

Creation 3

RECORDS MANAGEMENT STANDARD

RMS 1.1

File Creation

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 Records creation results directly from the transaction of business. In most cases the way in which people and organisations do business results naturally in the creation of records; in other cases a record must be deliberately created because conducting the transaction, by itself, does not generate the record.

- 3 Records that will meet accountability requirements and other needs of an organisation cannot be created or managed without an adequate record keeping system. Records management practices, and in particular records creation, must be systematised through policies, procedures and the application of best practice.

- 4 Appropriate controls should be built into filing systems to capture and identify accurately information required by an organisation. Filing systems are at the heart of information storage and retrieval activities.

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1 **Scope**

- 1.1 This standard is a best practice benchmark for all organisations creating or holding public records. It provides advice and guidance on the creation of paper-based files. It does not cover the creation of electronic files.
- 1.2 It deals with the creation of registered files including policy, administrative and case files but not staff personal files. The creation of unregistered records and staff personal files are to be the subject of separate standards.
- 1.3 Similarly, the process of conversion from one record keeping system to another is to be covered by a separate standard.

2 **Definitions**

For the purposes of this standard the following definitions apply:

- 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 **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.
- 2.4 **Computer database.** A structured collection of data, which may be manipulated by digital computer to select and sort desired items of information.
- 2.5 **Departmental Record Officer (DRO).** The person appointed by a government department or agency as being responsible for the management of the records of that organisation.
- 2.6 **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).

- 2.7 **Docket books.** A series of folders containing forms which record the reference, title and location of a record.
- 2.8 **Documentation.** Written facts about a record keeping system, including its component parts and a manual of instruction detailing rules for use and maintenance of the system.
- 2.9 **Electronic records.** Records where the information is recorded in a form that is suitable for retrieval, processing and communication by a digital computer.
- 2.10 **File.** An accumulation of paper records maintained in a predetermined physical arrangement. Used primarily in reference to current records.
- 2.11 **Filing systems.** A plan for organising records so that they can be found when needed.
- 2.12 **Hierarchical.** Arrangement by a graded system of organisation.
- 2.13 **Index cards.** A series of cards that may be arranged alphabetically for the purpose of facilitating references to names, file titles, etc or numerically for file references.
- 2.14 **Keyword.** A word in a file title which pin-points the subject matter of the file.
- 2.15 **Operational area.** A unit, division or department within a government department or agency with responsibility for a particular function.
- 2.16 **Paper records.** Records in the form of files, volumes, folders, bundles, maps, plans, charts, etc.
- 2.17 **Protective marking.** The process of determining security restrictions on records. Previously called 'classification'.
- 2.18 **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.
- 2.19 **Public Records Act 1958.** Legislation 6 & 7 Eliz. 2, Ch 51.
- 2.20 **Record series.** A collection of records having a common subject or theme usually identified by a specific lettercode or number

- 2.21 **Register.** A list of records, usually in simple sequence such as date and reference number, serving as a finding aid to the records.
- 2.22 **Registration.** The process of records creation and its recording in an appropriate finding aid, such as a register, index, computer database, etc.
- 2.23 **Registered file.** A file that is part of a registration system.

3 **Responsibilities**

- 3.1 Departmental Record Officers and Chief Registrars are responsible for ensuring the operation of an effective and efficient registered file system, for ensuring that it is used by all operational areas of their organisation, and that all relevant documentation is accurate and available to staff of the organisation when 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 creation of registered files.

4 **Purpose**

- 4.1 Files are created and included in a registered file system to provide formal evidence of the business transactions of an organisation. Their purpose is to capture, maintain and provide access to evidence of transactions over time in accordance with accountability and business practices. The establishment of a coherent filing system provides for faster and systematic filing, faster retrieval of information, greater protection of information, and increased administrative stability, continuity and efficiency.
- 4.2 Determining which records require registration is a decision which needs to be based upon an analysis of the organisation's requirements to maintain accountable records of particular activities and its information needs. The kinds of records which are most likely to be placed on registered files include:
- policy papers (reports, correspondence, etc)
 - minutes, circulated papers etc of meetings
 - papers relating to the preparation of legislation
 - research and development papers
 - casework

