

# Records Management FAQ

## RECORDS SCHEDULES

- How do I know if my institution has an active records schedule?
  - Contact your institution's records management coordinator or equivalent personnel.
  - Contact Provincial Archives' records help line at 306-787-0734 or at [recordhelp@archives.gov.sk.ca](mailto:recordhelp@archives.gov.sk.ca)
- Is my old operational records schedule still valid?
  - All operational record schedules are assigned a title number. All schedules approved prior to 1995 numbered 1 to 328 are obsolete and can no longer be used to dispose of public records.
  - Many older schedules have been replaced by new versions. Contact the Provincial Archives helpline if you are unsure whether you are using the current version.
- Can I still use ARMS2006 or SARS for my administrative records?
  - Administrative records closed prior to April 1, 2015 that are classified using ARMS2006, can be disposed of in accordance with ARMS2006 or ARMS2014.
  - Records that were created or active after April 1, 2015 must be classified under ARMS2014 or a comprehensive corporate-wide schedule.
  - SARS is no longer an acceptable classification system for records. If you have old records that were classified with SARS you will need to update the classification to ARMS2014 (if applicable in some cases ARMS2006 could be used for consistency).
- If a record can be classified in multiple record series how do I choose the correct one?
  - Make sure that the classification is based on the function or purpose of the record and not the subject of the record.
  - Ask staff that deal with records management if there is a convention in use and follow that.
  - If no convention exists, a classification decision should be made based on the function of the record, communicated to relevant staff, and used consistently across the organization.
  - If there is no clear answer you can contact the help line at the Provincial Archives for advice: 306-787-0734 or at [recordhelp@archives.gov.sk.ca](mailto:recordhelp@archives.gov.sk.ca).
- How do I ensure that the "General" secondaries in ARMS2006 were used correctly?
  - ARMS2006 should not be used for classifying records except in special circumstances (see "Can I still use ARMS2006 or SARS for my administrative records?" above).
  - The General series in ARMS 2006 is used extremely rarely. Only in cases where the record is of a general nature and there is absolutely no other category to use should it be considered. It can be used only if the records are not required to support financial, legal, or specific administrative functions.

## RECORDS CLASSIFICATION

- How do I determine if a given record is a government (i.e. public) record or not?
  - There are three categories that a record may fall into: government record, transitory record, or non-government record. This flow chart can help you determine where a particular record should be categorized and dealt with:  
[http://saskarchives.com/sites/default/files/pdf/rec\\_decision\\_flowchart\\_fin.pdf](http://saskarchives.com/sites/default/files/pdf/rec_decision_flowchart_fin.pdf)
  - The Transitory Records Guidelines can be found at:  
[http://saskarchives.com/sites/default/files/pdf/transitory\\_rec\\_guide\\_fin.pdf](http://saskarchives.com/sites/default/files/pdf/transitory_rec_guide_fin.pdf)
- How do I know if a record is the official copy?
  - An official record can be the original and only copy of a record, an electronic copy, or a replacement copy that has had its integrity verified. An official record must also satisfy all legal and fiscal concerns about media migration.
  - If you have the only copy of the record within your ministry, it is probably the official copy. If you are unable to determine with certainty whether or not yours is the only copy, err on the side of caution and consider it the official copy.
  - There may be times when copies of the same record are kept by different individuals or different areas of the institution for different purposes. If a record serves different functions for different business areas, it may be necessary to retain more than one copy of the record.
- Are drafts considered records? When should I keep drafts of documents?
  - Drafts of significant changes to a document are considered to be government records and should be kept to detail the development of a document.
  - What constitutes a significant change is subjective but it does not include simple changes to spelling, grammar, or formatting.
- Are emails government (i.e. public) records?
  - It depends on the content of the email. Like all records, email will be either a government record, a non-government record, or a transitory record. Emails that are not related to government business such as personal emails or advertisements are non-government records. Emails that are of temporary usefulness that are needed only for a limited period of time, to complete a routine task, to prepare an ongoing document, or are duplicate copies may be considered to be transitory records. All emails that relate to the transaction of government business are government records and should be treated like any other government record in terms of classification, retention, and disposal.
  - The Transitory Records Guidelines provide details on identifying transitory and non-government records:  
[http://saskarchives.com/sites/default/files/pdf/transitory\\_rec\\_guide\\_fin.pdf](http://saskarchives.com/sites/default/files/pdf/transitory_rec_guide_fin.pdf)

- Are VHS, floppy discs, CDs, etc. government records?
  - If public records are housed on external media such as CDs, DVDs, floppy discs, USB sticks, and external hard drives, the media must be maintained so that the records remain readable, usable, and accessible until the end of the records' retention periods. Disposal for these records is treated the same as any other government record.
  - Government records can exist in any format. Video, audio, CAD files, photographs, et cetera, can all be government records. If the content meets the definition of a government record, it must be treated as such regardless of its format.
- When are records considered closed?
  - Closure varies for different records depending on how long they remain active, internal file closure practices and trigger events. Generally speaking, if the record is not in use and not needed at the end of the fiscal year it may be considered closed in that year.
  - Some records are used for references purposes but are not longer actively developed, for example internal policy documents. These records are usually considered to be active, since they are still in use.
  - Some records have closure conditions indicated in their record series such as "Upon termination of agreement/contract" or "After policy has been revised or is obsolete". These records are considered active until the designated condition has been met.
  - The individuals who work with the records directly may be able to best determine if a record has met its closure condition(s).

