

# A brief guide to transferring paper records to The National Archives

## **OGL**

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## Introduction

**The National Archives and government departments have a joint responsibility to work together to select records of historic value for permanent preservation, and ensure their transfer and ongoing accessibility.**

This document provides a summary of key information and guidance for anyone already familiar with transferring paper records to The National Archives. It does not cover transfers to other places of deposit.

This document advises how to physically prepare, catalogue and uplift records to The National Archives. It applies to government departments and third party contractors acting on their behalf.

More detailed guidance is available on The National Archives' [website](#) and through our [corresponding e-learning modules](#).

Information relating to the transfer of digital records is available on The National Archives' website.

### We will support you to be:

- efficient and effective in managing your records
- transparent and accountable for your decisions
- compliant with relevant legislation such as the [Public Records Act](#) (1958 and 1967), [Data Protection Act](#) (1998), [Freedom of Information Act](#) (2000) and [Environmental Information Regulations](#) (2004)

### We are committed to being:

- consistent in our decisions
- plain in our message and guidance
- timely in our performance of key tasks
- transparent in our actions
- clear in the application of decisions and solutions

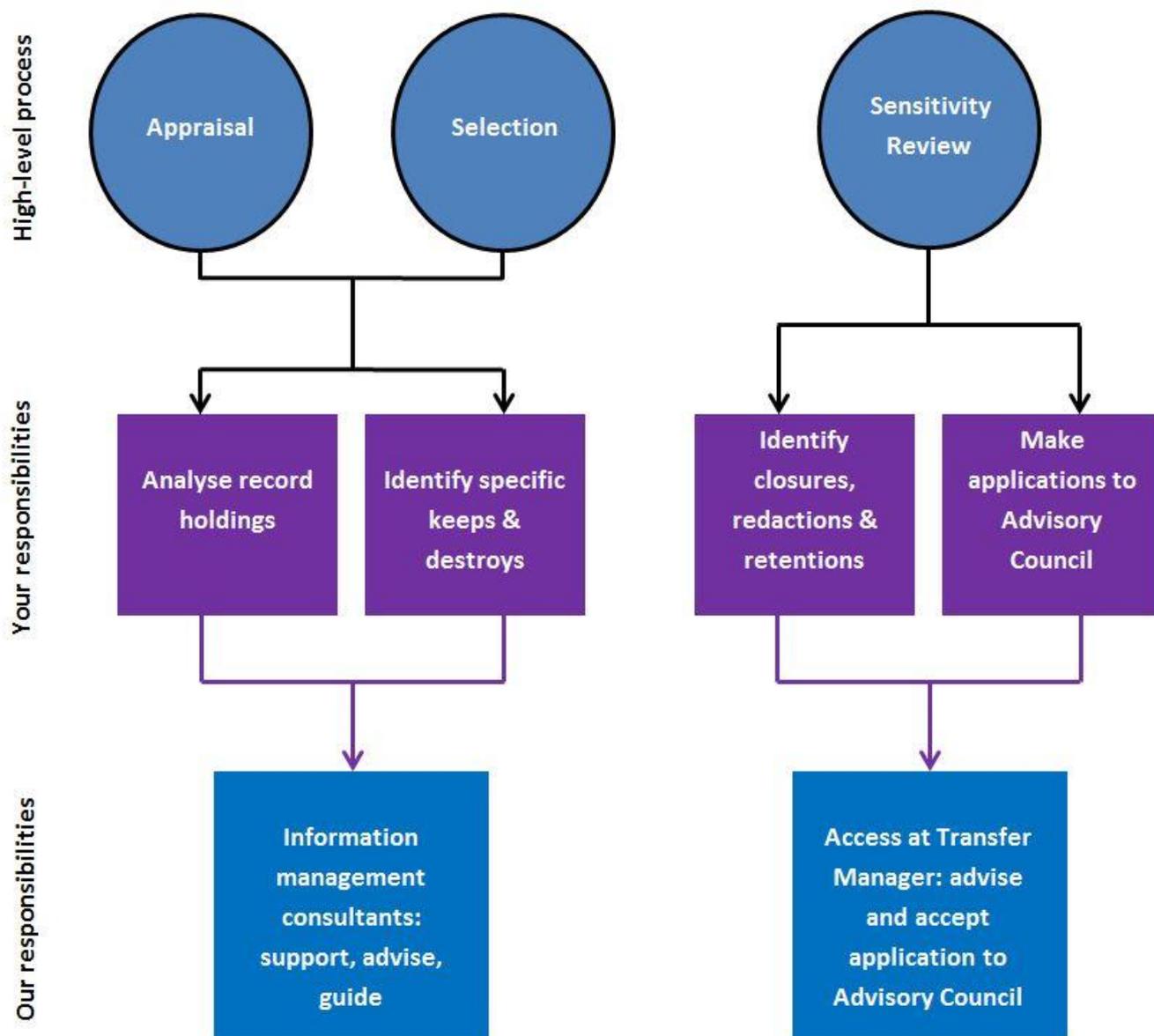
### We ask you to commit to:

