



Home Office

How we communicate with customers

Version 12.0

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff about the different ways to communicate with our customers

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About: How we communicate with customers

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff about the different ways to communicate with our customers.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors then email Guidance & Quality, Operating Standards.

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email Guidance & Quality, Operating Standards.

Publication

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was published:

- version **12.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **29 September 2022**

Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been updated to reflect the change in our sovereign from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to His Majesty King Charles III.

Related content

[Contents](#)

How we communicate with customers

This section tells HM Passport Office staff how we communicate with our customers using GOV.UK, HM Passport Office web chat, Skype for business, social media and advertising campaigns.

We interact with customers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through examiners, customer service teams and an external call centre run by Teleperformance.

We communicate with customers to ask for more information, to follow up requests for information and keep them updated. To do this, we use:

- automated emails and SMS (short message service)
 - when a customer applies online, we ask if they want to get notifications by email, SMS or both
- telephone calls
- letters (by post and email)
- Skype for business
- webchat
- [GOV.UK](#)
- social media
- the [application guidance booklet](#)

If we do not get a reply to an email or letter we have sent to a customer who has a live application with us, we will follow the withdrawn application guidance.

If we do not get a reply to an email or letter we send to a countersignatory, we will follow countersignatories guidance.

If a customer is abusive with our staff

HM Passport Office staff are not expected to deal with abusive, violent or threatening customers, either face to face, by phone or in correspondence.

If you, the member of staff, have an abusive customer, you:

- have the right to refuse to serve them
- must refer to customer conduct guidance

How we communicate using GOV.UK

[GOV.UK](#) provides public information for UK government services, including HM Passport Office. It includes announcements, publications, statistics and consultations and provides our customers with useful information, such as:

- locations of passport interview offices

- locations of Application Processing Centers
- contact details for our Advice line
- how to make an appointment
- how to apply for a passport
- how to cancel a lost or stolen passport
- how to apply for an emergency travel document
- the standards customers must meet to get a passport (for example, photo standards)
- passport fees
- how to contact us
- how to make a complaint
- our policies and guidance

How we communicate using HM Passport Office's web chat

The web chat service is provided by Teleperformance (TP) and is an additional communication channel for our customers. It is available from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 6pm Saturday and Sunday.

TP will send an email to the Customer Service Management team (CSMT) with any questions they need them to answer. A CSMT agent will contact the customer within 24 hours.

A customer can print a transcript of the web chat.

How we communicate using Skype for business

We use Skype for business to facilitate remote passport interviews in specific circumstances where we are unable to carry out a face to face interview as specified in guidance.

Interviewing a person resident abroad by Skype for business

When we need to interview a person who is resident abroad this will be facilitated using Skype only when:

- it is not possible for a face to face interview in their country or a neighbouring one
- there is no Visa Access Centre (VACS) in the country
- there is no agreement to use the VACS
- the VACS cannot be used for example because of social distancing policies

Interviewing a person resident in the UK by Skype for business

If we need to interview a person who is resident in the UK this will be facilitated using Skype when exceptional measures are in place.

To conduct an identity interview using Skype, you, must follow the Identity interviews using Skype_guidance.

How we communicate using Social Media

We interact with customers on Twitter and respond to generic questions and service issues. We do not engage with customers using other forms of social media, such as: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn or YouTube.

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office do have Facebook accounts overseas in some countries so may also provide some generic responses to questions or issues raised.

How we respond on Twitter

We get questions and complaints on Twitter using our handle: @HM_Passport. A dedicated team in the Customer Services Management team (CSMT) deal with any Twitter messages.

CSMT will:

- answer any general queries on Twitter about our services
- no respond on Twitter to any:
 - Direct Message from customers
 - specific application queries

Our customer messaging will tell customers to contact the passport advice line for further help.

How we handle advertising campaigns

Advertising campaigns can include social media, radio, TV, digital signage and search engine ads.

For paid advertising campaigns, the Campaign and Behavioural Marketing team submits a brief to the Home Office Strategic Communications team, who:

- develop a campaign plan
- work with the Cabinet Office and other departments to sign off the campaign
- engage with media agencies to deliver the campaign

Related content

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How we communicate with a customer with disabilities

This section tells HM Passport Office staff about the services we offer to help us communicate with customers who are profoundly deaf, have a hearing loss or have a speech impairment and customers who are blind or partially sighted.

