

# **Consensual Romantic and Sexual Relationship Policy 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 wages<sup>1</sup> 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 or her 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 consensual 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 Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EOAA) 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 consensual 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.

## **Responsible University Office & Officer**

Columbia University Human Resources  
Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action

## **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.

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

## **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.

Consensual 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 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 consensual 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 Employment Policies and Procedures on Discrimination and Harassment, a copy of which may be found on line at: <https://eoaa.columbia.edu/>

## **Responsibilities**

Questions regarding the Consensual Romantic and Sexual Relationship Policies or the Employment Policies and Procedures on Discrimination and Harassment should be directed to the Vice Provost, Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 103 Low, 212-854- 5511, [jerihenry@columbia.edu](mailto:jerihenry@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**

Consensual Romantic and Sexual Relationship Policy between Staff Members and Students  
<https://eoaa.columbia.edu/content/consensual-romantic-and-sexual-relationships>

Consensual Romantic and Sexual Relationship Policy between Staff Members  
<https://eoaa.columbia.edu/content/consensual-romantic-and-sexual-relationships>

Policy on Romantic and Sexual Relationships Between Faculty/Staff and Graduate Students  
<https://eoaa.columbia.edu/content/consensual-romantic-and-sexual-relationships>

Policy on Romantic and Sexual Relationships Between Faculty/Staff and Undergraduate Students  
<https://eoaa.columbia.edu/content/consensual-romantic-and-sexual-relationships>

Statement of Ethical Conduct and the Administrative Code of Conduct  
<http://policylibrary.columbia.edu/statement-ethical-conduct-and-administrative-code-conduct>

Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination Policies and Procedures  
<http://policylibrary.columbia.edu/equal-employment-opportunity-and-nondiscrimination-policies-and-procedures>

Columbia University Human Resources Policy Manual  
<http://hr.columbia.edu/policies/hr-manual>

**Web Address**

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

**Policy Location**

Administrative Policy  
Library HR Policy Manual  
Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action