## **STORAGE AND DISPOSAL**

- Where/how should I store my old paper records?
  - Paper records should be stored in boxes in a dry, climate controlled location.
  - Records can be kept locally or with a designated records storage company.
  - Records should have the appropriate records schedules and record series number along with closure dates marked on them to facilitate easier retrieval and disposal.
- Will the Provincial Archives store my records?
  - No. The Archives only preserves a small number of historically important government records which are identified when disposal of records is requested.
  - Records storage companies such as Central Services Records Center, and Crown Store-all will manage records until they are ready for disposal.

- Can paper records be scanned and kept in digital copy only?
  - Records can be scanned and the originals can be destroyed as source records only if your institution has created and is following a policy to ensure that the digitized official records are properly formatted and that their integrity and authenticity is maintained in the new format.
  - For more information, including disposal requirements, see the Imaging and Source Records Disposal Guidelines: [http://saskarchives.com/sites/default/files/pdf/imaging\\_source\\_rec\\_disposal\\_guide\\_fin.pdf](http://saskarchives.com/sites/default/files/pdf/imaging_source_rec_disposal_guide_fin.pdf)
- How do I count retention and determine that a record is eligible for disposal?
  - Retention begins in the fiscal year after a record is closed. A record closed in February 2009 (the 2008-09 fiscal year) will begin counting retention on April 1, 2009 (the start of the 2009-10 fiscal year).
  - The retention period is the number of years listed in the schedule. This is the number of fiscal years the record needs to be held for before it is eligible for disposal.
  - Eligibility for disposal begins on the first day of the fiscal year after the retention period is over. A record closed in 2008-09 with a 6 year retention will be available for disposition at the start of the 2015-16 fiscal year (April 1, 2015).
  - Part 3 of the Records and Information Management training provides a more detailed description of retention. <http://saskarchives.com/services-government/records-management-training>
- How does the records disposal process work?
  - Once you determine that records have met their retention period, a disposal request can be sent to the Provincial Archives. The request must include an inventory of all relevant records along with a classification (schedule and series #) and dates of file closure. Forms can be found on the Archives' website at: <http://saskarchives.com/services-government/records-disposal>
  - The request must be signed off on by your institution's Designated Records Officer DRO before submitting your request.
  - Once a review of the records is completed by the Archives, a letter will be sent back to you that indicates which records that need to be held for appraisal or transfer to the Archives and which records can be destroyed.
  - You may then destroy the indicated records in accordance with your institution's policies.
  - For more details see the Guidelines for Records Disposal here: [http://saskarchives.com/sites/default/files/pdf/rds\\_update\\_sept2015.pdf](http://saskarchives.com/sites/default/files/pdf/rds_update_sept2015.pdf)

- My records disposal inventory form asks for a records Schedule Name/Number. Where do I find this information?
  - A records schedule name refers to the title of the schedule (usually ARMS 2006, 2014 or ORS)
  - All schedules include a 3 digit schedule number that identifies the schedule such as “ORS 500”.
  - This information is found on the first page and the footer of each page in all schedules.
- Where/who do I send Disposal Requests to? Can I submit them electronically?
  - More information and forms available here: <http://saskarchives.com/services-government/records-disposal>
  - Disposal requests can be submitted electronically via email to [recordhelp@archives.gov.sk.ca](mailto:recordhelp@archives.gov.sk.ca)

## **SCHEDULE DEVELOPMENT**

- Who do I contact about starting an ORS development project?
  - Contact the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan records help at [recordhelp@archives.gov.sk.ca](mailto:recordhelp@archives.gov.sk.ca)
  - An ORS Development Guide is available on the Archives’ website as well: [http://saskarchives.com/sites/default/files/pdf/orsdevguide\\_fin\\_2017.pdf](http://saskarchives.com/sites/default/files/pdf/orsdevguide_fin_2017.pdf)
- I have a completed draft of a records schedule. Now what?
  - You should have an Information Management Archivist assigned to your institution who will review the schedule and help prepare it for approval. Contact the individual directly or contact the Archives’ help desk to get in touch with them.
  - Once the schedule is complete, it will be reviewed by the Public Records Committee. Once any issues they have are addressed, it will be signed and become your official records schedule.

## **TRAINING AND MORE INFORMATION**

- What kind of Records and Information Management training is available?
  - The Archives’ RIM training workshops have been discontinued and the material has been developed into a set of online training courses available through LEARN (<https://learn.gov.sk.ca/elm/One.aspx?objectId=12084466&contextId=2489593>) for members of Executive Government and on the PAS website (<http://saskarchives.com/services-government/records-management-training>) for other users.
  - More focused training courses for specific aspects of records management are in development. If you would like to see training on a topic not currently offered, please contact us at [recordhelp@archives.gov.sk.ca](mailto:recordhelp@archives.gov.sk.ca) to offer your suggestion.

- Where can I find more information regarding records management?
  - All of the Archives' policies, procedures, and guidelines are available here:  
<http://saskarchives.com/services-government/record-management-policy-and-guidelines>