



Policy on Consensual Relationships

Academic Handbook

(A. Right and Responsibilities, I. General Statement: Relations with Students)

With regard to relations with students, the term “faculty” or “faculty member” means all those who teach and/or do research at the University including (but not limited to) tenured and tenure-track faculty, librarians, holders of research, lecturer, or clinical appointments, graduate students with teaching responsibilities, visiting and part-time faculty, and other instructional personnel including coaches, advisors, and counselors.

The University’s educational mission is promoted by professionalism in faculty/ student relationships. Professionalism is fostered by an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Actions of faculty members and students that harm this atmosphere undermine professionalism and hinder fulfillment of the University’s educational mission. Trust and respect are diminished when those in positions of authority abuse or appear to abuse their power. Those who abuse their power in such a context violate their duty to the University community.

Faculty members exercise power over students, whether in giving them praise or criticism, evaluating them, making recommendations for their further studies or their future employment, or conferring any other benefits on them. All amorous or sexual relationships between faculty members and students are unacceptable when the faculty member has any professional responsibility for the student. Such situations greatly increase the chances that the faculty member will abuse his or her power and sexually exploit the student. Voluntary consent by the student in such a relationship is suspect, given the fundamental asymmetric nature of the relationship. Moreover, other students and faculty may be affected by such unprofessional behavior because it places the faculty member in a position to favor or advance one student’s interest at the expense of others and implicitly makes obtaining benefits contingent on amorous or sexual favors. Therefore, the University will view it as a violation of this Code of Academic Ethics if faculty members engage in amorous or sexual relations with students for whom they have professional responsibility, as defined in number 1 or 2 below, even when both parties have consented or appear to have consented to the relationship. Such professional responsibility encompasses both instructional and non-instructional contexts.

1. Relationships in the Instructional Context. A faculty member shall not have an amorous or sexual relationship, consensual or otherwise, with a student who is enrolled in a course being taught by the faculty member or whose performance is being supervised or evaluated by the faculty member.
2. Relationships outside the Instructional Context. A faculty member should be careful to distance himself or herself from any decisions that may reward or penalize a student with whom he or she has or has had an amorous or sexual relationship, even outside the instructional context, especially when the faculty member and student are in the same academic unit or in units that are allied academically.

Handbook for Student Academic Appointees

(Duties and Responsibilities particular to Associate Instructors: Relations with Students)

If faculty members (including graduate students with teaching responsibilities) engage in amorous or sexual relations with students for whom they have professional responsibility, even when both have consented to the relationship, it will be viewed as a violation of the “Code of Academic Ethics”.

Personnel Policies for All IU Staff

(5.1 Consensual Relationships)

Such relationships can interfere with a supervisor's ability to evaluate an employee or may at least give rise to the perception that the supervisor's evaluation is biased. In addition, those who engage in such relationships should be cautioned that questions may later arise regarding whether the relationship was consensual.

A. Consensual romantic relationships

The university's mission is promoted by professionalism in all relationships between supervisors and employees. IU recognizes the potential for a conflict of interest when a consensual romantic and/or sexual relationship occurs between a supervisor and his or her employee.

B. Provisions

The policy, Employment of Relatives, Students, and Minors, already precludes employees from evaluating the work of others with whom they are related, or from making hiring, promotional, transfer, or similar decisions concerning such persons.

The same concepts within the Employment of Relatives provision apply to consensual romantic and/or sexual relationships and require, at a minimum, that appropriate arrangements be made for objective decision making.

C. Disclosure

When a consensual romantic and/or sexual relationship exists between a supervisor and his or her employee, the supervisor has the responsibility to disclose the relationship to his or her supervisor.

The employee may disclose the relationship to the supervisor's supervisor.

At this time, arrangements will be made to eliminate or mitigate a conflict whose consequences might prove detrimental to the university.



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