Personal Relationships Policy

This policy is current as of 1 January 2014 and will be reviewed at least annually by Kaplan.

Scope

This policy is applicable to Kaplan Higher Education Pty Ltd, trading as Kaplan Online Higher Education.

Purpose

Kaplan is committed to maintaining the highest standards when conducting our business. Therefore, in all relationships with our students, employees are expected to act in a dignified manner. Performance and conduct at work is key to the success of Kaplan and the students we serve.

This policy is based on the fundamental principle that conflicts of interest should be avoided, and recognises that it is very dangerous to mix professional and personal relationships. It also recognises that in the staff-student relationship there exists a special trust which should not be denied or exploited. This policy requires disclosure of relationships or events which run contrary to the conflict of interest principle.

Policy

A personal relationship is defined as: a family, sexual, romantic, or other close personal relationship and includes relationships between students and staff.

At all times appropriate boundaries must exist, but this is especially the case where a relationship is of sexual nature, for example between a staff member and a student, or where family members are concerned, as for example where a staff member is teaching their own child.

Personal relationships between students and staff

It is recognised that such relationships may involve a serious inequality of power, and may create real difficulties for the parties concerned but also for third parties, for example, other students who may perceive that a student whom they think or know is in a relationship with a staff member may be gaining an assessment advantage. In considering the obligations on a staff member under this policy particular care must be taken to ensure that cultural considerations are taken into account.

Kaplan does not prohibit personal relationships, *per se*, though it does place certain obligations on staff who may be in a personal relationship.

Obligations on staff in a personal relationship

There are two fundamental obligations:

1. Disclosure:

   The staff member must disclose the fact that he/she is in a personal relationship and provide sufficient details to his/her line manager so as to ensure that any conflict of interest or advantage or disadvantage to all students will be avoided. Failure by a staff member to disclose that he/she is or may be in a personal relationship with a student may result in disciplinary action. This may include termination of employment in the case of a serious breach.
2. Non-involvement in decision making

Normally the staff member must not be involved in decision making processes relating to:

- Recruitment or selection for entry into a course
- Assessment and/or supervision
- the awarding of a scholarship or prize
- resource support
- exclusion or disciplinary matters.

It is however recognised that on occasion complete non-involvement of the staff member in the matter may be unfair to the student with whom the staff member is in a personal relationship or in some instances to other students, for example where a group of students are involved in a joint project which is being assessed by a staff member who is in a relationship with one of them.

In such cases the staff member may be involved but only after gaining the consent of the supervisor and provided his or her supervisor is made fully aware of the precise circumstances and provided the supervisor puts in place measures to protect all students involved. Such measure may include appropriate moderation or second marking procedures.

Attempts to establish relationships with students

It is also recognised under this policy that staff are in a potentially difficult situation where they attempt to establish a personal relationship with a student. In many instances such behaviour may amount to misconduct. Very often it will be harassment and be seen as a breach of the special trust owed by the staff member to the student.

In recognising this special trust, staff must be particularly careful in their dealings with students of different cultural or racial backgrounds who may not be aware that such advances or perceived advances by a staff member are not acceptable, or that it is completely appropriate in Australia society to advise the staff member that their approach is unwelcome.

Related Policies

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following related Kaplan policies:

- Access and Equity policy
- Code of practice
- Harassment and bullying policy

Please see your Human Resources representative or Business Unit Head if you have any queries relating to this policy.

Responsible Officer

The responsible officer for the implementation and relevant training of this policy is the Vice President, Higher Education Australia.