



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



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Retention/Disposal Policy

The FCO has a legal obligation to retain a comprehensive record of its business. Key legislation includes the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967, The Freedom of Information Act 2005, the Data Protection Act 1984/1998, and the Environmental Information Regulations 1992/2004. This guide is intended to help FCO staff understand their responsibilities for storing information appropriately, and reducing risk by disposing of information which is no longer needed. HMG policy is 'digital by default' so records should be in electronic format wherever possible - never both electronic *and* paper unless there are specific, usually legal, reasons for this. Posts should check with their Legal Adviser in case there are additional legal requirements for their host country. Questions about this document should be directed to KTD at iHub@FCO.gov.uk

Information type	Format/Location	Retention period	Disposal action
Policy documents			
Briefings and submissions	Electronic/iRecords	Permanent - Reviewed for transfer to The National Archives (TNA) for permanent preservation at 20 years	Destruction method appropriate to classification
Policy documentation	Electronic/iRecords Paper	Permanent - Reviewed for transfer to TNA for permanent preservation at 20 years	Destruction method appropriate to classification
Documents concerning formulation, implementation or interpretation of major policy decisions	Electronic/iRecords Paper	Permanent - Reviewed for transfer to TNA for permanent preservation at 20 years	Destruction method appropriate to classification
Strategic Programme Management	Electronic Paper	6 years after the end of the project	Electronic – reviewed for removal Paper – shredded
FCO board papers and documentation	Electronic/iRecords Paper	Permanent - Reviewed for transfer to TNA for permanent preservation at 20 years	Destruction method appropriate to classification

Cases			
Consular Case files	Electronic Paper	3 years following closure	Electronic - deleted Paper – shredded and burnt
Legal Adviser case files	Electronic Paper	6 years from last action	Electronic - deleted Paper – shredded and burnt
Documents and correspondence required for ongoing legal issues	Electronic Paper	Permanent - Reviewed for transfer to TNA for permanent preservation at 20 years	Destruction method appropriate to classification
Documentation relating to Public Inquiries	Electronic/iRecords Paper	Permanent - Reviewed for transfer to TNA for permanent preservation at 20 years	Destruction method appropriate to classification
Freedom of Information requests – original request and response	Electronic/iRecords Paper	Permanent - Reviewed for transfer to TNA for permanent preservation at 20 years	Destruction method appropriate to classification
Data Protection requests – original request and response	Electronic Paper	Kept for as long as there is a business requirement and in line with the Data Protection Principles	Destruction method appropriate to classification
Freedom of Information requests and Data Protection requests – internal correspondence and ephemera	Electronic / paper	2 years from last action or according to legal advice	Electronic – reviewed for removal Paper – shredded and burnt
Estates			
Contracts and contract information	Electronic/iRecords Paper	10 years	Electronic – reviewed for deletion Paper – shredded
General estates related information	Electronic	10 years unless of historic interest, in which case permanent – reviewed for transfer to TNA for permanent preservation at 20 years	Destruction method appropriate to classification
Project documentation	Electronic/iRecords Paper	10 years	Destruction method appropriate to classification
Sale/Purchase of property	Electronic/iRecords Paper	Permanent – reviewed for transfer to TNA for permanent preservation at 20 years	Destruction method appropriate to classification

Financial			
Main accounting ledgers	Electronic	Permanent	
Invoices	Electronic Paper	3 years after the end of the Financial Year	Electronic – deleted Paper – shredded
Procurement documentation	Electronic	Permanent	
Supporting Financial documentation	Electronic Paper	3 years after the end of the Financial year	Electronic – deleted Paper – shredded
Employee travel and subsistence expenses	Paper	3 years after the end of the Financial Year (to be retained by the individual member of staff)	Held by the individual member of staff
Prism record for employee travel and subsistence expense	Electronic	7 years	Electronic – deleted
Purchases through the Government Procurement Card	Electronic	7 years	Electronic – deleted
HR			
Pay, Superannuation, Security vetting	Electronic and Paper	85 years from DOB or 5 years after death	Electronic - deleted Paper – shredded and burnt
Employment Tribunal Files	Electronic and Paper	6 years after last action or according to legal advice	Electronic - deleted Paper – shredded and burnt
Medical and Welfare Information	Electronic and paper	85 years from DOB or 5 years after death	Electronic - deleted Paper – shredded and burnt
HRD Personnel information - UK Based staff	Electronic and paper	85 years from DOB or 5 years after death	Electronic - deleted Paper – shredded and burnt
HRD Personnel information – LE staff	Electronic/ Paper	3 years after last action	Electronic - deleted Paper – shredded and burnt
Sifts and interview panels – CVs and	Electronic	Six months after appointment	Electronic - deleted

notes			Paper – shredded
Continuity of Education	Electronic	85 years from DOB or 5 years after death	Electronic – reviewed for removal Paper – shredded
Private Office Papers			
Ministerial engagement diaries	Electronic	Electronic diaries – one year	Electronic - deleted
Declined invitations	Electronic/Paper	6 months	Electronic – deleted Paper – shredded
International Ministerial communications	Electronic/iRecords Paper	Permanent - Reviewed for transfer to TNA for permanent preservation at 20 years	Destruction method appropriate to classification
Protocol			
Notification of arrival/departure/ change of circumstances of foreign diplomats in UK	Electronic Paper	Paper notifications - 3 years Electronic - permanent	Destruction method appropriate to classification
Visit programmes – final	Electronic/iRecords	Permanent Reviewed for transfer to TNA for permanent preservation at 20 years	Destruction method appropriate to classification
Major Events – Summits, campaigns, etc. (final documentation)	Electronic/iRecords Paper	Permanent - Reviewed for transfer to TNA for permanent preservation at 20 years	Destruction method appropriate to classification
IT			
IT Projects and Programme documents	Electronic/iRecords	Permanent - Reviewed for transfer to TNA for permanent preservation at 20 years	Destruction method appropriate to classification
Service Desk call records	Electronic	2 years from call closed date	Electronic - deleted
IT problem management records	Electronic	5 years from call closed date	Electronic - deleted
Major Incident Reports – and associated documentation	Electronic	5 years from call closed date	Electronic - deleted
Instant Messenger and Presence Messages (IMP)	Electronic	30 days	Electronic - deleted