



# **Complying with the Records Management Code: Evaluation Workbook and Methodology**

**How to use this workbook**

## How to use this Workbook

- 2.1 In addition to the executive summary, which prefaces this workbook, the document is divided into 12 chapters. Eight of these chapters constitute specific modules within which are contained the relevant workbook questions. The structure of the document is displayed below:

Introduction

How to use this Workbook

Module 1: Records management function

Module 2: Records management policy statement

Module 3: Roles, responsibilities, training and awareness

Module 4: Active records management, record creation and record keeping

Module 5: Records maintenance

Module 6: Records disposal

Module 7: Access regimes for managing FOI requests

Module 8: Performance measurement

Risk evaluation and development of mitigation strategies

Sector specific guidance and regulation of records management

- 2.2 The first chapter - the Introduction is self-explanatory but it also provides an explanation of how this workbook can be used to undertake a compliance assessment. Modules 2 through to 9 each explore a facet of the *Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Management of Records by Public Authorities*.
- 2.3 This chapter provides an explanation of how this workbook can be used to undertake a compliance assessment together with illustrative examples.
- 2.4 The next eight chapters contain a numbered module to enable users to assess the level of compliance with each key area identified in the Records Management Code (paragraph **Error! Reference source not found.** in the Introduction refers) For each key area there is an introductory statement on its purpose, contextual information, references to relevant guidance and, finally, the workbook questions. The workbook questions within each of these modules forms the key part of the workbook, as these questions need to be addressed in order for users to assess the degree to which their organisation complies with the relevant key area described in the Records Management Code.
- 2.5 For ease of use RTF (Rich Text Format) copies have been provided on TNA's website to allow an organisation to download either the entire workbook or if more convenient a single module in order to complete its own copy in electronic form. PDF (Portable Document Format) versions have also been provided for those wishing to print and complete in hard copy
- 2.6 It is recommended that to gain the greatest value from the workbook the user works through each module in sequence and answer the questions

in the order in which they appear in each module. This may also avoid duplication of effort as responses to questions posed in Modules 3 and 4 may for example assist in answering questions in Modules 5, 6 and 7.

- 2.7 Each question requires an initial response of Yes, No or Non Applicable. Below each question a Reference field has been provided to either insert an explanatory statement or a cross reference to a relevant document or policy statement which can be examined by an independent assessor for compliance.
- 2.8 The aim of this workbook is not merely to achieve a complete series of Yes responses as in certain circumstances that may not be relevant or applicable. However where the answer is a negative response (No), it is recommended that following completion of the module a risk assessment be undertaken to assess the level of risk and develop appropriate mitigation strategies.
- 2.9 Finally the last two chapters contain advice on how to evaluate the information gained in completing each module and to undertake risk assessments to determine appropriate mitigation strategies. The last chapter explains what guidance; policy or regulation exists in terms of records and information management, which is specific to each sector of public administration. It does not provide definitive guidance, as each sector will continue to develop its rules and regulations for best practice but it has been provided to list known reference material and relevant sources for additional guidance.

## **Definitions**

- 2.10 For the purpose of this workbook, a record is a specific piece of information produced or received in the initiation, conduct or closure of an institutional or individual activity, and that provides sufficient content, context and structure to provide evidence of an activity. A managed record-keeping system exists where records can be organised and indexed, for management and retrieval in logical groups which reflect the context of creation and use – records should be categorised so they can be scheduled for disposal once they are no longer required and all management processes should be capable of audit.

## **Worked examples**

- 2.11 Here are worked examples for the following four scenarios:

- Positive (Yes) responses
- Negative (No) responses
- Non-applicable (N/A) responses
- Partial compliance responses where a positive response (Yes?) is appropriate for part of the organisation

### **Positive (yes) responses**

- 2.12 The reference field must be completed in all cases unless the matter is self evident. Here is a worked example – for question 1 in Module 2 to which a positive Yes response has been given

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*Is the records management function formally recognised within the organisation as a specific corporate programme?*

Yes

No

N/A

*Reference* This function was submitted to the Management Board on 20/07/2004 for formal endorsement ref MB paper 37/2004 and is detailed in the accompanying records management policy ref MP 101/2004

2.13 The comment inserted in the Reference field permits an independent assessor to cross check the validity of the asserted answer.

