Conflict of Interest Policy

There have been instances where members of academic staff have asked to supervise postgraduate students with whom they have personal relationships (e.g. spouse, partner, offspring). In these circumstances there are real or perceived conflicts of interest, including decisions on academic progress and transfer of registration. Therefore, the following guidelines have been developed to be applied specifically to postgraduate student supervision. These guidelines have been approved by the Senate.

1. In all cases where a real or perceived conflict of interest in PGR supervision exists or develops, the academic member of staff involved should declare this at the earliest opportunity to the relevant Head of Department and Departmental Director of Postgraduate Research. If a conflict of interest is deemed to exist, the member of staff should withdraw from supervising that student and every effort should be made to find alternative supervisors.

2. If the academic member of staff concerned considers that withdrawal from supervision is impossible or undesirable, a written case should be made detailing the relationships involved and the attempts made to find an alternative supervisor. A final decision will be made by the University Director of Postgraduate Research in consultation with the Head of Department.

3. In line with the University's Code of Practice, a supervisory team should be appointed for each postgraduate research student. The primary supervisor and co-supervisor should be identifiably independent. Consequently, wherever possible, partners (personal or business) should not constitute the only members of the supervisory team for a research student.

4. A research student’s studies should not commence until the identity of the supervisory team has been agreed with the Departmental Director of Postgraduate Research and Head of Department.