



Athabasca University

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GOVERNANCE OFFICER
AND GENERAL COUNSEL



Office of the Chief Governance Officer and General Counsel

Records and Information Management Framework



Approved by: Executive Team

Approval Date: June 29, 2022

Review Date: June 2027

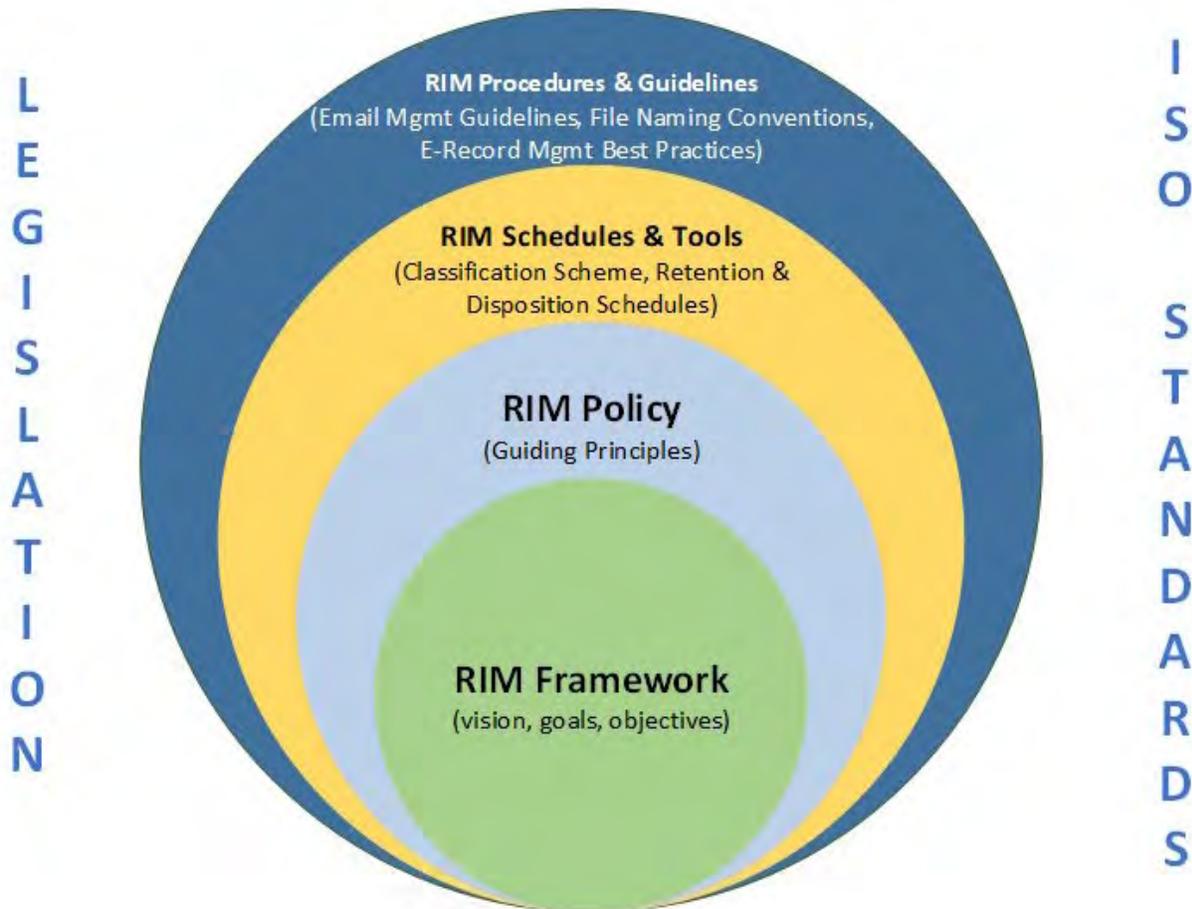
Framework Contact: Records and Information Management Coordinator



