



hugenote kollege

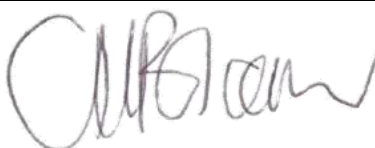
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POL:C3/2026

P O L I C Y

**ROMANTIC AND SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN
STUDENTS AND STAFF**

QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

COMPILED / REVIEWED BY	AUTHORISED BY
HUMAN RESOURCES	HUGENOTE KOLLEGE MANAGEMENT
Date : 12/06/2026	Date: 23/06/2026
Title: CFO	Title: Rector
Name: M Payne (me)	Name: CHM Bloem (prof)
	
Signatures	

Revision Record

	Notes	Number	Date
Previous Version		n/a	n/a
New Version	New policy	1	12 June 2026
Approved for Issue			24 June 2026
Planned Revision			1 st Semester 2029



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1. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Policy Title	Policy on Romantic and Sexual Relationships between Students and Staff
Policy Category	Institutional Governance / Human Resources / Student Affairs / Safeguarding
Related Policy	HK Policy on Professional Boundaries between Staff and Students
Review Cycle	Every three (3) years, or earlier if legislative, regulatory or institutional risk factors require review.

2. APPROVAL BLOCK (After it served at Institutional Quality Assurance Committee)

Name and Position	Signature	Date
Rector: Prof CHM Bloem		2026/06/24
Human Resources: Me M Payne		2026/06/24

3. PREAMBLE

3.1 Hugenote Kollege recognises that romantic and sexual relationships between staff and students give rise to specific institutional, ethical and safeguarding risks.

3.2 Such relationships may, by virtue of the nature of higher education, the existence of power imbalances, dependency relationships, roles of authority and institutional influence, give rise to exploitation, coercion, favouritism, conflicts of interest, prejudice

3.3 to fair processes, and harm to the learning, residential and working environment.

3.4 This policy must be read and applied as a supplementary and specific policy to the Hugenote Kollege Policy on Professional Boundaries between Staff and Students.



3.5 Where overlap exists, this policy must be interpreted as the more specific norm in relation to romantic and sexual relationships.

3.6 This policy affirms Hugenote Kollege's commitment to human dignity, fairness, professional integrity, student safety, the duty of care, and a zero-tolerance approach to the abuse of power.

4. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

4.1 The purpose of this policy is to protect students from exploitation, coercion, manipulation and harm that may arise from unequal power relationships between staff and students;

4.2 to protect the integrity, fairness and credibility of academic, administrative, disciplinary, pastoral and residential processes;

4.3 to establish clear prohibitions, disclosure obligations and management measures for romantic and sexual relationships between staff and students;

4.4 to prevent conflicts of interest, actual or perceived favouritism, and harm to institutional trust;

4.5 to establish clear reporting, investigation and safeguarding procedures; and

4.6 to ensure that breaches of this policy are dealt with consistently and lawfully.

5. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

5.1 This policy applies to all campuses, teaching sites, residences, student accommodation under the control or supervision of Hugenote Kollege, fieldwork, institutional functions, student activities, and all other spaces or circumstances where staff and students are in an institutional relationship.

5.2 This policy applies to all categories of staff, including but not limited to:

5.2.1 permanent, fixed-term, part-time and sessional staff;

5.2.2 academic staff;

5.2.3 professional and support staff;



5.2.4 management and senior management;

5.2.5 tutors, mentors, demonstrators and similar roles;

5.2.6 residence staff; and

5.2.7 contractors, consultants, interns, volunteers and any person acting on behalf of Hugenote Kollege.

5.3 This policy applies to all students, including undergraduate, honours, postgraduate, full-time and part-time students, as well as any student who applies for, is placed in, or is allocated institutional accommodation.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY PRINCIPLES

6.1 Human dignity, equality and safety. Every student and staff member has the right to dignified, safe and fair treatment.

