

PROFESSIONAL RECORDKEEPING TIPS

Records can be released for many reasons, not only freedom of information requests, but also lawsuits, grievances, breaches, legal processes and requirements, and evolving public expectations and information practices

Faculty and staff are expected to create and maintain excellent professional records in their official work, consistent with University recordkeeping requirements and possible future disclosure

The University is subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)

Most University records requested under FIPPA are released; only a few are excluded or exempt from disclosure

Under FIPPA, “record” means any record of information, however recorded, whether in printed form, on film, by electronic means or otherwise. Records include in-progress, draft, and confidential work. Common examples are; memos, minutes, reports, memoranda, letters, e-mail, texts, photos, voicemail, and even post-it note annotations

FIRST CONSIDER RECORD PURPOSES AND CONTENTS

- WHY are you creating a record? What are its purposes and expected uses – who is its intended recipient?
- WHAT information needs to be in the record for its purposes and uses? Make a list if necessary
- ONLY collect, create, and record information needed for the record and its purposes at the right level of detail
- ASK your direct report if unsure of the purpose, expected uses, or level of detail to include in a record
- RECORDS DEMONSTRATE compliance with law, regulation, policy, practices/standards, and public expectations

CREATING AND MAINTAINING EXCELLENT PROFESSIONAL RECORDS

- CONSIDER POSSIBLE FUTURE DISCLOSURE as you create records:
 - Assume that emails, texts, etc. will be forwarded, copied and archived
 - Remember that most requested records are disclosed, and there is no exemption for embarrassment
 - It is trite to say but true that today’s email or memo could be tomorrow’s headline
 - Consider the effect of disclosure on the institution and your own career/job
 - Records should withstand media interpretation, after-the-fact analysis, and legal challenge
- BE OBJECTIVE, state relevant facts and professional assessments within your role, expertise, and qualifications
- AVOID unnecessary personal/editorial/inappropriate comments or information, sarcasm, and irony
- Make records factual, accurate, complete for purpose, useful for recipients and users, and kind
- A record is PRIVILEGED (and should be so marked) if it contains or is intended for legal advice from counsel
- Follow University of Toronto Archives and Records Management policies and procedures
- KEEP OFFICIAL RECORDS, which evidence official action or must be preserved by law or University policy
- REGULARLY DELETE/SHRED TRANSITORY RECORDS, extra copies, in progress drafts, trivial/routine emails
- Be professional in communications, such as emails, texts, and voicemail:
 - If possible, keep to one item or topic per message
 - Always use a separate message for personal communications, such as personal updates, opinions, and jokes
 - Telephone if discussion is useful/efficient, but summarize discussion and action items by email as appropriate