Records Disposition Guidelines

For DIY Office or File Room Cleanouts

Best Practices of Records Retention and Disposition

- Use an approved, current records retention schedule to authorize disposition.
- Begin retention period AFTER the record is no longer current or active, for example:
  - Fiscal records: Retention period starts after the end of the current fiscal year.
  - Employee personnel records: After separation from employment.
  - Projects, case matters, events records: After completion or settlement.
- Immediately suspend routine disposition upon notification of a legal hold; resume disposition after notification that the legal hold has been released.
- Duplicate or convenience copies (“Transitory Records”) may be disposed of whenever they are no longer useful to you or your department.
- Electronic copies of scanned documents may serve as the authoritative record copy; if so, then the paper record is a duplicate that can be disposed of when no longer useful.
- Document any records destruction events.
  - Assure secure destruction of documents containing confidential or sensitive information.
  - Schedule disposition events to occur at the same time every year for maximum efficiency. Three most common disposition dates:
    - End of fiscal year
    - End of calendar year
    - End of academic semester or academic year
- Document any records transferred to an archive.
  - Consult with an archivist before sending records to an archive.

The following pages provide more details and descriptions about the ten most common record types found in offices and file rooms. (See Quick List for a one-page summary.)
Ten Most Common Record Types Found in Offices and File Rooms

1. Transitory Records

Retention: Useful life
USG Category: Common
USG Series: 0472-01-017
Description: Any type of recorded information that does not contain significant information and whose usefulness is of short duration (typically less than 2 years).
Examples: Duplicates (“convenience copies”); anything labeled “file copy” or “preliminary draft”; to-do lists; sticky notes; meeting invitations; thank-you notes; acknowledgment of receipt; desk notes; reference files; printouts of webpages; reminders; paper forms used for data entry into a computer application; sign-in sheets after attendance has been recorded in another system of record; rough sketches or diagrams; printed copies of emails and electronic documents kept only for quick reference; subject files of limited interest to the department; previous employee’s personal work notes.
Comments: Departmental copies of invoices, travel expenses, and other purchases are convenience copies. Official record is retained by the Office of Fiscal Services.

2. Student Exams, Quizzes, Papers, Homework

Retention: 1 term (after course completion, if final grade is not contested)
USG Category: Student Records
USG Series: 0472-06-012
Description: Any documentation that supports the awarding of a final grade for a particular course to a student.
Examples: Graded tests, quizzes, term papers, and other course assignments.
Comments: This does not apply to graduate student qualifying or comprehensive exams. Contested grade results: until the matter is resolved.

3. Committee Reports

Retention: Major decisions: PERMANENT; all other records: 3 years.
USG Category: Administration
USG Series: 0472-02-012
Description: Any documentation that supports or provides evidence of the activities and decisions of various standing and ad hoc committees of the institution.
Examples: Meeting agendas and minutes; studies; recommendations; resolutions; directives; declarations.
4. Search Records

Retention: 4 years (after conclusion of candidate search)
USG Category: Human Resources
USG Series: 0472-04-030
Description: Any documentation used to evaluate the qualifications of candidates and that serves to document and support the process of finding, assessing, and selecting a candidate to fill an open position within a department, college, or other unit.
Examples: Questionnaires and responses of candidates; interview questions and notes taken by those conducting the interview; applications and résumés; references; work samples.

5. Accounting Records

Retention: 5 years (after end of fiscal year)
USG Category: Finance
USG Series: 0472-03-001
Description: Any documentation of revenue due/received and expenses due/disbursed, and the authorization and reconciliation of those transactions.
Examples: Bank statements, purchase requests and purchase orders, requisitions, accounts receivable and accounts payable records, write-offs, cancelled and returned checks, refunds, journal entries, receipts, invoices, credit vouchers, etc.
Comments: Monthly and quarterly reports: retain 1 year.

6. College Department Student Files

Retention: 5 years (after graduation or last enrolled)
USG Category: Student Records
USG Series: 0472-06-006
Description: Any documentation that supports the college’s process of graduation certification for its students.
Examples: Graduation checklist, academic records, notes, correspondence.
Comments: This retention category applies to individual student files.
7. Publication Records

Retention: Final publication: PERMANENT; all other records: 5 years.
USG Category: Common
USG Series: 0472-01-011
Description: Any publication produced by the institution for general distribution, and the records created to produce that publication.
Examples: Magazines, brochures, pamphlets, calendars, event programs and promotional materials, printing specifications, artwork, mockups, rewrites.
Comments: Contact the university’s archivist for number of copies and transfer procedure of final publications.
(Publications produced by other organizations are considered reference material, not records of the university. Retain only as long as useful.)

8. Contracts and Agreements

Retention: 7 years (after expiration or cancellation)
USG Category: Legal
USG Series: 0472-14-002
Description: Any type of documentation that constitutes an agreement between the institution and other parties; except for building construction, repair, and maintenance (see “Property Management” for those records schedules).
Examples: Contract signed and dated by all parties; notes on the negotiation of the agreement; memoranda of understanding; exhibits; addenda, amendments.
Comments: Fully executed copy held by the Contracts Office is considered the record copy, whether retained in paper or in electronic form. If the document predates the establishment of the Contracts Office, then the department is responsible for retaining and disposing of the fully executed copy.

9. Employee Evaluations

Retention: 7 years (after completion of evaluation)
USG Category: Human Resources
USG Series: 0472-04-030
Description: Any type of recorded information that serves to document an employee’s performance of the duties, responsibilities, and assignments of their position, whether executive, administrator, faculty, or staff. Evaluations may be performed by supervisors, peers, students, and/or other staff.
Examples: Handwritten notes; documentation generated outside of the electronic employee performance appraisal system; work samples; scoring sheets; student comments or complaints; written responses.

Comments: Documentation held by the hiring manager is considered the record copy, whether retained in paper or in electronic form.

10. Institutional Planning Records

Retention: Final report: **PERMANENT**; all other records: **10 years**

USG Category: Administration

USG Series: 0472-022

Description: Any documentation that supports or provides evidence of a college or unit’s role in the development of short-term or long-term plans for the institution.

Examples: Instructions, internal planning materials, proposals, strategies, surveys, activity reports, working papers.

Comments: Contact the university’s archivist for number of copies and transfer procedure of final reports.