

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT (STAFF)



INTRODUCTION

Hartpury aims to provide a working and learning environment which will enable staff and students to fulfil their personal potential. Hartpury is, therefore, committed to providing a supportive and inclusive environment for all.

The purpose of this policy is to set out expected standards of behaviour by staff towards colleagues, students and other stakeholders, to ensure high standards of integrity in the conduct of Hartpury business and to avoid both impropriety and any appearance of impropriety. This Code also provides guidance in areas where personal relationships overlap with working relationships. It seeks to protect the integrity of all students and staff from allegations of actual or perceived conflicts of interest and avoid complaints of harassment and grievance or disciplinary action.

It should be read in conjunction with Hartpury's Staff Disciplinary & Dismissal Policy (which deals with general staff misconduct), the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, the Guidelines on Professional Boundaries and with the relevant sections of a member of staff's terms and conditions of employment.

SCOPE

This Code of Conduct applies to all members of staff of Hartpury. For the purposes of this Code, members of staff are defined as all staff employed by Hartpury in either an established post, sessional or casual staff. This also applies to individuals engaged under a Contract for Services with Hartpury.

In terms of working and personal relationships, this Code covers the following:

- business, commercial, financial relationships ;
- close friendships and social relationships ;
- family relationships;
- intimate relationships including marital, sexual, romantic, emotional whether heterosexual or same sex relationships.

This list is neither exhaustive nor exclusive.

This Code covers all areas where such relationships raise questions about conflict of interest, trust and/or confidentiality which may occur at the outset, during or on the termination of a relationship. Such conflicts may arise in relation to the following areas

- management and supervision of staff including career progression, appraisal, remuneration and staff development;
- deployment of financial and other resources;
- all aspects of teaching and learning, whether direct delivery or academic support;
- access to confidential information;
- access to Student Services including financial assistance, accommodation and other services;
- contractual matters including employment, career opportunities, placements, complaints and discipline;
- assignment of work and facilities to students.

This list is neither exhaustive nor exclusive.

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND BEHAVIOUR

Hartpury expects high standards of performance and conduct from its employees at all times. Hartpury has agreed a basic Code of Conduct which applies to all staff both on campus and at all off-site activities. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure the Code is followed. The following is expected of all staff:

As a member of staff at Hartpury, it is expected that:

- You will arrive for work on time, and be punctual to meetings, lectures etc;
- You will be appropriately dressed for your duties and wear your ID badge at all times.
- You are honest, responsible, courteous and show respect for others;
- You will respect property, materials and equipment on the campus and surrounding area;
- You will set a good example to other staff, students, visitors and guests to Hartpury;
- You will follow and abide by all terms and conditions of your employment and policies and procedures affecting your work;
- You will ensure that your conduct will not, at any time, have any adverse effect upon the reputation of Hartpury, both at work and outside of work;
- You will comply with the policies relating to safeguarding and child protection including the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedure and Guidelines on Professional Boundaries. This includes Hartpury's policy on Sexual Misconduct;
- You will be responsible for promoting equality, diversity and inclusivity across Hartpury and undertake your duties in accordance with Hartpury's policies relating to equality and diversity.
- You will comply with all Health and Safety rules and regulations as specified in the Staff Handbook, and departmental safety rules as appropriate, not putting yourself, or others, at risk through inappropriate behaviour;
- You will have read and understood Hartpury's Mission Statement, and policies and procedures affecting your work;
- You will be responsible for the behaviour of students in your care, where appropriate;
- You will listen to the views of other members of staff and be sensitive towards their views;
- You will work as part of a team, share experiences and be co-operative;
- You will be responsible for your own behaviour and actions;
- You will demonstrate professional standards in all situations;
- Should you bring a vehicle on site, you will observe driving and parking regulations at all times.

COMPLIANCE

Line managers and heads of departments are responsible for ensuring that within their department this Code is followed and a record of outside interests and employment is kept. It may be misconduct under Hartpury's Staff Disciplinary & Dismissal Policy for a member of staff to fail to comply with this Code.

