



Personal Relationships

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 Responsible Executive: Provost & VP of
 Human Resources
 Responsible Office: Office of the
 Provost, Office of Human Resources
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Table of Contents

Policy Statement	1
Who Is Governed By This Policy	2
Definitions	3
Policy	3
I. RELATIONSHIPS INVOLVING FACULTY/STAFF WITH UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OR OTHER TRAINEES	3
II. RELATIONSHIPS INVOLVING ONLY STUDENTS OR OTHER TRAINEES	5
III. RELATIONSHIPS INVOLVING ONLY EMPLOYEES (FACULTY AND STAFF)	5
IV. PREEXISTING OR PRIOR RELATIONSHIPS	5
V. FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND NEPOTISM AVOIDANCE	6
VI. REPORTING OBLIGATIONS AND PROCEDURES	6
VII. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	7
Policy Enforcement	7
Related Resources	8
Contacts	8
Disclaimer	8
Appendix A: Disclosure and Recusal Plans	Click Here

Policy Statement

The Johns Hopkins University (“JHU” or “University”) is committed to the personal, academic, and professional well-being and development of its students, trainees, faculty, staff, post-doctoral fellows, clinical residents, and all other members of the University community. In particular, the University is committed to fostering an environment that promotes academic and professional success for all members of its community by addressing behaviors that can undermine the important missions of our institution. The University seeks to create and maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect, collegiality, fairness, and trust. The Personal Relationships Policy (the “Policy”) implements the University’s commitment to maintaining the integrity of its educational and working environment. This Policy focuses on the conflict of interest that may exist when individuals simultaneously engage in both personal and professional relationships in which one individual has the potential to exert substantial academic or professional influence over the other. These situations can have adverse effects on both the individuals and on the climate, culture and mission of the institution.

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Because student-teacher and trainee/mentor relationships form the heart of our institutional identity, this Policy pays particular attention to such situations. Romantic and/or sexual relationships are viewed as incompatible with a teaching/training relationship. This view applies regardless of whether the context involves, for example, an undergraduate student and an instructor, a graduate student and a professor in the same program, or a clinical resident and the attending physician. Our mission depends on having a climate of mutual respect in which academic, professional, and scholarly achievements are unambiguously seen as the only criteria for success.

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of our work and the need to maintain all opportunities for future learning, this Policy considers not only current student-teacher relationships with direct influence but also whether there is a reasonable potential for substantial academic or professional influence in the future, such as faculty associated with a student's inter-departmental program.

In addition to preserving the integrity of the student-teacher relationship, the Policy considers a number of issues that may arise in a dating, romantic, or sexual relationship involving individuals in other inherently unequal positions, such as two employees when one reports to or is otherwise evaluated by the other. This Policy also addresses nepotism issues that may arise when members of the same family or household are affiliated with the University.

While this Policy only covers consensual and familial relationships, one goal of the policy is to prevent sexual harassment. Where one individual has power over another individual, freely given consent may be illusory.

Actual or perceived coercion or exploitation can constitute sexual harassment. These issues may come to the surface during the course of an otherwise consensual relationship or after a relationship ends. Circumstances may change, and conduct that was previously welcome may later be perceived as unwelcome or coercive. Even when individuals involved in a relationship consent at the outset of the relationship, that consent does not preempt a complaint or other legal action based upon subsequent unwelcome conduct. Sexual harassment, even when it arises from an initially consensual relationship, is covered by separate University policy.

Who Is Governed By This Policy

This Policy applies to all members of the University. To the extent there is any inconsistency between unit policies and procedures and this Policy, this Policy controls.

