



# **INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION**

## **REPORT 2018/107**

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### **Audit of the management of the onboarding process by the Office of Human Resources Management**

**While the Office managed the onboarding process in compliance with United Nations policies and procedures, there was need to streamline reference checks, establish performance indicators and enhance records management**

**14 November 2018  
Assignment No. AH2017/512/04**

# **Audit of the management of the onboarding process by the Office of Human Resources Management**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the management of the onboarding process by the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) in the Department of Management (DM). The objective of the audit was to assess whether it was being managed effectively and efficiently, and in compliance with United Nations policies and procedures. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2017 and included: (i) the onboarding process of new staff members; (ii) OHRM monitoring and performance management of the process; and (iii) management of relevant records.

OHRM onboarded new staff members and disbursed their relocation payments generally in compliance with United Nations policies and procedures. However, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the onboarding process, reference checks need to be streamlined, performance indicators established, and records management improved.

OIOS made seven recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, OHRM needed to:

- Implement guidelines on the conduct of qualitative reference checks, assign responsibility to conduct them and determine what positions should undergo such checks;
- Review and streamline responsibility for the onboarding process within the Office;
- Prepare a project initiation or similar document to outline the costs and benefits of the Secretariat's participation in the United Nations Global Centre for Human Resources Services;
- Establish, monitor and report on performance indicators related to the onboarding process to improve its efficiency;
- In consultation with the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, establish targets for paying settling-in and relocations grants, measure achievement against these targets and address causes of non-achievement;
- Review and update guidance pertaining to official status files; and
- Update its retention schedule for personnel records including onboarding records and determine in which systems these records will be maintained.

DM accepted the recommendations and initiated action to implement them.

# CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
I. BACKGROUND	1
II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	1-2
III. AUDIT RESULTS	2-10
A. Onboarding process	2-5
B. Monitoring and performance management	5-8
C. Records management	8-10
IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	10
ANNEX I      Status of audit recommendations	
APPENDIX I   Management response	

# **Audit of the management of the onboarding process by the Office of Human Resources Management**

## **I. BACKGROUND**

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the management of the onboarding process by the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) in the Department of Management (DM).
2. Onboarding activities include all the steps that are conducted before a candidate enters the Organization. It starts with the recruitment request from an office or department through their executive office, encompasses determination of salary grade and step, conducting background/reference checks, obtaining medical clearance, making travel arrangements, and finishes with the issuance of a personnel action in Umoja during the staff member's first week in the Organization or new post and paying settling-in and relocation grants, where applicable. Several administrative issuances and OHRM guidelines govern various aspects of the onboarding process. The 2012 Inter-Organization agreement on transfer, secondment or loan of staff among the organizations applying the United Nations Common System of Salaries and Allowances governs interagency movements.
3. Onboarding activities are documented in the Offer Management module of Inspira, an information system used for various human resources processes in the United Nations Secretariat. As of 3 May 2018, there were 11,531 Inspira recruitment and 7,038 non-Inspira recruitment onboarding cases recorded Secretariat-wide. Non-Inspira recruitments are those with no job opening or temporary job opening published in Inspira, such as political appointees, secondments from governments, language staff selected from roster and short-term appointments of less than three months.
4. OHRM processed 2,834 onboarding cases and 64 other staff movements in Inspira between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2017, of which 1,043 were fixed term appointments and 1,855 temporary appointments.
5. Two operational teams in the Headquarters Deployment Group for Human Resources (HDG-HR) in the Learning, Development and HR Services Division in OHRM were responsible for onboarding of professional staff during the audit period. The Headquarters Staffing Section in the Strategic Planning and Staffing Division (SPSD) of OHRM carries out onboarding of general service staff and background checks for all onboarded staff. Both operational teams in HDG-HR were headed by two chiefs at P5 level who supervised 78 professional and general service staff. The Headquarters Staffing Section is headed by a chief at P5 level supervising 16 professional and general service staff. HDG-HR was dissolved as of 31 December 2017 and the onboarding activities are now carried by out the Human Resources Service.
6. Settling-in and relocation grants are processed by OHRM and reviewed and paid by the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts (OPPBA).
7. Comments provided by DM are incorporated in italics.