HM Passport Office provides a range of services to support customers who are profoundly deaf, have a hearing loss or have a speech impairment and customers who are blind or partially sighted.

Customers who are deaf, have a hearing loss or speech impairment

To support customers who are profoundly deaf, hearing-impaired or have a speech impairment, Teleperformance (TP) uses text relay on a Minicom phone. The customer sends a message and TP replies. This service has the same opening hours as the normal Advice line.

The Customer Service Management team (CSMT) uses the Next Generation Text Relay Service (NGTR) to provide a text relay service for customers.

NGTR lets customers with hearing or speech impairments communicate through telephone or text-phone equipment and other devices (for example, personal computers and tablets). An assistant will relay the speech between the 2 people on the call.

When you, the CSMT officer, receive a call from NGTR:

1. A recorded message will say, 'Please hold for an operator-assisted call from a text-phone user.'
2. A relay assistant will be connected to the call.
3. The relay assistant will say, 'Hello, you have a call from a deaf or speech-impaired person, and I will be relaying the call. Please say 'go ahead' when you have finished speaking.'

Sign language and induction loops in Customer Service Centre

At our Customer Service Centres (CSC) and interview offices, we have:

- volunteer staff trained in sign language that can help interpret
- induction loops and quiet rooms with no background noise
- British Sign Language interpreters to help with passport interviews

When to book a British Sign Language interpreter

Customers who need a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter to translate at an interview, must

1. Call the Interview Hub to book an interview.
2. Book the interpreter when they book their interview appointment.

The Interview Hub must ask the TP Authentication by Interview (ABI) service desk to book an interpreter.

Customers who visit a CSC can bring a friend to sign for them, but we do not allow the friend to take part in a passport identity interview.

Customers who are blind or partially sighted

We support customers who are blind or partially sighted with versions of the guidance booklet available, in:

- braille
- audio tape
- large print format

Customers can ask for a guidance booklet by contacting the [Passport Adviceline](#).

Braille stickers for passports

We can attach a braille sticker to a new passport.

Customers must ask for the Braille sticker option when they apply. To get a sticker for a current passport, the customer must call the [Passport Adviceline](#).

Customers who need help filling in their application form

Customers can call the Passport Adviceline if they are blind or partially sighted and [need help with their passport application form](#).

A member of the CSMT, will:

- fill in the form for the customer, using the information they provide
- post the form to the customer, to:
 - check
 - sign
 - return with the correct documents, payment and photos

Related content

[Contents](#)

Customer communication: automated texts and emails

This section tells HM Passport Office staff about how and when we send automated emails and SMS (short message service) text messages to customers.

We send email and SMS (short message service) text messages to customers using [GOV.UK Notify](#).

When we send automated texts and emails

We send automated texts and emails at different times in the customer's passport journey.

Automated reminders: when a passport is due to expire

We send automated SMS text messages to a customer's mobile phone to remind them their passport (or their child's passport) is due to expire.

Automated reminders: Premium and Fast Track appointments

We send automated SMS text messages to customers to remind them they have booked a counter appointment. We only do this if they have asked us during the application process. Customers can also ask for reminders by email.

Automated reminders: asking for documents

When customers do not send us the documents we need, we will send them automatic reminders through text message or email. If a customer still does not send us their documents:

- the examiner must withdraw the AMS (Application Management System) after 90 days
- DAP (Digital Application Processing) will automatically withdraw the application after 97 days

Automated responses: from examination team mailbox

If a customer sends an email to an examination team mailbox, we will send them an automatic email response to acknowledge receipt of the email.

The team operational team leader (OTL) must make sure the automatic response has been added to the mailbox using the standard template. Once the response has been set, the examiner will not need to recheck it when they sent an email from the mailbox.

Automated messages: when the customer's passport is expected

We send automated SMS text messages and emails to customers to tell them when they can expect to receive their new passport. The message will be in English or Welsh (if the customer has applied in Welsh).

