

The Cloud and My Classroom

What are cloud-based applications?

Cloud-based applications both run on and store associated data on a server outside of our campus. This external storage area is known as the cloud because it does not reside on your local computer or on any machine that you have in your possession. Cloud based applications include some of the following: Google Docs & Drive, Dropbox, and iCloud.

What are the risks associated with using cloud-based or other web-based apps in the classroom?

Using cloud-based or web-based apps in the classroom pose a unique risk when it comes to the federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA governs student educational records, which are broadly defined by the University of Puget Sound as “any record maintained by the university which is directly related to a student.” According to the Office of Academic Advising’s tutorial on FERPA, “Almost any student-related piece of paper is part of the student’s educational record. Information displayed on a computer screen is also considered part of the student’s educational record.” Examples include but are not limited to:

- Any form of communication that includes personal information about a student
- Transcripts or any communication that includes grades (midterm or final)
- Class Lists
- Degree Progress Reports
- Academic Sanction Records
- Advising Information

To ensure compliance with FERPA, student-related files should NEVER be stored with a commercial cloud service.



What else can I use to make sure I’m compliant with FERPA in my classroom, but still use technology and web-based apps to assist with the learning process?

Technology Services provides various online tools that are FERPA compliant. Use Moodle for online content submission and delivery as well as the gradebook and other interactive tools. Use Mahara for ePortfolio content or blogs. Also, try saving documents to your network share or using web-based academic software from vDesk.

Contact the Service Desk or your Educational Technologist for more information.

Data Maintenance Responsibilities if you use the Cloud

Technology Services is unable to assist faculty and staff using cloud services in the event of data loss or other issues (e.g., loss of username or password, compromised access) associated with such an account. Users are personally responsible for backup of files stored with such services.

Many cloud services have the ability to locate and remotely wipe associated devices, including phones, tablets, and computers. It is very important to use a **strong password** to prevent harm to your account, your data, and your devices.