University model for information and records management

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Executive summary

1. This paper seeks to clarify where and when records management standards will be applied to support the implementation of the University Records Management Policy.

2. It is only necessary to apply records management conventions (in full) to a subset of an organisations information base.

3. When establishing whether records management solutions should/should not be applied many organisations make a distinction between declared and undeclared records. A declared record is an item which is subject to no further change. Undeclared items are typically draft work, or inconsequential items which are managed according to local arrangements.

4. Declared records are managed within a clearly defined records management system, through the application of agreed standards e.g. naming, version control, appraisal, destruction.

5. The concept of managing declared and undeclared records in separate domains is a well established records management technique.

6. This paper illustrates how these concepts work and will be applied as a basis to support the implementation of the University Records Management Policy.

7. Implementation of this model will assist the University in securing efficiency gains (controlling data and physical storage costs and improving productivity). This approach will further assist the University in reaching compliance with Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

8. This proposed model for information and records management was discussed by the University Records Management Implementation Group, when it met in May 2009. The Group endorsed the information management model presented. The paper is now being submitted to the University Senior Management Group for review and approval.

Scope

The University's management response to *2004/05 Report 3 Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002* committed the University to developing and implementing a records management function primarily through:

- The development and implementation of file plans;
- Allocating retention periods to records series in parallel with file plan design and implementation (i.e. records appraisal and disposal);
- Improving the quality and manageability of records through the application of naming conventions, version control and metadata standards;
- Identifying, protecting and registering vital records as part of the process of migrating records into file plans;
- Piloting procedures and processes for records destruction in parallel with the population of file plans.

This paper seeks to clarify where and when records management standards will be applied to University materials e.g. which records should or should not be managed within file plans. The paper also provides an overview as to how a selection of established records management models and techniques work, and how these will operate at the University.

Application of proven methods – records management 'light'

"*Records management is an established theory and methodology for ensuring the systematic management of all records and the information they contain through their lifecycle.*" (JISC, 2007).

In developing a records management function at UAD, it is important to recognise that the techniques and tools of records management are well established and proven elsewhere. Successful, effective and timely implementation of records and information management practices at UAD will largely involve taking proven methodologies and practices (with or without any modification) into our workplace. It will not always be necessary to implement in full records management tools and techniques. For some organisations/sectors e.g. government, banks, pharmaceutical industries the bulk of the information created or received is strictly controlled. It is not the intention that all of the University's information should be subjected to the strict application of a set of records management protocols. However, it is recognised that a level of improvement is required, and some changes to working practices will be necessary. In many instances a 'light' touch will be applied to generate a level of improvement in the management of the University's information.

Implementing records management standards: a proportional response
The records management standard ISO 15489-1:2001 requires that a records keeping system does not permit items held there to be altered. The authenticity of the record to preserve its evidential value is a core requirement and must be guaranteed. This could require the conversion of electronic materials into a read only format e.g. PDF prior to their placement within a file plan. Looking at the University's business requirements while it would be desirable to convert some materials into PDF it would not be cost effective to apply this standard to all items. Thus in developing and implementing records management solutions for the University it will not always be necessary to adopt a strict interpretation and application of records management standards. Where appropriate a balance will be struck.

Developing a records management function: Undeclared and declared records

When deciding the level of resource to be expended when managing corporate information one approach is to make a distinction between undeclared and declared records. This concept forms the foundation of how elements of the University Records Management Policy will be implemented.

> It is only necessary to apply records management conventions (in full) to a sub-set of an organisations information base. Typically, this involves working with *declared* records.

In summary, a declared record:

- Is **complete**, and **subject to no further change** i.e. "*the contents of the record are frozen at this point and should remain un-editable from thereon.*" (JISC, 2007, pp.51);

- Should still provide the organisation with the ability to create a new record based on that which was declared earlier. The new record is then treated as a separate version/entity.

Conversely, an undeclared record is typically:

- **Incomplete**, i.e. **work in progress** - a draft.

In addition, many organisations choose not to declare as records, items which are:

- ***Ephemeral i.e. short lived, inconsequential items***, e.g.
  - Ad-hoc meeting requests
  - Circulars
  - Routine requests

- ***Working copies of papers/documents***, e.g. copies of papers sent to meeting attendees.

- ***Non-business related content***, e.g. CVs

> These examples provide a snapshot of declared and non declared records. Additional guidance will be offered and made available within the Information/records management area of the University Portal.

Record (information) life-cycle

A number of organisations take the view that "*The life of a record begins at the moment of its declaration.*" (JISC, 2007, pp.51) The declared record is then subject to a higher level of management control throughout its lifetime i.e. the item is likely to be subject to organisational conventions including:

- Naming;
- Version control;
- Classification and placement within a file-plan;
- Controlled destruction or transfer to archival storage when a pre-defined retention period is reached.

Conversely, information of lower value i.e. draft/incomplete items, are managed in a less restrictive regime. Subsequently, records management conventions need only be applied (fully or to varying degrees) to a sub-set of the information held by an organisation. This is a targeted, proportional response – focusing resource and effort on managing information assets which are of importance to the organisation.

In a creative environment such as the University, it is not uncommon for materials to be kept in desks, filing cabinets, hard drives, network shares etc. Consistency in the management of corporate information is variable. Much information is either created or received without ever being formally captured to the organisation. To address issues such as these, records managers have developed the concept of working in separate domains. (Shepherd & Yeo 2003, pp.116)

'Domains': a model for information/records management - managing undeclared and declared items.

