Course Grouping FERPA Guidelines

In certain situations, faculty members may wish to combine course sections in the LMS (Moodle/Blackboard) for a given semester. However, FERPA regulations limit the circumstances in which grouped courses are allowed without student approval. Even under such circumstances, specific actions are required. Review the options below to determine your situation and follow the steps indicated.

Groups allowed by FERPA **without student approval**

1. Sections of a course that have the same instructor and are online or are offered at the same time. For example,
   1. Two or more concurrent, online, asynchronous sections
   2. Independent study sections can be combined with online or on campus sections
   3. Hybrid courses – sections that are categorized as online synchronous and on-campus
   4. Online asynchronous sections and on-campus face-to-face sections
   5. IVN sections and on-campus face-to-face sections
2. Lecture/lab co-requisite sections (PHYS 211 and PHYS 211L with the same professor)

If your situation is allowed under FERPA **without student approval**, take the following steps.

1. Obtain email approval from your direct supervisor (Dean/Division Chair/Department Director). The supervisor will keep this documentation for at least one semester.
2. In Campus Connection, include a notification disclosing the grouping for all sections that are grouped. This notification must be present in the Notes section of the Class Detail area. This must be disclosed prior to beginning of registration for the term.
3. Disclose the section groupings within the syllabus. See the Syllabus Statement below for an example.
4. Request that the LMS Administrator create course groupings.

Example Syllabus Statement

The students in this course are grouped in the LMS with students enrolled in <insert class name>, <insert class number>, and <insert delivery method>. Students will see the names, locations, email addresses, discussion forum postings, and contributions to group activities of all students enrolled in the grouped course within the LMS *for the current semester*. Grouping classes in the LMS allows for access to enhanced course materials, greater diversity of opinions and life experiences in course discussion boards, as well as expanded class sizes for course activities.

Groups allowed by FERPA **that require student approval** prior to grouping

The groupings listed below must have signed release forms for every member of every class section prior to grouping.

1. Sections of a class that have different instructors (e.g. MATH 103 taught by Professor X and Professor Y)
2. Different courses with the same instructor other than lecture/lab co-requisite sections (e.g. ENGL 120 and ENGL 125 with Professor X)
3. On-campus classes or sections taught at different times - even by the same instructor (e.g. 9:00 am PSYC 111 and 11:00 am PSYC 111 with Professor B)

If your situation requires student approval, take the following steps.

1. Obtain email approval for the grouping from your direct supervisor (Dean/Division Chair/Department Director). The supervisor will keep this documentation for at least one semester.
2. Obtain signatures of all students in all relevant class sections. If a student does not want to sign, the course may not be grouped.
3. After the last day to add, deliver all signed forms to your Chair.
4. Chair will verify that all forms needed are present.
5. Request that the LMS Administrator create course groupings.
6. Chairs will keep forms on file for at least one semester after the course is complete.

Course Grouping FERPA Release Form for Students

The purpose of this release form is to provide permission to instructors to group members of different courses and/or different course sections. The [Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act](http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html) (FERPA) was passed in 1974. Generally, it is: "A federal law designed to protect the privacy of education records, to establish the right of students to inspect and review their education records, and to provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate and misleading data through informal and formal hearings." Two key components of the law include:

1. College students must be permitted to inspect their own educational records
2. School officials may not disclose personally identifiable information about students, nor permit inspection of their records, without written permission unless such action is covered by exceptions permitted by the Act. A notable exception is disclosing information to school officials determined by the institution to have a legitimate educational interest.

* As a student enrolled in <class name, class number and delivery method>, I have read the course syllabus and I consent to being grouped in the LMS with students in <class name, class number and delivery method>.
* I have read the course syllabus and I **do not** consent to being grouped in the LMS with students in a different section or course.

Term: Fall 2018

Print Name

Signature

Date