



## Version Control Statement

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Positive professional relationships between members of staff and students are an essential part of supporting our students' educational development and ensuring their welfare whilst at the School. However, when relationships between staff and students become personal in nature, they may lead to actual or perceived imbalances of power or authority, accusations of bias or exploitation, and questions about the nature of consent. This can undermine trust and confidence in the academic process, impair academic progress and negatively affect the welfare of the student.

To provide a positive, safe and supportive learning and working environment, this Policy sets out the School's position on personal relationships between staff and students, where these are of an intimate or close personal nature.

To protect the welfare of students, and in the best interests of staff, the School **prohibits all staff** from pursuing or entering into a personal relationship with any student for whom they have any direct or indirect academic responsibilities, or other direct professional responsibilities.

## 2. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- 2.1. This policy applies principally to all staff and students at the School but can, under certain circumstances, also apply to other members of the Istituto Marangoni London community (see section on 'Istituto Marangoni Definitions').
- 2.2. It also applies to:
  - 2.2.1. job applicants in so far as they are requested to declare any personal relationships with existing students or staff in their application form;
  - 2.2.2. individuals applying to become students in so far as the staff member has influence over whether the student is admitted.

## 3. ISTITUTO MARANGONI DEFINITIONS

- 3.1. **Personal Relationships** - a relationship which transgresses professional boundaries and may lead to real or perceived conflicts of interest, or misuse of power and authority.

Examples of personal relationships include:

- 3.1.1. a family relationship a business/commercial/financial relationship
- 3.1.2. a romantic/intimate/sexual relationship (including a brief or one-off occurrence)
- 3.1.3. a close personal/social friendship, which exists outside of the workplace.

However, personal relationships are not restricted to these examples and anyone who is in a situation which could lead to a potential conflict of interest, as set out in this policy, must declare it as outlined below.

- 3.2. **Staff Member** - any individual who is employed by Istituto Marangoni London, or engaged to carry out work for Istituto Marangoni London, including visiting staff, guest, and hourly-paid staff.
- 3.3. **Student** - includes any person currently studying for an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification, or on any course arranged by or through other IM Schools or Training Centers, including applicants, and offer-holders. It covers all students who are registered for a Programme even if their status is suspended but does not include former students who have

finished their courses, unless they are current applicants or offer holders for another Programme at the School.

- 3.4. **Istituto Marangoni London Community** - includes but is not limited to all students, salaried and non-salaried members of staff (including visiting staff), contractors and executive members of the Board as well as other individuals who are authorised to be on School premises for the purposes of work or study.
- 3.5. A **conflict of interest** may arise where an individual might be seen to be influencing School matters for actual, potential or perceived personal benefit. Such a conflict may arise in a situation when a member of the School community is in a position to influence, directly or indirectly, School business, research or other decisions in ways that could lead to gain for them, their family or others. No one should be involved in making decisions in relation to their commitments to the School from which they, or anyone with whom they have a close financial or personal relationship, stands to personally benefit. Such considerations apply to a wide range of activities in which conflicts may arise, including, but not restricted to, student admissions, student assessment, disciplinary proceedings, appeals, staff recruitment, staff promotion and remuneration, procurement and assessing proposed relationships between the School and outside parties.
- 3.6. A **historical relationship** is one that has ended. Where these were in existence at the time of this policy, it is the School's expectation that they would have been reported. Once a relationship has ended, an individual can notify the School by emailing the HR department. Information regarding the relationship will be kept on staff records for two years in case of any concerns or complaints that the past relationship is impacting on current working relations and / or the student experience. Such complaints will be investigated in line with the policy in place at the time of the relationship.
- 3.7. **Positional power:** this is the authority held by virtue of one's position in the organisation's structure and hierarchy.
- 3.8. **Consent:** permission for something to happen or agreement to do something with a full understanding of the facts and without coercion. Consent is not consent if it is given under pressure, (perceived or real) threat, or given when someone is not really capable of giving it – e.g. if they are intoxicated, asleep and/or not capable of giving consent. Consent can be withdrawn at any time.
- 3.9. **Exploited Consent:** consent that is secured only due to the occupancy of respective positions within an unequal relationship e.g. supervisor and student. Exploited consent includes experiencing pressure (perceived or real) to give consent in order to improve marks, improve promotion, or where a person believes they would not receive due professional attention

