**Title:**

Revision: Conflict of Interest Policy

**Current Policy:**

***Graduate Bulletin- Supervisory Committee Section for Master’s and Doctoral Programs (page 75 & 76)***

“A supervisory committee’s judgments on the quality of a student’s thesis or dissertation should be based solely on the academic merits of the work before them. Any other standard risks a breach of professional ethics or law and undermines the integrity of the process and those involved. Any personal or financial relation­ships (e.g. involving the major professor, committee members, and/or student) that may create the perception of bias in that process must be avoided. This would not include the typical practice of hiring a student on a university assis­tantship in the home unit but would include the student being hired by the ma­jor professor’s private company. If any such conflicts of interest could exist, they should be reported to the administrative head of the student’s academic unit, who will evaluate same for potential harm and take appropriate action.”

**Suggested Revised Policy Language:**

“A supervisory committee’s judgments on the quality of a student’s thesis or dissertation should be independent, unbiased, and based solely on the academic merits of the work before them. Any other standard risks a breach of professional ethics or law and undermines the integrity of the process and those involved. Any personal, professional, or financial relation­ships (e.g. involving the major professor, supervisory committee members, and/or student) that may create the perception of bias in that process must be avoided. Immediate family members, domestic partners and married couples are restricted from serving together on the same supervisory committee in any capacity as this could potentially lead to a perception of bias. For the purposes of this policy, immediate family members are defined as a parent, grandparent, spouse, sibling, child or grandchild by blood, adoption or marriage. Exception requests for extenuating circumstances can be submitted by the unit’s academic dean to the Dean of The Graduate School for consideration. However, for doctoral supervisory committees, under no circumstances can a Committee Chair (or Co-Chair) and University Representative be immediate family members, domestic partners, or a married couple. The University Representative must be drawn from outside the student’s department (as well as outside the student’s degree program for interdisciplinary pro­grams) must be a fully-tenured member of the faculty with Graduate Faculty Status (GFS) and should be free of conflicts of interest with other members of the supervisory committee. Financial conflicts of interest would not include the typical practice of hiring a student on a university assis­tantship in the home unit but would include the student being hired by the ma­jor professor’s private company.

If any such conflict of interest exists, it should be reported by the department chair to the academic dean’s office of the student’s academic unit, who will evaluate the situation for potential harm and take appropriate action. If questions or irregularities arise that cannot be resolved within the academic unit, the dean’s office should contact the Dean of The Graduate School or designee for resolution by submitting an exception request to The Graduate School.”

**Implementation:**

Takes effect Fall 2020 for new thesis and doctoral admits.

Grandfathering will be allowed for thesis and doctoral students (those admitted to candidacy) who currently have immediate family members, domestic partners or married couples serving on the supervisory committee together, as long as it does not involve a Committee Chair (or Co-Chair) and University Representative for doctoral students.