## Negative (no) responses

2.14 Where a negative response is given it is still possible in some cases to provide some supporting comment, which may assist in mitigating the risk. As an illustration a worked example is provided below - the following question which appears as question 20 in Module 3 Record Management Policy Statement is answered here with a negative No response

**Er** Are newly appointed personnel (including temporary  
**ro** staff and consultants) made formally aware of the  
**r!** policy? Yes  No  N/A

**R**  
**ef**  
**er**  
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**no**  
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**un**  
**d.**

It is proposed to introduce a new module to the induction-training programme for new personnel w.e.f. from 1 April 2005. Business unit managers have been required to ensure staff appointed before that date are fully briefed and provide confirmation to Human Resources that this has been completed

2.15 Here the reference comment indicates the risk is small and has been adequately addressed and an independent assessor could confirm if this statement was valid.

## Non-applicable (N/A) responses

2.16 Where a non-applicable response is given this may of itself be sufficient but again wherever possible an additional comment should be provided to explain why this question is not relevant in the context of other organisation's record management. As an illustration a worked example is provided below - the following question which appears as question 130 in Module 6 Records Maintenance is answered here with a non applicable N/A response.

<b>Erro r! Ref eren ce sou rce not fou nd.</b>	<i>Where applicable has a policy been implemented to ensure continued access to encrypted or password-protected records?</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Reference Current and past policy has been to disallow use of personal password protected files or encryption by reliance on the information security procedures outlined in the organisation's Information Security policy ref. IS 15/2001.</i>				

2.17 Here the reference comment explains why the response to this question has been provided and an independent assessor could confirm that the alternative arrangements mentioned exist and are adequate.

## Partial compliance responses

2.18 In many instances it may not be appropriate to give a complete Yes or No response as compliance is incomplete and varies across the organisation. In such cases a qualified “Yes?” comment should be provided as illustrated below to highlight where the organisation currently complies and where it does not

<b>Error!</b> <b>Reference</b> <b>source</b> <b>not</b> <b>found.</b>	<i>Are there selection and disposal policies and schedules for each business unit?</i>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Reference</i> Partial compliance Finance, Purchasing, & Social Services have agreed schedules. Housing and Education have draft schedules the remaining six departments schedules will be developed and agreed by March 2006 as per project plan ref. RM 2A/2004.						

2.19 Here the reference comment clarifies the extent of non-conformance and when conformance will be achieved, and will enable an independent assessor to determine the validity of the statement.

2.20 Realistically partial compliance will be the most appropriate response to some of the questions contained in this workbook but in such cases the explanatory comment needs to highlight the degree to which the organisation complies and where possible the timescale for addressing the remainder or alternatively the other measures or circumstances which mean extending compliance further is not appropriate to the organisation. The information needs to be sufficient to enable an assessor to validate the statement.

2.21 Once the questionnaire is complete an assessment can be undertaken to confirm the validity of the accompanying reference comments - the cited policies and procedural documents plus supporting performance measures etc. Where partial or non-compliance is identified a full risk assessment should be undertaken to confirm the criticality of the risk, the relevance of any proposed mitigation strategy and to clarify the timeline for undertaking the required remedial work. The outcome of this work should be validated and approved by a senior management board or committee. This issue is explored further in the chapter entitled *Risk Evaluation and development of mitigation strategies*.

## Benefits

2.22 Effective records management supports:

- efficient joint working and information exchange

- evidence-based policy making by providing reliable and authentic information for the evaluation of past actions and decisions
- administration of data protection principles and effective implementation of freedom of information and other information policy legislation, through good organisation of records
- accountability by providing reliable records of actions and decisions
- knowledge management across sectors of government by making reliable information available for sharing, extraction and summarisation
- various specific legislation or regulations, which give, rise to a requirement to demonstrate the authenticity of records to increase the evidential weight for legal admissibility purposes.

2.23 It is expected that external auditors undertaking assessments of performance will use this workbook to determine the effectiveness of an authority's record management policies and procedures. To this end it is envisaged that users of the workbook in combination with existing performance evaluation tools will be able to undertake a holistic view of the information processes occurring within their organisation, determine the degree to which their records are adequately managed and clarify the nature of required improvements.