



Relations between Staff and Learners

Procedure No: 3-7500

Issue date 22.02.2016

Issue No: 1

Purpose: This policy is intended to provide guidance to members of staff team who are in close, intimate and/or exclusive relationships with learners; to protect the integrity of all members of staff and clients from allegations of actual or perceived conflicts of interest; to avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest; and to prevent behaviours that give rise to complaints.

Responsible Person: Chief Operations Officer

Overview:

EQUALS International nurtures and promotes its role as a community in which staff and learners engage in harmonious, respectful, professional and mutually beneficial relationships. EQUALS regards the relationship that staff have with learners as one of academic, professional, management and spiritual responsibility; and as such, that the nature of these relationships is of utmost importance to the professionalism of individuals and of the Institute as a whole.

EQUALS considers that close, intimate and/or exclusive relationships between staff and learners bring inherent risk to the real or perceived balance of power; fairness and equal treatment; and the exercise of ethical and professional responsibilities by staff. EQUALS regards such relationships as potentially disruptive to the teaching, learning, support and administrative environments with the potential to adversely affect other staff, educators and learners.

While EQUALS recognises that it has no right to regulate the private lives of its staff or learners, we strongly recommend that staff do not enter into close, intimate and/or exclusive relationships with learners.

Scope:

This policy covers close, intimate and/or exclusive relationships, between staff and learners. It covers all areas where such relationships raise questions about real or perceived conflict of interest, trust and/or confidentiality, which may occur on the outset, during or on the termination of a close, intimate and/or exclusive relationship. The areas in which these conflicts may arise include but are not limited to:

- Management and supervision
- All aspects of teaching and learning
- Support and advocacy
- All aspects of administration and processing of records

Policy

1. In the event of a close, intimate and/or exclusive relationship between a member of staff and a learner, the staff member in question must inform EQUALS Management of the relationship as soon as practicable. The declaration will be held in strict confidence.



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2. In the first instance, EQUALS Management will direct the reorganisation of duties to minimise professional contact between the relevant parties.
3. Subsequently, EQUALS Management will consider an appropriate course of action to protect staff and learners from perceptions of favouritism or other preferential treatment and to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all affected parties.
4. EQUALS Management will consult with the relevant staff and learner who will be expected to comply with the course of action as directed. Failure by staff to comply with directions may result in disciplinary action.
5. In addition, failure by staff to disclose a relationship covered by this policy will be investigated and disciplinary action may be taken.
6. Likewise, any member of staff who finds themselves the subject of a complaint may, following investigation, face disciplinary action. However, any complaint found to be made in malice could lead to disciplinary action against the complainant.
7. Learners or staff who find themselves in receipt of unwanted/inappropriate behaviours or involved in a relationship that they do not consider to be truly consensual or have been personally adversely affected by a misuse of power/authority or conflict of interest, should raise this matter with EQUALS Management. The matter will be treated in strict confidence and a decision made as to the most appropriate course of action, including investigation by internal and external authorities, will be made in consultation with the complainant.