



Student Privacy Notice

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1. INTRODUCTION

Botswana Open University (hereinafter "the University" or "BOU") is committed to protecting the privacy and personal information of all students, including prospective students. This Student Privacy Notice outlines how we collect, use, store, share, and protect your personal data in compliance with the Data Protection Act, 2024 (Act No. 9 of 2024) and other applicable laws in the Republic of Botswana.

By enrolling or applying to study at Botswana Open University, you acknowledge that you have read, understood, and consent to the terms outlined in this Notice. This Notice is provided to ensure transparency in our data processing activities and to inform you of your rights as a data subject under Botswana law.

2. SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This Privacy Notice applies to:

- 2.1 Prospective students who have submitted enquiries or applications for admission
- 2.2 Currently enrolled students across all programmes, qualifications, and levels of study
- 2.3 Former students and alumni whose records are retained by the University
- 2.4 Students on all campuses, including distance learning, online, and blended learning modes

This Notice applies to all personal data processed by the University throughout the student lifecycle, from initial contact through to post-graduation engagement.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 **Personal Data:** Any information relating to an identified or identifiable individual, including name, identification numbers, contact details, location data, online identifiers, and academic records.
- 3.2 **Sensitive Personal Data:** Special categories requiring enhanced protection, including health data, disability information, religious beliefs, ethnic origin, biometric data, and criminal conviction records.
- 3.3 **Processing:** Any operation performed on personal data, including collection, storage, use, sharing, or deletion.

- 3.4 Data Subject: The individual (student, prospective student, or alumnus) to whom the personal data relates.
- 3.5 Data Controller: Botswana Open University, which determines the purposes and means of processing personal data.
- 3.6 Consent: Freely given, specific, informed, and unambiguous indication of agreement to the processing of personal data.

4. PURPOSE OF PROCESSING PERSONAL DATA

4.1 Lawful Bases for Processing

The University processes personal data based on:

- Contractual necessity – Performance of enrolment agreement or pre-contractual steps
- Legal obligation – Compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements
- Public interest – Performance of tasks in the public interest or official authority
- Legitimate interests – Necessary for University's legitimate purposes unless overridden by data subject's rights
- Vital interests – Protection of life or physical integrity
- Consent – Explicit consent for specific purposes (particularly for sensitive data)

4.2 Purposes of Processing

The University collects and processes personal data relating to students and prospective students for purposes that include, but are not limited to:

- processing applications for admission and enrolment.
- creating and maintaining student records.
- administering academic programmes, assessments, examinations, and awards.
- monitoring academic engagement, progression, and attendance.
- providing teaching, learning, research, and student support services.
- administering tuition fees, sponsorships, funding, and other financial arrangements.
- communicating with students through institutional platforms, including the Learning Management System.

- facilitating graduation ceremonies, alumni services, and verification of awards.
- complying with statutory, regulatory, and accreditation requirements.
- ensuring campus safety, security, and crime prevention.
- supporting research, statistical analysis, and institutional planning; and
- managing complaints, disciplinary processes, academic appeals, and quality assurance.

This list is illustrative rather than exhaustive. The University may process personal data for additional purposes that align with the original collection purpose. Personal data is processed on lawful grounds including contractual necessity, compliance with legal obligations, performance of tasks in the public interest, legitimate interests of the University, protection of vital interests, or consent where required.

5. WHAT PERSONAL DATA IS COLLECTED

5.1 Standard Personal Information

The University collects personal data throughout the student journey, from initial enquiry through graduation and beyond. This includes:

- identification and contact details
- academic records, assessments, and results
- financial and sponsorship information
- student engagement and learning analytics data
- health or disability information where necessary to provide support services
- images, including photographs and video recordings for identification and official purposes and
- ICT usage data related to University systems
- Sensitive or special category personal data is processed only where necessary and with appropriate safeguards, including consent where required by law.

5.2 Sensitive Personal Data

With your consent, the University may collect and process:

- Health information and disability status (to provide appropriate support and access to services)
- Information about special educational needs

- Data related to religious or dietary requirements.
- Disability and accessibility needs
- Criminal conviction records (where required for programmes or professional registration)

5.3 Electronic Communications

Upon enrolment, you will receive a university email address. The University logs usage of email and other ICT systems to ensure proper system functioning and security.

5.4 Visual Images and Recordings

From time to time, Botswana Open University may conduct photography or video recording on campus or at official University events, including graduation ceremonies, based on the University's legitimate interests for communication, marketing, and information purposes. Images or recordings may be used on University platforms, including live streams and official social media channels. Where practicable, notice of such recording will be provided. At large events, individual consent may not always be feasible; however, where filming focuses on identifiable individuals or small groups, the University will seek consent where reasonably possible.

5.5 Learning Analytics and Engagement Monitoring

The University uses learner analytics to monitor student engagement and support academic success. This may include attendance tracking, system login activity, and participation in online learning environments. Such data is used responsibly to provide academic and pastoral support and, where necessary, for academic or disciplinary processes.

