

Tax Chamber

First-tier Tribunal for Scotland



GENERAL GUIDANCE ON PDF BUNDLES

1. This guidance is provided to achieve a level of consistency in the provision of PDF bundles for use by the Tribunal in hearings in the Tax Chamber. A PDF hearing bundle is a single document containing an organised collection of electronic copies of documents for use at the hearing of an appeal. This guidance should be followed unless there is a good reason not to do so and is subject to any specific Orders by the Tribunal.

2. This guidance should, if operated properly, provide the Tribunal and the parties with a PDF bundle or bundles which are as accessible and functional as a paper bundle, if not more so. Revenue Scotland, most represented parties and many appellants in person should be able to comply with all or most of these requirements. If it is not possible for a party to comply with the requirements for preparing a PDF bundle, they should provide a brief explanation of the reasons to the Tribunal as far in advance of the hearing as possible and in good time prior to the date on which bundles are due to be served. Where possible, the party should identify a practical way of overcoming the problem so that the Tribunal can consider this and provide appropriate Orders.

FORMAT AND FEATURES OF PDF BUNDLES

3. PDF bundling should observe the following principles:

(1) All bundles must, where the nature of the document permits, be the subject of OCR (optical character recognition). This is the process which turns the document from a picture of a document to digitized printed text which can be read as text so that the document becomes word-searchable and words can be highlighted/marked in the document by the Tribunal and the parties before and during the hearing. Not all documents may be convertible with OCR but most should be. Free OCR software is available online (see Online Resources below).

(2) All documents should appear in the bundle in portrait mode. If an original document is in landscape, then it should be inserted so that it can be read with a 90-degree rotation clockwise. No document should appear upside down. Where outsize documents are included (e.g. large spreadsheets or drawings), they should be fitted onto a single page but be capable of being read with adequate clarity by use of the 'zoom' function.

(3) The default view for all pages in the bundle should be set as 100%.

(4) All pages in a bundle or series of bundles must be numbered consecutively, and if possible, by computer generated numbering or at least in typed form (if added by a scanner), and not numbered by hand. If computer generated or typed, the number becomes machine readable and can be searched for. The page numbers shown in the index should correspond with the page numbers of the PDF file if possible. For example, if the index is two pages, it will show the number of the first page of the first document as "3" if that is the page of the PDF on which it appears.

(5) Care should be taken to ensure that page numbers do not obscure relevant detail on the document.

(6) Where possible, any scans of documents should not be greater than a resolution of 300 dpi (the higher the dpi the greater the resolution of the image or document) and in grayscale in order to avoid slow scrolling or rendering when viewing the document. This will also reduce the total size in Mb of the PDF bundle.

(7) All significant documents and all sections in bundles must be bookmarked for ease of navigation with an appropriate description as the bookmark including the page number of the document.

(8) An index or table of contents of the documents must be prepared. Where possible, all entries should be hyperlinked to the indexed document. In general, the table of contents should be in chronological order and provide a brief description of each document. Large bundles may be divided into sections each in chronological order and shown accordingly in the index or table of contents.

(9) Where a witness statement includes a reference to an exhibit there should, where possible, be a hyperlink to that exhibit from the relevant point in the witness statement.

(10) Careful thought should be given to the number of PDF files required. In most cases it will be possible to combine all documents in one single PDF file – Notice of Determination, Notice of Appeal, Statement of Case, witness statements, correspondence etc. In larger cases it may be sensible to separate out categories of documents into separate PDF files. However, further subdivision is not helpful – eg it is not helpful to have separate witness statements in separate PDF files and further subdivision should be unnecessary with an index or table of contents hyperlinked to the documents and sections bookmarked.

(11) Legislation and case law authorities relied upon by the parties should usually be included in a single PDF hearing bundle with the documents. In larger cases with many documents, it may be more convenient to provide a separate PDF file of the authorities. A PDF authorities' bundle should be page numbered, indexed, bookmarked and fully searchable in the same manner as the hearing bundle.

(12) If the Tribunal Order requires a core bundle then a PDF core bundle should be produced complying with the same requirements as the PDF hearing bundle.

(13) If documents are added to the bundle after the hearing bundle has been sent to the Tribunal and the other party, it should not be assumed that the Legal Member will accept a revised bundle as a complete replacement because he/she may already have started to mark up the original. Inquiries should be made of the Tribunal as to what the Legal Member would like to do about it. Absent a particular Order, a substitute bundle should be made available with any pages added appropriately sub-numbered (143.A, 143.B etc) and the pages added should also be provided in a separate PDF file.

DELIVERING PDF BUNDLES

4. When the PDF bundle is ready to be delivered by email to the Tribunal the sender must be aware that there is a maximum size of attached files which can be received by the Tribunal via email. This is 21Mb in aggregate. An email with an attached file which is bigger than that or an email with files which together total more than 21Mb in size will be rejected and not delivered. If a party wishes to serve a PDF file or files that are larger than 21Mb on the Tribunal then they should contact the Tribunal in advance to discuss how this may best be achieved.

ONLINE RESOURCES

5. Guidance on preparing PDF hearing bundles can be found online on YouTube or via a Google search. Adobe.com provides step-by-step instructions on creating and converting documents to PDF, compressing files, bookmarking and hyperlinking documents, combining and merging PDF files, adjusting page numbering, etc. Free OCR software and guides on how to use it can be found by searching on Google.

Anne Scott

Chamber President

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