
22 May 2026

NICS Guidance on the Laying, Presenting and Depositing of Papers in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide guidance on the procedures for laying documents before the Assembly, presenting papers to it, and depositing documents in the Assembly Library. It is a replacement to the guidance issued in May 2025.

Background

2. The arrangements for the laying and presentation of papers and accounts in the Northern Ireland Assembly are outlined at Standing Order 23 of the Assembly's Standing Orders:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Standing-Orders/Standing-Orders/#23>

3. There are four main categories of publications which come before the Assembly:

(i) **Statutory Rules:** Guidance on which is available at Part 10 of the Handbook of Subordinate Legislation (the "Red Book") at:

<http://nics.intranet.nigov.net/nics/documents/handbook-subordinate-legislation-red-book>

(ii) **Laid Papers:** Papers laid before the Assembly pursuant to a statutory provision.

(iii) **Presented Papers:** Papers that are not provided to the Assembly pursuant to a statutory provision, but which would be of interest to Assembly Members.

(iv) **Deposited Papers:** Papers that are not required to be laid or

presented, but are deposited in the Assembly Library, principally for the purpose of providing information which has been referred to by a Minister in an answer to a question (typically statistics, tables or particularly lengthy responses).

Laid Papers

4. Certain documents are required to be laid before the Assembly in fulfilment of an obligation imposed by a statutory provision, for example, the annual reports and accounts of a statutory body. These form the majority of papers laid in the Assembly. For more specific advice regarding the layout and contents of the annual report and accounts for laying in the Northern Ireland Assembly, please see DoF's most recent Finance Director letter on *Laying of Annual Report and Accounts in the Northern Ireland Assembly*, which should be read in conjunction with this guidance.
5. If statute requires a document to be laid before the Assembly, the body responsible for the publication is required to send **an electronic copy** of the document, along with the covering letter (both **in PDF format**), to laid.documents@niassembly.gov.uk. The Business Office will in turn distribute this electronic copy to the relevant statutory committee and the Assembly Library. [See at Annex A the accompanying note from the NI Assembly Business Office outlining the ongoing temporary arrangements relating to the format in which documents are to be laid and presented to the Assembly, and specifies the position in respect of documents relating to the Budget and estimates process].
6. The covering letter should include: a reference to the statutory provision under which the document is to be laid; the contact details for the organisation (branch email address and contact telephone number), should the Business Office need to discuss the document; and, where available online, the web address where the document can be accessed. It should be noted that documents will not be considered to have been laid until the electronic and paper copy of both the document and covering letter have been received by the Business Office (subject to the temporary arrangement outlined at Annex A).
7. Where documents are not available in electronic format (and it is expected that the majority of such documents would be), 23 hard copies of the document, along with a covering letter, should be provided to the Business Office (Assembly Business Office, Room 32, Parliament Buildings, Belfast, BT4 3XX), which will in turn distribute them to the relevant statutory committee and the Assembly Library.

8. If, exceptionally, the organisation wishes the document to be distributed to all 90 Assembly Members, it should arrange for copies to be placed in Members' pigeonholes, or sent electronically using the email contact information for all MLAs available on the Assembly website: <http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/mlas/emails.aspx>. Copies for distribution to all Members should not be sent to the Business Office. Since the Business Office records all papers laid and presented in the Assembly in the official Minutes of Proceedings, and Members have ready access to these papers, it would be envisaged that the provision of hard copies of documents to all Members would generally not take place.
9. Documents must be laid in the Business Office* before any distribution to the public, Companies House, or any other organisation (*subject to the DoF guidance). When the Assembly is sitting laid publications: appear on the "Papers Presented" list (which is part of the formal Minute of Proceedings for each sitting of the Assembly); and the titles of publications laid during recess periods appear in the first Minute of Proceedings published following recess.
10. The laying date will be the date on which both the electronic version or the paper copy of the document and covering letter are received in the Business Office (see the temporary arrangement outlined at Annex A). In some cases, a printed or glossy version of a document is produced after it has been laid in, or presented to, the Assembly. Such documents should not be provided to the Assembly's Business Office, as it will not process, distribute, or retain printed copies of documents already laid or presented.
11. Although receipt of the publication in the Business Office fulfils the statutory requirement for it to be laid, the responsibility for it to be placed in the public domain remains with the publisher and **not** the Assembly. This is a **legal obligation** under the Legal Deposit Libraries (Non-Print Works) Regulations 2013 [which concern the depositing of publications electronically] and the Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003 [which concerns the depositing of publications in hard copy format].
12. Publishers are legally required to deposit **either** electronic **OR** hard copies of their publications: they should not deposit in both formats. The legal deposit libraries prefer and encourage the electronic deposit of publications.
13. **Depositing Publications Electronically:** Copies of publications published in electronic format should be sent to the Library at Queen's (in **PDF format**) using the email address niopaenquiries@qub.ac.uk , where they will be archived and made available to The British Library under an agreement between both parties. The British Library will in turn

make copies available to the other 5 legal deposit libraries (The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford; Cambridge University Library; The National Library of Scotland; The Library of Trinity College, Dublin; and The National Library of Wales) under the Legal Deposit Libraries (Non-Print Works) Regulations 2013.

