

Policy on Consensual Relationships Between Faculty and Students

The University's [Sexual Harassment Policy](#) prohibits unwelcomed sexual advances, but what about situations where both parties willingly consent? Dating or sexual relationships between faculty and students or post-docs (hereafter, "sexual relationships") are also inherently problematic because of the unequal power dynamic between the parties to the relationship, the responsibility of faculty for evaluating students' work, the possibility that other faculty and students may be adversely affected, and because such relationships diminish the trust and respect that ordinarily characterize the faculty-student relationship and are therefore inconsistent with the educational mission of the University. For these reasons, the University strongly discourages such relationships, even when both parties willingly consent.

In order to avoid any conflict of interest or abuse of authority, any faculty member who has any responsibility for supervision, evaluation, grading, advising, employment, or other instructional or supervisory activity related to a student or postdoc is prohibited from entering into a sexual relationship with that individual beginning with the effective date of this policy. For relationships that predate this policy or that began before the faculty member assumed the responsibilities, the faculty member must immediately disclose the relationship to their immediate supervisor and, if possible, remove himself/herself/themselves from these responsibilities.

Where a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest or abuse of authority exists in the context of a sexual relationship between a faculty member and a student or post-doc predates this policy or arose before the faculty-student relationship or responsibility began, the faculty member involved shall notify their immediate supervisor. The supervisor shall have the responsibility of making arrangements to eliminate any conflict of interest that might prove detrimental to the University or to either party in the relationship, while at the same time maximizing the student/post-doc's educational and professional opportunities. Violations of this policy should be reported to the faculty member's supervisor, who will deal with the matter in accordance with University policy and relevant collective bargaining agreements.

Nothing in this policy should be construed to override or alter the campus Sexual Harassment Policy, <http://www.umass.edu/eod/SexualHarassmentPolicy.pdf>.

Questions about the Consensual Relationships policy should be directed to Associate Provost Michael Eagen.