

Schedule Summaries

Retention Schedules Chosen

- + UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO COLORADO SPRINGS RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE FOR HR & PERSONNEL ACTIONS
- + BBB RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE SAMPLE
- + MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM GENERAL RECORD RETENTION SCHEDULE

Purpose/Audience

BBB Sample: its purpose is to give a baseline understanding, through concrete examples of commonplace business requirements and tasks, of how long records should be kept based on their nature. More theoretically, the sample provides a tangible object to communicate the theory behind a Retention Schedule (RS) in order to get end-users to think about its applicability.

UCCS HR RS: reference guide for HR department for official files and actions related to necessary Human Resources and Personnel actions.

Montana U General RS: seemingly the entirety of the Montana University's RS for all of its departments and their respective file classifications

Comparison

The types of RS chosen were intentional: a generalized one (regardless of how closely it would mirror or deviate from statutes mandated by law) as well as actual RS from institutions. Beyond that, the other 2 should be similar in nature, at least in the types of the institutions that they serve.

The BBB Sample RS serves the purpose of the generalized example. Given that it is an official release of the Better Business Bureau, its authority is genuine and its guidelines are well established as precedent from years of aggregate knowledge. The other 2 RS are from Universities: Montana and University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. Though they have much overlapping similarity, the scope of each RS is different: the UCCS example is for their HR department; Montana's is seemingly institution-wide. However, since they each pertain to universities and the populations that are served by that type of institution, there is sufficient similarity to warrant a direct comparison.

As stated, the BBB Sample provides a framework for small businesses to use. It is important to note that its source is the IRS, so its dealings are mostly financial, or at least imply that the matters all relate to “the books,” essentially. For example, the document really only delineates between different types of correspondence, but most everything else deals predominantly with records of financial transactions.

The retention periods for each line item vary between 1-7 years (starting from the date that the taxes were filed) or are to be kept permanently; the vast majority are permanent, 3 or 7 years, with a few 1, 2, and 3 year retention periods mixed in. All follow federally mandated durations; the periods are not surprising, but again it serves as a good reference point. What this document lacks, however (though unsurprisingly), is context: the retention periods are all there and clear in what schedule applies to what record type, but the date taxes filed information is the only context given. Nothing is given in the way of the relevance of each record type to the others and no disposition method (presumably, the Authority is the IRS code). Again, given that it is a generalized example, this is not surprising, but could potentially lead to some confusion on the part of an end-user.

The UCCS HR RS is a more traditionally formatted RS. Consisting of four spreadsheet columns for the record type, the sub-department/location within HR, the retention period per record type, and a related authority for that retention period (when and where applicable). Its layout is different due to its audience and use case; here, as opposed to the BBB Sample, it is a true working reference for official staff of the institution. Thus the specificity is much greater, both for the types of records to be kept and their respective retention periods. While the retention periods seem confusing in their specificity, the only challenge would be to identify to which type a document/record belongs. Once that is determined, the schedule for the item is clear, as is the responsibility with whom it lies, as well as the governing authority that the schedule is following for compliance.

The RS document itself is well laid out and easy to follow; quite key in an effective policy is the communication and ease of compliance with the rules and guidelines. While the document runs 9 pages, the record types are separated out and detailed, so the RS' length works to its advantage in that way. While the detail works well for internal use, what it lacks- like the BBB Sample- is the disposition method after the retention period has ended. However, a particular strength is that the document references other RS that were utilized in the creation of their own, furthering the justification for the duration of the retention periods chosen.

The most complete RS of the three is from Montana University. It is a comprehensive schedule for the school at large, including the Academic, Administrative, Facilities & Maintenance, Financial Aid, and Research Grant records, among others. Within each of these departments, the schedule lists delineates the types of records. Importantly, each file type has a number associated with it (reference code), a clear natural-language description of the record type in addition to the record type name, the retention period, and (finally) the disposition method. The biggest strength of the document, beyond its comprehensiveness, is its clarity, particularly in the individual retention schedules by record type.

Another facet of its thoroughness is the content before the schedule is even reached when reading the RS. There is an overview that enumerates what the document is, its purpose, a definition of what a record is (surprisingly useful, given the lack of societal understanding of a record and their importance), how to apply the RS to the real world, and a list of shorthand terminology used in the subsequent listed schedule. Additionally, a table of contents helps the end-user easily navigate the document to find the requisite information for which they're searching- useful, given that the schedule spreadsheet consists of 30 pages.

What it lacks is a governing authority to back up the retention period with legal justification. However, the RS is so thorough, specified, and logical that it seems authoritative on its own, and the periods of retention follow RIM industry standard guidelines (lots of x+3/7 years); the inclusion of the authority would just make the document more difficult to use and is superfluous (additionally, there is some reference to the state of Montana's governing laws about records retention in the body of the document). Like the UCCS HR RS, the Montana RS also lists resources that were consulted in the creation of the schedule. The most glaring spot of potential confusion or contention is in a disposition method: "Archival Review" is a frequently used disposition method in this RS; while it is not unreasonable in and of itself- and seems mostly appropriate for the schedules it's been chosen for, in fact- there still exists a great possibility of inconsistency in how the decisions are being made, which would increase the greater the number of contributors to that process is. However, it does appear like most of the record types this option is used for are financial or bureaucratic by nature; rather they are more records like syllabi, which are important for posterity and the history of the institution, but not necessarily for the ongoing daily operations of the University.

Sources

- Montana University System General Record Retention Schedule. Nov 29, 2017
- University of Colorado Colorado Springs Records Retention Schedule For HR & Personnel Actions. March 27, 2017
- BBB Records Retention Schedule. *No date*