## **II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

8. The objective of the audit was to assess whether OHRM managed the onboarding process effectively and efficiently, and in compliance with United Nations policies and procedures.

9. This audit was included in the 2017 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the operational risks associated with inadequate and inefficient onboarding process.

10. OIOS conducted this audit from February to July 2018. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2017. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risk areas in the management of the onboarding process by OHRM, which included: (i) the onboarding process of new staff members, including fixed term and temporary appointments (i.e. initial appointments, re-appointments, interagency transfers and secondments from government); (ii) OHRM monitoring and performance management of the process; and (iii) management of relevant records. Assignments, re-assignments and internal transfers of existing staff members, which are managed by executive offices, were not included in the scope of this audit. Onboarding activities carried out under delegated authority, for example by the Department of Field Support (DFS), were excluded from the audit scope.

11. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of key personnel in OHRM and OPPBA, (b) reviews of relevant documentation, (c) analytical reviews of data, (d) sample testing of 60 onboarded cases, (e) survey of other United Nations system organizations on their onboarding process for benchmarking purposes, and (f) survey of selected staff onboarded in the period under review to assess their satisfaction with the onboarding process. The survey of United Nations system organizations was sent to 27 organizations and 22 responded. The staff satisfaction survey was sent to 366 staff members onboarded in 2016 and 2017 and 138 staff responded.

12. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

### **III. AUDIT RESULTS**

#### **A. Onboarding process**

OHRM needed to determine what positions should undergo qualitative reference checks and clarify responsibilities for conducting such checks

13. United Nations Guidelines on Verification of Academic Qualification and Work Experience require verification of documentary evidence of education and previous employments listed in the Personal History Profile (PHP). Substantive verification, which includes examination of information sent directly to the United Nations by educational institutions and previous/current employers, is carried out for professional job categories. Seen-and-verified verification, i.e. examining the original documentary proof of academic qualification, is required for general service categories.

14. OHRM conducted substantive verification of academic qualification and work experience to mitigate the risk of inaccurate information on applicants' education background, previous employment history and professional qualifications, as well as to guard against fake documentation. The verification also served as an eligibility check and check of the integrity of a candidate. It required current and former employers to confirm directly to the United Nations the job title, employment dates, whether the candidate worked full time or part time, candidate's good standing and the fact that the candidate had not been dismissed due to misconduct. However, there was no requirement to conduct qualitative reference checks for prospective staff by requesting current or previous supervisors to provide information on the candidate's performance and attitudes. Qualitative reference checks might include questions about the candidate's competencies, strengths, limitations, communication and language skills, work ethics, working with others and in teams, flexibility and initiative, problem solving, and ability to handle stress. Such checks would

improve the quality of information available on candidates being considered for hiring and would vary depending on the criticality of the role in the organizational structure.

15. OHRM commented that it was the responsibility of hiring departments to conduct qualitative reference checks. However, this requirement was not formalized in the internal procedures or guidelines and there was no record that qualitative reference checks had been conducted in any of the personnel files reviewed. If any qualitative reference checks were conducted, they were done informally, on an ad hoc basis and inconsistently. There was therefore a missed opportunity to obtain further information on which to base selection decisions.

16. Subsequent to the audit, OHRM developed standard operating procedures (SOP) for reference verification, which were pending senior management review and issuance. It will introduce qualitative reference checks as part of basic verification service offered by the newly created United Nations Global Centre for Human Resources Services in Bonn. However, the SOP did not specify whether qualitative reference checks would be conducted for all professional posts and who would be responsible for conducting such checks.

**(1) OHRM should implement guidelines on the conduct of qualitative reference checks, assign responsibility to conduct them and determine what positions would undergo such checks.**

*DM accepted recommendation 1 and stated that OHRM would finalize the guidelines requiring the conduct of qualitative reference checks and establishing clear roles and scope. Recommendation 1 remains open pending receipt of the issued guidelines on qualitative reference checks.*

OHRM needed to review and streamline responsibility for the onboarding process

17. An efficient onboarding process requires a streamlined organizational structure that will strengthen the accountability for results and facilitate efficient communication between the involved parties.