- preparation and cataloguing quality
- transparent planning
- rigorous timekeeping to agreed plans
- a collaborative partnership with The National Archives to meet the requirements of the Public Records Act

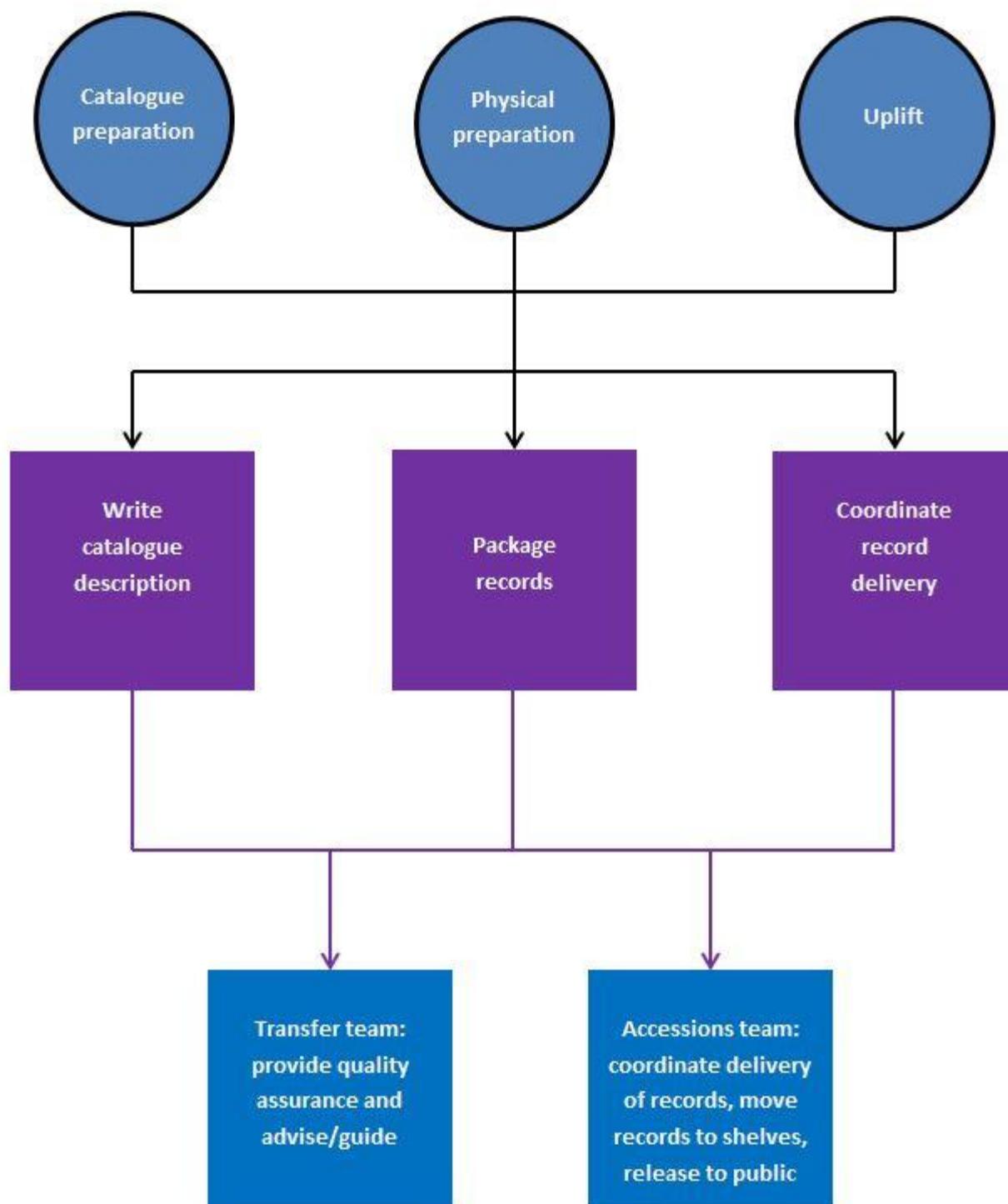
Together, our joint obligations ensure best practice in records management (under the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the management of records issues under Section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000)

