

STAFF AND STUDENT PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

1. PURPOSE

Blackburn College is committed to fostering a professional, respectful, and safe environment for all. It is essential that staff and students engage in teaching, learning, and support activities free from undue influence, bias, or abuse of power.

This policy aligns with the Office for Students (OfS) Condition of Registration E6 and aims to safeguard both students and staff from potential conflicts of interest and misconduct, while upholding academic and professional integrity.

2. DEFINITION AND SCOPE

2.1 This policy applies to all Blackburn College staff and students, including contractors, agency workers, casual staff, governors, and volunteers. It encompasses both current and historical relationships where both parties are actively involved with the College.

2.2 Staff includes anyone employed or formally contracted by the College.

- Current students are defined as individuals enrolled in any Blackburn College programme.
- Relevant staff members are those with academic, pastoral, administrative, disciplinary, or safeguarding responsibilities for students.
- Intimate Personal relationships are romantic, emotional, or sexual in nature.
- Excluded Relationships are:
 - Those established before either party joined the College in their current capacity.
 - Relationships existing before a staff member became a relevant staff member for the student.
 - Staff-to-staff relationships where one party later becomes a student.
 - Abuse of power refers to exploitation of authority or influence to improperly affect another person's experience or decisions.

3. PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 Safeguarding students from any actual or potential conflict of interest and/or Abuse of Power, and maintaining fair academic practices are the College's priorities.
- 3.2 With the exception of Excluded Relationships, Staff who would be considered a Relevant Staff Member are prohibited from establishing, or attempting to establish, an Intimate Personal Relationship with any Student.
- 3.3 Any actual or perceived conflicts of interest should be declared in relevant formal settings (such as boards) from personal relationships must be declared to Human Resources and managed appropriately.

4. DISCLOSURES AND SAFEGUARDING

Staff must never pursue or enter an Intimate Personal Relationship with any student under 25 or any adult considered vulnerable/under their care. Any breach will be investigated under safeguarding protocols and may involve disciplinary or external legal action.

All relationships with the potential for conflict of interest, including Excluded Relationships, must be declared to a line manager.

Risk management actions may include:

- Reassignment of responsibilities.
- Change of line manager.
- Redeployment.
- Formal disciplinary processes if mitigation is not possible.

Students will not be disadvantaged or forced to change courses or modules due to actions taken to manage conflicts.

Concerns about undisclosed relationships or misconduct should be reported to a line manager and the HR Team. These will be handled with discretion and seriousness.

5. SIGNPOSTING AND SUPPORT

Signposting and relevant safeguarding support details are detailed below.

- NSPCC/Childline: Call 0800 1111 or use the 1-2-1 online chat.

Useful resources:

- [TES Article: School Sex Abuse Allegations](#)
- [Simpson Millar: School Abuse](#)
- [Independent: Everyone's Invited](#)
- [Teacher Toolkit: Sexual Harassment in Schools](#)
- [EHRC: Sexual Harassment and the Law](#)
- [Freedom of Expression Guidance](#)

6. SANCTIONS

6.1 Breaches may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal.

6.2 Safeguarding violations may be referred to external authorities such as the LADO and the Police.

7. RECORD OF INTIMATE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The College 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 HR team.

8. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

This Policy was created in collaboration with the Policy and Procedures Committee and Strategic Safeguarding Committee and the Designated Safeguarding Governor.

9. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Policy will be reviewed bi-annually by the Strategic Safeguarding Committee and relevant stakeholders.

10. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Student Safeguarding Policy
- Sexual Violence, Harassment and Abuse Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Student Behaviour Policy and Procedure
- The Pledge
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Information Sharing Protocol
- Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Student Computer Usage Policy
- Disciplinary and Dismissal Policies
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy

11. MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

The Executive Director of Student Support and Experience (College DSL) is responsible for overseeing this Policy.

12. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Blackburn College is dedicated to equality, diversity, and inclusion. This policy has been reviewed to ensure it does not negatively impact individuals with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

13. ADDITIONAL NOTES

- Staff must take reasonable steps to verify if someone is a student before initiating a relationship.

- Platonic relationships and social club memberships do not need to be declared unless a conflict arises.
- If uncertain, staff should consult the HR Team.

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