Module 5: Keep or Destroy
Introduction

When information is no longer used regularly, decisions need to be made about how long it should be kept or whether it can be destroyed.

On successful completion of this module you will be able to determine what must happen to Curtin information that is no longer in regular use.
What happens to information that is no longer regularly used?

University information

In some cases University information that is no longer used regularly may have to be kept permanently because it has continuing value. More often it can be destroyed after a specified time. Curtin uses disposal authorities to determine how long different types of information is required to be kept.

Ephemeral information

Staff may destroy ephemeral information once they have finished referring to it. There is no need for formal approval so it helps if information is already clearly marked as reference material or a copy.

Note: Ephemeral paper material that is considered sensitive and no longer required must be placed in a blue secure destruction bin.
What are Disposal Authorities?

Disposal authorities are documents approved by the State Records Commission that define the minimum periods of time that different types of record must be kept and how they are to be disposed of, whether that be by destruction or retaining them permanently.

There are two types of Disposal Authorities in use at Curtin.

**General Disposal Authorities (GDAs),** which are produced by the State Records Office and include records that are common across all government agencies. Curtin currently uses three GDAs:

- General Disposal Authority for Human Resource Management Records
- General Disposal Authority for Financial and Accounting Records
- General Disposal Authority for Administrative Records.

Curtin also uses the **Western Australian University Sector Disposal Authority (WAUSDA)** for records that are specific to University business functions that aren’t covered by the GDAs, such as student, examination, research and course information.

**Sentencing**

The process of determining how long a folder must be kept is called ‘Sentencing’. Using the Disposal Authorities, a folder is given a sentence and then placed in a storage box with other folders that will be due for destruction at the same time.

Information that has been sentenced as having archival or permanent value must be kept forever and boxed separately from information that will ultimately be destroyed.
What is done with information not yet due for destruction?

Once information has been sentenced and boxed, the boxes should be stored in the local area until the information is at least two years old. This is because this information may need to be accessed by the local area within that period.

After two years the information is considered inactive. The information can then be transferred to Records & Information Management for storage until it is due for destruction. If the information is of permanent value it will be stored forever.

Transferring inactive information to Records & Information Management will help reduce the need to maintain a large local storage area and ensure that the records are well described and accessible for as long as required.
How do staff apply to destroy University information?

Staff need authorisation before University information can be destroyed. This is to make sure that it is not still needed for business, legal or historical reasons.

An application must be made to destroy University information using a Records Destruction Request Form. The form is signed by the area head and then sent to Records & Information Management where it is sent for checking and approval to relevant parties, including the Freedom of Information Coordinator and the University Archivist.

Once all parties have authorised the destruction of the information, formal notification will be given to the area. If the information is located in the area the information must be placed in a secure destruction bin.

Authorised destruction of information that has previously been transferred to Records & Information Management will be done in consultation with the responsible area.
Is there training & support?

Records & Information Management can make an initial assessment of your needs and provide advice for managing your information. Please contact us to discuss your area’s requirements.

Specific group training sessions for sentencing, transfer and destruction have been developed. Staff who are processing information no longer used regularly must attend these sessions as they provide staff with the knowledge and tools to complete these tasks accurately and efficiently.

These sessions can be booked through the Employee Kiosk.

To find out more about our face to face training sessions, browse through the RIM Training or contact us.
How is information destroyed?

Paper

Once staff receive notification that information has been authorised for destruction, they need to destroy it in a secure manner so documents can't be read or recreated. To do this, records must be disposed of in lockable secure bins. Bins can be ordered from Site Services.

Online

Electronic information approved for destruction must be deleted from the network or hard drive. If the information is sensitive, ensure that the records are destroyed by overwriting. For further advice contact the CITS service desk.

Removable media

Where electronic information stored on removable media is approved for destruction, the media itself must be destroyed or sanitised (securely deleted by CITS) so that no information can be recovered.
How would you dispose of these files?

Now that you've seen how information is destroyed, let's try to appropriately destroy these files.

CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting minutes - 25/06/09

Item 1 - Timesheets
Gary has let everyone know the decision to introduce timesheets to the working environment. A document has been setup and Gary will email around when meeting is complete.

What is the best way to dispose of this printed document?
Select an option below.
What happens to permanent (archival) information?

The boxes of archival or permanent University information transferred to Records & Information Management are processed, described and preserved to become part of Curtin’s permanent information assets, also known as the Archive Collection. This information will be preserved forever, providing staff, students and the wider community with a valuable resource of information about Curtin’s history and achievements over time.

For this reason information that has been identified as needing to be kept permanently must be boxed separately from information that can eventually be destroyed.

Records & Information Management manages all types of archival information including photographs, publications, and audio and video recordings. For more information or assistance to protect information having permanent value or to access the Archive Collection please [contact us](mailto:contactus@curtin.edu.au).