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| Policy on personal staff-student relationships involving Postgraduate Researchers | |
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| Policy on personal staff-student relationships involving Postgraduate Researchers |

# Purpose

* 1. This policy covers the University’s expectations regarding the way in which colleagues and Post Graduate Researchers (PGRs) manage close personal relationships between PGRs and any of their supervisors.

The University does not interfere with personal relationships between adults. It is the responsibility of the University though, to take due regard for ensuring appropriate measures are in place to safeguard supervisors and PGRs who are in close personal relationships with each other. The difference in ‘power’ between a supervisor and PGR, makes these relationships potentially vulnerable to exploitation. They also generate real or perceived inequalities, not only involving the persons concerned, but also affecting other members of the University, whether students or staff. It is vital that the staff-PGR relationship is one of trust, confidence, and respect in order that all PGRs can benefit from the learning experience. It is also vital that PGRs benefit from equality of treatment and so it is important that a personal relationship between a member of staff and a PGR does not in any way prejudice that equality, in reality, or perception

PGR supervision is part of training and examination processes whose integrity **must** be maintained. Accordingly, members of staff are strongly discouraged from entering into a personal relationship with PGRs.

# Scope

* 1. This policy pertains to personal staff-student relationships involving PGRs and their supervisors. Close personal relationships are for the purpose of this policy defined as intimate, close friendship, or family relationships. Intimate relationships are to be understood as romantic and/or sexual relationships. Intimate relationships may be formal such as marriage, registered partnership, or cohabitation. Intimate relationships also include casual relationships of a romantic and/or sexual nature.

# Intimate Relationships

* 1. Any supervisor who is in an intimate relationship with a PGR whom they supervise, **must** declare this relationship to their line manager as soon as possible.
  2. The line manager will seek confirmation regarding the relationship with the PGR in person and in confidence.
  3. If there is an intimate relationship or close friendship, the line manager will take the following actions:

1. Create a record that will be held by the Dean or Institute Director. This record will contain the names of the supervisor and PGR, the student number, the date the intimate relationship or close friendship was declared, the projected end date of the PGR’s programme of study, and whether and when a declaration is made that the intimate relationship has ended.
2. If the colleague is a first supervisor, they will be removed from this role, even if the intimate relationship has ended to ensure there is no threat to the integrity of either party. They may continue as a second or third supervisor if the PGR is in agreement and if their individual expertise is essential for a successful supervision process.
3. If the colleague is a second or third supervisor, they will be removed from the supervisory team unless their individual expertise is essential for a successful supervision process and if the PGR is in agreement. They may not step up to becoming a first supervisor or be involved in any decisions regarding their progression, extension or suspension of studies, or financial matters. The intimate relationship will be disclosed by the line manager to the first supervisor who will treat this information as confidential.
4. The line manager will instruct the relevant Faculty Hub to make the agreed changes to the supervisory team on the student record.
5. It is the supervisor’s duty to inform their line manager **should** the intimate relationship end to ensure that the supervisor is not reassigned to the PGR. The line manager will instruct the Dean or Institute Director to amend the record with the date of this declaration.
6. Any arrangements made following the disclosure of an intimate relationship between a supervisor and their supervisee will remain in place until graduation or termination even if the intimate relationship ends. If the PGR is uncomfortable with the supervisor continuing in the role once the relationship has ended, they may request a change of supervisor.
7. A first supervisor who is removed from the role after the disclosure of an intimate relationship will no longer be able to write letters of recommendation for the PGR; this role will be undertaken by the second or third supervisor.
8. If the colleague is the second or third supervisor they will no longer be able to write letters of recommendation – this will remain the sole responsibility of the first supervisor.
9. In addition, any PGR who is in an intimate relationship with their supervisor **should** declare this relationship to the Director of the Doctoral College ([ddc@hull.ac.uk](mailto:ddc@hull.ac.uk)). A confidential record will be kept and the Director will reach out to the relevant Dean or Institute Director for assurance that the process above has been followed.

# Family Relationships

* 1. Family relationships between potential supervisors and prospective PGRs **must** be declared to the academic’s line manager before an offer of study is made.
  2. Prospective PGRs will be asked to declare if they have a family relationship with any of the supervisors as part of the application process.
  3. The University does not permit academics to accept close family members (parents, children, grandparents, grandchildren, brothers or sisters) as PGRs. The line manager will in consultation with the relevant Graduate Research Director (GRD) or PGR lead explore whether alternative supervision arrangements not involving the academic in question can be made.
  4. The University advises against taking on other relatives as PGRs but will accept such supervision arrangements if the line manager and relevant GRD or PGR lead are satisfied that no other suitable supervisor is available.
  5. Any new family relationship that occurs during the PGR’s period of study (for example, a new ‘in law’ relationship between supervisor and PGR) **must** be declared by the supervisor to their line manager and by the PGR to the Director of the Doctoral College (ddc@hull.ac.uk).

# Transition arrangements

* 1. The University **must** ensure that PGRs benefit from equality of treatment and that it does not open itself up to potential complaints from PGRs relating to integrity, equity, and prejudice. Therefore, it is important that supervisory teams in which there is an existing intimate or family relationship follow the guidelines for transition outlined here.
  2. Any existing intimate relationships **must** be declared within one month and the transition to the new supervisory team **must** take place within three months of this policy coming into force. Supervision of a PGR by someone with whom they are in an intimate relationship is not permitted to continue after the three-month period.

# Failure to comply arrangements

* 1. Supervisors failing to declare a personal relationship with a PGR may be excluded from the list of approved PGR supervisors by the Research Degree Committee.

# Escalation and arbitration

* 1. Any issues arising from this policy that cannot be resolved locally will be escalated to the relevant Associate Dean for Research and Enterprise.
  2. In cases where issues cannot be resolved in the Faculty, the Director of the Doctoral College will be the final arbiter.

**Version Control**

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