PURPOSE

Athabasca University (“the University” or “AU”) is a 100% digital technologies-based learning environment through its virtual campus where learners of all ages and stages can seamlessly interact with learning experiences asynchronously or synchronously, online or offline, remote and in-place. It is also a purposeful near-virtual working environment intended to support and benefit both employees and learners. The Records and Information Management Framework is a foundational document which will set out the underlying vision and objectives of the Records and Information Management (RIM) Program to ensure Athabasca University’s proper management of its information assets (administrative and operational records) at its virtual campus and in its near-virtual working environment. The Program will consist of a Records and Information Management Policy setting out the guiding principles for the institution-wide management of information assets, and tools such as a Record Classification System and File Naming Guidelines to enable staff to support a healthy record lifecycle.

Fig.





The RIM Program's design and development will support the University's transformative initiatives, including the Imagine Strategic Plan, Imagine Learning Framework, and OneAU Initiatives. The Program will also support digital governance and will be essential to enabling the University to effectively use accurate data and analytics in its decision-making by establishing records that are consistent, identifiable, and accurate. By ensuring that the full lifecycle of institutional records and information assets is managed, the RIM Program will also help the University mitigate risk and ensure compliance with legislation.

As is the case with the University's other organizational assets (people, capital, and technology), administrative and operational records, information, and data assets must be managed to maximize their value. Collectively, these assets fall under the scope of the RIM Program. The RIM Framework is intended to articulate key elements of AU's RIM Program design and development. The Framework will contextualize the management of these strategic administrative and operational information assets within the University setting, within applicable legislative and regulatory requirements, and in accordance with international standards and best practices.

The Framework has been developed to consolidate and identify elements of the University's administrative and operational records and information management structure and help ensure that the University's records and information management initiatives align to its strategic priorities. The Framework will provide guidance to all members of the University community. Requirements will be established that ensure strategic management of these assets, alongside traditional reasons to maintain strong record-keeping, maximizing efficiencies across the organization, as well as complementing and enhancing existing information management practices. The Framework will assist the University in modernizing and maturing its management of information assets and allow for continuous improvement and future-building as AU bolsters its foundational plans. The successful implementation of the University's initiatives requires a matured RIM model and effective processes to support it and contributes to the integrated ecosystem as a whole, further streamlining processes.

The RIM Framework will prioritize the following five intentions:

1. Alignment with the University's transformative strategic initiatives, including the Imagine Strategic Plan, Imagine Learning Framework, Digital Governance, and OneAU initiatives;
2. Adoption of and alignment with International Standards and best practices for the structure, scope, and reach of the RIM Program;
3. Retention of necessary evidential activities to enable the University to demonstrate transparency and compliance;
4. Consolidation and identification of successful elements of the University's existing records and information management structure and ensure the RIM Program optimizes organizational efficiencies that can be attributed to strong RIM practices; and
5. Collaboration with the business areas of the University's administration as the most effective means for developing and promoting RIM best practices.