DISCLOSURE

All those to whom the Code applies should declare any relevant conflict or potential conflict of interest between their affairs and those of Hartpury, arising in the course of their duties, to their line manager, Head of Department, or the Vice Chancellor & Principal, as appropriate.

PAID WORK OUTSIDE HARTPURY

When undertaking paid work outside Hartpury, members of staff must comply with Hartpury's rules as set out in their terms and conditions of employment. Staff must not,

without the written consent of Hartpury, undertake any employment or engagement which might interfere with the performance of their duties or conflict with the interests of Hartpury.

It may be misconduct under Hartpury's Staff Disciplinary & Dismissal Policy to undertake paid work which is found to be detrimental to or in conflict with Hartpury's interests.

A member of staff undertaking work outside Hartpury must make it clear to all relevant persons that the work is undertaken in a private capacity, that Hartpury is not involved, and that Hartpury accepts no liability in connection with the work done.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Hartpury strives to maintain the highest standards in all the teaching and research that it undertakes, and staff must not conduct themselves in ways that may undermine the academic standards of its awards or the conduct and dissemination of its research as explicit in this document and the Hartpury Code of Research Practice.

GIFTS, BENEFITS AND HOSPITALITY

Staff should be careful to ensure propriety over receipt of gifts, benefits or hospitality in the course of, or connected with, Hartpury business and should refer to the Anti Bribery Policy and Guidelines on Professional Boundaries for further information.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS

It is recognised that in a healthy working environment staff and students form mutually rewarding relationships. Relationships between staff and students and between staff and other staff are an important professional issue but can potentially give rise to issues of professional conduct and equality of opportunity and treatment.

Staff should conduct themselves at all times in ways that are consistent with Hartpury's policies and procedures, and acknowledge their professional and ethical responsibility to protect the interests of students and accept the obligations and constraints inherent in that responsibility.

Hartpury does not seek to regulate the personal lives of staff but has legitimate concerns about staff/student and staff/staff relationships insofar as they affect the good order, the good running, the regulation, the good standing and/or reputation of Hartpury, and as they could potentially affect the work performance of staff and/or students. For further information, please refer to the Guidelines on Professional Boundaries.

PHYSICAL/SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS UNDER THE AGE OF 18

Staff must be made aware that physical/sexual relationships with students under the age of 18 are strictly prohibited.

Colleges/Universities have an enhanced duty of care for students under 18 and there should be a clear expectation that no member of staff, whether in a teaching or support role, should enter into a relationship with any student under the age of 18.

Teaching staff in particular should be made aware that having a relationship with a student under 18 is treated as a criminal offence that may result in imprisonment.

Staff entering into close personal relationships with students under 18 will be subject to Hartpury's Staff Disciplinary & Dismissal Policy. Any relationships of this nature must be, without delay, referred to Hartpury's Safeguarding Team for referral to the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Executive. Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Executive will organise an Allegations Management Meeting and provide guidance to Hartpury's Safeguarding Team. This behaviour may constitute gross misconduct, which could lead to summary dismissal and a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS AGED 18 OR ABOVE

It is the responsibility of the member of staff to inform their Line manager or a member of the HR Team, if they are in a close personal relationship with a student aged 18 years or more. This is the case for all members of staff whether in a teaching or support role and not just those with a direct teaching relationship with the student. If relevant, the information will be shared with appropriate staff with the agreement of the member of staff.

Any intimate relationship between any student and any staff member who has any responsibility for students, and which can include academic, technical, administrative, or other support or leadership roles, in which the employee may be in a position to exercise a degree of influence over a student, is strictly prohibited. This is due to potential conflicts of interest, breaches of professional ethics, and the potential for exploitation due to the inherent power imbalance in these settings.

Employees are reminded that the commencement of such a relationship will be a serious breach of this policy and will be dealt with under Hartpury's Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy. Actions by the university could also include, where appropriate, a referral being made to the employee's professional / regulatory body.

