

RETENTION AND DISPOSAL

Records retention and disposal is the process of determining the period of time that a record is required to be held and managed before it can be legally destroyed, or retained permanently (usually by placement in the USP Archive). This process is governed by the Records Management policy and the associated USP Retention and Disposal Schedules.

The retention of records varies with the significance of the record; the more significant the record is to the University, the longer a record is retained. Staff should note there is no standard seven year rule applied to the retention of records; the length of time to retain records can be anything from immediate destruction to retain for 75+ years. The USP Retention and Disposal Schedules provide minimum retention periods for University records and consequent disposal action.

All records are destined to be disposed of at some point in the future; however this process is conducted in accordance with the appropriate USP Retention and Disposal Schedule, or under a specific one-off disposal authority. A record disposal sentence is assigned when the file is created in the University's record keeping system (Records Manager) and the retention period is applied from the date the file is closed or becomes inactive.

Final disposal is guided by the Schedule and authorised by the Vice-Chancellor. The originating record custodian and the Manager, Records Management certify that the records for destruction meet the criteria of the respective Schedule.

Note: The disposal of a record does not necessarily mean destruction. The disposal of a file or a record can take two paths:

- 1) Destruction (that is, the document is destroyed and cannot be re-created), or
- 2) Transferred to the USP Archive facility.

The method of disposal is normally assigned when the record is created.

Storage of records

Files are closed when they are no longer required for administrative purposes, have become inactive or a new part is created. Currently closed (inactive) files remain with and are held by the relevant Faculty, School or business unit (this refers to hard-copy files. Electronic files remain available and viewable in Records Manager. Note: if a file is 'closed' in Records Manager no new documents can be added to the file).

Records being stored for disposal, whether kept within the business unit or transferred to a temporary storage facility should be boxed by the year of destruction (see a box label example below). Please note: the Records Management office cannot accept custody of records until a temporary records storage facility is established.

Temporary records storage: The Records Management office is exploring the possibility of the provision of a Closed (Inactive) Temporary record storage facility. This would enable business units to transfer inactive files (files will be held by the relevant faculty or business unit for a minimum of two (2) years to facilitate easy access and then transferred to the facility) and would 'free-up' valuable space within their work place.

The files would remain in the facility until they are due for disposal. Access to the files during this period would need to be arranged through Records Management. Prior to destruction a list will be provided by Records Management to the originating office to ascertain their endorsement, or otherwise, for the disposal of records.

Records from **legacy record keeping systems** that do not have disposal authorities must be appraised and a specific authority sought for either destruction or transfer to official temporary storage, or transfer to the USP Archive.

DE	06	4045
<i>Indicates the box contains temporary records that will be destroyed. DE = Destroy.</i>	<i>Indicates the year the box is due for destruction. 06 = 2006.</i>	<i>Unique box identifier sequentially generated.</i>

Example: box label containing records due for destruction

Request to dispose of records

Staff are encouraged to contact the Records Management office in the first instance when they wish to initiate the disposal of records. To initiate the disposal of records requires the completion of the *Records Disposal Notification Form*. Once completed, the form, which must include a list detailing University records to be disposed of, should be sent to the Manager, Records Management.

Whether electronic or hard-copy all University records must be listed with sufficient identifying information provided (for example; by individual file, or by group (if generic) such as "invoices Jul – Dec 2003"). The destruction list will be retained permanently for purposes of accountability.

Upon receipt of the Records Disposal Notification Form the Records Management office will assess and appraise the records according to the Retention and Disposal Schedule/s. Once verification is complete a recommendation will be made by the Manager, Records Management to the Manager, Council and Central Committee Secretariat for the Vice-Chancellor's authorisation.

Destruction of records – hard-copy

Destruction must be done in an approved manner such as shredding or pulping. The University has a hierarchy for disposal methods, and these reflect available services at each campus, however the preferred method is via secure pulping. If pulping (recycling) is not available locally, then the next (second) option for destruction is explored, and so on.

The disposal method hierarchy is:

- 1) pulping (external business provision)
- 2) shredding (in-house, or via an external secure shredding provider)
- 3) burning (in-house, or via an external secure incineration provider).

Records Management will take the advice of the local Campus Director regarding the disposal services available at the respective campus. The method of destruction must be indicated on the *Records Disposal Notification Form* which accompanies the list/s of records identified for destruction.

Destruction of records – electronic

Electronic document records must be destroyed under authorised processes. The Records Management office does not distinguish between electronic or hard-copy records with regards to the Retention and Disposal Schedules sentencing rules. A request to dispose of electronic records must be made using the Records Disposal Notification Form.

For those records contained in Records Manager a list will be provided to the originating/ creating office of the records advising that the records have reached their designated disposal year, so that this can be approved or revised. Once authorised for destruction the deletion from Records Manager is secure and final.

For those records not contained in Records Manager specific measures will be need to be enacted to ensure electronic records are destroyed completely, with particular attention to personal and sensitive information. As most operating systems do not erase deleted information from hard drives, but simply remove the file names from the directory and eventually write over the unwanted information, a specific instruction to ensure complete destruction will be provided by the Records Management office to the requesting business unit once destruction has been authorised.

Exemption to record disposal

The following series of records are exempt from sentences applied from within the approved USP Retention and Disposal Schedules:

- Records subject to evidence requests
- Records schedule for destruction in accordance with an approved Schedule, but which are, or are likely to be, or there is knowledge that they may be required for evidence or subpoenaed in legal proceedings. These records must be retained until finalization of all relevant proceedings.

The USP Records Management policy outlines the responsibilities and accountabilities for record keeping and can be viewed at www.usp.ac.fj/records. The USP Retention and Disposal Schedules can also be found at the same web address.

For further information or for advice, please do not hesitate to contact the Records Management office.