

Staff & Student Personal Relationships Policy

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Tier:	1
Lead contact:	Head of Quality & Compliance
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Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations	Annex A.1: Academic Regulations & Credit Framework
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UK Quality Code reference:	Quality Code Expectations for Quality: Advice and Guidance: concerns, complaints & Appeals
OfS Conditions reference:	Condition E6: Harassment and Sexual Misconduct (in force 1 August 2025)
Equality and Diversity Considerations:	Policy should be available in accessible format for all students.
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Staff & Student Personal Relationships Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Every student should be safe during their time at university. This includes protection from harassment and sexual misconduct. As such NSCD has developed the Personal Relationship Policy to ensure there is a clearly defined policy on staff and student personal relationships.
- 1.2 Positive professional relationships between members of staff and students are central to students' educational development and welfare. However, intimate or close personal relationships between students and staff who have responsibility for them can cause significant problems because of conflicts of interest, imbalance of power and authority, perceived favouritism, and undermining of trust and confidence in the academic process. Being a member of staff brings with it certain duties and responsibilities. If a staff member behaves in an unprofessional way towards a student, it may have negative consequences for student welfare and may cause risk to both the staff member themselves and the wider institution.
- 1.3 This policy concerns consensual relationships - non-consensual behaviour is covered under the [Harassment, Sexual Misconduct & Related Behaviours Policy](#).
- 1.4 This policy is part of NSCD's response to Condition E6 (Harassment and Sexual Misconduct) of the Office for Students (OfS) regulatory framework, which came into force on 1 August 2025. It sits alongside the Harassment & Sexual Misconduct Policy as part of the single comprehensive source of information required by Condition E6.2¹. The condition is mandatory and sets out, among other matters, requirements for steps which providers must take to protect students from any actual or potential conflict of interest and/or abuse of power that may arise in intimate personal relationships between relevant staff members and students.

2. Scope & Principles

- 2.1 The policy sets out the expectations and obligations of staff at Northern School of Contemporary Dance (NSCD) and franchise partner providers, with respect to personal relationships between students and staff, regardless of gender, sexual orientation and identity.
- 2.2 This policy is intended to ensure that appropriate safeguards and processes are in place to prevent abuses of power and sexual misconduct.
- 2.3 To protect the welfare of students, and in the best interests of staff, NSCD:
 - a) Prohibits any relevant staff member (as defined in section 3) from entering into an intimate personal relationship with a student. Any breach of this prohibition will be

¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/student-rights-and-welfare/student-guide-to-harassment-hate-and-sexual-misconduct/what-to-expect/https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/student-protection-and-choice/harassment-and-sexual-misconduct/condition-e6-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct/>

addressed under NSCD's usual disciplinary process and may result in dismissal of the relevant staff member; and

b) Prohibits intimate or close personal relationships with staff or students who are under the age of 18 or who are considered an adult at risk; and

c) Strongly discourages any other close personal relationship between a staff member and student even when there is no direct responsibility.

d) Recognises, in line with the "excluded relationships" in OfS Condition E6.11(i), that the prohibition in (a) does not apply to any ongoing intimate personal relationship that (i) existed before 1 August 2025 and remains in existence, or (ii) existed before the staff member became a relevant staff member in relation to that student. Such relationships must still be declared under section 6 and managed under section 6.6 to address any actual or potential conflict of interest or abuse of power, and the student must not be disadvantaged by the steps taken; and

e) Confirms, in respect of any relationship that is permitted under (d) or otherwise managed under this policy, that: (i) the student may report any concern about harassment, sexual misconduct, conflict of interest or abuse of power through any of the channels set out in section 8 and the Harassment, Sexual Misconduct & Related Behaviours Policy, irrespective of whether the relationship has been declared or remains in place; (ii) the student will not be penalised by NSCD for participating in such a relationship; and (iii) the student will be protected by NSCD from retaliation by the staff member if they report harassment, sexual misconduct or any concern arising from the relationship.

All intimate or close personal relationships must be declared to ensure the boundaries of professional conduct are not transgressed.

