

GENERAL RECORDS SCHEDULE
Records Common to Most Offices

Introduction

This general records schedule provides the minimum retention periods and disposition instructions for records common to most offices. "Records" are defined as all documentary materials made or received regardless of physical type (books, paper, photographs, maps, electronic data, audiovisual, microforms, optical imaging, etc.) documenting decisions and transactions made in connection with official United Nations business.

In the definition cited above, the phrase "regardless of physical type" means that records are not comprised only of paper materials. Attention must be given to electronic records. This includes, but is not limited to, both online storage and offline electronically stored records on tapes, disks, optical disks, etc. Electronic records should be stored, retained, and scheduled for disposition just as their hard copy or microform counterparts.

General schedules, created by ARMS, are ready-made schedules designed to be broad, for use by all Secretariat offices. Records listed in this schedule cover administrative or housekeeping functions, copies of records used only for reference and informational purposes, and records maintained in the offices of high level officials.

High level officials include the organization head, heads of departments, their deputies and assistants; the heads of program offices and staff offices, directors of offices, divisions, branches, or equivalent; principal regional officials; staff assistants to those aforementioned officials, such as special assistants, confidential assistants, and administrative assistants. Unique substantive records relating to the activities of these individuals have potential permanent archival value and are scheduled accordingly to ensure their preservation.

Records identified as administrative or housekeeping, relating to the internal operations of an office, are assigned shorter retention periods. Most of these records are used as temporary controls and are summarized at higher departmental levels.

The schedule is divided into broad categories, such as, "Administrative Records", to facilitate use. Records series titles are listed within these categories, such as "Administrative Subject Files". Each record series contains a broad description and disposition or minimum length of time that it should be retained in office and when or if it should

be transferred to the ARMS storage facility. The location of the official copy of the record is indicated when applicable.

Office records, unique in function, not covered by a general schedule should be listed on a separate schedule created specifically for that office.

The ARMS Records Management Unit is charged with providing services to all Secretariat offices. Services include records retention and disposal schedules, file classification plans, as well as advice about microfilming, records storage, and automation. For further information please contact:

United Nations Archives and Records Management Section
Records Management Unit
One United Nations Plaza, Room 1170
3-5075

Administrative Records:

1. Administrative Subject Files

Records in hard copy or electronic form used to support the administrative or housekeeping functions of an office. Files may include but are not limited to subjects relating to office organization, staffing, timekeeping, budget, payroll, travel, meetings, procurement, training, equipment and supplies, programmes, etc. They may also include copies of internal progress reports, correspondence, directives, charts, statistics, cables, and other materials:

- a. Records maintained at operating levels documenting routine transactions.

Disposition: Destroy when 2 years old.

- b. Records documenting significant policy and decisions, and exceptional cases. These files are often maintained by high level officials.

Disposition: PERMANENT. Retain in office for 3 years then transfer to Archives for permanent retention.

2. Committee and Meeting Files

Records of committees and meetings, as well as more formally established councils, conferences, and task forces in hard copy or electronic form:

- a. Records relating to establishment, organization, membership, and policy of internal committees.

Disposition: Destroy 3 years after termination of committee.

- b. Records created by committees including minutes and hearing proceedings (may be summary in nature, verbatim transcripts, or audio or video recordings), final reports and agendas documenting the accomplishments of official boards and committees, EXCLUDING those maintained by the sponsor or Secretariat.

Disposition: Destroy when 3 years old.

- c. Official committee and meeting records maintained by

the sponsor or Secretariat.

Disposition: PERMANENT. Retain in office for 3 years then transfer to Archives for permanent retention.

3. Organization and Functional Charts

Organization and functional charts in hard copy or electronic form including graphic illustrations which provide a description of the arrangement and the administrative structure of the functional units, programs, or offices of a department.

- a. Copies used for reference and informational purposes.

Disposition: Destroy when superseded or obsolete. Official records are maintained in the ST/ORG series.

4. Policy, Procedures, Directives, Rules and Regulations

Records in hard copy or electronic form includes manuals, circulars, administrative issuances, instructions and bulletins:

- a. Case files which document aspects of the development of the above.

Disposition: PERMANENT. Retain in office for 3 years then transfer to Archives for permanent retention.

- b. Copies used for reference and informational purposes.

Disposition: Destroy when no longer needed. Official records are maintained by the author or creating department.

