

WATERFORD INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY RECORD RETENTION POLICY

Waterford Institute of Technology recognises the importance of effective records retention to meet legal standards, optimise the use of space, minimise the cost of record retention, and ensure that outdated and useless records are destroyed.

Records

Anything written in an official capacity should be done so in a clear, precise and objective manner, it should be factual and accurate. Handwritten notes or annotations should be legible. Reasons for decisions should be documented carefully. Where opinions are given, they should be supplied with facts and reference made to policies where appropriate. Avoid making irrelevant or personal comments. If a report, minute, etc is relying on previous documents or precedents, these or the relevant abstracts should be attached to the current document.

Records Retention

Statement

Most records should not be retained for more than five years. Reasons for longer retention will include the following:

- Statutory requirements
- The possibility of litigation
- Historical or research purposes, or relating to an important policy development
- Relevant personal information relating to employees and students

Historical Records

After the retention period prescribed by statute or dictated by administrative, legal, or financial needs has expired, some records may be kept permanently for historical purposes. This may be because they preserve evidence of the origin, development, or functions of various areas within the Institute or because they contain information which has been gathered by a department and which is worth preserving.

Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 - Personal Information

The following are the eight fundamental rules of the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 regarding personal information:

1. Obtain and process information fairly
2. Keep it only for one or more specified, explicit and lawful purposes
3. Use and disclose it only in ways compatible with these purposes
4. Keep it safe and secure.
5. Keep it accurate, complete and up-to-date
6. Ensure that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive
7. Retain it for no longer than is necessary for the purpose or purposes
8. Give a copy of his/her personal data to that individual, on request.

Exemption

The Data Protection Act provides an exemption for personal information that is held for *'statistical or research or other scientific purposes* to be held indefinitely, provided specific requirements are met:

- For the purposes of safeguarding the fundamental rights and freedoms of data subjects
- The purpose of the processing was disclosed when it was obtained and the data subject did not request in writing that the data should not be processed for that purpose
- the information is not processed to support measures or make decisions relating to particular individuals, and

the processing does not cause substantial damage or distress to the individual.

Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003

The FOI Acts provide stringent demands on public bodies with regard to record keeping practices.

The Act establishes three statutory rights:

- a right to access records held by public bodies;
- a right to have personal information in a record amended where it is incomplete, incorrect or misleading;
- a right to obtain reasons for decisions affecting the person.

The link between records management and FOI is now very explicit. The basic concept is that information which is captured as a record on paper, microform or in an electronic system requires consistent, systematic and active management throughout its lifecycle i.e. from the time it is created until it is disposed of or archived for historical reasons.

Storage of Data

All active data and records should be stored as securely as possible in order to avoid potential misuse or loss. All data and records will be stored in the most convenient and appropriate location having regard to the period of retention required and the frequency with which access will be made to the record. Files should be kept in cabinets, storage areas, etc provided by the Institute

Data and records which are no longer active, due to their age or subject, should be stored in the archive room in the appropriate archive boxes and marked accordingly. Please consult the "sending records to the Archive Centre" section of the Archive Centre Procedures for more information.

All sensitive and confidential material should be securely locked away in a local filing cabinet. A clean desk policy must be implemented in all offices that deal with personal data. (Any data file or record which contains personal data of any form can be considered as confidential in nature).