

Appointment and Employment of Relatives or Close Friends

Enabling Policy Statement; Executive Owner; Approval Route:	Our Colleagues - Chief People Officer - Operations Committee
Is the Procedure for internal use only (Non-disclosable) ?	Disclosable
Associated Policy Statements:	N/A
Authorised Owner:	Human Resources Director
Authorised Co-ordinator:	Head of HR Performance Delivery
Effective date:	20 February 2024
Due date for full review:	20 February 2027
Sub documentation:	There is no sub documentation

Approval History

Version	Reason for review	Approval Route	Date
1.0	3 Yearly review and migration to the POPP governance structure	Operations Committee	20 February 2024

1. Purpose

It is acknowledged that on occasions people may work for a Department/Faculty who are relatives or close friends to other employees. The purpose of this procedure is to:

- Ensure that applicants for positions at the University are treated fairly;
- Ensure that the University maintains its commitment to equal opportunity and is a good employer;
- Manage potential conflicts of interest with respect to the recruitment and employment of relatives or close friends; and
- Minimise the risk of accusations of nepotism or preferential treatment with respect to recruitment or employment practices.

It is not suggested that individual employees would allow themselves to be influenced by personal relationships, however, it is sound operational policy to avoid circumstances in which such practice might be alleged or inferred.

2. Scope and Exceptions to the Procedure

This procedure covers all current University staff and all recruitment practices that result in an employment contract between the applicant and the University. This procedure does not form part of the contract.

3. Definitions and Terminology

Close friends: friends who an employee knows personally and meets with socially on a regular basis outside work.

Relative: people who are connected by blood, marriage or civil partnership, or who co-habit, or dependents of such people.

4. Procedural Principles

4.1. Principles

Staff members are not to have sole responsibility for the selection or appointment of relatives or close friends.

Staff members must not have a direct reporting relationship with a relative or close friend without senior line management knowledge.

Staff members must not have sole responsibility for objective-setting, promotion, advancement, salary review or performance review processes for a relative or close friend.

All appointments to posts will be made on merit.

4.2. Procedures

Any employee who considers that they have close friends or relatives within the meaning of this procedure must ensure that their manager(s) and HR Department are aware of their personal situation before undertaking any activity which may give rise to concerns over a conflict of interest e.g. recruitment, appraisal, reward or disciplinary discussions.

Should a relationship change or develop between two existing employees or should a relationship

be brought to the attention of a manager, once informed, the manager must undertake consultation with the individuals concerned and must ensure that arrangements put in place so as to comply with this procedure.

4.3. Employment of Related Employees within the same location, team or department

Whilst it is possible to have a harmonising and effective working relationship with a close friend or relative in the same team, it must also be recognised that there may be potential issues in such arrangements either for the individuals themselves or others.

The potential problems could include:

- Embarrassment or awkwardness for co-workers
- Difficulties in arranging shifts/annual leave to accommodate both
- Concerns about lack of objectivity in the event of disagreements within the workplace or in relation to any incidents or investigations

Where employees are unable to move, then management should consider any potential interpersonal or operating problems and minimise these by whatever action they may consider to be reasonable and appropriate. This could include measures such as:

- Ensuring that the people concerned do not work on the same shift/in the same office

Ensuring that other employees in the workplace are confident that they can raise issues where they have concerns that the relationship in question is having a detrimental effect on the working environment, or on operational issues.

Where there are serious concerns about the effect a relationship is having, either on one or both of the employees performance, or on others within the team, the manager will seek HR advice and then commence consultation with the staff involved which may result in one or both of the staff members being redeployed within the University.

4.4. Related Employees and line management issues

Steps should be taken to ensure, as far as practically possible, that those who are related or close friends do not work in positions where one has either direct or indirect management authority for the other.

This would also include ensuring that situations do not arise whereby a manager is involved in the decision making process related to incremental increases, annual reviews, internal promotions, secondment or transfer of any employee with whom they are close friends or related.

Rarely, circumstances may arise which result in a line management responsibility for a close friend or relative through for example:

- A relationship developing between two existing employees
- Organisational Change

In such cases, the employee should be consulted with and consideration given to what can be done to mitigate any difficulties that may arise from this e.g. moving one or other of the employees to a suitable alternative position or reporting line.

In the interim appropriate measures should be taken to protect both parties and the University, for example ensuring that incremental increases, annual reviews etc. would be completed in conjunction with another appropriate manager.

If it is not possible for the individual to be line managed by another member of staff, the line manager's manager or the HR Manager will be involved in the decision making processes relating to issues such as incremental increases, annual reviews and internal promotion.

4.5. Recruitment

If an employee of the University is aware that a close friend or relative of theirs is applying to work for the University it is their responsibility to inform them of the principles of this procedure and to ensure that their manager is made aware of the likely application.

Anyone who is involved in a selection process (shortlisting or interviewing) and is aware that a related person, or indeed any other person that they know personally, has applied, they should declare this to the other members of the shortlisting/interview panel at the earliest opportunity.

If this is felt by the Chair of the Panel to risk a conflict of interest, they should then be withdrawn from the selection process and replaced by a suitable colleague. If this is not possible, then the individual's line manager should be involved in the selection procedure so that they can monitor the process and the decisions that are made and ensure that matters are conducted fairly and equitably; thus protecting the manager concerned, the candidate and the University from any allegations that personal relationships influenced the end result.

If any employee has further concerns regarding the employment of relatives or close friends, they should initially raise this with their line manager. A line manager who is made aware of a conflict of interest under this procedure must determine, in consultation with the relevant HR representative, the appropriate response, and if appropriate, the best means of managing the conflict.

5. Governance Requirements

5.1. Implementation: Communication Plan

Communication of the procedure was undertaken when first published and continues to be shared with colleagues via the intranet and support from HR during recruitment processes.

5.2. Implementation: Training Plan

Training and support for this procedure is covered in general recruitment and line management training and/or guidance from HR.

5.3. Review

This procedure will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if required by a change in legislation or practice.

5.4. Legislative Context and Higher Education Sector Guidance or Requirements

N/A

5.5. Sustainability

This procedure is deemed to have little to no impact on sustainability.

6. Stakeholder Engagement and Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment was completed on 31 January 2024 and is held by the Authorised Co-ordinator.

Stakeholder Consultation was completed, as follows:

Stakeholder	Nature of Engagement	Request EB Approval (Y/N)	Date	Name of Contact
Governance	Governance Review	N	11 December 2023	Andrea Langley
H&S	H&S Review	N	3 January 2024	Matt Purcell
Sustainability	Sustainability Review	N	15 December 2023	Martin Wiles