

INTIMATE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

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The Royal Academy of Music moves music forward by inspiring successive generations of musicians to connect, collaborate and create.

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**UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON**

Continued overleaf

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INTIMATE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

PURPOSE

1. The Academy recognises the value of collaborative and positive professional relationships between colleagues, and between staff and students. A central aspect of this relies on professional integrity, trust, transparency and respectful boundaries that support safe and effective learning and working environments for all.
2. This policy outlines the Academy's position in relation to intimate personal relationships between colleagues, and between staff and students. In doing so, the purpose is to underpin the educational and pastoral mission of the Academy in fostering an environment free from abusive and unacceptable behaviours.
3. Positive professional relationships are essential to staff and student learning, development and wellbeing. However, intimate personal relationships between staff members where there is a power dynamic, or between staff and students, introduces the risk of actual or perceived conflicts of interest, imbalances or power or authority, accusations of bias, favouritism or exploitation, and questions around the nature of consent.
4. Therefore, this policy seeks to protect students and staff from allegations of misconduct and actual or perceived conflicts of interest, as well as reduce the potential for an abuse of power to occur. It also acknowledges that students within an intimate personal relationship with a staff member may experience the negative effects of a power imbalance even where an abuse of power is not intended.

SCOPE

5. The Intimate Personal Relationships Policy applies to all staff, employees, students, visitors, and associates of the Academy.
6. The policy is concerned with consensual relationships. Allegations of non-consensual behaviour and breaches of policy will be investigated and may lead to serious consequences as outlined in the Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy as well as disciplinary processes.
7. Staff and students are encouraged to seek advice or raise concerns at the earliest opportunity by using the reporting processes outlined in this policy. Staff and students will be supported to comply with the provisions of this policy when acting in good faith.
8. This policy supersedes the Ethics & Conduct Policy 2019. Therefore, any intimate personal relationship in existence prior to the date of this policy must be in compliance with the previous policy and reviewed in conjunction with the provisions of this policy.

DEFINITIONS

9. **Intimate personal relationships**

An intimate personal relationship is a close consensual relationship that is more than merely a professional relationship or friendship. It is where the nature of the relationship includes one or more of the following elements:

- Physical intimacy or sexual activity whether brief, one-off or repeated
- Romantic or emotional intimacy
- A financial relationship
- A family relationship

10. Staff members with professional responsibility

Staff members with professional responsibilities towards students include but are not limited to, those within teaching, supervision, examination and assessment, professional services, mental health and student support, as well as security roles.

The definition includes brief temporary responsibility and longer-term permanent responsibility. It also includes formal and informal responsibility whether formed within the Academy or in an outside context, as well as changes in circumstances which relate to the staff-student relationship.

11. Position of trust

A position of trust is where an adult has responsibility and direct contact with children and young people under 18. The definition also extends to persons in positions of responsibility for adults at risk.

12. Conflict of interest

An actual or perceived conflict of interest may arise in circumstances where an individual's personal interests or commitments interfere with, influence or compromise their obligations towards the Academy, its students or staff members. A conflict of interest may be connected to intimate personal relationships such as family, romantic or financial arrangements, as well as connections outside the Academy (see also [Conflicts of Interest Policy](#)).

13. Abuse of power

Abuse of power is where a person uses their position of power or authority to apply pressure in a way which may result in another person doing something, or refraining from doing something, that they may not have otherwise done. Abuses of power can include exploitative, manipulative, pressurising, coercive or grooming behaviours.

Actual or perceived power or authority may relate to someone's role or position, prestige or reputation, a position of trust, or relate to power dynamics that exist or develop within intimate personal relationships. Due to the nature of staff-student relationships, perceived or actual abuses of power may be unintentional but still have a negative impact on students.

POLICY STATEMENT ON STAFF-STUDENT INTIMATE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

14. To protect the welfare of students and act in the best interests of staff, the Academy:

- a) Prohibits a staff member from being in or entering into an intimate personal relationship with a student for whom they have professional responsibility, and
- b) A staff member must immediately declare to the Director of Human Resources (HR) if an intimate personal relationship exists, has developed, is developing or appears likely to develop between them and a student for whom they have professional responsibility.
- c) A staff member who does not have professional responsibility for students is strongly discouraged from entering into an intimate personal relationship with a student.

