



**THE GEORGE
WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY**
WASHINGTON, DC

Responsible University Official: Vice Provost for Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement

Responsible Office: Office for Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement

Last Reviewed Date: May 17, 2019

POLICY ON PROHIBITED RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

Policy Statement

The George Washington University is committed to maintaining a safe, positive, and respectful environment in which students, faculty and staff study, learn and work without concern that potentially exploitative or coercive sexual or amorous relationships may damage the associations essential to our educational mission, create real or perceived conflicts of interest, or jeopardize the fair treatment of members of our community.

The pedagogical, coaching, mentoring and advising relationships among faculty, administrators and students are central to the mission and purpose of the university. Faculty members, administrators, coaches and certain other staff have important, multifaceted and influential roles with students. They serve as intellectual guides, role models, supervisors, mentors, educators and advisors for our students. Because the integrity of these relationships must be maintained and fostered for the benefit of the participants and third persons, the university expects these individuals to conduct themselves in a manner that does not potentially interfere with those relationships.

The relationships identified in this policy involve individuals occupying positions of asymmetrical power and authority. That asymmetry creates a risk of exploitative or coercive sexual or amorous relationships that compromise the integrity of the educational process. The existence of a relationship in this context, even when consensual, may also create the perception of favoritism or preferential treatment that damages the integrity of the supervision and evaluation provided and may harm third parties. These relationships may also raise concerns that the person in authority has violated standards of professional conduct, created a potential for conflicts of interest or bias, or undermined respectful and productive educational and supervisory affiliations, and may lead to actual or perceived sexual harassment,

discrimination and other behavior harmful to members of our community.

Therefore, this policy prohibits, with few exceptions as identified in this policy:

All sexual or amorous relationships between undergraduate students at the university and teachers and staff as defined in this policy.

All sexual or amorous relationships between graduate students at the university and teachers and staff as defined in this policy, who have or may have in the future an instructional, evaluative or supervisory responsibility over the graduate student while the graduate student is enrolled at the university.

At the same time, the university recognizes that individuals otherwise covered by this policy may have pre-existing relationships. In such cases, the policy instructs the persons in the relationship with greater power or authority within the university to: disclose the relationship to the dean or highest authority in their school or division, who will take reasonable and appropriate steps to remediate the potential conflict of interest, as approved by the Provost or designee, and in consultation with other university staff as appropriate.

Members of the university community with questions or concerns about this policy and their obligations to follow it are encouraged to discuss the issues with staff in the Office of the Vice Provost for Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement.

Policy

1. For purposes of this policy, a “teacher” is someone who teaches, educates, supervises or evaluates students, including but not limited to regular, part-time, specialized or visiting faculty. It includes faculty who may not be teaching during a particular semester or academic year but who serve as an academic administrator, as well as faculty who are on sabbatical or on another form of leave. It also includes graders, and graduate assistants who teach, supervise or evaluate students.
2. For purposes of this policy, “staff” includes university employees, administrators, contractors, volunteers and others who coach, mentor, counsel, advise, employ, supervise, manage or evaluate students for or on behalf of the university. For purposes of this policy, “staff” does not include undergraduates whose affiliations with the university are primarily as students.
3. For purposes of this policy, “amorous” means showing, expressing or relating to sexual interest or intimacy or physical relations, irrespective of whether

such conduct is welcome.

4. For purposes of this policy, an “undergraduate student” is someone who has not previously earned an undergraduate degree. Students who are pursuing a second or later degree are considered graduate students for purposes of this policy. Students with unclear registration status or a registration status other than as a graduate or undergraduate student, and graduate students who are members of a university athletics team based on NCAA eligibility rules, are considered undergraduates for purposes of this policy.

Article I

Prohibited Relationships with Undergraduate Students

No teacher (except for graders and graduate assistants, as provided below) or staff member may have a sexual or amorous relationship with any undergraduate student at the university. No grader or graduate assistant may have a sexual or amorous relationship with any undergraduate student at the university who is enrolled in a course in the department in which the grader or graduate assistant is performing his or her duties.

No teacher or staff member may teach, evaluate, coach, mentor, counsel, advise, employ, recommend (or serve as a reference for), supervise or manage an undergraduate student with whom they have previously had a sexual or amorous relationship.

Article II

Prohibited Relationships with Graduate Students

No teacher or staff member may have a sexual or amorous relationship with a graduate student in their department, program, or school as a whole in the case of a non-departmentalized school. Further, no teacher or staff member may have a sexual or amorous relationship with a graduate student 1) over whom they have or likely will have a future instructional, evaluative, supervisory or managerial relationship while the graduate student is enrolled at the university, or 2) for whom they are likely to be called upon to formally or informally provide a recommendation (or serve as a reference) for future employment or fellowship, research or other educational positions.

No teacher or staff member may teach, evaluate, coach, mentor, counsel, advise, employ, recommend (or serve as a reference for), supervise or manage a graduate student with whom they have or previously had a sexual or amorous relationship.

Article III

Pre-Existing Relationships

If there is a pre-existing sexual or amorous relationship that pre-dates one or both parties' affiliation with the university that would be prohibited under this policy, the person in the position of greater authority within the university shall immediately inform their dean or highest authority in their school or division¹ of the relationship. The dean or highest authority will, as approved by the Provost or designee, and in consultation with other university staff as appropriate, promptly implement a recusal from the institutional relationship in a manner that results in the least harm to the student, monitor the recusal and appropriate future recusals, and implement additional appropriate remedial measures to minimize the conflict of interest or appearance thereof. These efforts shall be documented and centrally maintained by the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.

Article IV

Violations

Violation of Article I or II of this Policy by the person in the position of greater authority and/or the failure to inform the dean or highest authority in the school or division in a timely fashion as required in Article III may subject the violator to disciplinary and/or corrective action. The university may take interim steps to manage or address the violation prior to taking disciplinary action, including but not limited to recusal of the person in the position of greater authority. The Disciplinary and/or corrective action will depend on the circumstances of the violation, including but not limited to whether the person in the position of greater authority promptly reported the relationship prohibited under this policy; and may include additional training, counseling, a written warning, suspension (including suspension of relevant responsibilities such as teaching or advising), or termination of employment.

Nothing in this policy prohibits a member of the university community from bringing a complaint under the university Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Interpersonal Violence Policy if, for example, the individual believes that the sexual or amorous relationship was not welcome or consensual. Further, in cases where there is a finding under the Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Interpersonal Violence Policy that a relationship was welcome or consensual, an investigation and appropriate action may still be taken for violations of this policy.

¹ If the person in the position of greater authority is the dean of a school, then the dean will inform the Provost. If the person in the position of greater authority is the Provost, the Provost will inform the President. If the person in the position of greater authority is the President, the President will inform the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Article V

Questions & Consultations

Individuals who are or may be parties to a sexual or amorous relationship that may be prohibited here and who have questions about this policy or wish to consult with university personnel are encouraged to contact the Office of the Vice Provost for Diversity, Equity, and Community Engagement.

Contacts

Contact	Telephone	Email
Vice Provost for Diversity, Equity & Community Engagement	202-994-7297	diverse@gwu.edu

Document History

- **Last Reviewed Date:** May 17, 2019
- **Policy Origination Date:** July 1, 2018

Who Approved This Policy

The George Washington University Board of Trustees

Reporting of non-compliance with this policy can be done through the [Office of Ethics, Compliance and Privacy's](#) website.