

<b>Policy on Personal Relationships Between Staff and Adult Students</b>		
<b>Lead:</b> Executive Director: People Services		<b>Status:</b> Approved
<b>Version:</b> 1		<b>Date of Version:</b> 9 September 2025
<b>Approving Body:</b> Executive Team		<b>Supersedes:</b> N/A
<b>Approved on:</b> 9 September 2025		<b>Next Review Date:</b> September 2028
<b>Equality analysis tool<sup>1</sup></b>		
1.	Is the policy relevant to the public sector equality duty?	No
2.	Have any concerns previously been raised about this policy or practice?	No
3.	Is likely to result in discrimination against a protected group?	No
4.	Does this policy positively contribute to the participation of under-represented groups in the College's activities?	No
<b>Version Control</b>		
<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Change(s)</b>
V1	9 September 2025	N/A
<b>Access</b>		
<b>Location</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	
Service Centre	People Services and HE	
Document Centre	Yes	
Public Website		
<b>Communication</b>		
<b>Medium</b>	<b>Audience</b>	
College News, LCBs Heads Meetings	All staff	

<sup>1</sup> The Screening Template in relation to the Policy on Personal Relationships Between Staff and Adult Students can be found on page 6 of this document.

## Heart of Yorkshire Education Group

### Policy on Personal Relationships Between Staff and Adult Students

#### 1. Purpose

1.1 This policy sets out the Heart of Yorkshire Education Group's expectations regarding close personal relationships between staff members and students.

The Group recognises the right of adults to engage in personal relationships. However, we also have a responsibility to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to safeguard staff and students where such relationships exist.

The difference in role and authority between a member of staff and an adult student can create situations that are vulnerable to exploitation and may give rise to real or perceived inequalities. These may affect not only the individuals directly involved but also other students and staff within the Group.

It is vital that the staff–student relationship is founded on trust, professionalism, and respect so that all students can benefit equally from their learning experience. Any personal relationship between a member of staff and an adult student must not prejudice this equality, either actual or perceived.

Accordingly, staff must not have close personal relationships with students for whom they have responsibility for teaching, assessment, guidance, or support.

#### 2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to personal relationships between staff and adult students enrolled at the Heart of Yorkshire Education Group. The policy should be read in conjunction with [The Code of professional Conduct](#).

2.2 Separate arrangements for children and young people are covered in the [Guidance on Safe Working Practice for the Protection of Young People and Staff at Heart of Yorkshire Education Group](#) and in [Keeping children safe in education 2025 - Statutory guidance for schools and colleges](#). These make clear that any sexual behaviour by a member of staff with or towards a student or other young person is unacceptable.

It is an offence for a member of staff in a position of trust to engage in sexual activity with a student under the age of 18 and sexual activity with a child could be a matter for criminal and/or disciplinary procedures. Young people are protected by the same laws as adults in relation to non- consensual sexual behaviour. They are additionally protected by specific legal provisions depending on their age and understanding.

2.3 For the purpose of this policy:

**Close personal relationships** include intimate relationships, close friendships, and family relationships.

**Intimate relationships** are defined as romantic and/or sexual relationships, whether formal (e.g. marriage, civil partnership, or cohabitation) or informal/casual.

### **3. Intimate Relationships**

3.1 Any staff member who is in, or enters, an intimate relationship with an adult student for whom they have teaching, assessment, or pastoral responsibility must declare this relationship to their senior leader immediately.

3.2 The senior leader will confirm the declaration with the student in confidence.

3.3 If an intimate relationship is declared, the senior leader will take the following steps:

- a) Create a confidential record to be held centrally on their personal record within People Services.
- b) Ensure the staff member is removed from direct responsibility for teaching, assessing, or providing pastoral support to the student.
- c) Allocate alternative support/teaching arrangements to protect both the student's learning experience and the integrity of assessment.
- d) Ensure the student is not disadvantaged and continues to receive appropriate support.
- e) Require the staff member to notify their line manager should the relationship end, so that appropriate records can be updated.

### **4. Family Relationships**

4.1 Staff must declare any family relationship with an applicant or current student to their line manager.

4.2 Students will also be asked, as part of the enrolment process, to declare if they have a family relationship with any member of staff.

4.3 The Group does not permit staff to take on direct teaching, assessment, or pastoral responsibility for close family members (parents, stepparents, carers children, siblings (full half or step), grandparents, grandchildren, any member of the same household).

4.4 Where other family relationships exist; the Group will seek to make alternative arrangements to avoid any conflict of interest.

4.5 Any new family relationship that arises during the student's programme of study must be declared by both staff and student as soon as possible.

## 5. Friendships

Friendship refers to positive and respectful interactions between staff and students/young people. These interactions should foster a supportive and professional environment.

