



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

Operating Policy and Procedure

HSC OP: 60.06, Consensual Relationships – Faculty and Students

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Health Sciences Center Operating Policy and Procedure (HSC OP) is to establish a policy defining and addressing consensual relationships between TTUHSC faculty and students and establishing procedures for reporting such relationships.

REVIEW: This HSC OP will be reviewed on June 1st of every even-numbered year (ENY) by the Vice President for Human Resources, the Office of Equal Opportunity, the Chief Compliance Officer (CCO), the Office of General Counsel, the Executive Vice President for Finance and Operations, the Academic Affairs Curriculum Committee, and the Academics Council, with recommendations for revision forwarded to the President by August 1st.

POLICY/PROCEDURE:

1) Definitions

- a) Consensual Relationship: Congruent with TTU System Regents' Rule 03.01.10, "consensual relationship" is defined as: a mutually acceptable, intimate, romantic, or sexual relationship between a TTUHSC faculty member and a student.

Consensual relationships are prohibited between faculty and:

- (i) students in the faculty member's class
 - (ii) students with whom the faculty member has a supervisory or instructional connection
 - (iii) students with whom the faculty member is in a position of real or perceived authority
 - (iv) students within the same academic unit (e.g., school, department, area)
- b) Management Plan: A formal agreement developed when a faculty member discloses a consensual relationship with a student. The plan outlines the measures required to eliminate any supervisory, instructional, or evaluative authority and to remove conflicts of interest associated with the relationship.

2) Relationships that are Prohibited and Require Disclosure

- a) Objective. The objective of TTUHSC is to provide an environment in which students may pursue their careers and studies with maximum productivity and enjoyment. The university expects faculty, staff, and others in positions of authority to manage their responsibilities appropriately and with sound professional judgment and impartiality. Finally, the university supports an overall educational environment that is free from conflicts of interest. Behavior or conduct which interferes with this goal will not be tolerated.

- b) **Policy Statement.** It is the policy of TTUHSC that faculty with academic, instructional, teaching, training, supervisory, advisory, or evaluative responsibility over students recognize and respect the ethical and professional boundaries that must exist in such situations.
- i) Consensual relationships, as set forth below, between faculty and students, may constitute and/or create (1) conflicts of interest; (2) unprofessional conduct; (3) breach of trust; (4) the appearance of impropriety; and (5) present questions regarding the validity of consent. Such relationships also have the potential to undermine the atmosphere of trust and objectivity essential to the educational process; exploit the faculty – student relationship; and create a professional or academic disadvantage to third parties.
 - ii) TTUHSC PROHIBITS consensual relationships between faculty and students over whom they have or may reasonably expect to have academic, instructional, teaching, training, supervisory, advisory, or evaluation responsibility.
- c) If such a relationship exists or develops, the individual in a position of authority must promptly disclose the relationship to the Provost. In addition, the individual must disclose the relationship using TTUHSC's [Conflict of Interest and Commitment Disclosure Form](#).
- d) Upon disclosure, the individual in a position of authority must either:
- (i) Cease the relationship.
 - (ii) Cooperate fully in removing all direct or indirect oversight responsibilities through the development and implementation of a written Management Plan for teaching, training, advising, or supervising the student or postgraduate.
- e) **Management Plan:** In the case that the relationship does not cease, in coordination with the Conflict of Interest and Commitment Committee, a written management plan shall be prepared by the Provost or the Provost's designee that details the arrangements for the student's continued education, and if the student is to continue in the faculty member's program area, the written management plan shall specify the faculty member's role relative to the student's degree acquisition.
- 3) **Scope.** This policy applies to all TTUHSC faculty, whether their employment status is full-time, part-time, regular, temporary, or voluntary.
- 4) Faculty relationships beyond consensual relationships could pose a conflict of interest and are guided by [HSC OP 10.05, Conflict of Interest and Commitment Policy](#);
- 5) **Violations of this Policy.**
- a) Violations of this HSC OP 60.06 and related policies may result in discipline, up to and including termination. Please see related policies [HSC OP 10.05](#), [HSC OP 60.03](#), and [HSC OP 70.31](#).
- 6) **Complaints**
- a) If an individual feels a decision was discriminatory or based on a protected category, they may reach out to the TTU System Office of Equal Opportunity (reference TTUS Regulation 07.10).
- 7) **Right to Change Policy.** TTUHSC reserves the right to interpret, change, modify, amend, or rescind this policy in whole or in part at any time without the consent of faculty members, staff members, positions of authority, or students/postgraduates.

- 8) **References.** See also *Regents' Rules* [03.01](#) and [03.02](#) regarding ethical behavior and conduct; [HSC OP 10.05, Conflict of Interest and Commitment Policy](#); [HSC OP 70.55, Consensual Relationships – Faculty, Staff and Residents](#); and [TTUHSC Institutional Student Handbook, Part IV, Anti-Discrimination Policy, item F](#).