- 2.4 Staff members, those at NSCD and/or franchise partner providers, are in a position of trust. It is important that they demonstrate exemplary behaviour. Staff should always give due consideration as to what is an appropriate environment and what is appropriate conduct in relation to the activities they are undertaking.
- 2.5 There is potential for abuse or the perception of abuse in any personal relationship between individuals in inherently unequal positions where one individual is expected to discharge their teaching or supervisory responsibility for the other, whether they are paid for their services (e.g. including honorary fellows and guest tutors). Such positions include, but are not limited to, a tutor and student, mentor and mentee, advisor and advisee, or support manager and student. This also includes support staff who report on progress of students or are influential to a student's development in any capacity.
- 2.6 Relationships in which one party is in a position to assess, evaluate the work or influence the career of the other, may also provide grounds for complaint by third parties when that relationship gives undue access or advantage, restricts opportunities, or simply creates a perception of these problems.
- 2.7 This policy seeks to protect students and staff from allegations of actual or perceived conflicts of interest, and to limit circumstances where a position of power may be abused. In doing so it seeks to ensure a positive and supportive working environment where all are treated fairly.
- 2.8 Students on a placement in an external organisation, and teaching students, must adhere to any policies on personal relationships within the external organisation. In the

absence of a policy in the external organisation staff and students must continue to follow this policy and should not enter close personal and intimate relationships with their placement mentors or company members who hold mentorship status.

- 2.9 Where a close personal relationship exists between a staff member and student, even when there is no direct supervision, the relationship may give rise to real or perceived conflict of interest, breach of trust or confidentiality, there must be a clear declaration of the relationship, **see Appendix A**.

Franchise Partner Providers

- 2.10 This policy applies to all franchise partner providers delivering programmes on behalf of NSCD. Where NSCD awards qualifications through a franchise arrangement, the standards set out in this policy extend to all staff employed or engaged by the franchise partner, this includes; guest tutors, wellbeing staff and freelance staff who have any responsibility for NSCD-registered students, regardless of the setting in which delivery takes place.
- 2.11 Franchise partner providers are responsible for ensuring that this policy is understood, implemented, and actively promoted within their own organisation. Each franchise partner must have in place its own procedures for managing staff and student personal relationships that meet or exceed the requirements of this policy and must ensure that any staff with responsibility for NSCD students are made aware of and comply with these standards.
- 2.12 Where a matter arises involving a staff member contracted or employed by a franchise partner and an NSCD-registered student, the franchise partner is responsible for managing the matter in the first instance, including any investigation and appropriate action, in line with this policy. Franchise partners must notify NSCD's HR Manager and Quality Office promptly of any declared relationships or alleged breaches involving NSCD students, so that NSCD can fulfil its oversight and regulatory responsibilities.
- 2.13 NSCD reserves the right to audit franchise partners' compliance with this policy and to take appropriate action, including under the terms of the franchise agreement, where standards are not met.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- 3.1 **'student'** includes any person pursuing a course of study leading to the award of a MA, degree, diploma, or certificate of the University.
- 3.2 **'relevant staff member'** means any arrangement where a person in their capacity as a member of staff has any academic, pastoral or administrative or similar responsibility for a student, including for supervising, tutoring, teaching, selecting, assessing, protecting, safeguarding, or providing a reference for, the student. In line with OfS guidance, this includes (but is not limited to) lecturers and other teaching staff, teaching assistants or guest tutors, dissertation or project supervisors, personal tutors, pastoral and welfare staff, security staff, and members of the Leadership Team and other senior staff with responsibility or oversight for institutional strategy such as governors, processes and delivery (e.g. the Principal/CEO and Vice Principal). Where a postgraduate or other student

is also engaged by NSCD in a teaching, demonstrating, ambassadorial, supervisory or similar capacity, this policy applies to them in that capacity in relation to any other student for whom they have direct responsibility.

3.3 ‘Intimate personal relationship’ has the meaning given by OfS Condition E6.11(m): a relationship that involves one or more of (i) physical intimacy, including isolated or repeated sexual activity, or (ii) romantic or emotional intimacy. It includes marriage and civil/life partnerships, regardless of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation, brief relationships and one-off occurrences, and relationships conducted in person, online, or by any other form of communication. For the avoidance of doubt, “emotional intimacy” under this policy is not intended to prevent staff from engaging compassionately and considerately with a student on a professional basis (for example as a personal tutor, supervisor or counsellor); but staff and students should be aware that emotional intimacy can also be formed through grooming behaviours, which may amount to abuse of power.

3.4 ‘Close personal relationship’ excludes intimate relationships but means a relationship where the nature, content, emotional involvement and/or frequency of interactions and/or communications between a staff member and a student transgress the boundaries of professional conduct or may be reasonably perceived to do so.

