

Student Records

Student Records Policy

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) is a federal law that states that a written institutional policy with respect to student records must be established and that a statement of adopted procedures covering the privacy rights of students be made available annually. The law provides that the institution will maintain the confidentiality of student education records, subject to the exceptions outlined below.

Georgetown University accords to its students all rights under this law. No one outside the institution shall have access to students' educational records nor will Georgetown disclose any information from these records without the written consent of students except:

1. to personnel within the institution,
2. to persons or organizations providing student financial aid,
3. to accrediting agencies carrying out their accreditation function,
4. to persons in compliance with a judicial order or a lawfully issued subpoena (provided that the University will first make a reasonable attempt to notify the student),
5. to organizations conducting studies to develop, validate, and administer predictive tests; to administer student aid programs; or to improve instruction,
6. to authorized representatives of federal or state government agencies for the purpose of audit and evaluation of government programs,
7. to persons in an emergency in order to protect the health or safety of students or other persons, and
8. to parents of a dependent student as defined in the Internal Revenue Code.

All of these exceptions are permitted under the Act. Information will be released only on the condition that the party to whom the information is released will not disclose it to a third party without the written consent of the student. Furthermore, the University will maintain records of any access provided without the expressed consent of the student, and these records will be made available to the student on request.

With respect to grade reports, the University encourages students dependent on their parents to disclose to them academic and other personal information.

However, it is the policy of the University not to provide academic and other personal information to parents without the student's consent. An exception to this policy will be made when the University determines, on the basis of all the circumstances, that disclosure to parents is warranted because of compelling academic, health, safety or disciplinary concerns. When the University determines that disclosure is warranted, and there is no emergency, students will first be given a reasonable period of time within which to inform their parents and to request that their parents acknowledge such notification by contacting the appropriate University office.

Within the University community only those members individually or collectively who act in the student's educational interest are allowed access to student education records. These members include personnel in the Offices of the Deans; in the Offices of the Provost, the Registrar, Admissions, and Student Financial Services; counseling

offices; and University personnel within the limitations of their need to know.

The University may provide directory information at its discretion. This information includes student name, addresses, including e-mail address, telephone numbers, date and place of birth, parents names, major field of study, dates of attendance, enrollment status, expected date of graduation, degrees and awards received, the most recent previous educational institution attended, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, and weight and height of members of athletic teams. Students may instruct the Registrar to withhold the release of directory information by providing written notice to the Office of the University Registrar. These instructions will be honored until the student informs the Registrar otherwise.

The law provides students with the right to inspect and review information contained in their education records, to challenge the contents of their education records, to have a hearing if the outcome of the challenge is unsatisfactory, and to submit explanatory statements for inclusion in their file if they find the decision of the hearing panel to be unsatisfactory. The word "student" is defined to include all current and former students but not applicants for admission.

Academic files are maintained on the Main Campus by the undergraduate and graduate Deans' Offices and the University Registrar. These files contain admissions credentials and records of current and previous academic work. Records are also maintained in certain instances by the following offices or departments: Provost, Dean of Students, Cawley Career Education Center, Office of Student Financial Aid, Office of Global Education, the Office of Revenue & Receivables, and academic departments.

Students wishing to review their education records must make a written request to the custodian of these records. The information will be made available within forty-five days of the request. Students may have copies made of the records with certain exceptions (e.g., a copy of an academic record on which a hold has been placed because of an unsatisfied financial obligation or a transcript of an original permanent academic record from another institution). These copies will be made available to the student through a secure link. It should be noted that education records do not include:

1. records of the Georgetown University Police Department,
2. student health records,
3. employment records, or
4. alumni records.

Health records, including those maintained by members of the Student Health Service, the Counseling Center, and the Department of Psychiatry may be personally reviewed by a physician or other appropriate professional with the student's written permissions

Students may not inspect or review the following records which are specifically excluded by federal law:

1. financial information submitted by their parents;
2. confidential letters and recommendations associated with admission, employment or job placement or honors to which they have waived their rights of inspection and review;
3. confidential letters and recommendations which were placed in the records prior to January 1, 1975; and

4. education records containing information about more than one student in which case access will be permitted only to that part of the record which pertains to the inquiring student.