Automated messages: digital referee notifications

We will tell customers, when:

- we send an email to their digital referee asking them to complete the referee section of the application
- the referee has completed the application
- we have finished automatic identity checks
- we reject their referee and need a new one

See: how to deal with customers who cannot provide a digital referee

Automated messages: specific requests

We will also send the customer an automated message (if they have supplied a mobile number), when:

- we need a new photo
- Sopra Steria Ltd asks for documents to support an application
- the customer has applied from the UK and we ask them for a new countersignature
- it's time to send in their documents (for example, after the digital referee completes their section)

Automated messages: after we issue a passport

We will send the customer an automated message:

- to tell them we have approved their application
- when we issue their new passport using the Premium service
- telling them their passport will be with them soon (when we issue their new passport using the standard or Fast Track service)

Automated messages: reminders to sign new passports

We will send customers an automatic message reminding them to sign their new passport when they receive it.

When we stop sending automatic messages

We will stop sending automatic messages when:

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- we have sent the customer their new passport
- we replace an online application with a paper application form

Messages sent from the Digital Lost Stolen Reporting system

If a customer reports a passport lost or stolen using the [Digital Lost Stolen Reporting \(DLSR\) system](#), they will receive automatic notifications at different stages of the process.

For UK cases, a customer can choose to get notifications by SMS (short message service) email or both. For overseas cases, we will send notifications by email.

DLSR will send automatic notifications, to:

- let the customer know we have received the lost or stolen report
- tell the customer we have cancelled their passport
- give the customer a reference number for the lost and stolen record

If we need more information, Teleperformance (TP) will try to contact the customer 3 times. If TP contacts the customer, they will continue to deal with the report.

If TP is unable to contact the customer, they must select a radio button to move the report to the next stage. This will trigger an automatic notification to the customer. DLSR will send these messages, after the:

- first unsuccessful attempt to contact the customer
- second unsuccessful attempt to contact the customer
- third unsuccessful attempt to contact the customer

TP will cancel the report after the third unsuccessful attempt to phone the customer.

For further information on how TP support our customers please see [How Teleperformance communicates with customers](#).

Related content

[Contents](#)

How to contact customers by phone

This section tells HM Passport Office staff when and how we make phone calls to customers, the greetings we must use and how we identify the customer.

We phone customers to:

- ask for information missing from their application
- answer questions they have

Calling a customer may:

- provide information unless we require further documents or written consent
- prevent delay to their application

See individual guidance topics for details of what information can be taken over the phone. In some cases, written confirmation will always be needed.

Staff may phone a countersignatory or digital referee to ask for information they have not given on the application form or to clarify responses received, and this guidance must also be followed if you are contacting the countersignature or digital referee by phone.

When to phone a customer: office hours

You, the examiner, must only phone a customer between the hours of 9am and 8pm. Calling a customer outside these hours can cause alarm and distress.

Before calling a customer overseas, you must check the time difference. If the time in that country is not between 9am and 8pm, you must send an email.

You can phone outside these hours, if the customer says they are happy for you to call them.

Before contacting a customer, you must check the application and case notes to see if the customer has told us about any times when they will not be available.

Phone contact: no answer from the customer

If you contact a customer by telephone and they do not answer the initial call, you must:

- leave a voicemail to confirm you will call again in 2 hours
- make 2 further attempts to call the customer in one day (making no more than 3 calls in one 24 hour period), leaving a voicemail on the third attempt telling the customer you will write to them
- add a case note detailing your actions after each attempt

If you have made 3 attempts to speak with the customer in one day and have not been able to do so, you must send the customer a letter. If you are working on:

- AMS, you must use the letters available
- DAP, you must use the **Comms builder**
- DAP and have made 3 attempts to contact the digital referee, you must transfer the application to AMS (because we do not yet have digital referee letter options on the Comms builder)

If there is no suitable letter and you still need to speak to the customer, you must send a Contact letter (001) asking them to call you.

If there is no response to the Contact letter, you must deal with the application using the Withdrawing passport applications guidance.

DAP: putting an application on hold during customer phone contact

If you are working on DAP, you must put the application on hold during the 24 hour period you attempt phone contact. You must use the **I need to speak to a customer** reason. You must only use this once (for 24 hours) unless you:

- speak to the customer, and they ask you to call them back outside of the 24 hour period
- need to attempt contact with a customer overseas, and the time difference means you have limited chance to call (you must use the **I need to speak to a customer** reason no more than twice (48 hours) in this scenario)

AMS: putting an application on hold during customer phone contact

If you are working on AMS, you can retain the customer's physical application (for example, on your desk or by using pigeon hole) during the 24 hour period you attempt phone contact. This is because you can exit the application on screen, when working on AMS.

