

University Recordkeeping Manual

Part Three

STUDENT RECORDS

Archives and Records Management Services
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Part 3 – Student Records

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Part 3 - Student Records

1. General rules regarding Student Files

An official student file (student file) is created for every prospective or enrolled student when they are allocated a student identification number (SID) number in Sydney Student. The official student files are created and managed by ARMS. All documents, including email, recording actions which affect a student's candidature should be attached to the respective student file. Both sides of the correspondence should be attached so that a complete record is retained for future reference and accountability.

Students are entitled to access to their own student file so all documents should be written with the understanding that the student may read what is being written about her or him.

There are some specific actions such as special consideration applications, referral to student support services, academic appeals or misconduct matters which must be recorded, kept and managed on separate files. This is so access is restricted to the certain University staff who have a need to know. All additional files relating to students must be created in the University's corporate records system.

Student files are retained until 6 years after either the year of last action, or close of the appeal period, after which they are destroyed in a manner that is compliant with the State Records Act 1998.

2. General responsibilities

Student files should only be accessed by authorised personnel dealing with matters relating to a particular student.

Student files should only contain documents relating to that student. University staff who have access to such files should not attach documents relating to other students, or any other person on the file. For example:

- Do not place tax file numbers of thesis examiners on the student's file;
- Do not place documents such as minutes of academic committee meetings which refer to multiple students as well as to the relevant student, on file. Such documents should have the names of other people removed or otherwise hidden.

Student files may also be accessed by external agencies in accordance with the University's [Privacy Management Plan](#), and so should reflect the highest standards of professional behaviour by all staff.

Student files must be stored securely and not left in areas with unrestricted access. They should be placed in envelopes when being sent to other offices.

When transferring a file to another staff member (new location), please advise Records Management Services of the movement of the file.

3. Academic Recordkeeping Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Department, and ultimately the Faculty, to ensure that adequate records for the teaching and assessment of students are made and kept for the mandated retention period. This is necessary for the understanding of the reasons behind why certain decisions and actions have been made.

E.g. Interactions with students about:

- courses
- subjects
- difficulties the student encounters
- applications for assistance
- assignments and assessment
- complaints or appeals relating to assessment

All such interactions and decisions should be thoroughly documented and kept on the respective files.

All consultations and other meetings between supervisors and postgraduate research students must be documented and the records attached to the student's file.

Provision of assistance services by Disability Services should be documented and kept on a separate file from the official student file. Two files could be linked by the student's SID.

Assessment and appeals

Documentation of assessment action, which is additional to comments on assignments handed back to students, exam scripts or results processing must be attached to respective student file.

Disputes about assessments, both when there are changes made to the original assessment and when the request for re-assessment is not successful, must be documented and the records attached to the respective student file.

All appeal processes, whether formal or informal, must be adequately recorded and attached to a file.

Documents related to formal student academic appeals should not be placed on the official student file. Formal appeals should be recorded on separate appeal files which should be linked to the student file using the student's SID.

When a student lodges a formal appeal against an academic assessment, all the documentation relating to that student's assessment, including mark sheets, annotated examination scripts, minutes of departmental meetings, must be retrieved from the examination and other assessment records and placed on the appeal file.

Departmental meetings and committees

Minutes of departmental meetings should be filed centrally in the departmental or faculty office.

All academic committees which deal with individual students' progress, particularly unsatisfactory progress, must keep records of their proceedings.

Where appropriate, copies of the section of the minutes which relate to the individual student should be placed on the student's file.

Request to create files

A request to create files such as student appeals or departmental meetings should be made to Records Management Services

(e-mail: records.online@sydney.edu.au or phone ext 69537).

The documentation to be attached to a file may consist of correspondence, minutes, diary or other notes and email exchanges. It must be printed or copied and attached to the student file. All correspondence received from students must be placed on their files.

See also Section 4 below – “What documents go on the student file?”

4. What documents go on the student file?

Documents to be attached to the routine student file are those relating to general student administration matters including:

- Applications for credit or cross institutional study
- Deferral requests & approval
- Exclusion and re-admission
- Financial assistance – eg, bursaries, prizes, *not* student loans handled by Student Services
- Re-enrolment
- Scholarship payment authority forms
- “Show Cause” letters to student
- Copies of outcome letters from misconduct or appeal matters that have an impact on candidature

Records of postgraduate student management including:

- Application forms
- Correspondence to and from the student
- Higher degree candidature annual progress reports
- Meetings between student and supervisor
- Thesis examination including examiners' reports

Records of international students including:

- Applications
- Copies of academic transcripts from secondary schools & other institutions
- Copies of passports and visas
- Correspondence with the University regarding application
- Language test results (IELTS or TOEFL).
- Letters and conditions of offer
- Requests for financial assistance
- Scholarship applications

5. What does *not* go on the student file

Documents which should not be attached to the routine student file are those created by the actions listed below. Where indicated a separate file should be created. Otherwise the documents should be kept in folders in alphabetical order for each semester in the departmental or faculty office

- Allegations and case documents created under the [Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism in Coursework Policy 2012](#) (separate file)¹, however, the final outcome or determination letter should be filed in student file.
- Alleged misconduct and student disciplinary matters (separate file), however, the final outcome or determination letter should be filed in student file.
- Change of address
- Student placement/practicum records (separate file)
- Financial or other assistance provided through Student Services (separate file)
- Request for a transcript of academic record and copies of academic transcripts
- Special consideration documents (separate file), including the Medical certificates or Professional Practitioners Certificates received in support of a special consideration application
- Student appeals (separate file) other than a copy of the final outcome letter where it has an impact on candidature

Please refer to the [FILING GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT RECORDS](#) for detailed instructions on correct placement of student records. If you have any other query about filing procedure, please either e-mail: records.online@sydney.edu.au, or phone ext 69537 for further advice.