18. The responsibility for onboarding activities was historically split between two organizational units in OHRM – the Human Resources Service in the Learning, Development and HR Services Division and Headquarters Staffing Section in the Strategic Planning and Staffing Division. This organizational split and inadequate record management practices (described later in the report) did not facilitate efficient communication within the Organization and with the onboarded candidates. OIOS review of onboarding cases showed numerous e-mail exchanges between the two units, recruiting departments and offices, and candidates on the status of onboarding. The split also did not allow for one process owner to review performance and make necessary process improvements. OIOS survey of onboarded candidates indicated that some of them were requested to provide the same information several times either to different staff involved in onboarding or to the same staff who had lost the information provided earlier. Among the suggestions for improvement, several staff indicated that it would be more useful to have a centralized onboarding team with one focal point for the onboarded candidate.

**(2) OHRM should review and streamline responsibility for the onboarding process within the Office.**

*DM accepted recommendation 2 and stated that given the proposed restructuring and the division of responsibilities for the onboarding process between the new Department of Operational Support and the new Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, this review would be addressed in 2019. Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of the results of the review and relevant action plan to streamline responsibility for the onboarding process.*

OHRM needed to analyze the benefits of joining the United Nations Global Centre for Human Resources Services

19. United Nations system organizations should harmonize standards for background/reference checks to facilitate efficient interagency movement of staff. In addition, the costs and benefits of business initiatives should be analyzed to support decision making.

20. In the reviewed sample of 10 interagency movements, OIOS did not see any exchange of information with releasing agencies on reference checks that they had conducted. Instead, OHRM conducted reference checks for the transferred staff members to comply with internal procedures. This led to frustration of the staff members who had to initiate the reference check process with their universities and former employers, even though some of them had worked for many years in the United Nations system. This slowed down their interagency movement. About 30 per cent of transferred surveyed staff members were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the reference checks.

21. OHRM commented that reference checking requirements differed among organizations. While most of the organizations focus on conducting qualitative reference checks, only a few conducted substantive verifications of academic qualifications and work experience the way OHRM does. This was corroborated by OIOS analysis of 22 survey responses by the United Nations system organizations, which showed differences in the type of pre-employment checks and verification methods used. The results are summarized in the Table 1. Only five organizations responded that they required external confirmations from educational institutions and past employers to be sent directly to them. Others relied on a review of original or certified copies of diplomas, certificates or employment references or conducted telephone interviews.

**Table 1: Types of background/reference checks conducted by United Nations system organizations for internationally recruited staff**

Type of background/reference check	Required	Optional	Not applicable	Total number of responses
Verification of academic credentials stated in the job application	16	4	2	22
Verification of work experience stated in the job application	11	8	2	21
Qualitative reference checks by contacting current or past supervisors	16	5	1	22
Checking criminal records	4	6	10	20

22. To address the differing practices of conducting background/reference checks, eight United Nations system organizations<sup>1</sup> joined to discuss and contribute to the creation of a not-for-profit operation called United Nations Global Centre for Human Resources Services (“OneHR”), which was endorsed by the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) at its 33<sup>rd</sup> session in March 2017. OneHR would be hosted by United Nations Volunteers in Bonn and initially provide job classification and reference checks services on a cost recovery basis with the expected benefits of professionalisation, consistency, standardisation and

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Secretariat, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Health Organization, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, and United Nations Volunteers

efficiency of service. At the time of the audit, the United Nations Secretariat was finalizing a memorandum of understanding and service level agreement with OneHR.

23. While HLCM endorsed the recommendation to proceed with the establishment of OneHR, it was recognized that the decision on whether or not to participate in the joint facility would be driven by the interest of the respective organizations. The United Nations Secretariat's decision to participate in the joint facility was not supported by a business case analyzing the different alternatives for conducting reference checks, their comparative costs and expected benefits. Although the business case (commissioned by the Human Resources Network) presented to HLCM confirmed the feasibility of the creation of OneHR, it concluded that while there were qualitative and financial benefits for collaborating on job classification services, cost savings were not expected from reference checking. Furthermore, the United Nations Logistics Base in Brindisi was already performing the majority of the proposed reference checks for peacekeeping recruitments, and other locations may be more advantageous than the one that had offered to host the centre.

