# General Teaching Council for Wales

## Records Management Policy

### Introduction

This document sets out the Records Management Policy for the General Teaching Council for Wales. The Council recognises that the efficient management of its records is necessary in order to support its core functions, to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations and to enable the effective management of the Council. Records Management is defined as the responsibility for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use, distribution, storage and disposal of records.

The purpose of the Policy is to ensure the creation and maintenance of authentic, reliable and useable records, by establishing a framework and accountability for records management, through which best practice can be implemented and audited.

Records are defined as all those documents, regardless of format, which reflect the Council's activities and the business carried out by the Council. They may be created, received or maintained in hard copy or electronically. This Policy covers both formats.

The Council also has a responsibility to comply with legislative requirements, relating to records contained in the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act and the Public Records Act.

### The need for records

The Council must keep a record of its activities so that:

- its transactions are properly documented
- there is continuity in the event of a disaster
- the Council can account its actions to the National Assembly for Wales and other interested stakeholders
- an audit trail is possible
- responses to requests under the Freedom of Information Act can be given
- an historical record of the Council's business is available.

### Responsibilities

The Council has a corporate responsibility to maintain records and systems in accordance with regulations. Since records management is a specific corporate programme, the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team have a major stake in the implementation of best practice. The day to day responsibility for the Records Management System will fall to the Office Manager assisted by the Administration &

Corporate Support Team. This responsibility sits alongside the responsibility for the Archive and Freedom of Information systems.

Team Managers, within the relevant teams, will be responsible for records generated by their departments' activities, namely to ensure that the records created, received and controlled within their department are managed in a way which meets the aims of this Records Management Policy. They will also devise a time-scale for deciding how long their archived records should be retained. This will be communicated to the Administrative and Corporate Support Teams when paper records are sent externally to Archive storage premises. These time-scales will reflect legislative requirements for retention of documents of particular types.

The IS Officer will be responsible for ensuring that the Council's electronic systems and their functions,comply with this Policy and related legislative requirements.

Individual employees of the Council must ensure that the records for which they are responsible are complete and accurate records of their activities, and that they are maintained and disposed of in accordance with the Council's Records Management Policy. This will encompass both the paper and electronic records which they maintain.

## Storage

### 1 Paper Records

All active live paper records will be held with each Department of the Council which will minimise the requirement for external Archive storage. Live records will normally be the current financial/Academic year, but in exceptional cases, such as Finance, it may be that the current and previous years' records may be retained in the office. Any records which are considered to be of a "Confidential" nature should be retained in lockable cabinets and cupboards.

#### Archiving and Retention

Team Leaders will be responsible for deciding when to archive paper records. They will decide whether to archive records on a yearly or half-yearly basis. They will prepare the records for archive and inform the Office Manager that they are ready for archiving, also ensuring that the Destroy date is entered on the Archive boxes.

#### Disposal

Paper records which have been sent out to external Archiving storage will be logged both at the Council and also at the Archive site. Destroy dates will be logged by the external Storage site and records destroyed on the relevant dates as originally informed by the Council. The Council will receive confirmation that the records have reached their destroy date and have subsequently been securely destroyed.

There will be documents which will need to be permanently retained e.g. Council and Committee Minutes as they are an official record of the Council's business operations. A decision has been taken to donate the copies of these papers to the National Library for Wales.

Access to Archived Records

Archived records can be re-called to the office at any time. They will be returned within a 24 hour period when requested. This will ensure that any information which is needed to respond to a query or complaint can be accessed without any delay.

## 2 Electronic Records

Many electronic documents are produced in the course of Council business, with varying degrees of value and longevity. These can be in various versions – working, draft and finalised documents – and various formats: from conventional text-based documents (such as MS Word files or PDF files), e-mail messages taking the place of memos and phone calls; e-mails commenting on attached documents; and spreadsheets.

Not all electronic documents are formal records. This section is aimed at those electronic documents which are more formal and that would be expected to be kept as records in one form or another. Some may have a paper equivalent and those would be archived as well as the electronic version.

Electronic records, particularly those used by more than one individual, should be structured into directories, sub-directories and folders on the P Drive, with records that form part of the same objective to ensure that all evidence of the same business activity is grouped together and safeguarded. This ensures that individual records are easier to find and can be read in their wider context. The structure of directories, sub-directories and folders must be simple and logical with the electronic folders proceeding from the general to the specific. As far as possible electronic records should not be stored in personal workspace.

**Archiving, Deletion and Retention**

Electronic Files

All records should be accurate and not kept longer than is necessary and, should only be retained for one (or more) of the following criteria: -

- legal requirement (e.g. professional standards casework, financial records)
- public interest (e.g. corporate & policy documents)
- business need (e.g. funding programmes, operational matters).

Team Managers will be responsible for deciding when to permanently delete or archive electronic records from the P drive to the Archive Drive. They will decide whether to archive records in the same manner as paper records, ie on an annual, monthly and quarterly basis. As a general rule however, documents are to be archived after 5 years unless they are still needed to be accessed on a regular basis. Financial records will be kept for current financial year + 6 years. Team Managers will also ensure good housekeeping and remove unnecessary duplicates of final documents; working copies that are no longer required and documents that contain no continuing value to the Council.

Database Records

The records held by the Council on databases, e.g. the Register of Qualified Teachers, form a core resource of the Council – these live records are kept permanently on the database; historical data (such as change of name/address or workplace) is archived automatically by the database application itself. The database records, and any scans of documents, held on the Teacher Misconduct Case Management System will be kept for 40 years.

Emails

It is not possible to set a standard retention period for e-mails because e-mail is used to communicate about such a wide range of things, ranging from the instantly disposable to the highly significant. The retention period of an e-mail is determined by the importance of its contents. Therefore retention decisions have to be taken on a case by case basis at the time of receiving and sending. Most e-mails do not need to be kept beyond the timeframe of the task to which they refer. If an email is sufficiently valuable as to be kept as a permanent record then for business continuity purposes, and also to enable the Council to meet its freedom of information and data protection obligations, important e-mails and attachments should be stored in the relevant part of the P Drive where they will be accessible to other staff. Emails will then be treated as an electronic file and archived to after 5 years unless they are needed to be accessed on a regular basis.

Confidential Electronic Records

Confidential documents and emails when moved to the archive drive will be placed in secure folders so that only relevant staff can access

**Linked Policies**

Other policies, practice and procedures exist which touch upon the Records Management Policy. They are as follows:

IT Security Policy

Freedom of Information

Business Continuity & Risk register

Code of Conduct for Council Officers.

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