

**To:** Deans and Directors

**From:** Diane Hiebert-Murphy, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) *Diane Hiebert-Murphy*

**Date:** November 7, 2025

**Re:** Protecting Student Privacy When Delivering Academic Feedback

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### Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to remind all academic and administrative units of their obligations under The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) and to provide recommendations to prevent privacy breaches when discussing student performance, progress, or disciplinary matters.

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### Background

The University's Access and Privacy Office has recently reviewed incidents where student academic information was discussed in settings that did not adequately protect privacy. These reviews, along with guidance from the Manitoba Ombudsman's Office, reinforce the need for careful consideration of where and how feedback is provided to students.

Under FIPPA, a breach of privacy can occur even if there is no confirmation that a third party actually overheard or accessed personal information — it is sufficient that an opportunity existed where personal information *could* have been accessed.

Given the range of environments in which learning occurs — classrooms, laboratories, clinics, field settings, and online platforms — the approach to maintaining privacy must be flexible and context-specific.

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### Recommendations for Faculties and Academic Units

To mitigate privacy risks and promote respectful communication with students, Faculties and units are encouraged to adopt the following practices:

1. **Establish clear procedures** for providing academic or performance feedback to students, ensuring that discussions occur in private settings wherever possible.
2. **Avoid public spaces** (e.g., hallways, classrooms, labs, or other shared environments) when discussing matters related to student performance, conduct, or standing within a program.
3. **Refrain from using speakerphone** or similar technology to deliver feedback, particularly in semi-public environments. When remote participation is necessary,

use secure and private communication methods such as Microsoft Teams or direct phone calls with all participants in private spaces.

4. **Provide students with options** to receive feedback at a later time or in a different setting if privacy cannot be immediately ensured.
5. **Incorporate privacy considerations into training** for faculty, instructors, and staff who engage directly with students, emphasizing compliance with FIPPA and respectful communication practices.

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### **Next Steps**

Deans and Directors are asked to share this memo with faculty and staff within their respective Faculties and to ensure that appropriate measures are implemented to protect student privacy when handling sensitive information.

For additional guidance, units may contact the [Access and Privacy Office](#).