

Policy on Consensual Relationships and Prevention of Sexual Misconduct

Last Updated On: 2025-09-12

1. Preamble and Purpose

PATAN COLLEGE FOR PROFESSIONAL STUDIES (hereafter known as “PCPS College”, “college”, “we”, “our”, “us”) is committed to fostering a safe, respectful, and professional academic environment that is free from exploitation, harassment, and conflict of interest. The unique power dynamics inherent in educational settings can compromise the integrity of academic judgment, the fairness of the learning environment, and the well-being of all members of our community.

This policy aims to:

1. Uphold the highest standards of professional and ethical conduct.
2. Protect students and staff from potential coercion, favouritism, and sexual harassment.
3. Ensure that all academic and professional evaluations are based on merit.
4. Comply with the laws of Nepal, including the **Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Elimination) Act, 2071 (2015)**, and the **Education Act, 2028 (1971)** and its related regulations.

2. Scope and Applicability

This policy applies to all individuals within the college community, including:

1. All teaching and non-teaching staff (full-time, part-time, contractual, and adjunct).
2. All students (undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral).
3. Administrators, management, and members of the governing body.

3. Definitions

1. **Consensual Relationship:** A mutually agreed-upon romantic and/or sexual relationship. Consent must be voluntary and given without coercion.
2. **Power Differential:** An imbalance of power where one individual has supervisory, evaluative, or advisory authority over another (e.g., teacher-student, supervisor-intern, senior-junior).
3. **Sexual Harassment:** As defined by Nepali law, any unwelcome act of a sexual nature, whether physical, verbal, or non-verbal, that creates an intimidating,

hostile, or offensive environment. This includes, but is not limited to, sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

4. **Conflict of Interest:** A situation where a staff member's personal interests could improperly influence their professional judgment or duties regarding a student.

4. Policy Directives

4.1 Relationships Between Staff Members

While the college respects the personal lives of its employees, relationships between staff members where a significant power differential exists (e.g., between a department head and a subordinate) are strongly discouraged. If such a relationship exists or develops, the individual in the position of higher authority **must** disclose the relationship in writing to their immediate supervisor or the Human Resources department. The college will then take steps to manage the conflict of interest, which may include reassigning supervisory or evaluative responsibilities.

4.2 Relationships Between Staff and Students

This policy strictly prohibits romantic or sexual relationships between a staff member and a student over whom they have, or are likely to have, any academic, evaluative, or supervisory authority.

This includes, but is not limited to:

1. A professor and a student currently enrolled in their class.
2. An advisor and their advisee.
3. A thesis supervisor and their student.
4. A department head and any student within that department.
5. Any staff member involved in grading, awarding scholarships, or making recommendations for a student.

If a pre-existing relationship exists (e.g., between spouses or family members), the staff member **must** immediately disclose the relationship to their Head of Department or the Principal to ensure appropriate measures are taken to eliminate any conflict of interest, such as transferring the student to another class or advisor.

A relationship that begins after a student has completed a course or graduated may still be subject to scrutiny if the staff member continues to have any institutional influence over the student's academic career.

4.3 Relationships Between Students

The college generally does not regulate consensual romantic relationships between students. However, all students are expected to adhere to the college's Code of Conduct, which prohibits any form of harassment, bullying, or disruptive behaviour. Relationships that create a hostile environment for other students, involve a significant power imbalance (e.g., between a senior student club leader and a junior member they oversee), or lead to allegations of harassment will be addressed under the relevant disciplinary procedures.

5. Reporting and Grievance Procedure

The college has a designated **Sexual Harassment Complaint Committee** as required by Nepalese law. This committee is responsible for receiving and investigating complaints of sexual harassment and violations of this policy.

1. **Confidentiality:** All reports will be handled with the utmost confidentiality to the extent possible.
2. **Protection from Retaliation:** Retaliation against any individual who reports a concern in good faith is strictly prohibited and will be treated as a separate and serious offense.
3. **False Complaints:** Knowingly making a false or malicious complaint is a serious violation of this policy and may result in disciplinary action.
4. **How to Report:** Complaints can be submitted in writing to the Chairperson of the Sexual Harassment Complaint Committee or through email helpme@patancollege.edu.np.

6. Disciplinary Actions

Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action, the severity of which will be commensurate with the nature of the violation. Actions may include, but are not limited to:

1. Mandatory counselling or training.
2. Verbal or written warning.
3. Suspension or termination of employment for staff.
4. Suspension or expulsion for students.
5. Legal action may be pursued in cases that constitute a criminal offense under Nepalese law.

7. Education and Training

The college is committed to prevention through education. All new staff and students will be required to undergo orientation on this policy. Regular awareness workshops on preventing sexual harassment, understanding consent, and maintaining professional boundaries will be conducted.

8. Policy Review and Communication

This policy shall be reviewed every two years, or sooner in response to legislative changes or institutional learning. The updated policy and a summary is kept at the Student Support Office and HR Department Office.

Acknowledgment

I have received, read, and understood the **Policy on Consensual Relationships and Prevention of Sexual Misconduct** for PCPS College.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

(This signed acknowledgment must be returned to the Human Resources Department in case of employees and will be placed in the employee's personnel file. In case of Students, this signed acknowledgement must be returned to the Student Support Office and will be placed in the student's personal file.)