

Retention Scheduling

9. Information Management Records

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance is aimed at Departmental Record Officers and staff in central government departments and agencies who handle records relating to the management of information. In many organisations this function is concentrated in a Departmental Records Section/Records Management Unit but some aspects may be handled by other areas, for example the handling of requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (requirement takes effect from 1 January 2005), and knowledge management initiatives.
- 1.2 The guidance covers records in all media, although it points to more specialist advice on electronic records and the framework of the *Modernising Government* agenda.
- 1.3 It is unlikely that any information management records will be selected for permanent preservation. Criteria for selecting records for historical purposes can be found in the publication *Acquisition and Disposition Policies* (PRO, 2000) and in the more detailed operational selection policies. No records should be destroyed without reference to these documents and all records no longer required for business purposes are subject to the formal appraisal process to determine whether they fall within the PRO selection criteria.
- 1.4 The guidance forms part of a series on retention scheduling (see section 5). For general information on the compilation of retention schedules see *Records Management Standards: Disposal Scheduling* (PRO, 1998).

2 Scope and nature of the records

- 2.1 Information management records cover four broad areas:
- record keeping, including records management systems, retrieval, and access
 - disposal – appraisal and selection
 - storage
 - general management – liaison with other organisations, training, conferences, staffing, etc
- 2.2 Many of these records are still maintained in paper form even though they may have been created electronically. In

accordance with the *Modernising Government* target that “by 2004 all newly created public records will be stored and retrieved electronically”¹ the records will form part of an electronic records management system. Departments and agencies may wish to digitise the paper records that need to be kept after that date so that there is a central and corporate collection of information management records held electronically. Guidance on the management of electronic information is available from the Public Record Office; the following publications are particularly relevant:

- Management, Appraisal and Preservation of Electronic Records (2 vols, 1999)
- Good practice in managing electronic documents using Office 97 on a local area network (2000)
- Sustainable electronic records: strategies for the maintenance and preservation of electronic records and documents in the transition to 2004 (2001)

See also section 5.

- 2.3 Records and information management is concerned with the management of recorded information across the whole department or agency, regardless of format, location or originator. It is concerned as much with systems to ensure that the information necessary to record the activities of the organisation is captured in the first place as it is with managing records that have already been created. In this context there is increasingly closer connection with parts of the office that discharge related activities and, in some cases, a merger of such activities. These may include knowledge management, data protection, freedom of information and audit. Departmental records staff must take note of this and ensure that there is a consistent approach to the management, appraisal and disposal of such material.

3 Effects of legislation

- 3.1 Two recent major pieces of legislation affect the creation and retention of information management records. However, they should not affect current or future retention policies for records in general. The primary reason for retaining records must still be

¹ White Paper, *Modernising Government* (Cm 4310, 1999, p49)

their use in the conduct of the current business of the department or agency.

3.2 *Data Protection Act 1998*

3.2.1 Records managers need to understand the general principles that govern personal data and its management, and to ensure that their handling of personal data complies with the Act. An explanation of the Act and the Data Protection Principles is contained in the PRO publication *Data Protection Act 1998: A Guide for Records Managers and Archivists* (2000).

3.2.2 The areas where information management records may contain personal data include:

- contracts, with staff, record storage companies, disaster recovery companies, etc
- appraisal and selection of records containing personal data (for example, case files)
- retention of personal data relevant to the purposes for which they were created
- inventories of personal data collections
- access to relevant records

3.2.3 A detailed explanation of how data protection must be incorporated into corporate policies and guidance on information management processes relevant to the Act may be found in *Code of Practice for Archivists and Records Managers under section 51(4) of the Data Protection Act 1998* (PRO, Society of Archivists and Records Management Society, 2002).

3.3 *Freedom of Information Act 2000*

3.3.1 Full implementation of the Freedom of Information Act must be made by 1 January 2005. For records managers the main effects of the legislation are contained in the Lord Chancellor's *Code of Practice on the Management of Records under Freedom of Information*. The Code sets out the framework for the management of records by public authorities and, for public record bodies, describes requirements for the review and transfer of public records.

3.3.2 Two major requirements of the legislation and the Code impinge upon the retention of information management records:

- disclosure decisions
- documentation of appraisal decisions

3.3.3 Requests for information will need to be logged so that any appeals against non-disclosure can be dealt with effectively. The model schedule at 4.2 covers FOI requests.

3.3.4 Enquirers for information have the option to seek evidence of when and why information has been disposed of. Appraisal decisions (including disposal schedules) therefore need to be recorded and this information retained permanently by the department (after 30 years this documentation needs to be covered by a retention instrument). Detailed guidance on the documentation can be found in the publication *Records Management Standards: Documentation of Records Work* (PRO, 2001).

