

Staff - Student Relationship Policy

This policy contributes to compliance with the Office for Students' **Condition E6** on harassment and sexual misconduct, and should be read alongside the Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy.

Alternative formats:

Please contact a member of staff from the Wellbeing Team if you have a disability which makes it difficult to read this document or other information online. We can provide this information in a suitable alternative format.

Reference Points:

This policy is related to the following staff policies

- · Disciplinary procedure
- Social Media policy
- · Bullying and harassment policy
- Student handbook
- · Grievance procedure
- Safeguarding policy

This policy is underpinned by:

 Office for Students: guide for students to harassment and sexual misconduct <u>https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/student-rights-and-welfare/student-guide-to-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct/</u>

Staff-Student Relationship Policy

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1. Scope

- 1.1 LAMDA is committed to the promotion of an inclusive, respectful and considerate community. LAMDA expects every staff member, consultant and student to behave in a respectful, inclusive and responsible manner towards all members.
- 1.2 The policy sets out the expectations and obligations of employees, workers and consultants with respect to personal relationships between students and staff, regardless of sexual orientation and identity.
- 1.3 For the avoidance of doubt, employees include all staff academic and non-academic including student mentors in a position of trust.
- 1.4 Workers comprise casual workers who teach or engage with students in any capacity for any duration.
- 1.5 Consultants comprise of artistic directors, writers, examiners and producers on a freelance engagement who work with students and staff at LAMDA. For the purposes of this policy, this includes staff at placement providers who are responsible for supervising and assessing the work of students who are on a placement.
- 1.6 All of the above groups are in a position of trust, and it is vital to demonstrate exemplary behaviour. Utmost care must be taken to ensure that your actions aren't misinterpreted on any occasion by anyone despite being well intentioned. Furthermore, you should always give due consideration to what is an appropriate environment and what is appropriate conduct in relation to the activities that you are undertaking.
- 1.7 This policy will be applied in a manner consistent with upholding freedom of speech and academic freedom protections, in line with sections 3.5 and 4.2 of LAMDA's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech ("Code"). In particular, no member of academic staff will be subject to disciplinary action as a consequence of exercising their right to freedom of speech or academic freedom within the law. The Code sets out LAMDA's values relating to freedom of speech, the procedures to be followed when arranging events on LAMDA-controlled premises, LAMDA's expectations regarding conduct at such meetings and the criteria LAMDA uses when considering event approval. For the avoidance of doubt, if there is a conflict between this policy and the Code, the Code will prevail.

2. Purpose of the policy

- 2.1 LAMDA recognises that some socialising between staff and students is inevitable in the drama school environment, however the nature of staff/student relationships imposes particular responsibilities and duties on staff. This policy is intended to ensure that appropriate safeguards and processes are in place to prevent any abuse of power and sexual misconduct.
- 2.2 This policy seeks to protect students and staff from allegations of actual or perceived conflicts of interest, and to avoid circumstances where a position of power may be abused. In doing so it seeks to ensure a positive and supportive working environment where all are treated fairly.
- 2.3 Subject to paragraphs 2.5 and 5 below, LAMDA prohibits any intimate relationships between staff and students.
- 2.4 LAMDA also prohibits close personal relationships between staff and students where there is a direct supervision, management, welfare or pastoral role or responsibility for the student's academic studies.
- 2.5 A breach of this policy will be dealt in accordance with LAMDA's Staff Disciplinary Policy. If such a relationship exists before someone becomes a staff member, they must declare it, or make such a declaration when a student is enrolled that they have been in or are in a relationship with a student, and appropriate boundaries will be put in place. This might include, for example, ensuring that the member of staff was not involved in teaching or assessing the student.

3. Guidance for Staff

- In order to maintain appropriate relationships with students, and to help reduce the risk of sexual misconduct, abuse of power or conflict of interest, staff should:
 - Maintain an appropriate physical and emotional distance from students and perform their duties in the best interests of LAMDA without favour towards any individual student over another student.
 - Avoid creating special friendships with students, as this may be seen as grooming.
 - Ensure that where they have a pre-existing relationship with a student, a conflict of interest declaration is made to the HR department prior to the commencement of their employment or when the student concerned enrols.
 - Use their LAMDA email account, telephone, software applications and internet access for communications with students where possible, avoiding personal messaging or making use of any of the social media channels (such as WhatsApp, Messenger, Instagram or X).
 For the avoidance of doubt, if WhatsApp is used, it must be ensured that this is for a limited period of time until a particular piece of work is complete and is strictly limited for the purposes of the project to hand.
 - Set an example by writing and communicating with students in a professional manner at all times. Any email sent to a student or a colleague about a student may be disclosed to the student or their nominated legal representative in accordance with the Data Protection Act.
 - Staff should not give their personal mobile phone number to a student. Staff should use
 their work telephone numbers which may be diverted to their personal mobile without
 having to divulge their personal number. LAMDA's communication channels such as
 LAMDA email, Zoom or Microsoft Teams could be used as an alternative. On LAMDA
 trips, such as Edinburgh, staff should use a LAMDA PAYGO mobile.
- 3.2 Where staff have a primary role of providing supervision, teaching, or pastoral care to students (including personal tutors), staff should:
 - Ensure that in-person meetings and discussions occur on site at LAMDA. Where not possible, it must be ensured that the meeting occurs in a public venue, such as a library or a café.
 - Refer students with support needs to Student Services or Academic Services as appropriate, and limit their role in providing personal support to a student where this is not part of their employment duties.
 - Refrain from contacting students outside of reasonable working hours.
 - Not seek personal information from a student except any relevant, medical information for special consideration, or personal circumstances information.

