1. Do we have to do this (records management/Records Management Database)?

**Yes.**

All state agencies must maintain an internal records management program (Rule 1210-01-.03(1)) and ensure that retention schedules are properly implemented and followed (Rule 1210-01-.02(5)). See [MTSU Policy 129](https://www.mtsu.edu/policies/general/129.php) for additional information.

1. What is a record?  
     
   **Documentation in connection with official MTSU business.** This includes “all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, photographs, microfilms, electronic data processing files and output, films, sound recordings, or other material, regardless of physical form or characteristics made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any governmental agency.” T.C.A. § 10-7-301(6)
2. Are copies considered records?  
     
   **No.** Only the official document, regardless of format, is considered a record.  
     
   *Example 1*: Copies made of a final report and shared with other participants in a meeting are not records. Only the official report, maintained by the report owner, is a record.

*Example 2*: You receive an emailed copy of a different department’s final report and print the email for better viewing. The printed copy is not a record. The owner of the final report is responsible for maintaining, retaining, and destroying the official record.  
  
*Example 3*: You digitize physical documents, confirm the electronic files are accurately/completely captured, and securely stored/saved. The electronic file is now the record. The physical document is no longer a record and can be destroyed.   
  
**Other documents considered non-records**: brochures, reference materials, drafts, obsolete catalogs, bulletins, trade journals, and manuals.

1. What is an RDA?  
     
   **Records Disposition Authorization.** Broadly stated, these are categories that documentation connected to official MTSU business (records) fit into. Each RDA can be found on the State’s Records Management website ([here](https://sos.tn.gov/rmd)), along with descriptions, retention periods, and destruction requirements.   
     
   You want to find the RDA that best fits your record. If you have trouble determining what RDA applies to your records, please feel free to contact us at [recordsretention@mtsu.edu](mailto:recordsretention@mtsu.edu) and we’ll help you classify the record for proper retention.
2. Do I need to keep a record of my records? That seems redundant.  
     
   **Yes.** We are required by law to properly maintain and destroy records (TCA § 10-7-302, TCA § 10-7-303). MTSU submits a report to the Records Management Division, TN Secretary of State’s Office, annually. This report includes all records created, maintained, and destroyed by the University.   
     
   The MTSU Records Database serves as a resource to help you stay organized. By keeping records of your records (seeming redundancy acknowledged) within the database, compliance with State law is simplified and streamlined!  
     
   If you need help figuring out the best way to manage your records, reach out to us at [recordsretention@mtsu.edu](mailto:recordsretention@mtsu.edu).
3. I’m the records coordinator for my area. Can I access the MTSU Records Database?  
     
   **Yes!** Send an email to [recordsretention@mtsu.edu](mailto:recordsretention@mtsu.edu) to let us know you’re the Records Coordinator for your area. Please provide your department and FSA Username so we can get you set up in the database. Once you’re set up, you can sign into the database [here](https://www.mtsu.edu/caerm/records_management_retention.php).
4. Can you show me how to create, edit, and request destruction of records?  
     
   **Yes.** Take a look at the MTSU Records Management Training on our website ([here](https://www.mtsu.edu/caerm/records_management_retention.php)). It provides a step-by-step demonstration with pictures. Reach out to us if you need further assistance and we’re happy to help!
5. Do the dates I enter in the Records Management Database really matter?  
     
   **Yes!** The dates are incredibly important. The first part of accurate record retention is properly assigning an RDA. The second part, and the way we show compliance with State law, is through proper retention and destruction based upon the record dates you provide.
6. What do all these record dates mean?  
     
   **Think of a box.** A physical box, regardless of how you store your records (i.e., electronically), is how we want to think about records storage. You have different “boxes” for different types of records (RDAs) and each box contains records for each year, either the calendar year or the fiscal year. Let’s set the date parameters for our box:  
     
   Start Date of Records = the date of the earliest document/record contained in the box  
   End Date of Records = the date of the latest document/record contained in the box  
   Destruction/Archival Date = the earliest date that the records in the box can be destroyed  
     
   *Example*: Your box contains all the Working Papers (RDA SW17) for the fiscal year, July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023. RDA SW17 requires a retention period of one year before destruction.  
     
    Start Date of Records = July 1, 2022  
    End Date of Records = June 30, 2023  
    Destruction/Archival Date = End Date of Records + Required Retention Period + 1 day  
    Destruction/Archival Date = June 30, 2023 + 1 Year + 1 day = July 1, 2023  
    **July 1, 2023 is the earliest date you can request for this record to be destroyed**
7. Do I need approval to add new records or edit my existing records in the Records Management Database?  
     
   **No.** You only need approval **before** destroying records.
8. Can I destroy records without prior approval through the Records Management Database?  
     
   **No!** Send a records destruction request through the Records Management Database. We review these requests each Friday. If you have questions, please contact us at [recordsretention@mtsu.edu](mailto:recordsretention@mtsu.edu) and we’ll be happy to assist you!
9. I destroyed my approved-for-destruction records. Am I all done?  
     
   **Not quite!** One final step and then you can put those records out of your mind. Go back into the record in the Records Management Database and update the following four fields:  
     
    Destruction Request: “Destroyed – Final Disposition”  
    Records Destroyed: Select “Yes” radio button  
    Date Records Were Destroyed/Archived: Enter date  
    Method: Select method
10. My record needs to be kept longer than the RDA specifies. What do I do?  
      
    **It depends.** Please contact our office so we can discuss your specific record. It is possible that the records may fit better under a different existing RDA. It’s also possible that we may choose to speak with the State’s Records Office about developing a new RDA.
11. The Annual Records Destruction Day is coming up and I need to label boxes. Can you help with that?  
      
    **Yes!** Please take a look at the [MTSU Records Storage and Labeling FAQ](file:///Q:\Training%20Documents\Records%20Management\MTSU%20Records%20Storage%20and%20Labeling%20FAQ.docx).
12. Is there record management training?  
      
    **Yes!** We have training available on our website in the resources section under “MTSU Records Management Training” ([here](https://www.mtsu.edu/caerm/records_management_retention.php)).   
      
    Additionally, we will be offering records training throughout the year. We will send out emails to announce any upcoming trainings. If you are the Records Coordinator for your area and are concerned you aren’t on the email list, please send an email to [recordsretention@mtsu.edu](mailto:recordsretention@mtsu.edu) and we’ll be sure you’re included on future emails.  
      
    For questions or to request training, please reach out to us via email or stop by!

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