

REGISTRAR'S OFFICE

Abbott House, 1st Floor

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The Registrar's Office maintains the educational records of all students upon their matriculation at Vermont Law School. As stated in our FERPA policy, students have the right to review everything in their file, except letters of recommendation to which they have waived the right of access, and to challenge any perceived inaccuracy. Students are required to provide the Registrar's Office with an official copy of their transcript (LSDAS copies are not official) from their degree-granting institution(s) and from all other institutions whose credits are not reflected on the transcript(s) from the degree-granting institution(s) at the time of matriculation. Some leeway is given for compliance, but students who have not satisfied this requirement will not be registered for classes for the following year until after receipt of the required transcript(s).

The Registrar's Office provides the following services to students:

1. **Registration of Classes:** First-year JD students are randomly assigned to sections of the required first-year curriculum. Second- and third-year JD students and MELP and LLM candidates register for their classes in April and August respectively.
2. **Grade Reports and Transcripts:** Students are provided with a grade report at the end of each semester. This document is provided in a format that allows students to photocopy it for potential employers who do not require an official transcript. The Registrar's Office is only obligated to provide students with one copy of their grade report; this is an important document that should be maintained for future use. Requests for additional copies of grade reports can be treated as requests for unofficial transcripts, which can incur a charge. Requests for official transcripts should be completed on the Transcript Request Form, available from the Registrar's Office. This process requires, at a minimum, 24 hours for completion and can take longer depending upon the work demand in both the Registrar's Office and the Business Office. There is a charge of \$5.00 for each request after the first. If the Business Office determines that a student has an outstanding debt to Vermont Law School, the request will not be authorized until the debt has been cleared or arrangements made for payment.
3. **Request for Written Certification:** Students require written certification of their status for various reasons: enrollment verification for private health insurance, verification of enrollment for purposes of loan deferment, letters of good standing for scholarships and transfer, certification of degree completion for all bar examinations, etc. All such requests get processed through the Registrar's Office, regardless of who will ultimately sign the certification. Most of these requests also require clearance from the Business Office. Again, outstanding debt to VLS can prevent release of the requested certification.
4. **Retention of Examinations:** ABA standards require the retention of examinations for at least one year. Most examinations are stored in the Registrar's Office, but some members of the faculty will keep their own examinations. Students have access to peruse and/or copy their examinations but may not take possession of them. If students wish to discuss their examinations with the faculty, the Registrar's Office needs timely notice to deliver the examination to the appropriate professor. All examinations stored in the Registrar's Office are destroyed after one year.
5. **Notification of Illness and/or Family Emergency/Death:** Students who are unable to attend class because of illness or an emergency, or for any other reason, should notify the Registrar's Office at their earliest convenience, who will in turn notify the students' professors. Although some members of the faculty want to hear about absences directly from the student, it is generally accepted that notice from the Registrar's Office is all that is required. Depending on the reason stated for the absence, professors will determine if the absence is excused or not. Students need to inform the Registrar's Office only once in the period from Monday to Friday of any week of absences for the same reason, i.e., illness on Thursday and Friday.
6. **Change of Status:** If your status at Vermont Law School is going to change for any reason, you need to inform the Registrar's Office of this in writing, i.e., request for a leave of absence, notification of withdrawal (either completely or from one package or the other if you are a joint-degree student), etc. The Registrar's Office will then notify all appropriate offices of this change.
7. **Change of Address:** The Registrar's Office should have your current address at all times. However, you can also prevent disclosure of this information, and other personally identifiable information by completing the necessary form available from the Registrar's Office.
8. **FERPA and Directory of Records:** See below.

ACADEMIC REGULATIONS

are posted separately on the policies web page.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF STUDENT RECORDS FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

I. Confidentiality Policy

VLS maintains the confidentiality of student educational records as required by the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

