

Title:	Policy on relationships between employees and between employees and students
Policy Number:	P038
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Approved by:	Academic Board (AB)
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External Reference Points:

External Source	Reference Points
UKQC- Core Practices	N/A
UKQC- Advice and Guidance	N/A
Awarding Body Reference	N/A
Other reference Points	N/A

1. Policy Statement:

1.1. This policy covers all staff of the College. It is intended to provide guidance in areas where personal relationships overlap with working relationships and to ensure that individual members of staff do not commit acts of impropriety, bias, abuse of authority or conflict of interest and – just as important - do not lay themselves open to allegations that they have done so.

2. Relationships between employees and students:

2.1. Students at Nelson College are adults, attending the College voluntarily for clearly defined educational purposes. The role of College employees- also adults - is to serve these students by helping them to achieve their personal, academic and professional goals. While it is important that employees establish and maintain high standards, it is equally important that there should exist a natural spirit of respect and co-operation, students and staff working together as partners to accomplish a common objective. The College environment should be characterised by free expression, inquiry, and discussion.

2.2. The College values and relies upon the professional integrity of relationships between members of staff and in the staff/student relationship. In order that College business is conducted and perceived to be conducted in a professional and proper manner it is necessary to distinguish between, and take account of, personal relationships which overlap with professional ones.

2.3. In the context of this policy document, a personal relationship is defined as:

- a family relationship,

- a business/commercial/financial relationship or
- a sexual/romantic relationship
- an established platonic relationship

2.4. The College believes that the professional relationship between a student and a member of staff is vital to a student's educational development and affirms that the teaching relationship is based on trust, confidence and dependency. In this context a professional relationship is defined as one where there is an assessing, supervising, tutoring, teaching or pastoral role or a role providing administrative or technical support. Students are entitled to equality of treatment and it is important that a personal relationship between a member of staff and a student is not perceived by others to prejudice that equality of treatment.

2.5. Whilst the College cannot forbid personal or intimate relationships between its employees and its adult students, or between employees not otherwise in a formal or long-term open partnership, as a matter of policy and for the avoidance of doubt it strongly disapproves of employees becoming personally involved with students in any way other than in the context of College-sanctioned activities. Such involvements are not in the best interests of the students, its employees or the College.

2.6. Employees are therefore strongly advised not to enter into a sexual/romantic relationship with a student for whom they have a responsibility for assessing, supervising, tutoring, teaching, for pastoral care or for whom they are required to provide administrative or technical support. Further, staff should not enter into a business, commercial or financial relationship with a student which could compromise, or could be perceived to compromise, the objectivity and professional standing of the teaching relationship.

2.7. The College recognises, however, that such relationships may exist when a member of staff is appointed or when a student enrolls, or that a relationship may develop between a member of staff and a student during a programme of study. Where a member of staff has a professional role in relation to a student with whom he or she has a personal relationship, it is the responsibility of the member of staff to inform the Principal promptly, in order that alternative teaching, tutoring or assessment arrangements may be made.

3. Relationships between employees:

3.1. Although the existence of a personal relationship between members of staff does not necessarily constitute a bar to the employment or promotion of either party, staff should declare to the Principal any personal relationships which may give rise to a real or perceived conflict of interest, trust or breach of confidentiality.

3.2. Where a personal relationship exists or develops between members of staff who are in a line management or supervisory relationship at work, they must not be involved in recruitment, selection, appraisal, promotion or in any other management activity or process involving the other party. Additionally, staff in a personal relationship should usually not work together in any circumstance whereby a conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality or unfair advantage may be perceived to be gained from the overlap of a personal and professional relationship.

3.3. In any such circumstances, the relationship must be declared in confidence, to the Principal, who will then endeavour to make alternative appropriate management arrangements and confirm them in writing to the individuals concerned. If it is considered unavoidable to inform other members of staff about the relationship in order to explain a change in management arrangements, this will be discussed with the individuals concerned, before it is disclosed.

3.4. Employees who are uncertain about whether they should take action regarding a personal relationship are invited in all circumstances to seek guidance in confidence from the Principal.

3.5. In any case in which a personal relationship as defined within this policy, is not declared and results in an unfair advantage or disadvantage to either of the parties to the relationship (be they a member of staff or a student), this will be considered a serious matter and may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including (as appropriate) expulsion or termination of employment.