MANAGING PUBLIC SECTOR RECORDS

A Training Programme

# Managing Personnel Records


INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON ARCHIVES

INTERNATIONAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT TRUST

# MANAGING PERSONNEL RECORDS

# Managing Public Sector Records

## A Study Programme

General Editor, Michael Roper; Managing Editor, Laura Millar

# Managing Personnel Records

International Records Management Trust

International Council on Archives

Managing Personnel Records



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# Managing Personnel Records

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# INTRODUCTION TO *MANAGING PERSONNEL RECORDS*

Every organisation employs staff and creates personnel records. Staff are among an organisation's most important, and usually most expensive, assets. Like any other asset, staff are a resource that must be deployed to maximum advantage. The proper management of personnel records can make a significant contribution to this objective by ensuring that information is available to take decisions and to protect the rights both of the state and individuals. Moreover, because personnel systems are closely linked to payroll systems, improved personnel records will have a positive impact upon payroll management and thus upon the overall budget of the organisation. A personnel records system should run effectively whether it is in a purely paper-based environment or in the emerging electronic environment.

This module is not primarily concerned with the skills and techniques of personnel management, though inevitably it discusses the main functions involved. Rather, this module aims to identify and describe the types of records generated in the normal course of personnel management. The module then seeks to promote good practice in the creation, maintenance and disposal of those records. The main focus is on the management of personal files, which are the 'case files' that relate to individual employees. Personal files comprise the main bulk of personnel records.

*Managing Personnel Records* aims to help the records manager understand the role that records play in the whole range of issues involved with personnel management. Its goal is to assist both records managers and non-records staff, including line managers and personnel staff, to manage personnel records in support of public accountability and good governance. The module will enable them to advise policy makers and personnel managers about the importance of effective personnel records management.

The module is written particularly for records managers who have completed their study of the earlier modules in this programme. It is addressed to those working in posts carrying managerial responsibility for personnel records. It will also be of value to managers in other disciplines, in particular personnel officers seeking a broader perspective.

The module provides an understanding of the management framework needed for the control of personnel records and their significance as a resource for public sector personnel management and human resources planning. It explores the role of these records as tools for monitoring staff numbers and performance as well as for protecting the rights of individual staff.

Although this module is directed primarily at those involved in personnel records management in the public sector, the principles and practices it advocates are also relevant in the private sector.

# ORGANISATION OF THE MODULE

Managing Personnel Records consists of seven lessons:

| | |
|---|---|
| Lesson 1: | The Context of Personnel Records Management |
| Lesson 2: | Personnel Management Business Processes and Records |
| Lesson 3: | The Nature of Personal Files |
| Lesson 4: | Managing Personnel Records in a Manual Form |
| Lesson 5: | Managing Personnel Records in a Mixed Paper/Electronic Environment |
| Lesson 6: | Management Issues |
| Lesson 7: | What to Do Next? |

The appendix to this module contains a sample excerpt from a retention schedule for personnel records.

# AIMS AND OUTCOMES

## Aims

The specific aims of this module are

1. to explain the objectives of personnel management and the legal and regulatory context in which it operates

2. to describe the roles of creators and users (stakeholders) of personnel records, the main record series and their uses and to consider issues such as security, access and retention periods

3. to introduce the basic business processes involved and to describe the documents that result

4. to discuss the nature and contents of personnel files

5. to describe the principles of managing paper-based personnel records systems

6. to offer guidance on repairing or replacing existing systems that are not functioning effectively

7. to introduce the concept of automated integrated personnel management and payroll systems, to examine the policy issues involved including linking personnel management systems to the payroll and to examine the advantages and disadvantages involved.

## Outcomes

When you have completed this module, you will be able to

1. explain the objectives of personnel management in its legislative context, identify the basic business processes involved and understand the resulting documents

2. understand the roles of the key stakeholders involved and the use they make of the main record series

3. appreciate issues relating to security, access and retention of personnel records

4. understand the records management role in the planning and implementation of projected integrated automated personnel and payroll systems

5. determine whether a personnel management records system is working effectively or needs to be upgraded.

# METHODS OF STUDY AND ASSESSMENT

This module of seven lessons should occupy about 65 hours of your time. You should plan to spend about

8 hours on lesson 1
10 hours on lesson 2
10 hours on lesson 3
12 hours on lesson 4
12 hours on lesson 5
8 hours on lesson 6
5 hours on lesson 7.

This includes time spent doing the reading and considering the study questions.

At the end of each lesson there is a summary of the major points. Sources for additional information are provided in Lesson 7.

Throughout each lesson, activities have been included to help you think about the information provided. Each activity is a 'self-assessed' project; there is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer. Rather, the activity is designed to encourage you to explore the ideas presented and relate them to the environment in which you are studying or working. If you are studying these modules independently and are not part of a records or archives management organisation, you should try to complete the activities with a hypothetical situation if possible. If the activity suggests writing something, you should keep this brief and to the point; this is not a marked or graded exercise and you should only spend as much time on the activity as you feel necessary to understand the information being taught. At the end of each lesson are comments on the activities that will help you assess your work.

Following the summary at the end of each lesson are a number of self-study questions. Note that these self-study questions are designed to help you review the material in this module. They are not intended to be graded or marked exercises. You should complete as many of the questions as you feel will help you to understand the concepts presented. External assessments, such as assignments or exams, will be included separately when this module becomes part of a graded educational programme.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This module assumes that you have access to a records office, records centre or archival institution or that you have some involvement with the management of personnel records. The various activities may ask you to draw on your own experiences and compare those with the information provided in the lessons. If you do not have access to personnel records or archives within your organisation, you may need to develop a fictitious scenario for your activities. You do not have to be in involved directly with personnel management to work through the activities in this module, although you wish to discuss this module with friends or colleagues who are in such positions in the organisation, so that you can discuss principles and concepts with them and compare your understanding with theirs.

## Case Studies

The following case study provides valuable additional information.

Case Study:

31: Barbara Reed, Australia, 'Personnel Records: A Case Study'

**LESSON 1**

# THE CONTEXT OF PERSONNEL RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Personnel management is an agency-wide function; it affects every department and administrative unit within the organisation. The aim of personnel management is to use the human resources of the organisation to best advantage. This is done by deploying existing resources to meet current needs and developing those resources to meet anticipated future needs. Personnel records are critical to the personnel management function.

Lesson 1 explains the context of personnel records management. It begins by introducing information about the nature of personnel records and their importance, then it examines the history of modern personnel management, which can be divided into six stages. The lesson also discusses the importance of managing public sector personnel records in relation to the national legal requirements. It examines the role of the stakeholder in personnel records care, and it considers changing trends in personnel management, including the growing emphasis on 'downsizing' and the increasing complexity of managing personnel records in an electronic work environment.

## THE NATURE OF PERSONNEL RECORDS

In many respects, personnel records are similar to other kinds of administrative records and thus many of the techniques described in other modules in this series are also applicable. However, personnel records do have special features that require attention and that make the care of personnel records particularly important to the organisation. Try the following activity and then read on to consider the various special features of personnel records.

**Activity 1**

Before reading further in this introduction, write down as many qualities or features of personnel records that you think might distinguish them from other types of organisational records and that might require special attention.

# Personnel Records and Government Functions

*Personnel records are part of a government-wide system.*

The government usually has offices all over the country, each of which will maintain personnel records of some sort. Thus the quality of local communications may be very important in determining what record-keeping strategies are likely to succeed or fail. For example, where communications are slow, there may be a greater need for duplicate files because it takes too long for a file to be sent to the user from a central point.

Personnel records support the business needs. Good personnel records are necessary to allow the best use of available staff and promote efficiency in the organisation. The records also help the organisation make good use of scarce resources and help provide an accurate source of data, which can be used in other information systems throughout the organisation.

There are strong links between personnel management and other government systems, notably the management of the payroll and control of pensions expenditures. Personnel record-keeping systems can be linked to payroll systems. Personnel records provide the authority for the payment of salaries and benefits to employees. The linkage between personnel records and payroll systems must be fully understood before changes to either are implemented. Changes to one system may have a significant impact upon the functioning of another system. There may be advantages to creating a combined computerised personnel and payroll system, for example. However, records managers need to be aware of the electronic records management issues involved with doing this. It is also important to consult widely with all of the relevant stakeholders before implementing any changes.

# Personnel Records and Staff Management

*Personnel records are the primary source of information about an organisation's staff.*

The head of every organisation needs to know how many people work for him or her, who they are, where they are, what responsibilities they have and how effective they are. Human resource planners also need to know the qualifications, competencies, dates of promotions and retirements of staff. In some countries, record systems have broken down to such an extent that accurate information on these topics is no longer available. Without this information it is impossible to deploy and manage staff effectively.

Personnel records provide a basis for decision making in every area of personnel work, including

? human resources forecasting and planning

? recruitment and selection

? employment (including promotion, transfers, disciplinary procedures, termination and redundancy)

? education and training

? pay administration

? health, safety and welfare.

The existence of large numbers of false entries on the payroll (known as ‘ghost workers’) can represent a major cost to the civil service budget. Fighting the ghost worker problem is an important tactic for preventing waste and enabling the government to improve the pay of the employees who really do exist. It is impossible to eliminate ghost workers from the payroll unless it is possible to establish an authoritative list of staff. This can only be provided from accurate personnel records.

# Personnel Records and the Employee

*Personnel records directly affect the employee.*

More than many other records in the organisation, personnel records directly affect the employee in question and his or her family. Personnel records document the contractual relationship between employer and employee and the employee’s career history in the organisation. The information held in these records is used to make decisions about suitability for promotion, transfer or, in some cases, disciplinary action. These records will also be used as authority to determine pay and other benefits, including pension entitlements for the employee and dependent family members. It is therefore extremely important that personnel records are accurate and complete.

Personnel records also serve the needs of the individuals. They guard people’s rights and entitlements, provide evidence of their progress and employment history and serve as an authoritative source of accurate information about them. When personnel records are not managed properly, it becomes very difficult and time consuming to calculate pension benefits. In some countries delays in paying pensions affect almost every civil servant in retirement, from the most senior to the most junior. Improving the completeness of personnel records can speed up this process and bring material benefit to a large number of people.

Personnel records may have an effect on other individual rights, including the person's

? right to work

? standing in society

? promotion paths

? eligibility for training

? right to entitlements, including pensions, medical contributory schemes, insurance, and so on.

To achieve the objectives of serving the employer and the employee, it is in the interest of the organisation and the individual that the records meet basic criteria. Personnel records must

? be accurate

? contain verified information

? contain all the required information

? be trusted by all parties involved.

# Sensitivity of Personnel Records

*Personnel records are exceptionally sensitive.*

Personnel records contain information about the professional (and sometimes private) circumstances of individuals. Access to these records must be strictly controlled in a physically secure environment with effective control systems to track their movement and use. Records staff must be aware that they have been entrusted with a special responsibility never to reveal information gained from working with personnel records. They must understand the ethical considerations concerning access to and management of these records.

Restrictions on access to personal files are common. In some cases this involves imposing physical security, such as a locked area, or even physically separate systems for confidential material. In most organisations, personal files can be seen only by those whose job requires them to use the files. A checking process is often in place to protect the files from inappropriate or mischievous amendment. In some countries, particularly those with freedom of information or privacy laws, individuals may be allowed to consult their own files, in full or in part. They may also be allowed to correct or amend details they think are wrong.

# Life Span of Personnel Records

*Personnel records remain active for very long periods.*

Personnel records will usually remain in use by the originating department for the duration of the career of the employee in question. In many cases this will be decades. In addition, organisations often take some responsibility for the welfare of retired staff. Thus a personnel department may need to access personal files even after the person has retired. Moreover, the organisation will need to maintain and update some records about a retired member of staff while that person (or his or her dependents) are receiving a pension. This means that decisions about the technology used to create and maintain personnel records must take into account the need to access records for at least 70 years. This is particularly relevant when electronic record-keeping systems are being evaluated.

# Quantity of Personnel Records

*Personnel records are voluminous.*

Typically the public service maintains very large volumes of personnel records and the majority of these continue to be held on paper. The failure to manage these records will lead to significant wastage of office space and have major implications in terms of cost and staff time. It is therefore essential that changes to the management of personnel records should be 'piloted' or tested on a small scale to ensure that they are well designed before large-scale implementation. Failure to do this may lead to costly errors.

**Activity 2**

How do you think your organisation might make use of the information in your personnel file? How might you make use of that information? Write down as many ideas as you can think of for each question. Also write down a description of how you expect the government to manage personal information about you.

# THE EVOLUTION OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

The personnel management function involves a wide range of activities, from staff recruitment, deployment, development and training to disciplinary matters and employee appraisals. It is also concerned with grievance procedures, redundancy and dismissal, human resources planning, salary structures and employee conditions, as well as negotiations with trade unions and staff associations.

*There have been six stages in the evolution of modern personnel management.*

Like any professional activity, personnel management has developed and grown more sophisticated over time. Noted personnel management expert Michael Armstrong has identified six stages in the evolution of modern personnel management.[1] These stages are outlined below. This progression represents development in industrialised countries after the first world war. While some countries may have experienced a different evolution, this model is useful as a framework for understanding the functions, activities and administrative structures associated with personnel records.

## Stage 1: Welfare

The welfare stage involves providing employees with facilities such as canteens and looking after their interests. Welfare officers first appeared in significant numbers during the first world war.

## Stage 2: Personnel Administration

Personnel administrative support to management in the form of recruitment, basic training and record keeping was introduced between the first and second world wars.

## Stage 3: Personnel Management – The Developing Phase

During the second world war and throughout the 1950s, a whole range of personnel services emerged, including salary administration, supervisory training and advice on

[1] Michael Armstrong, *A Handbook of Personnel Management Practice*, 4th edition, 1991.

industrial relations. Personnel management operated primarily at the tactical level and had relatively little involvement with strategic issues.

## Stage 4: Personnel Management – The Mature Phase

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, systematic training (under the influence of training boards), performance appraisal and human resources planning were introduced. Personnel management involved the use of more sophisticated training, salary administration and appraisal (management by objectives) techniques. It also involved the application of behavioural science knowledge to job design and motivation. There was increased involvement of personnel managers in strategic issues, especially those concerning industrial relations.

## Stage 5: Personnel Management – The Entrepreneurial Phase

The 1980s saw the personnel function adjusting to the enterprise culture and the market economy. The 'entrepreneurial personnel director' who emerged was very much concerned with strategic issues and making a contribution to profitability. In many cases there was an interest in developing a positive 'corporate culture.'

## Stage 6: Personnel Management – The Post-entrepreneurial Phase

In the 1990s there emerged a reaction against some of the negative features of the enterprise culture, with its emphasis on greed and individualism. The virtues of teamwork and a 'climate of consent' are now being emphasised. During this period the human resource management concept has become popular. This is defined as a strategic approach to acquiring, developing, managing, motivating and gaining the commitment of the organisation's key resource: its people.

# THE LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

The public sector is generally the largest employer in a country. This fact alone creates considerable problems in ensuring that personnel records are comprehensive, accurate and up to date. From one point of view, the public sector may be viewed as a single organisation. From another it consists of a wide and disparate variety of bodies ranging from ministries and departments to ‘parastatals’ (or quasi-governmental bodies), local government bodies, health bodies, educational and cultural institutions and other types of agencies.

The degree of autonomy enjoyed by different bodies within the public sector for personnel management may vary considerably between one organisation and another. Ultimately all are accountable to some degree to central agencies such as the office of the head of the civil service, the public service commission, the ministry in charge of the public service and the ministry responsible for finance and the accountant general (for salaries). Because different agencies may be involved with personnel management, it is common to find personnel records relating to the same individuals in many different offices of the government. As a result, it can be difficult to locate and bring together in one place a full career record for any particular individual.

*It is common to find personnel records relating to the same individuals in many different offices of the government.*

The legal framework governing employment will vary from country to country and will offer different degrees of employment protection to employees. The laws and regulations governing the public sector may be different from those governing the private sector. Within the civil service the terms and conditions of employment are governed by the constitution or by legislation governing the public service commission. These documents should provide terms of employment at least as comprehensive and beneficial as a national employment law.

All personnel work should conform to the statutory employment framework within the country and to any subordinate regulations. For example, many countries have legislation including an Employment Act, a Trades Union Dispute Act, a Worker’s Compensation Act and a Public Service Commission Act. The records manager must be familiar with the provisions of employment legislation as they relate to records care. In any organisation, personnel officers must be fully aware of the statutory requirements and other regulations governing conditions of employment. They should be alert to the implications of changes to employment law. There are occasions when advice and guidance should be sought from outside the organisation, for example from the public service commission or the legal department of the civil service.

**Activity 3**

Find out what legislation specifically governs personnel management in your government. (If you are working in the private sector, find out what organisational policies address personnel issues; also check for legislation that governs how your organisation manages personnel.) Review the legislation or policies and, for each separate document, identify what you think its main purpose is and what specific aspects of personnel management it governs.

The overriding purpose of the legal framework for managing personnel is to

? define the rights and obligations of employers

? define the rights and obligations of employees

? establish mechanisms for resolving disputes between employers and employees (whether at the level of individual grievances or more widespread disputes).

Within the legal framework, there is scope for organisations to manage their personnel functions with varying degrees of flexibility. The statutory framework will almost certainly vary from country to country, but it is likely to protect employees in a number of ways. For example, a person applying for a job may be protected against some or all of the following:

? race, sex, colour and age discrimination

? discrimination as either members or non-members of a trade union or political party

? discrimination against a disability

? being required to declare 'spent offences' when a given period of time has expired (a 'spent offence' is one where the penalty has already been served).

On starting work, employees may be entitled to some or all of the following:

? protection against dismissal or other unfavourable treatment on the grounds of race, sex, politics or trade union activity

? equal pay for equal work (both men and women)

? time off, maybe with pay, for antenatal care

? time off, maybe with pay, for trade union duties

? time off, maybe with pay, for safety representative duties

? time off, maybe with pay, for public duties

? statutory sick pay

? written statement of terms of contract

? itemised pay statement

? consultation in the event of redundancies.

One of the complexities of employment law is that the length of service or length of probationary period required before workers acquire particular legal rights may vary quite considerably from country to country. For example, employees may have different rights after different periods of employment, such as the following.

? After four weeks, employees may be entitled to receive a minimum period of notice if they lose their position, and they may receive guaranteed payments and protection from dismissal if the employer cannot provide work

- After twenty-six weeks, they may be entitled to statutory maternity pay.
- After two years, they may be entitled to a written statement of reasons for dismissal, protection from unfair dismissal, redundancy compensation, paid time off to look for work in the case of redundancy and guaranteed return to work after pregnancy.

It is essential that the personnel records are kept in good order, so that they can demonstrate the organisation's compliance with the laws or policies in force.

Traditionally, the majority of staff employed by the civil service and other public sector bodies have had permanent status. This status normally entitles them to full-time employment and often a pension on retirement, in both cases subject to satisfactory performance. They may also be entitled to allowances for accommodation, travel, free or low-cost health schemes and other benefits such as pensions for widows and children. Each of these various allowances increases the complexity of the personnel management process and generates additional records.

*The purpose of the legal framework for managing personnel is to define the rights and obligations of employers and employees and establish mechanisms for resolving disputes.*

# IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS

The public sector is generally the largest organisation in a country, often accounting for between thirty to fifty per cent of national expenditure. Of that share, as much as eighty percent may be spent on salaries, wages and pensions or other benefits for public sector employees.

Because of its size and complexity, the public sector often faces considerable problems in maintaining an accurate and up-to-date record of its employees. This difficult, in turn, can result in excessive expenditure on the one hand and injustices to individual staff on the other. The improvement of personnel management systems is increasingly seen as a means of providing significant benefits to the government and to individual staff, and the management of personnel records can make a vital contribution to this process.

It is of primary importance to identify those people who create, use and are affected by personnel records, in order to ensure their needs are met as personnel records systems are improved. These people are known as stakeholders:

***Stakeholder:*** Any person, group or other organisation that has a claim on an organisation's attention, resources or output or is affected by that output.

The primary stakeholder for personnel records in the public sector is the state itself, which creates personnel records through its agencies, the government departments, for its own purposes. In any organisation, staff are the primary asset, and the state is no exception. It needs to ensure that this asset is deployed to maximum advantage. The state exercises this interest through a variety of public sector organisations, which are likely to include some or all of the following departments or ministries:

? the office of the head of the civil service

? the ministry in charge of finance

? the public service commission

? the public service department

? the personnel management office

? the accountant general’s department

? the pensions office

? the audit office

? the office in charge of national security

? the national archival repository

? line ministries and their agencies.

Most of these offices, and others mentioned below, will have a director in charge of administration and personnel. This person will be responsible for personnel management and human resources planning. In this role, the director is responsible for carrying out the personnel policies and regulations of the government, particularly the policies and procedures specific to the particular organisation. The effective management of personal records is an important part of these responsibilities.

*The primary stakeholder for personnel records in the public sector is the state.*

The second most important stakeholder in the management of personnel records is the individual who is the subject of the records. For that person, his or her career and livelihood depend in great part upon full and accurate records. Inaccurate records can affect rights and entitlements for the individual and his or her family.

Staff organisation or trade union representatives are also stakeholders. They seek to ensure that individuals’ rights are upheld in cases of dispute. Where there are inaccurate or false records, negotiations tend to begin with controversy rather than equity.

Society in general also has a stake in ensuring that the government’s records about people are accurate and trustworthy. Trust in the government is quickly eroded when records about individuals are obviously incorrect. Loss of faith and individual powerlessness can undermine the very fabric of government.

The process of managing personnel records can be quite complex owing to the number of stakeholder groups involved. Moreover, many records are duplicated by different stakeholders. The regional offices of line ministries may hold their own sets of personnel files, particularly where communications with a central personnel department are difficult. Thus the 'information flow' can become quite complex.

*For more information on examining information flows, see* Analysing Business Systems. *The issue of information flow is discussed later in this lesson.*

Records managers need to evaluate the requirements of some or all of the bodies described below.

