



Using Harvard's General Records Schedule

The **General Records Schedule** (GRS) is a University policy developed by Records Management Services that provides instruction on how long you must keep different types of records (retention) and how records should be destroyed or transferred to the Archives (disposition) once they have fulfilled their retention requirements. The GRS is designed to make it easier for all University employees to make thoughtful and legally defensible decisions about keeping and disposing of records. The University as an institution and individual University offices both benefit from complying with the General Records Schedule. The GRS:

- Promotes office efficiency
- Provides for the appropriate disposition of obsolete records
- Reduces University liability exposure
- Ensures compliance with laws and regulations
- Helps preserve the University's history

SCOPE OF THE GRS

The GRS covers common records found throughout the University – accounts payable, personnel files, program planning, publications, student records, and special events are just a few examples. The GRS applies to records in all formats, including paper records, electronic records such as Word documents, spreadsheets and databases, and e-mail.

ORGANIZATION OF THE GRS

The GRS is organized into broad functional categories, including facilities, finance, human resources, executive and management, special programs, alumni and development, faculty and academic centers, and student activities and services. Each category contains entries for specific types of records. For example, the human resources category contains entries for employee personnel records, faculty personnel records, and search records (among other series). Each entry contains a description of the records and examples of the types of documents you might find in those files. There is also a retention statement that tells you how long to keep the records. Records that have historical value and may be appropriate for transfer to the University Archives are indicated in the retention plan by the phrases "contact archives," "transfer to archives," and "retain permanently."

WHAT IF I DON'T FIND MY RECORDS IN THE GRS?

Although the General Records Schedule covers many types of records created at the University, your office may create unique records that are not represented in the GRS. RMS works with offices to create special retention schedules for records not in the General Records Schedule. In the process, RMS reviews the records, gathers information from the office about the records' use and value, and creates a records schedule that meets the needs of the office and the obligations of the University. If you do not find an entry in the GRS for some of your records, please **contact RMS** to discuss them.

READING AN ENTRY IN THE GRS

Series Title

A generic title describing the type of records.

Retention Plan

This tells you how long you will need to keep materials and what their final disposition will be (review, archives, destruction). Some series have multiple retention plans, indicated by a letter (a, b, or c). Read the descriptions to see which plan best fits your records.

How to Break It Down

If the plan says:
"Retain 4 years after the end of the fiscal year."

"Retain": Indicates that the records must be kept for a certain period of time before they are ready for their final disposition.

"4 years": Indicates how long the records must be kept.

"after end of fiscal year": Indicates the trigger for when to begin counting the retention period.

Accounts Payable Records (0410)

This series documents the payment for vendor, travel and other expense reimbursement, PCard, and petty cash transactions by local units.

Records include invoices, receipts, or other original supporting documentation (e.g. packing slips), web voucher cover pages, petty cash vouchers, petty cash logs, petty cash receipt slips, corporate card monthly statements, PCard settlement system reports (weekly sweep reports), Harvard University Universal Expense Forms (UEF), Missing Receipt Affidavits, and payment request forms or memos.

Retention Plan:

- a) Non-Sponsored Accounts: All original documentation not transferred to Central Administration: *Retain 4 years after end of fiscal year.*
- b) Sponsored Accounts: All original documentation not transferred to Central Administration: *Retain 6 years after final account closing unless longer period specified by granting agency.*
- c) All Accounts: All copies of documentation transferred to Central Administration: *Retain 1 year after end of fiscal year.*

Legal Citation: 26 C.F.R. §§ 31.6001-1, 301.6501; 34 C.F.R. § 74-53; 48 C.F.R. § 4-7; 31 U.S.C. § 37; OMB Circular A-110; M.G.L. c.62C, § 24; M.G.L. c.260, § 2

Notes:

- 1) Web voucher invoices, travel and reimbursement receipts or other supporting documentation are imaged and maintained centrally. Local units are responsible for submitting them to Central Administration and maintaining copies to support day-to-day questions and operations.
- 2) Central Administration does not image receipts for Pcard and petty cash. Local units are responsible for maintaining original documentation of Pcard and petty cash transactions.

See Also:

- [Equipment Maintenance Records](#)
- [Procurement Records](#)
- [Computer Hardware Records](#)
- [Contract and Agreement Administration Records](#)

Records Schedule Number

A four-digit code used to identify the type of materials. Needed when filling out paperwork for transfers.

Function & Contents

The function statement describes why the records were created and maintained and how they are used to support office activities.

Legal Citation

Reference to the legal or regulatory requirements concerning these materials. Not all series have legal citation.

Notes

The notes are special instructions for using the schedule or for maintaining or disposing the records in the series.

See Also

A cross reference for other useful or related series.