



Applies to: Faculty, staff, student employees, volunteers, and parties doing business with the university involving public records

Responsible Office

Office of University Compliance and Integrity

POLICY

Issued: 09/29/2007
Revised: 03/01/2024

As a state-supported institution of higher education, the university is subject to the Ohio Public Records Act, Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 149.43, which requires all public offices to organize and maintain public records for which they are responsible in a way that allows the offices to identify and provide such public records in response to public records requests. All university employees and others who use or keep public records on the university's behalf are expected to comply with this policy.

Purpose of the Policy

To facilitate prompt access to public records and promote compliance with the Ohio Public Records Act.

Definitions

Table with 2 columns: Term and Definition. Rows include Actual cost, Electronic record, Public record, Record, Redaction, and Requester.

PROCEDURE

Issued: 09/29/2007
Revised: 11/18/2024 (minor revision)

- I. Making a Public Records Request
A. Requests for public records may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing, including via email. The university may not require a written request, disclosure of the requester's identity, or disclosure of the intended use of the requested public record.



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- B. Although no specific language is required to make a request, the requester must at least identify the public records sought with sufficient clarity and specificity to allow the university to identify, retrieve, and review the public records.
- C. Requests for information that does not exist on a fixed medium (paper, electronic, audio or video tape, etc.) are not subject to Ohio's Public Records Act. An individual who seeks only information is encouraged to direct their inquiry to the university office that maintains that information.
- D. To facilitate a timely response, members of the media seeking public records should submit requests to the Office of Marketing and Communications, University Square South, 2nd Floor, 15 E. 15th Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43201, osumedia@osu.edu. Others should submit public records requests directly to the university office having custody or control of the public records or to the Public Records office at publicrecords@osu.edu, c/o the Office of University Compliance and Integrity, 21 East 11th Street, Columbus, Ohio, 43201-2190.

II. Responding to Public Records Requests

- A. Public records requests submitted directly to a university office are to be referred to that office's designated public records team member for tracking and response. Offices without a designated team member are to immediately contact the Public Records office for assistance with tracking and response.
- B. University offices should make every effort to respond with all deliberate speed to requests for public records that are clearly public and easily accessible. If the designated public records team member for a university office receives a public records request that is other than routine (e.g., the request involves legal issues, appears to be ambiguous or overly broad and may need denied, or is worded in manner such that the office cannot identify the public records being requested), the designated team member must acknowledge receipt of the request by indicating that a response will be made available within a reasonable period of time. Once acknowledgment of the request is complete, the designated public records team member for a university office must then immediately contact the Public Records office for guidance.
- C. All public records requests from members of the media that are received by a university office must be sent to the Public Records office and the Office of Marketing and Communications at osumedia@osu.edu to facilitate a timely response.
- D. If a requester makes an ambiguous or overly broad request, or if the university cannot reasonably identify the public records being requested based on the information provided by the requester, the university may deny the request, but must provide the requester an opportunity to revise the request by informing the requester of the manner in which public records are ordinarily kept and accessed. To facilitate crafting and revising public records requests, the university must make available a copy of its [records retention schedules](#) upon request.
- E. The university may decline to create a **record** that contains requested information if a public record does not already exist and may decline to seek out and retrieve records that contain specific information that may be of interest to the requester if that information has not already been compiled in an existing public record.
- F. Except as provided in section II.G. below, the university may not limit the number of public records that it will make available to a single person nor limit the number of public records that will be made available during a fixed period of time. The university may not set a fixed period of time before it will respond to a public records request.
- G. The university may limit the number of records delivered to a requester to 10 per month, unless the requester certifies to the university in writing that the requester does not intend to use or forward the requested records, or the information contained within them, for commercial purposes. If a requester does not provide such certification, the university is only required to provide a maximum of 10 records per month to that requester.
- H. When a public records request is made to examine the personnel file of a current employee, the university office will, to the extent practicable, endeavor to notify the employee of the request. Efforts to notify the employee may not delay timely processing of or responding to the request.



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III. Making Public Records Available and Payment for Public Records

- A. Following receipt of a request, public records are to be made available for inspection promptly and free of charge during regular business hours, with the exception of published holidays. Alternatively, the university may provide copies of public records within a reasonable period of time. The prompt/reasonable period of time within which public records must be made available to a requester will depend upon a number of factors, including the volume of the public records requested, the ease of retrieval, the medium on which the public records are stored, the need for any legal review, and any need for **redaction**.
- B. A requester may choose to receive copies of public records on paper, in the same medium as the university keeps them, or on any medium upon which the university determines that the public record can reasonably be duplicated in the normal course of operations. The requester may also choose the means by which copies will be delivered or transmitted. A university office may charge a requester the **actual cost** of producing copies and may require advance payment of that actual cost. The university may also charge the requester the costs associated with delivery or transmission. A university office may not charge a requester for intermediate copies made for purposes of redaction.

IV. Denial of Records or Information Contained in a Record

- A. If a public records request is denied, in whole or in part, the university will provide the requester with an explanation, including legal authority stating why the record was not provided. If the initial request was made in writing, the response must also be provided in writing.
- B. A university office must contact the Public Records office before denying any request in whole or in part.
- C. When making a public record available for public inspection or copying, the university will notify the requester of any redaction or make the redaction plainly visible. A redaction is considered a denial of a request unless it is authorized or required by law. For example, Social Security numbers are to be removed from a record before it is released to protect constitutional privacy rights.

V. Contacting the Public Records Office

- A. A requester should contact the Public Records office at 614-292-6459 or via email at publicrecords@osu.edu if an acknowledgement of the public records request is not received from the university after 10 days of submitting the request to verify that it has been received.

Responsibilities

Position or Office	Responsibilities
Public Records office	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assist offices with public records requests as set forth in the policy. 2. Process public records requests as set forth in the policy.
University offices with a designated public records team member	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Respond with all deliberate speed to requests that are clearly public and easily accessible as set forth in the policy. 2. For non-routine requests, acknowledge receipt of the request as set forth in the policy and then immediately contact the Public Records office for guidance. 3. Send public records requests from members of the media to Public Records office and Office of Marketing and Communications. 4. Contact Public Records office before denying any request in whole or in part.
University offices without a designated public records team member	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Immediately contact the Public Records office for assistance with tracking and responding to all public records requests. 2. Send public records requests from members of the media to Public Records office and Office of Marketing and Communications. 3. Contact Public Records office before denying any request in whole or in part.



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Resources

Ohio Attorney General: Sunshine Laws Manual, ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Sunshine

Ohio Public Records Act, codes.ohio.gov/orc/149.43

Office of Marketing and Communications, omc.osu.edu

Public Records training, buckeyelearn.osu.edu

University General Records Retention Schedule, go.osu.edu/retention-schedules

Contacts

Subject	Office	Telephone	E-mail/URL
Public Records Request guidance/assistance	Public Records office, Office of University Compliance and Integrity	614-292-6459	publicrecords@osu.edu compliance.osu.edu
Public Records Request guidance/assistance (media)	Media Relations, Office of Marketing and Communications	614-292-9681	osumedia@osu.edu omc.osu.edu

History

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