24. Without a clearly developed business case, the Organization may not select the best option to address the reference check issue. With the implementation of OneHR underway, OHRM needed to develop a project initiation or similar document outlining, inter alia, its role in the roll out of the OneHR, the expected costs and the benefits the Secretariat anticipates to derive by participating in it.

**(3) OHRM should prepare a project initiation or similar document to outline the costs and benefits of the Secretariat's participation in the United Nations Global Centre for Human Resources Services and use it as a basis to evaluate in the future whether the desired benefits were achieved.**

*DM accepted recommendation 3 and stated that because the Centre was only recently established, an evaluation methodology or key performance indicators were yet to be refined. Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of the document outlining the costs and benefits of the Secretariat's participation in the United Nations Global Centre for Human Resources Services.*

## **B. Monitoring and performance management**

OHRM needed to maintain complete data and establish, monitor and report on performance indicators related to the onboarding process

25. According to Secretary-General's bulletin on the organization of OHRM (ST/SGB/2011/4), one of the core functions of the Learning, Development and Human Resources Services Division is to review and streamline business processes for increased efficiency and effectiveness. Additionally, in his report to the General Assembly (A/72/492), the Secretary-General called for the strengthening of transparency and accountability mechanisms in the exercise of delegated human resources management authority against established key performance indicators (KPIs). This would be enabled by fully updated information management systems.

26. OHRM did not establish performance standards or KPIs for the onboarding process. The only exception was a limit of two months for reference checks performed by SPSD. Therefore, OHRM did not measure how many days on average it took between the selection decision to recruit a candidate and his or her entry into the Organization. Even though OIOS obtained the onboarding data for the whole Secretariat, key dates in the process were not recorded in the Offer Management module in Inspira and thus OIOS was not able to analyze whether onboarding activities were conducted efficiently for the entire population.

27. As of 3 May 2018, 18,569 onboarding cases had been processed Secretariat-wide in the Offer Management module, including temporary job openings. However, 8,147 (44 per cent) of the cases were not fully completed in the system, of which 4,143 cases (51 per cent) had been initiated between 2014 and 2016. In the reviewed sample of 60 onboarded cases, half of them were not fully completed in Inspira, even though the staff members had been fully onboarded in the Organization. Table 2 shows the rate of completion of the individual steps in Inspira in the reviewed sample and demonstrates that as the process progressed, relevant steps were not documented and closed in Inspira. Delayed completion of individual steps also required departments and offices to inquire from OHRM on the status of onboarding.

**Table 2: Rate of completion of steps in the Offer Management module in Inspira**

<b>Inspira - Offer Management module</b>		<b>Completed</b>	<b>Not completed</b>	<b>Rate of completion</b>
Step 1	Confirm Interest/Request PHP/Release Request	60		100%
Step 2	Job Offer Request	60		100%
Step 3	Request Index Number	59	1	98%
Step 4	Validate Job Offer Request	59	1	98%
Step 5	Determine Grade and Step	59	1	98%
Step 6	Endorse Candidate Grade and Step	59	1	98%
Step 7	Offer Documents	52	8	87%
Step 8	Request for Medical Clearance	48	12	80%
Step 9	Request for Reference Checks	43	17	72%
Step 10	Confirmation of Offer and Visa	31	29	52%
<b>All steps completed</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>50%</b>

28. OIOS analyzed timelines for 60 onboarded cases by retrieving key dates from various onboarding documentation. It took on average 77 days (2.5 months) between the selection of a candidate and his/her entry in the Organization. This went up to 96 days (3 months) for fixed-term appointments. An analysis of 22 responses of surveyed United Nations system organizations showed that 69 per cent of them onboarded internationally recruited professional staff on average within 3 months, 23 per cent between 3 to 6 months, while 9 per cent did not keep this statistic. Therefore, OHRM performance was comparable to others. However, the longer the onboarding process took, the longer the departments and offices did not have the staff they needed to deliver their mandates. This may lead to a high number of temporary appointments, and increased pressure on existing staff.

