

Volume: E1 Employment/ Hiring	E1.04.2 Relationships Between University Employees and Students Effective Date: 05/01/2020 Last Revised: 05/01/2020 Date of Next Review: 05/01/2025	Responsible Office: Academic Affairs and Human Resources
Chapter: 04 Ethics		Responsible Officer: Provost and Director of Human Resources

POLICY STATEMENT

Northeastern Illinois University (Northeastern or the University) expects members of the University community to help maintain a respectful academic and work environment. Interactions between students and their professors, advisors, or any other University employees holding positions of authority over students should be conducted in a professional manner to prevent real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest, exploitation, or bias. Due to unequal power relationships, University employees should not be romantically or sexually involved with a student over whom they have current supervisory or evaluative authority.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to protect the integrity of the academic and work environment at Northeastern. This policy outlines limitations on consensual romantic or sexual relationships between employees and students at Northeastern to ensure students are not adversely impacted by unequal power dynamics or conflicts of interest. The University is committed to putting students' interests first in addressing the challenges and competing interests that arise when defining limitations on certain types of employee-student relationships.

WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY

This policy applies to all employees and students in the University community.

DEFINITIONS

Consensual romantic or sexual relationships: relationships of a romantic, dating, amorous, and/or sexual nature entered into with the consent of both parties. Physical contact is not a required element of such relationships.

Employee: administrators, faculty, staff, instructors or adjunct faculty, Extra Help or part-time staff, and graduate assistants. Student workers with supervisory or evaluative authority over other students are considered employees under this policy.

Student: any person registered for study (including online study) at the University, including those persons in continuing status for the next semester or summer session.

Supervisory or evaluative authority: the power to control or influence another person's employment or academic advancement, including but not limited to hiring, work conditions, compensation, promotion, discipline, admission, advising, or grades. Positions such as tutors, graduate assistants, and peer mentors, for example, will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine whether supervisory or evaluative authority exists sufficient to warrant the application of the policy provisions herein.



REGULATIONS

[Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 \(Title IX\), Title 20 U.S.C. Sections 1681-1688](#)

1. **PROHIBITED CONDUCT**

Consensual romantic or sexual relationships between employees and students are not permitted in circumstances in which the employee has current supervisory or evaluative authority over a student.

2. **REQUIRED DISCLOSURE**

If a consensual romantic or sexual relationship exists or develops in a situation in which an employee has current supervisory or evaluative authority over a student, the employee with such authority (including a student employee with authority over another student employee) must immediately report the relationship to their Department Chair, Dean, or the Provost's Office (in the case of a faculty member), or the Office of Human Resources (in the case of a staff member or student employee). The appropriate official will provide guidance on how to address the situation as promptly as possible.

3. **WRITTEN MANAGEMENT PLAN**

In circumstances where removal of supervisory or evaluative authority is not practicable or in cases of pre-existing consensual romantic or sexual relationships, the parties must work with the Department Chair, Dean, or the Provost's Office (in the case of a faculty member) or with the Office of Human Resources (in the case of a staff member or student employee) to determine whether a written management plan can be developed to manage the conflict of interest. The appropriate official will provide such guidance as promptly as possible. If a written management plan is issued, the appropriate official will provide copies to both the employee and student.

4. **EXCLUSIONS**

This policy is not intended to apply to relationships between spouses (marital or civil union) when either (or both) is an employee at Northeastern, or relationships between undergraduate or graduate students, so long as no supervisory or evaluative role currently exists.

5. **EXCEPTIONS**

Requests for exceptions to this policy may be considered on a limited, case-by-case basis. Such requests should be made in writing to the Provost's Office (in the case of a faculty member) or the Office of Human Resources (in the case of a staff member or student employee). A written management plan may be required in such circumstances. The appropriate official's decision regarding exceptions is final.

6. **VIOLATIONS**

Failure to comply with the required disclosure or written management plan requirements in the Procedures section is a violation of this policy.

7. **SANCTIONS/REMEDIAL MEASURES**

If an employee (including student employee) violates this policy by failing to make a required disclosure, disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with procedures outlined in the relevant collective bargaining agreements, handbooks, policies, Student Code of Conduct, procedures, practices, or contracts. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary actions to be determined by the Provost's Office (in the case of a faculty member) or the Office of Human Resources (in the case of a staff member or student employee). The appropriate official's decision regarding sanctions and remedial measures is final. A student engaged in a prohibited consensual romantic or sexual relationship with an employee (including a student employee who is supervised by another student employee) will not face disciplinary actions under this policy.



PROCEDURES

1. **REPORTING**

Any student or employee or third-party who reasonably believes an employee is engaged in a prohibited consensual romantic or sexual relationship is encouraged to report the concern to the Provost's Office (in the case of a faculty member) or the Office of Human Resources (in the case of a staff member). A student or employee who knowingly and intentionally makes a false report under this policy is subject to University discipline, as set forth in the Guidelines below.

GUIDELINES

The following may be imposed for violations of this policy:

1. **FOR EMPLOYEES**

- verbal warning;
- written warning;
- advisory letter;
- required educational and prevention training;
- work suspension with or without pay;
- probation;
- demotion;
- transfer;
- termination; or
- revocation of tenure or emeritus status.

2. **FOR STUDENT EMPLOYEES**

- verbal warning;
- written warning;
- advisory letter;
- required educational and prevention training;
- work suspension with or without pay;
- probation;
- demotion;
- transfer;
- termination;
- residence hall suspension or expulsion;
- disciplinary suspension;
- expulsion; or
- degree revocation.

3. **RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER POLICIES**

This policy is intended to be an extension to existing University policies and does not alter or modify any existing policies, including but not limited to the Sexual Misconduct Policy, which covers sexual harassment.

AUTHOR REFERENCE

[Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 \(Title IX\)](#)
[Northern Illinois University, Relationships Between University Employees and Students](#)
[Northwestern University, Consensual Romantic or Sexual Relationships Between Faculty, Staff and Students](#)



[University of Michigan, Prohibitions Regarding Sexual, Romantic, Amorous, and/or Dating Relationships Between Teachers and Learners](#)

HISTORY

Effective 05/01/2020
Public Comment period: 04/01 – 30/2020
Authored 10/01/2019

RELATED POLICIES AND OTHER INFORMATIONAL MATERIAL

[Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)
[Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Policy](#)
[Nepotism and Personal Relationships](#)

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please direct questions or concerns about this policy to:

Contact	Phone	E-Mail
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs	(773) 442-5420	academic-affairs@neiu.edu
Office of Human Resources	(773) 442-5200	cs-employment@neiu.edu

DISCLAIMER

The University reserves the right to modify or amend sections of this policy at any time at its sole discretion. This policy remains in effect until such time as the Responsible Officer calls for review. Requests for exception to any portion of this policy, but not to the policy statement, must be presented in writing to the Responsible Officer.