



## OPERATIONAL SELECTION POLICY OSP35

### BOARD AND COMMITTEE RECORDS

March 2006

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## 1 Authority

- 1.1 The National Archives' Acquisition and Disposition Policy statements (February 2000) announced the Archives' intention of developing, in consultation with departments, Operational Selection Policies across government. These policies would apply the collection themes described in the policy to the records of individual departments and agencies.
- 1.2 The National Archives' Appraisal Policy statement (August 2004) announced a new emphasis to Operational Selection Policies:

*The National Archives will develop generic archival appraisal guidance for categories of records such as those produced by similar types of departments (agencies, regulatory bodies) or those produced by activities common to many departments (research papers, inspection reports). (section 2.4.3.6)*

This Operational Selection Policy provides generic archival appraisal guidance for records in paper or electronic format created by boards, committees, working parties and groups, and similar institutional or ad hoc bodies.

- 1.3 If you have any comments on this policy please email [recordsmanagement@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:recordsmanagement@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

or write to:

Acquisition and Disposition Policy Manager  
The National Archives  
Kew  
Richmond  
Surrey  
TW9 4DU

- 1.4 Operational Selection Policies are intended to be working tools for those involved in the selection of public records. This policy may, therefore, be reviewed and revised in the light of comments received from the users of the records or from archive professionals, the department's experience of using the policy, or as a result of newly discovered information. There is no formal cycle of review but we would welcome comments at any time. The extent of any review and revision exercise will be determined according to the nature of the comments received.

## 2 Scope

- 2.1 This Operational Selection Policy must be used in considering retention periods for board, committee, etc records held within paper file schemes and electronic records management systems, and to identify which

paper files or electronic folders or documents should be transferred in due course to The National Archives.

- 2.2 Boards and committees are found across the entire range of Government department and NDPB activity, from the most senior and strategically focussed levels such as Cabinet and its committees through to, for example, those dealing with purely local and short-term issues in local offices. Annex A gives some more examples.
- 2.3 Accordingly, the records addressed in this Operational Selection Policy may fall within the scope of any of the Acquisition Policy themes.
- 2.4 Formal records of boards and committees are generally homogeneous in format, comprising agenda, circulated papers, minutes of meetings and reports. These document types will almost certainly be consistent from the paper files period through into the era of electronic filing. Secretariats or secretaries may have files relating to the board or committee: on the appointments of members; payments to members who are not government servants; the preparation of briefing documents for chairs; the calling for and the drafting of documents for circulation; and arrangement of meetings. These files are addressed at paragraph 3.16 and at Records Management Issues Directly Related to Appraisal, section 4. below.
- 2.5 Tribunals and Committees of Inquiry generate different formats of records, and are outside the scope of this Operational Selection Policy.
- 2.6 Insofar as they generate agenda, circulated papers, minutes of meetings and reports, records of Royal Commissions and some other Commissions may fall within the scope of this Operational Selection Policy. Some examples are given in the Table at line 4.
- 2.7 Records of the Research Councils are outside the scope of this Operational Selection Policy.
- 2.8 Records of the Official Side of the Civil Service Whitley Council are covered in OSP38 (the records of the Trade Union Side are not public records).
- 2.9 A decision chart for departmental appraisers is included at Annex B.
- 2.10 This operational selection policy provides guidance on the identification of records for permanent preservation. It does not provide guidance on the application of freedom of information legislation to the records referred to.

### **3 Appraising Board and Committee Records**

- 3.1 As noted above committee-style working exists at every level of government activity.

- 3.2 Most international bodies of which UK is a member work in the committee style. The records of the international bodies will be preserved by those bodies, and are not public records: copies of such documents held by UK government departments and agencies should not be selected for preservation, unless they are significantly annotated by UK ministers or senior officials. Copies of committee documents issued by international defence organisations (NATO and SEATO) on departmental files selected for permanent preservation must be substituted by dummies. Committee documents issued by other international organisations can be left on file, but should not be made available unless the organisation has agreed to this.
- 3.3 Within the UK, records of the UK Parliament including all Parliamentary committees are preserved in the Parliamentary Archives. Files in departments covering evidence to Parliamentary committees (including the Public Accounts Committee) and drafting of Government responses to Parliamentary Committee reports should be reviewed on the merits of the issues discussed in Committee.
- 3.4 A full set of all Cabinet and Cabinet ministerial and official committees documents is transferred to The National Archives from the Cabinet Office. Copies of Cabinet or Cabinet committee documents on departmental files selected for permanent preservation must be substituted by dummies. (See Preparation of records for transfer, section 6 at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/advice/standards.htm>)
- 3.5 Complete sets of the minutes and documents of the management boards of all ministerial and non-ministerial departments and of all executive agencies must be preserved, unless expressly ruled out in the Agency Appraisal Report.
- 3.6 Complete sets of the agenda, circulated papers, minutes and reports of all other boards and committees, other than the Cabinet and its committees, which include ministers within their membership, or which report formally to a minister or ministers, must be selected for permanent preservation (see for examples Annex A lines 5 and 6). Exceptions to this rule may arise if reports are printed as Parliamentary papers.
- 3.7 The records of programme or project boards for major projects must be considered for permanent preservation against the following criteria:
  - Innovation
  - Gross cost
  - Method of financing
  - Risk
  - Impact

Appraisers should also consider whether records of monitoring of progress at more senior levels will constitute a sufficient record of the programme or project.