29. Without establishing and measuring KPIs and maintaining complete data, OHRM was not able to identify and timely address bottlenecks in the onboarding process. About 33 per cent of surveyed staff members found the onboarding process too long. The reasons mentioned for delays were lengthy communication with United Nations (55 per cent), and time taken for: verification of academic credentials (28 per cent), visa application (24 per cent) and verification of employment history (21 per cent).

30. OIOS analysis showed that some efficiency gains could be achieved for the onboarding activities that were under the control of OHRM and executive offices. For example, it took on average:

- (i) 23 calendar days between confirming a candidate's interest in the offered job and sending her/him the offer documents;
- (ii) 26 calendar days between confirming a candidate's interest in the offered job and sending a release request to the relevant United Nations system organization or government;
- (iii) 14 calendar days between the offer confirmation and raising a request for a G4 visa; and

- (iv) 24 calendar days between the entry date of the staff member and issuance of the personnel action in Umoja.

31. OHRM informed OIOS that performance standards would be established as part of the Global Service Delivery Model.

32. OHRM also did not establish qualitative indicators (i.e. values based on or influenced by personal feelings, tastes, or opinion, such as rate of satisfaction) and did not collect feedback from onboarded staff members. Such feedback could be efficiently obtained through online staff satisfaction surveys. Staff surveys are already commonly used for other services in the Organization, such as information technology helpdesk, travel, medical and training.

33. In the absence of qualitative indicators collected and evaluated by OHRM, OIOS administered a survey. An analysis of survey responses showed that 22 per cent of onboarded staff members were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the onboarding process and almost 16 per cent of staff members rated the professionalism of all staff involved in the onboarding process as poor or very poor. This may lead to frustration of the onboarded staff and negatively impact the image of the Organization. These staff members frequently mentioned lack of communication and update of the status of the onboarding by HR partners. Eighty-one of the 138 surveyed staff members suggested improvements to the effectiveness and efficiency of the onboarding process, such as keeping selected staff informed on the status, improving the professional approach of HR partners, having a focal point during the onboarding process, and timely processing of relocation payments. Even though OHRM provided onboarded staff with different information materials, some staff found that the information was not easy to understand, or the information was received too late in the onboarding process. This could be effectively and efficiently remedied by creating an online user-friendly resource about the onboarding process, including frequently asked questions, which could be shared with the candidates in the e-mail requesting to confirm their continued interest in the position.

**(4) OHRM should establish, monitor and report on performance indicators related to the onboarding process to improve the efficiency, including: (i) establishing quantitative and qualitative performance indicators, as well as methods of measurement and data collection; (ii) ensuring entries in the Offer Management module in Inspira are timely completed to produce accurate management information; and (iii) analyzing onboarding timelines and identifying and addressing bottlenecks.**

*DM accepted recommendation 4 and stated that as part of the management reform, a new Business Transformation and Accountability (BTA) Division would be created which, inter alia, would be dedicated to monitoring and strengthening performance by mainstreaming results-based management in the planning and daily operations of the Secretariat. BTA will support managers in their efforts to establish clear targets and criteria for performance and will generate, analyze and communicate data, conduct reviews and support self-evaluations. Recommendation 4 remains open pending receipt of established performance indicators, evidence of improved data entry in the Offer Management module in Inspira and analysis of onboarding timelines.*

OHRM needed to establish targets for payment of settling-in and relocations grants, measure their achievement and address causes of noncompliance

34. The administrative instruction on settling-in grant (ST/AI/2016/5) states that the purpose of the grant is to provide eligible staff members with a reasonable amount of cash for relocation on initial appointment, assignment or transfer to a duty station. The administrative instruction on excess baggage, shipments and insurance (ST/AI/2016/4) specifies that staff members entitled to unaccompanied or relocation shipment may opt for a lump-sum payment known as a “relocation grant” in lieu of these

shipments. Since both grants provide financial assistance to staff at the time of their relocation, they should be paid as soon as possible following their entry into the Organization.

