

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Policies and Procedures Affecting All Students

Knowledge of University Policies

Each student is responsible for knowing Mason's rules, regulations, requirements, administrative policies and Academic Policies. This catalog is the normal repository of academic policy statements, but corrections, changes, or interpretations can be promulgated by other means, including electronic publication.

When the university or one of its academic units changes course requirements, grading procedures, or criteria for acceptance into particular programs, academic standing, or graduation, the changes apply to all students enrolled at the time of implementation of the change and thereafter.

Students have certain choices regarding the set of degree requirements under which they graduate, as detailed in the Catalog Requirements for Degrees in AP.4 Degree Application, Conferral and Graduation. PDFs of all previous catalogs may be found online (<http://registrar.gmu.edu/catalog-archives>). Additionally, the Special Collections and Archives section of the Fenwick Library has copies of all previous catalogs. They may not be checked out, but may be photocopied. Any student in doubt about an academic matter should consult a faculty advisor or dean.

Students are subject to the university's stated policies regarding patents and copyrights. These policies are available online (<http://osp.gmu.edu>).

Catalog Requirements for Degrees

Catalog year refers to the setting of course and non-course requirements within academic programs as stated in the school and college section of a specific catalog. Catalog year does not set academic policies other than program requirements in place, however. Not all programs and degree components are available in all catalogs. For any one degree, all requirements must be met as stated in a single catalog. The only exception is that Bachelor's degree students may select a minor from another catalog year for which they are eligible, as noted below.

Bachelor's degree candidates may choose to graduate under the terms of any catalog in effect during their enrollment in degree status. Students who have been inactive for two or more years or who have attended another institution without prior approval from their academic dean or director must graduate under a catalog in effect at or after their re-admission and during their enrollment in degree status.

Master's and doctoral degree candidates who have been continuously enrolled may choose to graduate under the terms of any catalog in effect during their enrollment in degree status. Students who have been inactive more than one year, however, may be required by their program to graduate under a catalog in effect after they have been granted permission to re-enroll. In no case may a student choose the requirements of a future catalog year that take effect after the student's degree is anticipated.

Mason ID Card

Fairfax Campus: Student Union I, 1203
Phone: 703-993-1004

Science and Technology Campus: Colgan Hall, 202

Phone: 703-993-9779

Arlington Campus: Founders Hall, 220
Phone: 703-993-9153

Loudoun Campus: 21335 Signal Hill Plaza, Suite 130
Phone: 703-993-4350

Distance Learners: please contact the Mason Card Office at masonid@gmu.edu to make arrangements

Web: masonid.gmu.edu/mason-id (<http://masonid.gmu.edu/mason-id>)
Email: masonid@gmu.edu

After registering, each student should obtain a Mason ID card. It must be presented to use library services and is required for admission to university events and when using facilities after normal operating hours. It is not transferable and is valid as long as the student has active status.

Official Communication with Students

Web: masonlive.gmu.edu (<http://masonlive.gmu.edu>)

Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account and are required to activate that account and check it regularly. Students are also expected to maintain an active and accurate mailing address in order to receive communications sent through the United States Postal Service.

Preferred Name Policy

Web: University Policy 1143 (<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/preferred-name-policy>)

A student may designate and use a Preferred Name for University purposes, except when use of a legal name is required by University or by law.

A student may designate a Preferred Name in University information systems only when such systems allow for such designation.

The University will ordinarily use a student's Preferred Name in university communications and reporting except when use of a legal name is required by the University or by law. By way of example but not limitation, Preferred Names will be reflected on class rosters, in Blackboard, in Patriot Web (including Degree Works), and in directory listings including email address.

A student's legal name shall be used for billing, verification of enrollment, payroll, official transcripts, communication with external authorities, or as otherwise required by the University or by law. A student's identification card must display only the student's legal name. The University may identify students by both legal name and Preferred name at any time.

A student may not use a Preferred Name for any kind of misrepresentation. A student may not use profanity in a Preferred Name.

Change of Status, Address

Each student is required to provide Mason with current contact and identifying information, including permanent and local addresses, telephone numbers, and legal name. Each student must also maintain the university e-mail account assigned at the time of admission. Students are responsible for official communications directed to Mason e-mail accounts. For more information, check the website (<http://masonlive.gmu.edu>).

Addresses should be updated over the Internet using Patriot Web. Name and Social Security number changes require official documentation and must be processed in person at the Office of the University Registrar or with the original copy of a notarized request.

