



A R M S
Archives & Records
Management Services

University Recordkeeping Manual

Part Three

STUDENT RECORDS

Archives and Records Management Services
June, 2001 (revised March 2008)
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Part 3 – Student Records

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UNIVERSITY RECORDKEEPING MANUAL

Part 3 - Student Records

1. General rules regarding Student Files

A student file is created for every enrolled student:

- When they are allocated a SID number in FlexSIS.

All documents, including email, recording actions which affect a student's candidature should be attached to the student's 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 on 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 managed on separate files. This is to restrict access to personal information which may be distressing or embarrassing to only those University staff that has a need to know.

Student files are retained until 7 years either after the year of last action, or close of the appeal period, after which they are destroyed

2. General responsibilities

Student files should only be accessed by authorised personnel dealing with matters relating to a particular student (see University Privacy Policy below).

Student files should contain only documents relating to that student. Do not attach documents relating to other students, or any other person, to 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 other students as well as to the relevant student, on file. They should be copied and names of other people removed or otherwise hidden.

Student files may also be accessed by external agencies in accordance with the University's Privacy Policy, and so should reflect the highest standards of professional behaviour by all staff.

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

When transferring a file to another staff member (new location), you must 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 an adequate record of the teaching and assessment of students is made and kept for the mandated retention period. This is necessary to be able understand what decisions and actions have occurred and the reasons for those decisions and actions.

Interactions with students about:

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

Which result in actions must be documented.

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 Student Services should be documented on separate files from the main student file, linked by the student's SID.

Assessment and appeals

Documentation of assessment action which is additional to the comments on assignments handed back to students, exam scripts or results processing must be attached to the student's 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 student's 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 to be placed on the routine student file. Formal appeals should be recorded on separate appeal files which are linked by the student's SID to the student file.

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: recordsonline@usyd.edu.au or phone ext 69537).

The documentation to be attached to 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 student files?”

These notes on responsibilities are based on the Resolution of the Academic Board on Assessment and Examination of Coursework of 13 December 2000

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 Re-admission
- Financial assistance – eg, bursaries, prizes, *not* student loans handled by Student Services
- Re-enrolment
- Scholarship Payment Authority Forms
- Show Cause
- Student placements, including reports
- A copy of a Written Warning issued under Student Plagiarism: Course Work Policy and Procedure¹
- Progression Profile in accordance with the policy Identifying and Supporting Students at Risk²

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

¹ Issued under Part D Clauses 11(2)(b) or 12(4)(b), signed and dated by the Nominated Academic and the student. All other documents concerning allegations of academic dishonesty must be on a separate file.

² Section 2.4: Progression Profile means an a record of all relevant documentation pertaining to an students At Risk status, including warning letter, Staying on Track Surveys etc. A student's Progression Profile will be supplemented by the Faculty with each intervention, producing a record of the student's At Risk history.

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 raised. Otherwise the documents should be kept in folders in alphabetical order for each semester in the departmental or faculty office

- Allegations under the Academic Honesty Policy and Student Plagiarism: Coursework Policy and Procedure (separate file)³
- Alleged misconduct and student disciplinary matters (separate file)
- Change of address
- Change of name (stored separately)
- Enrolment variation
- Financial or other assistance provided through Student Services (separate file)
- Medical certificates⁴
- Request for a transcript of academic record and copies of academic transcripts
- Special Consideration documents (separate file)
- Student appeals (separate file)
- Any information which is recorded and verified on official University systems, such as FlexSIS, does not need to be retained in hard copy upon the student file.

6. Other files about students

There are several matters which should not be recorded on the routine student file. To protect the privacy of students, information which may be distressing or embarrassing should be held on separate files which have a restricted circulation limited to that staff who are dealing with those matters.

In addition, the retention periods for the 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 mandated retention periods may also be in breach of the University's Privacy Policy.

³ See footnote 1, above. Copies of the Written Warning must be placed on the student file, but not other documents related to allegations of academic dishonesty.

⁴ If received in support of a special consideration application, attach to the special consideration file; otherwise make a note that a medical certificate was sighted, date and initial the note for the student file, and return the certificate to the student.

Specific examples are:

- Allegations of Academic Dishonesty
- Alleged misconduct and student disciplinary matters
- Special Consideration documentation (see reference below)
- Student Appeals
- Student Services (counselling, financial, housing, other special needs)

The relevant sections of the Academic Board Resolution on Assessment and Examination of Coursework on special consideration are:

Part 5, Section 6 privacy and Record Keeping

The faculty office must retain all special consideration applications and associated documentation for the specific period (see below). Students should be notified promptly if the documentation is inadequate or if the circumstances are not considered sufficiently serious as to warrant leniency.

