Managing Active Records: File Management

Principles

Practices

Procedures

Guidelines

Records Management Publication Number Two

Government Records Service
MANAGING ACTIVE RECORDS:

FILE MANAGEMENT

GOVERNMENT RECORDS SERVICE

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PART ONE: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

| CHAPTER 1 | RECORDS MANAGEMENT: AN OVERVIEW | 1 |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THIS PUBLICATION | 1 |
| AUDIENCE | 2 |
| UPDATING | 2 |
| ENQUIRIES | 2 |
| SOME USEFUL DEFINITIONS | 2 |
| What is Records Management? | 3 |
| What is a Record? | 3 |
| What are Active Records? | 4 |
| What are Inactive Records? | 4 |
| What is a File? | 4 |
| What is a Records Office? | 4 |
| Who are Records Officers? | 4 |
| RECORDS MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS | 5 |
| Management in General | 5 |
| Registry Management | 5 |
| Inactive Records Management and Disposal Arrangements | 6 |
| Vital Records Management | 6 |
| BENEFITS OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT | 6 |
| OTHER DEFINITIONS | 7 |
| File Plan | 7 |
| Filing | 7 |
| Filing System | 7 |
| Recordkeeping System | 7 |
| Records Classification | 8 |
| Records Classification Scheme (RCS) | 8 |
| Records Classification System | 8 |
| Vital Records | 8 |
CHAPTER 2  MAINTENANCE OF A RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME ............9
INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................................. 9
IMPORTANCE OF A DEPARTMENTAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY ............ 9
COMPONENTS OF A DEPARTMENTAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY ............ 9
ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEPARTMENTAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT
PROGRAMME ............................................................................................................... 10
RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROCESSES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES ........11
ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEPARTMENTAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT
PROGRAMME ............................................................................................................... 12
Assign Records Management Responsibilities .......................................................... 12
Collect Information for Records Inventory ............................................................... 14
Analyse Records Inventory ....................................................................................... 15
Develop Recordkeeping System ................................................................................. 16
PROMULGATION OF PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES ...................................... 16
MONITORING AND AUDITING ................................................................................... 17
CHAPTER 3  RECORDS CREATION AND CAPTURE .................................................. 18
INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................ 18
PRINCIPLES ON CREATION AND COLLECTION OF RECORDS ......................... 18
BUSINESS RULES FOR RECORDS CREATION AND COLLECTION ...................... 18
What records to be created/collected ....................................................................... 19
Who to create/collect records .................................................................................. 20
When to create/collect records ................................................................................ 20
Where to keep records .............................................................................................. 20
ESTABLISHMENT AND REVIEW OF BUSINESS RULES .................................... 21
CHAPTER 4  RECORDS CLASSIFICATION AND FILING ........................................... 22
INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................ 22
WHY RECORDS CLASSIFICATION? .......................................................................... 22
TWO BROAD CATEGORIES OF CLASSIFICATION .................................................. 22
THE RECORDS CLASSIFICATION PROCESS ......................................................... 23
FILING FEATURES ..................................................................................................... 25
COMPONENTS OF A RECORDS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM .................................. 25
FILES GROUPING ......................................................................................................... 26
PROBLEMS CREATED BY NOT SEPARATING RECORDS INTO SERIES ................. 29
POLICY RECORDS SHOULD BE MAINTAINED SEPARATELY ................................ 29
INCORRECT GROUPING OF RECORDS .................................................................. 29
CODING A FILE .......................................................................................................... 29
WHAT IS FILE CODING? ......................................................................................... 30
NUMERIC CODING METHOD ................................................................................. 30
PART TWO: FILING PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

CHAPTER 11 MANAGING REGISTRY ................................................................. 58
  INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................. 58
  ACTIVITIES INVOLVED IN REGISTRY MANAGEMENT .................................... 58
  GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICER IN CHARGE OF REGISTRY
    MANAGEMENT .................................................................................................. 59
  CONTROL RECORDS ESSENTIAL TO REGISTRY MANAGEMENT .................... 59
  What are the Control Records in a Registry? ................................................... 59
  Types of Control Records .................................................................................. 59

CHAPTER 12 REDUCING UNNECESSARY FILING ............................................. 61
  INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................. 61
  INFORMATION RECEIVED BY B/D .................................................................. 61
  REDUCING COPY DISTRIBUTION ....................................................................... 61

CHAPTER 13 HANDLING OF INWARD AND OUTWARD CORRESPONDENCE ...... 63
  CATEGORIES OF INWARD CORRESPONDENCE .............................................. 63
  PROCEDURES IN HANDLING INWARD CORRESPONDENCE ............................ 63
    Opening the Correspondence .......................................................................... 63
    Recording the Date of Receipt ........................................................................ 63
    Checking Attachments ...................................................................................... 64
    Registering the Incoming Correspondence .................................................... 64
    Acknowledging Receipt .................................................................................... 64
    Attention Note .................................................................................................. 64
    Mail Personally Addressed ............................................................................ 65
    Mail for Urgent Attention .............................................................................. 65
    Fax .................................................................................................................... 65
    Money, Cheques and Valuables Received ....................................................... 65
  PROCEDURES IN HANDLING OUTWARD CORRESPONDENCE ....................... 66
    Distribution ...................................................................................................... 66
    File Copy Arrangement .................................................................................... 70
    Circulation Copy ............................................................................................... 70
    Registering the Outgoing Correspondence ..................................................... 71
    Modes of Transmission ..................................................................................... 71

CHAPTER 14 CLASSIFICATION AND FILING ..................................................... 73
  UNDERSTANDING THE CONTENT .................................................................... 73
  CLASSIFYING DOCUMENTS UNDER ESTABLISHED CLASSIFICATION SCHEME
    ......................................................................................................................... 73
SAFEKEEPING OF CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS ................................................................. 96
STORING FILES IN ACTIVE RECORDS STORES ......................................................... 97
CHAPTER 19 TRANSFERRING GOVERNMENT RECORDS TO NON-GOVERNMENT
BODIES ....................................................................................................................... 98
INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 98
GUIDELINES FOR GOVERNMENT BUREAUX/ DEPARTMENTS ON THE
TRANSFER OF CUSTODY AND OWNERSHIP OF RECORDS .................................. 98
Responsibilities of B/Ds ............................................................................................ 98
Consideration of Records for Transfer ................................................................. 99
Records Appraisal ..................................................................................................... 99
Assistance in Records Appraisal ........................................................................... 100
Retention of Rights ................................................................................................ 100
Protection of Records .............................................................................................. 100
PREPARATION OF TRANSFER AUTHORITY ......................................................... 100
RECORDS NOT BEING TRANSFERRED ................................................................. 101

Appendices

Appendix A – LIST OF GENERAL FORMS AND FILE COVERS COMMONLY USED IN
REGISTRY SERVICES

Appendix B – A GLOSSARY OF COMMON TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS FOR
RECORDS USERS

Appendix C – PRACTICAL GUIDE ON FILING ROUTINES AND PRACTICES
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adm Wing CM</td>
<td>Administration Wing Circular Memorandum</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCFMS</td>
<td>Bar-coding File Management System</td>
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<tr>
<td>B/D</td>
<td>Bureau and department</td>
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<td>CCGO</td>
<td>Central Cyber Government Office</td>
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<td>DRM</td>
<td>Departmental Records Manager</td>
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<td>ERKS</td>
<td>Electronic recordkeeping system</td>
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<td>GARDS</td>
<td>General Administrative Records Disposal Schedules</td>
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<td>GC</td>
<td>General Circular</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRS</td>
<td>Government Records Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITMU</td>
<td>Information Technology Management Unit</td>
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<td>L/M</td>
<td>Loose minute</td>
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<td>NRS</td>
<td>Non-file Record System module of BCFMS</td>
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<td>OGCIO</td>
<td>Office of the Government Chief Information Officer</td>
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<td>PRO</td>
<td>Public Records Office</td>
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<td>RCS</td>
<td>Records classification scheme</td>
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<td>RMM</td>
<td>Records Management Manual</td>
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<td>SARCIS</td>
<td>Storage Allocation and Records Centre Information System</td>
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<td>SR</td>
<td>Security Regulations</td>
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PART ONE: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

CHAPTER 1  RECORDS MANAGEMENT: AN OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Records are valuable resources of the Government to support evidence-based decision making, meet operational and regulatory requirements and are essential for an open and accountable government. Good records management enhances operational efficiency and effectiveness while minimising costs. Records management is therefore an important function of bureaux and departments (B/Ds).

1.2 Although it is now commonplace for B/Ds to create or receive records in electronic form, most B/Ds still have an operational need to continue keeping their records in a paper-based recordkeeping system pending the implementation of an electronic recordkeeping system (ERKS). This publication will focus mainly on the best practices for managing active records in a paper-based recordkeeping system.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THIS PUBLICATION

1.3 Government policy, principles and requirements as well as best practices and guidelines on records management are promulgated through General Circulars (GCs), Administration Wing Circular Memoranda (Adm Wing CMs), as well as records management publications and guidelines issued by the Government Records Service (GRS)\(^1\). Though the core records management principles therein apply to all records regardless of their format and medium, records management processes and procedures for managing physical records and those for managing electronic records differ in one way or another due to their inherent differences in nature.

1.4 So far as this publication is concerned, the focus is confined to the routines and practices on how paper records in their active stage are managed, especially the records type known to us as files. This publication provides detailed discussion and description with regard to the management principles, practices, procedures and guidelines of active files in B/Ds which have not yet fully implemented an ERKS. For the concurrent management of both paper and electronic records in a B/D where an ERKS has not been implemented and/or fully operational, readers should also refer to the Guidelines for Managing Records in a Hybrid Environment issued by GRS which prescribes the relevant policy, principles, requirements and best practices for records management functions and activities in a hybrid records management environment.

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\(^1\) The prevailing publications of GRS are available on Central Cyber Government Office (CCGO) at http://grs.host.ccgo.hksarg/cgp_intro.html which is accessible by government officers only.
AUDIENCE

1.5 This publication is intended to be used by:

(a) Registry staff (also known as records officers) who are responsible for the filing of incoming and outgoing paper correspondences and documents. They may refer to the procedures and guidelines in Part Two (Chapters 11 to 19) of this publication for performing daily routines, while the principles and practices are set out in Part One (Chapters 1 to 10) of this publication; and

(b) Records managers and records users who are responsible for, among others, overseeing execution of records management activities to ensure that paper records are properly created/collection, used, managed and preserved within the recordkeeping systems of their B/Ds.

1.6 To facilitate reference by registry staff in their daily operation, a glossary of common terms and abbreviations for records users is provided in Appendix B. Besides, a useful guide on the filing routines, namely “Practical Guide on Filing Routines and Practices”, which is a summary of the procedures and guidelines mentioned in Part Two (Chapters 11 to 19) of this publication, is attached at Appendix C.

UPDATING

1.7 As good records management practices are continually evolving, this publication will be updated as and when necessary to keep pace with international records management standards and best practices, and to ensure compliance with the Government’s prevailing records management policy and directives.

ENQUIRIES

1.8 Enquiries arising from this publication should be addressed to the following officer in GRS:

Records Management and Administration Office

Post title: Senior Executive Officer (Records Management) I
Telephone no.: 2195 7789
Lotus Notes e-mail: RMAO/GRS/HKSARG

SOME USEFUL DEFINITIONS

1.9 Below are some of the terms defined in the context of records management.
What is Records Management?

1.10 Records management refers to the planning, directing, organising, controlling, reviewing, training and other managerial activities involved with respect to the creation, classification and indexing, distribution, handling, use, tracking, storage, retrieval, protection and disposal of records to achieve adequate and proper documentation of Government policies, decisions and transactions as well as efficient and cost-effective operation of B/Ds.

1.11 File management applies records management principles to ensure that files can be retrieved and used when needed.

What is a Record?

1.12 A record is any recorded information in any physical format or medium created or received by an organisation during its course of official business and kept as evidence of policies, decisions, procedures, functions, activities and transactions.

1.13 Information created or received by B/Ds daily are in the following common forms:

(a) E-mails;
(b) Letters;
(c) Memoranda;
(d) Directives/ Circulars;
(e) Forms;
(f) Reports;
(g) Publications/ Periodicals;
(h) Fax;
(i) Maps;
(j) Plans;
(k) Contracts;
(l) Deeds; and
(m) Tenders, etc.

1.14 Not all of them will become records of B/Ds. Records can be distinguished by their being created or received to document official functions, policies, decisions, operations, procedures and transactions, and kept as evidence of such activities. In general, records can be categorised into the following types:

(a) E-mail records. In a hybrid environment where an ERKS has not been implemented, all e-mail records should be “printed-and-filed” for record purposes and managed by the departmental paper-based recordkeeping system as paper records;

(b) Paper records. Before the implementation of an ERKS, all paper records created (or printed from electronic records) should be kept and managed in the departmental paper-based recordkeeping system as explained in Chapter 3 of this publication;

(c) Electronic records (excluding e-mails printed and managed as paper records under (a) above). They are either stored on removable storage media (e.g. DVDs) or non-removable storage media (e.g. computer servers for various applications including websites and instant messaging); and
Other non-electronic records, such as microfilm, analog tapes, etc.

1.15 Non-record materials are documentary materials that do not meet the conditions of record status. They may include:

(a) Library and museum material acquired solely for reference or exhibition purposes;
(b) Stocks of publications and blank or obsolete forms;
(c) Extra copies of the same documents generated for convenience or reference; and
(d) Drafting materials or working papers, on condition that the official record copy is properly filed, etc.

What are Active Records?

1.16 Active records are those records frequently used for current business and therefore should be maintained in their place of origin or receipt.

What are Inactive Records?

1.17 Inactive records are those records which are no longer required or rarely required for the conduct of business or reference and may be transferred to intermediate storage before disposal. The definition of inactive records may vary according to the nature of business and/or operational consideration of individual offices or organisations.

What is a File?

1.18 A file is a collection of related written or printed record items (papers, documents, etc.) arranged in systematic order, and treated as a unit. Record items are grouped into files so as to show the history of each piece of departmental activity, and to form a manageable number of units in the recordkeeping system. A file is the basic unit within a records series/group.

1.19 Readers should be aware that, in the context of this publication, a “file” is not referring to an electronic file (such as Word and Excel) which the computer reads or writes.

What is a Records Office?

1.20 A records office in a B/D is a unit where records management functions and activities are performed in support of the general administration and programmes of the B/D, and which normally has its own staff and accommodation. It is also known as a “registry” in the Government context.

Who are Records Officers?

1.21 Records officers are normally registry staff or personal secretaries who are responsible for carrying out day-to-day records management activities in the respective offices. Depending on operational needs, there may be more than one records officer in each office.
1.22 Each B/D should appoint officers with adequate records management knowledge to be responsible for performing records management functions and activities and other related system management activities. The assigning of those records management duties is detailed in paragraphs 2.8 to 2.13 of this publication.

1.23 To ensure effective and efficient management of records, records officers in B/Ds should have clear and comprehensive job descriptions, and receive proper training in records management. The designated officer(s) should also be:

(a) given exclusive responsibility for placing materials into the files;
(b) allowed enough time freed from other duties to maintain the files properly and to dispose of inactive records regularly; and
(c) encouraged to work in partnership with the records users (i.e. officers who use the records); this partnership will help the records officers to decide what records to file.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS

1.24 The records management functions in a B/D support its evidence-based decision making activities and operations. This objective can only be accomplished if the functions receive both a strong commitment from senior management and the necessary resources.

1.25 The following are various aspects of records management functions. It is the responsibility of designated records officer(s) to carry them out.

1.26 Records officers of each B/D should:

Management in General

(a) coordinate with other staff of the B/D to facilitate the effective management of its records;
(b) maintain an inventory of all records series within the B/D (see para. 4.2.3 of GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 1 - *A Practical Guide To Records Scheduling And Disposal* for guidelines on preparing the inventory);
(c) communicate with the GRS when records management advice is required;
(d) review records management functions and activities from time to time;
(e) apply technology in managing records where feasible;
(f) manage the B/D’s records in compliance with Government security policy;

Registry Management

(g) provide mail and messenger services;
(h) sort, open, and route all incoming mails according to a standard pattern or by special arrangement with the offices concerned (Chapter 13 of this publication
is relevant);

(i)    establish and maintain appropriate records classification schemes (RCSs) (i.e.
       file plans) for programme (functional) and administrative (housekeeping)
       records in order to facilitate the scheduling and disposal of records (see GRS’
       Records Management Publication No. 3 - *Subject Filing* for guidelines on
       preparing such schemes and the use of the standard classification scheme for
       administrative records);

(j)    prepare finding aids (e.g. file lists, indexes, etc.) to expedite the rapid
       retrieval of information in records;

(k)    provide reference service to make information in records available to officers,
       as and when required;

**Inactive Records Management and Disposal Arrangements**

(l)    draw up records disposal schedules for the B/D’s programme records (see
       Chapter 4 of GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 1 - *A Practical
       Guide To Records Scheduling And Disposal* for direction in drawing up such
       schedules);

(m)    store the B/D’s inactive records in records centres administered by GRS (see
       Chapter 5 of GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 1 - *A Practical
       Guide To Records Scheduling And Disposal* for the services provided by these
       centres);

(n)    timely transfer the B/D’s records of permanent value to the Public Records
       Office (PRO) of GRS;

(o)    obtain agreement from the GRS Director with regard to the disposal of records
       (Note: It is important to recognise that all Government records, irrespective of
       their age, function, subject matter or security classification, are of potential
       value as Government archives. To ensure that no records that should be
       retained permanently are otherwise disposed of, B/Ds must not destroy any
       records without the prior agreement of the GRS Director.); and

**Vital Records Management**

(p)    identify the B/D’s vital records, store and regularly update a set of these records
       at secure storage administered by the B/D itself.

**BENEFITS OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

1.27    The benefits derived from an effective system of records management are obvious.

1.28    For records users, the benefits are:

   (a)    greater support of work, in that necessary records are arranged so they are directly
applicable to the work being done and unnecessary material is disposed of;

(b) increased productivity, in that more time can be spent on the work rather than trying to find the files; and

(c) better use of office space, in that there will be a reduction in or better arrangement of the necessary filing equipment.

1.29 For the organisation, the benefits are:

(a) better access to key information (relevant records are easier to identify and access to the needed materials is enhanced);

(b) economical use of filing equipment for active records;

(c) reduction of paper duplication;

(d) records which require special handling are identified;

(e) procedures to secure records are reviewed or established; and

(f) appropriate records disposal procedures are reviewed or established.

OTHER DEFINITIONS

1.30 Given below are some basic definitions used in this publication.

File Plan

1.31 Same as RCS (See: Records Classification Scheme).

Filing

1.32 It is a process in which responsible staff analyses the content of a document, classifies it according to established RCS, and captures it in B/D’s designated paper-based recordkeeping system or ERKS. It may simply mean the process of placing records in the appropriate location and order within a filing system. Effective filing contributes to prompt, accurate and complete retrieval of information.

Filing System

1.33 A storage system (e.g. files, boxes, containers or any electronic system) in which records are systematically stored according to an RCS.

Recordkeeping System

1.34 A recordkeeping system is a manual or automated record/information system in which records are collected, organised and classified to facilitate and control their creation, storage, retrieval, distribution, maintenance and use, disposal and preservation. A good recordkeeping system can meet the requirements for maintaining complete, accurate and reliable records to protect legal, financial and public rights and interests relating to the functions, transactions and
activities of the concerned organisation.

**Records Classification**

1.35 To facilitate a wide range of records management activities, including identification, capturing and retrieval of records, security and access control as well as disposal, records should be systematically organised according to RCSs (also called file plans), which are plans for logical arrangement of records according to one or more of the following: business functions, activities and contents of the records.

**Records Classification Scheme (RCS)**

1.36 A plan or list in which records of an organisation are categorised according to its business functions, activities and contents of the records. It includes a coding system expressed in symbols (i.e. alphabetical, numerical and alphanumerical) to show the logical relationship amongst the records. An RCS is also known as a file plan. Common types of RCSs include subject-based, function-based, organisational-based and geographical-based ones. For more details on RCS, please refer to GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 3 - *Subject Filing*.

**Records Classification System**

1.37 A set of logically structured terms, conventions, methods and procedural rules for the systematic identification and arrangement of records into categories. It comprises the following:

(a) RCS (or file plan);
(b) finding aids and tools (e.g. relative index and cross-referencing rules, scope notes, naming conventions/vocabulary control/thesaurus);
(c) file titling and coding mechanism; and
(d) file manual, which is a document to aid and control the filing of records, explain a particular records classification system and contain details on its application, operation and maintenance.

**Vital Records**

1.38 Vital records are those records containing information essential to the continued and effective operation of an organisation during and after an emergency or disaster. B/Ds should identify and protect their vital records to ensure uninterrupted operation of major business functions.
CHAPTER 2 MAINTENANCE OF A RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTION

2.1 It is the Government’s records management policy that each B/D should establish a comprehensive records management programme for proper management of government records. In this chapter, we will suggest some basic steps and activities to be undertaken when starting such a programme.

IMPORTANCE OF A DEPARTMENTAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

2.2 To ensure compliance with the Government’s records management policy, which requires the establishment in each B/D of a comprehensive departmental records management programme for effective and efficient management of government records as well as for identification and preservation of archival records, it is incumbent on B/Ds to develop and establish departmental records management policies in their organisations taking their unique business and records management needs into account.

COMPONENTS OF A DEPARTMENTAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

2.3 A departmental records management policy is a statement which offers an overview of how the B/D should create and manage its records to meet operational, policy, legal and financial purposes. It demonstrates a B/D’s commitment to adopting and practising good records management and serves as guidelines on records management for its staff. The key components of a departmental records management policy should comprise:

(a) Purpose;
(b) Objective;
(c) Scope;
(d) Regulatory environment;
(e) Roles and responsibilities for records management;
(f) Recordkeeping system;
(g) Protecting vital records;
(h) Monitoring and auditing; and
(i) Training.
ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEPARTMENTAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

2.4 With a clear departmental records management policy in place guiding the strategic direction, B/Ds should implement the policy through a comprehensive and effective records management programme together with proper records management processes, practices and procedures, so as to ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, government regulations and directives, and departmental policy. In gist, a departmental records management programme should cover essential records management functions, including but not limited to the following:

(a) Specifying the recordkeeping system(s) and technologies to be used for the capture, management and storage of records;

(b) Setting out essential records management functions supported by proper records management processes, practices and procedures;

(c) Defining clearly records management roles and responsibilities; and

(d) Monitoring the effectiveness and efficiency of records management functions, processes, practices and procedures on an on-going basis.

2.5 A good records management programme requires management of the entire life cycle of records from creation, registration, processing, retrieval and use, storage, protection to final disposal. Figure 1 below depicts the life cycle of a record:

**Figure 1: Records Life Cycle**
(a) Creation
Records begin the life cycle when they are created or received to meet policy, operational, legal and financial purposes. B/Ds should identify their business functions and assess their information needs so as to create and capture adequate but not excessive records.

(b) Active Stage
“Active records” are those records, regardless of their date of creation, regularly required for current business relating to the administration or function of a B/D. In this stage, many of the active records will need to be accessed frequently. Such records are usually maintained in office space and equipment close at hand.

(c) Inactive Stage
“Inactive records” are those records no longer active or rarely required for action or reference. As a general yardstick, records are inactive if they have not been referenced to for more than two years or their average retrieval rate is lower than three references per linear metre per month. This yardstick may be varied or re-defined according to individual office’s operational consideration. In this stage, reuse of the inactive records is not frequent enough to justify their being stored in prime office space and equipment. Inactive records are therefore often stored at a lower cost storage place such as a records centre until the Disposal stage is reached.

(d) Disposal
Records disposal marks the end of the records life cycle and refers to the actions taken on inactive records which have little or no retention values to B/Ds. It takes the forms of records destruction, records transfer to PRO of GRS for permanent preservation, records migration to different formats or systems, and transfer of records outside government control.

