

Acceptable Behaviour towards Students Guideline

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) The purpose of this Guideline is to provide practical and illustrative guidance that support the interpretation and application of the [Acceptable Behaviour towards Students Procedure](#).

(2) This Guideline applies across all areas of The University of Queensland (UQ/the University) and is intended to promote transparency, fairness, and the protection of student wellbeing by reinforcing the importance of Disclosure, accountability, and ethical conduct in interactions with Students.

Section 2 - Frequently Asked Questions

(3) Who does the [Acceptable Behaviour towards Students Procedure](#) apply to?

The Procedure applies to all UQ Leadership, Staff and Contractors as those terms are defined in the [Sexual Misconduct and Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy](#).

(4) Why is Direct Power and Influence treated differently to Indirect Power and Influence?

Leadership, Staff and Contractors of UQ must not engage in Intimate Relationships with Students over whom they have Direct Power and Influence, as this poses unmanageable risks to Students. Such relationships, including those perceived as being initiated, cultivated or engaged in, are prohibited.

Relationships involving Indirect Power and Influence may still present risks, but these can often be managed through Disclosure and a formal management plan.

The Procedure prioritises Student wellbeing while protecting the academic and professional integrity of Leadership, Staff and Contractors.

(5) What should I do if I'm unsure whether I have engaged in conduct which could be perceived as initiating, cultivating or engaging in an Intimate Relationship with a Student who I have Direct Power and Influence over according to the Procedure?

If you're uncertain, you should submit a [Disclosure and Management of Interests Form](#) so the situation can be assessed and managed appropriately.

(6) How should I respond if a Student over whom I have Direct Power and Influence behaves in a way that challenges Professional Boundaries?

Leadership, Staff and Contractors must uphold and reinforce Professional Boundaries in their interactions with Students. If a Student exhibits behaviour that may blur these boundaries, it is important to address it promptly and clearly. Providing clear, respectful guidance early helps maintain a professional and supportive learning environment.

For example, if a Student seeks a personal connection through a social media platform, you should politely decline and

explain that professional communication should occur through official channels such as your UQ email or Blackboard which are appropriate for academic purposes.

(7) What happens if I fail to Disclose an Intimate Relationship with a Student?

Failure to Disclose an Intimate Relationship may be considered a breach of University policy/procedure. Consequences can include:

- a. formal investigation
- b. disciplinary action
- c. reassignment of duties

Even if the Intimate Relationship does not involve Direct Power or Influence, non-disclosure undermines trust and accountability and may compromise the integrity of academic or professional processes which are established to protect and mitigate risks to Students.

(8) When am I required to disclose an Intimate Relationship with a Student who I have Indirect Power and Influence over?

You must disclose an Intimate Relationship with a Student over whom you have Indirect Power and Influence either:

- a. at the commencement of employment, engagement or enrolment where the relationship is pre-existing; or
- b. as soon as the relationship meets the defined criteria, whether by intention or otherwise.

Leadership, Staff and Contractors must act with awareness of their behaviour and the power and influence dynamic, which may change over time as a result of circumstances such as (but not limited to) promotion and changes to the type of or terms of engagement you hold with UQ. Prompt Disclosure is essential and must not be delayed.

(9) Can an Intimate Relationship that started before the Student enrolled still be a breach?

Yes. The Intimate Relationship must be Disclosed and appropriately managed. If the Leadership, Staff and/or Contractor has Direct Power or Influence over the Student, the Intimate Relationship is prohibited. In the case of an existing relationship, appropriate steps must be taken to avoid a situation of Direct Power or Influence arising.

(10) Can I supervise a Student that I'm in an Intimate Relationship with if they consent?

No. Consent from the Student does not override the Procedure. In situations where you have Direct Power or Influence over the Student—Intimate Relationships are strictly prohibited, regardless of mutual agreement.

(11) I am both a Student and Staff of the University. Am I still required to disclose Intimate Relationships with Students who I only interact with during activities that I engage in as a Student?

Yes. Students are frequently engaged with the University as Staff in various roles. In such cases, the dual role of being both a Student and Staff does not exempt you from the obligation to Disclose.

(12) What actions can I take to maintain Professional Boundaries with Students?

The University is a vibrant community that brings together a large and diverse population of staff and students, spanning a wide range of ages, cultural backgrounds, and life stages. Maintaining professional boundaries in this context requires a balanced and principled approach based on the professional context. Regular self-reflection and awareness of the power dynamic are essential to upholding these boundaries.

When working or engaging with Students, in particular where Direct Power and Influence exists but where there is no

Intimate Relationship, the following recommendations should be applied to ensure that the Procedure is adhered to:

a. Communications

- i. Use approved University channels to communicate with Students such as emails between Leadership, Staff or Contractor's UQ email address and a Student's UQ email address.
- ii. In circumstances where it is necessary to provide personal phone numbers and email addresses to Students, communication should strictly be limited to academic or professional work and not for personal or social reasons. These circumstances are limited to circumstances where:
 - the Leadership, Staff or Contractor does not have reasonable access to an approved UQ channel of communication to initiate professional communication; or
 - the UQ Student has requested contact to a personal phone number or email account from the Leadership, Staff or Contractor which relates to the Student's study and cannot be reasonably facilitated through an approved UQ communication channel as a result of time or accessibility constraints.
- iii. It is best practice to follow up any substantive telephone call with a Student with a written summary of the conversation to the Student's University email account so that there is an auditable trail of the communication and both parties are clear of what was said and agreed.
- iv. Leadership, Staff and Contractors should not disclose private or overly personal information about themselves to Students or enquire about Students' personal or private lives.
- v. Leadership, Staff and Contractors must communicate with Students in a professional manner. 'Banter' of a sexualised nature, offensive language, inappropriate jokes, or comments related to Students' appearance, gender, race, or any other attributes are unacceptable.

b. Physical Interaction and Contact

- i. Maintain an appropriate physical distance. Hugging, touching and other forms of physical intimacy between the Leadership, Staff or Contractor and the Student must be avoided.
- ii. Meetings should be held in appropriate University or public spaces, relevant to the academic or professional UQ activity offered to the Student.
- iii. Ensure that contact remains during reasonable working hours.

c. Socialising with Students

- i. Leadership, Staff and Contractors who attend University functions with Students where alcohol has been provided must demonstrate restraint in accordance with the [Staff Code of Conduct Policy](#) and the [Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy](#).
- ii. It is not appropriate to consume alcohol outside of official interactions with Students.
- iii. Leadership, Staff and Contractors should avoid socialising with Students outside of official interactions.

Status and Details

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