



WYCLIFFE HALL

Pastoral Boundaries Policy

Background and Scope

Wycliffe Hall works hard to provide good pastoral care for its students, particularly through its Fellowship Group Tutors. Wycliffe Hall regards good quality relationships as being at the heart of good community, and as such integral to students' wellbeing and academic, emotional, social and spiritual development. In order to maintain a strong sense of community within the Hall, staff with pastoral roles are encouraged to maintain close relationships and meet regularly with students. However, Wycliffe Hall is keen to ensure that these relationships are always appropriate and reflect the moral standards, professionalism and pastoral heart of the community.

The Church of England has issued [Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy](#) which outline clear expectations and guidance for Clergy with regard to ministering to, and caring for others. We also note the University of Oxford's central HR [policy concerning relationships between students and staff](#). Both of these form a foundation to this policy, yet it should be noted that the provisions in this policy relating to pastoral care are applicable to all members of staff, ordained and non-ordained, who may be perceived to have any sort of educational, administrative, pastoral or supervisory involvement with a student.

For the purpose of these procedures, "student" includes any person studying on or auditing a course at Wycliffe Hall, even if they are intermitting (suspending) their studies. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Hall's policies on safeguarding, harassment and fitness to study.

Effective Pastoral Care

1. An issue of particular importance, highlighted by the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy, concerns pastoral boundaries.
2. It is essential that staff model good pastoral practice in their relationships with students.
3. In modelling exemplary standards of pastoral care to students, all who are employed by Wycliffe Hall, or who offer teaching on Wycliffe's behalf, are expected:
 - a) to be aware of their responsibility for respectful pastoral ministry in caring for and nurturing students;
 - b) to adhere to principles and standards set out in Wycliffe Hall's Safeguarding Policy;
 - c) to be aware of their responsibility to reduce the risk of harm to students from abuse and other types of exploitation;
 - d) to ensure that a proper emotional and psychological distance from students is maintained, and that no financial dependence develops;
 - e) to ensure that pastoral discussions are held in appropriate locations – for example, except in a medical or other emergency or in the course of legitimate domestic maintenance, there should be no reason for a member of staff to enter a student's bedroom;
 - f) to avoid visiting a student who is known to be alone at home, particularly during the evening or at night; equally, no encouragement should be given to a student to visit a staff member at home when they are alone;

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- g) never to have inappropriate physical contact with students;
 - h) to ensure that communication with students in all forms is appropriate in terms of content, context and frequency so there is minimal opportunity for any party to misconstrue or misrepresent a situation;
 - i) to ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place for separate accommodation for staff and students on college missions;
 - j) to exercise professional judgment as to the appropriate limits of their personal relationships with all students, with due regard to the risks and their responsibilities, as well as the risks of the perception of harassment.
4. It should be stressed that the responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries always rests with the member of staff, however difficult or challenging the pastoral relationship may prove to be. Where a member of staff feels uncomfortable or out of their depth, they should immediately consult with their Line Manager about the best way forward in the Hall's ongoing care for the student concerned.
 5. Staff should seek always to remember that the responsibility of care for each student rests with the Hall primarily, and individual staff members contribute to this responsibility. Therefore, no member of staff should hesitate to consult where they feel that more is being asked of them by a student than is proper to the relationship, including demands on their time.

Intimate Relationships in the Context of the Tutor¹ and Student Relationship

6. For the avoidance of doubt, it is considered completely inappropriate and unacceptable for an intimate relationship of a sexual, romantic or intensely emotional nature, either in person or online, to arise between a tutor and a student. The Hall considers all tutors to have direct responsibility for all students. To embark upon such a relationship often involves difficulties rooted in inequalities of power, possible perceived favouritism, the emotional or practical consequences of relationships coming to an end, and problems in maintaining the boundaries of professional and personal life. There are also circumstances in which such a relationship may infringe safeguarding boundaries. It is considered essential in the pastoral and professional role of all staff to ensure that a conflict of interest of this type does not arise, and that relationships with students for whom a tutor has pastoral, educational and supervisory involvement remain strictly professional, respecting the trust inherent in them.
7. Disciplinary action will be taken against a tutor who fails to disclose an intimate relationship or who is considered to have adversely misused their position, power and/or authority for sexual or other advantage.

Relationships Between Other Staff and Students

8. For the avoidance of doubt, it is considered completely inappropriate and unacceptable for an intimate relationship of a sexual, romantic or intensely emotional nature, either in person or online, to arise between a member of staff and a student for whom they have direct responsibility. To embark upon such a relationship often involves difficulties rooted in inequalities of power, possible perceived favouritism, the emotional or practical consequences of relationships coming to an end, and problems in maintaining the boundaries of professional and personal life. There are also circumstances in which such a relationship may infringe safeguarding boundaries. It is considered essential in the pastoral and professional role of all staff to ensure that a conflict of interest of this type does not arise, and that relationships with

¹ For the purposes of this policy, the word 'tutor' means tutorial fellow, Fellowship/Personal tutor, chaplain, or member of the Senior Management Team.

students for whom a member of staff has pastoral, educational and supervisory involvement remain strictly professional, respecting the trust inherent in them.

