



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

# Records Services University of Melbourne Records Retention and Disposal Authority

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**Records Services  
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Records Retention and Disposal Authority  
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# Records Services University of Melbourne Records Retention and Disposal Authority

## Guidelines for Use

### 1. Purpose of the Authority<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this Authority is to provide a legal mechanism for the retention & disposal of university records in accordance with legislative instruments and regulations issued under the *Public Records Act 1973*.

The Authority:

- identifies records which are required to be preserved permanently as part of the University's archival heritage;
- prevents the premature destruction of records which need to be retained for a specified period to satisfy legal, financial and other requirements of public administration;
- specifies the minimum, and in some cases maximum, periods for which records are required to be retained;
- authorises the destruction of those records not required permanently; and
- mandates the prompt destruction of records as required under the *Information Privacy Act 2000* and other instruments

### 2. Context of the Authority

#### 2.1 Scope

This Records Retention and Disposal Authority applies to University records only. A University record is defined as "...a record comprised of recorded information in any form (regardless of format), created or received and maintained by the University and its officials in the course of conducting its administrative and operational affairs, and retained as evidence of such activity..."<sup>2</sup>.

Records of affiliates are not considered University records as affiliates are not formally part of the University unless officially incorporated under the *Melbourne University Act 1958*. Unincorporated affiliates may have public records obligations but are responsible for managing their own records in accordance with these. However, all records created by or provided by the University in connection with its dealings with affiliates are University records.

Records of University Auxiliary Operations (semi-independent enterprises which operate on a commercial basis in support of core University activities – refer to the list in the Annual Report<sup>3</sup>) are University records<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Public Record Office Victoria, PROS 07/01, General Retention and Disposal Authority for Records of Common Administrative Functions Version 2009, p.3.

<sup>2</sup> University of Melbourne Records Management Policy 2009.

<sup>3</sup> University of Melbourne Annual Report 2008, p.94.

<sup>4</sup> Note: for any given academic cycle, the University reports its current affiliates and auxiliaries by means of the Annual Report.

Records of University subsidiaries, i.e. those companies in which the University holds more than 50% of the voting rights (refer to the list in the Annual Report)<sup>5</sup>, are not University records. However, all records created by or provided by the University in connection with its dealings with subsidiaries are University records.

## **2.2 The Crimes (Document Destruction) Act 2006<sup>6</sup>**

It is an offence under the *Crimes (Document Destruction) Act 2006* for individuals or organisations to destroy documents that they know are or are reasonably likely to be required as evidence in a future legal proceeding, with the intention of keeping the documents out of evidence. It is also an offence to expressly or implicitly authorise a person to commit these acts.

This Authority is subject to an overriding requirement to retain documents or records that are, or are reasonably likely to be, required as evidence in legal proceedings, i.e. if proceedings are underway or ought reasonably to be anticipated, relevant documents and records must not be disposed of in those circumstances.

Destroying records in accordance with this Authority is lawful as long as the requirements under the *Crimes (Document Destruction) Act 2006* are met.

## **2.3 Replacement of existing University Records Disposal Schedule coverage**

This Authority replaces the following University Records Disposal Schedules:

8. Faculty Administrative Records (1992)
12. Personnel Services (1993)
13. Risk Management Office (1999)
14. Property and Buildings (1995)
15. Common Administrative Records (1999)
16. Central Records (2003)
17. Student Records (1996)
18. Academic Departments and Schools (1997)
19. Financial Records (1997)
20. Student Support Services and Academic Administration Records (2003)

## **2.4 Records already sentenced using University Records Disposal Schedules 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20<sup>7</sup>**

As of 12/03/2010, this Authority will formally replace University Records Disposal Schedules 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 & 20 as the legal authority for disposal of University records.

Records already sentenced prior to this date as short term temporary (i.e. to be destroyed in 30 years or less) under the previous Records Disposal Schedules, may retain that sentencing and do not need to be resentenced.