35. OHRM and OPPBA did not establish KPIs for processing and paying settling-in and relocation grants. Out of 60 reviewed onboarded cases, settling-in and/or relocation grants totalling \$955,838 were paid to 27 onboarded staff members. HR partners correctly calculated and the Travel Claims Unit in OPPBA disbursed the settling-in and relocation grants payments to eligible staff members in compliance with applicable administrative issuances. However, it took on average 35 and 45 days between the entry into the Organization and payment of the settling-in grant and the relocation grant respectively. This includes five days from the approval of the payment to its actual disbursement, which is dependent on pay dates set in Umoja and thus cannot be shortened.

36. The Regional Service Centre in Entebbe set a KPI to pay 98 per cent of relocation and assignment grants within five days of the arrival of the staff member. Those KPIs were however not monitored. The survey of United Nations system organizations showed that 36 per cent of organizations had not set a KPI for payment of relocation grant and settling-in grant, while 32 per cent indicated that their target was to pay immediately upon arrival, 9 per cent within 5 days, 18 per cent within 1 month and 5 per cent upon signing the appointment letter by a staff member.

37. Delays in paying settling-in grant and relocation grant meant that they no longer met their purpose of providing financial support on relocation and as a result, relocated staff members may experience financial difficulties at the time of their move to a new duty station. More than 20 per cent of staff members surveyed by OIOS were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with delayed payments of the settling-in and/or relocation grants. Staff members were forced to ask for financial support from their families, take loans or use their savings upon their arrival in New York.

**(5) OHRM should, in consultation with OPPBA, establish targets for payment of settling-in and relocations grants, measure their achievement against these targets and address causes of non-achievement.**

*DM accepted recommendation 5 and stated that OHRM and OPPBA would work to establish targets and timelines for these payments. Recommendation 5 remains open pending receipt of established targets for paying settling-in and relocations grants and methods of measuring them and addressing non-achievement.*

## C. Records management

### OHRM needed to update guidance on maintenance of official status files and its retention policy

38. The Secretary-General's bulletin on record-keeping and the management of United Nations archives (ST/SGB/2007/5) requires efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records. The United Nations Guidelines on Verification of Academic Qualification and Work Experience require keeping of verification records in the official status file, local databases and the upcoming global database via Inspira.

(i) Guidance on the maintenance of official status files needed to be updated and streamlined

39. The Personnel Records Unit in OHRM maintained around 10,000 official status files of current and past staff members in the United Nations Headquarters in New York. According to the administrative instruction on annual inspection of official status file (ST/AI/108, dated 24 February 1955), the files should

include personal history forms, correspondence regarding recruitment, notifications of personnel actions, letters of commendations, papers relating to family status, allowances, leave and visa. At the time of the audit, OHRM had identified that only five documents needed to be kept as an original in the hard copy of the official status file: designation of beneficiaries, oath of office, signed performance documents, signed letter of appointment and signed personal induction questionnaire. However, this had not yet been implemented.

40. Digitally born documents were printed and filed in the physical official status files contrary to the Secretariat move to a paperless office environment. For example, verification records on background/reference checks received by e-mail by SPSD were printed and forwarded to the Personnel Records Unit to file in Official Status Files and provided to HR partners on their request. In 2018, SPSD started filing these documents in the Reference Verification module in Inspira, to which HR partners in Human Resources Services were given access.

41. Based on OHRM's May 2017 retention policy, official status files are to be archived for 30 years after the date of the last separation of a staff member from the Organization. Therefore, in the long term, archiving of physical official status files would represent a significant cost to the Organization. Even though the Unite Docs record management system was ready to replace the hard copy official status files, OHRM had not yet taken a decision to do so. OHRM noted that they had recently decided to start using Unite Docs for dependency records.

