



POLICY CONCERNING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STUDENTS AND STAFF

1. This policy concerns consensual relationships. Sexual harassment is dealt with under St Hilda's College's Policy and Procedure on Harassment.
2. St Hilda's College staff who are also employed by the University are bound by the University's staff/student relationships policy (<https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-student-relationships>).

Definitions

3. **Students:** This policy applies to all undergraduate and graduate students of St Hilda's College while they are undertaking a course of study, or while they are intermitting their studies. It also applies to all visiting and exchange students whilst registered at St Hilda's College.
4. **Staff:** This policy applies to all Fellows of St Hilda's College, including emeritus and honorary Fellows, and to all members of staff employed on a permanent or casual basis by St Hilda's College who have responsibility for students of St Hilda's College, including Junior Deans.
5. **Responsibility:** 'responsibility' for a student includes any direct teaching, professional, pastoral, or administrative responsibility for or authority over a student, whether temporary or permanent. It includes but is not limited to lecturing, teaching, overseeing projects of fieldwork, supervising, and setting and/or marking of examinations or other assessments, and the admission or selection of applicants. It also includes acting as a mentor or college adviser. Responsibility within the meaning of this policy does not include informal support or assistance given by one graduate student to another.

Policy

6. St Hilda's College recognises the value of positive professional relationships between students and members of staff. Such relationships are central to students' educational development and welfare. However, sexual or romantic relationships between students and staff who have responsibility for them can cause significant problems because of conflicts of interest, the imbalance of power and authority, perceived favouritism, and the emotional or practical consequences of relationships coming to an end. Staff have a responsibility to act in a way that protects and promotes student welfare, and that does not damage the reputation of the College.
7. Staff must not engage in sexual or romantic relationships with any students for whom they have responsibility. Staff must not engage in relationships with students for whom they have responsibility that result in the student becoming financially dependent on the member of staff. If staff become aware that there is a significant possibility that any such relationship may develop, they must declare the situation promptly to the Senior Tutor or the Human Resources Manager, and must cease to exercise any responsibility for the student in question.
8. Staff are expected to exercise professional judgment as to the appropriate limits of their personal relationships with all students, with due regard to the risks and their responsibilities outlined above, as well as the risks of the perception of harassment. Even where a staff member does not have and is not likely to have responsibility for a student, staff are strongly encouraged to be cautious before embarking on any sexual, romantic, or close personal relationship with any student. Such relationships may give rise to complaints or concerns rooted in real or perceived inequalities of power, accusations of bias, favouritism or exploitation, adverse effects where a student becomes practically or emotionally dependent on a member of staff, and questions about the nature of consent. The risks of such complaints are likely to be heightened where there is a

significant age difference between the staff member and the student; where the student is taking their first degree; and/or where the student is particularly vulnerable. Staff should consider whether such a relationship should be declared to the Senior Tutor or the Human Resources Manager.

Information-sharing

9. The College reserves the right to share information about any relationships falling within the scope of this policy with the University, another College, or any public or regulatory authority where it is appropriate and necessary to do so for a legitimate reason including without limitation the protection of student welfare, compliance with any regulatory or legal obligation, or protection of the reputation of the College.

Breaches

10. Breaches of this policy constitute misconduct which may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Approved by Governing Body in Trinity Term 2024
22nd May 2024