9. If a member of Wycliffe Hall support staff without direct educational, administrative, supervisory or pastoral involvement with students in general embarks upon a relationship with a student, whether in person or online, they are required to bring the matter to the attention to their line manager, who may be able to take steps to mitigate against unintended consequences or impacts for the Wycliffe Hall Community in partnership with the Senior Management Team. The line manager, and the leadership of the Hall, will attempt to deal with the situation in a way that protects the dignity and privacy of all parties.
10. Disciplinary action will be taken against a member of staff who fails to disclose an intimate relationship or who is considered to have adversely misused their position, power and/or authority for sexual or other advantage.

Relationships Between Hall Council Members and Students or Staff

11. For the avoidance of doubt, it is considered completely inappropriate and unacceptable for an intimate relationship of a sexual, romantic or intensely emotional nature, either in person or online, to arise between a member of Hall Council and a member of staff for whom they have direct responsibility. To embark upon such a relationship often involves difficulties rooted in inequalities of power, possible perceived favouritism, the emotional or practical consequences of relationships coming to an end, and problems in maintaining the boundaries of professional and personal life. There are also circumstances in which such a relationship may infringe safeguarding boundaries. It is considered essential in the pastoral and professional role of all members of Hall Council to ensure that a conflict of interest of this type does not arise, and that relationships with staff for whom a member of Hall Council has oversight remain strictly professional, respecting the trust inherent in them.
12. If a member of Hall Council without direct educational, administrative, supervisory or pastoral involvement with students embarks upon a relationship with a student, whether in person or online, they are required to bring the matter to the attention to the Chair of the Hall Council (or, in the case of the Chair, the Deputy Chair), who may take steps to mitigate against unintended consequences or impacts for the Wycliffe Hall Community in partnership with the Senior Management Team. The Chair of Hall Council, and all involved in the leadership of the Hall, will attempt to deal with the situation in a way that protects the dignity and privacy of all parties.

Unwanted Advances and Inappropriate Behaviour

13. If any student finds themselves in receipt of unwanted or inappropriate behaviour or involved in a relationship with a member of staff that they do not consider to be truly consensual, or if they consider that they have been adversely affected by a misuse of power, authority, or conflict of interest, they should report the matter to Wycliffe Hall's Harassment Officer.
14. Members of staff who experience unwanted advances and other unwelcome behaviour should report the matter to Wycliffe Hall's Harassment Officer.
15. For further information on harassment processes at Wycliffe Hall, staff should refer to the Harassment Policy, and students to the Non-Academic Discipline policy.
16. Given the wider social climate in which many victims of harassment are reluctant to report unwanted advances or other unwelcome behaviour for fear of it not being taken seriously, Wycliffe Hall is committed to fostering a culture in which students and staff feel confident to

report any such concerns without fear of reprisal, and with the guarantee of a fair and sensitive investigation of the complaint.

Disclosure of Existing Relationships with Prospective Students

17. If a close personal or intimate relationship is pre-existing between a member of staff and a candidate for admission as a student, the member of staff must make their line manager aware of it at the outset of the admissions exercise, so that steps can be taken to avoid any conflict of interest arising. The matter will, as far as possible, be handled in confidence to ensure that there is no detriment to the candidate.
18. Disciplinary action will be taken against any member of staff who fails to disclose an intimate relationship or who is considered to have adversely misused their position, power and/or authority for sexual or other advantage.

Information-sharing

1. The College reserves the right to share information about any relationships falling within the scope of this policy with the University, another College, or any public or regulatory authority where it is appropriate and necessary to do so for a legitimate reason including without limitation the protection of student welfare, compliance with any regulatory or legal obligation, or protection of the reputation of the College.

VERSION CONTROL					
Version Number	Policy Gatekeeper	Date of Approval	Committee	Date to Take Effect	Date of Next Review
V.3	EAH	24.11.14	Education	24.11.14	Hilary 2017
V.4	JRW		Education		
V.5	MFL	16.05.19	Education	16.05.19	Trinity 2021
V.6	MFL		Education		
V.7	MFL	22.05.22	Education	22.05.22	Trinity 2024
V.8	MFL	12.02.25	Education	12.02.25	Trinity 2027

It is the responsibility of the Gatekeeper of each policy to check annually whether there have been any legislative and/or University policy changes that are relevant to Wycliffe Hall.