3.5 ‘Responsibility for a student’ is defined widely and includes any teaching, professional, pastoral or administrative responsibility or authority over a student, whether temporary or permanent. Situations where a staff member will have responsibility for a student will include, but not be limited to where:

- I. there is any direct supervisory or teaching relationship (for example between postgraduate students and their supervisor, or tutors and their tutees)
- II. a member of staff has direct or indirect responsibility for that student’s academic studies (for example, assessor of a student’s work)
- III. a member of staff has direct or indirect responsibility for that student’s personal welfare (for example providing welfare services or acting as a mentor or advisor).
- IV. a mentor or making decisions over opportunities or work placements.
- V. a member of staff is involved in the admission or selection of applicants or offer-holders.

3.6 ‘Position of trust’ - any staff member working closely with children, young people or adults at risk, is in a position of trust.

3.7 ‘Abuse of power’ has the meaning given by OfS Condition E6.11(a): a situation where a relevant staff member exploits a position of power in relation to a student so as to apply pressure in a way which (i) may result in the student doing something, or refraining from doing something, that they may not have otherwise done; and (ii) that action or inaction could reasonably result in something that falls within the scope of an intimate personal relationship. Abuse of power can take various forms and may include, but is not limited to, grooming, manipulation, coercion, and pressuring a student to engage in conduct they do not feel comfortable with. It includes both detrimental treatment (e.g. negative reviews or references, lower marks, withholding feedback or extensions, restricting access to opportunities, funding or resources) and ostensibly favourable treatment (e.g. positive reviews or references, higher marks, greater access to support or opportunities, promised introductions).

3.8 An **‘adult at risk’** is someone over the age of 18 who receives or may need community care services by reason of disability or illness and because of those needs is unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. This can relate to physical, mental or psychological wellbeing or the potential to be drawn into sexual or criminal exploitation and activity.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 All members of NSCD have a responsibility to abide by and promote the principles in this policy in relation to their work and duties at NSCD ensuring that:

- The policy is known, understood, and implemented.
- Individual behaviours take into consideration the impact it may have upon others.
- Everyone is treated with respect and dignity.
- Where a member of staff has concerns, they should raise this with their line manager or other relevant staff.

4.2 In order to maintain appropriate relationships with students, and to help reduce the risk of sexual misconduct, abuse of power or conflict of interest, staff should:

- I. maintain an appropriate physical and emotional distance from students and perform their NSCD duties in the best interests of the school without favour towards any individual student over another student.
- II. follow the [Safe Contact Principles](#) in all activities relating to NSCD.
- III. avoid creating special friendships with students.
- IV. use their NSCD email account, NSCD telephone, School software and applications and internet access for communications with students where possible, avoiding personal messaging (including on social media).
- V. set an example by writing and communicating with students in a professional and business style. Any email sent to a student or a colleague about a student may be disclosed to the student or their legal representative, for example under data protection law;
- VI. Staff should give careful consideration before giving their personal mobile phone number to a student. There may be occasions and circumstances however where this may be unavoidable. Staff are encouraged to use their work telephone numbers which may be diverted to the staff member’s personal mobile or access a school mobile phone for a period of time where possible .
- VII. The use of group messaging (i.e. WhatsApp) may be used by staff using personal mobile phone/s. On these occasions, staff should ensure this is for NSCD related activities such as; the planning/logistics for module activities or performances where it is deemed a more effective form of communicating to a group.
- VIII. where possible, ensure that meetings and discussions occur on campus or other NSCD-approved premises. Where not possible, ensure the meeting occurs in a public venue, such as a café.
- IX. refer students with support needs to the NSCD wellbeing team and limit the role in providing personal support to a student where this is not part of a staff members employment duties.
- X. refrain from contacting students outside of reasonable working hours.
- XI. not seek personal information from a student except as relevant to the NSCD process (e.g. medical information for special consideration, or personal circumstances information as part of an academic progress process). This should

be accessed via the formal routes of Student Review Board, published Personal Support Plans and action plans.

- XII. adhere to the same guidelines, where logistically possible, when participating in fieldwork with a student, attending conferences and any other school-based activities whilst away from the usual workplace.

4.3 The list below provides some examples of unacceptable behaviour towards students, please note that the below is not an exhaustive list of examples:

- I. Physical touching deemed as unprofessional or inappropriate that does not follow the principles as outlined in the [Safe Contact Principles](#)
- II. Comments or questions of a sexual nature (whether verbally or electronically).
- III. Paying undue special attention to a particular student/s.
- IV. Accepting gifts from a student, unless it is following final assessment completion and deemed to be a minor token of thanks in accordance with the NSCD's anti bribery policy.
- V. Inviting any individual student to your private home without using the declaration form (Appendix A)
- VI. Inviting a student to another venue or room without others present, or visiting their home or room, including while at conferences, overseas trips, or on placement.

