I. Introduction

1. The University of Stirling is a diverse organisation which creates, receives and uses recorded information in a wide variety of formats. The increased emphasis on good governance and accountability brought about by the Freedom of Information Act and other compliance legislation requires that the University manages its information effectively.

2. The University recognises the value of effective records management, and a University Records Management Policy has been approved by the University Court. The Policy establishes a requirement for effective records management and outlines the responsibilities for staff working with recorded information in any format across the organisation.

II. Aims of Records Management Strategy

3. The records management strategy has a number of aims and objectives which are geared towards ensuring that the University manages all of its recorded assets effectively. In particular, the strategy will constitute an approach for realising the benefits of effective records management:

These include the following:

- Effective management of information assets
- Compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements
- Efficient use of staff time
- Space savings
- Increased accountability
- Cost reduction
- Reduction of risk
- Improved working environment

4. This document will outline the areas of activity that the Records Management Office will undertake, and how effective records management will support the University’s strategic goals by helping towards improved operational efficiency.

5. The aim of the strategy is to create an effective culture of record-keeping across the University, with devolved practices supported by guidance and training provided by the Records Management Office. This approach will ensure effective use of all resources, allowing the needs of different departments to shape the nature of the implementation in those areas.
6. The Records Management Office recognises the diverse nature of the University's structure, and that a flexible, devolved approach will facilitate the introduction of effective record-keeping practices. The implementation of these practices at department level will be expected to meet a minimum standard.

7. The Records Management Strategy will achieve the following:

- All university records are captured and managed effectively
- All recorded information is readily accessible
- Retention policies exist for all records, and the policies are applied
- Provision for the long-term storage of vital and other important records
- Relevant training programme for all University staff to ensure communication of records management principles, and practical advice for implementation
- The Records Management Office will provide tools relevant to the implementation of effective records management practices in all areas of the University

III. University Records Management Policy

8. The University Records Management Policy is necessary to ensure the widest possible acceptance of the need for records management, and demonstrates the University's commitment to good governance in respect of its records and associated responsibilities.

9. The Records Management Policy is a statement of principle and defines the following important issues:

- high-level support for records management
- the need for effective records management in all areas of the University
- responsibilities for the implementation of effective records management
- commitment to professional records management staff

10. The University Records Management policy will support the core strategic aims of the University. The Records Management Strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it continues to provide effective support to records management activities in all departments and that it helps all staff to understand their own responsibilities.

IV. Implementation of effective Records Management

11. The implementation of effective Records Management at the University of Stirling will operate on a devolved basis. The University Records Management Policy describes the various levels of responsibility which will make best use of available resources and concentrate knowledge and experience in the relevant areas.

12. The Records Management Office currently has two members of staff to provide advice and guidance to all University areas. The Office has responsibility for
other areas of information compliance including data protection and freedom of information legislation.

13. The University Records Management Policy places responsibilities on all staff for the effective management of records in their own areas. It also places responsibilities on department managers to ensure that the policy is implemented and that staff in their area are aware of the requirements and receive appropriate training.

14. The Records Management Office will produce high-level guidance to allow departments across the University to manage the records that they create and receive.

15. The Records Management Office will proactively gather information from departments about the records they hold.

16. Where there are areas of common interest across a number of departments, the Records Management Office will take the lead, with appropriate departmental consultation, and produce generic high-level guidance for record-keeping and retention policies. This will allow for a common approach to the management of similar records across the organisation, thus reducing duplication of effort and reducing the burden on all departments.

17. Departments will be expected to assess their own record-keeping requirements where common issues do not apply. By using the guidance notes produced by the Records Management Office, departments should be able to create effective procedures for their own area, and, where necessary, adapt their existing procedures accordingly.

V. Records Management Guidance

18. Guidance for all records management and related issues will be made available via the Records Management web pages and will form the basis of future Records Management training sessions (see below).

- Records management best practice guidance – general
- Records management best practice guidance – paper record systems
- Data protection guidance for record-keeping
- Email management best practice
- Shared drive management best practice

19. All guidance produced by the Records Management Office will be promoted at training sessions and included for discussion at senior staff meetings.
VI. Record Retention Policies

20. The Records Management Office will aim to create high-level records retention policies which cover common activities and functions across the University. This will help to ensure a uniform approach to the retention and disposal of similar records. This will realise benefits in the following ways:

- Efficient departmental planning and decision-making
- Reduction in storage requirements
- Easier office moves
- Help to ensure statutory compliance
- Reduction of liability issues
- Compliance with Freedom of Information s61 Code of Practice
- Operational consistency across the University

21. All records retention policies will be ratified by the Records Management Office.

VII. Legislative Compliance

22. The implementation of effective records management practices requires the University to acknowledge and respond to the requirements of relevant legislation.

23. The Records Management Office will monitor these requirements and provide professional interpretation for departments with regard to record-keeping practices. This advice will be provided in response to individual enquiries or more normally in the form of approved records retention documents or appropriate guidance documents.

24. In particular, the Records Management Office has a responsibility for the University’s obligations in respect of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. The Records Management Office will continue to provide appropriate training to all staff, and monitor transactions prompted by the legislation to ensure that the University fulfils its statutory obligations.

VIII. Training

25. A devolved approach to Records Management places an emphasis on providing training to departments to allow them to develop and implement effective records management practices.

26. The Records Management Office will, in consultation with the Training and Development Office, establish an effective records management training programme.
IX. Communication

27. The Records Management Office will develop an effective communication strategy to ensure that current guidance is readily available. This will include publicity through appropriate channels.

28. One of the most accessible sources of current information will be the University Records Management website. It will act as an information resource for departments who are implementing records management practices in their area, and will provide information on:

- Records Management Policy
- Records Management Strategy
- Records Management Guidance documents
- Training opportunities
- Current legislative and regulatory compliance information
- Data Protection Guidance
- Freedom of Information Guidance

X. Records Management Action Plan

29. The Records Management Action plan will list the major projects and activities initiated by the Records Management Office. The Plan will include information about the projects including targets, proposed activities and indicators showing progress and successes.

30. The Action Plan will be created on a proactive basis to ensure that it continues to support the Records Management Strategy.

31. The Action Plan will be reviewed regularly.

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