15. A staff member must also declare immediately to the Director of HR in circumstances where:

- b) The staff member is already in an intimate relationship with a student prior to the commencement of this policy (a requirement of the Ethics and Conduct Policy 2019).
- c) An intimate personal relationship already exists between a staff member and a student prior to one or both becoming a staff member or student at the Academy.
- d) There is a likelihood that a staff member will take on or assume responsibility for a student where an intimate personal relationship exists.
- e) There is or has been an intimate personal relationship between the staff member and student at any time including where there is no responsibility.

- f) There is a reasonable risk that a conflict may arise due to the nature of the staff member's role even where no professional responsibility exists.

16. Admissions, recruitment and financial processes

Staff must also be aware that the provisions of this policy also apply to recruitment, admissions and financial processes where there is a reasonable risk of an actual or perceived conflict of interest or abuse of power. This includes where an intimate personal relationship exists between:

- a) A staff member and a prospective candidate, applicant or offer-holder.
- b) A staff member and a student applying for a scholarship, bursary, or other financial assistance.
- c) A candidate for a role as a staff member and a student.
- d) Any other intimate personal relationship that may have a direct or indirect impact on awards or decision-making.

A declaration must be made by the staff member to the Director of HR at the earliest opportunity so that steps can be taken to prevent and reduce the risk of a potential or actual conflict of interest.

No student or prospective student will be disadvantaged by the existence of an intimate personal relationship with a staff member during the recruitment, admissions and awards processes at the Academy. However, the relevant staff member in these circumstances must not be involved in or influence the decision-making processes relating to the relevant candidate or student.

17. Whilst the existence of an intimate personal relationship with a student will not by itself pose a risk to a staff member's role, recruitment, progression, or opportunities, the following will be considered for immediate disciplinary action as outlined in this policy:

- a) Entering into a prohibited intimate personal relationship with a student.
- b) Unreasonable delay or non-disclosure of an intimate personal relationship with a student.
- c) Failure to comply with measures designed to mitigate the risk of a conflict of interest and abuse of power following a disclosed intimate personal relationship with a student.
- d) Other circumstances including but not limited to, alleged misconduct and non-consensual relationships.

UNDER-18 STAFF-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

- 18. The Academy's **Safeguarding Policy (Under-18s)** outlines the expectations, responsibilities and reporting procedures in relation to the education and welfare of children (under-18). All staff must familiarise themselves with the Safeguarding Policy, child protection procedures and designated safeguarding contacts.
- 19. The Academy prohibits sexual or romantic relationships with children, which will lead to immediate disciplinary action under this policy and the Safeguarding Policy (Under 18s).
- 20. In an education setting, sexual relationships between staff and students who are under 18 can lead to serious legal and disciplinary consequences. It is a criminal offence for an adult (over 18) and in a position of trust to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18. This applies whether or not the relationship is perceived to be consensual (Sexual Offences Act 2003).
- 21. In addition, the attempt or development of an intimate personal relationship with a child by an adult in a position of power, may be indicative of abusive, grooming or exploitative behaviour, which also constitutes a disciplinary matter under the Safeguarding Policy (Under 18s). The Designated Safeguarding Lead will also determine whether to refer the matter to the police in addition to disciplinary action.

ADULTS AT RISK

22. The Academy's **Safeguarding Policy (Over-18s)** outlines the expectations, responsibilities and procedures in relation to adults at risk and all staff must familiarise themselves with this policy.
23. The Academy prohibits intimate personal relationships with adults at risk, which will lead to immediate disciplinary action. Staff in a position of trust are reminded that a sexual relationship with an adult at risk, particularly if suffering from certain mental disabilities, may fall within the scope of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

