



**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

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**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE**

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**NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF NAMIBIA RECORDS MANAGEMENT SECTION**

**TO: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO THE PRESIDENT  
SECRETARY TO CABINET  
DEPUTY AUDITOR GENERAL  
DIRECTOR: NAMIBIA SECURITY INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
SECRETARIES: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY/NATIONAL COUNCIL  
DIRECTOR: ELECTIONS  
ALL PERMANENT SECRETARIES: O/M/As  
ALL DEPUTY PERMANENT SECRETARIES (MoEAC)  
ALL DIRECTORS (HEAD OFFICE AND REGIONS)**

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES CIRCULARS OF 2017**

**CIRCULAR 3 OF 2017: INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE OF FILE PLAN IN O/M/As  
AND SOEs**

**MARCH 2017**

## GUIDELINES FOR COMPILER OF INSTRUCTIONS

1. The instructions should be compiled in the order as this example.
2. **These instructions are standard and only the following paragraphs may be altered to suit the requirements of a particular office:**

### Paragraph 1

The full name of the office using the FILE PLAN should be given, for example Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation, Head Office or City of Windhoek, Town Clerk's Department. If the file plan is to be used by regional offices or sub-offices, this should be indicated.

### Paragraph 2

The date of implementation should be inserted. This date should be inserted only after the file plan has been approved.

### Paragraph 3

The name of the post occupied by the person in charge of the file plan should be inserted. This should not be lower than Chief Administrative Officer (O/M/As).

### Paragraph 7

“Staff member” or “Section” should be deleted.

### Paragraph 12

If the file plan is not to be used in regional or sub-offices, paragraph 12 (b) should be deleted.

### Paragraph 12(b)

“Regional” or “sub-offices” should be deleted. If neither describes the offices correctly the correct description should be written in.

### Paragraph 14

An accurate example taken from the file plan of the office should be given.

**MINISTRY OF \_\_\_\_\_**  
**OFFICE OF \_\_\_\_\_**  
**HEAD OFFICE**  
**FILE PLAN**

**CONTENTS**

- a) General Instructions
- b) List of main series
- c) Numerical layout
- d) List of independent case files
- e) Annexures

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE OF FILE PLAN

### 1. OFFICE USING FILE PLAN

This file plan is for the use of \_\_\_\_\_ and it may not be used by any other office without the permission of the Chief Archivist.

### 2. IMPLEMENTATION

This file plan will be implemented on \_\_\_\_\_ and from this date no correspondence may be conducted on files from the previous file plan with the exception of case files. The files of the previous file plan should be closed on the day prior to the implementation of this plan and no items from these files should be transferred to the new files. If necessary, case files should be renumbered to fit in with the new file plan.

### 3. INSTRUCTIONS FOR OFFICIAL IN CHARGE OF THE FILE PLAN

Control over the file plan has been entrusted to \_\_\_\_\_ and no alterations/additions to the file plan may be made without the permission of this official.

His/her duties include the following:

- a) He/she should keep the Master Copy of the file plan, see paragraph 4;
- b) He/she should report all alterations/additions to the file plan to the National Archives, see paragraph 5;
- c) **After the file plan has been in operation for at least three years, he/she should apply to the National Archives for disposal guidelines on the file plan;**
- d) **The file plan should be in operational for a period of two/three years, thereafter he/she may apply to the National Archives for alterations/additions on the file plan;**

- e) He/she should check the daily file on a regular basis to ensure that correspondence is being conducted on the correct file;
- f) He/she should ensure, as far as possible, that paragraphs 8 and 9 of these instructions are being adhered to. The files concerned should be checked regularly to ensure their correct use;
- g) The practical working of the file plan should be monitored and when necessary he/she should ensure that the necessary changes are made. With the assumption of new functions, new files may have to be created and if necessary, the existing files be divided or amalgamated/combined/incorporated.
- h) Parent files, that are file descriptions which have been subdivided, yet are used as files themselves, should be checked carefully to ensure that these do not develop into “General” files. If necessary further sub-files should be created;
- i) If cases occur where correspondence begins on one file and later the emphasis shifts to another aspect of the subject, he/she should ensure that the correct subject file is used;
- j) Instructions concerning unclassifiable correspondence and file descriptions are found in paragraphs 12 and 14 of these instructions.

