

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM BUSINESS COMMUNICATION GENERAL RECORDS SCHEDULE

May 2008



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM: GENERAL RECORDS SCHEDULES FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The University of Wisconsin System comprises fifteen distinct institutions, many of which create and receive records that are similar in purpose and utility. In the interest of efficiency, therefore, this records schedule identifies two categories of records that are common to all University of Wisconsin institutions, so as to avoid making each institution secure a distinct retention schedule for the same categories of records.

This document also provides guidance to University of Wisconsin System employees regarding what does and does not comprise a public record, which will in turn allow University employees to retain for a discrete time period and thereafter destroy expired public records, as well as those materials that do not comprise public records.

II. **SCOPE:** The records schedules described within this document include the following University Records:

⌚ Business Communication: Routine

⌚ Business Communication: Transitory

III. UTILITY AND FUNCTION OF INFORMATION PROVIDED WITHIN THIS DOCUMENT.

A. Preservation of Historical Documents. Historically, University records have been preserved in paper files. Presently however, advances in technology are beginning to present a viable alternative to paper records: electronic data stored in computer systems. Using electronic data to store University records presents a potentially fatal flaw, however, because electronic data decays over time. Thus, unlike paper records, with the passage of time electronic records lose information as it randomly slips away in byte-sized chunks, unless software updates are consistently purchased, installed, and maintained.

Because of this aspect of information technology systems, records storage within an information system must comply with the legal requirements set forth in: Regent Policy Document 3-2: University of Wisconsin System Public

Records Management; and Chapter Adm 12: Electronic Records Management—Standards and Requirements. Please carefully review these documents prior to storing official copies of public records upon information systems and if you have questions or concerns, then please seek assistance from the records officer at their respective University of Wisconsin institution

- B. Use of the Systems Approach.** To as great an extent as possible, the records schedules included within this document were developed using a systems approach. That is, the substantive information contained within an individual document, rather than the document's format, is the basis for the descriptor of each document. This is because the format for some documents is dynamic in nature and subject to administrative change. Thus, the descriptors for each document are as comprehensive as possible without relying upon format or form names.

Due to these changes, however, there may be instances in which an individual records schedule does not reflect the exact title or name of a form as used by the originator of a document. In such cases, if a University employee has difficulty determining whether a document comprises a record by reviewing the descriptive information contained within both the document and a records schedule, then employees seek assistance from the records officer at their respective University of Wisconsin institution.

C. Minimum Retention Established and Permanent Retention Procedure.

The records schedules included within this document establish minimum retention periods for each type of record. The disposition of each record is assumed to be destruction after its minimum retention period. However, expired records may be retained, for as long as they are needed as a resource for performing future projects on behalf of the University of Wisconsin.

- D. Materials That Do Not Comprise Public Records.** Under Wisconsin law, many materials do not comprise public records. Therefore, non-records should be retained only so long as they are useful as a resource for performing the transaction of public business on behalf of the University of Wisconsin System. Thereafter, in the interest of efficiency and proper resource management, they must be destroyed.

The following materials are not public records, under Wis. Stats. §§ 16.61 and 19.35:

1. **Duplicates.** Public records do not include duplicate copies of records, the original copies of which are in the custody of an office contained within the University of Wisconsin System Administration, and which are maintained by a University employee only for convenience or reference and for no other substantive purpose.
2. **Unsolicited Notices or Invitations.** Public records do not include unsolicited notices or invitations received by a University employee,

which are not related to any official action taken, proposed, or considered by the University of Wisconsin System.

3. **Drafts, Notes, and Preliminary Computations.** Public records do not include drafts, notes, preliminary computations, and like materials, but only if they are intended for personal use by an individual University employee or prepared by a University employee in the name of the person for whom the employee is working.
4. **Routing Slips and Envelopes.** Public records do not include routing slips and envelopes.
5. **Personal Materials.** Public records do not include materials that are purely the personal property of a University employee and that have no relation to his or her office.

Please note that non-records should be destroyed as soon as possible, concurrent with the time at which they are no longer useful as a resource for performing the transaction of public business on behalf of the University. Moreover, personal materials should neither be created nor retained by a University during the regular course of business.