# Central and Common Services Departments

**Public Services Commission**

In some government systems, the public or civil service commission handles all appointments above a certain grade. In other governments, this responsibility is divided into functional areas. For instance, there may be a commission responsible for the teaching service; this commission will process teaching appointments. The main purpose of a service commission is to appoint officers, typically from higher executive officer level upwards, for work in the civil service. It will also confirm appointments, exercise disciplinary control over persons employed in the public service and terminate appointments. Other activities include overseeing the deferment of increments, compulsory retirement, fines, transfers and promotions, acting appointments, demotions, advertisements, interdictions, suspensions and secondments. Service commissions may also be involved with training and development and they may audit the agency for efficiency and effectiveness. Typically, the commissions open recruitment files as described in Lesson 2.

**The Office of the Head of the Civil or Public Service**

This office is ultimately responsible for the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service, including the management of personnel records. It may appoint staff, generally at both the clerical and executive level. In most cases, it holds personal records of these staff and may hold records about other specific categories of employee, such as civil servants above a specified level of the civil service. It also obtains and uses personnel information to monitor the performance of the civil service or of specific grades or occupational groups. The office has an interest in the financial aspects of employment.

**Ministry of Finance**

The ministry or department in charge of finance is ultimately responsible for the payment of civil servants. It therefore has an interest in the accuracy of personnel records for budgetary purposes, particularly in relation to the total number of public servants, their grades and levels of pay. Ultimate responsibility for the payment of salaries and wages may rest with the government's accountant general or head of the treasury. The finance ministry is an independent body, and its decisions cannot be altered by any person or authority. It may, however, delegate some of its powers to the heads of departments or to advisory committees.

**Accountant General**

The department of the accountant general is responsible for paying civil servants. It requires accurate information about the pay entitlements of all staff, including new recruits, and about all changes in their circumstances. These changes may include promotions, demotions, transfers, allowances, retirements, death (whether in service or later) and dismissals. The department generally includes a unit responsible for payroll.

**Pensions Office**

This office is responsible for paying pensions. It requires accurate information about date of birth in order to calculate retirement age. It needs accurate dates of appointment to establish length of service, including any breaks. Information about payments received is needed to calculate pension entitlements. In some countries, the pensions office is responsible for the administration of a widows and orphans' pensions scheme.

**Audit Office**

This office is responsible for financial audit and may also be responsible for carrying out efficiency audits. In both roles, it makes use of personnel records.

**Personnel Management Office**

The purpose of this office is to develop and manage personnel policies, to guide human resources development and to improve management services in the civil service in general. In this role, it may hold personal records of civil servants, usually those above a certain level. It will include a division responsible for personnel management, which may be involved with modernising the personnel records system and overseeing staff development programmes, including staff performance appraisal.

**National Security Office**

Some government appointments are sensitive and require vetting by the police or national security agency. Security reports on individuals are normally subject to a level of security classification, which prescribes rules on their handling and storage.

**National Archives**

The National Archives has responsibility for preserving records of permanent value to the nation, including a selection of personnel records of key national figures. In some of countries, its responsibility also includes giving advice on the management of current and semi-current records, including personnel records, and the systems by which they are managed.

**Line Ministries**

Line ministries may have devolved responsibility for recruitment at lower levels, typically clerical staff and manual workers. They are generally responsible for maintaining personal records for some or all of these staff and for transmitting returns and other information about personnel that may be required by the central authorities, including the accountant general.

# Individual Stakeholders

Individual staff have a major interest in the management of personal records. They entrust personal information about themselves to the government for the purposes of managing their employment and career. Individuals have a right to expect that personal records are treated with confidentiality and sensitivity and are only made available to people with a genuine reason to see them. They should also be able to expect that the information contained on the personal files is accurate, up to date and readily retrievable.

Furthermore, staff should be confident that

? terms and conditions of service will be observed

? remuneration will be accurate and paid at the specified dates

? accurate and adequate information will be available for the calculation of pensions to those entitled to them, including widows or widowers and children.

In some countries, individual civil servants have a right to see information held on them. This right may be established through a management directive or it may be enshrined as a right under freedom of information or other legislation.

*Individual staff have a major interest in the management of personal records.*

**Activity 4**

For each of the stakeholders discussed above, determine the formal name for that particular department, office or agency in your organisation. Write down the formal name and write a brief description of that department’s functions and activities, particularly in relation to personnel management. Based on this analysis, do you think the departments you identified are key stakeholders in personnel records care in your organisation? Can you think of any other stakeholders not mentioned here?

# Providing Information to Multiple Stakeholders

The multiplicity of stakeholders can lead to very complex information flows. In some cases, personnel information may be channelled to agencies that do not require this information or do not require multiple copies. One of the biggest difficulties with serving a number of stakeholders is determining the best way to provide information without either providing too much or providing too little.

The following activity illustrates what can happen when a system has become overly complicated. You should spend some time on this activity, as the issue of information flow is very important to effective personnel records management. The establishment of effective systems is discussed further in the following lessons.

**Activity 5**

Consider the following case.

In a West African country in 1990 it was found that a large number of copies of personnel documents were being generated and distributed unnecessarily. The Public Service Commission appointed civil servants from the level of higher executive officer upward. There were about 15,000 civil servants at this level, with roughly 1,000 new appointments and 3,000 promotions a year. Each appointment and each promotion generated about 15 sheets of paper. Copies of appointment and promotion letters were sent to

the office of head of civil service (where they should have been placed on personal files but often were not)

the relevant ministry (to be placed on the file maintained for the department concerned)

the department concerned (to be placed on individual personal files)

the account general (this copy was not used but bundled up and stored)

the auditor general (to enable payroll audit).

The public service commission itself retained three copies of the letter. One was put on a personal file for each appointee, one on a file relating to the department concerned and one on a running file.

The department concerned then made a copy of the appointment or promotion letter and sent it, along with up to five copies of an establishment warrant (for established posts) or a change of holders return (for non-established posts), to the relevant branch of the controller and accountant general's treasury for vetting. These copies were not used for any purpose as payments had been centralised in the payroll section and the treasury vetting process had been abandoned.

The establishment warrant or the change of holders return was vetted. One copy was stored with the promotion or appointment letter; the others were returned to the department. T he department then filed one copy and made another copy, which was sent with a payroll input sheet to the payroll section of the controller and accountant general's department.

Based on this information, draw or describe the flow of information in this system. Who receives what information first? Who receives information next? How is it managed? How could this information flow be improved to become more efficient and effective?

# TRENDS IN PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Increasingly governments across the world are under political and financial pressures to downsize the range and scope of their activities through privatisation, market testing, devolution and other means. In addition, they may be required by legislation or pressed by trade unions to offer

? equal opportunities to female employees

? flexible working practices such as job sharing, flexible working hours and maternity and paternity leave.

In recent years, there has been a widespread trend to devolve responsibilities for personnel management from the central ministries to individual agencies, which may have considerable flexibility in defining their own objectives, job descriptions, levels of remuneration and other conditions of employment within parameters defined by the centre. They may also choose to contract out certain jobs to the private sector.

*In recent years, there has been a trend to downsize government and devolve responsibilities for personnel management from central ministries to individual agencies.*

These changes require the introduction of a range of contracts of employment, such as term contracts operated for specific periods. Rights, entitlements and terms and conditions may be negotiated with individuals. Salary, performance goals and benefits may be negotiable. Accurate record keeping is essential to track such non-standard agreements and to provide the evidence necessary to protect the rights of both employer and employee. In some countries many of these records are filed with personnel records.

These trends are particularly significant for countries with limited resources, such as those carrying significant international debts; these countries may have been pressed to reduce the size of the public service in return for financial assistance from the international community. In some cases this reduction is achieved by a freeze on recruitment, but more often it involves making staff redundant (also known as 'retrenchment' or 'downsizing').

This staff reduction process has often highlighted weaknesses in the statistical information available about staff; as a result, many countries have developed specialised databases or computerised personnel management systems to try to manage their personnel information more effectively. However, experience has shown that where the paper personnel records are disorganised or incomplete, the success of computerised systems has been limited. In most cases the paper personal files are the only source of reliable data for the new computerised systems; well-kept paper personnel records are essential to the success of the systems. Accurate personnel records are needed to calculate the terminal benefits of staff who have been retrenched. Overall, the policy of cutting the size of the civil service has increased, not reduced, the need for efficient records management.

Increasingly, the public sector is looking to the private sector to provide techniques for improving the quality and efficiency of its employees. In particular, the introduction of performance-related promotion and pay schemes has been common. Improving the quality of staff performance requires accurate and complete personal files, as these schemes require detailed records of individual performance over the period of their careers.

If we look to the future, it is clear that all other aspects of management are becoming more information intensive. In general, changes in personnel management are being accompanied by the introduction of information technology. Inevitably new information systems will generate new kinds of personnel records. Many of these will be in electronic format and will require specialised management and skills. The records manager of the future will need to make an even greater contribution to the organisation's human resource management objectives, not only in the management of personnel records once they have been created but also in the design of personnel management systems before they are implemented.

*For more information on electronic records care, see* Managing Electronic Records.

**Activity 6**

Examine the present personnel management systems in place in your organisation. Have there been changes in the scope and nature of personnel management, such as reductions in the civil service, decentralisation of personnel care, installation of computerised systems and so on? Write a brief description of any changes you have identified. Then, write a brief description of how those changes might affect what records are created and where they might be kept. Write down as many ideas as you can think of. You may wish to discuss this activity with colleagues involved with personnel management or personnel records care to help you understand the trends occurring in your agency.

# SUMMARY

Lesson 1 has discussed the nature of personnel records and discussed the importance of their management in the public sector. It has also introduced the personnel management function and the six stages in the evolution of modern personnel management and stressed the need to manage the records in relation to the national legal requirements.

Managing personal records is made more difficult because of the requirements of the various stakeholder agencies. The lesson has explored the roles of key stakeholders, including not only the individual who is the subject of the record and his or her employer but also

? the office of the head of the civil service

? the ministry in charge of finance

? accountant general

? pensions office

? audit office

? public service commission

? public service department/ministry of public service

? personnel management office

? national archival repository

? line ministries.

The lesson also examined how a particular personnel management activity can involve information flows that can lead to an unnecessary accumulation of records.

The lesson has highlighted the changing trends in personnel management. These changes include the growing emphasis on ‘downsizing’ and the increasing complexity of managing personnel records in an electronic work environment.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Explain at least four qualities that distinguish personnel records from other records within an organisation.

2. Describe three reasons personnel records are important to an organisation and individuals within it.

3. Why must personal files be protected and kept physically secure?

4. Explain the six stages of modern personnel management identified by Michael Armstrong and outlined in this lesson.

5. What bodies in government might the personnel management agency report to?

6. What types of legislation might affect personnel management?

7. What is the purpose of a legal framework for personnel management?

8. Name at least four protections personnel legislation should offer to employee.

9. What types of benefits might an employee be entitled to under personnel legislation?

10. What is a stakeholder?

11. Who is the primary stakeholder in the management of personnel records? Why?

12. Why are staff organisation or trade union representatives key stakeholders?

13. Why is society a stakeholder?

14. Why is the state a stakeholder?

15. Explain why the following offices of the state can be considered stakeholders in the care of personnel records:

    ? the office of the head of the civil service

    ? the ministry in charge of finance

    ? the public service commission

    ? the public service department

    ? the personnel management office

    ? the accountant general’s department

- ? the pensions office
- ? the audit office
- ? the office in charge of national security
- ? the national archival repository
- ? line ministries and their agencies.

16. How does the existence of a number of stakeholders lead to complex information flows?
17. Explain some of the recent trends in personnel management discussed in this lesson.
18. Explain how these trends might affect the creation and retention of personnel records.
19. How might the process of reducing staff in an organisation affect the creation and retention of personnel records?
20. How might computerisation affect the creation and retention of personnel records?

# ACTIVITIES: COMMENTS

**Activities 1-2**

Both these activities are designed to help you start thinking about the qualities of personnel records and about why personnel records are important. You should compare your answers with the information given in the introductory lesson and bear this information in mind as you proceed through the module. Activity 2 in particular will help you consider the differences between how a personnel file is valued and used by an organisation and how it is valued by an employee. You should have certain expectations about how the organisation manages information about you; perhaps you think it should be confidential, accurate, and used only for the purpose it was gathered. Consider these expectations as you work through this module and consider the record-keeping requirements needed to meet those expectations.

**Activity 3**

Every jurisdiction will have different legislation affecting personnel management. It is important to recognise that legislation affects not only the management process but also the records created by that process. If possible, you might want to obtain copies of the relevant legislation and refer back to them as you work through this module.

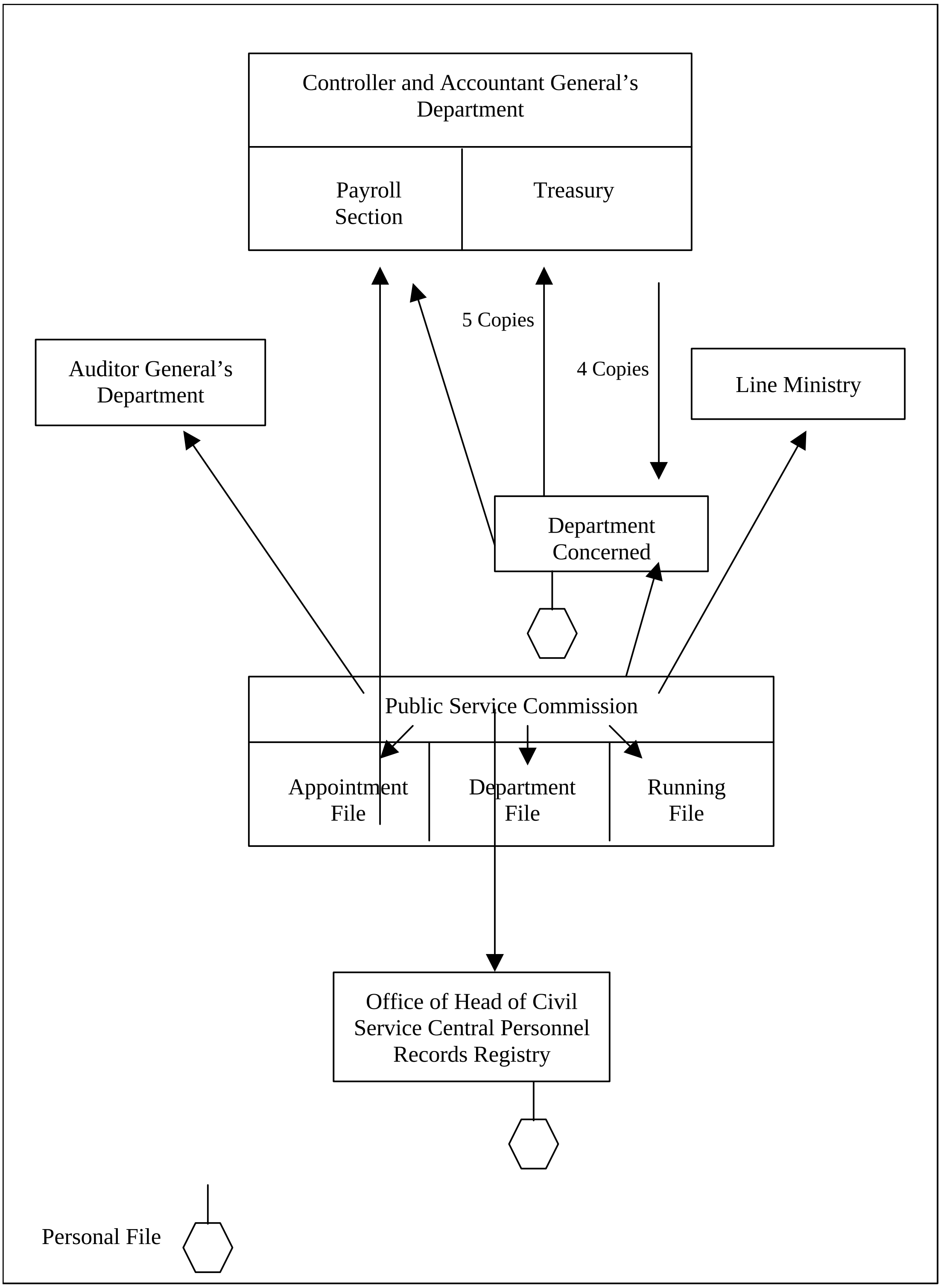
**Activity 4**

This activity will help you identify the particular stakeholders in your organisation involved with the personnel management process. You should compare your lists with the information in this lesson and discuss your findings with colleagues involved with personnel records care to ensure you have identified all stakeholders and clarified their particular interest in personnel records.

**Activity 5**

As you will see in this activity, the flow of paper is unnecessarily complex. Examine the illustration below showing the information flow. Your chart should be similar to this one.

Analysing and charting information flows in this way demonstrates clearly the way in which staff time, storage space and stationery can be wasted when records systems are not well designed. This process is discussed in more detail later in this module.


Controller and Accountant General's Department
Payroll Section
Treasury
5 Copies
4 Copies
Auditor General's Department
Line Ministry
Department Concerned
Public Service Commission
Appointment File
Department File
Running File
Office of Head of Civil Service Central Personnel Records Registry
Personal File

**Activity 6**

Changes in processes inevitably bring changes in the types of records created and used. It may not be possible for you to examine specific record-keeping systems or personnel management processes in detail, but you should spend as much time on this activity as possible to allow you a clear understanding of current trends in personnel management in your organisation. However, do not spend so much time on this activity that you get behind on work on this module; other activities in the module will ask you to examine specific tasks or actions in your organisation and will also help you understand current trends and developments.

**LESSON 2**

# PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT BUSINESS PROCESSES AND RECORDS

Lesson 2 considers the major business functions and processes that comprise personnel management. Personnel records are generated as the byproduct of each of these processes. Not every organisation will carry out all of the processes described. For example, some governments do not carry out performance appraisal. Other processes, such as recruitment, are found virtually everywhere. Some organisations will create other types of records as well. Lesson 2 examines the following particular personnel management functions:

? human resource planning and personnel policy management

? recruitment and appointment

? induction and initial training

? confirmation in post

? performance appraisal

? education, training and development

? promotions, transfers and secondments

? disciplinary proceedings and dismissal

? attendance, annual leave and sick leave

? redundancy

? death in service

? retirement and pensioners

? payment.

The lesson examines these functions and then discusses the effect they have on the nature of the records created and on the care and use of those records. The lesson also examines records-related concerns or issues that emerge during these various personnel functions. Lesson 3 examines the nature of the individual personnel file, examining in particular the master and working personal files and the personal record card.

Note that for ease of reference most figures and forms in this lesson are included at the end of the main text for the lesson.

# HUMAN RESOURCE PLANNING

Logically, if not always in practice, personnel management begins with human resource planning.  Human resource planning attempts to analyse likely influences on the supply of and demand for people, with a view to maximising the organisation's future performance.  Planning for people in organisations involves ensuring that the organisation has

? the right people

? in the right numbers

? with the right knowledge, skills and experience

? in the right jobs

? in the right place

? at the right time

? at the right cost.

Both the quantity of staff and their quality are important issues.

Human resource planning may be undertaken at a global, ministry, departmental or lower level, or not at all.  The users of human resource planning are not just the planners themselves but also the senior management of the organisation, including the head of personnel.  Their objective is to produce a better fit between the current levels and skills of staff and the plan's projections.

To carry out the human resource planning process, it is necessary to obtain certain key facts about staffing in the organisation.  These facts include grade, occupational group, job type, title or department, contract of employment, sex, age, length of service, skills and educational levels, knowledge and expertise, language, ethnic origin, nationality and disability.  Research is needed to gather these facts if they are not already accessible to the human resource planners.

Statistics gathered from this exercise can be analysed to produce information about the match between actual staff skills and those identified as necessary or desirable.

Carrying out a human resource planning exercise relies heavily on the information contained in personnel records.  Working through this process has the added benefit of identifying gaps in the personnel records and allowing processes to be put into place to fill these gaps.

The human resource planning process is illustrated in the Figure 1 below.  Note that Stages 1 and 2 can be carried out simultaneously, but the later stages must be carried out in sequence.

## Records Issues

When a human resources plan is developed, personnel departments should maintain the master copy; department heads should have a copy of the most up-to-date plan. Records of the entire planning exercise should be kept by the personnel department for three planning cycles; updates should be kept until shortly after the next full-scale plan is completed.

**Stage 1**

Analyse current staff in organisation and past trends to

? assess the present situation

? assess relevant future changes

? project future availability of key staff

*From personnel records*

**Stage 2**

Analyse future plans of the organisation in staffing terms to

? assess relevant future trends

? project numbers of staff required in the future

*From Corporate Plan*

**Stage 3**

Examine matches or mismatches between these two projections

and

Identify critical shortfalls or staff surpluses

**Stage 4**

Evaluate alternative approaches to dealing with the results

**Stage 5**

Decide upon the approach to be used, including provisions for monitoring and review

***Figure 1: Human Resources Planning***

# PERSONNEL POLICY

All organisations will also develop personnel policies. For example, organisations will establish guidelines for hiring or dismissal, for standards of work and so on. Many of these policies may be interlinked with other organisational policies and guidelines. These guidelines will usually be codified and consolidated in the form of a personnel manual or in some cases, standing orders or regulations for use by personnel officers and to inform staff members of their rights and obligations. They are issued by an office in the public service with authority to set general personnel regulations, for example the Public Service Commission, Office of the Head of Civil Service or Public Service Ministry.

## Records Issues

Personnel policy covers a wide range of issues, for example what kinds of behaviour should be officially encouraged and which discouraged, pay negotiations with trade unions, revisions to the job and pay grading structures, policies on recruitment and so on.

Policy records normally consist on position papers and reports on what policies should be or have been adopted. Unlike the records concerning individual staff members, these records relate to overall management and so would not be filed in individual personnel files. Rather, a personnel policy records are normally kept as a separate series within the agency responsible for personnel management.

# RECRUITMENT

The purpose of recruitment is to acquire the best candidate(s) for the job(s). In some government systems, recruitment for the civil service is handled by a service commission, which maintains files of recruitment records. This process does not always apply to recruitment at lower grades, such as for drivers and cleaners, who tend to be recruited directly by the department or ministry.

## Records Issues

The recruitment process generates a number of types of record. Most of these are not needed after the post is filled. The exceptions may be the application form and educational certificates, which are required for long periods. Not only could deliberate untruth by the applicant be grounds for dismissal, even years after appointment, but the application form provides important source of original source data about the employee.

# Preparing the Job Description

This involves identifying the main duties, responsibilities and tasks involved in the job and the physical, social and financial conditions of the job.

