

Appropriate relationships between Senior Members and Students in the College setting

The College believes that the professional relationship between a student and a senior member is a central part of a student's educational development, and regards relationships between senior members and their students as an important professional issue. The professional relationship, in the College setting, is defined as one which involves any of the following: teaching, learning, assessment, research, selection, tutoring, pastoral support and welfare. It also refers to relationships in which administrative and technical support is provided. This Code of Conduct covers situations where the professional relationship seems likely to develop, or does develop, a romantic or sexual dimension. Any romantic or sexual relationship between a senior member and a student raises serious questions of conflict of interest, trust, confidence, dependency, and of equality of treatment. Such relationships may also have a negative impact on the teaching and learning environment for other students and colleagues, and moreover may carry a serious reputational risk for the College.

Implicit in the professional status and role of senior members is a moral obligation to ensure that such conflicts of interest and associated reputational risk for the College do not occur, and that relationships with students for whom a senior member has direct professional responsibility remain strictly professional in nature. Senior members have a professional and ethical responsibility to protect the interests of students in this way, to respect the trust involved in the relationship, and to accept the constraints and obligations inherent in that responsibility. This applies to graduate students as well as to undergraduates, and holds irrespective of age or status within the College of the senior member concerned.

Senior members are strongly advised not to enter into a romantic or sexual relationship with any student they are responsible for teaching, tutoring, advising, assessing, or for whom they provide pastoral or welfare support.

Although the College regards it as unprofessional for any senior member to seek to initiate or pursue such a relationship without regard to the problems that may ensue, it also recognizes that such relationships may develop. In the very unlikely event of such a relationship developing, it is the senior member's responsibility to declare the relationship to the Senior Tutor or the Master. The Senior Tutor or the Master will consult confidentially within the College, or in another College, or in a Department, as necessary, in order to make an assessment of the best means of protecting the interests of the student and senior member concerned. The Senior Tutor or Master will then institute arrangements within the College to ensure that the senior member is removed from all direct professional and working contact with the student concerned, as far as is reasonably possible. Details of the course of action to be adopted will be agreed in writing between the Senior Tutor or the Master and the senior member concerned; the student concerned should also be involved in the process, insofar as it is considered to be appropriate. Should circumstances require disclosure, the failure of a senior member to disclose a relationship of this kind, such that action can be taken to protect the interests of the student concerned and of other students who may be affected, and of the College, may lead to disciplinary action within the College, in accordance with the College's Statutes and Ordinances.

Students who are, or who have been involved in romantic or sexual relationships with senior members and who do not consider their involvement to be, or to have been, truly consensual, have the right of complaint under the College's harassment policy.

If family members of a senior member become students in his or her College, this may also carry the potential for conflicts of interest, although of a different kind. Again, it is the responsibility of the senior member to declare any such relationship to the Senior Tutor or the Master to ensure that any such potential conflicts of interest are avoided.

All information and disclosures made under the Code of Conduct will be treated in confidence unless otherwise agreed by the parties involved and/or there is a formal obligation on the College to disclose such information to an external regulatory body.