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# Staff and Student Relationship Policy

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**Audience:** Public

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**Responsible person:** Student Support Manager

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**Approved by:** Institute Leadership Group

**dyson**

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# 1.0 Scope and Purpose

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The Dyson Institute is committed to the promotion of an inclusive, respectful, and considerate community, and in taking steps to protect students from conflicts of interest and abuse of power that can arise from personal relationships between staff and students. The Institute expects every staff member and student to behave in a respectful, inclusive, and responsible manner to all members of the Dyson community.

Personal relationships between staff and students could raise potential for a conflict of interest, create challenges regarding trust and confidence in working relationships, and give rise to a perceived or realised imbalance or abuse of power and authority. The Institute is committed to equal treatment in teaching, learning, supervision, selection, assessment, research, and pastoral support. Where a student is also a staff member, their status as a student takes priority in this policy.

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## 2.0 Institute Principles

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### 2.1 Intimate relationships

The Office for Students (OfS) define 'Intimate Personal Relationship': "as a relationship that involves one or more of the following elements:

- physical intimacy including isolated or repeated sexual activity; or
- romantic or emotional intimacy."

Given the small specialist nature of the Dyson Institute, it is assumed that all members of Institute staff have direct or indirect professional or pastoral responsibility for students' wellbeing and development. Therefore, to maintain a professional relationship with students based on trust, confidence and equal treatment. **The Institute has banned intimate personal relationships between staff and students as a further measure to make a significant and credible difference in protecting students from any actual or potential conflict of interest and/or abuse of power**

Any member of Institute staff entering an intimate or sexual relationship with a student under the age of 18 will be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in accordance with the Dyson Institute Safeguarding and Prevent Policy.

Students and staff are encouraged to read the Sexual Violence, Harassment and Misconduct policy alongside this policy if they believe they have experienced or are at risk of experiencing harassment and/or sexual misconduct because of the actual or potential abuse of power and conflicts of interest that can arise from relationships between staff and students. Reports can be made:

- (i) through the Safeguarding Portal, Selecting reporting to the Safeguarding team
- (ii) Through the Safeguarding Portal, requesting support from a Sexual Violence Liaison Officer (SVLO)
- (iii) Seeing a member of the Student Support team in person in D5, Malmesbury Office
- (iv) Emailing [DIETsafeguarding@dyson.com](mailto:DIETsafeguarding@dyson.com)

(v) Speak Up – Portal, inbox (speakup@dyson.com) or Hotline (UK 0800 915 1571)

For further information on ways to report, see the Single Comprehensive Source of Information on the Institute Webpage.

If a relationship exists prior to a student enrolling or a member of staff joining, then the policy for personal relationships (section 2.2) should be followed, see section 5 for definitions.

Failure to comply with this policy will result in an investigation and potentially disciplinary action in accordance with the [Dyson Disciplinary Policy](#).

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## 2.2 Close personal relationships

Examples of what may amount to a close personal relationship is defined as a personal or familial relationship include a partner, family member, or close friendship. This list is non-exhaustive and if you are in doubt about the nature of a relationship, you should discuss the matter with your line manager or HR business partner.

Close personal relationships may have formed prior to a member of staff's appointment or a student's enrolment at the Institute. It is the responsibility of the member of staff to inform their Head of Department and to disclose the relationship as described in [Dyson's Global Conflicts of Interest policy](#). This will allow arrangements to be made to mitigate any risks that may arise on a case-by-case basis.

Staff members who have a close personal relationship with a student must always act with integrity and must not be placed in a position where there is an actual or perceived conflict of interest. This includes ensuring that they do not have any influence over processes or other aspects of provision which could unduly benefit the student or place them at risk of harm from abuse of power.

The OfS defines 'abuse of power' as: "a situation where a relevant staff member\* exploits a position of power in relation to a student 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."

It is the responsibility of the Institute's management team to ensure that action is taken to proactively mitigate against potential conflict of interest, including by removing or transferring responsibilities where appropriate.

Relevant responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Recruitment and selection
- Teaching
- Supervision and assessment
- Exam invigilation
- Pastoral support including reasonable adjustment decisions.
- Student conduct issues (complaints against the individuals or complaints made by the individual)
- Complaints and appeals.
- Mitigating circumstances

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## 2.3 Observing professional boundaries

The Institute requires staff to observe professional boundaries in all their interactions with students, whether social or professional.

In most circumstances, the professional boundaries that must be observed by staff with students will be clear. However, it is recognised that there will be some areas in relation to which guidance may assist to clarify the Institutes requirements of staff.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of example behaviours that the Institute would regard as being beyond these professional boundaries:

### 2.3.1 Social

The Institute recommends that students and staff do not connect via social media and messaging platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok) other than those related to professional networking sites (e.g. LinkedIn).

