

Records Management retention scheduling

6. Project records

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The following guidance is aimed at Departmental Record Officers and their staff and also staff in government departments and agencies who have responsibilities for project management. It covers records in all media generated by all kinds of projects, from simple undertakings such as the publication of government reports to large projects such as building construction.
- 1.2 This guidance should be read in conjunction with other publications in this series, in particular:
- [Buildings records retention schedule](#)
 - [Accounting records retention schedule](#)
 - [Contractual records retention schedule](#)
- 1.3 A project is a management approach designed to bring about a change. It provides a framework bridging the current state of affairs and a planned future. Once achieved, the framework has served its purpose. All projects are finite and the records that they produce are of minimal business use afterwards.

2 Minimum retention periods

2.1 There are many record types common to most projects. Their retention periods are usually determined by legislation or by general records schedules used throughout government. For example, accounting and other financial records are largely covered by the [Limitation Act 1980](#). See also [Accounting records retention schedule](#).

2.2 Many records will be unique to a particular project, such as technical documents, maps or plans. The retention of these records may be determined by the nature of the project and also by historical considerations.

For example, the documents of a major government building project such as the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in London are likely to be retained for longer than those for the refurbishment of a government office block.

Some records of major building projects are likely to be worthy of permanent preservation or will need to be retained for the lifetime of the facility. See [Buildings records retention schedule](#).

2.3 The most important factors to consider when deciding appropriate retention periods for project records are:

- the significance of the contribution made by the project to the functions performed by the creating organisation
- the importance of the project to the development of the department or agency within the government infrastructure
- any residual value to the creators

2.4 The model schedule in this guide reflects minimum retention periods for various categories of records. Departments and agencies may wish to retain some of the records in these categories for Second Review.

You can get advice from The National Archives' Information Management Consultants and guidance from [The National Archives acquisition and disposition strategy](#). Some departments may also have in place operational selection policies that cover project records.

- 2.5 The model schedule is concerned with final documents. Most projects will include a version control system for their documentation. Earlier versions of reports and papers might be kept until the end of the project, but no longer.

3 Scheduling the records of individual projects

- 3.1 In the case of major projects Departmental Record Officers (DROs) and project managers may wish to draw up a specific retention schedule at the beginning of the project, drawing on the minimum retention periods described in the model schedule included with this guidance. Such action will effectively take account of the particular nature of the project (see section 2).
- 3.2 When framing a specific retention schedule the project manager should consult end users. The project manager might conduct this on an individual basis or through the project board established for the purpose. Involve DROs or their representatives in such consultation or invite them to project board meetings where records issues are discussed.
- 3.3 Place papers compiled by project and stage managers, by members of project assurance teams or by others involved in projects, on registered project files. Sometimes these papers will be part of the formal documentation.

The situation is different for unregistered material kept by them or information kept on individual disk drives outside of a managed system for electronic records. Destroy this no later than one year after the end of the project.

- 3.4 As a general rule you could destroy the records of small projects (those of less than twelve months duration) after two years.

However some of the documents from such projects may have to be retained for legal reasons (for example, financial information).

- 3.5 Project records created and managed electronically may overlap with paper records. Rationalise the two sets at the end of the project to reduce duplication.
- 3.6 For information on the compilation of retention schedules see [Disposal scheduling](#).

4 Glossary

The following terms are common in project methodology:

Business Assurance Co-ordinator - member of a project assurance team who is responsible for planning, monitoring and reporting on all business assurance aspects of a project so that actual costs and elapsed times are in line with planned costs and time schedules

Business case - justification for undertaking a project, defining the benefits which the project is expected to deliver and the constraints within which the project is required to operate

Checkpoint - a regular technical and management control point, measuring actual achievement against plan

Configuration management - process of identifying and defining items of change in a system, recording and reporting on their status, and verifying the completeness and correctness of configuration items

End stage assessment - management control at the end of each stage of a project (as defined in the project plan), consisting of a presentation on current project status to the project board and a request for approval of plans for the next stage

Feasibility study - a short assessment of a process or procedure to enable a recommendation to be made whether a project proposal is likely to be technically possible and commercially sensible

GANTT chart - shows planned activities and actual progress as horizontal bars set against a time scale (first developed by Henry L Gantt in 1917)

Highlight reports - progress reports prepared by project managers, usually at monthly intervals, highlighting any actual or potential problems

Mid stage assessment - an interim management control point which may be undertaken to authorise limited work to begin on the next stage of a project before the current stage is complete, to permit a formal project review during a long stage, or to make decisions when unplanned situations arise

Post Implementation Review - undertaken six to twelve months after a project system or product has become operational to check that implementation has met the project objectives and that the system/product is meeting user needs

PRINCE - (**PR**ojects **IN** **C**ontrolled **E**nvironments) a standard methodology used for project management in government

Project Assurance Team - consists of three technical and administrative roles:

- Business Assurance Co-ordinator
- Technical Assurance Co-ordinator
- User Assurance Co-ordinator

Project Board - usually consists of three senior management roles:

- Executive (overall project guidance and assessment)
- Senior user (representing users of the project's product)
- Senior technical (representing areas responsible for technical implementation)

Project Evaluation Report - produced at the end of a project to provide an assessment of all managerial, technical and quality aspects of a project, and to document experiences

Project Initiation Document - defines the project terms of reference, including:

- project boundaries
- aims and objectives
- project priority
- organisation and responsibilities
- resource plans
- quality policy
- reporting arrangements
- assumptions and constraints
- risk analysis

Resource plan - identifies the type, size and allocation of the various resources required during the project (such as finance, staff or equipment)

Technical Assurance Co-ordinator - member of a project assurance team who is responsible for planning, monitoring and reporting on all technical assurance aspects of a project so that technical and operating standards defined for the project are used to good effect

Technical plan – document identifying the sequence and timing of activities, together with responsibilities assigned for producing various parts of the overall product of a project

User Assurance Co-ordinator - member of a project assurance team who is responsible for planning, monitoring and reporting on the user assurance aspects of a project so that the needs of the users are fully taken into account and the impact on the user's business and operational requirements is properly assessed

5 Other publications and further information

5.1 The National Archives produces records management standards and guidance which aim to promote good practice in the management of public records throughout all stages of their life cycle.

5.2 **Record Keeping** includes standards on particular aspects of records management and also publications covering general records management principles including:

- [File creation](#)
- [Tracking records](#)
- [Business recovery plans](#)

5.3 **Acquisition and Appraisal** contains publications relating to acquisition and disposition, retention scheduling and operational selection policies. Current material in this series is:

- [Acquisition and disposition strategy](#)
- [Disposal scheduling](#)

- Retention Scheduling: 1. [Buildings records](#)
- Retention Scheduling: 2. [Personnel Records](#)
- Retention scheduling: 3. [Accounting records](#)
- Retention scheduling: 5. [Contractual records](#)

5.4 **Access** provides guidance on access, freedom of information, data protection and similar issues, including:

- [Access to Public Records](#)
- [Access to NHS records transferred to places of deposit under the Public Records Act](#)

5.5 **Preservation** covers guidance on the preservation of records and the preparation of records for transfer to The National Archives, including their cataloguing, packing and labelling.

5.6 Further information on these and other aspects of the management of public records is available at nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/ or from:

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Project records model disposal schedule

Item	Description	Disposal	Notes
1	Project proposals -approved -rejected or deferred	 -ten years after completion of project -five years after completion of project	
2	Project Initiation Documents (PIDs) and supporting documentation (including business cases)	Ten years after completion of project	Records relating to major projects may be kept for Second Review (25 years)
3	Feasibility studies -reports -draft reports -working papers -correspondence	 -ten years after issue -two years after date of last paper -two years after date of last paper -five years after date of last paper	Records relating to major projects may be kept for Second Review (25 years)
4	Plans and specifications (such as statements of requirements, operational requirements, technical plans, resource plans) -provisional/proposed -final -variations	 -five years after completion of project -ten years after completion of project -ten years after completion of project	
5	Contracts and agreements -contracts under seal -other contracts -title deeds -correspondence	See Retention scheduling: 5. Contractual records	Title deeds are not public records but might be retained for administrative purposes

Item	Description	Disposal	Notes
6	Contractors -approved nominations -rejected nominations -approved list -removals/suspensions	 -one year after issue -one year after issue -when new list is issued -six years after the end of the project	
7	Tender boards -record sets of papers -other copies -working papers -minutes of meetings	 -at the end of the project -one year after date of last paper -two years after date of last paper -five years after date of last paper	
8	Maps, plans, drawings and photographs -master set -working copies -other copies	 -ten years after completion of project -at the end of the project -five years after date of last paper	Records relating to major projects may be kept for Second Review (25 years)
9	Financial documents (including investment appraisals)	Six years after completion of project	See also Retention scheduling: 3. Accounting records
10	Equipment and supplies	Six years after completion of project	
11	Land records -allocation -procurement/disposal	 -when land released for other purposes -12 years after date of disposal	
12	Human resources	See Retention Scheduling: 2. Personnel Records	Originals with personnel departments

Item	Description	Disposal	Notes
13	Project boards, Assessment meetings (and so on) -minutes -correspondence	-five years after date of last paper -five years after date of last paper	Records relating to major projects may be kept for Second Review (25 years)
14	Reports (such as stage assessments, quality reviews, highlight reports, GANTT charts) -interim -final -evaluation -draft	-five years after issue -keep for Second Review -keep for Second Review -at the end of the project	
15	Product descriptions	Five years after completion of project	
16	Project operating manuals	Five years after completion of project	
17	Miscellaneous records such as: Copies of documentation from other projects; information on products, equipment or machinery; training courses; correspondence	Two years after completion of project	