United Republic of Tanzania

President's Office
Public Service Management

Desk Instructions for Registry Staff and Records Users

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UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

President's Office
Public Service Management

Records and Archives Management Division

DESK INSTRUCTIONS FOR REGISTRY STAFF AND RECORDS USERS

Records management aims at ensuring that the right information is available to the right person, at the right time, and at the least possible cost.

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PREAMBLE

Records and information are key resources for government decision making and it is a shared responsibility to ensure they are well preserved, used and managed effectively. PO-PSM has issued these instructions to direct registry staff and users on issues to consider when working on files or dealing with official records and information. This is aimed at ensuring compliance and sustainability of a records management system which has been installed in MDAs, with the ultimate goal of enabling availability of records to the right person, at the right time and at the least possible cost.

PART A

DESK INSTRUCTIONS FOR REGISTRY STAFF

NUMBER 1: FILLING IN THE INWARD CORRESPONDENCE REGISTER

1. When mail is received in the Registry, write or stamp the date of receipt on each letter. The letters must then be entered individually in the Inward Correspondence Register:

2. Take each letter received and write in the Inward correspondence Register:

   - the next serial number (column 1).

   - the date of the letter (column 2). Do not use the date the letter was received.

   - the date that the letter was received (column 3). If no date has been stamped or written on the letter, then enter today's date.

   - the name of the person and the office or department, if there is one, from whom the letter has come (not the address) (column 4). If you are in doubt ask the head of the Registry.

   - any security grading, such as 'Confidential', usually written or stamped at the top or bottom of the page (column 4).

   - the Ministry's Department's or sender's reference number on the letter, if there is one (column 5).

   - a short but clear version of the subject of the letter (column 6). This will often be given at the head of the document. Consult the head of the Registry if you are in difficulties.

3. Leave the remaining columns in the register blank for the time being.

4. When you have entered all the letters that you have been given, pass them to the head of the Registry who will either put them on a mail folder for preview.

5. Columns 7 and 8 of the register are completed when letters are placed on their appropriate files (see desk Instruction Number 4). The date the letter was filed, together with the name, title or initials of the action officer to whom the file is being sent, are entered in column 7. the file number is written in column 8.

NUMBER 2: ASSIGNING FILE REFERENCE

1. Read each item carefully, there may already be directions about where to file the letter, for example in a note written by senior management or in a reference in the text of the letter to a previous outward letter sent by your office, if so place it on the indicated file.

2. If no reference is given use the keyword list to identify the two keywords that are most appropriate to the main subject of each letter.

3. Check the file index. If there is already a file with the combination of keywords that you have identified, and if the letter clearly relates to the title of this file, then write this file reference on the back of the letter lightly in pencil.

4. If the letter has the same keywords as an existing file (or files), but does not relate to the file title, it may require a new file with the same combination of keywords. Check with the head of the registry.

5. If it is agreed that a new file with the same keywords is needed, write on the back of the letter the same series and keyword codes as the related file, but add the next sequential final number to the file reference. For instance, if the existing file is AB 7/72/01, the new file will be AB 7/72/02 and assign the appropriate file title.

6. If there is no file that matches the keywords you have identified, then a new file may be required. Check with the head of the registry to confirm that this is the case.

7. If it is agreed that a new file is needed, write on the back of the letter the code numbers of the keywords you have identified, placing the lowest number first.

8. Identify the correct file series in which the new file should be placed by considering carefully the function, activity and administrative unit to which the letter relates. Write the file series code on the back of the letter, immediately in front of the keyword codes already noted.

9. Now complete the reference number by adding the sequential number '01' to show that this is the first file in this series with this particular combination of keywords.

10. If there is no suitable keyword from the keyword list check with the head of the registry to determine relevant Keywords based on the subject matter of the letter.

NUMBER 3: FILING MAIL

1. Locate the relevant file.

2. If the file is not in its correct place, look in the file transit book to see who is shown as holding it. Note that person's name and today's date and set aside the letter temporarily (see 10 below). If the file you require is marked as being in the custody of the Registry but cannot be found, inform the head of the registry so that a search can be initiated.

