




Student Handbook



All information is current at the time of publication but is subject to change.
OCTOBER 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this publication is to answer frequently asked questions and familiarize students with administrative policy and procedures. Information is organized by category. The link to frequently used forms is in the appendix.

Keys to Academic Success

- (1) The first key involves learning about the policies, procedures, and important dates that affect students. Becoming familiar with the various services University of the Potomac provides and making use of those services when needed will facilitate your progress.
- (2) Research shows that regular class attendance is very important to academic success. It is simple but true: the key factor for student success is regular classroom attendance and active classroom participation.
- (3) Feel free to consult with your academic advisor when you have a problem or concern that is affecting your academic progress. Sometimes another person can help generate solutions that enable you to work through a challenge.
- (4) Developing study skills, time management skills, and interpersonal skills in academic and experiential coursework will enhance your effectiveness in your current position and your potential for career advancement.
- (5) Rely on the members of your cohort and/or class. As a cooperative, rather than a competitive team, you can help one another to be the best you can be as you go through the program as one support group.
- (6) The final key is to keep focused on your long-term goal: degree completion. As you encounter challenges, search for solutions that maintain your progress toward this goal.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Location and Access

DC Campus (Main Office)

1401 H St NW, Suite 100

Washington, DC, 20005

Phone: 202-274-2300

Metro: The closest metro station is McPherson Metro station (orange, silver, and blue lines).

Parking: there are public parking garages and street parking available around the premises.

VA Campus

7799 Leesburg Pike, Suite 200

Falls Church, VA 22043

Phone: 202-521-1290

Metro: The closest metro station is McLean station (silver line).

Parking: There is a public garage behind the building. Parking fees may apply.

Office Hours

DC/VA Campus

Monday 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Tuesday 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Wednesday 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Thursday 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Friday 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Saturday Hours vary – contact the campus

Emergency Preparedness

The university recognizes the need to prepare for unexpected catastrophic events such as natural or human-made disasters or the outbreak of pandemic illnesses, as well as the need to return the university as quickly as possible to its normal operations should such events occur. Our preparation, response, and recovery will draw upon local, state, and federal agencies and experts.

Emergency Response and Evacuation Procedures

University of the Potomac has designated an Emergency Management Team that will serve as the Campus Security Authority:

President- Ms. Andrea Kemp-Curtis

Executive Director, IT/Facilities- Mr. Mark Jiidee

Dean, Student Support Services- Ms. Lachelle Matthews

Human Resources- Ms. Seble Teklehaimanot

Director, IRA- Ms. Camilla Meros
Academic Dean – Dr. Sergei Andronikov
PDSO- Omega Barrow

In the event of an emergency or dangerous situation on campus, any employee who is aware of the emergency should call 9-1-1 and alert the members of the Emergency Management Team by calling 1-202-274-2300 (DC) or 1-202-521-1290 (VA).

The team member who receives the call will determine, in consultation with other members of the Emergency Management Team as appropriate, whether a notification should be sent to the University of the Potomac community. The Emergency Management Team will, without delay, and considering the safety of the community, determine the content of the notification and initiate the notification system, unless issuing a notification will, in the professional judgment of responsible authorities, compromise efforts to assist a victim or to contain, respond to, or otherwise mitigate the emergency. If it is determined that an emergency notification should be sent, a member of the Emergency Management Team will send the notification via text message to the identified campus community using the University of the Potomac's notification procedure; email blast, one to one voice contact. The content of the notification will be determined by members of the Emergency Management Team, and certain messages will be pre-formulated to expedite the notification process.

After notification of an emergency or dangerous situation, the Emergency Management Team will monitor events and circumstances and determine appropriate follow-up information that should be disseminated, such as all-clear notices and updates about continuing steps taken to respond to the emergency, including class cancellations. The Emergency Management Team shall also notify local authorities, as appropriate.

Emergency Notification and Evacuation Testing

University of the Potomac will annually publicize its emergency response and evacuation procedures in conjunction with annual tests of the emergency notification and evacuation plans. The emergency notification system will be tested at least annually. These tests may include regularly scheduled drills, exercises, and appropriate follow-through activities, designed for assessment and evaluation of emergency plans and capabilities. Each calendar year, the Emergency Management Team will test the notification system, evaluate the outcome, determine if any revisions to existing procedures are necessary, and advise the University's President of the date, time, and result of the annual test. In addition, test evacuation procedures will be performed at least annually. A safety representative will be assigned to coordinate evacuation tests and assist with evacuation in the event of an actual emergency. Tests may be announced or unannounced and will be documented by Human Resources or facilities manager. Documentation will include a description of the test, the date and time, and whether it was announced or unannounced.

When these Policies Take Effect

These policies and procedures will become active and remain in effect when a university state of emergency is declared, as defined herein. If a university state of emergency is not declared, regular university policies and procedures remain in effect.

Guiding Principles

The university will make every effort to provide necessary information to the university community throughout any University state of emergency. Departments should be as flexible as possible to enable all faculty, staff, and student employees to continue to work and maintain operations to the extent possible, including facilitating working from home and other remote locations, allowing full-time employees to work part-time, using flexible work schedules or alternate work assignments, and utilizing other appropriate solutions during the emergency period.

Unless directed otherwise, individuals who can work are expected to report for work and support the department or university in whatever capacity is needed. Faculty, staff, and student employees can be required to work outside their usual classifications/responsibilities to the extent they are qualified and can safely perform the work.

Catastrophic Event

University of the Potomac (UOTP) recognizes the need to prepare for unexpected catastrophic events such as natural or human-made disasters, the outbreak of pandemic illnesses, and other events that affect the continuity of operations and make it difficult to maintain normal processes including classroom instruction.

Definitions

Catastrophic Event – any unforeseen event, outside the control of the university, which is so widespread that it interferes with normal activities.

Policy

If a catastrophic event occurs that requires evacuation from the main campus or branch location, UOTP will notify the student population using a mass text and email through the university email system and follow its policies outlined in the Student Handbook.

As our distance education program is done entirely through our Learning Management System (Moodle), classes and academic programs can be resumed through this medium as soon as possible. On ground/Hybrid students will need to move to this modality until the main campus or branch location is able to resume normal operations. UOTP leverages available educational technologies such as the SONIS Student Management System as well as Moodle as our Learning Management System. These cloud-based programs should minimize the likelihood of service interruptions.

UOTP utilizes AWS cloud backup services to store and protect data. This includes an online managed backup service that provides the university with a system for the backup, storage, and

recovery of computer files. Backups are performed on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis.

University backup and recovery procedures are tested and verified on an annual basis to ensure protection in the event of an outage, system failure, or natural disaster.

