



Academic Records Retention FAQ

What should faculty keep? How long should they keep it?

“Best Practices” for Academic Records Retention for UWF Instructors

What do instructors have to keep?

Course Syllabus

The course syllabus documents course policies and procedures, including how you compute final grades. Should a student file a grade appeal, the course syllabus will support your decision about the course grade you assigned. Students often request copies of the syllabus (no, they don't always keep their copy) when they transfer to another institution and want to document that the course they took at UWF is equivalent to a course with a similar name but different course number at another institution.

Class work retained by the instructor

If you do not return student work (term papers, homework, art work, lab project, and other class work), you are obliged to keep it.

Class exams

You need not keep every copy of the exam, but you must keep a copy of the test questions, answer key, and test administration instructions (usually included on the first page of the exam questions). Scantron forms can be returned to students; you will retain a record of the student score on the exam.

Why must instructors keep these records?

UWF must comply with records retention schedules established by the State of Florida

The State of Florida Department of State (2015) identifies documents that must be retained and specifies the retention interval for these records. A small set of these records apply to university professors and academic departments.

How long must I keep these materials?

The State of Florida records retention schedule describes different retention periods for different records. The easiest rule of thumb for faculty to follow is to retain syllabi, class exams, and other class work that you do not return to students for *two calendar years after the end of the course*. For example, for a course that ends on December 15, 2015 (the deadline for grade submission), these records must be retained until December 15, 2017.

Maintaining Accurate Records is a Good Practice for Effective Mentoring and Responding to Student Inquiries

Faculty seldom use paper grade books to record and track grades on assignments they use to determine student grades. Most instructors now maintain a detailed record of grades earned on assignments and exams during a term as an Excel spreadsheet or in the eLearning grade book.

These records serve multiple purposes after the term is finished.

A student might request a letter of recommendation a year or more after completing your class.

If the student submits a grade appeal for the course, a detailed record will document how the instructor computed the final grade.

Should a student get an incomplete and the chair or another instructor must compute the final grade (e.g., when the original instructor is on sabbatical, is on medical leave, or has left the university), the records should be complete enough to determine a grade. Instructors must describe this process when they submit an Incomplete Grade for a course.

Resources

Davis, B. G. (1993). *Tools for teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Florida Department of State, Division of Library and Information Services. (2015). *General records schedule GS5 for public universities and colleges* (R. 1B-24.003(1)(e), *Florida Administrative Code*). Retrieved from <http://dos.myflorida.com/media/693588/g505.pdf>