## Overview of the selection and transfer process

Your role is crucial to the entire process.



**This document applies to the following stages of the process:**



## Physically preparing your records

This section describes the key principles you should follow when physically preparing your records for transfer. For more detailed advice consult the [full guidance document](#) on The National Archives' website and the corresponding e-learning module.

The National Archives can supply the following material to government departments:

- box reference labels (departmental lettercode, series number and piece number and item number)
- closure labels ('Closed until' and 'Closed until various dates up to')
- dummy cards for whole pieces and extracts
- yellow and black warning tape for closed extracts
- warning stickers for distressing photos

Contact your Transfer Adviser if you require any of these items.

### Basics for standard files

If the original file cover is protecting the pages within, write The National Archives' catalogue reference on this file cover, ensuring that it does not obscure other information. If the original cover is not adequately protecting the pages, insert the file (**including the original cover**) into a four-flap folder and write The National Archives' catalogue reference on the front. Files that are thicker than **five centimetres** should be split evenly, with the original file cover remaining with the first part of each file.

#### Metal objects to be removed:

- ✓ paperclips and bulldog clips
- ✓ staples which prevent users from opening and viewing information
- ✓ pins and sharp objects
- ✓ metal-ended tags – replace with plastic-ended tags

#### Rubber and plastic objects to be removed:

- ✓ comb bindings
- ✓ plastic wallets
- ✓ plastic covers
- ✓ rubber bands

### Tagging items into a file

#### Booklets

Endorse loose, untagged booklets in HB pencil with The National Archives' catalogue reference of their parent piece and insert into acid-free envelopes. Mark the acid-free envelope in HB pencil with a brief note of its contents (e.g. 'one booklet enclosed'). Leave booklets that are already tagged into the file as they are, providing they are secure and can be read without removing the tag.

### Sticky notes (Post-it® notes)

Discard any sticky notes which are blank, have been added during the review and transfer process, or contain only unimportant administrative or 'housekeeping' information (e.g. 'Put this on file', 'Copy this').

Keep sticky notes containing information of value – remove these from the document, place them in polyester enclosures and replace them in their original position in the file.

### Damaged and loose pages

Endorse badly torn pages with The National Archives' catalogue reference and insert them into polyester enclosures in order to prevent further damage. Do not try to repair them with adhesive or 'archival' tape. You do not need to take any action if pages have minor tears.

Loose pages can often be tagged in place in their file, without being put into polyester enclosures. Ensure the new tag hole does not damage any text but secures the pages. The tag holes should be about 2cm from the edge of the page, so that the page will not tear loose easily. Do not use self-adhesive tag hole reinforces.

Put pages with badly torn corners and unusable tag holes into polyester enclosures and replace them in the file.

### Newspapers and newspaper cuttings

Endorse newspapers and newspaper cuttings in HB pencil with The National Archives' catalogue reference of the parent piece they belong to, and place into acid-free envelopes. Mark the acid-free envelope in HB pencil with a brief note of its contents (e.g. '4 newspaper cuttings enclosed').

If possible, insert a black and white photocopy of the newspaper or cutting in front of the enclosure or envelope. This minimizes the handling of newspaper materials which are often fragile and likely to deteriorate over time.

### Thermal paper

Copies produced through thermal processes (including some but not all fax papers) are often unstable as the text can fade and disappear. There is currently no method of preventing this potential fading as it is due to the chemical makeup of thermal paper. Consequently, specific measures are required for preserving the information found on thermal paper.

