

## Code on personal relationships between staff and students

The Open University does not wish to prevent personal relationships between members of staff and students. In line with its Equality and Diversity Strategy, all members of staff and all students should take note of this Code and should adhere to it in cases where personal relationships may cause a conflict of interest.

Such a conflict of interest may arise when a member of Open University staff is responsible for the admission, teaching or assessment of a student with whom they have a personal relationship that brings with it obligations, benefits or dependencies. In such cases, there is a danger that the conflict of interest may undermine the integrity of the University, and seriously disrupt the learning environment for other students and colleagues.

In addition, even consensual relationships may involve an abuse of power, and problems may occur should such a relationship become non-consensual. In the latter case, both parties will have a right of complaint under the University's Bullying and Harassment policy.

The following guidance should always be followed where there is either a pre-existing relationship, or one which develops, between a member of staff and a student:

- 1 Members of staff should recognise a professional and ethical responsibility to protect the interests of students, to respect the trust involved in the staff/student relationship and to accept the constraints and obligations inherent in that responsibility.
- 2 Any member of staff who has a personal relationship with a student whose work he or she is responsible for assessing or supervising, or for whom he or she has an admission or teaching responsibility should declare this to their line manager, or an appropriate superior, who will decide upon any action required.
- 3 Any student who is allocated for teaching or assessment to a member of staff with whom they have a personal relationship should declare this to their National Director/Assistant Director, Student Services\*. Such declarations will be treated in strict confidence.
- 4 Any student or member of staff who considers that their relationship is not consensual should follow the procedures of the University's Bullying and Harassment Code.

Complaints under the Code will be monitored by the Complaints and Appeals Office.

---

\* National Director (for national centres in Scotland, Ireland and Wales) and Assistant Director, Student Services (for English regional centres)