2.6 The records life cycle marks a starting point for creating a records management programme in which tools, systems, and procedures are developed to manage each stage of the life cycle. The records management processes in different stages of records life cycle include records capture, registration, classification, storage, access, tracking, and disposal. The key activities include setting records management policy, assigning responsibilities, establishing and promulgating procedures and guidelines, as well as designing, implementing and administering recordkeeping systems.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROCESSES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

2.7 Records management processes, practices and procedures should be formulated to support the implementation of departmental records management policy and programme. Records management practices and procedures set out the proper ways, authorities and the responsible party(ies) performing records management functions and processes with a view to demonstrating the accountability of a departmental records management programme and specifying the expected behaviour required of staff members on records management. The relationships among the departmental records management policy, programme, functions, processes, practices and procedures are depicted in Figure 2 below.
ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEPARTMENTAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

Assign Records Management Responsibilities

2.8 The first step in establishing/maintaining a records management programme in each B/D is to define and assign records management roles and responsibilities and promulgate them within the B/D to meet the needs of internal and external stakeholders. As records management is the responsibility of every staff of B/Ds, B/Ds should ensure that:

(a) A directorate officer is appointed to oversee records management in the B/D to ensure that there is adequate attention from the senior management;
(b) An officer not lower than the rank of Senior Executive Officer or equivalent is designated to take up the responsibilities of the Departmental Records Manager (DRM);
(c) Records management roles and responsibilities are clearly defined;
(d) Records management roles and responsibilities are assigned to staff of appropriate
levels and skills and in compliance with the Government’s records management requirement (e.g. disposal process should be properly supervised by an officer not lower than the rank of Executive Officer II or equivalent as stipulated in GC No. 2/2009 entitled “Mandatory Records Management Requirement”);

(e) Records management roles and responsibilities are made known and promulgated to all staff members; and

(f) The job descriptions of the staff concerned reflect their specific records management responsibilities for accountability and to facilitate evaluation.

2.9 Responsibilities for DRM and other responsible staff should include, among others:

(a) Development, management and review of departmental records management policy, programme, practices and procedures;

(b) Provision of records management advice within a B/D;

(c) Development and provision of records management training for staff;

(d) Design and implementation of recordkeeping system(s);

(e) Monitoring and maintaining compliance with Government and departmental records management policy, programme, practices and procedures;

(f) Creation, capture, management and storage of records;

(g) Development, management and maintenance of RCS(s);

(h) Establishment and review of records retention and disposal schedules; and

(i) Orderly and timely implementation of disposal of time-expired records according to approved records retention and disposal schedules.

2.10 As DRM plays a key role in establishing and implementing the departmental records management programme to ensure that GRS’ requirements and guidelines on records management are complied with, any replacement of DRM should be reported to GRS not later than two weeks after the replacement.2

2.11 For records which are managed under different recordkeeping systems (i.e. a paper-based recordkeeping system or an ERKS), the roles and responsibilities of records officers and records users will also be different. In a paper-based recordkeeping system, recordkeeping is primarily the duty of registry staff who are responsible for receiving and classifying records into the relevant files, retrieving and delivering the records/files to the records users and maintaining the custody of the paper files. For electronic records which are captured and managed in an ERKS, records users would be able to capture records into and search/retrieve records from the system directly.

2.12 Furthermore, personnel taking up records management responsibilities would also be different under different recordkeeping systems. In a paper-based recordkeeping system, IT

2 Mandatory requirement under paragraph 5 of GC No. 2/2009.
staff normally would not be assigned with records management responsibilities. Unlike a paper-based recordkeeping system, staff from Information Technology Management Units (ITMUs) of B/Ds should be involved in the management of electronic records such as preservation of electronic records, backup of vital records, transfer of electronic records and/or destruction of electronic records after approval has been obtained from GRS.

2.13 Apart from overseeing the departmental records management programme and other duties, DRM is responsible for ensuring the design and implementation of recordkeeping system(s), as well as approving new RCSs and reviewing RCSs every two to three years. DRM will need to ensure that records management roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and promulgated within a B/D. All officers in a B/D should cooperate with their DRM in designing or improving the recordkeeping system(s). They may provide important insight during the analysis and design of the new recordkeeping system and help determine which features of the existing system should be retained. They can also help identify improvement areas in the existing system.

Collect Information for Records Inventory

2.14 The second step in establishing/maintaining a records management programme is to take an inventory of all records held in the B/D. A records inventory is a detailed listing that may include the types, locations, dates, volume, classification schemes, equipment and usage of an organisation’s records. A complete and accurate records inventory is a prerequisite for good records management because it facilitates efficient control and retrieval of records and provides basic information to support records management activities.

2.15 Regardless of the media in which records are maintained, a records inventory of files should at least include the following information:

(a) File title;
(b) File reference number;
(c) Date opened and date closed; and
(d) Storage location (e.g. room/floor).

2.16 Besides, to plan for the effective management of different forms of records under a hybrid environment, B/Ds should collect more information such as the forms of records and access control to multiple forms of records when drawing up the records inventory. B/Ds may consider whether a single inventory list or separate lists for electronic and non-electronic records are more appropriate. For instance, if records of different forms are maintained in different record series, different lists may be adopted. If multiple forms of records are created under the same records series, a single inventory list is recommended. The following information may be collected:

(a) The form of records created/collected under a business function, process and transaction (e.g. paper records, other non-electronic records such as microfilms, electronic records, etc.).
(b) The quantity of records of different forms (e.g. number of files or quantity in linear metre (for paper records), number of relevant containers or objects (for other
non-electronic records), amount of disc space occupied in gigabyte (for electronic records), etc.

(c) The security classification of records.

(d) The media (e.g. optical discs or microfilms) and recordkeeping systems in which different forms of records under a business function, process and transaction are maintained.

(e) The storage location of the records (e.g. file storage room (for paper files), computer server room (for electronic records in computer systems), etc.) and tools used to store the records (e.g. file cabinet (for paper records and electronic records on removable media), computer system (for electronic records online), optical/magnetic discs (for electronic records offline), etc.).

(f) For electronic records, the format of records and the applications used to create/annotate, retrieve and view the electronic records.

(g) The existing access control to multiple forms of records under the same business function, process and transaction.

(h) The retention and disposal schedules of the records.

(i) The responsible officers for managing records.

2.17 B/Ds may conduct a records survey to obtain the above information for drawing up an accurate records inventory of all their records regardless of the forms or media. The records survey may be conducted by physical examination of the filing facilities like racks, cabinets, shelves and computer systems. B/Ds may also collect the information by making reference to the existing records inventory and business rules for records creation and collection.

**Analyse Records Inventory**

2.18 Through analysing the information from the records inventory, B/Ds can draw up or review their records disposal schedules (see GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 1 - *A Practical Guide to Records Scheduling and Disposal* for direction in drawing up records disposal schedules) and determine whether the existing records management programme is effective and efficient in managing records of different forms.

2.19 B/Ds should take into account the following records management processes and principles when reviewing or drawing up specific systems requirements of their recordkeeping system that work most efficient for their offices:

(a) creation of adequate but not excessive records to meet business, operational and evidence purposes;

(b) determination of the official records if multiple forms of the same records are managed and kept;

(c) timely capture and registration of records into proper recordkeeping system and linking the records to other related records through records classification and/or contextual information;

(d) effective organisation and classification of records;
(e) proper custody and storage of records and effective planning and timely preservation of records with archival value over time;

(f) proper and consistent security, access control and use of multiple formats of records under the same business function, process or transaction;

(g) integrated and consistent records retention and timely disposal of time-expired records;

(h) identification and transfer of records with archival value to GRS; and

(i) proper protection of vital records in multiple forms.

Develop Recordkeeping System

2.20 Once the analysis is complete, B/Ds could develop or refine the following elements of their recordkeeping systems to better underpin their records management programmes:

(a) the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders of the recordkeeping systems;

(b) a set of authorised policies, procedures, practices and user guidelines;

(c) the types of media in which records will be filed (paper, microfilm etc.);

(d) the software, hardware and other equipment for efficient storage and retrieval;

(e) the selected classification and arrangement of records;

(f) the required records disposal schedules;

(g) the security classification of records; and

(h) the access control.

PROMULGATION OF PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

2.21 All B/Ds should establish their departmental records management policies and promulgate them to all their staff, particularly those responsible for records management and those who need to access and use records in their daily work. This is to make staff aware of their records management responsibilities.

2.22 If necessary, B/Ds should develop further guidelines and procedures for compliance by their staff. For example, B/Ds should promulgate the procedures and guidelines of their designated official recordkeeping systems and prohibit staff from using personal or non-official systems to capture, manage and store records of the B/Ds.

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3 Adm Wing CM No. 5/2012 dated 11 July 2012 on “Establishment of Departmental Records Management Policies” advises B/Ds to establish their departmental records management policies by April 2013. Annex I of Adm Wing CM No. 5/2012 provides an example of departmental records management policy which includes operational and procedural guidelines for records management processes as an appendix.
2.23 The policies should be re-circulated to all staff at least once every six months.\(^4\) They should be reviewed at least once every two years.\(^5\)

2.24 B/Ds should also provide the necessary guidance, coaching and training on records management to their staff, especially to new recruits and staff (e.g. Records Managers) who are newly assigned specific records management duties.\(^6\)

**MONITORING AND AUDITING**

2.25 B/Ds should undertake compliance monitoring and internal audits regularly to ensure that Government records management policy and requirements and departmental records management policy, programme, practices and procedures are adhered to.

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\(^4\) Paragraph 9 of Adm Wing CM No. 5/2012.

\(^5\) Paragraph 10 of Adm Wing CM No. 5/2012.

\(^6\) B/Ds may distribute the pamphlet entitled “Tips on Records Management for Government Employees” to new recruits and staff concerned and use the related training materials for the purpose (available at http://grs.host.ccgo.hksarg/q_tips.html, which is accessible by government officers only).
CHAPTER 3 RECORDS CREATION AND CAPTURE

INTRODUCTION

3.1 Creation and collection of records is important to B/Ds in meeting operational, policy, legal and financial purposes as well as documenting accurately and adequately government functions, policies, procedures, decisions and transactions to serve as reliable evidence.

3.2 GRS has drawn up guidelines for B/Ds to create and collect complete, reliable and adequate records through establishing business rules on records creation and collection.

PRINCIPLES ON CREATION AND COLLECTION OF RECORDS

3.3 Records should be created and collected to:

   (a) meet operational, policy, legal and financial purposes; and
   (b) document accurately and adequately government functions, policies, procedures, decisions and transactions to serve as reliable evidence.

3.4 The creation/collection of records should be adequate but not excessive.

3.5 To facilitate access, use and preservation, records should be created or kept in the most suitable medium and format. In particular, records which are known to have permanent value should be created in a format that will permit such records to be transferred to and preserved by PRO of GRS. B/Ds should contact PRO for details on transfer of records with archival value if necessary.

BUSINESS RULES FOR RECORDS CREATION AND COLLECTION

3.6 As a systematic approach to records creation/collection, B/Ds should develop business rules to document decisions as to what records are to be created and kept by B/Ds. These business rules, which incorporate records creation/collection as part of business routines and hence minimise the risk of inadequate creation/collection of records, should be established, documented and promulgated in a way that can be used by staff in their daily work. The business rules should give clear instructions to staff on the following aspects:

   (a) What records to be created or collected;
   (b) Who to create or collect records;
   (c) When to create or collect records; and
   (d) Where to keep records.
3.7 Details of the above could be referred to paragraphs 9 to 14 of the “Guidelines on Creation and Collection of Records”.

**What records to be created/collected**

3.8 B/Ds should determine what records they need having regard to the principles set out in paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 above. The following are general examples of what records should be created/collected:

- (a) Inward and outward communication with external persons and bodies directly relating to the functions and activities of an organisation;
- (b) Minutes and other records of meetings, consultations and deliberations pertinent to the decision-making process, formulation of policies;
- (c) Procedures or transaction of business;
- (d) Major oral decisions and commitments;
- (e) Individual exercise of a discretionary judgement which has a major effect on the functions and activities of the organisation;
- (f) Departmental/government forms, registers and information (in electronic/non-electronic forms) which document business transactions/procedures; and
- (g) Draft documents (e.g. amendments to minutes of meetings) which form part of a complete documentation of the relevant issue, as appropriate.

**Capture the appropriate form of record**

3.9 Records should be created or kept in the most suitable medium and format. In the context of a hybrid environment, B/Ds should set out clearly in their business rules the appropriate form and/or medium of the records to be captured if the records are created/collected in more than one form or medium. B/Ds should determine which form of records should be considered as the official records if multiple forms of records are captured and kept. For example, if a meeting agenda is created using Microsoft Word and it was sent to the attendances of the meeting by e-mail and also by paper copies, the B/D should determine whether the electronic form (in Microsoft Word format), the e-mail or the paper form, or more than one form, should be considered as the official records.

**Maintain single form of records in the same business function**

3.10 There are cases where both paper and electronic forms of records are created/received under the same business function, process or transaction and nearly all of the records are created/received in electronic forms but a few processes involve the creation/receipt of records in paper form (e.g. a letter in paper form received from an external organisation). Under the

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7 Adm Wing CM No. 4/2012.

8 Paragraph 7 of Adm Wing CM No. 4/2012.
circumstances, B/Ds may consider whether the paper records can be digitised into an electronic form (e.g. by scanning)\(^9\) for integrated management with the electronic records created/received under the same business function, process or transaction.\(^{10}\) This would facilitate search and retrieval of records by users as well as the management and preservation of the records by records officers.

**Who to create/collect records**

3.11 B/Ds should clearly specify their staff’s roles and responsibilities of creating/collecting records so that records are created/collected routinely by staff. For example, in each business process/transaction, particularly for those involving the creation/collection of large quantity of records (e.g. processing and issuing licences to the public), specific staff should be designated to create/collect records as a business routine. It should be stressed that creating/collecting reliable, complete and adequate records is one of the staff’s core duties and responsibilities. Performance of such duties and responsibilities should be evaluated in appraisals as appropriate.

**When to create/collect records**

3.12 Records should be created/collected to document the actions and decisions as soon as possible in order to ensure that the reliability and completeness of records will not be adversely affected due to passage of time. For example, records should be created/collected immediately after completion of a business process/transaction and minutes of meeting should be prepared after the meeting as soon as possible to avoid missing of important details.

**Where to keep records**

3.13 The business rules should set out that records must be kept in designated departmental recordkeeping systems (e.g. a paper-based filing system or an ERKS), but not in personal systems (e.g. the subject officer’s personal files or e-mail inbox). A recordkeeping system also provides for records to be kept in context (e.g. organised according to a proper and systematic RCS) so that their connection to other records relating to the same subject/case/event is apparent. Classified records should be managed and kept according to the provisions in the Security Regulations (SR).

3.14 B/Ds should check, from time to time, whether their staff have properly followed the business rules to create/collect records, and in particular, whether records are kept in designated departmental recordkeeping systems instead of personal systems or unauthorised devices or digital storage medium. For example, e-mail records created or received in the course of official business could only be printed and filed to a paper-based recordkeeping system or

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\(^9\) B/Ds should take into account whether there are any overriding considerations (e.g. copyright issues) that the paper record is not suitable for digitisation.

\(^{10}\) B/Ds should note that the original paper record is still a government record after digitisation and is subject to the mandatory records management requirements stipulated in the relevant GCs or Adm Wing CMs. For example, the GRS Director’s prior agreement must be obtained before the paper record can be destroyed.
captured in an official ERKS designated by B/Ds, instead of personal mailbox spaces or alternative storage devices.

ESTABLISHMENT AND REVIEW OF BUSINESS RULES

3.15 B/Ds may adopt a coordinated approach to establishing business rules relating to records creation/collection, particularly for those business functions/activities common to sections or offices, and designate relevant sections or offices to establish business rules for functions/activities specific to the sections or offices. Established business rules should be endorsed by an officer not below the rank of Senior Executive Officer or equivalent. These rules should be re-circulated to all staff at least once every six months.

3.16 B/Ds should properly document and promulgate the established business rules and relevant guidelines on records creation and collection to all staff for compliance. B/Ds should also conduct regular reviews (e.g. at least once every two years) on the departmental guidelines and business rules on records creation and collection. The review should be endorsed by an officer not below the rank of Senior Executive Officer or equivalent.
CHAPTER 4 RECORDS CLASSIFICATION AND FILING

INTRODUCTION

4.1 Records classification involves the systematic identification and arrangement of records into categories according to logically structured conventions, methods, and procedural rules represented in a classification system.

WHY RECORDS CLASSIFICATION?

4.2 No matter how expertly a record in any format is designed and prepared, its value diminishes unless it is properly filed and can be readily retrieved when needed. Records classification is often regarded as the blueprint for effective records management because:

(a) records classification allows records to be filed, arranged and stored systematically, thereby minimising misfiling, loss and unauthorised access and use;
(b) it enables faster and more accurate information retrieval; and
(c) records disposal can be made much easier and simpler as records with the same retention requirements are filed together.

TWO BROAD CATEGORIES OF CLASSIFICATION

4.3 Classifying records is a process of grouping or arranging records or documents in logical order, according to their degrees of likeness in:

(a) physical formats (e.g. paper files, maps, registers, computer printouts, magnetic tapes, optical discs, microfilms, films, photographs, video tapes); and
(b) intellectual contents (subject, project/case, function/activity, etc.).

4.4 Classification in accordance with physical formats is obviously a relatively easy task. Records personnel should have no difficulty in separating files, computer printouts, tapes, maps, etc., for storage and maintenance.

4.5 A further classification of records by intellectual contents is more complicated and will be discussed in the following sections and chapters.
THE RECORDS CLASSIFICATION PROCESS

4.6 Classifying files involves:

(a) grouping records according to their physical format, contents or retention requirements (file grouping);
(b) developing and maintaining a classification scheme for every group of documents (details covered in GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 3 - Subject Filing); and
(c) following the classification scheme in the filing process.

4.7 Filing, in simple term, is a process (see Figure 3) of placing documents into a file in accordance with an RCS (also known as a file plan). Filing procedures normally include:

(a) analysing the content of documents received or generated;
(b) sorting and classifying them according to a classification scheme;
(c) arranging and storing related documents in a specific file jacket (if an appropriate file already exists, place the document into the file in reverse chronological order. Otherwise, open a new file [this involves naming the new file and allotting a file reference to it]);
(d) updating records inventory (if a new file / part is created);
(e) marking contextual information on the minute sheets;
(f) passing the file onto the action officer; and
(g) storing the file systematically in a designated place (cabinet, racks, etc.) for future retrieval.

For details of the filing procedures, please refer to Chapter 15 of this publication.
Figure 3: Filing process

- Receive externally generated document
- Read document
- Classify document
- New topic?
  - Yes: Classify file
  - No: Retrieve old file
- Maintain subject list and index
- Document internally created
- Create new file
- Update records inventory
- Create file movement card
- Enter document into the file according to the Filing Practices in Chapter 15
- Pass file to action officer or to active storage
FILING FEATURES

4.8 Filing features are the characteristics by which documents are classified, stored and retrieved. There are at least six filing features identified in most documents:

(a) subject - topic describing the content of the documents;
(b) surname (name or title) of the correspondent (individual or organisation);
(c) name (title) of project, product, transaction, or thing;
(d) location (geographical or political division);
(e) number (symbol) assigned to transaction, commodity, location, project, individual or organisational unit; and
(f) date prepared or used.

4.9 One of the primary tasks of records officers is to ascertain by which filing feature files will be requested most often. For example, they must know if the records users are more likely to request information by the names of persons or their ID numbers in order to decide whether the files are to be classified by name or by number.

4.10 Sometimes records officers may see the need to identify the files by more than one feature. They can use a second feature as the basis for a sub-classification. For example, records within a geographic file by districts may require a further breakdown by names of individuals.

COMPONENTS OF A RECORDS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

4.11 A properly developed records classification system comprises an RCS as well as related classification and indexing procedures. Together they bring order and logic to information storage and retrieval. The major components of a records classification system are an RCS and a file manual.

4.12 An RCS has the following four elements:

(a) classification structure
The structure can be hierarchical or sequential. Hierarchical structure shows the “tier” or sub-classification clearly. Take a file numbered “3/06/01” on a subject “Vehicle Examination--Goods Vehicles--Exceeding 16 Tonnes” as an example, the first tier of the file number “3” represents the primary subject of “Vehicle Examination”, the second tier “06” represents the secondary subject of “Goods Vehicles”, and the third tier “01” represents the tertiary subject “Exceeding 16 Tonnes”.
(b) **subject terms**

Subject terms are words which indicate the subject matter. Primary subject terms represent the main areas of concerns or the main activities of the office. Within individual primary subject terms, there could be further sub-divisions covering more detailed subject matters.

(c) **subject codes**

Subject codes are symbols or abbreviations used to represent the subject. They can be alphabetic, numeric or alphanumeric. Details can be found in paragraphs 4.20 to 4.40 below.

In sum, subject terms and subject codes are assigned to the subjects/functions/activities identified in the RCS to assist retrieval and management of all records relating to each business activity. In applying an RCS to a filing system, subject terms are used as file titles and subject codes as file references.

(d) **index**

Index is a separate collection of cards, extra copies of documents, cross-reference sheet or other forms arranged in an order different from that of the file list (which lists files according to their classification structure). It provides another way of finding a document other than by file reference. For example, an application case file that is arranged numerically might have an index arranged alphabetically by the name of the applicant. Therefore, it is a kind of finding aids to make it easier to locate files or retrieve information. In a subject classification scheme, an index lists the subject terms, their synonyms and other keywords under which information may be sought alphabetically with cross-references to the appropriate subject terms and codes. Besides being a search tool, it also serves as a thesaurus – a vocabulary control list – for file titles.

4.13 File manual is a document which aids and controls the filing of records with details on the application of RCS, scope notes, naming conventions, subject list and relative index, and operational procedures for a particular filing/recordkeeping system.

**FILES GROUPING**

4.14 As mentioned in paragraph 4.6 above, the first step of classifying is to sort records into different groups. If files of similar nature, function, or subject matter are grouped together, a distinct unit or a number of units of files will be formed. These record units are also known as records series.

4.15 Two basic file categories, namely, administrative files and programme files, describe the most fundamental distinctions between records. Their relationships with other file categories that comprise different records series are shown in Figure 4 below:
(a) Administrative files vs. Programme files

Administrative files contain housekeeping records created or received during the course of day-to-day administrative activities that deal with general administrative activities, accommodation and facilities, procurement and supplies, finance and accounting, human resources, information services and information technology. Records of this nature are common to all B/Ds.

Programme files contain functional/operational records created or received by a B/D whilst carrying out the primary functions, activities or missions for which the B/D was established. Records of this nature are usually unique to each B/D.

In planning and developing subject classification schemes, it is advisable to separate administrative files from programme files and prepare separate schemes for them. Since administrative subject files are similar throughout B/Ds, GRS has developed a standard classification scheme for administrative records for B/Ds in GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 3 - *Subject Filing* to avoid duplication of effort and to encourage consistency in records classification among B/Ds. B/Ds are required to use this scheme to facilitate inter and intra departmental coordination and information exchange. As programme files are unique to each B/D, B/Ds should develop their own classification schemes to suit their records management requirements. Guidelines on how to draw up subject classification schemes for programme subject files are also given in GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 3 - *Subject Filing*. 
(b) Subject files vs. Case files

Subject files contain records on a given subject, which may be policy or routine correspondence (e.g. licensing policy, licence applications), rather than a particular case, person or organisation. They may require relatively complicated classification schemes because they contain diverse information and records users may request them by different filing features. Case files contain records on a specific event, project, person, organisation, location or case. They are usually arranged by a single filing feature. For example, personnel related files are arranged alphabetically by name, while project files are normally arranged numerically by project number or alphabetically by project name.

