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Record Retention Schedules The Creation

University of St Andrews
August 2004

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Definition of a record

Recorded information [regardless of form or medium] created, received and maintained by an organisation in pursuance of its legal obligations or in the transaction of business.
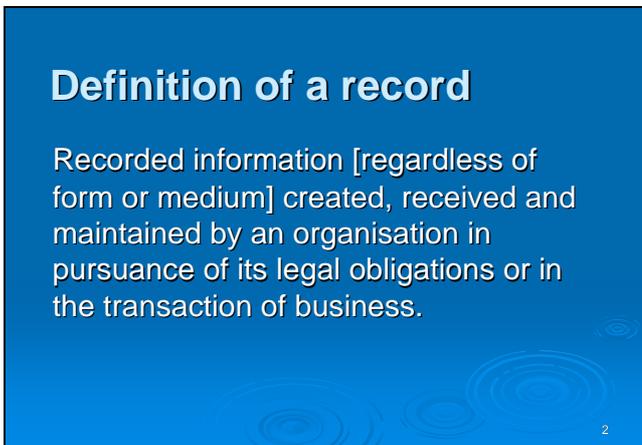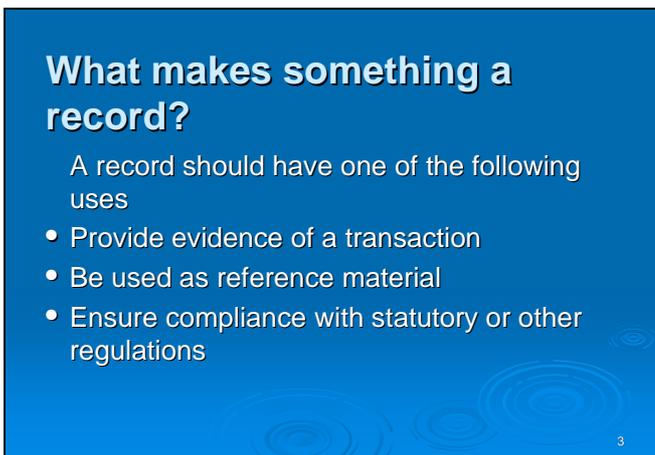
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What do we mean by record?

There are many definitions – this is a common one.

Note that this refers to all media.

Day to day business includes learning and teaching

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What makes something a record?

A record should have one of the following uses
- Provide evidence of a transaction
- Be used as reference material
- Ensure compliance with statutory or other regulations

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Not all documents are records.

We use records:

TRANSACTIONS
To conduct current business
To guard against fraud
To protect our rights and assets

EVIDENCE
If we need to recall or prove what was decided in the past
To provide access to previous work, thus saving time and money

COMPLIANCE
To support accountability
To demonstrate compliance

Records also
Provide cultural context and research information
Are the corporate memory of an organisation

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A Records Retention Schedule

Is a written statement of actions to be taken with respect to all the records created or maintained by an organisation. It will usually include:

- Description of the record
- Retention period and trigger
- Disposal

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Usually takes the form of a table and will include columns for
- Description of the record
- Retention period and trigger
- Disposal

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Terminology

Description of the Record
  usually by category rather than by individual record

Retention Period
  length of time during which a record should be kept before proceeding to disposal

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Terms commonly used in a retention schedule.

Usually there are too many records to allow great detail, so categories of records are described

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Terminology

Trigger
  Start point of the retention period

Disposal
  Review
  Archive
  Destroy

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Trigger
Eg for exam scripts, you could set a retention period of CAY + 3
Another example is Date of creation + 6 months

Review – extend retention period? If not, decide disposal – archive or destroy

May also include

Reason / Citation
eg need to monitor student progress

eg legislation or regulation eg DP Act

Notes/Comments
eg held in Muniments

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Retention schedules may also include a Reason/Citation column and a Notes column

Description	Retention Period	Reason / Citation	Disposal	Notes
Core Record containing personal data on individual students	End of relationship + 6 years	Data Protection Act 1998 Prescription and Limitations Scotland Act 1973	Permanent Archive	See Appendix A
Non-core Record	End of relationship + 6 years	Data Protection Act 1998 Prescription and Limitations Scotland Act 1973	Destroy	See Appendix A
Records documenting the handling of requests for confirmation of individual students' awards, attendance or conduct from employers and other educational institutions.	Last action on request plus 1 year		Destroy	
First Destination Surveys: individual responses	Completion of analysis of responses	Data Protection Act 1998	Destroy	
Records containing (anonymised) analyses of First Destination Surveys.	Current academic year + 5 years		Review	Archival value?

Just an indication – drawn from various sources. But has the columns mentioned.

Look at row one – it refers to the Core Record. We have recently established a Core student Record for St Andrews. This is the information necessary to allow the university to fulfil two functions

1 Provide a transcript, confirm degree awards etc

2 Retain material for research purposes

Note – citation, row 1. DP Act says you must not keep longer than necessary. How long is necessary? – in this case 6 years because of the Limitations act

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Why have a RRS?

- Ensures compliance with legislation
- Enables us to dispose of old records with confidence
- Provides accountability
- Identifies records of value
- More efficient use of space, staff time and equipment

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In practice, we do make decisions about how long to keep records. The trouble is, this usually occurs when a new filing cabinet has to be bought or a server fills up. Such decisions are usually arbitrary, and may lead to premature or inadvertent destruction.

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How to create a RRS

Establish what records you have
- Create a classification scheme
- Functional approach
- What activities support each function?
- What records support the activities?

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Not necessarily a formal file-naming scheme – would just establish the kinds of records you hold

One approach to classification has been to mirror the structure of the organisation – so records would be classified as Finance, Estates, School of History, Academic Registry etc

Inflexible and what happens when something is restructured?

Modern approach is to classify on the basis of function The university fulfils certain functions – eg teaching and learning, research, resource management. Your unit will also fulfil certain functions – they may be the same as the university functions, or they may be subfunctions
Decide which functions your unit fulfils. For instance, an academic school will fulfil some of the student administration function, as well as the teaching and research functions.

What activities and processes support each function? What does your unit do in respect of that function? What records do you keep to support that process?

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Analysis

Are they the official record or duplicates of something kept elsewhere?

Are there related records kept elsewhere?

Is there any legislation or regulation affecting retention of the records?

Even if there is legislation, do you still need to keep the records longer than the prescribed time?

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Once you have established your classification scheme, you can look at the categories/classes of records you keep. What you need to do before you make any decisions about retention is ask yourself the questions alongisde [not in any particular order].

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Analysis

How likely is it that the records will be needed again for business purposes?

How serious would the consequences be if we did not have them?

Do they have long-term research value?

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Records management involves a bit or risk analysis and a bit of cost/benefit analysis

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Analysis

What are the risks involved in keeping these records?

Will they be liable for disclosure under the DP or FoI Acts?

Are they worth the cost of keeping them? – the JISC have estimated that a filing cabinet costs more than £600 per year in terms of space used.

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It is estimated that staff spend 10% of their time looking for information. A RRS would tell you whether or not you are likely to have that information and where to look. It should also mean that there is less rubbish to wade through.

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Steps to take

- Establish categories of records
- Evaluate the records
- Weigh up the risks involved
- Decide a retention period
- Decide on disposal
- Review the RRS at intervals

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Think about function and establish the categories of records you hold.

Review the schedule – a RRS is not set in stone – it should be improved and developed over time, depending on what works and what doesn't.

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Links

JISC Records life cycle and RRS

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=srl_structure

Student Record Retention Schedule discussion document

http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/foi/recordsmanagement/

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