3. If no file exists for the file reference, open a new file as described in desk Instruction Number 5.

4. When you have the correct file in front of you, punch a hole in the top left-hand corner of the document, 3 cms (one inch) down from the top and 3 cms in from the left-hand edge, and fasten the document to the tag on the right-hand side of the file.

5. Write the folio number on the top right corner of the document and circle the number. If a document is more than one page, the whole document, not the individual pages, is given a folio number. Consult the head of the Registry if you are uncertain about how to deal with annexes, attachments and enclosures.

6. Read the document you have filed in order to see whether it mentions any previous correspondence. If it does, see whether that correspondence is already on the file. If it is, then write the folio number of the previous correspondence against the reference to it in the letter you are filing. Then write the folio number of the letter you are filing on the previous letter.

7. Write the name of the action officer who is to deal with the document on the transit ladder on the file cover. Record the same information in the file transit book with the date (see Desk Instruction Number 10).

8. Now complete columns 7 and 8 of the relevant entry in the Inward Correspondence register. In column 7 insert the date on which you have filed the item and the name, office or initials of the officer to whom the file is being sent. Then insert the file number in column 78.

9. Place the file at the Office Attendant's collection point or, if urgent, deliver it personally.

10. If the file for an item for filing is already with an action office, and if that officer is to take action on the item, the file should be retrieved, the item filed and the file returned to the office. If the action officer with the file is different from the officer who is to take action on the item, the officer who holds the file should be contracted for instructions.

NUMBER 4: OPENING A NEW FILE

1. Do not open a new file, or a new part of an existing file, until you have the first document(s) to put on it and the head of the Registry has agreed that a new file is needed.

2. When approval has been given, take a new file cover and enter on it, neatly and legibly:-

   - the file number and part of the file if it is a new part.
   - the file title (to be agreed with the head of the Registry).
   - the date on which you are opening the file.
   - the index headings (keywords).

3. Insert a tag in the cover and then file the correspondence on the right-hand side.

4. Enter the details of the new file or file part in:

   - the file diary (the next serial number, file number, date that you are opening the file, the file title and previous file number, if any).
   - the file index (index headings and file number).
   - a new file transit sheet (file number, file title, index headings and previous file number, if any).

NUMBER 5: DEALING WITH RETURNED FILES AND MAIL DESPATCH

1. When a file is returned to the Registry, its return must be noted immediately in the file transit book.

2. Check to see whether the file contains any mail for despatch of any instructions. If there is no mail for despatch, proceed to step 8 below.

3. If there is mail for despatch, check that it is properly signed and dated and that there is a file copy to place on the file and a second copy for the 'flimsy' file.

4. Take any mail that is to be dispatched and write in the Outward Correspondence Register:-

   - the next serial number (column 1).
   - the date on which you have received the mail for despatch (column 2).
   - the date on which you despatch the item (column 3).
   - the subject of the letter (column 4). This is usually to be found as a heading to the letter, but if you are in doubt consult the head of the Registry.
   - the reference number of the letter (column 5).
   - the name of the addressee, but not the full address (column 6).
   - the mode of despatch, ie by hand or post (column 7).

5. Complete the Office attendant's Despatch book in respect of any mail that you propose to send by office attendant, as follows:-

   - the date of despatch (column 1).
   - the reference number of the letter (column 2).
   - the office attendant's name (column 3).
   - the name of the ministry/department/agency (column 4).

6. Hand the Despatch Book and mail to the office attendant and instruct him/her on delivery. The office attendant is required to get the receiving officer to write his/her name in the Despatch Book and sign it with the date (column 5).

7. When a file is returned and contains no mail for despatch, check whether there are any 'bring-up instructions (see Desk Instruction Number 7) or any other instructions for the Registry.

