

# Fact Sheet

## Transitory Records



Records Management and Privacy Office  
Kingston, ON K7L 3N6  
Tel. (613) 533-6095  
[access.privacy@queensu.ca](mailto:access.privacy@queensu.ca)

### What are Transitory Records?

**Transitory Records** are created or received by the University in the course of conducting its activities, but have no ongoing operational, informational, evidential or historical value. Usually transitory records have an immediate or short-term value, pertaining to an immediate task or minor transaction. They can exist in any format or medium.

Unlike **University Records** that provide evidence of policy, decision or obligation, and which must be filed and retained in a recordkeeping system, and disposed of according to authorized [records retention schedules](#), transitory records may be destroyed/deleted of as soon as they are no longer serve a business purpose.

#### *Transitory Records include:*

##### **Announcements and notices of a general nature**

- Notifications of meetings, special events, holidays, acceptances or regrets
- Memos to all staff of a routine nature where you are not the originator

##### **Drafts**

- Preliminary drafts which do not reflect significant steps in the preparation of a final document or record decisions
- Working papers where the results have been written into an official document and which are not required to support it

##### **Convenience or duplicate copies**

- "cc" copies which require no action
- "FYI" copies made and kept only for convenient reference or for information and that are not annotated
- Printouts or extracts from databases
- Minutes and agendas received from other parts of the university or external groups which require no action
- Office mail log/daybook copies of correspondence which are also filed elsewhere in the filing system
- Email messages forwarded for printing

##### **Messages where the information has no operational value**

- Personal messages, for example: "Let's meet for lunch."
- Messages to schedule or confirm meetings

##### **Superseded lists**

- Address lists, distribution lists, membership lists, etc.

##### **Stocks of in-house publications which are obsolete, superseded or otherwise no longer useful**

- Administrative manuals, telephone directories that do not originate from your unit
- Published reports, newsletters or reference materials received from other parts of the university, from vendors or external organizations which require no action
- Blank forms

# Destroying/Deleting Transitory Records

- **Destroy/delete transitory records regularly.**
  - Do not retain transitory records
  - Review transitory materials regularly after operational need ends
  - Clearly identify draft items and discard once the final version of a document is prepared (with exceptions noted below)
  
- **Destroy/delete transitory records as soon as they have served their primary purpose.**
  - Notices: once event has taken place (unless you are the originator)
  - Preliminary drafts: when the final version of a document is issued
  - “FYI”: when no longer referenced
  - “cc” copies: when issue is resolved or concluded
  - Snapshots or printouts: when database is updated/rolled over
  
- **Exercise judgement on what transitory records may be needed to be kept and for how long.**
  - Drafts and working papers may need to be retained until a final report is prepared, a final agreement is reached, or a final decision is taken
  - Versions which show an evolution or change in policy or approach may have value for historical research purposes
  - Budgets or policies may have reference value in the unit responsible for their creation
  - A telephone message slip or transmission document may be kept as evidence of contact at a certain time and date
  - An annotated copy of a convenience or duplicate copy showing significant input should be filed and saved with other records related to the same activity or function
  - Periodic printouts may constitute an important “snapshot” record of a dynamic database

Note that transitory records are not the same as duplicate sets of records that are maintained by an office where there is a need to keep a duplicate set to serve a business purpose. These duplicate series should be managed according to an authorized records retention schedule.



## *Remember...*

Handling transitory records requires you to exercise your judgement. If you are unsure about destroying or deleting records, contact the Records Management and Privacy Office at [recordsmanagement@queensu.ca](mailto:recordsmanagement@queensu.ca).