5 Designing Systems

5.1 Registered files should contain information which is linked to the activities and functions which they document.

5.2 The methodology for creating registered file systems should comprise the following features:

5.2.1 Preliminary investigation

- collection of information from documentary sources and from interviewing the organisation's staff and others
- identification and documentation of the role and purpose of the organisation, its structure, its legal basis, and its business and political environment
- other factors which may affect the management of records (for example, space and equipment)

5.2.2 Analysis of business activity

- collection of information from documentary sources and from interviewing the organisation's staff and others
- identification and documentation of each business function and activity
- establishment of a business designation scheme (a hierarchy of functions and activities)
- identification and documentation of the flow of business processes

5.2.3 Identification of record keeping requirements

- collection of information from documentary sources and from interviewing the organisation's staff and others
- identification of the requirements for evidence of each business function and activity. These requirements for evidence can be established from an analysis of the organisation's regulatory environment and from a risk assessment of failure
- determination of how each requirement for evidence may be satisfied by formal recording

5.2.4 Assessment of existing systems

- measure the performance of existing filing systems against record keeping requirements

5.2.5 Identification of record keeping strategies

- identify strategies which satisfy record keeping requirements. Strategies should be adopted on the basis of the degree of risk involved in failure to satisfy a requirement or objective which is within the organisation's overall corporate strategy and which the record keeping system is intended to support

5.2.6 Design of a system

- design a system which meets corporate strategies and the requirements of public records legislation
- ensure that the system supports business processes
- ensure that the system is easily understood and can be used effectively by its customers

5.2.7 Monitoring performance

- ensure that mechanisms are in place which will enable an effective measurement of the performance of a registered file system
- initiate and monitor corrective action, if necessary

5.3 Types of registered file referencing systems include:

- alphabetical
- numerical
- alpha-numeric (for example, AB 12 / 1)
- keyword

The most common of these systems is the alpha-numeric. An attraction of this is that the letters can indicate the function or business process covered by the files. For example, a series of files created by the Finance Department of an organisation might have a prefix F or FIN; a Personnel Management Department might use P or PM. Whatever combination of letters is used, it must be simple and easily understood by users of the filing system.

Examples of these systems, in the form of file lists, are shown by Figures 1 to 4.

Figure 1 - Example of an alphabetical filing system

FINANCE AND PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT

Accounting

Budgets: 1991

Budgets: 1992

Budgets: 1993

Costing
Costing: Accommodation
Costing: Equipment
Costing: Health and Safety
Expenditure
Income
Reprographic

Estimates

1991/2
1992/3
1993/4

Income Tax

Legislation

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
Employment Protection Act 1978

Pay

Clerical staff
Executive staff
Security staff
Senior management

Staff

Personal files [in alphabetical order of names]

Training

Figure 2A - Example of a numerical filing system (structured)

- 1 Establishment of Commission
 - 1/1 Appointment of Commissioners
 - 1/2 Travel Insurance
 - 1/3 Banking Arrangements
 - 1/4 Appointment of Auditors
 - 1/5 Provision of Funds Scheme
 - 1/6 Information about Commission's Activities
 - 1/7 Arrangement of Meetings and Lunches
 - 1/8/1 Meetings of the Commission: Agenda and Minutes
 - 1/8/2 Meetings of the Commission: Circulated Papers
 - 1/8/3 Meetings of the Commission: Reports
 - 1/9 Meetings and relations with other organisations
 - 1/10 Establishment of Contingency Fund
 - 1/11 Loans from Department of Trade

- 2 Pilotage Districts
 - 2/1 Arundel
 - 2/2 Berwick
 - 2/3 Blyth
 - 2/4 Boston and Spalding
 - 2/5 Bristol
 - 2/6 Gloucester
 - 2/7 Hartlepool
 - 2/8 Humber

- 3 Staff Matters
 - 3/1 Appointment of Chief Executive
 - 3/2 Appointment of Senior Executive
 - 3/3 Appointment of Accountant
 - 3/4 Income Tax
 - 3/4/1 Income Tax: Commissioners' Exemption Forms
 - 3/5 Staff Pensions
 - 3/6 Staff Expenses
 - 3/7 Consultancy Services

Figure 2B - Example of a numerical filing system (random)

