# RECORDS MANAGEMENT

## *STANDARDS*

## Documentation of Records Work

**Standards for the management of
Government records**

**RMS 2.2**

## Preface

1       This standard has been prepared by the Public Record Office (PRO) and is one of a series of Records Management Standards for use by all organisations creating or holding public records.

2       The documentation of the appraisal of records has always been a particularly important aspect of records management. It has promoted consistency in the retention of records and in their selection for permanent preservation. In addition, in recent years the documentation of record keeping in general has become a vital component of records management systems. The move towards greater openness in government and the introduction of freedom of information legislation have given the documentation of records work an extra significance.

3       This standard should be read in conjunction with the PRO Acquisition Policy and Disposition Policy (2000) and with any departmental operational selection policy that may be in force.

# List of Contents

# 1    Scope

1.1    This standard is a best practice benchmark for all organisations creating or holding public records.

1.2    It provides advice and guidance relating to the documentation of work on records in all formats except electronic. Detailed guidance on the management of electronic records can be found in the PRO booklets *Management, Appraisal and Preservation of Electronic Records* (1999).

# 2    Definitions

2.1    **Access**.    The availability of, or permission to consult, records.

2.2    **Accountability**.    The principle that organisations and individuals are required to account to others for their actions.  Government departments and agencies must be able to account for their actions to the appropriate regulatory authority.

2.3    **Appraisal**.    The process of evaluating an organisation's activities to determine which records should be kept, and for how long, to meet the needs of the organisation, the requirements of Government accountability and the expectations of researchers and other users of the records.

2.4    **Archives**.    Those records that are appraised as having permanent value

2.5    **Client Manager**.    An officer of the Public Record Office responsible for giving advice and guidance to a group of government departments and agencies, to provide for the timely and effective appraisal, documentation and accessioning of departmental records.

2.6    **Departmental Record Officer**.    The person appointed by a government department or agency as being responsible for the management of the records of that organisation.

2.7 **Disposal**. The implementation of appraisal and review decisions. These comprise the destruction of records and the transfer of custody of records (including the transfer of selected records to an archive institution). They may also include the movement of records from one system to another (for example, paper to electronic).

2.8 **Docket Book**. A folder containing forms which record the reference, title and location of a record.

2.9 **Documentation**. The provision of written evidence, support or proof of an action or undertaking.

2.10 **Electronic records**. Records where the information is recorded in a form that is suitable for retrieval, processing and communication by a digital computer.

2.11 **Microform**. Records in the form of microfilm or microfiche, including aperture cards.

2.12 **Operational Selection Policy**. Detailed statement of selection criteria as they apply to certain departments or to categories of records found in more than one department.

2.13 **Paper records**. Records in the form of files, volumes, folders, bundles, maps, plans, charts, etc.

2.14 **Place of Deposit**. A record office which has been approved for the deposit of public records in accordance with Section 4(1) of the Public Records Act 1958.

2.15 **Public records**. Records of, or held in, any department of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom or records of any office, commission or other body or establishment whatsoever under Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, as defined in paragraph 2 of the First Schedule to the Public Records Act 1958. Also records of organisations subsequently included in the table in the above schedule or of those whose records have since been determined as public records by the Public Record Office.

2.16 **Public Records Act 1958**. Legislation 6 & 7 Eliz 2, Ch 51.

2.17 **Record series**. A collection of records having a common subject or theme usually identified by a specific lettercode or number

2.18 **Retention**.   The continued storage and maintenance of records for as long as they are required by the creating or holding organisation until their disposal, according to their administrative, legal, financial and historical evaluation.

2.19 **Review**.   The examination of records to determine whether they should be destroyed, retained for a further period, transferred to an archival establishment, or presented to a third party.

2.20 **Scheduling**.   The production of a schedule, or list of public records, for which pre-determined periods of retention have been agreed between the operational manager and Departmental Record Officer of the government organisation concerned, and the Public Record Office.