How to answer, open and close a phone call

All staff must be consistent in their approach to phone calls to maintain good customer service and display a professional approach.

Phone contact: how to answer a phone call

You must answer a phone call with the greeting: "Good [morning, afternoon evening], His Majesty's Passport Office [office location], [first name] speaking. How can I help you?"

Phone contact: how to open a phone call

When calling a customer, you must open the call with: “Good [morning, afternoon, evening], I am calling from His Majesty’s Passport Office [office location], my name is [first name]. Can I speak to [customer’s name (first name and surname)]? Is this a convenient time to talk?”

Phone contact: how to close a phone call

When closing a phone call, you must:

1. Thank the customer for their call or the information they have given us.
2. Ask them if there is anything else you can help with.
3. Say goodbye.

Phone contact: how to leave a voice mail

If a customer does not answer the phone, you must leave a voice message if the facility is available:

- on the first attempt, with: “Good [morning, afternoon, evening], I am calling from His Majesty’s Passport Office, my name is [first name]. I am calling about an application you [sent, countersigned or confirmed the identity on]. I am processing your application and need to speak with you directly, so please do not contact our helpline, as they won’t be able to advise you. I will call you again in 2 hours. Goodbye.”
- on the third attempt, with “Good [morning, afternoon, evening], I am calling from His Majesty’s Passport Office, my name is [first name]. I have been unable to contact you by phone, so I will send you a [letter or email] asking you for information. Please follow the instructions in the [letter or email]. You may need to check your spam or junk email folder. Thank you.”

Identifying the customer on the phone

Before answering a customer’s questions, you must first confirm their identity on the phone by asking security questions.

If you cannot identify a customer, you must not tell them:

- an application exists
- any information about the application, including details

What we can say over the phone

The Disclosure guidance explains what information you can discuss over the phone.

If a customer tells us they are recording the phone call

HM Passport Office does not consent for customers to share, publish or broadcast a conversation with HM Passport Office in any way.

If a customer says they are recording the conversation, you must ask what they intend to do with the recording. If they say they are going to share, publish or broadcast the conversation, you must:

- tell them HM Passport Office does not consent to this sharing of information
- politely end the call

If a customer says they are keeping the recording for their own records, you can continue the call. You must advise the customer that under General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) they must not share, publish or broadcast the conversation.

DAP applications: asking for documents or more information

You, the DAP examiner, must tell the customer to mark the top left corner of their return envelope with the letters, **RQ** (returned query) if you contact the customer by phone to ask for documents or information.

This will allow Sopra Steria Ltd staff to identify any return query mail and allow applications to be processed as quickly as possible.

Related content

[Contents](#)

How to use Application Management System letters

This section tells HM Passport Office staff about the different types of letters we use during the passport application process when we use the Application Management System (AMS).

HM Passport Office and our partners Sopra Steria Ltd send letters created on the Application Management System to customers to ask them for a range of information and documents to complete their passport application. For example, we may ask for birth certificates, fees, photos, parental consent or court orders.

Letters Sopra Steria Ltd send

When Sopra Steria Limited (SSL) scans a paper application or declaration form on to the Application Management (AMS), AMS automatically identifies, if:

- documents are missing
- required information is missing
- the fee is incorrect
- the fee is missing
- the Post Office Check and Send service has sent the application

For applications sent through the post, AMS will automatically generate a letter. SSL will normally post to the customer. In some overseas cases SSL may send a letter manually. SSL does not send letters on applications sent through the Post Office Check and Send service.

Application Management System letter templates

The Application Management System (AMS) has a collection of standard letters and phrases examiners regularly use when they need to contact a customer to ask for more documents and information.

Unless the [customer's title is one we cannot use](#) or the International submissions route and Local Services booklet tells you about specific overseas delivery requirements you (the AMS examiner), must send post, using a customer's:

- title
- forename initials
- surname

For example: Mr A.J. Johnson-Smith.