Emergency Closing of the University

If the University finds it necessary to cancel or delay classes, announcements are made on local television stations. Students are advised to check their local stations for announcements or to call the University. An announcement is placed on the University's website. All students must check their Potomac email for announcements and additional information.

Emergency Medical Procedures

In the event of minor medical emergencies, there are first aid kits located at the front desk, library, and in the kitchen. They are stocked with supplies necessary to treat minor cuts, bruises, and sprains. In more severe cases, the situation should be reported to the closest staff or faculty member, who will, in turn, delegate someone to report the event to the administrator in charge. The administrator will contact medical personnel and the emergency contact designated by the student, if necessary. If time is critical, there are phones with outbound lines in the library and the lobby.

The first person on the scene should call 911 immediately. Delegate the closest individual to contact an administrator or instructor. Clear others from the immediate vicinity. Attempt to keep the victim calm and still. Do not attempt to move the victim. Follow any directions provided by the 911 operator.

Fire Drills

Fire drills may be held at unspecified times. Students are expected to recognize the necessity for the procedure and to cooperate fully in the activity. Fire evacuation maps are posted in all classrooms and hallways. All exits are marked. Students are expected to leave the building promptly and in an orderly manner.

Insurance

The school does not provide insurance against fire, theft, or vandalism of student property.

Lost and Found

Lost items may be turned in to instructors or the front desk. Any person who loses an item may inquire at the Front Desk.

Smoking

Smoking is not permitted anywhere inside the University's buildings. There are designated smoking areas outside campuses.

Student Information

The University requires every student to keep the school informed of his/her current address, phone number, and e-mail. Changes can be made through the student portal.

Academic Records

Current academic records are generated electronically via Moodle, our Learning Management System. This system is password protected with specific security permissions. Hard copies of these records are stored in fireproof cabinets on the main campus or within the SONIS SIS. Each cabinet requires a key and is behind several doors with special access for entry. All forms from the admissions application are scanned and stored in the digital academic file in SONIS for each student. Electronic documents are stored in the cloud with a digital backup.

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

New Student Orientation

All new students are required to participate in University of the Potomac's orientation. This familiarizes new students with the University's academic policies, teaching philosophies, curricula, and support services.

Cell Phone Usage

The usage of cell phones is not permitted during class time.

Class Schedule

Courses begin at various times throughout the year. Class meeting dates for each course are made available by the Registrar's Office.

Completion of Program and Course Requirements

See the [Academic Catalog](#) for complete information.

Graduation Dates

The formal commencement ceremony is held in June each year on a date announced by the University. Degree candidates who have completed all graduation requirements since the

previous commencement ceremony are eligible to participate. Degree candidates who will be enrolled in their final courses on the date of commencement may also apply to participate in the ceremony. A student receiving an incomplete grade in a course who completes the course requirements and is issued a grade in that course is deemed to have completed the course in the session it was taken. The degree conferral date (noted on transcripts and diplomas) is the final day of the session in which the student completes all degree requirements. Diplomas and official transcripts are issued only for students who have completed the academic requirements of their program and have no financial obligation to the University.

Diplomas and transcripts are issued only to students in good financial standing with the University and only these students may participate in the commencement ceremony. Eligible students must submit an application for graduation to the Student Retention and Services by the established deadline.

Leave of Absence (LOA)

Students in good standing who find it necessary to interrupt their education may apply for a Leave of Absence (LOA) for up to one semester (two consecutive eight-week sessions) per academic year. Students are encouraged to consult both an academic advisor and a Financial Aid Officer before taking a leave. Students in need of a leave longer than 16 weeks are required to withdraw from the University.

International Students

International students in good standing who find it necessary to interrupt their education may apply for a Leave of Absence for a maximum of one semester (two consecutive eight-week terms) once they have successfully completed two semesters (four consecutive terms of 8 weeks or 12 credits) per academic year. A leave of absence does not adversely affect satisfactory progress toward a degree. Students who have not completed 12 credit hours at the time of a Leave of Absence request are required to withdraw from the University. International students cannot apply for Leave of Absence in the middle of their semester.

Reminders:

- Students must contact Financial Aid for information on the effects of a Leave of Absence on financial aid packages.
- Students who request and receive a Leave of Absence or who withdraw from the University and subsequently return must meet with an Advisor to reestablish their academic plan/degree map.
- If a student takes a Leave of Absence during a course, the student must repeat the entire course unless a final grade can be given.
- Students taking an LOA may have financial obligations.

Application for LOA must be made prior to the deadline announced by the University.. Students must fill out a Leave of Absence (LOA) Request Form. The LOA will NOT be granted for a session that has already started. If a student takes a Leave of Absence during a course, the student must repeat the entire course unless a final grade can be issued. The request must be approved by the Academic Department, Student Finance Department, and International Student Services Department (if applicable). The Student Retention and Services Department will file the request and keep track of students on LOA. Failure to return at the end of an approved Leave of Absence results in the student being withdrawn from the University. The effective date of the withdrawal is the last day of an approved Leave of Absence.

Course Attendance Policy

Implicit in the Mission of the University of the Potomac is enhancing cross-cultural understanding among the diverse and multicultural student body it serves. As a result, the University places a high value on the classroom experience. Attendance is expected in all classes and attendance records are maintained. Class attendance is important for the following reasons:

- University of the Potomac teaching strategies take advantage of small class sizes to encourage interactive learning among students and instructors whether in an online or a classroom-based environment.
- Institutional learning outcomes require student participation in class.

Minimum Attendance Requirement

The University's attendance policy is as follows:

Minimum Attendance Requirement: Students must attend a minimum of 75% of a course in order to be eligible to be considered for a passing grade.

After 14 consecutive calendar days of absence, a student will be withdrawn from the University. Any action taken due to excessive absences may affect financial aid and graduation dates.

Obligations of students who are absent: Students are responsible for all missed content and assignments from classes that they miss. Whenever possible, students who will miss a class should make prior arrangements with their instructors to make up any work missed.

Prolonged absences: Cases of prolonged absences caused by an emergency, or a medical condition may require students to withdraw from some or all of their courses. Under such circumstances, students should first consult student services, a program chair, or an Academic Dean.

When scheduled holidays or inclement weather interfere with scheduled classes, instructors are responsible for establishing makeup time and/or course work. Fridays are set aside for such make-up. Scheduled makeup sessions, extended class sessions, additional assignments, and

individual conferences may be considered makeup alternatives. Makeup must be completed before the end of the session in which they occurred.

Course Attendance Periods

Attendance in online courses is automated through the University of the Potomac learning management system (LMS). Attendance in the online portion of Hybrid courses is also automated. All courses have 16 attendance periods each session and students must attend a minimum of 75% (12 attendance periods) of a course in order to be eligible to be considered for a passing grade.

