

WYCLIFFE HALL

- OXFORD -



Pastoral Boundaries Policy

1. Background and Scope

- 1.1 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 spiritual development. In order to maintain the strong sense of community within the Hall, staff with pastoral roles are encouraged to maintain close relationships 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.
- 1.2 The Church of England has issued *Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy* (See Appendix I, in 2014 this publication is currently under review) which outline clear expectations and guidance for Clergy with regard to ministering to, and caring for others. These guidelines 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.
- 1.3 "A student" in the context of this policy is understood as any individual who is studying for an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification at Wycliffe Hall, or who is a student on any course arranged by or associated with, Wycliffe Hall.

2. Effective Pastoral Care

- 2.1 An issue of particular importance, highlighted by the *Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy*, concerns pastoral boundaries. Several difficult issues may arise in pastoral care, especially, but not restricted to, situations where male staff are pastoring female students, and *vice versa*.
- 2.2 It is essential that students and staff are never put in uncomfortable situations, and that staff model good pastoral practice in their relationships with students (for guidance on best practice see *chapters 2 and 3 of the Guidelines – Appendix I*).
- 2.3 In modelling exemplary standards of pastoral care to all students, Wycliffe Hall's tutors and associated tutors are expected:
 - a) to be aware of their responsibility in the care and nurture of, and respectful pastoral ministry with students;
 - b) to help maintain principles and standards set out in Wycliffe Hall's Safeguarding Policy;
 - c) to be aware of their responsibility to reduce harm to students from abuse and other types of exploitation
 - d) to ensure that a proper emotional and psychological distance from students is maintained;
 - e) to ensure that pastoral discussions are held in appropriate locations – for example, one-to-one pastoral conversations should not take place in student bedrooms.

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- 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 tutor at home when they are alone;
 - g) to avoid inappropriate physical contact with students, especially in one-to-one situations;
 - h) to ensure that communication with students in all forms is appropriate in terms of content, context and frequency so there is little 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
- 2.4 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.

3. Intimate Relationships in the Context of the Tutor and Student Relationship

- 3.1 For the avoidance of doubt, it is considered highly inappropriate and unacceptable for an intimate relationship of a sexual, romantic or intensely emotional nature, either in person or online, to arise from the context of an ongoing professional tutor and student relationship. To embark upon such a relationship often involves difficulties rooted in inequalities of power as well as problems in maintaining the boundaries of professional and personal life. It is considered essential in the pastoral and professional role of staff to ensure that a conflict of interest of this type does not arise, and that relationships with students for whom a member of staff has pastoral, educational and supervisory involvement remain strictly professional, respecting the trust inherent in them.
- 3.2 If a member of staff is aware that there is a risk that such a relationship may develop, or may be in the early stages of developing with a student, they are expected to bring the matter to the attention of their line manager as early as possible so that the line manager can assist in taking steps to mitigate against unwanted or unintended consequences in consultation with the Senior Management Team.
- 3.3 Disciplinary action may be taken against a member of staff who fails to disclose an intimate relationship as defined in clause 3.1 or who is considered to have adversely misused their position, power and/or authority for sexual or other advantage.

4. Relationships Between Other Staff and Students

- 4.1 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, they are required to bring the matter to the attention to their line manager, who may take steps to mitigate against unintended consequences or impacts for the Wycliffe Hall Community in partnership with the Senior Management Team.
- 4.2 Disciplinary action may be taken against a member of staff who fails to disclose an intimate relationship as defined in clause 3.1 or who is considered to have adversely misused their position, power and/or authority for sexual or other advantage.

5. Relationships Between Hall Council Members and Students

- 5.1 If a member of Hall Council without direct educational, administrative, supervisory or pastoral involvement with students embarks upon a relationship with a student, they are required to bring the matter to the attention to the Chair of the Hall Council, who may take steps to mitigate against unintended consequences or impacts for the Wycliffe Hall Community in partnership with the Senior Management Team.

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6. Unwanted Advances and Inappropriate Behaviour

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 Members of staff who experience unwanted advances and other unwelcome behaviour should report the matter to Wycliffe Hall's Harassment Officer.
- 6.3 For further information on harassment processes at Wycliffe Hall, please refer to the Harassment Policy.

7. Disclosure of Existing Relationships with Prospective Students

- 7.1 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.

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

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.