

Memo to: All UH-Downtown/PS Holders
From: Dr. Loren J. Blanchard, President
Subject: Access to and Maintenance of Personnel Files

UH-Downtown/PS 02.A.19
Issue No. 6
Effective date: 04/10/2020
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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy statement is to facilitate compliance with federal and state regulations as well as [University of Houston System Administrative Memoranda 02.A.31](#), to ensure the integrity of personnel files and the accessibility of personnel file information and to preserve the confidentiality of records when such disclosure would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy. This policy applies to the personnel records of all current and former University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) employees, regardless of status, classification, full-time equivalency (FTE) or duration of employment.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 Employee: Any individual hired through UHD Human Resources (HR) and paid through the payroll system.
- 2.2 DocuWare Electronic Records System: The data warehousing software system used by UHD for creating and maintaining electronic employee personnel files.
- 2.3 Personnel File: The official file of a University of Houston-Downtown employee which contains all documents or copies of documents relevant to the employment relationship that are collected, assembled, or maintained by the University of Houston-Downtown Division of Human Resources..
- 2.4 Public Information: For the purpose of this document, data, and records available to the public, including but not limited to, the name, sex, ethnicity, salary, title, and dates of employment for each employee, as set forth in the Texas Public Information Act and related rulings from the Texas Attorney General.
- 2.5 Student Employee: An employee in a position that requires student status as a condition of employment. Student employees include graduate assistants and hourly student workers.

3. POLICY

- 3.1 The University of Houston-Downtown establishes and maintains electronic personnel files for each of its current and former employees, with access limited to certain administrative and support staff in HR. Benefits records, including group insurance programs, retirement plans, supplemental retirement programs, deferred compensation programs, medical records, affirmative action records related to an investigation and/or possible pending litigation, and payroll records are maintained in HR either electronically

or in hard copy, but separately from the employee's personnel file. Those records that are maintained electronically in the DocuWare electronic records system are indexed separately from the electronic personnel file.

3.2 The University of Houston-Downtown complies with the [Texas Public Information Act](#) pertaining to access and maintenance of personnel-related information. Requests for information covered by the Public Information Act are subject to the provision of [SAM 03.H.02, Open Records](#).

3.3 Maintenance of electronic personnel records is also subject to [SAM 03.H.01, Records Retention](#), and [SAM 02.A.31, Access to and Maintenance of Personnel Files](#).

3.4 All information and records pertaining to all employees will be maintained in confidence and with respect for the individual's privacy to the extent practicable. The University of Houston-Downtown will permit access to personnel-related information as required by the Texas Public Information Act. The Office of General Counsel of the University of Houston System will make decisions regarding access under this act.

3.5 It is the responsibility of the employee and/or the employee's immediate supervisor to notify HR of any additions to and corrections of information in the employee's personnel file.

3.6 Nothing in this policy shall be used as the basis for discrimination or retaliation against any individual or group on the basis of race, gender, age, color, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Additionally, UHD prohibits discrimination in all aspects of employment on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 All necessary personal information will be directly obtained from the employee and maintained in the employee's personnel file.

4.2 Retention of personnel files will comply with the official University of Houston System Records Retention Schedule, which is prepared in accordance with state and federal regulations.

4.3 Each employee or a designated representative of the employee (prior written designation and approval is required) is entitled to review the entire contents of his or her own personnel file and to obtain a copy of any document(s) in the file. Access to the DocuWare electronic records system is restricted and employees may view their file by appointment only. If an employee disagrees with any information in his or her file, he or she must immediately notify either his or her supervisor or the Vice President for Human Resources (VPHR). He or she may ask the VPHR to correct or delete any item in the file or write a statement of disagreement. The final decision about revising, deleting, or adding rests with the Vice President for Human Resources.. If the employee disagrees

with the decision rendered by the VPHR, he/she may appeal this decision to the President. The President's decision is final and binding.

