



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

Operating Policy and Procedure

HSC OP: 70.55, **Consensual Relationships – Faculty, Staff, and Residents**

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, staff, and/or residents, and establishing procedures for reporting such relationships.

REVIEW: This HSC OP will be reviewed on February 1 of every even-numbered year (ENY) by the Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO), the TTUS Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO), the Office of General Counsel (OGC), the Provost and the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer (COO) with recommendations for revision forwarded to the President by March 1.

POLICY/PROCEDURE:

1. Policy.

- a. **Objective.** The objective of TTUHSC is to provide an environment in which faculty, staff, and residents may pursue their careers with a maximum of productivity and enjoyment. Behavior or conduct which interferes with this goal will not be tolerated.
- b. **Policy Statement.** TTUHSC upholds a policy that mandates employees in positions of supervisory, advisory, training, or evaluative authority over faculty, staff, or residents to maintain ethical and professional boundaries in such relationships.

This policy specifically addresses consensual relationships between employees in supervisory/subordinate dynamics. These relationships may constitute and/or create (1) conflicts of interest; (2) unprofessional behavior; (3) breaches of trust; (4) perceptions of impropriety; and (5) questions regarding the legitimacy of consent. They can also compromise the essential trust and objectivity in the workplace, exploit the supervisor-subordinate dynamic, and disadvantage third parties professionally.

In light of these concerns, TTUHSC strictly **prohibits** consensual relationships between supervisors and their subordinates. This applies to individuals who currently have, or are likely to have, supervisory, advisory, training, or evaluative roles over other faculty, staff, or residents, or those within their chain of command or authority.

- c. **Scope.** This policy applies to all TTUHSC faculty, staff, and residents, whether their employment status is full-time, part-time, regular, or temporary.
- d. **Consensual Relationship.** As used herein, a consensual relationship is a mutually acceptable intimate, romantic, sexual, or other affectional relationship between TTUHSC faculty, staff, and/or residents.
- e. **Reporting Responsibility.** If a consensual relationship arises between faculty, staff, or residents within a supervisory/subordinate context, it is the duty of the individual in the supervisory or advisory role to report the relationship to their immediate superior. Additionally, they must terminate the relationship as long as any supervisory/subordinate dynamic persists. The supervisor is also required to collaborate in establishing alternative provisions for the supervision, training, advising, and evaluation of the subordinate faculty, staff member, or resident.

- f. **Immediate Supervisory Responsibility.** Supervisors who are notified or become aware of consensual relationships between a supervisor and a subordinate shall take immediate steps to alter the conditions that create the conflict of interest, breach of trust, unprofessional conduct and/or the appearance of impropriety caused by the relationship. An employee who is or was involved in a consensual relationship may not remain under the supervision of the supervisory employee.
- g. **Failure to Report or Cooperate.** Employees holding positions of authority who engage in or continue consensual intimate, romantic, sexual, or other affectionate relationships without promptly reporting them, or who do not cooperate in resolving the conflicts of interest, breaches of trust, unprofessional conduct, or appearances of impropriety these relationships create, will face disciplinary measures. These measures can extend to termination of employment. Furthermore, if a complaint of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct is filed by the subordinate party in an unreported relationship, there will be no presumption that the relationship was consensual in nature.
- h. **Grievance of Disciplinary Actions.** Disciplinary actions imposed for violations of this policy may be grieved or appealed by the individual who is disciplined pursuant to existing TTUHSC policies and procedures. See [HSC OP 60.10](#) and [HSC OP 70.10](#), respectively, for faculty and staff complaint procedures.
- i. **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 employees, faculty, or residents.
- j. **Other.**

See also [Regents' Rules, Sections 03.01 and 03.02](#) regarding ethical behavior and conduct, and [HSC OP 10.05, Conflict of Interest and Commitment Policy](#).