

FAQ's for Consensual Relationships Policy

Please note: use of the word *employee* includes faculty, classified staff, administrative and professional staff, post-doctoral positions, and employee positions requiring student status or university affiliate, including post-doctoral positions funded by other entities. Use of the phrase *authority differential* means the difference in the level of work-related authority between two people (example: one person is a director and the other is a coordinator).

1. Q: If I am an employee and currently in a relationship with another employee, and we never reported it, what should I do?

A:

- If there is a non-reported relationship among employees who are not in the same reporting structure (i.e., different departments), no action is necessary.
- If the employees are in the same reporting structure and there is an authority differential, the person in the position of higher authority must report the relationship to his or her supervisor and create a [mitigation plan](#).
- If the employees are in the same reporting structure and peers, no action is necessary.

2. Q: My partner and I have been in a relationship for a while. Our relationship was allowed under the previous UT policies but would be prohibited with the new standards. We are now an established couple and/or married. Do we need to do anything?

A:

- If you are a couple and not married, all consensual relationship policies apply.
- If you are a married couple, please note UT Austin's nepotism policy: <https://policies.utexas.edu/policies/employment-close-relatives-nepotism>
- If there is a relationship among employees who are not in the same reporting structure (i.e., different departments), no action is necessary.
- If the employees are in the same reporting structure and there is an authority differential, the person in the position of higher authority must report the relationship to his or her supervisor and create a [mitigation plan](#).
- If the employees are in the same reporting structure and peers, no action is necessary.
- If the relationship involves an undergraduate student and an employee, the relationship is prohibited.
- If the relationship involves a graduate student or a professional school student and an employee, the employee must not have power or influence over the student. If the employee has such power, the relationship is prohibited.

3. Q: What should I do if I know of a colleague or co-worker who is in a relationship with a student or other UT affiliate that would be prohibited under the new policy?

A: You should report it. Pursuant to the policy, any employee who is notified or becomes aware of an alleged violation of this policy has an obligation to report it in a timely manner. A list of reporting options is specified in the [Consensual Relationships Policy, Section VII, E](#).

4. Q: I am an employee currently in a relationship with an employee in another unit on campus. Our units are unrelated and we have no reporting relationship. Do we need to do anything?

A: No. If you are in a relationship with another employee with whom there is no authority differential or sphere of authority, you do not need to report it.

5. Q: Who in a relationship has the responsibility to report it?

A: The person in the position of greater authority and/or power has the responsibility to notify the appropriate university office and work with them to develop a [mitigation plan](#).

- For faculty members, such relationships should be reported to the appropriate dean and [Executive Vice President and Provost](#) (EVPP).
- For staff members, such a relationship should be reported to the appropriate unit head, the [Office for Inclusion and Equity](#) (OIE), and [Human Resources](#) (HR).

6. Q: I am a UT employee in a romantic, committed relationship with another UT employee in another department. I want to enhance my future opportunities by participating in the UT Staff Educational Benefit Program. Is this a violation of the policy?

A: No. For the purposes of this policy, the term "undergraduate" does not include any individual who is considered an undergraduate solely because the individual is taking courses through the Staff Educational Benefit Program. Your relationship would not be considered a violation of the policy if you do not teach, manage, supervise, advise or evaluate your partner in any way.

7. Q: I am a UT faculty member and my partner wants to enroll as an undergraduate at UT so that he can expand his career options. Is this a violation of the new policy?

A: Yes. The policy prohibits relationships between a UT employee (including faculty) and an undergraduate student. If your partner enrolls at UT as an undergraduate student, your relationship would be a violation of the policy. In certain unique situations, an exemption from the policy may be granted, depending on the facts and circumstances of the particular relationship at issue. Questions about the application or effect of this

policy to your existing relationship should be directed to the [Executive Vice President and Provost](#).

8. Q: *My spouse and I both work at UT. Do we fall under the Consensual Relationship policy?*

A: No, the consensual relationships policy does not cover married couples. However, you and your spouse may be subject to the [Employment of Close Relatives \(Nepotism\) Policy \(HOP 5-1260\)](#). This policy prevents conflicts of interest and appearances of favoritism that result in the appointment, reappointment, and/or supervision of an employee by a close relative.

9. Q: *I work for a UT contractor working on the new Dell Medical School and operate a crane. My boyfriend is an undergraduate at UT. As an affiliate, is this a violation of policy?*

A: Yes. The policy prohibits relationships between a UT affiliate and an undergraduate student. As a UT affiliate, your relationship with an undergraduate student at UT would be a violation of the policy. In certain unique situations, an exemption from the policy may be granted, depending on the facts and circumstances of the particular relationship at issue. Questions about the application or effect of this policy to your existing relationship should be directed to the [Office for Inclusion and Equity](#) and/or [Human Resources](#).

10. Q: *I am a student employee working as an usher at Bass Concert Hall. My girlfriend is an undergraduate at UT. Would I be violating the policy by dating her?*

A: If you do not teach, manage, supervise, advise or evaluate her in any way, there is no policy violation.

11. Q: *I am a post-doctoral fellow overseeing a lab. I want to have a relationship with a grad student in my lab who has expressed interest in having a relationship with me. Would this relationship violate the policy?*

A: Yes. The policy expressly prohibits employees or affiliates from engaging in a consensual relationship with any graduate student whom they teach, manage, supervise, advise, or evaluate in any way. By virtue of your supervisory role overseeing the lab, the proposed relationship would violate the policy.

12. Q: *I am an extension student with plans to enroll as a full-time undergraduate student next fall. My girlfriend of nearly five years is a faculty member at UT. She told me that we may have a problem. Is this true?*

A: Yes. The policy prohibits relationships between a UT employee (including faculty) and an undergraduate student. If you enroll at UT as an undergraduate student, your relationship with the UT faculty member would be a violation of the policy. In certain

unique situations, an exemption from the policy may be granted, depending on the facts and circumstances of the particular relationship at issue. Your girlfriend should contact the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, Human Resources, or the Office of Inclusion and Equity for guidance about the application of this policy to your existing relationship.

13. Q: The policy states that certain relationships which are prohibited and then states that some relationships are ok if neither person is in a position of authority; why is the policy written the way it is?

A: We are community approaching 100,000 individuals. We could not address every possible relationship or situation. We recognize that consenting individuals associated with UT should be free to enter into personal relationships of their choice; however, we also recognize that such relationships must not put at risk the fundamental interest of every member of the University community to participate in University activities free from conflicts of interests, favoritism, and/or exploitation. The goal of the policy is to prevent actual or perceived conflicts of interest which create the possibility for favoritism and/or exploitation. Should you have any specific questions about this policy, please consult the [Office for Inclusion and Equity](#).