Records already sentenced prior to this date as long term temporary (i.e. to be destroyed after 31 years or more) or permanent under the previous Records Disposal Schedules, must be reappraised in light of this new Authority.

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<sup>5</sup> University of Melbourne Annual Report 2008, p.94.

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from Public Record Office Victoria, PROS 07/01, General Retention and Disposal Authority for Records of Common Administrative Functions Version 2009, p.4.

<sup>7</sup> Adapted from Public Record Office Victoria, PROS 07/01, General Retention and Disposal Authority for Records of Common Administrative Functions Version 2009, pp. 4 – 5.

### 3. Explanation of Authority Structure<sup>8</sup>

The structure of this Authority is based on the University's Enterprise Classification Scheme (ECS). It is intended that the ECS and this Authority be updated in conjunction with each other so as to remain consistent to the University's recordkeeping needs and obligations.

#### Function

This Authority identifies 14 broad University functions. The function is the first and highest level in the ECS. It is indicated at the top of each page in capital letters and a description is provided in its first occurrence in the Authority.

#### Activity

Activities are the processes or operations that are undertaken as part of each University function. This is the second level in the ECS. The description provided details the transactions that take place in relation to the activity.

#### Records description

This contains a description of the records classes generated as a consequence of performance of the business function, activity and/or transaction. The descriptions can refer to one record class, such as a register, or a batch of records documenting a particular set of transactions.

### 4. Explanation of Authority Headings<sup>9</sup>

#### CLASS NUMBER

The class number or entry reference number provides citation and ease of reference.

#### DESCRIPTION

The description of each record class is specified in this entry. A record class is a group of records that relate to the same activity, function and/or subject and require the same disposal action.

#### RETENTION

This entry provides the archival status of each class - either permanent or temporary. If the disposition is temporary, then a retention period is provided based on legal/institutional features of the record. In many instances, the last action completed is the trigger for the disposal action to be performed on the record. 'Last Action' can mean, for example, the date a file was closed, the date a record was last referred to, the date the last entry was made or the date a record was last updated etc.

#### CUSTODY

This entry specifies where the responsibility for care of the records lies during the different phases of their existence. For permanent records, it may nominate a date by which the records are eligible for archival custody.

#### PRIME SOURCE

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<sup>8</sup> Adapted from Public Record Office Victoria, PROS 07/01, General Retention and Disposal Authority for Records of Common Administrative Functions Version 2009, p.5.

<sup>9</sup> Adapted from Public Record Office Victoria, PROS 07/01, General Retention and Disposal Authority for Records of Common Administrative Functions Version 2009, p.6.

This entry notes the work unit or division responsible for maintaining the Prime Source for the university record generated by the function and activity.

The nominated work unit or division will retain responsibility for custody and security of the records class in accordance with legislative, financial, administrative and archival recordkeeping requirements. In the case of Permanent Records, the work unit may transfer them to Records Services when no longer required for business purposes.

Where no Prime Source is indicated, records are to be managed by the work unit currently holding custody.

In the case of records with temporary retention, where the Prime Source is not your work unit, then the records are considered to be a duplicate of the Prime Source's record and can be destroyed in accordance with Normal Administrative Practice (NAP) – see 5.10 below.

## 5. How to Use the Authority

### 5.1 Sentencing University Records Using the Authority

Before using the Authority, the records to be sentenced must first be identified and loosely described - i.e. are they student records, financial records, correspondence files, research records?

Ensure that any actions described within the records have been completed and that the records are no longer required or are considered to be inactive.

Examine the records to gain a better understanding as to what their contents are and what matters they concern – this may involve reading or scanning the contents of a file (both hard copy and electronic) as the file title is not always an accurate reflection of a file's contents

In the case of hard copy files, any file which has not been tightly controlled through means of a tracking and/or document registration scheme may contain records unrelated to the file title. Any one of these documents may cause the file to have a mandatory longer or shorter retention.

