

# Ordering and return of records

Guidance on procedure

**OGI**

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## Introduction

1. The processes for the dispatch (temporary requisition) and return of records at The National Archives (TNA) is managed by Government and Remote Services (GRS). This team is headed by the Government and Remote Services Manager and its day-to-day operation is managed by the Government and Remote Services Delivery Manager. GRS should be contacted via email at:  
[Government.Orders@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Government.Orders@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)
2. GRS will only fulfil requests to requisition records if the requestor has been authorised by the Departmental Records Officer (DRO), Deputy DRO or nominated deputy for requisitions, as listed on the Authorised Requestor's form that is lodged with GRS.
3. GRS will hold only one Authorised Requestor form for each departmental branch that has been given a TNA ticket number to requisition records. Therefore, while additional Authorised Requestors can be added at any time, the Authorised Requestor form will need to include all those in the branch that continue to need to requisition records. Once authorised by the appropriate DRO (or their nominated deputy), and submitted to GRS, the most recent Authorised Requestors form will replace, and invalidate, any previous form held by The National Archives for that branch.
4. Please note that only the originating department can directly request its original open and closed records. If you require open and closed records that were created by another department GRS will seek the originating department's permission prior to ordering. GRS will not send out original closed records that originate from another department. These can either be viewed at The National Archives, or at the originating department, once authorisation has been received. (The processes for departments viewing each other's records, and special measures for requisitions to Inquiries are outlined at paragraphs 12 and 13).
5. All requests for access to closed departmental records which are to be viewed at The National Archives by a third party (anybody other than an Authorised Requestor) must be made by an Authorised Requestor in an email to GRS. The email must clearly set out the individual names of those third parties that will be viewing the records at The National Archives, the organisation that they represent, and whether copies can be made available for them to take off-site and any other provisions relating to their access. Where the third party is from outside the department then GRS will require confirmation that the DRO, or their nominated deputy, has approved privileged access to the records.
6. GRS will not in any circumstances send out to departments an electronic copy of a closed document, or a link to a digital image of a closed document.

## Ordering and return procedure

7. Please follow the procedure below for ordering and returning records - this will maintain an audit trail of the requisition in GRS:
  - a) Complete the online record requisitions order form. The link to this form will be made available to Authorised Requestors on contacting GRS. Authorised

Requestors might then choose to bookmark the link or add it to their favourites bar in their web browser for further use (or other such solution that is in line with their departmental IT policies). **Please note that:**

- all the options boxes on the online form that have a red asterisk next to them must be completed for the form to be successfully submitted and processed
  - if you are selecting individual references then the first box (01) must have a record reference in it in order for the form to be successfully submitted
  - if you press 'send' on completing the form and it does not submit then please do check for error messages and that you have checked (and read) the terms and conditions box
  - the form must be completed by an Authorised Requestor using a valid ticket number for it to be processed by GRS. (If GRS does not recognise the requestor or the ticket number then the order will not be processed.)
- b) Once the form has been successfully submitted then GRS will process your order. You will receive an email from GRS confirming the dispatch of the records which will set out the seal number used on each pouch (and your own order reference number if you have included one).
- c) Once you have received the order please send an email to GRS to confirm that the records have arrived and the seal on each pouch is unbroken.
- d) Please contact GRS if you have not received the records within two days of receiving confirmation of their dispatch. If GRS has not received delivery confirmation from you after one week of dispatch the team will contact you to find out if you have received the records.
- e) Once you have finished with the records please send a completed returns form (available on the borrowing accessioned records TNA webpage) to GRS.
- f) **Please:**
- package and return open and closed records in separate sealed pouches/packages and include a returns form with each pouch
  - If a record's open/closure/retention status has changed since it was last at The National Archives then each record that is changing status must be accompanied by an AA2 form. (For further instructions please consult TNA's guidance titled, 'Process for sending previously retained pieces or extracts to The National Archives' which is also available on the 'Borrowing accessioned records' TNA webpage
- g) When GRS has received the records a team member will email you to confirm their safe receipt at TNA.

## **Your responsibility for the safe keeping of requisitioned records**

8. The Public Records Act 1958, and separately the Section 46 Code of Practice on the management of records issued under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, both place an obligation on departments to make arrangements for the safe-keeping and security of records in their custody. Whilst records are on requisition from The National Archives this safe keeping obligation remains the responsibility of the organisation which has requested the temporary return of records. Records should not be passed on to third parties without prior discussion with GRS.

## **Procedure when records are misplaced whilst on requisition**

9. If a record is misplaced whilst on requisition please contact GRS as soon as you are not able to locate the record.
10. If records are misplaced whilst requisitioned then GRS will carry out an audit of the requisitioning department's record storage and tracking arrangements. The DRO will then be requested to prepare a report for the GRS Manager outlining the steps that they have taken to locate the record(s) and mitigate the risk of a similar incident happening in the future. In certain instances requisition services will be suspended while the audit is carried out and until revised procedures are put in place by the requisitioning organisation.

## **Problems with a requisition**

11. If you receive any records from The National Archives in an unsatisfactory state or in pouches that have had the security seals broken you must contact GRS immediately.

## **Records requisitioned by another department and Inquires**

12. To maintain the audit trail at The National Archives then open records that are already on requisition but are required by a department, other than the originating organisation, must be returned to The National Archives in the first instance and then re-ordered by the new department. The subsequent order will only be processed by GRS once the originating department has given permission for the requisition. (Closed records can only be viewed by another department at The National Archives or on the originating departments' estate.) Do not send records on to a new department directly because the records remain the responsibility of the original requestor.
13. Special measures will be agreed with each department involved in instances where records are required to be produced at The National Archives (or requisitioned) for Inquiries and other temporary bodies, and causes, of investigation.

## **Reporting on outstanding and misplaced records**

14. Records that have been on requisition for more than six months will be placed on the Outstanding List for your department. GRS will send a copy of this list to your DRO

every six months alongside a list of records that have been misplaced by your department while on requisition. Outstanding and Misplaced records form part of Information Management Assessments and are reported on to The National Archives' Operational Governance Board and Audit Committee. These measures form part of The National Archives' duty to preserve records in its custody.