



# **084. Staff and Student Personal Relationships Policy**

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### **1. Introduction, Purpose and Scope**

IFG values the membership of its community of staff and students equally; no individual is more valued than the other as a result of their status. This notwithstanding, there is a natural imbalance of power between staff and students. There is also a natural imbalance of power in institutional hierarchical structures. There is the potential for abuse of power, or the perception of this, in any intimate or personal relationships between individuals in fundamentally unequal positions where one individual is expected to discharge their teaching, training, supervisory and/or pastoral responsibility for the other. This applies equally to staff-only professional working relationships, as it does to staff-student institutional relationships.

#### ***Purpose***

This policy is therefore intended to:

- protect both students and staff from actual or perceived conflicts of interest, abuse of power, or professional misconduct;
- ensure that all members of the IFG community maintain professional boundaries and trust in educational and workplace settings;
- make reasonable efforts to limit and mitigate the circumstances in which a position of power could be abused;
- put processes in place to achieve these aims.

### ***Scope and definitions***

This policy covers all staff and students of IFG. For the purposes of clarity:

- **Staff** refers to all individuals employed or contracted with IFG, whether on a permanent or temporary basis, including freelance/guest/visiting staff, and regardless of whether they are administration, student-facing or hold a teaching position.
- **Students** refers to all individuals holding current registration as a student of IFG, whether enrolled or not.

### ***Applicants to an IFG course of study***

This policy also covers applicants to a course of study with IFG, insofar as any actual or perceived conflict of interest will be taken into account when reviewing an application. No applicant will suffer any detriment as a result of such consideration; IFG will simply consider, in the event of determining that an offer of study should be made, whether there are any additional measures that would need to be implemented to remove/mitigate any conflict of interest. If so, IFG will ensure these are put in place during the student's registration.

### ***Definition of 'Personal Relationship'***

For the benefit of clarity, under this policy the term 'Personal Relationship' means both intimate (romantic) relationships between parties but also close personal relationships. Close personal relationships might include circumstances, for example, where two parties are related to each other; where one person is the legal guardian of another, or where a person is acting in the capacity of a parent or guardian. Former couples who both work at IFG but share children would also be deemed to have a close personal relationship. (These examples are not exhaustive.)

## **2. Prohibited Relationships**

Not all personal relationships are prohibited. IFG recognises that circumstances may arise where there are pre-existing relationships between individuals, both personal (e.g. people being related) and/or intimate (e.g. people being in a romantic relationship), and that this is acceptable provided that any conflicts of interest are appropriately managed and relevant mitigations are in place.

### ***Personal relationships between staff and students***

In accordance with its Safeguarding obligations and duty of care to its staff and students all intimate personal relationships between staff and students are prohibited. This applies to students both under 18 and those 18 years or over. The only exception would be a pre-existing relationship between a teacher and a prospective student e.g. a student who is the wife, husband or partner of a teacher. In this case, the Academic Director should be notified of this relationship prior to the student's enrollment.

### **3. Key Principles**

- Staff are in positions of trust and must uphold professional boundaries at all times.
- Whilst a young person can consent to sexual activity once they are 16 years of age, the [Sexual Offences Act \(2003\)](#) makes it a criminal offence for an adult in a position of trust (see Section 3, 'Definitions') to engage in sexual activity of any kind with a person under the age of 18.
- Students, especially those under 18 or considered adults at risk, may be particularly vulnerable to power imbalances. Procedures are therefore in place to manage any conflicts of interest for the protection of all parties.
- All staff (permanent, temporary, freelance, or guest) are expected to behave professionally and avoid any relationship that could undermine trust or fairness.

### **4. Conflicts of interest**

To help IFG protect its staff and students, and to avoid and manage conflicts of interest that may compromise, obstruct or prevent any of its activities, all staff members are required to disclose the following:

- a) Where there is a pre-existing personal or intimate relationship with another member of IFG staff;
- b) Where a staff member enters an intimate relationship with another member of IFG staff;
- c) Where there is a pre-existing personal or intimate relationship between a staff member and any student(s);
- d) Where a personal or intimate relationship comes to exist between a staff member and any student(s).

### ***Management of conflicts of interest***

In the event that circumstances arise where a member of staff is in a personal or intimate relationship with a foundation or undergraduate student who is aged 18 years or older, IFG's position with regard to the continued employment position of the member of staff (including consideration of changes to duties/contractual terms and conditions, possible breach of the Staff Code of Conduct and, in cases of serious contractual breaches, termination of

employment), will be reached under this Policy's Declaration of Personal Relationships Procedure (see Appendix 1 to this Policy).

Where relevant relationships do occur, the staff member will normally be temporarily removed, without prejudice, from all responsibilities that may entail a perceived or actual conflict of interest and/or abuse of power, to allow IFG to come to a decision about the way forward.

## **5. Responsibility to disclose**

Staff have a responsibility to disclose whether they have a close personal or intimate relationship with another member of IFG (whether staff or student), regardless of the wishes of the other party. Please see Appendix 1 Declaration of Personal Relationships Procedure for further information.

Where a person becomes a staff member and they have a pre-existing close personal or intimate relationship with a current staff member, both the new staff member and the current staff member have a responsibility to ensure the relationship is declared.

Where staff are unsure as to whether they have a close personal or intimate relationship with another staff member or a student (either a current or an incoming new student), they should seek advice from their line manager or the Finance & HR Manager. Staff are particularly encouraged to seek advice if the other party expressly does not wish for the relationship to be reported to IFG.

