Staff-student relationships

Romantic or sexual relationships that occur in the student-teacher context or in the context of employment, supervision or evaluation present special problems. The difference in power and the respect and trust that are often present between a teacher and student, supervisor and subordinate, or senior and junior colleague in the same department or unit makes these relationships especially vulnerable to exploitation. They also generate real or perceived inequalities, not only involving the persons concerned, but also affecting other members of the department, whether students or staff. At the same time, we recognise that such relationships do indeed occur, and they need not be damaging, but may be both significant and long-lasting.

Accordingly the Department adopts the following policy with respect to the behaviour of members of staff (at all levels, including graduate tutors) in charge of teaching our students (at all levels, including graduates).

1) **Undergraduate students** are, in general, the most vulnerable members of the academic community:
   a. relationships between teaching staff, including graduate teaching tutors, and undergraduates are very strongly discouraged.
   b. If such a relationship does occur, it may or may not be the subject of disciplinary action in line with College regulations. In any case, the member of staff in question should as soon as possible inform a senior member of the department, and withdraw from all teaching of that undergraduate cohort.
   c. The member of staff in question should withdraw from writing references and recommendations for the student in question.
   d. Where possible, the Head of Department should be notified.

2) **Graduate students** are vulnerable too, not least because they are at a point in their academic careers when the good opinion of their supervisors and teachers may be vital.
   a. relationships between academic members of teaching staff and graduate students are very strongly discouraged, especially between a supervisor and a graduate supervisee.
   b. If such a relationship occurs between a member of staff and a graduate student a senior member of staff should be informed as soon as possible.
   c. The member of staff should withdraw from supervising the student, and from writing letters of recommendation for them.
   d. Where possible, the Head of Department should be notified.
   e. As much as possible, the Department encourages a practice of full disclosure in the case of such relationships’ continuance: this avoids real or perceived conflicts of interest, as well as embarrassment for others.
3) Between members of staff, both academic and professional services staff, disclosure of any such relationship is strongly encouraged, especially in order to avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest, as well as embarrassment for others.

4) In case of any concerns about such relationships:
   a. Undergraduates are urged to consult their personal tutor or the Undergraduate Senior Tutor or the Head of Department.
   b. Graduate students are urged to consult their supervisor or their personal tutor or the Post-graduate Senior Tutor or the Head of Department.
   c. Members of staff are urged to consult the Head of Department.

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