

Proposal to Amend WKU Faculty Handbook

Section(s) to be amended:

Corresponding page number(s):

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1. Type of Change:

☐ Editorial (non-substantive)

☒ Substantive

Editorial revisions include updates to the organizational structure, web addresses and names/titles, as well as other similar non-substantive changes. Substantive change is defined as addition, deletion, or revision of policy or procedure.

Addition: Where possible, identify the section of the handbook to which addition is proposed:

Deletion: Identify the section of the handbook from which deletion is proposed:

X Revision: Identify the section of the handbook to which revision is proposed:

2. Proposals should be made in the form of text intended as an addition to or a replacement of, in whole or in part, some current section of the Faculty Handbook.

Current:

II.V. Faculty/Student Relationships: Sexual relations between students and faculty members are fraught with the potential for exploitation, and therefore **expressly prohibited**. The respect and trust accorded a professor by a student, as well as the power exercised by the professor in an academic or evaluative role, make voluntary consent by the student suspect. Further, these relationships might be less consensual than the individual whose position confers power or authority believes.

Even when both parties initially have consented, the power differential between faculty and student may make it difficult for the student to end a relationship for fear of retribution. The development of a dating and/or sexual relationship renders both the faculty member and the institution vulnerable to possible later allegations of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual harassment, sexual assault) due to the significant power differential that exists between faculty members and students.

In their work-related relationships with students, members of the faculty are expected to be aware of their professional responsibilities and avoid apparent or actual conflict of interest, favoritism, or bias. A relationship between a faculty member and a student whom the faculty member evaluates, advises, or supervises, is expressly prohibited. A relationship between a student and a faculty 2 member in their department/school who does not directly evaluation, advise, or supervise or in another department/school at WKU is strongly discouraged.

Pre-existing relationships (e.g. marital or Other Qualified Dependents) as defined by Policy [4.230V](#) are subject to the reporting requirements in Section III and may present a conflict of interest.

For pre-existing relationships that exist between a faculty member and a student whom the faculty member is subsequently assigned to evaluate, advise, or supervise, the faculty member must disclose the consensual relationship to their immediate superior (normally the department chair/school director or college dean) and make arrangements to avoid the-advising, supervising, evaluating, or grading

responsibilities for the consensual partner as described in Policy [4.230V](#). If a dating or sexual relationship develops between a faculty member and a student for whom the faculty member does not advise, supervise, or evaluate, the faculty member needs to report the relationship to their department chair/school director.

This policy should not be construed to supersede any existing, applicable federal or state statutes.

Consensual and non-consensual relationships are addressed in the University's Discrimination and Harassment Policy [0.204V](#), and Title IX Sexual Misconduct/Assault Policy [0.207V](#).

Failure to act in accordance with this policy may result in personnel and/or disciplinary action.

Confidentiality regarding consensual relationships will be maintained in so far as possible.

Proposed Revision:

II.V. Faculty/Student Relationships:

Sexual relations between students and faculty members are fraught with the potential for exploitation. The University policy on Faculty/Student Relationships can be found at:

<https://www.wku.edu/policies/docs/index.php?policy=360>

3. Rationale for addition:

The current Faculty Handbook contains contradictory language. It states that these relationships are "strictly prohibited," but it goes on to state that in some cases they are allowed. The proposed revision directs faculty to the current Academic Affairs policy until such a time when the AA office might choose to revise its policy. This change aligns the Faculty Handbook with the AA policy via a link to the AA policy. This was the intent of the Faculty Senate body when the Handbook Committee recommendation to the Faculty Senate was sent back to the committee in May 2025 with direction to align the handbook language with University policy.