The Digital Application Processing system (DAP) removes all titles automatically and all correspondence to customers will show the customer's first name and surname only.

When a customer's name is too long

If a customer's name is too long to fit on the item of post, you must use 'the alternative address' tab on the Application Management System (AMS) to amend their name.

When a customer applies for a post-dated passport

Because we send post-dated passports in the customer's future name, you must write to them or send their supporting documents or new passport using their current name.

You must update the AMS letter template to change the name (and title) to show the customer's current name and title.

What title to use when sending a letter

If you need to send a letter to a customer, you must check the 'titles' field and where a customer has selected a title preference you can accept:

- Mr, Mrs, Miss and Ms
- professional titles (for example, doctor, judge, religious titles)
- titles of nobility if you have confirmed it (see: Titles guidance)

Titles we cannot use when sending a letter or returning documents

If a customer has included another title in the 'other title' field, you must remove the title (if the application is processed on AMS) and leave the field blank, using only the customer's first name and surname. This includes:

- variations of Mr (for example, 'Mister')
- unconfirmed titles, that are not part of the actual name (for example, 'His Majesty', if not confirmed as an acceptable title of nobility)
- non-binary titles, such as Misc or Mx

Some customers identify as non-binary and use a non-binary gender title, such as Mx in place of Mr, Mrs, Miss or Ms.

You must make sure all correspondence addressed to customers who use non-binary gender titles only shows their first name and surname.

For example, you must address a letter as Dear Joe Bloggs (and not Dear Mx Bloggs).

You must remove any non-binary title and leave the title field blank in AMS if the customer has used a non-binary gender title. You must update the alternative address field in AMS to remove the customer's title before you complete the application and return their new passport and supporting documents.

Formatting customers names in letters

When drafting a letter, you must format the name consistently throughout the letter. You must use lower case for all forenames and surnames with only the first letter of each name capitalised. You must not type the customer's surname in capitals. For example:

'Thank you for submitting a passport application for <<Katie McNally>>'

'you sent us the version of <<Katie>>'s birth certificate which doesn't...'

How to compose an AMS system letter

If you are examining an application and need to send a letter to a customer (or third party) using the AMS, you must:

1. Complete the examination of the application as much as possible.
2. Resolve any questions with the countersignatory or (digital referee) before sending them a letter.
3. Ask for all the documents and information you need in 1 letter.
4. Select **Generate Letter** from the 'Next Actions' section (a 'New IPS Letter' screen will appear). If other letters have already been sent, the number of letters will show in brackets after the **Letter History** in the 'Links' menu.

How to address an AMS letter

If you are sending a letter to the customer, you must check the address details on the paper application form match the one on the **App Details** screen.

You must make sure the customer's address is correct and set out in a way that is acceptable for our couriers to deliver.

If the address details cannot be presented in full or do not match the address written by the customer, you must:

- change the details
- save the details
- identify data capture errors
- record data capture errors on the system
- case note all actions

How to address an AMS letter to an alternative address

If a customer asks us to use an alternative address for their correspondence, you must:

1. Select **Generate Letter** from the **Next Actions** section (a 'New IPS Letter' screen will appear).
2. Select the **Other** radio button from the **Address Type** field.
3. Manually enter the customer's name and address.
4. Continue to create the letter.

How to address an AMS letter to a countersignatory

Before sending a letter to a countersignatory or digital referee, you must:

- make sure their forename, surname, phone number and post code on the application form match those on the system
- correct any differences, in line with current guidance

Opening the **New IPS Letter** screen will automatically show the customer's details.

To address a letter to a countersignatory, you must:

1. Click the **Countersignatory** radio button
 - this will automatically check the pre-paid label field
 - a return address label will not be printed
 - the system will automatically print the letter with a blank address label
2. Check the countersignatory's address (SSL does not data verify this section).
3. Continue to create the letter.

How to address an AMS letter to a third party

To send a letter to a third party (a person who is not the customer or a countersignatory) you must:

1. Select **Other** on the **New IPS Letter** screen (the system will clear the address field).
2. Change the address, name and greeting to the details of the person you are sending the letter to.
3. Make sure you have checked the **Pre-Paid label** field if you are sending a pre-paid label to a third party.
4. Continue to create the letter.

