

RECORDS RETENTION POLICY

1. What is a Records Retention Schedule?

1.1. A Records Retention Schedule is a document which sets out the periods of time the institutions business records are to be retained. Records may relate to individuals (e.g. staff or students) or to the University as an organisation (e.g. financial records). In all cases the records should be stored securely and only available to staff and externals who are authorised to view them.

1.2. The Retention Schedule does not look at individual records but looks at the individual group or collection of related records which are filed and used together.

1.3. The schedule applies to all records irrespective of medium.

1.4. The basic components of any Records Retention Schedule are:

- a description of each category of records which the institution generates
- a minimum retention period for each category of records.

1.5. The University's Records Retention Schedule uses the JISC generic *HEI Records Retention Schedule* as a framework and it has been adapted to suit the business of the institution.

2. Reasons for having a Records Retention Schedule

2.1. Keeping unnecessary records takes up valuable space, is expensive in terms of staff time and incurs unnecessary costs. It also imposes a risk liability under the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

2.2. Records which are retained may need to be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Data Protection Act 1998.

2.3. Retention schedules assist with compliance under the Data Protection Act, principle 5 of the Act requires us to keep personal data for no longer than is necessary and only for the purpose for which it was collected.

2.4. The Code of Practice on the Management of Records under section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 states

It is particularly important under FOI that the disposal of records - which is here defined as the point in their lifecycle when they are either transferred to an archives or destroyed - is undertaken in accordance with clearly established policies which have been formally adopted by authorities and which are enforced by properly authorised staff.

3. Who has access?

3.1. All staff have access to information in furtherance of their legitimate University duties.

4. Length of keeping records

4.1. Records should be retained for as long as they are needed to enable the institution to operate effectively, to comply with legal, regulatory and operational requirements. This includes compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

4.2. Records should be retained for only as long as they are needed, enabling efficient use of space and minimising the overall costs associated with maintaining records.

4.3. Retention periods are formulated according to a number of factors:

4.3.1. The Data Protection Act 1998 – regulates how the University uses and stores personal information, protects individuals against misuse of information and provides them with the right to access. It also ensures information is not held longer than necessary.

4.3.2. The Limitation Act 1980 – sets out time limits in which action may be taken, for example former students taking civil action against the University and for which the institution may need the files as evidence.

4.3.3. Cost – the cost of storing and maintaining records.

4.3.4. Freedom of Information Act 2000 – the public have the right to be told whether information exists and to receive that information (subject to exemptions). It is an offence to deliberately withhold or destroy information to prevent disclosure.

4.3.5. JISC guidance – where no legal or regulatory requirement is available to define retention periods the JISC 'best practice' guidance is followed.

5. Responsibilities

- 5.1. The Data Protection and Freedom of Information Officer is responsible for drawing up guidance for good records retention practice and promoting compliance with the policy.
- 5.2. Deans of Faculties and Heads of Professional Services have overall responsibility for the management of records generated by their areas activities, to ensure the records created, received and controlled are managed in accordance with University policies and procedures.
- 5.3. It is the responsibility of the Deans of Faculties and Heads of Professional Services to ensure that all live records are maintained in good order and retrieval is simple but controlled (unauthorised access must not be possible in accordance with the Data Protection Act).
- 5.4. It is the responsibility of all staff to use information for the purpose of carrying out their official contractual University duties only.

6. Long term storage of paper records

- 6.1. Paper records may need to be stored for several years but those not referred to on a regular basis need to be stored in a safe environment.
- 6.2. As records move out of regular use some will need to be archived whilst others will be destroyed. Records for archiving will need to be transferred to Archives which will be appropriately labelled identifying:
 - Contents list
 - Academic year to which records relate
 - Destruction date
 - Senior Management contact

7. Disposal of records

- 7.1. At the end of the designated retention periods appropriate action should be taken where records are to be destroyed. Electronic records should be deleted, non confidential paper records should be recycled and confidential records (including those containing personal or financial information) should be disposed of using confidential waste disposal.

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