(c) Policy files vs. Routine files

Policy files contain information on the formation, development and changes of policies, procedures, instructions, guidelines, etc. which is used as a basis for making decisions, e.g. :

(i) Policy on Overtime Allowance;
(ii) Policy on Staggered Working Hours;
(iii) Policy on Granting of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA); and
(iv) Policy on Grant and Loan.

For quick identification, efficient records disposal and better security, they should be separated from the routine files, which document the implementation details or matters of a more minor nature, e.g. :

(i) Applications for Overtime Allowance;
(ii) Working Hours of Individual Staff;
(iii) CSSA Appeal Cases; and
(iv) Rejection Letters to Applicants of CSSA.

(Note: (i) & (ii) are administrative records while (iii) & (iv) are programme records).

It is advisable to put “policy” in the file titles and assign distinct code for them for easy identification. For example, “0” can be put in the last tier of the file reference to signify a policy file.
PROBLEMS CREATED BY NOT SEPARATING RECORDS INTO SERIES

4.16 Records series such as “General” or “Miscellaneous Correspondence”, in which all the files of the B/D are maintained, could not reflect the different types of records created, nor the way in which the records are used. Records in a series like this are not well organised to facilitate records retrieval.

4.17 The second problem is that policy records are not clearly identified. Policy records are those records which state a B/D’s policy on any of its jurisdictions and are normally kept on a more permanent basis. Mixing them together with routine administrative files or other programme records will certainly create difficulties when it comes to records retrieval or disposal.

POLICY RECORDS SHOULD BE MAINTAINED SEPARATELY

4.18 It is always recommended that a series of policy files be created and maintained separately for the following reasons:

(a) it facilitates easier identification and retrieval of policy records;
(b) it enables proper records disposal as policy files are often required to be kept for a longer period than records of routine business; and
(c) it allows better records security as policy records can be easily separated for security storage, restricted issue and circulation.

INCORRECT GROUPING OF RECORDS

4.19 Problems could arise if the methods to group records into records series are not proper:

(a) records series overlap with one another and are not mutually exclusive;
(b) policy records are scattered in all series of records;
(c) series do not follow a logical pattern; and
(d) too many or too few series are established.

CODING A FILE

4.20 The opening sections of this Chapter introduce the grouping of files of similar nature in order to form records series and the need to maintain a classification scheme as the initial steps in records classification. The ensuing sections will examine the ways by which individual documents are arranged (filed) in a specific file, as well as the various methods employed in coding a file. All these activities represent different aspects of records classification.

4.21 For practical reasons, we will talk about the activity of file coding first.
WHAT IS FILE CODING?

4.22 Coding a file consists of assigning symbols (numbers, letters and alphanumeric combinations) to the file. The coding is a representation of the RCS in accordance with pre-established rules. A file is coded primarily for the following purposes:

(a) to distinguish a file from other files within the same file group;
(b) to distinguish a file from files of other groups; and
(c) to indicate the logical relationship between record series and files within a series.

4.23 Common coding methods include numeric, alphabetic and alphanumeric.

NUMERIC CODING METHOD

4.24 With this method, the file reference is a series of numbers which may be designed in the following patterns:

✧ Serial Numbering

4.25 Files are numbered serially in sequential order, usually from 1 onwards (e.g. 1, 2, 3…..) regardless of what its subject matter is. There is no meaning attached to the numbers themselves other than to indicate their place in the series.

4.26 The numeric sequence may also arise from the document itself. Thus invoices, cheques, tickets, purchase orders and forms of most kinds have a unique number identifier by which they can be distinguished, filed and retrieved.

4.27 This method has the following advantages and limitations:

Advantages -
(i) simple to use; and
(ii) allows room for expansion because new files can always be added freely from the last number used.

Limitations -
(i) must operate with the aid of an index to give meaning to the numbers; and
(ii) more time required in referring to the index to identify the logical relationships of one file with another. For example, files on similar subjects can bear unrelated codes such as 1, 18 and 37.
\section*{Annual Single Numbering}

4.28 It is similar to serial numbering as the file reference codes are constructed by numbering files from “1” serially beginning each year in sequential order with a suffix indicating the year (e.g. 1/1999, 2/1999, 1/2016, 2/2016, etc.).

4.29 This method has the following advantages and limitations:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Advantages -}
    \begin{itemize}
      \item (i) simple to use;
      \item (ii) size of file numbers could be kept down; and
      \item (iii) facilitates file disposal where the date of disposal is reflected by the year of creation.
    \end{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Limitations -}
    \begin{itemize}
      \item (i) must operate with the aid of an index to give meaning to the numbers; and
      \item (ii) more time required in referring to the index to identify the logical relationships of one file with another. For example, files on similar subjects can bear unrelated codes such as 1/1999, 18/2012 and 37/2016.
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

\section*{Code Numbering (Group Classification Code)}

4.30 Activities of an office are broadly grouped together and each group is given a numeric code with meaning. Files are opened under each code or its sub-divisions in a successively lower order number.

\subsection*{Duplex-numeric coding}

4.31 This coding method allocates numbers which are separated into two or more parts by a dash, space, period, or comma. This is the method GRS adopted in the standard classification scheme for administrative records (GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 3 - Subject Filing). For example:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
1-5 & Accidents \\
1-10 & Legislation \\
1-15 & Appreciation and Condolences \\
\ldots & (“1” stands for the schedule on Administration” and 5, 10 and 15 for the relevant subject groups within the schedule.) \\
\ldots & \\
\ldots & \\
4-5 & Finance and Accounting \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}
4.32 Under the subject area: Accidents (1-5), it can be further broken down into more specific subject matters such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5/0</td>
<td>Accidents – Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5/1</td>
<td>Accidents – Investigations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5/2</td>
<td>Accidents – Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5/3</td>
<td>Accidents – Settlements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.33 This method has the following advantages and limitation:

**Advantages** -
(i) logical sequence of classification and sub-classification; and
(ii) unlimited expansion enabled by sub-classifications under a particular code.

**Limitation** -
(i) an index is needed to attach meanings to the number.

**Block Numbering**

4.34 It resembles the Code Numbering method in that activities of an office are divided into separate classes but “blocks” of numerals are set aside for each class in advance. The size of the block of numbers set aside for any given class is based on an estimate of use and some unassigned numerals would be allowed for new items. For example, each office of GRS has been assigned a block of numbers to code its classes of programme records:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assigned block of codes</th>
<th>Programme file references reserved for office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 - 199</td>
<td>RMAO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 - 299</td>
<td>RSDO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 - 399</td>
<td>PRO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 - 499</td>
<td>PSO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This method has the following advantages and limitations:

**Advantages** -
(i) simple to design and use; and
(ii) files are easily identified by the blocks of numbers to which they belong.

**Limitations** -
(i) limited expansion because the block of numbers is fixed;
(ii) a new block of numbers will need to be created if the growth of each class or series of records exceeds the block numbers allocated; and
(iii) an index is needed to explain the number block.

**ALPHABETIC CODING METHOD**

Files are arranged according to the first letter or letters of the subject’s first name, and the sub-divisions in the order of the first letter or letters of the second name and so on. The system is similar in nature to a general telephone directory or a dictionary. An example of the system is:

- CB  Community Building
- MAC  Mutual Aid Committee
- TPE  Tsui Ping Estate

This method has the following advantages and limitation:

**Advantages** -
(i) suitable for a small number of files, possibly consisting of less than 2 filing drawers;
(ii) self-indexing i.e. can operate without the aid of an index; and
(iii) elastic i.e. new heading can be introduced at any point without disturbing the classification.

**Limitation** -
(i) confusing if standard rules of alphabetical coding (e.g. treatment of “the”, “and”, “a”, hyphenated words prefix, abbreviations etc.) are not consistently followed.
FACTORS FOR CHOOSING CODING METHODS

ALPHANUMERIC CODING METHOD

4.38 It is the combination of letters and numbers to indicate filing progression. Normally, alphanumeric coding takes the form of using a mnemonic alphabetical code for the primary subject and a sequence of number and/or letter code for secondary and tertiary subdivisions. The following is an example:

- Mnemonic letters represent the primary subject -
  - CB Community Building
- A number is added representing the secondary subject -
  - CB/12 Community Building - Mutual Aid Committee
- Another number is added representing a further breakdown of the subject matter -
  - CB/12/0 Community Building - Mutual Aid Committee - Policy

Advantages -
- (i) logical sequence of classification and sub-classification;
- (ii) the alphabetical codes can be rather self-explanatory; and
- (iii) unlimited expansion enabled by sub-classifications under a particular code.

Limitation -
- (i) confusing if standard rules of alphabetical coding (e.g. treatment of “the”, “and”, “a”, hyphenated words prefix, abbreviations etc.) are not consistently followed; and
- (ii) an index is needed to attach meanings to the number.

SELF-EXPLANATORY CODES

4.39 Self-explanatory codes can be used to supplement the above coding methods as appropriate for easy identification. It is advisable to add division/section/district affix in the file reference number. For some files on annual exercises, such as Draft Estimates, the year suffix can be added to the file reference. For example:

- (a) Prefix code: Department / Division / Section / District;
- (b) Suffix code: Year / Security classification / Part number

FACTORS FOR CHOOSING CODING METHODS

4.40 There are a number of factors to be considered when choosing which coding methods for use. The system should:

- (a) provide ready identification of records groups;
- (b) facilitate records retrieval;
(c) accommodate the functions and operational requirements of the organisation;
(d) be able to segregate records requiring special protection; and
(e) be easily understood and learnt by users.

FILE TITLING

4.41 Naming files consistently, logically and in a predictable way will distinguish files from one another at a glance, and as a result will facilitate the classification and retrieval of files. A title given to a file should be meaningful and precise to help users identify and understand the content of files through their titles. It ought to be specific enough to limit the scope of the material to be placed in file and minimise misfiling.

4.42 Naming conventions provide a set of rules to allocate a title to a file at the time of creation that makes retrieval of information more predictable. In allocating a unique and meaningful title, it is important to strike a right balance between:

(a) Brevity: keeping titles short and easy to use;
(b) Usability: describing the content accurately;
(c) Specificity: using specific terms; and
(d) Collocation: grouping records under broad headings.

4.43 The elements of a title should be structured consistently to facilitate retrieval, e.g. from general to specific. Standardised abbreviations and acronyms (e.g. departmental authorised list of abbreviations and acronyms) should be used. Articles, prepositions and conjunctions should be minimised and consistent separators (e.g. “-”, “/”) should be used.

4.44 The target is that each file is titled primarily to reflect its uniqueness among all other files according to an RCS and, secondarily, degree of likeness to other files can be expressed through the common use of selected subject terms.

GUIDE TO RECORDS FILING METHODS

4.45 In the succeeding sections we will discuss briefly how documents are titled and filed by making use of their particular filing features:

(a) subject matter of document;
(b) geographic area or location;
(c) number or symbol;
(d) name of people, organisation, title of report, project, product, etc.; and
(e) date.
FILING BY SUBJECT MATTERS OF RECORDS (SUBJECT FILING)

4.46 Subject filing is the process of arranging and filing records according to their content or subject matters concerned. The purpose is to bring together all documents on the same subject to make it easier to find information when it is needed.

4.47 The possible benefits of having a well-documented subject file classification scheme are:

(a) it ensures that files in a B/D will be maintained properly despite personnel changes;
(b) it readily provides a list of subject categories that a department can use as file titles or topics;
(c) it provides guidelines to help records officers select file titles;
(d) it matches the vocabulary of records officers to that of the searchers by standardising terminology for file titles; and
(e) it controls over the use of synonyms and spelling, and distinguishes among homographs.

4.48 There is no quick and easy way to make subject filing systematic. Developing a subject classification scheme is a painstaking task. Accordingly, GRS promulgated a standard classification scheme for administrative records, which are common to B/Ds, in GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 3 - Subject Filing for service-wide adoption to reduce development and training efforts. As programme files are unique to individual B/Ds, they should be covered by separate classification schemes developed by B/Ds.

Classifying Administrative Subject Files by Using GRS Records Management Publication No. 3 - Subject Filing

4.49 The classification scheme in GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 3 - Subject Filing is made up of a Subject List and an Index. The filing process mentioned in paragraph 4.7 using the standard classification scheme for administrative records of subject files would involve the following steps:

(a) Read and understand content of the item received/generated;
(b) Translate the subject content of the item into subject term(s) or vocabulary reflecting the subject matter of the item;
(c) Check the records inventory to determine if file of the subject concerned has or has not been opened;
(d) If it is a new subject, open a new file;
(e) Name or assign a title to the new file according to the naming rules;
(f) Allot a file reference to the new file according to the coding rules;
(g) Place the item into the file in reverse chronological order;
(h) Store the file systematically in a designated place (normally specified by the file reference); and
(i) Pass it on to action officer concerned if necessary.

4.50 Details on how to use the standard classification scheme for administrative records in filing are given in Chapter 3 of GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 3 - *Subject Filing*.

**FILING BY GEOGRAPHIC AREA OR LOCATION (GEOGRAPHIC FILING)**

4.51 This method is for those records most often retrieved according to by geographical locations. Records filed under location can further be subarranged by name or number if necessary.

4.52 If records are to be filed by location, records officers must consistently file at the same level of geographical subdivision. Locations range from broad geographic areas to very precise subdivisions. The following is an example:

Hong Kong Island  
Southern District  
Aberdeen  
Area 3

4.53 Records officers should decide which locational level is to be used as the basis for their file arrangement. Records officers doing much locational filing will find the local and overseas postal guides, city directories, organisational directories and the like helpful.

**FILING BY NUMBER (NUMERIC OR SERIAL FILING)**

4.54 People generally recognise, recall, and follow file sequences more easily when numbers or symbols are used. Numeric or serial filing is particularly efficient when records already bear registration numbers as in most invoices, contracts, licenses, certificates, vouchers, cheques, bills and requisitions.

4.55 Numeric codes are sometimes used as a timesaver for operating subject files. Although considered simple and fast, it is not actually a complete method of filing. Usually an *additional alphabetic index or list explaining the numeric codes is necessary*. The time needed to maintain the index or list must be taken into account when employing this system. An example is the processing of job applications, each of which can be assigned a candidate number. The B/D may need to establish a list of candidates comprising the candidate numbers, names and other information, etc.
FILING BY NAME (ALPHABETIC FILING)

4.56 This method is used when records are most often retrieved by the name of person, office, organisation, etc. **Filing by name, like filing by number and location, is often used in case files.**

What are Case Files?

4.57 As explained in paragraph 4.15(b), case files are those records which contain information relating to specific action, event, person, organisation, location or thing. Case files, including project files, usually constitute a major records type in most B/Ds. The following are examples of case files:

(a) Purchase orders;
(b) Contracts;
(c) Investigations;
(d) Requisitions;
(e) Loans;
(f) Researches;
(g) Construction projects; and
(h) Personnel records.

Observing Standard Rules in Filing by Name

4.58 Alphabetic filing of a large series of case files is not as simple as it may seem. The problem, again, is inconsistency. **Confusion will occur if standard rules are not followed.** The following are examples that may create difficulties for records officers:

(a) names containing numerals (123 Company);
(b) compound words (South Pacific Co., North Pacific Co., etc.);
(c) hyphenated surnames (Humphery-Smith);
(d) married women's names; and
(e) prefixes on surnames (David de Valera, Otto von Bismarck, etc.).

4.59 Only when standard rules have been followed can persons, especially those who do not do the filing, find records in such a system with ease. B/Ds are advised to set up their specific standard rules with reference to business or operational needs. For example, a B/D can code the personnel files with the first five letters of the surname of the person concerned, followed by the initials, Christian name and serial number, with the intervening hyphen(s) and space(s) removed.
FILING BY DATE (CHRONOLOGIC FILING)

4.60 Though documents within a file are arranged in chronological order, very few files are arranged by date alone. Some case files are arranged by date, but very often secondary filing feature(s) is/are employed to aid retrieval.

4.61 Date filing is also found in those “suspense” or “follow-up” files which exist to remind officers of unfinished actions to be completed by a known date. Often secondary filing feature(s) is/are employed to aid retrieval. For example, a B/D may receive on a specific day several applications of different nature. The case files can be arranged by date first and then sub-arranged by the nature of the application.

HOW TO IMPROVE EXISTING RECORDS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

4.62 The following list out ways to improve the existing records classification system in a B/D:

(a) Separate records from non-records to avoid excessive filing;
(b) Develop file manual to aid and control filing of records;
(c) Assign designated staff (e.g. registry in-charge) to control the creation, naming and coding of new files to facilitate accurate capturing and ready retrieval of records;
(d) New classification schemes for a B/D such as those necessitated by re-organisation should be approved by its DRM\(^1\); and
(e) DRM to review RCS every two to three years\(^2\).

\(^1\) Mandatory requirement under paragraph 8 of GC No. 2/2009.
\(^2\) Mandatory requirement under paragraph 12 of GC No. 2/2009.
CHAPTER 5 SEARCH AND RETRIEVAL OF RECORDS

INTRODUCTION

5.1 Records retrieval is the process of recalling specific records from storage. Owing to the inherent difference in the functionalities of paper-based recordkeeping system and electronic recordkeeping system, records retrieval is conducted differently under the two systems. In particular, the computer search (e.g. with Bar-coding File Management System (BCFMS)) of the whereabouts of files/records can be conducted almost instantly without the need to first consult an index that would otherwise be needed for a manual search.

SEARCHING RECORDS FROM A PAPER-BASED SYSTEM

5.2 It should be recapped that an accurate inventory of records is a prerequisite for good records management because it facilitates efficient control and retrieval of records and provides basic information to support records management activities (e.g. establishing records retention and disposal schedules, review of time-expired records). B/Ds should prepare and maintain an accurate inventory of records.13

5.3 Apart from the RCS, a records classification system is supported by finding aids and tools (e.g. scope notes, file index and cross-referencing rules, thesaurus/controlled vocabulary) and file manual. These finding aids and tools not only enhance the accuracy of filing records and the maintenance of the record classification scheme by registry staff, they also facilitate the speedy retrieval of records by records users.

5.4 To facilitate records retrieval, B/Ds should adopt effective means, BCFMS or GF 448 “File Movement Card”, to track records movement.

TWO STAGES OF RECORDS RETRIEVAL

5.5 In a paper-based recordkeeping system, there are basically TWO stages involved in records retrieval: primary and secondary stages.

(a) In the primary stage of records retrieval, only the list (or index) of the records is searched; and

(b) The secondary stage of record retrieval occurs when the required records, identified from the list, have to be obtained from storage and their contents used to support an action.

13 Mandatory requirement under paragraph 6 of GC No. 2/2009.
RETRIEVAL FROM CASE RECORDS GROUP IS EASIER

5.6 Retrieval of records from some records groups is relatively easier than from others. For example, retrieval of a certain file from a large sequence of alphabetically filed staff personal files is certainly less complicated than finding a file from a series of General Correspondence or Subject files.

5.7 As a general rule, those records which are filed by name, number, geographic area or location and date create the least difficulty so far as retrieval is concerned. Most case records, incidentally, are filed by these methods.

5.8 The file groups that present a major problem in information retrieval are subject files. In order to facilitate records retrieval from these groups of files, serious consideration should be given to their being properly classified, titled and indexed during their creation stage.

PROCESS INVOLVED IN THE RETRIEVAL OF RECORDS / INFORMATION BY SUBJECT

WHAT IS AN INDEX?

5.9 An index is a systematically arranged list of items of records or files giving enough information for each item to be traced by means of a code, a registration number or a symbol indicating its position in a file sequence.

5.10 For many, an index is synonymous with a catalogue. While an index entry merely locates a required item of record, a catalogue entry, however, includes additional prescribed description about each item.

WHAT IS INDEXING?

5.11 In the context of records management, indexing is the physical process of listing significant details about each file title in some searchable form, adding an address (code, reference, or registration number of the file) for storage and retrieval.

SUBJECT FILES RETRIEVAL PROCESS

5.12 Before retrieval can start, the records concerned have to be properly filed first. Some major points in filing subject files are recapped below.

5.13 Initially, each new record item received will be read and an idea formed of its subject matter. It should be noted that misreading or misunderstanding of the record item may provide a wrong idea of its subject matter, thus affecting the way it is filed and subsequently its retrieval.

5.14 This conceptual analysis of the record item is then translated into a specific file title,
uniquely different from all other file titles in the system, possibly with the aid of some form of controlled vocabulary. Human error again may affect subsequent retrieval, particularly if the controlled vocabulary is not strictly followed.

5.15 At the same time, file title and location details are added to a subject index, which is a tool to be used when carrying out a retrieval search.

5.16 The retrieval process starts with the information need of an individual user or action officer (requesting user), which is translated into the concept of a specific file (requested file) containing that information. The controlled vocabulary is available to assist at this stage if necessary. It should be noted that human error may affect subsequent retrieval if the requested file does not in fact contain the needed information, and if the searcher fails to appreciate the user's need and concept correctly.

5.17 The retrieval process then involves getting the requested file from storage, or if it is already in use, tracing through a file movement system. The file is then sent to the requesting user, where it should meet his/her information need.

5.18 If the file delivered through the retrieval system does not meet the user’s information need, a new conceptual analysis of a requested file must be developed, and the searching process re-instituted. It should be noted that the system failure may have been caused by poor techniques in vocabulary control and/or indexing, but human error at various stages, both at input and while searching, is the most likely culprit.

HOW TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE RETRIEVAL OF RECORDS BY SUBJECT

5.19 By outlining the above retrieval process, it is emphasised that retrieval of records/information through subject access takes effort and that effective and efficient retrieval depends very much on:

(a) proper classification of the records in the first place;
(b) proper control (vocabulary, for example) in file titling;
(c) proper subject index and good indexing techniques; and
(d) proper training of registry staff in these techniques.

5.20 For a more in-depth illustration of indexing or retrieval of subject files, readers could refer to GRS' Records Management Publication No. 3 - *Subject Filing.*
GOOD PRACTICES FOR RETRIEVING PAPER FILES

5.21 The following are some good practices for facilitating the retrieval of files:

(a) Active files, in particular those which are frequently retrieved, should be kept as near to the records users as possible. Inactive files, on the other hand, may be kept in off-site locations. Please see Chapter 6 for more details on storage of records;

(b) The names and contact details of registry staff, and the division of duties among them to manage different series of files should be made known to records users. This would facilitate them to approach the appropriate registry staff to retrieve files; and

(c) Storage equipment should be labelled accurately and conspicuously to facilitate retrieval of files.
CHAPTER 6   STORAGE AND PRESERVATION OF RECORDS

INTRODUCTION

6.1 B/Ds should put in place appropriate arrangements to ensure proper custody and storage of records.14

6.2 Records should be stored in proper facilities (e.g. filing cabinets, filing racks) in a clean and dry environment and protected from unauthorised access.15

PROPER CUSTODY AND STORAGE OF RECORDS

6.3 Records should be kept in a suitable medium, system and environment that are compatible with the form and characteristics of the records, their retrieval requirements and preservation needs.

6.4 In particular, records should be stored and protected in ways that reflect their security classification. B/Ds should adhere to the SR, notably SR 190-235 and SR 350-387 in respect of the protection and storage for classified records.

6.5 In case of any loss or unauthorised destruction of records, the incident should be immediately reported to the DRM and a copy of such report sent to GRS simultaneously. The DRM should conduct investigation into the incident, take appropriate action, and report his/her findings to GRS within three months.16

STORAGE OF PAPER RECORDS

6.6 Paper records should be stored in a clean and dry environment (i.e. not near window, water/sewage pipe, water drain, water tank, manhole, water permeable wall or ceiling), and in proper filing equipment (e.g. cabinets and racks). Paper records should not be stacked on the floor. General guidelines on records storage environment are available from paragraphs 510 to 523 of the Records Management Manual (RMM). B/Ds should arrange inspection of records storage areas regularly and also after events such as adverse weather conditions, typhoons or rainstorm to ensure proper storage of records.

6.7 B/Ds should in particular note that paper deteriorates rapidly in an environment of high temperature and humidity. In addition, mould growth on paper can be a health hazard to staff.