4 Model retention schedule

4.1 The retention of information management records should be considered in the light of both business and legislative requirements, taking into account the cost of retention and the use to which the records might be put in the future.

4.2 The following schedule shows recommended maximum retention periods for information management records:

Type	Item	Description	Disposal
Record keeping	1	Records relating to the control of record keeping systems	When system is superseded
	2	Documentation of record series ("zero files")	(a) preserve permanently for series from which records have been transferred to the PRO or place of deposit (b) destroy when all records in the series have been destroyed

	3	Records relating to services provided to the rest of the department/agency	5 years
	4	Documentation on applications by departments for variations to the thirty year rule	2 years after variation has lapsed
	5	Documentation relating to the disclosure status of records under FOI	5 years after the record is opened
	6	Information surveys, record audits and registry inspections	5 years
	7	Applications to the Lord Chancellor for the retention of records under section 3(4) of the Public Records Act 1958 and related correspondence	10 years
	8	Internal publications	When superseded
	9	Schedules of records loaned to other organisations ²	Until disposal of the records covered
	10	Donations of records to the department	As long as record is held by the department or agency
	11	FOI requests: a) for documents already open	1 year

² See also *Records Management Standards: Discontinued and Transferred Functions* (PRO 2001)

		b) for documents which are subsequently opened c) for documents which remain closed	2 years 10 years
Disposal	12	Disposal schedules	Retain permanently
	13	Correspondence and papers relating to the compilation of disposal schedules	10 years
	14	Review lists, including information from systems such as DRUID ³	5 years
	15	Lists, certificates, docket books or databases of records destroyed	Retain permanently
	16	Copies of catalogues/lists of records transferred to the PRO or place of deposit (i)	5 years
	17	Retrieval of records from the PRO or place of deposit	2 years
	18	Documentation on presentations under section 3(6) of the Public Records Act 1958	5 years
Storage	19	Security of records	5 years
	20	Records of tracking and location systems	When system is superseded

³ retain permanently where these are the only record of records destroyed (see item 13)

	21	Records relating to the use of on-site storage areas	2 years
	22	Records relating to the transfer of records to on-site storage	2 years after records disposed of
	23	Records relating to the selection of off-site storage facilities	2 years
	24	Records relating to contracts with storage providers ⁴	6 years from end of contract
	25	Records relating to the transfer of records to off-site storage	2 years after records disposed of
	26	Records relating to the retrieval of records from off-site storage	2 years
General management	27	Records relating to the development, implementation and review of information management policy	Second review
	28	Guides, manuals and instructions on the management of records	Destroy when new issue(s) agreed and circulated
	29	General administrative records, including routine correspondence relating to the provision of information management services ⁵	2 years

⁴ See PRO guidelines Retention Scheduling: 5. Contractual Records

⁵ See also section 5 for guidelines on the retention of other generic records such as those relating to finance, health and safety, and projects

	30	Disaster planning records	Destroy when new plan is promulgated
	31	Training records, including audiovisual material	5 years

Notes:

- (i) Departments may wish to retain these lists permanently although they are always available through the PRO catalogue PROCAT

5 Other publications and further information

5.1 The Public Record Office produces several sets of records management standards and guidance which aim to promote good practice in the management of public records throughout all stages of their life cycle. Details about the publications can be found in *Records Management: Standards and Guidance: Introduction* (PRO, 2001). The following are likely to be most relevant to the disposal of information management records:

5.1.1 Record Keeping

- Management, Appraisal and Preservation of Electronic Records
- Functional requirements for electronic records management systems
- Developing a corporate policy on electronic records
- Good practice in managing electronic documents using Office 97 on a local area network

- RMS 2.2 Documentation of Records Work
- RMS 3.2 Business Recovery Plans

5.1.2 Acquisition and Appraisal

- Developing an inventory of electronic records collections
- Evaluating information assets: appraising the inventory of electronic records
- Acquisition and Disposition Policies
- RMS 5.1 Disposal Scheduling
- Retention Scheduling: 1. Buildings Records
- Retention Scheduling: 2. Personnel Records
- Retention Scheduling: 3. Accounting Records
- Retention Scheduling: 4. Health and Safety Records
- Retention Scheduling: 5. Contractual Records
- Retention Scheduling: 6. Project Records
- Retention Scheduling: 7. Complaints Records
- Retention Scheduling: 8. Press and Public Relations Records

5.1.3 Access

- Access to Public Records
- Data Protection Act 1998: A Guide for Records Managers and Archivists
- Freedom of Information Act 2000: A Guide for Records Managers and Archivists

5.1.4 Preservation

- Sustainable electronic records: strategies for the maintenance and preservation of electronic records and documents in the transition to 2004

5.1.5 Further information on these and other aspects of the management of public records can be obtained from:

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