

LAINE

THEATRE ARTS

Policies

Staff and Student Personal Relationships Policy

STAFF AND STUDENT PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Staff and Student Personal Relationship Policy sets out the expectations and obligations of all staff (including but not limited to permanent and sessional teaching staff, visiting teaching staff and artists, and professional services staff with respect to personal relationships between students and staff and between colleagues.
- 1.2. All Laine Theatre Arts staff are in a position of trust. It is important that they demonstrate exemplary behaviour at all times and always give due consideration to what is an appropriate environment and what is appropriate conduct in relation to the activities they are undertaking.
- 1.3. The College recognises that socialising on a friendship basis between colleagues and staff and students can be a positive aspect of being an active member of the Laine Theatre Arts community; however the nature of staff/student and staff/staff relationships imposes particular responsibilities and duties on staff. This policy is intended to ensure that appropriate safeguards and processes are in place to prevent abuses of power and sexual misconduct.
- 1.4. This policy aims to protect students and staff from allegations of actual or perceived conflicts of interest, and to limit circumstances where a position of power may be abused. In doing so, it seeks to ensure a positive and supportive working environment where all are treated fairly.

- 1.5. This policy prohibits intimate or close personal relationships between staff (including visiting teachers and visiting artists) and students.
- 1.6. This policy prohibits intimate or close personal relationships between members of staff where there is a direct supervision.
- 1.7. Where an intimate or close personal relationship exists (at the time this policy is effective, August 2025) between a staff member (including visiting teachers and visiting artists) and a student or between members of staff where the relationship may give rise to real or perceived conflict of interest or breach of trust or confidentiality, there must be a clear declaration of the relationship. The declaration of the relationship should be made using the Staff Personal Relationship Declaration of Interest Form (see Appendix 1).
- 1.8. The Policy will be regularly reviewed, and if necessary updated, to ensure it remains effective and aligned with requirements outlined by the Office for Students.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1. There is a potential for abuse or the perception of abuse in any intimate or close personal relationships between individuals in unequal positions where one individual is expected to deliver their teaching or supervisory responsibility for the other.
- 2.2. Due to the potential for conflict of interest, exploitation, favouritism or bias, such relationships may undermine the integrity of the supervision or evaluation provided or may have adverse effects on the working or learning environment for those directly involved, as well as for the broader team and departmental culture.

- 2.3. Relationships in which one party is in a position to evaluate the work or influence the career of the other, may also provide grounds for complaint by third parties when that relationship gives undue access or advantage, restricts opportunities, or simply creates a perception of these problems.
- 2.4. To ensure all staff and students are able to work and study in a safe and supportive environment, Laine Theatre Arts prohibits close or intimate personal relationships between staff (including visiting teachers and visiting artists) and students.
- 2.5. Where students also undertake work for the College, either voluntarily or have an employment contract, they will be defined as students.
- 2.6. Where staff become enrolled as students during their employment at the University they will be defined for the purposes of this policy as an employee.
- 2.7. When staff and students leave or graduate from the College the policy will no longer apply.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1. For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply.
- **Abuse of power:** a situation where a relevant staff member exploits a position of power in relation to a student so as to apply pressure in a way which:
 - may result in the student doing something, or refraining from doing something, that they may not have otherwise done; and
 - that action or inaction could reasonably result in something that falls within the scope of an intimate personal relationship.
 - **Adult at risk:** someone over the age of 18 who receives or may need community care services by reasons of disability or illness and as a result

of those needs is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation. This can relate to physical, mental or psychological wellbeing or the potential to be drawn into sexual or criminal exploitation and activity.

- **Close personal relationships:** a relative or friend, or a relationship where there is a financial dependence.
- **Intimate relationships:** a consensual romantic or sexual relationship which goes beyond the bounds of a platonic or working relationship. It can be brief and includes a one-off occurrence.
- **Position of trust:** any staff member (including visiting teachers and visiting artists) working closely with children, young people or adults at risk is in a position of trust.
- **Consent to an intimate relationship:** agreeing by choice and having the freedom and capacity to make that choice. The person seeking consent should always take steps to ensure that consent is freely given, that is informed and recognises that it can be withdrawn at any time.
- **Freedom to consent:** a person is free to make a choice if nothing negative would happen to them if they said no. For example, a person is not free to choose if:
 - They are being threatened with violence (by the perpetrator and/or by someone else).
 - They are being threatened with humiliation.
 - They believe that the continuation or assessment of their studies, or progression or advancement of their career, will be at risk if they refused.
 - They are being blackmailed.

- There is a significant power imbalance and the party without power feels pressured to continue in the relationship against their will.

