

WHAT IS A RECORD?

The term record refers to “documents created, received and maintained as evidence and information by an agency, organisation, or person in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business” (AS ISO 15489.1:2002 Records Management). A ‘record’ can be in any of the following formats:

- anything on which there is writing;
- a map, plan, diagram or graph;
- a drawing, pictorial or graphic work, or photograph;
- anything on which there are figures, marks, perforations, or symbols, having a meaning for persons qualified to interpret them (e.g. artefacts);
- anything from which images, sounds or writing can be reproduced with or without the aid of anything else; and
- anything on which information has been stored or recorded, either mechanically, magnetically, or electronically

When should records be created?

A document becomes a record when it takes part in a business transaction and is kept to provide evidence of the transaction. Records must be created where there is a need to be accountable for decisions, actions or outcomes.

They should be created and maintained in a manner that ensures they can be identified and retrieved when required. Staffs are required to create records which adequately document the activities and decisions of the University which they take part.

What constitutes an official University record?

An official University record is “information created, received, or sanctioned, and maintained, by a staff member in the course of conducting business on behalf of the University acting within their designated capacity (position) regardless of format (paper, electronic, audio-visual)” (USP Records Management policy).

They are not duplicates and should be captured to ensure that the University has records that:

- relate to, document, or provide evidence of business activities of an individual staff member, faculty or business unit, or of the University as a whole;
- record decisions, decision-making processes, advice and/or direction;
- support the corporate memory of a business unit, a faculty and/or the University as a whole.

Guide to determining an official University record

The importance of a record is not always apparent when it is first created. If you are unsure about whether a document you are managing is an official record, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does it form part of a University transaction?
- Does it add value or support to an existing document?
- Does it show how a transaction was processed?
- Does it show how a decision was made?
- Does it document a change to policy, procedure or methodology?
- Does it fall within the functions and activities contained in the University's Records Disposal Schedules?
- Does it show when or where a University event happened?
- Is it a formal draft of a submission, agreement or legal document?
- Is there a statutory requirement to keep the document?
- Is this document essential for the rapid re-establishment of business in your area?

If the answer to ANY of these questions is “yes” and the document is original, the document is considered an official record.

Ownership of official records

USP has a general claim of ownership of its records, as the organisation for which the activities which generate the records are undertaken. This does not however invalidate other claims of ownership. The USP Intellectual Property and Copyright Policy (March 2010) states:

Since the University employs people specifically to engage in teaching and research, it has a legal and moral right to own at least part of any intellectual property they produce. Yet this right is not absolute and an individual's intellectual property rights may supersede those of the University.

The addition of any intellectual property to a USP record-keeping system shall not in itself constitute a claim to USP ownership, beyond what is stated in the above policy.

The USP Records Management policy outlines the responsibilities and accountabilities for record keeping and can be viewed at www.usp.ac.fj/records

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