4.4 The Leadership Team and HR Manager will be responsible for:

- Overseeing the continuing application and development of the Personal Relationships Policy in line with legislation and strategic objectives
- Overseeing the Register of Declarations and subsequent actions.
- Reporting on Staff and Student personal relationships to the Board of Governors and Regulator (OfS) as appropriate.

4.5 The Quality Office will be responsible for:

- Overseeing the development of the Personal Relationship Policy in line with the regulator and sector best practice, ensuring regular reviews are embedded within the policy review cycle at Senate.
- Managing confidential student records with all associated paperwork.

4.6 Franchise Partner Providers will be responsible for:

- Where a matter arises involving a staff member contracted or employed by a franchise partner and an NSCD-registered student, the franchise partner is responsible for managing the matter in the first instance, including any investigation and appropriate action, in line with this policy.
- Notifying NSCD's HR Manager and Quality Office promptly of any declared relationships or alleged breaches involving NSCD registered students.

5. Communication of Policy

- 5.1 This policy will be published in staff and student handbooks and posted on the NSCD Virtual Learning Environment and public website.

- 5.2 NSCD will endeavour to provide documents in different formats if requested by applicants, staff, and students.
- 5.3 The induction of all staff will include specific reference to the Policy and the responsibility of staff to reflect its principles in their own practice.
- 5.4 Training during each academic year will be available for all staff to ensure they are familiar with all relevant student-facing and whole school policies. Such training will include specific content on this policy, on appropriate professional boundaries, and on the likelihood of harassment and sexual misconduct occurring within intimate personal relationships between relevant staff members and students. Mandatory specialist training will be delivered for staff likely to be involved in receiving disclosures, undertaking investigations, or making disciplinary decisions arising from this policy or the Harassment, Sexual Misconduct & Related Behaviours Policy.
- 5.5 In accordance with the prominence principles in OfS Condition E6.11(o), NSCD will:
- (i) communicate the existence, content and access route of this policy and the wider Harassment, Sexual Misconduct & Related Behaviours Policy in writing to all students and to all staff at least once each calendar year;
 - (ii) reference the existence of these policies on the school website and other main documents promoting NSCD's higher education services;
 - (iii) reference the policies in the staff handbook and the student handbook; and
 - (iv) ensure that students confirm understanding of the policy at registration each year and that induction sessions for new students contain training on behaviour that may constitute harassment and/or sexual misconduct.
- 5.6 This policy forms part of NSCD's single comprehensive source of information on harassment and sexual misconduct under OfS Condition E6.2, alongside the Harassment, Sexual Misconduct & Related Behaviours Policy.
- 5.7 Historical versions of this policy will be retained and remain accessible to current and former students for as long as they may be relevant, in line with the prominence principles in OfS Condition E6.

6. Procedure for the declaration of personal relationships

- 6.1 All declarations are to be made as soon as reasonably practicable and always within one month using Appendix A.
- 6.2 It is the responsibility of the staff member to declare a close personal relationship. Students will not be held responsible to declare such relationships.
- 6.3 As the declaration contains sensitive personal data it will be stored securely and managed in compliance with data protection legislation. Such declarations will be treated respectfully, sensitively, and confidentially, and the wishes of both parties respected as far as is possible.

- 6.4 If in doubt the best course is to declare a relationship, or any interaction with a student that is of concern, so that appropriate measures (to protect both the student and the member of staff) can be considered.
- 6.5 Staff and students must complete the Personal Relationship Declaration Form (Appendix A). This form should be completed even if the relationship was previously declared on a job or course application form. The steps within the reporting process are detailed below:

Stage	Detail
Step 1	Staff: should submit the form to HR; who may need to discuss the details with the staff member or with the Line Manager or Leadership team. Students: should submit the form to the Quality Office who may need to discuss the details with the students or with the staff member's Line Manager, HR or Leadership team.
Step 2	HR, Leadership team and the Quality Office will review the form and where appropriate and necessary, will consult the parties and the Line Manager on what actions, if any, are required to remove any potential conflict. The actions will be documented on the form and copies provided to the relevant parties. HR will store the form securely on the member of staff's central HR file.
Step 3	Any unresolved matter may be referred to the Leadership team.

