DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

ETHICS IN THE CLASSROOM

As a grader, Teaching Assistant, or instructor you have certain power over the students in the class to which you have been assigned. These students have spent thousands of dollars and lots of effort to take your course and get a good grade, and your power derives from your ability (or perceived ability) to influence their grades. This can put you into many conflict of interest situations and your lack of recognition of this can lead to an abuse of power.

The following rules are intended to help you avoid conflict of interest. Read them carefully. Your signature indicates your understanding and willingness to abide by them.

- Don't date or engage in any romantic or other personal situation with your students. Your seemingly innocent request for a date may result in that student saying yes only because of the power relationship. The student may smile and seem flattered but may only be putting on a front and may in fact be very unhappy about this. Conversely, unscrupulous students may feign an interest in you to influence your grading, etc. This is not fair to other students.

- Don't accept any other favors from your students and don't extend favors only to select students. Gifts of any value are not appropriate. (On the other hand, an instructor may entertain students at his/her expense as long as all students are included.)

- Don't tutor your students for money or any other return. This may be perceived as soliciting gifts for a better grade. You may (and are in fact encouraged to) give students help. However, all students should be able to get this kind of help. It should not be an expression of a romantic interest in a particular student.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive. In general, avoid serving your personal interest where it conflicts with your official responsibility to the class.

You are expected to insure that your teaching and interaction with students occurs in a constructive, positive, academic atmosphere. Since Duke courses take place in a co-ed, multi-cultural setting, you should not take actions or say things that could constitute a gender or ethnic offense such as off-color sexual jokes or innuendo, religious jokes, or jokes making fun of other cultures and their practices. Humor, in particular at the expense of any group represented in your class, can produce a negative or even threatening atmosphere for some of your students. (This should not be construed to exclude levity in the classroom. Unfortunately, some people use a veneer of humor to express some of their prejudices and then claim it was all in fun.) Gratuitous physical contact can also contribute to hostility in the learning environment. Touch limited to shoulder, elbow, and hand shake are generally considered appropriate for the professional environment.

The behaviors proscribed above are considered serious violations of Department and University policy. Violations will be prosecuted through appropriate channels. Undergraduate cases will be referred to the Undergraduate Judicial Board. Other cases will be referred to the Department Chair and appropriate Deans. Procedures detailed in the University's Sexual Harrassment policy apply in many of these cases.

I have carefully read these ethical guidelines and understand what is expected of me as a teaching assistant, grader, or instructor by the Department of Computer Science. My signature below indicates my willingness to abide by these principals.

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Student's name Date