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Definitions

Personal Relationship	A “Personal Relationship” in the context of this Policy includes a dating, romantic, or sexual relationship, without regard to the length of the relationship or whether the participants are cohabitating. While the Policy cannot cover every possible interaction of a personal and consensual nature, sexual or romantic interactions that are substantial enough that a reasonable observer would consider them to potentially result in real or perceived favoritism or bias are considered “Personal Relationships” for the purpose of this Policy. A “Personal Relationship” involves active participation of both parties in which there is the perception of mutual consent, and thus is distinct from existing sexual misconduct and discrimination and harassment policies, which can be found here . These non-familial personal relationships are distinct from those of familial relationships, which are covered in Section V of this Policy.
Undergraduate students	For purposes of this Policy, “undergraduate students” includes any student currently enrolled in an undergraduate program, or any other trainees or staff of a similar status, including but not limited to Peabody Preparatory students, School of Medicine Junior Volunteers, pre-baccalaureate research or professional interns and volunteers.
Trainees	For purposes of this Policy, a “trainee” includes anyone who is receiving academic or professional training at Hopkins but who is not included in the definition of “undergraduate students” above. This includes, but is not limited to: students currently enrolled in a graduate or professional school program, post- baccalaureate program students, postdoctoral scholars, clinical residents, and fellows.
Academic supervisory authority	“Academic supervisory authority” includes teaching, advising, grading, evaluating, supervising research, serving on a dissertation or other academic committee, mentoring, overseeing and/or having influence over academic progress and/or funding, or otherwise occupying a position of influence or power over a student’s or trainee’s academic program or professional development.
Professional influence	<p>“Professional influence” refers to the power of an individual, by virtue of position of employment, rank or professional standing in the institution, in academia, or the field to have the potential to effectively advocate for or against the other individual’s advancement or effect personnel decisions regarding the other individual, such as salary, promotion or hiring recommendations.</p> <p>Examples of individuals with professional influence include department heads, assistant or associate deans, vice provosts, and other senior administrators, coaches, supervisors, advisors, residential life staff, managers, and others who may mentor, supervise, or evaluate other students, faculty, or staff members.</p> <p>Restrictions regarding professional influence in the context of a personal relationship also apply to employees regarding actions involving contractors and vendors.</p>

Policy**I. RELATIONSHIPS INVOLVING FACULTY/STAFF WITH UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OR OTHER TRAINEES**

The integrity of academic and professional relationships between faculty or staff members and students stands at the foundation of the University’s educational mission. Accordingly, the University expects faculty and

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staff to maintain interactions with students and trainees free from influences that may interfere with their educational experiences and professional development. Personal relationships involving a faculty or staff member and a student or trainee can adversely affect the educational environment for the individual involved in the relationship as well as for others in the community.

For information on reporting obligations and procedures, see Section VI of this Policy.

A. Relationships Involving Faculty/Staff and Undergraduate Students

1. In light of the inherent inequality of power and authority as between faculty and undergraduates and the potential for adverse effects on the educational environment for the entire community, all non-familial Personal Relationships involving a faculty member and an undergraduate student are prohibited, regardless of whether the faculty member currently exercises academic supervisory authority or professional influence over the student. This prohibition applies even when the student and faculty member are in different divisions of the institution due to the fluid nature of undergraduate interests and the need to ensure that future opportunities for the student are not adversely impacted by a Personal Relationship.
2. In addition, staff members are not permitted to be in a position in which they have professional influence over a student and/or their campus experiences (e.g., senior administrators, coaches, supervisors of student employees, and others who mentor or advise students) if they have a Personal Relationship with that student.

B. Relationships Involving Faculty/Staff and Non-Undergraduate Trainees

1. Different academic fields and programs have different spheres of influence for non-undergraduate trainees (including but not limited to graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, clinical residents and interns) that may or may not correspond to departmental or divisional boundaries. The requirements below are the minimal requirements of this Policy across all divisions of the institution. Individual divisions, departments or programs may impose broader prohibitions or requirements for disclosure and management than those described here. Individuals are responsible for understanding the policies specific to their departments, programs, and schools.
2. All faculty and staff are prohibited from having academic or professional influence over a trainee with whom they have a Personal Relationship. Faculty and staff are also prohibited from being in positions in which they might be reasonably expected to have the potential for exerting academic or professional influence in the future over a trainee with whom they have a Personal Relationship. These restrictions apply independent of the primary affiliation of the employee or trainee regarding schools, departments, etc.
3. Examples of situations where the employee would be considered to have, or have the future potential for, academic or professional influence include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Faculty and staff affiliated with a trainee's academic or professional program
 - b. Faculty supervisors and collaborators on a trainee's research or scholarly project
 - c. Faculty teaching a course in which the trainee is enrolled, regardless of whether the faculty and trainee are in the same school, department or program.
 - d. Dissertation committee members, or members of other committees with authority or influence over a trainee
 - e. Faculty or staff who would normally be expected to provide regular formal evaluation of a trainee's performance, such as an attending physician in a field closely related to the trainee's

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field. Occasional minor evaluations could be handled with a conflict of interest disclosure within the evaluation. Deans are expected to provide clear guidance and efficient mechanisms for an employee to do this.

