

# FERPA: In a Nutshell



**Contents:**

- [What is it and where are the rules?](#)
- [What does it mean for students?](#)
- [What does it mean for staff and faculty?](#)
- [Understanding Directory Release](#)
- [Where do I go for guidance?](#)

## WHAT IS IT AND WHERE ARE THE RULES?

FERPA stands for the **F**amily **E**ducational **R**ights and **P**rivacy **A**ct.

The Family Policy and Compliance Office (FPCO) defines FERPA as a law that protects the privacy of student education records.

<b>Washington State Administrative Code, Chapter 478-140</b>	<a href="http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=478-140">http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=478-140</a>
<b>Federal FERPA Legislation</b> (FPCO PDF current as of 2009)	<a href="http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpc/pdf/ferparegs.pdf">http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpc/pdf/ferparegs.pdf</a>
<b>UW FERPA Page for Faculty</b>	<a href="http://www.washington.edu/students/reg/ferpafac.html">http://www.washington.edu/students/reg/ferpafac.html</a>

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR STUDENTS?

FERPA makes **four** guarantees to postsecondary students. These rights include the following:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the University receives a request for access.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.
3. The right to provide written consent before the University discloses personally identifiable information from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.
4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the University to comply with the requirements of FERPA.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR STAFF AND FACULTY?

1. Only access those educational records you need to access as part of your job. Ask yourself, "Is this a legitimate educational need?"
2. Do not post grades publicly. The public posting of grades either by the student's name, student number, or social security number without the student's written permission is a violation of FERPA.
3. Don't email grade information. There is no guarantee of confidentiality on the Internet.
4. Do not release without written authorization any of the following:
  - Student number
  - Grades/Exam Scores
  - Grade Point Average
  - Social Security Number
  - Parent Address/Phone
  - Detail of Registration Information (i.e., courses, times)
  - Race, Ethnicity, or Nationality
  - Gender
  - Date of Birth
  - Total Credits
  - Number of Credits Enrolled in a Quarter
  - Emergency Contact

## UNDERSTANDING DIRECTORY RELEASE

1. If the student has not restricted access to directory (or public) information you may release the following:
  - Name
  - Address
  - Telephone number
  - E-mail address
  - Enrollment status
  - Degrees & awards received
  - Most recent previous school attended
2. If a student has blocked release of directory information, you may not release any information about that student. We recommend you say, "*I have no information about that individual.*"
3. Use the "305" screen in SDB/Keynes to check for a student's directory release setting.
4. Departments may not release non-directory or personally identifiable information about a student to a third party (parents included) without the student's written authorization. You may have the student fill out a consent-to-release form if the student wants you to speak with a third party. The student must sign a new form each time s/he allows you to release non-directory information. Download the PDF Consent form here: <http://registrar.washington.edu/forms/consent.pdf>

## WHERE DO I GO FOR GUIDANCE?

FERPA issues are sometimes confusing and the correct course of action is not always clear. You don't have to navigate the muddy FERPA waters alone! Email: [ferpa@uw.edu](mailto:ferpa@uw.edu) for guidance from the UW Registrar on FERPA issues you encounter. If you encounter a FERPA breach let us know. We are here to help.