# 3    Responsibilities

3.1 Departmental Record Officers are responsible for ensuring the effective and efficient operation of record keeping procedures, including the safe-keeping and retention of records for as long as required, the transfer of those records selected for permanent preservation, and the timely destruction of records no longer required.

3.2 PRO Client Managers are responsible for giving advice and guidance to government departments and agencies on the management of their records, including the documentation of record series and of appraisal decisions.

3.3 Open Government Officers in government departments are responsible for the operation of the Open Government Initiative (OGI) in their organisations, including following the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information (2nd edn, 1997).

3.4 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 will mean that certain staff will be responsible for implementing the provisions of the Act in their departments. These responsibilities will include development of records management compliant with the Lord Chancellor's *Code of Practice on the Management of Records under Freedom of Information (FOI)*. The Code covers the documentation of appraisal and the provision of adequate record keeping systems.

3.5 Registry/Records Supervisors in government departments are responsible for ensuring that the records management systems meet the needs of interested parties. This includes the adequate documentation of record series.

3.6     Data Protection Officers are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Data Protection Act 1998 in their organisations, including provisions relating to data storage, processing and transfer, all of which require effective documentation of record keeping systems.

3.7     The *Modernising Government* agenda sets specific targets relating to the management of electronic records. Particular members of staff of government departments and agencies may be deputed to ensure that the required products are delivered and that the agenda's milestones are reached. Electronic records management systems will in future provide the means for documenting records work.

# 4      Documentation

## 4.1    Organisational Mapping

4.1.1   Enquiries to government departments and agencies from the media, business, parliament and the public are increasing as government policies on openness and freedom of information legislation are being implemented. Access to the correct sources is made much easier if the organisation outlines its structure, objectives, functions and services in a compact document or manual. This should include descriptions of the record series in which the organisation's documents are arranged.

## 4.2    Operational Selection Policies

4.2.1   Operational Selection Policies (OSP) apply the selection criteria set out in the PRO's acquisition and disposition policies to the records of particular government departments or to cross-departmental themes. They are developed in partnership between the PRO and the relevant government departments and give more detailed guidance on which records should be selected for permanent preservation. Where an OSP exists it should form the basis of the selection criteria applied to particular records series. An OSP brings together and records the subject knowledge built up by PRO and departmental staff, and ensures that knowledge is not lost when key staff leave. Moreover OSPs are available to the public and so make the selection process more accountable. They can be used to answer enquiries about selection decisions.

## 4.3    Documenting Record Series

4.3.1 To promote consistency in appraisal and to meet the demands of freedom of information, information about records is required, including the contents of files/folders, how they are organised, and who created and used them. This information (also known as metadata) is available at the time the records are created and it should be recorded for use at future stages in the records life-cycle.

4.3.2 The items of information in the following table should be recorded. This includes reference to the cross-government metadata standard and to the PRO toolkit *Developing an inventory of electronic record collections* (2000):

| Item | Description | Cross govt | Inventory |
|---|---|---|---|
| Series identifier | This will usually consist of a title, and an alphabetical or alpha-numeric prefix (eg Financial Policy series, 2/FIN) | Aggregation level | |
| Format and structure | This should include the physical nature of the series or collection (eg computer files, registered paper files, microfiche) and a description of the filing system (hierarchical, coordinated theme, numerical, etc) | Format (ie physical format) | |
| Index/finding aid | The method by which access to the series or collection is given should be recorded. This might be a computer database or a simple card index. | Location | |

