Section 5 – Records Creation and Capture

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Main Things to Remember about Record Creation and Capture

- You should create or capture the records your office needs to document operational and business processes, and for evidentiary, transparency and accountability purposes.
- You should save or file records along with the others that support the same task.
- You should not file duplicates, personal papers, reference material or UN parliamentary documents (ST/SGBs etc.) or publications.
- The mission Information Management Officer should develop rules and procedures so that everyone knows what kind of records need to be created and kept as evidence of that work or to inform it again in the future.

Introduction

The first phase in the life of a record is its creation and capture. When carrying out an action or making a decision it is important to create and capture an accurate record of it. Some records which affect the UN are created by others (e.g. contractors or stakeholders) and must also be captured to provide a complete and reliable picture of the business of the UN. Some things that appear to be records may not need to be captured because they are duplicates (e.g. copies of records created and captured in other parts of the UN and sent to you for information) or because they are not records of a UN activity or decision.

All records, regardless of their format, should be filed or organised so that related ones are linked in some way and can be retrieved when required. This section provides guidance on how to achieve this, including how to name and version control electronic records.

Why Create Records?

All UN staff have a responsibility to create records that document their work in order to:

- Provide member states and citizens with evidence of UN decisions and actions
- Inform colleagues and ourselves of what has been done or decided
- Provide templates or examples of how things have been and should be done
- Keep track of progress in projects and processes

Each UN office, department, mission or unit should have the following recordkeeping provisions in place:

- Written guidance on what records should be created, and the format of the official record
- Guidance and instructions for documenting policies and decisions
- Guidance on working papers, working files and drafts, and their status as records (or otherwise)
- Guidance on creating and using finding aids (e.g. indexes)

These provisions will vary from office to office but this Toolkit gives help and guidance to assist you to meet the ARMS standards.

When to Create and Capture Records

A record must be created when evidence of decisions or actions and transactions is needed. It should be done whilst the action is occurring or decision is being taken, or soon afterwards. Using computer systems may create the record at the same time as carrying out the business activity, but as the UN's official record format is paper it is perfectly acceptable to use a paper based filing system.

Records are required for important substantive <u>and</u> administrative decisions, actions and transactions (substantive records and administrative records).

How to Create and Capture Records

There are different ways records can be created including:

- handwriting notes
- completing forms or templates
- creating and transmitting an email
- creating a memorandum or note for file
- creating word processed documents
- taking photographs (taken either digitally or traditionally)
- making video tapes, DVD and traditional film recordings
- making audio tapes, CD and other audio recordings
- entering data into a database

There are also different ways records can be captured. <u>Capturing</u> records is a responsibility of all UN staff members and includes capturing:

1. paper-based records by physically placing them in a file in the correct part of your office's file classification scheme

2. electronic records by either saving them into files within an ARMS-approved electronic document and records management system (EDRMS).

For convenience, electronic records should be saved into a folder structure on a shared or network drive as part of the creation process, but because the UN's official record format is paper, they must be printed and filed. More guidance is available in the Toolkit section Recordkeeping in the UN.

Important business emails should either be saved like other electronic records (i.e. taking them out of your email system and into an electronic

file within the ECM or an EDRMS) or printed along with any enclosures and placed in a paper file. Take care to ensure any enclosures are also saved and filed with the email record.

Folder and Document Titles

Although the official record will be in paper, it is important to be able to easily retrieve electronic copies from within shared or network drives, or from within the ECM or an EDRMS. Folder and document titles are the principal tools in electronic record retrieval and the same principles should apply to paper records as to electronic records. It is therefore important that you have rules in place for giving meaningful titles to folders and documents. The rules not only ensure swift retrieval of records but also make selecting file titles more consistent and efficient.

Naming Conventions

Your local recordkeeping system should include naming conventions for files and documents as part of the creation process. These rules should include how the various parts of the title are ordered. This will allow you and your colleagues to easily locate and retrieve records either by searching on the name or by browsing files and folders through the 'Windows Explorer' function.

In developing your naming conventions, remember that the document or file names that result must indicate what a record is about and must relate to your mission's approved file classification scheme.

Elements of Document Titles

Document titles can be made up of a number of different elements combined in different ways. This table gives the main ones to consider:

Table: Document Title Elements

Element	Recommendations	Example
Organisational structure	Put in reverse hierarchical order (most general first): < department, office/division, section/unit>	*Emergency Liaison Branch, OCHA*
Date	Always use the format year,	*2005-10-31*

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	month, day so the documents will sort in chronological order: <yyyy-mm-dd>	
Document type	Agree standard terms; make document type the final element in the title	*policy; plan; guideline; letter*
Personal name	Use the order: <lastname_firstname>	*LeRoy_Alain; Ban_Ki-moon*

Information about the version of a document may also be included, but see below for more information on version control.

