

## Working from Home: UTARMS Records Management Guidelines

Like most of the staff at the University of Toronto, UTARMS has transitioned to working from home in order to support community efforts to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Though we're out of the office, we're still eager to help with your records management questions.

As the University responds to the COVID-19 pandemic and works to ensure continuity, meetings, decisions, and information used to support those decisions is generated rapidly. We want University staff to be able to locate, reference, and store this information efficiently.

Once you settle into your work from home environment, consider the following tips to help you keep up your good records management practices while you're away from the office.

### Proper At-Home Workstation Setup

First and foremost, read and follow the instructions and advice in the [\*COVID-19 Temporary Special Telecommuting Work Arrangements Guideline\*](#) prepared by Human Resources & Equity. This document contains important details and the relevant contacts you need to know in order to maintain appropriate records, data, and information privacy and security while working from home.

### Record/Document Tracking

Ideally, you'll have access to your shared network spaces over the University's virtual private network (vpn). However, if vpn is unavailable and your team works on a shared network drive, you and your teammates may find it necessary to work with copies of folders or files from your shared resources to complete your work. If you choose to do this, plan to maintain version control with the following tips:

- Designate individuals to co-ordinate any collaborative edits required for specific files.
- Designate locations where the official copies will be stored.
- Set a regular schedule for updates to the official copies.
- Use meaningful file naming conventions for versions. For more file naming tips and examples, check out: [\*UTARMS Electronic Records Management File Naming Conventions\*](#).
- Add any new records and documents you are creating to appropriate folders.

## Email Management

Keeping up with email is a challenge in the best of times but we can expect higher volumes of email while we are all dependent on digital channels to communicate from home. Here are some tips to stay on top of your email as volume increases:

- Ensure that you are using University of Toronto's email system or the Office 365 environment to communicate any messages that include personal or health information. Do not use personal email addresses or communication tools to send University-related information. For more information, contact the [UofT Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office](#).
- Be mindful that the business content you create is a [University Record](#). Separate your personal and informal messages from business-related messages.
- Delete personal or informal messages as soon as they are no longer required.
- Make use of the folder storage features in your email software. Set up a simplified file structure that corresponds to your shared drive folders and file messages as they are created and received.
- Be on the lookout for messages about decisions, meeting summaries, and project plans. These are University Records that should be transferred to the archives once they've met [in-office retention requirements](#).
- Consider holding discussions in one of the University-supplied online tools, such as Microsoft Teams, and capture the decisions in formal minutes in Word files or email messages to the attendees.
- Check out more tips for managing email at home or in the office here: [UTARMS Tips for Managing Email](#)

## Maintaining Control of Paper Records at Home

We create and rely heavily on digital records when we work from home, but there are still scenarios that necessitate some paperwork. Keep in mind that you are responsible for any paper you bring home from the office, and any paper you make while doing University work from home. Here are some tips to help manage your paper at home:

- Build a few minutes into the end of your workday to secure any papers you've used or made in the course of your work.
- Be mindful of whether the paper you've generated or used is the only version of a record. Secure any paper University Records until you can return them to your in-office filing system.

- Be careful not to throw any confidential notes or papers in your home garbage! Secure any papers you are finished working with until they can be thoroughly shredded or returned to your University office's secure shredding bins.

## **Reviewing Office-Specific Records Management Procedures**

Once settled into working from home arrangements, some might find this a good time to review unit-specific policy and procedures. If you're taking this time to review your records management practices or file plans, UTARMS recommends the following projects to keep your RM in good shape:

- Refresh your RM Fundamentals with UTARMS' [Records Management Fundamentals Video](#)
- Go through your email inbox, sent box, and file folders. Be on the lookout for messages or attached documents that contain business decisions, meeting recaps or other University Records. These should be filed, retained, and disposed according to UTARMS Records Retention and Classification Recommendations
- If you have vpn access, take an inventory of your shared drive and consider mapping your files and folders to proper retention and disposition instructions.
- Draft a 'Shared Drive Policy' for your team that includes the consensus for how your shared drive will be used, what records will be stored there, who will have access, and what naming conventions and other standards you will use. UTARMS can provide you with examples of shared drive policies.
- While everyone is working from home, maintain familiar file structures to avoid frustration and confusion as we navigate our temporary work arrangements. If you decide to move things around, communicate the changes with your team.

## **Stay in Touch**

UTARMS is working from home but we're still here to help. If you have records management questions, please contact us:

**Andrea McCutcheon, Records Archivist: [andrea.mccutcheon@utoronto.ca](mailto:andrea.mccutcheon@utoronto.ca)**

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