

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON CONSENSUAL SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

The University's Policy prohibiting consensual sexual relationships in certain circumstances remains in effect. After reading the policy below, please contact your chair, dean, or supervisor should you have questions.

CONSENSUAL RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

The University of Nevada, Reno prohibits romantic or sexual relationships only in circumstances in which one of the individuals is in a position of direct professional power over the other. In that circumstance, both the University and the person in the position of superior power are vulnerable to charges of harassment from the person in the position of lesser power or from third parties. Where such relationships are known to exist and no complaint has been made, a warning, verbal or written, shall be given to both involved parties by the chair, dean, or supervisor over both parties. Only in the case of a complaint will the Affirmative Action Office become involved.

Definition of a "professional" power relationship: A faculty member or supervisor will always be treated as having such direct power if the student is in an educational experience in which the faculty member has the authority to assign grades, or the supervisor has any input into the evaluation of the employee's work performance, promotion, or tenure. A faculty member will be treated as having such direct power in other circumstances as well; e.g., when serving on thesis, dissertation, or scholarship awards committees, or in matters of admission and advisement. The same principles that apply to the faculty-student relationship also govern administrative faculty in their relationships with students.

Faculty, staff, and administrators should be aware of the possibility that an apparent consensual relationship with a student or a supervisee may be interpreted (either at the time or at a later date) as non-consensual and, therefore, sexual harassment. Moreover, faculty, staff, and administrators, particularly in relationships with students and persons under their supervision, need to be aware that a sexual relationship may give rise to a perception on the part of others that the evaluative capacity of the faculty member or the supervisor has been compromised. The power differential inherent in faculty-student and supervisor-supervisee relationship may compromise the student's or the supervisee's ability to make decisions and thus may call into question the bona fide consensual nature of a relationship.

Faculty and students or supervisors and supervisees entering into a romantic or sexual relationship where no professional power differential exists should be aware that power differentials may change, and should avoid situations that may become exploitative. Parties involved in such relationships should consult with the department chair, dean, supervisor, or the Affirmative Action Office.