Appeals of Academic Procedures

Students have the right to appeal decisions regarding requests for academic actions. The appeals process begins in the academic unit. Each college, school, and institute at Mason has a written statement of that unit's appeal process on file in the dean or director's office. Students who feel the appeals process was conducted unfairly by a college or school may appeal to the Provost's Office. All appeals must be in writing, and they must demonstrate that the student has exhausted all options within the academic unit. Undergraduate students initiate appeals of unit decisions with the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education. Graduate students initiate appeals of unit decisions with the Associate Provost for Graduate Education. *The Provost's Office does not consider grade appeals or appeals of Honor Committee decisions.*

Undergraduate Appeals

The Provost's Office may refer cases to the University Academic Appeals Committee. The committee consists of five faculty members, including at least one member of the Faculty Senate and the provost (or designee), who serves *ex officio*, in a nonvoting capacity. The committee hears only those cases where procedural irregularities or a questionable application of university policies is demonstrable, or when the provost or the committee deems the case relevant to the application of university-wide policies. The burden of proof rests with the student, who must provide clear and convincing documentation to support the contention that the decision was unfair based on the criteria stated above. The committee's decision is final. The University Academic Appeals Committee is not charged to hear grade appeals or appeals of Honor Committee decisions.

Graduate Appeals

Students who believe they were not afforded due process by the Associate Provost for Graduate Education may appeal to the Graduate Academic Appeals Committee. The committee is a subcommittee of Graduate Council and consists of five members of the graduate faculty. The committee hears only those cases it judges demonstrate procedural irregularities or a questionable application of university policies, or when the provost or the committee deems the case relevant to the application of university-wide policies. The burden of proof rests with the student, who must provide clear and convincing documentation to support the contention that the decision was unfair based on the criteria stated above. The committee's decision is final. The Graduate Academic Appeals Committee is not charged to hear grade appeals or appeals of Honor Committee decisions. Specific appeal procedures can be found on the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President's website under Graduate Education.

The Provost's Office is responsible for maintaining appeals records, determining whether students have just cause, and ensuring that

complete documentation is available for all committee members. The committee communicates its decision to the student, the relevant unit, and the provost.

Student Requests for Academic Actions

All requests for academic actions, such as special permissions or exceptions to published academic regulations, must be submitted to the head of the unit in which the student's program is housed, for example, the department chair, institute director, or school or college dean. Forms and instructions on how to initiate an academic action are available in the academic unit and on the unit's web site. For students who have not yet declared a major, the academic actions process is executed in the Office of Student Academic Affairs, Advising & Retention, SUB I, Room 3500. Students will be informed of the average wait time for decisions on academic actions undertaken within their units. Those who need assistance with the academic actions process may consult their academic advisor, or they may be directed to the university ombudsman.

Office of the Ombudsman

Phone: 703-993-1000

Web: diversity.gmu.edu (<https://diversity.gmu.edu>)

The Office of the Ombudsman is a resource to help all Mason students navigate the University. The Ombudsman can listen to university-related concerns raised by undergraduate and graduate students in confidence and off-the-record, and help them identify appropriate resources to address their concerns and understand their options in any University-related situation. The Ombudsman operates independently of all formal processes at the university. The Ombudsman has no authority to make exceptions or to grant requests, but can help expedite informal resolution to students' concerns. When appropriate, the Ombudsman may recommend changes in processes and policies at the university. Meetings with the Ombudsman are confidential, except when there is imminent risk of serious physical harm to anyone. The Office of the Ombudsman does not serve as an office of notice or record for the University. If a student wishes to put the University on notice about anything, the Ombudsman can help identify the appropriate channel. The Office of the Ombudsman offers a safe place to discuss and explore options, so students can better understand the University and make informed decisions about their concerns. The Office of the Ombudsman does not replace or substitute any formal processes made available by the University.

Academic Assessment

All academic programs at Mason, including the Mason Core program, have student learning outcomes that are assessed periodically. Student work in various courses may be used for such an assessment. Student anonymity is assured and grades will not be affected.

Students may be called on from time to time to participate in focus groups, complete questionnaires, or contribute in some other way to the ongoing assessment process. Assessment is vital to the continuous improvement of the university, and student voices are an essential part of the process.

At any time, students may contact the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment at assessment@gmu.edu with questions or concerns about assessment activities.

To learn more about the learning outcomes and assessment activities of a specific program, visit the website (<http://assessment.gmu.edu>).

Student Work, Intellectual Property

University Policies 4002 (<https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/copyright-in-university-works>) and 4003 (<http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/patenting-university-inventions>) control ownership of copyrightable works and patentable inventions made at Mason.

