

Personal Relationships Policy

For the full Personal Relationships Policy, please visit the University's [Policy Library](#).

POLICY STATEMENT

Villanova seeks to maintain an educational atmosphere wherein students, staff, and faculty members inter-relate in appropriate professional and pedagogic ways. In keeping with this goal, employee-student relationships are strongly discouraged, and in most cases prohibited. Employees are not permitted to have romantic or sexual relationships with Villanova undergraduate students. In addition, faculty members are not permitted to have romantic or sexual relationships with graduate students who are enrolled in their classes; who are majors, minors, or concentrators in their departments or programs; who work as their research or teaching assistants; or over whom they exercise any other type of supervision or academic/professional judgment. Staff members and coaches are similarly not permitted to have romantic or sexual relationships with graduate students over whom they may exercise any type of supervision or academic/professional judgment.

In addition to the potential for abuse of power in such relationships, sexual and romantic relationships between employees and students place the employee in an unethical and unprofessional conflict of interest, and hence are unacceptable. Although it is recognized that the student may be a full and willing participant in such a relationship, both the responsibility for adhering to this policy and the consequences for violating it fall upon the employee rather than the student in such situations.

Student assistants are not permitted to have sexual or romantic relations with students who are enrolled in their classes or over whom they exercise any other type of supervision or judgment. The prohibition against romantic or sexual relationships with other students who are graduate students, majors, minors, or concentrators in their department or program does not apply unless the student assistants have some supervisory relationship to those students. Otherwise, the same principles apply to student assistants as apply to faculty members.

Certain relationships may arise in the work environment that have the potential for compromising or appearing to compromise the fairness and objectivity of a supervisor, in relation to subordinates, and which may result in a conflict of interest. The University recognizes that all individuals are entitled to freely choose their personal associations and relationships. However, when a faculty or staff member enters into a romantic and/or sexual relationship with an employee whom he or she supervises, a power differential may exist which can compromise an individual's exercise of such choice in personal relationships. Others may also perceive such a relationship as one of preferential treatment that may be detrimental to themselves or others. Thus romantic and/or sexual relationships between faculty/staff members and employees under their supervision – even though consensual – are strongly discouraged. If such relationships are entered into, they should be approached in a sensitive manner, with an understanding of how they may be perceived by others, and comply with the reporting procedure described below. Similarly, relationships among individuals on the same level, even where there is no component of supervisory authority or influence, may be misinterpreted by others and should be approached in a sensitive manner.

Employees are not permitted to use social media applications (e.g. Grindr, Tinder, Facebook) to pursue romantic or sexual relationships with Villanova undergraduate students or any Villanova students under their supervision.

PROCEDURE

Employees engaged in a romantic or sexual relationship with undergraduate students or other students they may supervise are required to report the relationship immediately. For faculty members, the relationship should be reported to their department chairs (or to the Dean in the College of Nursing or College of Professional Studies). The chair should also notify the appropriate dean and the University's Sexual Harassment Officer. For staff members, including coaches and student assistants, the relationship should be reported to their immediate supervisor and the Human Resources Department.

The individual to whom the relationship is reported is charged with taking appropriate action, in consultation with other appropriate University officials, to eliminate both the substance and appearance of conflict of interest or abuse of power. Department chairs, Human Resources staff and other officials who deal with these situations are expected to do so in ways that do not penalize or stigmatize the student, and, when possible, are expected to keep these matters confidential.

If a faculty or staff member is engaged in a romantic and/or sexual relationship with a subordinate employee, any such faculty member is required to notify his/her department chair (or Dean in the College of Nursing or College of Professional Studies) and any such staff member is required to notify his/her immediate supervisor and the Human Resources Department, and to make alternative arrangements for supervision of the subordinate employee, especially any decision making regarding any employment action or benefit pertaining to the subordinate employee.

Employees and student assistants who have pre-existing relationships with students that could potentially violate this policy should promptly report the relationship to the appropriate contact. Exceptions to this policy will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Full-time employees who are also part-time students may also be eligible for an exception in certain circumstances.

The sanction imposed for violation of this policy will necessarily depend on the facts and circumstances of the case, including whether the employee or student assistant voluntarily reported the relationship, and may range from a reprimand to termination of employment, subject to the terms of the Dismissal and Suspension Procedure for Faculty, if applicable.