

# RELEASE OF CUSTOMER INFORMATION PROCEDURE

## 1. Purpose

This procedure has been established to provide guidance to staff relating to requests for the release of customer information. The two key objectives being:

1. To ensure the protection of individual's private and confidential academic, service and personal information.
2. To provide guidelines for staff dealing with external enquiries relating to individual's information.

## 2. Scope

This procedure applies to all processes related to the release of information about students or clients of the Institute by staff of The Gordon.

## 3. Definitions

**Individual:** An individual could be a student or prospective student of The Gordon Institute of TAFE or the Geelong TECH School, or a client or prospective client of The Gordon's Skills and Jobs Centre or other services.

**Personal Information:** Information or an opinion (including information or an opinion forming part of a database), that is recorded in any form and whether true or not, about an individual whose identity is apparent, or can reasonably be ascertained, from the information or opinion, but does not include information of a kind to which Schedule 1 [of] the *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic) applies

**Sensitive Information:** information or an opinion about an individuals:

- racial or ethnic origin, or
- political opinions, or membership of a political association, or
- religious beliefs or affiliations, or philosophical beliefs, or
- membership of a professional or trade association; or trade union, or
- sexual preferences or practices, or
- criminal record.

Note that sensitive information also represents personal information

**Unique Identifiers:** Unique identifiers are an identifier (usually a number) assigned by an organisation to an individual to identify that individual in a unique manner for traceability within the organisation

## 4. Overview / principles

The Gordon is committed to meeting all of the legal obligations expressed in legislation relating to Privacy with respect to the management of customer information and in accordance with our *Privacy Policy RM PO 04*. However, enquiries are often received to release customer information from:

- Students or clients
- Employers of our students or clients
- Parents/guardians/spouses of our students or clients
- Government agencies, such as Social Security, Worksafe Victoria, Victoria Police
- Other Registered Training Organisation
- Courts

Examples of information sought include:

- Enrolment details
- Assessment results
- Attendance details
- Location of the student

- **Contact details**

These matters all relate to the disclosure of an individual's private information and may be received either in person, over the phone or by mail and may be directed to Student Administration, Customer Services, Program Area offices, to individual teachers or other office staff.

The Gordon shall maintain student information that it holds for the purposes of providing services to a customer or student in a confidential manner and the individual's personal information shall only be released as specified below.

#### **4.1 Phone enquiries**

In general, all phone enquiries for the release of any individual's personal information should be discouraged and the enquirer asked to put the request in writing via email so that it can be promptly reviewed and addressed.

Any person wishing to make personal enquiries as to the location of a student must be requested to give their name and relationship to the individual and unless the matter is an emergency matter, must be requested to put their request in writing.

The Gordon is not obliged to identify whether is onsite, in class and locate the student, however where the matter is an emergency and the student is timetabled to be present, the callers contact details and message should be taken and relayed to the student. The name and contact details of the timetabled teacher, student or the location of the classroom must not be released.

#### **4.2 Current customers**

All current students and clients have a right to access their academic results, application history, fees or other personal records. In general this information is directly available to the individual through them logging onto eStudent or Gordon Online.

Where a student cannot access this information directly, if their identity can be verified (eg student id number and date of birth) the information can be provided by frontline staff and emailed to the address recorded in eCentral or printed and provided to the customer in person.

Access to records held outside of these systems is available via request to the Institute's Privacy Officer who will review the request and authorise the release of information ensuring that other individuals are not identified as required under privacy and freedom of information principals. These requests must be referred to [qualityassurance@gordontafe.edu.au](mailto:qualityassurance@gordontafe.edu.au) and will be recorded in the Institute's database of requests prior to authorisation and release of the relevant information.

#### **4.3 Former student**

The Institute maintains records of academic results and awards issued for former students in the student management system and historic archives. All staff who receive requests for former students information must first attempt to verify the student's identity, full name and date of birth as recorded during their enrolment. Where the information is available to the frontline staff and the person's identity is verified the information may be released.

All requests for records not held in the student management system must be referred to the Institute's Records Manager for an archives search to be conducted ([records@gordontafe.edu.au](mailto:records@gordontafe.edu.au)).

#### **4.4 Parent / guardian / carer**

The Institute can release customer information to a parent, guardian or carer of either:

- An individual who is currently under the age of 18 years of age and that person was recorded as a party on the Under 18 Enrolment Supplement,  
or
- Who is over 18 and disabled and where the individual has provided written consent for the release of information to that person.

Requests for the release of customer information in these circumstances must be in writing and a copy retained of both the request and the information released.