All communications on professional networking sites should reflect the professional relationship between staff and students.

### 2.3.2 Teaching and supervision activities

- Ensure all teaching/ supervision activities are conducted in an appropriate environment or location. An example of an inappropriate location includes the student's or staff's home.
- Ensure to engage the student in teaching/supervision during appropriate office/study hours whether in person or electronic communications. Avoid pressuring the student or being pressured by the student to engage in these activities outside of these hours.
- Ensure you don't solicit student information of a personal nature which is unnecessary for the purpose of the teaching/supervision relationship.
- Ensure that all behaviour in the context of teaching/supervision remains professional with appropriate confidentiality. For example, do not make critical comments regarding other students, comments that may be perceived as favouritism or treat others less favourably.

### 2.3.3 Off-campus professional activities

Unprofessional behaviour, for example as described by the non-exhaustive list of behaviours from 3.3.1 – 3.3.2 by a staff member towards a student during Institute related events, conferences and other professional events/activities that are attended by both staff and students. For the avoidance of doubt, such behaviours would be deemed inappropriate if engaged in by a staff member when conducting off-site professional activities.

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## 3.0 Dyson principles

Institute students are all employees of Dyson Technology Ltd. Any close personal relationship between employees of Dyson, direct or indirect, must be declared. The Institute discourages intimate personal relationships between Dyson Technology

staff and students, particularly where the member of staff and student are in the same team. Therefore, staff and students must declare their relationship in the Dyson legal service portal. Once declared, roles will usually be adjusted to mitigate the risks that may arise from any perceived or actual conflict of interest. Further information, including how to disclose and record a relationship can be found in [Dyson's Global Conflicts of Interest policy](#).

Failure to comply with the [Global Conflict of Interest Policy](#) will result in an investigation and potentially disciplinary action in accordance with the [Dyson Disciplinary Policy](#).

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## 4.0 Speaking up

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Students and staff are encouraged to refuse and report inappropriate behaviours from staff and can gain support through the student support and safeguarding teams via the Institute Hub.

Where a member of staff or student feels that this policy or the Dyson Conflicts of Interest Policy has not been followed they should report this through the [safeguarding portal](#), or by contacting legal compliance and ethics at [Lce@dyson.com](mailto:Lce@dyson.com) or [SpeakUp@dyson.com](mailto:SpeakUp@dyson.com).

Concerns are taken seriously and followed up promptly. Reporting individuals will be asked to give their identity to help in an investigation, which will be kept strictly confidential. However, they may choose to remain anonymous.

There will be no retaliation for anyone disclosing information in good faith, whether that information is subsequently proven to be true or not.

Reporting individuals will be protected from any actions within Dyson that might occur as a result of their disclosure, providing it is made in good faith, and will be supported appropriately. Anyone who does retaliate against someone reporting a concern in good faith may themselves be subject to disciplinary action. If someone raises a concern that is subsequently found to be malicious, disciplinary action may be taken against them.

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## 5.0 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy and in accordance with the Office for Students Condition of Registration E6 Harassment and Sexual Misconduct, the following definitions apply:

**Abuse of power** means 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:

- (i) may result in the student doing something, or refraining from doing something, that they may not have otherwise done; and
- (ii) that action or inaction could reasonably result in something that falls within the scope of an intimate personal relationship.

**Ban on intimate personal relationships** means a policy or rule which provides for both of the following elements:

- (i) with the exception of excluded relationships, any relevant staff member is prohibited from having an intimate personal relationship with one or more students; and
- (ii) any breach of such prohibition by a relevant staff member would result in the provider taking appropriate steps in line with its usual disciplinary process, including the possibility of the breach resulting in dismissal of the relevant staff member.

**Excluded relationships** means any ongoing intimate personal relationship that:

- (i) existed before the date this condition comes into force and that remains in existence; or
- (ii) existed before the date that the staff member became a relevant staff member in relation to that student.

**Harassment:** has the meaning given in section 26 of the Equality Act 2010 and section 1 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (in its entirety, and as interpreted by section 7 of the Act).

**Intimate personal relationship** means a relationship that involves one or more of the following elements: physical intimacy including isolated or repeated sexual activity; or romantic or emotional intimacy.

**Relevant staff member** means a member of Institute staff who has direct academic responsibilities, or other direct professional responsibilities, in relation to that student.

**Staff:** includes but is not limited to employees and contractors of the Dyson Institute.

**Sexual misconduct:** means any unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and includes, but is not limited to:

- (i) sexual harassment;
- (ii) sexual assault; and
- (iii) rape.

**Students:** includes, but is not limited to, persons who are registered on a higher education course and, at any point in time within the overall duration of that higher education course, are employed by, or otherwise providing services to, a higher education provider. For the purpose of this policy, student also applies to postgraduate research students from other education providers who are supervised by Institute staff.