

# Personal Relationships at Work Policy

September 2025

|               |                                  |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Scope         | All Staff at UK Business College |
| OFS Condition | B2                               |
| Access:       | Public                           |

Version 1.1

Approved by the Board of Governors

## Contents

|                                                                                                                                |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Introduction .....                                                                                                          | 3  |
| 2. Scope and Purpose .....                                                                                                     | 3  |
| 3. Definition .....                                                                                                            | 4  |
| 3.1 Conflict of interest:.....                                                                                                 | 4  |
| 3.2 Abuse of Power: .....                                                                                                      | 4  |
| 3.3 Consent to a Personal/Intimate Relationship: .....                                                                         | 4  |
| 3.4 Freedom of Consent:.....                                                                                                   | 4  |
| 3.5 Capacity to Consent: .....                                                                                                 | 5  |
| 4. Relationships Between Staff and Students .....                                                                              | 5  |
| 4.3 Guidance on Unacceptable Behaviour Towards Students:.....                                                                  | 6  |
| 5. Relationship in between Members of Staff .....                                                                              | 6  |
| 5.2 Guidance on Acceptable Behaviour Between Colleagues to Reduce the Risk of<br>Abuse of Power or Conflict of Interest: ..... | 7  |
| 5.3 Restricted Activities: .....                                                                                               | 7  |
| 5.4 Expectation of Professional Conduct:.....                                                                                  | 8  |
| 6. Declaration of the Personal/ Intimate Relationship.....                                                                     | 8  |
| 7. Policy Breaches.....                                                                                                        | 9  |
| 8.Appendix 1 – Declaration Form .....                                                                                          | 10 |

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This policy outlines our position on personal relationships between students and staff, and between colleagues, and sets out expectations of the Company from their employees and third parties to ensure that no blurring of judgement or conflict of interests arises.

1.2 It also sets to protect the Company and employees from allegations of improper professional behaviour or harassment.

1.3 Personal or intimate relationships are defined as any romantic or sexual involvement that extends beyond the boundaries of a strictly platonic or professional connection. This definition applies equally to all employees, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation. Failure to adhere to this policy may result in disciplinary actions, including potential termination, due to the risks of conflicts of interest, perceptions of favouritism, and the potential for harassment or other misconduct.

## 2. Scope and Purpose

2.1. UKBC staff, including academic and professional service staff, are in a position of trust. It is important that they demonstrate exemplary behaviour. They should always give due consideration as to what is an appropriate environment and what is appropriate conduct in relation to the activities they are undertaking. Someone could misinterpret actions, no matter how well intentioned they are.

2.2. UKBC recognises that employees have a right to a private life, and socialising between colleagues and staff with students is a positive aspect of being an active member of the College community. However, the nature of staff/staff and staff/student relationships imposes particular responsibilities and duties on staff. This policy is intended to ensure that appropriate safeguards and processes are in place to prevent abuses of power and sexual misconduct.

2.3. This policy aims to protect staff and students from allegations of actual or perceived conflicts of interest, and to limit circumstances where a position of power may be abused. A close or personal relationship between staff and students is therefore prohibited excluding an existing relationship declared prior to 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025.

2.4. Where a personal or intimate relationship exists between a staff member and student prior to the date of this policy (1<sup>st</sup> August 2025) then this must be declared (see Appendix 1) to determine whether it could be perceived as a conflict of interest, breach of trust or confidentiality, or abuse of power.

### 3. Definition

#### 3.1 Conflict of interest:

3.1.1. Due to the potential for conflict of interest, exploitation, favouritism, or bias, such a relationship may undermine the integrity of the supervision or evaluation provided, or may have adverse effects on the working and learning environment for those directly involved as well as for the broader team/department.

3.1.2. Relationships in which one party is in a position to evaluate the work or influence the career of the other, may also provide grounds for complaint by third parties when that relationship gives access or advantage, restricts opportunities, or creates a perception of these problems.

#### 3.2 Abuse of Power:

3.2.1. This is where someone uses their position of power, authority or influence over others. This may include, but is not limited to, manipulation, coercion, grooming, intimidation, or applying undue pressure on individuals to engage in behaviour they are not comfortable with or that goes against their will.

Such conduct undermines the principles of fairness, respect, and professional integrity. It can create a culture of fear or compliance and may result in significant harm to individuals and the wider organisational environment. Abuse of power will not be tolerated under any circumstances and will be treated as a serious breach of policy.

#### 3.3 Consent to a Personal/Intimate Relationship:

3.3.1. For the purpose of this policy, consent is defined as agreeing by choice and having the freedom and capacity to make that choice. The person seeking consent should always take steps to ensure that consent is freely given and recognises that it can be withdrawn at any time.

#### 3.4 Freedom of Consent:

3.4.1 An individual is free to make a choice if nothing negative would happen to them should they say no. For example, a person is not free to choose if:

- They are being threatened with violence (by the abuser or someone else);

- They are being threatened with humiliation;
- They believe that the assessment or continuation of their studies and/or progression or future career advancement will be at risk if they refuse;
- They are being blackmailed;
- There is a significant power imbalance, and the party without power feels pressured to continue with the relationship against their will.