Online Attendance periods for each week of the eight-week session are from Monday 12:01 am to Wednesday 12:00 am (Eastern Standard Time) and from Thursday 12:01 am to Sunday 12:00 am (Eastern Standard Time). A student has attended an online class for an attendance period by logging into the class at least once during the period and answering at least one discussion question.

Hybrid: Attendance periods for each week of the eight-week session consist of the scheduled on-campus class meeting and the online period from Monday 12:01 am to Sunday 12:00 am (Eastern Standard Time). A student has attended the online attendance period for the week by logging into the class at least once during the period and answering at least one discussion question.

All times are Eastern Standard or Daylight Savings Time.

Registration Procedures

Every student must be registered each semester. A semester is defined as two 8-week sessions. Continuing students will be registered at the midterm of the second session of their semester to ensure a place in the upcoming semester.

Course Withdrawal

If a student has attended beyond the ADD/DROP period of their semester but subsequently wishes to withdraw (Drop) from a course in that semester, they must complete a Student Status Change Request Form (SSCR) form. The form is available on the [Student Retention and Services webpage](#). Please see the Institutional Refund Policy for financial obligations.

Add/Drop Period

The ADD/DROP period is defined as the first week of the 16-week semester. Students may drop a course within the ADD/DROP period of their semester without incurring an academic penalty or financial obligation. Students may add courses during the add/drop period. Students must submit a Student Status Change Request (SSCR) form to request the changes. All requests will be reviewed by the Academic Affairs Department and account balances will be adjusted accordingly. Students must review the Institutional Refund Policy for financial obligations.

Official Academic Program Withdrawal

To officially withdraw from University of the Potomac, a student must inform the Student Retention and Services Department at studentservices@potomac.edu and complete the Withdrawal form. Only an approved Withdrawal form constitutes an official withdrawal. (See the Refund Policy in the University of the Potomac [course catalog](#) for financial obligations incurred when withdrawing from the University).

Administrative Program Withdrawal

If a student fails to attend a course during any 14 consecutive day period or to register for subsequent sessions, the Registrar withdraws them from their program. This process constitutes an administrative withdrawal. (See the Refund Policy in the University of the Potomac [course catalog](#) for financial obligations incurred when withdrawing from the University).

"WF" Indicator

Indicates that a student was withdrawn from a course during week five (5) of any course. The grade WF is also applicable to those students who have not officially withdrawn from the class, have ceased attending, and have failed to complete the requirements of the course. This grade carries the same academic penalty as a grade of "F" and is computed as a part of the Grade Point Average.

Re-Admission and Re-entry

If a student has enrolled in another institution after withdrawing from the University of the Potomac, official transcripts should be provided from that institution prior to re-admission or re-entry to the University. Students are encouraged to contact Admissions for further details on re-admission and Student Support Services for additional information on re-entry.

Students are required to comply with any new program requirements, policies, and procedures, textbook changes, or changes in tuition and fees that are delineated in the catalog in effect at the time of their re-admission or re-entry.

Re-entry Process

Students must complete the re-entry application prior to the term in which they are returning. Upon receiving the re-entry application, a member of Student Support Services will contact the student to schedule an interview with the Re-entry Committee. During the meeting, the student will have the opportunity to explain their reasons for withdrawing from the University and present their academic plan for continuing and graduating. The Re-entry Committee will make a final decision within 48 hours after the interview, and the student will be notified of the outcome via email.

The Re-entry Committee will consist of members of academics, student support services, and faculty members. Students must pay any outstanding balance prior to registration. If approved, the Re-entry Application is routed to the DSO (if applicable), Academics, and Student Financial Services for signatures. The student is granted access to the university email and learning management system. The re-entry committee will convene twice per term, in weeks 3 and 7. All re-entry requests must be submitted by the end of week 7 for consideration in the following term.

Sample Valid Re-entry Reasons:

- Military service, with supporting documentation
- Medical conditions, with appropriate documentation
- Major life events or transitions

International Re-entry Process

- Maintain valid F-1 visa status
- Provide documentation explaining the reasons for the withdrawal

Re-admission

Students that have been withdrawn for over one year (Re-admissions) should contact Admissions Department. Students that have been withdrawn for less than one year (Re-entry) should contact Student Retention and Services.

If a student has enrolled in another institution after withdrawing from the University of the Potomac, official transcripts should be provided from that institution prior to readmission to the University. Please contact Admissions for further details on re-admission.

Students are required to comply with any new program requirements, policies, and procedures, textbook changes, or changes in tuition and fees that are delineated in the catalog in effect at the time of their re-entry/re-admission.

How to Obtain University of The Potomac Transcripts

Requests for official University of the Potomac transcripts must be made in writing and submitted to the Registrar via the online Parchment portal. Requests must include a student's name, four digits of the social security number (if applicable), dates of attendance, and a complete address to where the transcript may be sent. The cost of an official transcript is \$10. Financial clearance is required by the Student Financial Services Department before an official transcript can be released. Unofficial transcripts can be downloaded from the Student Portal.

Detailed information is available on the [Registrar's Office webpage](#).

VETERANS BENEFITS

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Education Benefits

University of the Potomac is approved for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) education benefits. Please see your Financial Aid Officer as eligibility varies by campus and program.

Yellow Ribbon Program for Veterans

The Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program (Yellow Ribbon Program) is a provision of the Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008. This program allows institutions of higher learning (degree-granting institutions) in the United States to enter voluntarily into an agreement with Veterans Affairs to fund tuition expenses. The institution can contribute up to 50% of those expenses and Veterans Affairs will match the same amount as the institution. UOTP's Washington, DC location participates in the Yellow Ribbon Program.

Private or Foreign School	Up to \$24,476.79 per academic year National Maximum
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STUDENT SERVICES AND RESOURCES

Learning Resources Center/Library

The Learning Resource Center (LRC) is maintained at the Washington, DC campus and provides support to the Virginia campus as well. The LRC is committed to supporting and promoting excellence in teaching, research, and scholarship at a high standard for students and faculty.

The LRC offers access to scholarly Online-Databases and in-print collections, and training workshops on researching skills, finding resources, managing results, citing sources, and avoiding plagiarism.