Generally, Mason does not assert ownership of copyrightable works and patentable inventions made by students (who are not also Mason employees) to fulfill the requirements of a particular course. Mason generally owns copyrightable works and patentable inventions made by students who are not employees if they are made in the course of sponsored research or with substantial use of significant university resources. If a student (undergraduate or graduate) is also an employee (such as a research or teaching assistant), Mason generally owns copyrightable works and patentable inventions made as part of that student's employment responsibilities. Students with questions are encouraged to consult the policies and to contact the Office of Technology Transfer, ott@gmu.edu or 703.993.8933.

Conduct within the University Community

Office of Student Conduct
Student Union I, Room 4100
Phone: 703-993-6209
Fax: 703-993-2893
Web: studentconduct.gmu.edu (<http://studentconduct.gmu.edu>)

Students enrolling in the university assume an obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with the university's function as an educational institution. The Code of Virginia (Section 23-9.2:3) confers on the university the responsibility for maintaining order within the university and the right to adjudicate those who are disruptive.

Students are governed by the Code of Conduct (<http://studentconduct.gmu.edu/university-policies/code-of-student-conduct>).

The Office of Student Conduct holds responsibility for addressing the conduct of Mason students and their guests. Questions regarding student conduct should be directed to the Office of Student Conduct, SUB I, Room 4100, 703-993-6209; or their website (<http://studentconduct.gmu.edu>).

Privacy of Student Records

Office of the University Registrar
Student Union I, Room 2101
Phone: 703-993-2441
Email: registrar@gmu.edu
Web: registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa (<http://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa>)

Each year, Mason informs students of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974. The university intends to comply fully with this act, which protects the privacy of education records, establishes the right of students to inspect and review their education records, and provides guidelines for amending inaccurate or misleading data through informal and formal hearings. Students also have the right to file complaints with the Family Policy Compliance Office (U.S. Department of Education) concerning alleged failures by Mason to comply with the act.

The Notification of Rights under FERPA and the Public Notice Designating Directory Information detail students' rights and the procedures implemented by the university to comply with FERPA.

FERPA is a federal law that affords students certain rights with respect to their education records. Specifically, it affords students the right to:

1. inspect and review their education record;
2. request the amendment of inaccurate or misleading records;
3. consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in their education record; and
4. file a complaint with the Family Policy Compliance Office of the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures of the university to comply with the act.

George Mason University strives to fully comply with this law by protecting the privacy of student records and judiciously evaluating requests for release of information from those records. FERPA authorizes the release of "directory information" without the student's prior consent under certain conditions, which are set forth in the act. George Mason University has defined its "directory information" in accordance with the law. Please visit the Office of the University Registrar website (<http://registrar.gmu.edu>) for additional information about student privacy and FERPA.

Public Notice Designating Directory Information

George Mason University designates the following as public or "directory information." Such information may be disclosed by the university without the student's prior consent under the conditions set forth in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

Directory Information: Student name, address, telephone numbers(s), e-mail address, date and place of birth, major, dates of attendance, enrollment status (full time, part time), class, previous institutions, major field of study, awards, honors (including Dean's List), degrees conferred including dates, past and present participation in officially recognized sports and activities, and physical factors (height and weight of athletes).

Note: *Directory information is information that Mason may disclose, but it is not required to do so. It is Mason's policy to refrain from actively disclosing addresses, telephone numbers, and dates of birth; however, the university routinely verifies this information. Mason does not disclose social security numbers, personal identification numbers, photographs, grades, grade point averages, class schedules, academic actions nor the number of credits enrolled in or earned unless the student has signed a consent form.*

Currently enrolled students may withhold disclosure of directory information under FERPA. To withhold disclosure, students must present a photo ID in person at the Office of the University Registrar, Fairfax or Prince William campuses, and complete the Request to Prevent Disclosure of Directory Information Form. The form may be submitted at any time throughout the year and will immediately affect prospective disclosures. George Mason University assumes that failure on the part of any student to specifically request the withholding of a category of directory information indicates individual approval for disclosure. Former students may not place a new request for nondisclosure of directory information on their education records; however, they may request its removal.

Confidential (Private) Hold: Prevents the disclosure of all directory information including name, address, telephone number(s), e-mail address, date and place of birth, photographs, major, dates of attendance, enrollment status (full time, part time), class, previous institutions, major field of study, awards, honors (including Dean's List), degrees conferred (including dates), past and present participation in officially recognized sports and activities, and physical factors (height and weight of athletes).

Note: Confidential status does not convey a right to be anonymous in the classroom or to impede routine classroom communication and interactions. Students with confidential status should expect to be identified in class by name and to have their Mason email address used for class purposes.

Students who elect this category must conduct all university business either in person with a photo ID card or from a remote location with an original notarized request. Such students' names will be published in the commencement program unless the students request exclusion in writing. Students in this category are eligible to use interactive web and other electronic systems, such as Patriot Web, for transactions (including registration) which are protected by a secured login.