

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL

Consensual Amorous Relationships Guidelines

The University of Massachusetts Lowell (UMass Lowell/University) promotes a professional, friendly, supportive work and learning atmosphere for its employees and students and furthers an environment where all work/academic decisions are made professionally and fairly. Therefore, the integrity of interaction among faculty, staff and students must not be compromised.

Consensual amorous, dating, or sexual relationships (amorous relationships) have inherent risks when they occur between a faculty member, supervisor, or other member of the University community and any employee or student when a professional responsibility exists between them. An employee with professional responsibility over another with whom he/she has an amorous relationship should be aware that the relationship may subject him/her and UMass Lowell to legal liability. Consequently, such professional responsibility may not exist between two individuals who are in or who plan to enter into an amorous relationship.

Professional responsibility is defined for the purposes of these guidelines as performing functions including but not limited to teaching, counseling, grading, advising, evaluating, hiring, supervising, and making decisions or recommendations that confer benefits such as promotions, financial aid, bonuses, or other awards or compensation, or that may impact upon other academic or employment opportunities. It also includes evaluating prospective applicants for employment or admission.

Such relationships may compromise or be perceived as compromising the fairness and impartiality of a supervisor's/faculty member's conduct toward the subordinate or to others in subordinate positions. Further, there is potential impact on the work environment and potential damage to the supervisory individual's own credibility and standing, within the department and within the University as a whole.

Given the power imbalance between the two individuals, the relationship may in fact be far less voluntary for the subordinate than it appears to the supervisory individual. Additionally, circumstances may change, and conduct that was previously welcomed by the subordinate party may in fact become unwanted and unwelcome. Initial consent of both parties to the relationship may not prevent later charges of sexual harassment by the subordinate. Legally, the supervisory individual and the organization could be challenged if a consensual amorous relationship results in allegations of hostile work environment by the subordinate, or by any others in the department who feel they themselves have been treated unfairly as a result of the relationship.

Any employee of UMass Lowell who is in, or who plans to enter an amorous relationship with another employee or student member of the University, or an applicant for employment or admission, when a professional responsibility exists between them, must report the relationship with his/her administrative superior and HR/EOO. Similarly, any member of the University in

an amorous relationship with another member, upon notification or assignment of any duty or role that creates a professional responsibility over the other, must immediately report the relationship to his/her supervisor and to HR/EOO. At the discretion of HR/EOO and management, changes to duties or roles will be made to remove the professional responsibility, in order to eliminate the existing or potential conflict of interest.

As a potential penalty for either failing to report an amorous relationship in compliance with this guideline, or allowing an amorous relationship to become one where one party to a relationship is sexually harassing another, the University reserves to itself the right to decide that it will not pay for representation of that individual in the event a legal claim is asserted against the University and/or that individual.

Faculty and staff who have questions or concerns regarding this policy should contact:

Human Resources/Equal Opportunity & Outreach
University of Massachusetts Lowell
Wannalancit, 3rd Floor
600 Suffolk Street, Lowell, MA 01854
978-934-3560