



The
MAST
 Academy Trust

Policy	Personal relationships at work policy		
Owner	Melanie Humphreys – The Mast Executive Administrator		
Date approved	12 th February 2020	Adopted from	February 2020
Approver	Martyn Jones	Signature	<i>Martyn Jones</i>

Current version	V2.0
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Next review due	Autumn Term 2022
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Objective of Policy
The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on managing personal relationships between staff within the Mast Academy Trust and schools.

Version Control	
Version Number	Summary of amends from previous version
1.0	Development of policy
2.0	Amends to policy following union advice. 5.2.5: Separation into bullets of section 5.2.6: additional confirmation that information will be securely destroyed.

Sign off requirements	
Approvers	Position
Chair of trustees ratification	Martyn Jones
Local LGB adoption approval	Chair of Governors per LGB
Reviewers	Position
Natasha Greenough	CEO The MAST
Trust representative	Liz Godman
Unions consulted (if applicable)	Representative
ASCL	
GMB	
NASUWT	
NEU, (ATL)	

Section Number	Content	Page Number
1.0	Policy statement	3
2.0	Purpose	3
3.0	Scope	3
4.0	Relationships between employees	3
5.0	Procedures	4
6.0	Non-compliance	5
Appendices		
A	Definitions	

1.0 Policy statement

1.1 In order to maintain the Mast Academy Trust and their schools integrity and reputation for inclusion, it is necessary to acknowledge when personal and professional relationships overlap. While most personal connections will be positive in that they will promote good team working and professional bonds, it is recognised that there will be some relationships that may require an employee to withdraw from certain decisions or from undertaking certain duties to protect themselves and the Mast Academy Trust from any conflict of interest, misuse of power or unfair bias.

2.0 Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on managing personal relationships between staff within the Mast Academy Trust and schools. Our definition of a personal, professional and working relationship is outlined in Appendix A.

2.2 This policy aims to protect the integrity of colleagues and to recognise any power imbalance that may affect welfare and inclusion. It is not about prohibiting personal relationships at work, but to provide guidance to manage actual or potential conflicts of interest and to establish appropriate standards.

3.0 Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all staff of the Mast Academy Trust. For the purposes of this policy, employees, casual workers, agency workers, contractors and any third party engaged to work within the Mast Academy Trust and volunteers are included.

4.0 Relationships between employees

4.1 Personal relationships between employees will normally pose no conflict of interest unless there is a professional or working relationship between the individuals.

4.2 It is understood that employees may develop close, personal friendships with individuals. If employees have a professional or working relationship with someone that they consider to be a close, personal friend, they must ensure that their friendship with the individual does not impact, or appear to impact, the ability to perform their role.

4.3 Where a personal relationship exists or develops between employees who are in a line management or supervisory relationship at work, they must avoid participating in decisions that might raise the appearance of a conflict such as recruitment and selection, allocation of research grants/funding, academic development/appraisal, disciplinary matters, sign off of expenses or in any other management activity or process involving the other party. This list is not exhaustive and is only intended to provide examples of conflict of interest activities.

Where a personal relationship exists between colleagues who are in direct line management, the trust may make reasonable adjustments such as relocate a colleague or adjust roles/line management where appropriate. This will be done in consultation with colleagues, but is in the interests of protecting all parties against potential or perceived conflicts of interests or potential or perceived misuse of power.

5.0 Procedures

5.1 Employee obligation

- 5.1.1 Employees must declare any existing or new personal relationships they have may give rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest, misuse of power or unfair bias. If an employee has a personal relationship with an individual to whom they have, or are scheduled to have any such professional or working relationship as defined in Appendix A, the employee must:
- Inform their CEO or Headteacher (as appropriate) of this relationship as soon as it becomes known. This notification should include the names of both individuals; the level of management/supervision the employee has with the individual or the level of interaction they have over work matters that could potentially become a legitimate concern for the Trust.
 - Withdraw from any professional relationship or work related tasks with the individual until the CEO or Headteacher (as appropriate) has taken the appropriate action.
- 5.1.2 If an individual suspects and/or witnesses that a personal relationship has overlapped with a professional or working relationship, the process outlined at 5.1.1 must be followed. The individual can request to remain anonymous if they wish. Any employee found to have made a vexatious complaint will face disciplinary action.
- 5.1.3 If the employee is unsure whether or not the personal relationship could give rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest, misuse of power or unfair bias situation, the employee should contact **school to identify contact and update** in the first instance for advice and guidance.

5.2 Trust/School obligation

- 5.2.1 Once the CEO or Headteacher (as appropriate) has been notified of the personal relationship, they will assess the situation and identify if there is a conflict of interest. If there is, they must take immediate steps to ensure that the employee will have no direct involvement in the management of the other party as outlined in 4.3.
- 5.2.2 The CEO or Headteacher (as appropriate) will notify a Chair of Trustees/Chair of Governors. This notification should include the names of the individuals; the level of management/supervision the employee has with the individual or the level of interaction they have over work matters and clarification as to the reason this represents a conflict of interest, misuse of power or unfair bias situation.
- 5.2.3 The CEO or Headteacher (as appropriate) in collaboration with the Chair of Trustees/Chair of Governors will take appropriate action which will usually entail the identification of ways in which both parties can continue working in the trust albeit separately. This may include (but is not limited to):
- Moving one or both parties to another school within the Trust
 - Moving the individual to report under another employee unrelated to the

situation.

- Amending the employee's duties so that they do not have sole responsibility for the individual's work.

5.2.4 Any action will be undertaken only after full consultation with the individuals concerned. However, should the situation be considered to raise legal concerns or constitute a disciplinary matter, then the Trust will take appropriate direct and immediate action.

5.2.5 If it is not possible to implement any of the options listed in 5.2.3;
- or equivalent other options e.g. due to no suitable open vacancies or alternative line managers/supervisors;
- or if the employee/s refuse to agree to the offered solutions;

the Trust/school reserves the right to take disciplinary action up to and including dismissing the employee/s.

Dismissal will only be undertaken as a last resort in circumstances where no other course of action is reasonably open to the Trust/school and where the situation justifies such action (see section 6 below).

5.2.6 If action has been taken, this will be appropriately documented and saved securely onto the employee's personal record. Employees have the right to request that this information is removed from their personal file if circumstances change e.g. if there is no longer a personal relationship or if the personal relationship no longer bears any conflict of interest. Any information removed will be securely destroyed.

6.0 Non-compliance

6.1 Any breaches of 5.1.1 may result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee.

6.2 Any behaviour that is considered inappropriate (i.e. evidence of unfair bias/personal conflicts brought into the workplace) will be investigated under the Mast Academy Trust Disciplinary Policy.

Appendix A: Definitions

- A **personal relationship** is defined as a romantic, intimate, sexual and/or exclusive relationship; a family relationship; a business/commercial or financial relationship; or a relationship which involves an emotional attachment. *This definition is not exhaustive and therefore anyone who considers that they may be in a potential conflict of interest situation should declare this following the procedures outlined in section 6 of this policy.*
- A **professional relationship** is defined as one where there is an assessing, supervising, managing, tutoring, teaching or pastoral connection with the individual; for instance a line manager or lecturer or a role that provides some other support such as mentoring, coaching or training to that individual.
- A **working relationship** is defined as individuals who are in a personal relationship and do not have a professional relationship, but could still be in a situation that would potentially cause a conflict of interest, misuse of power or unfair bias situation occurring. E.g. a peer to peer relationship where the employees have to liaise and cooperate over work matters.