



# Hertford College

OXFORD

## STAFF AND STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

Version 2.3 September 2025

*Replaces all previous College policies or similar in relation to staff and student relationships.*

### 1. GENERAL

- 1.1. This policy concerns consensual relationships.
- 1.2. Non-consensual incidents are dealt with under various other provisions, including the Harassment & Bullying Policy, the Student Disciplinary Code, Employee Disciplinary Procedures, and the Academic Disciplinary Committee.
- 1.3. College staff who are also employed by the University are also bound by the University's staff/student relationships policy (<https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-student-relationships>).

### 2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. **Students** includes:
  - 2.1.1 undergraduate and graduate students of the College while they are undertaking a course of study, or while they are intermitting their studies.
  - 2.1.2 students of other institutions participating in a College activity or programme, including visiting students, summer schools, and the like.
  - 2.1.3 applicants for undergraduate or graduate places at the College.
- 2.2. **Staff** includes: all Fellows of the College, and anyone employed by the College on a permanent or casual basis, who have responsibility for students.
- 2.3. **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. Trustees are deemed to have a (shared) responsibility for all students, regardless of the extent of any direct interaction.

### 3. POLICY

- 3.1. The College recognises the value of positive professional relationships between students and 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.
- 3.2. Staff must not engage in sexual or romantic relationships with any students for whom they have responsibility. Staff must not engage in any form of relationship with students for whom they have responsibility that results 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 (Academic Staff) or the HR Manager (non-Academic Staff), and must cease to exercise any responsibility for the student in question.
- 3.3. 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. 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; 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 HR Manager.

### 4. INFORMATION-SHARING

- 4.1. 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.

### 5. BREACHES

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

*Approved by the **Governing Body**,*

*September 2025*