

Royal Northern College of Music

Relationships Between College Staff and Students

Policy & Procedure

Department: Human Resources

**Document owner: Head of Human
Resources**

**Approval Committee: Executive
Committee / Board of Governors**

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RNCM
ROYAL NORTHERN
COLLEGE of MUSIC

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 The Royal Northern College of Music aims to provide a working and learning environment which enables staff and students each to realise their full potential and contribute to a vibrant and mutually supportive community.
- 1.2 Whilst the College does not seek to regulate the personal lives of staff and students, they are required to respect and maintain the boundaries of personal and professional life and comply with their professional, legal and moral responsibilities to ensure that the welfare and interests of all staff and students are protected and that the proper delivery of teaching and learning, academic standards and the College's smooth functioning, good standing and reputation are preserved. Whilst personal relationships between students and members of staff must not be perceived by others to prejudice equality of treatment, they have the potential to disrupt the teaching and learning environment for other students and staff.
- 1.3 The College recognises the benefits of an active College community where interaction between colleagues, staff and students is a positive aspect. However, the College also recognises that the inherent nature of staff and student roles means that staff are in a position of power relative to a student, irrespective of the student's age, maturity and level of study.
- 1.4 There is potential for sexual misconduct to occur due to the power and influence imbalance between staff and students. Consequently, intimate relationships and close friendships between staff and students are strongly discouraged by the College. However, should such a situation arise, the requirements for declaring the relationship set out in the policy will apply.
- 1.5 This Policy prescribes:
- The relationships between staff and students which are strictly prohibited by the law and by the College;
 - The relationships which are **strongly discouraged** by the College (including the reasons for this); and
 - The declarations which must be made and the procedures which shall be followed, in the event of certain relationships existing or developing.
- 1.6 The College is mindful, and will remain mindful when implementing this Policy, of its legal obligations including its duty of care and its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998, and the offences set out in the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

2. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- 2.1 This Policy applies to:
- All individuals currently working (and those who have applied to work) at all levels and grades, including senior managers, officers, employees, teaching consultants and contractors, trainees, homeworkers, part-time and fixed-term employees, casual workers and agency staff (collectively referred to as 'staff' in this Policy); and
 - All College students and student applicants irrespective of their age or course of study (collectively referred to as 'students' in this Policy).

- 2.2 In the context of this Policy, a Relationship is defined as including:
- An 'Intimate Relationship', meaning **any** sexual or romantic relationship, however brief, whether a heterosexual or same sex relationship either in person or remotely (e.g. via social media, email or text messaging);
 - A 'Family Relationship', meaning a parental/ brother/ sister/ uncle/ aunt/ niece/ nephew/ grandparent/cousin relationship.
 - A 'close friendship', meaning a non-sexual/physical relationship which could impact on academic integrity.

- 2.3 If any student finds themselves in receipt of unwanted or inappropriate behaviour or involved in a relationship that they do not consider to be truly consensual, or if they consider that they have been adversely affected by a misuse of power, authority, or conflict of interest, they should refer to the College's policy on Dignity at Work. Any complaint by a student should follow the Student Complaints Policy and Disciplinary Procedures.

Members of staff who experience unwanted advances and other unwelcome behaviour, to include advances from students, should also refer to the College's Dignity at Work policy.

3. INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS UNDER THE AGE OF 18

- 3.1 Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 it is a criminal offence for a person aged 18 or over ('A') to engage in prescribed sexual activity (including touching) with someone under the age of 18 ('B') where A is in a position of trust in relation to B. For these purposes, a position of trust includes where A looks after (including having responsibility for) persons under 18 who are receiving education at an educational institution and B is receiving education at that institution. The College strictly prohibits any such activity.
- 3.2 The College strictly prohibits Intimate Relationships between staff and students under the age of 18.

4. INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS AGED 18 AND OVER

- 4.1 In order to protect the welfare of staff and students, to preserve the reputation of the College and to avoid incidents and allegations of impropriety, bias, abuse of authority, discrimination and harassment, conflict of interest, favouritism and potential disruption to the teaching and learning environment, the College **strongly discourages** Intimate Relationships between staff and students aged 18 and over.

5. FRIENDSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS AGED 18 AND OVER

- 5.1 In order to protect the welfare of staff and students, to preserve the reputation of the College and to avoid incidents and allegations of impropriety, bias, abuse of authority, discrimination and harassment, conflict of interest, favouritism and potential disruption to the teaching and learning environment, the College strongly discourages close friendships between staff and students aged 18 and over.

6. DECLARATION OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS

6.1 In the event of the development or existence of a Relationship (including an Intimate Relationship or a Family Relationship) with a student, the member of staff concerned is required immediately to declare it to the Head of Human Resources or the Human Resources Officer, who shall then make a declaration to an appropriate Senior Manager (for example, Line Manager/Head of School/Head of Department) for consideration. The member of staff must inform the student of this declaration and seek the student's consent where possible. If a member of staff is in any doubt as to whether a declaration should be made, he/she should seek guidance from the Head of Human Resources or the Human Resources Officer.

6.2 The recipients of a disclosure shall treat all information sensitively and shall not seek more detail than is necessary; nor shall the information be made available to colleagues other than those who need to know for the proper conduct of College business.

6.3 The Senior Manager shall consider the disclosure and any other supplemental or relevant information and determine what if any arrangements should be put in place. This consideration and determination shall be taken having consulted with others where necessary, including the member of staff concerned. The arrangements may include but are not limited to:

- ensuring, where possible, that the member of staff does not have any responsibility for aspects of the student's work which require judgement, for example assessment;
- ensuring that the member of staff is not in any position to take decisions affecting the student, including the provision or withholding of the following: facilities for research; the allocation of places on courses or of bursaries, scholarships or loans; the awarding of any other benefits, financial or otherwise; or for allocation of performance opportunities;
- ensuring that appropriate steps are taken to minimise the potential effect of the Relationship on other students and staff and on the College;
- in the case of Intimate Relationships, ensuring that arrangements for teaching or supervision are such that the two parties do not have one-to-one contact and are kept separate, if that is reasonable and practicable, for example in terms of tutorial groups;
- ensuring that appropriate support (including academic and/or pastoral support) is made available to the student.

6.4 All declarations shall be recorded in writing and shall be placed on the member of staff's HR file and on the student's student file, together with details of the steps taken by the College and any arrangements to be observed and implemented. The College may review and, where appropriate, make changes to these arrangements to ensure that they remain relevant and effective.

6.5 Should a member of staff or student not be satisfied with the steps taken by the College under this section or any arrangements put in place, they should contact the Head of Human Resources (staff) or the Head of Registry (students), who will make arrangements for an appropriate Senior Manager to review the position.

6.6 Staff or students who have any concerns regarding the development or existence of a Relationship should contact the Head of Human Resources (staff) or the Head of Registry (students).

7.

8. CONSEQUENCES OF NON-COMPLIANCE

- 8.1 Staff should be aware that a breach of this Policy could lead to action under the College's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, including sanctions up to and including dismissal. A breach of this Policy may include, but is not limited to:
- The development or existence of a Relationship which is prohibited by law and/or this Policy;
 - A failure to declare a Relationship in accordance with this Policy;
 - A failure to comply with any arrangements or requirements put in place following the declaration of a Relationship.
- 8.2 Students should be aware that a breach of this Policy, including a failure to comply with any arrangements or requirements put in place following the declaration of a Relationship, could lead to action under the College's Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

9. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF POLICY

- 9.1 The College's Executive Committee shall be responsible for reviewing this policy to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.