

Using Penn's Records Retention Schedule

What is a record?

A **record** is any information—regardless of format—that is created or received in the course of university activities and is retained to serve operational, legal, administrative, or historical purposes.

What is the Records Retention Schedule?

A **records retention schedule** is a structured framework that classifies records, assigns retention periods based on legal, regulatory, operational, and historical requirements, and defines how those records are to be handled once their retention period ends.

Penn's Records Retention Schedule establishes the minimum amount of time university records must be retained and provides guidance for their final disposition. Retention periods are minimum requirements; records may be retained longer when required for legal, regulatory, operational, audit, or other business purposes. Approved methods of disposition include deletion of electronic records, shredding of paper records, or transfer to the Archives. If records are determined to have historical value by the University Archivist, ownership and responsibility are transferred to the University Archives for permanent preservation.

Key Retention Schedule Principles

1.

Official Record Copy

Where multiple copies of a record exist, only one office should maintain the official record copy unless otherwise required by law, regulation, policy, or operational need.

2. Records Holds and Preservation Requirements

Records subject to litigation, investigation, audit, accreditation review, regulatory inquiry, or other preservation requirement must not be destroyed until the hold or preservation requirement has been formally released.

3. Convenience, Duplicate, and Reference Copies

This schedule applies to official university records maintained in the course of university business. Convenience copies, duplicate copies, reference copies, and transitory records may be disposed of when no longer needed, provided they are not the official record copy and are not subject to a preservation requirement.

Using Penn's Records Retention Schedule

Retention Schedule Columns

Unique ID (A)	Record Series Title (B)	Record Series Description (C)	Retention Period - Code + Years (D)	Retention Definition (E)	Work Unit (F)	Location (G)	Data Risk Classification (H)	Disposition Method (I)	Format (J)	Authority/Notes (K)
---------------	-------------------------	-------------------------------	-------------------------------------	--------------------------	---------------	--------------	--	------------------------	------------	---------------------

Column Descriptions

A. Unique ID - Unique identifier assigned to each record series for management, maintenance, reference, and schedule administration purposes.
B. Record Series Title - Short title, describing the series
C. Record Series Description - More information and types of documents that align with the series
D. Retention Period - This will include a code and a number of years or months to help set and calculate retention
E. Retention Definition - This combined with the Retention Period field will define the retention of the series
F. Work Unit - Owners of the record series
G. Location – System, database, or physical location
H. Data Risk Classification - Using ISC's data risk scale ... High, Moderate or Low for each series
I. Disposition Method - (Shred, delete, Permanent Transfer to the Archives/Archival Review)
J. Format – The format(s) the record series exists in: Paper, Electronic, Microfilm.
K. Authority/Notes - Used to capture any relevant citations impacting retention of the series or any relevant information about the series that doesn't align with other fields.

Using Penn's Records Retention Schedule

Codes used in the records retention schedule

Code	Description	Column	Notes
TA	Transfer to the Archives	Disposition	Records possess permanent historical, evidential, or research value and are transferred to the University Archives without further appraisal.
AR	Archival Review	Disposition	Records should be reviewed by University Archives staff at the end of the retention period to determine whether they possess enduring historical, evidential, administrative, or research value. Records not selected for archival preservation may be destroyed.
D	Delete/Shred	Disposition	Records should be permanently destroyed when their retention requirements have been met and the records are not subject to litigation hold, investigation, audit, accreditation review, public records request, or other preservation requirement.
AC	After Close	Retention Period	The retention period begins when the record reaches a defined closing event. The closing event must be specified in the Retention Definition column.
CE	Calendar End	Retention Period	The retention period begins on the last day of the calendar year (December 31) in which the record was created, received, completed, or last active, unless otherwise specified in the Retention Definition column.
AV	Administrative Value	Retention Period	Records may be retained as long as they are needed to support administrative, operational, legal, fiscal, academic, or business activities. Administrative value should be evaluated periodically. Once administrative value has ended, records should be disposed of according to the assigned disposition method.
US	Until Superseded	Retention Period	Records remain active until replaced, revised, rescinded, or withdrawn by a newer version. Superseded records may be retained longer if they possess ongoing administrative, legal, or historical value.
PM	Permanent	Retention Period	Records are retained indefinitely and are not scheduled for routine destruction. Records designated as Permanent should be protected from loss, degradation, or technological obsolescence through appropriate preservation, storage, and migration practices.

Using Penn's Records Retention Schedule

LA	Life of Asset	Retention Period	Records are retained for the duration of ownership, operation, or useful life of the associated asset, plus any additional retention period specified in the schedule.
----	---------------	------------------	--

- Contact the [University Records and Information Manager](#) with questions regarding records management and retention at Penn.