

# Method statement on the selection and appraisal of corporate records

## Purpose

1. This method statement describes the process by which the University will distinguish and select those corporate records with the highest value for permanent preservation, from those that lack potentially enduring public value.
2. Appraisal supports records management because it:
  - a) maintains the efficiency of departmental records management systems by limiting their contents to those records which are of continuing value
  - b) ensures that records of permanent or archival value are identified so that provision can be made for their preservation.

## Scope

3. This method statement applies to the appraisal of all corporate records maintained by the University of York, irrespective of the records' format. It covers the appraisal material to be transferred to the University Archive and the re-appraisal of existing archive holdings.
4. The University Archive, within the nationally accredited Borthwick Institute for Archives, will ensure that appraisal for archival purposes selects physical and digital records of the highest archival value. The Borthwick Institute will provide appraisal and cataloguing tools and methods to support the integration and appraisal of digital and analogue records.
5. This procedure should be used alongside policy and guidelines issued by the Records Management Office which set out requirements and good practice.

## Method statement

### Appraisal values

6. The University will consider the following values in the appraisal of its corporate records. These values represent its principal 'selection criteria'.
7. Records may sometimes have two types of value: (a) their 'primary' value to the University (institutional/operational value), and (b) a 'secondary' public value to society/culture, providing an enduring resource for research to a wide range of future users (archival value).
8. Appraisal of the operational or 'business' value of records (the retention of records for business or legal purposes) will be carried out in such a way as to: assist efficient and effective administration through reducing the time taken to retrieve information; ensure pertinent material is retained for as long as it is necessary to enable informed policy development, to demonstrate research quality and safeguard the rights and interests of the University, its employees and stakeholders; enable record creators and keepers to address the quantity and proliferation of documentation and maintain control of storage spaces; allow departments to account for the management of resources and policy-making to the public, and in the course of legal, financial and regulatory scrutiny; assess risk and make decisions based on the analysis of available information.
9. Archival appraisal in the context of University-maintained systems and repositories will be undertaken by the University Archivist, in consultation with Information Owners: to determine which records have the highest archival value; to avoid duplication in the selection of archival material; to develop consistent archival appraisal decisions within and across departments, centres and institutes of the University; to support the strategic objectives and collection themes of the

Borthwick Institute and, within it, the University Archive; to be aware of usage and potential future research, but to assess these needs alongside overarching collection and acquisition strategies.

10. Records will be selected for the University's Archive which demonstrate enduring public interest value, for example by: enabling research and investigations; ensuring long-term accountability; preserving personal, community and corporate identities, memories and histories; helping to establish and maintain rights, obligations and precedents; and securing records for future educational, research or development purposes.
11. Records will be selected for the University's Archive which show the significance of the functions and activities of University, its departments and communities and which provide information relevant to the Archive's collection policies.
12. Records of the highest archival value will be those which: are most capable of documenting change, continuity and development over time and of assisting historical interpretation of such changes; document the functions of departments, services and officers of the University and the work, contributions and histories of its communities and members; are capable of being re-used for purposes other than those they were created to perform; and support diverse and inclusive research and generate new insights.
13. Appraisal will be carried out in such a way as to select records of the highest archival value in respect of: the history of the University, its organisation, departments, staff and student communities and procedures; notable events or persons (where the records add significantly to what is already known); institutions; policies (including their formulation and interpretation); processes and procedures; social development, including demographic, cultural and economic change; scientific, technological and medical development; significant changes in the way an academic discipline is conducted; changes to the physical environment; marginalised and under-represented groups and histories.
14. In determining those records of highest archival value, the University will take account of the accessibility and usability of the material. This will be particularly the case where accessibility might be compromised by its legal status, ownership, statutory or contractual compliance or physical condition.

### **Appraisal principles**

15. The following principles and frameworks support the application of the University's appraisal criteria.

#### *Retention scheduling*

16. The development of retention schedules under the Information and Records Management Policy remains fundamental to the expression and application of appraisal values and decisions and the subsequent disposal of records or their transfer to the University Archive. Retention schedules provide scope for reviews and in recommending minimum retention periods support local flexibility and promote the auditable recording of disposal actions. Furthermore, they ensure consistent criteria are applied in departments, institutes and sections with reference to sectoral record-keeping guidelines, best practice, legal and contractual requirements and relevant limitation periods.

#### *Record creation and disposition*

17. Effective appraisal, especially in a digital environment, relies on robust systems of records creation and the inclusion of records in retention schedules.
18. The University Archivist and Records Manager: will promote the creation of filing systems and conventions and metadata that enable the appraisal of records for business and archival value; where appropriate repositories exist, will support the provision of procedures for the appraisal, migration and transfer of digital records; will support the creation of good records and systems,

providing clear guidelines for naming, filing and storing documents; and will encourage and assist in the development of disposal schedules across all records in all formats.