Thermal paper must be photocopied and the photocopy tagged in front of the original document in the correct place in the file. Do not discard the thermal paper – keep it as it proves the authenticity of the copy.

Some features to look out for when identifying thermal paper:

- It has a smooth, shiny surface on the printed side
- Grey or silver lines are obvious where the surface has been scratched or abraded

## Polyester enclosures and acid-free envelopes

### Checklist for using polyester enclosures:

- ✓ Place only one page or photograph in each polyester enclosure. This ensures the item is visible on both sides, and researchers will not need to remove it to view it completely
- ✓ Use a polyester enclosure of an appropriate size – one that is neither too small nor too large for its contents
- ✓ Replace the document in the polyester enclosure in its original position in the file it belongs to (its 'parent piece')
- ✓ The file's tag should normally run through both the polyester enclosure and the document inside it, securing the document in place, unless tagging the document would obscure text. Photographs should not be tagged under any circumstances, endorse any document not secured by a tag with The National Archives' catalogue reference of the parent piece, in case it comes loose. Write the endorsement lightly but legibly in HB pencil
- ✓ Do not write on the polyester enclosure

### Checklist for using acid-free envelopes:

- ✓ Endorse the document lightly and legibly in HB pencil with The National Archives' catalogue reference of its parent piece
- ✓ Place the document in an acid-free envelope of an appropriate size
- ✓ Mark the envelope in HB pencil on its front with a brief note of the contents (e.g. '1 newspaper enclosed', '2 maps enclosed')
- ✓ Tag the acid-free envelope in the original place of the document within the file, in such a way that the contents can be easily removed for examination and then replaced. The size of the envelope, the way it is tagged, and its flap should not make the contents difficult to extract
- ✓ Run the tag only through the envelope and not its contents

## Dummy cards and redactions

Dummy cards, provided by The National Archives, are used to indicate the items that have been removed or are missing from a file. [Full guidance on redaction](#) can be found on The National Archives' website.

**Closed/retained files:** Fill the box then remove the piece, to ensure space is left when the piece is returned to the box. Insert a dummy card explaining why the piece has been removed.

**Number not used:** Insert a dummy card but do not leave a space, as no file will be returned to the box.

**Missing files:** Leave the depth of an average file in the box and insert a dummy card.

**Extracting whole page/s:** Replace with a dummy card in each location indicating the amount of pages and details of the extraction. Number pages being extracted in HB pencil to assist with reuniting at a later date.

**Extracting information from a page:** Redacted pages need to be stamped with FOI details and a 'closed until' date. In the original file replace the original pages with the redacted copies. The original unredacted sheets need to be enclosed in a new file cover – this is now an 'item'. A 'closed until' label and 'closed extract label' should be applied to the cover of the item.

## Maps and plans

Maps and plans outside the body of a file should be transferred in the format in which they have previously been stored. Do not flatten rolled maps and do not roll or fold maps that have been stored flat. The map should have The National Archives' catalogue reference written twice on the back, on opposite corners, in HB pencil

**Rolled maps** should be rolled onto the outside of an archival tube. Secure the map with cotton or linen tape, tie in an easy release bow, then insert the tube (with the map secured on the outside) into a linen bag.

Write The National Archives' catalogue reference at the top and bottom of the bag, and secure a label at the opening, also bearing the appropriate reference.

Large folded **single maps** that have already been folded should be kept this way. Place them in a four-flap folder with The National Archives' catalogue reference on the front of the folder. The map should have The National Archives' catalogue reference written twice on the back, on opposite corners, in HB pencil.

Keep **folded maps** found in registered files and bound volumes with their parent files. If tagging a map into a file, place the map into an acid-free envelope, making sure it is accessible. Mark the envelope with the contents (for example, 'one map enclosed') and tag in place.

**Flat maps** should be inserted into folders. Ask your Transfer Adviser at The National Archives for advice on size, construction and materials. The map should have The National Archives' catalogue reference written twice on the back, on opposite corners, in HB pencil.

## Photographs and negatives

Endorse all photographs and place them in polyester enclosures; then tag the enclosures in the place where the photograph originally sat in the file. Only one photograph should be placed into each polyester enclosure so that researchers can see the back as well as the front without removing the photograph. Do not punch new tag holes in photographs.

