MetFilm School
Policy on Staff-Student Relationships

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1. Introduction

1.1 This policy outlines MetFilm's position on relationships between members of staff and students. The relationship between students and staff are central to the student experience and this policy is intended to ensure that these relationships are professional, have boundaries, and are founded on mutual trust and confidence.

1.2 In the context of this document, a **personal** relationship is defined as:

- a family relationship;
- a friendship;
- a business / commercial / financial relationship; or

- a sexual / romantic relationship, however brief.

1.3 A **professional** relationship is defined as:
- a teaching, assessing, supervising, tutoring, mentoring role; or
- a pastoral or welfare role; or
- an administrative or technical support role.

1.4 The difference in power between a member of staff and a student makes any personal relationships potentially vulnerable to exploitation. They also generate real or perceived inequalities, not only involving the persons concerned, but also affecting other members of the School, whether students or staff.

2. Scope of the Policy

2.1 This policy applies to all staff members of MetFilm, including all tutors and teaching assistants, and other people contracted directly by the School.

2.2 The policy also applies to staff who are enrolled as students.

3. Relationships with other Policies

3.1 This policy is part of a suite of policies and guidelines that have been designed to protect staff and students and ensure all members of the School community can enjoy a positive environment in which to work and study. This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:
- Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Safeguarding Policy
- Declarations of Interest
- Guidance on the use of social media

4. Policy Statement

4.1 The staff-student relationship should be one of trust and confidence in order that students can benefit from the learning experience offered by the School. It is also vital that students benefit from equality of treatment and so it is important that a personal relationship between a member of staff and a student does not in any way prejudice that equality, in reality or perception.

4.2 Members of MetFilm staff are strongly discouraged from entering into a personal relationship with any student and this policy covers all students regardless of their course. Although undergraduate students and postgraduate students (given the nature of the tutor / student relationship) are seen to be more vulnerable, all students are affected by the imbalance of power in any such relationship. It should be noted that any relationships with students under the age of eighteen is regarded as a disciplinary matter under the School's Safeguarding Policy. In particular, under the Sexual Offences

Act 2000 it is an offence for a person over 18 to have a sexual relationship with a child under 18 where that person is in a position of trust in respect of that child, even if the relationship is consensual.

4.3 The School regards it as unprofessional for any staff member to actively seek to initiate a personal relationship or to pursue such a relationship with a student in any circumstance. It has a duty of care to its students to ensure that they can study in a safe environment and that their welfare is protected. The School may, therefore, take disciplinary action under the Staff Disciplinary Procedure where there is any behaviour by members of staff that undermines the professional staff student relationship such as texting, inappropriate communications, asking them to socialise etc. Such behaviour or that of a more serious nature such as asking for sexual favours or other forms of abuse, will lead to action.

4.4 MetFilm does, however, recognise that such relationships may nonetheless develop where it may not have been initiated by the staff member or may pre-exist. Where a member of staff has a professional role in relation to a student with whom they have a personal relationship, it is the responsibility of the member of staff to inform the HR Manager. The HR Manager along with the Safeguarding Team will review teaching, tutoring, assessment, administrative or any other arrangements to ensure the interests of the student are protected.

5. Guidance on maintaining professional relationships

5.1 Staff should aim to develop good professional relationships with students. Within this, certain boundaries are important to maintain to ensure that these relationships remain professional as follows:

- Although staff should aim to develop a professional relationship, they should not see themselves as friends;
- Staff should maintain an appropriate boundary between work and home including not sharing personal information with them or socialising with them except on any appropriate School related functions;
- Staff should only communicate with students through official School channels such as Quercus, School email or Moodle. They should not give out personal phone numbers or email addresses. They should also not use social media platforms for communication such as WhatsApp or request students to be a 'friend' on Facebook or respond to such requests from students – staff should refer to the guidance on the use of social media for further information about what is acceptable.

6. Declarations

6.1 Staff must declare to the HR Manager where they have an existing personal relationship with a student. Where this exists, the Safeguarding Team should ensure that the member of staff does not teach or assess the student or otherwise have any professional responsibility for them. Such relationships

should also be declared and it is important that the student is not advantaged by the relationship above their peers.

6.2 Where a personal relationship develops, it is the responsibility of the member of staff to inform the HR Manager promptly. Where a staff member has not declared it will be viewed as a disciplinary matter.

6.3 School Management who become aware of a relationship that has not been declared should initiate appropriate action in conjunction with HR.

7. Reporting concerns

7.1 Students who are concerned about a relationship with a member of staff will be encouraged to use the Guidance on Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour where applicable (see 8 below).

7.2 Staff who have concerns about the relationships of other member of staff should inform HR.

8. Dealing with unacceptable behaviour

8.1 The School is committed to providing and supporting an environment that promotes equality and diversity. It values the diverse community and aims to create an environment of respect where all are treated equally and where staff and students can reach their full potential.

8.2 Harassment, bullying and discrimination can lead to fear, stress and anxiety and may be unlawful. The School finds any form of such behaviour unacceptable. If a student is unsure whether a relationship with a member of staff could be defined as harassment or bullying, they should be encouraged to act promptly and seek advice from the Head of Student Services.