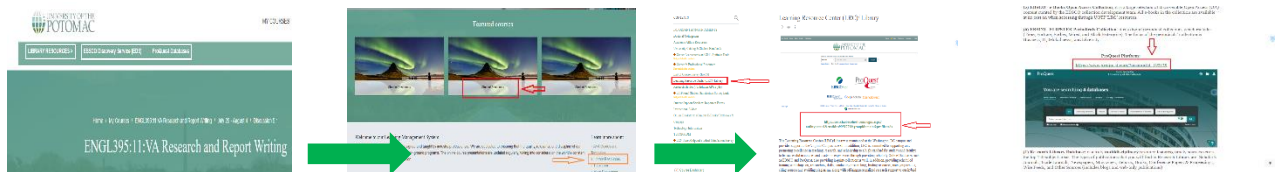
Contact The Learning Resource Center (LRC) Support: library@potomac.edu

How to access LRC Information Resources?

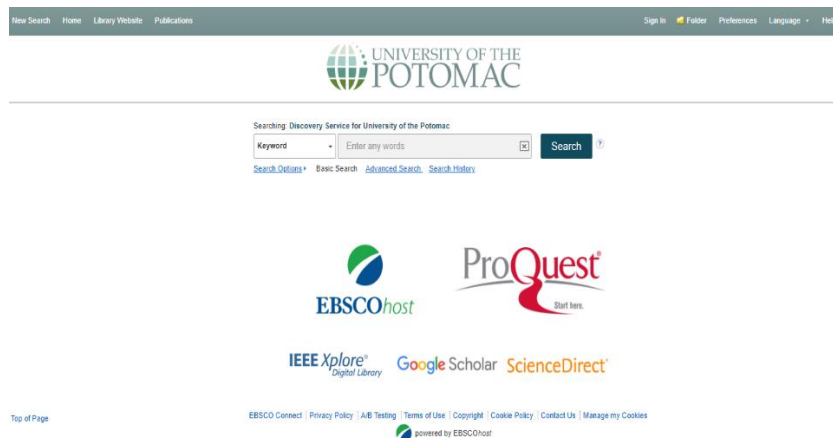
Step 1: Log in with your UOTP account through E-Learning System (Moodle)

<https://uotp.mrooms.net/login/index.php#section-8>

Step 2: Click on one of the following links: Library Resources, EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS), ProQuest Databases



❖ EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS):



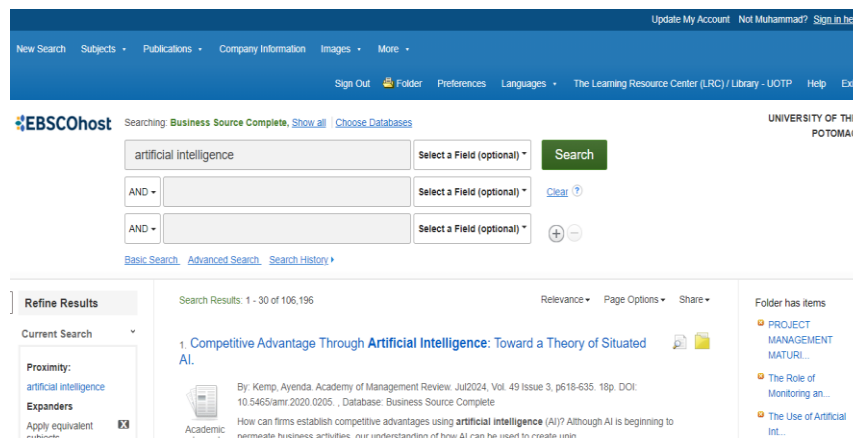
EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS) is an integrated platform that enables users to search and access content from over **200 online databases** through a single interface. **EDS** provides access to a variety of resources, including scholarly journals, eBooks, trade publications, newspapers, reports, and audiobooks. EDS also includes multimedia content, such as maps, graphs, charts, images, audio recordings, and videos. **EDS** also offers features like subject indexing, full-text searching, relevance ranking, and high-quality linking.

EBSCO Discovery will always at first show you items you have access to the full text of, which will significantly cut down your research time compared to searching just with search engines like Google Scholar, where you will come across many items that are behind a paywall.

Scholarly Online Databases:

Some of University of the Potomac online resources (databases, e-journals, and e-books) are governed by license agreements such as EBSCO and ProQuest databases, which have limited use to current UOTP faculty, staff, and students, and log in by Potomac User IDs. However, the LRC provides some Open-Access resources which are available for no charge.

❖ EBSCOhost Research Database:



It is an intuitive online research platform used by thousands of institutions and millions of users worldwide. With quality databases and search features, EBSCO is the leading provider of research databases, e-journals, magazine subscriptions, eBooks, and discovery services.

(1) The Business Source Complete database: It is primarily a business-focused database, and can be accessed through LRC's Moodle page, which includes (1,865) active Full-Text journals, non-open access, peer-reviewed, with no embargo, and indexed in Web of Science or Scopus. Moreover, it includes a growing collection of (1,306) active global Open Access (OA) journals, which treated with high-quality subject indexing and precise/accurate full-text linking. It also includes a 16 comprehensive non-journal business content such (12,970) Case Studies – Business, (1,185,250+) Company Profiles/Information Records, (1,241) Country Economic

Reports, (2,395) Market Research Reports, (5,422) SWOT Analyses, (75,000+) Videos - Associated Press, (8,840) Working Papers (Business) and more.

(2) Regional Business News Database: It provides nearly (40) active full-text, non-open access covering U.S. and Canadian provinces' business publications. Users can search newspapers, magazines, and other resources from trusted news dating back to 1990.

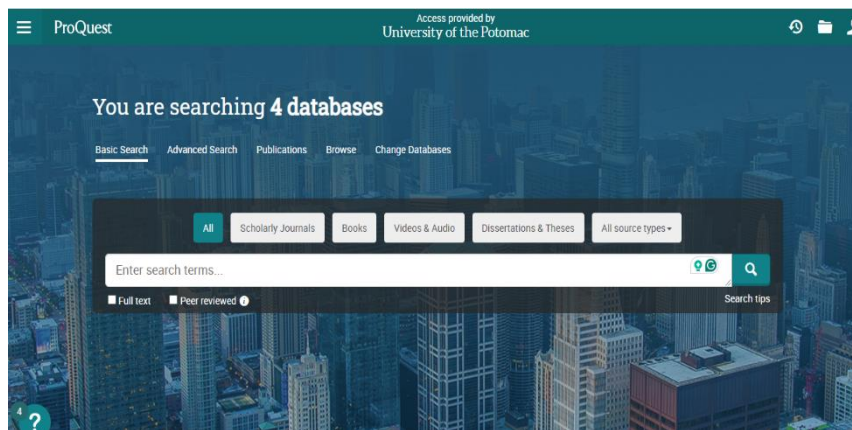
(3) GreenFILE Database: It is a research database covering all aspects of human impact on the environment. Its collection of scholarly, government and general-interest titles includes content on global warming, green building, pollution, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, recycling, and more.

