

Wadham College Policy on Student-Staff Relationships

This policy places staff-student relationships within the context of the College's core responsibilities and activities – that of academic research and the stewardship and teaching of students. This responsibility involves a duty of care to both students and staff.

The College is committed to taking all necessary steps to ensure that students are not subjected to sexual harassment; this policy operates alongside and is not intended in any way to limit or override the College's Harassment Policy and Procedure. Furthermore, it is the view of Governing Body that intimate relationships between staff and students, even when apparently consensual, carry serious risks of being harmful to students' academic progression and to the reputation of members of staff.

DEFINITIONS

This policy applies to all Fellows and members of staff who have academic, professional or pastoral responsibility for students ("Responsibility") on the College's behalf. Fellows and staff members are expected to be aware of the students, if any, for whom they have Responsibility; in the event that they believe there is any ambiguity in this respect, the Fellow or staff member must raise this with the Warden or Senior Tutor (for academic staff) or Head of HR or Domestic Bursar (for non-academic staff).

For the purposes of this policy, a 'member of staff' should be understood as including any individual who is employed by the College or engaged as a casual paid worker, and any other individuals (such as members of the Senior Common Room) to whom the College offers any of the privileges or facilities normally available to its employees. It does not apply to students employed by the College, except in cases where they have Responsibility for another student (e.g. they are employed as a lecturer or out-tutor).

A 'student' should be understood as any individual who is studying for an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification, a visiting student, or a student on any course arranged by or through the College, or any part of the collegiate University.

POLICY ON STAFF-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

1. Staff are prohibited from engaging in romantic or sexual relationships with any student for whom they hold any Responsibility on behalf of the College. Such relationships are always inappropriate irrespective of whether the student did not object, appeared to give consent, gave consent or even instigated the behaviour.
2. Any member of staff found to be engaging in a romantic or sexual relationship with a student for whom they have Responsibility, even with their consent, will be subject to disciplinary action, which may result in dismissal and/or removal of their College post.

3. All staff are bound by this policy, irrespective of whether the relationship takes place on College premises or elsewhere. It covers face-to-face actions, as well as those which take place through other media such as emails, letters, telephone conversations, social networking sites, text messages, etc..
4. Any member of staff who is in a romantic or sexual relationship with a student of the College for whom they do not have Responsibility must nonetheless disclose this to the Warden or Senior Tutor (for academic staff) or Head of HR or Domestic Bursar (for non-academic staff). This will ensure that they are not asked to assume Responsibility for a student with whom they are in a pre-existing relationship. Failure to disclose such a relationship will be treated as a disciplinary matter, which may result in dismissal and/or removal of their College post.
5. A staff member must disclose any previous romantic or sexual relationship with a student for whom they are given or are to be given Responsibility; such disclosures should be made to the Warden or Senior Tutor (for academic staff) or Head of HR or Domestic Bursar (for non-academic staff). Failure to disclose such a relationship will be treated as a disciplinary matter, which may result in dismissal and/or removal of their College post.
6. If a romantic or sexual relationship is pre-existing between a member of staff and a candidate for admission to the College as a student, the member of staff, if aware of the application, must make the Warden or Senior Tutor (for academic staff) or Head of HR or Domestic Bursar (for non-academic staff) aware of it at the outset of the admissions exercise, so that steps can be taken to avoid any conflict of interest arising. The matter will, as far as possible, be handled in confidence to ensure there is no detriment to the candidate.
7. The College recognises the sensitivities involved and will take all reasonable steps to keep concerns confidential. Information will only be shared with those who strictly need to know about the issues raised, including to provide support to the student and the member of staff or to initiate disciplinary action (as set out above).
8. Any member of staff or student who has questions about this policy and its application should discuss them with the Warden, Senior Tutor, Domestic Bursar or Head of HR as appropriate.