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Parent Policy: [Conflict Policy – Conflict of Interest and Commitment, and Institutional Conflict](#)

INFORMATION DOCUMENT: Consensual Personal Relationships

Office of Administrative Responsibility:	Associate Vice-President (Human Resources, Health, Safety and Environment)
Approver:	Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and Vice-President (University Services and Finance)

Overview

A **consensual personal relationship** is any relationship, either past or present, which is romantic, intimate or sexual in nature and to which both parties consent or consented. This Information Document concerns actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may arise from consensual personal relationships between a staff member and a student, trainee or other staff member. While the University appreciates that consenting adults may freely interact and are entitled to reasonable privacy, the University strongly discourages consensual personal relationships between staff members and students, trainees or other staff members where an actual or perceived conflict of interest exists.

Conflict of Interest in Consensual Personal Relationships

The University is committed to cultivating and maintaining a safe learning and working environment based on integrity and respect in which our students, trainees and staff members enjoy equitable conditions and treatment, including fair supervision, instruction and evaluation. As the University community contains many opportunities for social interaction between consenting adults, the potential exists for a consensual personal relationship to arise between a staff member and another staff member, student or trainee.

Consensual personal relationships between a staff member and a student, trainee or another staff member may result in a conflict of interest when a staff member is in a position to make or influence decisions, to take actions, or to exercise authority over or extend favourable or unfavourable treatment to the student, trainee or other staff member with whom they are in a consensual personal relationship. In some cases, a consensual personal relationship puts the staff member in a conflict of interest where the relationship began before the student, trainee or other staff member joined the University community or prior to the staff member starting work at the University. Examples of such situations where a conflict or a perceived conflict of interest for a staff member may arise include:

- Admission of a student to a program of study;
 - Appointment of a graduate student, trainee or other staff member;
 - The evaluation of a student, trainee or other staff member;
 - Influence or control over the employment conditions of a student, trainee or other staff member;
 - Coordination of a student's program of studies;
 - Coordination of a student's housing;
 - Provision of coaching for athletes and/or athletic teams or in conjunction with other University academic activities;
 - Provision of instruction;
 - Provision of student supervision and the conduct of examinations;
 - Administration of discipline;
 - Awarding of prizes, scholarships and financial assistance;
 - Awarding of graduate teaching or research assistantships or other remunerative employment, either within or outside the University using funds administered by the University;
 - Staff member's employment in the Department or Faculty where the student is registered in a program of study; or
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- Responsibility for the administration of academic programs or services in the Department or Faculty where the student is enrolled.

Managing Conflict of Interest in the Context of Consensual Personal Relationships

Where the staff member is in a position to make or influence decisions about a student's, trainee's or other staff member's employment, the [Managing Conflict of Interest in Employment Procedure](#) shall be followed.

Where the staff member is in a position to make or influence decisions about a student's, trainee's or other staff member's academic environment, the [Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment Reporting and Assessment Procedure](#) shall be followed.

In accordance with the above-named Procedures, such conflicts must be reported in a timely fashion and an appropriate plan to eliminate, or manage, the conflict put in place.

Some examples of how conflicts can be managed in this context include: recusing the staff member from decisions and actions that affect the student's, trainee's or other staff member's academic environment; assigning such matters to an independent staff member; otherwise putting in place arrangements to eliminate or minimize the risk of conflict of interest, and to address any perception of misuse of authority or favoritism, particularly in situations where, by virtue of their expertise and specific skills, the staff member and the student, trainee or other staff member are required to interact in an academic environment (for instance, in a research laboratory).

Where such measures are not sufficient to manage an actual or perceived conflict of interest that arises from a consensual personal relationship, the matter will be raised to the next appropriate senior reporting officer or to a conflict review committee as per the applicable Procedure.

Other Considerations

Consenting adults should be cognizant of the possibility of any negative consequences resulting from a breakdown in a consensual personal relationship or conflict within the relationship.

If, at any time, a consensual personal relationship becomes non-consensual, or is alleged to have been non-consensual for the duration (such as in the case of a student under the age of 18 years, for example), it may be handled according to the *Sexual Violence Policy*. In law, no consent is obtained if sexual activity is induced by abusing one's position of trust or authority over the other person. More information can be found here: [A Definition of Consent to Sexual Activity: Policy Centre for Victims Issues](#)

A staff member who is also a member of a professional organization may also be subject to that organization's policies and procedures on consensual personal relationships.

In accordance with the [Ethical Conduct and Safe Disclosure Policy](#), the University will not tolerate any reprisal, directly or indirectly, against anyone who makes a report about a consensual personal relationship between a staff member and a student, trainee or other staff member, where the report is made in good faith and based on reasonable belief that a conflict of interest exists. Reports shall not be malicious, frivolous or vexatious.

Support Offices include the following:

Faculty Relations, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Human Resources, Health, Safety and Environment
Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights
Office of the Dean of Students
Office of the Student Ombuds
Interfaith Chaplains' Association