14 Mandatory requirement under paragraph 21 of GC No. 2/2009.
15 Mandatory requirement under paragraph 23 of GC No. 2/2009.
16 Mandatory requirement under paragraph 22 of GC No. 2/2009.
6.8 For paper records which have long-term (e.g. 30 years or over) or permanent value, they should be stored in a clean environment with round-the-clock control of temperature at 20°C +/- 2°C and relative humidity at 50% +/- 5% to ensure their preservation over time.

**STORAGE OF INACTIVE PAPER RECORDS**

6.9 Utilising off-site storage for inactive paper records can save costs and enhance retrieval efficiency.

6.10 GRS operates records centres in Tuen Mun which provide centralised intermediate storage services for B/Ds to store their inactive records. B/Ds should consider shortening the retention period of inactive paper records in their storage by transferring the records to GRS for intermediate storage or preserving them by microfilming. Details on the services provided by the records centres are available in Chapter 5 of GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 1 - *A Practical Guide To Records Scheduling And Disposal*.

6.11 Where appropriate, B/Ds may also store their inactive paper records in B/Ds’ off-site locations. B/Ds should ensure that they develop proper practices and procedures when relocating inactive records to off-site locations to avoid loss of records.

**BULK RELOCATION OF PAPER RECORDS**

6.12 To minimise the risk of losing records during bulk relocation of files, appropriate arrangement should be made during the process. These include: designating an officer not below the rank of Executive Officer II or equivalent to oversee the task; taking stock before the relocation exercise; conducting a file inventory check after relocation; documenting the inventory check and updating the new storage location immediately afterwards. B/Ds should refer to the “Guidelines on Bulk Relocation of Government Records” for more details.

**STORAGE OF OTHER NON-ELECTRONIC RECORDS**

6.13 Besides paragraph 6.6, B/Ds should note that the temperature and relative humidity of the storage environment should be carefully controlled for other non-electronic records having long-term (e.g. 30 years or over) or permanent value. For example, microfilm records should be stored in an 24-hour air-conditioned and dust free environment with stable and controlled temperature at 14°C +/- 2°C and relative humidity at 40% +/- 5%, while audio-visual records in an environment of temperature ranged between 4°C and 16°C and relative humidity not higher than 40% with minimum fluctuations. B/Ds may seek the advice on storage and preservation of records of specific forms from the Preservation Service Office of GRS.

17 Mandatory requirement under paragraph 21 of GC No. 2/2009.
STORAGE OF OTHER INACTIVE NON-ELECTRONIC RECORDS

6.14 Similarly, B/Ds may consider storing their other inactive non-electronic records in off-site locations to save costs and enhance retrieval efficiency. Proper practices and procedures should be developed and adhered to when relocating inactive records to off-site locations to avoid loss of records.

BULK RELOCATION OF OTHER NON-ELECTRONIC RECORDS

6.15 Similar to bulk relocation of paper records and electronic records, B/Ds should make appropriate arrangements for bulk relocation of other non-electronic records to minimise the risk of losing records during office relocation or moving inactive records to off-site storage. Appropriate arrangements should be made in accordance with the “Guidelines on Bulk Relocation of Government Records” to ensure that the relocation process is properly supervised and conducted.

REFERENCES

6.16 B/Ds could refer to the following to look for guidelines related to the storage and preservation of electronic records:

(a) Guidelines for Managing Records in a Hybrid Environment;
(b) A Handbook on Preservation of Electronic Records; and
(c) Guidelines on Bulk Relocation of Government Records.
CHAPTER 7  ACCESS CONTROL, SECURITY AND TRACKING

INTRODUCTION

7.1 Records should be classified according to their level of sensitivity at a particular time in accordance with the SR. Timely access to records should be provided to authorised users for conducting business.

SECURITY CLASSIFICATIONS

7.2 Security classifications apply to define the level of confidentiality and security measures required in handling documents of the HKSAR Government. Originators shall decide the grading on consideration of how much damage the unauthorised disclosure of the material or its source would cause either to the HKSAR Government or the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China. According to SR 161, there are four categories of classified information, i.e.:

(a) TOP SECRET - Information and material, the unauthorised disclosure of which would cause exceptionally grave damage to the HKSAR Government or the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China.

(b) SECRET - Information and material, the unauthorised disclosure of which would cause serious injury to the interests of the HKSAR Government or the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China.

(c) CONFIDENTIAL - Information and material, the unauthorised disclosure of which would be prejudicial to the interests of the HKSAR Government or the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China.

(d) RESTRICTED - Information and material, the unauthorised disclosure of which would be undesirable in the interests of the HKSAR Government.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

7.3 Security is the personal responsibility of every Government servant. Official information shall not be released to unauthorised person and appropriate steps must be taken to prevent unauthorised disclosure. Relevant Government servants are required to sign a declaration to confirm their understanding that they may be prosecuted for an offence under the Official Secrets Ordinance (Cap. 521) if they disclose without lawful authority or fail to prevent with care the unauthorised disclosure of official information.

7.4 Officers handling classified records have the duty to be thoroughly acquainted with SR and related Circulars/Circular Memoranda pertaining to their duties. They can get access to these requirements through the CCGO’s website at http://sb.host.ccgo.hksarg/sr/sr.pdf (which is accessible by government officers only) or the Departmental Security Officer of respective B/Ds. Enquiries shall be made to the Departmental Security Officer in case of doubt.
“NEED-TO-KNOW” PRINCIPLE

7.5 According to SR 120 and 121, the principle that the dissemination of classified information should be no wider than is required for the efficient conduct of the business in hand and restricted to those who are authorised to have access is fundamental to all aspects of security. Staff should be made fully aware that it is their personal responsibility to apply the “need-to-know” principle within their own sphere of activity.

ACCESS CONTROL AND SECURITY

7.6 Irrespective of forms of records, access control and security should be established and implemented in the recordkeeping systems of B/Ds to protect the security and integrity of records stored therein. It should ensure that records and the associated metadata and audit trails are:

(a) protected from tampering, unauthorised alteration and erasure;
(b) protected according to the relevant security classifications as stipulated in the SR; and
(c) accessible by authorised users only.

7.7 B/Ds should comply with the relevant requirements stipulated in the SR and IT security policy and guidelines. Although the implementation method of access control and security may differ for different forms of records, B/Ds are reminded of the following:

(a) To provide sensitive information with adequate protection, records are to be classified according to their level of security at a particular time in accordance with SR 160-161;
(b) The security classification should be applied according to the information contained in the records, instead of their forms. For example, a paper record and an electronic record containing the same piece of information should not be applied with different security classifications. Similarly, B/Ds should also ensure that the access rights of classified records are granted to users in a consistent manner regardless of their forms; and
(c) The security classification of a record should be clearly marked and displayed in accordance with SR 170-176 and SR 373-376.

7.8 Regarding the security of electronic records, B/Ds should make reference to the IT Security theme page on ITG InfoStation for more details of requirements and guidelines on IT security (http://itginfo.cccgo.hksarg/content/itsecure/default.shtml, which is accessible by government officers only).
MANAGING ACCESS CONTROL AND SECURITY OF PAPER RECORDS

7.9 Due to the importance of access control and security, B/Ds should establish a mechanism to monitor and review such control. For example, random checks can be conducted regularly by the DRM and the Departmental Security Officer to ensure records users and records officers have adhered to the security requirements to create, manage and store classified records.

7.10 B/Ds should also keep in view any changing situations and regularly review and update the access control and security accordingly. For example, the access control and security will need to be updated as a result of changes of responsibilities of users due to change of duties, changes to the RCS (e.g. after a major reorganisation of a B/D), or changes of security classification of records.

7.11 All the relevant activities should be properly documented to demonstrate that sufficient control is in place to ensure the overall security and integrity of the recordkeeping systems.

7.12 The DRM in each B/D should review the classified records in his/her custody at least once every five years to downgrade suitable items. He/she should adhere to the SR and coordinate his/her review with agencies that bear a direct relation or have a direct interest in the subjects or contents of the records to be reviewed.\(^\text{18}\)

TRACKING OF PAPER RECORDS

7.13 In a recordkeeping system, tracking of the movement and use of records is required to:

- (a) identify outstanding action required;
- (b) enable retrieval of records;
- (c) prevent loss or missing of records;
- (d) monitor usage for recordkeeping system maintenance and security (e.g. growth of records, disposal of records); and
- (e) identify the operational origin of individual records where the recordkeeping systems have been amalgamated or migrated.

7.14 B/Ds should decide the type of information that needs to be maintained to facilitate tracking of records, and to adopt means to track the whereabouts and movement of records.

7.15 In general, B/Ds should have adopted BCFMS, file movement cards, or other measures to track the whereabouts and movement of paper files.

7.16 B/Ds are reminded that the tracking of records not only applies to paper files, but also to records of different forms such as oversized maps and bulky books and other non-electronic records. B/Ds should also implement effective means (e.g. a manual register or an electronic library management system) to facilitate tracking of such records, which is also applicable to electronic records stored on removable media such as DVDs.

\(^{18}\) Paragraph 443 of RMM. SR 182 is also relevant.
CHAPTER 8  RECORDS SCHEDULING AND DISPOSAL

INTRODUCTION

8.1  Scheduling and disposal of records should be well planned and implemented in a systematic, orderly and auditable manner. B/Ds should refer to the general guidelines provided in GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 1 - *A Practical Guide To Records Scheduling And Disposal* for details.

RECORDS SCHEDULING

8.2  A records retention and disposal schedule is also known as a records disposal schedule or disposal schedule. It is a systematic listing or description of an organisation’s records which indicates the arrangements to be made for their custody, retention and final disposal.

8.3  B/Ds are required to draw up disposal schedules to cover all their programme records to ensure systematic planning and orderly implementation of records disposal. With the agreement of the GRS Director, such draft disposal schedules will be approved in the form of Disposal Authority (abbreviated as “DA”).

8.4  B/Ds should forward draft disposal schedules to GRS within a period of two years for all new series of programme records. Approved records retention and disposal schedules should be reviewed at least once every five years to determine whether amendments are required. B/Ds may refer to the “Guideline cum Checklist for Review of Records Retention and Disposal Schedules” for conducting such reviews.

8.5  B/Ds should arrange retention and disposal of records in accordance with requirements specified in GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 4 - *General Administrative Records Disposal Schedules* (GARDS) for administrative records and the disposal schedules established for programme records. This applies to all government records regardless of their form or media (including electronic records and other non-electronic records).

8.6  B/Ds should also refer to the *Guidelines for Managing Records in a Hybrid Environment* for advice on taking a consistent approach in the records scheduling of different forms of records and/or establishing different disposal actions for the same category of records created or received in different forms.

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19  Mandatory requirement under paragraph 15 of GC No. 2/2009.

20  Paragraph 617 of RMM.
Notes for Preparing Disposal Schedules

8.7 A B/D can now access its own set of updated and approved disposal schedules at the Storage Allocation and Records Centre Information System (SARCIS).

8.8 For B/Ds with sections/offices performing similar functions/activities and hence generating similar records, “centralised” disposal schedules can be established to cover these records which probably have the same retention requirements. This arrangement not only helps standardise the retention requirements of similar records, but also save costs on managing a large number of schedules.

8.9 Disposal schedules should address operational and fiscal needs as well as policy and statutory requirements adequately.

RECORDS DISPOSAL

8.10 Regular disposal of records facilitates easy retrieval of records in active use, and minimises costs for maintaining and storing records. It includes the destruction of records in question upon the GRS Director’s approval or transfer of records with archival value to PRO of GRS for permanent retention.

8.11 B/Ds should dispose of time-expired records at least once every two years for all their administrative records, which are covered by the GARDS, and for all their programme records with approved disposal schedules.  

21 If there are valid reasons to defer the transfer of time-expired records having archival value or potential archival value to PRO for retention or appraisal by more than two years, B/Ds must seek agreement in writing by a directorate officer in the B/D concerned at the level of deputy secretary/deputy head of department and the GRS should be consulted in advance.

8.12 B/Ds should, during the regular disposal exercises, review files which are inactive (see paragraph 2.5(c) of this publication) but remain unclosed (especially for those files which had been opened over 30 years) to see whether they should be closed and then disposed of.

Prior consent before destruction of records

8.13 Regardless of the forms or media of the records, B/Ds must obtain the prior agreement of the GRS Director before they destroy any government records.

21 Mandatory requirement under paragraph 17 of GC No. 2/2009.

22 Mandatory requirement under paragraph 18 of GC No. 2/2009.
FINAL DISPOSAL OF RECORDS

8.14 To minimise the risk of inadvertent unauthorised destruction of records during the disposal process, B/Ds should designate an officer not below the rank of Executive Officer II or equivalent to ensure that the disposal process is properly supervised and the records disposal procedures as set out in Appendix IV of GC 2/2009 are complied with.23

8.15 In addition, B/Ds should also specify clearly the roles and responsibilities of the parties concerned for the disposal of hybrid records. For example, the destruction of electronic records may need the technical support from the ITMU after the B/D has sought the agreement of the GRS Director.

8.16 B/Ds should adopt suitable methods for the final disposal of records which are compatible with the forms and media of records, and the sensitivity and security classification of their contents. For example, classified waste materials (classified documents no longer required and the materials used in the production of such documents) should be destroyed normally by shredding in accordance with SR 227 to 234, whilst the destruction of classified electronic records should comply with SR 377 to 378.

TRANSFER OF RECORDS WITH ARCHIVAL VALUE

8.17 Some records contain information having archival value or potential archival value which forms part of the memory of the community. Regardless of the forms and media of such records, B/Ds should transfer these records to PRO according to the respective disposal schedules24 and with any supporting documentation, indices or other relevant information as required by PRO.

8.18 All government records reaching 30 years old should be appraised by PRO to determine whether or not they possess archival value for permanent preservation.25

23 Mandatory requirement under paragraph 19 of GC No. 2/2009.
24 Mandatory requirement under paragraph 16 of GC No. 2/2009.
25 Paragraph 637 of RMM.
CHAPTER 9 VITAL RECORDS PROTECTION

INTRODUCTION

9.1 Vital records are those records containing information essential to the continued and effective operation of an organisation during and after an emergency or disaster. B/Ds should identify and protect their vital records to ensure uninterrupted operation of major business functions.

9.2 For detailed guidelines and procedures for establishing a vital records protection programme, B/Ds should refer to GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 6 - Manual on Vital Records Protection.

IDENTIFYING VITAL RECORDS

9.3 Identification of vital records requires a comprehensive review on records kept by a B/D so as to determine what records warrant protection under the programme. B/Ds should conduct a risk analysis to assess the potential risks (e.g. fire that may cause loss or serious destruction to the records).

9.4 When selecting vital records where the required information exists in more than one record form/source, B/Ds should take into consideration when, where and how the vital records would be retrieved and used in the event of an emergency or a disaster. Since vital records in different forms may require different equipment, devices, tools and software to retrieve and access, B/Ds should consider the availability of these equipment and facilities (e.g. computer and application software) during and after an emergency or a disaster.

SELECTING PROTECTION METHODS

9.5 There are various methods to protect vital records. The common methods include duplication, dispersal, on-site protection and off-site storage. Please refer to Chapter V of GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 6 - Manual on Vital Records Protection for more details.

9.6 The protection methods should be selected having regard to the business needs (e.g. records of rescue plans may need to be kept on site to facilitate timely retrieval during and after an emergency or a disaster), cost implications as well as expertise and skills required of the B/D concerned.
PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES TO MANAGE VITAL RECORDS SCHEDULES

9.7 To supplement the advice set out in GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 6 - *Manual on Vital Records Protection*, B/Ds should adopt the following good practices and procedures:

(a) designate an officer(s) not below the rank of Chief Executive Officer or equivalent to endorse a duly completed vital records schedule (VRS). Such authorisation should be documented in the VRS (i.e. Part VI of the VRS proforma);

(b) designate the DRM to coordinate with various concerned parties to draw up VRSs and maintain a master list of all VRSs. It is recommended that DRMs should also keep a duplicate set of all VRSs of their B/Ds;

(c) review VRSs regularly, say every two to three years and as and when necessary, to meet changing business needs of B/Ds and revise them as appropriate. Revisions made to a VRS should be properly endorsed; and

(d) properly protect and store VRSs to ensure their availability during and/or after the occurrence of an emergency or a disaster.
CHAPTER 10 MANAGING ELECTRONIC RECORDS

INTRODUCTION

10.1 An electronic record means a record generated in digital form by an information system, which can be (a) transmitted within an information system or from one information system to another; and (b) stored in an information system or other medium.

10.2 An ERKS is an information/computer system with the necessary records management capabilities designed to electronically collect, organise, classify and control the creation, storage, retrieval, distribution, maintenance and use, disposal and preservation of records. It provides comprehensive records management functionalities to support efficient and effective management of electronic and non-electronic records. In the era of e-government, it is expected that more and more electronic records will be created and received in business operations. B/Ds should consider and plan for implementation of an ERKS in their organisations so as to reap the benefits of technology to manage both electronic and non-electronic records effectively and efficiently in a proper, consistent and secure manner by one single recordkeeping system.

10.3 There is a fundamental distinction between information systems (or business systems) and ERKSs. Business systems contain data that is commonly subject to constant updates (dynamic) and able to be transformed (manipulable). By contrast, ERKSs contain data that is not dynamically linked to business activity (fixed) and unable to be altered (inviolable). They maintain appropriate contextual information (metadata) and links between records to support their value as evidence. Therefore, business systems cannot be equated with ERKSs from records management perspective in that only the latter could provide the necessary records management functionalities for retaining records of past actions, and fixing the content, structure and context of records over time.

FILING OF E-MAIL RECORDS

10.4 Only when an ERKS is implemented and agreed by GRS, e-mail correspondences in a B/D should be “printed-and-filed” for record purposes and managed by departmental paper-based recordkeeping system similar to other paper records. For more details on the proper management of e-massages and e-mail correspondences, please refer to Guideline on the Management of Electronic Messages.

FILING OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS

10.5 Electronic records could be divided into two main types: born-digital records and digitised records. Born-digital records are records originated in a digital format that require a computer to be readable by people. A digitised record is one that is born analog (paper) and has been converted into a machine readable format using a scanner. Electronic records of both

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26 Mandatory requirement under paragraph 7 of GC No. 2/2009.
types should be captured into the departmental ERKS and stored along with associated metadata, regardless of format. Linkage with other records (including paper records) could also be added during the capture into the ERKS to maintain the contextual information between related records.

10.6 Non-electronic records (e.g. paper records) should be captured into an ERKS as far as practicable by conversion into digital format through scanning taking into account operational needs, regulatory and legal requirements. B/Ds should develop their departmental ERKS procedures and guidelines on scanning depending on the system functionalities of their own selected ERKS solution. They need to assess the full implications of early destruction of the original records after scanning to safeguard the Government’s interests in accordance with the guidelines entitled *Disposal of Original Records (for records that have been digitised and stored in a digital form)* promulgated by GRS.

10.7 In the absence of an ERKS, electronic records should be printed and filed (stored) in a paper-based recordkeeping system as a physical record. Exceptions may be made for those electronic records which cannot be printed on hardcopies (e.g. audio and visual files) and those stored on external storage media (e.g. DVDs) which would be too bulky to be printed. Those electronic records would be stored in its container (to be put inside an envelope as an attachment to a file enclosure or stored in a separate storage facility) as a physical object in the paper-based recordkeeping system with the appropriate links/cross-references with other records.

10.8 Officers should not use shared drives, local hard discs or other devices not designed for recordkeeping purposes to capture and keep records in lieu of an ERKS or a paper-based recordkeeping system.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF ERKS**

**Roles and Responsibilities**

10.9 Under a hybrid/digital environment, B/Ds should review and ensure that the roles and responsibilities under different recordkeeping systems and/or different forms of records are defined clearly as appropriate.

**Metadata**

10.10 Metadata are literally defined as “data about data”. Recordkeeping metadata (e.g. creator and date created) are data describing the context, content and structure of records and their management through time. An ERKS will have records management functionalities to capture and maintain metadata to accomplish the following:

(a) ensuring the authenticity, reliability and integrity of records;
(b) facilitating retrieval and understanding of records;
(c) supporting the management of aggregations and records including managing the security classification of folders/records and access to them; and
(d) enabling the identification of the technological environment (e.g. the software used to create a record) in which the electronic records were created or captured and
facilitating migration of records from one computer platform to another.

10.11 The digital environment for records management requires a different expression of traditional requirements and different mechanisms for identifying, capturing, attributing and using metadata. Initially, metadata defines the record at its point of capture, fixing the record into its business context. Metadata continues to accrue information relating to the context and business processes in which the records are used. Even when records become inactive, metadata helps with other purposes like preservation. The purpose of records management metadata is to ensure authenticity, reliability, usability and integrity of records over time.

**Compliance**

10.12 B/Ds should ensure that the design of an ERKS complies with the standards entitled (i) *Functional Requirements of an Electronic Recordkeeping System* and (ii) *Recordkeeping Metadata Standard for the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region* developed by GRS to manage both electronic records and non-electronic records in a proper, consistent and secure manner.

**Records Classification Scheme**

10.13 As the records classification system is unique for each B/D, B/Ds should review their departmental RCS when planning to implement an ERKS. In particular, B/Ds should set out rules, practices and procedures to create, title, classify, organise and manage aggregations; and to maintain and revise the RCS in an ERKS.

**References**

10.14 B/Ds could refer to (i) *Guidelines on Implementation of an Electronic Recordkeeping System: Key Considerations and Preparation Work Required* and (ii) *A Handbook on Records Management Practices and Guidelines for an Electronic Recordkeeping System* for planning the implementation of an ERKS.
CHAPTER 11 MANAGING REGISTRY

INTRODUCTION

11.1 Registry management is an important aspect within the broader context of records management. Good registry management ensures that records in their active stage are properly controlled and maintained.

ACTIVITIES INVOLVED IN REGISTRY MANAGEMENT

11.2 Generally speaking, registry management involves two main records controlling activities:

(a) **Physical control** such as file creation and registration, movement control, file closure, file maintenance, etc.; and

(b) **information control** such as records classification, indexing, and index searching.

11.3 Information control has already been discussed in previous chapters. In the succeeding chapters, we will look at the following management activities:

(a) Handling of inwards and outwards correspondence (*Chapter 13*);
(b) Classification and filing (*Chapter 14*);
(c) Making up of file (*Chapter 15*);
(d) Controlling file movement (*Chapter 16*);
(e) Closing files (*Chapter 17*); and
(f) Miscellaneous registry services (*Chapter 18*).

11.4 The basic requirements of filing handling procedures will be illustrated in details in the succeeding chapters. To facilitate reference by registry staff in their daily operation, a concise guideline on the filing routines, namely “Practical Guide on Filing Routines and Practices”, is attached at Appendix C.
GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF OFFICER IN CHARGE OF REGISTRY MANAGEMENT

11.5 It is the responsibilities of the officer(s) in charge of registry management to ensure, among others, that:

(a) correspondence ought to be put away or filed daily;
(b) each incoming document is stamped with the date of receipt unless there is an instruction to the contrary;
(c) acknowledgement is made for letters received from members of the public;
(d) in the case of registered letters, particulars should be recorded in a special register;
(e) each document is filed and passed on to the subject officer concerned for action. If the file is not immediately available, the procedure in paragraphs 15.27 to 15.34 in Chapter 15 is to be observed;
(f) where a document is addressed or copied for the attention of a specific officer by name, the document is enclosed in file to the officer so named or to the subject officer if more appropriate;
(g) where attachments are mentioned, they should be checked to ensure that there is no omission; and
(h) all incoming and copy of the outgoing correspondences are duly inserted in the relevant file and their particulars are recorded on the minute sheet.

11.6 More detailed description of the above duties/activities is provided in the following chapters.

CONTROL RECORDS ESSENTIAL TO REGISTRY MANAGEMENT

What are the Control Records in a Registry?

11.7 These are records created within the registry itself to be used as aids to carrying out the various procedures in registry management.