- **Capacity to consent:** whether someone is not physically and/or mentally able to make a choice and understand the consequences of that choice. For example, a person does not have capacity to give consent if they are asleep or unconscious. A person's capacity to consent may be inhibited by the influence of drugs or alcohol or the presence of a cognitive or learning difficulty, or mental health condition.
- **Grooming:** a gradual process that someone in a position of power uses to manipulate someone to do things they may not be comfortable with and to make them less likely to reject or report abusive behaviour. Grooming will initially start as befriending someone and making them feel special and may result in sexual abuse and/or exploitation.

4. RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS OR STAFF UNDER THE AGE OF 18 OR WHO ARE AN 'ADULT AT RISK'

- 4.1. Members of staff must not be in, or enter into, an intimate or close personal relationship with a student or staff member under the age of 18, or an adult known or suspected to be at risk. This would not apply to students who are children of staff, or where the staff member has legal responsibility for the student. In these cases, staff must not be in a position of influence.
- 4.2. Staff must not engage in sexual behaviour with someone with whom they are in a position of trust. Whilst a young person can consent to sexual activity once they reach the age of 16, the Sexual Offences Act (2003) makes it a criminal offense for a person to engage in sexual activity with a person under the age of 18, where the adult is in a position of trust.

- 4.3. Anyone suspecting a member of staff of acting inappropriately towards a student or staff member under the age of 18 or an adult at risk should refer to the College's Safeguarding Policy and contact the Principal Safeguarding Officer who may contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) and/or the police.

5. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS

- 5.1. Laine Theatre Arts prohibits intimate or close personal relationships between staff and students.
- 5.2. Where students also undertake work for the College, either voluntarily or have an employment contract, they will be defined as students.
- 5.3. Students on a placement in an external organisation, for example working for a theatre company on a production, must continue to follow this policy and should not enter into any intimate or close personal relationships with their placement supervisors, any member of staff or any other individual within that organisation who is under the age of 18 or is regarded as an adult at risk.
- 5.4. In order to maintain appropriate relationships with students and to help reduce the risk of sexual misconduct, abuse of power or conflict of interest, staff should:
- Maintain an appropriate physical and emotional distance from students and perform their College duties in the best interests of the College without favour towards any individual student over another student.
 - Avoid creating special friendships with students as this may be seen as grooming.

- Ensure that online meetings and communications use a College email account. Staff should avoid personal and/or direct messaging through social media.
- Follow the same guidelines, where logistically possible, when participating in any other College activities whilst aware from the usual workplace.

5.5. Where staff have a primary role of providing supervision, teaching or pastoral care to students, staff should;

- Ensure that any in-person meetings and discussions take place on campus or other College approved premises, including an approved organisation's premises, in the case of placement visits.
- Refer students with additional support needs to the Student Support Team.
- Refrain from contacting students outside of reasonable working hours unless there is an urgent or emergency situation and contact needs to be made immediately.
- Not ask for personal information from a student except as relevant to a College process, for example medical information for special consideration or personal circumstances information as part of an academic process. In all cases GDPR must be followed.

6. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MEMBERS OF STAFF

6.1. Relationships between members of staff are permitted at the College, however in order to prevent potential abuse of power or perceived or real conflict of interest, colleagues must declare personal relationships in either of the following situations:

- Where a relationship begins that may give rise to a real or perceived conflict of interest, exploitation, favouritism or bias.
- Where a relationship already exists and a new situation arises that may give rise to a real or perceived conflict of interest, exploitation,

favouritism or bias. For example, two staff members in a relationship who work in different departments who now work in the same department.

- 6.2. Where colleagues are in an intimate or close personal relationship, consideration will be given as to how to prevent conflict of interest, breach of confidentiality or unfair advantage being gained (or perceived to be gained) from the overlap of a personal and professional relationship. This may include finding alternative line management arrangements.
- 6.3. The line manager will only inform other relevant members of staff about the relationship if the individuals concerned agree. In order to maintain appropriate relationships with other members of staff, and help reduce the risk of abuse of power or conflict of interest, staff should:
 - Ensure that online meetings and communications, use a College email account. Staff should limit personal and/or direct messaging through social media to urgent situations in line with the Communication Policy.
 - Where possible, ensure that any in-person meetings and discussions take place on campus or other College approved premises. Where this is not possible, ensure the meeting occurs in a public place or an approved organisation's premises.
 - Establish boundaries between professional and non-professional communication with colleagues and following the same guidelines, where logistically possible, when you and the staff member are participating in other College activities away from your usual workplace.

- 6.4. Where an intimate or close personal relationship ends it is expected that all parties will continue to conduct themselves in a professional manner and avoid personal disputes which impact on the working environment or other colleagues and students. It may also be appropriate for some of the actions, put in place by the College during the relationship, to continue for a period of time following the end of the relationship. The staff members involved will be consulted and required to comply with reasonable actions.

7. INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT BY STUDENTS AND STAFF MEMBERS

- 7.1. Inappropriate conduct towards a student or staff member is not acceptable. The conduct may breach the relevant Code of Conduct, and other relevant College guidance and procedures.
- 7.2. A staff member should seek advice immediately if they feel they have been subject to unprofessional or inappropriate conduct from a student or another staff member by speaking to their Line Manager, Head of Department, or Human Resources to ensure appropriate support is provided.
- 7.3. A student should seek advice immediately if they feel they have been subject to unprofessional or inappropriate conduct from a student or a member of staff, by speaking to their Head of Department, Course Leader, or a member of the Student Support Team to ensure appropriate support is provided.
- 7.4. Students who have experienced sexual misconduct are encouraged to contact the College's Student Support Team for support and guidance.

8. DECLARATION OF INTIMATE OR CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

- 8.1. All declarations regarding intimate or close personal relationships should be made as soon as reasonably practicable and always within one month of the relationship starting. As the report contains sensitive personal data it will be stored securely in compliance with GDPR legislation.
- 8.2. Declarations will be treated respectfully, sensitively and confidentially, and the wishes of both parties respected as far as is possible. Staff should submit a Declaration of Interests Form (see Appendix 1).

9. BREACH OF POLICY

- 9.1. An intimate or close personal relationship between a staff member and student is in breach of this policy and will be investigated under the College's Disciplinary Policy.
- 9.2. Whilst intimate or close personal relationships between a staff member and a student are prohibited, a student can report and seek support for harassment or sexual misconduct within a relationship with a member of staff should one occur. In this instance, a student would not be penalised by the College for participating in the relationship, and they would be protected from retaliation by the staff member if they reported harassment or sexual misconduct. This does not affect the further application of the Staff and Student Code of Conduct if appropriate. The Process for dealing with a complaint of sexual misconduct is detailed in the sexual misconduct policy.
- 9.3. Failure to disclose an intimate or close personal relationship with another member of staff or where there is a real or perceived conflict of interest, breach of trust or confidentiality, may be investigated under the Staff and

Student Code of Conduct and could result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or study as outlined in the staff disciplinary procedures.

10. MONITORING COMPLIANCE

- 10.1. The Laine Theatre Arts Board of Directors has overall responsibility for the Safeguarding and delegates day-to-day implementation of the Staff and Student Personal Relationships Policy to the Senior Management Committee which in turn is supported by the Safeguarding Committee.
- 10.2. The Board of Directors monitors Safeguarding compliance, including matters relating to staff and student personal relationships through consideration of the minutes of the Senior Management Committee and through consideration of an annual Safeguarding and Prevent Report on the recommendation of the Senior Management Committee.
- 10.3. The Academic Director (Executive Safeguarding Lead) is responsible for reporting any significant safeguarding incidents to the Board of Directors including those arising from concerns raised under the Staff and Student Personal Relationships Policy.

11. POLICY REVIEW

- 11.1. The Staff and Student Personal Relationships Policy is reviewed every three years by the Senior Management Committee and is approved by the Board of Directors. The policy will also be subject to approval by the University of Portsmouth, the College's awarding body for its degree-level provision.
- 11.2. This policy is effective from 1st September 2025 and will be next reviewed in July 2028.

APPENDIX 1: STAFF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP DECLARATION OF INTEREST FORM

LAINE THEATRE ARTS

Staff Personal Relationship Declaration of Interest Form

PURPOSE:

This form is to be completed by any staff member who wishes to declare a personal relationship that may present, or be perceived to present, a conflict of interest. This includes intimate, familial, or close personal relationships with students or other staff members.

STAFF MEMBER DETAILS

- Full Name:
- Job Title/Role:
- Department:
- Email:

DECLARATION OF RELATIONSHIP

- Name(s) of individual(s) involved:
- Role/Status of individual(s): (e.g., Student, Staff, Contractor)
- Nature of relationship: (e.g., intimate, familial, friendship, previous relationship)
- Relevant dates/context: (e.g., when it began/ended, if applicable)

Potential Impact

- Does this relationship have the potential to affect impartiality, supervision, assessment, or workplace decisions?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please provide details:

STAFF STATEMENT

I confirm that the information provided above is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that this declaration will be treated confidentially and in line with Laine Theatre Arts' policies, and that appropriate steps may be taken to manage any potential conflict of interest.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Line Manager/HR Use Only

- Received by:
- Position:
- Date received:
- Action taken (if any):

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version:	1
Approved by:	Board of Directors on 12 September 2025
Review Interval:	3 Years
Last Review Date:	September 2025
Next Review Date:	July 2028