- A. Persons Outside Vermont Law School. No one outside VLS shall have access to, nor will VLS disclose any information from, a student's educational records without the written consent of the student except, pursuant to FERPA, to officials of other institutions in which the student seeks to enroll, to persons or organizations providing a student financial aid or enforcing provisions of student financial aid received, to accrediting agencies carrying out their accreditation function, to persons in compliance with a judicial order, and to persons in an emergency in order to protect the health or safety of students or other persons.
- B. Persons within VLS. School officials must demonstrate a "need to know" before personally identifiable student information, located outside their immediate domain, may be released to them. Such release must be documented and placed in the student's file.
 - 1. School officials are those members of VLS who act in the student's educational interest within the limitations of their need to know, which includes deans, faculty, administrators, clerical and professional employees, and other persons who manage student record information.
 - 2. Within the VLS community, only those persons, individually or collectively, acting in student's educational interest are allowed access to a student's educational records. This includes persons in the Offices of the Registrar, Admissions, Comptroller, Financial Aid, and Business Services, and academic personnel within the limitations of their need to know. In addition, the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs, the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs, and the Director of the Academic Success Program have full access to student information contained in the administrative computer system.
- C. Directory Information. In its discretion, VLS may provide directory information, in accordance with the provision of FERPA, to include: student name, photograph, local address and telephone number, date of birth, dates of attendance, class year and class schedule, degrees and awards received, and the most recent previous educational agency or institution attended by the student.
 - 1. A student may withhold directory information by notifying the Registrar in writing within two weeks after the first day of classes for the fall semester.
 - 2. Requests for nondisclosure will be honored by Vermont Law School for only one academic year; therefore, authorization to withhold directory information must be filed annually in the Office of the Registrar.

II. Student Inspection of Records

FERPA provides each student with the right to inspect and review information contained in his/her education records, to challenge the contents of his/her education records, to have a hearing if the outcome of the challenge is unsatisfactory, and to submit explanatory statements for inclusion in his/her file if the decision of the hearing panel is unacceptable.

- A. Written Request. The Registrar has been designated to coordinate the inspection and review procedures for student education records, which will include admissions, academic, and financial files; and academic cooperative education, and placement records.
 - 1. A student wishing to review her/his education records must make a written request to the Registrar using the "Request for Copies of Documents in File" form available outside the Registrar's Office. In some circumstances a copy will not be made (e.g., an academic record for which a financial "hold" exists, or a transcript of an original or source document which exists elsewhere). Copies are made at the student's expense at prevailing rates which are listed on the form.
 - 2. Records covered by the Act will be made available within forty-five days of the request.
- B. Exceptions and Exclusions. As provided by the Act:
 - 1. Education records do not include records of instructional, administrative, and educational personnel which are the sole possession of the maker and are not accessible or revealed to any individual except a temporary substitute; employment records; or alumni records.
 - 2. A student may not inspect or review financial information submitted by his/her parents; confidential letters and recommendations associated with admissions, employment, job placement or honors and to which he/she has waived his/her rights of inspection and review; or education records containing information about more than one student, in which case VLS will permit access only to that part of the record which pertains to the inquiring student.
 - 3. VLS is not required to permit a student to inspect and review letters of recommendation to which the right to access was waived.
- C. Correction Records. A student who believes that his/her education records contain information that is inaccurate or misleading, or is otherwise in violation of his/her privacy or other rights, may discuss his/her problems informally with the Office of the Registrar.
 - 1. If the decision is in agreement with the student's requests, the appropriate records will be amended. If not, the student will be notified within a reasonable period of time that the records will not be amended, and she/he will be informed by the Office of the Registrar of his/her right to a formal hearing.
 - 2. A student's request for a formal hearing must be made in writing to the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs who, within a reasonable period of time after receiving such requests, will inform the student of the date, place, and time of the hearing. A student may present evidence relevant to the issues raised and may be assisted or represented at the hearing by one or more persons of his/her choice, including attorneys, at the student's expense. The hearing panel, which will adjudicate such challenges, will be the Committee on Standards.
 - 3. Decisions of the hearing panel will be final, will be based solely on the evidence presented at the hearing, will consist of written statements summarizing the evidence and stating the reasons for the decision, and will be delivered to all parties concerned.

4. The education record will be corrected or amended in accordance with the decision of the hearing panel, if the decision is in favor of the student.
5. If the decision is unsatisfactory to the student, the student may place with the education record statements commenting on the information in the record, or statements setting forth any reasons for disagreeing with the decision of the hearing panel. The statements will be placed in the education record, maintained as part of the student's records, and released whenever the records in question are disclosed.
6. A student who believes that the adjudication of his/her challenge is unfair or not in keeping with the provisions of the Act may request, in writing, assistance from the Dean of Vermont Law School to aid him/her in filing complaints with The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Office, Department of Education, Room 4074, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202.

Revisions and clarifications of this policy will be published as experience warrants.

DIRECTORY OF RECORDS

Office of Admissions (Abbott House): Records in the Office of Admissions are not covered under FERPA. These records receive FERPA protection and gain student access only upon the applicant's matriculation.