Types of Control Records

11.8 In general, at least three types of control records should be maintained in a registry:

(a) **Retrieval Control Records** - The various kinds of indexes are typical examples of this type. In fact, the maintenance of proper indexes is essential for the efficient operation of registry work (The various indexing systems are discussed in details in GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 3 - *Subject Filing*).
(b) **Evidential Control Records - Inventory of records** is a typical example of this type. Details on inventory of records will be discussed in paragraph 18.19.

(c) **General Service Control Records** - Included in this type of control records are:

(i) Records Movement Registers or Location Registers, and

(ii) Bring-up Registers or Diaries.

11.9 Separately, registries equipped with BCFMS could perform the above controls with the functions provided by BCFMS.
CHAPTER 12 REDUCING UNNECESSARY FILING

INTRODUCTION

12.1 Management of records starts with a careful control over what information should be kept in the recordkeeping system and what should not in the first place. Records users should, in cooperation with registry staff of each B/D, make sure that only those needed information are filed. Filing unneeded information is likely the least productive of all office tasks. Indiscriminate filing wastes manpower and equipment. In this chapter, guidelines will be provided to help registry staff recognise those types of documents which might not need to be filed.

INFORMATION RECEIVED BY B/D

12.2 Before deciding whether to put the various types of records received/created by B/Ds (as in paragraph 1.13 of this publication) into the recordkeeping system, one should ask oneself the following questions first:

(a) Do we have to file those “information only” copies?
(b) Do we have to file all publications or periodicals as records?
(c) Should we file all routine correspondences?
(d) How many copies of each document should we file?
(e) Are we doing our part to make the official file complete?
(f) Can we share files with other offices or B/Ds?
(g) Can we reduce distribution of extra copies to other offices or branches?

REDUCING COPY DISTRIBUTION

12.3 Reducing copy distribution could be an effective way to control unnecessary filing. While we appreciate the fact that information copies are very important in the communication chain of a department, we do think that before copies are routinely sent out to every officer and office, a user survey should be undertaken in order to determine the real need of each recipient. The following questions could be asked during the review:

(a) Have the copies been requested?
(b) What purpose will the copy serve? Is the purpose valid?
(c) Could one copy be enough to serve two or more officers or offices?
(d) Could the file be shared?

12.4 Though B/Ds could not afford any gap in communication, they still have to watch out for the unnecessary distribution of copies which is likely to become the B/D’s filing nuisance.
12.5 Distribution by e-mail should be considered as a way of circulation to reduce unnecessary generation of paper records.
CHAPTER 13  HANDLING OF INWARD AND OUTWARD CORRESPONDENCE

CATEGORIES OF INWARD CORRESPONDENCE

13.1 There are three broad categories of incoming correspondence:

   (a) correspondence impersonally addressed to the head of B/D;
   (b) correspondence personally addressed to individuals; and
   (c) sealed classified documents.

PROCEDURES IN HANDLING INWARD CORRESPONDENCE

Opening the Correspondence

13.2 Incoming correspondence should be opened by responsible officers. Where practicable, all incoming correspondence should be opened by one officer in the presence of another. Registry staff should check if the envelopes containing confidential information were opened. Departmental Security Officers shall be informed in case of doubt.

13.3 Not all correspondence are records. By definition, a record is any recorded information in any physical format or media created or received by an organisation during its course of official business and kept as evidence of policies, decisions, procedures, functions, activities and transactions. As such, only those items which are subsequently kept for further actions or reference would be filed. Generally speaking, advertising materials are not records.

13.4 For correspondence bearing the marking of “Personal”, “Private”, “Private and Confidential”, “c/o” or those which are obviously of non-official business, they should be distributed to respective officers directly without being opened.

Recording the Date of Receipt

13.5 Each incoming correspondence must be stamped with the date of receipt. The exact time of receipt does not need to be entered unless there is a departmental instruction saying that this should be done. The receipt chop can also remind the subject officer of the need to issue acknowledgement and reply to the originator of the correspondence expeditiously.
Checking Attachments

13.6 Where attachments are quoted, registry staff should check to ensure that there is no omission. If omission does occur, registry staff should contact the originating officer for replenishing the omitted attachment, or report to the subject officer for instructions.

13.7 The envelope may also be affixed to the document if the time and place of posting are treated as matters of importance.

Registering the Incoming Correspondence

13.8 To some B/Ds, where there is an operational, security or legal requirement, an Incoming Document Register may need to be maintained to record the information of the originator, reference, date written or date received of the correspondence of certain subjects.

13.9 According to SR 201, for incoming documents classified CONFIDENTIAL and above, a register must be maintained to record the date and office of the origin and where it is filed. In the case of registered letters, particulars should be recorded in Inward Registered Letters and Remittance Register (GF 197).

13.10 The Non-file Record System (NRS) module of BCFMS can be used to record incoming correspondence. NRS facilitates users in management of non-file records in files. Simply speaking, as one file may contain many records (i.e. the paper documents filed in the paper, assigned with serial enclosure numbers), one BCFMS file can be related to a number of NRS records. BCFMS can support the General Registry to index the records and allows convenient retrieval of these non-file records by using NRS. Please refer to Chapter 9 of the User Manual for BCFMS Version 5.2 for details. For further enquiries regarding BCFMS, please contact the Efficiency Unit.

Acknowledging Receipt

13.11 According to GC No. 2/2018, receipt of correspondence from outside organisations/individuals should be acknowledged as early as possible and in any event, not later than ten calendar days upon receipt, unless a substantive reply can be made within this period. A note should be made on the correspondence that this has been done. If the correspondence comes with a despatch slip (GF 121), the receiving office is required to acknowledge receipt by returning the despatch slip duly signed and dated to the originating office.

Attention Note

13.12 Where a correspondence is addressed or copied to the head of a B/D for the attention of a specific officer by name, the correspondence is normally opened and enclosed in file to the officer so named or to the subject officer if more appropriate.
Mail Personally Addressed

13.13 Unless with the consent of the head of B/D, a government officer should not use his/her official address for the receipt of personal mail. The Government will not be held responsible for any delay, loss, interference or damage rendered to such mail.

13.14 Registry staff receiving personal mail for an officer on long leave should forward it immediately to the Departmental Secretary or his/her immediate supervisor who will take necessary action in accordance with the instructions given by the officer concerned before his departure.

Mail for Urgent Attention

13.15 The officer in charge of the registry is responsible for ensuring that correspondence marked “URGENT” is brought immediately to the attention of the subject officer concerned. This will enable the subject officer to accord relevant priority in the processing of the case.

Fax

13.16 Generally speaking, when both fax copy and the original copy are received, only one of them is required to be kept in the file because filing excessive copy is a waste of resources and would generate a lot of unnecessary records.

13.17 Before filing, registry staff could discard the fax leader page if it does not contain additional information.

13.18 Same as the receipt of incoming correspondence by mail, registry staff should put a stamp of the date of receipt on the incoming fax or a chop carrying the wording “RECEIVED BY FAX ON... ” for this purpose.

13.19 If it is considered necessary to also have the original document for audit or legal purposes (e.g. to authenticate signatures or chops under financial regulations or legislation), the originator should be asked to send the original document by means other than fax.

Money, Cheques and Valuables Received

13.20 Money, cheques and valuables received by the registry should be handed immediately to the appropriate officer, and the related procedures as laid down in the *Financial and Accounting Regulations* should be strictly followed.
PROCEDURES IN HANDLING OUTWARD CORRESPONDENCE

Distribution

13.21 Before outgoing documents are sent out, registry staff should check and ensure that:

(a) accurate file references are assigned to all outgoing documents;
(b) all outgoing documents are signed; and
(c) all attachments mentioned in the documents are enclosed properly.

13.22 According to SR 166, 169-170 and 193, registry staff should ensure that security classification has been marked clearly on all classified outgoing documents:

(a) documents are classified according to their contents, not the classification of the file (e.g. a SECRET incoming mail may be replied by a CONFIDENTIAL memo because the reply memo does not contain secret information);
(b) if a SECRET document covered by a CONFIDENTIAL memo is to be sent out, the highest classification of the two (viz. SECRET) should be marked on the envelope and all covers;
(c) RESTRICTED document must be marked with its classification RESTRICTED in block letters in black at the top and bottom of every page and the height of the letters should not be less than 5 mm;
(d) the ways of handling CONFIDENTIAL or higher than CONFIDENTIAL documents are more or less the same as that of (c) above. However, it is better to mark letters in red; and
(e) every TOP SECRET and SECRET document and every page of such document must be individually numbered, e.g. 1 of 20, 2 of 20.

13.23 Registry staff should then check the classification of each document and decide whether envelope should be used. All RESTRICTED and above documents and documents containing personal data should be placed in envelopes. Non-classified documents do not need to be placed in envelope. If necessary, “Transit Envelope” should be used in the distribution of documents among B/Ds and within B/D itself.

13.24 In accordance with SR 213, classified documents should be sealed as follows:

(a) TOP SECRET document

Document must be placed in two envelopes. The flap of the envelope should be strongly glued and sealed at every 100mm intervals. The classification of the document should be marked on the envelope. Reference number and the sender should also be written on the inside envelope.
(b) SECRET and CONFIDENTIAL document

Document must be placed inside an envelope with the flap strongly glued. Envelope should be wafer sealed at 100mm intervals and signed across every wafer seal and the envelope. All the seals and the envelope beams should be covered by adhesive tape. The two end of the adhesive tape should go across to the other side of the envelope. Classification, file reference and the sender should be marked on the envelope.

(c) RESTRICTED document

Document must be placed inside a non-transparent envelope. The envelope should be strongly glued. The classification of the document should be marked on the envelope.

13.25 Outgoing mail should be sent out to the recipients as soon as possible. Registry staff should consider how to despatch a document (e.g. by messenger, by hand, by post or fax, electronic delivery, etc.), and indicate the way of delivery at the top corner of the first page of the document (e.g. by fax). If the document is in paper form, a blue tick should be marked against each recipient in the distribution list.

13.26 If the name and telephone number of the sender, the name and fax number of the recipient, and the total pages of the document have already been stated in the document to be transmitted by fax, fax leader page (see Figure 5 below) is not required unless there is additional information to be supplemented. CONFIDENTIAL and above document should not be sent out by fax machine without encryption.

13.27 The original document retained by the originator should be clearly marked to show the date of transmission by fax. The use of an appropriately worded chop (e.g. “SENT BY FAX ON...”) may be used.

13.28 It is not economical to deliver document both by fax and by despatch where unnecessary duplicates are created. The Adm Wing CM No. 36/97 issued on 18 December 1997 stipulated that original copy of the fax document will need to be sent out only if there is a specific need, for example, in the case of signed copies of agreements or colour document. If at the request of the addressee, the original document has to be subsequently sent by post or courier, a photocopy should be made and placed on the originator's file before despatching.
### Figure 5: Example of Fax Leader Page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From:</th>
<th>To:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your Ref.:</td>
<td>Your Ref.:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Your Fax No.:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of pages (including this leader page):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please notify ______________________ on Tel. No.: _______________________ if message received is incomplete.

Message/Remarks:
13.29 SR 214 to 217 set out the requirements in the despatch of different classification of documents within Hong Kong as follows:

(a) TOP SECRET and SECRET document
    Document should only be despatched by messenger designated by Secretary of Security or Assistant Commissioner of Police (Security) under locked container and transported by specific government vehicle.

(b) CONFIDENTIAL document
    Document can be despatched by messenger assigned by the department.

(c) RESTRICTED document
    Document can be despatched by Receipt and Despatch Service provided by Government Secretariat, officer assigned by the department, or private run courier service / agent authorised by Government Security Officer.

13.30 If CONFIDENTIAL or above document is required to be sent out to recipient outside Hong Kong, it is necessary to seek advice from the Government Security Officer of the Security Bureau in accordance with SR 225.

13.31 E-mail record is equally important as paper record. Before implementation of an ERKS and unless otherwise agreed by GRS, e-mail correspondence should be printed-and-filed for record purposes. Subject officers should print out the e-mail directly from the e-mail software and file the records into appropriate paper files just the same as the case of other paper records.

13.32 Generally speaking, there is no need to register outgoing mails unless the relevant document is very important, or the document is of CONFIDENTIAL or above classification. If it is necessary to do so, the register can be recorded on the Record of Correspondence Sent Out (GF 44).

13.33 If a receipt is needed for outgoing document/file (such as CONFIDENTIAL or above document/file), a despatch slip (GF 121) can be attached to the document/file. The receiving office will sign and date on the despatch slip and send back the slip to the sender office. The returned despatch slip will usually be placed back and attached to its carbon copy at the despatch schedule pad to prove that the outgoing mail, especially CONFIDENTIAL document/file, has been received by the recipient. Registry staff should check the despatch schedule pad regularly to see if any despatch slips are not returned yet. This is to ensure that all outgoing mails have been despatched and received properly. Besides, a Chit Book (GF 53) can be used if the outgoing mails are delivered by hand.

13.34 Particular attention should be paid to GC No. 2/2017 issued on 8 March 2017. The circular sets out that apart from CONFIDENTIAL documents or documents of irregular sizes, despatch service of paper documents by hand should no longer be continued.
File Copy Arrangement

13.35 Apart from making enough copies for action officers and those officers whose attention would be required, extra copies should be made for filing.

13.36 File copy of the outgoing document should be kept at appropriate file and placed as the latest enclosure with the minute sheet recorded in the same manner as the incoming correspondence, except that it should not be underlined. Cross-referencing should also be marked on the file copy (see paragraphs 15.18 to 15.20).

13.37 If the same document has been sent to more than one recipient, only one copy of the document should be filed. The registry staff should write down “same documents sent to ______” or “same documents sent to the list of recipients at ( )” at the bottom corner of the file copy.

13.38 If an outgoing document involves more than one topic, registry staff can make several copies or extracts of the documents and place into files concerned. However, the principles mentioned at paragraphs 15.21 to 15.26 should be observed.

Circulation Copy

13.39 It is a practice of some B/Ds to make a copy of an outgoing document (without attachment), either by typing on “flimsy” paper or by photocopying, and place it in a folder for circulation to keep senior officers informed of the latest activities and progress. The frequency of circulation, depending on the number of outgoing documents, is usually at weekly intervals. However, it is not necessary to circulate routine documents and documents containing personal data. CONFIDENTIAL document should be circulated separately and for operational reason, restricted to officers on a “need to know” basis.

13.40 Some senior officers may write down questions or instructions on the circulation copies. Therefore, registry staff should examine the content when the circulation folder is returned to the registry, to see if relevant officers have noted these comments or instructions. After the circulation is completed, the circulation/flimsy copies can be destroyed as they are not records by definition and the original records should have been filed in the designated recordkeeping system.

13.41 Such circulation arrangement is not common nowadays given the ease of sharing information through e-mails.
Registering the Outgoing Correspondence

13.42 It is not necessary to keep a register to record all outgoing correspondence which are of ordinary nature. However, a register may be maintained in case there is an operational need to record outgoing correspondences which are important or graded.

13.43 If evidence of receipt is required (e.g. in sending graded documents or files), a despatch slip (GF 121) to go along with the correspondence sent via the secretariat despatch service, or a Chit Book (GF 53) for correspondence sent by a special messenger can be used. This requires the receiving office to acknowledge receipt by signing the chit book, or by returning the despatch slip duly signed and dated. Since messenger service and the actions required for despatch slips are manpower consuming, they should be dispensed with in the event of routine correspondence. Urgent correspondence can be attached with an “Urgent Delivery” Slip (GF 104) which does not require acknowledgement of receipt.

Modes of Transmission

13.44 Outgoing correspondence should be forwarded to the addressee with minimum delay. There are several modes of sending off outward correspondence:

(a) messenger service (by in-house staff or by courier service through contractor);
(b) Secretariat despatch service;
(c) departmental despatch service;
(d) postal service
   (i) ordinary local or overseas;
   (ii) ordinary registered;
   (iii) recorded delivery;
(e) fax; and
(f) e-mail or other electronic means.

13.45 Item (a) above is costly and should be used only when urgent delivery of documents is needed. Wherever possible, items (e) and (f) should be used for transmission between government B/Ds and for inter-office within a B/D.

13.46 Registered postal service should only be used as specified in Financial and Accounting Regulations, where an ordinance specifically requires it, or for the despatch of irreplaceable items.

13.47 Only where proof of delivery is needed, the recorded delivery service rather than the registered postal service should be used. As these services are expensive, they must only be used when the ordinary post is not suitable and only on the authorisation of an officer(s) designated by the head of B/D.

13.48 Fax provides an economic and convenient means for inter-departmental, intra-departmental or if needs be, overseas transmission. For security reasons, such service is not recommended to be used for the transmission of classified documents unless protected by
additional encryption equipment. Advice on the installation of such equipment should be obtained from the Government Security Officer.

13.49 For transmission of classified information by e-mail or other electronic means, B/Ds should strictly adhere to SR and other information security requirements and guidelines issued by the Government.
CHAPTER 14 CLASSIFICATION AND FILING

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTENT

14.1 After the receipt or issue of a correspondence which is a record, registry staff should read and evaluate the content of the record because it is important to note that the content may be different from its subject caption.

CLASSIFYING DOCUMENTS UNDER ESTABLISHED CLASSIFICATION SCHEME

14.2 To facilitate storage and retrieval, documents should be classified according to the subject and function. As such, registry staff should:

(a) Translate the subject content of the document into subject terms or vocabulary reflecting the subject matter of the document;
(b) Check the records inventory on files or index to determine whether any relevant file of the subject concerned has been opened. If the subject file already exists, place the document into the file. BCFMS would be useful in the searching;
(c) If, upon preliminary checking, there is no directly related subject file, registry staff should check the records inventory in details and look for any appropriate subject file which could accommodate the records concerned. Such “double-checking” mechanism would help avoid the opening of duplicate or highly similar files, which would in turn lead to confusion or misfiling;
(d) If it is confirmed to be a new subject, open a new file. In this respect, registry staff should refer to GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 3 - Subject Filing which sets out the Standard Classification Scheme for Administrative Records and provides guidance on establishing and using a subject classification scheme for programme records; and
(e) When the appropriate file reference and title of the new file are decided, registry staff should input them into BCFMS so as to make available the latest and comprehensive information and facilitate the printing of the file label on the file cover.

THE PURPOSE OF FILING

14.3 Filing is an important registry management function. The purpose of filing is to enable records users to retrieve records in the future when needed. Registry staff responsible for this function should refer to the following information for elaboration:

(a) Classification in the context of file management - Chapter 4 of this publication;
(b) Coding or numbering a file jacket - Chapter 4 of this publication;
(c) Systems of arranging records item in a file - Chapter 4 of this publication; and
(d) Methods of file titling - Chapter 4 of this publication and GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 3 - *Subject Filing*. 
CHAPTER 15  MAKING UP OF FILES

INTRODUCTION

15.1 Having been classified, a document (which is a record) is then ready to be filed (i.e. placed in a file jacket in accordance with an RCS). If necessary, a new file will be opened to house the document concerned.

15.2 In this chapter, we will discuss in detail the physical process by which documents are placed in a file or a new file is opened, as well as the activities relating to file maintenance.

CONDITIONING RECORDS

15.3 In preparing records for filing, the records officer should make sure that:

(a) paper clips, pins and rubber bands should be removed;
(b) documents are arranged in chronological order;
(c) related papers should be neatly stapled (preferably diagonally at top left hand corner);
(d) an appropriate stapler should be used;
(e) out-size records should be folded in size or be kept in folder with the appropriate size;
(f) bulky attachment should be filed separately in an envelope to be attached to the main file or in a sub-file with a note to facilitate cross-referencing;
(g) all clippings, flimsies or other irregular-sized materials are attached to a stiff sheet of A4 size paper;
(h) all damaged records are properly mended or reinforced with adhesive tape; and
(i) all reply deadlines are highlighted in yellow.

LOCATING FILE

15.4 Locate the file according to the file reference quoted in the correspondence. If reference is not quoted, look up the file list, subject index and file movement cards to find the file concerned.

15.5 If the file is not immediately available, consult the subject officer if a loose minute (L/M) should be opened (Details about opening L/M are at paragraphs 15.27 to 15.34 of this Chapter).
OPENING FILE

15.6 If there is no existing file on the subject and the topic warrants an independent file for action, a new file should then be opened. Procedure normally involves:

(a) Choosing an appropriate file jacket (for types of file jackets, see Appendix A). For files with a lot of enclosures or high frequency of circulation, file jackets with hard covers are desirable;

(b) Filling in the fields on the file cover for the file reference, date opened, department, subject title, connected papers, subject in index, etc. as appropriate (see Figure 6). For easy identification, some registries would also put the name of the unit, section or office, in addition to the department, in the “Department” field;

(c) Updating the file list; and

(d) Creating a new File Movement Card (GF 448) for registries not using BCFMS.

PLACING DOCUMENT INTO FILE

15.7 Place the document on the enclosure side (i.e. on the right of a file) of the file in chronological order – normally according to the date of receipt of the document with the latest document/enclosure on the top.

15.8 Assign a number to the document and circle it at the top right corner of the document in consecutive order commencing with ①. A circle for indexing is already printed on the standard format memos. B/Ds may select either red ball pens or blue pencils to perform the filing and indexing activities provided that they apply such practice consistently within the B/D.

15.9 Where there are attachments to an enclosure, they should be filed underneath the enclosure and marked with the same enclosure number but with a suffix such as ① and ②, indicating that there are two attachments appended to the enclosure ①.

15.10 Punch a hole (see Figure 7) on the enclosure (at about 1.5 cm from the top and 1.5 cm from the left) for the green tag to pass through.
Figure 6: Example of File Cover

* “Keyword Titling Method” is discussed in details in GRS’ Publication No. 3 - Subject Filing.
Figure 7:  *Stapling and Punching a Hole on an Enclosure*

RECORDING MINUTE SHEET

15.11 For easy reference, red ball pen or blue pencil should be used to register the following data of the correspondence and underline them on the Minute Sheet (GF 82) (see Figure 8 for illustration):

(a) type of document (e.g. memo, letter, circular, c.c. memo, etc.);
(b) date of document;
(c) designation or name of the originator (for incoming correspondence) or addressee(s) (for outgoing correspondence);
(d) if the incoming correspondence is a carbon copy, the designation or name of the addressee(s) should also be marked;
(e) a line under each entry of incoming correspondence; and
(f) subject matter of the correspondence (this is not normally required unless it is required by B/Ds to facilitate future retrieval of that particular document).
15.12 In registering the information on a minute sheet, the language of the incoming correspondence should be used:

In handling English incoming correspondence, English should be used to register the above data. For example:

\[ \text{c.c. Memo dated 25.1.2015 from Director of Environmental Protection to Director of Administration} \]
\[ \text{re: Departmental Study on Records Management} \]
\[ \text{DS} \]
\[ \text{DDS(G)} \]
\[ \text{ADS(G)} \]

If the incoming correspondence is in Chinese, Chinese should be used for registration. For example:

\[ \text{25.1.2015 環境保護署署長致行政署長便箋副本} \]
\[ \text{關於：部門檔案管理研究事宜} \]
\[ \text{部門主任秘書} \]
\[ \text{副部門主任秘書(總務)} \]
\[ \text{助理部門主任秘書(總務)} \]
15.13 It could be seen from the above examples that only the data of the original correspondence is required to be entered on the minute sheet. Therefore, if there is any Chinese attachment appended to an English letter or memo, records officer should use English to register the letter or memo, but do not need to register the Chinese attachment.