14. No covering letter is required for electronic deposit of Laid papers. Electronic copies **should not** be sent directly to the British Library, the Agency for the Legal Deposit Libraries, or the legal deposit libraries themselves.

15. **Depositing Publications in Hard Copy Format:** Titles published in hard copy format only are required to be deposited with the 6 legal deposit libraries referred to in paragraph 13. Additionally, as the National Archives guidance on the Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003 states that the Queen’s University, Belfast, should be ‘treated as an official deposit library for Northern Ireland official publications’, one copy should also be sent to the Library at Queen’s. Copies (in the numbers specified), with a covering letter, should be sent to the following locations:

Contact Details for the Legal Deposit Libraries for Providing Hard Copies of Documents

Legal Deposit Office The British Library Boston Spa Wetherby West Yorkshire LS23 7BY	Agency for the Legal Deposit Libraries 21 Marnin Way Edinburgh EH12 9GD Tel: 0131 334 2833	Official Publications Department, The McClay Library Queen’s University Belfast BT7 1LP Tel: 028 90 976233
(One copy)	(Five copies)	(One copy)

Copyright Statements: *Departments and Agencies*

16. All copyright works made by departmental and agency officials in the course of their duties qualify for crown copyright protection under section 163 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. These copyrights are owned by His Majesty the King and administered on his behalf by the Controller of His Majesty’s Stationery Office, an official within The National Archives. There is no departmental / agency copyright and therefore it is incorrect to refer to works produced by government as being the copyright of a specific department or agency. Government publications, whether published in print or digital form, should include appropriate copyright and

re-use statements. The inclusion of these statements confirms where ownership of the copyright rests and also facilitates the re-use of the information.

17. Copyright statement: Accordingly, most of the material issued by departments and agencies should include the Open Government Licence identifier (the logo below) at the top of the following statement, which should be placed on the reverse of the title page, with the text in bold edited as required:



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Where we have identified any third party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at **[insert website address]**.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at **[insert branch contact details eg Tel Number, postal / email address]**.

Copyright Statements: *Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs)*

18. Most Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) are classified as non-Crown bodies and consequently do not qualify for Crown copyright protection under section 163 of Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. As non-Crown bodies, most NDPBs must therefore use their own copyright statement, not a Crown copyright statement.
19. Non-Crown Copyright Statement: Accordingly, it is recommended that the following best practice non-Crown copyright statement (with the text in bold edited as required), appear on the reverse of the title page of the majority of organisations' published documents (including their Annual Report and Accounts) and nowhere else in the document:



© **[Name of NDPB]** copyright **[year of publication]**.

This publication is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0. To view this licence visit: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/ .

Where we have identified any third party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at **[insert website address]**.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at **[insert organisation's contact details eg Tel Number, postal / email address]**.

20. A small number of NDPBs are classified as 'Crown Bodies' and qualify for Crown copyright protection under section 163 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. NDPBs classified as Crown bodies should follow the guidance on Crown Copyright statements referred to in paragraphs 16-17. If NDPB officials are unsure as to the status of their organisation, and of which statement to use, they should refer this query to their Department's DALO, who can in turn seek advice from the National Archives at official.publishing@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Presented Papers

21. Papers presented to the Assembly are not required by statute to be laid, but may be of interest to Members. They include, for example, consultation documents, papers presented in accordance with departmental guidelines or practice, and corporate and business plans.
22. Documents should be presented to the Business Office in accordance with the guidance outlined in paragraphs 5 to 7 (minus the requirement for the covering letter to contain reference to a related statutory provision, which is required solely for laid documents).
23. Since presented papers are not published by the Assembly, it is not responsible for depositing them with the legal deposit libraries. The principle regarding the provision of electronic or print copies of documents is as outlined in paragraphs 11–15, with the Legal Deposit Libraries (Non-Print Works) Regulations 2013 and the Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003 applying to all published works produced by Northern Ireland Departments, Agencies and other official bodies. For further information on the depositing of Northern Ireland official publications

which have been presented to the Assembly, please contact the Official Publications Department at Queen's University Belfast, using the contact details outlined in paragraph 15.

Deposited Papers

24. Deposited papers principally (but not exclusively) comprise papers containing detailed information which has been referred to by a Minister in an answer to a question, but which has not been detailed in full in the answer, for example, statistics or tables. The purpose of depositing these papers in the Assembly Library is to make the information available to Members and persons interested in the information referred to in the answer, and serves the function of placing the information in the public domain. The Assembly Library publishes a list of all Deposited Papers on the Assembly website at:

<https://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/research-and-information-service-raise/deposited-papers-2024/>

(for papers deposited in the years before/after 2024 the above web address should be changed to have the suffix of that year inserted [eg '2023' for papers deposited in 2023, and for previous years '2021' etc]).

