Fairfield School of Business
info@fairfield.ac

Personal Relationships at Work Policy

Version	**1.1**
	Public
Last updated	September 2026
Category	Regulations
Approved by	Board of Governors

Abstract:

This policy outlines our position on intimate and/or exclusive personal relationships between students and staff and between colleagues and sets out the expectations of the Company from their employees and third parties to ensure that no blurring of judgement or conflict of interest arises. It also seeks to protect the Company and employees from allegations of improper professional behaviour or harassment.

Applicability:

This policy applies to all members of FSB staff; it does not apply to students; however, we recommend that students are aware of it.

Contents

1. Purpose 2
2. Definitions 2
3. Relationships Between Staff and Students 4
4. Relationships Between Members of Staff 6
5. Declaration of a Personal/Intimate relationship 7
6. Policy Breaches 8
7. Review and Update 8
Appendix: Intimate Personal Relationship Declaration Form 9
Intimate Personal Relationship Declaration Form 10

1. Purpose

1.1 FSB staff, including academic and professional services 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.

1.2 FSB 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 our 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.

1.3 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.

1.4 'Excluded Relationships' (as defined in section 2.2) must be declared using the process in Section 5 of this policy to determine whether it could be perceived a conflict of interest, breach of trust or confidentiality or abuse of power.

1.5 FSB delivers higher education programmes in collaboration with external awarding bodies. FSB is obligated to preserve the academic integrity these programmes and to assure the wellbeing of students enrolled with the awarding body. This means that where the awarding body has its own restrictions on personal or intimate relationships between staff and students, FSB may be required uphold these.

2. Definitions

2.1. An **Intimate Personal Relationship** means a relationship that involves one or more of the following elements:

i. physical intimacy including isolated or repeated sexual activity; or
ii. romantic or emotional intimacy.

In the context of this policy, a personal or intimate relationship is defined as a romantic/sexual relationship which goes beyond the boundaries of a platonic or working relationship and applies to all employees regardless of gender or sexual orientation

2.2. **Excluded Relationships'** means any ongoing intimate personal relationship that:

i. existed before the 1st August 2025 and that remains in existence; or

ii. existed before the date that the staff member became a relevant staff member in relation to that student.

'Staff' includes but is not limited to employees and contractors.

2.3. '**Relevant Staff Member'** means a member of staff who has, or will have academic, pastoral, or other professional responsibilities in relation to that student.

2.4. **Conflict of Interest**: A Conflict of interest arises when personal interests or relationships cause bias in decision-making and affect job performance. 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.

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.

2.5. **Abuse of Power** means a situation where a Relevant Staff Member exploits a position of power in so as to apply pressure in a way which:

i. may result in someone doing something, or refraining from doing something, that they may not have otherwise done; and

ii. that action or inaction could reasonably result in something that falls within the scope of an intimate personal relationship.

Abuses of power can take various forms and may include though not limited to; manipulation, coercion, grooming or exerting pressure on others to engage in conduct they do not feel comfortable with.

2.6. **Consent to a personal/intimate relationship**: 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.

Understanding Consent

2.7. **Freedom to Consent**: An individual is free to make a choice if nothing negative would happen to them if they said 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 pressurised to continue in the relationship against their will.

2.8. **Capacity to Consent**: 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 make also be inhibited by the influence of drugs alcohol or the presence of a cognitive or learning difficulty, or mental health condition.

3. Relationships Between Staff and Students

3.1. FSB prohibits relevant staff members from starting or pursuing personal intimate relationships with students with the exception of Excluded Relationships as defined in 2.2. This means that any breach of this policy by a relevant staff member would result in FSB taking appropriate steps in line with its usual disciplinary process, including the possibility of the breach resulting in dismissal of the relevant staff member.

3.2. Staff are required to declare any Excluded Relationship (see Appendix) to enable FSB to assess whether any potential or actual conflict of interest exists.

3.3. Relevant staff members are strongly discouraged from entering into a non-intimate close personal relationship with any such student for whom they have any direct or indirect academic responsibilities, or other direct professional responsibilities.

3.4. Prospective students will be asked as part of the Admissions process whether they currently have a personal relationship with any staff member at FSB, and the nature of this relationship if they answer in the affirmative. In the event that such as relationship is declared, the Admissions team will raise this with the HR Team and the Student Lifecycle and Enhancement Manager. The HR Team will then contact that staff member to initiate the declaration and risk assessment process.