The process of preparing the job description generates basic information about the nature of the position and can be used in many aspects of personnel work, such as performance appraisal, training programmes and disciplinary interviews.

The job description might include what is called a 'person specification', which defines the knowledge, skills and experience required to carry out the tasks summarised in the job description successfully. This process involves matching the characteristics of the job with the characteristics of the potential applicants. An example of a job description is to be found in Figure 2; a sample of a person specification is in Figure 3.

### Records Issues

A record of each job description and person specification should be kept for at least as long as the job exists in the organisation. Line managers should have an up-to-date copy of the job description and be involved in any revisions to it. Each member of staff should have a copy of his or her job description.

# Application Forms

Application forms should be used to obtain personal information from applicants, including full name, address and telephone number, date of birth, sex, disability if any, ethnic origin (or tribe), language spoken, nationality. The form will also gather information about qualifications and career, such as educational qualifications, career details, work experience, reasons for applying for the job and references. An example of an application form is in Figure 4.

Some organisations allow candidates to submit a curriculum vitae (CV) instead of or in addition to a completed application form.

### Records Issues

The application form is a record that may be required if the individual's statements are questioned at a later date. Unsuccessful applications need only be kept for a short time (usually between 2-6 months) in the event of an appeal against the decisions. As well, if the interview process is unsuccessful, it may be necessary to go back to the pool of applicants to find further possible people to be interviewed.

The application form or CV, with the offer letter and letter of appointment, should be placed on a temporary personnel file. A permanent file should only be opened once the candidate has taken up his or her post. If the candidate does not take up the post, the application form should be retained for 1-2 years.

Unsolicited applications and other general recruitment enquiries would normally be kept for 1-3 months.

## Special Contracts

Some staff appointments are made by individual contract. These contracts will set down the terms and conditions of appointments. Summaries of the reports are usually placed on the personnel file of the individual. A separate set of contracts is maintained by the personnel department.

### Records Issues

Individuals should have copies of their contracts; the personnel department should hold the originals. Contracts should be kept for the statutory period after the expiry of the contract, which is usually about six years.

# APPOINTMENT

The terms and conditions of service need to be agreed. Depending on the appointee's status, this may involve correspondence with the employing department or one or more of the central agencies. Special allowances for accommodation, travel, car and so on may need to be negotiated. Appointees may have to sign an official secrets or guarantee of confidentiality form.

## Records Issues

As soon as the recruit is in post, the staff list must be amended and the relevant central authorities (ministry of public service, accountant general) need to be informed. A personnel file should be opened to which should be added the application form, a statement of any non-standard terms and conditions, letter of appointment, medical certificate, evidence used to verify the date of birth and qualifications held by the candidate and so on.

# Induction and Initial Training

A new member of staff requires induction to his or her job and to the organisation as a whole. The level will vary according to the job. It may require only a few hours or a period lasting several weeks or months.

Initial training is concerned with learning the specific skills of the job rather than with familiarisation with the organisation.

## Records Issues

Responsibility for keeping the records of induction and initial training should be jointly carried out by the immediate line manager and the personnel department.

These records serve various purposes. At their simplest, they can be used to confirm that all new staff have completed their induction and training and how well they have done. They can also be used to assess the effectiveness of the induction process and to introduce improvements where appropriate.

The induction record should be placed on the personnel file along with the application form and the letter of appointment.

# Confirmation in Post

Most if not all new staff will be subject to a probationary period. At the end of this period, they should be formally confirmed in post, unless their performance has been unsatisfactory. This should not come as a surprise; line management in conjunction with personnel staff should have already provided feedback and support. Where performance has been unsatisfactory, the necessary warnings should have been given before the end of the probationary period.

During the probationary period, which may range from a few weeks to a year or more, the personnel department should ensure that personnel staff and line management keep records of the progress of probationary staff in order to be in a position to confirm them in post where appropriate.

## Records Issues

A brief summary of the probationary period should be placed on the personnel file along with a Confirmation in Post certificate. A copy should go to the central department responsible for posting the employee to the job.

If the probationer is not confirmed in post, the reasons for the decision should be given. A further probationary period, or dismissal, may follow. A notification of an extended probationary period or dismissal should be placed on personnel file. If dismissal takes place, the relevant central authorities must be informed and the staff list amended.

Any other procedures in the organisation's personnel manual should be followed, including the process of appeal or the right to a verbal interview to clarify the decision.

## Performance Appraisal

Records of performance appraisal are important to the ongoing operational effectiveness and continuing development of the organisation, as well as to the well-being of the individual members of its staff. These records provide evidence for the future deployment and promotion of staff as well as information about their current performance.

Performance appraisal should be seen in the context of the aims and objectives set out in the organisation's strategic plan. Individual forward job plans (FJP) should reflect these aims and objectives and provide the information on which performance appraisal is based. An Individual Forward Job Plan is a formal document outlining key performance targets for the coming year and any training requirements agreed between the staff member and his or her line manager.

It is good practice to carry out a formal annual appraisal of staff performance. This appraisal should be conducted by the line manager with the support of the personnel department, and it should result in a formal record. Appraisal should be followed up by the production of an FJP, agreed between the line manager and the member of staff, setting out six or so key performance targets for the coming year and any related training requirements.

The FJP should be kept under review throughout the year. It may be amended from time to time by mutual agreement and will provide the evidence on which the next performance appraisal is based.

An example of an appraisal report is shown in Figure 5.

The FJP form should be similar to the appraisal form, except that the key performance targets should be set out in full. The performance markings should be replaced by training needs and support from the line manager.

## Records Issues

Appraisal Reports are probably best kept as a separate series. The summary on the personnel file should simply record the overall performance mark, the mark on suitability for promotion and the long-term potential mark. Appraisal reports should be retained by the personnel department for 3 to 5 years at most. Forward job plans should also be destroyed as soon as their immediate value is passed.

# EDUCATION, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

As appropriate, staff should be provided with opportunities for further education, training in new skills and professional development. Where possible, education and training should be carried out in conjunction with the staff member's particular Forward Job Plan. The personnel department should monitor the results. Comments should be noted on the personnel file and entered in a skills register. The register should be organised by skills, followed by the names of staff who have acquired them and the level obtained.

Attendance at overseas education and training courses usually requires approval from the central agency and the employing department. Bonding may be required, whereby the person agrees that in exchange for training, he or she will undertake to work for the employer for a specific period of time upon return from studying. It is wise to monitor the training process closely to ensure staff complete the course and return to their post within the allotted time. This monitoring process may generate considerable correspondence between the employing department, the civil service department and perhaps the high commission or embassy in the host country, as well as with the individual concerned. The institution in the host country may also become involved.

## Records Issues

A skills register should be established if there is not one in use. Abstracts of education, training and development courses attended and their results should be placed on the personnel file. A separate series of correspondence files on overseas education and training should be kept in the civil service department and in the employing departments.

# PROMOTIONS

Promotions should be based primarily on merit, though seniority may also be a consideration. Traditionally, candidates for promotion have been required to attend a promotion board, but increasingly managers have been allowed to advertise for applications when a vacancy occurs and to carry out the selection themselves, possible with the involvement of personnel staff. Promotion boards may be restricted to internal candidates only, but may also include outside candidates.

Appeal procedures should be in place to consider cases where individuals were not selected for promotion or were not promoted.

## Records Issues

There will probably be a separate case file for each promotion board. The board's comments on each candidate should be copied to the individual's personal file. Relevant central authorities should be informed. The staff list will need to be amended.

# TRANSFERS AND SECONDMENTS

Civil servants and other public sector staff, usually those above a certain grade, can generally be transferred or seconded elsewhere at short notice. The personnel department should have available the regulations on the relevant terms and conditions under which this can be carried out. In some cases, staff may actively seek a transfer or secondment, in which case the terms may be different.

Transfers and secondments may be at the same grade, or they may result from a promotion or demotion.

## Records Issues

A transfer or secondment certificate should be placed on the personnel file. The personnel file should be transferred to the new agency's personnel department. In some countries the personal file does not move with the individual. The relevant central authorities should be notified.

# DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS

Disciplinary procedures should conform with employment legislation, but they may also be governed by less formal codes of practice where these exist. For example, there may be a conciliation or arbitration service that promulgates such codes.

Such procedures may vary from country to country. The procedures will define the action to be taken by whom; they will also allow individuals to be informed of the complaints against them, giving them an opportunity to state their cases. The punishment should fit the crime. The procedures should also ensure that, except for gross misconduct, employees are not dismissed for a first breach of discipline, that disciplinary action is not taken until the case has been carefully investigated and individuals are given an explanation for any penalties imposed. A right of appeal should also be specified.

Disciplinary proceedings may have serious consequences. It is important that from the outset a full record of the events which resulted in proceedings should be kept. In many cases, it should be possible to identify failings at an early stage and take remedial measures, which may include some sort of penalty, including demotion.

## Records Issues

A full record of disciplinary proceedings should be kept until there is no possibility of further appeals. There may be a statutory period of limitation. A record of disciplinary procedures should be placed on the employee's personnel file. It should include a date at which, subject to satisfactory performance, it will be expunged from the record. If staff are demoted, the relevant central authorities should be informed. If staff are dismissed, the staff list should be amended and the central authority informed. There can be cases where pension benefits are forfeited; in such cases the relevant authorities should be informed.

# DISMISSAL

Except in cases of gross misconduct, dismissal is usually a matter of last resort. It should have been preceded by an ongoing process of warnings on the one hand and counselling, training and other remedial measures on the other. The record of disciplinary proceedings should be used for this purpose. The precise nature of what is meant by gross misconduct should be specified in the personnel manual.

## Records Issues

Staff may be dismissed either with full benefits or without any benefits. The personnel file should contain a record of any entitlements to pension and other benefits to which dismissed staff are entitled. The record should be maintained until the normal retirement age, when the pension should start to be paid. The dismissed officer should be provided with a copy of the record.

Where the officer is dismissed with loss of all benefits, a record of this fact will be needed to prevent re-employment by the agency (if the organisation's personnel policy requires this) or the mistaken payment of benefits to which the individual is not entitled. Normally the personal file would be kept for a minimum of five years after dismissal without benefits.

The dismissal should be noted on the personnel file and the file should then be closed. The file then may be held in either the department responsible for pensions or in the last employing department. In either case, the central authority responsible should be informed. The pensions department should maintain a record of the date of retirement.

Even if the individual is not dismissed, the full record of dismissal proceeding should be retained for any statutory period required, which may be 3 to 5 years.

# ATTENDANCE, ANNUAL LEAVE AND SICK LEAVE

Systems should be in place to check on attendance, annual leave and sick leave. All of these systems should be monitored by the personnel department and, where necessary, used to promote improved performance in these areas.

Continuing poor attendance or abuse of annual leave may result in disciplinary proceedings. Excessive sick leave may result in referring the employee to the civil service's medical advisor or appropriate health office.

## Records Issues

It is important that records are kept by the personnel department to substantiate any cases that may arise during the employee's employment or even during retirement.

# REDUNDANCY

As mentioned earlier, redundancy or 'retrenchment' has in recent years become a significant factor as governments world-wide seek to reduce the size and scope of government. New employment legislation is often passed to assist this process. Good practice requires that schemes to encourage voluntary redundancy should be established and that compulsory redundancy should only be used as a last resort. Where compulsory redundancy is being considered, there should be negotiations with the staff representatives to determine the principles on which redundancy decisions will be made.

## Records Issues

In the event of redundancies, the staff list should be amended as necessary and the central authorities informed. A record of any future entitlements (in addition to compensation at the time of redundancy) should be kept and placed on the personnel file, which should then be closed. A copy of the statement of entitlement should be provided to the redundant employee.

Records of redundancy policy and the redundancy scheme should be kept centrally by the department in charge of the civil service. Individual departments will also have copies of material about the scheme for their own administrative purposes. Records relating to implementing the scheme should be kept in the employing department.

The files of employees made redundant should be transferred to a central repository, such as a records centre. The records may be required to answer future queries in relation to the redundancy scheme or to entitlements.

# DEATH IN SERVICE

Death in service primarily affects the next of kin. Widows and widowers may be eligible for pensions. Children below the age of majority may be entitled to benefits until they reach a specified age. *Ex gratia* payments may be considered in some circumstances, for example where the death may have been brought about by poor working conditions or an unforeseeable accident. In addition the employer may be liable for a statutory payment under health and safety legislation.

## Records Issues

In the event of a death while the person was in service, the staff list should be amended and the central authority informed. The personnel department should maintain up-to-date and accurate records of next of kin and their name, address and telephone number, in order to communicate with them in the event of an emergency or incident.

# RETIREMENT

Retirement covers both retirement at the normal retirement age (55 - 65) and early retirement. A person may opt for early retirement for health reasons, to take a different job, to begin a new lifestyle or as part of a retrenchment programme. These different scenarios will have different financial implications for the individual and for the records that need to be kept.

## Records Issues

Records of any continuing financial payments should be kept by the department responsible for pensions. The date of retirement should be noted on the personnel file. When staff leave to take up another job, whether within the public or the private sector, the personnel file should be retained against the eventuality that the individual may subsequently seek re-employment. The staff list should also be amended and the central authority informed of the change.

# PENSIONERS

Pensioners have statutory rights that must be observed. It is critical, therefore, that appropriate records be kept. Normally the pension scheme in place in the civil service will be centrally managed through the department responsible for pensions. In countries where there is no separate fund for civil service pensions, pensions are paid out of government revenue. Where functions (and the requisite staff) have been transferred to executive agencies, parastatal organisations or the local government, these organisations may have been required to create their own pension funds. The government then is faced with two options:

? ‘freeze’ the pension entitlement of the former civil servant and pay the pension at retirement age

? make a contribution to the new organisation’s pension fund commensurate with the years of service the civil servant has worked.

The second option is expensive, and often the funding is not available. Consequently in many cases it is vital to maintain an accurate record of the pension entitlements of former civil servants.

## Records Issues

Pensions records should be kept by the office responsible for pensions. Key records include trust deeds and rules and the minute books of the trustees of the pension scheme. If civil servants have been transferred to newly created organisations, such as executive agencies, special arrangements may have to be made to safeguard records of pension entitlements.

# PAYMENT

The authority to pay salaries lies with the personnel department. A central payroll unit usually makes the actual payments. The unit must be notified of all changes in individual staff circumstances such as promotions, demotions, part time and overtime working, transfers and secondments. If pay rates change, for example on account of inflation, the Payroll Unit will make the necessary alterations.

## Records Issues

Each time they are paid, staff should be provided with a pay slip for their own records. Payroll and wage records, including details on overtime, bonuses and expenses, and details of any other benefits in kind, should be kept by the payroll department for the statutory period under taxation legislation, which may vary, but the period is unlikely to be shorter than six years. The same retention periods are likely to apply to income tax records and annual returns of taxable pay and tax paid.

# SUMMARY OF PERSONNEL DOCUMENTS

Figure 6 below is a summary of the types of documents discussed in this lesson. In most cases, the documents will be filed on master personal files, although some will be held on working personal files. Master files are those permanent files containing the primary, comprehensive source of information about an individual's career. Working files are those held for convenient reference or that relate to the management of a particular function; they are usually not permanent records.

These two types of files are described in greater detail in Lesson 3. Some of the documents identified here may also be found on policy and operational files or on case files relating to particular functions, such as public service commission appointments.

Figure 7 illustrates the ways in which these records might be held on file series. The list is not definitive; the series established will vary from country to country in relation to the way the personnel function is managed.

*The principles of creating files series, to reflect different functional activities or requirements, are explored in* Organising and Controlling Current Records.

The series created to support the personnel function will depend upon the functions and work patterns and size of the government or the organisation concerned. In particular, policy and operational files may be organised into series supporting broader or narrower activities. In a large organisation, series will need to be more narrowly defined, whereas in a smaller organisation which maintains fewer records, the series can be broader.

**Activity 7**

Choose at least three of the personnel functions discussed in this lesson. For each function chosen, identify the types of documents created and who has custody of them. Use the format shown in Figure 6 as a model for this activity and fill in as much information as you can.

**National Archives of . . . .**

*Records Management Department*

| | |
|---|---|
| Job title: | Records Inspection Officer - team leader |
| Responsible to: | Head of department |
| Purpose: | to provide professional guidance and assistance to departments x, y, and z in the management of their records, and in particular with the selection of records for permanent preservation |

1. General duties

   ? Undertake such professional duties as may be required by the head of the department

   ? Assist in developing record keeping systems to ensure that all records and records series are appropriately treated during their active life and disposed of thereafter

   ? Assist in training records staff in departments

2. Staff

   ? Control and supervise the work of junior and non-professional staff

   ? Assist with effective on the job training

3. Resources

   ? Evaluate the resources available to record creating agencies and make suggestions for improving value for money

   ? Work with staff and users to evaluate the archival value of records created by the departments for which the team is responsible

4. Contacts

   ? Head of department

   ? Records management team

   ? Head of Reader Services Department

   ? Users of the service

5. Circumstances

The post-holder will be located in the National Archives. He or she will be required to visit the departments for which the team is responsible on a regular basis. This may involve some long journeys and overnight stays to regional headquarters.

***Figure 2: Sample Job Description***

| Job title | Personnel Officer: Executive Recruitment | |
|---|---|---|
| | ***Essential*** | ***Desirable*** |
| Physical make up | Well dressed, clear speech, articulate, good general health | |
| Attainments Education | Degree or equivalent qualification | Member of the Institute of Personnel Management |
| Training | Selection testing course | |
| Job experience | xxx years of experience of recruitment selection and more general aspects of personnel work | Work in similar organisation |
| General intelligence | Good verbal reasoning ability, logical thought, ability to analyse candidates' skills etc. and relate them to the job requirement | Good numerical ability |
| Specialised aptitudes | Good oral and written communication skills | |
| Interests | Evidence of some non-work related interests | Social activities |
| Disposition Acceptability | Ability to get on with people of many different backgrounds. Empathy with the requirements of equal opportunity policy | |
| Independence | Ability to make decisions within the recruitment budget | |
| Influence | Ability to convince managers of the value of systematic and fair recruitment and selection methods | |
| Objectivity | Ability to make sound judgements about job applicants | |
| Circumstances | Willingness to spend occasional nights away from home. Clean driving licence | |

***Figure 3: Sample Person Specification***

PHOTOGRAPH

Enclosures Returned

**Application for Employment in Categories IV and V of Government Service**

1. Name in full

…………………………………………………………………………………….…..

(Surname first in block capitals)

…………..……………………………………………

2. Date of Birth ………………………..…..

3. Place of birth ……………………..…………………….

(Birth certificate must be attached)

Address

……………………………….……………………………

……………………………………………………………

4. Appointment desired

……………………………………………………..……………………………

| 5. Schools | From | To |
|---|---|---|
| …………………………………….…….…..…… | …………..…. | ……………… |
| | …………… | ……………… |

6. Examination passed – giving dates and subjects and attaching Certificates

| | Date |
|---|---|
| (a)……………………………………………………..…….. | ………..……. |
| (b)………………………………..……………...…….. | ………………. |
| (c)…………………………….……………..…………. | ……………..…. |
| (d)……………………………………………………... | |

***Figure 4: Sample Application Form (page 1)***

7. Employment or occupation up to the present. Set out in chronological order each position held and the name of the employer also dates and reasons for relinquishing employment.

| | From | To |
|---|---|---|
| *(I)*……………………………………………… | ………… | ………… |
| ……………………………………………….. | ………… | ………… |
| ……………………………………………… | ………… | ………… |
| ……………………………………………… | ………… | ………… |
| ………………………………………………. | ………… | ………… |
| ………………………………………………. | ………… | ………… |
| ………………………………………………. | ………… | ………… |
| ………………………………………………. | ………… | ………… |

8. (a) Have you ever been in Government Service? Yes/No
   (b) Can you type? Yes/No
   (c) Can you do shorthand? Yes/No
   (d) Have you sat for the Government Entrance Examination? Yes/No

Cross out inappropriate and add details

9. Names and address of two who are prepared to vouch for your character:
   (1) ………………………………………………………………………………
   (2) ………………………………………………………………………………
   Attached testimonial

Date ……………………………… Signature ……………………………………….

***Figure 4: Sample Application Form (page 2)***

*CONFIDENTIAL*

**Staff Appraisal Report**

| | |
|---|---|
| Period from      To      Date of birth | |
| | |
| Officer's name | |
| Mr   Mrs   Miss   Ms | |
| | |
| Substantive grade      Job title (when appropriate) | |
| Date of entry to substantive grade      Seniority date | |
| Details of any temporary grade held during the period of this report | |

***Figure 5: Sample Staff Appraisal Report (page 1)***

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">Division (HQ staff only</td><td colspan="2">Location</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4"></td><td>Area</td><td>Branch</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">Date started present job</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="5"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">? Please correct any errors on this page in red<br>? This report is to be completed and returned not later than</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td><td>to</td><td colspan="3"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">? The reporting officer should sign here when his or her report is finished<br>? I have read the notes for guidance and other material issued to me<br>? This officer has worked for me for ___________ years _________ months<br>Signature of reporting Officer __________________________________Date _________________<br>Name in block letters ________________________________________Grade ________________</td></tr>
</table>

***Figure 5: Sample Staff Appraisal Report (cont.)***

1.1 **Job description and objectives** *Read guidance note before completing this section*

? The officer reported on is to complete this section

Job title if any ______________________________________________________________________

In completing parts a – c below you should refer, as appropriate, to the job plan agreed at the start of the reporting period and, after discussion with your Reporting Officer, record any changes which occurred during the period.

| | |
|---|---|
| a) Set out the main duties of the job in order of importance | Approx. % of time for each task |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| b) List the specific objectives established at the start of the reporting period revised as necessary to reflect any changes agreed during the year. | |
| | |

***Figure 5: Sample Staff Appraisal Report (cont.)***

| | |
|---|---|
| c) Give a broad indication of the resources managed, for example, how many staff are in your command and their grades? How much expenditure is directly controlled or advised upon? Other resources. | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

| |
|---|
| 1.2 **Performance assessment**<br>? The reporting officer is to complete this section<br>Give an assessment of each of the components of the Job Description and comment on: |
| (i) Effectiveness in main duties of the job set out in 1.1 a |
| |
| |

***Figure 5: Sample Staff Appraisal Report (cont.)***

| |
|---|
| (ii) Achievement of any established objectives set out in 1.1 b |
| |
| |
| |
| (iii) Use of staff and other resources mentioned in 1.1 c |
| |
| |

***Figure 5: Sample Staff Appraisal Report (cont.)***

? Give an overall assessment of the officer by ticking one of the boxes below

? The mark must reflect the performance actually achieved and should not make allowances for any special factors such as age, ill-health or inexperience, which should be noted in the space below.

