

## Wadham College staff-student relationships policy

This policy places staff-student relationship within the context of College's core responsibilities and activities – that of academic research and the stewardship and teaching of students. This responsibility involves a duty of care to both students and staff. It is the view of Governing Body that intimate relationships between staff and students, even when apparently consensual, carry serious risks of being harmful to students' academic progression and to the reputation of members of staff. For this reason the College strongly advises that staff and students should not enter into such relations. The following policy covers situations that may nonetheless arise, and follows the spirit of the University's guidelines, which are available here:

[https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/relationship/staff\\_student\\_policy/](https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/relationship/staff_student_policy/)

This document is to apply to both academic and non-academic staff.

1. This policy covers current and former close personal or intimate relationships, however brief, between members of staff and students where the staff member has any responsibility for the student. These include, but are not limited to: sexual, romantic, or emotional relationships whether they are conducted in person or online. (Family, commercial/financial and/or other relationships are covered under the College's [Conflict of Interests Policy](#).)

For the purposes of this policy, a 'member of staff' should be understood as including but not limited to any individual who is working within the College or as a casual paid worker (including graduate students working as teaching assistants or out-tutors), and any other individuals (such as members of the senior common room) to whom the College offers any of the privileges or facilities normally available to its employees.

A student should be understood as any individual who is studying for an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification, a visiting student, or on any course arranged by or through the College, or any part of the collegiate University.

2. The College regards the professional relationship between members of staff and students as central to students' educational development and wellbeing. Professional relationships are those in which the staff member, through their engagement with the College, has any educational, administrative, pastoral or supervisory involvement with a student. The College reminds staff of the importance of maintaining academic and professional integrity and of their responsibility for the welfare of students.
3. Implicit in the professional role of members of staff is an obligation to ensure that conflicts of interest do not arise, and that relationships with students for whom the staff member has any responsibility remain strictly professional, respecting the trust inherent in them.
4. The College strongly advises staff not to enter into a close personal or intimate relationship with a student for whom they have any responsibility and thus towards whom they are in a position of trust.
5. To embark on a close personal or intimate relationship with a student is inevitably complicated by the inequalities of power, as well as blurring the distinction between professional and personal life. Moreover, such relationships can disrupt the teaching and learning environment for other students and colleagues and may lead to accusations of favouritism or bias, thereby undermining trust in the academic process.
6. The College requires that any close personal or intimate relationship with a student for whom a staff member has any responsibility and/or towards whom they are in a position of trust (e.g. in a welfare context) is immediately brought to the attention of the Warden and/or Senior Tutor (for academic staff) or HR Manager and/or Domestic Bursar (for non-academic staff) of Wadham College, by the staff member, in order that action can be taken to mitigate any unintended consequences. The member of staff should also disclose any former relationship with a current student for whom they are given or are to be given responsibility. If the staff member is unsure whether they have any responsibility for the student and/or are in a position of trust, they should declare the relationship to the Warden and/or Senior Tutor (for academic staff) or HR Manager and/or Domestic Bursar (for non-academic staff), in order that the risk of unintended consequences arising can be assessed. Any declaration of this kind will, so far as possible and subject to the specific provisions of this policy, be treated in confidence.

7. Disciplinary action (possibly resulting in dismissal) may be taken against a member of staff who fails to immediately declare a close personal or intimate relationship, as required by this policy.
8. Attention is drawn to the fact that relationships involving students under the age of eighteen or vulnerable adults could fall within the scope of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 relating to persons in positions of trust having sexual relations with children under eighteen or vulnerable adults. Members of staff must not enter into a close personal or intimate relationship with a student under eighteen years of age or a vulnerable adult for whom they have any responsibility.
9. If a close personal or intimate relationship is pre-existing between a member of staff and a candidate for admission as a student, the member of staff, if aware of the application, must make the Warden and/or Senior Tutor (for academic staff) or HR Manager and/or Domestic Bursar (for non-academic staff) aware of it at the outset of the admissions exercise, so that steps can be taken to avoid any conflict of interest arising. The matter will, as far as possible, be handled in confidence to ensure that there is no detriment to the candidate.
10. Once a relationship has been declared to the Warden or Senior Tutor (for academic staff) or HR Manager or Domestic Bursar (for non-academic staff), they will take steps to:
  - consult with the member of staff and the student to identify any impact their relationship may have within the College;
  - facilitate the re-organisation of duties to minimise contact and ensure the member of staff is not tutoring, supervising, assessing, or providing pastoral care for the student; is not professionally responsible for administering activities in which the student is involved; and,
  - ensure that appropriate action is taken to minimise the potential effect of the relationship on other staff and/or students.
11. The Warden, Senior Tutor, HR Manager and/or Domestic Bursar will deal with the situation in a manner that protects the dignity and, as far as possible, privacy of all parties, and those involved will be expected to comply with any reasonable decision or action.
12. The College advises students not to enter into any relationship other than a professional relationship with a member of the College's staff, or other Colleges' or University staff with any responsibility for them and/or in a position of trust. If such a relationship should develop, and the student is not sure that a member of staff has disclosed their relationship, they are encouraged independently to advise the Warden or Senior Tutor.
13. If any student finds themselves in receipt of unwanted or inappropriate behaviour or involved in a relationship that they do not consider to be truly consensual, or if they consider that they have been adversely affected by a misuse of power, authority, or conflict of interest, they should refer to the [College's and/ or University's policy on harassment](#).

Members of staff who experience unwanted advances and other unwelcome behaviour should raise the issue with the Warden or Senior Tutor (for academic staff) or HR Manager or Domestic Bursar (for non-academic staff).
14. Any member of staff or student who has questions about this policy and its application should discuss them with the Warden, Senior Tutor or HR Manager.