

Nepotism

Standards of Conduct

EWU Policy 901-05

Effective: February 23, 2024

Authority: EWU Board of Trustees

Proponent: President's Office

Purpose: This policy pertains to familial relationships between employees of Eastern Washington University or between employees and students. It prescribes requirements and procedures for eliminating conflicts of interest associated with family relationships and for responding to violations of this policy.

History: This policy was adopted by the EWU Board of Trustees (BOT) on February 23, 2024. It revises and supersedes a previous version of the policy dated March 21, 2014.

Applicability: This policy pertains to all employees and students of Eastern Washington University, including student and non-student temporary employees.

1 – GENERAL

1-1. Policy

University employees shall not have supervisory authority over a family member and shall not initiate or participate in institutional decisions in which a family member has a direct beneficial or financial interest (such as appointment, retention, promotion, salary, leave of absence, award of a contract, grades, awards, scholarships, etc.).

University employees may not use their positions to secure special privileges or exemptions for a family member.

1-2. Violation Procedures

Suspected violations of this policy or of Chapter 42.52 RCW shall be reported to human resources. Reports of alleged violations shall be investigated under EWU Guideline 401-01, Investigations.

1-3. Related References

- Chapter 42.52 RCW, Ethics in Public Service
- Title 292 WAC, Ethics in Public Service

1-4. Definition

"Family member" includes:

- a. an employee's spouse or partner;
- b. a child, stepchild, grandchild, parent, stepparent, grandparent, brother, half-brother, sister, half-sister, aunt/uncle, niece/nephew, or cousin of an employee or of their spouse or partner; and,
- c. the spouse or the partner of any person identified in subsection b above.

2 – EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS

Employees cannot participate in the hiring or supervision of a family member.

Applicants: if an employee's family member applies for a position, the employee must recuse themselves from any involvement in the search and subsequent hiring process.

Current employees: If a supervisor/subordinate relationship between family members exists, the following actions will be taken:

- A. The supervisor involved in the relationship shall immediately report the relationship to their supervisor.
- B. The supervisor receiving such a report will immediately notify Human Resources for assessment and further action. This supervisor will also take responsibility for all personnel actions regarding the subordinate employee in the relationship until a conflict of interest plan is put in place.
- C. Human Resources will coordinate with university administration to develop a conflict of interest management plan. Both parties are responsible for following the terms of the plan and notifying Human Resources when there is a change in the nature of the relationship.

3 – ACADEMIC RELATIONSHIPS

If an employee has a family member who is a student, the employee must not make decisions regarding their family member. This includes, but is not limited to, admissions, advising, grading, or disciplinary decisions. If a student wishes to participate in an academic department where a family member serves as a faculty member or takes a class from a family member, the following steps must be taken:

- A. The faculty member must alert the chair/director of the potential conflict;

- B. The chair/director will work with the faculty member and student to identify a plan to address the conflict of interest. This plan should address all ways in which the employee could make decisions impacting the student, such as:
 - 1. Recusing themselves from making decisions about whether or not the student should be accepted into a particular program;
 - 2. Recusing themselves from any discussions about the student's academic progress and any academic or disciplinary issues;
 - 3. Exploration of alternative courses, course substitutions or equivalencies and, if not appropriate, finding an alternative grader for the student and excluding participation from the grading criteria for the course; and,
 - 4. Finding an alternative faculty member to serve as a mentor/advisor for the student.

The plan must then be presented to the applicable dean for review and, ultimately, forwarded to the Provost's Office for approval. A final copy of the approved plan will be maintained in the Provost's Office.