

Recommended Best Practices for Admissions & Records Maintenance in Law Schools

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to ensure that necessary records and documents are adequately protected and maintained and to ensure that records that are no longer needed or of no value are discarded at the appropriate time.

Principles Governing Records Retention and Disposal

- Records (regardless of the storage medium) can be disposed of upon reaching the minimum retention period, provided the school does not need the records for future administrative, legal, research/historical, or fiscal purposes.
 - *Administrative value: contain information applicable to current or future university operations*
 - *Legal value: contain evidence of legally enforceable rights or obligations of the University/School*
 - *Research or historical value: document the purpose, growth, history, services, programs, and character of the campus*
 - *Fiscal value: required for budget development, financial reporting, or audit purposes.*
- **Keep as little as possible.**
- Records should be stored consistently within the department in a manner that provides protection against misuse, misplacement, damage, destruction, or theft. Original, confidential, and sensitive documents should be stored in a secure location.
- Do not keep copies of records that are maintained by an office that created the record (referring to unofficial, duplicate copies of records).
- Records that identify a person are more subject to direct legal action than statistical or generic records; therefore, retention and disposal of these records require priority attention.
- Records, which have been contested, should never be destroyed unless the ability to reconstruct them in legally acceptable form is preserved. The destruction of records should cease once litigation commences.
- Retention and disposal policies should include provisions for machine-readable records (e.g. microfilm), which can be access only with specific technology.
- Any record recommended for retention that exceeds five years, and especially if the retention period is to be either indefinite or permanent retention should be imaged for security (current format is PDF).

- The retention periods recommended below are based on the fact that essential data will be recorded on academic records which are retained permanently.
- Retention and disposal policies should be the same regardless of storage medium (paper, digital) or location of the data (law school office or central campus).
- Data that resides in a database and is used to dynamically generate documents such as a degree progress report should have the same retention period as the document(s) in which the data was used.
- Specific records within each school may vary from those listed in the accompanying retention schedules. Records should be retained or destroyed by applying the same retention rule that applies to similar records that are listed in the retention schedules.

Retention Schedule A

Admissions Data/Documents

Data/Documents	AACRAO Recommendation	NLSO Recommendation	Note
Admission letters (notices of admission)	5 years after graduation or non-attendance	Destroy at graduation or 5 years after non-attendance	
Denial and waitlist notifications	5 years after graduation or non-attendance	1 - 2 years	
Admission response/deposit form	None	Destroy when files transferred to Registrar	In most situations this will be electronic data
Applications for admission or readmission for matriculants	5 years after graduation	Permanent	
Applications for admission or readmission for non-matriculants		1 Year	
Character and fitness disclosures	None	Permanent	
Letters of recommendation	Until admitted	Destroy when files transferred to Registrar	Included in LSAC Report
Personal statement	None	Destroy after graduation or 5 years after non-attendance	Retain Permanently if relevant to moral character
Resumes	None	Destroy after graduation or 5 years after non-attendance	Retain Permanently if relevant to moral character
Student waivers for rights of access to see letter of recommendation for admission	Until terminated	Destroy when files transferred to Registrar	Included in LSAC Report
Test scores LSAT	5 years after graduation or date of last attendance	Permanent	Included in LSAC Report
Undergraduate transcripts – reflecting earned degree	5 years after graduation non-attendance	5 years after graduation non-attendance	
Military records	5 years after graduation non-attendance	5 years after graduation non-attendance	
Handwriting sample	None	Permanent	Included in LSAC Report
Undergraduate transcript unofficial	None	Destroy when files transferred to Registrar	Included in LSAC Report
Visiting students' applications for matriculants	1 year after application term	Permanent	

Data/Documents	AACRAO Recommendation	NNLSO Recommendation	Note
Visiting students' applications for non-matriculants	1 year after application term	1 year	
Visiting students' letters of good standing	1 year after application term	Destroy as part of degree audit or 5 years after non-attendance	

