

Policy Title:	<b>Students Records Policy</b>
Policy Number:	<b>1213</b>

## 1. Policy Statement

University of Niagara Falls Canada (UNF) is committed to creating, maintaining, and destroying student records in accordance with regulatory and legislative requirements and industry standards. This document sets out the University's policy on the collection, use, storage, destruction, and disclosure of the personal information that forms part of the Official Student Record and the personal information collected on prospective applicants and applicants who do not become students. It applies to the Registrar's Office, the Faculties, and all other academic and administrative units that are the primary and secondary custodians of specified data collected and stored about prospective applicants, applicants, students, alumni, and former students of the University.

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of UNF's Student Records policy is to ensure responsible management of student records and record-keeping systems, regardless of the medium in which they are stored.

## 3. Scope

### Records

By applying for admission to University of Niagara Falls Canada and by registering in programs or courses at the University, students accept the University's right to collect pertinent personal information. UNF uses this information to assess students' qualifications for entry, to establish a record of their performance in programs and courses, to provide the basis for awards and governmental funding, and to assist the University in the academic, operational, and financial administration of its affairs.

All documentation submitted to the University in support of an application for admission, financial award, or as part of any investigation, appeal/petition, or request, becomes the property of the University. Official documents received by UNF from other institutions or organizations are not released, returned, or redirected.

Official documents must be sent directly to the Registrar's Office. If they are not received in a sealed envelope that remains unopened and free of tampering, they will not be accepted official documents.

Official physical records are stored in the Registrar's Office: A student official record typically contains (where applicable):

- all letters and admission forms which bear the signature of the student or their designate;
- all documents used to support an offer of admission, including résumé, Letter of Intent, official transcripts of previous education, language proficiency test scores, letters of recommendation;
- medical documentation;

- other factual documentation considered pertinent to the student's studies, including but not limited to study permits, visas, copies of passports; and,
- documentation related to official leaves of absence, formal appeal decisions, disciplinary actions, and any other official transactions.

During the student awards application review process, the Chair of the Student Awards Committee ensures that all applicant records are maintained in a secure location. Once the Committee's deliberations are complete, the Committee Chair sends all financial awards application forms, essays, recommendation letters, awards letters, and other documentation to the Registrar's Office for retention in the students' record.

Other records, such as examinations, academic progress records, student loans documentation, and financial payment plan agreements are retained and secured in the department responsible.

Copies of records related to official student requests for review or for appeal shall be sent to the Registrar's Office for retention as part of the official student record and in accordance with the University's Retention Schedule.

### **Accuracy of Records**

Unsubstantiated allegations or accusations are not incorporated in students' official records.

Any requests to change a name, by means of alteration, deletion, substitution, or addition, must be accompanied by appropriate supporting official documentation.

Students have the right to inspect all information contained in their own record, subject to applicable access-to-information and protection-of-privacy laws and with the exception of evaluations and letters of reference supplied to the University, with the understanding that they be kept confidential.

### **Storage, Access, and Security of Records**

The University stores student records in physical (paper) and in electronic format.

The Registrar's Office stores and safeguards the physical student official records. All physical records are secured within at least 2 levels of security. Information systems stores and safeguards all electronic student records. All records are secured and backed up according to industry standard protocols which includes backup to an off-site location at least weekly.

Only if granted security access to do so, University faculty and staff may store general student information as part of correspondence attached to the students' electronic profile in the student information system. Staff may not store medical or other highly sensitive or confidential information as part of the general student electronic profile.

These records must be stored as part of the official student record in the Registrar's Office, with a cover notation only in the electronic profile.

## POLICY

Only registrarial staff may access the physical student official records. Faculty and staff who have a legitimate need for the information in order to perform their official duties may be granted access to limited components of official student records. Student official records may not be removed from the Registrar's Office without the Registrar's (or designate's) consent.

Only the Registrar's Office is authorized to produce official transcripts. All official transcripts are complete and unabridged. The Registrar's Office does not produce partial transcripts.

If a student has outstanding required documents or outstanding debts to the University, access to official records will be restricted and certain academic documents (e.g., transcripts, degree parchments) may be withheld until payment is received in full.

