

# Records Management retention scheduling

## 3. Accounting records

© Crown copyright 2012

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence) or email [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available for download at [nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk).

## Contents

1	Introduction .....	3
2	Scope and nature of the records .....	4
3	Retention principles.....	4
4	Enquiries and further information .....	5
	Appendix: Model retention schedule .....	6
	Bank account records.....	6
	Expenditure records .....	7
	Ledger records .....	8
	Receipts and revenue records .....	9
	Salaries and related records .....	10
	Stores records.....	10
	Other accountable financial records .....	11

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Government departments' and agencies' accounts (Vote Accounts and Trading Accounts) have to be laid before Parliament and they are preserved as published Parliamentary papers. These published accounts are sufficient for most future research purposes and the supporting departmental journals, ledgers and vouchers can be destroyed as soon as any limitation periods specified by statute have expired.
- 1.2 Some statutes, which may bear on retention periods for documents of various departments and agencies, are:
- [Civil Evidence Act 1995](#)
  - [Value Added Tax Act 1994](#)
  - [Companies Acts 1985](#) and [1989](#)
  - [Consumer Protection Act 1987](#)
  - [Data Protection Act 1998](#)
  - [Financial Services Act 1986](#)
  - [Limitation Act 1980](#)
  - [Freedom of Information Act 2000](#)

This is not an exhaustive list of all Statutes which may have a bearing on the retention of financial records. See [legislation.gov.uk](http://legislation.gov.uk) for all UK legislation.

There are also departments and agencies which operate specialised accounts or funds and these organisations should consult their legal branches or the relevant legislation to ascertain if any express provisions for the retention of documents apply.

- 1.3 For guidance on the retention of records on the public expenditure survey, preparation of estimates and similar material, see Retention Scheduling 10. [Central expenditure records](#).
- 1.4 For general guidance on the compilation of retention schedules, see [Disposal scheduling](#).
- 1.5 This guidance is aimed at records managers and financial managers in government. Both parties should agree any individual departmental guidance and formally endorse it in writing on the schedule.

## **2 Scope and nature of the records**

2.1 The financial records covered by this publication are the following broad categories:

- bank accounts
- expenditures
- ledgers
- receipts and revenue
- salaries and related documents
- stores and services
- other accountable financial documents

## **3 Retention principles**

3.1 All retention periods are given in whole years and should be computed from the end of the financial year to which the records relate.

3.2 The retention periods cited are based in the general National Audit Office (NAO) requirement that main accounting ledgers should be retained for six years and supporting documents for eighteen months following the end of the financial year to which they relate.

In the interests of administrative convenience we have substituted two years in the schedule for the eighteen months stated by NAO.

3.3 However it is not unusual for departments to retain supporting documentation also for six years, for example where goods are supplied. In the event of a query or dispute, the invoice may not provide the necessary information and the supporting documentation may form part of the evidence required.

It is for each individual department to undertake a risk assessment and to decide whether it requires supporting documentation to be retained for six years.

## 4 Enquiries and further information

- 4.1 Enquiries in the first instance should be addressed to the Departmental Record Officer of the department or agency concerned.
- 4.2 The National Archives provides guidance on many aspects of records management and related records management issues, available at

[nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/)

or from:

Information Management and Practice Department  
The National Archives  
Kew  
Richmond  
Surrey  
TW9 4DU

email: [information.management@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:information.management@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

telephone: +44 (0) 20 8876 3444

fax: +44 (0) 20 8392 5283

## Appendix: Model retention schedule

### Bank account records

Type	Item	Description	Disposal
Cheques and associated records	1	Cheque book/butts for all accounts	Two years
	2	Cancelled cheques	Two years
	3	Dishonoured cheques	Two years
	4	Fresh cheques	Six years
	5	Paid/presented cheques	Six years
	6	Stoppage of cheque payment notices	Two years
	7	Record of cheques opened books	Two years
	8	Cheque registers	Two years
	9	Record of cheques drawn for payment	Six years
Bank deposits	10	Bank deposit books/slips/butts	Two years
	11	Bank deposit summary sheets Summaries of daily banking Cheques schedules	Two years
	12	Register of cheques lodged for collection	Two years
Bank reconciliations	13	Reconciliation files/sheets	Two years
	14	Daily list of paid cheques	Two years
	15	Unpaid cheque records	Two years
Bank statements	16	Bank statements, periodic reconciliations	Two years
	17	Bank certificates of balance	Two years
Electronic banking and electronic funds transfer	18	Cash transactions Payment instructions Deposits and/or withdrawals	Disposal action in line with paper records

Type	Item	Description	Disposal
Electronic banking and electronic funds transfer (continued)	19	Audit trails	Retain for the same period as the base transaction record

