

## Managing the Digital University Desktop



Understanding and Empowering the Individual; Preserving the Public Record and Institutional History

### When and how should I save Email Attachments?

Most of us struggle with how to handle emails with files attached. They cause storage problems and pose virus risks, but can also be vital to our work. When trying to decide what to do with attachments, we need to ask several questions –

- Does the email message attachment have permanent or **continuing value**? If no, delete once its value ends (purpose has been concluded).
- Who else received this message? If there are multiple recipients, are you the primary keeper of this document? Example: You are the chair of a committee and receive meeting minutes from a committee member; as chair retention of the document would be your responsibility until transferred to Archives or into an electronic records keeping system.
- Is the attachment a work in progress (such as a draft)? If yes, do you need all versions? Retention of drafts can depend on whether you are the creator or recipient and on the type of document. As a general rule keep drafts only if they are needed to document the process, such as evidence when negotiating an agreement. In most cases, the final version is sufficient for long term retention.
- Should I save the message along with the attachment?
  - If the email message provides context for the attachment, the answer is yes. In most cases where the attachment has continuing value, the email should be kept as it supplies the date, sender, and recipients as well as any cover message.
  - Can I save the email and attachment as paper only? Yes, if transmission data is retained on print-out (date, sender, recipients, subject, and message body; **see FAQ on acceptable print formats** for additional help).

If the email and attachment have legal or evidential value, the most authentic (trustworthy) storage is as part of your email environment.