STAFF-STAFF INTIMATE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

24. It is recognised that in certain contexts and circumstances, an intimate personal relationship between staff members may increase the risk that an actual or perceived conflict of interest, unfair advantage, breach of confidence, or abuse of power may exist or develop.
25. Where an intimate personal relationship exists or develops between staff members, it must be declared immediately to the Director of HR. This is to enable an assessment to take place and suitable measures to reduce the likelihood of risk be put in place, which will be kept under review.
26. A staff member in an intimate personal relationship will not be permitted to:
 - a) Engage in the recruitment, selection, appraisal, promotion, or in any other management activity or process involving the other staff member.
 - b) Work directly together where there is a reasonable likelihood that an actual or perceived conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality, abuse of power may arise from the overlap of personal and professional relationship.
 - c) Take part in any decision-making processes involving or connected to the other staff member.
 - d) Undertake roles or responsibilities that may directly or indirectly impact students due to the existence of the intimate personal relationship.
27. In order to determine suitable preventative measures, it is considered unavoidable that some information will be shared with relevant staff members. It will be for the Director of HR to determine necessary steps and preventative measures (see Disclosure Process below).
28. Identification and implementation of suitable measures may include but are not limited to:
 - a) Consulting with relevant staff members to identify the areas where the intimate personal relationship may overlap with professional roles and responsibilities at the Academy.
 - b) Identifying alternative line-management, supervision or support arrangements.
 - c) Reallocation or re-organisation of roles and responsibilities.
 - d) Identifying and reducing areas of impact where decision-making responsibilities may give rise to the reasonable likelihood of a perceived or actual conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality, or imbalance of power regarding other staff members or students.
29. In the context of the Academy, it is recognised that it may not always be possible to mitigate every circumstance and eventuality particularly within specialist and smaller departments. However, suitable measures must remain consistent with the purposes of this policy and kept under review.

SUPPORT AND ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

30. The Academy acknowledges the fundamental role that positive professional relationships between staff and students have in fostering an environment of learning and support.

Students are made aware of this policy through training and guidance designed to ensure they feel confident to seek support and advice when they need it. It is not the purpose of this policy for

students to be disadvantaged for participating in an intimate personal relationship with a staff member.

We recognise that students may be worried or concerned about the requirement for staff to disclose the existence of such a relationship as well as the consequences for not doing so. Students may feel that a disclosure may risk consequences to their studies and future career, or this may be suggested as a reason to conceal the relationship. However, it must be kept in mind that any conversations or directions towards secrecy and a lack of transparency may indicate the existence of a power dynamic that this policy seeks to address.

Disclosure of an intimate personal relationship between a staff member and student will be treated sensitively and students will be supported when raising questions and concerns in good faith. A student who would like advice can contact the Dean of Students or Senior Case Manager.

Students who have experienced inappropriate contact or approaches from a staff member or non-consensual behaviour are encouraged to contact the Senior Case Manager. Allegations of staff misconduct will be investigated in line with the relevant disciplinary processes.

Students can also raise concerns through **Report + Support** with their details or anonymously.

DISCLOSURE OF AN INTIMATE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

31. Staff must make a disclosure of an intimate personal relationship with a student or another staff member immediately and always within 2 weeks.
32. A disclosure will be treated sensitively and confidentially. Personal data will be stored and processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Please see www.ram.ac.uk/privacy for more information.
33. It is recognised that a disclosure may contain details that one or both parties do not wish to be made public and may be worried about potential consequences of the disclosure process, such as where it relates to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Disclosures will be handled in a respectful manner, with dignity and considering the wishes of both parties as far as possible.
34. An appropriate degree of confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process. It is anticipated that some limited information will need to be shared in the event that measures are required, for example with Heads of Department, line managers or for the purpose of safeguarding. This will be discussed with both parties and their opinions taken into consideration.
35. Staff are also encouraged to seek advice if the other party expressly does not wish the relationship to be disclosed.
36. If misconduct is alleged or identified during the intimate personal relationship disclosure process, the Academy reserves the right to instigate disciplinary proceedings.

DISCLOSURE PROCESS

37. Staff must follow this process to disclose an intimate personal relationship without delay:

Step 1: The staff member must contact the Director of HR by email outlining:

- a) their details including department and line manager
- b) the details of the other party (staff/student) and department
- c) the nature of the relationship (ie sexual/romantic/financial/family), and
- d) when the intimate personal relationship began (and/or ended if relevant).

