Managing the Records of Departing Employees: Offboarding Responsibilities

As UW-Madison employees, we all create, receive, and maintain public records as part of our positions. These records document the University's activities and business. They may be in paper or electronic media and exist in various formats, including but not limited to documents, photographs, videos, datasets, maps, social media, texts, and emails.

When an employee leaves their position (e.g., transfers to another department, resigns, retires, is laid off, or is terminated), the records they created and managed remain the University's responsibility and property and must continue to be managed by their unit. These records must be accessible and managed in compliance with all state and federal legal requirements, Board of Regents and Universities of Wisconsin policies, and UW-Madison records retention schedules and policies.

Getting Started – Understanding Records Management

If you're not familiar with the basics of records management, such as how to identify public records and non-records, how to determine how long to retain records, and which records need to be destroyed or transferred to the University Archives after their retention period, please review our Introduction to Records Management training. Additional records management guidance can be found on our training webpage.

Transition Planning

While some employee departures may be sudden and unexpected, there are other situations in which advance preparation is possible. Regardless, plans for transitioning an employee's physical and electronic records should begin as soon as it is known that an employee is leaving.

The supervisor (and the employee, if possible) should determine how to handle any remaining records after the employee leaves. Answers to the following questions can be used to create a plan for managing and accessing records that may be needed after the employee leaves:

- Where will the records be stored?
- Who will need access to and take over the management of the records?
- Are any records stored in locations that only the employee can access?
- Do these need to be moved to a central location, or should permissions be transferred to other staff?

Employee Responsibilities

At a minimum, the employee is responsible for:

- Documenting any physical and electronic locations where they store records before they leave and sharing the document with their supervisor
- Moving records from personal drives and locations where only the employee has access (e.g., Box, computer hard drive) to an agreed-upon location or granting their supervisor or other staff permissions to access them

Employees should also:

- Identify applicable records retention schedules for their records
- Any records that have met their retention periods should be disposed of or transferred to University Archives per the disposition outline in the applicable records retention schedule
- Any records that still need to be retained should be moved or saved into centralized spaces or drives so they can continue to be accessed and managed by the unit

Supervisor Responsibilities

It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the departing employee has documented the records in their possession and their location, and that the employee has moved or provided access to the records.

If the employee was unable to fulfill their responsibilities before departing, the supervisor will need to complete them on the employee's behalf.

The supervisor must ensure that the records are:

- Disposed of or transferred to University Archives if they have met their retention period per an approved University records retention schedule
- Managed appropriately if they are still required to be retained until they have met their retention

To ensure ongoing compliance, the supervisor may also want to incorporate these tasks into the unit's offboarding policies and procedures. *Refer to Appendix A for a checklist of tasks.*

Other Campus Resources for Managing Electronic Records

DoIT also maintains a guide outlining the steps to take when an employee leaves the University. Employees and their supervisors should work with DoIT to make sure all electronic records and data created and managed by the separating employee are accounted for and managed appropriately.

Where Can I Get Help or Additional Training?

You can ask questions and get additional help by contacting the Records Management Program. We also have additional training on records management topics on our website.

Reviewed: 01-09-2026
Revised: 12-18-2025

Appendix A: Checklist for Departing Employee Records

Departing employees and their supervisors may find it helpful to create an inventory of records managed by the departing employee to ensure all records are accounted for. This list can be used to track records that need to be maintained by the unit, records to be destroyed/deleted, or records to be transferred to the University Archives. When the checklist is completed, it should be reviewed with the supervisor, if possible.

Records should NOT be disposed of or deleted because they are "old" or have not been used in a long time. Records should be managed, disposed of, or transferred to the University Archives in accordance with the University's approved records retention schedules.

Any records that are part of an active public records request, audit, or litigation should NOT be disposed of or deleted.

- Check and document all physical and electronic spaces where records may be kept or saved.
  - ☐ Desk and office area
  - ☐ File cabinets, storage spaces (e.g., attics, basements, closets, etc.)
  - ☐ Offsite storage (e.g., State Records Center)
  - ☐ Email accounts
  - ☐ Internal Hard Drives (typically the C-drive on computers) and Computer Desktop
  - ☐ Google Drive, SharePoint, Box, or any other cloud storage
  - ☐ M365 accounts and service accounts used by projects, groups, departments, etc. that are managed by the departing employee (see training on RM webpage)
  - ☐ USBs, external hard drives, and/or other external storage devices
  - ☐ Any other spaces, physical or electronic, where you may hold records
- If you are the owner, administrator, or permissions manager for an electronic resource used by your office, assign that role to your supervisor (or their designee).
- If you are an Authorized User for unit records being stored offsite at the State Records Center, notify Records Management and let them know you are leaving. If possible, provide the name of your replacement in that role or the name of someone who can help determine a replacement.
- Use records retention schedules to determine how long the records need to be maintained before disposing of or transferring to the University Archives.
  - ☐ Notify the supervisor of any records that have not met their retention period and still need to be maintained by the unit.
  - ☐ Destroy, delete, or transfer to the University Archives any records that have met their retention period.
- For records you manage that have not met their retention period and must still be held by the unit:
  - ☐ Move electronic records from locations that are only accessible by the departing employee (e.g., C-Drive, Box) to a central location or grant permission for the manager (designee) to ensure they can continue to be managed by your unit.
  - ☐ Document the location of all paper and electronic records that still need to be maintained by the unit.