- 3.8 The records of the utilities national users committees should be preserved. Those of committees or groups below national level should not be selected for transfer to The National Archives: they may be offered to interested local repositories.
- 3.9 Appraisers of committee-style records must keep in mind: the gradations of committee-style work; related records created at higher levels; and the certainty or likelihood that records of committee work at more senior levels will have been selected for preservation, at The National Archives or in other archives such as the Parliamentary Archives or if published in the British Library.
- 3.10 Appraisers of the records of small executive agencies and small NDPBs should bear in mind that the records of the management board or the managing committee may be the only records of the body which will be preserved at The National Archives.
- 3.11 Where the minutes of a board or committee can be understood only in conjunction with the circulated papers selection of the minutes must be accompanied by selection of the papers.
- 3.12 Within the overall national context, appraisers of committee-style records not covered in the preceding paragraphs must exercise personal judgement on the long term significance of the committee or working group they are considering: a generic scale might be – is a contribution to national government policy being deliberated, or simply local executive process?
- 3.13 Significant recommendations or conclusions of boards and committees working at levels below those referred to in the preceding paragraphs are likely to be adequately reflected within records created at more senior levels, and should therefore be appraised robustly. Nonetheless, appraisers retain discretion to select records for preservation for any special reason.
- 3.14 Where more than one government department or agency is in membership of a board or committee, The National Archives' record set of documents should be those from the department which provided the secretariat.
- 3.15 Where more than one set of board or committee documents has been filed within a government department or agency no more than one set should be selected for The National Archives.

- 3.16 If the Secretary maintained a set of briefing and drafting files these should be reviewed on the basis of whether they include significant information not included in the formal board or committee records.

#### **4 Records Management Issues Directly Related to Appraisal**

- 4.1 Departments, agencies and non-departmental public bodies must consider whether electronic committee files/folders should be closed no less than annually. The usefulness of adopting folder parts as a means of dividing up a folder into years is set out in paragraph 5.5 of The National Archives' *Requirements of Electronic Records Management Systems, volume 4: Implementation Guidance*, published in Sept 2004 <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/electronicrecords/regs2002/pdf/implementation.pdf>
- 4.2 Departments, agencies and non-departmental public bodies must ensure that no more than one copy of board or committee documents is marked for preservation in electronic records management systems.
- 4.3 Board and committee secretariat records of administrative, financial and other housekeeping arrangements will not be selected for permanent preservation, and must be destroyed as soon as the business requirement to retain them expires. The business classification scheme should incorporate disposal schedules.

## Annex A

**Table, with selected examples**

1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Organisations</li> </ul>	Not public records
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European Community</li> </ul>	Not public records
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UK Parliamentary Committees</li> </ul> <p>Eg Select Committee on EEC Legislation</p>	Not public records
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Royal Commissions; and Commissions</li> </ul> <p>Examples            Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution            Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment            National Lottery Commission            Medicines Commission            Competition Commission</p>	See para 2.9
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisory committees (ie including non-government servants)</li> </ul> <p>Examples:            Committee on Standards in Public Life            Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites            Dartmoor Steering Group            Review Board for Government Contracts            Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment            Environment Agencies Regional Committees            Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes            Advisory Group on Hepatitis            Animal Procedures Committee            Energy Advisory Panel            Property Advisory Group            Industrial Injuries Advisory Council</p>	See Para 3.6
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultative committees</li> </ul> <p>Eg Consultative Council on Local Government Finance</p>	See para 3.6
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet, and Cabinet ministerial and official committees</li> </ul>	See para 3.4 and OSP12
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interdepartmental Committees</li> </ul> <p>Eg Public Expenditure Survey Committee (PESC)</p>	



9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departments' Management Boards</li> </ul>	See para 3.5
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive Agencies Management Boards</li> </ul>	See para 3.5
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme and Project Boards</li> </ul>	See para 3.7
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilities Users Committees</li> </ul>	See para 3.8
	Examples Rail Passengers Council, and regional Rail Passengers Committees Consumer Council for Postal Services	
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departmental ctees, boards, working parties, etc</li> </ul>	See para 3.12

## Annex B

### Board and Committee Records – Decision Chart



