

Proposed Policy

III.C. Intimate Relationships

Freedom of thought and expression, and the ability to pursue knowledge unfettered, are essential to the academic enterprise. The faculty - student academic relationship is central to this enterprise. Faculty members serve as teachers, mentors, and evaluators, and are entrusted to nurture the intellectual development and professional preparation of their students. Intimate relationships between faculty and students can compromise the integrity of academic interactions. Given the innate power imbalance between faculty and students, intimate relationships create the potential for real or apparent coercion, favoritism, bias, or exploitation.

To provide clarity regarding the intentions and purposes of this policy, the following definitions are employed.

- **Student** refers to all full-time, part-time, visiting, or prospective undergraduate or graduate students, and all postgraduate trainees, research associates, residents, and fellows.
- For the purposes of this policy **Faculty** refers to tenure-track, instructional, adjunct, research, and clinical faculty members of all ranks. (Other individuals (e.g.: students, post-doctoral fellows and other trainees) who exercise academic authority over students should see their respective handbooks for related policies.)
- **Intimate relationships** refer to sexual, dating, and/or romantic relationships. Note: unwanted advances or other inappropriate behaviors may be considered sexual harassment, which falls under HR Policy 106.
- **The exercise of academic authority** includes the following activities (on or off campus): teaching courses, (i.e., having primary or shared responsibility for the conduct of a course but not, for example, simply delivering occasional guest lectures); grading or otherwise evaluating student work; advising on formal projects such as a thesis or other research; serving as an external examiner or committee member on a thesis committee; participating in decisions regarding student funding or resource allocation; performing clinical supervision; and making recommendations or otherwise influencing decisions regarding admissions, employment, or the awarding of grants, fellowships, or other recognitions. Generally, it is assumed that faculty exercise academic authority over all students in their department or program. However, there are circumstances and academic structures within the University where the assumption of academic authority may not be fitting, for example, in cases of some secondary faculty appointments or informal program affiliations, or in large, distributed departments in the School of Medicine and Dentistry. In such cases, it is left to the Department Chair and cognizant Dean to define appropriate domains of academic authority; however, if there is uncertainty, the existence of academic authority should always be assumed.

Any questions regarding the above definitions, as well as other aspects of this policy, should be directed to the University Intercessor or the appropriate Department Chair or Dean.

The Policy

III. C. i. Faculty are prohibited from entering into intimate relationships with undergraduate students of the University.

III. C. ii. Faculty are prohibited from entering into intimate relationships with graduate students or postgraduate trainees over whom they exercise academic authority as defined above.

III. C. iii. Faculty are prohibited from accepting academic authority (as defined above) over any student with whom they currently share an intimate relationship, or with whom they have shared such a relationship in the past.

Violations:

Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary actions, which can include, but are not limited to, written warnings, loss of privileges, mandatory training or counseling, probation, suspension, demotion (including revocation of tenure), expulsion, and termination of employment. Disciplinary actions will be enforced at the appropriate administrative level ranging from department Chair to the office of the Provost.

Exceptions:

In rare cases, exceptions to this policy may be granted by agreement of both parties in the relationship, the Chair(s)/Dean(s) of the faculty member and the student, and the University Office of Counsel. A written management plan outlining measures to insure the integrity of the academic interaction and to protect the best interests of the student must be filed with the cognizant Dean and reviewed annually. The University Intercessor is available for guidance in the creation of such a plan.

III. D. Management of Academic Relationships with Immediate Family Members

Close familial relationships may exist between faculty members and students at the University, for example when a faculty member's child, person over whom the faculty member has legal guardianship, spouse, or committed partner enrolls at the University. In any such case in which the faculty member may exercise academic authority over the student, a plan must be developed in consultation with the cognizant Department Chair(s) detailing how any conflicts of interest will be managed. The plan must be approved by the student, the faculty member, and the cognizant Chair(s) and Dean(s).

Related policies include: <https://www.rochester.edu/working/hr/policies/pdfpolicies/121.pdf> and <https://www.rochester.edu/working/hr/policies/pdfpolicies/106.pdf>. Also refer to other handbooks as developed (graduate handbook, post-doctoral handbook, UG, etc).

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