

CORPORATE RECORDS AND ARCHIVES

Guide to Records Management for Unit Heads

Managers, Department Heads, Chairs, Directors

www.carleton.ca/records

Introduction

Any records that you create or collect as part of your role as a Unit Head carries ongoing value to your department's operations and administration. Separating these materials from other departmental records is a risk as it may contribute to a potential loss of corporate resources and knowledge, instability of operations, and inefficiency in retrieval of information.

This guide touches on all areas of records management considerations for your role as a Unit Head. Corporate Records and Archives staff is also available to consult with you and your staff as you transition into your role as Unit Head.

Overview

This guide covers:

- Types of Records
- Unit Head Records Management Responsibilities
- General Department Records Management
- Transitioning Control of Records Management

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 work unit's records could include minutes and agendas, emails, reports, working documents, distribution lists, spreadsheets, database records, audiovisual recordings, architectural or technical drawings, voicemails, photographs, and more.

Not all records are equal in value however. Your work unit'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 secure private and confidential records.

Transitory Records

Can destroy once no longer needed. Includes, but not limited to:

- 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, applicable Senate or university policies or directives, or Corporate Records and Archives guidance. Includes, but not limited to:

- Agendas, minutes, and supporting documentation
- Terms of reference, procedural guidelines, and policies
- Final versions of reports and recommendations
- Contracts and MOUs
- Documentation regarding project and program planning
- 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 or specific contracts, you do not need to print digital records in order to save them as "final versions".

Unit Head RM Responsibilities

All 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. This **duty to document** is supported at Carleton through the university's *Corporate Records and Archives Policy*.

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.

Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility for the implementation and management of the Corporate Records and Archives Policy falls under three roles: Unit Heads, the University Secretary, and the Corporate Archivist.

Unit Heads

Unit heads are responsible for the records under their department's creation and control, and must ensure compliance with the Corporate Records and Archives Policy, including providing the Corporate Archivist with reasonable access to and an opportunity to examine all current and non-current records.

University Secretary

The University Secretary has ultimate responsibility for the retention and disposition of all corporate records. The University Secretary facilitates this responsibility by managing the Corporate Archives portfolio and supporting the work of the Corporate Archivist and additional archivist and records management staff.

Corporate Archivist

The Corporate Archivist is responsible for facilitating the efficient management of Carleton University's corporate records by coordinating the institutional records management program, including advising departments in proper records management, file classification structures, and the Carleton University Retention Schedule.

Unit Heads can meet their responsibilities to records management by taking the following steps:

- Ensure staff are well trained on records management practices.
- Ensure staff are supported when time and resources are required to address records management issues.
- Assign and support an administrator to oversee records management in the department.
- Seek the advice of and provide access to unit records to the Corporate Archivist when required.
- Ensure that any technology, software or databases that create, maintain, and store records in the department are appropriately supported, renewed, and meet requirements for:
 - Records retention and disposition
 - FIPPA compliance
 - IT security compliance
- Ensure that permanent or historical records are transferred to the Corporate Archives. Corporate Archives preserves records in all formats, including born-digital records, audio-visual materials, objects, textiles, and photographic materials.
- Support your department to create and document a file classification plan, including adherence to the Carleton University Retention Schedule.
- Ensure that any committees under your supervision have, if required, filed Terms of Reference with Corporate Records and Archives.

General Records Management Responsibilities

When you begin your role as Unit Head, make sure you become acquainted with current records management practices in your department.

- Is there an existing records management plan for the department, which includes roles and responsibilities, folder naming conventions, retention and disposition scheduling, and clear procedures for where to retain the records of Unit Heads?
- Does your department have clear procedures and storage locations for records that are confidential or private and require enhanced security (e.g. password protection, locked locations, folder permission)?
- Will you be providing your department administrator, assistant, or other appropriate staff person with access to your Outlook account? Who will be responsible for identifying emails or attachments of significance that should be retained on your network drive?
- Likewise, which staff members will or should have access to any folders that retain records created by you or that are related to your role?
- Are there any outstanding records management issues that your staff would like to have addressed or that Corporate Records and Archives staff could provide guidance on?

Transitioning Control of Records Management

Whether due to regularly scheduled administrative changes, such as movement of Department Chairs, or retirements, handing over control to an incoming Unit Head should include taking steps to prevent loss of any of your records or resources.

Emails

- Forward any emails detailing active or ongoing business or issues to your successor. If no successor is in place at the time of your leaving, arrange for these emails to be forwarded to a successor through an appropriate staff member.
- Ensure that emails or attachments of significance that must be retained longterm, but are no longer active, are saved to the appropriate department location. Emails should be saved as PDFs. Take care to save the correct messages in threads or from multiple senders.
- Contact Corporate Records and Archives to assess Outlook accounts or saved correspondence to ensure that retention requirements are followed.

Teams

- If you are the owner of your department's Teams site, ensure that you add your successor as an owner of the site OR that an appropriate staff member in the department has the ability to do this after you leave.

OneDrive

- If you have any records related to your role as Unit Head stored in your Carleton OneDrive account, transfer these records to the appropriate department network drive or Teams location if the record is needed there.

Other Considerations

- University records must always be created and maintained on Carleton-approved platforms and technology. If you have any records associated with your role as Unit Head saved on external hard drives, flashdrives, desktop, or P drive, ensure that you save them in the appropriate location in your department's network drive.
- If you are unsure of your obligations to private or confidential records in your possession, consult with the university's Privacy Office and/or Corporate Records and Archives.

Hardcopy Records

- File all official physical records that are still active or must be retained within your work unit as appropriate. Ensure that all files and boxes are labelled correctly.
- Ensure that your department's administrator is aware of the records under your control and any that may have been sent to a secondary storage location.
- Contact Corporate Records and Archives to assess any records that may be permanent and ready to transfer to Corporate Archives' holdings.
- Ensure that any physical records that were used during work-from-home periods have been returned to your department's custody.