



Arab Open University Confidentiality Policy

Version 3

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Note: A policy can be reviewed before the designated review date should there be a need to.

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Defining Confidentiality at AOU

At Arab Open University confidential would refer to information that would not in any way breach information details of university systems, policies, and members of the university community without his/her complete informed consent.

Aim of Confidentiality Policy

The aim of the confidentiality policy at AOU is to place rules and restrictions on information transmitted within or outside the organization to prevent jeopardizing the image of a person or AOU. The policy aims at protecting all employees, students and AOU at large and therefore aims at ensuring that no information is divulged without the informed consent of the person in question or the university management. This Policy is designed to work with and support university various codes of conduct and relevant policies for dissemination of information and data protection.

Scope

The scope of the confidentiality policy would be extended to information concerning staff, students and information/data related to AOU:

Students:

- Student registration and enrollment details.
- Student details relating to any disability, impairment or health.
- All financial details related to students including that of funding need and assistance.
- Student information shared during advising and counseling.
- Student s shared views during tutorial that may or may not be sensitive in nature.
- Student information of grievances and complaints.
- Student details of assessments, grades and feedback.

Staff:

- All personal information sought at the time of employment.
- Staff financial details as salary, indemnity, promotion and other financial benefits.
- Details related to staff disability, impairment or health.
- Staff grievances or complaints registered.

AOU Data:

- Student Information System (SIS) data.
- The AOU information pertaining to agreements with the accrediting bodies or external agencies.
- AOU information pertaining to administrative and financial matters.
- AOU information pertaining to minutes of the committees, policies and bylaws.

Policy Statement

AOU is committed to transparency. It aims to strike a balance between encouraging openness, avoiding unnecessary secrecy and bureaucracy, and ensuring individual and university privacy is respected. The confidentiality policy and associated policies and procedures set the framework within which personal and any other potentially sensitive information is to be collected, stored, handled and disclosed.

AOU policy on confidentiality states the following:

- 1) Student and staff are expected to maintain high standards in complying with the confidentiality policy concerning self and others at AOU.
- 1) All staff and students are entitled to confidentiality and data protection
- 2) Staff and students are entitled to clear and transparent information of the implications of their data stored and the right to access their personal information.
- 3) Staff and students personal information should be elicited with their informed consent.

- 4) Student and staff data may be used for routine AOU processes that are within the bylaws governing students and staff by the concerned employees.
- 5) While delivering confidential information, it may be delivered only to the person concerned.
- 6) Students and staff are to nominate one person who may act as the bearer/receiver of all information in the person's absence.
- 7) In case of confidential information to be delivered, wherein the student or the staff concerned is unavailable due to death or serious injury/sickness, the information may be delivered to the immediate family member nominated at the time of enrollment or employment.
- 8) Staff and students have the right to be informed of the official information stored in the University documents concerning them.
- 9) Information may be divulged without consent only in case of a risk/ danger posed to a person, group or university property or in case of a legal requirement.
- 10) The above information # 10 may be divulged only to the appropriate authorities through proper channels of communication.
- 11) Institutional data concerning students and staff may not be used by any external entity, individual or institution without the approval of the Branch council, the senior most committee at the branch and the University Council at AOU-HQ.
- 12) Safeguarding Institutional information and data is maintained according to data protection policy.
- 13) Staff are required to report any breach of the policy immediately to the concerned body.
- 14) Any breach of confidential information would be dealt with appropriately within the jurisdiction of the AOU systems and policies.
- 15) Data related to students' academic performance may be shared with guardians or sponsors.

Roles and Responsibilities

The AOU senior Management is responsible for managing this policy and overseeing its implementation. Line managers are responsible for implementing the policy within their departments, and for overseeing adherence by staff and other stakeholders. Every member of staff should take personal responsibility for conforming to it.

- The Senior Management is responsible for gaining assurance that confidentiality is managed appropriately within the university and that adequate resources are made available to implement this Policy.
- The Vice Presidents and Branch Rectors are responsible for ensuring that all confidential information is handled and processed in line with this Policy and associated procedures.
- They are responsible for ensuring that confidentiality clauses are contained within staff contracts and within any third party contract and in accordance with any local regulatory framework or Procedure.
- Line Managers will be responsible for ensuring that all staff have read this Policy, the Information dissemination policy and AOU procedures to access to Information and are working to the required standard.
- Line managers are also responsible for overseeing staff induction and training in relation to this policy and other relevant policies.
- They will ensure that a high standard of record keeping is maintained by conducting regular audits and Quality checks.
- Staff members will generally have access to all information that they genuinely need to know to execute job responsibilities and are obliged to respect the confidentiality of all personal and institutional data.

Managing a Breach of Confidentiality

If accidental disclosure occurs, the responsible line manager should take swift action to minimize the damage. They should find out who knows about the incident, talk to them and remind them of their duty to maintain confidentiality. The breach must be reported to senior management member to consider if

further actions are required. All staff should help to prevent accidental disclosures of personal or institution sensitive information.

Regular monitoring and checking that all members of the university community are fully aware of the policy and that disclosure of personal data and other confidential information should only be made in accordance with the confidentiality and data protection policy.

Related Bylaws and Policies

- Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy.
- Data Protection Policy.
- Dissemination of Information Policy

