



# TEXAS TECH™

## Operating Policy and Procedure

### **OP 32.33: Faculty, Staff, and Student Conflicts of Interest in Supervisory, Teaching, and Evaluative Relationships**

**DATE:** April 29, 2024

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this Operating Policy/Procedure (OP) is to ensure that the integrity of faculty/student roles is protected from conflict of interest.

**REVIEW:** This OP will be reviewed every two years after publication by the Dean of the Graduate School and the Vice Provost for Faculty Success with substantive revisions forwarded to the Provost and Senior Vice President (PSVP).

### **POLICY/PROCEDURE**

#### **1. Background**

Texas Tech University has the responsibility to protect the integrity of the roles of the faculty and students during the period of graduate, professional, or undergraduate enrollment in any university offering and involvement in other evaluation processes of the university.

#### **2. Criteria**

Faculty must avoid academic supervisory, teaching, or evaluative relationships with students, staff, or other faculty that pose significant conflicts of interest from the standpoint of personal or professional connections. Such connections might include husband/wife or other affectional liaisons, supervisor/employee relationships, or parent/child relationships. The appearance of conflict of interest should be avoided; the department chair should be consulted if questions arise.

#### **3. Guidance**

- a. Spouses, parents, or those involved in other affectional relationships must not direct or serve on committees that evaluate their partners, children, or other close relatives. Such committees include thesis, dissertation, or preliminary, comprehensive, or qualifying examination committees; periodic staff evaluations; or annual, three-year, or tenure evaluations.
- b. Students should not enroll in courses offered by their parents, spouses, or partners in affectional liaisons.
- c. An employee's immediate supervisor should not direct the employee's research nor permit the enrollment of the employee in the supervisor's courses or other organized instructional activity(ies), except for students employed as research assistants, teaching assistants, or graders. (However, students shall not serve as a teaching assistant or grader for a course in which they are enrolled.)

- d. No member of the faculty who has held rank higher than instructor normally is eligible to pursue a graduate or professional degree at Texas Tech; exceptions require prior approval of the dean of the appropriate college/school.
- e. Any exceptions should be approved and monitored by the chair of the faculty member's unit, unless the chair is involved; in case of involvement, the chair must refer the decision to the dean. If the dean is involved, the exception decision must be referred to the PSVP.

#### **4. Requests for Exceptions**

- a. Faculty and Staff

In unusual circumstances, a request for an exception to enter into an academic supervisory, teaching, or evaluative relationship with a partner, child, or close relative can be submitted to a committee consisting of the department chair, the dean or dean's representative, and the Vice Provost for Faculty Success. This committee shall submit its recommendations to the PSVP who shall have final decision authority for exceptions.

- b. Graduate and Professional Students

In unusual circumstances, a request for an exception to enter into an academic supervisory, teaching, or evaluative relationship with a partner, parent, or close relative can be submitted to a committee consisting of the student's department chair, the Graduate Dean or associate graduate dean, the Associate Vice President for Research, the Vice Provost for Faculty Success, a faculty member from the Student Affairs Subcommittee of the Graduate Council chosen by lot, and the student representative to the Graduate Council. This committee shall have final decision authority for exceptions.

Students in the Law School and School of Veterinary Medicine will submit requests for exceptions to a committee consisting of the student's academic dean or dean's representative, the Associate Vice President for Research, the Vice Provost for Faculty Success, an officer in the Faculty Senate, and an officer from the Student Government Association or from the Student Bar Association (if the requesting student is in the Law School). This committee shall have final decision authority for exceptions.

- c. Undergraduate Students

In unusual circumstances, a request for an exception to enter into an academic supervisory, teaching, or evaluative relationship with a partner, parent, or close relative can be submitted to a committee consisting of the faculty member's dean, the Vice Provost for Faculty Success, the student's dean (if different from faculty member's dean), Student Government Association President, the Dean of Students, and the chair of the faculty member's department. This committee shall have final decision authority for exceptions.