15.14 If the incoming correspondence has both Chinese and English versions, records officer should use the language of the original document to mark the entry on the minute sheet, and remark that there is a translated copy. For example:

文獻藏品展 1.7.2017 揭幕儀式程序表 (夾附英文譯本)

Nevertheless, if the document has no indication on which version is the translated copy, records officer should register the document in English and remark that the document has copies in both English and Chinese. For example:

Programme of the Opening Ceremony of Heritage Collection Exhibition on 1.7.2017 (with both English and Chinese versions)

15.15 If only the English name of the originator could be found in a Chinese document, records officer should try to confirm the person’s Chinese name (e.g. searching in the content, letter head, etc.). Do not add a random Chinese name. If the Chinese name could not be confirmed, the English name could be used for temporary registration. When the Chinese name is confirmed later, it should be added next to the original English name as illustrated below:

29.12.2015 Mr. Tan Man Kit 信件 陳文杰

15.16 The enclosure number should be marked on the left column of the minute sheet using red ball pen or blue pencil for easy reference. The file reference and page number should be marked in the designated places in every minute sheet.

15.17 To facilitate the working of action officer, there should be at least two blank minute sheets kept in the file.

CROSS-REFERENCING RELATED FILES AND DOCUMENTS

15.18 To facilitate records users to trace related documents of the same file, and to enable them to know if there are other files related to the file in use, cross-referencing should be added. For example, if the incoming document is a reply to another enclosure in the same file, the records officer should:

On the incoming document:
(a) If the enclosure number is clearly shown, use red ball pen or blue pencil to circle the enclosure number; or
(b) If the content of the document quoted the enclosure but without specifying the enclosure number, use red ball pen or blue pencil to mark the enclosure number next to the quote (see Figure 9); or

c) If the document does not mention the previous enclosure, phrases like “Reply to ( )” could be added in an appropriate space (usually at the bottom) in the enclosure.

| Reply to   ( ) |

On the originating document:
The phrase “Replied by ( )” could be marked in an appropriate space in the enclosure (usually at the bottom).

| Replied by ( ) |

15.19 In addition, depending on the situation, other reference notes might be made on the related documents, e.g. “See ( )” (see Figure 9) or “See also ( ) in File Ref. _____”, to facilitate the tracing of related documents in the same file and different files respectively.

| See   ( ) |

| See also ( ) in File Ref. _____ |
15.20 Related or precedent papers may also be flagged for easy reference. The various types of tags (e.g. “For Information” tag (GF 71), “Action Required” slip (GF 67), etc.) can be used to draw attention of subject officers.
COPYING, EXTRACTING AND REMOVING DOCUMENT AND PLACING IT INTO RELATED FILE(S)

15.21 When a document touches upon one subject or more and is of reference value to other file(s), it may be copied to the relevant file(s) for ease of reference or action. Circulars issued by relevant authorities are examples of such documents. Besides filing the circulars into the concerned “circular” file, copies of the circulars are usually filed into the related subject files.

15.22 If an enclosure contains information related to other file(s), it could be extracted (only part of the enclosure is copied) and filed into the related file(s). For example, besides filing the notes of staff meeting into the subject file of “Staff Meeting”, the part of the notes which discussed about acting appointment would be extracted and filed into the subject file of “Acting Appointment”.

15.23 Sometimes it may be necessary to remove an enclosure to another file. For example, if an enclosure in a file is regarded as misfiled, the enclosure should be removed and filed into an appropriate file. A sheet bearing the phrase “Removed to File Ref. __________” should be placed in the file where an enclosure was removed, as well as marking “Removed to File Ref. ____________ as (   )” on the margin of the minute sheet of the originating file as advised under paragraph 15.24(c) below.

15.24 When an enclosure is copied/extracted/removed, a note should be written in black, blue or red ball pen on the documents and in the margin of the minute sheets of both files indicating:

(a) from which file these copies/extracts/removed documents are made, such as:
   “Copied/Extracted/Removed* from (   ) in File Ref. ________________ ”

(b) to which file the copies/extracts are placed, such as:
   “Copied/Extracted* to File Ref. __________ as (   )”

(c) to which file the enclosure is removed to, such as:
   “Removed to File Ref. __________ as (   )”

* please delete the irrelevant

In the case of removal, a sheet should be placed in the originating file where an enclosure is removed (see Figure 12 below).

15.25 Figure 10 to Figure 13 illustrate examples of the above notes.
15.26 Depending on the number of cross-referencing, rubber stamps with the phrases in paragraphs 15.18, 15.19 and 15.24 could be used.

**Figure 10:** Example of the note to be made on the minute sheet of the originating file where an enclosure is copied/extracted/removed *(* please delete the irrelevant)

**Figure 11:** Example of the note to be made on the enclosure of the originating file where an enclosure is copied
Figure 12: Example of the note to be made on a sheet placed in the originating file where an enclosure is removed

Figure 13: Example of the note to be made on the enclosure of the receiving file where an enclosure is copied/extracted /removed * (* please delete the irrelevant) from the originating file

Memo

Further to Circular No. 8/2000 on “Management of Government Records”, this memo is to bring to the attention of the Heads of Departments that measures to prevent unauthorized destruction of government records.

2. Paragraph 605 of the Government Records Manual (available at http://grs.byo.gov.zw/manuals/GOV_MAN.pdf) requires Heads of Departments to confirm that records on loan to them from government records for preservation purposes, and paragraph 420 of the Manual, requires Heads of Departments to confirm that records on loan from government records for preservation purposes, have been returned to government records for destruction.

3. Paragraph 420 of the Government Records Manual requires Heads of Departments to confirm that records on loan from government records for preservation purposes, have been returned to government records for destruction.

This note is to be placed on a file on which an enclosure is removed and on the enclosure of the receiving file where an enclosure is copied/extracted/removed.

Removed from (21) in GRS T&C/28/0
OPENING OF LOOSE MINUTE (L/M)

15.27 If the file is not immediately available for housing the incoming document, it should be referred to the subject officer for instruction. Particular attention should be drawn for documents which are “urgent”.

15.28 If it is considered that action has to be taken without any delay, an L/M could be opened for the purpose. Depending on the security classification, appropriate L/M jacket, such as GF 391, GF 391A, and GF 391G, could be used for the purpose.

15.29 All entries made on the L/M cover must be in black pencil in order to facilitate renumbering during incorporation into the main file, and the re-use of the L/M jacket later on.

15.30 All L/Ms should bear a reference number to help keep track of the records. The most convenient method is to have them numbered on the basis of the main file. For example:

L/M No. (1) to LD GR/5-25/1

Main files’ references

L/M No. (3) to GRS RMAO/20/0

15.31 The above example shows that there are two L/Ms - (1) and (3) - opened for the main files “LD GR/5-25/1” and “GRS RMAO/20/0” respectively. This numbering method enables cross-referencing between the main file and the L/Ms, and more convenient incorporation into the main file later on.

15.32 All L/Ms opened should also be recorded in the main file jacket under the column “Related Files” for cross-referencing. As a usual practice, a registry should maintain a “Loose Minute Register” to register the file reference, subject, opening date and date of incorporation into the main file of L/Ms opened. New file movement cards to be attached to the file movement card of the main file or barcoding system labels should also be created to record the whereabouts of the L/Ms.

15.33 In other respects, L/Ms should be treated as a proper file.

15.34 L/Ms, being temporary files, should be incorporated into the main file at the earliest possible opportunity (see paragraphs 17.7 to 17.10 of this publication). L/Ms should not be used as long-term case files.

RETRIEVAL OR BORROWING FILES UNDER ACTION

15.35 If it is necessary to insert records into a file under action by the subject officer, it is advisable to consult the subject officer first as to whether the file could be released for filing or an L/M should be opened (procedures with regard to the latter have been discussed in the above paragraphs).
15.36 If it is considered that the records should be filed and placed in the file under action without any delay, before doing so, an “Action Required” slip (GF 67), with brief instructive notes if necessary, should be attached to the records concerned. The file should be returned to the action officer as soon as practicable, and should be placed on top of the “In” tray so that it could be noticed by the subject officer.

**RECORDING FILE MOVEMENT**

15.37 On completion of the minute sheet recording and cross-referencing, the records officer should mark the post titles of the action officer(s) by designation at the following:

(a) underneath the particular entry on the minute sheet;
(b) the lower section of the file cover (subject to sufficient space); and
(c) barcoding system or file movement card.

15.38 When more than one officer is going to take action, the records officer should raise the following questions to determine an appropriate order of priority:

(a) who is going to take action first?
(b) if parallel actions are called for, can the priority be determined by the rank or seniority of the officers?

15.39 If there is no clear answer to the above questions, the records officer should consult his/her supervisor or the action officer. If the document is for circulation only, the priority of the readers is determined by the ranks of the officers (from the highest to the lowest rank).

15.40 If the file requires action, please refer to Chapter 16 on the procedures in controlling file movements.

**USE OF TAGS**

15.41 Appropriate tags, e.g. “Action Required” slip (GF 67), “Urgent” tag (GF 69), “For Information” tag (GF 71), “For Signature” tag (GF 70), etc., should be used to draw the attention of the action officer if necessary.
CHAPTER 16 CONTROLLING FILE MOVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

16.1 It is the registry staff’s responsibility to control the routing of files and to accurately record their movements. By accurately recording all file movements, one can reduce lengthy file searches and locate information efficiently.

THE TWO MOST COMMONLY USED METHODS

16.2 Before an ERKS is implemented in a B/D, the two most commonly used methods for controlling file movements and records retrieval are:

   (a) BCFMS; and
   (b) File Movement Card (GF 448).

BAR-CODING FILE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

16.3 The BCFMS is a service-wide application implemented at most government registries to facilitate file management. This PC application helps registry staff to record file movements, search the required files, compile management information and identify inactive files for disposal.

16.4 Registry staff should record every file movement into the BCFMS to facilitate the overall monitoring of file management in a registry.

16.5 To record file movements in BCFMS, the <In/Out Movement Update> function under the “File Maintenance” module should be used. It should be noted that this function can only handle a single distribution arrangement within a period of every file. To overcome the problems caused by this restriction, registry staff can record the file movements in the “Remark” of the <Update File> function under the “File Maintenance” module; or mark the related files as required files using the <Wanted File Booking> function.

16.6 Whether a registry can operate effectively depends on the file movement control and the accurate recording of file movement. Registry staff should record every file movement into the BCFMS as it contains information of the concerned file, and the movement records are valuable source of management information. The information retrieved from BCFMS could be used for the overall monitoring of file management in a registry. Since some officers may transfer their files without notifying the registry, it is advisable to regularly update the whereabouts of the files if the Portable Data Terminal (PDT) is available.

16.7 Registry staff should refer to the user manual of BCFMS issued by the Efficiency Unit for individual functions of the BCFMS where necessary.
FILE MOVEMENT CARD

16.8 If there is no BCFMS in the registry, file movement card should be used to record file movement manually. It should be noted that file movement card is used to record the whereabouts of a file. When sending off a file, the concerned information should be marked on the file movement card extracted from the file. To facilitate the monitoring of unreturned files, the file movement cards should best be placed in a designated card storage area.

Features of File Movement Card (GF 448)

16.9 An individual movement card is raised for each file created. A specimen of the card is shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14: File Movement Card

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject/Title</th>
<th>File No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G.F. 448

Procedures of Using the Card

16.10 The procedures of using the cards are as follows:

(a) Creation of the card
   (i) Extract an unused file movement card;
   (ii) Type onto it the file title and reference;
   (iii) Enter the name or title of the officer to whom the file is to be delivered, as well as the date of entry of this information; and
   (iv) Place the card in its appropriate position in the card storage area.

(b) Updating of the card
   (i) Movement card should be immediately updated when the file is returned to the registry for storage or passing on to another officer.
GOOD PRACTICES FOR CONTROLLING FILE MOVEMENT

16.11 The recording of file movements helps one to track down the whereabouts of a file. To enable the locating of information efficiently, it is advisable that:

(a) all officers should pass a file to another officer through the registry;
(b) registry staff should mark the designations of action officers on the minute sheet, file cover and BCFMS or File Movement Card (GF 448); and
(c) stocktaking of files should be performed regularly.

FILE MOVEMENT OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

16.12 As stipulated in SR 202, a register must be maintained recording all files which contain documents classified CONFIDENTIAL and above together with an up-to-date record of the whereabouts of such files. Also, in accordance with SR 212, heads of B/Ds must ensure that full records are kept of the receipt and despatch of documents classified CONFIDENTIAL and above.
CHAPTER 17 CLOSING FILES

WHAT IS A “CLOSED PART”?

17.1 A “Closed Part” is that part of a file series which has been closed (see para. 17.5 for file closing procedures) and no documents are to be added to or removed. A file should be closed under the following circumstances:

(a) the file has become too bulky; or  
(b) the subject matter is completed and further action is not likely.

17.2 B/Ds should review files which are inactive but remain unclosed to see whether they should be closed and then disposed of. It should be noted that all Government records reaching 30 years old should be appraised by PRO to determine whether or not they possess archival value for permanent preservation.

THE ADVANTAGES OF HAVING CLOSED PARTS

17.3 The closing of files is conducive to a recordkeeping system in the following ways:

(a) files are maintained and kept to a manageable size;  
(b) files remain neat and tidy;  
(c) disposal of files is facilitated;  
(d) access or search time is reduced when information is required;  
(e) storage space is saved; and  
(f) files become easier to handle.

17.4 DRMs should, therefore, monitor the growth of the records under their B/Ds and institute regular procedures to close files.

FILES CLOSURE PROCEDURES

17.5 The following should be observed when closing a file:

(a) Close a file at an appropriate time. This may be determined by administrative factors, (e.g. when action(s) on a file has been completed and further action is considered unlikely) or the physical size of a file has nearly reached its full capacity;  
(b) Try to split the file at a logical point, but not in the middle of an on-going action. This may require the advice from subject officers;  
(c) Assign a part number to the next part of the closed part. The first closed part must be
Part I of the file and the second closed part is Part II and so on;

(d) Retain the same file title and file reference as the original file, but with a succeeding part number (e.g. Part II) for the new part of the file;

(e) Cross the file cover of the closed file diagonally in red and mark the cover with the file closed date;

(f) Add the file closed date on the minute sheet of the closed file;

(g) Remove all documents at float of the closed file to the new part of the file;

(h) Place a “Closed Part/Volume Form” (see Figure 15) on the enclosure side of the closed file;

(i) For registries with BCFMS, use the <Open New Part> function under the “File Maintenance” module to create a new file part and the <Update File> function to close an existing one;

(j) For registries without BCFMS, update the file list; and

(k) Consult the relevant records disposals schedule and note the appropriate disposal action on the file cover of the closed part. If it is no longer active, it should not be stored in the active records storage. (For information with regard to the management and storage of inactive records, please see GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 1 - A Practical Guide to Records Scheduling and Disposal.)

Figure 15: Closed Part/Volume Form

17.6 Registry staff should note regularly the usage rate of closed files and store inactive files separately from active files to facilitate records disposal in future.
INCORPORATION OF LOOSE MINUTE INTO MAIN FILE

17.7   L/M should be incorporated into the main file when the latter is available. Normally each enclosure of the L/M should be incorporated into the main file in chronological order and all such enclosures should be re-numbered with their cross-references updated. Minutes of the main file should be revised to reflect the incorporated items. Minutes of the L/M should be incorporated into the main file in a similar way.

17.8   However, if the subject matter of the L/M is completed and the L/M, though related to the subject matter of the main file, can be handled independently, then all the minutes and enclosures of the L/M can be incorporated into the main file as one entry. Registry staff should place the minutes of the L/M on top of other enclosures to make it a single stack and remove the L/M cover which may be over-bulky. The whole stack should be filed in the main file as a new enclosure and an enclosure number (e.g. ⑧) should be marked on the top right corner of the first page with red ball pen or blue pencil. All enclosures originally filed in the L/M should be re-numbered with a suffix, e.g. ⑧ ¹, ⑧ ², ⑧ ³, etc. (⑧ ¹ being the earliest one). Cross-references should be updated accordingly to tally with the new enclosure numbers. The incorporated L/M should be registered on the minute sheet of the main file as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>⑧</th>
<th>L/M on Review of 2015 Records Management Training Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(opened on 24.12.2015, incorporated on 15.1.2016)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17.9   When the L/M has been incorporated into the main file, information in BCFMS or L/M register should be updated to reflect the change. Information on the L/M marked on “Connected papers”, if any, on the main file cover should also be removed.

17.10  It must be stressed that L/M should not be used as case files. Every effort should be made to incorporate them into the main file at the first available opportunity.
CHAPTER 18 MISCELLANEOUS REGISTRY SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

18.1 This chapter describes those miscellaneous records related services that a registry should also offer. These include:

(a) File putting away service;
(b) File returning service;
(c) Records bringing up service;
(d) Upgrading of files;
(e) Downgrading of files;
(f) Safekeeping of classified documents; and
(g) Storing files in active records stores.

PUT AWAY SERVICE

18.2 When current action on a file is completed and the documents are sent out, registry staff should return the file to the subject officer to see if there is any follow up action. If there is no follow up action, the subject officer will usually mark, on the left margin of the minute sheet, “No further action (NFA)”, “File away (FA)” or “Put away (PA)”.

18.3 Registry staff should initial against the instruction marked in the file by the subject officer to show that it has been taken care of before storing the file.

FILE RETURNED FROM SUBJECT OFFICER

18.4 When a file is returned to the registry, registry staff should make sure all required actions have been completed before placing the file in stores (e.g., check whether file minutes have been initialled and letters answered) and all tags such as “Action Required” slip (GF 67), “For Signature” tag (GF 70) or “Urgent” tag (GF 69), and floater have been removed to avoid future confusion. BCFMS should be updated accordingly.

18.5 If it appears that some action is omitted, registry staff should remind the subject officer at once or seek further instructions.
BRING UP (BU) INSTRUCTIONS

18.6 If the subject officer needs to recall a file for further action some days later (e.g. to await a reply to the outgoing correspondence), he/she could instruct that the file be brought up on a certain date, usually 2 weeks after the despatch of the correspondence or on any other appropriate date.

For B/Ds implementing BCFMS

18.7 Upon receipt of instruction to “Bring up”, registry staff concerned should initial against the instruction on file and attach a “Bring Up” tag (GF 68) to the enclosure or minute in question, and mark the requirement under the <Mark BU File> function of the “File Maintenance” module in BCFMS. BCFMS will remind registry staff to “Bring up” when he/she signs in the system on the date. Relevant staff will then be able to check which files should be brought up through the <BU Enquiry> function of the “Enquiry” module and retrieve the relevant files.

18.8 To allow ample time for file tracking and retrieval, it is a good practice to mark the “Bring up” date in BCFMS as one or two days before the actual required date.

For B/Ds implementing a manual system instead of BCFMS

18.9 For a file registry not equipped with BCFMS, “Bring up” should be registered manually in a BU diary. Registry staff should mark the particulars of the file and the date specified in his/her BU diary. Registry staff will retrieve the file one or two days before the actual required date and attach a “Bring Up” tag (GF 68) on it.

18.10 File retrieved should be marked and passed to the subject officer for follow up action. If necessary, relevant enclosures or minutes should be indicated with tags for easy reference. The “Bring up” record in BCFMS or BU diary (where applicable) should then be removed. Registry staff should consider if new “Bring up” date should be assigned.

TEMPORARY UPGRAENDING OF FILES

18.11 During operation, it may be necessary to upgrade a file to CONFIDENTIAL temporarily. A Temporarily Confidential Card (GF 353) should be attached to the file cover in this case. Thereafter, the upgraded file should be kept in the Confidential Registry for follow-up action until the file is downgraded again.

18.12 Registry staff should register in BCFMS about the temporary relocation of the file in question to the Confidential Registry to facilitate file tracking. In the absence of BCFMS, registry staff should update the file list about the temporary upgrading and relocation of the file concerned.

18.13 The file movement card can be another control measure to indicate that a file has been upgraded or downgraded. Markings can be made in red to indicate when a file is upgraded/downgraded and to whom it is addressed. A Temporarily Confidential Card can also
be affixed on the card when the file is upgraded, and detached if downgrading is authorised by the originating officer.

18.14 Some officers may prefer opening an L/M for the issue in question and have it upgraded to temporarily confidential in order that the main file can still be available for use. In that case, it should be recorded in an L/M register and the L/M should be taken care of in accordance with SR.

DOWNGRADING OF FILES

18.15 Registry staff should review, as far as practicable, whether classified files should be downgraded, after obtaining the endorsement of the originator according to SR 182 to 185. In case it is impracticable to seek the originator’s advice, the downgrading decision should be endorsed by the appropriate subject officer. In addition, according to paragraph 443 of RMM, the DRM in each B/D should review the classified documents and records in his/her custody at least every 5 years to downgrade suitable items.

SAFEKEEPING OF CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS

18.16 It should be noted that SR 194-198 stipulate the requirements for safekeeping of classified documents:

(a) TOP SECRET document
must be kept in a safe with a combination lock inside a strongroom or secure zone protected by two combination lock barriers. Details of the safe combination must be restricted to the officers included in the list mentioned in SR 115.

(b) SECRET document
must be kept in a safe fitted with a combination lock; or in a steel cabinet fitted with a locking bar and padlock inside a strongroom.

(c) CONFIDENTIAL document
must be kept in a steel cabinet fitted with locking bar and padlock.

(d) RESTRICTED document
must be kept in a locked steel filing cabinet; or in an office which is locked up after office hours and to which members of the public do not have access.

(e) Materials or things used to record or which have a record of classified information must be treated as classified documents. Examples are shorthand notebooks, carbon papers, typewriter ribbons, stencils, cylinders, discs, tapes, cartridges, wires, and flash memory devices.
18.17 SR 350A stipulates that requirements specified in the Baseline IT Security Policy shall be observed and followed when dealing with information systems. Regarding the information security of information systems and removable storage devices, the relevant circulars/circular memoranda (e.g. Adm Wing CM No. 1/2008) should also be observed in addition to SR.

STORING FILES IN ACTIVE RECORDS STORES

18.18 Registry staff should note the following:

(a) files should be placed properly in records storage facilities, not on the floor or on the top of filing racks;
(b) records storage facilities should be marked with accurate and easy-to-read labels to facilitate file retrieval; and
(c) records storage facilities should be kept clean and dry and free of fire hazard; unauthorised entry should be prevented and storage of materials other than files should be avoided as far as practicable.

18.19 Relevant registry staff should prepare and maintain an accurate inventory of records including the following information:

(a) file title;
(b) file reference;
(c) date opened and date closed; and
(d) storage location (e.g. room/ floor).
CHAPTER 19 TRANSFERRING GOVERNMENT RECORDS TO NON-GOVERNMENT BODIES

INTRODUCTION

19.1 Records, irrespective of their physical formats or media, created and accumulated by B/Ds are the property of the Government. They are normally held in the custody of the responsible B/D until disposal action results in their destruction or transfer to GRS. In the course of this process, while custody may change, ownership of the records does not.

19.2 When government functions are “hived” off or privatised, a decision has to be made about the disposal of records held by the responsible B/D(s) which may affect both custody and ownership of the records.

19.3 Long-term and often intractable problems may stem from a failure to define clearly issues, needs and responsibilities in relation to government records at the time of the transfer of a function outside Government.

19.4 According to the mandatory requirement under paragraph 20 of GC No. 2/2009, in case a B/D needs to transfer its records to non-government bodies due to such reasons as corporatisation, privatisation or outsourcing, the DRM should send a list of records pending transfer to the GRS Director for prior agreement so that appropriate arrangements can be made for records having archival value. The list should group the records by disposal schedule and include the information on file title, file reference number, date opened and date closed, and storage location (e.g. room/floor). No government records should be transferred outside the Government unless with the prior agreement of the GRS Director.

GUIDELINES FOR GOVERNMENT BUREAUX/ DEPARTMENTS ON THE TRANSFER OF CUSTODY AND OWNERSHIP OF RECORDS

19.5 If a B/D is planning or undertaking the privatisation or separation of a government function, it is important that the B/D should be aware of the implications and responsibilities with regard to the records relating to that function.

Responsibilities of B/Ds

19.6 It is Government records management policy that no records may be included in any legislation, contract of sale or agreement in respect of privatisation or the transfer of a function outside Government unless an authority to transfer custody or ownership of the records has been issued by the GRS Director. Any transfer of records custody or ownership should be adequately documented. A documented agreement between the transferring B/D and the new custodian/owner should be made and endorsed by the GRS Director.
19.7 GRS should be informed in advance about proposals to privatise government functions which may require the transfer of ownership or custody of government records.

