

# RECORDS RETENTION

## Objective:

To determine whether the department/unit practices records retention and electronic data retention that are compliant with institutional, federal and state laws on retention policies and procedures.

## Potential Impact:

Results in noncompliance with institutional and/or UHS policies, placing the institution in potential violation of federal and state laws and exposing the institution to negative publicity.

## Helpful Tools:

- UH System Administrative Memorandum:

[UH System Records Retention Schedule](#)

[03-H-01 - Financial Record Retention](#)

[02.A.31 - Access to and Maintenance of Staff Personnel Files](#)

- Other(s):

[State of Texas Records Retention Schedule – Texas Administrative Code, Title 13, Part 1, Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 441, Texas Government Code](#)

[Records Management Publications](#)

[Texas State Records Retention Schedule](#)

## Contacts:

For	Contact	Phone Number
Employee Information	Employment Services and Operations	713-221-8072
Student Information	The Registrar	713--221-8136
Financial Information	Business Affair	713-221-8604
All Other information	The Compliance Officer	713-222-5340

## Frequently Observed Weaknesses/Deficiencies:

- Failure to have records retention practices.
- Failure to periodically communicate information on records retention.
- Maintaining records beyond required retention period.
- Failure to secure records.
- Failure to archive electronic data.
- Failure to back up electronic data.

**Best Business Practices:**

1. Maintain all required departmental records for the appropriate retention period. Example: payroll related documents – four years; Purchase Requisitions – fiscal year end plus three years.
2. Develop internal record retention guidelines/procedures as necessary and ensure communication of these guidelines, as well as UHS guidelines to all employees. Additionally, inform users that the information stored electronically (or via computer) including email, may be subject to disclosure under open record laws.
3. Develop and implement storing and purging/destruction policies and procedures.
4. Avoid keeping unnecessary records (This could increase liability as well as decrease available storage space.)
5. Ensure security of all records by limiting access to those who have a job-related need-to-know.
6. Ensure all work-related electronic data is archived and backed up.

**Case Scenario:** An office coordinator for a department maintains several years of student files within an office in boxes. These files contain student grades, student personal data, exam grades, etc. The coordinator also has employee files dating back 15 years with leave information and physician statements. The office remains locked, however, the information is not safeguarded within the office and several employees have keys, including master keys. The coordinator shreds records as time permits, but is unsure of how long to maintain certain records. Additionally, when the department business administrator is asked where and what student and employee records may exist in the department, the administrator is unsure. What concerns and risks are associated with the records in this office?

**Case Scenario Answer:** This scenario contains several concerns related to record retention, record security/safeguarding, and legal liability. The student and employee information should be secured under lock and key by the office coordinator, because access should be restricted to only those with a work related need to know. Additionally, the office coordinator has no idea of how long to maintain certain records and when to dispose of them because the department does not have internal record retention procedures, and has not communicated information to employees on the records retention guidelines. In this case, employee leave information need only be maintained for four years, and medical information should be destroyed once it has served the purpose for which it was solicited, and maintaining them longer creates unwarranted safeguarding risks. Finally, the department business administrator has not taken steps to identify what students' and employees' records exist in the department, and to ensure that proper protection and retention procedures are established.

## AREA

This questionnaire is designed so that “no” answers indicate that an internal control weakness may exist and the procedure/process may need to be examined in greater detail. **Comments should be provided for “No” answers.** When such weaknesses are identified, a change in the process may be necessary OR a control may need to be put into place to address the weakness. The appropriate UHD contact office (as outlined in the self-assessment text) may be contacted for assistance with identified weaknesses..

Self-Assessment of Internal Controls for Contracts	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Are employees familiar with institutional, federal and state policies and procedures regarding records retention?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Does management periodically communicate practices regarding records retention including electronic data to employees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has the department developed and implemented policies and procedures for the storing and purging/destruction of records?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Does the department avoid maintaining unnecessary records so as to maximize efficient use of space and avoid potential liability?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are all records (student, employee, financial, etc.) appropriately secured to avoid unauthorized access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do employees ensure all work-related electronic data is archived and/or backed up?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are records retained for the appropriate time period as prescribed by UHS policies? <a href="#">UH System Records Retention Schedule</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

This is a living document and will be updated as revisions are necessary. Periodically, you may want to check for updates and revisions. We welcome any questions and feedback regarding the information contained in this tool including any comments regarding how this may be more useful and effective.