

Information and Records

INFORMATION

[Texas Government Code, Chapter 552](#), gives the public the right to request access to government information. University of Houston-Downtown (“University”) records fall within the definition of public information and are presumed to be open and available to the public unless an exception applies to the disclosure of the information. By law, the University has an obligation to promptly release requested information unless the information is:

- Confidential or otherwise protected by law;
- A judicial decision; or
- An exception to disclosure that has been requested by the University of Houston System (“UHS”) Office of General Counsel.

In accordance with the provisions of University of Houston System Administrative Memorandum (“SAM”) [03.H.02 Open Records](#) (PDF), all requests for public information shall be coordinated through the UHS Office of General Counsel, following the procedures described in this policy. The UHS Office of General Counsel is the **ONLY** department that is authorized to respond to Texas Public Information Act requests.

Because the timeline is triggered when the written request is received, the request must be forwarded the same day to the appropriate administrator as follows:

- **For employee information:** Employment Services and Operations (713-221-8072)
- **For student information:** The Registrar (713-221-8136)
- **For financial information:** Business Affairs (713-221-8604)
- **For all other information:** The Compliance Officer (713-222-5340)

The appropriate administrator will then forward the written request immediately to the UHS Office of General Counsel.

Faculty should be aware that classroom records and student grades are considered confidential and should not be disclosed without the appropriate authorization.

Reference:

UH System Administrative Memorandum

03.H.02 - [Open Records](#) (PDF)

Question: My neighbor is working on an industry study and has requested student records. Is he allowed to have this?

Answer: **No.** Student records are to be used for University business only, unless otherwise specified under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). We are responsible for protecting the confidentiality of student information from interested third parties as well as from faculty and staff who have no “business” reason for such information. Students are entitled to expect confidentiality and the protection of their privacy. The release of information must always be only to authorized parties and always in accordance with applicable laws.

ACCURACY OF RECORDS

UHD employees are required to maintain the integrity and accuracy of business documents and records for which they are responsible. No one may alter or falsify information on any record or document. This includes staff accurately completing timesheets indicating hours of work and hours of absence from work, with appropriate reasons. It is a violation of law to falsify or alter the reporting of time worked, salary records or in any way revise University documents or records to provide unearned benefits to an employee or other party.

Question: My supervisor has asked me to change the date on a receipt so that we can be reimbursed. Am I allowed to do that?

Answer: **No.** Once a document has been completed it may not be altered. An addendum may be added to the receipt, but the receipt itself should not be changed and the addendum must be dated with the date it is written.

RETENTION AND DISPOSAL OF RECORDS

All records, regardless of their category (financial, academic etc...), must be accurately maintained in the form prescribed by law and by the [UH System Records Retention Schedule](#). Questions about specific record retention requirements that cannot be resolved within your department should be directed to the Business Affairs Office (713-221-8604) for financial records or the Office of Vice President for Employment Services and Operations (713-221-8072) for personnel records.

Contact Information Technology at 713-221-8111 if you have questions regarding the application owner of electronically stored information.

Reference:

[UH System Records Retention Schedule](#)

UH System Administrative Memorandum

03.H.01 - [Records Retention](#) (PDF)

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

Question: I have over 700 messages in my Outlook Inbox. I'd like to clean it out, but I'm afraid I might violate policy. Is email subject to records retention?

Answer: It depends on the content and authorship of the document. If you author documents or receive business email from outside customers or business partners, you may have an obligation to retain certain messages. You can delete the vast majority of internal memos, announcements and informational items that you receive. These are considered "transitory" in terms of records retention and you can delete them as soon as they have served their informational purpose to you.

If you are unsure, discuss your particular documents with your manager.

Question: My department is very low on file space and I need to throw away old files to make room for new ones. Can I throw away everything over three years old?

Answer: Your department or division has a formal retention schedule. Documents, records and files must be retained as long as the retention schedule requires. Reference the UH System [Records Retention Schedule](#) or [Records Retention](#) policies.