



Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Ethical Relationships at UMass Boston

1. What does the [Ethical Relationships Policy](#) cover?

The Ethical Relationships Policy applies to consensual romantic relationships and/or consensual sexual activity that occurs between employees at UMass Boston, or between employees and students. The goal of the Policy is to prevent and address conflicts of interest, abuses of power, and other potential imbalances that may be unfair or create a perception of unfairness that impacts the working and learning environment at the University.

Sexual activity that is not consensual, including sexual assault, and other types of sexual harassment are separately address by the [Non-Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#), or other applicable policies and procedures. Community members who have experienced sexual harassment, including sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, or stalking, should reach out to the [Office of Civil Rights and Title IX](#), the [UMass Boston Police Department](#), or both.

2. As a UMass Boston employee, can I have a consensual romantic relationship with another employee?

UMass Boston does not generally prohibit employees from fraternizing or engaging in romantic relationships or sexual activity with one another. If, by virtue of their job roles or duties, one member of a romantic or sexual relationship has supervisory or evaluative authority over the other, the Ethical Relationships Policy requires that the employee in a position of higher authority disclose the relationship to the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX. Alternatively, employees who are faculty members may disclose to the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. All other employees may disclose to the Vice Chancellor for Human Resources.

3. As a UMass Boston employee, can I have a consensual romantic relationship with a student?

UMass Boston employees should be aware of power dynamics, including the potential for abuses of power or appearance of impropriety, may exist in relationships with students. For this reason, employees, particularly faculty and supervisors, are generally discouraged from engaging in relationships with students. The Ethical Relationships Policy prohibits employees from engaging in romantic or sexual relationships with students over whom they have a

supervisory or evaluative role. Such relationships include any relationship where one member of the relationship is teaching the other, or a relationship between an employee with departmental administrative responsibilities (including a program director or chair) and a student within their department. Relationships between supervisors and student employees are also prohibited.

If such a relationship arises, the employee in a relationship must inform the Office for Civil Rights and Title IX, the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, or the Vice Chancellor for Human Resources.

4. Does the Ethical Relationships Policy apply to student employees?

Yes. The Ethical Relationships Policy prohibits relationships between student employees and other students that they supervise, whether those students are employees or not. For example, Resident Assistants may not have sexual relationships with students living in an area over which they have responsibility.

5. Does the Ethical Relationships Policy apply to relationships that pre-existed an employee's supervisory position? For example, if a faculty member becomes department chair, must they disclose an ongoing romantic relationship to another member of their department?

Yes. If, because of promotions or other changes in role or position, an employee's role with regard to another employee becomes supervisory or evaluative, the employee in the position of greater authority is required to disclose any sexual or romantic relationships between the two employees. The disclosure is required even if other members of the employees' department or relevant administrators were previously aware of the relationship.

6. I am a UMass Boston employee, and my spouse has enrolled in classes here using the tuition credit benefit. Must we disclose our relationship?

Per the Ethical Relationships Policy, you must only disclose your relationship if you are in a supervisory or evaluative relationship to your spouse. For example, if your spouse were taking classes in the department for which you are a program administrator, you must disclose the relationship. However, if your spouse is not taking classes in the department in which you work, and there is no other supervisory or evaluative relationship between you at UMass Boston, you do not need to disclose the relationship. You must make the disclosure even if you have already applied and been approved for the tuition benefit.

7. How do I disclose a relationship pursuant to the Ethical Relationships Policy?

You should contact the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX, or the Vice Provost and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs (for faculty), or the Vice Chancellor for

Human Resources (for staff) to make a disclosure pursuant to the Ethical Relationships Policy. Employees disclosing a relationship will generally be required to fill out the “Disclosure of Appearance of Conflict of Interest” form or “Appearance of Undue Favor or Improper Influence” form available from the [Massachusetts State Ethics Commission](#).

8. Is my disclosure confidential?

The University cannot treat disclosures pursuant to the Ethical Relationships Policy as confidential; however, any information shared with CRTIX or the appropriate Vice Chancellor will be treated with discretion and sensitivity, and shared only on a “need to know” basis. CRTIX or the appropriate Vice Chancellor may need to share information with supervisors and other relevant administrators in order to put in place alternative arrangements for evaluation or reporting, or to take other steps to address a potential conflict of interest.

9. What happens after I disclose my relationship to CRTIX or the appropriate Vice Chancellor?

CRTIX and/or the appropriate Vice Chancellor will consult with administrators or supervisors, and will put in place alternative reporting or other evaluative measures designed to eliminate or minimize the potential for a conflict of interest. For example, the chair of a department who has a romantic relationship with another member of the department may be required to recuse themselves from participating in performance reviews for that member. In the case of relationships between employees, the University will strive to adjust reporting and evaluative arrangements in a way that is non-punitive and causes the least disruption possible to the department or business unit.

Disclosures will be maintained by CRTIX and may be included in an employee’s personnel file.