- 6.6 In placing measures to manage any conflict of interest, HR, the Leadership team and/or Quality Office may consider the following:

- I. any known vulnerability of the student.
- II. the student's or colleague's personal circumstances at the time
- III. whether there is a supervision or teaching arrangement in place
- IV. the circumstances of the student when the close personal relationship commenced or was initiated (for example, if the personal relationship existed prior to the staff/student relationship);
- V. any special family, kinship, and other significant relationships
- VI. the nature of the two individuals' contact in study
- VII. the potential for the staff member to influence the academic progress and outcomes or career progression of the student or colleague; and
- VIII. the extent of the power imbalance between the two individuals.

6.6 Following disclosure, the person to whom the disclosure has been made will ensure as appropriate that the student is aware of the disclosure and that alternative arrangements are put in place to avoid the member of staff having any professional connection with the student.

6.7 Both the staff member and student will be notified of the conflict-of-interest management measures put in place.

7 Breach of the Policy

- 7.1 Any instances of infringement will be investigated and where appropriate will be considered under the relevant complaints/grievance and disciplinary policy for staff or students. Failure to comply with this policy, or any arrangements which are put in place under it, will be addressed under NSCD's usual disciplinary process. In the case of a relevant staff member, the available outcomes include the possibility of dismissal where the seriousness of the breach so warrants. The consequences of any breach will be proportionate to the seriousness of the conduct, having regard to the need to guard against future conflicts of interest or abuse of power and to discourage breaches of this policy.
- 7.2 Unprofessional or inappropriate conduct towards a student or staff member is not acceptable. This may breach the [Harassment and Sexual Misconduct & Related Behaviours Policy](#) and/or the [Staff Disciplinary Policy](#), and other school and HR policies and procedures.
- 7.3 A student should seek advice immediately if they feel they have been subject to unprofessional or inappropriate conduct, by speaking to the Quality Office, Student Services or the Student Support team to ensure appropriate advice and support is provided.
- 7.4 A staff member should seek advice immediately if they feel they have been subject to unprofessional or inappropriate conduct, by speaking to the Quality Office, line manager, Vice Principal, or HR to ensure appropriate support is provided.
- 7.5 Anyone suspecting a member of staff of acting inappropriately towards a student under the age of 18 or an adult at risk should contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who will act within the [Safeguarding Policy](#). The DSL may contact the leadership team, HR and this may be referred to the local authority designated officer and/or the police.
- 7.6 A relevant staff member who enters into, or fails to declare, an intimate or close personal relationship with a student for whom they have a professional connection is in breach of section 2.2(a) of this policy. This applies whether the relationship was deliberately concealed or comes to NSCD's attention by other means, and whether or not a complaint has been made (in line with the "incident" trigger in OfS Condition E6.11(l), which includes circumstances where NSCD has reasonable grounds to suspect that an undisclosed relationship exists). The breach will be investigated under the relevant disciplinary procedure and may result in dismissal. Steps taken under section 6.6 to manage any conflict of interest will be designed to ensure that the student is not disadvantaged.
- 7.7 An unintentional or late failure to declare a close personal relationship (i.e. one that does not engage section 2.2(a)) with a student, where there is a real or perceived conflict of interest or breach of trust or confidentiality, will be reviewed by HR and the Leadership Team and may be investigated under the disciplinary procedure. The student involved will not be penalised by NSCD for the relationship and will be protected from retaliation by the staff member, in line with section 2.2(e).

8 . Complaints

8.1 Staff, students or visitors who wish to make a complaint regarding a personal relationship should seek resolution through the complaints procedure..

- [Student Complaints Policy & Procedures](#)
- [Staff Complaints Policy & Procedures](#)
- [Public Complaints Procedure](#)

9. Related Documents

- [Harassment, Sexual Misconduct & Related Behaviours Policy](#)
- [Non-Academic Misconduct Policy](#)
- [Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Safeguarding Policy](#)
- [Learning Culture & Code of Practice](#)
- [Safe Contact Principles](#)
- [E Safety & Online Policy](#)
- [Acceptable use of IT Systems Policy](#)

10. Key contacts

Name	Role	Email
Human Resources Manager	Lead contact for staff	Geraldine.mcdowall@nscd.ac.uk
Quality Office	Policy Oversight	quality.office@nscd.ac.uk
Designated Safeguarding Officer	Safeguarding (students under 18 / adults at risk)	safeguarding@nscd.ac.uk
Student Services	Student support / general enquiries	studentservices@nscd.ac.uk

11. Appendices

Appendix A Staff & Student Personal Relationships Declaration Form