

## CONSENSUAL RELATIONSHIPS

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### 1. GENERAL

Wake Forest University is committed to fostering workplace and educational environments that are free from conflicts of interest, favoritism, coercion, harassment, and discrimination. In support of this commitment, the University places limitations on romantic or sexual relationships between faculty, staff and students at Wake Forest, even when such relationships are consensual.

### 2. DEFINITIONS

- a. For the purpose of this policy, a *consensual romantic or sexual relationship* is defined as a relationship of a romantic, dating and/or sexual nature entered into willingly by both parties.
- b. For the purpose of this policy, *supervisory or evaluative authority* is defined as the authority to oversee, direct, or evaluate another person's employment or academic work, advancement, or extracurricular participation. This includes, but is not limited to, authority over hiring, work conditions, compensation, promotion, discipline, admission, grades, assignments, supervision of dissertations, recommendations, and financial support.

### 3. GUIDELINES

- a. It is essential to the integrity of Wake Forest University's management, education and research practices to avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest that may be created by relationships in the workplace and in the educational environment. When a consensual romantic or sexual relationship exists or has existed between people of unequal power at the University, the person with the greater power must not hold any supervisory or evaluative authority over the other person in the relationship, except as noted below.
- b. When employees interact with students, the employees are in a position of trust and power. These interactions must not jeopardize the effective functioning of the University by the appearance of either favoritism or unfairness in the exercise of professional judgment. All employees are expected to be aware of their professional responsibilities and to avoid apparent or actual conflict of interest, favoritism or bias.
- c. Consensual romantic or sexual relationships are prohibited between a student and an employee. Efforts by employees to initiate these relationships are also prohibited. Violation of this policy by an employee is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.
- d. Accommodations for pre-existing consensual romantic or sexual relationships between a faculty or staff member and a student may be permitted under certain circumstances and

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will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In such circumstances, the disclosure process described below must be followed.

### 4. DISCLOSURE PROCESS

Any consensual romantic or sexual relationship described in this policy that pre-exists or develops during the course of a faculty or staff member's employment must be disclosed as directed below.

- a. Any pre-existing consensual romantic or sexual relationship between a faculty or staff member and a newly enrolled student, or any new supervisory or research relationship involving a pre-existing consensual romantic or sexual relationship must be disclosed by the person in the position of greater power or authority through submission of the Workplace Relationship Disclosure Form. The disclosure must occur within 30 days of the start of the faculty or staff member's employment with the University or within 30 days of the student's matriculation at Wake Forest.
- b. If a new consensual romantic or sexual relationship develops during employment, an initial disclosure must be made by the person in the position of greater power or authority to Human Resources by submitting a Workplace Relationship Disclosure Form. A Human Resources Partner or the Conflict of Interest Office will consult with department and/or school leadership and Human Resources senior leadership, as necessary, to determine appropriate action for minimizing or removing the conflict of interest risk.
- c. The Conflict of Interest Office conducts an annual online disclosure process to identify all potential conflicts of interest, including those related to consensual romantic or sexual relationships. Supervisory or research relationships involving consensual romantic or sexual relationships must be disclosed as part of the annual process, in addition to the initial disclosure.

### 5. HOW TO REPORT CONCERNS

- a. A staff or faculty member or a student who would like to report a concern about a possible violation of this policy should contact one of the following:
  - i. Human Resources
  - ii. Compliance Office
  - iii. Compliance Hotline
  - iv. Title IX Coordinator or a Deputy Title IX Coordinator
- b. Questions regarding this policy may also be directed to one of the offices or individuals listed above.

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- c. Retaliation against a staff/faculty member or a student who reports a good faith concern under this Policy is prohibited. Please see the University's [Whistleblower/Non-Retaliation Policy](#) for more information.