Polyester enclosures are the only suitable material for storing photographs. They are used as they enable viewing and handling of the photograph without having to remove it from the enclosure; this limits the damage to the sensitive surface of the photograph. Endorse negatives and photographic slides and place them into acid-free envelopes that have passed the ISO18916:2007 Photographic Activity Test (PAT) for enclosure materials. Interleave individual negatives with silversafe paper. Tag the acid-free envelope into the file where the negatives or slides originally sat.

Do not undertake repair work on photographs or negatives. Instead, note the need for repair on the e-Transfer (AA2) form for the attention of Collection Care.

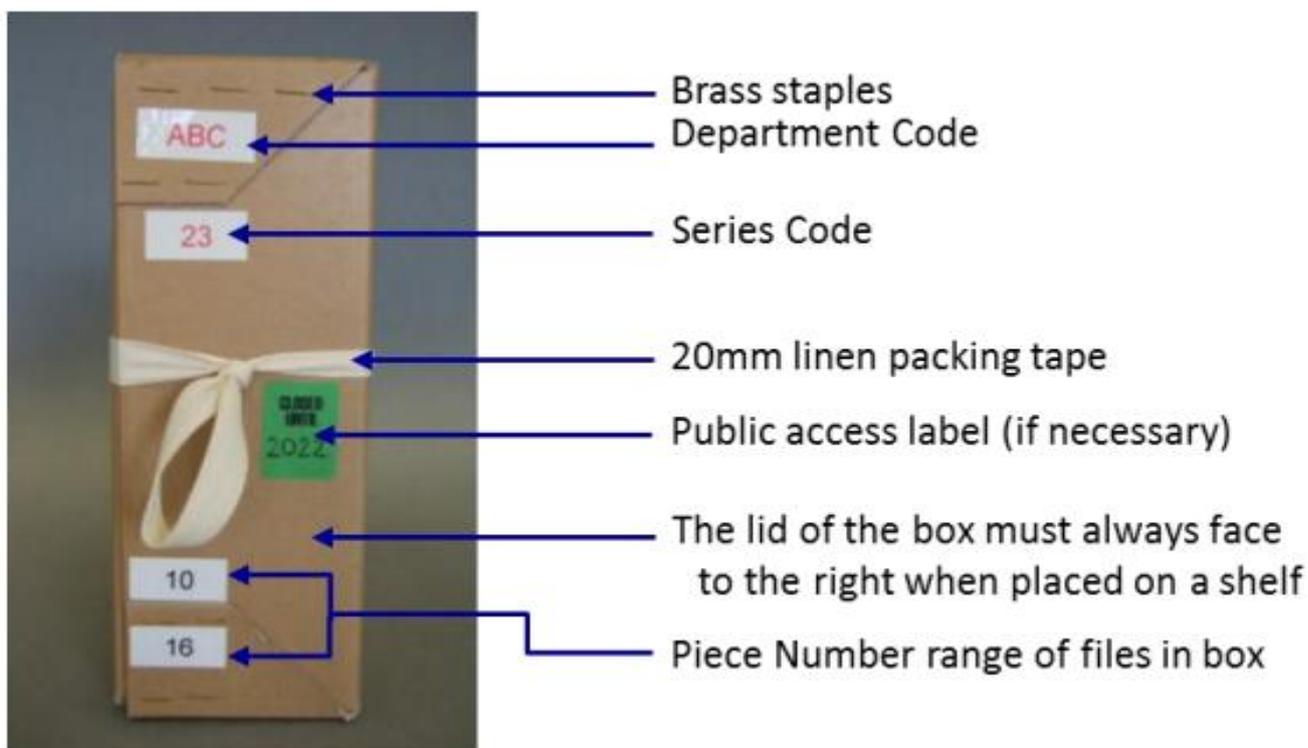
## Packing and labelling

For a full list of standard [box board specifications](#) see The National Archives' website.

The box should be slightly overfilled to ensure the contents are not free to move around or slump down when the box is on the shelves. Alternate the orientation of the files, to make the documents lie more evenly in the box.

