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NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
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**AN ASSESSMENT OF ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY'S RECORD KEEPING
SYSTEM IN LINE WITH BEST PRACTICE**

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ABSTRACT

Record keeping problems were becoming more pronounced at the Zimbabwe Open University over the years as accurate, reliable and trustworthy records for evidential purposes were being created but not properly managed. Its record keeping system was characterised by unethical behaviour by data capture clerks who altered examination marks, records with wrong information, missing records and unqualified records staff members. The stance by ZOU to align its activities with the ISO 9001 standard through the quality Policy Manual and the declaration to set up 2017 as the year to be ISO certified probed the researcher to assess the university's record keeping system in line with the International Standard Association (ISO 15489:2016) to establish whether the record keeping system is coping with set standard. Informed by the interpretivist paradigm, the study adopted the case study approach to check the state of records at ZOU using the ISO 15489 standard as the benchmark or yardstick. The population consisted of records and data capture clerks and regional administrators responsible for the management of students records. Interviews were used to collect data and purposive sampling was used in this study. Since the study is qualitative in nature, data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis drawn from the research questions derive from the standard. Results confirmed the existence of records management processes such as registration, classification, tracking and appraisal though these processes were not systematic and effective. In addition, the study established that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the registry staff did not possess records management qualification and the allocation of responsibilities in regional centres lied to Regional administrators most of which did not have records management qualification. More so, despite having a records management policy that is aligned to best practices, the records management policies and procedures needed enforcement and revision to cater for electronic records. On disaster management strategies, only fire extinguishers were available and the registry staff were not trained on conduct in case disaster strikes. The study also established that records audits were conducted quarterly every year but there was little that was done to rectify grey areas identified. Recommendations made included the implementation of records management policy and fully supporting the registry department to ensure that the documentary evidence is preserved.