Intimate relationships between students and staff, who are not in a position to exercise any degree of influence over the student, are permitted but strongly discouraged. If a relationship, however does exist, Hartpury will advise the member of staff and the student that their personal relationship should be conducted entirely off campus. This is to avoid negative perceptions from other members of staff and students.

Any member of staff involved in the assessment of a student to whom they are related to, or in a non-professional or personal relationship with, must make this known to Hartpury authorities via the appropriate academic line manager. In the case of HE academic staff, they must inform the Chair of the Field and Award Examination Boards at which the academic performance of the student is considered.

If a student declares a relationship with a member of staff, Hartpury will take the same stance as detailed above.

It would be completely unacceptable for a member of staff to form a relationship with a student based on preferential treatment in return for sexual favours. Any such behaviour will be subject to Hartpury's Disciplinary & Dismissal Policy and may constitute gross misconduct.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF

Hartpury does not concern itself with the private lives of its staff unless they affect its effective operation or its reputation.

Within Hartpury, members of staff will have a variety of mutually rewarding relationships which will not have a detrimental effect upon colleagues or the good running of the organisation. Whilst most social and personal relationships are entirely beneficial, in that they promote good working and academic relationships, there are occasions when personal relationships between staff may lead to actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

Family relationships must be declared on Hartpury application form. If a family relationship exists the relation cannot be on the interview panel or be the line manager of the other family member. Family members must behave professionally towards each other, applying exactly the same standards of behaviour as to all other staff. Family members include; spouse, partner, dating couples, parents, in-laws, step family,

siblings, grandparents and grandchildren, aunts, uncles, cousins, adopted family members and guardians.

Members of staff are required to declare an interest where a close personal relationship gives rise to a reasonable apprehension that a conflict of interest might exist, or that the integrity of the academic, administrative or institutional processes of Hartpury could be threatened, in circumstances such as those detailed above. Such an apprehension will almost certainly arise where one party to a relationship has a direct line management responsibility for another. It will not necessarily arise from the mere fact of co-membership of a particular department or unit.

It is the responsibility of the member of staff to make a declaration of interest to their line manager/head of department or to one of the persons designated by Hartpury for the purpose. There will not be a requirement to give details of the involvement.

ENDING OF STUDENT-STAFF/STAFF-STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

It is important that if a close personal relationship ends, the member of staff feels encouraged to inform their line manager. Hartpury would wish to be made aware of the end of a close personal relationship where this involved:

- A line manager and direct employee
- Members of a team
- Any other close personal relationship which may affect the member of staff's ability to fulfil their duties or may influence a member of staff's decision making in the workplace

Members of staff who are uncertain about what action to take should seek guidance, in confidence, from the Human Resources Department. Failure to declare a conflict of interest which results in the academic, administrative or institutional processes being brought into question may result in disciplinary action being taken.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Employees responsible for contributing to Hartpury's social media activities should be aware at all times that they are representing Hartpury. Therefore, they should act in accordance with the relevant policies and procedures.

Social media is used by many people, particularly students to communicate with their peers and the public. Students may wish to form personal relationships with employees however to ensure professional boundaries are maintained, employees must not accept and/or invite students or parents of students to be 'friends' on personal social media accounts or other online services. For more detailed information, employees should refer to the Social Media Policy.

ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE

Employees must not attend work under the influence of any substance, including alcohol, illegal drugs and/or solvents. Employees who have been prescribed medication by a healthcare professional must inform their Line Manager immediately if that medication has, or could, have an adverse effect on the employee's ability to carry out his/her duties.

Hartpury's Alcohol and Substance Misuse policy outlines the standards expected of all Hartpury's working community in relation to drug and alcohol use and abuse, and provides guidance on managing issues related to such use and abuse and the action that will be taken by Hartpury in instances of non-compliance.

CONDUCT OUTSIDE OF WORK

Hartpury does not seek to dictate how employees conduct themselves in their personal lives outside work. However, unlawful, anti-social or other conduct by employees, which may jeopardise Hartpury's reputation or position, may be dealt with through Hartpury's Staff Disciplinary & Dismissal procedure.