OVERVIEW

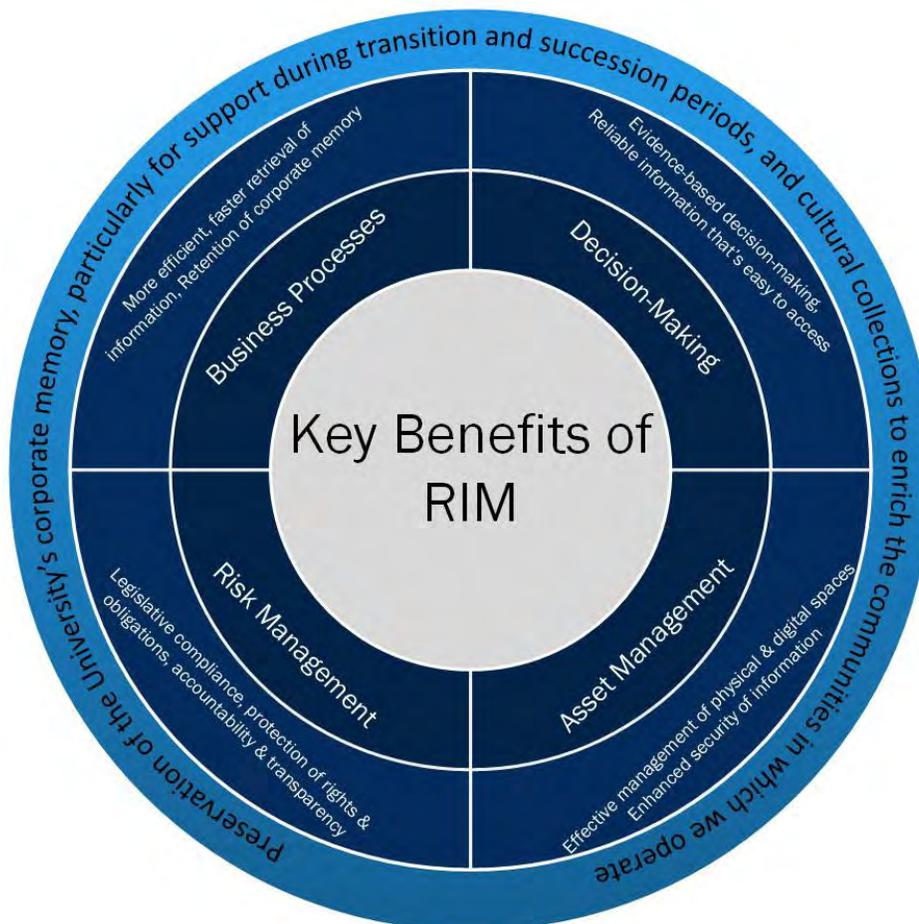
The University accumulates records, information, and data through the delivery of academic programs as well as through its daily operations. Records, information, and data, regardless of format, are broadly

recognized as important strategic, organizational assets. They are critical inputs to informed analysis and decision-making, which can range from their use in the University’s annual budget analysis to appropriate evidential activities essential to transparency and compliance, and decisions that determine the University’s ongoing relevance.

All records and information have a lifecycle from their creation or receipt through their active period when in use, to their final disposition of either confidential disposal or archival preservation. A RIM Program will manage each stage of the record lifecycle to allow the University to conduct its business effectively, reliably, efficiently, and consistently. In a virtual environment, it is especially important to introduce conscious management at the earliest possible stage of a record lifecycle to ensure controls are maximized. Conscious records management must be disciplined, consistent and coordinated. Having and maintaining a properly managed Program and putting it in practice provides confidence to the University’s stakeholders that its records and information assets are treated as a core business resource that will support ongoing achievement of strategic objectives, the delivery of services to students, and protect the rights of the University community.

Implementation of the RIM Framework will allow the University to see a number of key benefits.

Fig.





- (a) Business Processes
 - More efficient business processes that rely on information
 - Faster retrieval of records and information assets to facilitate information sharing, collaboration, and reuse
 - Continuity in the event of a disaster
 - Retention of corporate memory and key decisions
- (b) Decision-Making
 - More informed and evidence-based decision-making
 - The information required is reliable and easy to access
- (c) Asset Management
 - Enhanced security of records and information
 - Effective management of physical and digital spaces
- (d) Risk Management
 - Greater availability of records to support compliance, accountability, and transparency
 - Continued compliance with legislative requirements
 - Protection of the rights and obligations of the University and individuals
- (e) Preservation of the University's corporate memory, particularly for support during transition and succession periods, and cultural collections to enrich the communities in which we operate

STRATEGIC REQUIREMENTS

Athabasca University's physical and electronic records and information assets are its corporate memory. They are the evidence of how the University performs its functions and why decisions were taken, and as such they are a vital asset for its ongoing operations. Effective records and information management ensures that the records maintained are:

- Authentic, reliable, complete, and accessible;
- Protected and preserved, to satisfy operational needs, ensure current and future accountability, and support future decisions and actions; and
- Disposed of accountably, and as legislation requires.