? Comment on any special factors and on a mark in either of the two right-hand boxes

| Outstanding | Performance significantly above normal requirements | Performance fully meets normal requirements of the grade | Performance not fully up to normal requirements: some improvement necessary* | Unacceptable *(copies of written warnings must be attached)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

** Say not only why you have given this mark but also what improvements are necessary.*

Comments:

***Figure 5: Sample Staff Appraisal Report (cont.)***

| |
|---|
| 1.3 **Next year's work** *Read guidance not before completing this section* |
| ? The reporting officer should set out the job description, main tasks and objectives agreed with the officer for the coming year |
| |
| |
| |

***Figure 5: Sample Staff Appraisal Report (cont.)***

| |
|---|
| 1.4 **Performance Appraisal Interview** |
| Record here and in Sections 1.5 and 1.6, what you have agreed at interview. If performance did not reach normal requirements you must set out what action is proposed |
| |
| |

| |
|---|
| 1.5 **Training** *Read guidance note before completing this section* |
| ? If after discussion wit the officer, the reporting officer thinks the officer's performance or potential could be improved by training, the needs should be specified below<br>? If the requirement is for other than on-the-job training, specify the course proposed<br>? If it is agreed that no training is required this should be explained below |
| |

***Figure 5: Sample Staff Appraisal Report (cont.)***

| |
|---|
| |
| ? It is the reporting officer's job to follow up his or her recommendations for courses with Training Branch – has a nomination been made for any course(s) proposed? |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes ☐ | No ☐ | *Tick as appropriate* |

| |
|---|
| 1.6 **Postings**<br>? If after discussion with the officer, the reporting officer thinks the officer should be considered for a different job as the same grade in the coming year, this should be recorded below with reasons |
| |
| ? Use this space to record any proposal for a lateral transfer to another occupational group or class |
| |

***Figure 5: Sample Staff Appraisal Report (cont.)***

| |
|---|
| ? If a posting is suggested, comment on the officer’s availability for release |
| |
| |
| |
| |
| 1.7 **Officer’s comments** *Read guidance note before completing this section* |
| ? If after discussion, there is anything which the officer being reported upon wishes to add to the record made in Section 1.1 to 1.6 he or she may do so in the space below |
| |

***Figure 5: Sample Staff Appraisal Report (cont.)***

? ***READ GUIDANCE NOTE ON SECTION 2.2***

? A brief record must be made here of anything the officer has been told about the promotion assessment to be recorded in Section 2.2

| |
|---|
| |
| |

*The officer should sign below when the form has been completed up to this point.

I have seen section 1 of the report and my comments (if any), including any disagreements, are recorded above

Officer's signature ________________________________ Date ________________________

*Figure 5: Sample Staff Appraisal Report (cont.)*

| 2.1 **Personal Qualities and Abilities** *Read guidance note before completing this section* | | |
|---|---|---|
| ? **THE REPORTING OFFICER IS TO COMPLETE THIS SECTION**<br>? Complete each relevant section by ticking one of the boxes (using the rating scale in Section 1.2) and adding as full a comment as possible in the space provided<br>? Identify any particular qualities that are vital or relatively unimportant to the officer's work | | |
| **Outstanding** | **Unacceptable** | **Comment where necessary** |
| **REASONING AND PERCEPTION** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | | |
| **JUDGEMENT AND FORESIGHT** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | | |
| **PROBLEM-SOLVING AND INITIATIVE** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | | |
| | | |

***Figure 5: Sample Staff Appraisal Report (cont.)***

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **DRIVE AND DETERMINATION** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | | |
| **ACCEPTANCE OF RESPONSIBILITY** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | | |
| **RELIABILITY UNDER PRESSURE** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | | |
| **STAFF MANAGEMENT** ***(IF APPLICABLE)*** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | | |
| **MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | | |
| **RELATIONS WITH OTHERS** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | | |

***Figure 5: Sample Staff Appraisal Report (cont.)***

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| GENERAL SKILLS | | |
| **- WRITTEN** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | | |
| **- ORAL** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | | |
| **- NUMERACY** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | | |
| SPECIALIST SKILLS | | |
| **- KNOWLEDGE** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | | |
| **- APPLICATION** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ | | |
| ***(MAKE SURE IT IS CLEAR WHAT SKILLS THE OFFICER IS BEING ASSESSED FOR)*** | | |

***Figure 5: Sample Staff Appraisal Report (cont.)***

Further relevant comment

**2.2** PROMOTION ASSESSMENTS ***READ GUIDANCE NOTE BEFORE COMPLETING THIS SECTION***

? **BOTH THE REPORTING OFFICER AND THE COUNTERSIGNING OFFICER MUST GIVE THEIR OWN ASSESSMENT OF THE OFFICER'S FITNESS FOR PROMOTION TO THE NEXT SUBSTANTIVE GRADE(S) AND SHOULD COMMENT ON THE MARK(S).**

? Assess potential to perform the duties at the next grade. Look back at the rating of aspects of performance in Part 1 as well as the rating above and ensure any fitted assessment is justified.

? Separate assessments are required when the officer is eligible for promotion to more than one grade.

| | **WRITE PROMOTION GRADE(S) IN BOX(ES)** | **HIGHLY FIT** | **FIT** | **LIKELY TO BECOME FIT IN THE NEXT 2 YEARS** | **NOT FIT** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **THE REPORTING OFFICER'S ASSESSMENT** | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

***Figure 5: Sample Staff Appraisal Report (cont.)***

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON DISCLOSURE)* | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | **WRITE PROMOTION GRADE(S) IN BOX(ES)** | **HIGHLY FIT** | **FIT** | **LIKELY TO BECOME FIT IN THE NEXT 2 YEARS** | **NOT FIT** |
| **THE COUNTERSIGNING OFFICER'S ASSESSMENT** | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| *(SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON DISCLOSURE)* | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

***Figure 5: Sample Staff Appraisal Report (cont.)***

| Summary of Documents Generated by the Personnel Function | | |
|---|---|---|
| **System[2]** | **Documents** | **Custody** |
| **Human resources planning** | human resources plan. the plan should form part of and be linked to the wider strategic plan of the organisation. there are likely to be records of analyses carried out leading to the preparation of the plan. | the strategic plan should be widely disseminated through the organisation. the human resources plan itself should be treated as confidential and made available only to senior management. the agency concerned should hold the master copy in its policy files series. |
| **Recruitment** | job analyses, job descriptions, person specifications, advertisements, interview reports and references. candidates' application forms, letters of appointment. record of successful candidates. | the service commission concerned should hold the first six of these items on case files for as long as they are relevant; candidates' application forms and letters of appointment should go on the master personal file. |
| **Special contracts** | contracts and records of contract negotiations, which may be specific to a particular job or may be more general, such as part-time working, working flexible hours or job sharing. | the central agency or employing agency concerned should hold the contracts in a series of contracts files<br>a copy of the contract will also go to the master personal file. |
| **Performance management: induction and initial training** | records documenting the induction programme | master personal file |
| **Performance management: confirmation in post** | confirmation certificate/letter | master personal file |
| **Performance management: annual appraisal** | record of appraisal, forward job plan, annual report | the forward job plan should be retained for several years for comparison purposes. records of appraisal; summary details (overall mark, suitability for promotion and long term potential) should be held on the master personal file |
| **Education, Training and Development** | records of courses attended, skills acquired and levels obtained | master personal file and working personal file in central agency concerned |

***Figure 6: Summary of Documents Generated by the Personnel Function (page 1)***

[2] System as used here refers to a functional system within the overall personnel management function.

| System | Documents | Custody |
|---|---|---|
| **Promotion** | letter of promotion | master personal file |
| **Transfer** | letter of transfer | master personal file |
| **Discipline management** | full record of disciplinary proceedings and outcome | the full record of disciplinary proceeding should be maintained on a separate case/policy file, possibly requiring special security. only the outcome ie letters to the individual, should appear on the master personal file. |
| **Dismissal** | full record of proceedings | the full record of disciplinary proceeding should be maintained on a separate case/policy file, possibly requiring special security. only the outcome ie letters to the individual, should appear on the master personal file. |
| **Attendance, Annual Leave and Sick Leave monitoring** | leave and sickness cards | working personal file |
| **Statutory and/or civil service Redundancy** | full record of proceedings, negotiations and results | master personal file |
| **Death in service** | compensation terms | master personal file |
| **Retirement** | assessment of pension entitlement, pension notification and other documents relating to the retirement process | master personal file; pensions department case file |
| **Establishment information** | staff establishment lists, seniority lists | central agencies concerned; employing agencies |

***Figure 6: Summary of Documents Generated by the Personnel Function (cont.)***

| Examples of Main Records Series Supporting the Personnel Function | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Record Series** | **Where Held** | **Contents** |
| personnel management: policy and operational files | ministry in charge of the public service<br>employing agency<br>service commission | records of all aspects of the development and implementation of human resource management, including succession planning, job evaluation, health and safety, allowances, tax, salaries and wages, promotion, grievances, discipline, travel and overseas training. service commissions hold records of the development and implementation of policies for recruitment, promotion, grievances and discipline and overseas training. |
| record cards or sheets | ministry in charge of the public service<br>employing agency<br>service commission | record cards or sheets containing summary or statistical information used for planning and other purposes. in some countries they are held on personal files. in some countries these have been converted into databases. (the printouts may look very similar to the original cards). |
| recruitment: individual<br>case files, permanent pensionable and expatriate staff | service commission | records of the recruitment of candidates before a decision has been taken such as job analyses, job descriptions, advertisements, etc |
| recruitment: individual<br>case files, non pensionable staff | employing ministry | records of the recruitment of 'local', temporary or 'operational service' non pensionable staff including candidates before a decision has been taken and successful candidates who have not taken up a position |
| contract files | employing agency<br>central agency | contracts and associated correspondence |

***Figure 7: Summary of File Series Supporting the Personnel Function (page 1)***

| Examples of Main Records Series Supporting the Personnel Function | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Record Series** | **Where Held** | **Contents** |
| master personal files: permanent pensionable staff. In larger ministries, this series may be subdivided into sub series, that may be held in separate locations. For example there may be a sub series for nurses in the ministry of health held in the office of the chief nursing officer. | employing agency, or cadre or agency responsible for the civil service | records providing a complete record of the individual's service history |
| master personal files: non pensionable staff | employing agency | records providing a complete history of the individual's service |
| working personal files: permanent pensionable staff | employing agency | records maintained at the convenience of the user. they will not contain a complete record of the individual's service history |
| working personal files: non pensionable staff | employing agency | records of recruitment, promotion, grievances and discipline of 'local', temporary, or 'operational service' non pensionable staff |
| personal case files | service commission | records of recruitment, promotion, grievances, discipline and overseas training of permanent civil servants |

***Figure 7: Summary of File Series Supporting the Personnel Function (cont.)***

# SUMMARY

Lesson 2 has examined the major business functions and processes that comprise personnel management. It has

? outlined the basic need and requirements for personnel records

? outlined the basic personnel activities

? shown how records are created in the process of doing the business

? described the main types of records created by specific personnel management activities

? suggested what part of the organisation is most concerned with the records might be most appropriately stored and managed

? illustrated the nature of the records series required.

The particular personnel management functions examined include

? human resource planning

? personnel policy management

? recruitment

? appointment

? induction and initial training

? confirmation in post

? performance appraisal

? education, training and development

? promotions

? transfers and secondments

? disciplinary proceedings

? dismissal

? attendance, annual leave and sick leave

? redundancy

? death in service

? retirement

? pensioners

? payment.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Explain the purpose of human resource planning.

2. What information about staffing is required to carry out human resource planning.

3. Describe the five stages involved with human resources planning.

4. What records are generated from the human resources planning process and how should they be managed?

5. What is the purpose of personnel policy management?

6. What types of records might be created as part of the process of developing policies?

7. What is the purpose of recruitment?

8. What records are generated from the recruitment process and how should they be managed?

9. What records are generated from the process of preparing a job description and person specification and how should they be managed?

10. How should the application form be cared for in the personnel records management system?

11. How should special contracts be cared for in the personnel records management system?

12. What issues have to be confirmed during the process of agreeing an appointment?

13. What records are generated from the appointment process and how should they be managed?

14. What records are generated from the process of inducting and training new staff and how should those records be managed?

15. When a person is confirmed in his or her post, what records are generated and how should they be managed?

16. Explain the concept of performance appraisal.

17. Explain the purpose of Individual forward job plans.

18. What records are generated from the performance appraisal process and how should they be managed?

19. What records are generated from the process of providing educational, training or development opportunities to staff, and how should those records be managed?

20. What records are generated from the promotions process and how should they be managed?

21. What records are generated from the process of transferring or seconding staff, and how should those records be managed?

22. What records are generated from the disciplinary process and how should they be managed?

23. What records are generated from the process of dismissing an employee, and how should those records be managed?

24. What records are generated from the process of monitoring attendance and leave, and how should those records be managed?

25. What records are generated during programmes of redundancy or downsizing, and how should those records be managed?

26. What records are required to deal with a death in service?

27. What records are required to deal with retirement of staff?

28. What records are needed to document the rights of pensioners?

29. What records are generated in the process of paying salaries, and how should those records be managed?

# ACTIVITIES: COMMENTS

**Activity 7**

This activity will help you compare the information provided in this lesson with the actual types of personnel records created in your agency and the processes used to care for them.  If you have time, consider examining more than three types of functions, as this will help you understand the personnel process better and identify and understand the records resulting from that process.  However, do not spend so much time that you get behind with your work on the rest of this module.

## LESSON 3

# THE NATURE OF PERSONAL FILES

This lesson examines the actual files created as part of the personnel management process. In particular, it examines the nature of master personal files and working personal files, the two 'case' files created on individuals in the organisation. The lesson also examines the 'personnel record card', a valuable source of information about individuals.

While many records are created as part of the personnel management process, including policy and planning documents, an official personal file for an individual employee should not be created until the candidate has taken up his or her post. Until a letter of appointment is issued, a temporary file should be created. This ensures that the paperwork involved in the recruitment process is not retained if there is no appointment.

The personal file, or personnel 'case file' as it is also called, can be divided into two files: a master personal file and a working personal file. The term 'personal file' is used here.

> ***Case papers/files:*** Papers or files relating to a specific action, event, person, place, project, or other subject. Also known as dossiers, dockets, particular instance papers, project files or transactional files.

Much information about an individual employee must be kept for a long time, but other records are quickly obsolete and need not be kept beyond a certain time. The objective of designating master personal files and working personal files is to help ensure essential records are filed in the master file for long-term retention and less important records are kept separately, so that they may be destroyed after a specified period.

A master file system also facilitates information retrieval by ensuring that all relevant official documents are concentrated in a single file and that responsibility for maintaining that file is clearly assigned. The working file may include duplicates needed to help people do their jobs but will not contain any original documents that need to be kept for an extensive period.

The personal file may also contain a 'personal record card', a form that captures key information about an individual. Other forms may also be created. These forms are discussed later in this lesson.

*An official personal file for an individual employee should not be created until the candidate has taken up his or her post.*

# MASTER PERSONAL FILES

Master personal files should be created for each staff member. The designation of a 'master personal file' for each employee is key to controlling the proliferation of files. Master personal files should contain a complete record of the individual's career, including both original documents and summary records. Documents on the file should be numbered in sequence.

*The creation of a 'master personal file' for each employee is key to file management.*

Where the master file should be held is an important issue. The answer will vary according to the organisational structure and requirements of the country concerned and the way communications need to flow. Where the personnel management system is still highly centralised, it may be appropriate to hold the master file in the office of the head of civil service, the public service department or the office of the head of the relevant cadre. Working files can then be held in the relevant ministry or department.

Where the civil service has a clear policy on delegated authority for personnel issues, the master file should be held locally with the ministry, department or local authority concerned. The master file should then be transferred with the individual if he or she is transferred to another agency. There may be circumstances in which a central agency will need access to the master file, for example when the individual is approaching retirement. In this case, the master file may be transferred to the central authority temporarily so that the calculation of pension benefits can be made. The file should then be returned to the employing agency until the individual retires.

Where systems have broken down, establishing master files may be critical to revitalising personnel records systems. A systematic effort will be required to ensure that the designated master file does not contain unnecessary information and that it contains a complete set of relevant legal documents.

It is important that rules for the care of master files be drawn up so that best practice can be introduced and monitored. The following factors should be taken into account when establishing rules.

? There will be only one master personal file for each employee.

? Master files will document the legal relationship between employer and employee and contain a complete record of service.

? In centralised systems, master files will be maintained by a central agency responsible for all civil servants or by the agency responsible for the relevant cadre.

? In decentralised systems, master files for permanent and pensionable staff will be maintained by the parent ministry. Master files of other categories of staff, may be held by the employing unit, depending upon the particular needs of the organisation.

The types of documents contained on the master personal file may include the following:

? candidate's application form, which should provide basic information about date of birth, gender, ethnicity, nationality, permanent home address, educational qualifications, relevant career details, references, membership in professional bodies, reasons for applying for the job

? letter of appointment, which should confirm the terms and conditions of appointment, such as starting salary, job description, leave entitlement and so on

? letter of acceptance

? medical examination report(s)

? confirmation in post certificate.

These documents constitute the basic record about that person. They should be kept on the personal file as long as it exists. Subsequent information that may be placed on the master file, if the circumstances in question arise, includes the following:

? summaries of performance appraisals: overall mark, suitability for promotion, long-term potential

? summaries of education, training and development courses attended and the results

? promotion letters, letters of demotion, transfer letters, secondment letter(s), changes in occupational group

? summary of any relevant disciplinary proceedings, summary of infringements in attendance, lateness, annual leave or sick leave (the documents relating to the proceedings themselves may be kept on working files to facilitate disposition), dismissal note

? note of redundancy

? note of death in service

? note of retirement.

Where there are changes in personal circumstances, such as change of name, change of address, change of next of kin, it is the responsibility of staff to keep the record up to date by informing the personnel department.

# WORKING PERSONAL FILES

Working personal files contain reference information needed, such as copies of legal documents or records such as forward job plans, papers relating to minor disciplinary matters or applications for leave. Rules for working files should aim to ensure that they do not contain *original* documents with long-term value. In many systems the working files are transferred with the employee when he or she is posted to a new ministry. Often the master file will be held at a central location.

| |
|---|
| *Working files should not contain* original *documents with long-term value.* |

Working files should be held for local reference for as long as they are required. They should contain only information needed to support a particular personnel function. They do not contribute to an ongoing legal record. Therefore, as long as the master file is properly maintained, the working files may be destroyed when a staff member has been transferred from a ministry or department, has been retrenched or dismissed or has retired.

These files may also be destroyed when an appropriate period has lapsed after the completion of an activity, such as a training programme, a disciplinary hearing or an appraisal exercise. For instance, performance assessment records are normally only kept for about five years, although essential data such as the marks for overall performance or suitability for promotion and potential can be extracted and held on a record card or in a database. Appraisal records can be held in a separate series of working files with forward job plans, which can be scheduled for destruction.

The following types of records may be found on the working personal files of permanent staff:

? copy of appointment/posting letter

? acceptance letter/last pay certificate

? copy of confirmation in appointment

? recommendations for promotion

? copies promotion/posting letters

? details of acting appointments

? details of government loans

? details of retired imprests (ie money advanced to an individual for use on State business – when the business is completed the official has to ‘retire’ or account for the money)

? correspondence relating to clearance to travel

? documents relating to training or study leave

? copies of correspondence about disciplinary matters

? records of annual leave

? copies of correspondence relating to secondments/resignations/retirements/death

? correspondence of a personal nature relating to the individual.

The following types of records may be found on the working personal files of daily paid staff:

? copy of appointment/posting letter

? copy of acceptance letter

? certificate of residence

? information about annual leave

? correspondence about disciplinary matters

? correspondence about retirement/ resignation

? death certificates.

**Activity 8**

Does your organisation create both master files and working files? What are the working files used for? What kind of information is filed on the master file and what kind on the working file? Write a brief description of how personnel records are created and managed. Then write at least four suggestions you would make to improve that aspect of the personnel record-keeping system.

# PERSONAL RECORD CARDS

The master personal file will also contain a personal record card or sheet. This document captures all essential information about the employee. The document should include

? full name

? date of birth

? next of kin

? marital status

? home address and telephone number.

The card will also record information about the employee’s career, such as

? details of postings and transfers, promotions

? retirement date, or date of leaving the service.

In some countries it may be difficult to gather all of this information about the employee. Many employees may not have telephones, or the political situation may make it inadvisable to ask employees about their ethnic background. Particularly in countries where transport facilities are limited, employees from rural areas may find it necessary to stay with friends or relatives while they are working. In organisations where this situation is common it is wise to record both permanent and temporary postal addresses.

Some details may be impossible to obtain. Employees may not always know their date of birth. In this situation, registration clerks should be instructed to obtain a statement from the employee about his or her approximate age. If the age has been estimated, the entry should be clearly marked with an agreed wording such as ‘estimated’ or ‘approximate’.

This personal record card is a key document. Where significant information is recorded (such as about a promotion), there is usually space for the signature of the line manager and date of authorisation. Information from the personnel record card or sheet should provide the basis for the design of personnel management databases.

These cards are sometimes scheduled for permanent preservation, rather than preserving the entire personnel file, because they take up much less space. However, this can only be considered if the cards contain complete and verified information.

A sample personal record card is shown in Figure 8.

**Activity 9**

Does your organisation create a personal record card? If so, examine the card or sheet and compare it with the example in this lesson. Write down at least three suggestions you might make to alter the organisation’s card to improve its layout, presentation or content.

***PERSONNEL RECORDS OF MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATION SERVICE***

**(TEACHING AND NON-TEACHING PERSONNEL)**

Full Name ........................................ Sex ________ *Regd. No. ....................

(BLOCK CAPITALS, SURNAME FIRST)

Date of Birth .................... Date of First Appointment and Grade ....................

.................... Date confirmed ....................

Nationality ....................

Home Town and Address ____________________

....................................................................

Next of Kin .................... Relationship ....................

