

5 October 2012

General Circular No. 5/2012

Records Management Reviews

(Note: Distribution of this Circular is Scale C. It should be read by all Directors of Bureaux, Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Departments and Directorate Officers in Bureaux and Departments and be brought to the attention of staff who, because of the functions of their posts, are required to take action on, or to be informed of the Circular.)

This Circular sets out the framework for reviewing the records management practices in bureaux and departments (B/Ds) and the details of departmental records management reviews to be conducted by the Government Records Service (GRS).

Reviewing B/Ds' Records Management Practices

2. Records are valuable resources of the Government. They are the basis on which decisions are made, services provided and policies developed and communicated. Proper management of records is therefore crucial to support evidence-based decision making, to meet operational and regulatory requirements and to enhance corporate governance.

3. It is government policy that each B/D should establish a comprehensive records management programme for proper management of government records. To demonstrate the Government's commitment to practising good records management and preserving archival records, a number of mandatory and essential records management requirements were introduced vide General Circular (GC) No. 2/2009.

4. In the interests of continuous improvement and compliance monitoring, a two-pronged approach will be adopted to review B/Ds' records management practices. This approach comprises two components –

- (a) self-assessment by B/Ds; and
- (b) departmental records management reviews conducted by GRS.

Self-assessment by B/Ds

5. Implementing a proper records management programme in their organizations and monitoring its effectiveness is primarily the responsibility of respective B/Ds. In accordance with paragraph 25 of GC No. 2/2009, B/Ds should review their records management practices regularly to ensure that their records management programme is functioning effectively. Through such self-assessment, B/Ds will be able to assess their compliance with the mandatory records management requirements and adoption of good practices as promulgated in the related General Circulars / Circular Memoranda and records management publications including the Records Management Manual. Relevant publications are uploaded on GRS' website: <http://grs.host.ccg.hksarg/index.htm#records>.

6. To assist B/Ds in this task, GRS developed a review form and coordinated B/Ds' first self-assessment of their records management practices in 2010. The findings of this exercise and GRS' recommendations on improvement measures were conveyed to B/Ds in November 2011. In the light of the experience gained and further records management guidelines issued to B/Ds¹, we have reviewed the scope of the self-assessment by B/Ds. The self-assessment by B/Ds should cover the following important aspects –

- (a) establishment and promulgation of a departmental records management policy;

¹ Two Administration Wing Circular Memoranda (CM) were issued to B/Ds on 6 and 11 July 2012 providing respectively supplementary guidelines on creation and collection of records and advice to help B/Ds develop their departmental records management policies. The CM on establishment of departmental records management policies issued on 11 July 2012 provides detailed information on the important aspects of records management mentioned in paragraph 6 of this General Circular.

- (b) distribution and designation of roles and responsibilities of records management (including the roles to be played by senior management, line managers, registry supervisors and registry staff as well as records users);
- (c) establishment and implementation of recordkeeping systems;
- (d) establishment, documentation and implementation of records management processes (including creation/collection and capture of records, registration of records², records classification, records storage, access to records, tracking movement of records, and retention and disposal of records);
- (e) protection of vital records;
- (f) management of records for administrative changes;
- (g) monitoring and auditing of records management practices to evaluate compliance with the government and departmental policies, procedures and guidelines; and
- (h) arrangement of records management training.

7. In order to provide continued support to B/Ds and to obtain updated information on B/Ds' records management practices regularly, GRS will continue to coordinate such self-assessment review exercises on a regular basis (e.g. once every two to three years). **The next self-assessment is scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2012.**

Departmental Records Management Reviews conducted by GRS

Objectives

8. To complement the self-assessments mentioned above, GRS will also conduct in-depth departmental records management reviews for individual B/Ds. These reviews will assist B/Ds to continue to improve on records management. The objectives of these reviews are to –

- (a) assess departmental management's awareness of, commitment to and involvement in practising good records management;

² Registration is to provide evidence that a record has been created or captured in a records system. For example, in a paper-based system, a record captured in a file should be registered through entering on the file contextual information such as type (e.g. memo), date, originator/addressee of the record.

- (b) evaluate B/Ds' compliance with the mandatory records management requirements and adoption of records management good practices, with particular reference to GRS' recommendations made in reports on the service-wide records management reviews and on other occasions pertaining to the B/D; and
- (c) identify improvement areas as well as good practices and consolidate the insight for making service-wide recommendations where applicable.

Methodology

9. In carrying out the departmental records management reviews, GRS will collect from the B/D concerned facts and data on the departmental records management programme through various means and tools, which may include but are not limited to review of documentation on records management, examination of recordkeeping systems, surveys and visits, interviews and focus group discussions.

Review Recommendations

10. Depending on the size and organisational structure of the B/D concerned and the volume of records kept by them, it is estimated that the on-site field work for each review will take about three to four months. At the end of the review, GRS will present its findings and recommendations to the B/D concerned. The B/D will be required to draw up an implementation plan on GRS' recommendations. GRS will provide specific advice and assistance to help the B/D implement the recommendations and closely monitor the implementation progress. Such review findings and recommendations as well as the implementation plan to be adopted by the concerned B/Ds will be submitted to the Chief Secretary for Administration for any further steer, as needed.

Review Schedule

11. GRS will draw up a review schedule on an annual basis, and will contact selected B/Ds separately to work out a detailed review programme with their Departmental Records Managers. B/Ds are required to cooperate with GRS for the conduct of the review.

Enquiries

12. Enquiries arising from this Circular may be addressed to Chief Executive Officer (Records Management and Administration) at 2195 7818 or Senior Executive Officer (Records Management Review) at 2195 7733.

(Ms Kitty Choi)
Director of Administration

c.c. Judiciary Administrator