Oxford University Archives Selection Policy

1. Background

This selection policy has been drawn up, and should be applied, in the context of the Archives' *Statement of Collection Policy*. It is intended to support, but not to replace, the professional judgement of staff when making decisions on the selection of records for permanent preservation in the University Archives. It is a statement of the Archives' selection objectives and of the criteria which should be used to make decisions about records selection and aims to ensure that the Archives takes a structured approach. It has taken account of the *Study of the Records Life-Cycle* and other related JISC publications.

The policy is intended as a working tool for staff of the Archives involved in the day to day selection of records and is to operate in the context that space and other resources in the Archives are necessarily limited. It applies to all records created and held by the University in whatever medium (paper files, electronic data, microfilm etc). It is applicable in both the appraisal of records for transfer to the Archives and the re-evaluation of existing holdings and will be updated as and when necessary. It is also intended that this policy should inform any future work undertaken in conjunction with the Central Administration concerning records retention and disposal in the context of the Freedom of Information Act and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

2. Purpose of appraisal

The aim of appraisal is to identify and select those records created or received by the University which collectively build a comprehensive but compact picture of the University over time. The University's archives should provide a complete and accurate picture of the following, insofar as these are reflected in the University's administrative records as defined in the Archives' Statement of Collection Policy: its organisation and governance; key functions and activities; major developments and achievements; and relationships with its various stakeholders. The records should be able to show:

- what the University did
- when, where and how it did it
- why it did it in a particular way
- who were the key staff involved and why
- what were the results of it
- what impact did it have and who was affected by it

The value of archives depends on breadth and depth of coverage and consistency of acquisition. A selection policy will assist the Archives in achieving these aims.

3. Selection objectives and functional analysis

Records selection should focus on preserving evidence of substantive functions (*eg* graduate student recruitment) and substantive elements of facilitative functions (*eg* marketing strategy

development and implementation) rather than some transactions within them (*eg* receipt of enquiries from potential applicants and the despatch of prospectuses). In the case of all the functional areas listed below (and, by extension, the activities carried out within them), the functions can also be classified into three further categories which are, in order of importance:

1. functions and activities particular to Oxford University
2. functions and activities performed by any university / HE body
3. functions and activities performed by any large organisation

Records which document the functions and activities in 1. are potentially of greater archival value than those in 2. which, in turn, are of greater value than those in 3. Fig.1 illustrates the relative values accorded to records using both types of functional hierarchy:

Fig. 1

	records of substantive functions	records of facilitative functions	records of activities and transactions
functions specific to Oxford University	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM
general university functions	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
functions of any large organisation	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW

The Archives' objectives for records selection are based on the principal functions of the University. These are:

1. Teaching
2. Research
3. Student administration and support
4. External relations
5. Commercial enterprise
6. Corporate management
7. Resources management

Selection Objective 1. Teaching

The Archives' first selection objective is to preserve evidence of the University's provision of teaching to deliver its taught programmes. Taught programmes include both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and non-award bearing programmes (eg some Continuing Education courses). This includes:

- development of teaching strategy; teaching management planning and policy development; teaching quality and standards management
- development and review of the taught curriculum; development, review and assessment of taught programmes and courses

Selection Objective 2. Research

The Archives' second selection objective is to preserve evidence of the undertaking of research and delivery of the University's supervised research degree programmes and the research, including collaborative research, carried out by academic staff (insofar as this is reflected in the University's administrative records). This includes:

- development of research strategy; research management planning and policy development; research quality and standards management including ethical standards
- development and management of research projects; dissemination and exploitation of research; development and review of research programmes
- development and management of relationships with research funding bodies

Selection Objective 3. Student administration and support

The Archives' third selection objective is to preserve evidence of the recruitment and administration of students, and the provision of support services to students throughout their relationship with the University. Support services can include accommodation services, careers services, health services, religious services, disability services, sports and leisure services, language centres, or social facilities. This includes:

- development of student administration strategy; student administration management planning and policy development;
- recruitment and admission of students including outreach initiatives and programmes; student records administration; administration of student progress and assessment; award ceremony administration; student relations management;
- development of student support services strategy; student support services management planning and policy development;
- planning and policy development of student support services; promotion and delivery of student support services; customer relations management

Selection Objective 4. External relations

The Archives' fourth selection objective is to preserve evidence of how the University manages and maintains its public profile, and of how it manages its relationships with groups or individual members of the public outside the University. This includes:

- development of public relations strategy; public relations management planning and policy development; management of public communications; corporate identity and brand management; management of sponsorship and donations; honorary degrees
- development of media relations strategy; media relations management planning and policy development; management of media communications
- development of HE sector relations strategy; HE sector relations management planning and policy development; management of HE sector communications; administration of membership of HE sector organisations
- development of community relations strategy; community relations management planning and policy development; management of community communications
- development of alumni relations strategy; alumni relations management planning and policy development; alumni communications and alumni relations event management

- development of fundraising strategy; fundraising management planning and policy development; management of fundraising campaigns
- development of publishing strategy; publishing management planning and policy development

Selection Objective 5. Commercial enterprise

The Archives' fifth selection objective is to preserve evidence of the establishment of related companies which are wholly or partly-owned by the institution; of the management of services provided by the University to students, staff, the general public or businesses on a commercial basis; and of the management of retail outlets operated and managed directly by the University. This includes:

- development of related companies strategy; related companies management planning and policy development; formation, management and disposal of related companies
- development of commercial services strategy; commercial services management planning and policy development; planning, quality management and promotion of the commercial service; customer relations management
- development of retail trading strategy; retail trading management planning and policy development; planning and quality management of retail outlets; policy development of retail outlets; promotion and customer services management of retail outlets

Selection Objective 6. Corporate management

The Archives' sixth selection objective is to preserve evidence of the University as a corporate entity and as a community in itself. This includes:

- development of policies and procedures for strategic planning and performance management; institutional strategic planning and development; strategic performance management; organisational development strategy; organisational restructuring and development of individual units within the University;
- development of legal framework and governance structure; management of governing and executive bodies; management of senior officer appointments;
- development of risk management strategy; risk management planning and policy development;
- development of security (physical, cyber-, information etc) strategies; security planning and policy development
- development of quality management strategy; quality management planning and policy development; quality audit;
- development of audit strategy; audit management planning and policy development;
- development of legal affairs management policies and procedures; management of contracts, agreements, litigation and legal claims and advice;
- development of government and HE regulator relations strategy; government and HE regulator relations management planning and policy development; management of government and HE regulator communications; development of HE sector legislation;
- development of Health and Safety strategy; Health and Safety management planning and policy development; Health and Safety audit;

development of environmental management strategy; environmental management planning and policy development; environmental audit and promotion of environmental awareness

Selection Objective 7. Resources management

The Archives' seventh selection objective is to preserve evidence of the management of University estates and property, human and information resources, IT and finance. This includes:

- development of property/estates strategy; estate management planning and policy development; property acquisition, development and disposal; facility development and relocation management
- development of finance strategy; finance management planning and policy development; management accounting; investment and asset management
- development of personnel strategy; personnel management planning and policy development; diversity and equality policy development; workforce remuneration and welfare management; workforce and industrial relations management
- development of information resources and IT systems strategy; information resources and IT systems management planning and policy development; records, archives, libraries and collection management
- development of intellectual property management strategy; intellectual property management planning and policy development; patent management
- development of equipment & consumables management strategy; equipment & consumables management planning and policy development
- development of insurance and procurement strategy; insurance and procurement management planning and policy development
- development of internal services strategy; internal services management planning and policy development; internal service planning and policy development; internal service promotion and customer relations management

4. Appraisal principles

All records appraisal should be guided by the following:

i) it is the policy of the Archives to appraise records and make selection decisions at series level, wherever possible.

ii) for certain records, series-level appraisal is not possible. In the case of correspondence files where there is a properly constructed and maintained classification scheme, appraisal will take place at file series level (*eg* all file volumes with a common identifier). In the case of file series where the classification scheme has broken down (*eg* in some parts of the central administration correspondence files, formerly 'Registry files'), or does not exist, appraisal will take place at item level *ie* file-by-file appraisal. In all cases, the appraisal will be according to the same criteria which are applied at series level when dealing with more structured records.

iii) it is not possible for the Archives to undertake appraisal at a lower level than item level *ie* piece level (*eg* inspecting each sheet of paper in a file). This is too time-consuming, and of insufficient value for staff to undertake.

iv) it is the policy of the Archives not to weed records ie to remove individual pieces of paper from a file. This is impractical: the reduction in file size does not justify the staff time required to do it.

v) it is the policy of the Archives not to employ sampling (in any form) as a means of record selection. In the case of particular instance papers, or case files, where the same basic activity is being performed on a number of different subjects, the files will be appraised and either selected or disposed of in their entirety.

Review of this policy

This policy was approved by the Curators of the University Libraries in 2019. It will be reviewed every five years. The date of next review is 2024.

Oxford University Archives September 2019