There are five (5) key strategic requirements of records and information management which underpin the Framework:

1. Accessibility

Records and information assets must be readily available and accessible for as long as required. As a result, records and information are managed throughout their full lifecycle and rules are established for the organization, storage, retrieval, and destruction of records. The University will ensure its RIM Program allows appropriate and efficient access to records and information to meet staff work needs and to support and guide decision-making.

2. Accountability & Stewardship

Records and information must be correctly managed in order to properly support administrative and operating functions of the University. All University employees are responsible for managing records and information. Roles and responsibilities for employees are articulated and understood,



and core competencies relating to managing records and information are identified and communicated, and training is provided. Strategies and priorities directing how records and information assets will be managed will be developed and communicated to all levels, and practices will be evaluated on an ongoing basis.

3. Usability and Quality Control

Records and information must meet the needs of the users. As a result, processes must be in place to ensure that records and information assets are accurate, reliable, and easy to use. Processes and technology supports are in place to ensure appropriate access to records and information and tracking of who has modified or accessed confidential records. The Program itself must also meet the needs of the community.

4. Planning, Coordination and Continuous Improvement

RIM practices should be linked to organizational goals, objectives, and financial planning, with a coordinated approach across the University. RIM should support service continuity and disaster recovery, and ensure corporate history is captured and maintained. RIM must also be planned by management and linked to business requirements, as departments must be able to embed records and information management requirements into business practices and systems. RIM will support the business performance of the University by ensuring that decisions are informed with reliable and trustworthy information.

5. Risk Management

Enterprise-wide records and information management will act as a risk mitigation instrument. Practices are in place to protect confidential, sensitive, and personal records and information from unauthorized collection, use, disclosure, and destruction. All records are managed to meet the rules of evidence and legal discovery. Records and information are managed to support business continuity and recovery in the event of disaster. The RIM Program will continue the effort for a lean-systems management, with increased efficiencies and improved service delivery for learners.

RESPONSIBILITY

A culture that supports and contributes to strong, high quality record management lifecycle will be cultivated at all levels of the University. As members of the University community, all University employees who create, receive, and use records have records and information management responsibilities. All employees are accountable for the management of records and information generated in the course of their duties or under their direct control in their physical and virtual environment. All University records and information assets should be appropriately stored and properly secured to prevent unauthorized access, disclosure, modification, loss, or damage.

Leadership will support best practice in records and information management by leading through example, assisting with communication, explicitly supporting, and endorsing of records and information management decisions made by the University.



The Chief Governance Officer and General Counsel (“CGOGC”) has a particular responsibility in ensuring the University corporately meets its legal responsibilities, and internal and external governance and accountability requirements. Day-to-day responsibility of records and information management will be as established in the RIM Roles and Responsibilities Matrix.

The Privacy, Policy, and Records and Information Management (PPR) Office, within the Office of the CGOGC, is responsible for working with managers and other information professionals to lead or support practices such as records scheduling, development of records classification systems, analysis of recordkeeping requirements in business processes, design and implementation of records systems, and delivery of role-specific training, and coordinating with the Digital Security Office in regards to data classification. It is responsible for providing advice and support for good practice of records management and the continual improvement of practices across the University.

LEGISLATION, REGULATIONS, AND POLICY

The Program will be underpinned by and ensure compliance with the legislative, regulatory and policy requirements governing records management practices, particularly:

- *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* – This Act ensures that public bodies, including Universities, are open and accountable by providing the public with the right of access to records, and the obligation to protect personal information from unauthorized collection, use, or disclosure by public bodies.