19.8 Consideration of the affected records should be undertaken by the B/D in consultation with GRS. The B/D is required to make recommendations to GRS in respect of future custody and ownership of the records and, as appropriate, to include any conditions to be attached to the transfer of the records.

**Consideration of Records for Transfer**

19.9 Before a B/D relinquishes ownership or custody of its records, the value of the records to the Government and the community, and the existence of any continuing interest of the Government or the public in the records should be carefully evaluated.

19.10 Records of long-term value and interest, such as those documenting the policies, organisation and activities of the B/D, should be retained.

19.11 There is a need to ensure that records are available to meet continuing and future administrative, accounting and legal requirements and any obligations under legislation or a ruling by a court of law.

19.12 The existence of classified or sensitive information requires steps to be taken to ensure that the legitimate interests of the Government and the public are protected.

19.13 An evaluation of the affected records is also required to ensure that records essential for the ongoing operational needs of the body or function being privatised or transferred are identified.

**Records Appraisal**

19.14 Wherever possible, a full appraisal should be completed before the physical transfer of any records. An appraisal may be deferred until after transfer provided that only the transfer of custody is involved, that sensitive material is removed, and that the protection of the records and their continued availability to the Government is assured.

19.15 Appraisal of records concerned will be conducted by GRS to identify those records that have no continuing value to the Government and those records known to be of permanent value but not required by the new owners of the function. The criteria to be applied to the remaining records are: do the new owners want the records and for how long does the Government want the records?

19.16 The B/D will need to provide resources to assist in evaluating records. Action officers who are familiar with the function or enterprise to be privatised will be required to advise on the value of the records.
**Assistance in Records Appraisal**

19.17 Should assistance be required in this exercise, B/Ds may contact the Records Management and Administration Office of GRS.

**Retention of Rights**

19.18 Where records are proposed for transfer, it is essential that any residual rights or measures of control over the records by the Government should be considered and provided for. This is particularly important if it is planned to transfer ownership as the records will cease to be subject to any Government regulations or administrative arrangements.

19.19 If the continued availability of records for administrative, accounting, audit or legal purposes is necessary, Government should retain rights of access by means of borrowing, copying and inspection.

19.20 Public rights in the records must also be protected. These may be derived from legislation or based on administrative arrangements, as in the case of access to public records.

**Protection of Records**

19.21 In cases where only the transfer of custody occurs or where residual rights are involved, the B/D must ensure an adequate standard of care for the records. Their continued maintenance and preservation are essential to these arrangements.

19.22 Under a transfer of custody, existing files and records should be closed and the privatised body or new owner of the function should be required to open new records. No alteration, addition to or amendment of transferred records should be allowed. Maintenance of the integrity and identity of the original records transferred is essential in circumstances where the records will be reverted to the Government in due course.

**PREPARATION OF TRANSFER AUTHORITY**

19.23 Any transfer of custody or ownership of records must be adequately documented to enable the responsible B/D and GRS to account for their disposal and to enable particular records to be located if required for administrative purposes or public access.

19.24 A documented agreement is especially important if records are physically transferred before an appraisal is completed and/or before records to be retained by the Government are removed.

19.25 Records should be described in sufficient detail as to the origin, physical form, system of control, content, date coverage, location and quantity to enable them to be readily identified.

19.26 The options for dealing with records affected by privatisation or the separation of a function from Government are:

(a) Retain the records with provision for access to those needed by the new owners.
(b) Copy the records needed by new owners.
(c) Transfer custody of the records needed by the new owners.
(d) Transfer ownership of the records needed by the new owners.
(e) Transfer ownership of all records in the relevant B/D except those of continuing value to the Government.

19.27 The options may be used in combination, as appropriate. The costs and balance of convenience, together with the factors discussed above, will need to be considered in each case.

19.28 The agreement of the transferring B/D to any authority will be asked for before it is issued by the GRS. Where conditions are attached to the transfer, evidence of the new owner's agreement to abide by those conditions will be required.

**RECORDS NOT BEING TRANSFERRED**

19.29 Those records not required by the privatised body or new owners of the function will need to be removed before the new owners take over the activity, and appropriate disposal action should be taken in conjunction with GRS, including the GRS Director’s prior agreement for destruction of any records and transfer of records to PRO for appraisal or permanent retention as the other government records.
LIST OF GENERAL FORMS AND FILE COVERS COMMONLY USED IN
REGISTRY SERVICES

GF 44 Record of Correspondence Sent Out
GF 45 Record of Files & Loose Minutes Received
GF 53 Chit Book
GF 60 File Jacket, Soft
GF 61 File Jacket, Hard
GF 67 Action Required Slip
GF 68 Bring Up Tag
GF 69 Urgent Tag
GF 70 For Signature Tag
GF 71 For Information Tag
GF 75 File Jacket Personnel Hard
GF 75A File Jacket Personnel Soft
GF 80 File Cover Hard Confidential
GF 80A File Cover Soft Confidential
GF 80F File Cover Hard Restricted (Admin.)
GF 80G File Cover Soft Restricted (Admin.)
GF 82 Minute Sheet
GF 104 Urgent Delivery Slip
GF 121 Despatch Schedule Pad
GF 197 Inward Registered Letters and Remittance Register
When choosing file jackets, the following should be observed:

(a) Hard covers are to be used where the files are bulky and are continually in use. They are normally used for policy files or files which are expected to last for many years;

(b) Soft covers are to be used where the files are slim and not often in use;

(c) All boxes on file jackets indicating file reference number, date opened, name of department, file subject, connected papers or files should be completed; and

(d) There are various types of folders available catering for general subjects, personnel matters, security-graded documents and loose minutes. Appropriate jacket should be chosen for specific needs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
<th>Chinese Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>asap</td>
<td>As soon as possible</td>
<td>尽快；盡速；從速</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ayc</td>
<td>At your convenience</td>
<td>尽快</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>App</td>
<td>Appendix (plural: appendices)</td>
<td>附錄</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Att’d</td>
<td>Attached</td>
<td>附上：隨信附上：</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>隨信夾附；夾附於後；寄上</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attn</td>
<td>For the attention of</td>
<td>經辦人：；；；</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>請交：；；；</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>煩交：；；；</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>請交：；；；辦理；</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>煩交：；；；辦理</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bc/bcc</td>
<td>Blind copy/blind carbon copy</td>
<td>副本密送(不在正本註明)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B/Ds</td>
<td>Bureaux/departments</td>
<td>局／部門</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BU</td>
<td>Bring up</td>
<td>按時呈閱；依期再提交本檔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cc</td>
<td>Carbon copy</td>
<td>副本送；副本存；</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>副本分送；副本送／存</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c/o</td>
<td>Care of (via)</td>
<td>轉交；本信由；；；轉交；</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>經；；；</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circ</td>
<td>Circular/circulation copy</td>
<td>通告／傳閱本</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ci/c</td>
<td>Clerk-in-charge</td>
<td>文員主管</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(at) centre/</td>
<td>Loose sheet(s) (usually a draft) being attached/’floated’ to the right-hand side within the file cover, i.e. placed on top of all enclosures</td>
<td>見散頁(通常是草稿)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at bed</td>
<td></td>
<td>夾附在／暫附在案卷右邊的散頁，放在存件最上面。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conf</td>
<td>Confidential</td>
<td>機密</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Confidential Registry</td>
<td>機密檔案室</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept</td>
<td>Department</td>
<td>部門</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enc/ encl</td>
<td>Enclosure</td>
<td>附件；存件；連附件</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FA</td>
<td>File away</td>
<td>存檔後放好</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fi</td>
<td>For information</td>
<td>以供參閱；提交參考；備考</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fna</td>
<td>For necessary action</td>
<td>請辦理；請依例辦理；請酌情辦理</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>To be clean-typed; ready for signature</td>
<td>謄稿待簽</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>file/on file</td>
<td>To be put on file</td>
<td>存檔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flagged</td>
<td>Indicated by attaching a small card of ‘flag’ to an enclosure or relevant page(s) for easy reference</td>
<td>於存件或文件上方張貼外露的小咭片或「紙旗」，方便翻查。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flimsy</td>
<td>Extra copy of an outgoing correspondence (typed on ‘flimsy’ paper) for circulation among officers in the originating office</td>
<td>外發文件的加印副本（印在薄紙上），傳閱發件辦事處各人員。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(at) float/floating</td>
<td>Loose sheet(s) (usually a draft, policy paper, a chart monitoring progress, etc) for amendment or frequent reference being attached to the left-hand side within the file cover, i.e. placed closely behind the minute sheets</td>
<td>暫附文件／檔首附件（見‘(at) float’） (散頁(通常是草稿、政策文件、進度表之類) 以供修改或經常翻查之用，附在案卷左邊，錄事頁之後。)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floater/Float</td>
<td>Document/draft at float (see ‘(at) float’)</td>
<td>暫附文件／檔首附件 (見‘(at) float’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GF</td>
<td>General Form</td>
<td>通用表格</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GR</td>
<td>General Registry</td>
<td>一般檔案室；總務室</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRS</td>
<td>Government Records</td>
<td>政府檔案處</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
<td>Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HQ</td>
<td>Headquarters</td>
<td>总部</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i/c</td>
<td>(Officer etc)-in-charge</td>
<td>主管</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>idc</td>
<td>In due course</td>
<td>稍後；稍後時間；適當時間</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incl</td>
<td>Inclusive/including</td>
<td>包括在內／包括</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Info/Infn</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>資料</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Init</td>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>簡簽</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kiv</td>
<td>Keep in view</td>
<td>留意事態發展</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L/M</td>
<td>Loose minute</td>
<td>暫用檔案；暫存檔案</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M___</td>
<td>Minute (followed by a number, e.g. M3 to denote ‘File Minute No. 3’)</td>
<td>錄事(有編號，例如M3即指案卷錄事第3號)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memo</td>
<td>Memorandum (plural: memoranda)</td>
<td>便箋；備忘錄；議事備忘錄</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUR</td>
<td>Memorandum under reference</td>
<td>上述便箋</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>不適用</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NB</td>
<td>Note carefully</td>
<td>注意</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFA/nfa</td>
<td>No further action</td>
<td>毋須繼續辦理；毋須續辦；毋須跟進</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No/nos</td>
<td>Number/numbers</td>
<td>數字</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offr</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>人員</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OC/O i/c</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>主管人員</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commanding/Officer-in-charge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Without security classification; unclassified</td>
<td>未編為保密等級；非機密</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opp</td>
<td>Opposite</td>
<td>相反</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P/pg</td>
<td>Page (pp for ‘pages’)</td>
<td>頁(pp適用於英文書寫，指一頁以上)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Put (file) away</td>
<td>文件先存檔後放好／移存</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pa</td>
<td>Per annum (annually)</td>
<td>每年一次</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>para</td>
<td>Paragraph</td>
<td>段</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>per</td>
<td>By; through the medium of</td>
<td>經由；透過</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
<td>Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-file or P/F</td>
<td>Personal file</td>
<td>個人案卷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl/pls</td>
<td>Please</td>
<td>請</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pp</td>
<td>Pages</td>
<td>適用於英文書寫，指一頁以上</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Personnel Registry</td>
<td>人事室</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO</td>
<td>Public Records Office</td>
<td>歷史檔案館</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS</td>
<td>Post script/written after; may also stand for Personal Secretary</td>
<td>後記／附言：其後寫上；亦指私人秘書</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pt</td>
<td>Part/point</td>
<td>部分／點</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTO/pto</td>
<td>Please turn over</td>
<td>請翻到後頁</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p&amp;f</td>
<td>Print and file</td>
<td>列印後存檔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
<td>Receipt and Despatch/Research and Development</td>
<td>收發／研究及發展</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMAO</td>
<td>Records Management and Administration Office</td>
<td>檔案管理及行政組</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re</td>
<td>Regard, about</td>
<td>請閱：・・・；事由：・・・；關於・・・事</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rec’d</td>
<td>Received</td>
<td>接獲</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reg/Regy</td>
<td>Registry／‘Reg’ may also stand for ‘Region’</td>
<td>檔案室／‘Reg’亦指‘區域’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reg’d</td>
<td>Registered</td>
<td>已登記</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Req’d</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>需要</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Secretary</td>
<td>秘書</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sgd</td>
<td>Signed</td>
<td>已簽署</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC</td>
<td>Temporary Confidential</td>
<td>暫列機密</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TY</td>
<td>Thank you</td>
<td>謝謝</td>
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<td>thro’</td>
<td>Through</td>
<td>透過</td>
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<td>uc</td>
<td>Under cover of</td>
<td>在寄給(人名/部門名稱)的封內</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usc</td>
<td>Under separate cover</td>
<td>另行寄上</td>
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<td>via</td>
<td>By way of</td>
<td>經</td>
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<td>vide</td>
<td>See</td>
<td>參看</td>
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<td>Vol</td>
<td>Volume</td>
<td>卷；冊</td>
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<td>vs</td>
<td>Versus (against)</td>
<td>相對</td>
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<td>w/encl</td>
<td>With enclosure(s)</td>
<td>連附件</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
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<td>---------</td>
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<tr>
<td>w/o</td>
<td>Without</td>
<td>無／不連</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w/o encl</td>
<td>Without enclosure(s)</td>
<td>不連附件：無附件</td>
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INTRODUCTION

1. The emphasis of this appendix is to provide an integrated guidance on the routine practices for managing files in the paper-based recordkeeping system, in which the majority of Government records exist. As some records contain information which, regardless of format, if disclosed inappropriately could do harm to the interests of the government, B/Ds should take heed to the level of security classification of their files/records in deciding the corresponding access.

SECURITY CLASSIFICATIONS

2. Security classifications apply to define the level of confidentiality and security measures required in handling documents of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (the HKSAR Government). Originators shall decide the grading on consideration of how much damage the unauthorised disclosure of the material or its source would cause either to the HKSAR Government or the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China. According to Regulation 161 of the Security Regulations (SR), there are four categories of classified information, i.e.:

   (a) **TOP SECRET** - Information and material, the unauthorised disclosure of which would cause exceptionally grave damage to the HKSAR Government or the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China.

   (b) **SECRET** - Information and material, the unauthorised disclosure of which would cause serious injury to the interests of the HKSAR Government or the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China.

   (c) **CONFIDENTIAL** - Information and material, the unauthorised disclosure of which would be prejudicial to the interests of the HKSAR Government or the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China.

   (d) **RESTRICTED** - Information and material, the unauthorised disclosure of which would be undesirable in the interests of the HKSAR Government.
PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

3. Security is the personal responsibility of every Government servant. Official information shall not be released to unauthorised person and appropriate steps must be taken to prevent unauthorised disclosure. Relevant Government servants are required to sign a declaration to confirm their understanding that they may be prosecuted for an offence under the Official Secrets Ordinance (Cap. 521) if they disclose without lawful authority or fail to prevent with care the unauthorised disclosure of official information.

4. Officers handling classified records have the duty to be thoroughly acquainted with SR and related Circulars/Circular Memoranda pertaining to their duties. They can get access to these requirements through the CCGO’s website at http://sb.host.ccgohksarg/sr/sr.pdf (which is accessible by government officers only) or the Departmental Security Officer of respective B/Ds. Enquiries shall be made to the Departmental Security Officer if in case of doubt.

“NEED-TO-KNOW” PRINCIPLE

5. SR 120-121 stipulate that the dissemination of classified information should be no wider than is required for the efficient conduct of the business in hand and restricted to those who are authorised to have access is fundamental to all aspects of security. Staff should be made fully aware that it is their personal responsibility to apply the “need to know” principle within their own sphere of activity.

OVERVIEW OF FILE HANDLING PROCEDURES

6. As a basic unit within a records series/group, a file is titled and coded to hold a collection of related record items. In general, five steps are involved in the file-handling procedures:
7. The following steps illustrate the basic requirements of filing procedures for registry staff. They may be modified to suit the operational needs of individual B/Ds but the fundamental principles should be adhered to ensure the establishment of good records management practices.

**Receipt**

8. In general, incoming correspondence could be received from two different sources:
Appendix C

(a) Documents received by the B/Ds, such as memoranda and reports issued by other B/Ds or organisations, letters from members of the public, circulars of bureaux, etc.; and

(b) Documents created by the B/Ds, such as memoranda and reports issued by offices of the B/Ds, file minutes and internal instructions issued by responsible officers.

9. Registry staff should ensure that all incoming correspondences, whether it is created by the B/Ds or by other organisations, are properly handled. The following are the steps to handle the incoming correspondences when received:

Opening the Correspondence

10. Incoming correspondence should be opened by responsible officers or, where practicable, by one officer in the presence of another. Registry staff should check if the envelopes containing confidential information were opened. Departmental Security Officers shall be informed in case of doubt.

11. Not all correspondences are records. Only those items which are subsequently kept for further actions or reference would be filed. Generally speaking, advertising materials are not real records.
12. For correspondence bearing the marking of “Personal”, “Private”, “Private and Confidential”, “c/o” or those which are obviously of non-official business, they should be distributed to respective officers directly without being opened.

**Recording the Date of Receipt**

13. Each incoming correspondence must be stamped with the date of receipt. Exact time of receipt should also be entered if there is a departmental instruction saying that this should be done. The receipt chop can also remind the subject officer of the need to issue acknowledgement and reply to the originator of the correspondence expeditiously.

**Checking Attachments**

14. Where attachments are quoted, registry staff should check to ensure that there is no omission. If omission does occur, registry staff should contact the originating officer for replenishing the omitted attachment, or report to the subject officer for instructions.

15. The envelope may also be affixed to the document if the time and place of posting are treated as matters of importance.

**Acknowledging Receipt**

16. According to GC No. 2/2018, receipt of correspondence from outside organisations/individuals should be acknowledged as early as possible and in any event, not later than ten calendar days upon receipt, unless a substantive reply can be made within this period. A note should be made on the letter that this has been done. If the correspondence comes with a despatch slip (GF 121), the receiving office is required to acknowledge receipt by returning the despatch slip duly signed and dated to the originating office.

**Attention Note**

17. Where a document is addressed or copied to the head of a B/D for the attention of a specific officer by name, the correspondence is normally opened and enclosed in file to the officer so named or to the subject officer if more appropriate.
Mail for Urgent Attention

18. The officer in charge of the registry is responsible for ensuring that correspondence marked 'URGENT' is brought immediately to the attention of the subject officer concerned. This will enable the subject officer to accord relevant priority in the processing of the case.

Money, Cheques and Valuables Received

19. Money, cheques and valuables received by the registry should be handed immediately to the appropriate officer, and the related procedures as laid down in Financial and Accounting Regulations should be strictly followed.

Registering the Incoming Correspondence

20. To some B/Ds, where there is an operational, security or legal requirement, an Incoming Document Register may need to be maintained to record the information of the originator, reference, date written or date received of the correspondence of certain subjects.

21. According to SR 201, for incoming documents classified CONFIDENTIAL and above, a register must be maintained to record the date and office of the origin and where it is filed. In the case of registered letters, particulars should be recorded in Inward Registered Letters and Remittance Register (GF197).

22. The Non-file Record System (NRS) module of the Bar-coding File Management System (BCFMS) can be used to record incoming correspondence. NRS, as a module included in the BCFMS Version 5.0 or later versions, facilitates the management of non-document records as well as documents within a file. The basic management unit of NRS is “document”, while that of BCFMS is “file”. Based on the creation records of documents by NRS, we can locate records within a file. Also through NRS, we can index records of significance and conveniently retrieve the relevant files. For further enquiries regarding BCFMS, please contact the Efficiency Unit.

Handling Fax Document

23. Generally speaking, when both fax copy and the original copy are received, only one of them is required to be kept in the file because filing excessive copy is a waste of
resources and would generate a lot of unnecessary records.

24. Before filing, registry staff could discard the fax leader page if it does not contain additional information.

Classification and Retrieval

Understanding the Content

25. Before filing the record, registry staff should read and evaluate the content of the record because it is important to note that the content may be different from its subject caption.

Classifying Documents under Established Classification Scheme

26. To facilitate storage and retrieval, documents should be classified according to the subject and function. As such, registry staff should:

(a) Translate the subject content of the document into subject terms or vocabulary reflecting the subject matter of the document;

(b) Check the records inventory on files or index to determine whether any relevant file of the subject concerned has been opened. If the subject file already exists, place the document into the file. BCFMS would be useful in the searching;

(c) If, upon preliminary checking, there is no directly related subject file, registry staff should check the records inventory in details and look for any appropriate subject file which could accommodate the records concerned. Such “double-checking” mechanism would help avoid the opening of duplicate or highly similar files, which would in turn lead to confusion or misfiling;

(d) If it is confirmed to be a new subject, open a new file. In this respect, registry staff should refer to GRS’ Records Management Publication No. 3 - Subject Filing which sets out the Standard Classification Scheme for Administrative Records and provides guidance on establishing and using a subject classification scheme for programme records; and

(e) When the appropriate file code and title of the new file are decided, registry staff should input them into BCFMS so as to make available the latest and comprehensive information and facilitate the printing of the file label on the file cover.
Appendix C

Opening Files

27. The following points should be noted when opening a new file:

(a) Choose an appropriate file jacket. For files with a lot of enclosures or high frequency of circulation, file jackets with hard covers are desirable;

(b) Fields on the file cover for the file reference number, date opened, department, subject title, connected papers, subject in index, etc., should be filled as appropriate. For easy identification, some registries would also put the name of the unit, section or office, in addition to the Department, in the “Department” field;

(c) Updating the file list; and

(d) For registries not using BCFMS, a new File Movement Card (GF 448) should also be created.

28. In the following instances, an unclassified file could be temporarily upgraded to “Temporarily Confidential” for keeping classified records:

(a) A security-graded document is received but no suitable classified subject files could be found to keep the record;

(b) There is a suitable subject file which is unclassified in nature; or

(c) The nature of the document needs only be classified in the initial stage and can be down-graded to “unclassified” eventually.

Opening Loose Minute

29. If the file is not immediately available for housing the incoming document, it should be referred to the subject officer for instruction. Particular attention should be drawn for documents which are “urgent”.

30. If it is considered that action has to be taken without any delay, a Loose Minute (L/M) could be opened for the purpose. Depending on the security classification, appropriate L/M jacket, such as GF 391, GF 391A, GF 391G and GF 411, could be used for the purpose.

31. All entries made on the L/M cover must be in black pencil in order to facilitate
renumbering during incorporation into the main file, and the re-use of the L/M jacket later on.

32. All L/Ms should bear a reference number to help keep track of the records. The most convenient method is to have them numbered on the basis of the main file. For example –

L/M No (1) to LD GR/5-25/1 
L/M No (3) to GRS RMAO/20/0

This numbering method enables cross-referencing between the main file and the L/Ms, and the more convenient incorporation into the main file later on. All L/Ms opened should also be recorded in the main file jacket under the column “Related Files” for cross-referencing. As a usual practice, a registry should maintain a Loose Minute Register” to register the file reference, subject, opening date and date of incorporation into the main file.

33. In other respects, L/Ms should be treated as a proper file.

34. L/Ms, being temporary part files, should be incorporated into the main file at the earliest possible opportunity. L/Ms should not normally be used as long-term case files.

Borrowing of Files

35. If it is necessary to withdraw a file from the subject officer, such as for quick referencing by another officer or for filing of new records, the subject officer should be notified. The file should be returned to the subject officer as soon as practicable after use, and should be placed on top of the “In” tray so that it could be noticed by the subject officer. If a new document is placed in a file under action, an “Action Required” slip (GF 67) should be attached to each of the document concerned with a brief note to draw the action officer’s attention. If the newly placed record requires the action of another officer, the records officer should consult the subject officer on whether an L/M should be opened in accordance with paragraphs 29 to 34 above.
Appendix C

**Processing**

*Proper Handling of Incoming Correspondence*

36. In preparing the incoming correspondence for filing, the records officer should make sure that the records are properly conditioned to meet the following –

(a) paper clips, pins and rubber bands should be removed;

(b) documents are arranged in chronological order;

(c) related papers should be neatly stapled (preferably diagonally at a corner);

(d) an appropriate stapler should be used;

(e) out-size records should be folded in size or be kept in folder with the appropriate size;

(f) bulky attachment should be filed separately in an envelope to be attached to the parent file or in a sub-file with a note to facilitate cross-referencing;

(g) all clippings, flimsies or other material are attached to a stiff sheet of A4 size paper;

(h) all damaged records are properly mended or reinforced; and

(i) all reply deadlines are highlighted in yellow.

