



Records Management for Service Accounts and Shared Mailboxes

Purpose: At UW-Madison, M365 Service Accounts and Shared Mailboxes are used for many purposes. Once an account is no longer needed, Service Accounts and Shared Mailboxes should be closed. Closing the account minimizes risk and cost to the university and reduces the administrative burden of managing unused accounts over time. Prior to closing a Service Account or Shared Mailbox, owners must appropriately manage records in M365 in order to stay in compliance with the law. This document provides guidance about the management of university records held in Service Accounts and Shared Mailboxes and where to go for help.

What is a University Record?

All materials, regardless of physical form or device used, that are created or received by employees in connection with university business are likely a public record. This includes communications with other employees as well as communications outside of the university if it is related to university business. All public records are considered the property of the university.

Which Kinds of Service Accounts or Shared Mailboxes Typically Hold Records?

Service Accounts or Shared Mailboxes that are established as departmental or project mailboxes most commonly hold university records that may fall under multiple record schedules depending on their content. The Electronic Communications section of the Records Management Training page has Email management guidance and an Email management decision tree to help manage records in these accounts.

Who is Responsible for Managing University Records Associated with a Service Account?

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When Can I Close My Service Account or Shared Mailbox If It Holds University Records?

Service Accounts and Shared Mailboxes should be closed when no longer needed, and all records associated with the account have reached the end of their retention period or have been moved to an appropriate long-term location for the remainder of their records lifecycle. [University retention schedules](#) will include instructions on whether records need to be transferred or destroyed at the end of their retention. Until that time is reached, these accounts must remain available for public records requests.

Do All Service Accounts Hold University Records?

No! Some service accounts, like those used solely to forward to other email accounts or for service access, don't hold records. These accounts can (and should) be closed when no longer needed.

Where Can I Go for Help with Questions?

For records management questions, contact [Records Management](#).

For Service Account and Shared Mailbox questions, contact the [DoIT Helpdesk](#).

Examples of Service Accounts/Shared Mailboxes and University Records

Note: Examples below are intended to be some of the most common use cases and not an exhaustive list.

Service Account or Shared Mailbox Established as a Mailbox Used to Receive and Send Emails

Example: Individual mailboxes tied to a position rather than the individual or a departmental/project mailbox accessible by multiple people.

These Service Accounts hold university records and cannot be closed until all records within the account have reached their retention according to [university records retention schedules](#). Even if no longer in use, the records in the account must remain available for public records requests. A record can be deleted from the Service Account as it meets its retention according to the record schedule assigned to it.

Guidance for organizing and managing records in these accounts can be found under the *Electronic Communications Records* section on the [Records Management Training](#) page. The Records Management Program can also assist with determining records schedules and best management practices for these Service Accounts.

Service Accounts for Sending Email Other than from M365

Examples: printers, copiers, 3rd-party mailers

These Service Accounts are used by applications, services and virtual devices to send email. These Service Accounts do not hold data themselves, so once the service is no longer needed there are no records that need to be retained. The Service Account should be closed when the service / programmatic access is no longer needed to minimize unnecessary access to local and network resources.

Service Accounts for Service Access

These Service Accounts use a username/password to access another application /service via NetID login. These Service Accounts do not hold data themselves, so once the service is no longer needed there are no records that need to be retained. The account should be closed when no longer needed to minimize unnecessary access to local and network resources. Examples of these types of services can be found at <https://kb.wisc.edu/40270>.

Service Account or Shared Mailbox Used to Directly Forward to Other Applications or Inboxes, which Then Manages the Response

Example: The Service Account or Shared Mailbox is set up to forward to another application/service like Salesforce or Help Desk/ticketing systems like Redmine with no human intervention.

Example: The Service Account or Shared Mailbox is set up to forward to a mailing list (Google Groups, Office 365 groups, or some other hosted mailing list).

In both cases, the receiving application or mailing list holds the record and is used to track the response and any decisions made.

The Service Account can be shut down when no longer needed since no records are stored in the Service Account itself. The recipient application or inbox holds the message along with any actions taken and serves as the official university record.



Service Account or Shared Mailbox Set Up to Directly Connect to Another Party for Reporting Purposes

Example: A unit has a Service Account or Shared Mailbox tied to a federal agency that is only used to submit an annual report. The account may receive automated reminders about deadlines, or confirmation that a report is received from the other party.

Reports created and stored on the university network will be considered the official record and should be managed according to the appropriate records schedule. It is recommended that the contents of the Service Account be treated as a [Business Record \(ADMIN201\)](#). Hold correspondence for 1 year from date of creation or receipt and destroy confidential. The Service Account can be closed when all records within the account meet their retention.