

## Managing the Digital University Desktop



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

### What Email can I delete?

Electronic mail created and received by University employees during the course of business are official University records, and should have the same retention as similar paper-based records. Additionally, the University's computing resources are limited in the amount of online storage which can be provided to users with electronic mail accounts. For both of these reasons, the following guidelines are important in ensuring effective, efficient and legal retention and disposition of electronic mail.

- Messages of **short term value** should be deleted and purged once their purpose has concluded. Such messages include:
  - those distributed to a number of staff for information only, such as news bulletins, circulars, meeting notices, copies of extracts of documents;
  - drafts;
  - those created solely as part of preparation for other records;
  - personal messages and announcements not related to official business;
  - junk mail.
- Messages of **continuing value** that document administrative decision-making, committee, faculty, and campus activities should be retained in hard or electronic copy until no longer administratively useful, and then transferred to the University Archives. Electronic copies should be deleted if paper copies are maintained. Examples of messages that may have continuing value are those which :
  - approve or authorize actions or expenditures;
  - are formal communications between staff, such as correspondence or memoranda relating to official business;
  - signify a policy change or development;
  - create a precedent, such as messages issuing instructions or advice;
  - relate to the substantive business of the work unit or University;
  - involve negotiations on behalf of the University;
  - have value for other people or the work unit as a whole.
- **Faculty correspondence**, research data, and external scholarly communications which are not of an administrative nature may still have significant archival value. Electronic copies may be deleted if paper copies are maintained.
- Messages whose loss would pose a **significant fiscal, legal, or administrative risk** to the university if they could not be accessed or read should not be deleted unless retained in an acceptable paper format.
- If you manage your **routine email correspondence and inter-office memoranda** by printing and filing it, purge and delete electronic copies. Avoid saving email in both paper and electronic format. If you manage your email with continuing value electronically, see the **Email Filing FAQ** for helpful tips. If you print and file your email, please see our **guidelines for acceptable paper formats**.

**Email should be managed by its content, not its format.**