

VLE Retention Policy

POLICY COVERSHEET

# Key Details

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| **POLICY TITLE** | Student Learning Environment Content Retention Policy |
| **DATE APPROVED** | November 2024 |
| **APPROVING BODY** | Academic Board |
| **VERSION** | 1.0 |
| **PREVIOUS REVIEW DATES** | n/a |
| **NEXT REVIEW DATE** | November 2025 |
| **OUTCOME OF EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT** | *No major change* |
| **RELATED POLICIES / PROCEDURES / GUIDANCE** |  |
| **IMPLEMENTATION DATE** | December 2024 |
| **POLICY OWNER (JOB TITLE)** | James Brown (Digital Learning Lead) |
| **UNIT / SERVICE** | Quality Enhancement Directorate |
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# Version Control

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **VERSION** | **DATE** | **REASON FOR CHANGE** |
| 1.0 | November 2024 | First version |

# Policy Hub

## For further information on policies:

1. You can go to the Secretariat pages on InSite at [https://outlookuwicac.sharepoint.com/sites/Secretariat](https://outlookuwicac.sharepoint.com/sites/Secretariat/);
2. You can go to the Policy Hub at [cardiffmet.ac.uk/about/policyhub](https://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/about/policyhub); or
3. Contact policies@cardiffmet.ac.uk.

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# Context of Policy

## Strategic Purpose

### A central component of Strategy 2030 is for the University to pursue sustainability goals and achieve net carbon zero. Legacy content and its storage comes at a financial and environmental cost, and a process is needed to mitigate the cost of retention while considering authentic teaching and learning needs. As part of this, the University intends that students can revisit and review learning environment content over the typical lifetime of their course of study, after which point it will be deleted from storage.

### Because of the environmental and financial costs, content retention policies are the norm across the sector, and this policy aims to bring us in line with best practice. Aligned to our ongoing ambitions for sustainability, this policy aims to be sector-leading in terms of mitigating the environmental cost of content retention.

## Policy Aim and Scope

### This policy aims to provide clarity and guidance regarding the length of time that material on student learning environments is retained~~.~~ This typically refers to content in the virtual learning environment – Moodle – but also relates to materials developed for the purposes of student learning, such as those hosted on MS Teams, Mahara, Turnitin, and MetConnect. It does not cover individually created “sandbox” courses, which staff may use as a testing area, whose retention guidance is directed by data protection guidance, as outlined below.

### Through this provision of clarity, this policy therefore intends to ensure that guidance for academic staff and students regarding the availability of legacy content can be shared in a meaningful way.

### The policy relating to the retention of courses complements the guidance regarding retention of personal records as directed by University data compliance procedures.[[1]](#footnote-1) This policy focusses on the retention of student learning environment content, and is separate to but aligned with the compliance procedures relating to the retention of personal data.

### Timelines referred to in this policy relate to the time from the creation of module-related learning environment.

# Defining users and user owned data

## User accounts

### User accounts are created when a user joins the university. For student users, they remain for the period of their programme plus an additional 120 days, with the exception of “cross academic year” programmes, where they remain for an additional 150 days.  Upon graduation, former students are added to an Alumni group for 1 year.

### Students who transfer from one programme to another within the University will be treated as having left the previous programme, and therefore shall not have normal access to that programme materials beyond the timelines highlighted in this policy.

### Students who suspend or withdraw from their studies shall not have access to materials beyond the normal timeline of study.

# Content Retention Timelines

## Content Retention on the virtual learning environment, Moodle

Module related materials on Moodle courses created via the integration with the Student Record System (SRS) will be retained and available to students for five years, so that students can access all prior materials over the course of their degree of study. From the beginning of the academic year that is four years after module creation, Schools will receive notification in January and June regarding the content scheduled for deletion. Following the June notification, content deletion will be scheduled. To exemplify this process, a timeline is shown below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Timeline** | **Event** |
| **Academic Year (e.g. 2025-26)** September 2025 | Module created with student enrolment |
| **Academic Year + 3 (e.g. 2027-28)**June 2028 | 3-year degree programmes complete |
| **Academic Year + 4 (e.g. 2028-29)**June 2029 | 4-year degree programmes complete |
| **Academic Year + 5 (e.g. 2029-30)**October 2029January 2030June 2030Summer 2030 | 1st notification of deletion2nd notification of deletion3rd notification of deletionContent created for Sept 2025 deleted |

## Content Retention of lecture recordings

This retention policy is in line with the Universities Lecture Capture Policy its outlined timelines for retention of stored recordings. Large capacity materials such as video should not be stored directly in Moodle.

## Content Retention of student assignments

Student assessment materials are hosted on Turnitin and as such stored separately from the storage of materials on Moodle. The University will request that records associated with Student Learning Environment areas that are due to be deleted are also destroyed by Turnitin.

# Retention of materials beyond the retention period

## As the current policy is to roll over existing module content to the subsequent year, copies of all files in any year instance should be available in more recent iterations. In situations where it is desired that any module materials are required beyond the retention timeline, specific files can be downloaded and stored locally. Advice is available regarding exporting of VLE-specific content such as quizzes to incorporate into a more recently created module, where needed; and notifications shared in the final year of retention will advise staff on their options. With sustainability and storage considerations in mind, users should attempt to minimise their overall storage requirements and only transfer older legacy content that is not available stored in newer iterations of the module instance.

## Retention of student assessments beyond the timeline of the retention should be managed locally by downloading any materials for storage. Retention beyond the students’ duration of study at the university should be mindful of data protection requirements, in that no materials should be kept unnecessarily.

# Retention of manually created and non-system courses

For courses that are manually created, and other user-associated courses, retention is indefinite, and these materials will only be deleted once the user has left the university (i.e. the user no longer exists in the system). Upon notification of deletion should schools wish to retain the module, a new ‘owner’ should be identified.

# Review and Approval

## The policy will be reviewed as part of an annual VLE review conducted by QED in conjunction with Moodle User Group. The findings of this review will be presented to Academic Board for consideration.

1. <https://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/about/structureandgovernance/Pages/Data-Protection.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)