## Expenditure records

Type	Item	Description	Disposal
Cash books/sheets	1	Expenditure sheets	Six years
	2	Cash books/sheets	Six years
Petty cash records	3	Petty cash records/books/sheets	Two years
	4	Petty cash receipts	Two years
	5	Postal cash book/sheets Postage/courier account/cash records Register of postage expenditure Postage paid record Postage books sheets	Two years
	6	Summary cash books	Two years
Creditors	7	Creditors' history records Lists/reports	Six years
Statements	8	Statements of accounts outstanding Outstanding orders	Two years
	9	Statements of accounts – rendered/ payable	Two years
Subsidiary records	10	Copies of extracts and expenditure dissections	One year
	11	Credit note books	Two years
	12	Credit notes	Two years
	13	Debit note books	Two years

Type	Item	Description	Disposal
Vouchers	14	Vouchers – claims for payment, purchase orders, requisition for goods and services, accounts payable, invoices and so on	Six years
	15	Wages/salaries vouchers	Six years
	16	Copies of vouchers	One year
	17	Voucher registers	Two years
	18	Voucher registration cards and payment cards	Six years
	19	Voucher summaries	One year
	20	Advice/schedule of vouchers despatched Delivery advice	One year
Costing records	21	Cost cards	Two years
	22	Costing records, dissection sheets and so on	Two years

## Ledger records

Type	Item	Description	Disposal
General and subsidiary ledgers	1	General and subsidiary ledgers produced for the purposes of preparing certified financial statements or published information	Six years
	2	Cash books/sheets	Six years
	3	Other ledgers (such as contracts, costs, purchases)	Two years
Related journals	4	Audit sheets – ledger posting	Two years
Journals	5	Journals – prime records for the raising of charges	Six years
	6	Journals – routine adjustments	Two years



Type	Item	Description	Disposal
Trial balances and reconciliations	7	Year-end balances, reconciliations and variations to support ledger balances and published accounts	Six years

## Receipts and revenue records

Type	Item	Description	Disposal
Books/butts	1	Receipt books/butts Office copies of receipts – cashiers', cash register, fines and costs, sale of publications, general receipt books/butts/ records	Six years
	2	Postal remittance books/records	Six years
	3	Receipt books/records for imposts (such as stamp duty, VAT receipt books)	Six years
	4	Irregular remittance books	Two years
Cash registers	5	Copies of forms	Six years
	6	Reconciliation sheets	Six years
	7	Audit rolls	Two years
	8	Summaries/analysis records	Two years
	9	Reading books/sheets	Two years
Cashiers' records	10	Handover books	Two years
Revenue records	11	Revenue cash books/sheets/records Receipt cash books/sheets	Six years
	12	Daily revenue dissections	One year
Debtors' records and invoices	13	Periodical revenue dissections	One year

Type	Item	Description	Disposal
Debtors' records and invoices (continued)	14	Copies of invoices/debit notes rendered on debtors (such as invoices paid/unpaid, registers of invoices, debtors ledgers)	Six years
	15	Source documents/records used for raising of invoices/debit notes	Six years
Debits and refunds	16	Copies of invoices and copies of source documents	Two years
	17	Records relating to unrecoverable revenue, debts and overpayments (such as register of debts written off, register of refunds)	Six years

### Salaries and related records

Type	Item	Description	Disposal
Salary records	1	Employee pay histories Note that the last three years' records must be kept for leavers, in either the personnel or finance records system, for the calculation of pension entitlement	Six years
	2	Salary rates register	When superseded
	3	Salary ledger card/records	Six years
	4	Copies of salaries/wages payroll sheets	Two years

### Stores records

Type	Item	Description	Disposal
Stores records	1	Goods inwards books/records	Six years
	2	Delivery dockets	Two years
	3	Stock/stores control cards/sheets/records	Two years

	4	Stock/stores issue registers/records	Two years
	5	Stocktaking sheets/records, including inventories, stock reconciliations, stock take reports	Two years
Purchase order records	6	Purchase order books/records	Six years
	7	Railway/courier consignment books/ records	Two years
	8	Travel warrants	Two years
Requisition records	9	Requisition records	Two years

### Other accountable financial records

Type	Item	Description	Disposal
Asset registers	1	Assets/equipment registers/records	Six years after asset or last one in the register is disposed of
Depreciation registers	2	Records relating to the calculation of annual depreciation	Six years after asset or last one in the register is disposed of
Financial statements	3	Statements/summaries prepared for inclusion in quarterly/annual reports	Six years
	4	Periodic financial statements prepared for management on a regular basis	Destroy when cumulated into quarterly/annual reports
	5	Ad hoc statements	One year