

## FERPA: Guidelines for Faculty and Staff Relating to Educational Records

---

### 1 Introduction:

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, commonly known as FERPA, is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. Students have specific, protected rights regarding the release of such records and FERPA requires that institutions adhere strictly to these guidelines. Therefore, it is imperative that the faculty and staff have a working knowledge of FERPA guidelines before releasing educational records. In addition to the University's FERPA Policy, these interpretive guidelines provide additional information on FERPA and the University of Houston System's practice with regard to FERPA. For more information regarding the University's responsibility under FERPA please review the University's on-line FERPA training.

### 2. Additional Guidelines for Faculty and Staff:

2.1. Requests for information from the educational record of a student should be referred to the proper educational record custodian.

2.2. Student scores or grades may not be displayed publicly in association with names, social security numbers or other personal identifiers. Some other code known only to the instructor and the individual student may be used to post grades/scores. Even a partial Social Security Number should not be used. In no case should the list be posted in alphabetic sequence by student name.

2.3. All papers or lab reports containing student names and grades should be secured. Students should not have access to the scores and grades of others in the class.

2.4 Factual information regarding grades and performance in an educational record may be amended when the student is able to provide valid documentation that information is inaccurate or misleading.

2.5. Student educational record information is not to be shared, including grades or grade point averages, with other faculty or staff members of the University unless their official responsibilities identify their "legitimate educational interest" in that information for that student.

2.6. Information from student educational records, including grades, grade point averages, and letters of recommendation should not be shared by phone or correspondence with parents or other parties outside the institution, without written permission from the student. See the attached records release form.

2.7. When in doubt, err on the side of caution and do not release student educational information. Contact the Office of the General Counsel for guidance.

2.8 A letter of recommendation may require express, written permission from the student to allow a faculty member 1) to access the student's educational records and 2) to disclose confidential information about the student to a third party. A faculty member may access a student's educational records without the student's express written permission only if specific job duties, such as the duties of an academic advisor, require access to those records. However, a faculty member, or any other appropriate University official, may not disclose confidential information from a student's educational records to a third party without express, written permission from the student.

2.9. FERPA enforcement may include sanctions as severe as the withholding of federal funding.