

## Can my parents access my record?

You may give your parent or guardian permission to access your records or grades by providing a signed and dated request to the Registrar's Office.

Your parent or guardian may request access to your record without your written permission if he or she claims you as a dependent according to the Internal Revenue Service code. In this case, your parent or guardian must:

- Submit a request form, which is available from the Registrar's Office.
- Provide either a copy of the last available year's IRS Federal Tax Return, showing that you were claimed as a dependent, or other appropriate legal document.

## How do I correct inaccurate information?

You have the right to seek to amend any of your USA education records that you believe to be inaccurate, misleading, or that violates your right to privacy or any other of your rights.

- Contact the Registrar's Office first. You may need to complete a form specifying which information you believe needs to be amended, and why.
- If the Registrar's Office cannot informally resolve the problem, you may request a formal hearing.
- If the result of the formal hearing is to deny the request to change the information, you will be given the opportunity to attach a statement of explanation or disagreement, which will remain with that record.

### Important Note

The right to challenge education records does not include the right to challenge a numerical or letter grade assigned to you by your instructor. To see USA's policy on grade grievances, please refer to *The Lowdown*, the student handbook.

## What if I want to file a complaint?

If you believe the University of South Alabama has failed to comply with FERPA requirements, you have the right to file a complaint with the Family Policy Compliance Office, which administers FERPA. The name and address for that office is:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U. S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC, 20202-4605

## For more information, contact:

University of South Alabama  
Office of the Registrar  
165 Administration Building  
Mobile, AL 36688-0002  
(251) 460-6251  
e-mail: registrar@usouthal.edu

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202-4605  
(202) 260-3887  
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OM/fpco/index.html>



# University of South Alabama



## Student Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the Confidentiality of USA Student Education Records

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## FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 as amended (FERPA) is a U. S. Federal law that governs the privacy of student education records, governs access to those records as well as disclosure of information from them. FERPA is sometimes referred to as the Buckley Amendment.

## Student rights under FERPA

- ⇒ Students have the right to inspect and review their education records.
- ⇒ Students have the right to exert some control over the disclosure of information from their education records.
- ⇒ Students have the right to seek the amendment of any of their education records that they believe are inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of privacy rights.
- ⇒ Students have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office.

## Who is a qualifying student?

You are a qualifying student if you are currently attending USA, or have attended USA in the past. Applicants to the University or prospective students are not guaranteed rights under FERPA.

## What are education records?

An education record is any record in any medium which is maintained by the University of South Alabama or an agent acting on behalf of USA, and which is directly related to a student and contains personally identifiable information.

Some types of information are not considered education records and are not protected by FERPA. These include:

- Campus law enforcement unit records.
- Employment records, except for those whose employment at USA is tied to their status as a student.
- USA student medical records.
- USA alumni records.

The University of South Alabama's **FERPA policy is published every year** in *The Lowdown*, the USA student handbook. *The Lowdown* is available from the USA Student Government Association Office, located in the Student Center, room 280.

## How can I access my education records?

- You must submit a signed request to the Registrar's Office specifying which records need to be reviewed.
- The Registrar's Office will arrange for access to the file and will notify you when and where the inspection may take place. Access will be granted as soon as possible, but no later than 45 days after the request was received in the Registrar's Office.
- You are entitled to an explanation of any of the information contained in your file. If you are unsure of something, please ask us.

**USA is not required to provide access to the following:**

- Your parent's or guardian's financial information.
- Confidential letters and recommendations for which you have signed a waiver of rights to inspect and review.
- Education records that contain information about other students.
- Any other record which is not legally considered an education record under FERPA guidelines.

## How do I release information from my education records?

You may authorize us to release information from your education records by submitting a written and dated request to the Registrar's Office. Specify which records are to be released, to whom the release is to be made, and the purpose of the disclosure. You will be responsible for paying the copying costs.

## What information do I have control over?

You have control over the release of directory information from your file. To prevent this information from being released to third parties, you must complete a "Request to Prevent Disclosure of Directory Information" form in the Registrar's Office within the first two weeks of a semester. This request will remain in effect unless changed by the student.

## What is directory information?

Directory information is personal information that does not harm or cause an invasion of privacy if released. USA has designated the following as directory information and may release it to reasonable third party inquiries:

- Name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, photograph, date and place of birth.
- Major, dates of enrollment, degrees conferred and dates of conferral, any graduation distinction.
- Previous institutions attended
- Last school attended.
- Participation in official sports or activities; height and weight of athletes.

**USA will never release social security numbers, race, gender, grades, GPA, citizenship, or religious preference to third parties as directory information.**

## Who can access my education records without my approval?

FERPA grants USA the right to disclose information from your education records without your approval to the following:

- University officials with a legitimate educational interest.
- Federal or state agencies, or organizations performing audits or official studies.
- Financial Aid Officers.
- Accrediting Agencies.
- Officials of other institutions in which you seek to enroll.
- Parents or legal guardians, if you are listed as their dependent according to the IRS tax code.
- Appropriate authorities in an emergency situation.
- Parties to legal actions through subpoenas and/or court orders.

**Legitimate educational interest** means that a university official has a justifiable need to view an education record in order to complete his or her job responsibilities, as defined by the university.