

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK – GUIDANCE AND SCENARIOS FOR COLLEAGUES AND MANAGERS

ALL PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Support, Report, Respect Tool

Leeds Beckett has recently introduced a [Support, Report, Respect](#) tool to help both staff and students with any experiences of unacceptable behaviour. Through this tool you may also raise concerns anonymously.

What if I know about/am made aware of a relationship which is impacting on a colleague, team or student? Who do I tell/what should I do?

You may raise concerns via the University's [Support, Report, Respect tool](#) (see above). You may also find it helpful to refer to the University's [Preventing and Addressing Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#).

Colleague Relationships –Talk to your line manager in the first instance (or another manager in your School/Service) about your concerns.

Confidentiality:

What happens if I choose to disclose my relationship to the Employee Relations team, rather than my manager?

A member of the Employee Relations team will work with you to discuss the situation and potential conflicts of interest. Where action is needed in relation to your job responsibilities or other work-related actions, in consultation with you, they will discuss the best way to share necessary information with relevant managers within the School/Service to enable these actions to be implemented. The aim of the discussion and disclosure is not to disadvantage individuals.

What information will you hold about my relationship and how long will you hold it for?

Where your relationship is with a student, the form at Appendix 1 of the Personal Relationships at Work Policy will be completed with you. The focus of the form is on actions to prevent any safeguarding issues and/or concerns arising – minimal personal data is captured. For example, if a Course Administrator declares that they are in a relationship with a student in the same School, one of the appropriate actions would be to ensure that they are not responsible for any administration of the course that the student is studying. The Appendix 1 form will be retained on your electronic personal file on the HR (iTrent) system for the duration of the student's studies with Leeds Beckett, plus 6 months (or, on request, end of relationship plus 6 months if this is sooner).

You do not need to complete the Appendix 1 form if your relationship is with another colleague. Where action is necessary, your manager will arrange for a short file note (titled Confidential Disclosure) to be kept on your HR file. This will detail the agreed changes/actions and specify that there is a conflict of interest (but not include personal details of the relationship). You may choose to keep your own records of any related meetings with your manager if you wish.

Your staff record is available to you on request through the processes for managing [Subject Access Requests](#). Managers can request relevant information via Human Resources.

I'm concerned that people may be 'outed' against their wishes because of compliance with this policy

We would expect that the individuals within the relationship will discuss the requirements of the Personal Relationships at Work Policy, prior to discussing their relationship with their manager/Employee Relations Team. The policy is put in place to safeguard individuals and maintain a safe, welcoming and inclusive community and applies to everyone regardless of sexual orientation. A Data Protection Impact Assessment

and Equality Impact Assessment have been undertaken and action taken to minimise the information collected, who can access it and the length of time that it is stored for. On balance, we consider the policy to be appropriate and proportionate. We have also sought and acted on feedback from [Stonewall](#)¹ prior to the implementation of the policy.

COLLEAGUE AND COLLEAGUE RELATIONSHIPS

Before the new policy was introduced, I was already in a relationship with another colleague – what do I need to do?

Review the Personal Relationships at Work Policy – not all relationships need to be declared or discussed with your manager. For example, if you are in a relationship with another colleague and you do not work closely together (and there is no conflict of interest) then you do not need to take any action.

If you have already had a discussion with your manager about your relationship and arrangements are already in place, review the Personal Relationships at Work Policy to see if a further discussion is needed.

If you haven't already talked to your manager about your relationship (and it is one which needs declaring under the Personal Relationships at Work Policy), speak to your manager (or a colleague in the Employee Relations team), even if your relationship is common knowledge. You should have this conversation as soon as reasonably practical (and within 6 weeks of the introduction of the new policy). Your manager will discuss with you any reorganisation of duties and/or alternative management/ supervisory/approval arrangements. This discussion and action are important safeguards for you, the other person in the relationship, and for the University.

A member of my team has told me that they are in a personal relationship (including family relationships) with another colleague – what guidance is available for managers?

It is the responsibility of the manager of a team within which employees are in a personal relationship (or have a family relationship) to take action, where required, to ensure the relationship is not the cause of a conflict of interest. No action should be taken simply because a colleague is in a personal relationship with another colleague. Only if there is an issue or risk (as outlined in Appendix 2 of the Personal Relationships at Work Policy) should action be considered. Confidentiality **must** be maintained if the colleagues do not wish their relationship to be disclosed. Managers are reminded about their data protection obligations under the law and our Data Protection Policy, including ensuring the security of such information.

