Records Management Policy Statement

Autumn 2005

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1. Policy Overview and Scope
2. The University of Essex is committed to creating, managing and disposing of its academic and non-academic records effectively in order to document its operations efficiently and openly, as well as help to meet its accountability requirements and community expectations.
3. [The University's record management policies, accompanying procedures, retention schedules, and good practice guidance [“the policies”]](https://www1.essex.ac.uk/records_management/policies/default.aspx) bring central focus to the institution's approach towards the creation, filing, retrieval and disposal of its records. The policies are built on the premise that effective creation, control and disposal of records brings administrative and financial benefits to the University, while promoting good practice in complying with legal obligations, particularly those established by Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.
4. The policies are formulated in accordance with the Code of Practice on the Management of Records, which is published under section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the University's Data Protection and Freedom of Information Policies, and the University's Information Systems Strategy, and take account of work carried out in this area across the Higher Education sector.
5. The policies are based on the understanding that all University employees are responsible for creating and maintaining authentic and reliable records in relation to their work.
6. Within the context of this policy statement, “records” refers to all documents created, received or maintained by the University in the course of carrying out its corporate functions. These documents may be held in electronic or hard copy format.
7. Policy Aims
8. The policy provides a framework for managing the University's records, and seeks to educate and assist staff across the institution in fulfilling their obligations and responsibilities in the important area of records management. It is built around a number of practical goals:
	* the creation and capturing of authentic and reliable records to demonstrate evidence of accountability and information about the University's decisions and activities;
	* secure maintenance and preservation of access to the records, as long as they are required to support University operations;
	* confidential destruction of records as soon as they are no longer required;
	* adherence to all legal obligations, specifically those established by the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000;
	* secure identification and archiving of records considered worthy of permanent preservation; and
	* University-wide staff awareness of all records management and related issues.
9. Responsibility for Records Management
10. The Governance Office is responsible for the development and maintenance of the policies. Central to this is the promotion, implementation, maintenance and monitoring of all records management activity, in consultation with relevant staff across the University.
11. Responsibility for adherence to the policies (including the Data Protection and Freedom of Information obligations), as developed by the Governance Office, lies with the heads of each of the departments[[1]](https://www1.essex.ac.uk/records_management/policies/sm_policy.aspx%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnote1). Senior management responsibility for records management lies with the Registrar and Secretary.
12. On the basis of the information and guidance provided by the Governance Office, staff are obliged to:
	* understand and adhere to policies relevant to their work;
	* ensure that records are held on the most appropriate medium for the task they perform;
	* identify those records that are vital to the operation of the University, and ensure they are preserved appropriately;
	* review periodically records that have been identified for permanent archive; and
	* dispose of and/or destroy appropriately those records that have reached the end of their retention period.
13. Records Management Framework and Implementation
14. Each department has in place a formal records management policy, a standard procedures document relating to the management and retention of each set of records relating to the core functions of that department, a retention schedule setting out how long each set of records is retained, and an archive policy. Each department adheres to all other relevant University-wide policies, including the Records Disposal Policy.
15. The Governance Office is responsible for ensuring that the policies are implemented effectively, and for raising awareness throughout the University of the existence of the policies and the importance of compliance.
16. Each department nominates an individual with whom the Governance Office liaises on all matters relating to records management. This nominee reports directly to the head of the department. Collectively, the group of nominees is known as the [Records Management Network](https://www1.essex.ac.uk/records_management/help/rm_network.aspx).
17. In liaison with the Governance Office, each department is responsible for ensuring it has effective manual and electronic filing systems that enable timely and efficient access to data upon request.
18. Staff Training and Development
19. The Governance Office produces and maintains relevant guidance for staff, all of which is published via this website.
20. The Information Manager [provides and supports appropriate training and information for all members of staff](https://www1.essex.ac.uk/records_management/help/training.aspx). The training aims to provide employees with the skills and knowledge necessary for them to understand and adhere to the policies, and to raise awareness of the University's legal obligations in this area.
21. The University's new staff induction programme includes sections on Data Protection and Freedom of Information to ensure new staff understand the University's legal obligations.
22. Policy Review and Audit
23. In conjunction with relevant staff, the Governance Office undertakes to review the policies at least every three years, depending on developments within the sector, and to audit adherence throughout the University on a regular basis.
24. Contact Information

Queries concerning any aspect of records management policy, including data protection and freedom of information, should be addressed in the first instance to the Governance [Office](https://www1.essex.ac.uk/records_management/contact/default.aspx).

Policy Agreed: September 2005
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Policy due for renewal: September 2008

Information Manager
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[1]In this context "department" is defined in the widest sense and encompasses administrative sections, major centres and other significant units in the University.