19. All material for disposal will be handled securely and with regard to any duties of confidence.

#### *Timing of appraisal*

20. The appraisal of new transfers and deposits within the University Archive will be carried out by the University Archivist as a qualified archival professional and effected in two stages: before receipt into the repository and after, during the cataloguing process.
21. Pre-acquisition appraisal will normally take place at the series-level or higher. For newly transferred or deposited material appraisal will generally be carried out on a file by file basis as part of the cataloguing process.
22. Archives gifted to the University will be appraised routinely and without requesting permission from the donor, in accordance with the terms of the gift.
23. Re-appraisal will often be necessary for larger collections if no appraisal was originally carried out at the time of acquisition.

#### *Documenting decisions*

24. Significant disposal decisions made after transfer/deposit, including the basis of any sampling, will be recorded in the archive finding aid at the appropriate level and/or in associated metadata.

## Monitoring and review

25. The Information Security Board will monitor the effectiveness of records management policy and oversee regular reviews. The Borthwick Institute's Collections Development Group manages and oversees collecting activity on a day-to-day basis. Appraisal and selection activity are also monitored through the use of the ICO Records Management tracker, local KPIs and the annual 'Accessions to Repositories' survey for the National Archives.
26. The UK's Archive Service Accreditation Standard requires archives to have a clear, documented policy on collections development, which explicitly covers acquisition, appraisal, and deaccessioning of material. The accreditation scheme provides external monitoring and review to ensure that appraisal is not arbitrary but is based on professional standards and criteria.

## Document control

<b>Approval body:</b>	Information Security Board
<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Chief Financial and Operating Officer and SIRO
<b>Responsible Service:</b>	Borthwick Institute for Archives   Records Management
<b>Policy Manager:</b>	Records Manager and University Archivist
<b>External regulatory and/or legal requirement addressed:</b>	Statutory Code of Practice on the management of records issued under section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000; Archive Service Accreditation Standard, requirement 2.2
<b>Equality Impact Assessment:</b>	An Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken.
<b>Approval date:</b>	December 2025
<b>Effective from:</b>	December 2025
<b>Date of next review:</b>	December 2028

Version	Date	Description
0.1	26 March 2012	Initial draft
1.0	3 May 2012	Approved by Information Security Board
1.1	15 May 2013	Format revisions agreed by Information Policy Executive
2.0	31 July 2019	Reviewed and approved by Information Security Board
3.0	5 April 2023	Reviewed and approved by Information Security Board
3.1	7 January 2025	Updated to reflect changed roles at 5.1
4.0	December 2025	Reviewed and approved by Information Security Board

## Appendix: Background

### The need for an appraisal policy

- The University is a public authority as defined by the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The policy supports the University's fulfilment of its obligations under the Code of Practice on the Management of Records, issued by DCMS under section 46 of the Act, and is framed with close reference to the guidance issued by The National Archives and Information Commissioner's Office.
- The University operates in a digital first environment. Growth in the volume and range of digital records and systems requires the University to manage and retain records consistently, irrespective of their format and still to respect the value of the record and its information and to address the specific preservation needs of a given format.
- A hybrid paper/digital environment necessitates a federated curation model. The need to ensure the consistent and ordered appraisal of paper and digital records across a diverse range of systems and local custodians is supported best by the provision of clear criteria. Archivists will normally act as custodians of the archival record, and where a digital archive or funder repository does not exist for research datasets with no enduring public value, and institutional or national provision is unavailable, data retention will remain the responsibility of departments.
- The need to support departments and researchers in providing for the appraisal and retention of their records under the auspices of the University's Information and Records Management strategies and professional and ethical codes and concordats (e.g. UKRI and researcher codes of conduct) which require universities to provide for the long-term preservation of research data and enable researchers to defend research conduct while managing data and resources effectively, efficiently and securely.
- The limited resources available for dealing with records management and a decline in research funding to generate new research requires the effectiveness of records and existing data to be maximised. Universities should capitalise on the value of data, whether in research, teaching or administrative support.
- Long-term and permanent preservation incur real costs to an institution, as does the improper or inadequate retention of records. It is important that the University is best placed to secure and apply appropriate funding to the management of its data.
- The open research and open data agenda, trusted research environments, and the greater availability of information provided by Freedom of Information legislation requires public bodies to document their appraisal work and provide justifiable reasons for keeping or destroying records.