When considering how and where information and records management tools and conventions are applied to an organisation's information resources, it is useful to think about different workspaces into which items can be released. The 'domains' concept has been developed by records managers to emphasise "*the distinction between records that need to be subject to systematic management and… captured in a records management system, and other items which can be modified and reused as required.*" (Shepherd & Yeo, 2003, pp.117.) This approach is endorsed by a number of agencies to manage documents and records, including the United Kingdom Public Records Office (1999).

The following tables illustrate how this information management model works.

The domains concept

Personal domain

- Each employee has a personal domain: personal space which is not controlled to corporate standards;

- This domain should normally only contain non-business related content i.e. items of a purely personal nature;

- Some organisational allow for early (conceptual) work to be held in this area e.g. early proposal for organisational change/redundancy.
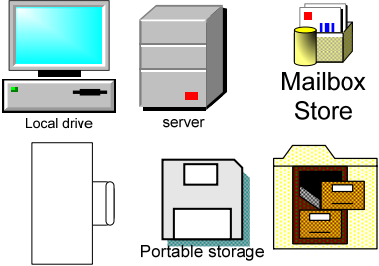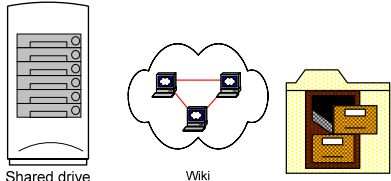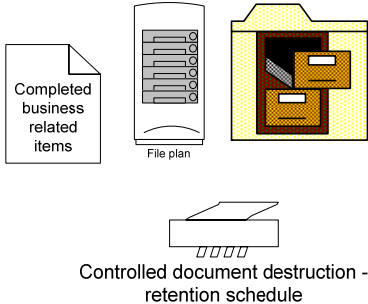
Workgroup domain

- This is an intermediate area where **undeclared** business related content is created and stored;

- The **workgroup domain** typically supports:
  - Work in progress – early work;
  - Collaborative drafting and editing;
  - Ephemeral i.e. short lived, inconsequential items.

- The **workgroup domain** is typically a shared space e.g. network drive or any other space used by a particular group. Whatever the space, this will be either accessible to the whole organisation or to a defined sub-group;

- The degree and level of control/standardisation applied within the **workgroup domain** depends on local needs;
  - Support and guidance on the management of items within the **workgroup domain** can be provided;

- Content within the **workgroup domain** requires an element of management albeit less rigorous compared that applied to materials held in the **corporate domain** :
  - Materials no longer required should be destroyed (deleted/removed) at the earliest opportunity;
  - Completed items and/or items matching the definition of **declared records** are to be transferred into **corporate domain**.

Corporate domain

- Materials in the **corporate domain** are controlled, classified, placed, maintained and held – as defined by organisational recordkeeping standards;

- This **corporate domain** is considered to be a formal record keeping system – the materials held here are subject to a high degree of control (depending on organisational requirements), this may involve applying:

  - Naming conventions;
  - Version control;
  - Classification;
  - Placement within filing structure (file plan);
  - Destruction or archival as determined by retention schedule.

Working with the domains concept at Abertay

Personal domain • Personal space (physical and/or electronic): normally non-business content. Local drive server Mailbox Store Portable storage	• Clearly defined organisational policy and/or quotas (in electronic environments) are normally applied. These help to encourage the release of business related content to the organisation as options for creating and storing materials are limited by design. • Controls determining the use of hard drives, network drives and portable storage devices to be investigated. • Controls are necessary to support the migration of draft or finalised items of importance into the appropriate domain i.e. ***workgroup*** or ***corporate***. • **Materials no longer required should be deleted/destroyed**.
Workgroup domain • Business related content – in development, typically incomplete – subject to change, or inconsequential items. Shared drive Wiki	• Controls are necessary to support the migration of finalised items of importance (***declared records***) into a formal records management system (***corporate domain***). • In electronic environments this could include quotas i.e. not routinely extending the storage space available within the collaborative/shared areas on the expectation that a percentage of materials will be transferred into the ***corporate*** domain, with items of low value being routinely destroyed. • Version control standards should be applied. • **Materials no longer required should be deleted/destroyed**. • Other controls may be necessary to manage the development/spread of new electronic spaces i.e. what collaborative space does the University provide – how should these be used etc?

Corporate domain
• Formal recordkeeping system – declared records only
 	
Completed business related items File plan
 	
Controlled document destruction - retention schedule
	• Records management controls applied to physical and electronic environments e.g. replication of a file plan to manage paper based records.
	• Implementing file plans through use of network share or implementation of a dedicated Electronic Records/Document Management System.
	• Procedures/policy for transfer of e-mail into filing plans where an e-mail contains item(s) that required to be declared as records e.g. a contract received from a supplier.
	• Responsibilities to be assigned for:
	   o Ensuring proper transfer of materials from workgroup domain into the corporate domain:
	   o Consistent application of records management standards inc. ***destruction*** and ***archival***.

Next steps

1. This paper presented to the University Senior Management Group for approval.

2. A number of policy and operational issued have to be considered and addressed to support the implementation of the domains model.

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June 2009.

References

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