

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SYSTEM  
ADMINISTRATIVE MEMORANDUM

**SECTION: General Administration**

**NUMBER: 01.D.10**

**AREA: Legal Affairs**

**SUBJECT: Consensual Relationship Policy**

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1. PURPOSE

The University of Houston System and its component institutions (“University”) are committed to maintaining a positive educational and working environment that is free from conflicts of interest, favoritism, and exploitation. This policy addresses dating, intimate, romantic, and/or sexual interactions that, although consensual, may create actual or perceived conflicts of interests, or create the possibility for exploitation or favoritism.

The University recognizes that consenting individuals associated with the University should generally be free to enter into personal relationships of their choice. However, such relationships must not risk undermining the essential purpose of the University or risk undermining the workplace and learning environment. Even if negative consequences to the participants do not result, such relationships could create an environment charged with potential or perceived conflicts of interest and possible use of academic or supervisory leverage to maintain or promote the relationship.

Accordingly, this policy prohibits inappropriate consensual relationships as defined in Section 2.1 below. This policy is applicable to any employee, including staff, faculty, and students at the University.

2. DEFINITIONS

2.1. Inappropriate Consensual Relationship - Any consensual dating, intimate, romantic, and/or sexual relationship between:

- a) An employee (including staff, faculty, or student employees);  
and
- b) An individual that the employee has responsibility as part of their job duties to teach, instruct, manage, supervise, advise, counsel, oversee, grade, coach, train, treat, or evaluate in any way.

2.2. Employee - Any staff member including, but not limited to, part-time, full-time, temporary, non-benefits eligible, contracted employees, or student workers whether being paid from University funds or not. Any faculty member including, but not limited to, non-tenure track, tenure-track, tenured, adjunct, instructors, instructional assistants, teaching assistants, lab assistants, or any other faculty

member who provides teaching or instruction to a University student whether being paid from University funds or not.

3. POLICY

3.1. Prohibited Conduct

3.1.1. The University prohibits any Inappropriate Consensual Relationship as defined in Section 2.1 of this policy. Any non-consensual sexual relationship and/or acts of discrimination and harassment are addressed in the University's [Anti-Discrimination Policy \(SAM 01.D.07\)](#) and the University's [Sexual Misconduct Policy \(SAM 01.D.08\)](#). Marriage and other familial relationships are addressed under the Nepotism Policy ([SAM 02.A.21](#)).

3.1.2. The University prohibits consensual dating, intimate, romantic, and/or sexual relationships between faculty and undergraduate students.

3.1.3. The University prohibits consensual dating, intimate, romantic, and/or sexual relationships between coaches and undergraduate students.

3.2. Complaints

Complaints regarding Prohibited Conduct shall be reported to the University's [Title IX Coordinator](#), who will inform the [University of Houston System Office of Equal Opportunity Services \("EOS"\)](#). EOS will determine whether and to what extent an investigation will be conducted and provide a recommendation to the appropriate administrator, as necessary.

3.3. Discipline and Sanctions

University responses to violations of this Policy will vary as appropriate to the facts and circumstances of each case. Any individual who is in violation of this policy is subject to disciplinary action ranging from verbal warnings up to and including termination/dismissal of employment or expulsion.

Any Employee subject to disciplinary action can grieve the disciplinary action pursuant to the applicable staff ([SAM 02.A.05](#)) or faculty grievance procedure. Students will have a right to grieve subject to the policies set forth in the University Student Handbook.

3.4. Retaliation Prohibited

Retaliation against a person who reports a potential violation under this policy, assists someone with a report of a violation, or participates in any manner in an investigation or in the resolution of a complaint made under this policy is strictly

prohibited and will not be tolerated. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to threats, intimidation, reprisals and/or adverse actions related to an individual's employment or education. If retaliation is found, appropriate disciplinary action and sanctions will be made in accordance with Section 3.3 of this policy.

3.5. Change in Reporting Structure

If an Inappropriate Consensual Relationship occurs or is likely to occur, the employee with responsibilities under Section 2.1(b) must consult with the University's Title IX Coordinator, who will inform the Assistant Vice Chancellor/Vice President for Equal Opportunity Services (EOS) to determine appropriate action, which may include changes in reporting structure.

3.6. Exceptions to Policy

Only the Assistant Vice Chancellor/Assistant Vice President for Equal Opportunity Services or designee is authorized to grant exceptions to this policy.

4. REVIEW AND RESPONSIBILITY

Responsible Parties: Senior Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance

Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Enrollment Services

Assistant Vice Chancellor for Equal Opportunity Services

Review: Every five years on or before August 1

5. APPROVAL

Approved: Richard Walker  
 Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Enrollment Services

Jim McShan  
 Senior Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance

Paula M. Short  
 Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost

Dona Cornell  
 Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs and General Counsel

Renu Khator  
 Chancellor

Date: February 20, 2019

6. REFERENCES

[System Administrative Memorandum \(SAM\) 01.D.07 – Anti-Discrimination Policy](#)

[SAM 01.D.08 – Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)

[SAM 02.A.21 - Nepotism](#)

**REVISION LOG**

<b>Revision Number</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Description of Changes</b>
1	05/15/2018	Initial version
2	02/20/2019	Updated Section 3.5, Changes in Reporting Structure, for the employee with responsibilities under Section 2.1.b to consult with the University’s Title IX Coordinator, who informs the AVC/AVP for Equal Opportunity Services in order to determine appropriate action. Changed review period from every two years to every five years on or before August 1