Marital Status (married, single, widowed) ____________________

Children's names and birth dates:

(1) .................... (2) ____________________

(3) .................... (4) ____________________

(5) .................... (6) ____________________

Languages spoken:

(1) (2) (3) (4)

**ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION**

| Level | Subject Pass | Year |
|---|---|---|
| (i) | | |
| (ii) | | |
| (iii) | | |

**PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION**

| Course | Institution | From | To | Date of Award of Certificate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (i) | | | | |
| (ii) | | | | |
| (iii) | | | | |

***Figure 8: Sample Personal Record Card (page 1)***

| PROMOTIONS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Post** | **Effective Date** | **Salary Scale** | **Point of Entry** |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Address of Present Station ..............................

Present Salary ..............................

***IF NAME HAS EVER BEEN CHANGED PLEASE STATE**

| Former Name | Date of Change | Authority |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

**Particulars of Employment/Postings since Leaving School/College**

(Indicate where appropriate, with dates, any break or discontinuation of service, such as study leave / maternity leave / sick leave / resignation / dismissal / suspension, and so on.)

| Particulars of Employment/Postings | From | To | Remarks with Dates |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | | |
| 5 | | | |
| 6 | | | |
| 7 | | | |
| 8 | | | |

I certify that the information given on this form is correct.

Signature of Teacher/Officer

Signature of Director/Assistant Director/Local Head

***Figure 8: Sample Personal Record Card (cont.)***

# OTHER PERSONNEL INFORMATION FORMS

Many of the processes connected with personnel work are repetitive and lend themselves to the use of forms. Examples include job applications, requests for leave, applications for allowances, confirmation of transfers and so on. Thus other types of forms are created and kept in either the master or working files, depending on their nature, use and value.

The range of forms appropriate to the needs of each organisation should be discussed by the records manager with the organisation's personnel manager and with senior management. Decisions about forms should take into account relevant legal requirements in the country concerned. Each form must include a clearly designated space for the employee's name and number, so that these can be identified if the form becomes detached from the file.

Good form design is an important tool in ensuring that records are legible, complete and duly authenticated. For this reason, forms should also have designated spaces where the line manager can sign each entry and note the date.

If the personnel function is automated, it will normally be necessary to redesign the forms to facilitate data capture and data entry.

*The management of automated personnel functions is discussed in Lesson 5.*

# SUMMARY

This lesson has examined the two types of personal files created as part of the personnel management process: the master personal file and the working personal file. The lesson also examined the 'personnel record card' and discussed the importance of managing the creation of other forms capturing personal information.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is a master personal file?

2. What is a working personal file?

3. Why should an organisation create a master personal file and a separate working personal file?

4. How should master personal files be managed to protect their contents?

5. Name at least ten typical records found on master personal files.

6. Name at least ten typical records found on the working personal files of permanent staff.

7. Name at least ten typical records found on the working personal files of daily paid staff.

8. What is the purpose of a personal record card?

9. What information should be captured on a personal record card?

10. Why should the design of forms be managed?

# ACTIVITIES: COMMENTS

**Activities 8-9**

Compare your answers to these activities with the information provided in this lesson. You should be able to compare the information you are studying with the situation in your own organisation and consider the similarities and differences.

**LESSON 4**

# MANAGING PERSONNEL RECORDS IN A MANUAL FORM

Paper-based personnel records are one of the most significant and space-consuming categories of records found in the public sector. Although computerised personnel information systems are becoming increasingly common, there is an ongoing requirement for records managers to understand how to manage paper systems, particularly because a large proportion of personnel records will continue to be on paper for the foreseeable future.

Moreover, automated personnel systems are unlikely to succeed unless they can build upon an efficient manual system. In some cases, a manual system may be the most efficient and practical option given the resources available. In either case, it is important to manage paper-based personnel records systems effectively and efficiency, for administrative purposes and to protect information about individuals.

This lesson examines the practical aspects of managing paper-based personnel records systems, including

? typical problems with managing personnel records

? centralisation versus decentralisation

? open versus confidential files

? numbering personal files

? internal arrangement of the file

? designing the file cover

? closing files

? establishing retention periods

? selection of personal files for permanent preservation

? employee index and naming conventions

? repairing collapsed systems.

In order to help users of this module understand the concepts discussed in this lesson, a number of activities are included that encourage comparison between the recommendations offered here with the realities of personnel records care in the organisation.

# TYPICAL PROBLEMS WITH MANAGING PERSONNEL RECORDS

*Personnel records can be very complex to manage.*

Following are typical problems that may be encountered.

? Often there are no effective procedures for removing inactive personnel records from the system or destroying them. Personnel records must be kept for a long time in order to protect the rights of individuals, and destruction should be approached with caution. However, in many countries no personnel records have been destroyed, despite the fact that early records may be more than a century old.

? It is not uncommon to find that active personnel records and records relating to ex-employees are stored together. This wastes valuable office space. More significantly, it creates increasing difficulties in retrieving current files when they are needed.

? Existing systems tend to create multiple copies of many of the documents involved in personnel management, often unnecessarily. This makes it increasingly difficult to retrieve required documents. Moreover, despite the quantity of paper generated, the personal files of civil servants tend to be incomplete.

? Frequently there are no widely accepted conventions relating to the order in which personal names are written or spelled. This causes filing and retrieval problems.

? Personnel records should provide a valuable source of accurate data for auditing computerised payroll systems, but this is rarely possible because records are not kept systematically.

? Despite the requirement for confidentiality and security, often the records are inadequately protected.

? Even where personnel files are held centrally, such as in the office of the head of civil service, it is normal for ministries and departments to create their own files. Without clear policies or procedures on the management of these files, it is not uncommon to find that as civil servants are transferred from one ministry or department to another, the files do not travel with them. This results in multiple files, both open and closed, on any civil servant.

? Personnel records need to be retained over a long period, generally well beyond the time the staff reach retirement age. The existence of multiple files relating to the same employee makes it difficult to determine which records should be kept.

## Common Filing Problems

Often there are substantial gaps in the completeness of personal files. One reason for this is the proliferation of duplicate open and confidential files in ministries, regions and districts arising from the common practice of opening a new file when a new employee joins an organisation. In theory, a middle-grade civil servant in the administrative cadre who is transferred half a dozen times in his or her career could generate as many as several dozen files. Moreover, as personnel registries have become congested and control systems have broken down, large numbers of files have been mislaid within the system. This mishandling of files can lead to the creation of numerous ‘temporary’ files. Crucial personnel information is thus spread across a variety of files. In addition, procedures for sending documents for filing are often disregarded or overlooked.

*There can be substantial gaps in the completeness of personal files.*

The result is that information on any given employee may be fragmented; it is impossible to know whether the record in question is complete. The objective is to reduce the proliferation of duplicate personal files and to ensure that those that remain are complete.

Before a records management programme can be implemented to restore control there must be agreement over responsibilities for maintaining up-to-date personnel information. It is important also to clarify rules for handling records when civil servants are transferred or leave the service.

Where a computerisation project is planned there is an opportunity to work co-operatively with the information systems staff. Projects to improve the quality of the personnel data through surveys or extensive cross-checking of details about individuals should also include measures to enhance the accuracy and reliability of the records.

It is vital to the sustainability of the personnel records system that duplicate files should not be allowed to develop. If a reference number is known but the file cannot be found, a duplicate file should be opened, bearing the same number as the missing file but marked on the cover with an agreed form of words such as ‘TEMPORARY DUPLICATE FILE’. Clerks should not be permitted to open files of this kind without consulting first with the supervisor, who should check that all efforts have been made to find the original file before authorising the duplicate file. If the original is found, the contents of the two files should be merged and the papers interfiled in the correct sequence. The file cover of the duplicate may be destroyed unless it has been used to record unique information, in which case it should be inserted within the cover of the permanent file.

If a reference number is known but the file has been destroyed, a new file should be opened. The file should bear the same number as the destroyed file but marked on the cover with an agreed form of words such as ‘PREVIOUS FILE DESTROYED’.

If an employee is found to have two different reference numbers (and therefore two separate files), the files should be merged in the way described above. One or other of the numbers should be deleted by removing the surplus card from the master index and by renumbering all relevant papers within the file. The card that remains in the master index should be annotated with an agreed form of words such as 'FILE NUMBER XXX FOR THIS EMPLOYEE DELETED'. The deleted number should be indicated, with an agreed form of words such as 'MERGED WITH FILE NUMBER YYY', on the list, if there is one, and on the master file or on the relevant docket sheets.

If an employee has been registered under two different names, the files should be merged and one of the two reference numbers deleted, as described above. Both names should appear on the merged file, with an indication that the employee is (or has been) known by more than one name. In addition, one name should be cross-referenced to the other in the master index.

# CENTRALISATION VERSUS DECENTRALISATION

Personnel files may be managed in one of two ways: in a centralised within one office of the organisation, or in a decentralised system in different departments. In a centralised personnel management system, personnel details are sent to the central government department responsible for managing activities such as recruitment, posting, promotions and pensions. In a decentralised system, individual departments are given responsibility for managing and reporting on the personnel management function. Sometimes only certain activities, such as pension administration, are centralised, while others, such as recruitment and promotions, are decentralised. Moreover, some of the principal users of these records may be in the capital and some in the regions, making access to information more challenging.

*Deciding whether to manage personnel records centrally or in a decentralised system will depend on how the personnel records system should interact with other parts of the organisation.*

When determining whether to manage personnel records centrally or in a decentralised system, it is necessary to consider how the personnel records system should function and interact with other parts of the organisation. Every situation is different, but the following factors must be considered.

? *Stakeholders*. The record system must support the operational objectives of the organisation. It is essential to know who has a stake in the system and what they want to achieve. For example, if the head of civil service wants to transfer responsibility for the management of middle-grade civil servants from a central institution (such as the public service ministry) to personnel departments located in line ministries, then the record system will need to become more decentralised.

? *Support by end users.* The personnel records system will directly or indirectly affect every employee. It is therefore important that it enjoys a high level of support, particularly with the directors of administration and personnel who will make the greatest use of the system. Decisions about centralisation or decentralisation must support their needs.

? *Information flows.* The flow of paper within the system must be analysed to identify unnecessary duplication and enable the design of better systems.

? *Efficiency of communications.* Where communications are slow or uncertain, there are advantages to encouraging stakeholders to hold their own sets of personnel files. Where communications make it practical to send information to users as needed, the number of files relating to any individual should be reduced. Either way, the number of files should be kept to the absolute minimum.

? *Security.* The creation, use and movement of personal files containing confidential information must be strictly controlled.

? *Resource implications.* The larger the task, the greater the institutional support and resources required. It is important to ensure the benefits are proportionate to the resources required to implement change.

? *Impact of new information systems.* Even where the personnel records system is wholly paper based, automation of areas such as payroll may have an impact on the way personnel information should be kept.

**Activity 10**

Are personnel records in your organisation managed centrally or in a decentralised system? Or are some records kept centrally and others decentrally? Write a brief description of the system in place. Then describe whether you would recommend a centralised or decentralised system, based on the factors outlined above. Be sure to indicate your reasons for your opinion.

# OPEN VERSUS CONFIDENTIAL FILES

All staff dealing with personnel information have a duty of confidentiality; they must not reveal personal information about staff to anyone other than authorised officials. The practice of using open and confidential files is common in many countries. The term ‘open’ does not of course imply that the file is open to anyone; it means that the file is open to those staff authorised to see it. Access to confidential files is restricted.

In some cases, confidential files are removed from the series of open files and held in a separate physical space, which could be a confidential registry or a private secretary's office. Often, confidential files are treated as a separate series.

Various levels of security may exist. Files may be classed as open, confidential, secret, top secret and so on. Appropriate levels of security and access restrictions will apply. Documents requiring special security in adherence to national security rules, such as police reports for security vetting, will clearly merit special protection.

It is important to establish standards for what should be filed on confidential files and what may be placed on open files. Sometimes security in open registries is so poor that any document of significance is sent to the confidential registry for filing. At the same time, records may be marked confidential not because they are sensitive but because the higher marking gives priority treatment in the mail service. As a result, too many documents may be filed on confidential files. And there may be no system of declassification, so that once a document has been incorrectly classified it cannot be easily declassified. The contents of the two types of files need to be clarified, and the creation of confidential files should be restricted to essential instances only.

*All staff dealing with personnel information have a duty of confidentiality, and some personnel information should not be placed on open files.*

**Activity 11**

Are personnel files in your organisation classified as confidential? Are all or only some files confidential? What criteria are used to decide levels of access to personnel records? Write a brief description of the process of classifying personnel records, answering each of the questions in this activity.

# NUMBERING PERSONAL FILES

It is not uncommon to find that personal files are organised alphabetically, by individual names. This can create problems because naming conventions may be applied inconsistently from one ministry and department to another. Optimum efficiency is achieved by arranging the files in numerical order. Each member of staff throughout the civil service is assigned a unique number and the names and numbers are organised in a names index.

*Personal files are best kept in numerical order.*

Requiring a unique identifying number for each civil servant also helps to control payroll, pensions and other personnel-related functions. As it is unlikely to be to be practical for records managers to introduce and maintain a new government-wide personnel numbering system, it is wise whenever possible to make use of existing numbering systems.

The source of this number will vary according to the circumstances, but it might be the payroll number, income tax number or national identity number. There are advantages and disadvantages to using any of these numbers. Following are the key factors to take into account.

? Is there a long-term commitment to maintain the numbering system?

? Is there any possibility that new numbers will be issued to the same individual?

? Does the system affect every employee?

If a unique numbering system can be identified, then the number associated with any individual can be quoted as a reference in all dealings with the individual. This will make it possible to retrieve information about the person anywhere in the system, whether the information is held on paper on electronically.

These issues need to be discussed with the relevant authorities to identify unforeseen problems with any particular numbering system. For example, staff paid on a daily basis may not be on the payroll, or citizens may be issued with new national identity card numbers if they lose their cards. Either of these situations could make the system unworkable.

If a unique numbering system can be identified, then the number associated with any individual can serve as a reference in all dealings with that person. The personal files held in central government agencies or in ministries and departments can be reorganised and indexed in reference number order. It will be essential to indicate the name of the creating agency clearly on the file cover to avoid confusion about the provenance of the file.

Where it is not possible to identify a numbering system that meets all the criteria outlined above, it may be possible to achieve a compromise. For example, if the payroll number is selected as the unique identifier, but daily paid workers do not have payroll numbers, it may be possible to organise their files in alphabetical order, while keeping the main series of personnel files in payroll number order.

**Activity 12**

How are personnel files in your organisation numbered? Write a brief description of the numbering system used. If no numbering system is used, describe how records are arranged and indicate whether you think a numbering system can and should be used.

# INTERNAL ARRANGEMENT OF THE FILE

Methods of arranging papers within the file cover are discussed in *Organising and Controlling Current Records*. Some further points need to be considered in connection with employee personal files.

If held on the personnel file, the personnel record sheet or card needs to be placed where it is immediately accessible. It must not become 'buried' in the middle of the file. If the 'back-to-front' filing method is adopted, it will be necessary to consider ways in which the personnel record sheet can be kept separate from the other papers on the file. If it is placed at the front of the file, it must be lifted out when new papers are added and must then be replaced on top of them. This process is not to be recommended, as the sheet would soon be damaged through repeated handling.

*The personnel record sheet or card needs to be filed so that it is immediately accessible.*

In a split file system, where treasury tags are used to attach papers to the right or the left of the inside of the file, the personnel record sheet can be placed on one side of the file and the remaining papers on the other. Another alternative is to print the personnel record sheet form on the inside or back of the file cover. This will automatically keep the personnel record details in a prominent position, but it does not allow for continuation sheets to be used.

*For more information on filing methods, see* Organising and Controlling Current Records.

**Activity 13**

How are the records in personnel files in your organisation arranged? Write a brief description of the processes used. Are there guidelines or procedures in place? If not, indicate whether you think a process should be established and procedures developed.

# DESIGNING THE FILE COVER

The design of the file cover for the personal file will differ in some respects from designs used for policy files in civil service agencies. The name of the department should be printed or stamped on the cover. Some organisations also print the word 'open' or 'confidential'.

It is also necessary to include on the front of the cover

- ? the employee's name
- ? the employee's number.

It may also be desirable to allocate space for

- ? the employee's sex
- ? any other essential information about the employee.

If at all possible, the cover should be pre-printed with clearly marked spaces where these details can be entered. If pre-printing is not possible, staff must be given clear instructions as to where on the file cover each piece of information should be written. It is important to ensure that the layout of each file cover is consistent, so that staff know where to look for any given piece of information. Much time can be wasted if this is not done.

The file reference should be indicated both horizontally along the spine of the file and vertically in the top right hand corner to facilitate retrieval. If it is handwritten, large and bold characters should be used; small or badly written characters cannot be read easily and may result in misfiling.

See Figure 9 for a sample file cover.

# CLOSING FILES

As indicated in *Organising and Controlling Current Records*, it is good practice to close any file which is more than 3 cm (1 in) thick and to open a continuation file, to which new documentation can be added.

The procedure for closing personal files is as follows.

1. The closed file should be marked with an agreed wording, such as 'PART 1 OF 2, CLOSED ON [DATE]'.

2. All current data should be copied from the old file cover to the new one, and the new file must also be distinguished by an agreed form of words, such as 'CONTINUATION FILE, PART 2 OF 2'. Both parts will have the same file reference and the two parts will be stored together. Removal of the closed file to offsite storage is not recommended because it means that an employee's complete career history can only be obtained by retrieving files from two different locations.

3. If a further continuation file is opened at a later date, it will become 'PART 3 OF 3'; Part 2 must then be marked as closed, and the words 'OF 3' should be added to both of the closed files.

These principles also apply to the closure of personnel policy files.

**Activity 14**

How are large personnel files handled in your organisation? Are they closed and continuation files opened? Write a brief description of the processes used. Then write at least three suggestions you would make to improve the processes.

# ESTABLISHING RETENTION PERIODS

*Personal files may be kept for a long period.*

Personal files should be retained in the system during the working life of the employee. Then they should be preserved in secure accommodation for such time as required by civil service regulations or legislation and certainly until all pension or other rights have expired. Holding closed files in a central location facilitates the calculation of pension rights, particularly where there are multiple files relating to the same person. Centralised storage of files can also provide data for audit checks in retrenchment exercises. The length of time such files are held needs to be determined in collaboration with senior managers responsible for the civil service.

The personal files of more notable civil servants may be worthy of permanent preservation. In some countries, only a small selection of personnel records of civil servants are kept permanently because there are other useful sources of information on prominent individuals, such as year books of the civil service and publications such as *Who's Who*. Where these sources do not exist, there is more reason to retain the files of prominent civil servants permanently.

There is also a case for selecting military service records, including those doing national service, because of the strong public interest in individual contribution to the defence of the nation in time of war.

*For more information on determining retention periods, see* Building Records Appraisal Systems.

Files that eventually reach the organisation's archival repository may eventually be opened to public use. Personnel records selected for permanent preservation and transferred to the archival institution will normally be made available to members of the public after a suitably long period, perhaps up to seventy years after their creation. The long closure period is designed to ensure that

? the individual subject of the personnel record is deceased

? public access will not cause distress or social embarrassment to living relatives.

Where personnel records have been given a security classification, such as classified, secret, top secret and so on, they may need to be formally declassified.

**Activity 15**

Explain the processes in place in your organisation at present to establish retention periods for personnel files? Are some files transferred to the archival repository? Who decides which files will be kept and for how long? Write a brief description of the processes used. Then write at least three suggestions you would make to improve the processes.

# INDEX AND NAMING CONVENTIONS

*If personnel files are numbered, then indexes will be required to access the files.*

An employee index can take the form of a card index or docket sheet, as described below, or a computerised database. If index cards or sheets are used, they should have printed headings, with sufficient space for each piece of information to be recorded. The index should link the employee's name to his or her number so that the file can be found.

The information on the card or docket sheet should be arranged so files can be found quickly and refiled accurately. The two most important items of information – the employee's name and the file number – should be positioned at the top of the card. A good layout will allow a searcher to read the most useful pieces of information first and so reduce retrieval time. The completed cards or sheets should be filed in an index cabinet or docket book in alphabetical order by employee surname.

## Naming Conventions

If the system is to work effectively, there must be standards or conventions for recording individual names. The employee's name should be recorded carefully and in full. In countries where employees have one or more 'given' names followed by a family or surname, it is good practice to record the surname or principal legal name first. If possible, the index card or sheet and the file cover can be printed with a separate box for this name, so it is easily found. Where there is no box, the name can be underlined. The first name(s) must also be clearly distinguished, preferably also in a separate box marked for the purpose. In countries where the family name normally precedes the given name, the names will naturally be recorded in that order.

In some countries, people may call themselves by a variety of names. They should be asked to provide all the names by which they are known; all these names should be recorded both on the file and in the index. Cross-references will need to be inserted in the index for employees who change their name, such as upon marriage, as well as those who are known by more than one name. In such instances a full index card should be filed under the married or more usual name, with a brief cross-reference card filed under the alternative name(s).

## Spelling of Names

A decision will need to be made about the spelling of employees' names. Where the same name can be spelled in several ways, consistent handling of the names is important. If employees are literate they can be asked to spell their name. In the case of illiterate employees, clerks will have to spell names as they think fit, though it may be helpful for them to be issued with guidance on names that can be spelled in more than one way. A list of standard spellings can be helpful in these cases.

The handling of variant spellings of names in the index is important: the simplest method is to insert cross-reference cards at each alternative place directing the clerk to the chosen spelling of the name.

Similar issues arise where transliteration is needed from one alphabet into another. In countries where this occurs frequently, procedures should be developed by the organisation.

In most societies, the name of the employee's father and the maiden name of his mother are likely to be the most useful information for the purpose of distinguishing one employee from another of exactly the same name. For this reason it is suggested that when two or more cards in the master index bear identical names, they should be filed following the alphabetical sequence of the mother's maiden names.

**Activity 16**

What naming conventions are in place in your country? For example, do family names come before first names or after? Is a different alphabet used in some instances? Do people have long names or compound names? Identify as many different naming conventions you can think of that might affect the organisation of files by personal name. Then write at least four suggestions you would make to handle these particular naming conventions.