(ii) Official status files were not adequately maintained

42. At the beginning of audit fieldwork, in 7 out of the 60 reviewed cases, the official status files were either not set up or included very few documents. In another eight cases, there was either no letter of appointment filed, or the filed letter of appointment was erroneous. In general, OIOS was not able to find 207 records, representing one quarter of the onboarding documentation either in the physical official status files or in Inspira. The same types of onboarding records were either filed in the official status files only, or in Inspira only, or filed in both places or not filed anywhere. Review of the official status files also showed that they included duplicate records or records that should not have been included, such as certificates from Inspira about completed training courses.

43. Inadequate records management leads to loss of valuable records and time in retrieving information, and higher costs in storing duplicate records or records that should have been disposed of. Filing verification and other personnel records electronically in Unite Docs would make them more readily available for those who needed to access them, prevent their loss or misplacement and improve efficiency in OHRM by eliminating time spent on printing, filing, searching and retrieving of hard copy records.

44. At the time of the audit, OHRM was reviewing its retention policy and outdated guidance on official status files. OHRM also needed to identify in its updated retention policy what personnel records to file in the official status files as hard copy and which to store electronically in Unite Docs. Furthermore, for documents that are not in official status files, OHRM needed to decide in which systems (Unite Docs, Umoja or Inspira) they should be created and maintained in to eliminate gaps and duplication.

**(6) OHRM should review and update guidance pertaining to official status files.**

*DM accepted recommendation 6 and stated that the outdated administrative issuance on official status files were under review. Recommendation 6 remains open pending issuance of the revised administrative instruction on official status files.*

**(7) OHRM should update its retention schedule for personnel records including onboarding records and determine in which systems these records will be maintained.**

*DM accepted recommendation 7 and stated that OHRM would establish official status files folders in Unite Docs, with a retention schedule to be determined at the time of their creation. Recommendation 7 remains open pending receipt of the updated retention schedule for personnel records specifying in which system these onboarding records will be maintained.*

#### **IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

45. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of the Department of Management for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

*(Signed)* Eleanor T. Burns  
Director, Internal Audit Division  
Office of Internal Oversight Services

## STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

## Audit of management of the onboarding process by the Office of Human Resources Management

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>2</sup> / Important <sup>3</sup>	C/ O <sup>4</sup>	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date <sup>5</sup>
1	OHRM should implement guidelines on the conduct of qualitative reference checks, assign responsibility to conduct them and determine what positions would undergo such checks.	Important	O	Receipt of the issued guidelines on qualitative reference checks.	31 December 2019
2	OHRM should review and streamline responsibility for the onboarding process within the Office.	Important	O	Receipt of the results of the review and relevant action plan to streamline responsibility for the onboarding process.	31 December 2019
3	OHRM should prepare a project initiation or similar document to outline the costs and benefits of the Secretariat's participation in the United Nations Global Centre for Human Resources Services and use it as a basis to evaluate in the future whether the desired benefits were achieved.	Important	O	Receipt of the document outlining the costs and benefits of the Secretariat's participation in the United Nations Global Centre for Human Resources Services.	31 December 2020
4	OHRM should establish, monitor and report on performance indicators related to the onboarding process to improve the efficiency, including: (i) establishing quantitative and qualitative performance indicators, as well as methods of measurement and data collection; (ii) ensuring entries in the Offer Management module in Inspira are timely completed to produce accurate management information; and (iii) analyzing onboarding timelines and identifying and addressing bottlenecks.	Important	O	Receipt of established performance indicators, evidence of improved data entry in the Offer Management module in Inspira and analysis of onboarding timelines.	31 December 2020
5	OHRM should, in consultation with OPPBA, establish targets for payment of settling-in and	Important	O	Receipt of established targets for paying settling-in and relocations grants and methods of	31 December 2019

<sup>2</sup> Critical recommendations address critical and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided with regard to the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

<sup>3</sup> Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

<sup>4</sup> C = closed, O = open

<sup>5</sup> Date provided by DM in response to recommendations.

## STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

## Audit of management of the onboarding process by the Office of Human Resources Management

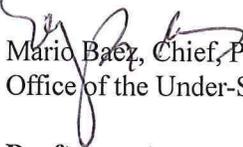
Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>2</sup> / Important <sup>3</sup>	C/ O <sup>4</sup>	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date <sup>5</sup>
	relocations grants, measure their achievement against these targets and address causes of non-achievement.			measuring them and addressing non-achievement.	
6	OHRM should review and update guidance pertaining to official status files.	Important	O	Receipt of the revised administrative instruction on official status files.	31 December 2019
7	OHRM should update its retention schedule for personnel records including onboarding records and determine in which systems these records will be maintained.	Important	O	Receipt of an updated retention schedule for personnel records specifying in which system these records will be maintained.	31 December 2019

# **APPENDIX I**

## **Management Response**

TO: Ms. Muriette Lawrence-Hume, Chief, New York Audit Service      DATE: 1 November 2018  
A: Internal Audit Division, Office of Internal Oversight Services

THROUGH: Olga de la Piedra, Director  
S/C DE: Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management

FROM:  Mario Baez, Chief, Policy and Oversight Coordination Service  
DE: Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management

SUBJECT: **Draft report on an audit of management of the onboarding process by the Office of Human**  
OBJET: **Resources Management (Assignment No. AH2017/512/04)**

1. We refer to your memorandum dated 16 October 2018 regarding the above-subject draft report and provide you with comments from the Department of Management in the attached Appendix I.
2. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide comments on the draft report.

## Management Response

## Audit of the management of the onboarding process by the Office of Human Resources Management

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	OHRM should implement guidelines on the conduct of qualitative reference checks, assign responsibility to conduct them and determine what positions would undergo such checks.	Important	Yes	OHRM Audit Focal Point	31 December 2019	The guidelines requiring the conduct of qualitative reference checks and establishing clear roles and scope are in the process of being finalized.
2	OHRM should review and streamline responsibility for the onboarding process within the Office.	Important	Yes	OHRM Audit Focal Point	31 December 2019	Given the proposed restructuring and the division of responsibilities for the onboarding process between the new Department of Operational Support (DOS) and the new Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC), this review will be addressed in 2019.
3	OHRM should prepare a project initiation or similar document to outline the costs and benefits of the Secretariat's participation in the United Nations Global Centre for Human Resources Services and use it as a basis to evaluate in the future whether the desired benefits were achieved.	Important	Yes	OHRM Audit Focal Point	31 December 2020	As the Centre was only recently established, an evaluation methodology or key performance indicators are yet to be refined.
4	OHRM should establish, monitor and report on performance indicators related to the onboarding process to improve the efficiency, including: (i) establishing	Important	Yes	OHRM Audit Focal Point	31 December 2020	As part of the management reform, a new Business Transformation and Accountability (BTA) Division will be created which <i>inter alia</i> will be dedicated to monitoring and

<sup>1</sup> Critical recommendations address critical and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided with regard to the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

<sup>2</sup> Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

## Management Response

## Audit of the management of the onboarding process by the Office of Human Resources Management

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
	quantitative and qualitative performance indicators, as well as methods of measurement and data collection; (ii) ensuring entries in the Offer Management module in Inspira are timely completed to produce accurate management information; and (iii) analyzing onboarding timelines and identifying and addressing bottlenecks.					strengthening performance by mainstreaming results-based management in the planning and daily operations of the Secretariat. The BTA will support managers in their efforts to establish clear targets and criteria for performance and will generate, analyze and communicate data, conduct reviews and support self-evaluations. Once the management reform is fully implemented, this recommendation will be addressed in 2019.
5	OHRM should, in consultation with OPPBA, establish targets for payment of settling-in and relocations grants, measure their achievement against these targets and address causes of non-achievement.	Important	Yes	OHRM Audit Focal Point	31 December 2019	OHRM and OPPBA will work to establish targets and timelines for these payments.
6	OHRM should review and update guidance pertaining to official status files.	Important	Yes	OHRM Audit Focal Point	31 December 2019	OHRM is currently reviewing the outdated administrative issuance on official status files which once promulgated will provide updated guidance.
7	OHRM should update its retention schedule for personnel records including onboarding records and determine in which systems these records will be maintained.	Important	Yes	OHRM Audit Focal Point	31 December 2019	OHRM is working to establish official status files folders in Unite Docs, which by design require a retention schedule to be determined at the time of their creation.