Retention Schedule B

Student Academic Records

Data/Documents	AACRAO Recommendation	NNLSO Recommendation	Note
Academic action authorizations and correspondence (dismissal, etc.)	5 years after graduation or date of last attendance	Permanent	May show on transcript
Academic records	Permanent	Permanent	
Applications for graduation	1 year after graduation or date of last attendance	1 year after graduation	
Changes of course (add/drop)	1 year after date submitted	1 year after date submitted or at graduation	
Change of grade forms	Permanent	Permanent	Should be stored with grade rosters
Class rosters	Permanent	None	
Class schedules (students')	1 year after graduation or date of last attendance	None	
Correspondence, probation form letters	None	Destroy as part of degree audit or 5 years after non-attendance	
Degree audit records	5 years after graduation or date of last attendance	3 months after graduation	If available online, there is no need to keep hard copies
Disciplinary action documents	See note 1	Permanent	See note 1
Disability accommodation documents		Permanent	For use with bar certification
Final examination questions, rosters, and other processing materials	None	1 year	ABA – 1 year
Final examinations answers (all formats)	None	1 year	ABA – 1 year
Grade reports (Registrars' copies)	1 year after date distributed	Permanent	
Hold or encumbrance authorization	Until released	Until released	
Incomplete request	None	Destroy when the 'I' grade is changed to a permanent grade	May be kept as permanent record with grade roster

Data/Documents	AACRAO Recommendation	NNLSO Recommendation	Note
Leave of absence	None	Destroy as part of degree audit or 5 years after non-attendance	Leave of absence are noted on student transcript
Letters of good standing	None	Destroy as part of degree audit or 5 years after non-attendance	Can determine good standing for any period based on student transcript
Name change authorizations	5 years after graduation or date of last attendance	Permanent if not on transcript or destroy at degree audit if on transcript	
Social Security number change documentation	None	Permanent	SSN changes are stored permanently in student information system
Transcript requests (student)	1 year after date submitted	1 year after date submitted	
Transfer credit evaluations	5 years after graduation or date of last attendance	Destroy as part of degree audit or 5 years after non-attendance	
Withdrawal authorizations	2 years after graduation or date of last attendance	Destroy as part of degree audit or 5 years after non-attendance	Withdraws are noted on student transcript

Note:

1. Disciplinary-action documents should be retained while in force. However, internal notes and documents related to any investigation should be retained separately, if at all, and then destroyed at the time of graduation.

Retention Schedule C

Certification Data/Documents

Data/Documents	AACRAO Recommendation	NNLSO Recommendation	ABA	Note:
Bar certifications	None	All certifications keep for one year; keep reportable incident certifications permanently		
Enrollment verifications	1 year after verification	Do not keep		Using the Clearinghouse
Social security certification	1 year after certification	Do not keep		
Veterans administration certifications	3 years after graduation or date of last attendance	Do not keep		

Retention Schedule D

Publications, Statistical Data/Documents, Institutional and Accreditation Reports

Data/Documents	AACRAO Recommendation	NNLSO Recommendation	Note:
ABA annual questionnaire	None	Permanent	
ABA site visit evaluation	None	Permanent	
Handbook/Catalog	Permanent	Permanent	Maintain in Registrars' Office, Library Archive, and online companies such as College Source
Census day statistics (Lock-on, ABA fall reporting)	None	Permanent	Maintain in Registrars' Office and Library Archive
Class rankings	None	Permanent	
Commencement program	Permanent	Permanent	Maintain in Registrars' Office, Library Archive and Development Office
Degree statistics	Permanent	Permanent	Maintain in Registrars' Office, Part of ABA Annual Report
Enrollment statistics	Permanent	Permanent	Maintain in Registrars' Office, Part of ABA Annual Report
Faculty evaluations	None	10 Years	Maintain in faculty personnel file
Grade statistics (distribution reports, etc.)	Permanent	None	

Data/Documents	AACRAO Recommendation	NNLSO Recommendation	Note:
Racial/ethnic statistics	Permanent	Permanent	Maintain in Registrars' Office, Part of ABA Annual Report
Schedule of classes	Permanent	Permanent	Maintain in Registrars' Office and Library Archive

Retention Schedule E

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Data/Documents

Data/Documents	AACRAO Recommendation	NNLSO Recommendation	Note:
Requests for formal hearings	Life of affected record	Permanent	
Requests and disclosures of personally identifiable information	Life of affected records	Permanent	
State bar examination pass/fail information and pass rates statistics	None	Permanent	Part of the ABA annual questionnaire
Students requests for nondisclosure of directory information	1 year after date submitted if so indicated in the college's policy statement	Destroy as part of degree audit	Maintain on student information system
Student statements on content of records regarding hearing panel decisions	Life of affected record	Permanent	
Student's written consent for records disclosure	Until termination by the student or life of affected record	Until termination by the student or life of affected record	
Waivers for rights of access	Until terminated by the student or life of affected record	Until termination by the student or life of affected record	
Written decisions of hearing panels	Life of affected record	Permanent	