II. RELATIONSHIPS INVOLVING ONLY STUDENTS OR OTHER TRAINEES

Students and trainees are prohibited from having academic or professional influence over other students when the individuals have a Personal Relationship. Individuals should not initiate or consent to Personal Relationships with individuals over whom they hold academic or professional influence, such as when one student/trainee is a teacher, teaching assistant, grader, resident advisor, research or clinical supervisor of the other, regardless of whether the students/trainees are within the same enrollment status or different statuses.

Because relationships among students/trainees, particularly undergraduates, are quite common and their personal and academic relationships can change frequently, supervisors or faculty are advised to attempt to prevent such conflicts whenever possible, such as by using anonymous codes instead of names on tests and assignments that will be graded by a student/trainee.

Students/trainees who become teaching assistants or who are placed in other evaluative or supervisory roles must be reminded of this Policy and the reasons for its existence during training for the role.

For information on reporting obligations and procedures, see Section VI of this Policy.

III. RELATIONSHIPS INVOLVING ONLY EMPLOYEES (FACULTY AND STAFF)

This Policy prohibits employees from having professional influence over another employee when the individuals have a Personal Relationship. Professional influence includes, but is not limited to, supervisors over their staff, reporting relationships, approval authority for travel or purchasing, evaluation for promotion or tenure, salary recommendations, mentoring positions, etc. An individual in a Personal Relationship with another employee must not initiate nor participate, directly or indirectly, in employment actions (initial employment or appointment, retention, promotions, salary, work assignments, leave of absence, etc.) involving the other employee.

For information on reporting obligations and procedures, see Section VI of this Policy.

IV. PREEXISTING OR PRIOR RELATIONSHIPS

The Policy acknowledges that the biases produced by a Personal Relationship may extend years after that Personal Relationship ends. Thus, individuals are also prohibited from having academic or professional influence over another individual with whom they had a Personal Relationship in the past (when both were adults).

The Policy acknowledges that pre-existing Personal Relationships among peers should not hinder future academic or professional advancement. Every effort will be made to enable such advancement while protecting the individuals involved, the community, and the mission of the institution. In such circumstances, the relationship must be clearly disclosed (as discussed in Section VI), prior to the appointment or promotion of either of the individuals. The individual who is to be promoted or appointed into a position of higher authority

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must be removed from having influence over the other individual and potential impacts on the community must be minimized to the extent possible. The promotion or appointment must include a written recusal plan outlining how these goals will be achieved.

The Policy acknowledges that Personal Relationships among undergraduate students are particularly common and fluid. Thus, faculty and staff should avoid creating situations wherein one undergraduate student has academic or professional authority over another undergraduate student as disclosure and recusal for pre-existing and past relationships among undergraduates might not be feasible. For example, therefore, undergraduate teaching assistants should be involved in grading only when work can be anonymized. Student employees should not be in a reporting relationship with other student employees.

V. FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND NEPOTISM AVOIDANCE

Immediate family members and members of the same household are not to be employed in any position where one has direct academic or other supervisory authority or professional influence over the other. Faculty and staff members (including student employees) must neither initiate nor participate, directly or indirectly, in employment actions involving members of their immediate family or household. Employment actions include, but are not limited to, initial employment or appointment, retention, evaluations, promotions, salary, work assignments, leave of absence, etc. This restriction applies for all appointments at Hopkins, regardless of the source of funds. Familial relationships must be disclosed (See section VI.), as with other personal relationships, so that a recusal plan can be developed to avoid the potential real or perceived conflict of interest that could arise with such activities.

If two employees become family members or members of the same household, both may retain their positions, provided one is not under the direct or indirect supervision of the other. It is the responsibility of the appropriate Vice President of Human Resources or Dean (or designee) to consider issues arising under this Section, and put a written recusal plan into place if appropriate.

Cases where one family member is an employee and the other is a student or other trainee are allowed, but one must not be involved in teaching, grading, or other direct evaluative or supervisory activities over the other.

For the purposes of this Section, immediate family includes all relatives, such as, but not limited to the following: spouses, domestic partners, children (including step-children and foster children), parents, step-parents, grandparents, grandchildren, in-laws, siblings (including step- brothers and step-sisters), cousins, nieces, nephews, aunts and uncles.