*Placing Documents into Files*

37. Place the document on the enclosure side (i.e. on the right of a file) of the file in chronological order – normally according to the date of receipt of the document with the latest document/enclosure on the top.

38. Assign a number to the document and circle it at the top right corner of the document in consecutive order commencing with \(1\). A circle for indexing is already printed on the standard format memos. B/Ds may select either red ball pens or blue pencils to perform the filing and indexing activities provided that they apply such practice consistently within the B/D.

39. Where there are attachments to an enclosure, they should be filed underneath the enclosure and marked with the same enclosure number but with a suffix such as \(1^1\) and \(1^2\), indicating that there are two attachments appended to the enclosure \(1\).

40. Punch a hole on the enclosure (at about 1.5 cm from the top and 1.5 cm from the
left) for the green tag to pass through.

Recording Minute Sheet

41. For easy reference, red ball pen or blue pencil should be used to register the following data of the incoming correspondence and underline them on the Minute Sheet (GF 82):

   (a) type of document (e.g. memo, letter, circular, c.c. memo, etc.),
   (b) date of document;
   (c) designation or name of the originator;
   (d) if the incoming correspondence is a carbon copy, the designation or name of the addressee(s) should also be marked; and
   (e) a line under each entry of incoming correspondence

42. Subject to the instructions of B/Ds, the subject matter of the document may need to be registered on the minute sheet.

43. In registering the information on a minute sheet, the language of the incoming correspondence should be used:

   In handling English incoming correspondence, English should be used to register the above data. For example:
Appendix C

c.c. Memo dated 26.1.2015 from Director of Environmental Protection to Director of Administration re: Records Management Matters

If the incoming correspondence is in Chinese, Chinese should be used for registration. For example:

26.1.2015 環境保護署署長致行政署長便箋副本
關於：檔案管理事宜

44. It could be seen from the above examples that only the data of the original correspondence is required to be entered on the minute sheet. Therefore, if there is any Chinese attachment appended to an English letter or memo, records officer should use English to register the letter or memo, but do not need to register the Chinese attachment.

45. If the incoming correspondence has both Chinese and English versions, only one of the versions should be filed unless required. If both versions of the document should be filed, records officer should use the language of the original document to mark the entry on the minute sheet, and remark that there is a translated copy. For example:

文獻藏品展 1.7.2017 揭幕儀式程序表
(夾附英文譯本)

Nevertheless, if the document has no indication on which version is the translated copy, records officer should register the document in English and remark that the document has copies in both English and Chinese. For example:

Programme of the Opening Ceremony of Heritage Collection Exhibition on 1.7.2017 (with Chinese version)

46. If only the English name of the originator could be found in a Chinese document, records officer should try to confirm the person’s Chinese name (e.g. searching in the content, letter head, etc.). Do not add a random Chinese name. If the Chinese name could not be confirmed, the English name could be used for temporary registration. When the Chinese name is confirmed later, it should be added next to the original English name as illustrated below:

29.12.2015 Mr. Tan Man Kit 信件

Appendix C
Appendix C

47. The enclosure number should be marked on the left column of the minute sheet using red ball pen or blue pencil for easy reference. The file reference and page number should be marked in the designated places in every minute sheet.

48. To facilitate the working of action officer, there should be at least two blank minute sheets kept in the file.

Cross-referencing Related Files and Documents

49. To facilitate records users to trace related documents of the same file, and to enable them to know if there are other files related to the file in use, cross-referencing should be added. For example, if the incoming document is a reply to another enclosure in the same file, the records officer should:

On the incoming document:
(a) If the enclosure number is clearly shown, use red ball pen or blue pencil to circle the enclosure number; or
(b) If the content of the document quoted the enclosure but without specifying the enclosure number, use red ball pen or blue pencil to mark the enclosure number next to the quote; or
(c) If the document does not mention the previous enclosure, phrases like “Reply to ( )” could be added in an appropriate space (usually at the bottom) in the enclosure.

On the originating document:
The phrase “Replied by ( )” could be marked in an appropriate space in the enclosure (usually at the bottom).

50. In addition, depending on the situation, other reference notes might be made on the related documents, e.g. “See also ( ) in File Ref. _____”, to facilitate the tracing of related documents in different files.

Copying, Extracting and Removing Document and Placing It into Related File(s)

51. When a document touches upon one subject or more and is of reference value to another file, it may be copied to the relevant file(s) for ease of reference or action. Circulars issued by relevant authorities are examples of such documents. Besides filing the circulars into the concerned “circular” file, copies of the circulars are usually filed into the related subject files.
Appendix C

52. If an enclosure contains information related to another file, it could be extracted (only part of the enclosure is copied) and filed into the related file(s). For example, besides filing the notes of staff meeting into the subject file of “Staff Meeting”, the part of the notes which discussed about acting appointment would be extracted and filed into the subject file of “Acting Appointment”.

53. Sometimes it may be necessary to remove an enclosure to another file. For example, if an enclosure in a file is regarded as misfiled, the enclosure should be removed and filed into an appropriate file.

54. When an enclosure is copied/extracted/removed, a note should be written in black or red ball pen on the documents and in the margin of the Minute Sheets of both files indicating—

(a) from which file these copies/extracts/removed documents are made, such as
“Copied/Extracted/Removed* from (   ) in File Ref. ________________

(b) to which file the copies/extracts are placed, such as
“Copied/Extracted* to File Ref. __________ as (   )”

(c) to which file the enclosure is removed to, such as
“Removed to File Ref. ____________ as (   )”

*please delete the irrelevant

55. Depending on the number of cross-referencing, rubber stamps with the phrases in paragraphs 49, 50 and 54 could be used.

Recording File Movement

56. On completion of the minute sheet recording and cross-referencing, the records officer should mark the post titles of the action officer(s) by designation at the following:

(a) underneath the particular entry on the minute sheet;
(b) the lower section of the file cover (subject to sufficient space); and
(c) barcoding system or file movement card.

57. When more than one officer is going to take action, the records officer should raise the following questions to determine an appropriate order of priority:
Appendix C

(a) who is going to take action first?
(b) if parallel actions are called for, can the priority be determined by the rank or seniority of the officers?

58. If there is no clear answer to the above questions, records officer should consult his/her supervisor or the action officer. If the document is for circulation only, the priority of the readers is determined by the ranks of the officers (from the highest rank to the lowest).

59. To record file movements in BCFMS, the <In/Out Movement Update> function under the “File Maintenance” module should be used. It should be noted that this function can only handle a single distribution arrangement within a period of every file. To overcome the problems caused by this restriction, registry staff can record the file movements in the “Remark” of the <Update File> function under the “File Maintenance” module; or mark the related files as required files using the <Wanted File Booking> function.

60. Whether a registry can operate effectively depends on the file movement control and the accurate recording of file movement. Registry staff should record every file movement into the BCFMS as it contains information of the concerned file, and the movement records are valuable source of management information. The information retrieved from BCFMS could be used for the overall monitoring of file management in a registry. Since some officers may transfer their files without notifying the registry, it is advised to regularly update the information of the files if the Portable Data Terminal (PDT) is available.

61. If there is no BCFMS in the registry, file movement card should be used to record file movement manually. It should be noted that file movement card is used to record the whereabouts of a file. When sending off a file, the concerned information should be marked on the file movement card extracted from the file. To facilitate the monitoring of unreturned files, the file movement cards should best be placed in a designated card storage area nearby.

62. As stipulated in SR 202, a register must be maintained recording all files which contain documents classified CONFIDENTIAL and above together with an up-to-date record of the whereabouts of such files. Also, in accordance with SR 212, heads of B/Ds must ensure that full records are kept of the receipt and despatch of documents classified CONFIDENTIAL and above.
Appendix C

Use of Tags

63. Appropriate tags, e.g. “Action Required” slip (GF 67), “Urgent” tag (GF 69), “For Information” tag (GF 71), “For Signature” tag (GF 70), etc., should be used to draw the attention of the action officer.

Distribution

Submission of File to Action Officer

64. Registry staff has to check the sequence of transmission as indicated at the lower part of the file cover to ensure that the order is in line with the submission sequence stated in the minute sheet. This step is very important in the transmission of file minutes. This is because the minutes will usually have to go through a number of responsible officers who may need to act accordingly before reaching the intended recipient.

65. Where necessary, it is always a good practice to attach related files (such as policy file and closed parts) with the file concerned to the responsible officers for actions. Documents of relevance or precedent cases should be flagged for easy reference.

Distribution of Outgoing Documents

66. Before outgoing documents are sent out, registry staff should check and ensure that:

   (a) accurate file references are assigned to all outgoing documents;
   (b) all outgoing documents are signed; and
   (c) all attachments mentioned in the documents are enclosed properly.

67. According to SR 166, 169-170 and 193, registry staff should ensure that security classification has been marked clearly on all classified outgoing documents:

   (a) Documents are classified according to their contents, not the classification of the file (e.g. a SECRET incoming mail may be replied by a CONFIDENTIAL memo because the reply memo does not contain secret information).
   (b) If a SECRET document covered by a CONFIDENTIAL memo is to be sent out, the highest classification of the two (viz. SECRET) should be marked on the envelope and all covers.
 Appendix C

(c) RESTRICTED document must be marked with its classification RESTRICTED in block letters in black at the top and bottom of every page and the height of the letters should not be less than 5 mm.

(d) The ways of handling CONFIDENTIAL or higher than CONFIDENTIAL documents are more or less the same as that of (c) above. However, it is better to mark letters in red.

(e) Every TOP SECRET and SECRET document and every page of such document must be individually numbered, e.g. 1 of 20, 2 of 20.

68. Registry staff should then check the classification of each document and decide whether envelope should be used. All RESTRICTED and above documents and documents containing personal data should be placed in envelopes. Non-classified documents do not need to be placed in envelope. If necessary, “Transit Envelope” should be used in the distribution of documents among government departments and within department itself.

69. In accordance with SR 213, classified documents should be sealed as follows:

(a) TOP SECRET document
   Document must be placed in two envelopes. The flap of the envelope should be strongly glued and sealed at every 100mm intervals. The classification of the document should be marked on the envelope. Reference number and the sender should also be written on the inside envelope.

(b) SECRET and CONFIDENTIAL document
   Document must be placed inside an envelope with the flap strongly glued. Envelope should be wafer sealed at 100mm intervals and signed across every wafer seal and the envelope. All the seals and the envelope beams should be covered by adhesive tape. The two end of the adhesive tape should go across to the other side of the envelope. Classification, file reference and the sender should be marked on the envelope.

(c) RESTRICTED document
   Document must be placed inside a non-transparent envelope. The envelope should be strongly glued. The classification of the document should be marked on the envelope.

70. Outgoing mail should be sent out to the recipients as soon as possible. Registry staff should consider how to dispatch a document (e.g. by messenger, by hand, by post or fax, electronic delivery, etc.), and indicated the way of delivery at the top corner of the first page of the document (e.g. by fax). If the document is in paper form,
a blue tick should be marked against each recipient in the distribution list.

71. If the name and telephone number of the sender, the name and fax number of the recipient, and the total pages of the document have already been stated in the document to be transmitted by fax, covering page (as shown in the picture below) is not required unless there is additional information to be supplemented. CONFIDENTIAL and above document should not be sent out by fax machine without encryption.

72. It is not economical to deliver document both by fax and by despatch where unnecessary duplicates are created. The Adm Wing CM No. 36/97 issued on 18 December 1997 stipulated that original copy of the fax document will need to be sent out only under very special circumstances, such as there is law implication or the original copy is a coloured document.

73. SR 214 to 217 set out the requirements in the despatch of different classification of documents within Hong Kong as follows:

   (a) TOP SECRET and SECRET document
Appendix C

Document should only be despatched by messenger designated by Secretary of Security or Assistant Commissioner of Police (Security) under locked container and transported by specific government vehicle.

(b) CONFIDENTIAL document

Document can be despatched by messenger assigned by the department.

(c) RESTRICTED document

Document can be despatched by Receipt and Despatch Service provided by Government Secretariat, officer assigned by the department, or private run courier service / agent authorised by Government Security Officer.

74. If CONFIDENTIAL or above document is required to be sent out to recipient outside Hong Kong, it is necessary to seek advice from the Government Security Officer of the Security Bureau in accordance with SR 225.

75. E-mail record is equally important as paper record. Before implementation of an electronic recordkeeping system and unless otherwise agreed by GRS, e-mail correspondence should be printed-and-filed for record purposes. Subject officers should print out the e-mail directly from the e-mail software and file the records into appropriate paper files just the same as the case of other paper records.

76. Generally speaking, there is no need to register outgoing mails unless the relevant document is very important, or the document is of CONFIDENTIAL or above classification. If it is necessary to do so, the register can be recorded on the Record of Correspondence Sent Out (GF 44).

77. If a receipt is needed for outgoing document/file (such as CONFIDENTIAL or above document/file), a despatch slip (GF 121) can be attached to the document/file. The receiving office will sign and date on the despatch slip and send back the slip to the sender office. The returned despatch slip will usually be placed back and attached to its carbon copy at the despatch schedule pad to prove that the outgoing mail, especially CONFIDENTIAL document/file, has been received by the recipient. Registry staff should check the despatch schedule pad regularly to see if any despatch slips are not returned yet. This is to ensure that all outgoing mails have been despatched and received properly. Besides, a Chit Book (GF 53) can be used if the outgoing mails are delivered by hand.

78. Particular attention should be paid to GC No. 2/2017 issued on 8 March 2017. The circular sets out that apart from CONFIDENTIAL documents or documents of
irregular sizes, despatch service of paper documents by hand should no longer be continued.

File Copy Arrangement

79. Apart from making enough copies for action officers and those officers’ attention are required, extra copies should be made for filing.

80. File copy of the outgoing document should be kept at appropriate file and placed as the most recent document of that file. The entry should be recorded on the minute sheet. The way of marking should be the same as marking incoming mails (see paragraphs 41 to 48), except that the need to underline the entry item is not necessary. Cross-referencing should be made on the file copy (see paragraphs 49 to 50).

81. If the same document has been sent to more than one recipient, only one copy of the document should be filed. The registry staff should write down “same documents sent to ______” or “same documents sent to the list of recipients at ( )” at the bottom corner of the file copy.

82. If an outgoing document involves more than one topic, registry staff can make several copies or extracts of the documents and place into files concerned. However, the principles mentioned at paragraphs 51 to 54 above should be observed.

Storage

Storage of Files in Active Records Stores

83. Upon the issue of the document and completion of procedures in paragraphs 66 to 82 above, registry staff should return the file to the subject officer to see if there is any follow up action. If there is no follow up action, the subject officer will usually mark, on the left margin of the minute sheet, “No further action (NFA)”, “File away (FA)” or “Put away (PA)”.

84. Upon the return of the file, registry staff should check if there is an instruction for “Bring up (BU)”. If not, registry staff should consider whether to suggest one. Before placing the file in stores, registry staff should make sure all required actions have been completed, and all tags such as “Action Required” slip (GF 67), “For Signature” tag (GF70) or “Urgent” tag (GF69), and floater have been removed to avoid future confusion.
BCFMS should be updated.

85. SR 194-198 stipulate the requirements for safekeeping of classified documents:

(a) **TOP SECRET document**
    
    must be kept in a safe with a combination lock inside a strongroom or secure zone protected by two combination lock barriers. Details of the safe combination must be restricted to the officers included in the list mentioned in SR 115.

(b) **SECRET document**
    
    must be kept in a safe fitted with a combination lock; or in a steel cabinet fitted with a locking bar and padlock inside a strongroom.

(c) **CONFIDENTIAL document**
    
    must be kept in a steel cabinet fitted with locking bar and padlock.

(d) **RESTRICTED document**
    
    must be kept in a locked steel filing cabinet; or in an office which is locked up after office hours and to which members of the public do not have access.

(e) Materials or things used to record or which have a record of classified information must be treated as classified documents. Examples are shorthand notebooks, carbon papers, typewriter ribbons, stencils, cylinders, discs, tapes, cartridges, wires, and flash memory devices.

86. SR 350A stipulates that requirements specified in the Baseline IT Security Policy shall be observed and followed when dealing with information systems. Regarding the information security of information systems and removable storage devices, the relevant circulars/circular memoranda (e.g. Adm Wing CM No. 1/2008) should also be observed in addition to SR.

87. Registry staff should note the following:

(a) files should be placed properly in records storage facilities, not on the floor or on the top of filing racks;

(b) records storage facilities should be marked with accurate and easy-to-read labels to facilitate file retrieval; and

(c) records storage facilities should be kept clean and dry and free of fire hazard; unauthorised entry should be prevented and storage of materials other than files should be avoided as far as practicable.
88. In accordance with GC No. 2/2009 issued on 22 April 2009, relevant registry staff should prepare and maintain an accurate inventory of records including the following information:

(a) file title;
(b) file reference;
(c) date opened and date closed; and
(d) storage location (e.g. room/ floor).

**ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS OF FILE HANDLING PROCEDURES**

*Incorporating Loose Minute into Main File*

89. L/M should be incorporated into the main file when the latter is available. Normally each enclosure of the L/M should be incorporated into the main file in chronological order and all such enclosures should be re-numbered with their cross-references updated. Minutes of the main file should be revised to reflect the incorporated items. Minutes of the L/M should be incorporated into the main file in a similar way.

90. However, if the subject matter of the L/M is completed and the L/M, though related to the subject matter of the main file, can be handled independently, then all the minutes and enclosures of the L/M can be incorporated into the main file as one entry. Registry staff should place the minutes of the L/M on top of other enclosures to make it a single stack and remove the L/M cover which may be over-sized. The whole stack should be filed in the main file as a new enclosure and an enclosure number (e.g. ⑧) should be marked on the top right corner of the first page with red ball pen or blue pencil. All enclosures originally filed in the L/M should be re-numbered with a suffix, e.g. ⑧1, ⑧2, ⑧3, etc. (⑧1 being the earliest one). Cross-references should be updated accordingly to tally with the new enclosure numbers. The incorporated L/M should be registered on the minute sheet of the main file as:

| ⑧ | L/M on Review of 2015 Records Management Training Curriculum  

91. When the L/M has been incorporated into the main file, information in BCFMS
or L/M register should be updated to reflect the change. Information on the L/M marked on “Connected papers”, if any, on the main file cover should also be removed.

**Bring Up File**

(For B/Ds using BCFMS)

92. Upon receipt of instruction to “Bring up”, registry staff concerned should initial against the instruction on file and attach a “Bring Up” tag (GF 68) to the enclosure or minute in question, and mark the requirement under the <Mark BU File> function of the “File Maintenance” module in BCFMS. BCFMS will remind registry staff to “Bring up” when he/she signs in the system on the date. Relevant staff will then be able to check which files should be brought up through the <BU Enquiry> function of the “Enquiry” module and retrieve the relevant files.

93. To allow ample time for file tracking and retrieval, it is a good practice to mark the “Bring up” date in BCFMS as one or two days before the actual required date.

(For B/Ds not using BCFMS)

94. For a file registry not equipped with BCFMS, “Bring up” should be registered manually in a BU diary.

95. File retrieved should be marked and passed to the subject officer for follow up action. If necessary, relevant enclosures or minutes should be indicated with tags for easy reference. The “Bring up” record in BU diary (where applicable) should then be removed. Registry staff should consider if new “Bring up” date should be assigned.

**Temporary Upgrading of Unclassified Files**

96. During operation, it may be necessary to upgrade a file to CONFIDENTIAL temporarily (see paragraph 28). Temporarily Confidential Card (GF 353) should be attached to the file cover in this case. Thereafter, the file in question should be kept in the Confidential Registry for follow-up action until the file is downgraded again. Registry staff should register in BCFMS of the temporary relocation of the file in question to the Confidential Registry to facilitate file tracking.
Appendix C

Downgrading of Files

97. Registry staff should review, as far as practicable, whether classified files should be downgraded, after obtaining the endorsement of the originator according to SR 182 to 185. In case it is impracticable to seek the originator’s advice, the downgrading decision should be endorsed by the appropriate subject officer. In addition, according to paragraph 443 of the Records Management Manual, the Departmental Records Manager in each B/D should review the classified documents and records in his/her custody at least every 5 years to downgrade suitable items.

Closing Files

98. A file should be closed under the following circumstances:

   (a) the file has become too bulky; or
   (b) the subject matter is completed and further action is not likely.

99. The following should be observed when closing a file:

   (a) the file should be closed in an appropriate time but not in the middle of on-going action (the subject officer may be consulted on this);
   (b) a new part of the file should retain the same file subject and file reference but with a succeeding part number;
   (c) a part number should be assigned when closing a file; the first closed part must be Part I of the file, the second closed part as Part II and so on;
   (d) a diagonal line in red should be added, and the file closed date should be marked on the file cover;
   (e) file closed date should also be indicated on the minute sheet;
   (f) all documents at float should be removed to the new file part;
   (g) place a “Closed Part/Volume Form” on the enclosure side of the closed file;
   (h) for registries with BCFMS, registry staff may use the <Open New Part> function under the “File Maintenance” module to create a new file part and the <Update File> function to close an existing one;
   (i) for registries without BCFMS, update the file list; and
   (j) Consult the relevant records disposals schedule and note the appropriate disposal action on the file cover of the closed part. If it is no longer active, it should not be stored in the active records storage.
100. Registry staff should note regularly the usage rate of closed files and store inactive files separately from active files to facilitate records disposal in future.

**PRINCIPLES IN EFFICIENT HANDLING AND MANAGEMENT OF FILES**

101. A registry which handles and manages files efficiently should:

(a) handle incoming and outgoing documents efficiently;
(b) file and keep only records which are required for further action and reference;
(c) prepare and maintain an accurate records inventory and index, updated to the latest position;
(d) open new files and L/M prudently on a need basis;
(e) incorporate L/M into main files as soon as practicable;
(f) add clear cross references to related files and documents to facilitate easy searching;
(g) number properly the enclosures and mark the relevant information on the minute sheet;
(h) register correctly the file movements;
(i) store and handle classified files according to SR and relevant circulars/circular memoranda;
(j) store files in designated file storage facilities;
(k) store closed parts of inactive files separately from active files to facilitate disposal in future;
(l) use BCFMS as far as practicable; and
(m) monitor and review regularly the handling and management of files to achieve further improvement.
THE DUTY TO FAMILIARISE WITH GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS, CIRCULARS AND CIRCULAR MEMORANDA

102. According to *General Regulations* 10 to 11, it is the duty of all Government servants other than staff on daily rates of pay to be thoroughly acquainted with all Government Regulations, Circulars and Circular Memoranda as appertain to their duties. Where a Government servant disobeys or neglects or fails to observe the terms of Government Regulations, Circulars or Circular Memoranda on Conduct and Discipline appertaining to his/her duties, disciplinary proceedings may be taken against him/her and he/she may be held pecuniarily responsible for any financial loss to the Government resulting from his/her disobedience, neglect or failure. Below are some existing requirements on the use and management of information/ documents/records:

(a) SR;
(b) GC No. 5/2006, No. 2/2009, 2/2017 and No. 2/2018;
(c) OGCIO Circulars No. 7/2008, No. 5/2009 and No. 4/2017; and

The above Regulations, Circulars and Circular Memoranda could be accessed through CCGO’s website (http://portal.ccgo.hksarg) by government officers for reference. In addition, all registry staff and records users should regularly note and observe newly issued requirements.