



University of the
West of England

JISC Records Management Project for UWE

Project Report

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Executive Summary

UWE submitted a bid to the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) in January 2003 under the 'Supporting Institutional Records Management' initiative.

Using the revised 'Study of the Records Lifecycle' report, it proposed to produce an institutional retention schedule for the areas of CORPORATE MANAGEMENT Governance and EXTERNAL RELATIONS Institutional Relations (categories identified from the original report), paying particular attention to how the latter connected to Widening Participation. This would build on a pilot carried out by the University Document Management and Retention Group (UDMRG).

The JISC Records Management Project for UWE ran from May to October 2003. The report considers the methodology used in applying the model and the issues raised.

The main issues highlighted by the project were:

- Where there is a low records management profile in the institution, there should be publicity prior to the production of retention schedules to engage possible participants;
- The informal interview approach adopted, followed up by interview notes and records survey, was more suited to the short timescale than the paper-based approach of the pilot project;
- The ease of applying the model depends on the nature of the functional area and the structure and organisation of the institution.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 JISC works with further and higher education, providing strategic guidance, advice and opportunities to use information and communications technology (ICT) in teaching, learning, research and administration.
- 1.2 In 2002 it invited funding proposals under the 'Supporting Institutional Records Management' initiative, which is part of its 'Continuing Access and Digital Preservation Strategy 2002-5'. The Call was divided into different themes, of which 1a Study of the Records Lifecycle – Pilot Case Studies was particularly relevant to UWE, as the University Document Management and Retention Group (UDMRG) had been carrying out a records survey and producing retention schedules, using the original Study of the Records Lifecycle report as a model. The first edition of the Study, published in 1999, included a Function and Activity Model and generic records retention schedule based on functions and activities which had been identified as common to all Higher Education Institutions. A revised Study of the Records Lifecycle was due for completion in April 2003. JISC proposed to fund a maximum of ten pilots to explore implementation issues in the different functional areas of the new edition. Institutions which received funding would be expected to produce an institutional retention schedule for the area(s) they had identified, and an accompanying report explaining the methodology used and issues raised by the project.

2 Background to the JISC Records Management Project for UWE

- 2.1 UWE Bristol is one of the UK's largest universities. It has a student population of around 23,000, and offers a large number of study opportunities across a wide range of disciplines.
- 2.2 In January 2003, UWE produced a bid to focus on the functional areas of CORPORATE MANAGEMENT Governance and EXTERNAL RELATIONS Institutional Relations (categories identified from the original report), paying particular attention to how the latter connected to Widening Participation. The University does not have a Records Manager, so work has until now been led by the UDMRG. It was hoped that taking part in the JISC Project would help to raise the profile of records management within the University.
- 2.3 The final project report would aim to examine the practical issues which emerge when applying the generic model to a large post-'92 university. The project was planned to encourage other HEIs without records managers to work on retention and the Project Manager would be able to advise others in similar institutions.

3 The Pilot Project

- 3.1 It was proposed to use the methodology developed during the initial pilot carried out by the UDMRG.
- 3.2 A records survey form, guidance notes and records retention schedule had been designed using feedback from the Group. The functional areas selected for the pilot had been Finance, Student Administration and Support and the Examinations Process. Records survey forms were drawn up using the Study of the Records Lifecycle. Staff completing the survey were briefed by a co-ordinator who was a member of the UDMRG. Individual services/faculties nominated the members of staff who would complete the form. They were encouraged to amend/add to the functional areas/activities, so that the completed survey form would reflect the organisation of the University rather than the model in the report.
- 3.3 On receipt of the completed survey forms, draft retention schedules were produced and returned for managers' comments. Managers' advice was received on operational requirements and additional functions and activities. The schedules were then checked by a solicitor before being presented with a report to the Directorate.

4 The Project

- 4.1 Pam Pearce was Project Manager from the start of the Project on 6 May 2003. She is an Administrative Officer in the Secretariat and, therefore, familiar with the “Governance” area. She is Chair of the UDMRG and co-ordinated the initial pilot. She had overall responsibility for the management of the JISC Project, including acting as line manager for a Project Assistant, maintaining financial oversight of the project and ensuring effective communication between those involved.
- 4.2 In the early stages of the project, she arranged for a website to be set up, liaised with the Clerk to the Governors on the appointment of the Project Assistant and met the Modular Scheme Director and Head of Widening Participation and his Personal Assistant to talk about what the project involved.
- 4.3 She received an advanced copy of the revised Study of the Records Lifecycle from JISC on 1 April 2003. The report was published later than expected, in May 2003. She received advice from JISC on changes to the functional areas in the new edition which meant that the functions covering Widening Participation were not as identified in the bid. The relevant areas were now called ‘HE Sector Relations Management’ and ‘Community Relations Management’
- 4.4 The Project Assistant, Sian Maher, was appointed to commence on 15 May 2003, working initially for one day per week, and then for two days per week between August and mid-October. She had previously worked and studied at the University, which proved useful when contacting staff in connection with the project and in understanding the University organisation and processes. She had no records management experience, having worked in different administrative roles.
- 4.5 She was responsible for day-to-day organisation of the project and co-ordinating the production of records survey forms and records retention schedules.

5 Methodology

- 5.1 The methodology based on the pilot project evolved as work progressed on Widening Participation, but it was also applied to Governance. The priorities were to define the boundaries of Widening Participation for the purpose of the project, to draw up a list of contacts, setting up meetings with key people, and to decide on the interview approach. It soon became clear that to achieve the required result in the limited time allowed, it would be necessary to carry out interviews and use e-mail correspondence to determine business processes and identify the resulting records.
- 5.2 Because of the time restriction it was decided that only the functional areas of Widening Participation and Governance would be included.
- 5.3 The Widening Participation initiative is diverse, fairly new and developing. Key people work in the Modular Scheme Office and the Widening Participation and Community Action Centre and in the Directorate, but there are many others involved in faculties and services. There was no definitive list of areas covered or of people involved. Few people contacted were aware of the project or what records retention schedules were for. They had not received information about the project earlier because it was not clear until the start of the project how many people kept records concerning Widening Participation. When the Project Assistant had established who needed to be approached, it was still difficult to make arrangements to talk to people due to pressure of workloads and records receiving a low priority. The lack of a records management policy in the University and the low profile of records management generally may have contributed to the problem. Some people were hesitant and suspicious. Staff could be made more aware of records management if it was included in the induction for administrative staff, and training on records management was available at different levels. Publicity at the start of the project would also have been helpful. Faculty Administrators are genuinely concerned about storage problems and the lack of a consistent approach within the University, but records management cannot be a priority for them at busy times when their administrative teams are dealing with student administration and teaching and learning.

- 5.4 The UDMRG records survey form was adapted for the first interviews. However, the structured survey format did not suit the interview situation. It was easier to take notes during a semi-structured interview about the processes involved and the records produced. The methodology was:
- A copy of the JISC Records Retention Schedule explanation was distributed along with an example of a completed Records Retention Schedule. The interviewee was shown a copy of the revised Study of the Records Lifecycle report. People were more positive about the project when they understood how it could benefit them.
 - After the interview, the interview notes were typed up and records entered on the survey sheet with the retention timescales. These were sent to the contact for approval.
 - It was only possible to interview the main contacts due to limited time. Others were approached by e-mail with blank interview questions and records survey with guidance notes attached for completion, with follow-up as required.
 - When the finalised records survey was received (anonymised example in Appendix 2), the records were noted on the schedule, using the UDMRG model as a guide.
 - The JISC report retention recommendation was included and any legal citations given where known.
 - The retention schedule was then sent to the Manager for recommendations.
- 5.5 Communication was through a mixture of e-mails and phone calls, but contact was made more difficult as the Project Assistant only worked one day per week at the beginning of the project. As the response improved, there were many staff involved but only a limited time to see them and there was concern that this would make it difficult to meet the deadlines for producing the records surveys and retention schedules. However, the tight project timescales could also have helped contacts realise the need for a speedy response. The faculties were given a questionnaire based on a list of faculty initiatives which had been included in a Widening Participation report presented to a Board of Governors committee earlier in the academic year. A list of contacts was maintained throughout the project. Whatever method of communication was used, frequent follow-ups were necessary to achieve a good response rate.