6.2 Recognition of power imbalance. In the higher education environment, structural, academic, administrative, pastoral and residential power may result in so-called "consent" not being truly free, uninfluenced or without pressure.

6.3 Zero tolerance for abuse of power. Any use of position, status, influence or institutional access to obtain, promote or protect romantic or sexual involvement is impermissible.

6.4 Prevention before reaction. Training, awareness, clear norms and early intervention form part of the College's duty of care.

6.5 Confidentiality and procedural fairness. Reports, disclosures and investigations must be handled confidentially, fairly and in accordance with applicable procedures.

7. DEFINITIONS

7.1 "Student" means any person who is registered, provisionally registered, or admitted to or allocated to a programme, activity or residential arrangement of Hugenote Kollege.

7.2 "Staff" means any person appointed, designated, contracted or authorised by Hugenote Kollege, or any person acting on behalf of the College.



7.3 "Romantic or sexual relationship" means any relationship that includes sexual acts, sexual touching, sexual intercourse, romantic involvement, or verbal or non-verbal sexual or romantic advances, including where such conduct is mediated electronically or through messages.

7.4 "Consent" means, for institutional purposes, voluntary and uncoerced agreement. Consent is not valid where it is obtained through intimidation, pressure, abuse of authority or exploitation of dependency.

7.5 "Power imbalance" means any situation in which one party may reasonably be regarded as having power or influence over the other party's academic progress, residential placement, discipline, wellbeing, financial support, employment opportunities, complaints processes or institutional status.

7.6 "Conflict of interest" means any situation in which a personal interest is likely to influence the objective performance of institutional duties, or creates the appearance of doing so.

7.7 "Senior manager" means any staff member with executive or substantial institutional authority or influence, including the Rector, Registrar, heads of functional divisions, programme leaders, campus managers and similar roles.

7.8 "Residence authority role" means any role that includes supervision, placement, discipline, access, pastoral care or operational control in a residence or student accommodation context, including heads of residence, house parents, residence managers, mentors and tutors.

8. CORE NORM

8.1 Given the unequal power relationships between staff and students, staff are prohibited from having romantic or sexual relationships with students over whom they exercise academic, administrative, pastoral, residential, disciplinary or other institutional authority or influence.

8.2 A breach of this provision may constitute serious misconduct and may, depending on its severity, justify dismissal.



9. PROHIBITIONS

9.1 General prohibition in relation to undergraduate and honours students

9.1.1 No staff member may have a romantic or sexual relationship with any undergraduate or honours student, irrespective of whether the staff member directly teaches, supervises or assesses that student.

9.1.2 This prohibition is based on the particular vulnerability of undergraduate and honours students within the institutional system.

9.2 Prohibition where any institutional power or influence exists

No staff member may have a romantic or sexual relationship with any student, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, where the staff member:

9.2.1 teaches, supervises, assesses, moderates, examines, mentors or coaches the student;

9.2.2 provides academic references or recommendations for the student;

9.2.3 has administrative authority over registration, financial support, residence placement, discipline, student employment or complaints processes;

9.2.4 fulfils a pastoral or residential authority role in relation to the student; or

9.2.5 can directly or indirectly influence the student's academic or institutional outcomes.

9.3 Enhanced prohibition for senior management

Senior managers may not have any romantic or sexual relationship with any currently registered student of Hugenote Kollege, irrespective of whether direct teaching or supervisory responsibility exists.

9.4 Enhanced prohibition for residence authority roles

Staff members in residence authority roles may not have any romantic or sexual relationship with any student in residence accommodation, or with any student who is reasonably dependent on their residential authority or care, irrespective of whether the student is undergraduate or postgraduate.

9.5 Repeated or patterned conduct



Hugenote Kollege will regard repeated involvement by staff with younger or institutionally vulnerable students as an aggravating factor, which may indicate a risk of exploitation, distortion of the educational relationship and possible abuse of power.

10. LIMITED EXCEPTIONS

10.1 Exceptions to this policy are extremely limited and may never undermine student safety, institutional integrity or fair processes.