It will also support compliance with legislation and professional best practices or ethical guidelines relating to specific business areas of the University, such as Health and Safety, Finance, and Human Resources.

The RIM Program will use the requirements, standards, and controls of the Framework to underpin the principles and best practices for records and information management at the University. The RIM Program will interrelate with internal University policies to ensure effective synthesis and consistency of information governance and management throughout the full record and information lifecycle, in particular the Information and Data Management Policy and related Procedures. These specifically address the governance and management of all information and data assets to ensure security, integrity, availability and protection. The Data and Information Security Classification Procedure, in particular, will aid in ensuring all records have the appropriate level of data classification and associated storage and security. As well, other internal policies will be considered, such as:

- Digital Governance Control Framework – Governing Policy
- Protection of Privacy Policy
- Security of Digital Information and Assets Policy and related Procedures
- Athabasca University Archives Policy
- Enterprise Risk Management Policy



STANDARDS AND CONTROLS

Records management performs a governance role in regard to its records and information assets, particularly in the way that they are managed, retained, made available, and disposed. Standards influence the way in which these aspects are controlled and managed. The University will seek to ensure that its Records and Information Management Program is compliant with the relevant International Standard on Records Management (ISO 15489), which sets out the principles and processes of good records management practices and provides a baseline for navigating a multifaceted approach to records management. The Program will also be modelled on the Canadian General Standards Board standards for documentary evidence, and ARMA International's standards and guides. The University will also ensure that benchmarking with other universities and other relevant public authorities as well as best practices are central to its development and maintenance.

Controls must be applied to the creation, maintenance, use and disposal of an institution's records, including retention scheduling, vital records protection, and storage and administration of inactive records. These controls will ensure that the University's records and information assets are:

- Trustworthy and managed accountably, effectively, and responsibly
- Readily accessible
- Understandable and usable
- Part of the University's approach to risk management
- Meeting its purpose
- Secured and protected

TOOLS

Records and information management tools support the implementation of recordkeeping policies and provide consistency for University-wide practice. These tools include:

- Record Classification System – A classification system is an index that identifies the groups of records and information assets created or received, used, and maintained throughout the University. It helps describe the records so that they can be found (similar to keywords in an internet search engine) and places records together that are related because of their context within the organization.
- Retention and Disposition Schedules – These will build upon the classification system to clearly set out the minimum period of time that a record must be kept and the conditions under which records are to be disposed, whether it be by secure, confidential shredding, deletion, or transfer to archives. This will be determined through collaboration with departments.
- Inventory – An inventory identifies the records, where they are located, and if they contain personal information. A Vital Record Inventory will also be created to identify the records and information that are critical to the function of the University and their location.



- Standard – This sets out the expectation for the creation and maintenance of a record during its active life, including storage and security, authenticity, and integrity.
- Training, Advice and Assistance – The PPR Office will provide advice, assistance, and training to University employees regarding the best practices and University policy for proper record and information management.

OCAP® Principles

Athabasca University respectfully acknowledges that we are located on and work on the traditional lands of the Indigenous Peoples (Inuit, First Nations, Métis) of Canada. We acknowledge the Principles of ownership, control, access, and possession ([OCAP®](#)) of Indigenous information governance and data sovereignty in our work with Indigenous communities in regards to administrative and operational records.

Acknowledgements

Athabasca University wishes to acknowledge the following:

The University of Edinburgh (2002). *Records management policy framework.*

Privacy & Information Management (PIM) Taskforce (2008). *Records and Information Management Framework for Ontario School Boards/Authorities.*

The University of Otago (2017). *Information and Records Management Framework for the Operations Group.*

Archives of Manitoba (2018). *Records and Information Management Framework.*

James Cook University (2013). *Records Management Framework.*

George Brown College (2008). *Records Management Policy Framework.*

The University of South Pacific (2017). *Records Management Framework.*

The First Nations Information Governance Centre