# REPAIRING COLLAPSED SYSTEMS

One of the most common problems with neglected records systems is that they are crammed with files that are not required on a daily basis. In personnel records systems, these files may relate to individuals who have been transferred to another department or to an executive agency or privatised organisation as well as to staff who have died, resigned, retired or been retrenched. In such overcrowded storage conditions, it is almost impossible to provide the information ministries need. These collapsed systems need to be repaired.

| |
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| *Collapsed personnel records systems must be repaired in order to help the organisation function effectively.* |

One of the first and most significant steps in repairing these systems is to identify and physically remove those files that have not been used for a designated period, such as ten years or fifteen years. As these files will still be needed for calculating pensions or entitlements, they should be systemically transferred to secure, low-cost storage. This process is known as 'decongesting' records systems.

Once the files have been transferred to a records centre, it will be necessary to create a finding aid capable of bringing together all files relating to a given individual. A number of options are available, including creating a large card index, developing a computerised database using customised software or inputting information into an 'off the shelf' or commercial database programme.

*For more information on this issue, see* Restructuring Current Records Systems: A Procedures Manual. *See* Managing Records in Record Centres *for information on transferring records to records centre storage.*

One approach to decongestion is described below. This approach works best in instances where it has been decided that the master file will be held by the employing ministry and where the payroll or some other definitive list of staff can be used to identify who works for each ministry. A considerable amount of analysis of the government's precise requirements would need to be undertaken before this method could be introduced.

## Step 1

The method divides all personal files into four categories:

? A: staff currently working for the ministry

? B: staff who used to work for the ministry but who have been transferred elsewhere

? C: staff no longer in the service, or those who have been retrenched, have retired, resigned, dismissed or have died. Further appraisal and selection would be required to identify files that could be safely destroyed

? D: staff whose status is unclear and whose files can be progressively eliminated by allocation to other categories.

This process is illustrated in Figure 10: The Decongestion Process.

This process progressively eliminates duplicate or unnecessary files from the system by

? decongesting the registries of category C files

? reorganising category A files so that they can be retrieved more easily

? reducing the category B backlog by merging them with the file held by the current employer.

## Step 2

Once the registry area is cleared of files not in active use, the task of repairing the system will seem more achievable. The next stage is to address the issue of duplicate files.

Where the intent is to introduce computerisation, the phasing of the decongestion exercise should be timed to coincide and support the development of the electronic system. If possible, any records management project in a particular ministry should precede the implementation of the computerised personnel systems in order to avoid including data from files relating to employees no longer in the civil service.

## Step 3

Improve the quality and completeness of personal files, by

? clarifying what should be held on the open file and on a confidential file

? separating master files from working files

? encouraging better records management practices by

    ? improving career development of records officers

    ? training

    ? auditing the accuracy and comprehensiveness of personal files.

Some of these issues were dealt with in more detail in other lessons.

NUMBER

**OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF THE CIVIL SERVICE**

**(P E R S O N N E L)**

| | |
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| Number pages serially at top outer corner in blue pencil.<br>Number minutes serially beginning a new series for each page.<br>Write minutes on the last page of the last enclosure, if there is space, or on the last page, if the paper is suitable otherwise, insert a minute sheet in the file. | **FILE NO.**<br>**PB –**<br>**Vol** |

NAME

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| | | | | | | ***AUTHORITY TO SEND FILE TO RECORD ROOM***<br>*Signature of Authorising Officer* | | Date |
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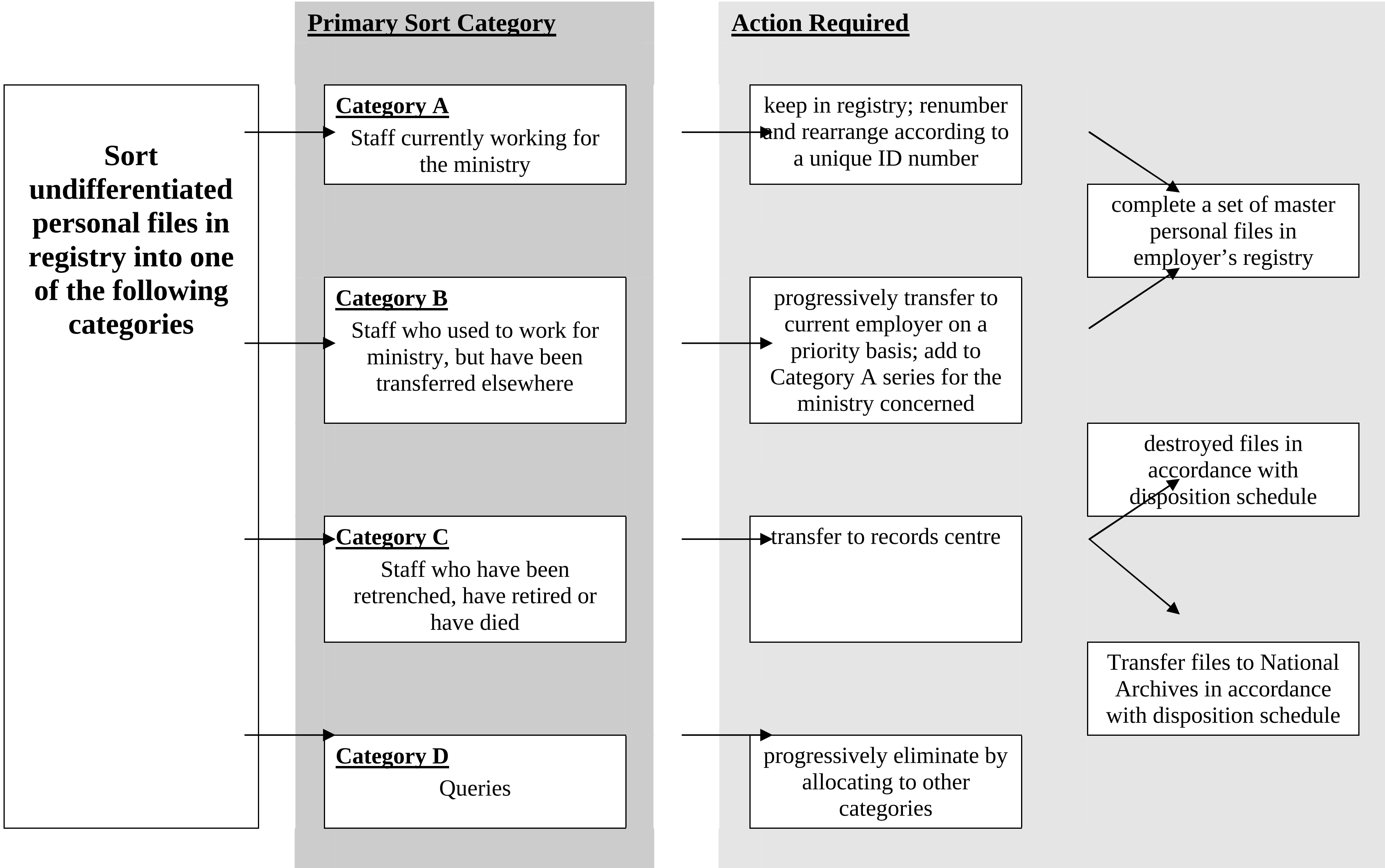
***Figure 9: Sample File Cover***


Primary Sort Category
Action Required
Sort undifferentiated personal files in registry into one of the following categories
Category A
Staff currently working for the ministry
Category B
Staff who used to work for ministry, but have been transferred elsewhere
Category C
Staff who have been retrenched, have retired or have died
Category D
Queries
keep in registry; renumber and rearrange according to a unique ID number
progressively transfer to current employer on a priority basis; add to Category A series for the ministry concerned
transfer to records centre
progressively eliminate by allocating to other categories
complete a set of master personal files in employer's registry
destroyed files in accordance with disposition schedule
Transfer files to National Archives in accordance with disposition schedule

# SUMMARY

Lesson 4 has introduced the issues involved in managing paper-based personnel systems. It has emphasised that the scale, geographical extent and security requirements of personnel records are important factors in determining the overall design of the system.

The lesson has covered some of the practical aspects of managing paper-based personnel records systems, including

? typical problems with personnel records care

? common filing problems

? centralisation versus decentralisation

? open versus confidential files

? numbering personal files

? internal arrangement of the file

? designing the file cover

? closing files

? establishing retention periods

? employee index and naming conventions

? repairing collapsed systems.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Explain at least five typical problems that might be encountered when managing personnel records.

2. Explain two common filing problems encountered when managing personnel records.

3. Explain the concepts of centralised and decentralised personnel records management.

4. Explain at least five factors that must be considered when determining whether to establish a centralised or decentralised personnel records management system.

5. What levels of security might exist for personnel records? Why is security important for personnel records?

6. Explain the concept of establishing a unique numbering system for personnel records.

7. What must be considered when deciding whether to establish a numbering system?

8. How should information on personal files be arranged?

9. How should the cover of a personnel file be designed? Why is it important to design the cover in a certain way?

10. Why is it important to create forms that are legible, complete and duly authenticated?

11. What steps should be taken to close personal files?

12. What should be considered when determining retention periods for personal files?

13. What types of personnel records may be worthy of permanent preservation?

14. Why are personnel records in an archival repository usually not made available to members of the public until after a suitably long period has passed?

15. What is the purpose of an employee index?

16. Explain the importance of determining particular processes for identifying and recording personal names.

17. What difficulties might arise when determining which name to use for an individual?

# ACTIVITIES: COMMENTS

**Activities 10-16**

Compare your answers to these activities with the information provided in this lesson. You should be able to compare the information you are studying with the situation in your own organisation and consider the similarities and differences.

**LESSON 5**

# MANAGING PERSONNEL RECORDS IN A MIXED PAPER/ELECTRONIC ENVIRONMENT

Personnel records and information procedures can be managed manually, but there is an increasing trend toward introducing computerised systems. It is important to understand that, whatever the technology used, the system must adhere to the requirements of a good record system as discussed in Lesson 4. Therefore, if an organisation is unable to manage its existing paper-based records it should not move to an electronic environment until manual control is achieved.

Lesson 5 examines the issues involved with managing personnel records systems in a mixed paper/electronic environment. It describes the main components of a mixed paper and computerised system. It explores the advantages and the disadvantages of computerisation and the specific uses of computers for personnel management. The lesson also outlines the prerequisites of a successful automated personnel management system and considers the roles and responsibilities of records professionals in developing effective personnel records systems. The lesson also explores the key factors involved in sustaining the efficiency of mixed paper/electronic systems.

## COMPUTERISATION AND RECORD KEEPING

Computerisation inevitably makes record keeping more complex. Many automated records systems contain information in a variety of formats saved on different storage media, which may lead to ongoing problems in accessing information electronically. Consequently, certain critical issues must be understood before an organisation moves to an electronic system.

*This lesson provides an overview of computerisation issues; for more detailed discussion, see* Managing Electronic Records.

- Personnel records will be needed for longer than the expected life of the systems that created them. Therefore, it is dangerous to rely solely on electronic information unless there is a fully developed electronic records management capacity.
- Managing personnel information electronically is not just a technology issue, it is also a policy issue, a business issue and a training issue.
- Reliable information, not technology, is essential to accountability.
- Collaboration between all stakeholders is essential for the successful implementation of an integrated system.

A computerised personnel information system makes it possible to capture, store and update information about personnel in order to enable rapid retrieval, processing and analysis of that information. Computerised systems usually capture an expanded version of the data held on the personnel record card in a manual system. Thus, they provide an updatable summary of the key particulars about an individual's career. This summary can be used in a range of different ways in support of human resource management and planning, such as

- recruitment planning (for instance identifying skill shortages or people with particular skills)
- succession planning
- planning and managing organisational development (for instance planning staffing for future institutional requirements)
- developing appropriate training programmes
- controlling long-term absences
- monitoring equal opportunities
- analysing trends and developing projections (for instance forecasting the future supply of labour)
- managing performance and appraisal systems.

**Activity 17**

Does your organisation automate its personnel management functions? If so, write a description of exactly what processes are automated. Who manages the system? How is it used? Can you think of three or four personnel-related activities that could be improved by using the organisation's computer system more effectively? If your organisation does not have an automated personnel management system, write a brief description of whether you think such an automated system could be installed and what advantages and disadvantages it might bring.

# ADVANTAGES OF COMPUTERISATION

*Many governments will want to proceed with computerisation in general and particularly with personnel management.*

There are many advantages to computerisation; senior managers will find the following advantages compelling reasons to automate.

? Computerised systems use staff time more efficiently.

? Paper personnel records are voluminous and costly to store; electronic storage is compact.

? The speed and efficiency with which information can be supplied to authorised users can be enhanced.

? Information in electronic form can be rearranged, aggregated, compared and analysed much more easily than information in a manual system.

? Personnel information can be stored in different locations or shared between different locations. Physically disparate information can be brought together centrally using telecommunications.

? Data can be entered once and used many times. Different versions of the same information can be provided to users in alphabetical, numerical or geographical sequences as required.

? Computerised personnel information systems can be linked to other systems, such as payroll and pensions, thus providing a more complete set of information than may be available otherwise. This reduces duplication of effort and encourages greater accuracy.

? Computerised systems can detect irregularities, thus lessening opportunities for fraud.

# LOGISTICAL AND RESOURCES IMPLICATION OF AUTOMATION

In spite of the obvious advantages of automation, important decisions need to be made about the scope of the potential system in relation to available resources. Managers will need to evaluate the information requirements of the organisation.

Issues to consider include

? the volume of information processed

? the frequency of revisions or updates

? the need for rapid retrieval

? the adequacy of existing record-keeping policies, systems and procedures.

These needs should be set against a realistic appraisal of the resources the institution can afford to spend on new information systems. Resources will include not only funds to purchase and maintain hardware and software but also qualified personnel to build, support and maintain the system.

| |
|---|
| *The institution must take a realistic approach to determining the resources it can afford to spend on new information systems.* |

Moreover, it is critical to evaluate the relationship of the potential electronic system to the existing paper-based system. The assumption that the computerised system will make the paper system unnecessary is often unfounded. In most countries, for the foreseeable future, mixed paper and electronic systems will continue to be used, for several reasons.

? It is often too expensive to transfer all personnel information to a computerised system.

? Power supplies may be unreliable, whereas paper systems do not rely on technologies to keep functioning.

? The original documents may be required in paper form for legal reasons. In many countries, for example, evidence laws do not recognise the legal validity of electronic information, even if its security can be guaranteed, as the original record carries the authorising signature.

? New opportunities for corruption and fraud may be introduced. Fraudulent activities may be difficult to detect because few people will have the technical skills to understand fully how the system operates.

? Particularly in rural areas, there may be problems in finding trained staff and local suppliers who can support software and hardware requirements.

? It may be difficult to finance the maintenance of computers, including replacements and upgrades or improvements.

? Physical conditions may not be suitable to support the safe storage of electronic records. For instance, computers and computer-generated information require temperature- and humidity-controlled environments, and backup storage facilities must be available.

? There are significant difficulties in protecting the reliability and availability of electronic records over time. (This last point is described in more detail below.)

# RECORDS MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS OF AUTOMATION

It can be very difficult to protect electronically created personnel information and make it available. *Managing Electronic Records* explores these issues in detail. In summary, the following key factors affect the management of electronic records over time.

? The electronic storage media is fragile and changes with time.

? In order to understand the record when it is retrieved in future, it is essential to capture sufficient accurate contextual and structural information about the record.

? Changes in technology mean that records that were generated on computers ten years ago may not be accessible today. Electronic records must be moved to new computer systems ('migrated') periodically so that they remain accessible.

? Often the responsibility for the management of the integrity of electronic records has not been assigned, making it difficult to ensure they are cared for adequately.

Typically, problems with automation arise in three areas. First is the maintenance of electronic records. Records are dependent upon the computer environment in which they were created and if those computers cease to be available to the records may become inaccessible. Second is the control of access to records. Many people can gain access to information in computers, so it is important to ensure only authorised personnel work with electronic records them, otherwise information may be altered inappropriately or without approval. Third is the control of versions of records. Because computer records can be altered easily, and the changes may not be readily apparent, it is important to ensure official records are protected from change over time.

Where there has been no attempt to manage electronic records, the organisation is exposed to a number of risks, including

? uncontrolled accumulation of records, documents and data

? inadvertent destruction of records, documents and data

? unauthorised tampering with records and documents

? absence of systems documentation and associated structural and contextual information (known as 'metadata').

***Metadata:*** The information about a record that explains the technical and administrative processes used to create, manipulate, use and store that record.

The consequences of inadequate care of electronic records may include the following:

? increased risk of wholesale, unsystematic and possibly illegal destruction of records

? loss of valuable business records and archives

? increased risk of security breaches

? unauthorised alteration or deletion of records (loss of evidence)

? public embarrassment

? unnecessary delays or breakdowns in the business process

? lack of public accountability

? system paralysis or, at the very least, difficulties in accessing information.

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS MANAGERS

Although the fundamental principles for keeping records in an electronic environment are more or less the same as in a paper environment, the skills required to manage them may be different. As the Canadian archival writer and educator Terry Cook has noted:

> …for the first time, [records managers and archivists] are not producing, managing, and saving physical things or artefacts, but rather trying to understand and preserve logical and virtual patterns that give electronic information its structure, content, and context, and thus its meaning as a 'record' or as evidence of acts and transactions. [3]

In general, the decision to introduce a computerised personnel information system will be taken by senior managers, with technical advice from information technologists. The development and introduction of computerised personnel information systems should involve collaboration between all key individuals, including personnel managers, information technology (IT) staff and records managers.

*Managing records within an electronic system or in a mixed paper/electronic environment requires new partnerships between information professionals.*

[3] Terry Cook, "Electronic Records, Paper Minds: The Revolution in Information Management and Archives in the Post-Custodial and Post-Modernist Era," *Archives and Manuscripts* 22 (November 1994): 302.

Personnel managers, as the users, need to determine their own requirements. IT systems programmers will be primarily concerned with developing and introducing current systems and preparing for the next generation of systems. It is the role of the records professionals to bring a longer term perspective to the project and to ensure that records management principles are safeguarded.

# Criteria for an Electronic System

All too often, projects developed without the input of records managers fail to meet their objectives because there has been inadequate attention to records issues. The records manager must ensure the following safeguards are in place to ensure electronic records are protected.

? The information in the existing personnel management system must be well-organised, accurate, easily accessible and sufficiently reliable to move to an integrated system. For example, naming conventions need to be standardised, and job categories should have a common classification.

? The integrity of the electronic records must be maintained: that is, the records must be complete, accurate and verifiable.

? Appropriate security procedures and systems (such as access restrictions/ permissions) must be imposed to ensure that (1) only authorised information is input into the system and generated from the system and (2) only authorised individuals can access or amend records. There must also appropriate back-up procedures and storage facilities to ensure records can be restored if necessary.

? The implications for records management of centralised or decentralised systems must be considered in relation to a the needs of the principal users.

? It must be possible to retrieve the records when needed for administrative, legal or historical purposes, and records should only be destroyed with proper authority according to records schedules.

? There need to be appropriate management structures in place to support the operation of the system, including legislation to support the legal admissibility of electronic information if there is no parallel paper system.

? There must be adequate administrative provisions to support the ongoing maintenance of the system, including financial resources, adequate physical conditions and sufficient staff. For example, there must be a reliable power supply; there need to be secure backup and storage procedures and facilities; the electronic and paper records need to be stored in appropriate environmental and physically secure conditions.

? There must be an effective training programme for users and custodians of records.

In addition to ensuring these standards and requirements are in place, records professionals can also help the development of the personnel records system by

? identifying records with continuing utility and enduring value

? determining, with the stakeholders, how long valuable records need to be maintained and accessible in order to meet administrative or archival requirements

? identifying the structural and contextual information (metadata) that needs to be captured and maintained with electronic records of enduring value if they are to remain identifiable and accessible over time

? working with systems developers to ensure that electronic records can be preserved over time and public access provided, as specified in archival legislation.

The table below in Figure 11 summarises the stages involved in introducing a computerised personnel information system and the roles the partners need to play at each stage.

| **Stages in Developing and Implementing an Automated Personnel Management System** | **Personnel Managers and Other Users** | **Information Technology Managers** | **Records Managers** |
|---|---|---|---|
| analyse information requirements (for example, develop a business case) | † | † | † |
| define systems requirements (process modelling, logic modelling and conceptual data modelling) | † | † | † |
| carry out a benefits analysis (including stakeholder analysis) | † | † | † |
| design the system (logical design: forms and reports, interfaces, data modelling; physical design: file and database design, distributed systems) | | † | † |
| specify hardware and software requirements | † | † | † |
| refine design specifications | | † | |
| procure equipment and commercial software (or develop in-house software) | | † | |
| implement the system (includes coding, testing and installing the system, training users and writing systems documentation) | | † | |
| maintain the system (including backup and storage provisions) | † | † | † |

***Figure 11: Stages in a Computerised Personnel Information System***

**Activity 18**

If your organisation has a computerised personnel information system, review the stages outlined in Figure 11 and compare these with the steps taken to develop the system in your organisation. For each step, identify who was involved. You may have to discuss this issue with people in the organisation responsible for the development of the system, if you were not involved or if the system were established some time ago.

If your organisation does not have a computerised personnel information system, examine the stages outlined and write down who in your organisation should be involved in each step. (Remember to identify positions, not necessarily particular individuals.) Identify any concerns you might have with ensuring the system was established properly. What steps should be taken to make sure all necessary stages are considered?

# SUSTAINING A MIXED SYSTEM

Mixed paper and electronic personnel records systems must work together harmoniously. Where the paper personnel records have been neglected, order must be restored. The following section describes some of the problems that may be encountered when implementing and managing a mixed paper/electronic personnel system. This section also introduces strategies for addressing these problems.

## Personnel Records as a Data Source

Computerisation requires that information is captured in a uniform way, and standardised input forms must be used, as illustrated in Figure 13. Paper-based personal files capture legally verifiable information about staff members from the point they joined the civil service; therefore, these files should serve as the primary source data for the system. Paradoxically, despite their fundamental importance, these records are often dismissed as a data source by those responsible for designing and implementing automated systems. Because the automation teams are unable to extract the information they require, they turn to other data sources, such as head counts or surveys. There are several reasons for this rejection of the central personnel files.

? There may be large numbers of personal files relating to individual civil servants but there may not be a comprehensive authoritative source of information. Further, there may not be an efficient means of accessing the information.

? Procedures for filing paper records are sometimes inadequate, and so the required information may not be available at all.

? The timetables and the budget for delivering the database project may be too tight to allow time to restructure the paper records so that they are usable.