COMPANY VEHICLES AND DRIVING IN PURSUIT OF HARTPURY ACTIVITY

Hartpury is committed to ensuring that employees are kept as safe as possible whilst undertaking any task on behalf of Hartpury, including driving during the course of work or in pursuit of business or activities.

Where company vehicles are provided to employees in specific posts at Hartpury this will be detailed in the employee's contract of employment.

There may also be occasions when employees are required to either drive a company vehicle or their own vehicle in pursuit of Hartpury business or activities. Individuals should refer to the relevant policies for more detailed information.

MISUSE OF POWER/AUTHORITY

Where members of staff believe themselves to have been personally adversely affected by a misuse of power/authority or conflict of interest, they should raise it with their line manager/head of department or through the procedures available (Grievance or Harassment Policy). Where Hartpury is made aware of a relationship by another person or other means, appropriate action will be taken to protect the integrity of all parties and procedures and deal with the matter as sensitively as possible.

Any of the parties involved who do not consider that satisfactory arrangements have been implemented have recourse to the Human Resources Department in the first instance.

HARASSMENT OF STAFF BY STUDENTS

Where relationships have been reported and appropriate action taken, any subsequent harassment of staff by students will be investigated using Hartpury's Harassment procedures. If substantiated, such complaints may lead to disciplinary action under the regulations governing student conduct.

CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS

Members of staff must disclose to the Deputy Principal (Resources) or a member of the HR team all criminal convictions, cautions and bind-overs against them, spent or unspent and all allegations which may be relevant if working with young children or vulnerable adults and any or pending court cases. All new members of staff will be asked to complete a DBS form. If staff are issued with a conviction, caution, reprimand, or warning or are charged with an offence subsequent to commencement of employment or change of job within Hartpury, they must inform a member of the HR team as soon as possible. Offers of employment cannot be made by line managers if the appropriate procedure is not followed. Please refer to Hartpury's Staff Disciplinary & Dismissal Policy for further information.

SAFEGUARDING

Hartpury has a statutory and moral duty to ensure that it safeguards and promotes the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Please refer to Hartpury's Recruitment and Selection Policy, the Guidelines on Professional Boundaries and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures for further information regarding safeguarding.

REFERENCE TO OTHER POLICIES

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy & Procedure
- Guidelines on Professional Boundaries
- IT Acceptable Use Policy
- Public Interest Disclosure Procedure
- Staff Disciplinary & Dismissal Policy & Procedure
- Grievance Policy
- Recruitment & Selection Policy
- Anti-bribery Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE)
- Social Media Policy
- Sexual Misconduct Policy
- Hartpury Code of Research Practice
- Staff Student Relationships Policy
- Bullying & Harassment Policy

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

As part of this policy, Hartpury reaffirms its commitment to the principles of freedom of speech and academic freedom, in accordance with the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 and guidance from the Office for Students (OfS). Hartpury will take all reasonably practicable steps to secure the right to express lawful views and engage in open debate without fear of censorship or institutional discipline for staff, students, and visiting speakers. In addition, this policy prohibits the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) in any situation that would prevent staff from speaking out about misconduct, harassment, or other matters of public interest.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

As with all Hartpury policies and procedures, due care has been taken to ensure that this policy is appropriate to all members of staff regardless of their age, disability, ethnicity, gender, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and transgender status.

The policy will be applied fairly and consistently whilst upholding Hartpury's commitment to providing equality to all. If any employee feels that this or any other policy does not meet this aim, please contact the HR Department.

Hartpury is committed towards promoting positive mental health by working towards the MINDFUL EMPLOYER Charter. Hartpury aims to create a culture of support within the workplace where employees can talk about mental health problems without the fear of stigma or discrimination.

APPROVAL & REVIEW CYCLE		
Reviewed By	Head of HR	June 2025
Approved By	Exec	June 2025
	Corporation	TBC
Interim-Review	No	-
Next Review Date		June 2026