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Information Management Principles

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Information Management Principles:

Excellence in information management at ACER will be achieved by following these principles:

1. Corporate importance

Information is a valued resource and ACER's strategic and operational plans define how it should be used and managed.

Information is a strategic resource, and will be managed appropriately.

In general, company-wide information will be centrally managed. Information needs and how information is managed should be identified as an integral part of strategic and project planning.

A governance framework ensures that this occurs.

2. Information sources

Because we manage information, it can be easily found, and its source reliably identified.

Company-created information may be made available from a core source or a derived source.

The core source for any item of company-created information must be identifiable and accessible. Any derived sources of information must be identified as such. In general, changes should only be made to the core source. Each core source should have an identified custodian, an identified access community and an identified set of maintenance responsibilities.

Where possible, different manifestations of information expressions should be derived from a single source. As with core and derived sources, changes should ideally be made to this single source and the derived manifestations should be automatically regenerated.

3. User-centredness

The information services and systems at ACER are designed and provided with the needs of users in mind.

User-centredness, focuses on how to design and provide information systems and services that satisfy users' needs at ACER. That means everything from major services and systems like Finance, CMS and HR, information for teachers visiting ACER for training and the procedure for obtaining a parking space.
We write something with the aim of informing, educating or expecting our readers to respond or take some action. Putting yourself in the place of your readers means looking at why, where, when, how and what the user might understand about the information you need to convey. Meeting with users to confirm, test and retest as you develop the information is critical to meeting readers’ needs.

4. Availability

Information is available to anybody authorised to access it, anytime, anywhere and anyhow as appropriate.

Information should ideally be accessible (subject to security and acceptable use guidelines) to:

- anybody who needs it and is authorised to access it
- at anytime
- anywhere
- and anyhow

in order to ensure that it delivers the greatest value to the company.

5. Staff development

We continuously improve our skills in working with information.

ACER needs to provide an adequate, relevant and ongoing development programme to enable staff to create, access, manage and disseminate information resources effectively.

The fifth principle is therefore illustrated by the phrase: “Staff development - we continuously improve our skills in working with information”.

6. Productivity and efficiency

Because we manage information, we are more productive as a community.

Information, and the way it is managed, should contribute to the productivity of members of the ACER community.

7. Statutory requirements

The way we manage information complies with legal and administrative requirements.

Information must be managed in accordance with external statutory and regulatory requirements.
Information must be stored in such a way as to allow a timely response to freedom of information and local requests, as well as legally-mandated controlled discovery.

Information arising from research involving human subjects must be dealt with in accordance with the Privacy Act requirements.

8. Trustworthy information and systems

ACER information is relevant, accurate and timely.

Information provided by ACER should be, and be perceived to be, trustworthy (that is, relevant, accurate and timely) to the maximum extent possible.

Where the information is sourced from outside the company (as with, for example, library holdings), all reasonable care should be taken to ensure its trustworthiness.

Any activity that creates, modifies or transmits critical company information should be trustworthy. This means that it should be:

- logged (to ensure an audit trail)
- non-repudiable (to ensure that the creator/changer can not later deny their action, and that there is proof that the action took place).

9. Retention and disposal

We keep the right information for ACER.

Essential information must be retained while required and then appropriately disposed of in accordance with ACER standards and external obligations.

A proportion of all information will be retained in the company Archives, constituting the organisation’s captured corporate memory. While it is retained, it must be managed in such a way as to be recoverable in the event of loss on a timescale consistent with company requirements.

Retention and disposal is about ensuring that information is preserved appropriately.

10. Information and technology

Our information needs are supported by our Information Technology services and systems.

IT Principles are derived from Information Management Principles.

IT Principles support and enable the implementation of the Information Management Principles, as well as determine the deployment of IT systems and services.
INFORMATION PRINCIPLE Processes:

PRINCIPLE 3: Cornerstones for applying this Information Management principle.

1. User-centredness is a design principle.

2. Information can be designed.

3. Everybody creates, manages and uses information.

4. Everybody should consider a user-centred design approach when working with information.

So how can this user-centred design approach be applied to information?