| Time span | The start and end dates of the series, and of individual records, should be recorded (the time span of series might be different from that of individual records) | Date: open date; close date | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Subject matter | This should include the purpose for which the records were collected or created, such as reference to any relevant legislation | Subject keywords | |
| Creators | The department, division or unit which created the records | Creator | Originator |
| Users | The departments, divisions or units which had access to the records and used them in the course of their work | | Business function |
| Related records | This should include earlier and later series of records | Relation | |
| Disposal | A record of the appraisal criteria applied, including references to the relevant acquisition policy and OSP criteria, and any correspondence between the Departmental Record Officer and the Public Record Office should be kept. This should also include any disposal schedule for the series or collection | Disposal | |
| Access | Any restrictions on the information contained in the series, either under legislative provisions or sensitivity criteria, should be recorded (protective marking) | Rights | Access rights; Protective marking |

| Transferred records | Information about records transferred, migrated or separated from the series (for example, as a result of a change in functions) and about any records which have been re-registered in the series should also be recorded. | | |
|---|---|---|---|

4.3.3 One file or folder in each series should be specifically assigned to contain the information required. This is commonly called the "**zero file**", because it is usually assigned the figure zero in the referencing system (eg 2/FIN/0). Where records in the series have been selected for permanent preservation, the zero file will also be selected for permanent preservation when the series is closed.

4.3.4 The location of records, when they are not in their usual storage area (registry or records management unit), should also be documented. For further guidance on this see the Records Management Standard RMS 2.1, *Tracking Records* (1998).

## 4.4 Documenting Records Appraisal

4.4.1 In the case of hybrid (paper and electronic) collections of records, these should be appraised as a whole. See *Management, Appraisal and Preservation of Electronic Records* (PRO, 1999).

4.4.2 In the case of file by file review, action record sheets should be used at each review stage. They should record:

- file reference
- file title/description
- date range
- summary of contents
- assessment of value
- recommendation on disposal
- relevant OSP or acquisition policy criteria, if not already cited at series level

The need to document disposal becomes more important with the introduction of freedom of information (FOI) legislation. Explanations of when and why particular documents have been destroyed may have to be given in response to FOI enquiries. Examples of review action sheets are at Appendix 1.

4.4.3   Reviewers may also find it useful to annotate individual indexing and tracking sheets in docket books when a file is destroyed or selected for permanent preservation. The docket books themselves should be kept for at least as long as the file series is open and destroyed when all files in the series have been destroyed or, if considered of longer term value, transferred for permanent preservation.

4.4.4   As the creation and use of electronic records become more widespread, the appraisal of records by series becomes more common. Whenever record keeping systems permit it is preferable to document the appraisal by using a series form.  See examples at Appendix 2.

4.4.5   Electronic records management systems and computer programs designed to support review and to catalogue records (such as DRUID - the Departmental Record User Information Database) can produce reports that will provide the necessary information to document appraisal. See Appendix 3 for an example of such a report.

4.4.6   Manual review sheets and computer reports on appraisal will not be selected for permanent preservation. However, departments may find it useful to keep them for at least as long as the record series to which they relate is open and destroyed when all records in the series have been destroyed or transferred for permanent preservation.

# 5   Disposal Schedules

5.1   A disposal schedule is a list of the record series or collections of an organisation for which common retention periods have been agreed between the Departmental Record Officer and the operational unit of the department which created or received the records for the conduct of their business. It will also include those records which are to be selected for permanent preservation and may also include instructions on when records are to be transferred to secondary or intermediate storage.

5.2   A disposal schedule is the basis of an organisation's records disposal programme and, as such, is a vital record in the documentation of record series and appraisal. Where an electronic records management system is used, it will store and support the operation of disposal schedules. For further guidance see the Records Management Standard RMS 5.1, *Disposal Scheduling* (1998).

# 6 Transfer of Records

6.1     Manual documentation of the transfer of records for permanent preservation is a normal by-product of the procedure itself and electronic records management systems will produce similar reports. Departments may wish to retain such reports and papers to answer enquiries but the accessioning procedures at the Public Record Office and in places of deposit will provide adequate documentation of this process.