Aircraft Operations Division

- 156 Notifiable aircraft accidents
 - 156/1 Notifiable aircraft accidents: policy
 - 156/2 Notifiable aircraft accidents: collection of information
- 157 Supersonic transport aircraft
- 158 Staff training
 - 158/1 Staff training: computer courses
 - 158/2 Staff training: management courses
 - 158/3 Staff training: records appreciation
- 159 Accounts
- 160 Manufacturers operational study group
- 161 Accommodation: Electrical
 - 161/1 Accommodation: Returns
 - 161/2 Accommodation: Lighting
- 162 Fuel contamination
- 163 Helicopter operations
- 164 Operating practices: fuel jettisoning
 - 164/2 Operating practices: visual flying
 - 164/3 Operating practices: instrument flying
- 165 Weather minima
- 166 Flight deck management

Figure 3 - Example of an alpha-numeric filing system

RAS Records Administration Services

- RAS 1 Relations with Departments
- RAS 1/1/1 Relations with Departments: Annual Statistical Return: 1987
- RAS 1/1/2 Relations with Departments: Annual Statistical Return: 1988
- RAS 1/1/3 Relations with Departments: Annual Statistical Return: 1989
- RAS 1/2 Relations with Departments: ADP and Data Protection
- RAS 1/3 Relations with Departments: Exercise of Lord Chancellor's Powers
- RAS 1/4 Relations with Departments: Interpretation of Public Records Acts
- RAS 1/5 Relations with Departments: Implications of Executive Agencies and Relocation Policy
- RAS 1/6 Relations with Departments: Privatisation
- RAS 1/7 Relations with Departments: Paper Conservation Questions

- RAS 2 Records Management
- RAS 2/1 Statistics
Records Management: Working Party on Records Management
- RAS 2/2 Records Management: Training

- RAS 3 Selection and Appraisal of Records
- RAS 3/1 Selection and Appraisal of Records: Particular Instance Papers
- RAS 3/2 Selection and Appraisal of Records: Accounting Records
- RAS 3/3 Selection and Appraisal of Records: Three-Dimensional Models
- RAS 3/4 Selection and Appraisal of Records: Electronic Records
- RAS 3/4/1 Selection and Appraisal of Records: Electronic Records: Datasets
- RAS 3/4/2 Selection and Appraisal of Records: Electronic Records: Office Systems

- RAS 4 Accessions and Processing of Records
- RAS 4/1 Accessions and Processing of Records: Internal Transfers
- RAS 4/2 Accessions and Processing of Records: Abolition of Classes
- RAS 4/3 Accessions and Processing of Records: RIS Feasibility
- RAS 4/3/1 Accessions and Processing of Records: RIS Feasibility: Project Board
- RAS 4/4 Accessions and Processing of Records: Editorial Work

Figure 4 - Example of a keyword filing system

No.	Keyword	See also	Used For
1	Accounts	Financial reports; Vouchers; Audit	
2	Accreditation	Allocations	
3	Advertising	Publicity	
4	Allocations	Accreditation	
5	Appeals		
6	Associations	Teachers' Association	
7	Audit	Financial reports	
8	Biology	Sciences	
9	Budgets	Estimates; Financial reports	
10	Chemistry	Sciences	
11	Circulars	Notices; Instruction	
12	Codes of conduct	Procedures	
13	Committees	Working parties	Records relating to <u>more than one</u> committee
14	Conferences		Any records not relating to a <u>named</u> conference
15	Contracts		
16	Development	Research; Staff training	
17	Enquiries		
18	Estimates	Budgets; Financial reports	
19	Financial planning	Planning	
20	Financial reports	Annual, quarterly or monthly reports; Reports; Budgets; Estimates; Accounts; Audit	
21	Grants	Loans	
22	Institutions	Universities	Any records not relating to a named institution
23	ITT	Teachers	Initial Teacher Training
24	Lectures	Speeches	
25	Loans	Grants	

6 File Notation

6.1 Reference

6.1.1 The reference assigned to a file must provide for its ready identification and retrieval, and it must be unique.

6.1.2 It must be easily understood by users of the registered file system.

6.1.3 It should be restricted to a maximum of four elements. Each of the elements in the reference should equate with a functional level of the file title.

