



Records Destruction Guidelines

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| Category or Type | University Administration |
| Last modified | November 2010 |
| Sponsor | Secretary to Council, & Registrar |
| Responsible Officer | Head, Corporate Records Services |
| Date Guidelines will take effect | November 2010 |
| Review date | November 2012 |

Purpose

This document outlines the responsibilities of staff when destroying university records.

Organisational Scope

These guidelines apply to all public records created within the University, but the principles of records destruction and the methods of destruction are best practice advice for all types of records created by the University.

Content

1. Principles of Records Destruction
 - a. Authorised

The New Zealand Universities General Disposal Authority (GDA) is our legal authority to dispose of our public records at the end of the appropriate retention period and when they are no longer required by the University. While the GDA sets out the minimum period for retention, staff also need to ensure that there is no administrative, business or legal need to keep the record before commencing with a record's destruction (see Records Disposal Process below for more information on the delegated authority framework for authorising the disposal of records).

- b. Appropriate

Any destruction of records ought to be irreversible and complete to prevent the information being recovered again and to ensure that there is no risk of accidental or unauthorised access to the records. Appropriately managed destruction should also consider the environment, and where possible records should be destroyed

in an environmentally friendly manner, such as recycling both paper and microforms (see Methods of Destruction below).

c. Secure/Confidential

Records should always be disposed of with the same level of security that was applied during their lifetime. Security during the disposal process can include the use of securely locked document destruction bins and a contractor who transports the records in a totally enclosed and locked vehicle. It may also be appropriate for particularly sensitive records to have an extra level of security applied to them at the disposal stage such as in-house shredding before being collected by a contractor for destruction.

d. Timely

Although timely destruction ought to be balanced by the organisation's desire to retain records for longer than the minimum retention period in certain circumstances, it is important not to keep records for longer than is necessary. The timely destruction of records helps to aid retrieval efficiency and minimise storage costs, and it enables the University to focus on records of greater value. For those records where a decision has been made to retain for longer than the minimum retention period, reasons for the decision should be documented to assist in their later disposal.

e. Documented

Because proof of destruction may be required during the course of an investigation, or in response to an information access request, or as part of a recordkeeping audit, the destruction of all records must be documented. A certificate of destruction should also be obtained from the contractor and placed on a file together with any other destruction documentation. The type of information to be captured includes:

- The date when the disposal took place;
- The disposal authority that applies;
- Which records were destroyed; and
- Who took the action and their authorisation.

2. Methods of Destruction

Archives New Zealand recommends the following destruction methods:

For paper:

- Shredding: this method reduces paper documents to fine ribbons;
- Pulping: this method reduces paper to its constituent fibres, and is often recycled;
- Burning: this method should only be undertaken in an industrial facility operating an enclosed incinerator and is not the most environmentally friendly option; and
- Dry maceration: this method reduces materials to fine particles.

Note: Burying or dumping paper records are not appropriate methods of destruction. Paper may take months or years to break down and maybe uncovered at any time.

- **Destroying sensitive information:** If available, both pulping and dry maceration is most appropriate for highly sensitive material. Shredding is appropriate, but where possible cross-shredding should be used for sensitive documents. Densely packed paper does not burn well so burning ought to be a last resort for this type of material.

For other media:

- Staff are advised to access the ITS Media Disposal Guidelines:
<https://its-faq.otago.ac.nz/?action=show&cat=270>

3. Record Disposal Process

1. Identify records due for disposal using the New Zealand Universities General Disposal Authority (GDA);
2. Complete the Request for Approval to Destroy form, available from the Corporate Records Services web pages;
3. Forward this form to either Corporate Records Services or a delegated certifying officer (see Delegation Framework below) for approval to destroy, or instruction to retain;
4. Carry out the certifying officer's decision;
5. Please forward the master copy of the form to the Head - Corporate Records Services for audit purposes, and please retain a copy for your area.

Note: This process should be used for records that:

- Have a D [Destroy] action in the General Disposal Authority (GDA); and
- Have a retention period in the General Disposal Authority (GDA) of 7 years or more (see Examples below).

It is not necessary to document the process of disposing of your low-level, routine administration records, such as those records outlined in Class 1: Administration of the GDA, including contact and address lists, reference material, drafts, duplicated and/or superseded information, and routine housekeeping information such as copies of minutes, meeting and travel arrangements, circulated notices, room bookings, venue and catering arrangements, and low-level correspondence.

4. Examples

The process outlined in Step 3 should be applied to records of medium-term value that originate from your area/for which you are responsible/that cannot be sourced elsewhere. Records of low-level value are excluded from this process, and records of long-term value cannot be destroyed and are therefore excluded on that basis. Examples of medium-value records that may originate from your area include:

- Review and evaluation records
- Delegation and authority records
- Reports
- Complaints, issues, incidences, grievances, misconduct and disciplinary action
- Financial and accounting records (not captured at corporate level)
- OSH, Health, Safety and Welfare records
- Standard employment and employee documentation (excluding what is placed on Personnel Files)
- Records relating to information systems
- Operational records relating to your area
- Records relating to software development
- Legal agreements, contracts, actions, opinions
- Examiner's reports
- Student records (not captured at corporate level)
- Property and facility records
- Fundraising, promotional campaigns, events, sponsorship
- Marketing campaigns and market research
- Committee and working party records
- Research management and research project records
- Records relating to services and support given to students

5. Delegation Framework for authorising the disposal of University records

| Certifying Officers | Delegated Authority | Sub-Delegation Levels |
|--|---|---|
| Vice-Chancellor Deputy Vice-Chancellors | Responsible for authorising the disposal of records created by VC and DVC offices and Council. | Staff reporting directly to Vice-Chancellor Deputy Vice-Chancellors |
| Pro-Vice-Chancellors Chief Operating Officer | Responsible for authorising the disposal of administrative records created by Divisional Offices and the Operations Division. | Staff reporting directly to Pro-Vice-Chancellors Chief Operating Officer |
| Service Division Directors Deans of Faculties Heads of Schools | Responsible for authorising the disposal of records created by their Service Divisions, Faculties and Schools. | Service Division Unit Managers Faculty Managers School Managers |
| Heads of Departments | Responsible for authorising the disposal of administrative records created by academic departments. | None |
| Directors of Institutes/Centres | Responsible for authorising the disposal of administrative records created by institutes and centres. | None |

6. Checklist for Records Destruction

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| | The records are authorised for destruction under the New Zealand Universities General Disposal Authority |
| | The University no longer requires the records and they are not required under any other legislation |
| | The records are not the subject of a current or pending investigation or access request |
| | Internal authorisation has been obtained |
| | An appropriate service provider has been contacted |
| | The service provider has been asked to provide a certificate of destruction |
| | The records destroyed have been documented |

Related Policies, Procedures and Forms

University of Otago Records Management Policy

New Zealand Universities General Disposal Authority

Request for Approval to Destroy Form

Information Security - Erasing Devices and Data Destruction (Media Disposal Guidelines)