

## RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS POLICY

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## **RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS**

### **1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

- 1.1. This policy is designed to give guidance to all Kaplan International staff and students on the expected standards of behaviour when working with children, young people and vulnerable adults, and our responsibilities and processes in reporting any concerns. Additional guidance should be sought locally for specific jobs or activities, especially where working with young children or in a personal or private environment.
- 1.2. At Kaplan International, we value good professional relationships between staff and students and recognise that the quality of these relationships relies heavily on a mutual trust, which may be threatened if a member of staff enters a physical relationship with a student.
- 1.3. In extreme cases, a liaison of this nature, albeit a consensual liaison, may lead to abuses of power in the staff/student relationship. Also, if the relationship is, at a later point, no longer deemed to be consensual by the student, this may lead to claims of harassment.

### **2. DEFINITIONS**

- 2.1. Child – UK Statute Law defines a child as a person under the age of 18.
- 2.2. Vulnerable (person) – In need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect. The definition focuses on the nature of activities, which if required by an adult, will define them to be vulnerable.

### **3. PRINCIPLES**

- 3.1. A relationship of trust exists where a member of staff, a student or a volunteer is in a position of power or influence over a vulnerable person by virtue of the work or nature of the activity being undertaken.
- 3.2. The conduct of staff should therefore be based on the following principles:
  - 3.2.1. Members of staff should recognise a professional and ethical responsibility to protect the interests of students, to respect the trust involved in the staff/student relationship and to accept the constraints and obligations inherent in that responsibility.
  - 3.2.2. To embark on a physical relationship with a student involves serious problems arising from the unequal power of the parties concerned as well as problems in maintaining the boundaries of professional and personal life. Such relationships may also disrupt the teaching and learning environment for other students and for colleagues.
  - 3.2.3. Students who are, or who have been, involved in a physical relationship with a member of staff, and who do not consider their involvement to be truly consensual may also make a claim of harassment to the college management.
- 3.3. Professional responsibilities of staff towards students may be academic, administrative or advisory. Under this policy, Kaplan International deems any physical relationships between staff and students as unprofessional conduct.

- 3.4. Any concerns, suspicions or allegations of abuse or inappropriate behaviour will be taken very seriously by Kaplan International and responded to appropriately.

#### **4. YOUR BEHAVIOUR**

- 4.1. In your position of trust it is important that you demonstrate exemplary behaviour. Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned. You should always give due consideration as to what is an appropriate environment and what is appropriate conduct in relation to the activities you are undertaking.
- 4.2. Furthermore, you should:
- 4.2.1. Treat all people including students, staff and visitors with respect and with due regard to cultural differences;
  - 4.2.2. Act as an appropriate role model and provide an example you wish others to follow;
  - 4.2.3. Challenge unacceptable behaviour by others - do not permit abusive youth/peer activities (e.g. bullying, ridiculing, including 'cyber bullying');
  - 4.2.4. Ensure feedback given in activities is constructive rather than negative;
  - 4.2.5. Be careful in your use of language/terminology/behaviour and do not make unnecessary comments or actions which could be interpreted as having a sexual connotation;
  - 4.2.6. Take special care when discussing sensitive issues with children or young people;
  - 4.2.7. Report any concerns, suspicions or allegations regarding the welfare of a young person immediately to the appropriate officer.

#### **5. REPORTING ALLEGATIONS**

- 5.1. Things to report:
- 5.1.1. There is a concern that a relationship is developing which may be an abuse of trust;
  - 5.1.2. You are worried that a vulnerable person is becoming attracted to you;
  - 5.1.3. You are worried that a vulnerable person is becoming attracted to a colleague who supervises or works with them;
  - 5.1.4. You think a vulnerable person has misunderstood or misinterprets something you have done;
  - 5.1.5. You have been required to physically restrain a vulnerable person to prevent them from harming themselves or another or from causing significant damage to property;
  - 5.1.6. A vulnerable person tells you they are being abused or describes experiences you believe may constitute abuse
  - 5.1.7. You see suspicious marks on a vulnerable person

## **6. HANDLING ALLEGATIONS**

If a member of staff has a physical relationship with a student to whom they have or are scheduled to have any such responsibility, then they have a responsibility to inform their line manager (Principal or Director of Studies) without undue delay and make arrangements to separate themselves as far as possible from such responsibilities.

Failure to do so will leave them open to charges of bias and could lead to disciplinary action.

## **7. CHILD PROTECTION**

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 includes the offence of 'breach of trust' making it unlawful for an adult who works in a position of trust with young people to have a sexual relationship with a young person under the age of 18, who is in full time education, whether or not this relationship is consensual.

We therefore explicitly prohibit sexual relationships between staff and students under 18.