

**CORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

# **RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY**

**APPROVED BY GOVERNING BODY ON 2 APRIL 2009**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **What are Records?**

Records are documents created, used and maintained for business reasons. They provide proof, or evidence of business activities; they illustrate policies, decisions and precedents and the context in which they were made; and they document compliance with statutory obligations. The format or method of storage has no bearing on their standing as records.

The Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003, provide a very broad definition of what may constitute a 'record'. The definition covers all document types and does not distinguish formats, being equally applicable to documents created, maintained and stored manually and/or electronically. It includes:

'...any memorandum, book, plan, map, drawing, diagram, pictorial or graphic work or other document, any photograph, film or recording (whether of sound or images or both), any form in which data (within the meaning of the Data Protection Act, 1988) are held, any other form (including machine-readable form) or thing in which information is held or stored manually, mechanically or electronically and anything that is part or a copy, in any form, of any of the foregoing or is a combination of two or more of the foregoing...'

The documents created, received and used by the Institute in carrying out its functions therefore constitute its official records because their content serves as evidence of those functions and because they testify as to how and why decisions were taken. The institute regards all recorded information, regardless of format, created and received during the performance of official duties as part of its official record holdings.

### **What is records management?**

Records management is the organisational function of managing records to meet operational business needs and accountability requirements. It tracks and controls documents from creation to disposal so that they can be moved as efficiently and speedily as possible through administration. It also serves to identify vital records, those that are necessary to the organisation's ability to continue its business and to protect its financial and legal interests. The identification and protection of such records is therefore of critical importance.

When the business function to which the records relate declines or ceases and they need no longer be readily available, they are transferred to an inactive, or non-current, storage facility for retention for a pre-determined period. When this retention period has ended, the records are destroyed according to agreed and documented procedures. A small proportion is preserved permanently because of ongoing administrative or historical value.

## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To provide a statement of intent declaring records management standards for the administration of the Cork Institute of Technology (the Institute) records.

All documents created and received in the course of its official business, constitute the official records of the Institute. The information that Institute records contain serves as evidence of functions executed and activities performed and comprises a valuable source of knowledge as to how and why decisions were taken. Given that good quality records are of value to any organisation, their effective management is necessary to ensure that the records maintained are authentic, reliable and complete and to ensure that they are protected and preserved as evidence to support future actions and to ensure current and future accountability.

- 1.2 To implement records management procedures and to create retention/disposal schedules for Institute records.

Records management is the application of controls to the creation, maintenance, use and disposal of all formats of records, elements of which include correspondence and forms, records classification, files, identification of the staff member responsible for the record, retention scheduling, disaster planning, vital records protection, the administration of inactive records storage, record conversion programmes, archival preservation activities and destruction of records.

Good records management is of special significance in the context of the Institute's functions, where the maintenance of academic records is a core activity.

- 1.3 To ensure preservation of records of permanent value and to establish archival criteria to maintain and assure continued access to appropriate historical records.

- 1.4 To support both protection of privacy and freedom of information services throughout the Institute and organisational compliance with legislation.

- 1.5 To propose the development of guidelines to accompany this policy document including retention and disposal schedules for general records common to all Institute departments and sections/units.

- 1.6 To develop policies and guidelines for the use of electronic media in the creation/capture/receipt/retention of information.

## **2. Scope**

- 2.1 The records of the Institute consist of recorded information, regardless of format, created or received by Institute officers and employees in the course of performing official functions on behalf of the Institute and held as evidence of its organisation, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, and internal or external transactions. Records can be in any physical form or medium, including paper or electronic.

### **3. Ownership of Records**

- 3.1 All records, irrespective of format, (i.e. both textual and electronic, including e-mails) created or received by Institute staff in the course of their duties on behalf of the Institute, are the property of the Institute and subject to its overall control.

### **4. Management of Institute Records**

- 4.1 All records created and received by Institute staff in the course of their duties on behalf of the Institute must be retained for as long as they are required to meet the legal, administrative, financial and operational requirements of the Institute, after which time they are either destroyed or transferred to the Institute Archives. The final disposition (either destruction or transfer to the Archives) of records is carried out according to approved schedules as outlined in the accompanying appendices.
- 4.2 While the records schedules prescribe the minimum period that Institute records must be retained, officers may, at their discretion, keep the records for a longer period of time if it is deemed necessary.
- 4.3 All records created and received by the Institute and its officers and employees in the course of their official duties must be disposed of in a manner that safeguards the confidentiality of the information they contain.
- 4.4 All records created and received by the Institute and its officers and employees in the course of their official duties that are permanently preserved must remain accessible to authorised officers and employees.

### **5. Responsibilities**

- 5.1 It is the responsibility of the individual officers to ensure that the appropriate security measures are observed for maintaining records containing personal or other confidential information. When scheduled for destruction, this material must be shredded, pulped, burned or otherwise disposed of to ensure that such information is not disclosed.
- 5.2 It is the responsibility of each Head of Function to operationalise this policy and to designate and inform the appropriate responsible officers in the creating/receiving department/office/unit.

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

### *Records Retention Schedule:*

A Records Retention Schedule is a control document that describes the Institute's corporate records at a series level and indicates the length of time each series shall be retained as active before transfer to the semi-active storage; the length of time each series should be retained as semi-active prior to final disposition; and the final disposition of each series. This document serves as the legal authorisation for the disposal of records.

March 2008