Office for Institutional Advancement (Curtis House): Any student who has completed one full semester at VLS becomes a member of the Alumni Association at the time their student status ceases. The Alumni Office records show both home and business addresses and telephone numbers, name of spouse or significant other, name and address of parents, and history of contributions to Vermont Law School. Directory information for "alums" is no longer protected by FERPA, but alumni are afforded the opportunity to withhold release of directory information by contacting the Office for Institutional Advancement. All other information contained in their records is for internal use only.

Office of Career Services (Dearing House): This office solicits information directly from students, including name, address, class, degree program(s), degree completion, previous education, gender, date of birth, race, cumulative grade point average/class rank, honors such as *Law Review* and/or Moot Court Advisory Board, and work-study eligibility. Any information forthcoming from students is available only to personnel in the department.

Office of the Comptroller/Business Office (Abbott House): The Business Office maintains an accounting of a student's financial obligations to VLS. Failure to meet this obligation will result in the Business Office withholding approval of release of a student's grade report, transcript, bar certification, and/or diploma. Therefore, the general information of indebtedness will be shared with the Registrar's Office and the Dean's Office. In addition, the Business Office maintains the record of a student's VLS parking sticker number in conjunction with the student's license plate number. None of this personally identifiable information will be disclosed to anyone outside the institution. In addition, students are given the opportunity to authorize other individuals to make inquiries of their accounts by completing a Business Office/Financial Aid Office Release Authorization Form. This form is considered in effect until further notice, i.e., the student submits an updated form. It is assumed that a student not completing this form does not consent to any release of information.

Environmental Law Center (Debevoise Hall): All Summer Session registrants are processed at the ELC and records are transferred to the Registrar's Office upon the student's matriculation.

Office of Financial Aid (Abbott House): A student's financial aid file contains their Institutional Student Information Report (ISIR), notice of financial aid eligibility and awards, loan applications, and other pertinent information requested to assess eligibility for financial assistance. Federal Perkins promissory notes and collection information is also kept in the Financial Aid Office for graduates who receive these loans. Copies of educational loan deferment forms are placed in the student's file prior to being sent to the lending agencies. A student has access to all this information. The Office of Financial Aid will release to scholarship committees the level of a student's financial need (e.g., none, high, etc.), but will not share any specific information. The Office of Financial Aid is notified by various agencies when a student/alum is in default on an educational loan and will inform the Registrar's Office of this default status when a student/alum has requested the release of a transcript or bar certification.

Office of the Registrar (Abbott House): The Registrar's Office receives from the Admissions Office a student's application file upon matriculation to VLS. At that time the record falls under the protection of FERPA. This record normally contains, at that time, the following: application for admission, LSDAS or GRE report, letters of recommendation, personal statement, letter of acceptance, and official transcripts reflecting all post-secondary education. A student may review and/or request copies of any of this material except any letters of recommendation to which he/she has waived the right to access.

Copies of official transcripts from other institutions are also available. As a student progresses through his/her educational program, the record will expand to include copies of class schedules, requests for release of information, copies of letters reflecting any probationary and/or disciplinary action, and copies of letters reflecting academic honors and/or awards. The Registrar's Office maintains a record of a student's academic progress with an official transcript (showing course, grades, semester and cumulative grade point average and class rank, where applicable.) A notice of loan default is appended to the student's official transcript when received. Independent of a student's individual record, the Registrar's Office keeps a file of student petitions to the Board of Review, with a copy of the decision letter in the student's individual record. Release of most information in the Registrar's Office requires a student's written permission, with the following exceptions: 1) When a student is being placed on academic probation, the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs, the student's faculty advisor, the head of the program for Academic Success, and the Director of Financial Aid are notified; 2) when a student has been academically dismissed, the same people as listed in #1 above, with the exception of the head of the program for Academic Success, are again notified; in addition, the Library, Office of Career Services, the Alumni Office, and all deans are notified of a student's "withdrawal," without mention of the circumstances; 3) when a student voluntarily withdraws or is granted a leave of absence, all people listed above, again with the exception of the head of the program for Academic Success, are notified; 4) if a student petitions the Board of Review for whatever reason, the members have full access to the educational records maintained in the Registrar's Office; 5) the Director of Financial Aid needs to know class rank and probation status to determine the continued eligibility for scholarships and/or work-study funds; therefore, the class rank list is provided to the Director of Financial Aid; 6) if a member of the faculty needs to be reminded of a grade they issued a student, this information will be given with the understanding that it cannot be shared with a third party.