Students who believe that their education records contain information that is inaccurate or misleading or is otherwise in violation of their privacy or other rights should discuss their concerns informally with the custodian of those records. It should be noted that a student may challenge a recorded grade only on the grounds that it was inaccurately recorded, not on the grounds that it was lower than what the instructor ought to have awarded (see *Regulations* III. 10 for a discussion of the grade appeals process). In most cases this would be the Dean of the school or the University Registrar. If this discussion does not lead to a resolution of the student's concern, the student has a right to an informal hearing. During this process the student will be afforded a full and fair opportunity to present relevant evidence. If the result of this hearing process is in agreement with the student's request, the appropriate records will be amended. If not, the student will be notified within a reasonable period of time that the records will not be amended and the student will then be informed of his or her right to a formal hearing.

The Provost, through the undergraduate and graduate Deans, will, when necessary, establish committees charged with the responsibility of adjudicating challenges to the contents of student records. Each committee will be composed of six members, three permanent and three alternates. The members will be nominated by the Dean and appointed by the Provost. Requests for a formal hearing must be made in writing to the appropriate Dean's Office within one calendar year after the initial denial of the student's request. This petition must be dated and signed by the petitioner and must contain a brief and concise explanation of the item being challenged and the basis for the challenge. It must also contain a statement that the petitioner's initial request to a University official was denied, naming the official and stating the date of the denial. The petition must further specify what relief is being requested.

The Dean will forward the petition to the Chair of the appropriate committee, the hearing will be convened within a reasonable time and all concerned parties will be notified in writing of the date, place, and time of the hearing. The Chair may request a written response to the petition prior to the hearing from the University official who initially denied the student's request. The student will receive a copy of any written response prior to the hearing. The chairperson may also request written verification of the item in question from the author. Hearings will be closed to the public, will include an informal presentation of arguments from both sides, and the student will have a full and fair opportunity to present evidence relevant to the issues and may be assisted and represented by individuals of their choice at their expense, including an attorney. Evidentiary rules will not apply. Committee members have the obligation to disqualify themselves if there is any indication of personal bias. Additionally, the student has the right to disqualify any member of the committee, after giving adequate reasons to the Chair; in such cases an alternate will be appointed. After both parties have presented their cases, the committee will render its decision as quickly as possible, usually within 48 hours of the close of the hearing.

The findings and conclusion of the committee will be provided in writing to both parties within a reasonable time and will include a summary of the evidence and the reasons behind the decision. Minutes of

the hearing will be kept on file in the appropriate Dean's Office. The powers of the committee shall include but not be limited to:

1. ordering the destruction of the document;
2. ordering the removal of the document from the file and its return to the author;
3. ordering the denial of the student's request.

After the decision of the committee has been rendered, the student whose request has been denied will have ten days to file a written appeal to the Dean. If the Dean is an interested party for a particular action, the Dean shall appoint a surrogate. Failure to file an appeal within ten days after the decision shall constitute a waiver of appeal rights. Within a reasonable time the Dean (or surrogate) will review the minutes of the hearing, meet with the concerned parties and, within three weeks thereafter, render a decision.

In the case of a challenge to a student record maintained by a department which reports to the Vice President for Financial Affairs, procedures parallel to those outlined above will be followed, except that the Vice President for Financial Affairs will appoint the committee.

The above procedures constitute general guidelines for these committees. The committees, however, may establish additional procedures as deemed necessary and appropriate to ensure fairness and to facilitate the hearing process. All time limits are to be determined without counting Saturdays, Sundays, University holidays, and vacation periods.

Students who believe that the adjudication of their challenges was unfair or was not in keeping with the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 may request (in writing) assistance from the appropriate Vice President of the University. Further, students who believe that their rights have been abridged may file complaints with the

Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, D.C.
20202.

Disciplinary Records

Disciplinary records of students shall be maintained by the University's Division of Student Affairs until graduation of the student from the University, at which time they will be destroyed. An exception will be made to this policy, however, in those instances when a student has been suspended or dismissed from the University for disciplinary reasons.

Suspension will be noted on the academic transcript as "Disciplinary Suspension." Dismissal will be noted on the academic transcript as "Disciplinary Dismissal." In cases of dismissal, a permanent record is kept by the Office of Student Conduct and in the academic record. In cases of suspension, a permanent record will be maintained by the Office of Student Conduct. Inquiries about a student's disciplinary record will only be released with the student's signature or as otherwise permitted under FERPA.