

CORRESPONDENCE

1. FCO Posts overseas

- 1.1 Correspondence for overseas Posts should be sent via internal mail to the FCO Outward Bag Room at King Charles Street, SW1A 2AH, for onward transmission to Posts overseas. Where the Post is being asked to arrange delivery of a letter to a named individual it is normal practice to enclose a copy for retention by the Post together with a copy of any correspondence from the addressee to which our letter is a reply. This is to minimise the danger of conflicting advice being given by the Home Office and FCO.
- 1.2 Correspondence from Nationality Group to a British Embassy or High Commission abroad should normally be addressed to the Consular Section of that Post. Correspondence may otherwise face delays in reaching the appropriate section at the Post or fail to reach the correct recipient.
- 1.3 The FCO is receiving an ever-increasing number of incorrectly addressed and marked envelopes. This has resulted in some classified mail being sent by insecure methods. It is the responsibility of the person who addresses the envelope to ensure that it is correctly addressed and bears the appropriate security classification.
- 1.4 All envelopes (except as described in paragraph 1.6 below) sent to the FCO Outward Bag Room must bear one of the 5 security classifications in the top left-hand corner of the envelope. These 5 classifications are:

TOP SECRET
SECRET
CONFIDENTIAL
RESTRICTED
UNCLASSIFIED.

The classification may or may not be followed by a "descriptor" (e.g. "management" or "policy") identifying the kind of sensitive material which is protected by the security classification.

- 1.5 The name and/or Department of the originating officer must also be displayed in the lower left-hand corner of the envelope.
- 1.6 Classified material addressed to the Outward Bag Room for despatch to an overseas Post must be double-enveloped, the inner envelope being addressed in the form specified in the above paragraphs. No security classification or the name of the Post must appear on the outer cover, which should be addressed merely to the Officer in Charge of the Outward Bag Room.
- 1.7 Failure to adhere to these requirements will result in the envelope being returned to the originator for correction.
- 1.8 The envelope layout for the correspondence to be sent by FCO to an overseas post is as below.

BY FCO BAG
UNCLASSIFIED/[SECURITY CLASSIFICATION]
Ref:

Consular Section
[name of post]
c/o Outward Bag Room
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Certified Official (add printed name of
official and Section)

2. **Correspondence with persons in the UK**

- 2.1 If an enquiry is received from a member of the public, which is transferred to another Government department for reply, an acknowledgement should be sent to the writer informing him/her which department will be dealing with the enquiry.
- 2.2 Outgoing mail should normally be sent by ordinary post. Where documents are being returned to a UK address, they should be sent by SMS. Details of the documents involved, the SMS reference, the date of despatch and the address to which they have been sent should be accurately recorded on the file/CID Casenotes, and if a covering letter indicates what is being returned, a copy of the letter should be placed on the file.
- 2.3 Applicants should not be encouraged to send documents by recorded delivery, nor to send stamped addressed envelopes for recorded or registered delivery (but where they have been provided, they may continue to be used, and handed in the Post and Fee Room). Recorded delivery post should otherwise be used only on the authority of a Senior Caseworker.

3. **Correspondence with persons abroad**

- 3.1 In normal circumstances, a letter of enquiry which comes direct from a private address in a foreign or Commonwealth country or from the Republic of Ireland should be photocopied and a copy kept on the file, the original being sent to the Nationality and Passport Section, Consular Division, Foreign and Commonwealth Office with the Corres Transfer 1 stock letter (ICD 449). The same applies to an enquiry made by a person in the United Kingdom about the nationality status of a person living abroad. An acknowledgement should be sent direct to the person advising that the enquiry has been passed to the FCO for reply. Where the addressee is abroad, an air mail envelope, or an official envelope marked "Air Mail" in the top left corner, should be used. In all other cases, except where paragraph 3.3 applies, a letter addressed to a person abroad should be sent via the FCO Bag service as explained in paragraph 1.
- 3.2 In some circumstances it may seem most efficient for us to send a substantive reply, for example, if the letter raises a policy issue about which the FCO would have to consult us or if particulars of a previous registration or naturalisation are being requested. In such a case, a Home Office reply may be sent via the appropriate overseas Post.
- 3.3 The guidance in paragraph 3.1 does not apply to those members of HM Forces who have BFPO addresses only. In such a case, an ordinary official franked envelope should be used marked "Air Mail" in the top left-hand corner. This should be placed in an unfranked airmail envelope and Post Room should be asked to

affix the necessary stamps.

- 3.4 If a person abroad sends a foreign passport direct to the Directorate, it should be returned, after the necessary information has been extracted, by diplomatic bag under cover of an explanatory note to the Post (see paragraph 1). There is an international convention that passports should not be sent across frontiers and therefore we should never invite persons abroad to submit their passports to us. If it is necessary for such a person's passports to be inspected and photocopies are not acceptable we should arrange for this to be done at the nearest Post.

4. Complaints

- 4.1 Special procedures apply to the handling of complaints. The Complaints Management Guidance and associated templates may be found on HORIZON at:

www.homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk/ind/manuals/complaints/index.asp

This guidance must be adhered to at all times, with particular regard being paid to the guidance on what, for this purpose, constitutes a complaint, the timescales that apply and the requirements for quality assurance of replies to complaints that fall to be handled locally.

- 4.2 Within Nationality Group complaints will normally be handled by Correspondence and Enquiry Team (CET). The Nominated Responsible Owner for Nationality Group is the CET Team Leader. Draft replies to complaints should be submitted in the first instance to the Deputy Chief Caseworker and must be cleared either by the Deputy Director or the Chief Caseworker prior to issue.

5. Retention of envelopes

- 5.1 Under **s.46(1)** of the British Nationality Act 1981, whenever a false statement is made in writing to the Home Office, the date of the offence is the date the statement is received. Proof of this date (or, failing this, proof of the date on which the relevant correspondence is filed) is important for any prosecution.
- 5.2 Where correspondence has been opened either by the Post Room or elsewhere in UKBA, and the letter/application form has been stamped with the date of receipt, the envelope does not need to be retained.
- 5.3 Where mail is forwarded to caseworkers unopened, the envelopes should be retained on file. They should be hole-punched and placed on file immediately below the correspondence they contained. They should not be discarded or damaged in any way. The date the correspondence is placed on the file should also be recorded on the minute sheet on the left-hand side of the file.