5. Publications Files

Formally prepared publications in hard copy or electronic form including newsletters, press releases, reports or bulletins prepared by or for the organization. Examples include annual reports; studies conducted by the organization; procedural brochures, pamphlets, and handbooks distributed for guidance to departments, to private organizations, and to the public; instructional and educational materials on audiovisual formats, such as filmstrips, motion picture, and slide tape productions; maps; and television and radio programs:

- a. Copies of publications used for reference and informational purposes.

Disposition: Destroy when superseded or obsolete. Official records are maintained in the "St" and "GA" Series; United Nations publications created at the organizational level are maintained in depository libraries; and Departmental publications are maintained by the author or creating department.

6. Reading Files

An extra copy file of outgoing correspondence usually arranged chronologically.

Disposition: Destroy when no longer needed.

7. Reports

Includes administrative, management, and progress reports in hard copy or electronic form consisting of textual, statistical or graphic material, prepared periodically, and reflecting activities in, or status of organization functions:

- a. Annual, special or final report and/or long-range programme plan maintained by high level officials.

Disposition: PERMANENT. Retain in office for 3 years then transfer to Archives for permanent retention.

- b. All other copies used for reference or informational purposes.

Disposition: Destroy when no longer needed.

- c. Feeder and preliminary reports prepared by subordinate units that are submitted to higher level offices.

Disposition: Destroy when 2 years old.

8. Schedules of Daily Activities

Calendars, appointment books, schedules, logs, diaries and other records in hard copy or electronic form documenting meetings, appointments, telephone calls, trips, visits, and other activities by employees while serving in an official capacity, excluding materials determined to be personal:

- a. Records at operating levels relating to official activities.

Disposition: Destroy when 1 year old.

- b. Records containing unique substantive information relating to the official activities of high level officials.

Disposition: PERMANENT. Retain in office for 3 years then transfer to Archives for permanent retention.

9. Suspense Files

Records in hard copy or electronic form organized chronologically in which records or data are entered or filed by a future date of recall.

- a. Extra copies.

Disposition: Destroy after action is taken.

- b. File copy.

Disposition: Incorporate it into the official files after action is taken.

10. Transitory Correspondence Files

Records of short-term value in hard copy or electronic form, such as:

* routine requests for information which require no administrative action, no policy decision, and no special compilation of research for reply;

* quasi-official notices including memoranda and other records that do not serve as the basis of official actions, such as notices of holidays, and copies of letters of transmittal that do not add any information to that contained in the transmitted material.

Disposition: Destroy when no longer needed.

11. Working Files (also known as Case, Project, Study)

Supporting records in hard copy or electronic form documenting the history of a single subject, function, or project from its initiation to its conclusion including background materials, studies, analyses, drafts, interim reports, correspondence, and other related papers.

Disposition: 6 years after completion or closing of project. Retain in office for 3 years after the completion or closing of the project, then transfer to Archives for an additional 3 years. Materials, such as publications, used solely for informational purposes should be weeded from the file, as well as extra copies of reports, drafts, ect.

Budget Records:

12. Budget Files

Budget and allotment records in hard copy or electronic form relating to the preparation of the budget, budget submissions, and modifications. May include but is not limited to correspondence, memorandums, reports containing narrative and statistical data, budget instructions and copies of published budget reports.

- a. Budget preparation files including copies of submissions, justifications, schedules, revisions and any other data analysis submitted to budget offices.

Disposition: Destroy when 4 years old.

- b. Budget Allotments.

Disposition: Destroy when 4 years old.

Communications Records:

13. Communications Files

Records in hard copy or electronic form relating to mail, cable, telegram, pouch, and messenger services.

- a. Records relating to incoming or outgoing registered mail pouches, registered, certified, insured, overnight, express, and special delivery mail including receipts and return receipts.

Disposition: Destroy when 1 year old.

14. Tracking and Control Records

Logs, registers, lists, indexes in hard copy or electronic form used to provide control access, or to document the status of incoming and outgoing correspondence, reports and other records.

Disposition: Destroy or delete with the related records that are authorized for disposal by this general records schedule.

Electronic Records:

15. Electronic Mail (E-Mail) Records

Records transmitted and received and any attachments to the record messages after they have been copied to an appropriate filing system.

- a. Transitory and personal messages that do not support business purposes.

Disposition: Delete messages from the e-mail system that do not support business purposes.

- b. Official records that meet the definition of United Nations records.

Disposition: Delete from the e-mail system after copying to appropriate filing system in accordance with an approved records retention schedule.

Examples of appropriate filing systems can include a central repository associated with department-wide network or LAN, or a decentralized electronic or manual filing systems.

