

Procedures for Disclosing Grades and Distributing Student Work

Grades may not be publicly posted, or papers/exams publicly distributed, by methods that disclose confidential information, unless the student has given written consent. Assignments and papers containing confidential, personally identifiable information may not be distributed in a manner that permits others to see the private information. This includes posting grades outside classrooms/offices or distributing papers in class or in bins.

Grades and grading comments are confidential information protected by law and policy from public disclosure. This means faculty and the campus must protect against situations in which students have access to each others' grades, or where student grades or work is available to the public as may happen when exams are left in a pile at the front or back of the room, passed around the room in a stack, or left unsupervised in return-bins outside classrooms or department offices.

Law and policy prohibit the use of all or part of a student's ID or social security number as an identifier for posting grades or distributing papers. Posting grades in an office or outside a classroom by name, social security number or student ID number, or even a portion of the ID number, is also a privacy violation because students and others may figure out which identifier belongs to which student, violating privacy and creating the risk of identity theft. It is also a violation to post grades or student work to a class listserv, or on a website, without ensuring password and other security protection. The list/site must limit access and be secured so that (1) only the student may see his/her own grades, (2) students may NOT see others' grades; and (3) no one other than the students has access to the listserv/website where grades or student work are posted.

Recommended procedures:

- Use a unique identifier for each student that is assigned just for your class. Do not list the grades in alphabetic order even if a unique identifier is used (it defeats the purpose).
- Have students submit written consent for distributing papers if they want to be able to pick up work from a return bin.
- Have students provide large manila envelopes marked with their names so that their work is returned to them inside an opaque, sealed envelope.
- Use electronic media such as email or web-based distribution of grades so that students can use a password to check their own grades that are not available to anyone without the password.
- Record grades on inside page and fold and staple papers closed.
- Have exams sorted alphabetically by discussion section, and have students pick up their papers directly from their TA.

Sample Written Consent

General Authorization for Public Distribution of Graded Papers or Examinations

I, [print name], [student ID #], authorize my instructor, (print name), to publicly distribute my graded papers, homework, and tests (e.g., by handing out in class or leaving in a bin) for [class title and number].

Signature, date

Paper-Specific Authorization for Public Distribution

I authorize the posting of my grade by personal identifier and the return of my exam/paper for pick-up from a class bin.

I do not authorize the posting of my grade or the public distribution of my paper.

Signature, date