be comfortable with and to make them less likely to reject or report abusive behaviour. Grooming may initially start as befriending someone and making them feel special and may result in exploitation and/or sexual abuse.
Intimate personal relationship	A consensual emotional or romantic relationship (whether sexual or not), which goes beyond the normally accepted bounds of a professional relationship between staff, or between a staff member and a student. These relationships could be ongoing, short term or limited to a single occurrence. They can be conducted in person or remotely e.g. via social media, email or text messaging.
Pastoral care	The support provided by staff to students, focusing on their emotional, physical, and academic wellbeing. This includes offering guidance, addressing personal issues, and fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. The aim is to ensure that all students feel valued, respected, and able to succeed in their studies.
Personal relationship	Is a broad term that refers to both close personal relationships and intimate personal relationships, as specified in this table.
Position of authority	Any employee who due to the nature of their role has direct or indirect responsibility over another employee or student.
Power	Refers to the ability or capacity to influence, control, or direct the behaviour of others, decisions, or events.
Power dynamic	Describes the way individuals or groups interact, where one side holds more power than the other, and this imbalance shapes relationships and

	communication. Power does not necessarily involve force or coercion but can resemble influence, authority, or control.
Power imbalance	This may occur when one individual has power or authority over another, whether this is direct or indirect responsibility, meaning that their positions are inherently unequal. Examples include, but are not limited to, a lecturer or supervisor and their student, a manager and staff member they manage, principal investigator and postdoctoral scholar or research assistant in their research group.
Professional relationship	A formal respectful relationship is characterised by mutual respect, integrity, and accountability, ensuring appropriate boundaries are maintained, and all interactions reflect high standards of competence, ethics, and responsibility.
Professionalism	Refers to the conduct, behaviour, and attitude of someone in a work or academic setting that reflects high standards of competence, ethics, and responsibility. It involves showing respect, integrity, accountability, and a commitment to maintaining appropriate boundaries and treating others with fairness and courtesy.
Sexual misconduct	<p>Sexual misconduct includes any unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature to which a person has not consented, or the person engaging in the behaviour does not have a reasonable belief as to that other person's consent. Sexual misconduct can happen within any kind of relationship or between people who do not know each other. Sexual harassment is a form of sexual misconduct.</p> <p>The Office for Students (OfS) definition of sexual misconduct is shown below:</p> <p>Sexual misconduct means any unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and includes, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. sexual harassment; ii. sexual assault; and iii. rape.

Appendix 2: Guidelines for Maintaining Professional Boundaries

To protect both staff and students, and to reduce the risk of allegations of improper behaviour, abuse of power, bias, sexual misconduct, discrimination, conflicts of interest, staff should adhere to the following guidelines:

- **Maintain an appropriate physical and emotional distance** from others, ensuring that you do not create what could be considered a 'favourable' or 'special friendship'. Physical contact must be appropriate, non-intrusive, and clearly justifiable in an educational or professional context. It must always be consensual unless in an emergency situation where security or first aid-trained staff may need to intervene without consent.
- **Avoid behaviour that could reasonably be perceived as inappropriate.** Favouritism and grooming must be strictly avoided. Staff must not engage in any behaviour that may reasonably be seen as preferential treatment.
- **Be mindful that individuals from different cultural backgrounds may misinterpret actions.** Members of our community from different cultural backgrounds might perceive certain actions or words differently, potentially leading to misunderstandings. Always strive to communicate clearly and considerately, ensuring that your interactions are professional and unambiguous.
- **Consider the tone and language used,** taking into account cultural differences or language barriers which could lead to possible miscommunication or misunderstanding.
- **Ensure in-person meetings and discussions occur on campus or other University-approved premises.** Where not possible, ensure the meeting occurs in a public venue, such as a library or a café. Staff must avoid meeting with students in either their own home or the student's home. If a home visit is essential for educational or pastoral reasons, a risk assessment must be completed in advance and approved by the Head of School. Home visits are never permitted for students under 18 years of age, except in cases related to wellbeing, and must be authorised in advance by the University's Designated Safeguarding Lead. Refer students with support needs to Student Support and Wellbeing and limit your role in providing personal support to a student where this is not part of your employment duties.
- **Do not seek personal information from a student** except as relevant to a University process (e.g., medical information for special consideration, or personal circumstances information as part of an academic progress process).
- **Use University communication channels:** When corresponding with a student, use University platforms such as University email accounts or University work mobile numbers. Ensure any correspondence to students is to a professional standard and bear in mind that any correspondence sent to, or about, a student may be disclosed as part of a Data Subject Access Request.
- **Avoid one-to-one meetings with students outside of office hours and off campus,** particularly if such meetings may include the consumption of alcohol.
- **Limit sharing personal information or problems with a student.** An example being that a student will need to be informed if their supervisor is going to be absent from work for a period of time, however, they do not need to be made aware of personal information that has no bearing on their study and/or would potentially make them feel uncomfortable (e.g., financial or marital difficulties).

- **Do not provide a student with a gift or lend/borrow personal items or money to or from a student.** Employees are discouraged from accepting gifts from students.
- **Adhere to the same guidelines during fieldwork, conferences, and other University activities:** Staff are required to adhere to the above guidelines, where feasibly and logistically possible, when participating in fieldwork, attending conferences or training events, residential placements, and any other University-related activities whilst away from their usual place of work/study.
- **Set up agreed communication methods for field trips:** It is recognised that for safety purposes it may be necessary prior to any field trip to set up an agreed method of communication for all parties. In such situations, it is advisable that any agreed communication channel (e.g., a WhatsApp group chat) is set up by the staff member; that all participants are clear beforehand on how it will be used (e.g., for professional purposes solely), that the nature of the content remains courteous and professional and in line with the [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#), and that it is everyone's understanding that the group chat is only to be used for the duration of the trip and will be deleted as soon as the trip has finished.

These guidelines are intended to support staff in carrying out their professional, pastoral, and academic responsibilities within appropriate boundaries.

It is recognised that incidental one-to-one interactions may occasionally occur in social or community settings outside the University's control. Staff are encouraged to exercise professional judgment in these situations and to be mindful of how such interactions may be perceived.