### ***Student-Student relationships and students employed as IFG staff members***

Students do not have any responsibility to disclose any pre-existing or other personal relationship, however they are encouraged to disclose this information if they wish. Student - on - student relationships do not fall within the scope of this policy except in the event of a student being employed by IFG as a staff member. In this event, the individual would have the same responsibilities as any staff member and would be required to disclose any relevant personal relationships.

### ***Personal relationships and social media***

IFG's policy and expectations regarding personal relationships, as set out above and throughout this policy, extend to behaviour and conduct on social media and online activities, as well as in person. IFG may consider a personal relationship that falls within the scope of this policy to be in place even where it has been conducted solely online/via social media. Failure to declare such a relationship will normally be considered a breach of this policy, and may result in disciplinary action.

### ***Relationships on Placements***

IFG does not currently offer or facilitate placements. However, in the event that IFG commences to offer or facilitate placements, students will be required to behave professionally and avoid intimate relationships with placement supervisors or external staff in positions of authority. Where there is a pre-existing or other personal relationship between a student and a

responsible person involved in the placement, students will be encouraged to notify IFG of this. However, our expectation is that the responsible person would notify us of this so that any conflict of interest can be managed to protect all parties.

## **6. Declaration Requirements**

Staff must declare:

- Any existing or new close personal or intimate relationship with another staff member or student.
- Any relationship that could present a conflict of interest, especially during admissions, assessment, or supervision.
- Students are not required to declare relationships, but may do so voluntarily.
- Declarations are handled confidentially and may result in adjustments to duties to remove any conflict of interest.

## **7. Breaches of this Policy**

- Failure to disclose a relevant relationship may lead to disciplinary action.
- Staff intimate relationships with under-18s or adults at risk are considered a serious breach and may involve Safeguarding/Prevent referrals.

## **8. Complaints and Whistleblowing**

Complaints about inappropriate relationships will be handled under the Sexual Misconduct, Harassment and Unacceptable Behaviours Policy.

Staff and students can report concerns via grievance, complaints, or whistleblowing procedures; such concerns may be referred into other relevant procedures, including those under the Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Harassment & Unacceptable Behaviours.

IFG does not use NDAs in misconduct or complaint cases or indeed other cases concerning personal relationships. Temporary 'no contact' or 'confidentiality' conditions may be imposed in order to allow an investigation to take place without compromising it.

## **9. IFG Single Comprehensive Source of Information (SCSI) statement**

International Foundation Group (IFG) maintains a Single Comprehensive Source of Information (SCSI), which contains all IFG policies and procedures relating to harassment, sexual misconduct and inappropriate behaviour, in accordance with the Office for Students (OfS) Condition E6.

Our SCSI is on the IFG website and easily accessible for everyone and does not require a login or password. It can be found on our website in our Student Support Section. The page is called Student Welfare at IFG London - Student Welfare at IFG - International Foundation Group (IFG) and will be highlighted during staff and student induction so that all students and staff are aware of how to access.

The SCSI is the authoritative source for IFG staff, students and prospective students to refer to for all matters relating to harassment, sexual misconduct, inappropriate behaviour and other welfare matters.

The SCSI is updated as and when information such as contact details or relevant policies & procedures are changed or updated. Changes to policies and procedures are noted and dated on the individual documents. Students and staff should therefore always refer to the SCSI for the latest information and advice. Historical versions of policies and procedures are retained by IFG Management and can be requested by both students and staff if required for historic incidents.

Our SCSI contains all policies, procedures and the multiple steps that may be taken by IFG to protect students from harassment, sexual misconduct, inappropriate behaviour and any welfare issues as required under Condition E6. Our primary aim is to prevent incidents from occurring but if they do then we have robust support, reporting, investigation and information handling procedures in place to ensure resolution and a fair decision-making process.

This statement can be found in both student and staff handbooks as well as being highlighted and discussed during student and staff inductions. Any questions regarding the polices & procedures should be addressed to the Academic Director or Director of Studies.

Our SCSI is reviewed annually and maintained by our Marketing and Partnerships Director, Stefan Green – email [s.green@intfoundationgroup.co.uk](mailto:s.green@intfoundationgroup.co.uk)

## **10. How to Declare a Personal Relationship to IFG**

Staff must complete the Personal Relationships Declaration Form (Appendix 2 to this Policy) and submit it to the Academic Director or their Line Manager as soon as they are aware of the need to disclose a Personal Relationship.

Staff will be asked on an annual basis to either declare that they have no relevant personal relationship to declare to IFG, or to complete/update the Personal Relationship Declaration Form (Appendix 2 to this Policy) and submit it to HR or their Line Manager.

Where Line Managers receive a Personal Relationship Declaration Form from an employee, they are responsible for forwarding it to relevant HR staff and should confirm in writing to the employee that they have done so.

## **11. Support and Advice**

Staff are encouraged to seek confidential advice from HR, their line manager, or the Academic Director if they are unsure whether a relationship needs to be declared.

## **12. Monitoring and Data Management**

The Personal Relationships Declaration Form will be stored securely on the staff member's file; relevant necessary information will be held confidentially and any information will only be shared on a strictly necessary basis, in accordance with UK GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) requirements as well as in line with IFG's statutory obligations such as those regarding Safeguarding and the Prevent Duty.

A register of Personal Relationships will be maintained, in accordance with the Policy, and once this procedure has been concluded the register should be updated by HR.

Appropriately redacted data will be reported to and shared with the Board of Governors, normally on an annual basis, for monitoring purposes.