4. Guidance on unacceptable behaviour towards students

- 4.1 Please note that the below is not an exhaustive list of examples:
 - Physical touching that could be construed as sexualised (e.g. touches of the shoulder or squeezes of the leg), or comments or questions of a sexual nature (whether verbally or electronically).
 - Paying undue special attention to a particular student which may be seen as grooming.
 - Accepting gifts from a student.
 - Inviting an individual student to your private home or room without others present, or visiting their home or room.
 - Asking a student to care for your child, or to house sit whilst on holiday, or perform any other personal services or work-related duties.

5. Relationships between members of staff

- 5.1 Relationships between members of staff are not prohibited. However, in order to prevent potential abuse of power or perceived or real conflict of interest, staff must declare close personal or intimate relationships as soon as possible to their line manager and Head of HR in either of the following situations:
 - Where a relationship begins that may give rise to a real or perceived conflict of interest, exploitation, favouritism or bias.
 - Where a relationship already exists and a new situation arises that may give rise to a real
 or perceived conflict of interest, exploitation, favouritism or bias. For example, two staff
 members in a relationship who worked in different departments who now work in the
 same department.

Where staff are in an intimate or close personal relationship, consideration will be given on how to prevent conflicts of interest, breach of confidentiality or unfair advantage gained (or perceived to be gained) from the overlap of a personal and professional relationship. This may include finding alternative line management arrangements.

The line manager will only inform other relevant members of staff about the relationship (e.g. in order to explain a change in management arrangements) if the individuals concerned agree.

Staff are reminded of possible power imbalances within intimate and close personal relationships. Relationships between employees in which one has direct or indirect authority over another at work are strongly discouraged.

In order to maintain appropriate relationships with colleagues/peers, and help reduce the risk of abuse of power or conflict of interest, staff should maintain an appropriate physical and emotional distance from other staff while working.

6. Inappropriate conduct

- 6.1 Unprofessional or inappropriate conduct towards a student or staff member is not acceptable. This may breach the Bullying and Harassment Policy and/or Staff Disciplinary Policy
- 6.2 A staff member should seek advice immediately if they feel they have been subject to unprofessional or inappropriate conduct from a student or colleague, by speaking to their line manager or the Head of HR to ensure appropriate support is provided.

7. Declaration

- 7.1 All declarations are to be made as soon as reasonably practicable and always within one month. As the declaration contains sensitive personal data it will be stored securely and managed in compliance with data protection legislation. Such declarations will be treated respectfully, sensitively and confidentially, and the wishes of both parties respected as far as is possible.
- 7.2 Staff who are unsure whether they have a close personal or intimate relationship with a student or staff member should seek advice from their line manager or the Head of HR. Staff are encouraged to seek advice if the other party expressly does not wish the relationship to be reported.

8. Breach of policy

- 8.1 An intimate relationship between a staff member and student is a breach of this policy and will be investigated under the Staff Disciplinary Policy.
- 8.2 Failure to disclosure a close personal or intimate relationship with a student, or with a colleague where there is a real or perceived conflict of interest, breach of trust or confidentiality, may be investigated under the Staff Disciplinary Policy.

8.3 This policy forms part of LAMDA's regulatory and conduct framework and is binding on all staff in relation to expected behaviour and disciplinary matters. This policy is not contractual and may be varied from time to time.

9. Summary for Students

9.1 The following text will be included in the Student Handbook.

What You Can Expect from Staff at LAMDA: A Summary for Students

At LAMDA, we are committed to fostering a respectful, inclusive, and professional learning environment. This summary outlines what you can expect from staff and how we protect your wellbeing and academic experience.

No Intimate Relationships

- Staff, including full-time, part-time, freelance, and visiting professionals, are not permitted to have intimate or close personal relationships with students.
- If such a relationship exists before someone becomes a staff member, they must declare it and appropriate boundaries will be put in place.

Professional Boundaries

- Staff are expected to keep professional and emotional boundaries in place, and treat all students equally and fairly.
- Communication should take place through official LAMDA channels (e.g., LAMDA email, Teams), not personal messaging apps.
- Meetings with staff should happen in professional or public spaces—never in private homes.

Unacceptable Behaviour

Staff must not:

- Make sexual or suggestive comments or physical contact.
- Ask students to do personal tasks unrelated to their training (e.g., babysitting, running errands).

Reporting Concerns

If a member of staff acts inappropriately, students can speak to:

- · Their personal tutor or a trusted staff member
- Student Services
- The Director of People & Culture

All reports will be taken seriously and handled confidentially. Students will be supported throughout the process.

₩ Why This Matters

This policy helps prevent the misuse of power and protects everyone's right to a safe and supportive training environment. It also ensures we meet national standards, including those set by the Office for Students (Condition E6).

Version Control: Document History and Next Review

SMT has responsibility for approval of any amendments to this policy and for keeping all such academic policies under regular review.

Version	3
Date policy approved by SMT:	June 2025
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Owner	Human Resources