5.1 While staff should be friendly and supportive, relationships must always remain professional to ensure a clear boundary between personal and professional interactions.

5.2 Social contact outside of formal activities should be avoided to prevent conflicts of interest, favouritism, or blurred boundaries. For example, contact with students or attending social events, together outside of Group activities or working hours could lead to misunderstandings

5.3 Staff should always maintain professional judgment and conduct, ensuring that their actions are in the best interest of the students and the Group.

5.4 Any friendship that arises during the student's programme of study which conflicts with the spirit of this guidance should be discussed and raised with the appropriate senior manager as soon as possible to ensure transparency and address any potential issues.

## 6. Sexual Harassment Legislation and Procedures

In addition to safeguarding legislation, the Group is committed to complying with all relevant sexual harassment legislation. Any allegations of sexual harassment involving staff and students will be taken seriously and investigated in accordance with appropriate Group policy. Procedures for reporting, investigating, and responding to complaints of sexual harassment are communicated within the Group Sexual Harassment Policy, to ensure a safe and respectful environment for all.

## 7. Responsibilities and Compliance Monitoring

All staff are required to participate in regular continuing professional development, including training on safeguarding, equality, diversity, and maintaining professional boundaries. The Group will provide regular and appropriate opportunities for staff to update and enhance their knowledge and practice in these areas.

All Group arranged social activities, both inside and outside working, hours must be covered by an appropriate Risk Assessment which requires staff to have read and understood this policy and the other policies referenced in paragraph 2.

The Group will monitor compliance to ensure that all staff are maintaining up to date knowledge on relevant practice. Regular audits of training records will be undertaken.

## **8. Failure to Comply**

Failure to comply with this policy including failure to declare a personal relationship with any student will be regarded as a conduct issue and dealt with in accordance the Group's Disciplinary Procedure.

## **9. Review**

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

## Appendix One: Screening Tool

### Public sector equality duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Group to have **due regard** for the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups; this involves considering the need to:
- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- Meet the needs of people with protected characteristics;
- Encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in activities where their participation is low; and to
- Foster good relations between people from different groups - this involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups.

Consequently, we need to assure ourselves that our policies will not have an adverse differential impact on any particular group. This pre-screening section will enable you to identify whether your policy is likely to have an adverse differential impact.

Please use the following template to help determine whether an equality analysis is required.

<b>Name of the Policy: Policy on Personal Relationships Between Staff and Adult Students</b>
Author(s): Karen Sykes

<b>Author(s) of Equality Analysis:</b>
Name: Karen Sykes
Job title: Group Executive Director People Services
Date:
Signature:

In order to decide whether the policy requires further action, please complete the following questions:

**1. What are the main aims, purpose and outcomes of the policy?**

In light of recent changes to legislation, our HEI partners require us to have in place an explicit policy on the above to provide clarity of expectations and to protect both staff and students. The attached draft policy has therefore been drawn up, pulling together existing elements from our Code of Professional Conduct and Guidance on Safe Working Practice. The draft is based on a policy provided by one of our university partners.

**2. Will these aims affect our duty to:**

	<b>Yes / No</b>	<b>How?</b>
Advance equality of opportunity?	Yes	By providing clarity on expected standards.
Eliminate discrimination?	Yes	
Eliminate harassment?	Yes	
Foster good relations between people from different groups?	Yes	
Tackle prejudice and promote understanding between people from different groups?	Yes	

**3. What aspects of the policy, including how it is delivered, or accessed, could contribute to inequality?**

None

**4. Will the policy have an impact (positive or negative) upon the experience of people, including those who share a protected characteristic? Not specifically**

**4.1 Please complete the following table:**

Protected characteristic	Meet needs of people with this characteristic	Encourage participation (if under-represented)	Remove or minimise disadvantages	Possible negative impact
Race			X	
Gender			X	
Disability			X	
Religion / belief			X	
Sexual orientation			X	
Gender reassignment			X	
Pregnancy /maternity			X	
Age			X	
Marriage / civil partnership*			X	

**Evidence:**

**4.2 In addition, please consider whether this policy may indirectly discriminate against young adult carers (16-24). Although not a legally protected group, this group often suffers disadvantage due to their caring responsibilities and we have a moral duty to protect them.**

Evidence:

N/A

**4.3 What different needs, experiences or attitudes are particular communities or groups likely to have in relation to this policy? N/A**

## Next steps

If your answers to these questions have identified potential negative impacts, then you should consider further consultation or action to minimise the differential impact. Please contact the Executive Director Curriculum & Quality for support.

If no further action is required, please sign the declaration below and include with all published copies of the policy.

## Declaration

The policy does not have a significant impact upon equality issues and therefore does not require any further action.

<b>Author(s) of EA.</b>
Name: Karen Sykes
Job title: Group Executive Director People Services
Date:
Signature: