

Edited as follows below and Resolution to move to section 2.2.6

New language = underlined

Deleted language = ~~strikethrough~~

2.2.6 Romantic and/or Sexual Relations between Faculty and Students

UTK's educational mission requires an atmosphere of professional behavior based upon mutual trust and respect between faculty and students. Relationships between students and their teachers, advisors, and others holding positions of authority over them should be conducted in a manner that avoids potential conflicts of interest or exploitation. Given the inherent differences in power between faculty and students, all members of the university community should recognize the possibility of intentional or unintentional abuse of that power.

Commonly accepted standards of professional behavior and ethics require that faculty members not hold advisory or mentoring, evaluative, or supervisory power over any student with whom they have a romantic and/or sexual relationship; such a relationship constitutes an inherent conflict of interest. Faculty members who engage in these relationships also leave themselves vulnerable to charges of sexual harassment ~~or conflict of interests.~~ Incidents of harassment and discrimination will be met with appropriate disciplinary action. Even when both parties initially have consented, such a relationship renders both the faculty member and the institution vulnerable to possible later allegations of sexual harassment in the light of the significant power differential that exists between faculty and students. In addition, even an amicable relationship can be damaging to the institution due to instances of or even the appearance of favoritism. Such relationships undermine the atmosphere of trust that is essential to the educational process. Thus, a faculty member must not initiate or accept such a relationship with a student over whom ~~they have~~ such faculty member has an advisory, mentoring, evaluative or supervisory role. Should such a relationship ~~develop~~ exist between a faculty member and a student, ~~faculty members should remove themselves from the evaluation of the student's work.~~ the faculty member must establish alternate evaluative or supervisory arrangements. If acceptable arrangements cannot be made then the relationship must not continue. In addition, faculty who are in the position to influence academic or employment decisions about others with whom they are in a romantic and/or sexual relationship must recuse themselves from such decisions.

Violations of this policy should be immediately reported to the Office of Equity and Diversity which will take appropriate action.