

<b>Policies of the University of North Texas Health Science Center</b>	<b>Chapter 05 Human Resources</b>
<b>05.208 Consensual Relationships</b>	

Policy Statement.

It is the policy of the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth that consensual relationships between faculty or staff members in positions of authority and their subordinates or their students are not permitted. Staff in positions of authority and faculty need to be sensitive to the potential for sexual harassment as well as conflicts of interest in personal relationships with their subordinate faculty and staff members or with their students.

When disparities in authority are present between two individuals involved in a consensual relationship, questions about professional responsibility and sexual harassment may well arise. What might appear to be consensual to one of the parties involved may, in fact, not be so. Faculty members exercise power over their students and persons in management/ supervisory positions exercise power over their subordinates and their students through the giving of praise or criticism, performance evaluations or grades, making recommendations for further studies or future employment, or conferral of other benefits, thus diminishing their student's or subordinate's actual freedom of choice.

Application of Policy.

All Faculty and Staff

Definitions.

1. **Consensual Relationships that Result in Sexual Harassment:** This type of relationship is one of an amorous or sexual nature. Examples of consensual relationships that might be construed as sexual harassment include, but are not limited to the below listed situations.

The subordinate party or student in the consensual relationship feels unwanted pressure to become involved and/or to continue the relationship.

The subordinate party or student in the consensual relationship feels compelled to change behavior and/or job duties because of the consensual relationship.

The consensual relationship has the purpose or effect of creating a work or academic environment in which others are negatively affected by the existence of that relationship.

In each of the above instances, the consensual relationships may be deemed sexual harassment. Consensual relationships that involve allegations of sexual harassment will be handled according to the provisions of the health science center's sexual harassment policy.

2. **Inappropriate Consensual Relationships that Do Not Contain Clear Elements of Sexual Harassment:** Consensual relationships between faculty or staff members in positions of authority and their subordinates or their students are inappropriate and a violation of health science center policy, whether or not such relationships result in sexual harassment. Such consensual relationships may not contain clear elements of sexual harassment. Nonetheless, such relationships can create problems including conflicts-of-interest, favoritism and low morale. These relationships often carry the potential for sexual harassment. Such relationships will be considered sanctionable behavior. Sanctions for inappropriate consensual relationships that do not contain clear elements of sexual harassment may include, but are not limited to the following.

Instruction to the parties to terminate the relationship.

Transfer of one of the parties to a new department or job responsibility.

Other disciplinary actions, including demotion or termination in severe cases.

Procedures and Responsibilities.

Procedure / Duty

1. Reporting inappropriate consensual relationships that do not contain clear elements of sexual harassment should follow those policies and procedures normally used in dealing with misconduct of faculty and staff.

Responsible Party

Faculty, Staff,  
Students

References and Cross-references.

None

Forms and Tools.

None

Approved: 9/1/2006

Effective: 9/1/2006

Revised: