

POLICY ON ROMANTIC AND SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF MEMBERS

Effective Date: November 12, 2019

Policy Statement

Staff members at Columbia should not participate in hiring, supervision, employment actions, evaluation, decisions pertaining to promotion or the direct setting of salary or wages¹ for someone employed at Columbia with whom that person has or has had a consensual romantic or sexual relationship except in unusual circumstances and with the explicit approval of the Vice President of Human Resources in consultation with the Office of the General Counsel.

Employees should be aware that entering into such a relationship with a person who may direct or control his, her, or their work creates the potential for risk to both parties.

In the event that a personal relationship of this kind does exist in a supervisory context, the supervisor must disclose the relationship to the appropriate superior and initiate arrangements to address any issues of conflict of interest.

A supervising staff member who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Staff and faculty concerned about a romantic or sexual relationship in violation of this policy are encouraged to speak with their chair, the dean, or other head of unit, the Vice Provost for Institutional Equity (OIE) or a Human Resources (HR) Senior HR Business Partner.

Reason(s) for the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to address the issue of romantic or sexual relationships between members of our community, prevent any conflict of interest from occurring to the fullest extent possible, and set forth procedures to be followed if such conflict occurs.

¹ Please note that this list of actions is intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive.

Responsible University Office & Officer

Columbia University Human Resources
Office of Institutional Equity

Revision History

N/A

Who is governed by This Policy

This policy applies to all employees.

Who Should Know This Policy

All Columbia University employees should review and understand this policy.

Exclusions & Special Situations

None

Policy Text

Columbia University's educational mission is promoted by the professionalism of its staff. This professionalism is reflected not only in the quality of the exchanges between staff members but also in the nature of their interactions as members of an academic community. Staff members have an obligation of responsible self-discipline, one which acknowledges the power some staff members exercise over others and the importance of protecting against its abusive or exploitative use.

Romantic and sexual relationships between staff members pose a threat to professionalism in situations where they compromise, or appear to compromise, a staff member's judgment of those subject to his or her or their authority. A similar threat exists when they lead or are perceived to lead to preferential treatment of one staff member over another. In these circumstances, they can be detrimental to the affected individuals, including staff members outside of the relationship, and can injure the University and its reputation. Further, where there is a power differential, romantic or sexual relationships between staff members are susceptible to being characterized as non-consensual or coercive, especially when they end, opening up the possibility of a charge of sexual harassment or sexual assault. Should a romantic or sexual relationship between staff members lead to a charge of sexual harassment or sexual assault, the University is obligated to investigate and resolve the charge in accordance with the University's *Anti-Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment Policies & Procedures for Faculty & Staff*, a copy of which may be found on line at: <https://institutionalequity.columbia.edu/>.

Responsibilities

Questions regarding the Romantic and Sexual Relationship Policies or the *Anti-Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment Policies & Procedures for Faculty & Staff* should be directed to the Vice Provost for Institutional Equity, 80 Claremont Avenue, 4th Floor, 212- 854- 5511, lbk2136@columbia.edu, or a Human Resources (HR) Senior HR Business Partner at (212) 851-7008.

Contacts

Columbia University Human Resources Morningside – Vice President (212) 851-7008

Columbia University Irving Medical Center Human Resources – Chief Human Resources Officer
(212) 305-3819

Cross References to Related Policies

[Policy on Romantic and Sexual Relationships with Undergraduate Students](#)

[Policy on Romantic and Sexual Relationships with Graduate Students](#)

[Policy on Romantic and Sexual Relationships between Staff Members](#)

[Statement of Ethical Conduct and the Administrative Code of Conduct](#)

[Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Policies and Procedures](#)

[Columbia University Human Resources Policy Manual](#)

Web Address

<http://hr.columbia.edu/policies/hr-manual>

Policy Location Administrative
Policy Library HR Policy Manual