



Name:	Student Records: Access & Confidentiality
Policy Number:	12-005
Origin:	Office of the University Registrar
Approved:	June 24, 2021, Executive Management Group
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Responsibility:	University Registrar
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1. Introduction

Saint Mary's University is committed to ensuring the confidentiality of Student Records. Students have the right to access their Student Records.

2. Purpose

- A. To outline the University's policy on the confidentiality of Student Records.
- B. To outline the rights of students to access their Student Records.
- C. To outline the responsibilities of employees regarding the collection, use and disclosure of Student Records.

3. Jurisdiction/Scope

- 2.1 This Policy applies to all Student Records.
- 2.2 All employees of Saint Mary's University have the duty to respect and maintain the confidentiality of Student Records. Violations of this Policy may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

4. Definitions

- a. **FOIPOP Act** means the **Nova Scotia Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act**.
- b. **Personal Information** means personal information as defined by the FOIPOP Act.

- c. **Student Record:** Any document or record of information that pertains to a past or current student or prospective student collected and stored by the Office of the University Registrar as part of the application, registration, or graduation processes.
- d. **Third Party:** a person or group besides the original two involved in a situation. For the purposes of this Policy, the original two will, in most cases, be the University and a student requiring access to their Student Record.
- e. **External Agent:** a person or organization providing goods or services to or on behalf of the University.

5. Policy

A. Collection of Student Information

Student Records are created and maintained by the University for administrative, educational, and statistical purposes. Personal information within Student Records will be collected only for the purpose for which that information was obtained, or for a use compatible with that purpose, or if the individual the information is about has identified the information, and has provided consent to the use of that information.

5.A.1. Use and Confidentiality of Voluntary Self-Identification Student Information

Self-identification information is collected by the University for reporting purposes and to help guide the institutional planning of support services. Self-identification information allows students to voluntarily disclose that they belong to one or more designated groups, such as racially visible persons, Indigenous persons, persons with a disability, or particular gender identities. Students have the right to opt in or to opt out of providing self-identification information, and to adjust or withdraw self-identification information. Proof of membership in a designated group is not required; however, documentation may be required to be eligible for certain scholarships, bursaries or academic initiatives.

Self-identification data is reported or shared as aggregate data; individual data is combined to create one collective number to ensure privacy. Individualized data will not be shared without explicit written consent from the individual.

B. Access to Student Records

5.B.1. Permission

Under the terms of this Policy, the responsibility to determine access to and disclosure of Student Records rests with the University Registrar.

5.B.2. Students

Students have the right to review their Student Records, with the exception of information within Student Records that is evaluative or opinion material compiled solely for the purpose of admission to an academic program. For example, reference letters are considered confidential, and will be released only with the written permission of the author. Students wishing to inspect their Student Records must make an appointment with the Office of the University Registrar. Should a student identify an error in their Student Record, they have the right to request a correction. In cases where information found to be in error has been disclosed as permitted by this Policy, recipients of that information will be advised of the correction.

Any requests to change a student's legal name, by means of alteration, deletion, substitution or addition, must be made in writing to the University Registrar, and be accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation. The Change of Personal Information form can be found at the following link:

<https://www.smu.ca/webfiles/ChangeofPersonalInformation.pdf>

Students may also choose to provide a preferred name and can do so at the following link:

<https://www.smu.ca/webfiles/PreferredFirstNameChangeRequestForm.pdf>

5.B.3. Employees' Access

Access and viewing of Student Records is permitted to Saint Mary's University employees, where it is demonstrably necessary for the performance of duties. All other access, including viewing, is prohibited. If an employee is uncertain about whether they can view or release Student Records, clarification must be sought through the employee's direct supervisor, prior to viewing or releasing information. Violation of this Policy may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

C. Disclosure of Student Records

5.C.1. Next of Kin

If someone other than the student (a third party) intends to collect a document on behalf of the student (e.g. transcript, diploma, etc.), the student must provide the third party with a signed authorization form. The third party must provide the signed authorization form, as well as government-issued photo identification, to the University.

5.C.2. Other Academic Institutions

Information may be shared with other universities and colleges with which Saint Mary's University maintains a collaborative relationship, in order to verify information provided as part of an application for admission and/or financial award.

5.C.3. External Agents

The University may contract the services of External Agents. Student data may be released to an External Agent, provided a confidentiality agreement exists between Saint Mary's University and the External Agent.

5.C.4. Third Party Disclosure

Personal information contained in Student Records will not be provided to a Third Party without the written, informed consent of the student, or in keeping with the privacy provisions of the FOIPOP Act.

D. Exceptions

This Policy does not apply to:

- Information that is already a matter of public record (for example, degree(s) or credential(s) that have been conferred by the University, and the date(s) of conferral); however, students may request that this information no longer be made public by contacting the Office of the University Registrar.
- The normal and authorized release of information to agencies, such as the completion and transmission of forms for government financial aid.
- The access and viewing of information required in the performance of an employee's authorized job duties.
- In emergency situations, where the health or safety of an individual is determined to be at risk, the University Registrar may release personal information about a student. Students are encouraged to regularly update their emergency contact information.
- The release of information that has been authorized, in writing, by the student, and
- Access or release as authorised under the FOIPOP Act.

E. Staff Training

The University will communicate this Policy to all employees. Refresher training for employees within the Office of the University Registrar will occur annually. New employees will be informed of this Policy and its implications during their departmental orientation.

F. Complaints

An individual who believes there has been a breach of this Policy will be directed to the University Registrar who will be responsible for initiating an inquiry regarding the circumstances and legitimacy of the complaint.

6. Relevant Legislation

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. S.N.S. 1993, c. 5, s. 1.
<https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/freedom%20of%20information%20and%20protection%20of%20privacy.pdf>, as may be amended from time to time.

7. Related Policies, Procedures & Documents

- [Consent Release Form](#)
- Schedule "A" Procedures - Transcripts and Academic Student Records
- FOIPOP Policy
- [Change of Personal Information Form](#)
- [Preferred Name Form](#)

SCHEDULE "A" – PROCEDURES RE TRANSCRIPTS AND ACADEMIC STUDENT RECORDS

A. TRANSCRIPTS

1. Students will, on submission of a signed [request form](#) or [electronic request](#) through Banner Self Service and payment of the published transcript fee, have the right to request an official transcript of their academic record for themselves or that it be sent to a third party. Transcripts intended for students will be marked "Issued to Student". Transcripts intended for third parties will be sent directly to the third party recipient.
2. Transcripts and diplomas will not be released to students who have an outstanding debt balance with the University. Students with debt balances still have the right to inspect and review their Student Records.
3. The Registrar's Office will not provide students or third parties with copies of other documents on file, such as transcripts from other institutions.

B. GRADES

The Office of the Registrar will release final grades to students. Grades are considered personal information, and will not be posted publicly. Students can obtain final grades from the Registrar's Office through secure web access.