8. Return the file to its correct location in the Registry and update the file's transit sheet.

NUMBER 6: SENDING FILES TO THE RECORDS CENTRE

1. When files are due to be transferred to the Records Centre, contact the Centre to request transfer forms.

2. Mark the relevant file transit sheets to indicate that the files are being transferred to the Records Centre.

3. Dust the records and remove metal pins and clips if this will not cause papers to become detached from the file. If a file is broken, tie if together with string. Remove bulky lever-arch files and ring binders which will not fit comfortably into the box. Tie together the contents of the lever each file or ring binders with string and label them carefully.

4. Remove any unimportant material such as greeting cards, advertisements and extra copies of documents that have become mixed in with the files.

5. Arrange the records in the order in which they were originally created. This will involve sorting them into series or groups of similar records which were created and maintained as units. Within each series, arrange the records in the order of their original reference numbers.

6. List the files in each box on a records transfer List Form, leaving the columns for the review date and location number blank. Each box must be listed on a separate form (with continuation sheets as necessary), and there must be three copies of the form. If carbon paper is used it is important to check that the information is clear on all the sheets.

7. Place the records to be sent to the records Centre in boxes vertically with the spine upwards. Pack the records firmly but do not overload the box.

8. If any of the records do not fit into the boxes, tie them into bundles no deeper than 30 centimetres.

9. Place the copies of the form on top of the files in the box to which they refer.

10. Send the boxes to the records Centre.

11. The records Centre staff will check the Records Centre transfer List Forms and add the action date, action category and records centre location number. If there are any queries, you will be contacted. Otherwise, one copy of the list will be returned to you. This will provide a means of ordering files from the Records Centre in the future.

NUMBER 7: RECORDING FILE MOVEMENTS

1. When a file is issued to an action officer, the name of the officer, or his/her title, and the date of issue are entered on the file's transit sheet. This information is also written, prior to the file's despatch, on the transit ladder that appears on the file's front cover.

2. Files returned to the registry are always fully recorded in the transit sheet.

3. File transit sheets are also updated when a file census has been carried out and all information about the location of file in offices has been collected.

4. Following the census, check each file reference in the first column of the census forms against the relevant file transit sheet. If the name of the action office in whose office the file was located differs from the officer recorded on the transit sheet, enter the correct name in the 'Sent To' column and today's date in the 'Date' column of the transit sheet.

5. Any differences in file locations are noted and brought to the attention of the head of the Registry who is responsible for discussing them with the action officer concerned.

6. Report any missing file to the head of the Registry who will take the appropriate action to make a search. When it is known that a file is lost, immediately write the words 'Missing File' and the date on the top of the transit sheet.

PART B

DESK INSTRUCTIONS FOR RECORDS USERS

- Handle files and papers carefully so as not to damage them
- Keep files free of unnecessary material (duplicates, drafts etc.)
- Always include the relevant file number on outgoing correspondence
- Use the Bring-up system when action on a file needs to be temporarily suspended
- Do not pass a file to another person without notifying the Head of the Registry
- Do not create your own files
- Do not breach confidentiality of official records and information
- Do not breach individual privacy
- Provide full support to registry staff during file census in your office.
- Do not work on your own personal file
- Inform the Registry Supervisor of any record keeping problem that you may encounter and be ready to cooperate with them to find solutions.

- Apply a clear desk policy before you go out of your office at the end of the day.
- Do not take official documents/files home.
- Deal with files promptly and return them to registry when they are no longer required for various actions.
- Do not create your own mini registries. All files should be stored in registries/records storage areas.
- Do not enter the registry or records storage areas with out permission.
- Do not work/take actions on original letters/documents. Use minute sheets for official instructions/actions.
- Do not remove any folio from a file to avoid loss of those folios and creation of information gaps in the relevant files/documents.
- Sign a file movement register when asked to do so by a registry staff
- Always direct customers to send official letters/documents to the registry for filing before action is taken
- Do not use loose tags for official instructions
- Inform the authority when you see any person removing or destroying or mutilating any public record without authorisation.
- Always lock your office whenever you go out for security purposes.