

Relationships between staff Policy

Policy Category:	Human Resources
Subject:	Relationships between Staff
Approving Authority:	SMT
Responsible Officer:	Director of HR
Responsible Office:	Human Resources
Related Procedures:	Grievance Procedure: Research, Teaching only and Professional Services Staff Grievance Regulation: Academic Staff
Related College Policies:	Relationships between Staff and Students Policy Bullying and Harassment Policy
Effective Date:	23rd September 2022
Supersedes:	New
Next Review:	September 2027

Introduction

The university recognises that there may be occasions when staff are related to or become close to another member of staff. They may be faced with situations where personal interest could conflict with their duties. This policy sets out the steps to be taken if individuals are in this position and seeks to protect the integrity of all staff from allegations of actual or perceived conflict of interest.

The policy applies to all staff in the university community:

- employees
- casual workers
- agency workers
- contractors
- honorary staff
- visiting staff
- volunteers
- emeritus staff

Please note there is a separate policy governing [relationships between staff and students](#).

It is understood that in most cases close [personal relationships](#) which exist or develop at work rarely pose a conflict of interest. However, if individuals have a [professional or working relationship](#) with someone, they must ensure that this relationship does not have or appear to have any influence on the ability of them or other staff to perform their job.

Where a personal relationship exists or develops between individuals who are in a line management or supervisory relationship, they must not participate in decisions that might raise the appearance of a conflict of interest. This could include:

- recruitment decisions
- allocation of resources
- appraisal
- disciplinary matters
- the processing of expense claims

This list is not exhaustive and staff should familiarise themselves with the King's [Financial Regulations](#) and the [Disclosure of Interests Policy](#) for further information.

There are also circumstances in which imbalances in power between the parties may lead to individuals feeling that they cannot freely consent to a relationship, such as when a manager seeks a personal relationship with one of their team. We are committed to providing an environment in which everyone is treated fairly and with dignity and feels a sense of safety and belonging. If you have any concerns, please contact your [HR Business Partnering Team](#).

Definitions

Personal relationship

A personal relationship is defined as:

- a romantic, intimate, sexual and/or exclusive relationship
- a family relationship
- a business, commercial or financial relationship
- a relationship which involves an emotional attachment, this can include friendships

This list is not exhaustive and therefore anyone who considers there may be in a potential conflict of interest situation should declare this.

Professional relationship

Where there is a supervising, managing, assessing connection with the individual. Such as line manager or supervisor.

Working relationship

Individuals who are in a personal relationship and do not have a professional relationship but could still be in a situation that would potentially cause a conflict of interest, misuse of power or unfair bias situation occurring. For example, a peer-to-peer relationship where staff have to liaise and cooperate over work matters.

Declaration

If a member of staff has a new or existing relationship with someone defined in the [introduction](#) to this policy. Furthermore, they believe the relationship may mean there is an actual or potential conflict of interest, misuse of power or inappropriate or unfair bias they should:

- Inform their manager or Head of Department of the relationship and provide details in an email. The notification should include the names of both individuals, any level of management or interaction and any other issues that could become a legitimate concern for the university.
- Withdraw from any professional relationships with the individual until their manager or Head of Department has reviewed the relevant working practices.
- If an individual is unsure whether a personal relationship could give rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest, they should contact their [HR Business Partnering Team](#) in the first instance for advice and guidance.

Reporting concerns

If an individual believes or witnesses that a personal relationship has impacted on a professional or working relationship, or where they have concerns about the imbalance of power between the parties, they should make the relevant line manager or Head of Department aware of this. This could be the manager or Head of Department of one of the parties.

Concerns will be treated confidentially. However, disciplinary action may follow where an individual has been found to have raised a vexatious complaint.

Line Manager/Head of Department – Next steps

After the line manager or Head of Department has been informed of the personal relationship, they will assess whether there is a conflict of interest in place. If so, they will ensure that the staff member has no direct management responsibility, or other decision-making power, in relation to the other named individual.

They will also inform their [HR Business Partnering Team](#) including the names of the individuals and the level of workplace interaction that is in place and outline why this represents a conflict of interest.

The manager/Head of Department will also work with their [HR Business Partnering Team](#) to develop ways of working whereby both parties can remain at King's but also addresses the conflict of interest. This should be completed on a timely basis to minimise disruption to the individuals involved and the university. Any actions taken will be in consultation with the staff concerned.

Details of changes to working patterns will be agreed in writing between the manager/Head of Department and the individual(s) concerned. All information and disclosures made under this policy will be treated as confidential and in accordance with the university's obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

The manager/Head of Department should explore all reasonable means following the appropriate college procedures as applicable to implement changes in working patterns. On the rare occasions that this is not possible, there may be no alternative other than to terminate an individual's contract of employment. Their [HR Business Partnering Team](#) should be consulted before this process is commenced.

If an individual unreasonably refuses to agree to the solutions proposed, King's may have no alternative but to take disciplinary action which could also include dismissal if no reasonably practicable way forward can be found.

If you need further support

If you have any questions about relationships between staff, please contact your [HR Business Partnering Team](#) who will be able to assist.