The records related to applications for Special Consideration contain sensitive personal information, which must be managed in accordance with the University's Privacy Policy and Privacy Management Plan. Access to the 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 in sealed envelopes. Special Consideration records must be retained for a minimum of 12⁵ months after 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 on privacy issues may be obtained from and questions regarding proper storage, management and eventual destruction of the records should be directed to recordsonline@usyd.edu.au. www.usyd.edu.au/arms/privacy

7. Student access to student files and related records

Under the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act (NSW) of 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 *Freedom of Information Act (NSW) of 1989* to see, or get a copy of, their student file and any other records about themselves.

Therefore the University's Privacy Management Plan, prepared to implement the privacy legislation, provides as follows:

In most cases the University will enable students to have access to student files (including electronic records) concerning them without the general need for a formal application under the NSW Freedom of Information Act 1989 or the NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998.⁶

⁵ Note: This reference in the policy is out of date. The required retention period is three years, see GDA 23 – 25.10.1.

⁶ *University of Sydney Privacy Management Plan*, p.27

Access to student file

Students should complete the application for appointment form (provided at the back of the Privacy Management Plan) 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:

- the documents attached to the file should be numbered folio by folio, beginning with the earliest dated documents
- it 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 are provided to the student.

Copies of any folios wanted by the student should be provided and the folio numbers noted on the application form.

If there are other 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

The Academic Board resolution *Assessment and Examination of Coursework*⁷ provides students with rights of access to their exam scripts and other forms of summative assessment for a period of four months from the date of release of results to students.

This resolution also gives students rights of access to access to their student file containing the documents relating to their assessment. The relevant sections of the resolution are:

Part 2, Section 3, (4) Rights and Responsibilities of Students:

(d) Review their examination scripts and other forms of summative assessment (except those saved for reuse in subsequent testing) for the duration of the script retention period;

(e) Have access to their student file containing the documents relating to the assessment;

Part 4, Section 4, (5) and (6) Processing and Releasing results:

(5) Departments are required to make arrangements for providing undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students, on request, with the numerical marks for the various components of assessment (where there is more than one), which comprise the final numerical mark reported on Examination Result Notices. Records of such marks should be retained for 12 months (GDA23-25.9.1).

(6) Departments are asked to make arrangements for undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students, on request, to peruse and, where they so desire, to obtain (a copy of) their examination scripts or any other written answers to examination questions, provided that:

(a) the request is made within the script retention period, and

(b) In the case of examinations involving confidential examination papers, where examination questions are used on more than one occasion, students may peruse under supervision, but not obtain a copy of, the examination paper and their answers to the questions.

⁷ <http://policy.rms.usyd.edu.au/0000007.pdf>

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 mentioned above.

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 *State Records Act (NSW) of 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 replacing the earlier GDA 9 from 2000. This document sets the minimum retention periods for most student-related records in the University.⁸

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 wants 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 7 years from 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

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 must be retained for the duration of the appeal period (4 months from the date of the examination or final assessment – see Definitions p.2 of the Academic Board resolution).⁹

It is recommended that all assessment records including exam scripts be retained for six months. It is also suggested that exam question papers which

⁸ http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/recordkeeping/general_disposal_authorities_996.asp

⁹ *Assessment and Examination of Coursework*, <http://policy.rms.usyd.edu.au/0000007.pdf>

are identified by the students' SIDs and returned at the end of the test are also kept for six months, even if they are not used for assessment purposes.

Except for those assessment records retrieved for appeals, the formal retention periods set out in GDA 23 are:

- annotated scripts: the appeal period (GDA23-25.2.2) being four months;
- marksheets: 12 months (GDA23-25.9.1);
- Minutes of departmental meetings: 5 years (GDA02-2.4.1).

The Academic Board resolution *Assessment and Examination of Coursework* states:

Part 4 Section 3, Conduct of Examinations and Determination of Results, (c)

If an appeal is made, all documentation must be placed on the student file. In the absence of an appeal, annotated scripts are to be retained for the appeal period (GDA09-10.4.1, NB this has been replaced by GDA 23-25.2.2), marksheets for 12 months (GDA09-10.5.1, now GDA23-25.9.1) and minutes of departmental meetings are to be centrally filed where they will be retained for 5 years (GDA02-2.4.1)

9. Requesting student files

If you are requesting a student file, please provide the student SID and the full name and date of birth (if you have it). This is to ensure that the correct file is provided as names can be duplicated many times. Files can be requested via the web using RMS Search (when access is available), by telephone, e-mail, and facsimile or in person.

Contact details are as follows:

Records Management Services
Main Building, A14
Telephone: 12213 or 13174
Facsimile: (02) 9351 4173
E-mail: recordsonline@usyd.edu.au