

## **GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION OF RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE FOR RECORDS PERTAINING TO SUBSTANTIVE FUNCTIONS**

### **Preliminary**

Every organisation produces records to carry out its various functions. These records are to be closed (recorded) after action on the issues considered thereon has been completed. While the files of purely ephemeral nature, containing little reference or research value, need not be formally recorded and may be destroyed after one year, different other categories of records are, however, required to be retained for different specific periods, according to their importance and reference values.

One of the prerequisites of a good Records Management is to ensure that records are neither prematurely destroyed nor kept for periods longer than required – at the cost of economy and efficiency. Thus, in order to prescribe judicious retention periods to different categories of records, a Records Retention Schedule (RRS) needs to be drawn by the concerned organisations.

### **Types of Records Retention Schedules**

Records Retention Schedules are of two types, viz.

1. Retention Schedule for Records pertaining to Facilitative Functions, and
2. Retention Schedule for Records pertaining to Substantive Functions.

#### **1. Records Retention Schedule for Records pertaining to Facilitative Functions:**

Records pertaining to Facilitative Functions are common to all departments. These relate to:

- i. Establishment, Personnel, and Housekeeping matters, e.g. Establishment, Welfare, Vigilance, Common Office Services viz. accommodation, furniture, stationary and forms, office equipments, library, security etc., Hindi, Public Relations, Parliament etc.
- ii. Common Office Procedures, and include various Registers, Lists, Diaries, Reports etc as mentioned in the Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure (12th edition, New Delhi, 2003), Para 111 (1) (c) and Appendix 28 thereof.
- iii. Financial matters, viz. Finance, Budget, Cash and Accounts etc.

Records Retention Schedules prescribed for the above-mentioned three categories of records are seriatim as follows:

- (i) *Record Retention Schedule for Records Common to All Departments\**- issued by Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Government of India.
- (ii) *Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure\**- issued by Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Government of India, Para 111 (1) (c) and Appendix 28 thereof.
- (iii) *General Financial Rules, 2005\** issued by Ministry of Finance, Government of India, Rule 284 and Appendix 13 thereof.

(\*Only the latest edition/version may be followed.)

## **2. Records Retention Schedule for Records pertaining to Substantive Functions:**

Records pertaining to Substantive Functions of a Records Creating Agency (RCA) include records pertaining to the functions which are peculiar (specific) to that particular agency. Therefore, the Retention Schedule for records pertaining to Substantive Functions of each RCA would be according to the records created by it.

*The Public Records Act, 1993* (69 of 1993) Clause (e) of Subsection (1) of Section 6 and the *Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure* (Para 111 (1) (d)) stipulate that every RCA would compile a Retention Schedule for Records pertaining to its Substantive Functions which has to be vetted by the National Archives of India (NAI) before its implementation.

### **Steps to be taken by the RCA in the preparation of Retention Schedule for Records pertaining to Substantive Functions**

#### **1. Study of the Structure and Functions of the Organisation:**

This would include the study of the hierarchical position of the organisation its organisational set up aims and objectives its duties and functions etc

#### **2. Study of the Work Distribution amongst various Divisions/ Branches/ Sections/ Units/ Cells etc:**

This exercise would help in short-listing the Divisions/ Branches/ Sections/ Units/ Cells etc that are assigned the work related to substantive functions of that organisation.

#### **3. Study of the Current and Semi-Current Record-Series/ Record-Groups:**

This exercise aims at the identification of record-series/record-groups pertaining to Substantive Function produced by a RCA. It would include a physical examination of file registers, filing manuals, and the current and semi-current files with a view to ascertain different subject-heads and their sub-heads under which record are being created in that RCA.

#### **4. Listing of the subject-heads (including sub-heads) and Record-Groups:**

This exercise involves listing of various subject-heads including their sub-head and

records-group under which record are being created by a division/ branch/ section/ unit/ cell etc. This listing should preferably be done under the name of division/ branch/ section/ unit/ cell etc.

### **5. Prescribing of the Retention Periods:**

After listing the subject-heads and their sub-heads/ records-groups, their retention periods are prescribed in accordance with their reference value and the importance of the subject. The retention period is the period a particular agency is required to keep the records before their final disposition.

For the purpose of prescribing the retention periods, the records are classified into three categories viz. 'A', 'B' and 'C'. An illustrative list of records fit to be categorised as 'A', 'B' and 'C' categories is given in Annexure - I.

*'A' Category:* Records under this category are meant for permanent preservation and are to be microfilmed because they contain:

- i. a document so precious that its original must be preserved intact and access to it in the original form must be restricted to the barest minimum; or
- ii. material likely to be required for frequent reference by different parties.

*'B' Category:* Records under this category are also meant for permanent preservation but they are not to be microfilmed.

*'C' Category:* records under this category are meant to be maintained for a limited period, not exceeding 10 years.

**N.B.** While prescribing the retention period for 'C' Category files, slabs of C-1, C-3, C-5 and C-10 may be followed, where the numerals represent the number of years that a file is to be retained after being closed or recorded.

