

Departmental Guidelines for Teacher-Student Relationships

The purpose of these guidelines is to preserve the trust and respect that are essential to the instructional mission of the Department. Within these guidelines, “teacher” includes faculty, part-time instructors, mentors, graduate teaching assistants, and graders; “relationship” refers to any amorous or sexual conduct, whether occurring one time, occasionally, or regularly.

Teachers are in positions of authority and exercise power over students in many ways, whether in giving praise or criticism, evaluating academic work, or making recommendations for further studies or future employment. Abuse or perceived abuse of this authority diminishes trust and respect. Because of the inherently unequal status of the persons involved, an amorous or sexual relationship with a student greatly increases the potential for a teacher’s abuse of power or perceived abuse of power.

ISU’s Personnel Policy, ISUPP 4080, states that: “While the private behavior of faculty is usually not of concern to the University, faculty interaction with students is. Faculty are expected not to participate in evaluation or supervision of students with whom they have or develop an amorous or familial relationship. Such participation constitutes unprofessional conduct. These relationships may include, but are not limited to: membership in the same household, close familial relationships, or dating or sexual relationships.”

In addition to these conflicts of interest, teacher-student relationships can potentially create a hostile learning or work environment not only for the student but also for the student’s classmates. For these reasons, the department advises against relationships between its teachers and the students they are instructing or supervising. The department also encourages its teachers to be mindful of professional boundaries when interacting with students whom they might reasonably be expected to evaluate in the future.