

CORPORATE RECORDS AND ARCHIVES

Guide to Records Management for University Committees

Including Task Forces, Working Groups

www.carleton.ca/records

Introduction

The work of committees is essential to the academic and administrative governance of Carleton University. Depending on terms of reference, committees and committee members must meet certain records management standards for the work and official records they produce. This guide serves as an introduction to the general responsibilities of committee chairs, secretaries, and members regarding management of their records.

This guide is for all standing committees, ad hoc committees, task forces, and working groups at Carleton, with the exception of Senate, Board of Governor, and hiring committees:

- Senate committees should consult the *Guide to Records Management for Senate Committees*.
- Academic hiring committees should consult the *Guide to the Retention and Disposal of Faculty Personnel Records*.

Overview

This guide covers:

- Types of Records
- Governance of Records
- Setting Up Retention and Disposition Scheduling
- General Records Management Responsibilities
- Organizing and Managing Committee Records

Types of Records

Records are evidence of any transaction or decision, regardless of format or material. Carleton's policies that regulate the creation, use, and management of records apply to both hard copy and born-digital records, regardless of any possible format. Your committee records may include minutes and agendas, emails, reports, working documents, distribution lists, spreadsheets, database records, audiovisual recordings, architectural or technical drawings, photographs, and more.

Not all records are equal in value however. Your committee's records might be **transitory** or **official**. Recognizing the difference between the two will help in disposing of low value materials efficiently while also retaining high value records needed for reliable decision-making, keeping historical evidence, maintaining accountability, or meeting Carleton's responsibilities to private and confidential records.

Transitory Records

Can destroy once no longer needed.

- Transitory correspondence (e.g. emails confirming meeting attendance, dates, meeting space and catering confirmation, etc.)
- Reference and research materials from external sources
- Multiple drafts of documents with no annotations of importance

Official Records

Manage retention and disposal according to the Carleton University Retention Schedule, specific university policies or directives, or Corporate Records and Archives guidance.

- Agendas, minutes, and supporting documentation
- Terms of reference, procedural guidelines, and policies
- Final versions of reports and recommendations
- Correspondence documenting major decisions, recommendations, awards, announcements, etc.
- Specific drafts or versions of documents with annotations of importance

Born Digital Records

Reduce paper waste.

- Digital records are official records too. Unless needed for specific operational requirements, you do not need to print digital records in order to save them as "final versions".

Governance of Records

Employees of Carleton have an obligation to create records that adequately document their actions and decisions. Employees must maintain, retain, and dispose of official records in a manner that supports Carleton's obligations to public accountability as well as to its students, staff, and faculty. This **duty to document** is supported at Carleton through the university's *Corporate Records and Archives Policy*. Certain committees are further governed by their terms of reference and related university policies.

Corporate Records and Archives Policy

All Carleton staff, including committees, must meet the standards and regulations of the Corporate Records and Archives Policy (2019). The major points of the policy state that:

1. In compliance with Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation, departments must protect records from inappropriate access, alteration, and usage.
2. All corporate records are the property of the University and subject to its overall control.
3. The policy guides management of records so that context, authenticity, and reliability of the university's records are maintained over time, throughout the records lifecycle.

The [complete policy](#) is available through the University Secretariat's website.

Terms of Reference

Beginning in 2022, the Corporate Records and Archives Department will be requesting documented terms of reference from committees, working groups, and task forces across Carleton. Having official **terms of reference registered** will make it possible for Corporate Archives staff to establish a retention and disposition schedule specific to your group. If your committee has not yet registered their terms of reference with Corporate Records and Archives please contact us.

Other Related Policies

Your committee should also be aware of other university policies that affect the creation and use of official records, including:

- Access to Information and Privacy Policy
- Email Use Policy
- Information Security Policy

These policies are accessible through the University Secretariat's website: carleton.ca/secretariat.

