

Fact Sheet

Access and Privacy Primer for Faculty Members



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Queen's University is subject to Ontario's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which provides a right of access to the University's records and information, and mandates us to protect the privacy of the individuals whose personal information we collect and keep. The Act pertains to all employees, including faculty members.

This fact sheet is not comprehensive; it is intended to give faculty members a few key take-aways to help them in their daily work. For more information about access and privacy, see the Records Management and

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What IS in scope is everything else that pertains to your work supporting the business of the University—including records pertaining to your teaching activities. Emails between you and a student are in scope and may be requested by the student as they are the student's personal information; this includes emails sent or received using a personal email account. It is always best to use your Queen's email account for Queen's University business. You should also know that FIPPA requires us to keep records containing personal information (such as emails with students) for a minimum of 1 year.

Take-away: Create records with access in mind.

Access to Information

Under FIPPA, anyone can request access to records in the custody or under the control of the University, including emails. The exceptions to disclosure are limited and specific, and can't be applied until after records have been reviewed by the University's Privacy Office staff.

Keeping your personal and work-related email separate will ensure that personal emails don't get drawn into a records search.

Protection of Privacy: Yes, students do care about privacy.

Students care about their privacy, even if they blog or Tweet about their most personal issues. They can, and do, make privacy complaints. Privacy is about having control over your own personal information and how, where, and when you choose to share it. So in general, we should not be sharing a student's personal information without their consent.

However, FIPPA is not meant to prevent us from doing the work we've been hired to do, and so the Act does allow us to share someone's personal information on a "need-to-know" basis where that disclosure is necessary and proper.

The Records Management and Privacy Office website has a number of FAQs (<http://www.queensu.ca/accessandprivacy/faqs>) providing guidance on how to respect student privacy in the context of your teaching.

Take-away: Be mindful of student privacy rights.