6. Other files about students

There are several matters which should not be recorded on the routine student file. These other files must be created in the University's corporate records system. If you need assistance with creating a file contact records.online@sydney.edu.au

To protect the privacy of students, information which may be distressing or embarrassing should be held on separate files. Such files have their access restricted access to staff who deal with those matters.

In addition, the retention periods for different records vary, and should everything be placed on the one file some documents will be retained for longer than necessary. Retaining these records for longer than the mandated retention period may also be in breach of privacy law requirement.

Specific examples are:

- Allegations of academic dishonesty
- Alleged misconduct and student disciplinary matters
- Special consideration documentation (see reference below)

¹.Refer to the [Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism in Coursework Policy 2012](#) available on the Policy Register.

- Student appeals
- Student services (counselling, financial, housing, and other special needs)

The records related to applications for Special Consideration contain personal and often health related information. Therefore access to this information must be limited to those staff who require it in order to carry out their responsibilities.

Special consideration records must be stored securely in a manner that prevents unauthorised access. If sent through the internal mail, special consideration records must be enclosed in a sealed envelope. Special consideration records must be retained for a minimum of 3 years after the date of last action, and then destroyed in a manner that ensures privacy is not breached. In addition, the proper destruction of special consideration records must be appropriately documented by Archives and Records Management Services. Further information is available from [ARMS Intranet page](#).

7. Student access to student files and related records

Under the NSW *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* students are entitled to seek access to all information about them held by the University of Sydney. They may also apply formally under the NSW *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* to see, or get a copy of, their student file and any other records about themselves.

Please refer to the University's [Privacy Management Plan](#) regarding students' right of access to information about themselves.

Access to student file

Students should complete the application for appointment form on the ARMS web site (sydney.edu.au/arm/privacy in the forms section) and hand it to the Faculty Office.

The Faculty Office should provide the student access to her or his file under their supervision. A copy of the dated and signed application form should be attached to the student file.

Before the file is provided to the student:

- hardcopy documents attached to the file should be numbered folio by folio, beginning with the earliest dated documents;
- it may be more convenient to print documents from the electronic student file for access by the student.
- both hardcopy and electronic documents should be checked to ensure that information about any other person is not contained in the documents attached to the file. Such documents should be copied and names of other people hidden before the file is provided to the student;
- if electronic access to the student file is provided, for example by creating a single pdf, references to other individuals should be permanently redacted from the access copy before providing it to the student.

Copies of any documents requested by the student should be provided and the folio or pdf page numbers noted on the application form.

If there are other related files about the student, such as academic appeal, disciplinary action or Student Services file, the student must be informed and given the opportunity to approach the unit(s) holding those other files.

Access to exam scripts

Section 9(5) of the [Assessment Procedure 2011](#)⁴ provides students with rights of access to their exam scripts. Exam scripts not immediately returned to students should be retained by the faculty for a minimum of six months after results are posted. In the event of an appeal, allegation, dispute or enquiry the relevant exam script must not be destroyed until the appeal process is exhausted or until the case or enquiry has been fully resolved. .

In the case of research students, access to examiners' and assessors' reports and related documents may require a formal application under one of the Acts previously mentioned.

8 Disposal of Student Records

This section should be read in conjunction with Part 7 of the University Recordkeeping Manual which deals with the retention and disposal of all University records.

The retention and disposal of University records is governed by the NSW *State Records Act 1998*. It is an offence under section 21 of the Act to destroy records without proper authorisation. *General Disposal Authority 23, University Records* (GDA 23) was issued by the NSW State Records Authority in December 2005. This document sets the minimum retention periods for most student-related records in the University.⁵

NB: RMS manages the retention and destruction of the files, including student files and appeal files, registered in its systems.

Documents which are not held on the official student file or other files relating to student administration or services (see section 5 above), should be destroyed using the confidential waste service.

An application for authorisation to destroy significant quantities of non-file records related to students must be made and approved. The approval should be given by the head of the administrative or faculty unit which created the records and wishes to destroy them. The top half of the form must be sent to Records Management Services for our records. There is a copy of the application form appended to this part of the Manual

Any questions regarding the retention or disposal of University records should be addressed to the Records Disposal Officer on ext 13174.

Student Files

Student files will be retained for 6 years from the last date of action, or from close of the appeal period, whichever is longer. However some documents related to students are retained for shorter periods of time (see below).

Student Appeals

⁴ See the [Policy Register](#) website

⁵ http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/recordkeeping/general_disposal_authorities_996.asp

Student Appeal files are retained for a minimum of one year after the appeal is finalised, (GDA23-25.2.6).

Examination papers, students work and related documents

Examination scripts, students' work which is not handed back to them, marksheets, results processing records and associated records should be retained for six months from the posting of results. Examination scripts or students' work subject to any appeals, disputes or allegations of academic dishonesty (including but not limited to plagiarism) must be taken out of the cohort, and placed on a new case file. The file will contain the student's work and all documents relating to the matter. Such files will have a longer retention period based on the nature of the case. Access to such case files is also restricted to a "need to know basis."

GDA 23 requires the following minimum retention periods:

- marksheets: 12 months (GDA23-25.9.1);
- minutes of departmental meetings: 5 years (GDA02-2.4.1).

9. Requesting student files

There is an electronic student file for all current students. The contents of this file can be accessed via Records Online. There may also be a hardcopy file. Hardcopy student files which can be requested via the web using Records Online. Other files related to individual students can be accessed in the same way, if you have the relevant access permissions.

10. Contact details

Records Management Services
Main Building, A14
Telephone: x69537
Facsimile: (02) 9351 4173
E-mail: records.online@sydney.edu.au