It is not necessary to include the application used to create or open a document in titles because Microsoft Office software indicates it in the file extension. For example, in a file titled 'General Ledger spreadsheet for 2006-07.xls' the word 'spreadsheet' is unnecessary as this is indicated in the '.xls' file extension.

Having selected which elements you require in your titles, decide on their order to give the most useful information first. This will vary depending on the type of document and how it is most easily searched for. For example:

- for records about electoral capacity building: <topic> <recipient> <document type> may be most appropriate

  training electoral monitors – Smith_John – letter);
- for financial accounting records: <order number> <invoice date> <vendor name>

  00432 - 2006-06-01 – Ballotboxes'R'Us Limited

Length of Titles

Try to keep titles short but meaningful, especially with email records. Remember that Microsoft operating systems will only allow a maximum of 256 characters (including spaces and slashes) in the entire folder path (i.e. from the root to the file extension). File titles (including folder path) longer than this will cause instability in your operating system.

Codes in Document Titles

File classification schemes use codes to identify a folder's functional/activity category (e.g. HRM-01 = Human Resources – Planning, strategy). These codes will become familiar to you and your colleagues and may be used as the first element in folder titles. In document titles it is best to avoid codes (or repeat file codes) and only use words (numbers for dates only).

Slashes, Full Stops and other Characters

Because of the way computer systems work, using symbols (i.e. any characters other than letters and numbers) may cause problems if you try to use them in folder or document titles. Microsoft uses back slashes (\ ) as part of its file path and therefore they can not be used in titles.

Similarly some older versions of Microsoft use full stops (.) solely to separate out the file extension which can make electronic records unreadable. Hyphens (-) or underscores (_) can be used as replacements.

Folder, Document Titles and other Metadata

A title is one type of metadata (see ARMS' Standard on Recordkeeping Metadata) and may include information captured in other metadata fields (e.g. <date>). Information in the title field facilitates searching for records.

Developing and Documenting File and Folder Naming Conventions

Using your file classification scheme as the basis you should develop your file and folder naming conventions with your colleagues, taking guidance and seeking approval from your mission records manager. This will ensure that the naming conventions are workable and can be used for all the documents and folders that your team needs.

Version Control

Version control reduces the risk of individuals or teams working from or updating the wrong version of a document – or sending out the wrong version in the first place. Without some form of version control time can be wasted trying to find the current version. Sometimes teams or

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managers will want to track changes to a document over time and possibly revert to older versions. Because the official record format is paper, any significant early versions which are wanted for later reference must be printed and filed. See ARMS' Guideline on Version Control for details on how to set up version control procedures for your office where needed.

UN Records Received from External Sources

Not all UN records will be created by UN staff. For example, incoming correspondence and emails on important matters from external sources will be UN records and must be filed alongside any outgoing correspondence or other records on the same matter. Without both in the file only part of the story is captured.

You must take particular care of sensitive records provided to the United Nations by foreign governments to allow it to carry out its business. Foreign government and other records from external entities must be accorded at least the same degree and duration of confidentiality and protection that they would receive in the foreign government.

Contractors also create records which the UN needs to control and keep for as long as required. The checklist Managing Contractor Records can be used to ensure you have, contractually, the right agreement and procedures in place to own and capture these kinds of records.

Duplicate and Copy Records

With modern office equipment it is very easy to copy and duplicate records. Knowing which one is the 'master record' is very important, as is knowing what to do with the copies and duplicates. The 'master record' is also known as the official record. The official record is generally the one which is filed in the unit which either created it or received it from an external source. In the UN this office is known as the office of record.

Occasionally the official record may not reside with the creating unit as, for example, with the reports on police activities in the field. Their office of record is the UNHQ DPKO Police Division who receives it through the SRSG or DSRSG via the Police Commissioner. Similarly, as a contingency, sometimes both the mission and UNHQ are designated the office of record and hold an official record each, therefore making two official records.

Copies and duplicates can take a number of forms:

1. Multiple electronic copies of electronic records:

A record copy may be duplicated many times throughout the UN. Email records and attachments are often sent to more than one recipient. The duplicate which each recipient receives will be identical in content at the point of receipt.

> - If the email or document originates from within the UN, the sender is responsible for keeping the official record;
> - if the email or document originates from outside the UN, the department responsible for liaison or action is responsible for keeping the official record.

2. Multiple paper copies of electronic records:

Another type of duplicate is a print-out of a record which has been created on a computer. The official record in the UN must be in paper unless ECM has been rolled out in your mission or you have an EDRMS or the record is too complex to render on paper (e.g. databases or linked spreadsheets). Your team must get approval from your mission records manager (and document in procedures) which records will have an electronic official record, and which a paper one.

