

RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK POLICY	
Implementation date:	
Version number:	V1.0

1. Purpose

- 1.1. We understand that many people meet their partners at work and that personal relationships between staff are inevitable. The purpose of this policy is to govern personal relationships in the workplace while respecting the right of all

our staff to a private life. This policy does not prohibit staff from having a personal relationship with a work colleague but instead sets out guidelines for conduct within the workplace and provides a framework for managers to deal with personal relationships which may affect the business.

1.2. This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time.

2. Scope

2.1. This policy applies to all employees, officers, consultants, self-employed contractors, casual workers, agency workers, volunteers and interns.

3. Responsibilities

This table should outline the responsibilities for different areas of UA92. This could be committees, departments, particular types of staff member or individual office holders who may be responsible for operationalising the policy. Role titles should be used as opposed to named individuals.

Role	Responsible for
People Director	The People Director has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy but has delegated responsibility for overseeing its implementation to the People Team. Suggestions for changes to this policy should be reported to the People Team.
People Team	Any questions you may have about the day-to-day application of this policy should be referred to the People Team in the first instance.

4. Definition of personal relationship

- 4.1. When we use the phrase "personal relationship" in this policy we mean any emotional or romantic relationship which goes beyond the normally accepted boundaries of the professional sphere between colleagues. This will include formal, family relationships (for example, where people are married or living together). It will also include less formal situations (for example, where the parties consider that they are "seeing each other" or "going out together").
- 4.2. This definition is not intended to be exhaustive. Given the sensitive nature of personal relationships, all staff are required to use common sense in assessing whether or not this policy is relevant to them. If any person is unsure whether this policy applies to their circumstances, they should speak to the People Team in confidence about their situation.
- 4.3. This definition includes all personal relationships between any member of staff, regardless of whether those involved work in the same team, department, division or office, or at the same site.

5. Purpose of this policy

- 5.1. In many cases a personal relationship between staff will not interfere with work. However, sometimes a personal relationship will be or become problematic because it adversely impacts on other colleagues or negatively affects business efficiency. Personal relationships can be particularly

problematic where they involve members of the same team or are between a supervisor or manager and subordinate.

5.2. This means that personal relationships are potentially a legitimate management concern. In issuing this policy, we seek to address the following, non-exhaustive, issues which may arise where there is a personal relationship:

5.2.1. Lack of transparency in relation to workplace matters.

5.2.2. Risks to the confidentiality of business information.

5.2.3. Legal risks regarding discrimination and harassment.

5.2.4. Potential conflicts of interest of those involved in personal relationships.

5.2.5. Actual or perceived bias regarding recruitment, promotion, rostering, annual leave allocation, appraisals, discipline and grievance and other operational matters where staff in a personal or familial relationship are also in a direct reporting or subordinate relationship.

5.2.6. Potential for negative effect on general public perception of fairness, objectivity and impartiality.

5.2.7. Embarrassment of other staff.

5.2.8. Fear of favouritism by other colleagues.

5.2.9. General adverse impact on team dynamics and reduction in team morale.

5.2.10. Outputs may be disrupted in the event of relationship breakdown.

5.2.11. Impact on the People Team or management resources and increased legal risks in the event of relationship breakdown.

6. Management guidelines

6.1. Where a manager becomes aware that a member of their team is in a personal relationship with a colleague, they are required to treat this sensitively and, as far as possible, in confidence.

6.2. Most personal relationships should not have a significant impact on the workplace or efficiency of work. However, managers need to recognise their responsibility to all team members and to the needs of the business.

6.3. No action should be taken simply because a staff member is in a personal relationship with a colleague. Only if there is an issue or risk as outlined above should action be considered.

6.4. Managers will know that they must not discriminate against staff on various protected grounds. They should particularly consider the characteristics of sex, sexual orientation and age before taking any action as a result of a personal relationship. For example, it should not be assumed that the more junior person in a couple will be transferred out of a team, as this could be indirectly discriminatory.

6.5. Managers should be aware that conduct directed towards a colleague for personal reasons may be unwanted and that, in some circumstances, this could amount to unlawful harassment for which the employer could be liable. We will take any grievances (formal or informal) very seriously and investigate these without delay. Managers should escalate any complaints of this nature to the People Team as soon as possible.

6.6. Any information regarding personal relationships is confidential and likely to be protected under data protection laws. Managers and the People Team are reminded about their data protection obligations under the law and our Data Privacy Statement, including ensuring the security of such information.

- 6.7. Managers are also reminded that we have a duty to protect the health and safety of our staff and that this includes mental health. If a manager has concerns regarding the health impact of a personal relationship on a member of staff they should bring this to the attention of the People Team without delay.
- 6.8. Given the highly sensitive nature of personal relationships, managers should seek the assistance of the People Team before dealing with any issues which may arise. They should also ensure that a formal note is taken of any meetings to discuss personal relationships.