25. Such papers can also be deposited during recess periods. Deposited papers are not liable for legal deposit in either electronic or print format.
26. Papers deposited to fulfil this requirement should be accompanied by a covering letter, on headed departmental notepaper and signed off by the Minister, addressed to the Member(s) who asked the question and including the relevant AQ number. Contact details for the relevant departmental business area (branch email address and contact telephone number) should also be provided, should there be any follow on queries concerning the Deposited Paper (note: these details will appear on the Assembly's website).
27. When depositing papers in the Assembly Library these should be sent in PDF or Word format to: neil.sedgewick@niassembly.gov.uk and cc'ed to Library.IssueDesk@niassembly.gov.uk

However, where it is not possible to do so, then two hard copies should be sent **FAO** Neil Sedgewick, Assembly Library, Room 141, Parliament Buildings, Belfast, BT4 3XX.

28. Queries relating to the depositing of papers in the Assembly should be addressed to the Assembly Library on 02890 521716 (Ext 21716).

Correcting Errors in Documents Laid, Presented and Deposited in the Northern Ireland Assembly

29. Organisations should on all occasions seek to minimise the incidence of errors in the documents Laid, Presented and Deposited in the Northern Ireland Assembly, and take all practical steps for their avoidance.
30. Annual Report and Accounts: Where errors are identified in Annual Report and Accounts these should, at the earliest opportunity, be raised with DoF's Accountability and Financial Management Division (david.wallace@finance-ni.gov.uk and sam.cottney@finance-ni.gov.uk).
31. Other Documents: Errors in other documents should be discussed with the relevant Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer (DALO) in the first instance. DALOs will liaise with Assembly Section, TEO, if further information is required. It should be noted that the Assembly Business Office has no role in ensuring that the information provided to the Assembly is correct. This responsibility lies with the organisations providing documents to the Assembly.

Further Guidance

32. Queries about any aspect of this guidance should in the first instance be directed to the relevant DALO. DALOs will liaise with Assembly Section, TEO, if further information is required. Any queries on the associated DoF guidance, should be directed to DoF's Accountability and Financial Management Division (see paragraph 30 for contact details).

**ASSEMBLY SECTION
THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE**



Northern Ireland
Assembly

ANNEX A
Business Office

Room 32
Parliament Buildings
Tel: +44 (0) 28 9052 1398
Email: Business.Office@niassembly.gov.uk

From: James Gilsenan, Clerk of Business (Table Section)
Date: 14 May 2026
To: David McCreedy, Assembly Section, The Executive Office; and David Wallace, Financial Reporting Branch, Accountability and Financial Management Division, Department of Finance
Cc: Business.Office@niassembly.gov.uk
Subject: Continuation of temporary arrangements for the laying and presentation of papers, including reports and accounts, at the Northern Ireland Assembly.

1. This memo confirms the continuation of the temporary arrangements for papers laid and presented before the Northern Ireland Assembly. These temporary arrangements will remain in force until further notice.
2. Documents, including annual reports and accounts, may continue to be laid or presented before the Northern Ireland Assembly on an electronic only basis.
3. This supersedes the previous provision that documents laid or presented, will not be considered as laid until both an electronic and a paper copy have been received in the Business Office.
4. This means that organisations required to lay or present documents at the Assembly should deliver an electronic copy of the document and the laying/presentation covering letter, both documents in PDF format, to laid.documents@niassembly.gov.uk.

5. All electronic documents and laying or presenting letters **must** be in PDF format and created electronically.
6. In the exceptional circumstances where a document is *only* available in hard copy, it may be laid or presented in hard copy to the Business Office, and 23 copies should be provided with an accompanying covering letter.
7. All documents relating to the budget and estimates process including, but not limited to, the Budget document, Spring Supplementary Estimates, Main Estimates and the Vote on Account should continue to be laid both electronically and in hard copy (23 copies) with the Business Office.
8. The Business Office will continue to distribute an electronic copy of documents laid and presented to the Assembly Library, and to retain an electronic copy for office records. The Business Office will distribute copies of documents laid and presented to the relevant statutory committees.
9. The Business Office does not circulate copies of laid or presented documents to Members. Departments can distribute laid or presented papers in hard copy, using the Members' pigeonholes in Parliament Buildings, or electronically using the email contact information for all MLAs on the Assembly's website.
<http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/mlas/emails.aspx>
10. Organisations must not send documents to the Assembly Business Office in advance of the laying date. Documents **must** be sent on the day they need to be laid.
11. This memo should be read in conjunction with the most recent:
NICS Guidance on the Laying, Presenting and Depositing of Papers in the Northern Ireland Assembly;
Department of Finance Guidance on Laying of Annual Reports and Accounts in the Northern Ireland Assembly.