

## Policy on Non-Fraternization

### GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL

**Effective Date: August  
1, 2014**

**Date Revised: February  
22, 2019**

**Supersedes: N/A**

**Related Policies:  
Sexual Harassment  
Policy; Policy on Rights  
and Responsibilities  
Under Title IX; Policy on  
Conflict of Interest and  
Commitment; Policy on  
Professional Standards  
and Business Conduct**

**Responsible  
Office/Department:  
Office for University  
Equity and Compliance**

**Keywords: harassment;  
misconduct;  
relationship;  
consensual; consent;  
romantic; sexual;  
amorous; coercion**

### I. Purpose and Scope

Northeastern University strives to provide an environment for students, faculty and staff that is respectful, fair and free of unlawful harassment or discrimination. This policy applies to all Employees, as defined below.

### II. Definitions

For purposes of this policy:

“Student” is any individual who is currently registered or enrolled in a credit bearing course or an academic program of the University.

“Supervisor” shall mean any person who has the authority and/or responsibility to hire, promote, discipline, evaluate, give assignments to or direct the work of employees of the university.

“Employee” shall mean any person employed by the university in any capacity, whether faculty or staff.

### III. Policy

In keeping with its commitment to provide equal opportunity to students, faculty and staff, and in order to avoid potential conflicts of interest, favoritism, exploitation, harassment or breaches of professional standards, the university prohibits romantic or sexual relationships where there is an inherently unequal position between the parties including supervision, direction or influence. Consistent with the purpose of this policy, graduate research and teaching assistants shall not engage in romantic or sexual relationships with students they instruct, evaluate, assign or advise.

a. *Undergraduate Students*

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No employee, graduate research assistant or teaching assistant shall pursue, have or maintain a romantic or sexual relationship with any undergraduate student.

*b. Graduate/Professional Students*

No employee, graduate research assistant or teaching assistant shall pursue, have or maintain a romantic or sexual relationship with any graduate or professional student whom they are responsible for teaching, grading, advising or otherwise supervising. Instructing, evaluating, assigning, supervising, and advising, may occur in the context of a class, a learning community, an academic department, a research lab, or an institute or center.

*Exception:* In the event such a relationship already exists at the time of enrollment, matriculation or employment, the involved employee shall report such relationship immediately to his or her supervisor, who shall take appropriate steps consistent with this policy, including the removal of any instructing, evaluating, assigning, supervising, advising or similar relationships between the employee and the student.

*c. Faculty, Staff and other Employees*

No supervisor shall have or pursue a romantic or sexual relationship with any employee who reports to the supervisor or over whom the supervisor has the authority and/or responsibility to hire, promote, discipline, evaluate, assign or direct.

*Exception:* If such a relationship existed prior to the professional relationship between the parties at the university, both the involved supervisor and involved employee shall report such relationship to the next-level supervisor, to whom the supervisor reports. The next-level supervisor shall take appropriate steps consistent with this policy, including the removal of any reporting or similar relationship between the supervisor and the employee.

*d. Consent*

In all such circumstances, consent by the parties may not be considered a defense against a charge of fraternization in any proceeding conducted under this policy.

*e. Reporting and Review*

Any employee who becomes aware of or involved in such a relationship prohibited by this policy has the obligation to report such relationship to the Office for University Equity and Compliance (“OUEC”), or Human Resources Management (if the involved employee is a staff member), or the Provost’s Office (if the involved employee is a faculty member or graduate student). The department receiving the report shall inform the OUEC, which shall coordinate with the supervisor of the

involved individuals to review and take appropriate action or make reasonable adjustments consistent with this policy.

*f. Enforcement*

Employees who violate this policy may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

The university utilizes a “preponderance of the evidence” standard (more likely than not that a policy violation occurred) in the determination of whether this policy has been violated.

*g. Retaliation*

It is unlawful to take adverse actions against any member of the Northeastern community for filing a complaint of violations of this policy, or for cooperating in an investigation of such a complaint. The university will not tolerate retaliation or discrimination against anyone who makes a good faith report of a suspected violation of law, regulation or university policy. Retaliation may have an adverse impact in the following areas: hiring, firing, promotions, demotions, compensation, benefits, grading, pressure to withdraw from class, ignoring, refusing requests for assistance. This list is not exhaustive.

#### **IV. Additional Information**

Questions regarding the applicability of or reporting requirements contained in this policy may be directed to the Office for University Equity and Compliance, Human Resources Management, the Office of the Provost, the university Ombuds, the Graduate Student Ombudsperson or the Office of General Counsel. Allegations of harassing behavior must immediately be reported to the Office for University Equity and Compliance.

#### **V. Contact Information**

Office for University Equity and Compliance, (617) 373-4644

Human Resources Management, (617) 373-2230

Office of the Provost, (617) 373-2170

Ombuds Office, (617) 373-3362

Office of the General Counsel, (617) 373-2157