- 4.4 Employees and supervisors, in the course of performing their job functions, may access personnel records of other employees only on a need-to-know basis, except pursuant to a proper subpoena or Texas Public Information Act request.
- 4.5 The public is generally entitled to obtain information in official personnel files that is not deemed confidential by law. All requests for personnel information concerning applicants for employment, current employees, and/or former employees from sources outside of the University shall be directed to the HR Records Department. Personnel file information that is generally protected from disclosure to the public without the employee's written consent includes medical records and any other information of a highly personal or sensitive nature. Public law allows state employees to choose whether they wish to keep confidential their home addresses, telephone numbers, family member information, and emergency contact information, as well as certain other personal information, and requires state agencies to maintain the employee's written election to restrict such access. Employee social security numbers will be protected from public access. The "The Public Access Authorization" section of the new hire, onboarding paperwork allows each employee the opportunity to designate what personal information they wish to keep confidential. Certain representatives of state and federal agencies may access personnel files pursuant to authority granted to them by state and federal statutes or regulations.
 - 4.5.1 UHD Police Department officers are automatically protected by the provisions of the Texas Public Information Act from having information released from their personnel files that is not generally protected from disclosure.
 - 4.5.2 All requests for information from the personnel files of University student employees require prior written authorization for release from the student or former student in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ([FERPA](#)).
 - 4.5.3 The protected information will not be published in directories, nor included on lists of employees secured from personnel files requested by organizations or individuals under the Public Information Act. The information will not be given to anyone else who requests it, except for requests under court order, as long as the authorization to deny public access has not been rescinded. However, the University of Houston System or UHD may use such information for any official business purposes.
 - 4.5.4 An employee may rescind an authorization to release or protect personal information at any time by updating their profile in the My Personal Info/Release Personal Info tile in [People Advantage Self Service](#) (P.A.S.S.).
- 4.6 The following guidelines are followed in maintaining personnel files:

- 4.6.1. Each employee's personnel file should contain electronic copies of documents relevant to the employment relationship that are collected, assembled, or maintained by HR. This information may include, but is not necessarily limited to, biographical data sheets; transcripts of college work when appropriate; letters of recommendation; completed and signed official application forms; letters of appointment if applicable; employment contracts or agreements if applicable; personnel action request (ePAR) forms; documentation of receipt of information required by law or University of Houston System policy; annual appointment letters if applicable; all (in-house and external) training records; performance evaluations; awards and honors; documentation of disciplinary action; memoranda and correspondence to and from the employee; memoranda and correspondence to and from administrators concerning the employment relationship of the employee with the University; and promotion, transfer, and/or demotion materials.
- 4.6.2 Files of terminated employees may contain only those forms which provide the basic information for retention required by State of Texas Regulations which include dates of employment, title, salary and last known address.
- 4.7 Before documents that include information on more than one employee are scanned into an employee's personnel file, all references to other employees shall be deleted when such references may constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. HR has the responsibility to ensure that existing information in a specific personnel file conforms to these editing criteria when a request for access is received.
- 4.8 Except as otherwise allowed or required by law or court order, the contents of personnel files are considered confidential, with access only on a need-to-know basis. Violation of confidentiality by any employee involved in maintenance or handling of the personnel records may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment. Employees involved in administration of personnel policies will not, except as otherwise allowed or required by law or court order, discuss personnel issues or problems with supervisors, other employees, or the public unless the employee provides written authorization to release such information.
- 4.9 The following documentation will be stored separately from the official personnel file:
- 4.9.1 All benefits enrollment forms and related documentation, including but not limited to, group insurance policies and retirement and supplemental retirement programs, deferred compensation programs, etc.
- 4.9.2 Medical Documentation: Employee's medical records
- 4.9.3 All materials collected as a result of an investigation into complaints of Title IX policy violations

4.9.4 All materials collected as a result of a grievance filed by an employee or an investigation resulting from a claim or complaint filed against an employee.

5. REVIEW PROCESS

Responsible Party (Reviewer): Vice President for the Office of Human Resources

Review: Every three years on or before September 1st.

Signed original on file in the Office of Human Resources..

6. POLICY HISTORY

Issue #1: 06/01/03

Issue #2: 07/11/08

Issue #3: 03/18/14

Issue #4: 09/06/19

Issue #5: 04/10/20 - Reaffirmed as Issue #6

7. REFERENCES

[UH System Administrative Memorandum 02.A.31](#)

[UH System Administrative Memorandum 03.H.01](#)

[UH System Administrative Memorandum 03.H.02](#)

[University of Houston System Records Retention](#)

[Texas Public Information Act](#)

[Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)