

National University of Ireland Galway
Code of Practice on the Conduct by Staff of College Business
Involving Relatives

(Agreed by Academic Council on 20 June 1997)

1. Application of this Code

- 1.1 This code applies to all staff members in the conduct of College business when dealing with relatives.
- 1.2 All matters relating to the interpretation and application of this Code shall be referred to the Registrar and Secretary for Academic Affairs for guidance or resolution.
- 1.3 A “relative” for the purposes of this Code includes any person who is a parent, spouse, brother, sister, child of a staff member, any person in relation to whom a staff member is or has been in loco parentis, any grandchild, nephew or niece of a staff member, any person who is a business partner of or in the employment of any staff member, and any other person who is, in the opinion of the Head of Department or School (because of a personal relationship or otherwise), so closely related to a staff member as to justify the application of this Code.

2. General Principles

- 2.1 Academic Council affirms the general principle that all students shall be treated equally and fairly. Where a student is related to a member of staff, he or she shall be afforded the same facilities, benefits and privileges as are available to comparable students in any relevant group or class. Related students shall not, because of their relationship, be treated with greater or lesser favour than comparable students.
- 2.2 The equal and fair treatment of students shall extend to all aspects of College life, including access to and use of library, computing and study facilities, and access to and use of sports, leisure and other relevant College facilities.
- 2.3 A student related to a staff member who pursues a course of study in any Department or school to which that staff member is affiliated, shall be treated by the related staff member and fellow members of staff in a manner which will not unfairly advantage or disadvantage that student.
- 2.4 While ensuring that related students are not given undue advantage, care shall be taken to ensure that related students are afforded the same rights and benefits which all students of their class are entitled and, in particular, the right to pursue any academic programme which is available as of right to other students of their course or class.

- 2.5 To protect the good name and reputation of related staff members and to avoid any suspicion of any conflict of interest such measures as are reasonable shall be taken in relation to the teaching, examination assessment or other dealings with a related student as will be sufficient to eliminate any possible suspicion of bias or favouritism. Such measures should include, where appropriate, relief from teaching or from engaging in any other relevant academic relationship with a related student, but always with due regard to the rights of staff members to maintain their academic standing in their discipline and to fulfil their academic obligations.

3. Duty of Disclosure

It is the duty of members of staff to inform their Head of Department or School of any relationship with a student which might compromise their position as an examiner, teacher, supervisor or academic administrator.

4. Course Provision and Interference

- 4.1 Where a compulsory course or module is required to be taken by a relative who is or has been a member of the immediate family of the staff member providing the course or module, consideration must be given to the feasibility of having another suitable unconnected member of staff teach the course or module in the semester or year concerned. Where, following due consideration of the matter, it is reasonably feasible to do so the course or module should be taught by an unrelated person.
- 4.2 Where a related student takes a course offered by another member of staff, the related staff member shall not seek to advantage or disadvantage such student by (a) any unwarranted interference in any aspect of the conduct of the course or (b) by seeking access to the contents of proposed examinations or (c) by any interference in the setting or correcting of any relevant examination. Particular care shall be taken in this regard by more senior staff members in their dealings with junior colleagues.

5. Examination Procedure

- 5.1 The procedures set out in paragraph 5.2 to 5.7 shall apply in the assessment and grading of the examination-related work of related students.
- 5.2 A member of staff may not set an examination in which his or her relative is a candidate without first consulting with and agreeing the appropriate procedure to be adopted with his or her Head of Department or School, or other agreed senior colleague.

Where appropriate, due regard shall be given to the following principles :

- (i) Where the course or module to be examined has been given jointly with others, the examination should be set by an unconnected staff member or members.

- (ii) Where a similar course or module is offered by another unconnected staff member, that person should be requested to set the examination having due regard to syllabus and the course actually delivered by the related staff member.
 - (iii) Where the related staff member alone is competent to set the examination, there should be appropriate consultation with the Head of Department or school and the External Examiner. Surplus questions might be required, for example, from which the External Examiner would make a final selection or such other measures as are considered appropriate.
- 5.3 A member of staff may not mark or otherwise assess his or her relative's performance in an examination in which his or her relative is a candidate. Arrangements should be made for an alternative examiner to assess the relative's performance against set standards. Where possible, the alternative examiner should have sight of a significant number of scripts already marked by the normal examiner.
- 5.4 An examiner should not be present at any examiners meetings while the performance of any class, which includes his or her relative, is being considered. In such cases, the examiner should communicate to the Chairman of the examiners, in advance of the meeting, any special considerations relating to the performance of examinees, other than his or her relative. The examiner should also remain available to the meeting to be called, if necessary, to comment upon the performance of any examinee other than his or her relative.
- 5.5 In the case of a degree examination, any examination script or other exercise which contributes to the final grade of a candidate, who is a relative of the normal examiner, should be included among those referred to the external examiner.
- 5.6 The Head of Department or School may require the procedures to be observed in any other case where an examiner is closely associated with an examinee.
- 5.7 Where there is any doubt about the application or interpretation of the procedures governing the examination process, the matter should be referred to the Head of Department or School, and/or to the supervisor of Examinations for determination, if appropriate.

6. Procedures for the award of prizes, fellowships or other distinctions.

- 6.1 The procedures in this section of the Code apply only where (i) a member of staff is in a position to influence the grant of any such benefit, and (ii) a relative of that member of staff is a potential beneficiary of the benefit in question.

- 6.2 Where a relative is a potential beneficiary of any College prize, fellowship or other benefit or distinction, the procedures set out in paragraphs 6.3 to 6.5 shall apply, where appropriate.
- 6.3 All members of staff shall inform their Head of Department or school, or other relevant party of any relationship with a student that might compromise their position as persons connected with the grant of any benefit.
- 6.4 Where the benefit in question is not automatically decided on the basis of objectively established performance or other criteria, a related member of staff shall absent her or himself from the selection or awarding process or committee.
- 6.5 Where it is appropriate for a related member of staff to absent her or himself from such process in a situation where her or his relative is a potential beneficiary, no benefit may be conferred without first consulting with and agreeing the appropriate procedure to be adopted with her or his Head of Department or School, or other appropriate party.