(These instructions should be included in the official’s duty sheet)

#### 4. **MASTER COPY**

The Master Copy is that copy of the file plan which contains details of all approval file descriptions and instructions as to how files should be opened and filed. No file may be opened without the approval of the official in charge. He/she should ensure that any alteration/addition to the file plan is immediately entered in the Master Copy. Individual case files are not entered in the Master Copy – see paragraph 17.

#### 5. **REPORTING OF ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS**

All alterations/additions, including the addition or deletion of an underlining, should immediately be reported to the National Archives for notification and approval. For easier reference, each notification should be numbered from one each year, for example,

1/2015, 2/2015, etc. As soon as approval for alterations/additions has been granted, the relevant pages of the file plan should be retyped and a copy submitted to the National Archives. (For secret files, see paragraph 11 of these instructions).

6. **REGISTER OF FILES OPENED**

The purpose of this register is to maintain a complete record of each file that has been opened. A loose-leaf register is recommended for this purpose as extra sheets of paper may be inserted to accommodate case file forming part of the numerical layout. The register is kept in the same order as the file plan but includes an additional column, "Date opened", to indicate the date on which the file was opened. The first page of the register should indicate the name of the office concerned and the date on which the register was introduced. (For secret files, see paragraph 11).

7. **ACCURATE FILING OF CORRESPONDENCE**

Each staff member/section should have a copy of the file plan. Officials should be acquainted with the main series they deal with and should constantly check that correspondence is filed on the correct file. Incorrect filing should be corrected immediately. This ensures that valuable material is not exposed to destruction or that ephemeral material is kept.

8. **POLICY FILES**

Provision is made in the file plan for policy files. These are indicated by a "P" after the file number, for example, 1/P, 5/P, etc. The purpose of these files is to group together items which deal with policy, decisions, instructions and procedures to make future reference to these items easier. By "orders" it is meant orders and instructions concerning the work of a section and not orders given to an individual. Correspondence filed on a policy file should be limited to the formulation of and alterations to policy. The following types of correspondence should **NOT** be placed on policy files:

- a) Enquiries on policy which do not lead to the formulation of new policy or re-interpretation of established policy;
- b) Individual cases which do not lead to new policy decisions or to the revision of established policy;

- c) Items concerning the main or sub-series as a whole but which are not policy, as well as individual aspects of the subject where no file exists. In these cases a suitable file should be created.

9. **ROUTINE ENQUIRY FILES**

Routine enquiry files can be created at various places in the file plan. These are indicated by a “/R” after the file number, for example, 1/R, 1/1R, etc. The purpose of these files is to handle enquiries which are ephemeral and need not be referred to again. Under no circumstances may value items be placed on routine enquiry files.

10. **REPORTS, RETURNS AND STATISTICS**

The main series “**REPORTS, RETURNS AND STATISTICS**” should be used for reports, returns and information which cannot be accommodated in any other main series. In cases where files for reports and returns are provided in the main series, these should only be used if the report/item cannot be placed on a specific subject file.

11. **CONFIDENTIAL, SECRET AND TOP SECRET FILES (Classified files)**

- a) Classified files are normally locked away by the head of an office or by an official appointed by him/her.
- b) Confidential, secret and top secret files may be opened for any main heading, subject or file appearing in the Master Copy of the file plan. These files are distinguished from ordinary files by the addition of /C, /S or /TS to the end of the file number.
- c) If a classified file is needed for a subject not provided for in the Master Copy, a suitable file should be created and reported to the National Archives in the usual manner. It is not necessary to indicate that this particular file will be classified.
- d) Confidential, secret and top secret files are not, as such, entered in the Register of Files Opened. A separate Register of Classified Files Opened should be maintained. See paragraph 6.