(Note: Along with the message text, the recordkeeping system must capture the names of the sender and recipients and date and receipt data when required.)

16. Electronic Versions of Records Scheduled for Disposal

Electronic records that support administrative housekeeping functions when the records are derived from or replace hard copy records authorized for disposal by ARMS for destruction in a programme - specific records schedule.

- a. When hard copy records are retained to meet recordkeeping requirements.

Disposition: Delete electronic version when the office determines that it is no longer needed for operational purposes.

- b. When the electronic record replaces hard copy

records that support administrative housekeeping functions.

Disposition: Delete after the expiration of the retention period authorized for the hard copy file, or when no longer needed, whichever is later.

- c. Hard copy printouts created for short-term administrative purposes.

Disposition: Destroy when the office determines that they are no longer needed for operational purposes.

17. Files/Records Relating to the Creation, Use, and Maintenance of Computer Systems Applications or Electronic Records

- a. Records created solely to test system performance, as well as hard-copy printouts and related documentation for the electronic files/records.

Disposition: Delete/destroy when determined that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit or other operational purposes.

18. Input/Source Records

- a. Non-electronic documents or forms designed and used solely to create, update, or modify the records in an electronic medium, and not required for audit or legal purposes and not previously scheduled for permanent retention in an ARMS approved records schedule.

Disposition: Destroy after the information has been converted to an electronic medium and verified, or when no longer needed to support the reconstruction of, or serve as the backup to, the master file, whichever is later.

- b. Electronic records entered into the system during an update process, and not required for audit and legal purposes.

Disposition: Delete when data have been entered into the master file or database and verified, or when no longer required to support reconstruction

of, or serve as back-up to, a master file or database, whichever is later.

19. Word Processing Files

Documents such as correspondence, memoranda, reports, messages, directives, manuals, etc. recorded on electronic media such as hard disks or floppy diskettes after they have been copied to an electronic filing system, paper, or microform for recordkeeping purposes.

Disposition: Delete from the word processing system when no longer needed for updating or revision.

Personnel Records:

20. Unofficial Personnel Files (Status Files)

Duplicate documentation in hard copy or electronic form pertaining to a staff member employed by the United Nations either as regular staff or under some other contractual arrangement, for example, interns, Special Service Agreements, etc. Files may include but are not limited to subjects relating to employment history, academic qualifications, appointment, performance, entitlements, dependency allowance, separation/transfer, etc. They may also include copies of reports, and personnel related correspondence.

Disposition: Destroy 1 year after separation or transfer of staff member. Upon separation any official records should be forwarded to the Personnel Records Unit/OHRM to be included in the employee's Official Status File which are retained for 30 years after the staff member's termination.

21. Personnel Planning and Management Files

Records in hard copy or electronic form relating to the general administration and operation of personnel functions including staff lists, performance appraisals, recommendations of promotion, contract extension, staff actions, conflict resolution and related correspondence, reports, vacancy notices, and exhibits.

Disposition: Destroy when superseded or obsolete. Any official records pertaining to a specific staff member should be forwarded to the Personnel Records Unit/OHRM to be included in the employee's Official Status File which are retained for 30 years after the staff member's termination.

Procurement:

22. Duplicate Contract Files

Duplicate documentation in hard copy or electronic form pertaining to contracts or legal agreements including copies of contracts and supporting documentation and correspondence relating to proposals, bids, specifications, and compliance. They may include but are not limited to contracts in the following areas:

- equipment, supplies and services
- employment and/or special service agreements
- field operations
- housing
- insurance
- lease agreements
- postal contracts and permits
- printing
- title documentation
- transportation
- travel

Disposition: Destroy 1 year after expiration of contract. Official records are maintained by Purchase and Transportation Service, Office of General Services.

23. Requisition File

Records in hard copy or electronic form relating to requisitions for equipment, supplies and services. May include but is not limited to copies of requisitions, invoices, bills, and related papers.

Disposition: Destroy when 1 year old.

24. Telephone Records

Office copies of telephone statements and toll slips in hard copy or electronic form.

Disposition: Destroy when 1 year old.

Time and Leave:

25. Employee Time and Leave Records

Records in hard copy or electronic form.

- a. Daily and weekly attendance sheets.

Disposition: Destroy when 1 year old. Official records are maintained by the Executive Office.

- b. Records of employee absences and accruals.

Disposition: Destroy when 1 year old.

- c. Employee request for and/or authorization given to employee to use sick, annual or other leave.

Disposition: Destroy when 1 year old.