Where a piece has been extracted from a box, temporary fillers and dummy cards should be added so that the piece can be reintroduced at a later date. Record this on the transfer form so the material can be removed on arrival.

The image below provides an example of a correctly labelled box.



## Cataloguing records

After records at government departments and agencies have been selected for permanent preservation and reviewed for sensitivity, staff at government departments must catalogue the selected records.

When the records are transferred, the catalogue descriptions are added to Discovery, The National Archives' catalogue. A huge number and wide variety of users (including UK civil servants, journalists, researchers, academics and members of the public) use this catalogue to find records of interest to them.

The descriptions on Discovery must be accurate and understandable, so that they can be searched and browsed easily. Therefore, work done by government cataloguers must reach a standard acceptable to The National Archives before it can be 'signed off' by The National Archives' Transfer Advisers and the transfer of records can take place.

For more detailed advice on cataloguing paper records consult the [full guidance on cataloguing](#) on The National Archives' website and our corresponding e-learning module.

Government cataloguers must use the Excel cataloguing template produced by The National Archives, available to [download](#) from The National Archives' website.

The National Archives looks for the following five qualities in the cataloguing data produced by government departments, and most of the points in the following sections of this guidance relate to these qualities. The qualities are:

- **ACCURACY** of the data – so that incorrect and false information does not appear on Discovery
- **UNDERSTANDABILITY** of the data – so that a researcher (who is not always an expert) can understand the data fairly easily, without having to look things up elsewhere
- **SIMPLICITY** of the data – so that government departments do not waste their time and resources on unnecessary detail, and the researcher can quickly decide if a record might be of interest or not
- **REASONABLE CONSISTENCY** of the data – the data within a series should be reasonably consistent when the records are the same or similar, but consistency should not be pursued at the expense of accuracy, understandability and simplicity
- **CORRECT USE OF THE TEMPLATE** – the data is put in The National Archives' cataloguing template in the correct fields and using the correct formats, so that it can be successfully loaded onto Discovery

## Explanation of cataloguing template

D: departmental lettercode  
 S: series number  
 SS: subseries number  
 SSS: subsubseries number

We will provide these for you to insert

The start and end date of the record – normally year only (yyyy) will suffice but (mm/yyyy) and (dd/mm/yyyy) can also be accommodated

Departmental code or number used for the record before it was assigned The National Archives' catalogue reference

Specialised information which does not belong in other fields on The National Archives catalogue – usually statements about how the record has been catalogued or processed

Cross-referral to digital record, used in transfers of hybrid (paper and born-digital) material

D	S	SS	SSS	P	I	First Date	Last Date	Scope/Content	Former Ref	Closure	C/R	Schedule Number	Note	Comments	Related Digital Material

P: piece number; provided by you to give structure and order to records within the series

I: item number; used to indicate split pieces or closed extracts

Description of the contents of the record; a brief summary of its subject matter

Closure: number of years the record is closed, or S if retained under section 3(4), or T if temporarily retained

C/R: FOI Exemption Schedule (enter C for closure) or Retention Schedule (enter R for retained)

Schedule Number: number of FOI Exemption Schedule or Retention Instrument

Communications of various types between you and the Transfer Adviser

## Uplifting the records

**When you are ready to arrange delivery of records to The National Archives, you should consult your Transfer Adviser for advice on completing the relevant documentation.**

Before the uplift stage, your Transfer Adviser must have 'signed off' on the [physical preparation](#) of your records and their [cataloguing](#) listings.

You must complete and date your [e-Transfer \(AA2\) form](#) (one per series) and [transfer delivery form](#) (containing all series included in the current transfer), and email them to your Transfer Adviser – who will 'sign off' on them and pass them to our Accessions team to arrange the uplift.

When this has been done, our Accessions team will contact you (or a designated contact who will be responsible for the uplift of the records, as stated in your delivery form) to agree on a delivery date. You must agree any subsequent changes to this date with our Accessions team.

When preparing the uplift for delivery, please send to the following address using a tracked courier service:

***Accessions Team  
The National Archives  
Kew  
Richmond  
Surrey TW9 4DU***

On arrival at The National Archives, the records will be checked against the transfer delivery form to confirm that they are consistent. If accurate, the uplift is then 'signed off' as completed and confirmation is sent to you or your designated contact.