

POLICY ON RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 All employees of the university, at all times, are expected to maintain professional relationships with students. These are based on trust, dignity, fairness and mutual respect, and are essential for delivering a positive student experience.
- 1.2 The policy addresses two forms of relationship which have the potential to undermine the professional relationship which should exist between university employees and the students of the university. These relationships are:
 - (a) Sexual, romantic or otherwise intimate relationships (“intimate relationships”) and
 - (b) Personal relationships.
- 1.3 Intimate relationships may take place in person, but equally may arise online or through remote or electronic communications. For the purposes of this definition, ‘relationship’ also includes any instance(s) of intimate contact.

Summary:

1. Academic employees and students: intimate relationships between academic employees and students are strictly prohibited.
2. Other employees with responsibility for students: intimate relationships between non-academic employees with responsibility for students and students are strictly prohibited.
3. Other university employees and students: intimate relationships between other university employees and students are strongly discouraged.
4. Personal relationships between employees and students: if this might reasonably be seen to create a conflict of interest, the employee must notify the relevant line manager.

2. Core principles

2.1 Intimate relationships between academic employees and students are prohibited due to:-

- a) Power imbalance: There is a significant risk that any intimate relationship between an employee of the university and a student of the university will reflect the unequal institutional power between employees and students. Such relationships give rise to a risk that they are based on exploitation. This is especially the case where the employee is either in a teaching role or is in a role that has responsibility for students.
- b) Conflict of interests: Additionally, an intimate relationship between any employee and a student of the university will give rise to situations where either there is a conflict of interest or there is a perception of such a conflict – for example through a perception of favouritism.

3. Intimate relationships

- 3.1 Intimate relationships between academic employees and students (including with any prospective student who has submitted a formal application to study) are prohibited. This requirement applies regardless of whether the employee has (or will have) a responsibility for teaching, advising or directly supervising the student.
- 3.2 Where a prospective applicant is in a pre-existing intimate relationship with a BCU employee, and wishes to study at BCU, they must formally disclose the relationship to the university as part of their application. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will review each application on a case-by-case basis. There is an equal expectation that the employee will at the same time or earlier disclose the relationship to their line manager and to have the relationship recorded formally in their HR employee file.
- 3.3 Similarly any intimate relationship between any student and any employee who has any responsibility for students, and which can include technical, administrative or other support or leadership roles, in which the employee may be in a position to exercise a degree of influence over a student, is strictly prohibited.
- 3.4 Employees are reminded that the commencement of such a relationship will be a serious breach of this policy. As a result, formal disciplinary action will be taken against the employee, and which could lead to the termination of their employment. Actions by the university could also include, where appropriate, a referral being made to the employee's professional / regulatory body.
- 3.5 Intimate relationships between any other employee of the university and students are strongly discouraged.

4. Personal relationships

- 4.1 If any employee has any other personal relationship with a current student (such as a family member or other close social connection) and which could reasonably be seen by others to call into question their integrity and impartiality, they must notify their Director/Head of School and line manager immediately. The Director/Head of School with the line manager will need to consider if any declared personal relationship raises a potential conflict of interest, and where this is the case, take appropriate actions to mitigate the effects, recording in writing the mitigating actions taken. A note will be kept on the employee and student record.

5. Application of the principles to students who also are employed by the university

- 5.1 Sexual, personal, romantic, or intimate relationships between postgraduate students and undergraduate students where the former has a pastoral relationship with, or is responsible for supervising the undergraduate student are prohibited.
- 5.2 Students who are working at the University in non-academic roles (e.g. hospitality), and where power imbalances do not exist, are not required to disclose personal relationships with other students.

6. Student Sex Workers

6.1 For the avoidance of doubt, a sexual relationship with a student sex worker is an intimate relationship.

7. Application of this policy

7.1 This policy applies to all university employees, including visiting employees, postgraduate students who are acting on behalf of the university, and casual workers.

7.2 This policy is not intended to address harassment, or allegations of sexual misconduct. Harassment is covered by the University's Dignity at Work Policy. An allegation of sexual misconduct would be covered by the University's Disciplinary Policy.