Also note that if non-records are retained beyond the time they are no longer useful as a resource for performing the public business on behalf of the University, then under Wisconsin law, duplicates, unsolicited notices, invitations, routing slips and envelopes would have to be turned over to a requester in response to a relevant public records request, and in response to audit or litigation proceedings. Wis. Stats. §§ 13.94, 19.35, and 804.01. Moreover, even though non-records such as drafts, notes, preliminary computations, and personal materials are not subject to disclosure under the public records law, they are subject to disclosure during litigation or audit proceedings. Wis. Stats. §§ 13.94, 19.35, and 804.01.

IV. CONDITIONS AFFECTING FINAL DISPOSITION.

All recommended dispositions stated within this schedule may be carried out by University of Wisconsin institutions without further consultation or approval from the University of Wisconsin Archives, legal services, or internal audit with the following exceptions:

- A. Public Records Request.** If a public records request is received by an office for any record or records included within this schedule, then the record(s) cannot be destroyed until the request is granted, or until at least sixty days after the date the request is denied. Court orders may extend this time period. If necessary and upon request, the Office of General Counsel will provide guidance to University of Wisconsin institutions regarding public records requests.

B. Litigation or Audit. Each University of Wisconsin institution must not only retain records that are the subject of pending litigation or audit, but also suspend any disposition until such time as the litigation or audit is completed. In order to be valid, however, requests for records relating to open audit must be filed with the affected University of Wisconsin institution. And if that institution is not apprised of pending litigation or audit, then that department is not responsible for retaining records longer than the retention periods specified within this document.

V. UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN GENERAL RECORDS SCHEDULES

RDA #	Business Communication: Routine	Retention Period: Retain for six months after a business activity or project is completed.
-------	------------------------------------	--

Routine communication has continuing value as a public record, because it is directly connected to the transaction of public business that is conducted by university employees. Routine communication comprises the normal communication that occurs when university employees, and sometimes their colleagues who are not university employees, work together to transact public business on behalf of the University of Wisconsin System.

Routine communication has no historical value; never includes records that set forth university policies, guidelines, procedures, or directives; and does not formalize the business processes of the University of Wisconsin System.

Routine communication can be memorialized using many different types of business tools, and it includes but is not limited to communication that:

- (1) Allows university employees, and sometimes non-employees, who are in different physical locations to discuss and perform routine aspects of business activities or projects on behalf of the University of Wisconsin System;
- (2) Records routine aspects of the decision-making process that occurred between colleagues during the lifecycle of a business activity or project;
- (3) Assists employees in administering routine facets of a university activity or business project; or
- (4) Allows employees to disseminate to their colleagues routine, substantive materials that are related to a university activity or business project.

Due to its routine nature, this type of communication is necessary only for a period of six months after a business activity or project is finished, and thereafter, it can be destroyed.

RDA #	Business Communication: Transitory	Retention Period: Retain for seven days or destroy when obsolete because the communication has been superseded or the related event has transpired.
-------	---------------------------------------	---

Transitory communication is directly connected to the transaction of public business that is conducted by university employees, but it has a short-term business value.

Transitory communication has no business value after the information contained in the message has been conveyed or superseded, or the event to which the message is related has occurred. Transitory communication does not establish policies, guidelines, or procedures; certify a transaction; become a receipt; nor perpetuate or formalize business activities of the University of Wisconsin System. Transitory communication is not necessary for statutory, legal, or fiscal purposes; has no historical value; would not be filed in a records management system; and should be destroyed after one week, or when obsolete because the communication has been superseded or the related event has transpired.

Transitory communication can be memorialized using many different types of business tools, and examples include but are not limited to:

- (1) Messages that communicate information that is not the basis for official action, such as news bulletins, holiday notices, charity and welfare appeals, or information about workplace events.
- (2) Scheduling information pertaining to an event that has already occurred.
- (3) Courtesy copies of communications that convey information but do not require responsive action by the University employee who is the recipient, but not the creator, of the communication.
- (4) Communication that is created by, or received from, a distribution list, listserv, or other resource provider for reference purposes.
- (5) A preliminary version of a document that has been shared for review and comment among colleagues after it has been superseded by a successive version of the document. Preliminary versions of a record may be classified as transitory only by the recipient, but not the creator, of the communication.
- (6) Transitory requests for information or materials to which a university employee can easily reply, and in response to which a university employee would not have to perform special research, engage administrative processes, or seek supervisory review.