



Section 11 – Registries

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Main Things to Remember about Registries

- Registries require dedicated staff whose only responsibility is looking after a mission's records.
- A recordkeeping system may be either centralised or decentralised (delegated) to individual offices.
- A Registry system can be implemented across multiple sites/locations but those aspects relating to the logical control of records must remain centralised (policy, procedures etc. and managing the classification plan).
- Maintaining correspondence logs should not be considered a primary part of your recordkeeping system.
- Storing records together only because they are incoming or outgoing correspondence is not good recordkeeping practice and is discouraged.
- In some circumstances it may be necessary to make copies of records but the Office of Record and location of the official record must be determined. Copies should also be registered and tracked so that they can



be destroyed at the time a final disposal action is taken on the official record.

Introduction

Records can be created by any staff member in a mission. They must be managed using approved systems designed for the purpose following best practice such as that set out in this Toolkit. Section 2 (Roles and Responsibilities) looks at who is responsible for establishing and overseeing such a system. However there are different ways in which a recordkeeping system can be implemented.

Many missions have multiple sites (buildings and/or locations) and aspects of the day to day management of records may be delegated to business units, for example, creating new files or managing records storage, within approved guidelines. This is a decentralised approach to running a recordkeeping programme. Another approach involves a dedicated team of people dealing with all aspects of recordkeeping as their primary function. This model is known as a [Registry](#). The specific things which are required in a centralised – Registry – approach are explained in this section.

Whichever approach is implemented, ARMS' policies and standards must be met at all times, this Toolkit and other ARMS' guidance are provided to help enable such compliance.

Managing Records Classification Plans

Logical

In a centralised recordkeeping system, Registry staff are responsible for managing classification plans to ensure that records can be filed correctly and retrieved easily. This includes:

- adding new branches or classes – determining whether a new class is required and if so, where to create it
- periodically reviewing the classification plan – ensuring that it continues to meet the needs of the mission, including easy retrieval of records
- checking for duplications – records relating to the same business activity or subject should be stored together and not split across several files

Importantly, Registry staff are responsible for creating all new files – both the logical and the physical. Staff must request new files from the Registry on a form which sets out the proposed title, the subject matter, and the proposed



place within the classification plan. Registry staff must consider whether or not a file already exists or whether a new file is indeed needed. They are responsible for determining where the new file is created and its title, based on the original request.

Physical

For all new files or new parts/volumes, Registry staff are responsible for creating the file folder, including labelling and registering it (see below), and determining where it will be stored. Metadata must also be recorded on the file folder:

essential metadata

- title
- open date – either the date of the first paper, first action, or of the relevant business cycle (e.g. first day of the new fiscal year)
- (close date – either the date of the last paper, last action, or of the relevant business cycle; added when the file is closed)
- part or volume number
- home location – and loan details if sent directly to the requestor once created

desirable metadata

- file reference number – if these are used in your recordkeeping system
- retention schedule details – relevant retention schedule (from PORS)
- cross reference – to point staff to related files

In a mission on multiple sites/locations, Registry staff should still have logical control over the classification plan but may choose to delegate the creation of physical file folders to offices.

File folders should be locally sourced, either manila, accordian or pressboard folders. Metadata can be printed on to good quality labels and affixed to the folders or written directly on to the folder where labels do not stick easily. Different coloured folders or labels can be used for different types of files to aid in quick identification. Using a different colour for each letter and/or number in a file reference, or different coloured folders, can make keeping large runs of records in order much easier as any misfiled files are easily seen.

Storing, Retrieving and Tracking Files

When new files are created they must be registered. **Registration** involves creating and maintaining a detailed file list or inventory, with entries for every file (logical and physical, including each part or volume). It captures the details



including the title, the date opened, the date closed, the file reference, the home (or permanent) location, and the current location. It should also include the relevant retention details for each file (see [Section 8 – the Peacekeeping Operations Retention Schedule](#)).

Registry staff are responsible for maintaining a central file store (often called 'the Registry') where most active files are kept. This is their home location – information which is recorded on the file list or inventory. Files may have local offices as their home location if they are referred to very frequently. In addition to The Registry there may be a **storage facility** which houses semi-active and inactive records.

Because most active records are stored in the Registry, a procedure must be in place to allow users to request files. Loans must be recorded on the file list or inventory. **Tracking** files means they can be found quickly and easily when required, and because files should be issued on loan for a set period of time, they can be retrieved again at the end of the loan period. It may be necessary to change the home location of a file from the Registry to an office if there is a high demand for it.