? There may be difficulties in accessing files for individuals working in more remote regions, even if the files have been kept.

? Records tend not to be available for non-established staff.

? Other data sources, such as nominal rolls, databases and surveys, appear at first to be more suitable and more convenient for data entry, even though they may not be as accurate as the central personnel files.

These other data sources, described below, are not sufficiently reliable to provide the basis for an efficient electronic personnel records system. Building a system that does not make use of paper records as a verifiable source of data can lead to a high degree of error. Certainly the data cannot be used to guarantee personal entitlements. As a result, the 'source data trap' is sprung. The new electronic database cannot be used for the personnel management functions it was designed to fulfil because the data cannot be trusted. The paper records are no longer maintained, which means they become out of date and unusable. The process of managing personnel information breaks down, at a high cost to the institution or the government.

Finding a way out of the 'source data trap' by creating a link between well managed paper and electronic systems is thus the key to improving the usefulness of computerised personnel information management systems and supporting the macro-policy objectives of improved human resource management and sustainable economic development.

**Source data trap**

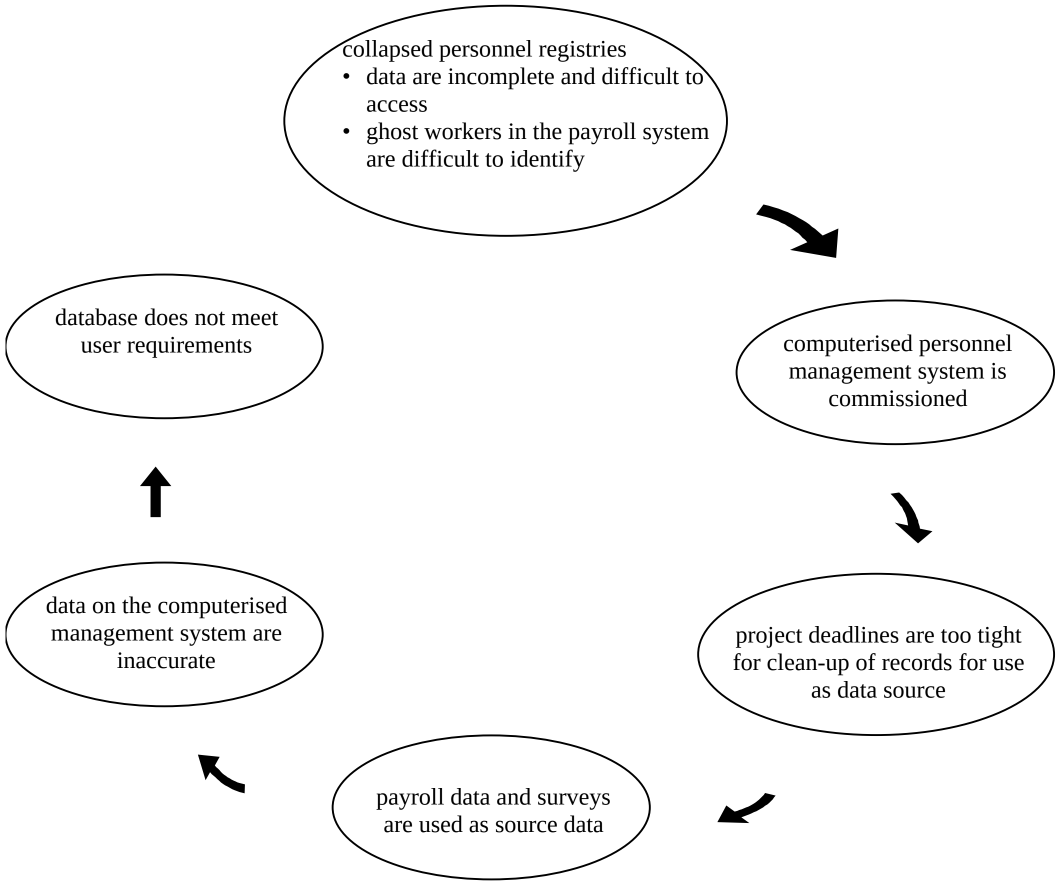



***Figure 12: Source Data Trap***

# Using Other Data Sources

While paper-based files are the primary source of legally verifiable information, other sources can be used in constructing computerised personnel information systems. Data for computerised personnel information systems tend to be drawn from personal files held in registries, nominal rolls and other databases and surveys, including head counts.

### Nominal Rolls

Line ministries are often required to maintain lists of the staff they employ. Initially this may appear to be a useful source of the basic data needed for a personnel database, such as name, age, position, and so on. However, maintaining the nominal rolls is often considered a low-priority task; therefore the record may be out of date. If there is a discrepancy in the information, it is still necessary to go back to personal files to resolve the problem. On their own, nominal rolls are not a sufficiently accurate source of information on which to base a new personnel system.

### Databases

The advantage of using other databases as source data for personnel information systems is that data can often be transferred automatically without rekeying. The most common database with relevant data is usually the payroll database. However, there are problems and limitations with the use of data from such databases. First, the database may be inaccurate. Second, the source data may not be structured in a way that is suitable for the new database and it may be cheaper to rekey the data; this extra work can lead to keying errors and inaccuracies. Third, unless the new personnel database is simply an upgrade of an older system, any source database will have been designed for an entirely different purpose, such as to manage the payroll. Thus it is likely there will be fields on the new personnel database that cannot be completed from other databases and additional data entry will be required.

### Surveys

Surveys to gather data about personnel have several advantages. The information is up to date, the survey team can decide what information should be collected and the survey forms can be designed to make data input easier. However, there are also disadvantages to using surveys to gather data. Often the surveys rely heavily upon the integrity of those individuals completing the forms. The survey forms must be checked against available personal files to verify the accuracy of the date of birth and the date of appointment to the civil service. Moreover, unless the survey is carried out as a census – that is, the data are gathered on the same day throughout the country (which requires a large, well-trained and well-organised team) – there is a good chance that discrepancies will occur. These discrepancies may be caused by differences in the way the data are gathered in different locations or, if the data gathering exercise is protracted, by staff moving from one location to another and appearing in more than one set of statistics. Also the data rapidly become out of date. Unless the new personnel database is fully functioning and the data can be entered into it quickly, and unless there are efficient procedures for updating the database subsequently, the data soon have little value.

*Mixed paper and electronic personnel records systems must work together harmoniously.*

**Activity 19**

Does your organisation have nominal rolls? Does it have other databases? Has it ever conducted surveys to identify and list staff? For each type of data source, write a brief description of it: what information does it hold, how is it created, how is it maintained? In your opinion, would this data source be reliable if you were to use it to establish an automated personnel management system? If your organisation does not have any of these data sources, explain how information about staff is maintained.

# Data Entry and Output

It is essential that staff be allocated to update the database; this task should be reflected in their overall work programme.  Unfortunately, in many jurisdictions, there is much enthusiasm for the development of a personnel database, but little attention is paid to who will maintain it.  Data entry can not be simply added to the existing workload of a staff member without creating time for the new task.  It is important to ensure in advance that realistic provision is in place for maintaining the system.  In the case of IT projects, maintenance includes the maintenance not only of equipment but also of the data.

Clear procedures must be established to ensure the data will be kept up to date. In some countries, procedures are designed to reward prompt and accurate notification of changes and to penalise the failure to do this. For example, the data entry team may reject instructions to increase an individual's monthly pay unless a printout of the relevant amended personnel system entry is attached. The employee will then press to ensure that the computer personnel system is updated in order to ensure the pay increase is processed promptly.

The systems designers will need to break down the database into groups of fields and check that the procedures and incentives for maintaining each field are realistic.  The maintenance of data should be a requirement of any automation project.  A detailed form may be developed to control the data entry process; the front and back of a sample form is shown in Figure 13.

Tightly controlled procedures will also be needed to prevent the entry of fraudulent data into the system.  Procedures might include supporting each data change request form with appropriate documentation.  The data entry teams need to track and record individual data changes on paper.  The large volume of paper this generates needs to be managed; otherwise it can easily become disorganised and difficult to locate.

Computers also generate large volumes of paper output.  Much of this paper is ephemeral and need not be retained, but some of it should be held for varying lengths of time as an audit trail.  Often the output data is omitted from the records management regime, wasting space and weakening the audit trail.  It is important to control the proliferation of paper by instituting good records management procedures.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Full Name</td><td colspan="2">Sex</td><td>No.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Date of birth</td><td colspan="4">Date of first appointment and grade</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Date confirmed</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Nationality</td><td colspan="3">Ethnic origin</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Home Address</td><td colspan="2">Home telephone no.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Next of kin</td><td colspan="3">Relationship</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Marital status</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Academic qualifications</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Professional qualifications</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Previous employment</td></tr>
<tr><td>Organisation</td><td colspan="2">Position</td><td colspan="2">Dates</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2"></td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Present employment</td></tr>
<tr><td>Organisation</td><td colspan="2">Position</td><td colspan="2">Dates</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2"></td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
</table>

***Figure 13: Sample Data Input Form, Front Page***

| Salary | | Performance | | Potential Record |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Date | Salary | | Performance | Potential |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Training record | | | | |
| Date | Course | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

***Figure 13: Sample Data Input Form, Back Page***

## Controlling Data Exchange

Often there is little understanding among users of the potential benefits of exchanging data between databases. Nor is there an awareness of the need to consider data exchange when commissioning and designing databases. The ability to exchange data between databases greatly enhances the return on the investment made in gathering the data. For example, data exchange would facilitate the decentralisation of personnel functions to local authorities, allow central government to have access to information needed for national policy purposes and enable an ongoing exchange within government. Data exchange can be facilitated by the use of common coding conventions and data structures. Unless officials responsible for commissioning new systems agree and abide by common standards, it will be difficult to achieve organisation-wide use of automated personnel systems.

# LINKING PERSONNEL INFORMATION TO THE PAYROLL

Personal files, computerised information systems and the payroll all contribute to the work of personnel managers. Discrepancies between these systems have serious consequences because managers may be unsure which information to trust. Without accurate personnel information, it is impossible to control payroll expenditure, carry out effective human resources planning and manage staff effectively. The key to addressing this problem is ensuring that information moves systematically between the three systems, that each is kept up to date and that each system provides a check against the others. There is no established rule about how this coordination can best be achieved; it will depend upon the systems and information requirements in the country concerned. Whatever precise mechanisms are selected, two controls are required:

1. a defined and regular means flow of information between the three systems

2. a common number shared between them to facilitate audit checks.

These two requirements can be understood better by working through the following activity.

**Activity 20**

A small Commonwealth country was having difficulty establishing coherence between its payroll system and its computerised personnel information system (CPIS). The CPIS designers had not considered using its paper-based personnel files as a data source or audit checkpoint. The paper files were dismissed as being too incomplete to be reliable, and data survey forms and head counts provided the data source for the CPIS. As a result, the payroll and the CPIS did not match, and when they were checked against the paper-based personnel files, there was a large margin of error. Only in 14 percent of the sample checked was there a complete match of information. The two key issues, the lack of flow of information between the systems and the lack of a common number shared between them, were then tackled.

The records manager considered the merits of using the payroll number, the tax identity number, the social security number and the national identity number as the unique identifier. She discovered that none of the numbering systems was applicable to every civil servant, but she decided that the payroll number was the most suitable as the link between the three systems. The payroll number made it possible to locate all information on any given individual and facilitates audit checks. To incorporate the payroll number into the CPIS, she would take the following steps.

1. She would create a data field for the payroll number in the CPIS.
2. She would use the payroll number as the retrieval number for the paper-based files. This would involve reorganising the files in payroll number order, both in the civil service department and in the employing ministries and agencies. This would also involve creating names indexes in each instance. She recommended using the order established by the CPIS database.
3. She would introduce simple running numbering systems in each employing ministry or department for non-pensionable staff, who had no payroll numbers, and then she would develop indexes based on those numbers.

The records manager then went on to analyse information flows between the systems. She saw that when new staff were appointed to ministries and departments or when staff were promoted, salary input forms were completed by the employing agency and passed to the payroll unit of the accountant general. She recommended that in each case a duplicate of the payroll input form should be passed to the CPIS managers, to add to the CPIS database.

*continued next page*

Having entered the information on the system, the CPIS staff would then print out the CPIS entry and pass it to the records staff responsible for the master personal files for filing. They would check to ensure that the information on the database matched the information contained on the job application form and the letter of appointment/ promotion and any other relevant legal documentation of the file. The records manager observed that if it turned out that there were no master personnel file in the system, this would be an indication that the computer entry might relate to a ghost worker. If the date of birth of the new employee did not match the date on the application form, or if there were no letter indicating that the employee had been promoted, there was a danger that the data might have been corrupted, and investigations would have to be carried out.

Based on this information, draw or describe the flow of information in this system. Who receives what information first? Who receives information next? How is it managed?

# SUMMARY

Lesson 5 has focussed on managing systems in a mixed paper/electronic environment. It described the main components of a mixed paper and computerised system.

Computerised personnel information systems have the same basic requirements as manual systems. They need to

? be as simple as possible

? contain accurate and reliable information

? be relevant to the business processes that they support.

The decision to computerise requires considerable thought. In some cases it may be better to fix the existing system. This lesson explored the advantages and the disadvantages of computerisation and discussed the specific uses to which computerisation can be put within the personnel management function. The lesson also outlined the requirements of a successful automated personnel management system and the roles and responsibilities of records professionals in developing effective personnel records systems. The lesson also examined the key factors involved in sustaining the efficiency of mixed paper/electronic systems. Suggestions were provided on the establishment of effective links between the paper and electronic parts of the system.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Name four issues to consider before moving to an electronic system.

2. Name at least five ways summaries of personnel information can be used to support human resource management and planning.

3. Name at least five advantages of computerisation.

4. Describe at least five reasons that mixed paper and electronic systems will continue to be used for personnel management in most countries.

5. Describe three key factors that will affect the management of electronic records.

6. Describe at least four risks an organisation is exposed to if it does not manage electronic records efficiently.

7. Explain the possible consequences of inadequate care of electronic records.

8. Why must the records professional be involved with the development of electronic information systems?

9. Describe at least eight safeguards that must be in place to ensure electronic records are protected from loss or damage.

10. Name four ways records professionals can help develop personnel records systems.

11. Explain why many automation teams reject the use of central personnel files when seeking data sources for the new automated personnel management system.

12. Explain the concept of a ‘source data trap’.

13. What other data sources might be used in the development of an automated personnel management system? Explain the benefits and drawbacks of each type of data source.

14. What issues must be considered when ensuring data entry processes are accurate?

15. How should computer output be managed to ensure it does not waste space and weaken the audit trail?

16. Describe the two controls needed to coordinate the personnel records system with the payroll system and with personal files.

# ACTIVITIES: COMMENTS

**Activities 17-19**

These activities will help you compare the information offered in this lesson with the reality in your own organisation. Compare your findings with the lesson and consider any significant differences you found. What could be done to ensure your organisation's systems are operating as efficiently as possible?

**Activity 20**

The recommended restructured information flow is illustrated below.

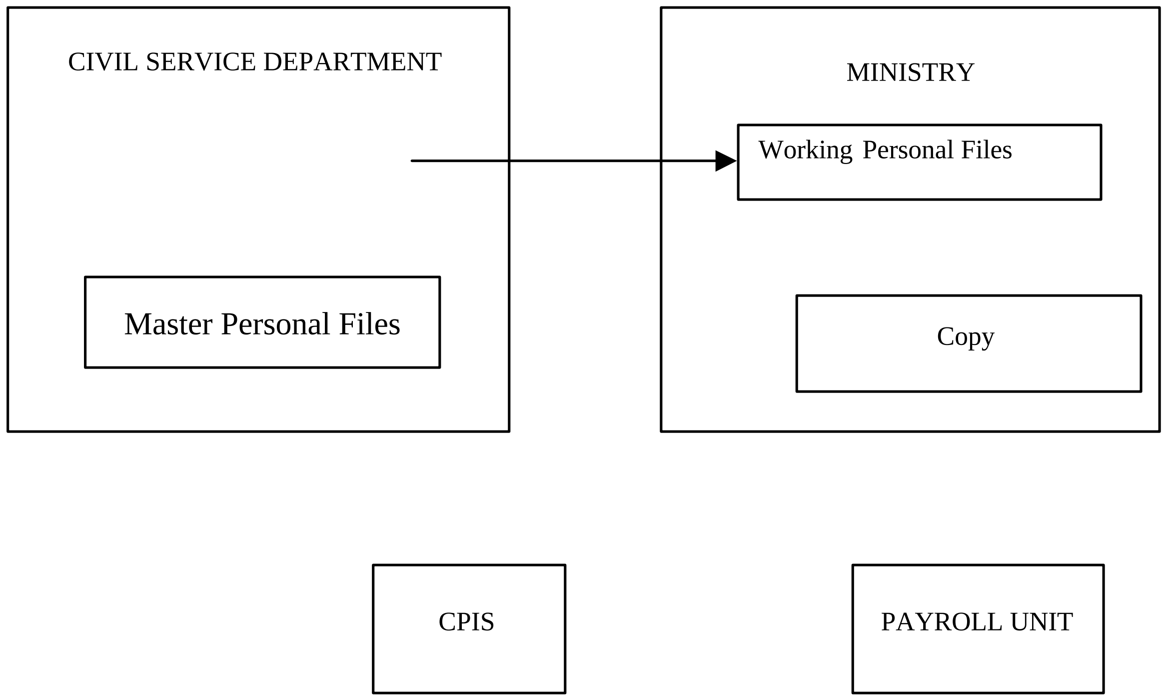



***Figure 14: Outline of Documentation Flow***

The same efficiency gains could be achieved in different ways in different countries, but the role of the records manager will be significant whatever solutions are developed.

**LESSON 6**

# MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Personnel record systems in government are so extensive that structural changes will have significant cost implications. Thus it is critical to obtain senior management support before any reorganisation is undertaken. Because personnel information is a key strategic resource, it will be a priority area for IT investment. Senior managers need to realise that records managers have a significant role to play in the process of automating personnel management systems, particularly in the management of both paper and electronic records.

*Senior management support is critical to effective personnel records management.*

What should the records professional tell senior management? What does senior management need to know? It is the records manager's job to explain how records management can contribute to the organisation's personnel management objectives and to articulate the principal issues involved. This lesson discusses those key management issues.

# THE CONSEQUENCES OF POORLY MANAGED PERSONNEL RECORDS

Managing records effectively is a fundamental aspect of managing the personnel function. Unless the records are managed, it becomes increasingly difficult to

? maintain an accurate payroll

? have confidence in personnel data for planning purposes

? set budgets for personnel expenditure

? process pension and other benefits payable to staff.

*Unless records are managed, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain an accurate payroll, have confidence in personnel data, set budgets or process pension and other benefits.*

# IMPROVING PERSONNEL RECORDS REQUIRES A STRATEGIC APPROACH

Managers often believe that existing personnel records systems are too flawed to be repaired. Conversely, some managers believe that the solution lies simply in improving the performance of the records staff and making minor improvements in filing procedures. In fact, while there are problems with staff quality, motivation and morale, there are also significant systemic and strategic reasons for the failure of personnel records systems. These include the following.

? The system may have been designed for a much smaller civil service and cannot cope with the volume of work of an expanded bureaucracy.

? The policy objectives and work processes for personnel management will no doubt changed, but the record keeping system may not have been updated to take these changes into account.

? Key operations such as payroll have been computerised, but the personnel records system may not reflect this or may not be linked to the automated system.

? The system for transferring files to a new location when a civil servant moves to a new posting may have broken down, leading to the extensive duplication of files.

If root causes of the records breakdown are systemic, no amount of staff motivation will succeed in improving the situation. A strategic approach to repairing the system will be required.

The design of the strategy will depend upon individual circumstances and needs. It may well include improving the efficiency of records staff by measures such as introducing a training programme, building staff motivation and morale by a sensitisation programme on the value of records work. It will probably also include other measures such as changing regulations, and redesigning procedures, forms and even entire record systems. For these changes to be successful, the support of senior managers will be vital.

# PERSONNEL INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND PERSONNEL RECORD-KEEPING SYSTEMS

Most senior managers now recognise that computerisation can make an important contribution to human resource management. The capacity to analyse, compare, monitor and plan can be greatly enhanced. However, computerisation tends to be seen as wholly the realm of information technologists, and personnel records tend to be seen as the realm of the filing clerks and records managers.

Records managers need to explain that it is not simply the medium that is at issue. Important records issues must be addressed, whether the system is electronic or paper-based. Unless this issue is addressed, records managers are locked into a subordinate position with little opportunity to influence events. If records managers are responsible only for an 'outdated' low-technology system that is not an investment priority, why should they be involved in planning new systems?

Senior managers need to understand that if the computerised systems are intended to generate accurate and reliable information – such as to calculate personal entitlements or protect national liability –records management controls are needed. If the systems are only to be used for broad statistical analysis, then a much higher level of inaccuracy can be tolerated.

If the computerised systems are expected to meet record-keeping requirements, then the records manager must be involved. He or she will bring a vital contribution to

? systems design, including an evaluation of whether the system is capable of capturing the necessary contextual information

? the management of the inputs and outputs, including the nature and quality of the source data available

? the long-term preservation of and access to electronic records.

Senior managers also need to understand that if records systems are to be effective over time, all of the records concerned must be subject to retention schedules. Unless the schedules are systematically applied, the build-up of redundant paper and of electronic records, which must be migrated from one hardware and software environment to another, will result in considerable unnecessary expense and in retrieval problems.

*See Appendix 1 for an excerpt from a sample retention schedule for personnel records.*

There also needs to be a clearly defined link between the paper-based personnel information system and the payroll. Establishing a clear audit trail between personal files and the payroll is a key factor in reducing 'ghost workers' and gaining control of the payroll. By linking the information held in the payroll database, the computerised personnel information system and the personal files, it will be possible to ensure better control of the payroll and to generate more accurate personnel information.

The records manager can help to define the flow of information required between the three systems; he or she can also facilitate audit checks. Ensuring that the three systems share a common number is critical to achieving this objective.

# PERSONNEL SYSTEMS AND REORGANISATION

*Personnel records are often overlooked when governments or organisations are reorganised.*

When staff are transferred to new organisations such as executive agencies or local authorities, it is important to plan for the management of those personnel records. In recent years, for example, many governments have pursued policies for divestment of functions (the creation of executive agencies, or privatisation) and decentralisation (transfer of powers to local government). This process usually involves transferring staff out of the civil service to the new organisation. But little thought is given to the kind of record system needed to manage personnel records or what should happen to the existing personnel records of transferred staff.

