Procedure for the management of leavers’ electronic data

General principles

It is essential that electronic material for which the University has a future requirement must be retained in an organised manner (see University Records Management Policy).

E-mail is a business-critical resource of the institution, and must be properly managed for the following reasons:

- e-mail can create a contractual obligation on the University
- e-mail content can be significant in employment law
- e-mail may contain information which is important to the efficient operation of the University’s business.

Individuals, including Affiliates, conducting the University’s business should be aware that any documents they create are viewed as corporate records and the property of the University; this includes e-mail and any attachments. Additionally, individuals have the same responsibility for managing e-mail records as they have for other forms of documents they might produce.

Except where staff and students correspond, the e-mails sent and received by students are not included in this procedure.

Nature of records to be retained

Decisions on which records to retain and for how long are dictated by the University Retention Schedule, or by legislation, internal requirements and the value of the records to the University.

Records should be subject to records appraisal using administrative, legal, financial and archival guidelines to establish the value of the record. The value of the record should be determined on the informational content, not on the medium on which it resides.

Computer accounts, including e-mail, should not be deleted purely on the instructions of the individual who is leaving. It is the responsibility of the appropriate line-manager/delegate or Affiliate Sponsor to identify and protect any important business information stored and managed by the person leaving.

University Procedures

In the case of members of staff, prior to departure, Human Resources will write to the leaver and the leaver’s line manager, reminding them of the procedures to be followed with regard to leaver’s data.

All leavers, including Affiliates, should remove personal material from the University’s systems at their own expense, before their day of departure. Any University-related documents they may have created are viewed as corporate records and the property of the University - this includes e-mail and any attachments. Permission of the line manager or Affiliate Sponsor should be obtained before such material is removed.

The line manager or Affiliate Sponsor should ascertain what material, if any, needs to be retained by the University. Computing and Library Services (CLS) should be informed as soon as possible (two months at most) after the leaver’s departure, so that the material can be preserved.
When a member of staff leaves, CLS will be informed by Human Resources, so that building access and IT accounts can be suspended at the end of the day of departure. Affiliate accounts are expired at the end of the period of affiliation, or earlier on the instructions of the Affiliate Sponsor.

Two months after the leaver’s departure, any material in home directories or personal e-mail accounts which has not been the subject of a retention request by the Records Management Service, Line Manager, or other authorised person, will be deleted by CLS.

Once members of staff or Affiliates have left the institution they have no legal right to continue to use any of the University’s computer systems, including electronic mail.

Responsibilities of staff and Affiliates

Individual staff and Affiliates have the same responsibilities for managing electronic records as they have when managing the University’s records on any other medium.

Every individual is responsible, in the course of their activities, for:

- Identifying and capturing documents, e-mails and their attachments which are appropriate for retention as electronic records, because of their business function or content, according to the University Retention Schedule.
- Managing e-mails and documents in a manner that ensures their integrity and guards against their inappropriate loss or destruction, and co-operating where necessary with an audit trail mechanism.
- Ensuring that personal e-mails and data are kept separate from University-related material
- Saving e-mail attachments in appropriate storage areas, rather than keeping them as attachments

Good housekeeping practices of this kind will facilitate efficient management of leavers’ data.

Responsibilities of the University

The Records Management Policy states that the University will treat the information located in its records as a valuable resource.

The University will provide a managed system for the archiving of documents that are identified as being of long-term value, and will preserve them securely as retrievable functioning documents and safeguard them from alteration or inappropriate handling. The system in particular will ensure that:

- The document can be accessed, located and retrieved in a form that is true to the original presentation.
- The document can be interpreted by showing where and when it was created and by whom, how it was used and how it relates to other information.
- The document can be trusted and its representation exactly matches that which was actually created and used, and its integrity and authenticity can be demonstrated beyond all reasonable doubt.
- The document can be preserved for as long as necessary and migrated to other systems and technologies.
The timely and complete destruction of records deposited in the archive in accordance with metadata applied by individuals.

Systems and procedures are actively managed and monitored for their correct use by managers, to ensure that records are correctly disposed of or retained by staff.

Computing and Library Services