#### 4. POLICY PRINCIPLES

- 4.1. Istituto Marangoni London staff must conduct themselves professionally and appropriately in their dealings with colleagues and students, in line with the IML Dignity at Work and IML Safeguarding Policy available on the IML Staff Hub.
- 4.2. The same guidelines and rules for appropriate conduct apply when staff and students are participating in fieldwork, conferences and other work-related activities away from the normal workplace, including when staff are on sabbatical leave.
- 4.3. The School's Equal Opportunities, Bullying and Harassment Policy and the Policy on Preventing and addressing Sexual Harassment and Misconduct Policy set out actions or behaviour which constitute harassment based on protected characteristics including gender,

gender reassignment, sexual orientation, age and race. Improper behaviour, where a member of staff uses their power to exploit students / staff, will be treated as gross misconduct and dealt with through the relevant disciplinary procedure.

- 4.4. The School's Preventing and addressing Sexual Harassment and Misconduct Policy set out actions or behaviour which constitute harassment based on protected characteristics including gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, age and race. Improper behaviour, where a member of staff uses their power to exploit students/staff, will be treated as gross misconduct and dealt with through the relevant disciplinary procedure as outlined in the Policy.
- 4.5. Staff in positions of influence should ensure that their behaviour does not put students or staff in an uncomfortable or difficult position, for example, by suggesting one-to-one meetings offsite in informal settings, such as restaurants, pubs or homes. Professional activity should be carried out at all times either in appropriate spaces (offices, meeting rooms, cafés) on campus or using online communication tools. Due consideration should be given to the power imbalance that exists and care should be taken to ensure that contact and behaviour are professional, appropriate and non-intimidating.

## **5. DISCLOSURE OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS**

- 5.1. As mentioned above, with effect from the Policy commencement date, all staff members are prohibited from pursuing or entering into an intimate relationship with any student. Failure to comply with this Policy will be considered as a disciplinary matter as set out in the IML Employee Handbook available on the IML Staff Hub.
- 5.2. If at the Policy commencement date, if a staff member (i) is already in a personal relationship with any student; or (ii) has previously been in a personal relationship with any student - they should declare that relationship to the HR Manager within a month of when the Policy commenced.
- 5.3. If it is found this Policy is breached unintentionally, for example where a member of staff is unaware that the other party is a student, and had no reasonable basis to suspect it, the member of staff should inform the HR Manager as soon as they become aware of the situation using the Staff Declaration Form. If a member of staff is unsure whether a relationship with a student should be disclosed under this Policy, the member of staff should disclose it.
- 5.4. A declaration of any close personal relationship should be made using the Staff Declaration form available on the IML Staff Hub.
- 5.5. All declarations will be treated respectfully, sensitively and confidentially and the wishes of both parties will be respected as far as is possible. This includes same-sex relationships where the parties may not be "out" publicly and respect for the cultural values of the parties involved. Any breach of confidentiality of information provided in the declaration will be investigated and may be subject to disciplinary action. Sensitive personal data will be stored securely and managed in compliance with data protection legislation.
- 5.6. Where a relationship between a staff member and a student is disclosed, Istituto Marangoni London will take proactive steps to ensure the student does not experience any unfair advantage or disadvantage as a result of the relationship. To protect students from any potential abuse of power or conflict of interest, appropriate measures will be put in place. These may include ensuring that the staff member is no longer involved in the teaching, assessment, supervision, or academic decision-

making processes relating to the student. Where possible, this may involve a change of tutor or reassignment to a different class or group. All such disclosures will be treated sensitively and in confidence, with the primary aim of safeguarding the student's academic experience and wellbeing.

## **6. RELATED POLICIES AND GUIDANCE**

- 6.1. IML Preventing and Addressing Sexual Harassment and Misconduct Policy
- 6.2. IML Safeguarding Policy
- 6.3. IML Dignity at Work
- 6.4. IML Student Code of Conduct and Student Disciplinary Procedures