

POLICY

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Approved By: President's Cabinet

Authority: [RCW 40.14](#); [RCW 42.56.010](#),
[WAC 434-615](#); [WAC 434-662](#); [WAC 434-663](#)

Cancels:

See Also:

[Western Washington University Archives Appraisal Guide](#)

POL-U4910.01 Managing University Archival Records

This policy applies to all units and employees of Western Washington University and to all university records. The policy identifies institutional obligations in the ongoing management of records designated “archival.”

Definitions:

University records: All recorded information prepared, owned, used, or retained by any department, office, or program of Western Washington University relating to the conduct of its affairs or the performance of any institutional or proprietary function, regardless of medium, format, physical characteristics, or subject matter. University records document both official acts and “non-official” supporting activities or work product of the institution. This definition excludes explicitly personal material, as well as faculty papers, which have been ruled personal papers by the WWU Assistant Attorney General.

University archival records: University records having enduring (“permanent”) value, typically for historical purposes but also including legal or administrative purposes. When encoded within a state-approved retention schedule, the “archival” designation identifies a legal obligation to retain the records according to archival standards ensuring the records’ authenticity, integrity, preservation, and accessibility.

1. University Records are the Property of WWU and Washington State

All university records are “public records” [as defined in law](#) and remain the property of Western as a Washington State institution. Individuals who participate in the creation or use of the records are obligated to leave the records intact to their successors.

2. University Archivist Directs University Archives

The University Archivist will manage and direct the University Archives through appraisal and selection of archival records, preservation of the collection, reference and access to the collection, and outreach to users.

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3. University Archivist Determines Archival Status of University Records

The University Archivist will designate university records as “archival,” or remove that designation, within the context of [state public records law](#). This designation can occur as part of the routine retention schedule process or outside of that process.

4. University Archivist has Access to All University Records

In order to survey, identify, and appraise records for archival value, the University Archivist has access to all university records and recordkeeping systems.

5. University Archivist Identifies Requirements for Preservation of University Archival Records

The University Archivist will work with record-creating units to identify requirements for ensuring that university archival records are transferred to the custody of the University Archives for preservation and ongoing access. This includes university archival records in all media and formats, including electronic.

6. University Records with “Archival” Designation may not be Destroyed

University records designated “archival” impose an obligation upon their custodians to ensure the records’ authenticity, integrity, preservation, and accessibility. In cases where this designation is encoded in an approved retention schedule, this obligation is a legal one.

7. University Archives is the Official Repository for University Archival Records

- A. The University Archives is the sole repository for the institution’s archival records. It acts in support of the institution’s own integrity for the benefit of current and future users. This responsibility extends to university archival records in all media and formats.
- B. Custody of university archival records will transfer from the office of origin to the University Archives when the records have passed their legal, fiscal, or administrative retention period or are no longer actively used by the office of origin.

8. State Law Requires that Electronic Records must Remain in Electronic Form

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9. University Archival Records will not Leave University Archives

Once custody of university archival records is ultimately transferred to the University Archives, those records may not be checked out, circulated, or removed from the repository. Staff from the office of origin may view records from that office in person at the University Archives during business hours, or the University Archives will provide free copies of specific records to the office upon request. In the case of electronic records, the University Archives will strive to make eligible records freely accessible online.

Exceptions:

Archival material may be removed from the University Archives temporarily and under controlled circumstances for

- specialized preservation/conservation treatments
- specialized reformatting/copying processes
- legal proceedings requiring an original copy
- other circumstances as approved by the University Archivist

10. University Archives Administers Access to University Archival Records

In cases where access to certain records is restricted, the University Archives will honor any legal requirements restricting access to or use of university archival records by persons other than designated university personnel.