Determine the function and activity that resulted in the creation of the records. This may involve looking at the University's Enterprise Classification Scheme (<http://www.unimelb.edu.au/records/ECS/>).

Locate the corresponding function and activity within the Retention and Disposal Authority. Read through the retention and disposal classes under that function and activity combination and assess which, if any, of the classes matches the records. More than one relevant disposal class may be identified. In these cases, records should be sentenced against the longest available retention class, taking into consideration any relevant information privacy issues.

Apply the appropriate disposal class to the records and determine the disposal date of the file or batch of records. For example if the disposal class states 'destroy 2 years after last action completed', find the date of the latest dated record and add 2 years to it, i.e.

if the latest dated record was August 2006, then the record would be due for destruction in August 2008.

If the records are hard copy files and can either be destroyed at a future date or are to be retained permanently, write the disposal sentence on the outside front cover. For example, D2008 (if the records are to be destroyed in 2008) or RP (Retain Permanently). Below the disposal date, write the class number from the Disposal Authority.

If the records are electronic and can be destroyed at a future date, create an electronic folder on the shared drive titled with the date due for destruction, e.g. 'Records for destruction 2008', and drag the relevant folders and documents into this new destruction folder.

If records are batched together for destruction in a particular year, then care must be taken to ensure that they are destroyed only when all records in the batch are eligible for destruction.

### **5.2 Sentencing generic miscellaneous or correspondence files**

If records have been accumulated onto a generic file, such as a 'miscellaneous correspondence' file, then the file should be sentenced according to the record on the file that has the longest retention period.

### **5.3 Recording the Destruction of Records**

It is essential that a list of the records that have been destroyed in accordance with this Retention and Disposal Authority and the date on which they were destroyed is kept. This list should be signed by the head of the work unit. A template that can be customised to suit work unit requirements is available here:

[http://www.unimelb.edu.au/records/doc/Records\\_Destruction\\_List.doc](http://www.unimelb.edu.au/records/doc/Records_Destruction_List.doc)

At a minimum, the Records Destruction List should record the subject matter or type of the records destroyed, the date on which they were destroyed and the Authority class number under which they were destroyed. Where there are files which are uniquely identifiable as items, there should be one entry on the destruction list for each file. Records can be listed as batches where they naturally aggregate in this manner (i.e. Themis invoices]

This list should be retained in the work unit as a record of what has been destroyed and when.

### **5.4 Destruction of Hard Copy Records**

The work unit which has custody of hard copy records eligible for destruction should make the arrangements for their destruction. To protect the interests of the University, it is important to ensure that the records are destroyed in an appropriate and secure manner. The best way of doing this is to use a confidential waste destruction bin available from Property and Campus Services see

[http://www.pb.unimelb.edu.au/confidential\\_waste\\_disposal.html](http://www.pb.unimelb.edu.au/confidential_waste_disposal.html) for details.

### **5.5 Destruction of Electronic Records**

When destroying electronic records eligible for destruction, special precautions should be taken to ensure that electronic storage media containing confidential material or information that may infringe upon personal privacy is electronically wiped clean or physically destroyed. Deleting an electronic record does not always mean that it has



been completely destroyed as most operating systems do not erase deleted information from hard disks but simply remove the file names from the directory and the deleted information is eventually written over by new records. Computer hard disks should be reformatted before the computer is disposed of. Records stored on magnetic media (such as tapes) can be erased by subjecting the media to a strong magnetic field, after which, the media can be reused. Records stored on optical media (such as DVDs and CDs) can be destroyed by cutting, crushing or other physical means of destruction.

### **5.6 Destruction of Audio-Visual Records**

Audio visual records eligible for destruction such as videotape, cinematographic film and microforms (microfilm/fiche/aperture cards) can be destroyed by shredding, cutting, crushing or other physical means of destruction.

### **5.7 Storage and transfer of temporary University Records**

Records Services has limited storage capacity and can therefore only take into custody transfers of records identified for permanent retention. Occasionally, the transfer of some long term temporary records may be negotiated with Records Services on a case by case basis. However, in such situations, the final decision regarding the taking of long term temporary records into custody rests with the Manager, Records Services.

