

# GUIDELINES

# GDL-9

## Faculty Record-keeping Guidelines: Graduate Student Records

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### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide faculty with practical record-keeping tips in managing the records they create as a by-product of their supervisory relationships with graduate students.

### 2. Record-keeping tips

#### 2.1 Centralized filing

- 2.1.1 File original records documenting a student's academic status and progress on departmental student files maintained by a graduate secretary. This measure ensures that all substantive records relating to a student's academic history are located in one, easily accessible location, supporting consistent planning, evaluation, and decision-making. It also means that personal information about a student can more easily be protected, located, and retrieved in the case of an information access request, dispute, or some other emergency.

#### 2.2 Segregate personal records and university records

- 2.2.1 Records documenting the following are considered university records:

- admission
- awards, scholarships, and fees
- coursework, supervision, and evaluation
- co-operative education
- international student status
- leaves and withdrawals
- disciplinary action
- student appeals of all types (e.g. grade, progress evaluation, discipline, etc.)
- thesis defence, submission, and approval
- Letters of reference

- 2.2.2 Records relating to the above activities document a graduate student's academic standing and progress at SFU. The University has an obligation to both document and be able to account for the outcomes of each activity.



2.2.3 In contrast, a faculty supervisor may make or receive records relating to a graduate student that are of a personal nature:

- correspondence detailing non-academic affairs
- academic achievements not related to SFU (e.g. delivering a paper at a conference, publishing a journal article, etc.)

2.2.4 The distinction between personal and university records relates to SFU's obligation to document and account for an activity. For example, delivering a paper at a conference may relate to a student's academic career, but SFU has no obligation to document that participation. Instead, a student should keep a record of such extracurricular achievements. A faculty supervisor's decision to also maintain such records is a personal one and not required to meet the business needs of the University.

### 2.3 Segregate academic records from employment records

2.3.1 Use student files only for records relating to academic standing and progress. Do not intermingle student employment records within the same file. Employment records include those documenting teaching and research assistantships. Records relating to academic standing and progress have a different retention period than those relating to employment (see *Follow prescribed records retention rules*).

### 2.4 Print to paper electronic records

2.4.1 Print to paper substantive university records stored in electronic form and place them on the departmental student file. This will ensure all university records relating to a single graduate student can be easily located. Keeping records in multiple locations means that it is less likely that the University will be able to bring together all of the records relating to one student if the need arises. Storing records in email applications, on desktops, in shared directories, on removable storage devices, and in multiple paper files may harm the University's ability to accurately and reliably document a student's academic standing and progress. It also complicates the application of consistent retention periods because of the existence of multiple copies stored in multiple locations (see *Follow prescribed records retention rules*). If copies of electronic records need to be kept so that they can be reworked for future uses, anonymize the records and save them as templates.

### 2.5 Print to paper substantive email exchanges

2.5.1 This guideline is an extension of the one above. Email relating to a graduate student's academic standing and progress (see *Segregate personal records and university records*), should be treated as a university record. If a substantive decision is documented in an email and only in an email, that record should be printed and placed on the student file.

### 2.6 Follow prescribed records retention rules

2.6.1 Faculty can open duplicate student files for their own personal reference and convenience, containing copies of original university records, if relying on one departmental student file is deemed too inconvenient or onerous. However, convenience copies are still considered university records and, therefore, university property. Graduate student files have been appraised for eventual destruction under a Records Retention Schedule and Disposal Authority (RRSDA). The retention periods outlined in that schedule should be followed and

applied to both departmental student files and any convenience copies held by faculty. For more information see RRSDA 2006-002, *Student Files – Graduates* <http://www.sfu.ca/archives2/dur-rrsdas/2006-002.html>.

### 3. Responsibility for this guideline

- 3.1 Questions about this guideline may be addressed to:
  - 3.1.1 Records Management Archivist, Archives and Records Management Department.
  - 3.1.2 Director, Graduate Admissions, Records and Registration, Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

### 4. Authority

- 4.1 This guideline is administered under the authority of the Archives and Records Management Department. Questions about interpretation of the guideline may be directed to the University Archivist. See SFU Archives' website (<http://www.sfu.ca/archives>) for contact details.