

Guidance for the completion of PR14 Historical forms

Since the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, new documentation has been introduced by PRONI in order to comply with the S46 code of the FOI Act. It is important that the forms are completed correctly to ensure for the efficient release of files to the public or for the ongoing protection of information deemed as exempt. The PR14 form is to be completed for files that are less than 30 years old from the date of the last paper. If a file is 30 years old or more a PR14 Historical form should be completed.

1. The PR14 is to be completed in conjunction with a page by page review of the file. The reviewing officer should work from the premise that an FOI request has been received for the information contained in the registered file. Therefore, the general presumption is one of **openness** and that in most cases files will return to PRONI with an open recommendation.
2. However, to ensure the protection of information that may be deemed exempt under the FOI Act such as sensitive personal data, files may be recommended for full closure, partial closure or blanking (redaction). Once one of these options has been selected or a combination, the PR14 should indicate which exemption[s] have been applied. Detailed guidance about exemptions should be available from within your department. The accurate identification of the pages requiring redaction or partial closure is crucial.
3. The tabbing of the relevant pages is helpful but the PR14 must also identify the relevant individual documents, eg memo/letter dated '....', 3rd paragraph, lines 5-9. This will allow for proper checking by the Departmental Information Manager/Departmental Record Officer and subsequent quality assurance by PRONI. It may be necessary to return the file if the PR14 documentation has only been partially completed.
4. The standard closure period will be 5 years except if there is a statutory prohibition or if S40 (personal data) of the FOI Act is being applied. In the case of the statutory prohibition, the closure will be for whatever period specified in the relevant statute bar and this should be recorded on the PR14 form. If S40 the personal information exemption of the FOI Act has been cited, it will be necessary to include an age assumption so the information to be exempted will remain closed until the individual is assumed to be 100 years old. For example, if the paper states the individual is 50 in 1970, the information will be released by PRONI in 2021. It is recognised that in some instances it will be virtually impossible to make an accurate age assumption and this should be stated on the PR14.

5. Although tabbing is permitted files must not be marked or altered by stapling of 'flags', or by writing/highlighting /underlining of text recommended for redaction.
6. If you have any queries regarding the completion of the PR14 you should refer to the Departmental Information Manager/Departmental Record Officer in the first instance. They can liaise with PRONI as required.