(4) Open Dissertations Database; It is a free multidisciplinary database with records for more than (1.4) million electronic theses and dissertations from more than (320) universities around the world. It provides insights into the traffic and discoverability of ETD research.

(5) E-Books Open Access Collection; It is a large selection of discoverable Open Access (OA) content curated by the EBSCO collection development team. All e-books in the collection are available at no cost when accessed through UOTP LRC's resources.

(6) FLIPSTER Periodicals Collection: It is a digital periodical collection that includes (Time, Fortune, Forbes, Wired, and Black Enterprise). The focus of the periodicals' collection is Business, IT, Global news, and Diversity.

❖ ProQuest:



(1) Research Library Database: Research Library is a truly multidisciplinary resource featuring timely sources across the top 150 subject areas. The types of publications that you will find in Research Library are: Scholarly Journals, Trade Journals, Newspapers, Magazines, Reports, Books, Conference Papers & Proceedings, Wire Feeds, and Other Sources (including blogs and web-only publications)

(2) ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global Database: It is another multidisciplinary resource providing material to support all departments and disciplines. It is the world's most comprehensive curated collection of multi-disciplinary dissertations and theses from around the world, offering millions of citations and full-text works from thousands of universities.

❖ **Book Collection**

The LRC collection has been developed to support the courses and program majors offered by the University. The collection includes over 6,500 print volumes and is available to use onsite and located at the DC Campus.

❖ **Zotero: Citation Manager Application**

Zotero is a reference management software that allows you to easily collect, manage, and save bibliographic information and other related research materials you find on the Web, also it works with word processing programs to help you easily cite your sources, add footnotes and create bibliographies. <https://www.zotero.org/>

❖ **APA citation 7th Edition**

The APA citation 7th edition is a referencing style published by the American Psychological Association, which aims to acknowledge the ownership of resources used in the academic writing and provides information necessary to identify and retrieve the work cited in the text. <https://apastyle.apa.org/>

❖ **Plagiarism Information and Checkers**

Plagiarism includes the use or representation of the thoughts, ideas, or words of another as one's own work in any assignment including the paraphrasing of information, the duplication of an author's words or ideas without identifying the source, and the failure to cite quoted material properly. To learn more about plagiarism, students are encouraged to review materials on plagiarism provided through our LRC.

❖ **Computers**

The University has computer labs to provide students, faculty, and staff with access to the internet and University databases on all campuses.

❖ **Training workshops materials & LibGuides**

Training workshop material and LibGuides are available through the LRC Moodle page.

❖ **Public Libraries**

To obtain a public library card, an ID and proof of address may be required. Please check your local library for acceptable forms of identification.

Student Government Association (SGA)

Student Government Association (SGA) has been established to empower students to have an organized voice in the operations of the University and a vehicle for arranging social and cultural activities as they wish. University of the Potomac Student Government represents students' views and concerns and takes these views and concerns to University administration. University of the Potomac Student Government:

- (1) Meets at least twice each year with administrators to discuss student concerns and the progress of the University;
- (2) Administers a student activity budget to be expended by the Student Government for social and cultural activities. Student and Retention Services work with Student Government to develop speaker series, establish student chapters of national professional associates, and enrich the academic life of the University.

Meetings of the Student Government are open to all students. Meeting dates are posted as determined by the Student Government Association. Students can contact studentservices@potomac.edu for more information.

Career Development Services (CDS)

Career Development Services has the resources students need to begin their job search journey. CDS offers workshops on resume development, interview skills, employment applications, and networking.

For more information, students should contact careerservices@potomac.edu.

Student Financial Services

For information on student financial services, please refer to the [course catalog](#).

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Compliance with the Civil Rights Act Of 1964

University of the Potomac admits students without regard to sex, race, color, sexual preference, national or ethnic origin, and accords all students the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally made available to students at the University. The University does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, sexual preference, national or ethnic origin, handicap, religion or age in staff hiring, student admission, or in the administration of its policies and programs.

Students, faculty, and administrative employees should refer any discrimination complaints in writing to the Human Resources Department. For additional assistance related to Civil Rights under Title IX, contact:

Office of Civil Rights, District of Columbia Office
U.S. Department of Education
330 C Street, SW, Room 5046 Washington, DC 20202
Phone: (202) 260-9225
Fax: (202) 260-7250
Email: OCR@ed.gov

(NOTE: There are different offices for different areas of the country. Visit the OCR website for more information.)

Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy

Sexual harassment is inappropriate in a working environment and is not tolerated at University of the Potomac. Sexual favors may not be explicitly or implicitly suggested as a term or condition of an individual's academic performance or employment. Sexual contact and conduct with sexual overtones, which has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic work performance or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or working environment, is prohibited. The University promptly investigates complaints of sexual harassment and when necessary, takes disciplinary action up to and including termination of the offending individual. All complaints of sexual harassment will be handled according to the Grievance Policy (Non-Academic) section of the Catalog and should be brought to the attention of the Title IX Coordinator or to General Counsel.

All sexual discrimination, sexual harassment, or sexual assault matters should be brought immediately to the attention of the Title IX Coordinator on campus or via the Title IX incident report form.

Washington D.C. Campus/Online

Title IX Coordinator

1401 H Street, N.W., Suite 100,
Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 274-2300
studentservices@potomac.edu

Falls Church, VA Campus

Title IX Coordinator

7799 Leesburg Pike, Suite 200
Falls Church, VA
(202) 521-1290
studentservices@potomac.edu

Americans with Disabilities Act

Students wishing to avail themselves of special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act must disclose special needs at time of admissions; accordingly, every effort is made to make reasonable accommodations. Certain programs may require manual dexterity. For detailed information and request for accommodation, please check out our website at <https://potomac.edu/about/student-service/disabilities-support-services/>

For physically challenged students, University of the Potomac has appropriate elevator service with ramps to facilitate easy entry. Restrooms are equipped with wide doorways and bars to ensure accessibility.

Maintenance of a Drug-Free Environment

University of the Potomac is committed to drug and alcohol abuse prevention and to the maintenance of a drug-free educational and work environment. University of the Potomac's Substance Abuse Policy is as follows:

- University of the Potomac engages in the education of its students, employees, and community members who are involved with the University regarding substance avoidance and abuse.
- The University disseminates materials addressing the prevention, detection, and treatment of substance abuse.
- The University is committed to reporting the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of a controlled substance.
- Students who violate University of the Potomac's Substance Abuse Policy are subject to appropriate action in accordance with Disciplinary Procedures (Non-academic) referenced in the University Catalog; such discipline may involve dismissal from the University.