Basic questions about those records need to be answered:

- What information does central government need to maintain about these staff?
- What is happening to the pension rights of the individuals concerned?
- Who should be responsible for managing the records of staff transferred from central government to new agencies?
- What information do the new bodies need to have about the previous service career of transferred former civil servants?

Failure to resolve these questions early in the reorganisation process is likely to lead to costly problems at a later stage. Employees may also lose their rights to pension and government services.

As the government is likely to have ongoing responsibilities for pensions and for other benefits or obligations, for instance in relation to injuries suffered in the course of service, there are important legal reasons for retaining the closed files in secure low-cost accommodation for reference purposes. New files can then be opened by the new employing agency and copies of necessary legal documents obtained as necessary.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF SOURCE DATA

*Investment in existing paper-based personnel records systems is vital to the success of human resource policies.*

Managers tend to believe that information technology will enable them to achieve their objectives. Thus they often existing personnel records, even though those records may provide not only legally verifiable documentation but also the source data upon which the accuracy of the new automated personnel management systems depends.

Senior management needs to understand that if the source data is of poor quality, the investment in information technology will be undermined. Investment in existing paper-based personnel records systems is not just desirable but vital to the success of the organisation's human resource policies and to successful automation schemes.

The records manager can play an invaluable role by analysing the data fields required for any new automated personnel management system and identifying which of these fields will require data that can only be obtained from personnel records. Having determined which records are required, the records should be sampled to determine how complete they are. Depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary to take steps to ensure that these records are complete, well-organised and available for the automation project.

Senior managers may believe that the information required in databases can be captured through other means than reference to records. Senior managers need to understand that without reference to records, personnel information cannot be legally verified. For instance, an individual may supply inaccurate information verbally or on a data collection form because he or she stands to benefit. For example, if the civil service pension does not cover living costs, it is in the interest of staff to claim to be younger than they really are in order to prolong their active service. They may lie about their ages. The accuracy of the database will be undermined unless authentic records, in this case copies of birth certificates, can be provided.

*The records manager can play an invaluable role in helping secure valuable and accurate source data.*

# CARE OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS

If the automated system is expected to provide the primary source of information about personnel, then it is essential that the electronically generated records must be managed. Senior managers need to recognise that personnel records must be kept for long periods. In many cases the technical mechanisms for such preservation have not been fully resolved. The organisation must have both a strategy and the institutional capacity to maintain the records securely over time and to ensure that they are accessible. Failure to do so will place the organisation's long-term memory at considerable risk, with significant financial and legal implications.

Records professionals can and should participate in the development of a strategy for electronic records care, in partnership with the key stakeholders and the organisation's information technology department.

*For more information on electronic records issues, see* Managing Electronic Records.

> *The organisation must have a workable strategy to maintain electronic records securely over time and ensure they are accessible.*

## Scanning Documents

In spite of many people's enthusiasm with the new techniques of scanning and document management systems, scanning personal files into an automated system will not solve all the organisation's information problems.

**A scanner** captures images from text, photographic prints, posters, magazine pages, and similar sources for computer editing and display. Scanners come in hand-held, feed-in, and flatbed types and for scanning black-and-white only or colour. Very high resolution scanners are used for scanning for high-resolution printing, but lower resolution scanners are adequate for capturing images for computer display.

***Document management*****:** The application of records management principles and techniques to the systematic handling and control of correspondence and internally generated documents with a view to their continuing use.

***Document management system:*** An (electronic) system used to manage different kinds of documents in an organisation using computer programs and storage.

***Scanning:*** The process of converting an image into a form that a computer can use.

A document management system allows an organisation and its users to create a document or capture a hard copy in electronic form, store, edit, print, process, and otherwise manage documents in image video, and audio as well as in text form. A document management system usually provides a single view of multiple databases and may include scanner for document capture, printers for creating hard copy, storage devices and computer servers and server programs for managing the databases that contains the documents.

One of the most common misconceptions by senior managers is that there is a document management system available that can remove all the problems associated with poorly run paper systems. However, there are still many problems associated with document management, which has yet to become a fully mature technology. There are serious questions about the use of document management systems, including the following.

? Documents created from outside the organisation have to be captured by scanning. This is labour intensive not only for the scanning process, but because every image file needs to be individually 'tagged' with retrieval terms. Documents on poor quality paper, documents written in pencil and hand-written documents are very difficult to scan efficiently.

? Much of the data capture work is shifted from low cost filing clerks to highly paid managers.

? Most document management applications do not include records management functions.

? Experience has shown that these systems are mostly successful where they are used by small units doing repetitive, standardised work where all the staff are enthusiastic about using the technology. The system quickly breaks down when staff members leave, or where it is expanded to involve a large group of people.

It is important to bear in mind that information technology is constantly evolving. What was 'experimental' two or three years ago may have evolved into a viable technology. At any given time the options available need to be analysed objectively in the light of up–to-date information and a realistic assessment of the organisation's resources and constraints. To be effective, strategies need not be expensive or complicated. Printing out key documents and preserving them on paper files may still be a valuable protection against any failure to preserve and access the electronic records over time.

*Electronic records issues are discussed in more detail in* Managing Electronic Records, Automating Records Services *and* Understanding Computers: An Overview for Records and Archives Staff.

## AUDITING PERSONNEL SYSTEMS

Whatever systems are used, it is essential that senior managers recognise the importance of auditing the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the personal files maintained on civil servants. The audit process should focus on ensuring the quality of master files but it can also examine the care and management of working files or the maintenance of appropriate automated systems. Records managers should encourage this audit activity, and they should seek to work closely with auditors to ensure records issues are addressed throughout the review process.

*For more information on auditing and evaluating systems, see* Strategic Planning for Records and Archives Services.

## RECORDS MANAGEMENT STATUS AND TRAINING

*Many of the problems encountered with personnel records have their origin in the absence of professional records managers in the civil service.*

There is a widespread lack of recognition of the contribution records managers can make to the management of personnel information; this lack of understanding contributes to the low status of records staff. Job evaluation exercises leading to the creation of posts with appropriate levels of responsibility may be one way to motivate records staff, thus providing career progression opportunities.

Training, aimed at building appropriate capacity, is key to achieving improvements and raising the profile of the records profession. It should not only build appropriate skills but help staff to see their role in the context of the management of the organisation and the civil service.

**Activity 21**

Consider the various strategic issues discussed above. Which issues are of concern within your organisation? For example, does senior management recognise the relationship between computerisation and record keeping? Do managers recognise that automation will not solve all records and information problems?

After you have identified those issues of concern, write a brief outline if how you would explain to senior management the importance of understanding the records issues involved with those issues. For example, how would you explain to senior managers that scanning will not solve records problems by itself? How would you explain the importance of managing personnel records during government reorganisations? Be sure to refer specifically to situations within your own organisation.

# SUMMARY

Lesson 6 has discussed the records management issues that should be communicated to senior management in order to gain support for the records management programme. These include

? the requirement for a strategic approach to improving personnel records.

? the difference between information systems and personnel record keeping systems

? the need for a clear audit trail linking personnel records and payroll

? the importance of planning the management of personnel records when staff are transferred to new organisations such as executive agencies or local authorities

? the significance of reliable source data to building reliable computerised systems

? the need to recognise that automated personnel management systems may create electronic records requiring specialised records management

? the problems associated with scanning personal files into an electronic document management system

? the value of auditing personnel information systems

? the importance of providing adequate staff development and training opportunities for records managers.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What are four consequences of poor management of personnel records?

2. Explain four systemic and strategic reasons for the failure of personnel records systems.

3. Explain why records management controls are needed for the development and use of computerised personnel management systems.

4. What is the role of the records manager in the development of computerised systems?

5. Why do the payroll database, the computerised personnel information system and the personal files need to be linked for an electronic system to work?

6. What records and information questions need to be answered when personnel are transferred to new organisations?

7. Why is it necessary to manage personnel records in the event of government reorganisation?

8. Why should senior managers recognise the importance of investing in existing paper-based personnel records systems in anticipation of automation?

9. Why are electronic records strategies required and what is the role of the records professional in their development?

10. What is document management system?

11. Explain four records concerns that arise when considering scanning documents and maintaining them in a document management system.

12. Why are audits of personnel systems important for strategic management?

13. Why is records management training and development important to the strategic management of personnel records systems?

# ACTIVITIES: COMMENTS

**Activity 21**

This activity should help you assess the strategic issues specific to your organisation and help you develop ideas for how you would address those issues if you were able to.  Remember, even if you are not in a position to effect change in those areas, it is important to work through this activity as though you were able to address these concerns to senior management.  Spend as much time and provide as much detail as you need to ensure you have considered all the issues and examined all the ways you might explain your concerns to senior management.

**LESSON 7**

# WHAT TO DO NEXT?

*Managing Personnel Records* has attempted to help the records manager understand the role that records play in the whole range of issues involved with personnel management. Its goal has been to assist both records managers and non-records staff, including line managers and personnel staff, to manage personnel records in support of public accountability and good governance.

The module has explained the management framework needed for the control of personnel records and their significance as a resource for public sector personnel management and human resources planning. It has also explored the role of these records as tools for monitoring staff numbers and performance as well as for protecting the rights of individual staff.

*Managing Personnel Records* has provided an overview of personnel management then discussed personnel management business processes and resulting records. It has discussed the importance of identifying stakeholders. It also examined managing personnel records in a manual form, including the steps involved with repairing collapsed systems. It then considered the management of personnel records in a mixed paper/electronic environment. It concluded with an introduction to management issues involved with personnel records care.

## ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

This module has introduced key activities in the management of personnel records. But which tasks should you undertake first? Which are high-priority and which are low? Each institution will make different decisions based upon

? the state of the record keeping systems

? the state of preparedness and training of the records staff

? the appropriateness of the legislative and regulatory framework

? the government's priorities for managing the personnel function.

The latter is particularly important: records management exists to serve the wider priorities of the organisation, not the other way round. However, it is possible to offer some recommendations for action that will help organisations manage their personnel records more efficiently. Complete the activity below then consider the suggestions.

**Activity 22**

Based on the work you did throughout this module, identify the priorities you would establish to establish or improve the personnel records management system in your organisation.

# Priority 1: Assess the Existing Situation

Carry out a survey of the existing record systems to identify strengths and weaknesses. This should cover

? the legislation and regulations that affect personnel record-keeping systems

? organisational structures and training for records specialists

? policies, procedures and guidelines

? the completeness of the records inventory and retention schedules

? records disposal procedures

? vital records and disaster recovery arrangements

? records storage

? security of access, including physical security.

One of the key facts to establish is whether problems are widespread, or whether they are concentrated in one or two administrative units. The former would suggest problems with the overall framework in which the record system is operating. Here a strategic approach may be most effective. The latter might suggest that a more limited and focussed approach would be more appropriate.

# Priority 2: Identify the Stakeholders and the Organisation's Policy Objectives

The management of personnel is a dynamic area, and priorities can change rapidly. Stakeholders will be able to provide valuable information about whether a policy is really going to be implemented, or whether it has had to be modified in the light of events and whether large automation projects are being considered. They will also be able to provide information about problems they are experiencing or which they anticipate for the future. For example, do they experience delays in receiving the information they need? Do they consult the records at all? If not, why not? A questionnaire can provide a useful way of gathering information but are usually supplemented by interviews.

*See* Restructuring Current Records Systems: A Procedures Manual *for information gathering methodologies.*

It is also important to identify the organisation's policy objectives for personnel management before determining a plan of action. There are likely to be policy statements and planning documents on the government's objectives for the civil service as well as policy documents specifically on personnel issues. The business plan, where it exists, usually has implications for the management of personnel, and this in turn has implications for the management of personnel records. For example, if the government decides to increase the number of teachers or to make budget savings by retrenching civil servants, these will all have implications for the management of personnel records. Having obtained as much information as possible from written documents, stakeholders should be asked for information to supplement the detail of what has already been learned.

It is important to remember that different stakeholders will have differing and sometimes conflicting objectives and priorities. If there are existing automated personnel management systems, or plans to introduce them, the IT department will also be a stakeholder with its own agenda, as well as being a service provider.

# Priority 3: Analyse the Information Flows

An analysis of the way information flows within the organisation and between organisations will identify unnecessary duplication, sometimes because the information is simply not needed and sometimes because the activity it supports is no longer meaningful. The analysis will also assist in identifying the boundaries of the record keeping system and its main stakeholders. This is important because it is easy to define the boundaries of the system too narrowly and then run into problems later. The analysis may be represented in a simple flow chart or it may result in a much more detailed set of diagrams and descriptive text depending upon the need. For example the introduction of a computerised document management system will require very thorough and detailed analysis of information flows (see Lesson 1). This would normally be carried out by a specialist systems analyst. As a general rule, wholly manual systems require rather less intensive analysis because manual systems are much more tolerant of imprecision and 'unwritten rules' than automated systems.

*The techniques outlined in* Analysing Business Systems *provide an appropriate methodology for analysing information flows.*

# Priority 4: Stabilise Existing Record-keeping Systems

The information gathering exercise should make it possible to decide where best to direct the personnel records improvement programme. Because almost any change to the existing system needs to be based on a firm foundation, it is advisable to stabilise the existing system for managing paper records as much as possible first.

## Priority 5: Plan Improvements

Having gathered relevant information and stabilised or repaired the existing systems improvements can be carefully planned based on

? the strengths and weaknesses of the existing system

? how information flows within the system

? what the main stakeholders think about the service being offered

? what the stakeholders want to achieve in the area of personnel management and what they intend to change

? whether there are plans for automating personnel information systems that will have an impact upon records management.

At this stage it will be possible to examine potential technological solutions to support the objectives of the stakeholders and the organisation as a whole. Although technology is important, it should come last in the planning process.

When the planned improvements are finally implemented they are likely to gain support and be successful because

? users have been consulted

? it is possible to demonstrate where problems are occurring and why

? it is possible to demonstrate that the changes proposed will bring concrete benefits to personnel management.

# GETTING HELP

The international organisations listed below often have national or regional branches or affiliated organisations. Following are names and addresses of agencies that could be contacted for assistance.

*See the* Additional Resources *document for information on other organisations and associations involved with records and archives management generally.*

**Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM)**

Suite 402-1075 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario
Canada, M5S 2B1
Tel: +1 416 920 3337
Fax: +1 416 920 6574
Email: capam@compuserve.com
Website: http://www.comnet.mt/capam/

The aim of CAPAM is to enhance Commonwealth co-operation in improving managerial competence and achieving organisational excellence in government. CAPAM exchanges experiences on new developments and innovations in management in governments by building networks among elected and senior officials, academics and non-governmental organisations. CAPAM provides rapid access to information on best practices in government administration.

**Institute of Personnel and Development (IPD)**

IPD House, Camp Road
London SW19 4UX
UK
Tel: +44 20 8871 9000
Fax: +44 20 8263 3333
Email: ipd@ipd.co.uk
Website: http://www.ipd.co.uk

The IPD is the UK professional body with over 90,000 members concerned with promoting best practice in the field of management and development of people, for application both by professional members and by their organisational colleagues.

**The International Personnel Management Association (IPMA)**

1617 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
USA
Tel: + 1 703 549 7100
Fax: + 1 703 684 0948
email: IPMA@IPMA-HR.ORG
website: http://www.ipma-hr.org/

The International Personnel Management Association (IPMA) is a professional association for public personnel professionals, primarily those who work in federal, state, or local government. IPMA's mission is to provide professional human resource management leadership, education, information, and representation services to advance organisational objectives and quality in the public sector.

**Activity 23**

Find out if your institution has any information about any of the agencies listed above. Does your organisation receive publications, participate in conferences or meetings or otherwise work with any of these groups?

In your opinion, which groups should your institution consider communicating with first, if any, and what would you expect to achieve by doing so? How would you go about building a productive relationship?

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

There are a few publications available about personnel records management, but it is not an area with an extensive literature base. Some publications are more easily obtained than others, and some more up to date than others. However, older publications also contain valuable information and may be more easily found in libraries in your particular country or region than very new publications that have not yet circulated around the world. Core publications are identified with an asterisk (*).

*Core publications are also identified in the* Additional Resources *document; refer to that document for information on more general publications on records and archives management.*

ARMA Standards Committee: Filing Systems Task Force. *Alphabetic Filing Rules*. 2d ed. Prairie Village, KS: ARMA, 1995.

ARMA Standards Committee: Filing Systems Task Force. *Filing Procedures: A Guideline.* Prairie Village, KS: ARMA, 1989.

ARMA Standards Committee: Filing Systems Task Force. *Numeric Filing: A Guideline.* Prairie Village, KS: ARMA, 1989.

ARMA Standards Committee: Filing Systems Task Force. *Subject Filing: A Guideline.* Prairie Village, KS: ARMA, 1988.

Armstrong, Michael. *Handbook of Personnel Management Practice.* 4th ed., 1991.

Bennick, Anne. *Active Filing for Paper Records*. Prairie Village, KS: ARMA, 1989.

* Cain, Piers and Anne Thurston. *Personnel Records: A Strategic Resource for Public Sector Management.* London: UK: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1998.

International Personnel Management Association (IPMA). *Personnel Files,* US: Center for Personnel Research Series, 1997.

**Activity 24**

Check your institution's library or resource centre. What books or other resources do you have about personnel issues in general and personnel records care specifically? Are any of the publications listed above available in your institution? If so, examine two or three of them and assess their currency and value to your institution. If not, identify two or three publications you think would be most useful to help develop or expand your library. Devise a plan outlining how you could realistically obtain copies of these.

# SUMMARY

This lesson has provided an overview of the entire module, *Managing Personnel Records.* This lesson has then discussed how to establish priorities for action and suggested that the main priorities for action are often as follows:

? Priority 1: assess the existing situation

? Priority 2: identify the stakeholders and the organisation's policy objectives

? Priority 3: analyse the information flows

? Priority 4: stabilise existing record-keeping systems

? Priority 5: plan improvements.

The lesson then outlined ways to find out more information or get help with personnel records issues. The lesson concluded with a discussion of valuable information resources relevant to personnel records care.

# STUDY QUESTIONS

? In your own words, explain the reason why the priorities proposed in this lesson are offered in the order they are in.

? Indicate two of the organisations listed in this lesson that you would choose to contact first and explain why.

? Indicate two of the publications listed in this lesson that you would choose to purchase first and explain why.

# ACTIVITIES: COMMENTS

**Activity 22**

Every institution will find itself at a different stage of development in terms of personnel records management. The priorities established will have to take into account the particular needs of that institution, the region and the country.

**Activity 23**

If resources are limited, it is wise to communicate with international organisations first, as they often obtain and filter information from national or regional associations. Thus valuable information is passed on to your organisation through the international group, which can save resources for all. It is also advisable to focus on general information before obtaining specialised publications or information.

**Activity 24**

It is important to begin with general information and ensure you have a good resource library of introductory and overview publications before developing a more specialised library.

**APPENDIX 1**

# SAMPLE RETENTION SCHEDULE FOR PERSONNEL RECORDS

## RETENTION OF PERSONNEL AND OTHER RELATED RECORDS

| Record | Statutory retention period | Statutory authority |
|---|---|---|
| Accident books, accident records/reports | 3 years after the date of the last entry | Regulation 7 of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences at Work Regulations 1985<br>(RIDDOR) (SI 1985/2023) |
| Income tax and NI returns, income tax records and correspondence with the Inland Revenue | Not less than 3 years after the end of the financial year to which they relate | Regulation 55(12) of the Income tax (Employment) Regulations 1993<br>(SI 1993/744) |
| Medical records and details of biological tests under the Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1980 | 2 years | Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1980<br>(SI 1980/1248) |
| Medical records as specified by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1999 | 40 years | Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1994<br>(COSHH)<br>(SI 1980/1248) |
| Medical records under the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987 | 40 years | Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987<br>(SI 1987/2115) |
| Medical records under the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 | 50 years | Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985<br>(SI 1985/1333) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Records of tests and examinations of control systems and protective equipment under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1994 | 5 years from the date on which the tests were carried out | Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1994<br>(COSHH)<br>(SI 1994/3246) |
| Records relating to events notifiable under the Retirement Benefits Schemes (Information Powers) Regulations 1995, records concerning decisions to allow retirement due to incapacity, pensions accounts and associated documents | 6 years from the end of the scheme year in which<br>* the event took place<br>* the date upon which accounts/reports were signed/completed | Regulation 15(1), (3) of the Retirement Benefits Schemes (Information Powers)<br>Regulations 1995<br>(SI 1995/3103) |
| Service contracts for directors | 3 years for private companies, 6 years for public limited companies | Section 221 of the Companies Act 1985 |
| Statutory Maternity Pay records, calculations, certificates (Mat B1s) or other medical evidence | Not less than 3 years after the end of the financial year to which they relate | Regulation 26 of the Statutory Maternity Pay (General) Regulations 1986<br>(SI 1986/1960) |
| Statutory Sick Pay records calculations certificates, self-certificates | Not less than 3 years after the end of the financial year to which they relate | Regulation 13 of the Statutory Sick Pay (General) Regulations 1982<br>(SI 1982/894) |
| Wage/salary records (also overtime, bonuses, expenses) | 6 years | Taxes Management Act 1970 |

RECOMMENDED RETENTION PERIODS (WHERE NO STATUTORY PERIOD EXISTS)

| Record | Recommended retention period |
|---|---|
| Actuarial valuation reports | permanently |
| Application forms and interview notes | 1 year |
| Assessments under Health and Safety Regulations and records of consultations with safety representatives and committees | permanently |
| Money purchase details | 6 years after transfer or value taken |
| Pension scheme investment policies | 12 years from the ending of any benefit payable under the policy |
| Personnel files and training records | 6 years after employment ceases |
| Records of pensioners | 12 years after benefit ceases |
| Records of senior executives | Permanently for historical purposes |
| Redundancy details calculation of payments, refunds, notification to the Secretary of State | Suggested retention period is 12 years from the date of redundancy because of the Limitation Act 1980 |
| Time cards | 2 years after audit |
| Trade Union agreements | 10 years after ceasing to be effective |
| Trust deeds and rules | permanently |
| Trustees' minute books | permanently |
| Work council minutes | permanently |