

Academic Affairs Manual (ACD)

ACD 402: Romantic or Sexual Relationships Between Faculty Members and Students

Effective: 2/2/1982

Revised: 4/13/2017

Purpose

To set forth the university's policies and procedures concerning romantic or sexual relationships between faculty members and students

Source

University policy

Applicability

All ASU faculty members and academic professionals

Background

One key metric by which ASU assesses itself is the academic success of its students. The degree of a students' academic success should not be the result of, or affected by, influences attributable to a romantic or sexual relationship between an ASU faculty member and a student. Such a relationship could generate serious conflicts of interest, may permanently compromise the academic and professional reputations of both parties involved, does not promote an atmosphere conducive to learning, and creates an unacceptable risk of real or perceived coercion or exploitation of students by faculty.

To ensure fairness, objectivity, and the other ethical responsibilities expected of all members within a community of scholars, faculty are committed to hold themselves to high standards with respect to their professional responsibilities towards students. These professional standards recognize that the influence of the faculty in teaching and mentoring extends beyond the classroom ([ACD 204-01](#)).

Therefore all faculty should be aware that romantic or sexual relationships with students are likely to lead to difficulties for both parties. Such relationships should therefore be avoided. They can be harmful to the student and have the potential to place faculty at great personal and professional risk. The power differential inherent in the faculty-student relationship means that any romantic or sexual relationship between a faculty member and a student is potentially exploitative or could at any time be perceived as exploitative. Faculty engaged in such relationships should be sensitive to the continuous possibility that they are, or may be placed, in a position of responsibility for the student's instruction or evaluation. In the event of a charge of sexual harassment against a faculty member arising from such a relationship, a defense based upon mutual consent may be unsuccessful when the facts establish that a faculty-student relationship existed between the parties.

Policy

Faculty and academic professionals are prohibited from engaging in a romantic or sexual relationship with a student over whom the faculty member or academic professional exercises, or can reasonably be expected to exercise, academic or employment authority or influence. Such authority or influence includes, but is not limited to,

employment-related decisions such as hiring, evaluation or discipline, and academic-related decisions such as grading, transfers, evaluations, formal mentoring or advising, supervision of research, employment of a student as a research or teaching assistant, exercising substantial responsibility for honors or degrees, or considering academic disciplinary action involving the student.

This policy does not apply to a romantic or sexual relationship between a faculty member or academic professional and a student who are spouses or domestic partners, consistent with the definition of family in [ACD 702–03](#), or to those relationships that predate the adoption of this policy, in such cases, [ACD 515](#) applies.

However, any faculty member who is a spouse or domestic partner of a student; or who became involved in a romantic or sexual relationship with someone who enrolled as a student at this university after their relationship began; or who became involved in such a relationship with a student before the faculty member joined the faculty of this university, is prohibited from evaluating the academic performance of that student or employing that student at this university, or otherwise exercising authority, supervision or influence over that student at this university. In order to enforce this provision a faculty member involved in such a relationship shall disclose the existence of the relationship to the head of their department or college.

This policy is consistent with the “Code of Ethics” ([ACD 204–01](#)), and the “Standards of Professional Conduct for Faculty Members and Academic Professionals” ([ACD 204–02](#)), which set forth standards to which faculty members must adhere, including responsibilities to students. Violations of this policy may result in corrective action, up to and including dismissal for cause ([ACD 508–03](#)).

Procedures

The exclusive procedure and protocols for the investigation of any claims of violations of this policy are set forth in [P20](#). If a deviation from these procedures is determined to be necessary for a particular case, that deviation shall not invalidate the findings of any investigation.

Additional Information

To view the Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation, Complaint and Investigation Procedure, see [P20](#).

Cross-References

For additional, related policies, see:

1. [ACD 204–01](#), “Code of Ethics”
2. [ACD 204–02](#), “Standards of Professional Conduct for Faculty Members and Academic Professionals”
3. [ACD 401](#), “Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation”
4. [ACD 515](#), “Nepotism”
5. [ACD 508–03](#), “Dismissal for Cause”
6. [ACD 702–03](#), “Family Leave”
7. [ACD 710](#), “Parental Leave with Pay”
8. the *Sun Devil Athletics Manual (SDA)*—[SDA 406](#), “Consensual Relationships”
9. the *Staff Policies and Procedures Manual (SPP)*—[SPP 205](#), “Nepotism and Relationships Between Employees”
10. the *Staff Policies and Procedures Manual (SPP)* —[SPP 815](#), “Romantic or Sexual Relationships Between Employees/Volunteers and Students”

and

11. the *Student Services Manual (SSM)*—[SSM 304–06](#), “Nepotism—Student Employment.”