Step 2: The Director of HR will acknowledge the disclosure and review the information. It is likely that both parties will be contacted and consulted in relation to preventative measures. Where necessary, a student will also be offered support through a meeting with the Dean of Students or Senior Case Manager.

It may be necessary to gather additional information from the Head of Department, line manager or other relevant staff members, to assess whether any actual or potential conflicts of interest exist and consider the practicalities of preventative measures in the circumstances. Any communications will be handled sensitively and confidentially to the extent that it achieves the purposes of the process.

At the end of the process, a summary will be sent in writing to the relevant staff member/student including information about support options.

A review of the preventative measures will take place in circumstances where the Director of HR is notified by the staff member that there is a relevant change of circumstances.

Step 3: If there is a dispute about the preventative measures or no satisfactory resolution can be reached, this will be referred to a member of the Senior Management Team for a determination to be made.

CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

38. The purpose of implementing preventative measures in relation to intimate personal relationships between colleagues or between staff and students is to remove or reduce the likelihood of potential or actual conflicts of interest and imbalances of power.

Therefore, the following will be considered during the review process by the Director of HR and/or member of Senior Management Team.

- a) The best interests and welfare of the student.
- b) Any known or disclosed risks of vulnerabilities relating to the staff member or student.
- c) Any relevant personal circumstances.
- d) The nature of the staff member's role and responsibilities and ongoing circumstances.
- e) The level of contact during study or work including any involvement in decision making processes that might be relevant.
- f) Whether any measures have already been discussed and/or implemented informally by the staff member or within the department in relation to the student's studies or between colleagues.
- g) The extent of any potential or actual conflicts of interest/power imbalance between the individual and impact on other students and/or staff members.
- h) Any concerns raised during the process about the practicalities of preventative measures to ensure they remain necessary and proportionate to the purposes of this policy.
- i) Any known or potential risks to Academy finances or assets.

39. Preventative measures to reduce the potential or actual conflicts of interest and imbalances of power may include but are not limited to:

- a) Changes to or reallocation of professional responsibility for the student or staff member.
- b) Additional supervision or co-supervision depending on the circumstances.
- c) Conditions relating to specific circumstances such as where there is temporary responsibility for a student, such as a short-term project or a visiting professor.
- d) Steps to notify relevant colleagues where necessary particularly where this may have an impact on academic, teaching or support relating to the student.
- e) In rare circumstances where options are limited due to specialisms, or where it is not possible to entirely remove risk, additional support measures will be put in place.

40. Additional information including notification requirements around changes of circumstances, support options and reporting processes will be provided.

ADVICE FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENT AND LINE MANAGERS

41. This policy and guidance is intended to support Heads of Departments and line managers with notifications they may receive regarding intimate personal relationships between colleagues or a staff member and student.

A Head of Department or line manager may receive information about an intimate personal relationship from a staff member, a student or a third party. Therefore, it is important that the following steps are taken to ensure that staff and students are supported in compliance with this policy.

Initial action in receipt of information or a notification about an intimate personal relationship:

- a) Acknowledge receipt of the information or notification, preferably in writing and treat the disclosure sensitively and confidentially where possible.
- b) Signpost the individual to this policy and disclosure process as well as staff or student support services.
- c) Consider whether there are any immediate steps that might be suitable and necessary to reduce professional responsibility or potential conflict of interest prior to a review by the Director of HR, for example pausing or re-allocating immediate responsibilities regarding the student.
- d) Seek advice from the Director of HR in the first instance. The Dean of Students or Senior Case Manager can also be contacted for support if there are concerns about the welfare of a student.

Heads of Department and line managers are also provided with additional support and training through in person/online insight sessions delivered through the year or by contacting HR.

RELATED POLICIES

42. Staff must review and comply with this policy in conjunction with the following:

1. [Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)
2. Dignity at Work Policy (via HR)
3. [Social Media Policy](#)
4. Safeguarding Policies ([under-18](#) and [over-18](#))

Alternative format

If you need help accessing this information or need it in an alternative format, please contact the general office on go@ram.ac.uk or call us on +44 (0)20 7873 7373.

Version history

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V1.1	23 JUNE 2025	New policy	Replaces Ethics and Conduct Policy 2019 - HR