Centrally storing all active files in a multi-site mission may not be possible but the home location of every file should still be recorded on a central file list or inventory. It should also be updated with any changes to the home location. Tracking file movements (loans etc.) should be delegated to staff in each location.

Filing Records

When new records are created or received the correct file may not be with the office in question as most active files will be stored in the Registry. Registry staff are responsible for filing new records on to files stored with them. Where files are held in offices, staff should undertake their own filing.

Either the creating/receiving office or the Registry itself is responsible for classifying the record (i.e. determining which file it belongs in) and once classified it is then filed alongside other records in the correct file.

Keeping up to date with filing is very important to ensure that all relevant records are available when a file is needed by staff, either to inform their work or in providing evidence of what has happened.



Managing Retention

The best time to apply a retention to a file is when it is first created. The **Peacekeeping Operations Retention Schedule** (PORS) covers all peacekeeping functions and activities and must be used in conjunction with your classification plan as new files are set up. This will help you determine how to manage your files over time as well as what has to happen to them when they come to the end of the records lifecycle.

For example, the finance activity within a peacekeeping mission works to the UN's fiscal year cycle (1 July until 30 June of the following year; for political missions it is 1 January to 31 December). This business cycle is reflected in PORS which stipulates that files relating to this function should be closed at the end of each fiscal year cycle enabling records – aggregated at the file (or part) level – to have their retentions actioned at the same time:

Title	Opened	Closed	Retention	Retention Due
Disbursement Vouchers – 2004-05	1 July 2004	30 June 2005	Destroy 5 yrs after closure	Destroy 1 July 2010
Disbursement Vouchers – 2005-06	1 July 2005	30 June 2006	Destroy 5 yrs after closure	Destroy 1 July 2011
OR				
Disbursement Vouchers – Part 1	1 July 2004	30 June 2005	Destroy 5 yrs after closure	Destroy 1 July 2010
Disbursement Vouchers – Part 2	1 July 2005	30 June 2006	Destroy 5 yrs after closure	Destroy 1 July 2011

Managing Individual Records

In some missions, staff are responsible for receiving all incoming correspondence and managing it at the record level. This involves registering each piece of correspondence into a Correspondence Log. It may also involve indexing it using key words or cross-referencing to a relevant file, and filing it. The whole file with the newly received correspondence is then sent to the addressee/staff member to action; the loan of the file is recorded, noting the temporary location on the file list or inventory.

This is a very time consuming process and should not be seen as a primary part of your recordkeeping system; the important thing is for the right person to receive the correspondence in a timely manner, and for it to be filed correctly so that it can be managed alongside all other relevant records.

Many missions file all incoming and outgoing correspondence in special files (e.g. 'Incoming Faxes 2006', or 'Outgoing Correspondence 2004'). Storing records together only because they are incoming or outgoing correspondence is not good recordkeeping practice and is discouraged. All correspondence should be filed alongside other relevant records (memos, emails etc.) relating to the same



matter where they can be managed appropriately as part of the recordkeeping system. Copies may be taken and kept for convenience in incoming or outgoing correspondence 'working files' but are not the official record (see below).

Office of Record

Records are easily copied, often for convenience when the original is filed and held in a different location. It is important to establish the difference between a copy and the **official record**. This is particularly important for distributed environments where the official record may be held either in a central Registry or in an office in another site/location.

In addition to determining which is the official record, it is important to determine which is the **Office of Record**. The Office of Record is most likely to hold the official record which is the version which will be managed over time.

It may be necessary for copies to be made of official records for convenience (e.g. records frequently referred to by different offices where retrieving/transferring the file would be inefficient). Where it is deemed necessary to make copies, it is important to remember:

- if a copy of an official record is changed or added to in the course of business it becomes a new record (i.e. new official record) and must be managed separately from the original (the official record of which it was a copy before being changed);
- retention schedules apply to copies as well as to the official record, although slightly differently:
 - when the official record is due for destruction, all copies must also be destroyed;
 - when the official record is due for transfer to local or interim archive, the copy should be destroyed (the official record will be available for loan if required);
 - when the official record is due for transfer to permanent archive, the copy must be destroyed.

In any event, the copy must be destroyed at the same time a final disposal action is taken on the official record. [Section 8 – the Peacekeeping Operations Retention Schedule](#) (PORS) has more information on retention schedules.

Where either whole files are copied, or copies of official records are bound together in file folders, they should be listed individually on the file list or inventory alongside the original, clearly noting which is the official record and which the copy. This will aid in their management and eventual destruction in keeping with PORS.