6. HOW PERSONAL DATA IS COLLECTED

Personal data is collected through various methods:

6.1 Direct Collection:

- Application forms and enrolment documents
- Registration and course selection processes
- Face-to-face interactions with university staff
- Student surveys and feedback forms
- Request forms for services and support

6.2 Automated Collection:

- Virtual Learning Environment tracking systems
- Attendance monitoring systems
- Library and IT system access logs
- Campus security and access control systems
- Email and communication platforms

6.3 Third-Party Sources:

- Previous educational institutions
- Examination boards and awarding bodies
- Sponsoring organizations and employers
- Government agencies and regulatory bodies
- International student recruitment agents

7. DATA SHARING AND DISCLOSURE

7.1 Internal Sharing

Personal data is shared within the University between departments on a need-to-know basis: academic departments, student support, registry, finance, ICT, library, security, quality assurance, legal offices. All staff are bound by confidentiality and trained in data protection.

7.2 External Sharing of Personal Data

BOU may share student personal data with certain external parties where necessary for educational, legal, regulatory, or operational purposes. All sharing is conducted in accordance with the Botswana Data Protection Act, 2024 and relevant University policies.

7.2.1 Government and Funding Bodies

The University may share personal data with government authorities for funding, reporting, accreditation, and policy purposes:

- Department of Tertiary Education Funding (DTEF): Student enrolment, attendance,
- and progress reporting

- Ministry of Education: National statistics and policy development
- Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA): Accreditation and quality assurance
- Statistics Botswana: Aggregated or anonymized national statistics

7.2.2 Law Enforcement and Regulatory Authorities

Personal data may be disclosed to law enforcement or regulatory bodies when required by law or to support investigations:

- Botswana Police Service: Crime prevention and investigation
- Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC): Corruption investigations
- Immigration authorities: Visa sponsorship and compliance
- Courts: Legal proceedings and subpoenas
- Information and Data Protection Commission: Regulatory compliance and oversight

7.2.3 Sponsors and Employers

Data may be shared with sponsors or employers for academic and placement purposes:

- Sponsors or scholarship providers: Confirmation of enrolment, attendance, and progress
- Employers or internship supervisors: Placement support and assessment (limited to necessary information)

7.2.4 Professional Bodies

Where relevant, the University may share personal data with professional or accreditation bodies:

- Professional registration bodies: Qualification verification and licensing
- Accreditation bodies: Programme compliance and quality assurance

7.2.5 Partner Institutions

Data may be shared with educational or practical training partners:

- Partner universities: Exchange programmes, joint qualifications, credit transfers
- Placement providers (hospitals, schools, industry partners): For practical training purposes

7.2.6 Parents or Guardians

Student personal data may be shared with parents or guardians:

- Only with explicit consent, except in emergencies affecting vital interests or when the student is a minor

7.2.7 Service Providers (Data Processors)

The University may engage third-party service providers to process data on its behalf. These providers are bound by contract to process data only according to University instructions:

- Academic tools: Turnitin® (plagiarism detection), Learning Management System (LMS) platforms, cloud providers, email services
- Administrative services: IT support, payment processors, printing companies, auditors, legal advisors
- Sensitive personal data will only be shared where required by law or with your explicit consent.

7.3 Turnitin®

Botswana Open University uses the Turnitin® system as a plagiarism detection and academic integrity tool. The system compares student submissions against a range of sources. To access the Turnitin® service, students are required to provide limited personal data, such as their name, institutional email address, and course details.

Turnitin® is an independent third party; students should review Turnitin's Privacy Statement at www.turnitin.com/privacy.

Graduation Graduate names, programmes, and classifications are published within the University, printed in graduation brochures, and may appear on the university website or social media page. Graduation ceremonies are public events and may be recorded or livestreamed.

8. DATA SECURITY

Botswana Open University implements appropriate technical and organizational measures to protect personal data against unauthorized access, loss, destruction, or alteration. These measures include:

- Secure IT infrastructure with encryption and firewalls
- Access controls limiting data access to authorized personnel only
- Regular security audits and vulnerability assessments
- Staff training on data protection responsibilities
- Secure physical storage for paper records
- Data backup and disaster recovery procedures

Despite these measures, no system is completely secure. The University cannot guarantee absolute security but commits to promptly addressing any data breaches in accordance with legal requirements.

9. RETENTION

Personal data is retained only as long as necessary for collection purposes, legal compliance, and accountability, guided by the Data Protection Act, 2024 and the University's Records Retention and Disposal Schedule.

In certain circumstances, the University may anonymize personal data so that it can no longer be linked to an individual. Anonymized data may be retained and used for research, statistical, or institutional purposes on an ongoing basis without further notice.

10. TRANSFERS OF PERSONAL DATA OUTSIDE OF BOTSWANA

Botswana Open University may transfer personal data outside Botswana where necessary, including for international applicants or when engaging service providers. Where such transfers are made to countries without equivalent data protection standards, the University will ensure appropriate safeguards are in place to protect the personal data.

