



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Knowledge and Technology Department
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

05 September 2017

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0753-17

Thank you for your email of 4 August 2017 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000, in which you requested:

... if you could provide a copy of your agency/department's current policy/guidance to staff relating to the deletion of emails.

I am also seeking the following information, if it is not contained within the above documents:

- 1. An answer as to whether your organisation has a general policy on automatically deleting emails after a certain period of time. If so, what type of emails are deleted (e.g. calendar invites/sent items/inbox items/all items) and after what period of time?*
- 2. I note that National Archives guidance states that organisations should "define clearly which emails need to be kept for business or historical value". Please provide your organisation's definition.*
- 3. Details of your organisation's policy on routinely deleting dormant accounts/those of former staff (i.e. what type of emails are deleted and after what period of time?)*

I am making this request to all central departments and a number of additional agencies. If you handle FOI requests for more than one organisation I would be grateful if you could process this individually for each of those organisations.

I am writing to advise that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested, and can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request, namely that:

1. The FCO does not have an automatic deletion policy on emails . All documentation, including emails, is retained and stored for as long as it is deemed necessary for business need, or is of value for the Public Record.
2. The FCO has published its document retention schedule on gov.uk. This schedule covers all material held by the FCO including that received and sent by email. It

identifies the type of information, the format and the period for which the documentation needs to be retained. Information kept to be “reviewed for transfer to The National Archives (TNA) for permanent preservation” has been identified as material which may have historical value for the public record. You can view this schedule at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foi-release-disposal-or-retention-of-documents-policy--3>

3. The FCO policy for deleting staff accounts, including email and personal documents, is that accounts should be deleted 6 months after someone leaves the FCO. An individual may apply for ‘do not delete’ status for their account if they plan to return after a short absence (e.g.a secondment to another organisation/maternity or paternity leave).

Information Policy Section
Knowledge Management Department



We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.