

# Records Management: Retention Scheduling

## 6. Project Records

### 1 Introduction

1.1 The following guidance is aimed at Departmental Record Officers and their staff and also staff in government departments and agencies who have responsibilities for project management. It covers records in all media generated by all kinds of projects, from simple undertakings such as the publication of government reports to large projects such as building construction.

1.2 This guidance should be read in conjunction with other publications in this series, in particular:

- Retention Scheduling: 1. Buildings Records
- Retention Scheduling: 3. Accounting Records
- Retention Scheduling: 5. Contractual Records

1.3 A project is a management approach designed to bring about a change. It provides a framework whereby a bridge between the current state of affairs and a planned future state may be constructed. Once the planned state has been achieved, the bridge can be dismantled, having served its purpose. All projects are thus finite and the records that they produce are of minimal business use thereafter.

### 2 Minimum Retention Periods

2.1 Many of the records generated by project work are common to most projects and their retention periods will usually be determined by legislation or by general records schedules used throughout government. For example, the retention of accounting and other financial records are largely covered by the Limitation Act 1980. See also *Retention Scheduling: 3. Accounting Records* (PRO, 2000).

2.2 Many records will be unique to a particular project, such as technical documents, and maps and plans. In these cases the retention of the records may be determined by the nature of the project but also by historical considerations. For example, the documents of a major government building project such as the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in London are likely to be retained for longer than those for the refurbishment of a government office block. Some records of major building projects are likely to be worthy of permanent preservation or will need to be retained for the lifetime of the facility. See *Retention Scheduling: 1. Buildings Records* (PRO, 2000).

2.3 The most important factors to consider when deciding what retention period is appropriate for project records are:

- the significance of the contribution made by the project to the functions performed by the creating organisation

- the importance of the project to the development of the department or agency within the government infrastructure
- any residual value to the creators

2.4 The model schedule accompanying this guidance reflects minimum retention periods for various categories of records. Depending on the nature of the project departments and agencies may wish to retain some of the records in these categories for Second Review. Advice in this area is available from PRO Client Managers and guidance from *Acquisition and Disposition Policies* (PRO 2000). Some departments may also have in place operational selection policies that cover project records.

2.5 The model schedule is concerned with final documents. Most projects will include a version control system for their documentation. Earlier versions of reports and papers may be kept until the end of the project, but no longer.

### **3 Scheduling the Records of Individual Projects**

3.1 In the case of major projects Departmental Record Officers (DROs) and project managers may wish to draw up a specific retention schedule at the beginning of the project, drawing on the minimum retention periods described in the model schedule included with this guidance. Such action will effectively take account of the particular nature of the project (see 2 above).

3.2 When framing a specific retention schedule the project manager should consult end users. This might be conducted on an individual basis or through the project board established for the purpose. DROs or their representatives should be involved in such consultation or invited to project board meetings where records issues are discussed.

3.3 Papers compiled by project and stage managers, by members of project assurance teams or by others involved in projects should normally be placed on registered project files or be part of the formal documentation. Unregistered material kept by them or information kept on individual disk drives outside of a managed system for electronic records should be destroyed no later than one year after the end of the project.

3.4 As a general rule the records of small projects (those of less than twelve months duration) could be destroyed after two years. Some of the documents from such projects, however, may have to be retained for legal reasons (for example, financial information).

3.5 Project records created and managed electronically may overlap with paper records. The two sets should be rationalised at the end of the project to reduce duplication. See also *Management, Appraisal and Preservation of Electronic Records* (2 vols, PRO 1999).

3.6 For information on the compilation of retention schedules see *Records Management Standards: Disposal Scheduling* (PRO 1998).

### **4 Glossary of Terms**

The following terms are common in project methodology:

**Business Assurance Co-ordinator** Member of a project assurance team who is responsible for planning, monitoring and reporting on all business assurance aspects of a project so that actual costs and elapsed times are in line with planned costs and time schedules.

**Business Case** The justification for undertaking a project, defining the benefits which the project is expected to deliver and the constraints within which the project is required to operate.

**Checkpoint** A regular technical and management control point, measuring actual achievement against plan.

**Configuration Management** The process of identifying and defining items of change in a system, recording and reporting on their status, and verifying the completeness and correctness of configuration items.

**End Stage Assessment** Management control at the end of each stage of a project (as defined in the project plan), consisting of a presentation on current project status to the project board and a request for approval of plans for the next stage.

**Feasibility Study** A short assessment of a process or procedure to enable a recommendation to be made whether a project proposal is likely to be technically possible and commercially sensible.

**GANTT Chart** Chart which shows planned activities and actual progress as horizontal bars set against a time scale. The technique was first developed by Henry L Gantt in 1917.

**Highlight Reports** Progress reports prepared by project managers, usually at monthly intervals, highlighting any actual or potential problems.

**Mid Stage Assessment** An interim management control point which may be undertaken to authorise limited work to begin on the next stage of a project before the current stage is complete, to permit a formal project review during a long stage, or to make decisions when unplanned situations arise.

**Post Implementation Review** A review undertaken six to twelve months after a project system or product has become operational to check that implementation has met the project objectives and that the system/product is meeting user needs.

**PRINCE** A standard methodology used for project management in government (**PR**ojects **IN** **C**ontrolled **E**nvironments).

**Project Assurance Team** A team consisting of three technical and administrative roles:

- Business Assurance Co-ordinator
- Technical Assurance Co-ordinator

- User Assurance Co-ordinator

**Project Board** A board usually consisting of three senior management roles:

- Executive (overall project guidance and assessment)
- Senior User (representing users of the project's product)
- Senior Technical (representing areas which have responsibility for technical implementation)

**Project Evaluation Report** Report produced at the end of a project to provide an assessment of all managerial, technical and quality aspects of a project, and to document experiences.