### 3.5 Capacity to Consent:

3.5.1 Capacity is about whether someone is physically and/or mentally able to make a choice and to understand the consequences of that choice. For example, a person does not have the capacity to give consent if they are asleep or unconscious. Capacity may also be inhibited by the influence of drugs, alcohol, the presence of a cognitive learning difficulty, or a mental health condition.

## 4. Relationships Between Staff and Students

4.1. With effect from 1st August 2025, UKBC prohibits close personal or intimate relationships between staff and students excepting excluded relationships as defined in clause 2.4 and declared in accordance with this policy procedure.

This measure is intended to preserve professional boundaries, ensure impartiality, and maintain the integrity of the academic environment. Any breach of this provision will be regarded as a serious matter and may lead to disciplinary action in accordance with UKBC's policies and procedures.

4.2. In order to maintain appropriate relationships with students, and to help reduce the risk of sexual misconduct, abuse of power, or conflict of interest, staff should:

- Maintain an appropriate physical and emotional distance from students, and perform their duties in the best interests of UKBC without favour towards any individual student over another student;
- Avoid creating special friendships with students;
- Use their UKBC email account for communications with students, avoiding personal messaging via Messenger or Twitter as examples;
- Give careful consideration before giving their personal mobile number to a student. UKBC communication channels such as UKBC email or MS Teams could be used as an alternative,

although it is understood that these are not always practicable. Staff could use their work telephone and have this diverted to their personal mobile number;

- Where practical, ensure that meetings and discussions occur on campus/in office. Where this is not possible, ensure that the meeting occurs in a public space;
- Refer students with support needs to the relevant UKBC support services should this not fall within their employment duties;
- Refrain from contacting students outside of working hours;
- Not seek personal information from a student, except as relevant to an UKBC process or policy.

### 4.3 Guidance on Unacceptable Behaviour Towards Students:

Staff are expected to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with all students at all times. The following behaviour are considered unacceptable and are strictly prohibited.

4.3.1 This list is not exhaustive:

- Physical touching that could be construed as sexual, or comments/questions of a sexual nature (either verbally or electronically);
- Paying undue special attention to one particular student, which can be construed as grooming;
- Accepting gifts from a student, unless it is deemed to be a minor token of thanks in accordance with UKBC policies;
- Inviting an individual student to your personal home or room without others present, or visiting their personal home;
- Asking a student to provide personal work-related activities such as child care for your child, to house sit while you are on vacation.
- Communicating with students through personal social media accounts, private messaging apps, or informal channels, unless strictly necessary for academic purposes via UKBC official email, UKBC portals.

## 5. Relationship in between Members of Staff

5.1 We recognise that, from time-to-time, personal relationships may develop between members of staff, and these are not prohibited. However, in order to protect the business and individual staff members from potential abuse of power or potential conflict of interest,

staff are strongly advised to declare (see Appendix 1) a close personal/intimate relationship in any of the following situations:

- Where a relationship begins that may give rise to a real or perceived conflict of interest, exploitation, favouritism, or bias;
- Where a relationship already exists, and a new situation arises which may give rise to a perceived or real conflict of interest, exploitation, favouritism, or bias. I.e., two staff members originally working in different departments are transferred to work in the same department;
- Where the relationship exists or develops between a member of staff and their line manager. Staff are reminded of possible power imbalances within intimate/personal relationships, and relationships between employees where one has direct or indirect authority over another are strongly discouraged. UKBC reserves the right to find alternative line management arrangements to prevent any conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality, or unfair advantages gained from the overlap of personal and professional relationships;
- If an employee is applying for a role in an area of the business in which an individual with whom they have a personal relationship currently works. This must be declared in order to ensure a fair and impartial recruitment exercise.

## 5.2 Guidance on Acceptable Behaviour Between Colleagues to Reduce the Risk of Abuse of Power or Conflict of Interest:

- Maintain an appropriate physical and emotional distance from other staff while working
- Perform your UKBC duties in the best interests of the Company, without favour towards any individual staff member over another;
- Avoid paying undue special attention to a particular member of staff;
- Use the UKBC email account, MS Teams, and internet access for work-related communications, and maintain professional communications that establish boundaries between professional and non-professional communications with colleagues;
- Where practical, ensure that meetings and discussions about Company matters are held on campus or other appropriate business settings;
- Refer colleagues with support needs to relevant UKBC support services, and be mindful to limit your role in providing personal support to a staff member where this does not fall under your employment duties.