11. YOUR RIGHTS

As a data subject, you have the following rights:

Right	Description (Policy Wording)	How to Exercise the Right at BOU	Limitations and Lawful Restrictions (BOU Context)
Right to Be Informed (Transparency)	Data subjects have the right to be informed about the collection and use of their personal data, including the purpose of processing, lawful basis, categories of data, recipients, retention periods, and their rights under the Act.	Submit a request to the BOU Data Protection Office (DPO) or consult BOU's Privacy Notice available on the official website and student/staff portals.	This right may be limited where disclosure would prejudice investigations, legal proceedings, academic integrity, national security, or where information is subject to legal privilege or statutory confidentiality obligations.
Right of Access	Data subjects have the right to obtain	Submit a written Data Subject	Access may be refused or restricted

Right	Description (Policy Wording)	How to Exercise the Right at BOU	Limitations and Lawful Restrictions (BOU Context)
	confirmation as to whether BOU processes their personal data and to receive a copy of such data in an intelligible form.	Access Request (DSAR) to the DPO with proof of identity.	where disclosure would adversely affect the rights and freedoms of others, compromise confidential academic or staff references, breach legal privilege, or interfere with regulatory or disciplinary processes.
Right to Rectification	Data subjects have the right to request correction of inaccurate, misleading, or incomplete personal data held by BOU.	Submit a rectification request to the DPO or the relevant faculty/department with supporting documentation.	Rectification may be limited where records must be preserved for legal, academic, audit, or regulatory purposes. Historical academic records (e.g., transcripts) may be supplemented but not erased.
Right to Erasure (Right to be Forgotten)	Data subjects may request deletion of personal data where the data is no longer necessary, consent is withdrawn, or processing is unlawful.	Submit a written request to the DPO specifying the data to be erased and the grounds for the request.	This right does not apply where processing is necessary for compliance with legal obligations, public interest in education, archiving, research, legal claims, or statutory record-keeping (e.g., academic records, financial and employment records).
Right to Restriction of Processing	Data subjects may request BOU to limit the processing of their data under specific circumstances, such as while accuracy is being verified or a legal claim is being considered.	Submit a restriction request to the DPO outlining the basis for restriction.	Processing may continue where required for legal claims, protection of the rights of others, academic administration, or compliance with statutory or regulatory obligations.
Right to Data Portability	Data subjects have the right to receive their personal data in a structured, commonly used, machine-readable format and transmit it to another controller where technically feasible.	Submit a portability request to the DPO, clearly specifying the data required.	This right applies only to data processed by automated means and based on consent or contract. It does not apply to data processed under legal or public interest obligations, including statutory academic records.
Right to Object	Data subjects may object to the processing of their personal data, particularly for direct marketing or where processing is based on legitimate interests.	Submit a written objection to the DPO stating the grounds for the objection.	BOU may continue processing where it demonstrates compelling legitimate grounds, including academic administration, institutional governance, legal compliance, or performance of a task carried out in the public interest.
Right to Withdraw Consent	Where processing is based on consent, data subjects may withdraw consent at any time without affecting the lawfulness of processing carried out before withdrawal.	Submit a consent withdrawal notice to the DPO or through the relevant digital platform where consent was provided.	Withdrawal does not apply where processing is required by law, contract, or public interest obligations, including academic, financial, and regulatory requirements.
Right Not to Be Subject to Automated Decision-Making	Data subjects have the right not to be subject to decisions based solely on automated processing, including profiling, that produce legal or similarly significant effects.	Submit a request to the DPO to request human review of an automated decision.	This right may be limited where automated processing is necessary for contractual performance, authorized by law, or based on explicit consent with appropriate safeguards in place.
Right to Lodge a Complaint	Data subjects have the right to lodge a complaint with the Information and Data Protection Commission if they believe their data protection rights have been infringed.	Contact the Information and Data Protection Commission and notify the BOU DPO of the complaint.	This right does not limit BOU's ability to pursue internal resolution mechanisms or comply with lawful directives from regulators and courts.

12. COMPLAINTS

If you believe your personal data has been mishandled, you may:

- Contact the University's Data Protection Manager (details in Section 14)
- Lodge a formal complaint through the University's official complaint procedure.
- Report the matter to the Information and Data Protection Commission

The University is committed to resolving data protection concerns fairly, promptly, and in accordance with applicable law.

13. CHANGES TO THIS POLICY

This Privacy Notice is effective from 01 January 2026 and will be reviewed at least annually or as required by changes in law, University operations, or best practices. Any material updates or amendments will be:

- Published on the University's official website and student portal
- Communicated to current students via email or other appropriate means
- Made available in hard copy upon request

Continued use of university services following notification of changes constitutes acceptance of the revised Notice. Students are encouraged to review this Notice periodically.

14. CONTACT INFORMATION

Data Protection Manager

Email: dpo@bou.ac.bw

Telephone: +267 3646053 / 6000

Office Hours: Monday–Friday, 07:30–16:30

General Enquiries

Email: info@bou.ac.bw

Website: www.bou.ac.bw

For urgent data protection concerns or suspected data breaches, please contact the Data Protection Officer immediately.

END OF DOCUMENT

This Student Privacy Notice has been prepared in compliance with the Data Protection Act, 2024 (Act No. 9 of 2024) and reflects Botswana Open University's commitment to protecting the privacy rights of all students.

Students are advised to read this Notice carefully and retain a copy for their records.