**Project Initiation Document** A document defining the project terms of reference, including:

- project boundaries
- aims and objectives
- project priority
- organisation and responsibilities
- resource plans
- quality policy
- reporting arrangements
- assumptions and constraints
- risk analysis

**Resource Plan** Document to identify the type, size and allocation of the various resources required during the project (finance, staff, equipment, etc)

**Technical Assurance Co-ordinator** Member of a project assurance team who is responsible for planning, monitoring and reporting on all technical assurance aspects of a project so that technical and operating standards defined for the project are used to good effect.

**Technical Plan** Document to identify the sequence and timing of activities, together with responsibilities assigned for producing various parts of the overall product of a project.

**User Assurance Co-ordinator** Member of a project assurance team who is responsible for planning, monitoring and reporting on the user assurance aspects of a project so that the needs of the users are fully taken into account and the impact on the user's business and operational requirements is properly assessed.

## **5. Other Publications and Further Information**

The Public Record Office is currently working on four main collections 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:

### 5.1 Record Keeping

This series includes standards on particular aspects of records management and also publications covering general records management principles. Current material forming part of this series is:

- RMS 1.1 File Creation
- RMS 2.1 Tracking Records
- RMS 3.1 Storage of Semi-Current Records
- RMS 4.1 Business Recovery Plans
- Human Resources
- Information Surveys

### 5.2 Acquisition and Appraisal

This series contains publications relating to acquisition and disposition, retention scheduling and operational selection policies. Current material in this series is:

- 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

In future it may contain specific guidance on the appraisal of electronic records.

### 5.3 Access

This series provides guidance on access, freedom of information, data protection and similar issues. Publications currently forming part of this series are:

- Access to Public Records

- Data Protection Act 1998: A Guide for Records Managers and Archivists

#### 5.4 Preservation

This series covers guidance on the preservation of records and the preparation of records for transfer to the Public Record Office, including their cataloguing, packing and labelling. A major publication in this collection is The Management, Appraisal and Preservation of Electronic Records (in two volumes – Principles and Procedures), published in 1999.

5.5 Further information on these and other aspects of the management of public records can be obtained from the Records Management Department

### Project Records

#### Model Disposal Schedule

Item	Description	Disposal	Notes
1	Project proposals - approved  - rejected or deferred	10 years after completion of project  5 years after completion of project	
2	Project Initiation Documents (PID) and supporting documentation (including business cases)	10 years after completion of project	Records relating to major projects may be kept for Second Review (25 years)
3	Feasibility studies - reports - draft reports - working papers - correspondence	10 years after issue  2 years after date of last paper  2 years after date of last paper  5 years after date of last paper	Records relating to major projects may be kept for Second Review (25 years)
4	Plans and Specifications (statements of requirements, operational requirements, technical plans, resource plans, etc)	5 years after completion of project	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- provisional/proposed</li> <li>- final</li> <li>- variations</li> </ul>	<p>10 years after completion of project</p> <p>10 years after completion of project</p>	
5	<p>Contracts and Agreements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- contracts under seal</li> <li>- other contracts</li> <li>- title deeds</li> <li>- correspondence</li> </ul>	<p>See <i>Retention Scheduling: 5. Contractual Records</i> (PRO, 2000)</p>	<p>Title deeds are not public records but might be retained for administrative purposes</p>
6	<p>Contractors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- approved nominations</li> <li>- rejected nominations</li> <li>- approved list</li> <li>- removals/suspensions</li> </ul>	<p>1 year after issue</p> <p>1 year after issue</p> <p>When new list is issued</p> <p>6 years after the end of the project</p>	
7	<p>Tender Boards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- record set of papers</li> <li>- other copies</li> <li>- working papers</li> <li>- minutes of meetings</li> </ul>	<p>At the end of the project</p> <p>1 year after date of last paper</p> <p>2 years after date of last paper</p> <p>5 years after date of last paper</p>	
8	<p>Maps, plans, drawings and photographs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- master set</li> <li>- working copies</li> <li>- other copies</li> </ul>	<p>10 years after completion of project</p> <p>At the end of the project</p>	<p>Records relating to major projects may be kept for Second Review (25 years)</p>

		5 years after date of last paper	
9	Financial documents (including appraisals) investment	6 years after completion of the project	See also <i>Retention Scheduling: 3. Accounting Records</i> (PRO, 2000)
10	Equipment and Supplies	6 years after completion of the project	
11	Land records - allocation - procurement/disposal	When land is released for other purposes  12 years after date of disposal	
12	Human resources	See <i>Retention Scheduling: 2. Personnel Records</i> (PRO, 2000)	Originals should be with Personnel Departments
13	Health and Safety Records	See <i>Retention Scheduling: 4. Health and Safety Records</i> (PRO, 2000)	
14	Project Boards, Assessment Meetings, etc - minutes - correspondence	5 years after date of last paper  5 years after date of last paper	Records relating to major projects may be kept for Second Review (25 years)
15	Reports (stage assessments, quality reviews, highlight reports, GANTT charts, etc) - interim - final - evaluation	5 years after issue  Keep for Second Review  Keep for Second Review	

	- draft	At the end of the project	
16	Product descriptions	5 years after completion of project	
17	Project operating manuals	5 years after completion of project	
18	Miscellaneous records, such as: copies of documentation from other projects; information on products, equipment, machinery, etc; training courses; correspondence	2 years after completion of project	