Requests for the release of customer information by parents, guardians or carers where the customer is over 18 or has not registered with the Disability Support Office the request can only be released with the written consent of the Institute's client. These requests must be in writing and a copy forwarded to [qualityassurance@gordontafe.edu.au](mailto:qualityassurance@gordontafe.edu.au) for registration and review by the Institute's delegated Privacy Officer, the Manager Quality and Risk Management.

#### 4.5 Employers of Apprentices and Trainees

Employers of apprentices and trainees receive regular progress reports in relation to their employee from the relevant program area, and where they are released from employment to attend campus for trainee receive a notification through eCentral if their employee is late, leaves early or does not attend.

However, from time to time additional information is requested, program managers are authorised to release additional information relating to academic issues, progress or attendance of an apprentice or trainee when a written request is received from an employer.

#### 4.6 Government Agencies

The Institute has a legal obligation to respond to requests to for customer information received from other government agents such as Victoria Police, WorkSafe Victoria, or Social Services in relation to investigations or reviews. These requests must be received in writing from a verifiable email address linked to the agency with the reason for the request or received in person with the sighting of relevant official identification and/or authority.

These requests should be referred to the Institute's delegated Privacy Officer, the Manager Quality and Risk Management, who will review the request and authorise the release. Where this is not practicable, a copy of the request and details of the information released must be sent to [qualityassurance@gordontafe.edu.au](mailto:qualityassurance@gordontafe.edu.au) where it will be formally recorded in the Institute's database.

#### 4.7 Court Orders

The Institute has a legal obligation to respond to court orders for the release of customer information. The person who signs for the request becomes legally responsible for the Institute providing the information. Therefore, it is recommended that requests are referred to the Institute's delegated Privacy Officer, the Manager Quality and Risk Management who will sign on the Institute's behalf. Where this is not practicable, a copy of the request must be sent immediately to [qualityassurance@gordontafe.edu.au](mailto:qualityassurance@gordontafe.edu.au) where it will be formally recorded in the Institute's database and the information collated and released. The person who has signed for the order will be notified when the information has been released.

#### 4.8 Other RTOs

From time to time the Institute receives requests for the verification of Awards or Academic Results from other registered training organisations. Wherever possible these requests should be in writing, and forwarded to [curriculum@gordontafe.edu.au](mailto:curriculum@gordontafe.edu.au) who will verify and confirm the authenticity of the information requested – in general this is only that an award of that reference and for that qualification was to an individual, or that the units lists on a statement of results is correct.

#### 4.9 Other Third Party Requests

From time to time the Institute receives requests for information about current or former students from individuals who do not fit the parameters described above. These requests must be treated with caution and the reason for the person requiring the information should be validated.

Information of an historic nature, eg person writing a biography of a former student, must be referred to the Institute's Records Manager ([records@gordontafe.edu.au](mailto:records@gordontafe.edu.au)), all other requests must be referred to the Institute's Privacy Officer who will register the request in the Institute's database and ask the enquirer

complete a formal *Request for Access to Documents or Information RM FO 04.01*. The request will then be reviewed against relevant legislation and a formal response provided to the enquirer.

#### 4.10 Freedom of Information Request

The Gordon is an Agency under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Vic). As such, requests for release of information can be made under the provision of the Act by any individual or organisation. Responses to these requests must be made within a specified timeframe and are subject to external review. Any request for the release of information under the Freedom of Information must be referred immediately to the Manager Quality and Risk Management ([qualityassurance@gordontafe.edu.au](mailto:qualityassurance@gordontafe.edu.au)) as the Institute's delegated FOI Officer.

### 5. Responsibilities

Position	Responsibility
Manager Quality and Risk	For the communication of guidelines for staff dealing with external enquiries relating to student information Has delegated authority as the Institute's privacy and freedom of information officer to release information to third parties where required under law or with the consent of the relevant individual.

### 6. Key aligned internal documents

*Information Release Consent to a Third Party RM FO 06.01*

*Information Release Consent for Information of a Personal or Sensitive Nature RM FO 06.02*

*Request for Access to Documents or Information RM FO 06.02*

*Privacy Policy RM PO 04*

*Request for access to documents or information RM FO 04.01*

*Records Management Procedure RM PR 03*

*Assessment Policy TED PO 10*

*Issue of Awards and Academic Statements STS PR 10*

### 7. Review and approval

	Position	Area
<b>Author / reviewer:</b>	Risk Manager Records Manager	Quality and Risk Management Records Management
<b>Custodian:</b>	Manager Quality and Risk	Quality and Risk management
<b>Review schedule:</b>	This procedure will be reviewed every 3 years (or earlier as required)	
<b>Last reviewed / updated:</b>	27 May 2020	