

Guidelines for the Identification and Destruction of Transitory Records

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NOTICE

Please do not download or save this document. Find the most recent version of this information on the IPRMO website, under
Records Management.

<https://www.ualberta.ca/en/information-privacy-records-management>

This approach prevents copies being saved and printed, which creates transitory documents and promotes outdated reference
copies.

Purpose

Transitory Records are data of temporary usefulness needed only for a limited time in order to complete a routine action or prepare a final record, e.g. drafts once the final has been provided. ¹

University of Alberta employees are authorized to destroy transitory **University Records** as part of routine operations.

Scope

Transitory University records are not required by the University to meet statutory obligations or to initiate, sustain, evaluate or provide evidence of decision-making, administrative or operational functions. Transitory records are not to be filed in **official recordkeeping systems**.

Records required for business, legal, financial, or archival purposes must be retained and filed in official recordkeeping systems and disposed of in accordance with an approved **record retention and disposition schedule**.

Out of Scope

The Policy does not apply to records that are not under the authority of the [Records Management Policy](#). This includes:

- **Research records** (subject to the University of Alberta Research Policy and its associated Procedures)

¹ https://rmo.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2025/02/TR1000_TransitoryRecords_Rev4.pdf

- **Personal communications**² of individual faculty, staff and students; or
- Records placed in the University Archives by or on behalf of a person or organization other than the University.

² For the purpose of this policy, personal communication is information in all media and formats that is created, received or accumulated as a result of personal activities that are not related to the mission, administration or operation of the University of Alberta.

³ *Access to Information Act*, SA 2024 c A-1.4 s 95. Accessible via <https://canlii.ca/t/2krlt>

Restrictions on the Destruction of Transitory Records

The University is subject to provincial access and privacy legislation.

Transitory records are subject to the *Access to Information Act (ATIA)*, and litigation and dispute resolution processes.

Transitory records, like any other university record, may have to be reviewed and disclosed in response to a formal request for information *even if they are kept when they should have been destroyed*.

When an access request is received, any transitory records that are responsive to the request must **not** be destroyed until the request has been processed and any appeal period has elapsed. Destroying records with intent to evade a request is an offense may be subject to a fine of up to \$50,000.³

Similarly, transitory records relevant to any actual or reasonably anticipated legal action should not be destroyed. The Information, Privacy and Records Management Office or the Office of General Counsel may provide notifications and further instructions as needed.

Personal Information and Transitory Records

If a University Record containing the **personal information** of an **identifiable individual** has been used to make a decision that directly affects the individual, the record must be

retained for at least one year after the personal information was used to make this decision. Exact copies or duplicates of these records may be destroyed immediately and do not need to be retained for a year.

How to Destroy Transitory Records

Transitory Records must be Destroyed Securely

Transitory Records must be disposed of in a manner such that information cannot be reconstructed. Physical records should be cross shredded or placed in a secure shredding bin. Any computer or mobile device that has been used to access personal or sensitive information in the custody of the University should have transitory information securely removed. For further information on identifying, classifying and destroying sensitive information, refer to the [Information Technology Security Policy](#) and the [Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Policy](#).

Transitory Records do not require approval of destruction.

Transitory Records should be disposed of when they are no longer required. No approval is required for destruction. Individuals are not required to keep evidence of transitory records that have been deleted or destroyed.

Appendix 1 - Examples of Transitory Records

The following are examples of types of Transitory Records. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, and the types described are not exclusive. When required, the description also indicates exclusions and limitations.

All transitory records are expected to be destroyed when no longer required.

1. Advertising Material

Description
Solicited or unsolicited information received from businesses or individuals advertising their products or services.
Examples
Paper or electronic brochures, company profiles, sales letters, menus, catalogues, price lists
Exceptions
University units may choose to retain and file advertising material relevant to their operations.

2. Draft Documents and Working Materials

Description
Working materials collected and used in the preparation of documents. Once the final version of a document is completed, it is filed in an official filing system as the master record.
Examples
Draft versions, working materials, research (e.g. literature reviews, internet searches)
Exceptions
In some cases, university units or offices responsible for legal documents (contracts, agreements, etc.), policy, audit reports, budgets, standards, guidelines, procedures, communications materials (publications, posters, films, etc.) might need to track the evolution of the final product. These offices may be required to keep various drafts, research and working materials in order to have a record of changes that were made and why. Requirements to keep drafts are specifically outlined in definitions of official records on the Records Retention Schedule.

3. Blank Information Media

Description
Anything that was intended to be used for collecting or storing information but was not used, or has been used and erased, and has become obsolete. Destruction of storage media prevents the possible recovery of erased information
Examples
Obsolete stationary, blank forms, blank storage media (audio or video tape, diskettes, discs, magnetic tapes, hard drives).
Exceptions

4. External Publications

Description
Printed or electronic materials obtained from sources outside the University. If the external publications will have no future value, they can be discarded after use. Copyrighted information contained in these publications belongs to the publisher under copyright laws, not to the University of Alberta, despite the fact that the University has purchased the publication.

Examples
Printed or electronic books, magazines, periodicals, pamphlets, brochures, journals, newspapers and software documentation, obtained from sources outside the University.
Exceptions
The master copies of publications produced by or for the University are not transitory and should be filed according to associated retention rules. Materials that comprise part of the University of Alberta Libraries collections are not considered university records and therefore are not subject to this Schedule.

5. Duplicates

Description
Copies of documents where: • nothing has been added, changed, or deleted; • the copies have been used for reference or information purposes only; and

- the Official version of the records is managed in systems that meet the requirements of the Records Management Policy.

A record must meet all three of these conditions to be a duplicate.

Examples

Copies of paper or digital official records, copies of University brochures and pamphlets, duplicates of microfilm, CD-ROMs, DVDs, etc., duplicate audio or video recordings, electronic copies of e-mail messages and other electronic documents, prints of microfilmed or imaged documents, e-mail messages or other electronic documents that are not the file copies for filing systems.

Exceptions

Duplicate records in a different medium that are maintained on an ongoing basis because they add significant functionality beyond other available formats (e.g. database records; linked or macro-enabled spreadsheets).

6. Information of Short-Term Value

Description
Documents with information of short-term value contain information that is of little or no interest, or importance to an office or University unit or is useful for only a brief period of time after which it has no further value. These documents do not have to be filed and can be routinely disposed of once employees are finished with them.
Examples
Routine notices or memos regarding holidays or special events circulated to all staff; Insignificant or inconsequential information items concerning routine administrative or operational matters; Basic phone or e-mail messages such as "I'm on my way" or "The meeting location has been moved to"; Other issues not pertaining directly to your office or not requiring you to act; "FYI or "cc" messages that do not pertain directly to you office's business and do not initiate or require action; Routing slips; Opened envelopes where the envelope does not provide any necessary additional information such as postmark date or the sender's address.
Exceptions

7. Failed Output Records

Description
Records that are unusable as a result of a failed output, printing, copying or other duplication process.
Examples
Failed print jobs (printer, photocopier, facsimile, photo finishing), failed audio or video reproductions, outputs resulting from abnormally ended jobs, improper selection criteria and programming errors.
Exceptions