10.2 Transitional or pre-existing relationship

10.2.1 A staff member who, at the time this policy comes into effect, or at the time of commencing employment at Hugenote Kollege, is married to, or has already been in an established romantic or sexual relationship for longer than twelve months with, an undergraduate or honours student, may apply for an exception.

10.2.2 Even where an exception is granted, mandatory disclosure, recusal from conflicts of interest, and formal risk management remain applicable.

10.3 Postgraduate students where no institutional responsibility exists

10.3.1 A relationship between a staff member and a postgraduate student may be considered only where:

10.3.1.1 the staff member has no current or foreseeable academic, residential, welfare, administrative or disciplinary authority over the student and will not have such authority; and

10.3.1.2 the relationship is fully disclosed and managed in terms of this policy.

10.3.2 Where any direct or indirect influence exists, the relationship remains prohibited.

11. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND MANDATORY RECUSAL

11.1 Where a relationship or intended relationship exists, or is suspected, the staff member concerned must immediately recuse himself or herself from any decision, process or involvement where a conflict of interest may arise.



11.2 Such recusal includes, among other things:

11.2.1 teaching;

11.2.2 supervision;

11.2.3 assessment, moderation and examination;

11.2.4 work allocation;

11.2.5 recommendations;

11.2.6 discipline;

11.2.7 residence placement; and

11.2.8 any administrative or pastoral decision-making relating to the student.

11.3 The College must make appropriate alternative arrangements to terminate any relationship of power or influence.

12. MANDATORY DISCLOSURE

12.1 Any staff member who:

12.1.1 is in a romantic or sexual relationship with a student; or

12.1.2 intends to become romantically or sexually involved with a student,

12.2 must disclose this immediately and in writing.

12.3 Such disclosure must be directed to:

12.3.1 Human Resources;

12.3.2 the Registrar or other designated responsible office; and

12.3.3 the relevant line manager.

12.4 Failure to disclose constitutes misconduct in itself and may lead to disciplinary action.

13. NOTIFICATION BY THE STUDENT

13.1 Where a disclosure process is underway, the student may be requested to provide written notification to the responsible office indicating:



13.1.1 that a relationship with a staff member exists; and

13.1.2 that, according to the student's account, the relationship was entered into voluntarily.

13.2 Such notification does not deprive the student of any future right to lodge a complaint or request protection.

13.3 The College reserves the right to act where there are indications of coercion, harassment, abuse of power or exploitation, irrespective of any statement of consent.

14. INTERVIEWS, RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

14.1 Upon receipt of a disclosure, Human Resources and/or the responsible office must interview the staff member concerned and, where appropriate, the student, and facilitate appropriate support or counselling.

14.2 The line manager must conduct a formal impact and risk assessment, taking into account:

14.2.1 the nature of the relationship;

14.2.2 the institutional processes affected;

14.2.3 the possible risks to the student, the College and third parties; and

14.2.4 the measures required to manage the risk.

14.3 Management measures must include at least:

14.3.1 the immediate removal of any authority of the staff member over the student;

14.3.2 alternative academic, administrative or residential arrangements;

14.3.3 restrictions on involvement in student-related decisions; and

14.3.4 secure and confidential record keeping.

14.4 Where an approved exception continues, the staff member must sign an annual declaration confirming that no conflict of interest exists or will arise.



15. REPORTING AND COMPLAINTS

15.1 Hugenote Kollege must make available clear, safe and confidential reporting channels for students, staff and third parties.

15.2 Reports may be submitted by:

- 15.2.1 the student concerned;
- 15.2.2 other students;
- 15.2.3 colleagues or managers;
- 15.2.4 residence staff or student leaders; or
- 15.2.5 any third party affected by the situation.

15.3 No person may be prejudiced, intimidated, victimised or threatened because he or she reports in good faith or participates in an investigation.

16. INTERIM PROTECTIVE MEASURES

16.1 Where a report or disclosure reveals safety, fairness or process risks, the College may implement interim protective measures.

