

Requests to Amend Student Records

Introduction

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act gives students the right to review their education record and the right to request the record's amendment for any ministerial/clerical errors that are discovered after review. The process of requesting an amendment also includes provision for a formal hearing if there is disagreement between the student and the holder of the record as to whether an amendment should be made. Changing or amending the student's educational record is limited to inaccurate, misleading information or if the information contained in the record is a violation of a student's privacy rights. Amendments to a student's education record on substantive matters such as a grade change (when the problem is not a recording error) or a change in the result of disciplinary adjudication are not covered by FERPA and will not be considered by the University under this procedure. To request an amendment to his or her education record, a student must follow the procedures listed below.

Requesting Record Review

A student wishing to review all or a portion of his or her education record must make a written request to review the record to the University Registrar, dean, head of the academic department, or other appropriate official who holds the record to be inspected. A University official will respond to such requests within fourteen (14) days to schedule a date for the review to occur. Depending on the amount of material to be reviewed, the review date may occur as late as forty-five (45) days after the request is made in order to allow requested materials to be gathered in one location.

Requesting Education Record Correction

After a student has reviewed his or her education record, a request to amend the record must be made in writing to the University official responsible for the record. By law, the University is required to consider only requests to amend information that is *inaccurately recorded*. Requests for substantive changes such as a grade change, removal of materials such as received evaluations, or outcome in a judicial proceeding are not covered under the FERPA amendment proceeding.

A proper request to correct a student education record must:

- Be written to the University official responsible for the record;
- Clearly identify the part of the record they want to be changed; and
- Specify why the record is inaccurate or misleading.

Any written request which does not include the required information will not be considered and the requestor will be notified in writing that their request was not made properly.
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Upon receipt of a proper request for amendment, the University will make a prompt determination within a reasonable time, but not more than thirty days, as to whether the proposed correction is accepted or rejected. The student will be notified in writing that the amendment has occurred or that the request is denied. A letter denying the request will state the reasons for the decision and notify the student of the right to request a hearing.

Requesting a Hearing

A hearing request must be made by the student using the FERPA Request for Formal Hearing form (available from the Registrar's Office). The Registrar will notify the student, within a reasonable time after the request is received, but not more than thirty business days, as to the date, time and place of the hearing. In most circumstances, the hearing date will be within forty-five business days of such notice so that the student may be prepared for the hearing. The hearing procedures outlined do not attempt to recreate or approximate a court of law.

Student Rights at the Hearing

- To present information and evidence concerning a clerical or recording error in the education record which needs to be corrected. The hearing is not an opportunity to review substantive decisions by University faculty or staff concerning evaluation of academic work or outcomes of disciplinary proceedings;
- To be advised by one or more individuals, including counsel;
- To have a full and fair opportunity to present evidence concerning requested corrections to the education record;
- To receive, within a reasonable period of time after the hearing, but not more than thirty business days, a written decision based solely on the evidence provided at the hearing. The decision will include a summary of evidence and reasons for the decision;
- To submit a statement into his or her education record commenting on the contested portion of the record which will be provided to any person who later views that portion of their education record, if the amendment is denied.
- To attend the hearing in person or via a telephone connection.

University Rights and Responsibilities When a Hearing is Requested

- To deny a request for a hearing when the proposed amendment to the education record include anything more than correcting clerical errors.
- To schedule a hearing within a reasonable time, but not more than thirty business days, after receiving the hearing request.

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- To provide evidence to the hearing officer to support the previous determination not to amend the student's education record.

Role of the Hearing Officer

- The hearing officer will be the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs or his/her designee.
- The hearing officer will arrange a hearing panel with two additional members of the Administrative Staff that have been determined to have no connection with the request for the FERPA hearing.
- To allow the student the opportunity to present evidence relevant to the issues raised. The hearing officer has the right to determine whether particular evidence presented is relevant to the record and issue(s) in question.
- A decision is made by a majority of the panel solely on the evidence presented at the hearing.
- To provide the student with a timely written decision, including a summary of the evidence and reason for the decision.

Hearing Outcome

If the hearing officer finds that the record is inaccurate, misleading or otherwise in violation of the privacy rights of the student, the University will amend the record accordingly. The student will be notified in writing of the correction.

If the hearing officer finds that the information in the education record is not inaccurate, misleading or otherwise in violation of the privacy rights of the student, the University will notify the student of the right to place a statement in the record commenting on the contested portion of the record, or stating why he or she disagrees with the decision not to amend, or both. The University will maintain this statement with the contested portion of the student's education record for as long as the record is maintained. The statement will be disclosed whenever the University is required to disclose the portion of the record to which the statement relates.

(Policy adapted from *The George Washington University*, http://www.gwu.edu/~regweb/web-content/FERPA_Request_to_Amend.pdf, - December 20, 2010)

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