

The University of Chicago

Policy on Consensual Relationships

Trust is essential to sound relationships between individuals who work in collaborative research, learning, clinical care, and other professional environments. The development of a sexual and/or romantic relationship may, in some cases, create legitimate questions about impartiality, professional judgment, conflicts of interest, coercion, harassment, and the appearance of favoritism or advantage.

This Policy therefore prohibits sexual and/or romantic relationships between (a) an academic appointee (as defined below) and an undergraduate student; (b) an academic appointee and a graduate or professional school student, postdoctoral researcher, resident/fellow, staff employee, or volunteer over whom the academic appointee exercises academic, supervisory or managerial authority; (c) a staff supervisor/manager and any person over whom they have supervisory or managerial authority; and (d) a coach (paid or volunteer) of varsity or club sports and an undergraduate student.

Definitions

An “**academic appointee**” is a member of the University Faculties or an Other Academic Appointee as those terms are detailed in Statute 11 of the University Statutes.

“**Academic authority**” includes the following activities (whether on or off campus): teaching courses as an instructor of record; grading or otherwise evaluating student work; advising on formal projects such as a dissertation or other research; serving on a dissertation committee; participating in decisions regarding student funding or other resource allocation; providing clinical supervision; supervising offsite fieldwork; and making recommendations or otherwise influencing decisions regarding admissions, employment, or the award of grants, fellowships, or other forms of recognition.

A “**disclosure**” means written notification to, and meeting with, the Title IX Coordinator.

Relationships Covered

In the interests of prudence and fostering a campus environment free of sexual harassment and discrimination, this Policy imposes the following requirements:

Academic Appointees and others with Academic Authority

Individuals with Academic Authority – Undergraduate Students

This Policy prohibits sexual and/or romantic relationships between academic appointees and undergraduates at the University.

This Policy also prohibits any staff, postdoctoral researcher or student (whether undergraduate, graduate or professional) from having a sexual and/or romantic relationship with an undergraduate student over whom they have academic authority. For example, a graduate student serving as a

lecturer may not have a sexual and/or romantic relationship with a student who is enrolled in that course during the duration of the course.

Individuals with Academic Authority – Graduate or Professional School Students

This Policy prohibits sexual and/or romantic relationships between academic appointees and any graduate or professional school student over whom they exercise academic authority.

This Policy does not prohibit sexual and/or romantic relationships between academic appointees and graduate or professional students over whom they do not have academic authority. If the academic appointee later seeks or is asked to take on a role or responsibility that would include academic authority over the student, the relationship must be disclosed promptly and managed to prevent the creation of that academic authority, as described below in the section on reporting.

This Policy also prohibits any graduate or professional student, postdoctoral researcher, or staff employee with an academic teaching or academic supervisory role from having a sexual and/or romantic relationship with a graduate student whom they teach or supervise during the duration of the teaching or supervisory relationship. For example, a graduate student serving as a lecturer may not have a sexual and/or romantic relationship with a student who is enrolled in that course during the duration of the course.

Academic Appointee – Postdoctoral Researchers

This Policy prohibits sexual and/or romantic relationships between academic appointees and any postdoctoral researcher over whom they exercise authority, academic or otherwise.

Academic Appointee – Staff Employees/Volunteers

This Policy prohibits sexual and/or romantic relationships between academic appointees and any staff employee or volunteer over whom they have supervisory or managerial authority.

Academic Appointee/Attending Physician – Resident Physician/Fellow

This Policy prohibits sexual or romantic relationships between academic appointees who are attending physicians and residents/fellows over whom they exercise academic, supervisory or managerial authority, or otherwise oversee the resident/fellow's work or training.

Staff Supervisors/Managers – Subordinate Employees/Volunteers

This Policy prohibits staff employees in supervisory and management roles from having sexual and/or romantic relationships with persons over whom they have supervisory, managerial or academic authority.

Coaches – Undergraduates

This Policy prohibits coaches (paid and volunteer) of varsity teams and sport clubs from having sexual and/or romantic relationships with undergraduate students.

Disclosure, Reporting and Non-Retaliation

There can be sexual and/or romantic relationships between individuals in positions of unequal authority that are not prohibited by this Policy. These types of relationships include, but are not limited to: academic appointee and graduate or professional student over whom the academic appointee does not currently exercise academic authority (as discussed above); senior faculty member-junior faculty member; faculty member-other academic appointee; attending physician-resident/fellow over whom they do not currently exercise academic, supervisory or managerial authority, or otherwise oversee the resident/fellow's work; staff employee and staff employee where neither individual exercises supervisory or managerial authority over the other.

In all instances, as soon as the person in a position of greater overall institutional authority learns that they will be taking on a role that will include academic, supervisory or managerial authority over the other individual, they must promptly disclose the existence of the relationship to the Title IX Coordinator. Depending upon the person's employment classification (*e.g.*, academic appointee, staff), the Title IX Coordinator for the University will then notify and confer with relevant leadership to develop a management plan, as appropriate, under the University's Nepotism Policy. This may include notice and consultation with the following individuals, only as necessary and appropriate: Senior Associate Provost, Ingrid Gould, and relevant department chair, dean and/or supervisor, the unit's academic affairs administrator, senior human resources representative or Human Resources. Any management plan must be approved by the head of the organizational unit (*e.g.*, Dean, Director, Chairperson).

A management plan is a written document that sets forth expectations and establishes rules that separate the professional relationship from the intimate relationship. Management plans are inherently flexible and can be modified at any time to account for and mitigate any changes in the professional relationship. For example, if a faculty member assumes a new administrative responsibility that would include a new type of authority over the other individual, the management plan should be reviewed and updated as needed.

Further, it can be the case that third-party witnesses to a prohibited relationship or suspected prohibited relationship want the relevant department chair, dean and/or supervisor to address the matter but remain silent out of fear of reprisal. Such individuals are encouraged to come forward to the Title IX Coordinator for the University. All complaints and concerns will be treated as confidentially as is feasible and will be addressed by the Title IX Coordinator for the University in partnership, as appropriate, with the chair, dean and/or supervisor. Retaliation against anybody who makes a complaint or raises a concern about a possible policy violation is prohibited.

Investigation & Determination

Investigations and resolution of complaints alleging a violation of this Policy generally will be resolved under the administrative procedures under the University's Policy on Discrimination and Unlawful Harassment.

Violations

Violations of this Policy may result in discipline, which can include, but is not limited to, written warnings, loss of privileges, mandatory training or counseling, probation, suspension, demotion, expulsion, and termination of employment (including revocation of tenure). Disciplinary actions will be enforced at the appropriate administrative level.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Information reported to the Title IX Coordinator will be treated as private and confidential in accordance with University Policy on Discrimination and Unlawful Harassment. The Title IX Coordinator will only share information with those individuals at the University who have a need to know (as described above, i.e.-Deans, Department Chairs).

Related policies include:

[Nepotism Policy for Faculty and Other Academic Appointees](#)

provost.uchicago.edu/handbook/clause/nepotism-policy-faculty-and-other-academic-appointees

[Nepotism Policy \(for Staff\) \(U206\)](#)

humanresources.uchicago.edu/fpg/policies/200/p206.shtml

[Policy on Harassment, Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct](#)

harassmentpolicy.uchicago.edu

[Policy on Title IX Sexual Harassment](#)

titleixpolicy.uchicago.edu

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