Code of Student Conduct

University of the Potomac's code of conduct defines the rights and responsibilities of students and establishes a structure by which to hold students accountable for violations of the code and other rules and regulations of the University. University of the Potomac expects its students will conduct themselves as business professionals as they progress toward their goals of academic achievement and career success. Student conduct subject to disciplinary action includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Academic Dishonesty such as cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism.
2. Forgery, alteration, and/or misuse of University documents, financial instruments, or identification cards with intent to defraud.

3. Unprofessional Conduct, such as, but not limited to:
 - a) Obstructing or acting in a manner disruptive or disturbing to the normal educational functions of the University, administration of the University, disciplinary procedures or other authorized activities on University property;
 - b) Disrespect of or insubordination to University personnel;
 - c) Use of oral or written profanity;
 - d) Physical and/or psychological abuse or the threat of such abuse of any person on or in the vicinity of University property or at University-sponsored or University-supervised functions or conduct that threatens or endangers the health or safety of any such person;
 - e) Sexual harassment of other students, faculty, or staff.

4. Misuse of University Property, such as, but not limited to:
 - a) Unauthorized use of, damage to, theft or seizure of any property or facilities of the University, or located within the boundary of University premises, threat to do so, or refusal to depart from any property or facilities of the University upon direction by officials or other persons authorized to represent the University;
 - b) Littering, defacing, destroying, or damaging property of the University or property under its jurisdiction;
 - c) Unauthorized entry into, presence in, or use of any University building or facility;
 - d) Violation of the computer use policy;
 - e) Violation of the University's policy on solicitation and sales.

5. Improper use of library/ resource center materials, including damage to materials and failure to return materials when due.

6. Alcohol and Drug Violations, such as but not limited to:
 - a) Use of drug and alcoholic beverages, including the purchase, consumption, possession, or sale of such items on campus property;
 - b) Possession, use, sale, or distribution of any type of drugs for illegal purposes;
 - c) Violation of the University's policy pertaining to smoking. (See page 5 of this handbook regarding smoking policy).

7. Criminal Activity and Violent or Dangerous Behavior, such as, but not limited to:
 - a) Violation of any local, state, or federal law;
 - b) Possession on University property or at any University activity of weapons, such as knives, firearms, or any dangerous chemical or explosive elements or their component parts;
 - c) Physical detainment or restraint of another person or the removal of such person from any place where he and/or she is authorized to remain or to in any way obstruct the free movement of persons on University premises or at University activities;

- d) Threatening of any member of the University of the Potomac community;
 - e) Tampering with fire protection apparatus or failure to comply with emergency evacuation procedures;
 - f) Gambling or holding a raffle or lottery on University premises;
 - g) Participation in unauthorized and/or disorderly assembly or incitement of a riot.
8. Other Violations.
- a) Violation of any other University rule or policy not contained in official publications but announced by a University official or other person authorized by the President.
 - b) Willful encouragement of others to commit any of the acts herein prohibited.

Sanctions

The following sanctions may be imposed:

- **Warning:** An oral or written statement to a student that he/she is violating or has violated University rules and may be subject to more severe disciplinary action.
- **Probation:** Exclusion from the participation in privileges or activities set forth by the University, including the holding of any office, for a specified period of time.
- **Interim Suspension:** If in the opinion of the President and/or the Disciplinary Committee, the presence of a student poses a serious threat to others, the President or his designee may, pending a hearing, suspend the student immediately. In such a situation, a hearing shall be held at the earliest reasonable time.
- **Suspension:** Exclusion from the University (to include classes and other University-related activities) for a definite period of time. If a student, while on suspension, violates the Code of Conduct while on University property or in relation to a University-sponsored activity, he/she shall be subject to further discipline in the form of dismissal or expulsion.
- **Dismissal:** Termination of student status for an indefinite period. The conditions of readmission, if any, will be stated in the order of dismissal. If a dismissed student violates the Code of Conduct while on University property or in relation to a University-sponsored activity, he/she shall be subject to further discipline in the form of expulsion.
- **Expulsion:** Permanent termination of student status without the possibility of readmission to any campus of the University.
- **Revocation of Degree:** If, in the opinion of the President and/or the Disciplinary Committee, the student has committed gross violations of the University's Academic Integrity and Ethics Policy, the President or his designee may, after a hearing, revoke the student's degree.

- **Restitution:** In addition to any of the above sanctions, reimbursement for damage to or misappropriation of property may be required. This may take the form of appropriate services or other compensation.

Disciplinary Procedures (Non-Academic)

A warning or probation may be administered by the President, CEO, or designee without further consultation. All cases involving suspension, dismissal, expulsion, revocation of degree or restitution of students are referred by the President, CEO, or designee to the Academic Dean or designee, who convenes a Disciplinary Committee for a hearing.

Any academic or administrative official, faculty member, or student may file a complaint with the Academic Dean or designee against any student for violations of University policies and procedures.

1. Written notice will be given to a student charged with violating the policies set out in this document.
2. If a student requests a hearing, the Academic Dean or designee will schedule a disciplinary hearing via teleconference, giving the student reasonable time to prepare his/her defense. If the student does not request a hearing, the Academic Dean or designee will still convene the Disciplinary Committee, who will make a written determination, which the student may petition for appeal within ten working days following receipt of the decision.
3. A written decision is issued within ten working days after the hearing.
4. The student is advised in writing of appeal procedures.
5. The student may petition for appeal within ten working days of receipt of the decision by writing a letter to the Academic Dean or designee. The appeal must outline the reasons the student objects to the decision of the Disciplinary Committee and provide any written evidence supporting the student's position.

The Academic Dean or designee forwards the student's petition for appeal, along with the summary of the disciplinary hearing and the Disciplinary Committee's written decision, to the President, who reviews all evidence and issues a written decision within thirty days. The decision of the President is final. The University does not accept further appeals from the student.

Procedures for Dealing with Disruptive Behavior

If a student's behavior, in addition to disrupting an instructional area, presents a threat to the safety of those present, the instructor should:

1. Order the student to stop the disruptive behavior and leave the area.
2. Call, or assign someone to call, the police to remove, and if necessary, arrest the student.
3. Notify the Academic Dean or designee and file a charge under the Code of Conduct.

4. If the instructor feels that the student's presence at the University presents an immediate threat to the safety of the University community, the instructor should request through the Academic Dean or designee that the student be placed on interim suspension.
5. A student on suspension is required to meet with the Academic Dean or designee prior to being permitted to return to class. The meeting is held at the earliest time practicable, but in no event later than three working days subsequent to the instructor's action. The meeting is informal in nature. The official conducting the meeting seeks to determine whether the student should be permitted to return to class or should be excluded pending resolution of the matter and provides the student with an explicit warning as to the consequences of any future disruption. The instructor should also be present unless specifically excused for good cause by the Academic Dean or designee.

