

Records Storage Areas – Dos and Don'ts

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for any member of University staff responsible for storing records.

What is the purpose of this guidance?

You may have so many records that you have to store them in places other than your office. This guidance highlights the issues which you should take into consideration when choosing somewhere to store your records. When records are no longer required for everyday reference, it may be a more economical use of space to store them in a records storage area rather than in office accommodation.

Why is the location of your records important?

The location of your records is important because it can impact on their accessibility and their long term preservation. Records must be stored somewhere which is easily accessible to any member of staff who may need to retrieve them. They must also be stored somewhere which will ensure they last for as long as they are required, which in some cases may be many years.

Storing records – dos and don'ts

Location considerations

Do:

- ✓ Keep your records in a secure location - you should be able to lock the room, cupboard or filing cabinet in which you have stored them
- ✓ Keep your records in an area where there is ample space to access and retrieve them - leave enough room for ladders if necessary and for cabinet doors to open
- ✓ Make sure you know what records are kept where. If boxing them, keep a list of what is in each box. Similarly if your records are stored over various locations, keep a list of which records are kept in which area
- ✓ Keep the storage area and equipment tidy
- ✓ Ensure the location meets health and safety requirements
- ✓ Make sure that your most frequently used records are stored in the most accessible location

Don't:

- X Keep your records in an area where they will cause an obstruction
- X Keep your records in an area which is inaccessible to some or all members of staff that need to get access to them

Environmental considerations

Do:

- ✓ Keep your records in a clean and dry area
- ✓ Arrange for your record storage area to be cleaned regularly

Don't:

- X Keep your records anywhere near water or water pipes
- X Keep your records near inflammable materials or rooms containing inflammable materials
- X Keep your records where there is evidence of rodents or other pests such as birds, silverfish or other insects

Use of storage equipment

Do:

- ✓ Distribute records evenly throughout shelves and cabinets - don't store them only on the top as this will make shelving or cabinets unstable
- ✓ Try and use boxes when storing records on shelves – this is tidier, keeps records more organised and gives more protection against pests and water damage
- ✓ Use the right size of box for the records you are storing; they should be neither too big nor too small
- ✓ Clearly label the storage equipment and furniture so that you can locate records easily. However, be aware that it is not always appropriate to advertise the exact contents of storage boxes for security reasons. You may want to label them with a random number that corresponds to a list held elsewhere.

Don't:

- X Overfill office furniture used to store records, such as filing cabinets - this is dangerous and can also make access difficult
- X Overfill boxes and make them too heavy to lift or carry
- X Keep records directly on the ground or on the very top of storage furniture where they will be more susceptible to damage from pests or floods

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