

Records Management Guidance: Student Files and Assessed Work

Student files

There is some excellent guidance which sets out the reasons for keeping student records, how they should be stored, accessed and destroyed and giving useful links to other sources of information at:

<http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/partnerships/records-retention-he/managing-student-records>

The central electronic record on spider keeps the permanent details on a student (including the dates they attended, what award they were given etc.). There should now be permanent records relating to the modules, such as module specifications. Although the central record is now very reliable there may be gaps from previous years, particularly from the 1980s and 90s. Academic departments should be aware of this before destroying records that may be the only records relating to a student or course.

There will also be other records, in both electronic and paper format, held in central administrative departments and in academic departments. The University retention schedule gives full recommendations on the different types of student records and is available on the Records Management website: <http://www.liv.ac.uk/csd/records-management/> The University Records Manager is also happy to give advice on specific queries.

The usual retention for most student records is six years after graduation. It is recommended that personal references are limited to this period and that, after that time, a reference consist primarily of confirmation of the facts held on the central, permanent record relating to the student (see JISC guidance above for more on this). It is worth noting that we are only obliged to keep the basic record which we hold permanently on the electronic system anyway. However, we do of course wish to help our graduates with more detailed information such as module content wherever we can.

If you have any concerns about fitness to practice then see the University policy on this at: <http://www.liv.ac.uk/students/student-administration-centre/policies-procedures/fitness-to-practise.htm> and the JISC guidance (link in first paragraph above), footnote 4.

Certain departments get frequent requests after six years and so may wish to keep records for longer than this period. The Data Protection Act states that personal information should not be kept for longer than necessary. If you can demonstrate that you need the data for a valid administrative reason and are following a consistent retention period then it should be acceptable to keep them for this longer period. Records should always be confidentially disposed of at the end of the retention period.

Records relating to the Boards of Examiners (acting as Module Review Boards, Progression Boards and Final Boards) are held at Level 2. These records would include Mitigating Circumstances details

and records of committee decisions and so would name individual students. They therefore need to be held securely and staff should be aware of data protection and freedom of information implications.

It is good practice to keep mitigating circumstances records in a sealed envelope so they are only opened if necessary. Staff should be aware of what the relevant appeals/ complaints/ disciplinary policies say about the retention of related records and be mindful of the sensitive nature of such data. See also guidance note on 'Appeals, Complaints, Disciplinary and Related Policies' on our website for more information.

Assessed Work

The main University policy on this is the Code of Practice on Assessment:

http://www.liv.ac.uk/tqsd/pol_strat_cop/cop_assess/code_of_practice_on_assessment.pdf

Section 12 is about retention and reads:

"Boards of Examiners have a duty to retain all work undertaken under examination conditions and which contributes to a final award, for a period of one year from the date on which the award was determined by the Board. For internal and external review purposes, a sample of any work contributing 20% or more of a module's mark should be retained and Departments/Schools must ensure that they retain samples of work totalling at least 60% of the module's mark. The work retained should be a representative sample, including two each from the top, middle and bottom of the ability range; this should be retained for one year after the determination of the award. Assessments taken under exam conditions that count towards an award need to be retained for one year after the award is given."

In this case 'award' means the final degree, not annual results. So departments need a system that identifies when the students taking that exam have graduated and wait until they have been gone a year. They should be aware of the issues that arise when students repeat years, take time out etc. The same applies to assessed work although, as it is only a sample that is required, there is less of a problem if any are disposed of before the student graduates. If any assessed work is sent to the University Records Centre for storage then it should be clearly indicated what year the students will graduate. If the scripts are able to be disposed of then the same process applies as to any other confidential destruction. A copy of all PhD theses should be submitted to the Library electronically via the institutional repository http://eprints.liv.ac.uk/policies/research_outputs.html.

Departments can choose whether to keep additional copies of PhD theses or copies of dissertations from any other type of award. They may wish to keep them if they contribute to knowledge in that field or if they are useful teaching aids. Departments should be aware if they do keep dissertations that they are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and so must be released on request unless an exemption applies. However, the Act does not apply if the document is already accessible to the public (for example, if it has been published or is available in a library that the general public can use). The onus is on the student to retain their copy of work that has been marked and handed back to them.