

03.703 Consensual Relationships. It is the policy of the UNT System that consensual relationships between personnel in positions of authority and their subordinates are not permitted. Personnel in supervisory positions and other positions of authority and faculty must be sensitive to the potential for sexual harassment as well as conflicts of interest in personal relationships with their subordinates. Even among peers, conflicts can arise. It is the policy of the UNT System that consensual relationships between UNT System personnel in positions of authority and their subordinates are not permitted.

1. Consensual Relationships that Result in Sexual Harassment. The type of relationship addressed in this section is one of an amorous or sexual nature. When disparities in authority are present between two individuals involved in a consensual relationship, questions about professional responsibility and sexual harassment may well arise. What might appear to be consensual, even to one of the parties involved, may in fact not be so. Persons in management/supervisory positions exercise power over their subordinates through the giving of praise or criticism, performance evaluations or grades, making recommendations for further studies or future employment, or conferral of other benefits, thus diminishing their subordinate's actual freedom of choice. Examples of consensual relationships that might be construed as sexual harassment include, but are not limited to situations where:
 - a. The subordinate party or student in the consensual relationship feels unwanted pressured to become involved and/or to continue the relationship
 - b. The subordinate party or student in the consensual relationship feels compelled to change behavior and/or job duties because of the consensual relationship.
 - c. The consensual relationship has the purpose or effect of creating a work or academic environment in which others are negatively affected by the existence of that relationship.
 - d. In each of the above instances, the consensual relationship may be deemed sexual harassment. Consensual relationships that involve allegations of sexual harassment will be handled according to the provisions of the Sexual Harassment policy.
2. Inappropriate Consensual Relationships that do not Contain Clear Elements of Sexual Harassment. Consensual relationships between staff members in positions of authority and their subordinates are inappropriate and a violation of University policy, whether or not such relationships result in sexual harassment. Such consensual

relationships may not contain clear elements of sexual harassment. Nonetheless, such relationship can create problems including conflicts-of-interest, favoritism and low morale. These relationships often carry the potential for sexual harassment. Such relationships will be considered sanctionable behavior. Sanctions for inappropriate consensual relationships that do not contain clear elements of sexual harassment may include:

- a. instruction to the parties to terminate the relationship
- b. transfer of one of the parties to a new department or job responsibility
- c. other disciplinary actions, including demotion or termination in severe cases.

Reporting inappropriate consensual relationships that do not contain clear elements of sexual harassment should follow those university policies and procedures normally used in dealing with misconduct of faculty and staff.