> - If the official record is paper (the majority of your records), it should be put on file and the electronic original deleted as soon as possible;
> - the official record may be electronic in which case any 'copies' printed for convenience (e.g. to take to a meeting) must not be filed

3. Multiple paper copies of paper records:

Paper records may also get copied, either for convenience or because the original must be returned (e.g. to provide evidence for dependent's benefits, the staff member's marriage certificate must be sighted; evidence of having sighted it is provided by taking a copy).

> - If the original record must be returned to a third party, the UN's record copy will be a duplicate

A good recordkeeping system will help staff to:
- Identify record copies
- Recognise when theirs is the office of record
- Know when to print records out for the paper file
- Know when to print out copies of records for convenience and destroy when finished with them

Teams working in isolation cannot always know how their records fit into the bigger UN picture, ARMS staff will have full information on

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recordkeeping across the organisation which will help to ensure that official records are kept for as long as needed and duplicates are destroyed as soon as possible.

What are 'Non-Records'?

There are a number of types of document which are not considered to be UN records. They include:

- Journals, newspapers, magazines and reference books
- Other reference material and information received or collated from external sources which is used to inform staff in doing their work
- United Nations documents and publications

What about personal records that I keep in my office?

Personal papers are considered non-records. They should be filed separately from United Nations business and/or official records. Remember that ST/SGB/2004/15 (Appropriate Use of United Nations ICT Resources and Data) provides for *limited* use of UN ICT resources for personal matters. ARMS has created a guideline for you to use in identifying and managing your personal records, and in determining what, if any, copies of business records you can request to take with you when you separate from the Organisation. You should use the Annex to ST/SGB/2007/5: Guidelines concerning the separation of private papers from business records to guide you in recognising personal files.

☑ Checklist: Managing Contractor Records

When negotiating services with external contractors, it is important to make sure the UN receives all records it needs once the work is done and the contract has expired. In drafting contracts, terms of reference and project plans for contractor projects, remember to:

☐ Clearly identify which contractor-created records are UN records

☐ Specify that background data that may have further value to the office must be delivered in addition to the final product (this is particularly relevant to electronic records)

☐ Specify that systems documentation must be delivered to the office along with the final product for projects to develop electronic systems

☐ Include a mechanism (such as deferred ordering and 'delivery of data' clauses) in contracts if all electronic data that should be delivered to the UN cannot be identified in advance

☐ Provide contractors with the regulations and procedures governing UN records

☑ Checklist: Record Creation Procedures

Record creation procedures must include the following:

- ☐ Guidance on what are United Nations records and non-records, including those created using office automation

- ☐ Written guidance on what records are to be created, captured and maintained and the format of the record copy

- ☐ Guidance and instructions for documenting policies and decisions (especially those arrived at orally)

- ☐ Guidance on the record status of working papers/files and drafts

- ☐ Guidance on personal papers

- ☐ Procedures on creating finding aids such as captions and indexes to facilitate access to records

Other Relevant Toolkit Sections

- Section 4 - Recordkeeping in the UN
- Section 9 - Managing Email
- Section 15 - Transferring Records to UN ARMS

Documents

- Appropriate Use of United Nations ICT Resources and Data (ST/SGB/2004/15)
- Recordkeeping and the Management of United Nations Archives (ST/SGB/2007/5)
- Information Sensitivity, Classification and Handling (ST/SGB/2007/6)
- Guideline on Version Control (ARMS, 2006)
- Standard for Recordkeeping Metadata (ARMS, 2004)
- Peacekeeping File Classification Scheme (2008)

Glossary

Administrative records: records which support and provide evidence of the administrative responsibilities of the office.

Metadata: data about data, or information about records (e.g. which describes the record's context, content and structure, and their management through time).

Office of record: usually the office which originates the record or which is directly and primarily responsible to take action on a task or transaction.

Official record: master or official copy of a UN record.

Substantive records: records which support and document the operational, policy and strategy work of the office.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the difference between creating and capturing records?

The distinction between creating a record and capturing can be very fine but it is essentially the difference between drafting or receiving a document and consciously making it part of the recordkeeping system. With non-paper media this can be an issue as it is possible to draft a document and to fail to save it or to receive a voicemail message and have it erased automatically.

What is an electronic document and records management system?

Also known by its acronym, EDRMS, an electronic document and records management system is one in which records are collected, organised, and categorized to facilitate their secure preservation, retrieval, use, and disposition and to ensure that records management standards are met.

What is version control?

Version control is a system for tracking each time a document is amended or edited – when it is changed. Each time a document is changed and saved, information is added to indicate that this has taken place. In Enterprise Content Management (ECM) systems this process is normally done automatically.