### **6. Preparation of the draft Records Retention Schedule:**

Thus, a draft Records Retention Schedule can be drawn up. A proforma for the draft Records Retention Schedule is enclosed at Annexure II.

While compiling the draft Records Retention Schedule, the subject-heads as well as the retention periods of the similar record-series under different divisions/ branches/ sections/ units/ cells etc. may be checked with a view to ensuring standardisation of nomenclature and the periods of retention.

### **7. Forwarding the draft Records Retention Schedule to National Archives of India for Vetting:**

The draft Records Retention Schedule thus compiled by the RCA Should then be forwarded to the National Archives of India for its vetting before its implementation by the RCA.

## **Vetting of the Records Retention Schedule by the National Archives of India**

After the draft Records Retention Schedule is received from the RCA, the National Archives of India would:

- i. depute its officer(s) for conducting on-the-spot study of the records pertaining to Substantive Functions of the RCA,
- ii. while vetting the draft Records Retention Schedule the officer(s) would study the organisational history, consult the File Registers, current and semi-current files and discuss the matter with concerned Sectional/ Divisional heads to finalise the retention periods, and
- iii. forward the vetted Records Retention Schedule to the concerned RCA for its implementation along with the Study Report.

### **Revision of the Records Retention Schedule Pertaining to Substantive Functions**

The *Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure* (Para 111 (2)) stipulates that the Records Retention Schedule pertaining to Substantive Functions should be reviewed at least once in five years. The revision is aimed at the inclusion of the expanding activities of the RCA as well as re-allocation of subjects and other organisational changes that might take place from time to time.

While revising the Records Retention Schedule, steps 1 to 7 stipulated above are followed.

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## ANNEXURE I

### An Illustrative List of Records fit to be Categorised as 'A', 'B' and 'C' Categories

#### 'A' Category

Records under this category pertain to subjects of prime administrative and / or historical importance, viz.

#### **A - Records of value for administrative purposes**

- (1) Papers containing evidence of rights or obligations of or against the government, e.g., title to property, claims for compensation not subject to a time limit, formal instruments such as awards, schemes, orders, sanctions, etc.
- (2) Papers relating to major policy decisions, including those relating to the preparation of legislation.
- (3) Papers regarding constitution, functions and working of important committees, working groups, etc.
- (4) Papers providing lasting precedents for important procedures, e.g., administrative memoranda, historical reports and summaries, legal opinions on important matters.
- (5) Papers concerning rules, regulations, departmental guides or instructions of general application.
- (6) Papers relating to salient features of organisation and staffing of government departments and offices.
- (7) Papers relating to important litigation or *causes celebres* in which the administration was involved.

#### **B - Records of Historical importance**

Much of the material likely to be preserved for administrative purposes will be of interest for research purpose as well; but papers of the following categories should be specially considered as of value to historians:

- (1) Papers relating to the origin of a department or agency of government; how it was organised; how it functioned; and (if defunct) how and why it was dissolved.
- (2) Data about what the department/agency accomplished. (Samples by way of illustration may be enough; but the need for such samples may be dispensed with where published annual reports are available).
- (3) Papers relating to a change of policy. This is not always easy to recognise, but watch should be kept for (a) summary for a Minister, (b) the appointment of a departmental or inter-departmental committee or working group, and (c) note for the Cabinet or a Cabinet Committee. Generally there should be a conscious effort to preserve all such papers, including those

reflecting conflicting points of view. In the case of inter-departmental committees, however, it is important that a complete set of papers be kept only by the departments mainly concerned—usually the one providing secretariat.

(4) Papers relating to the implementation of a change of policy, including a complete set of instructions to execute agencies etc., and relevant forms.

(5) Papers relating to a well-known public or international event or *causes celebre*, or to other events which gave rise to interest or controversy on the national plane.

(6) Papers containing direct reference to trends or developments in political, social, economic or other fields, particularly if they contain unpublished statistical or financial data covering a long period or a wide area.

(7) Papers cited in or noted as consulted in connection with, official publications.

(8) Papers relating to the more important aspects of scientific or technical research and development.

(9) Papers containing matters of local interest of which it is unreasonable to expect that evidence will be available locally, or comprising synopsis of such information covering the whole country or a wide area.

(10) Papers relating to obsolete, activities or investigations, or to abortive scheme in important fields.

(11) Any other specific category of records which, according to the departmental instructions issued in consultation with the National Archives, have to be treated as genuine source of information on any aspect of history-political, social, economic, etc., or are considered to be of biographical or antiquarian interest.

### **‘B’ Category**

Records under this category also pertain to subjects of administrative and/ or historical importance mentioned under ‘A’ category above. These, however, do not contain any material that is so precious that its original must be preserved intact or which is likely to be required for frequent reference by different parties, thus requiring microfilming.

### **‘C’ Category**

Records under this category pertain to subjects of secondary importance having referral value for a limited period, not exceeding ten years.