Documents pertaining to a student's achievement at another institution, which may have been received by the University, will not normally be released or redirected.

Unless compelled to do so by law, or authorized by the student in writing, the University will not disclose the contents of student records to any party outside the University, including the immediate family.

UNF considers the following information to be publicly available and will provide it to third parties in response to requests (e.g., confirmation of information for a potential employer) without seeking the student's consent:

- Full name.
- Degree(s) awarded by the University and date(s) conferred, if applicable.
- Faculty(ies) in which student is/was enrolled, with major field of study.
- Academic or other University honors or distinctions.

However, at any time an individual may request that this information cease to be made publicly available by contacting the Registrar's Office in writing. Upon formal request, the Registrar's Office will apply a flag to the student profile to prevent such release of information.

General statistical material drawn from academic records that does not disclose the identities of prospective applicants, applicants, students, alumni, or former students may be released for research and information purposes authorized by the University through the Registrar and President.

Alumni Services staff are permitted ongoing access to personal information relating to the identity and contact data of graduates. Alumni Services staff are permitted access to the contact data of prospective graduates within two (2) terms of their expected date of program completion in order to maintain contact with the individuals and inform them of events, programs and services.

UNF will disclose information in an Official Student Record to other institutions to the extent required for a particular course or program (e.g., off-campus placements, internships, joint programs).

### **Retention of Records**

All portions of a student’s electronic record which are needed to produce official transcripts are maintained permanently. UNF secures core elements of the student record, including a copy of the final transcript and a copy of any credentials granted, for at least 75 years or according to legislated requirements. The University will contract a third party off-site secure digital warehouse to act as the record keeper in the event that the institution closes or can no longer, for any reason, maintain the records. All other documentation contained in students’ files will be destroyed five years after graduation or last attendance at the University.

Documentation submitted by applicants who are not accepted or who are denied admission, and by applicants who fail to enroll following acceptance, is destroyed one year after date of the application for admission.

Academic records produced by or sent to academic staff are retained in the academic departments for one year after the student completes their program or is no longer active in UNF.

Examinations are retained for one year after grading.

No exception may be made to this policy without the written permission of the Registrar.

**4. Definitions**

These definitions apply to terms as they are used in this policy.

Word/Term	Definition
Prospective Applicant	A person who has indicated an interest in applying for admission to the University
Applicant	A person who has formally applied for admission to the University
Current Student	A person who has been registered and active within the last two terms in any program
Alumni	Persons who have received credentials from the University and are not currently active in a program
Record	Recorded information regardless of medium or characteristics.  Frequently used interchangeably with document. Types of records include textual record, visual record, cartographic record, audiovisual record, sound recording and electronic record.  Active records - Continue to be used with sufficient frequency to justify keeping them in the office of creation; current records. Semi-active records - Seldom used in day-to-day operations and appropriate for off-site storage.  Inactive records - No longer used in the day-to-day course of business, but which may be preserved and occasionally used for legal, historical, or operational purposes.

Word/Term	Definition
	Official records – Those which form the basis of the admission, academic, progression, and graduation standing of the student in the University

**5. Related legislation**

Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA).

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA).

**6. Responsibility**

The Registrar is responsible for the security, integrity, accuracy, and disposition of the Official Academic Record.

The Registrar’s Office is responsible for overseeing the collection, retention, and maintenance of official student records.

Academic team members are responsible for retaining, securing, and disposing of documentation in support of academic decisions.

Enrolment staff are responsible for submitting all supporting documentation provided by the student or applicant to the Registrar’s Office for the student’s record.

All staff and faculty are responsible for retaining, securing, and disposing of all records in their care.

All staff who receive medical or other sensitive documentation from or about students are responsible for sending it to the Registrar’s Office for secure retention.

Information Systems is responsible for the electronic security and storage of electronic records. The Registrar’s Office is responsible for ensuring permanent off-site storage of inactive official student records.

All departments are responsible for securing, retaining, and/or destroying student records according to this policy.

All faculty and staff are responsible for seeking assistance from the Registrar’s Office or the Privacy Officer when unclear about where and how to retain or destroy records.