

## Consensual Relationships Policy

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 University of Manchester Conferences Ltd (UMC) (“the company”) values and relies upon the professional integrity of relationships between employees.
- 1.2 In order that UMC business is conducted and is perceived to be conducted in a professional and proper manner it is necessary to distinguish between, and take account of consensual/personal relationships which overlap with professional ones.
- 1.3 There may be occasions when employees are related or become close or romantically involved with each other.
- 1.4 They may be faced with situations where personal interest may conflict with their duties and may be uncertain about how to deal with them.
- 1.5 This policy seeks to establish acceptable treatment and guide behaviour in such situations.
- 1.6 In the context of this document a **consensual/personal** relationship is defined as:
  - i. A family relationship;
  - ii. A business/commercial/financial relationship or
  - iii. A sexual/romantic relationship.

### 2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the correct procedure is followed so that employees are not susceptible to allegations of impropriety, bias, abuse of authority, discrimination, conflict of interest or favouritism.

### 3. Aims

- 3.1 The aim of the policy is to set out some principles to help employees avoid conferring (or being perceived as conferring), unfair advantage or disadvantage on colleagues or other individuals due to **consensual/personal** relationships (as referred to in 1.6, above).

- All staff should adhere to the 'Seven Principles of Public Life' drawn up by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. (Appendix A)

#### **4. Relationships between Employees**

- 4.1 Where romantic/sexual relationships occur between employees, it is their responsibility to deal appropriately with any potential conflicts of interest.
- 4.2 It may be necessary to review the relevant reporting structure if the relationship is between a line manager and a member of their team.
- 4.3 Employees needing advice should approach their own manager or, if deemed initially more appropriate and or discreet, Human Resources.
- 4.4 Employees should take care that any financial, familial or personal relationships entered into on a consensual basis do not unfairly advantage or disadvantage any employee, or other individual e.g. - job applicants or service providers.
- 4.5 The following should be noted and observed:
  - i. Should such relationships occur then the individuals involved will be expected to inform their manager as soon as possible to ensure that the potential effects can be considered.
  - ii. The manager must treat these matters in confidence at all times and will, in consultation with those involved, find ways in which actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest might be avoided.
  - iii. If the individuals involved are working in the same team and/or work area and any actual or perceived conflict of interest cannot be resolved by other means it may be necessary to explore the possibility of moving one party to another team and/or work area.
  - iv. If an employee has a close personal or familial relationship with a job applicant it would normally be necessary for him/her to avoid any involvement in the recruitment/selection process.
  - v. If an employee has a close personal or familial relationship with another employee they should have no involvement in decisions relating to pay, reward or promotion / appointments.
  - vi. External and internal applicants for posts will be asked to declare relevant personal relationships on appointment.

- vii. An employee who is, or who has been, involved in a romantic/sexual relationship with another employee and who does not consider their involvement to be truly consensual will have the right of complaint under the Dignity at Work Policy.

## **5. Relationships between Employees and Students**

- 5.1 The company values good professional relationships between its employees and students at the University, which are reliant on mutual trust and confidence; however this can be jeopardised when an employee enters into a romantic/sexual liaison with a student; this does not preclude circumstances where an individual whose primary relationship with the University is as a student, but who also holds a position of work, whether in a paid or other capacity within the University or The Company.
- 5.2 Employees should recognise a professional and ethical responsibility to protect the interests of students, to respect the trust involved in the employee/student relationship and to accept the constraints and obligations inherent in that responsibility.
- 5.3 Employees must be aware that students who are, or who have been, involved in a romantic/sexual relationship with an employee and who do not consider their involvement to be truly consensual will have the right of complaint under the University of Manchester's Dignity at Work and Study Policy, which may lead to formal proceedings being considered against a member of staff under the applicable UMC Ltd procedures.
  - Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 it is an offence for anyone over the age of 18 working with young people (for example teachers, student mentors, academic staff etc.) to have a sexual relationship with a young person under the age of 18 who is in full time education. This is applicable even if the relationship is consensual and the person does not teach the young person but works in the same institution where the young person is studying. This is because the member of staff is in a position of trust and the young person may be vulnerable to exploitation.

## **6. Declaration of personal relationships where they overlap with professional roles.**

- 6.1 Employees who are uncertain about whether they should take action regarding a consensual relationship are invited to seek guidance, in confidence, from the UMC-designated HR Partner or their trade union representative.
- 6.2 A case whereby any consensual relationship, as defined in this code, is not declared will be considered a serious matter and may lead to disciplinary action.

## **7. Harassment and Bullying at Work**

7.1 The company will not tolerate harassment and bullying at work the Dignity at Work Policy can be found on the UMC Website, the University's StaffNet or a copy can be requested from the UMC-designated HR Partner or UNISON.

7.2 Staff (and students) may also make use of the 'Report and Support' service led by the University Equality and Diversity service.

## 7. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually in consultation with the campus trade unions.

## 8. Consequences of Non-compliance

8.1 Employees should be aware that a breach of this Policy could lead to action under the Disciplinary Procedures.

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## Appendix A

### The Seven Principles of Public Life

- SELFLESSNESS:** Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.
- INTEGRITY:** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organizations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- OBJECTIVITY:** In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- ACCOUNTABILITY:** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- OPENNESS:** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- HONESTY:** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

**LEADERSHIP:** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

[Extracted from the “First Report of the Committee on Standards of Public Life”, UK May 1995]

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