Best practice in disposing of paper records, computers, or devices

Introduction

This guidance explains how to dispose of paper, computers, or other devices containing information to ensure that sensitive University information is not exposed.

When should I dispose of records?

Dispose of records in line with their retention schedule (if one is available), or as soon as they are no longer needed for ongoing business and accountability purposes.

As part of your everyday activities, you will probably "destroy" electronic records by deleting them. However, this sort of deletion may not eradicate the data. A copy may still remain on the PC, laptop or other device. Thus, when passing on or disposing of computing equipment and devices, it is important to take further steps.

Do not destroy records subject to a current information request until 40 days after the request has been answered. To check whether a record is subject to an information request, please contact your local freedom of information practitioner.

- [Who is my practitioner?](#)

How should I dispose of records?

Transfer to the University Archives any records which meet the criteria set out in the University Archives Collections Management Policy.

- [Edinburgh University Archives archival selection criteria](#)

Use one of the University's waste disposal and recycling services for records or equipment not suitable for preservation in the University Archives.

- [How do I dispose of my waste](#)?

Which waste service should I choose?

Before disposing of records or equipment, consider the consequences for the University or another party should an unauthorised person gain access to the

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"destroyed" information. If the information is in the public domain or you would release it without concern in response to a freedom of information request, dispose of it through normal waste procedures, for example, in a paper recycling bin.

For other information, use a secure or confidential waste disposal option.

Can I pass my PC, laptop or device to another user?

Do not pass equipment to organisations or individuals outside the University, including to a subsidiary company.

If your computer has been used to process highly sensitive information, do not pass on the computer within the University.

Why do we need to dispose of records?

The retention of unnecessary paper and electronic records consumes staff time, space and equipment. In addition, the data protection legislation requires us to keep records for no longer than necessary; we can be subject to regulatory investigation, sued or fined up to £500,000 for retaining unnecessary information if this causes damage to someone.

What help is available?

The University's Waste and Recycling Team can provide advice on the most appropriate destruction methods for your information.

[Waste and Recycling](#)

About this guidance

Version control	Author/editor	Date	Edits made
10	Rob Don	May 2024	Amended broken links.
9	Claire Friend	February 2018	Removed repetition. Reformatted for accessibility.
2	Susan Graham	July 2014	

If you require the guidance in an alternative format, please contact the Records Manager at Rob.Don@ed.ac.uk