

Introduction

The University of Ottawa creates, acquires, captures and manages vast amounts of information. By identifying the information that we need to keep, we can focus on managing only the information that is required to meet operational and strategic requirements.

This best practice provides employees the necessary guidance to understand these concepts and to provide advice in the identification of this type of information.

Many records should be managed informally and should only be retained for as long as they are in use. For more information, please consult the *What can I delete best practice*.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) applies to all your information and employees must search all information under the control of their units, sent or received. Once an access to information request is received, it is a criminal offence to delete or alter the information. Contact aipo@uottawa.ca if you have any questions.

The same applies to information identified in or affected by a legal proceeding.

How do I identify information that should be kept?

When determining the strategic and operational value of an information resource, consider the following factors:

- Purpose;
- Who created it (author);
- Structure, context and content;
- Impact as evidence to support and demonstrate decision-making;
- Role in documenting a business function and activity;
- Contribution to administrative efficiency and effectiveness, coherence and continuity within financial processes,
- Contribution to planning, performance measurement and reporting processes; and
- Role in satisfying administrative, business, accountability, stewardship, and legal requirements.

An information's **structure** (format and links to other documents or attachments), its **context** (information about the sender, recipient or recipients, and the time and date of creation), and its **content** (identified in the subject line or text of document) represent key elements that preserve the **value of the information** in any format or medium, provided the elements remain intact.

Based on these factors, information, regardless of format or medium, must be kept if it provides documentation to:

- Demonstrate a sequence of actions within a business process required to achieve a business transaction or outcome;
- Manage and administer a program continuously over time;
- Support decision-making;
- Measure and assess business performance;
- Establish business coherence, accountability, and organizational audit capacity; and
- Meet legal obligations.

Information is created, acquired and/ or collected on a daily basis. It can be found in any format or media such as email, paper, spreadsheet, presentation, etc...

Examples of information that should be kept

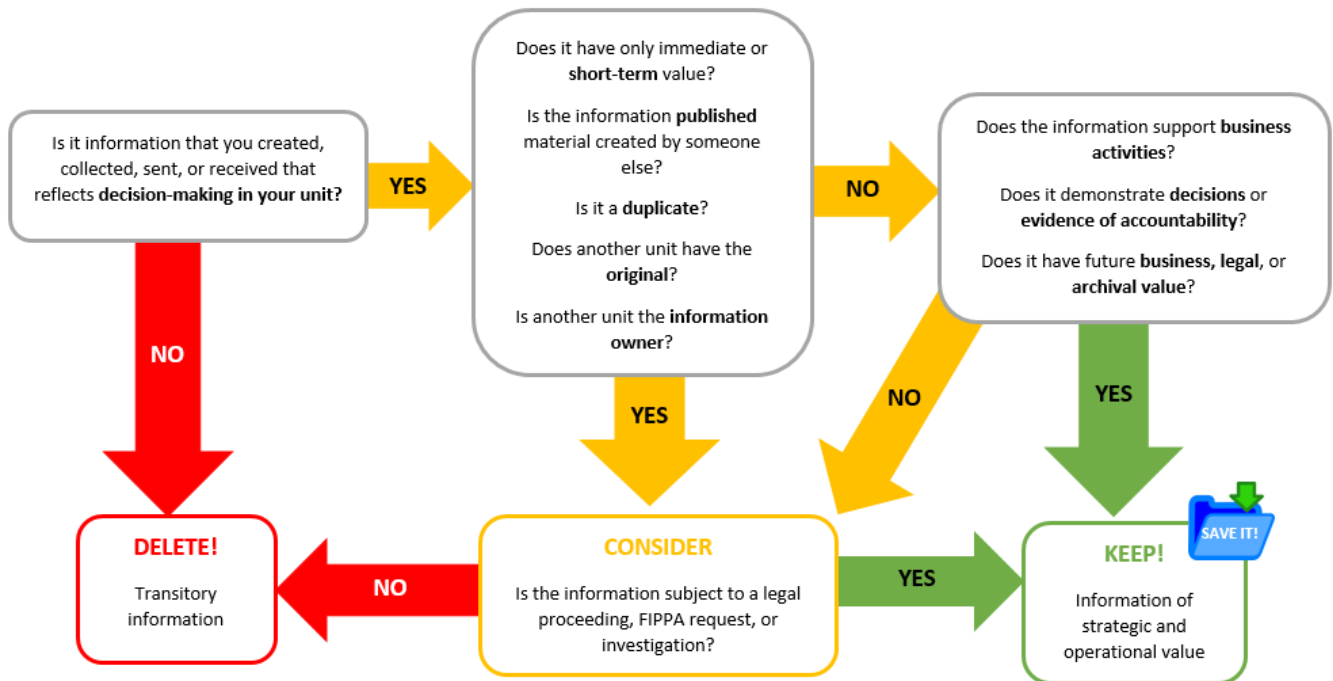
Transactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incoming and outgoing correspondence • orders, internal requisitions, receipts, requests, confirmations • interactions between clients, vendors, partners, or other institutions • contracts and agreements <p>uOttawa example: All interactions, payments, agreements, and signed forms during a student’s registration at the University.</p>
Planning documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • budgets, business cases, forecasts, work plans, strategic and operational plans • reports, policies, submissions, briefing notes, memoranda, or other papers supporting business activities • all significant versions and final version <p>uOttawa example: Final versions of your unit’s strategic plan for the next 5 years.</p>
Committee documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • terms of reference, lists of members • agendas, materials, minutes, records of decision • recordings of meetings <p>uOttawa example: Your own unit’s council meeting materials.</p>

What to keep?

Requests for information and the responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emails, form letters or templates used to collect responses • related responses, related instructions, completed responses in any format <p>uOttawa example: A client requests information on their own pension status or their own student status.</p>
Project management documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • project charter, work breakdown structure, project schedule, detailed budget • risk management plan, communication and training strategies • all project reports, final project sign off, project summary reports <p>uOttawa example: Approved communication strategies for a new program within your unit.</p>
Records of discussions, deliberations, or any situation related to any of the above that further documents the decision making process along with the logic used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • performance data, statistics, graphics, any work done by a consultant • audits and action plans, approval documents • performance measurement strategy documents, strategic reviews <p>uOttawa example: Email exchange between colleagues discussing a change in service delivery. Survey results and statistics gathered in preparation for a performance measurement review.</p>

Refer to the [Retention and Disposition Schedule](#) for more on information on what to keep and for how long.

Recap on identifying information that should be kept



Once you have determined the value of your information, you must ensure that it is properly captured, filed and managed in corporate repositories such as DocuShare or the network shared drives.

HELPFUL TIP:
 If it is challenging to file your information immediately, schedule regular times to review and file, such as **weekly or monthly**.