7. Conduct of those in personal relationships

- 7.1. Any members of staff who are in a personal relationship are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at work at all times in respect of such relationship. This means being considerate of the feelings of their other colleagues in their day-to-day dealings and being discreet in any discussions regarding their private life within the workplace. Public displays of affection are inappropriate in the work sphere.
- 7.2. Our equipment and resources are provided for work purposes only. Any inappropriate use in furtherance of a personal relationship will be treated as a disciplinary matter.
- 7.3. Our confidentiality rules continue to apply regardless of any personal relationship. Staff must ensure that they protect all confidential and commercially sensitive information from unauthorised disclosure.
- 7.4. As a matter of policy, colleagues who are in a personal relationship should not also be in manager/subordinate roles in the workplace. Where such a personal relationship arises, both parties are required to inform the People Team (people@ua92.ac.uk) , in confidence, as soon as reasonably practicable. We will then liaise with those involved to agree a plan to minimise the impact of the personal relationship on the business. This could include consideration of transferring one or both of the partners from their current role, if suitable. This will only be done with the agreement of those affected. If this is not possible for operational reasons, then we will consider putting in place appropriate safeguards to ensure transparency and fairness.
- 7.5. While there is no formal requirement for staff who are not also in a manager/subordinate relationship to disclose any personal relationship, they should consider whether it may be appropriate to inform the People Team (people@ua92.ac.uk) in any event or whether, having regard to their general duties of good faith towards their employer, they do so in relevant circumstances. For example, if there is a risk of a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest arising.
- 7.6. Failure to disclose a personal relationship as required by this policy will be treated as a disciplinary matter and, subject to investigation, could result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

8. Relationships between Employees and Students

- 8.1. We value good professional relationships between the UA92's employees and students, which are reliant on mutual trust and confidence. However, this can be jeopardised when employees and students enter into romantic and/or sexual relationships; this also includes circumstances where an individual whose primary relationship with the UA92 is as a student, but who also holds a position of work, whether in a paid or other capacity with the UA92.

- 8.2. Employees should recognise a professional and ethical responsibility to protect the interests of students, to respect the dynamics and the trust involved in the employee/student relationship and accept the constraints and obligations inherent in that responsibility, it is therefore the decision of the UA92 to strictly forbid relationships between employees and students. Any breach of this policy by an employee will be treated as a disciplinary matter and, subject to investigation, could result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal in line with our disciplinary policy.
- 8.3. Employees must be aware that students who are, or who have been involved in a romantic or sexual relationship with an employee have the right to raise this with UA92. This can lead to formal proceedings being considered against a member of staff.
- 8.4. Where a relationship is already in place prior to joining UA92, it is exempt.

9. Discrimination, harassment and other policies

- 9.1. All staff are reminded that they are subject to our policies on equality and diversity, discrimination and harassment and data protection and that breach of these policies may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.
- 9.2. We are committed to providing a workplace which is fair and equal. Nobody will be disadvantaged, discriminated against or otherwise subjected to a detriment because they are in a personal relationship. Any member of staff who has concerns about their treatment should raise this informally with their line manager in the first instance (if appropriate) or otherwise use the formal grievance procedure.
- 9.3. We will not tolerate any form of harassment of our staff and will take any allegations extremely seriously. Staff are reminded to consider their legal obligations towards colleagues. These may be especially pertinent at the beginning or end of a relationship, when professionalism and discretion will be particularly important.

10. Implementation, Communication and Training (where required)

- 10.1. This policy is reviewed annually by the People Team. The latest version of this policy can be found on the Handbook Sharepoint site.

11. Associated Policies and Documents

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Guidelines for maintaining professional boundaries with students

To protect both colleagues and students and to reduce the risk of allegations of improper behaviour, abuse of power, bias, sexual misconduct, discrimination, conflicts of interest, colleagues should adhere to the following guidelines:

- maintain an appropriate physical and emotional distance from students, ensuring that you do not create what could be considered a 'favourable' or 'special friendship';
- Ensure that meetings and discussions occur on campus or other UA92-approved premises.

- Refer students with support needs to Student Support Services and limit your role in providing personal support to a student where this is not part of your employment duties;
- Refrain from contacting students outside of reasonable working hours i.e. 8am – 6pm;
- Do not seek personal information from a student except as relevant to a UA92 process (e.g. medical information for special consideration, or personal circumstances information as part of an academic progress process),
- When corresponding with a student use your UA92 email account and wherever possible a UA92 telephone or work mobile number;
- ensure any correspondence to students is to a professional standard and bear in mind that any correspondence sent to, or about a student may be disclosed as part of a Subject Access Request;
- refrain from meeting a student on a one on one outside of office hours and off campus, particularly if such meetings may include the consumption of alcohol;
- unless necessary and using common sense refrain from sharing personal information or problems with a student. An example being that a student will need to be informed if their supervisor is going to be absent from work for a period of time, however they do not need to be made aware of personal information that has no bearing on their study and/or would potentially make them feel uncomfortable e.g. financial or marital difficulties;.
- do not physically comfort/embrace a student or use terms of endearment;
- do not provide a student with a gift, or lend/borrow personal items or money to or from a student;
- do not accept gifts from students unless they have completed their studies;
- give consideration to the tone and language used, taking into account cultural differences or language barriers which could lead to miscommunication or misunderstanding;
- adhere to the same guidelines, where logistically possible, when participating in fieldwork with a student, attending conferences and any other UA92 activities whilst away from the usual workplace;
- do not invite or encourage students, whether on a temporary or longer term basis, to reside in your home, or your shared accommodation.

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