



Relationships Policy

Applicability and Scope

This policy applies to all New England Conservatory (“NEC” or the “Conservatory”) employees and others engaged to perform services at or for NEC, including, but not limited to, full- and part-time faculty and staff, temporary employees, independent contractors hired to perform services for NEC, or guest lecturers (defined as an “NEC personnel member” in this policy).¹ It prohibits dating, romantic, or sexual relationships between students and an NEC personnel member, as well as between supervisory employees and those who report within the same line of management, with limited exceptions as set forth in the policy. For the purposes of this policy, a “student” means any full- or part-time student at NEC’s College, Preparatory School, or Expanded Education Department, or any other individual who is enrolled in classes and/or educational programs or activities whether such such programs or activities are held on NEC’s campus or at an NEC-sponsored event (this includes, without limitation summer programs or workshops).²

While this Policy sets forth typical definitions of a student and an NEC personnel member, the Conservatory will evaluate whether an individual should be considered an NEC personnel member or a student on a case-by-case basis, including factors such as the ways that the individuals contribute to the NEC community.

Prohibition on Romantic or Sexual Relationships with Students

NEC is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy educational environment for NEC’s students. Dating, romantic, or sexual relationships between a student and an NEC personnel member, even if consensual, can negatively affect the educational environment. Power differentials, real or perceived, can diminish a student’s ability to give meaningful consent to such a relationship, and the ability of an NEC personnel member to teach, evaluate, advise, or provide NEC services to a student without partiality can be questioned. Even when the NEC personnel member and the student act with integrity, others may perceive bias, partiality, or influence.

For these reasons, NEC personnel members are strictly prohibited from: (i) engaging in a dating, romantic, or sexual relationship with a student and/or (ii) from initiating or engaging in

¹ NEC personnel does not include current NEC students who are hired to perform work-study or other student employment work for NEC.

² NEC reserves the right to take corrective action if it learns that an NEC personnel member initiated and/engaged in sexual, dating, or romantic physical contact or communications with a student enrolled at another educational institution. NEC will assess all such reports on a case-by-case basis to determine if corrective action is appropriate.

any sexual or romantic communication (including text messages and communications by other electronic means) or physical contact with students. These prohibitions apply not just when students are on NEC's campus; they continue to apply when students are off campus, when NEC is not in session, and when students are on leave.

Any reports of an NEC personnel member initiating or engaging in sexual, dating, and/or romantic relations with a student will be investigated. A finding of having engaged in such conduct will result in corrective action, up to and including termination or separation from NEC. The Conservatory may also have separate obligations to report to authorities, depending on the circumstances.

All NEC personnel members are responsible for creating, modeling, and maintaining healthy, supportive, and appropriate boundaries with students. NEC personnel members must be vigilantly aware of this responsibility in all aspects of their interactions with students, being mindful at all times of the importance of their visibility and presence as positive role models. NEC personnel members must also be aware of the inherent power differential between NEC personnel and students, and must strive at all times to model appropriate behavior to all members of the NEC community.

On occasion, an NEC personnel member will have a preexisting dating, romantic, or sexual relationship, or a marriage with an individual who then becomes an NEC student. Similarly, an individual with a preexisting dating, romantic, or sexual relationship with a current student may become an NEC personnel member. It is the obligation of the NEC personnel member to disclose that relationship to NEC's Human Resources in advance of beginning employment or providing services, or if already employed or engaged by NEC, in advance of the matriculation of the student with whom they have a relationship.

Upon being notified of a preexisting relationship between an NEC personnel member and an NEC student, NEC will review and take necessary steps to ensure that the educational experience of the student, and other students at NEC, is not adversely affected by the relationship. In doing so, Human Resources will confer with applicable NEC administrators, including the Chief Academic Officer (for faculty) or the respective supervisor (for staff). A representative from Human Resources, or other NEC designee, will also speak separately with the student and the NEC personnel member. NEC will communicate decisions in writing to the student and the NEC personnel member. Since individual circumstances may vary, NEC has discretion to consider specific circumstances (e.g., the nature of the relationship, the specifics of the student's academic program, the NEC personnel member's responsibilities, constraints on the student's program of study, and whether the preexisting relationship arose as a result of the individual's position with NEC) in reaching determinations and/or implementing steps to ensure the educational experience of the student, and others at NEC, is not adversely impacted by the relationship. The steps can range from no action to the recusal of an NEC personnel member from matters involving the student to changes in teaching, advising, service, or other duties. In certain circumstances, such relationships if not reported may constitute sexual harassment as prohibited by [NEC's Policy Against Sex Discrimination](#).

Prohibition on Romantic Relationships Between Managers and Employees Within Reporting Line of Management

NEC also prohibits romantic or sexual relationships between managers and employees or contractors within the reporting line of management. Such relationships raise concerns about favoritism, bias, conflicts of interest, unfair treatment, and the validity of consent. If a complaint against an NEC personnel member related to such romantic or sexual involvement is found to have merit, that NEC personnel member may be subject to corrective action, up to and including termination or separation from NEC.

Even if two employees are involved in a romantic, sexual relationship, but are not within the same direct reporting line, NEC reserves the right to transfer one or both parties, if another position for which the employee is qualified is available, or terminate the employment of either employee if the relationship becomes disruptive or creates a conflict in the workplace.

On occasion, an NEC personnel member will have a preexisting dating, romantic, or sexual relationship, or marriage with an individual who then becomes an NEC personnel member. It is the obligation of the active NEC personnel member to disclose that relationship or marriage to Human Resources in advance of the individual with whom they have a relationship beginning work for NEC. Human Resources shall take appropriate steps consistent with this policy to determine whether the preexisting relationship or marriage causes a potential issue under this policy, including evaluating whether there will be a responsibility between the two to hire, promote, discipline, evaluate, assign, or direct.

Nothing in this policy shall be deemed as supplanting NEC's Policy Against Sex Discrimination, or other related NEC policies, which will apply by their terms, regardless of any disclosure made or steps taken under this policy. Community members are free at any time to raise any concerns or complaints related to such relationships.

Reporting Violations

Members of the NEC community are expected to immediately report any violation or potential violation of this policy to the Director or Human Resources, or if it involves the Director of Human Resources, to a member of NEC's Executive Council. NEC employees must also continue to immediately report any concerns of potential violations of other NEC policies, including NEC's Policy Against Sex Discrimination and/or the Policy for the Safety and Protection of Minors.

Amendments

NEC may amend, suspend, or cancel this policy at any time, with or without notice. The Conservatory retains the right to determine, in its sole discretion, if it will address a report of conduct under this policy administratively and outside of the process described in this policy, including when the safety of the Conservatory community is at risk, if there are extenuating circumstances involving either of the parties, or if the Director of Human Resources, in consultation with appropriate administrators, determines it is in the best interest of the Conservatory and/or the Conservatory community to do so.

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