12. **CORRESPONDENCE WHICH CANNOT BE CLASSIFIED**

a) **Head Office**

Whenever correspondence is received which is difficult to place on a suitable file, the official in charge should be consulted in order to determine which existing file should be used or if a new file should be created. If necessary, the National Archives should be consulted.

b) **Regional offices/sub-offices**

Whenever correspondence is received which is difficult to place on a suitable file and it appears as if no suitable file exists, this correspondence should be placed provisionally on file \_\_\_\_\_ Head Office should be consulted on file \_\_\_\_\_ in order to obtain the correct new file number. Full details on the nature of the correspondence in question should be given.

As soon as permission for the creation of the new file has been obtained, all regional offices/sub-offices will be informed of the addition to the file plan. The correspondence on file \_\_\_\_\_ should be removed and placed on the correct file.

13. **OPENING OF FILES**

Underlined descriptions in the file plan may under NO circumstances be used as files. The purpose of these underlined descriptions is to provide for further subdivision. Files are opened as needed.

14. **DESCRIPTION ON FILE COVERS**

Files should be numbered and described as closely as possible to the particulars given in the file plan. Where the file description is very long, certain components of the description, not forming a cardinal part, may be omitted. For example, where the complete file description is "Publications and Publicity, Publications, Own Publications, Sale and Distribution, Free Distribution List", it may be shortened to "Publications and Publicity, Own Publications, Free Distribution List".

When certain components are left out, it should be kept in mind that the main series heading should be given and that the description should be such as to ensure that there



is no doubt as to the contents of the file. Officials in Charge should assist registry staff in this matter.

Explanations in brackets are provided at various places in the file plan. These are provided for guidance and should not appear on the file cover.

File descriptions should be in capital letters and indelible ink should be used. The beginning and end dates of the correspondence should appear on every volume, as well as the disposal guidelines when available. Worn and damaged file covers should be replaced.

**15. THICKNESS/CLOSING OF FILES**

As soon as a file reaches a thickness of 3cm it should be closed. The correspondence should be checked carefully to ensure that each item is in its correct place and that there are no misfiled items. A sheet of paper with the words "Closed, see volume \_\_\_\_\_" is placed on the file as the last item. If the file cover is damaged in any way, it should be replaced by a new one. Closed files should be correctly stored until they may be destroyed or transferred to the National Archives. (See paragraph 18).

**16. ANNEXURE FILES**

Annexure files should be opened when items, for example reports, which are normally too bulky for files, are received. No correspondence may be filed on these files. The file cover should indicate the file number and should be marked "Annexure". Each item filed on the annexure file should be identified by a reference to the covering correspondence. The covering correspondence should also indicate that the item concerned has been placed on the annexure file.

**17. CASE FILES**

Case files forming part of the numerical layout of the file plan are opened as indicated in the file plan. Individual case files are not indicated in the Master Copy of the file plan, but in the Register of Files Opened (see paragraph 4). Particulars of case files not forming a part of the numerical layout appear in the List of Independent Case Files at the end of the numerical layout.

18. **DISPOSAL GUIDELINES**

As soon as a file plan has been successfully functioning for at least three years, the official in charge should apply to the National Archives for the issue of disposal guidelines.

As soon as disposal guidelines have been issued the "DISPOSAL GUIDELINE" column of the file plan is completed to indicate how each file should be disposed of. The meaning of the symbols used is as follow:

A.20 Retain for eventual transfer to the National Archives

D Request permission to destroy after the number of years indicated by the figure have expired.

19. **DESTRUCTION OF "D" FILES**

As soon as disposal guidelines have been issued, a destruction register should be compiled. This register is compiled on an annual basis, for example, 2013, 2014, 2015, etc. As soon as a volume with a D-guideline has been closed, it is entered under the year in which it qualifies for destruction, for example a file closed in 1990 and having the guideline D.3 is entered under 1992. This system enables a person to see in which year what file qualify for destruction. Because it is impossible to pre-determine how many files will be destroyed each year, it is recommended that a loose-leaf register be used for this purpose. (For disposal, see paragraph 18).

Destruction should take place on a regular basis, at least once a year. An application for disposal authority must be submitted to the Head of Archives for those files which qualify for destruction or transfer according to the guidelines issued.

Your cooperation in this regard will be highly appreciated.

  
SANET L. STEENKAMP  
PERMANENT SECRETARY

14.7.17.  
DATE