6.2     When transferring electronic records for permanent preservation, it is important that the steps taken (file structure transfer, conversion to transfer format, physical transfer, and compilation of finding aids) are logged and documented to ensure compliance with *A Code of Practice for Legal Admissibility and Evidential Weight of Information Stored Electronically* (BSI/PD0008, March 1999). Further details on the transfer of electronic records can be found in volume 2, section 6, of *Management, Appraisal and Preservation of Electronic Records* (PRO, 1999).

6.3     For guidance on the handling of records of transferred functions see the Records Management Standard RMS 4.1, *Discontinued and Transferred Functions* (2001).

# APPENDIX 1

### *REVIEW ACTION RECORD SHEET*

File-by-file review documentation should comprise a summary form and a file form, as follows:

## (1) Summary Form

| Series Title | |
| --- | --- |
| **Series Reference** | **Date Range** |
| **Summary of Contents** | |
| **OSP or Acquisition Policy criteria applying** | |
| **Completed By** | **Date** |

(2) File Form

| File Reference | File Title | Date Range | OSP/Acquisition Policy Criteria | Recommendation | Date | PRO CM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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# Review Action Record Sheet - description of terms

## (1) Summary Form

| Series title | The title of the series in common use |
|---|---|
| Series Reference | The identifier (if any) given to the series (eg FIN, GEN). Where only numbers are used put 'numeric' |
| Date range | The earliest and latest dates of the series |
| Summary of Contents | A description of the subject matter covered by the series, including any legislative background |
| OSP or acquisition policy criteria applying | The Operational Selection Policy (OSP) applying to the appraisal of the series or, if no OSP, the criteria from the PRO Acquisition Policy which apply. |
| Completed | Name of person completing the form |
| Date | Date form completed |

## (2) File Form

| File Reference | The reference (if any) given to the file/document |
|---|---|
| File Title | The title of the file/folder/record as it appears on the document itself |
| Date Range | The earliest and latest dates of the contents of the document |
| OSP/acquisition policy criteria | The Operational Selection Policy (OSP) or PRO Acquisition Policy criteria that applies to the appraisal of the file |
| Recommendation | Decision on the disposal of the record (usually *keep* or *destroy*) |
| Date | Date review of the file undertaken |
| PRO CM | Signature/initials of the Public Record Office Client Manager |

# APPENDIX 2

## RECORDS SERIES APPRAISAL

| Series Title | Series Code |
|---|---|
| | |

| Creators/Users |
|---|
| |

| Administrative Background |
|---|
| |

| Legal Status | Language |
|---|---|
| | |

| Acquisition Policy Theme/OSP Criteria |
|---|
| |

| Date Range |
|---|
| |

| Quantity/Accrual rate |
| --- |
| |

| Finding Aids |
| --- |
| |

| Scope and Content |
| --- |
| |

| Related Material | Separated Material |
| --- | --- |
| | |

| Completed By: |
| --- |
| |

| Date: |
| --- |
| |

| PRO Client Manager: |
| --- |
| |

# Record Series Appraisal form  description of terms

| Series title | Descriptive title of the file series in common use |
|---|---|
| Series code | The identifier given to the series eg FIN, GEN. Where only numbers are used put 'numeric' |
| Creators/Users | Operational unit/division creating the record and users (if different) |
| Administrative Background | Reasons behind the creation of the series (eg new function, legislation, transfer of functions) |
| Legal Status | Any Act of Parliament affecting appraisal of the series |
| Language | Note if any documents are in a language other than English |
| Acquisition Policy theme/OSP criteria | The PRO Acquisition Policy theme or Operational Selection Policy (OSP) used in appraising the series |
| Date Range | The earliest and latest dates of the series |
| Quantity/Accrual | Amount of records in the series, or annual accrual (if whole series is not being appraised) |
| Finding Aids | The type of index or other finding aid available to search for individual records in the series |
| Scope and Content | A description of the subject matter covered by the series |
| Related Material | Any other series or collection of records related to this series, including electronic records |
| Separated Material | Any records in the series which have been separated from the main run and their location |
| Completed By | Name of person completing the form |
| Date | Date form completed |
| PRO Client Manager | Signature of the Public Record Office Client Manager |