First Violation

The first time a particular student causes a disruption, the instructor, depending on the seriousness of the infraction, should:

- Order the student to immediately stop the disruptive behavior and give the student a verbal warning.
- Make a written note of the warning for the instructor's files, and
- Talk with the student after class to explain the consequences of any further disruption.

Second Violation

The second time a particular student causes a disruption, the instructor, depending on the seriousness of the infraction, should:

- Inform the student of the infraction and order the student to leave the instructional area.
- If the student leaves voluntarily, the instructor shall permit the student to return the next class period. If the student refuses to leave, the instructor shall advise the student that the failure to leave voluntarily renders the student liable for immediate suspension, dismissal, or expulsion as well as criminal prosecution for trespassing. If the student still refuses to leave, the instructor shall call, or assign someone to call, the police to remove, and if necessary, arrest the student.
- If the student refused to leave, the instructor must file a charge under the Code of Conduct, and unless interim suspension has been imposed, the student will be required to meet with the Academic Dean or designee or Academic Dean prior to being permitted to return to class. The meeting is held at the earliest time practicable but in no event later than three working days subsequent to the instructor's action. The meeting is informal in nature. The official conducting the meeting seeks to determine whether the student should be permitted to return to class or should be excluded pending resolution of the matter and provides the student with an explicit warning as to the consequences of any future disruption. The instructor should also

be present unless specifically excused for good cause by the Academic Dean or designee.

Third Violation

The third time a particular student causes a disruption, the instructor, depending on the seriousness of the infraction, shall:

- File a charge under the code of conduct (mandatory).
- Inform the student of the infraction and order the student to leave the instructional area. If the student still refuses to leave, the instructor shall call, or assign someone to call, the police to remove, and if necessary, arrest the student.
- Notify the Academic Dean or designee and bar the student from attending further classes until the matter has been resolved. The student is required to meet with the Academic Dean or designee prior to being permitted to return to class. The meeting is held at the earliest time practicable but in no event later than three working days subsequent to the instructor's action. The meeting is informal in nature. The official conducting the meeting seeks to determine whether the student should be permitted to return to class or should be excluded pending resolution of the matter and provides the student with an explicit warning as to the consequences of any future disruption. The instructor should be present unless specifically excused for good cause by Academic Dean or designee.

The conditions for readmission to class, if permitted at all, are determined by the Academic Dean or designee, and communicated to the instructor.

Grievance Policy

University of the Potomac recognizes the importance of providing a prompt and efficient procedure for resolving grievances fairly and equitably, without fear of prejudice or retaliation for initiating a grievance or participating in its settlement on the part of the person(s) involved. The University has a grievance policy that provides a process for all students, faculty and employees to discuss issues of concern with management and to receive careful consideration and a prompt resolution of their problem in an open and constructive manner. This procedure is intended to supplement, rather than discourage or replace informal discussion between students and faculty and between supervisors and employees. A faculty member or a supervisor should make every reasonable effort to resolve concerns outside the formal Grievance Process.

Students should refer to Student Grievance Procedures (Academic) and Grievance Procedures (Non-Academic) below.

Student Grievance Procedures (Academic)

The University of the Potomac carefully considers student academic grievances and makes adjustments when appropriate. Students submitting a grievance are not subject to unfair action or treatment as a result of their initiation of such a grievance. It is the University's objective to

maintain good communications and to ensure that concerns of all members of the University community (students, staff, and faculty) are addressed fairly. To accomplish this, the following process should be used in seeking resolution of a student's concerns:

Step 1: Discuss with course instructor (if appropriate)

Most academic issues involving faculty or academic departments (e.g. grade appeal) can be resolved by contacting the faculty member teaching the class before the issues escalate further.

Step 2: Discuss with Program Chair or designee

Students must request a meeting with the Program Chair or Academic Dean by telephone or in writing. The meeting can be through videoconferencing, or in person. The parties involved should attempt to resolve the complaint informally within 14 calendar days of the alleged act or omission.

Step 3: If necessary, file a formal grievance with the Academic Dean or designee

A grievance must be submitted in writing to the Dean **within 30 days** of the incident. Students must complete the student grievance form and ensure all necessary information is included.

Submissions should include:

- A detailed description of the issue
- Any supporting evidence or documentation
- Student's contact information and student ID

The form will be submitted directly to the Academic Dean who will respond to the student within 48 hours. The Academic Dean or designee appoints an Academic Grievance Committee (usually within 24 hours) to collect facts and make a recommendation for resolution. At a minimum, the committee consists of a member from the student services department, a faculty member, and a student. There are some cases where a committee meeting must be assembled due to the nature of the grievance. When a meeting is assembled, the person bringing forth the grievance is invited to attend but is not required to do so. If the grievance is related to a faculty action, the faculty shall also be invited to the committee meeting unless the written evidence previously provided by the faculty suffices.

The Academic Dean or designee has the final decision on recommendations resulting from Grievance Committee deliberations. When a final decision has been reached, the Academic Dean or designee notifies all relevant parties in writing. The committee should attempt to resolve the complaint within 30 calendar days of the grievance filing date. If a grade change or other record revision is required, the Academic Dean or designee notifies the Registrar. The Registrar makes the appropriate change(s) to the student's records. The decision of the Academic Dean or designee is final.

Grievance Procedures (Non-Academic)

The grievance procedure described below is applicable to non-academic student complaints. To ensure that grievances are addressed and resolved in a timely manner, it is essential that grievances are brought to the attention of leadership as soon as the incident occurs or when the

individual gains knowledge of it. Although there may be instances where it is reasonable and permissible to report a grievance significantly beyond the time of the occurrence, there should be every effort to report such grievances as soon as possible, and not to exceed 60 days.

Level 1: Contact the Student Support Services

Most non-academic concerns can be resolved by contacting the Student Support Services Department before the issue escalates further. Students must first request a meeting with the Dean of Student Support Services by telephone or in writing. The meeting can be through videoconferencing, or in person. Involved parties should attempt to resolve the complaint informally within 14 calendar days of the alleged act or omission.

Level 2: File a written grievance

If a complaint cannot be resolved informally, the student may file a written grievance using the grievance submission form. The written grievance shall contain the name of the complainant, the date of the filing, and a brief, yet specific description of the grievance and the redress sought. Non-academic grievances will be submitted to the Dean of Student Support Services who will respond to the student and appoint a Non-Academic Grievance Committee to collect facts within 48 hours. Personnel who review the appeal at this level may include the Academic Dean and any additional people, e.g., the Director of Financial Aid, or Registrar. There are some cases where a committee meeting must be assembled due to the nature of the grievance. When a meeting is assembled, the person bringing forth the grievance is invited to attend but is not required to do so. The Dean of Student Support Services has the final decision on recommendations resulting from Grievance Committee deliberations. When a final decision is reached, the Dean notifies all relevant parties in writing within 30 calendar days of the grievance filing date unless the situation requires additional research or investigation.