Key ideas/concepts to implement

- Early and ongoing focus on users and their goals
- Measure how the system is being used
- Design cycle – research, design, evaluation activities

Putting it into practice

Step 1: Identify and profile your user or user group and find out how your information will affect them.

Meet with people and find out what their needs are.
Collaborate with them – this can be a quick, informal meeting with someone in the corridor about the kitchen roster or a planned session with a group of users.
Review information currently developed for this purpose. Don’t ‘reinvent the wheel’.
Search for any other data or reports that might be available to provide background information.

Step 2: Design your information based on how users work and think, and then test, review and test again.

Get potential users to review and test – review trial and Test again.
Observe the context/environment (people, physical, practices, processes and technologies) in which your information will be used.
Are there any factors that impact on how people will use the information you are preparing?
Are there any problems that users or you can identify with the way that current information is used? Identify with users how the information can streamline their work and create efficiencies.
Test your information by asking for comments and feedback from your workgroup and your users. Give users a test using a paper or online version of a workflow, system or application.
Step 3: Test the final document or major parts of it as these are completed.

Review, refine, review.

Principle 5: Finding the best and making it common

The aim of the fifth principle of IM - Staff Development - is to say to people let's find the best practice and make it common by learning and doing.

Finding the best and making it common is not something often heard in management principles; more often we are told to find the best and make it better. But it is precisely this upside-down way of thinking that makes the principles of Information Management (IM) work.

We know that everybody knows lots of bits and pieces, but they have often not brought these together into a cohesive whole. One way to develop skill and expertise is to gather knowledge on how teams or individuals do certain things, such as structuring their email folders for example, and try and find the best way that is done and share this with others.

IM requires some skill. Staff need information supplied to them, along with the opportunity to train and have access to resources.

In addition, the collaborative nature of gathering information is vital to the success of implementing IM principles.

Individual staff and teams have an opportunity to use the tools being provided, ie forums, staff meetings, to determine the way the team agrees to work and documenting it. This process will be supported by the website being developed, along with a new 'Information Management for Workgroups' plan, which will help a team in inducting members to their agreed IM practice.

The practice of Information Management practice is therefore about acquiring the skills and discipline. It is not necessarily a 'right' way of doing things, but rather options for a 'better' way of doing things that will benefit staff and the Company.
Principle 9: Keeping the right information for ACER

ACER’s ninth Information Management principle addresses the retention and disposal of information with the statement ‘We keep the right information for ACER’.

In practical terms how can we meet this goal?

There are several questions to ask when deciding how to deal with information. This helps us identify who the information belongs to which in turn determines when and why it will be retained or disposed of. We then apply our own judgement based on knowledge of the functions of our area on a case-by-case basis.

Is the information personal and has no link to your work?

In this case you can retain or dispose of the information in any way you prefer.

Does the information belong to your workgroup?

If it does, you need to make a business decision based on your workgroup’s agreed processes for retention and disposal. This information might include working papers, drafts, requests for stationery and leave. You are able to make this decision based on your knowledge of your area’s functions.

Since your workgroup’s information may be bound by legal or other regulations imposed from outside of ACER (for instance if you are representing ACER as a member of an association or research group), you need to take these rules into consideration before disposing or retaining.

Is the workgroup information evidence of a transaction undertaken for Company business and therefore a workgroup record that may become part of a corporate record in future?

If it is, take into account that someone else might need to find the information, so clearly label and store it according to your workgroup guidelines. Once again your knowledge of the functions of your area helps you make that decision. You also may need to consider the value of keeping information for specific purposes such as historical reasons, for instance LSAY data sets

Does the information belong to ACER’s corporate records – HR, finance etc?

If it does, you will need to use the TRIM classification to label the information and decide where and how long this will be kept. To help staff manage these records a Records
Disposal Authority has been formulated. The Authority indicates how long particular records must be kept. Assistance with TRIM classification and using the Disposal Authority is available from the Records management staff.