

## **Revised Guidelines on Relationships Involving Staff, Students and Others Closely Associated with the College**

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

1. Royal Holloway, University of London aims to provide a working and learning environment which will enable staff and students to fulfil their potential. In order to achieve this, the College is committed to the creation and maintenance of a supportive and constructive environment. It is recognised that in a healthy working environment staff and students form mutually rewarding personal relationships. Whilst the College does not seek to regulate the personal lives of any of its members, staff and students are required to respect and maintain the boundaries of personal and professional life. The College has a legitimate interest in relationships between staff and students, and will seek to ensure that they do not affect its good running and reputation. The College also has a duty to ensure the protection of all students and staff. The positive implementation of the Guidelines outlined below aims to ensure that, in the event of relationships between members of the College, professional issues are properly addressed; fair, equitable and supportive working and learning conditions are maintained and possible harassment, grievance, disciplinary action and litigation, are avoided.

### **SCOPE OF THE GUIDELINES**

2. These Guidelines are intended to cover all relationships, including:
  - contractual relationships;
  - family relationships;
  - pecuniary relationships;
  - intimate relationships including marital, sexual, romantic, and emotional
  - membership of societies such as the Freemasons.

This list is neither exhaustive nor exclusive.

3. These Guidelines cover staff, students and other closely associated with the College. They also include relationships involving applicants for admission as students or applicants for employment as members of staff, with existing staff or students. It should be noted that members of Council and Senior College Officers are asked each year to submit a declaration of interests, which includes these sorts of relationships.

4. These Guidelines cover all areas where such relationships raise questions about possible conflicts of interest, trust and / or confidentiality, including:
  - all aspects of teaching and learning, including examinations and assessment;
  - access to confidential information;
  - access to services and facilities including financial assistance, accommodation and other services;
  - contractual and employment matters, including appointment, promotion, career development, complaints and discipline;
  - assignment of work and facilities to staff or students;
  - the management and supervision of staff;
  - deployment of financial and other resources;
  - the admission of students to the College;
  - the provision of all forms of support and pastoral care.

#### **RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS**

5. Relationships between staff and those students for whom staff have, or are likely to have, some specific academic or other professional responsibility raise important professional issues. This is particularly true where the relationships are intimate. They raise serious questions of conflicts of interest, of trust, confidence and dependency in working relations and of equal treatment in areas including teaching, learning, selection, assessment and research, and the giving or withholding of information, support and advice. For the protection of students and staff, the boundaries and moral obligations of the professional role of staff must be fully recognised and respected. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that this happens.
6. In the event of the development of a relationship with a student, a member of staff is **required** to declare it to his / her Head of Department or appropriate line manager. Heads of Departments should make such a declaration to the Principal. The recipient of the information should treat it with sensitivity and not seek more details than necessary; nor should the information be made available to colleagues other than those who need to know for the proper conduct of College business. The Head of Department or appropriate line manager should take steps to:
  - ensure that the member of staff does not have sole responsibility for aspects of the students work which require judgement, for example academic assessment;

- ensure that the member of staff is not solely in a position to take decisions affecting the student, including the provision or withholding of any of the following: facilities for research, the allocation of places on courses or of bursaries, scholarships or loans; or the awarding of any other benefits, financial or otherwise;
  - ensure that the appropriate action is taken to minimise the potential effect of the relationship on other students;
  - ensure that arrangements for teaching or supervision are such that the two parties are kept separate if that is reasonable and practicable, for example in terms of tutorial groups
  - Ensure that the relationship does not interfere with the provision of proper advice and support, pastoral care or administrative support to the student.
7. In the event of a relationship arising between a student and a member of staff, the student is **encouraged** to declare their involvement to an appropriate member of staff (for example Personal Tutor, Head of Department) as soon as possible. Students may, however, declare an involvement at any point in a relationship, even after the relationship has ended.
  8. Should a student or member of staff, having declared a relationship as set out above (paras 6-7), not be satisfied with the arrangements made, they should consult the Director of Human Resources (staff) or the Head of Support and Advisory Services (students) or the College Secretary to seek to have the position reviewed.
  9. Students or staff who are, or have been, involved in a relationship and who do not believe their involvement to be truly consensual may seek advice from the Director of Human Resources (staff), the Head of Support and Advisory Services (students) or the College Secretary. They have a right of complaint under the Code of Practice on Personal Harassment.
  10. Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is potentially a criminal offence for **any** member of College staff to have a sexual relationship with **any** College student who is under 18 years of age, irrespective of whether that member of staff has any direct responsibility for that student.