Registries in Multi-Site Missions

In missions spread over multiple sites/locations it may be most efficient to delegate some recordkeeping responsibilities to local records management focal points – staff under the guidance of the central Registry. Decisions on which tasks or activities can be delegated to focal points must take into consideration what business efficiencies can be gained against the level of centralised control required in properly managing your records.

Some functions must remain under central control:

- managing the classification plan (setting up and registering new files, reviewing the structure etc.)
- maintaining the central file register/inventory
- managing retention schedules, including authorising destructions
- development of policies, standards, procedures, guidance and training

Tasks which can be delegated to local focal points include:

- physically creating new files/folders
- boxing and listing files ahead of transfers to local or permanent archives
- managing storage of active, semi-active and inactive records (office storage/local registry/local records centre)
- tracking loans

Central Registry staff should provide outreach, training and support to all staff, particularly where storing, retrieving and tracking active files is managed locally, and regularly monitor recordkeeping practice across all sites/locations to ensure policies and guidelines are being adhered to and meeting local needs.

Electronic Registries

Paper remains the official record format for all UN records, meaning Registries managing paper files still have a place in modern missions. However there is a growing need to manage records electronically, particularly as many records are now created using computers and only exist physically when they are printed.

Scanning

Existing paper records are sometimes scanned. This is often done to improve access to the records where they are frequently referred to (e.g. purchasing records). Because the official record format remains paper, the originals must always be retained and managed as the official record in line with ARMS' policy, standards and guidance.



The decision to digitise existing paper records by scanning them should only be taken where there is a proven business benefit and efficiencies to be gained. Remember that the scanning process can be very resource intensive and consume any savings that may have been made by having the records available electronically. Some records should not be scanned even when efficiencies can be made, such as published documents (including [UN documents](#)) and records with either short retention periods or which are close to their destruction dates.

The Peacekeeping Operations Retention Schedule (PORS) applies to any scanned images as well as the physical official records. Because the official record format remains paper, ARMS will not accept scanned copies as substitutes for the official records when transferring to permanent archive at UNHQ.

ARMS has issued a new [Guideline on Records Digitisation](#) to assist with the assessing, preparation and management of records digitisation (scanning) projects.

Electronic Document and Records Management Systems (EDRMS)

Records which are 'born digital' – created electronically – can be managed in specialised software packages which provide all the functionality and tools to manage them as records. These include managing classification plans, retention schedules and search functions, as well as ensuring the reliability, usability and integrity of the records.

How EDRMS are set up and managed is very much like a paper Registry with an ongoing need for central oversight of the system. Like a paper Registry an EDRMS (effectively an electronic Registry) has elements which may be delegated to local focal points and staff generally. The principles established in this section apply equally to electronic Registries: logical control of the recordkeeping system must remain centralised.

Electronic Registries and managing electronic records require even more dedicated resources (including specialist staff) than for managing paper records. Few if any missions currently have electronic document and records management systems which meet ARMS' standards (see [Functional Requirements for Recordkeeping Systems](#)).



Benefits of Registries

- provides greater control over file creation, thereby reducing duplication of files, ensuring files are created within the correct part of the classification plan, and providing improved access to files and records
- files are tracked, providing an audit trail of who has had access, and with checks on loans, reducing the number of lost files
- where implemented, incoming correspondence is filed correctly alongside other relevant records giving the action officer the full picture when dealing with the matter at hand
- creates a body of experts on the records of the mission aiding in the retrieval of information

Registries require dedicated staff for the full benefits to be realised.

Other Relevant Toolkit Sections

- Section 2 – Roles and Responsibilities for Recordkeeping in the UN
- Section 5 – Records Creation and Capture
- Section 7 – Classification plans for Peacekeeping Operations
- Section 8 – The Peacekeeping Operations Retention Schedule (PORS)
- Section 11 – Setting up a Mission Records Storage Facility
- Section 12 – Managing Records in a Mission Records Storage Facility

Documents

- Functional Requirements for Recordkeeping Systems (ARMS, 2003)
- Peacekeeping Operations Retention Schedule (PORS) (ARMS, 2006)

Glossary

Office of record: The administrative unit responsible for the maintenance, preservation and disposition of official records.

Official record: Master or official copy of a UN record

Registration: In those systems where registration is used, its purpose is to provide evidence that a record has been created or captured in a records system. It involves recording brief descriptive information about the record in a register, and assigning the record a unique identifier.



Registry: A paper recordkeeping or filing system run by staff tasked with the centralised creation and management of files (including storage and tracking).

Tracking: Creating, capturing and maintaining information about the movement and use of records.

UN documents: the official publications of the United Nations; also called Official Documents

UN ARMS Toolkit