THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Nepotism, 1.25

University Policy

Applies to: Faculty, staff, graduate associates, student employees, and applicants

Responsible Office

Office of Human Resources

POLICY

Issued: 10/01/1973
Revised: 04/29/2024 (minor revision)
Edited: 09/22/2025

The basic criteria for hiring, promotion, transfer, and appointment of all university faculty, staff, graduate associates, and student employees will be appropriate qualifications and performance. Relationship by family, marriage, or domestic partnership will not preclude hiring, promotion, transfer, appointment if the individual meets and fulfills the appropriate employment standards.

Family members whose qualifications rank each of them first for the positions under consideration may be employed so long as neither family member is responsible for or influences any **employment action** involving the other. In such instances, all decisions will be referred to the Office of Human Resources, Employee and Labor Relations (ELR), for final approval; this includes dual career, spouse/partner, and any other family hiring.

University employees may not authorize or influence any employment action involving a family member. For example, an employee may not recommend a family member for a job, participate in discussions about a family member's job application, or request an interview or job for a family member. See Ohio Ethics Commission fact sheet, Public Jobs and Family Members for additional information.

Purpose of the Policy

To prohibit **nepotism** and emphasize that selection of personnel will be based on job-related qualifications and performance.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Employment action	Hire, promote, transfer, appoint, reclassify, supervise, direct, evaluate, make a salary or hiring recommendation, assign work or resources, approve leave requests, give any benefit, or terminate employment.
Family member	Spouse; domestic partner; mother; father; sister; brother; biological, adopted, or foster child; stepchild; legal ward; grandparent; grandchild; first cousin; aunt; uncle; niece; nephew; mother-in-law; father-in-law; sister-in-law; brother- in-law; daughter-in-law; son-in-law; grandparent-in-law; grandchild-in-law; or corresponding step-relatives; or corresponding relatives of the employee's partner; other persons for whom the employee is legally responsible; and anyone who stood in loco parentis (acting in place of a parent and assuming the parent's rights, duties and responsibilities) to the employee as a child.
Nepotism	Favoritism applied, regardless of others who may be more qualified, through authority or influence by someone in a position of power, toward family members or others for whom the employee is legally responsible. Favoritism is shown by giving preferential treatment in any employment action to family members and others as defined in the policy.
Unit	College or administrative unit.

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PROCEDURE

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I. Disclosure
   A. Individuals must notify their manager (e.g., dean, chair, vice president, direct supervisor, etc.) if any family member applies for a position for which they will be responsible or may influence the employment actions referred to in this policy. In such instances, the individual has a duty to cooperate in making alternative arrangements.
   B. Internal and external applicants are required to self-disclose, at the time of application, if the position for which they are applying reports to or supervises a family member.
   C. Internal and external final candidates for positions must have an approved alternative arrangement in place prior to the date of hire, promotion, transfer, or appointment.
   D. ELR is available to facilitate or consult with parties about notification and making alternative arrangements, or when necessary to advise as to the appropriate action when an alternative arrangement is not feasible.
   E. When the conflict of interest cannot be eliminated through alternative arrangements, the hire, promotion, transfer, or appointment will not be approved.
   F. Individuals who do not notify their managers and do not make alternative arrangements are in violation of this policy and will be subject to corrective action in accordance with university policies and rules.

II. Alternative Arrangements
   A. Alternative arrangements mean removing the responsibility or influence to hire, promote, transfer, appoint, reclassify, supervise, direct, evaluate, make a salary recommendation, assign work or resources, approve leave requests, give any benefit, or terminate employment for the family member and recusing self from influencing any employment-related decision. This includes relationships that are established post-hire. If alternative arrangements are not possible, employment is not feasible.
   B. The **unit** must submit an Alternative Arrangement Agreement which must be approved by ELR prior to hire, promotion, transfer, or appointment. ELR will consult with the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) on Alternative Arrangement Agreements involving faculty. Documentation of the Alternative Arrangement Agreement and its approval must be maintained in the personnel file of all impacted employees.

III. Duty to Act
   A. All human resources professionals (including talent/hiring professionals), staff and faculty managers, and chairs/directors who become aware of information regarding nepotism must notify their unit human resources business partner (HRBP) or designee within five work days of becoming aware of the information.
   B. After being notified, the HRBP or their designee will work with the unit and ELR to determine if an alternative arrangement can be made to eliminate the conflict prior to any hire, transfer, or other employment action. OAA will be consulted on alternative arrangements involving faculty.

IV. Accountability
   A. Individuals violating this policy will be held accountable through the university's selection and corrective action processes, with consequences ranging from non-selection to discipline, up to and including termination, in accordance with applicable policies or rules. Faculty will be subject to University Rule 3335-5-04.

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Responsibilities

Position or Office	Responsibilities
Applicants-internal and external	Disclose on the application if the position applied for will report to or supervise a family member (see definition).
Office of Human Resources, Employee and Labor Relations (ELR)	1. Consult with unit HRBPs, OAA, and individuals regarding nepotism and alternative arrangements. 2. Review and approve Alternative Arrangement Agreements. 3. Deny a hire, reclassification, or promotion if an alternative arrangement is not feasible. 4. Consult on employment action to be taken when alternative arrangements are not feasible for relationships established post-hire. 5. Collaborate with unit HRBP when there is a duty to act.
Faculty, staff, graduate associates, and student employees	1. Disclose family relationships as set forth in the policy. 2. Consult with OAA, unit HRBP, or ELR regarding nepotism and alternative arrangements as set forth in the policy. 3. Cooperate in the making of alternative arrangements.
Human resources business partner or designee	Upon notification of potential nepotism, work with unit, ELR, and OAA as appropriate to determine if alternative arrangement can be made to eliminate conflict.
Human resources professionals, staff and faculty managers, and chairs/directors	Notify unit HRBP or designee within five work days of becoming aware of a potential nepotism situation.
Unit	1. Consult with ELR regarding nepotism and alternative arrangements. 2. Submit Alternative Arrangement Agreement to ELR for approval. 3. Hold employees and supervisors accountable for disclosing family relationships and generating alternative arrangements.

Resources

Alternative Arrangement Agreement, hr.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/form-nepotism-comply.pdf
Faculty Rule 3335-5-04, trustees.osu.edu/bylaws-and-rules/3335-5
Ohio Ethics Commission Nepotism Fact Sheet, ethics.ohio.gov/education/factsheets/PublicContracts.pdf#page=19
Ohio Ethics Law and Nepotism elearning, ethics.ohio.gov/education/elearning/SixPart/Nepotism/index.html

Contacts

Subject	Office	Telephone	E-mail/URL
Faculty issues	Office of Academic Affairs	614-292-5881	oaa.osu.edu
Ohio Ethics Law	Office of University Compliance and Integrity	614-292-3251	compliance-integrity@osu.edu
Policy questions	HR Connection	614-247-myHR (6947)	HRConnection@osu.edu

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