



Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The **Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** is a federal law that governs the privacy of education records. It also provides guidelines for appropriately using and releasing student education records.

FERPA creates a right to privacy for students and the records held by schools.

FERPA provides students with the right to:

- Inspect and review their education records
- Request an amendment to their education records
- A hearing if the request for an amendment is unsatisfactory
- Request that the institution not disclose personally identifiable or directory information contained in their education records.
- File a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education alleging the failure by the university to comply with their rights under FERPA.

Education Records

An education record is any record, with certain exceptions, maintained by an institution (or its agent) that is directly related to a student or students. This record, in whatever format or medium, can contain a student's name or information from which an individual student can be personally identified.

Education records include:

- Transcripts
- Exams
- Graded papers/assignments/projects
- Notes from a conversation with or about a student that are placed in a student's file for others in a department to view.

FERPA provides students with the right to inspect and review the information contained in their education record. The Registrar at TCU has been designated by the institution to coordinate the inspection and review procedures for student education records. Students wishing to review their education records must make written requests to the Registrar listing the item or items of interest.

Students may not inspect or review information about other students, financial information submitted by their parents, confidential letters and recommendations associated with admissions, employment or job placement, or honors to which they have waived their rights of inspection to review.

Failure to adhere to the regulations contained in FERPA may result in both institutional and individual liability.

Institutional Policy and Statement of Procedures

No one outside the institution shall have access to nor will the institution disclose any information from student's education records without written consent of students with the following exception as permitted under FERPA:

- Personnel within the institution*
- Officials of other institutions in which students seek to enroll
- Persons or organizations providing student financial aid
- Accrediting agencies carrying out their accreditation function
- Person in compliance with a judicial order

**Within the TCU community, only those members acting in the student's legitimate educational interest are permitted to access student records. These members may include TCU personnel, including faculty, advisors, administrative staff and clerical staff.*

Legitimate Educational Interest

FERPA allows university officials to have access to student education records in which they have a “legitimate educational interest.” A university official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review a student education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility on behalf of the university, such as when the official is:

- Performing a task related to a student’s education
- Performing a task related to the discipline of a student; or
- Providing a service relating to the student or the student’s family (i.e., financial aid, job placement, counseling)

Access to education records does not authorize unrestricted use.

Sharing Student Information with Parents

For students enrolled in institutions of higher education, FERPA vests access to records with the student, not the student’s parents. Access to a student’s records or information about a student for parents may be granted under strict conditions that are arranged through the Office of the Registrar. Refer all parent questions and inquiries about access to records or student information to the Office of the Registrar.

Directory (Public) Information

Directory information is information that would not generally be considered an invasion of privacy if disclosed. At its discretion, the institution may provide directory information in accordance with the provisions of FERPA to include the following:

- Name
- Home address
- Home telephone number
- Major field(s) of study
- Dates of attendance
- Degrees and awards received (including Dean’s List)
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Weight and height of members of athletic teams

Under the regulations defined by FERPA, a student can choose to restrict directory information listed above from release. Unless otherwise indicated, this information will not be made available to any oral or written request nor will it appear in any publication. If a student requests restriction of the release of directory information, the information will not be published in Frog Calls, listed on university web pages or in any way made available outside direct educational interests of the university.

Contact Information

Registrar’s Office

Mailing Address:

TCU Box 297004
The Harrison, 1300
Fort Worth, TX 76129

Phone: (817) 257-7237

Email:

registrar_office@tcu.edu

Website: reg.tcu.edu

Best practices for Faculty and Staff

Student education records are considered confidential and may not be released to third parties (including parents) without written consent from the student. As a faculty, administrator or staff member, you have a responsibility to protect all items contained in an education record of a student.

- If a question arises as to the dependency of a student, please contact the Office of the Registrar for clarification.
- Do not send restricted student information or data via email
- When sending a mass email to multiple students (e.g., students enrolled in your course), use the blind copy function (Bcc), as student emails are directory information.