



UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON Ethical Relationships Involving Employees

Intimate relationships that might be appropriate in other circumstances can be problematic in the campus workplace when they occur among individuals between whom there is an imbalance of power based on their roles and responsibilities at the University of Massachusetts Boston (“UMass Boston” or the “University”). Such relationships are fundamentally asymmetric and are considered unprofessional under this policy because they raise serious concerns about validity of consent, conflict of interest and fair treatment. In addition, such relationships are to be avoided because they may create an impression on the part of colleagues of inappropriate or inequitable professional advantage or favoritism that is destructive to the working or learning environment and may raise doubts about the integrity of work performed.

The goal of this policy is to prevent and/or stop unfairness, abuses of power, impropriety, conflicts of interest, or the appearance thereof, which may result from consensual intimate relationships or sexual activity between employees with supervisory or evaluative roles and the employees or students who are subject to their supervision and/or evaluation.

1. Employee Relationships with Students.

No faculty member or other employee (whether permanent, temporary, full-or part-time, including contract employees) shall request, initiate, or engage in any type of romantic relationship or sexual activity, even if consensual, with any student with whom they have a supervisory or evaluative relationship, including: supervising a student employee, teaching, advising a thesis or dissertation, supervising research, supervising teaching, grading, acting in another evaluative or decision-making role with respect to the student’s educational participation or programming, or serving as Director of Undergraduate or Graduate Studies of the student’s academic program. Student-employees who supervise or evaluate other students or employees are considered “employees” for the purpose of this paragraph.¹

¹ Students who are employed as Residential Advisors (RAs) are generally prohibited from establishing intimate/dating relationships with any resident or student staff member living in the residence halls. RAs and other student employees should refer to their employment contract’s provisions regarding appropriate relationships for more information on such prohibitions.

2. Relationships between Supervisory Employees and Others.

University faculty, employees, and contract employees should be aware that any sexual or romantic relationship or activity with any individual, including faculty, staff, or person engaged as volunteer, intern, or independent contractor, over whom they have a professional, supervisory, evaluative, or decision-making responsibility, even if consensual, could be a conflict of interest or result in abuse of authority. Even when both parties have initially consented to such a relationship, it is the faculty member or employee in the position of greater authority who will be held accountable for the undisclosed conflict, unprofessional relationship, or abuse of authority.

3. Notification and Violation

If a relationship that implicates this policy arises, the person in the position of greater authority must promptly notify their supervisor, the Title IX Coordinator, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and/or the Vice Chancellor for Human Resources to evaluate the situation and ensure that alternate reporting or evaluative arrangement are put in place. In a relationship between an employee and a student, the employee is generally considered to be the person in the position of greater authority. All notifications made pursuant to this policy will be treated with appropriate discretion.

A pre-existing relationship may implicate this policy where a power imbalance is introduced due to changes in employees' roles at the University. For example, one employee may be promoted into a supervisory position over another, or an employee's spouse may enroll as a student in their department. In these situations, the employee in the role of greater authority should notify their supervisor, the Title IX Coordinator, and/or the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and/or the Vice Chancellor for Human Resources of the relationship as discussed above as soon as is reasonably possible after the power imbalance arises.

Individuals in a supervisory or evaluative position who fail to report relationships that implicate this policy will be in violation. Violations of this policy will be addressed through the University procedures in place to address sexual or professional misconduct, and/or the applicable collective bargaining agreement.