6.2 File title

6.2.1 The file title must accurately reflect the contents of the file. It should be brief, yet sufficiently comprehensive to describe the contents clearly. For example:

- Industrial Relations: Government White Paper 1975: Minutes of meetings with Local Authorities
- Furzebrook Research Station: Scientific Work: notes on Three Year Plan

6.2.2 The title must contain keywords relating to the subject of the papers contained within the file. Keywords should be chosen and structured in such a way as to make searching and retrieval of files an easy and straightforward operation. The use of non-specific or generic terms, such as “general correspondence” or “miscellaneous” should be avoided. Acronyms and abbreviations used in the title must be those in common use within the organisation.

6.2.3 The title should not normally exceed four elements, each relating to functional areas of the organisation or subject matter, and equating with the file reference. For example, the first element might describe the main subject area to which the papers refer or indicate the operational area to which they belong; the second element might identify the particular subject matter; a further element might be added to make the title more precise - as in the examples at 6.2.1 above.

6.3 Dates

The file cover must have space to enter the dates when the file was opened, when it is closed and when it is due for review/destruction.

6.4 Protective marking

There must be sufficient space on the file cover to indicate the protective marking (if any). Protective markings must be consistent with the accepted system used in the organisation.

6.5 File Covers

An example of a file cover, containing these standard items, is shown by Figure 5.

7 **Documentation**

7.1 Documentation describing the registered file system should include and clearly state the authority for the system's functions, such as referencing and indexing, and maintenance of the system.

7.2 The following information should be documented when a file is created:

- file reference
- file title
- protective marking (if any)
- where it can be anticipated, disposal action and date. Where this action cannot be anticipated, mechanisms must be in place to ensure that this action takes place when the file is closed

7.3 There should be a manual of registered file practice which should include instructions and guidance on file creation. Approved file creation practices should be described and the responsibilities of the staff of the organisation explicitly stated. In addition, practices and functions which should be avoided should be stated.

Where practices are to be performed in conjunction with, or are supported by, a computer database, user procedures should be described so as to enable staff of the organisation to perform record keeping functions effectively.

7.4 Documentation systems for file creation include:

- docket books
- index cards
- registers
- computer databases (electronic document management systems)

Examples of a docket book, index card and register are shown by Figures 6 to 8.

Guidance on the application of electronic document management systems is included in another series of booklets, also published by the PRO.

8 Monitoring

File creation systems should be monitored regularly and reviewed at least once every two years to ensure that they continue to operate effectively and efficiently, to meet the needs of users, and to satisfy documentation requirements.

Figure 5 - Example of a file cover

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE				
FILE BEGINS		ENDS		PART
FILE TITLE				FILE NUMBER
				FILE NUMBER
REFER TO	DATE	REFER TO	DATE	COMPUTER No.
				INDEXED UNDER:
				<p>DISPOSAL RECOMMENDATION This section to be completed by the nominated officer for the file series. The Registry Manual and Disposal Schedule must be consulted before marking the boxes below.</p> <p>1. DESTROY NOW <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>2. DESTROY AFTER <input type="checkbox"/> YEARS (give a number in box, not more than 12)</p> <p>3. RETAIN FOR 2nd REVIEW <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>4. RETAIN PERMANENTLY <input type="checkbox"/></p>

Figure 6 - Documentation: example of a docket

NUMERICAL INDEX SHEET M.D.R. 39

FILE PERIOD		PART		FILE NUMBER
FILE TITLE				
INDEX HEADINGS				
SENT TO	DATE	SENT TO	DATE	SECURITY CLASSIFICATION
				PREVIOUS FILE NUMBER
				SUBSEQUENT FILE NUMBER

Figure 7 - Documentation: examples of index cards

DSR 8

INDEX ENTRY
 (For entries referring to individual papers
 folio numbers must be added.)
 PLEASE USE BLOCK LETTERS

YEAR
REGISTRY OFFICER
DATE
HEAD OF REGISTRY

	Designation	File Number	Folio Number
REFERENCE			

DSR 10

NOMINAL INDEX

NAME (BLOCK CAPITALS)

TITLE AND GIVEN NAMES (BLOCK CAPITALS)

SUBJECT (a brief indication of the subject should be included)

FILE REFERENCE	FOLIO NO.	YEAR

