

University of Warwick Estates Records Management Procedure

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1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Information is the lifeblood of a university. If the University of Warwick Estates Office is to manage its assets information effectively, there must be an understanding of the University's information needs and how these can be met. In the course of carrying out its various functions, the University's Estates Office generates information from both internal activities and external organisations, which is recorded in documents and records.
- 1.2 Most of the information kept within Estates relates to the University's buildings. A full record of a building's structure, plant and services is essential in order to plan accurately for its future care and to enable departments to fulfil their legal obligations and liabilities. The maintenance of records is also essential to ensure that buildings are cared for efficiently, economically and to the appropriate standards. It is essential that appropriate records are maintained throughout a building's life.
- 1.3 The function of managing the University's estate involves three basic types of information created:
- **Legal:** includes estate title, leasehold and other contract documentation relating to the building and its surrounding land;
 - **Policy:** includes surveys, evaluation reports and Policy studies;
 - **Administrative:** relevant to the maintenance, repair and reconstruction of buildings.

They comprise information such as title deeds or leases, survey drawings, 'as built' drawings and records of services, photographs, maintenance records, inventories of plant, equipment and furnishings, and possibly archaeological information about the site and buildings.

Other information stored by Estates includes, Health and Safety and maintenance staff training and induction records.

2. Purpose and Scope

- 2.1 To ensure Estates retains appropriate records to support its legal and operational roles, and retains those records that demonstrate its historical and ongoing importance to the wider community.
- 2.2 Premature destruction of documents could result in inability to prove existing contracts and agreements and provide evidence for audit investigations.
- 2.3 Equally, the retention of all documents and records is impractical and appropriate disposal is encouraged. Disposal will assist Estates to maintain sufficient electronic and office storage space and will de-clutter office areas. Also lengthy or indefinite retention of personal information could result in breaching the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 2.4 It is important for the above reasons that Estates has in place systems and guidance for the timely and secure disposal of documents and records that are no longer required for business purposes.

- 2.5 The key objective of this Procedure is to provide a simple framework that will govern decisions on whether a particular document should be retained or disposed of. In the case of documents that are to be retained, the [Estates Records Retention Schedule](#) includes guidance on the appropriate retention periods.
- 2.6 The schedule applies to all records and documents created, received or maintained by Estates, or by its staff in the course of their work, in any medium or format. It will also apply to records and documents of external bodies mandated via University contracts.
- 2.7 Additionally, Estates aspires to meet the standards for best practice in records management defined by the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice as set out in the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and within the International Standard ISO15489.

3. Statement

- 3.1 The University of Warwick, Estates, will ensure that information is not kept longer than is necessary for legal or business reasons and will retain the minimum amount of information that is required to carry out its functions and in accord with statutory compliance.
- 3.2 Where at all possible, records received in digital form will continue to be retained as such, if it is necessary for them to be retained, and will not be produced as a hard copy. (See [Guide to keeping records in digital form only](#)). A specific document may be printed for viewing by a party or parties on request if it is deemed they have a right to view this and do not have access to the relevant electronic storage area in use by Estates.
- 3.3 Where records are received in paper form only they will be stored as such for the duration of the retention period, unless this is rendered impractical. If for example, the physical storage area is too far away for the frequency of access required, such as is the case with some O&M manuals, or if they need to be shared frequently and where it is deemed that an electronic medium would be appropriate for doing so.

4. Definitions

- 4.1 For the purposes of this Procedure document, the terms 'document' and 'records' include information in both hard copy and electronic form.
- 4.2 **Records:** evidence of Estates organisation, policies, procedures, activities and its compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Records are information in a fixed form that is created or received in the course of individual or institutional activity and preserved (retained) as evidence of that activity for future reference (the complete, final, and authoritative version).
- 4.3 **Documents:** refers to an item that is not a record, such as drafts, duplicates of record copies, information subject to revisions, and materials not directly relating to business activities. In this sense, documents are not usually restricted by retention schedules and can

be disposed of without authorisation as soon as they are no longer currently in use. (See [Checklist for Identifying a Record](#))

- 4.4 **Retention Period:** These are the minimum periods of time, varying from a few months to permanency, during which a record has to be maintained by Estates. This is usually determined by statute, legal, regulatory or business compliance, or where these do not apply, by a best assessment of risks involved in destruction against the costs of retention. If it is deemed best practice to retain a record for longer than the period suggested by the relevant legal authority, this can be arranged.
- 4.5 **Retention Schedule:** A retention schedule is a list of records for which pre-determined destruction dates have been established. In the case of the University of Warwick, Estates, the retention schedule is based on [JISC](#) - Higher Education Business Classification Scheme and Records Retention Schedules and also [The National Archives](#), which contains additional details around records relating to all aspects of buildings.
[JISC](#) provides information and background on the creation of retention schedules in the Higher Education Sector. [The actual retention Policy created by JISC](#) (Joint Information Systems Committee) includes guidance on minimum retention periods for records created Higher Education Establishments and is used by many universities in Britain for guidance.
Other records management bodies have also been consulted such as [Record retention and disposition schedules at Gov.uk](#) and [The National Audit Office](#)
- 4.6 **Trigger:** The point at which the retention period starts. For example, if a record of a maintenance inspection needs to be kept for one year after the inspection is complete, the "trigger" would then be, "the date of inspection". Other examples would be, "last action on case," or "disposal of property"
- 4.7 **Disposal:** After the minimum retention period, as stated in the relevant column, is concluded, the default action is the destruction of the record. If the default action is not to be carried out, namely to destroy the record, the schedule may state, for example, "review for archive" or "pass to new owner" as in the case of O&M manuals.
- 4.8 **Review of Retention Schedule:** The schedule will be reviewed every year, as recommended by The National Archive, to bring it in line with any new legislation or for additional categories of records to be included or removed from the schedule.
5. **Digital Records**
- 5.1 The key principles are:
- a. Authenticity
 - b. Storage and access policies
 - c. Demonstrability of adherence

- d. For detailed explanation of the above and further guidance on keeping records in digital format only, please see [Guidance notes- Guide to keeping records in digital form](#)

6. Retention and Disposal Procedure

- 6.1 Decisions relating to the retention and disposal of documentation should be taken in accordance with this Procedure and associated [advice and guidance](#), in particular:-
- [Disposal and Retention Checklist](#) – a checklist to be followed where the disposal of any document is being considered.
 - [Estates Records Retention Schedule](#) – comprehensive guidance on the recommended and statutory minimum retention periods for specific types of documents and records.
- 6.2 In circumstances where a retention period of a specific document has expired, a review may be carried out prior to a decision being made to dispose of it. This review should be straightforward and not time consuming. If the decision to dispose of a document is taken, then consideration must be given to the method of disposal to be used in line with whether the record is confidential or not.

7. Disposal

- 7.1 Confidential waste documents should be made placed for collection in the confidential waste bins and sacks that are located around the Estates Office, in order that they can be destroyed. It is essential that any documents to be thrown away, that contain confidential or personal data must be disposed of in this way, in order to avoid breaches of confidence or of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 7.2 Disposal of documents other than those containing confidential or personal data may be disposed of by binning, recycling, deletion (in the case of electronic documents), and the transfer of documents to external bodies, for example, to the Library for archiving, or building information where a building's ownership is transferred.
- 7.3 See the [Estates Records Management web page](#) for further information