All records identified as temporary according to this Authority are to be retained by the work unit until they are eligible for destruction. Accordingly, University work units must make their own arrangements in regards to the storage of temporary records; however Records Services can provide advice and options for off site storage facilities, at the work unit's expense.

When sending records off site for storage, the records should be placed in archive boxes and a box list compiled, listing the records contained in each box – the Records Transfer Form can be used as a template for this -

[http://www.unimelb.edu.au/records/doc/transfer\\_form.doc](http://www.unimelb.edu.au/records/doc/transfer_form.doc)

### **5.8 Transferring Permanent University Records to Records Services**

Records sentenced for permanent retention should be transferred to Records Services when the work unit has no further need of them. The records should be placed in archive boxes supplied by Records Services and a Records Transfer Form ([http://www.unimelb.edu.au/records/doc/transfer\\_form.doc](http://www.unimelb.edu.au/records/doc/transfer_form.doc)) listing the records contained in each archive box, completed. Each item in the box should be listed on a new line on the transfer form.

When completed, the Records Transfer form is to be forwarded to a Records Analyst for review and a records transfer number will then be generated for those records. This records transfer number is to be written directly on the boxes (no labels or sticky tape are to be used) that are to be transferred as well as the box number.

Once the boxes are ready for transfer, the work unit should then arrange to have their building supervisor contact a Records Analyst and arrange a time for the building supervisor to drop off the boxes to the Records Analyst at one of the Records Services storage areas that the Records Analyst specifies. Note that no transfers of records will be accepted until a Records Analyst has checked the transfer list to ensure adequate description and correct sentencing.

A signed copy of the records transfer form (signed by the head of the work unit) should also be forwarded to Records Services.

### **5.9 Normal Administrative Practice<sup>10</sup>**

Certain types of university records and information can be destroyed without reference to this authority under normal administrative practice (NAP). NAP covers the destruction of ephemeral material of a facilitative nature created, acquired or collected by university officers during the course of their duties.

The following material may be destroyed under NAP:

- working papers consisting of rough notes and calculations used solely to assist in the preparation of other records such as correspondence, reports and statistical tabulations;
- drafts not intended for retention as part of the office's records, the content of which has been reproduced and incorporated in the university office's record keeping system;
- extra copies of documents and published material preserved solely for reference (e.g. copies of minutes and agendas);
- publications, superseded manuals, catalogues and trade journals held for informational purposes only; and
- unsolicited advertising material.

## **6. Updates and Amendments to the Authority**

The Records Retention and Disposal Authority will be updated on a regular basis as new record classes are identified by Records Services, through consultation with clients.

If a record class is not covered by the Retention and Disposal Authority, contact a Records Analyst who may recommend either the addition of the record class to an existing disposal class within the Authority; or the development of a new disposal class by writing an Appraisal Report. An Appraisal Report will allow the records to be sentenced (and destroyed if the sentence permits) in the interim period between Retention and Disposal Authority updates. The Appraisal Report is written in consultation with the client and is approved by the manager of the work unit that is the custodian of the records, the General Manager, University Records and Policy and the University Archivist. Legal Services and Internal Audit may also be consulted where necessary.

Appraisal Reports written between Retention and Disposal Authority updates will be incorporated into the next update.

## **7. Further Information**

For further information about records disposal and this Records Retention and Disposal Authority:

[http://www.unimelb.edu.au/records/corporate/disposal\\_advice.html](http://www.unimelb.edu.au/records/corporate/disposal_advice.html)

This Retention and Disposal Authority is also available as an online database at:

<http://www.unimelb.edu.au/records/RDA/>

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<sup>10</sup> Adapted from Public Record Office Victoria, PROS 07/01, General Retention and Disposal Authority for Records of Common Administrative Functions Version 2009, p.4