## 5.3 Restricted Activities:

5.3.1 When a personal/intimate relationship exists between a line manager and a person for whom the line manager has responsibility, a more Senior manager will be responsible for the conduct of operational matters. Such “operational matters” include, but are not limited to:

- Dealing with disciplinary or performance concerns;
- Dealing with allegations of harassment, including sexual harassment;
- Authorising any hours worked above normal working hours;
- Authorising any leave;
- Confirming any payment arrangements to be made;
- Involvement in reorganisation of the area of the business in which the employees work

## 5.4 Expectation of Professional Conduct:

5.4.1 Where a personal/intimate relationship ends, it is expected that all parties will continue to conduct themselves in a professional manner and avoid personal disputes which impact on the working environment or other colleagues or students.

## 6. Declaration of the Personal/ Intimate Relationship

6.1. All declarations are to be made (see Appendix 1) as soon as reasonably practicable, and always within one week of occurrence. This includes situations where a close personal relationship or intimate relationship has developed, is developing or appears likely to develop.

6.2. The information provided on the Declaration Form will be stored securely in compliance with data protection legislation. Such declarations will be treated confidentially and sensitively, and the wishes of both parties respected as far as possible. This includes same sex relationships where the parties may not be “out” publicly.

6.3. Staff who are unsure whether they have a close personal or intimate relationship with a colleague or student should seek advice from their line manager, Head of Department, Academic Dean or Director, or HR representative.

6.4. Where a close personal or intimate relationship between a member of staff and a student existed prior to 1st August 2025, the staff member must disclose this relationship to their Line Manager without delay. The staff member is also required to complete the relevant declaration form (see Appendix 1), in order to enable appropriate adjustments or reorganisation of duties to be implemented as necessary.

This measure is intended to ensure transparency, uphold professional boundaries, and mitigate any potential conflicts of interest.

6.5. Staff who have an existing relationship with a prospective student applicant must declare this at the time of enrolment of the student as part of the admissions process.

## 7. Policy Breaches

7.1. We will deal with any difficulties caused by a personal/intimate relationship in the workplace in a sensitive manner, and an informal approach will be used in the first instance. However, where this does not bring about a satisfactory resolution, recourse to formal procedures such as the disciplinary procedure or personal and/or sexual harassment policies and procedure may be implemented.

7.2. In this context, the following may be deemed a disciplinary offence:

- Failure to disclose a personal/intimate relationship with a student or a colleague in accordance with the terms set out in this policy;
- A personal/intimate relationship with a student after the date of this policy is prohibited and will be investigated under the disciplinary process;
- Inappropriate physical interactions while working on Company sites;
- Harassment of any kind, related or unrelated to a personal/intimate relationship, and including but not limited to sexual harassment;
- Inappropriate or excessive use of Company IT systems for personal communication between those involved in a personal/intimate relationship at work.

## 8. Appendix 1 – Declaration Form

### SECTION A: TO BE COMPLETED BY STAFF

*This form should be completed in accordance with the Personal Relationships at Work policy and sent to your line manager and HR Dept*

|                                                                                                                                                                    |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Your Details:</b>                                                                                                                                               |  |
| Name:                                                                                                                                                              |  |
| Dept:                                                                                                                                                              |  |
| Job Role:                                                                                                                                                          |  |
| Location:                                                                                                                                                          |  |
|                                                                                                                                                                    |  |
| <b>Other Party's Details:</b>                                                                                                                                      |  |
| Name:                                                                                                                                                              |  |
| Are they an existing member of UKBC staff?                                                                                                                         |  |
| Job Role (staff)                                                                                                                                                   |  |
| Location:                                                                                                                                                          |  |
| Nature of Relationship:<br><br>(Please state whether the relationship is of a close personal nature i.e., friend or relative or an intimate/romantic relationship) |  |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| If declared an intimate/romantic relationship,<br>when did it start (month/year)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |              |
| <b>Declaration:</b><br><br><b>I understand the following:</b><br><br><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. It may be necessary for permanent or temporary adjustments to be made to any supervisory arrangements or other conditions to remove any real or perceived conflict of interest arising from the relationship.</li><li>2. This information will be stored securely and managed in accordance with data protection legislation</li><li>3. I have read and understood the Personal Relationships at Work policy</li></ol> |              |
| <b>Signed:</b><br><br><br><b>(Print Name):</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Date:</b> |

**SECTION B: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE RISK ASSESSOR**

*Risk Assessment of a Staff/Student Relationship*

*Relationships after 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025 between Staff/Student are prohibited*

|                                                                                             |                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Name of Staff:                                                                              |                                      |
| Job Title:                                                                                  |                                      |
| Location:                                                                                   |                                      |
| Name of Student:                                                                            |                                      |
| Name of the course being undertaken                                                         |                                      |
| <b>Outcome</b>                                                                              |                                      |
| Is the declared relationship deemed acceptable?                                             | <b>Yes/No</b> (delete as applicable) |
| If "No" briefly explain why                                                                 |                                      |
| Has this decision been communicated to the member of staff? (provide date of communication) |                                      |
| If the relationship is deemed acceptable how have any risks been mitigated                  |                                      |
| Signed:              Date:                                                                  |                                      |

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