

**Policy Title:****Interactions Between Teachers/Evaluators and Learners in Medical Education Programs - Consensual Relationships in Medical Education Policy****Background:**

Interactions between teachers/evaluators and learners in medical education programs sponsored by the University of New Mexico School of Medicine are guided by mutual trust, confidence, and professional ethics. Professional teacher/learner relationships have a power differential between the teacher and the learner. Personal relationships between those who teach and evaluate and those who learn carry a number of risks: conflict of interest, breach of trust, abuse of power, perception of favoritism, and breach of professional ethics. When any of these occur, there is disruption of the dynamics of the health care team, with consequent potential loss of quality patient care and medical education.

Those interactions with power differential include, but are not limited to faculty/student, faculty/resident, faculty/fellow, fellow/resident, supervising resident/subordinate resident, resident/student.

For the purpose of this policy, those in the position of greater power will be termed “teacher” and those who are in the position of lesser power will be termed “learner.”

**Definitions**

1. Teacher, for the purposes of this policy only, are defined as full or part-time faculty and all other personnel who evaluate student and resident/fellow performance.
2. Residents/fellows are all full time or part time residents/fellows.
3. Student refers to any person enrolled in a course approved by the School of Medicine.
4. A consensual relationship is any dating, romantic, sexual, or marriage relationship.
5. Position of authority includes situations in which the teacher is responsible for an evaluation of the performance of a learner.

**Policy:**

Teachers shall not engage in consensual relationships with learners whenever the teacher has a professional “position of authority”, which involves teaching or evaluation of learners’ performance, as part of the medical education program.

Should a consensual relationship develop, or appear likely to develop, while the teacher is in a position of authority, the teacher shall terminate the position of authority over the learner. Even when the teacher has no professional responsibility for a learner, the teacher should be sensitive to the perceptions of other learners, that a learner who has a consensual relationship with a teacher may receive preferential treatment from the teacher or the teacher’s colleagues.

This policy will apply to relationships between teachers and learners in the School of Medicine undergraduate medical curriculum, residency rotations/experiences in which the performance of

the student and the resident/fellow as part of their approved curriculum is being evaluated, and in all graduate medical education rotations/experiences.

Procedures

When a consensual relationship, as defined above, exists or develops, the teacher should avoid or terminate his/her position of authority with respect to the learner. Avoidance or termination includes, but is not limited to, having the evaluation performed by another qualified teacher; the position of authority being assumed by an alternative teacher; transfer of the learner to another rotation etc.

Non-Compliance with Policy

Any credible allegation of a teacher's failure to avoid or terminate a position of authority with regard to a learner while in a consensual relationship obligates the department chair, program director or other responsible person to conduct a prompt and thorough inquiry to determine whether the allegation is true. Where it is concluded that a position of authority in a consensual relationship exists and the involved person refuses to terminate the position of authority, the department chair or program director shall terminate the position of authority and can impose sanctions against parties involved.

Sanctions

Persons found to be in violation of this policy shall be subject to sanctions ranging from verbal warnings to dismissal or termination. Persons who knowingly make false allegations that a consensual relationship overlaps with a position of authority shall be subject to the same sanctions.

Responsible Office:	Office of Undergraduate Medical Education
Approving Body:	Curriculum Committee
Date of Revision:	1/8/09; 5/31/17
Scope:	Medical Students, Residents and Faculty