Where a colleague tells you that they are in a personal relationship with another colleague, you should arrange a meeting to:

- Discuss professional/personal boundaries and personal responsibility for behaviour with the individual(s) (particularly if it is a small team and some supervision will remain). Put parameters in place where possible to mitigate against confidential information being shared due to the relationship rather than required by the work.
- Discuss other potential impacts on the team and team members, and how to best mitigate these.
- Agree alternative operational arrangements as appropriate (and if required). Where a personal relationship exists between a line manager and a person for whom the line manager has responsibility, advice can be sought from the Employee Relations team to agree and implement alternative arrangements (e.g. approval of leave/expenses, PDR, work allocation etc).
- Consider and agree who else needs to know about the relationship and/or the alternative operational arrangements. The Dean/Director should be informed where action is required.
- Write a short file note of the agreed changes/actions. It is intended that you will be able to upload this directly to iTrent in the future via iTrent manager self service. In the interim, please forward this to the

¹ Stonewall provide information, support and guidance on lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace (LGBTQ+) inclusion.

Employee Relations Team (employeeerelationsteam@leedsbeckett.ac.uk) for upload to the individual's HR file.

- Where relationships end, you may need to have a further discussion with the individuals and potentially agree different actions and working arrangements to ensure separation of personal and professional life. Please also refer to the 'Further Guidance and Support' section below.

Where colleagues work within different parts of the University, specifically the manager should:

- Discuss any potential overlap of work or potential conflicts of interest, and appropriate actions to mitigate these. Where colleagues do not work closely together and there is no overlap, then colleagues do not need to tell their manager about the relationship.

Managers may contact the Employee Relations team (Employeeerelationsteam@leedsbeckett.ac.uk) for further advice and guidance on particular situations.

A member of my team is interested in a promotion/development opportunity, but if they are successful then they will be working closely with another colleague with whom they have a personal relationship – what should I do?

Under the [Recruitment and Selection Policy](#), panel members must declare to the Chair any significant relationship or friendship with applicants prior to the short-listing or interviewing taking place. Where a panel member is related to an applicant or shares a close personal relationship, the panel member will withdraw from further involvement in the selection process and an alternative panel member will be sought. Further advice should be taken from HR Services where there is any uncertainty or where the Chair wishes to declare a relationship.

Where a promotion/new appointment means that a colleague will be working closely with another colleague with whom they have a personal relationship, the same guidance for the manager/colleague discussion as given above applies.

If my manager changes, or I change job, do I need to let my new manager know about my relationship (or will information be passed to them)?

You are encouraged to disclose the relationship to your new manager, so that any action taken to mitigate potential impacts continues to be supported.

Who do I talk to if my relationship is with my manager?

You and your manager should talk to your manager's manager, or the Employee Relations team.

What about family relationships and close friendships – do I need to talk to my manager about these?

We recognise that the nature of our community means that colleagues may work with other colleagues with whom they have a family relationship; or develop close friendships. As detailed in the Personal Relationships at Work Policy, it is expected that colleagues will inform their manager of a close family relationship with another colleague where they work closely together and there is a conflict of interest (or potential conflict of interest). To minimise the possibility of bias during formal processes such as recruitment (including internal recruitment), panel members must declare any significant relationship or friendship prior to the process taking place (more information is available in the Personal Relationships at Work Policy and [Recruitment and Selection Policy](#)).

FURTHER GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Use of Personal Social Media to communicate with colleagues and students

The University's [Social Media Policy](#) contains principles to guide personal use of social media and to maintain appropriate boundaries, in particular:

"In communicating with students, colleagues, or anyone outside our University, we must all consider...:

c. The maintaining of suitable boundaries, both professional and personal, between employees and students in particular where mutual respect is an important part of the relationship at University.

d. The relationship between those involved in the communication. Is there an imbalance of power (real or perceived) within this relationship? Could the communication be perceived as dogmatic, inappropriate, or bullying?"

Support for colleagues following a relationship breakdown

All colleagues who work at our University have access to wellbeing and lifestyle support from our employee assistance programme. The employee assistance programme is a free, confidential employee benefit designed to help you with any personal or professional problems that may be affecting your home or work life, general health or wellbeing. More information is available on the [Wellbeing webpage](#).

Support for students following a staff/student relationship breakdown

Support and information which students may find useful can be found on the following websites:

[Leeds Beckett Student Wellbeing Team](#)

<https://www.thecalmzone.net/guides/relationship-breakdown>

[The Mix](#) is a young peoples website with information and advice about a range of topics including relationship breakdown.

If students need to apply for mitigation due to impact on health following a relationship breakdown, the Leeds Beckett Student Union Advice service provides free, confidential and independent help to all students at Leeds Beckett <https://www.leedsbeckettsu.co.uk/advice/>