6 Applying the Model: Widening Participation

- 6.1 The Retention Schedule on the Project website shows the Functions and Activities and resulting records which were identified under Widening Participation. Function names were selected which were similar to the model as well as being meaningful to the institution. For easy reference the functions could not be too lengthy. So the preferred terms for the main functions were: a) Education Sector Relations Management (see also 8.2) and b) Strategic Planning and Performance Management (Widening Participation Strategy). It was decided not to include initiatives to improve recruitment of international students, as government initiatives are to widen participation for home students only. It was also decided not to include some of the records held by the Enquiry and Admissions Service and within faculties which relate to general recruitment drives and are not specific to schools or communities identified in Widening Participation areas. NHS contracts and Teacher Training Agency contracts within the remit of Widening Participation were not included due to insufficient time available and also because they are specific to the Faculties of Health and Social Care and Education. Library schemes were under development, so there was as yet little information. There would be insufficient time and resources to consider the whole area of HE Sector Relations Management and Community Relations Management (the terms used in the revised Study of the Records Lifecycle).
- 6.2 Widening Participation encompasses a large number of schemes and events at national, regional and local level. The retention schedule would be limited to original records. However, edited versions of a record produced by one service might be used to create a report in another service. For the purpose of the schedule, they would be treated as two distinct records. Where a member of the University was a member of a national or regional group or committee and the original records were held externally, the University copy would be included on the schedule provided it was not connected with the regional project. This would ensure that a copy was available in the University. The records from the regional project were treated as a special case as they were maintained by a Project Co-ordinator who, although based at UWE, was funded by the regional project. The records, therefore, were not 'owned' by UWE.
- 6.3 Terminology was confusing to those unfamiliar with the area. For example, there were name changes of committees - the UWE Higher Education Compact Scheme changed to Heading Higher Passport. Acronyms for initiatives changed. It was often unclear whether an initiative was current or had been replaced.

7 Applying the Model: Governance

- 7.1 In contrast to Widening Participation, the Governance area was easier to define and far more structured. There were fewer contacts to interview. The Clerk to the Governors is Head of Service in the Secretariat where the project was based.
- 7.2 The Governance part of the project was not started until much later. In some ways this was advantageous, as the initial problems concerning the methodology of the project had been resolved. However, it did mean that there was a short timescale for return of responses.
- 7.3 At UWE, the Secretariat provides support to the Board of Governors and its committees and the Academic Secretariat to Academic Board and its committees. It had been planned, when the bid was submitted, that the Secretariat would be the main focus of the Governance part of the Project. However, under UWE's Articles of Government, the Board of Governors, the Principal and Academic Board all have certain responsibilities. So it was decided that the Academic Secretariat should also be included together with Faculty Boards and University Executive Groups.
- 7.4 Again, a mixture of interviews and e-mails was used. Once retention schedules had been produced for Governance from the Secretariat Records Survey, it was easier to adapt it for the Academic Secretariat. A significant variation in practice has been revealed between the various Faculty Boards and University Executives. It was proposed that Faculty Board retention practice should be brought into line with Academic Board practice in relation to the retention of records, as the Faculty Boards report to Academic Board. Also changes have been proposed for University Executives so that there is a consistent approach. These proposals will undergo further consultation.
- 7.5 The Retention Schedule for Governance is viewable on the Project website.

8 The Revised Study of the Records Lifecycle

- 8.1 There were a number of issues concerning the Function and Activity Model in the revised Study of the Records Lifecycle. The approach adopted by the author is to list business activities in a particular sequence within the 36 common business functions of HEIs. For consistency, each function begins with strategy development, planning, performance management, policy development, procedures development etc. Although within some functions this is a logical structure, it is top-heavy for an area which is project-based and evolving.
- 8.2 Where activities exist which are not covered by the Model, a new heading has been created and where possible a retention recommendation has been extracted for a similar record series under another function in the report with a numbered reference. The function 'HE Sector Relations' was renamed 'Education Sector Relations' to reflect the wider links with schools and other educational institutions.
- 8.3 The Widening Participation Initiative has resulted in a large number of committees, which generate their own paperwork. It was considered important to include these in the retention schedule. However, the meetings usually cover a wide range of activities, so they have been categorised under a broad combined heading which takes in a number of activities e.g. planning, procedures and events.
- 8.4 The web-based Records Retention Schedule is reasonably quick to use, but could be improved by linking to the relevant number in the model rather than accessing items by remembering each heading or scrolling down numbers. It can strain the eyes for the user to constantly flick between on-line function and activity model, on-line records retention schedule and the individualised version. The project records surveys were kept on Excel (separate worksheets combined in one file for each major area) and the retention schedules in Word.
- 8.5 It would also be helpful to have a search facility for records series and/or functions and activities on the Function and Activity Model/Records Retention Schedule.