3.5. 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 FSB without favour towards any individual student over another student,

- Avoid creating special friendships with students,

- Use their FSB 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. FSB communication channels such as FSB email or MS Teams could be used as an alternative although it is understood 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/office premises. Where this is not possible, ensure the meeting occurs in a public venue,

- Refer students with support needs to the relevant FSB support service where this does not fall within your employment duties,

- Refrain from contacting students outside of working hours,

- Not seek personal information from a student except as relevant to an FSB process or policy.

3.6. Guidance on unacceptable behaviour towards students; This list is not exhaustive:

- Physical touching that could be construed as sexual or comments or questions of a sexual nature either verbally or electronically,

- Paying undue special attention to one particular student which be construed as grooming,

- Accepting gifts from a student unless it is deemed to be a minor token of thanks in accordance with FSB policy,

- 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 or to house-sit whilst you are on vacation.

4. Relationships Between Members of Staff

4.1. We recognise that from time to time, personal relationships may develop between members of staff including those who may not work at the same business location, 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 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. FSB reserves the right to find alternative line management arrangements to prevent any conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality or unfair advantage 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.

4.2. **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 whilst working,

- Perform your FSB 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 FSB email account, MS Teams and internet access for work-related communications and maintain professional communications establishing boundaries between professional and non-professional communication with colleagues,

- Where practical, ensure that meetings and discussions about Company matters are held on campus or other appropriate business premises,

- Refer colleagues with support needs to the relevant FSB support service and be mindful to limit your role in providing personal support to a staff member where this is not part of your employment duties.

4.3. **Restricted Activities**

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 the employee's work.

4.4. **Expectations of professional conduct**

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.

5. Declaration of a Personal/Intimate relationship

5.1. All declarations are to be made 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.

5.2. The information provided on the Declaration Form will be stored securely by the HR team 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.

5.3. 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.

5.4. Staff who have a close personal or intimate relationship with a student, which counts as an excluded relationship must inform their Line Manager with immediate effect so that any reorganisation of activities can be facilitated.

5.5. Staff who have an existing relationship with a prospective student, which counts as an excluded relationship, must declare this at the time of enrolment of the student as part of the admissions process.

6. Policy Breaches

6.1. 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 FSB's Dignity (Anti-Bullying and Harassment) Policy may be implemented.

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

- A Personal relationship which is prohibited under this policy,
- Failure to disclose an excluded relationship with a student or a colleague in accordance with the terms set out in this policy,
- Inappropriate physical interactions whilst 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.

The above list is not exhaustive.

7. Review and Update

7.1. This policy will be reviewed as required and no less than annually by the Senior Management of FSB. Changes to this policy or the procedures for declaring intimate personal relationships will be approved by the Board of Governors.

Appendix: Intimate Personal Relationship 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.

Your Details:	
Name:	
Dept:	
Job Role:	
Location:	
Other Party's Details:	
Name:	
Are they a student or member of staff?	
Job Role (staff)/ Course (student)	
Location:	
Nature of Relationship: *(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, when did it start (month/year)	
Declaration: I understand the following: i. *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.* ii. *This information will be stored securely and managed in accordance with data protection legislation.* iii. *I have read and understood the Personal Relationships at Work policy.*	
Signed: **(Print Name):**	**Date:**

Intimate Personal Relationship Declaration Form

SECTION B: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE RISK ASSESSOR

Name of Assessor	
Job Title:	
Location:	
Outcome	
Is the declared relationship deemed acceptable?	**Yes/No** (delete as applicable)
If "No" briefly explain why (attach separate sheet if required)	
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:	

Document governance

Document owner*	**Head of HR**
Consulted parties**	HR Advisor; Senior Management Team
Next update due	September 2027
Classification	Public – anyone can view this document

**Responsible for updates to this content.*
*** To be consulted on updates to this content.*

Versions

Version no.	Description of Changes	Approved by	Date
0.1	Draft versions for consultation	n/a	n/a
0.2	Draft versions for consultation	n/a	n/a
1.0	Approved version – formatted	Board of Governors	July 2025
1.1	Personal relationships at work extends to staff members of the same business but at different locations.	Board of Governors (C.A.)	Oct 2026