VI. REPORTING OBLIGATIONS AND PROCEDURES

To avoid conflicts of interest, bias, or perceived coercion, individuals must not initiate or consent to Personal Relationships with individuals over whom they currently hold academic or professional influence. In considering whether to enter into a Personal Relationship, the individuals must consider that disclosure may be required and that there may be significant consequences for their positions at Hopkins. If such Personal Relationships covered by this policy nonetheless develop, or in the case of a pre-existing or past relationship, the individuals must disclose the relationship so a written recusal plan can be developed. If there is any doubt whether a relationship falls within this Policy, individuals in the relationship should seek guidance from

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Human Resources leadership or their relevant Vice Dean rather than fail to disclose. See [Appendix A](#) for requirements and guidance on disclosure and recusal plans.

In addition to the disclosure requirements outlined in [Appendix A](#), any member of the University community with concerns about the appropriateness of a relationship or its impact on the community may report the relationship to their supervisor, department chair, dean, human resources manager, or the Office of Institutional Equity. Consistent with the [Statement of Ethical Standards](#), members of the University Community who have actual knowledge of a relationship that clearly violates this Policy should report the relationship to their supervisor, department head, dean, human resources manager, or the Office of Institutional Equity, who will then be responsible for pursuing further information regarding whether a policy violation may have occurred. This reporting requirement is not intended to mandate reporting of rumors, innuendo, or unconfirmed suspicions, and there are no disciplinary consequences for an individual outside of a relationship who fails to report the relationship.

VII. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Those individuals who carry out this Policy—including those to whom disclosures are made and those involved in developing and implementing conflict management plans—shall do so in a manner that respects the privacy of the parties involved and shall share information only as necessary or appropriate to provide a safe, equitable, and hospitable educational and working environment for all members of the University community, and to comply with the policy and the law. All parties involved shall be prohibited from any subsequent bias or retaliation in response to disclosure and recusal actions under this policy. As always, individuals may seek assistance or support from a Confidential Resource.

The University may amend this Policy from time to time. Nothing in this Policy shall affect the inherent authority of the University to amend this Policy as it deems appropriate to further the educational mission of the University.

Policy Enforcement

Violations	Faculty and Staff who fail to comply with this Policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination, including revocation of tenure in accordance with prescribed procedures. Students who fail to comply with this Policy while acting in a teaching or other supervisory role may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with prescribed policies and procedures.
Enforcement	The Provost and the Vice President of Human Resources are responsible for ensuring consistency in development and enforcement of the Policy. The Office of Institutional Equity is responsible for investigating alleged violations of this Policy only if the facts of the situation are in dispute or if the Personal Relationship is found to be not fully consensual.

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Related Resources

University Policies and Documents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of Ethical Standards • JHU Student Code of Conduct • School of Medicine Graduate Student Policies School of Medicine Policies & Procedures • University's Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures

Contacts

Subject Matter	Office Name	Telephone Number	E-mail/Web Address
Policy Clarification and Interpretation	Office of the Vice President for Human Resources Or the Office of the Dean for the relevant school or schools	Office of VP for HR: 410-516-8075	https://hr.jhu.edu/about-hr/contact-us/
Compliance	Johns Hopkins University & Medicine Compliance Line	844-SPEAK2US (1-844-773-2528)	https://johnshopkinsspeak2us.tnwreports.com

Web Address For This Policy

<https://policies.jhu.edu>**Disclaimer****DISCLAIMER**

This manual does not constitute an express or implied contract and its provisions are not intended to be contractually binding. Each staff member's employment is terminable at will, and each has the right to end employment with the University at any time for any reason and the University reserves this same right.

Reservation of Rights

The University retains all managerial and administrative rights and prerogatives entrusted to it and conferred on employers inherently and by law. These include, but are not limited to: the right to exercise judgment in establishing and administering policies, practices and procedures, and to make changes in them without notice; the right to take whatever action is necessary in the University's judgment to achieve Hopkins' goals; and the right to set the standards of productivity and services to be rendered, etc. Failure of the University to exercise any such prerogative or function in a particular way shall not be considered a waiver of the University's right to exercise that prerogative or function in the future or to preclude it from exercising that prerogative or function in some other way.