#### **RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MEMEBERS OF STAFF**

11. Within any organisation, staff have normal interactions with colleagues, which will generally be mutually rewarding and will not have a detrimental effect upon colleagues or the good running of the organisation. Relationships between staff of the sort listed in para 2 above, however, may lead to conflicts of interest in the following circumstances:
  - members of staff who work within the same department, particularly if there is line manager responsibility, or if one member of staff is in a position of authority over the other;

- relationships between staff on committees / working groups or those who by the nature of their position in College have an involvement in, or an influence over, areas set out in para 4 above, which directly or indirectly relate to the person with whom they have a relationship.

12. In the event of circumstances arising such that a member of staff who has a relationship of the sort listed in para 2 above finds him / herself in a situation where there could be a conflict of interest, the member of staff is **required** to declare the relationship to his / her Head of Department or appropriate line manager. Heads of Department should make such a declaration to the Principal. The recipient of the information should treat it with sensitivity and not seek more details than necessary; nor should the information be made available to colleagues other than those who need to know for the proper conduct of business. The Head of Department or appropriate line manager should take steps to:

- ensure that the member of staff does not have sole responsibility for any aspect of the assessment of the other person's work;
- ensure that the involvement of a member of staff in taking or influencing decisions affecting the other person's salary, terms and conditions of employment, role, workload, promotion, training and development, career development, or appraisal is carried out in such a way as to protect the integrity of all parties and processes;
- ensure that the staff involved in the relationship and other staff in the department have clearly identified and satisfactory arrangements available to them to discuss areas of concern and seek support.

The more senior member of staff should take no part in the decision-making, and should decline to be involved in matters which might give rise to a conflict or perceived conflict of interest.

13. If the College is made aware of a relationship by a member of staff involved in the relationship, the College will consider appropriate action to protect the integrity of all parties. The staff involved will be consulted and are expected to comply with reasonable action. The College will try to ensure that these matters are dealt with as sensitively as possible.
14. Should a member of staff, having declared a relationship as set out above (para 12), not be satisfied with the arrangements made, s/he should consult the Director of Human Resources or the College Secretary to seek to have the position reviewed.
15. Staff who are, or who have been, involved in a relationship and who do not consider their involvement to be truly consensual may seek advice from the Director of Human Resources or the College Secretary. They have the right of complaint under the Code of Practice on Personal Harassment.
16. If the College is made aware of a relationship by a third party or other means, appropriate action will be taken to protect the integrity of all parties and procedures. If any member of

staff or student is found to have made a malicious allegation they will be subject to disciplinary action. The College will deal with these matters as sensitively as possible.

#### **OTHER RELATIONSHIPS**

17. If a member of staff has a relationship of the sort set out in para 2 above with an applicant for admission as a student or an applicant for employment and is likely to be involved in the making or influencing of a decision, the member of staff is **required** to declare it to his/ her Head of Department or appropriate line manager. Heads of Departments should make such a declaration to the Principal. The recipient of the information should treat it with sensitivity and not seek more details than necessary. The Head of Department or line manager should ensure that the member of staff does not take part in any decision-making in relation to that applicant.

Katie Kerr  
College Secretary & Head of Governance

**These Guidelines were first adopted by the Council in January 2000 and were subsequently revised in January 2006, & November 2011.**