16.2 These measures may include, among other things:

- 16.2.1 no-contact directives;
- 16.2.2 changes in residence placement;
- 16.2.3 changes in supervision or assessment arrangements;
- 16.2.4 redistribution of work or residential responsibilities;
- 16.2.5 temporary access control; and
- 16.2.6 any other reasonable precautionary measure necessary to protect the safety of the student and the integrity of the process.

16.3 These measures are administrative in nature and do not mean that a final finding of guilt has already been made.

17. INVESTIGATION AND FURTHER REFERRAL

17.1 All matters under this policy must be assessed promptly, confidentially and fairly.



17.2 Where a matter contains elements of sexual harassment, gender-based violence, coercion, intimidation, exploitation or possible criminal conduct, it must also be handled in terms of the applicable disciplinary, safeguarding or legal process.

17.3 Nothing in this policy prevents any person from laying a criminal complaint with the South African Police Service.

18. DISCIPLINARY ACTION AND SANCTIONS

18.1 A breach of this policy constitutes misconduct and may, depending on its nature and severity, amount to serious misconduct.

18.2 Without limiting the general nature of the above, the following outcomes may be applied:

18.2.1 a written warning for minor non-compliance;

18.2.2 a final written warning;

18.2.3 mandatory training or counselling;

18.2.4 removal from specific duties or a change in role;

18.2.5 suspension; and

18.2.6 dismissal in cases of serious misconduct.

18.3 The following will ordinarily be regarded as serious:

18.3.1 any prohibited relationship with a student over whom the staff member has authority or influence;

18.3.2 any relationship with an undergraduate or honours student without an approved exception;

18.3.3 failure to disclose;

18.3.4 deception or concealment;

18.3.5 retaliation, intimidation or interference with an investigation; and

18.3.6 any pattern of exploitative conduct.



18.4 This policy is student-protective in nature. A student will not be penalised merely because he or she reported a relationship, sought support or participated in an investigation.

19. CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORD KEEPING

19.1 All information, disclosures, reports, interview notes, management measures and outcomes under this policy must be handled confidentially and in accordance with applicable legal and policy requirements.

19.2 The responsible office must maintain a restricted and secure register of:

- 19.2.1 disclosures;
- 19.2.2 management measures;
- 19.2.3 matters investigated; and
- 19.2.4 anonymised statistics for management and Board reporting.

20. TRAINING, PREVENTION AND AWARENESS

20.1 Hugenote Kollege must implement ongoing training and awareness initiatives on:

- 20.1.1 professional boundaries;
- 20.1.2 power relationships between staff and students;
- 20.1.3 consent and coercion;
- 20.1.4 reporting routes; and
- 20.1.5 available support services.

20.2 Such training must form part of staff induction, student orientation and annual refresher training for senior management and residence authority roles.

21. MONITORING, COMPLIANCE AND REVIEW

21.1 The Registrar must ensure that this policy is implemented, monitored and periodically evaluated.

21.2 Annual anonymised reporting on disclosures, themes, training and compliance action must be submitted to the appropriate management and governance structures.



21.3 This policy must be reviewed every three years, or earlier if necessary.

22. ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER POLICIES

22.1 This policy must be read together with:

22.1.1 the Hugenote Kollege Policy on Professional Boundaries between Staff and Students;

22.1.2 the staff code of conduct;

22.1.3 the student disciplinary code;

22.1.4 any policy on gender-based violence and sexual harassment;

22.1.5 residence rules; and

22.1.6 any applicable policy on confidentiality and the protection of personal information.

22.2 Where there is a conflict between this policy and a general conduct or boundaries policy, this policy applies as the more specific norm in relation to romantic and sexual relationships.

23. SHORT TITLE AND COMMENCEMENT

23.1 This policy shall be called the Hugenote Kollege Supplementary Policy on Romantic and Sexual Relationships between Students and Staff.

23.2 This policy comes into effect on the date on which it is approved by the Board.