



**Maynooth University
Human Resources
Office**

Policy for Staff – Student Relationships

Date: 26th April 2006

Maynooth University Policy Staff – Student Relationships

1. The University values and aims to maintain appropriate professional relationships between staff and students. This depends on mutual trust and confidence, and on the boundaries of the professional role being respected and maintained by students and staff. It is primarily the responsibility of individual members of staff to ensure that these boundaries are respected and maintained.
2. Certain relationships between staff and students can give rise to serious questions of conflict of interest; of bias; of breaches of trust; of breaches of confidentiality; of unfairness in teaching, supervising, assessment and research. These relationships include close family relationships, material financial or business relationships, close personal relationships, intimate personal relationships, and sexual relationships. Such relationships can undermine the integrity of the assessment process; they can also seriously disrupt learning for other students, and can lead to challenges of unprofessional conduct.
3. For a member of staff to embark on a sexual / intimate personal relationship with a student will always involve serious risks and may lead to serious difficulties which have their roots in the unequal power of the parties concerned. There may be real problems in maintaining the boundaries of the professional and the personal life. For this reason, the University wishes to discourage members of staff from becoming involved in such relationships. Other relationships of the type referred to above raise similar issues.
4. Members of staff should recognise their professional responsibility to protect the interests of students, to respect the trust involved in the staff / student relationship, and to respect the constraints and obligations inherent in their role.
5. Any member of staff, other than the Head / Acting Head of Department, who knowingly has a relationship, or has had a relationship, of the type described above, with a student whose work he or she is responsible for assessing or supervising, or for whom he or she has a teaching responsibility, is obliged to declare this in confidence to the Head / Acting Head of Department who will decide on any changes of allocation or of responsibility that may be required. Subject to any legal requirements, such a declaration will be treated in strict confidence. By reason of the obligation on the part of the staff member to make a declaration, there will not be a requirement on the staff member to disclose the nature of the relationship. If a student declares such a relationship, then the Head / Acting Head of Department, having first confirmed as far as possible the veracity of the student's declaration by consulting with the member of staff in question, will follow a similar procedure. Where a third party reports that such a relationship exists, a similar procedure will be followed.
6. Where a Head / Acting Head of Department has a relationship, or has had a relationship, of the type described above, with a student whose work he or she is responsible for assessing or supervising, or for whom he or she has a teaching responsibility, he / she is obliged to declare this in confidence to the President who will decide on any changes of allocation or of responsibility that may be required. Subject to any legal requirements, such a declaration will be treated in strict confidence. By reason of the obligation on the part of the staff member to make a declaration, there will not be a requirement on the part of the staff member to disclose the nature of the relationship. If a student declares such a relationship, then the President, having first confirmed as far as possible the veracity of the student's declaration by consulting with the member of staff in question, will follow a similar procedure. Where a third party reports that such a relationship exists, a similar procedure will be followed.
7. A member of staff who is in, or who has been in, a relationship of the type described above shall not take part in any way in the assessment of the student concerned. For the avoidance of doubt, the staff member must not attend any part of an examinations board meeting where matters relating to the student in question are being considered.

8. Where a student considers that his / her sexual / intimate personal relationship with a staff member is not consensual, the student may avail of the procedures contained in the *Policy on the Protection of the Dignity of Staff and Students*.

Adopted by Governing Authority 26/04/2006