# APPENDIX 3

# Example of DRUID Report

**Series :** Ministry of Health and Social Security     **Criteria: Lettercode :** MH     **Class:** 148

| File Ref<br>*From Date*    *To Date* | Part | Status | Description | Review Comments | IO Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A/B056/0001/VD<br>*Undated*    *Undated* | | Keep | STATS OF REGISTERED PARTIALLY SIGHTED AND BLIND PERSONS. | Automatic load 30/11/99<br>Statistics but worth keeping | |
| A/C101/0044/VF<br>*Undated*    *Undated* | | Keep | CHEMISTS PAYMENTS ARRANGEMENTS:STATS ASPECTS OF ADJUSTMENT-FACTOR ENQUIRY. | Automatic load 30/11/99<br>lots of correspondence relating to the DHSS | |
| A/C101/0044/VG<br>*Undated*    *Undated* | | Keep | CHEMISTS PAYMENTS ARRANGEMENTS : STATISTICAL ASPECTS OF ADJUSTMENT - FACTOR ENQUIRY | Automatic load 30/11/99 | |
| A/C101/0044/VH<br>*Undated*    *Undated* | | Keep | CHEMISTS PAYMENTS ARRANGEMENTS-STATISTICAL ASPECTS OF ADJUSTMENT FACTOR ENQUIRY | Automatic load 30/11/99 | |
| A/C101/0062/VL<br>*Undated*    *Undated* | | Keep | CHEMISTS PAYMENTS ARRANGEMENTS CHEMISTS REMUNERATION ENQUIRY 1969.NEGOTIATIONS WITH CHEMISTS. | Automatic load 30/11/99<br>Similar to previous k's | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| A/C101/0062/VM<br>*Undated*　　*Undated* | Keep | CHEMISTS PAYMENTS ARRANGEMENTS<br>CHEMISTS REMUNERATION ENQUIRY<br>1969.NEGOTIATIONS WITH CHEMISTS. | Automatic load 30/11/99 |
| A/C101/0062/VN<br>*Undated*　　*Undated* | Keep | CHEMISTS PAYMENTS ARRANGEMENTS<br>CHEMISTS REMUNERATION ENQUIRY<br>1969.NEGOTIATIONS WITH CHEMISTS. | Automatic load 30/11/99 |
| A/C101/0062/VO<br>*Undated*　　*Undated* | Keep | CHEMISTS PAYMENTS ARRANGEMENTS<br>CHEMISTS REMUNERATION ENQUIRY<br>1969.NEGOTIATIONS WITH CHEMISTS. | Automatic load 30/11/99 |
| A/C101/0078/VB<br>*Undated*　　*Undated* | Keep | CHEMISTS PAYMENTS ARRANGEMENTS STATS<br>ASPECTS OF THE PHAMACEUTICAL SOCIETY'S<br>PROPOSALS FOR A PLANNED PHARMACY<br>SERVICE AND ITS ASPECT ON PAYMENTS. | Automatic load 30/11/99 |
| A/C101/0109/VA<br>*Undated*　　*Undated* | Keep | CHEMISTS PAYMENTS ARRANGEMENTS<br>CHEMISTS TECHNICAL SUB-COMMITTEE | Automatic load 30/11/99 |
| A/C101/0115/VB<br>*Undated*　　*Undated* | Keep | CHEMISTS PAYMENTS ARRANGEMENTS SMALL<br>PHARMACIES SCHEME. | Automatic load 30/11/99 |
| A/C101/0124/VA<br>*Undated*　　*Undated* | Keep | CHEMISTS PAYMENTS<br>ARRANGEMENTS.INFORMATION ON THE<br>EFFECTS OF PHARMACY CLOSURES. | Automatic load 30/11/99 |