Setting Up Retention and Disposition Scheduling

1. Ensure that you have registered your terms of reference with Corporate Records and Archives, including a basic description of the types of records created by your committee and the contact of the staff person responsible for managing the records.
2. Corporate Records and Archives staff will contact you to review your committee records, any existing retention practices, and recommend a retention and disposition schedule.
3. The retention schedule will document length of time that official records are maintained by your committee, when the records become inactive, and directions on the final disposition of records past their retention; either secure destruction or transfer of permanent materials to Corporate Records and Archives.
4. If applicable to your committee, at the end of their tenure, committee chairs must also ensure that their records are transferred to incoming chairs.
5. For standing committees and working groups, Corporate Records and Archives recommends a minimum retention of active and semi-active records of 3-5 years. This **minimum** retention will vary depending on the work of your committee, whether it is standing or ad hoc, and whether there is a requirement to review projects in which the committee is involved.
6. Records that may be scheduled as permanent will vary depending on the committee and **may** include, but are not limited to:
 - Annual reports
 - Minutes and agendas
 - Correspondence of significance
 - Work plans
 - Reports and working documents
7. If your committee is in possession of records that are already past retention periods and no longer required for anticipated work, please contact Corporate Records and Archives to schedule an appraisal of the materials.

General Records Management Responsibilities

In support of the described records governance and retention scheduling, **Committee Chairs** should ensure that steps are taken to:

- Ensure that **copies** of confidential or sensitive records are returned by committee members and/or appropriately destroyed once the *copies* are no longer needed.
- Destroy transitory records in a timely manner.
- Ensure that official records are created, stored, and transmitted using university-approved technology only (e.g. official Outlook accounts, MS Teams, department network drives, etc.).
- Contact Corporate Records and Archives for guidance on appraising older, inactive committee records.
- Ensure that the appropriate committee records, including emails, are transferred to incoming chairs if applicable.
- Establish records management practices, such as file classification and naming conventions, which are consistent and efficient.

Organizing and Managing University Committee Records

Committees must establish records sharing and management procedures on Carleton-approved platforms only. Committees should use and organize their records based on the type of work they do. In other words, use the right tool for the right job.

- Do you only share documents with each other, rather than editing them collaboratively?
- Do you require tools to edit and mark documents between the committee members?
- Where will your final documents be maintained for longer retention periods?

Outlook

If your committee mainly shares documents through email rather than working collaboratively on materials, you can support your work through use of Outlook. However, Outlook is **not** a long-term storage repository for official university records. For longer retention periods, attachments and emails of significance should be maintained in an appropriate network drive location or MS Teams site that has a supporting records management plan

Teams

Teams supports collaborative work within and between site members and departments in cloud-based virtual environments. It is especially suited for committees with members contributing to documents at the same time and, if used properly, can help avoid draft confusion and needless duplications of records. If using Teams for your committee, please consider that:

- Teams is best suited for organizing and maintaining records that are active or semi-active. Corporate Records and Archives currently advises that permanent records and records with other specific requirements may need to be stored on network drives. Contact Corporate Records and Archives to review requirements of your records so that an appropriate retention plan is followed.
- Access and use of Teams by your committee members is based on permissions that you or your committee secretary must manage. If committee members change, you must update the Teams channel to remove ex-members and grant membership to new ones. Likewise, as Chairs transition, the ownership of the Teams site must also be updated.
- If your committee's use of its Teams site ends, you must remove committee records, retain or dispose of them in the appropriate location (e.g. network drive) and then arrange for the deletion of the site.

OneDrive

Corporate Records and Archives does not advise the use of OneDrive for committee records. OneDrive is cloud-based storage for individual users, both staff and faculty. While OneDrive does provide for sharing between users, it is not suited for collaborative work. Maintaining committee records on an individual's account could also create problems in effective transfer and disposition of materials.

Network Drives

If your committee currently uses a departmental network drive for organization and retention of its committee records, please inform Corporate Records and Archives. Corporate Archives staff will follow up on the retention and disposition needs of your committee.

For more guidance on the organization, retention, and disposition of committee records using Teams, please see the *Guide to Records Management in MS Teams* from Corporate Records and Archives.