9 Electronic Records

- 9.1 There is variable practice within UWE faculties and services for keeping electronic records and no electronic records management system; electronic records only appear on the schedule when they are regarded as the original record on the records survey. There is still a lack of understanding and awareness among administrative staff as to how long records are retained on databases. It is recommended that dissemination of electronic archiving and backup policies be improved.
- 9.2 There is currently no University advice available on e-mail management and retention. Staff do not always consider properly whether to print, save electronically or delete e-mails. They may not realise when the e-mail is the main record of an activity. It is hoped that UWE will be able to use the results of another JISC project which is part of this initiative.

10 Findings

- During the course of the Project, 60 people were contacted altogether only five of whom did not reply.
- Universities with a low records management profile may benefit from a concerted publicity campaign at the beginning of a project to engage future participants.
- Provision of staff training on records management for administrative staff might help motivate staff and, if timed to coincide with projects, might encourage them to participate.
- The informal interview about business processes followed up by interview notes and records survey was more suited to the short timescale than the paper-based approach of the pilot project.
- An effective communication system is vital for the speedy completion of a retention schedule.
- The generic headings used in the Revised Study of the Records Lifecycle are not appropriate for an initiative which is project-based and evolving.
- Terms chosen for functions and activities in the 'tailored' version of the model should be simple and commonly used within the institution.
- The ease of applying the model depends on the nature of the function and the structure and organisation of the institution.
- The web-based retention schedule could be improved by quick links between numbered sections and a search facility for functions and activities and/or records series.
- Electronic archiving and backup policies should be widely disseminated among administrative staff.

- Committee records are an important element of the Widening Participation Initiative and need to be included in the schedule.
- Applying the model for Governance revealed inconsistencies in records retention practice between Boards supported by different services.
- Some linked areas, which were not investigated as part of the project, will need to be considered in the future.

11 Conclusion

- 11.1 There has been limited publicity within the University about the project so far. The web pages for the Secretariat are under development, and it has been difficult to utilise the project web page, as it is maintained elsewhere in the University. It would have been interesting to explore the possibility of using Blackboard or the Intranet for two-way communication during the consultation process. This has been done in other universities, but at UWE Blackboard is only used for teaching and learning at present and the Intranet is used in a limited way for consultation.
- 11.2 Publication of the retention schedules and the report will be an impetus for records management in the University. It is hoped that this report can be used as a ‘springboard’ to further developments.

Glossary

Aimhigher	An initiative which aims to show young people the benefits of going into higher education
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
MAR	Modular Assessment Regulations
SEEC	Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation
UDRMG	University Document Management and Retention Group
WP	Widening Participation

Example of a records survey completed by a faculty (anonymised)

Name and Description of Activity or Business Process	Name of Resulting Record	Record Held By	* E/ P/M	Years Live	Years in Archive	Review ? Y/N	Notes
Faculty Open Days	Statistical data of number of attendees and interest		E	3	n/a	N	
Presentations and workshops in local schools/colleges	Record of schools visited and when		E	2	n/a	N	
Radiotherapy,Diagnostic Imaging Roadshows and taster days	Being re-planned						
Visits to schools/colleges career fairs	Record of school/colleges attended		E	6	n/a	N	
Nursing Cadet Scheme	Minutes		P	3	n/a	N	
Access Open Afternoon	Statistical data of number of attendees and interest		E	2	n/a	N	
Access talks at Colleges	Record of colleges attended and when		E	4	n/a	N	
Post Qualifying Careers Advisory Services	Confidential database of every enquiry		E	16 months	n/a	N	

Name and Description of Activity or Business Process	Name of Resulting Record	Record Held By	* E/ P/M	Years Live	Years in Archive	Review ? Y/N	Notes
PG Open Evening	Statistical data of number of attendees and interest		E	2	n/a	N	
Post Qualifying Workshops	Record of dates and venue		E	7	n/a	N	
Visits to NHS Trusts	Dates in diary		E	7	n/a	N	
Widening Access interview with NHS Trust Partners	Applications		P	3	n/a	N	
Foundation Course for Allied Health Professions	Applications		P	course about to commence	n/a	N	
Mailings	Record of mailings sent, when and who to		E	Since 1997	n/a	N	
A named secondary school	Meetings, notes		E	since Jan 2003	n/a	N	
Foundation of Health Module Level 1	Enrolment form		P/E	CAY +1	n/a	N	
Assistant Practitioner Programme	Meetings, minutes		P/E	6 months	n/a	N	
Heading Higher Passport	Planning Stage						