All sexual discrimination, sexual harassment, or sexual assault matters should be brought immediately to the attention of the Title IX Coordinator via the Title IX incident report form. All disability discrimination matters should be brought to the attention of the Disability Office/Coordinator at studentservices@potomac.edu.

If a student had a complaint or grievance that could not be resolved after exhausting Potomac's grievance procedures, a complaint may be filed with any of the following regulatory bodies:

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE):

<https://www.msche.org/complaints/>.

Higher Education Licensure Commission (HELIC) – District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education:

<https://helc.osse.dc.gov/topic/helcadmin/community-stakeholders/public-complaints>

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV):

<https://www.schev.edu/students/resources/student-complaints>

Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)

<https://www.ice.gov/sevis/contact>

National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA):

<https://nc-sara.org/student-complaints>

The Virginia State Approving Agency (SAA) approves education and Virginia training programs. Our office investigates complaints of GI BILL ® beneficiaries. “This institution is approved to offer GI Bill® educational benefits by the Virginia State Approving Agency.” GI Bill ® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government website at <http://www.benefis.va.gov/gibill>. While most complaints should initially follow the school grievance policy, if the situation cannot be resolved at the school, the beneficiary should contact our office via email at saa@dvs.virginia.gov.

Privacy of Student Records

Policies and procedures concerning the privacy of student records are governed by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-380). Student records are maintained by the Registrar’s Office (academic records), Financial Aid Office (financial aid records), and Student Finance Office (accounts receivable records). Files that are accessed by outside personnel are documented with the date and name of the person or entity accessing the file. Files are maintained in a locked room, in fire-resistant cabinets.

Students have the right to inspect and review their educational records, request an amendment to their educational records, consent to the disclosure of their educational records, and file a complaint with the US Department of Education.

Students aged 18 or over have access to their personal record files kept by University of the Potomac. All authorized Potomac personnel have access to student records for official purposes. A student (or in some cases an eligible parent) is given access to his/her record within a reasonable time after submitting a written request to the office in possession of the record. Students should allow 72 hours for a written request to be fulfilled.

If the content of a record is believed to be in error, inaccurate, discriminatory, in violation of student rights, or otherwise inappropriate, it may be challenged, and students may submit a written explanation to be included in the record.

Student information is released to persons, agencies, or legal authorities as required by subpoena/legal process or by consent of a student (or eligible parent). Information is released on a consent basis in cases where a student or eligible parent has provided written consent, signed, dated, and specifying the information to be released and the name(s) of persons to whom the information is to be released.

Right of Refusal to Provide Copies

University of the Potomac reserves the right to deny transcripts or copies of records not required to be made available under FERPA regulations in any of the following situations:

- A student has an unpaid financial obligation to the University
- A student is in default on a Title IV federal loan
- There is an unresolved disciplinary action against a student

University of the Potomac designates the following items as directory information: Student name, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities, dates of attendance, degrees, certificates, and awards received. If a student does not want any or all of the above information released, he/she should inform the Registrar's Office in writing by the fifth calendar day following the start of classes.

Directory Information

Colleges and universities may disclose, without consent, "directory" information. University of the Potomac designates the following items as directory information: Student name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities, dates of attendance, degrees, certificates, and awards received, e-mail address, and the most recent previous educational institution attended.

COMMON ACRONYMS AND ACADEMIC TERMS

ACE – American Council on Education, an agency that evaluates non-traditional forms of education and provides credit recommendations.

BUDGET PERIOD (FINANCIAL AID) - a period of time in which a student completes a minimum of 24 credits; the equivalent of an academic year.

CATALOG – an institutional publication containing academic offerings, course descriptions, and institutional policies

COHORT – a group of people banded together to achieve a common goal. All Upper Division students in the baccalaureate program are assigned to a cohort based on when they begin the Upper Division program. This same group of individuals will progress through the degree program together as a group

COA (COST OF ATTENDANCE FOR FINANCIAL AID) - the amount it costs to attend University of the Potomac per academic year. This amount includes tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, or other education-related expenses.

CLEP - College Level Examination Program – a testing program designed to grant college credit for successful completion of subject area examinations.

CYCLE – A term used to identify a student’s billing and registration periods.

DANTES – Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support - an examination for college credit program originally developed by the armed forces.

ELECTIVE – a course chosen by the student, which does not specifically fulfill requirements of general education or degree concentration.

EFC (EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION FOR FINANCIAL AID) - the amount, based on federal calculations, that you/your family are expected to contribute towards your education.

FACULTY ADVISOR – An academic person responsible for assisting students with the development of their educational plan and with other academic concerns throughout their educational career.

FAFSA - FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID - A form used to apply for all federal Title IV Financial Aid programs. Application must be made once per year.

FINANCIAL AID – A general term used to refer to government student loans and grants.

GENERAL EDUCATION - The general education component of a standard degree program is a common core of learning including subject matter from the humanities, the natural sciences, the physical sciences, and the social sciences. It is recognized that such a common core is necessary in the development and for the growth of the educated person. It is much more important that the general education subjects be taught with emphasis upon generalization rather than with an academic specialization as the major objective.

GRADE REPORT – A report of academic progress for a single session.

ISIR - INSTITUTIONAL STUDENT INFORMATION REPORT – An information report generated from a FAFSA which indicates a student’s eligibility status.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE – A short period of time when a student is not attending school. Students are required to notify University of the Potomac in writing before taking a leave of absence.

MSCHE – Middle States Commission on Higher Education

PROMISSORY NOTE - A binding legal document students sign when applying for a student loan.

REGISTRAR – the party responsible for the maintenance of academic student records.

SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS (SAP) – Please refer to the Catalog for satisfactory academic progress requirements.

SESSION – An 8-week period of time during which a student takes a designated number of courses (two sessions equal a 16-week semester).

SPECIAL STATUS STUDENT – A student who is a non-degree-seeking student (refer to the Catalog for additional information).

STUDENT HANDBOOK - A guide designed to provide students with information on policy and procedure of University of the Potomac.

TRANSCRIPT – A record of the student’s entire academic career.

WITHDRAWAL – The action of a student leaving the University for a period of time in excess of one session.

APPENDIX

The following online forms are available at <https://potomac.edu/about/student-service/>

- Re-entry Application (within 1 year).
- Leave of Absence Request Online Form.
- Student Status Change Request Online Form.
- Authorization to Release Information FERPA Release Form
- Change of Personal Information Request Form