



## ARCHIVES AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

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## Introduction

Effective records management is essential for the Royal College of Music (RCM) to operate efficiently, meet legal requirements, and support transparency and accountability. With the growing volume of records, both digital and paper, there is an increasing need to manage information in a consistent, secure, and accessible way. This policy outlines key procedures and responsibilities to ensure that all records created or received by the RCM are accurate, up-to-date, and managed throughout their full lifecycle, from creation to retention or secure disposal.

## Purpose

1. This policy provides a consistent framework for managing records across the RCM. It ensures that records are:
  - Created and maintained in an accurate and accessible form.
  - Protected from unauthorized access or modification.
  - Retained and disposed of in line with legal, academic, and business requirements.
  - Compliant with all relevant laws, including but not limited to the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018, and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

## Scope

2. This policy applies to:
  - All departments, staff (academic, administrative, and technical), consultants, contractors, and volunteers.
  - All records and documentation created in any format, including paper, digital, email, audio-visual material, and databases.

## Definitions

3. The following definitions are used within this policy:

- **Record** - Information created, received, and maintained as evidence of RCM's activities and transactions.
- **Active Record** - Used regularly in current business processes.
- **Inactive Record** - No longer required for daily business but retained for legal or historical purposes.
- **Vital Record** - Essential for continuing operations during emergencies or business continuity situations.
- **Archival Record** - Retained permanently for its historical, evidentiary, or legal value.

## Roles and Responsibilities

4. The following groups & individuals have responsibilities:

- **Senate and Council**
  - Oversees implementation and ensures the policy supports institutional goals.
- **Deputy Director**
  - Provides leadership in promoting good records management practices across departments and ensures consistent implementation of this policy.
- **Archivist**
  - Provides guidance for good records management practice.
  - Promotes recordkeeping compliance to ensure timely, appropriate, and efficient retrieval and use of information.
  - Coordinates secure disposal of records and identifies materials for permanent preservation.
- **Data Protection Officer**
  - Provides specific advice regarding data protection compliance.
- **Committee Secretaries**
  - Are responsible for creating and preserving a complete record of committee's business which becomes part of the permanent record in the College Archive.
  - Ensure records are stored in appropriate repositories to support transparency and auditability.
  - Committee members must securely dispose of any personal copies of minutes, reports, and papers.
- **Departmental Heads**
  - Have overall responsibility for the management of records generated by their department.
  - Ensure local procedures align with this policy.
  - Ensure that staff clearly understand their record-keeping responsibilities.
- **All RCM Staff**
  - Are responsible for maintaining and disposing of records in accordance with this policy and the guidance contained within the Data Retention policy.
  - Maintain complete, accurate, and fit-for-purpose records for activities they undertake.
  - Follow classification, retention, and security procedures.

## Principles of Records Management

5. Integrity and Authenticity - Records must be reliable, complete, and unaltered from their original creation.
6. Accessibility - Records must be retrievable and usable when required. Digital records should be stored in accessible formats with metadata.
7. Confidentiality and Security - Records containing sensitive or personal data must be protected with appropriate physical and electronic security measures to ensure that no unauthorized person can access, edit, or alter records.
8. Retention and Disposition - A number of records are selected for permanent preservation as part of the archives, for historical research. Where records are required for archival purposes or ongoing legal or academic reference, they must be reviewed with the Archivist.
9. Retention periods reflect legal requirements (e.g. UK GDPR, employment, tax, and health & safety law), sector standards, and operational needs. Outdated, superseded, or duplicate records must be securely disposed of. The RCM maintains a centralised Data Retention Policy, which defines the retention periods for all data categories across academic, administrative, financial, research, and governance functions. All staff must consult the Data Retention Policy to determine the required retention and appropriate disposal of records. Disposal must be secure and documented. Staff should consult the RCM's Technology Department to ensure the secure disposal of electronic records.
10. Transparency and Accountability - Records must support audit trails, FOI requests, and inquiries.

## Records Lifecycle

11. All records have a life cycle from when they are created or received by the RCM, through to its use, maintenance, storage, and eventual destruction or archiving:
  - **Creation** - Identify and record activities, transactions, and decisions.
  - **Use and Maintenance** - Ensure clarity of versioning, accessibility, and classification.
  - **Storage** - Store digital records in secure systems; paper records in appropriate conditions with access controls.
  - **Review** - Periodically assess relevance, accuracy, and continued value.
  - **Disposition** - Dispose securely or transfer to archives based on data retention schedule.

## Legal and Regulatory Compliance

12. This policy has been formulated to ensure compliance with the relevant regulations and national legislation including, but not limited to:
  - UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
  - Data Protection Act 2018
  - Freedom of Information Act 2000
  - Environmental Information Regulations 2004
  - Limitation Act 1980
13. This policy must be read in conjunction with other relevant RCM policies, including:
  - Data Protection Policy
  - Data Management (Retention) Policy

## Training and Awareness

14. All new staff will receive records management guidance during induction. Ongoing training and resources will be provided.

## Relationship to the RCM Data Retention Policy

15. This Records Management Policy should be read alongside the RCM Data Retention Policy 2024 (Version 3), which outlines the College's record categories, their required retention periods, and statutory justifications.
16. The Data Retention Policy provides operational guidance to support this Records Management Policy and ensures compliance with data protection legislation.
17. In the event of any discrepancy between local practices and the Data Retention Policy, the retention schedule shall take precedence.

## Signatories and document history

### **Librarian**

Peter Linnitt

2016, October 2025

### **Policy reviewed by**

Collections Management Committee

2016, October 2025

### **Approved by**

Collections Committee

December 2025 TBC