How to add AMS letter phrases

To create a letter using system phrases, you must [create a blank letter template](#):

1. Enter a description of the letter in the Description field (the Addressee field will default to customer).

2. Check the pre-paid field is blank, (this will make sure the Return Address Label is printed).
3. Click the Phrases tab and select the correct template from the drop down.
4. Click Add Template.
5. Select the phrase you need from the drop down.
6. Click Add Phrase.
7. Click Print Preview (to preview the letter).
8. Check the letter to make sure:
 - the letter has a logical order
 - there are no spelling errors
 - there are no grammatical errors
9. Click **Print** (the 'letter history' screen will show).
10. Click **Pigeon Hole** to re-box the application to the team storage area.
11. Select your team pigeon hole from the drop down box.
12. Enter the reason you have sent a letter in the **Bring up Reason** field:
 - the bring-up date will default to 2 weeks.
 - to change the bring-up date, click on the calendar icon and select the date
13. Click **Submit** (the 'examination query raised questions' screen will appear).

The **Examination Query** screen has twelve pre-set questions. The answers all default to **No**. You must change at least 1 answer to **Yes**.

To change the answer to a question, you must:

1. Click on the radio button next to the **No** field.
2. Select the **Yes** option.
3. Click **OK** to show the reason you are sending the application to pigeon hole.
4. Mark the left margin of the new application forms you are sending to the customer with the current application number (if you need to).
5. Put the letter, any enclosures and a pre-paid label in a windowed C5 (Business Mail Advanced) 1st class envelope.
6. Place the letter in the 'post out tray'.
7. Stamp or write your name on the right-hand side of the application barcode number.
8. Place the form and supporting documents back in the wallet.
9. Place the wallet in the awaiting to be filed tray. (The examination support clerk will then file the application in a pigeon hole in alphabetical order).

How to rearrange the order of phrases on AMS letters

To rearrange the order of phrases, you must:

1. Click the up or down arrow on the phrase you need to move.
2. Move the phrase to the correct place in the letter.

How to include phrases from another AMS letter template

To include phrases from a different letter template, you must:

1. Select the Phrase Code from the drop down box (a list of phrases will appear).
2. Click on the phrase you want to add to your letter.
3. Click ADD.
4. [Move the phrase](#) to the correct place in the letter.
5. Return to New IPS Letter screen.
6. Click Print Preview (a preview of the letter will appear).
7. Check the letter to make sure there are no spelling or grammar errors.
8. Make any changes.
9. Click Print.

All letters will include header and footer information.

When the letter has printed, the **Letter Produced** screen will show the message

‘Correspondence generated for (LS Reference no) status of record updated to LTQ.’

You must select **OK**. The letter will display in the **Letter History** screen.

How to use AMS free text letter phrases

If you write a letter using the Application Management System (AMS) and there are no correct paragraphs that fit your needs, you can insert a blank (free text) paragraph. This free text area will allow you to customise the letter.

You must:

- only use free text when absolutely necessary
- never use free text as an opening paragraph in a letter

Before using free text, you must:

- check there is no other suitable phrase you can use
- search the letters and phrases log for an existing phrase you can use to ask for missing information or documentation

When using a free text paragraph, you must:

- keep the tone of the letter professional but friendly
- [use plain English](#) and words the customer can understand
- check for spelling and grammar errors
- read sentences aloud to check if they make sense

How to ask for a new digital photo on AMS

When you need the customer to send a new digital photo, you must:

1. Check the 'photo ok' tab is not ticked (to make sure the customer can upload a new photo).

2. Create a text 917 letter on AMS (Application Management System) asking for a new photo that meets the standards.
3. Include phrase 917 (AB).
4. Include at least 1 reason the customer's photo failed to meet the standards and a 'next action' paragraph.
5. Add a case note explaining why you rejected the photo.
6. Set an AMS 'bring-up' for 14 days.

You will not need to print out a paper copy of the letter, as we will not post it to the customer. They will receive an automatic notification from the Digital Customer Service (DCS) system, asking them to follow a secure link. The link will let the customer view the letter online and direct them to the photo guidance notes.

The customer's notification will also include a link that lets them upload a new digital photo. After the customer uploads their photo, the online photo tool will check and crop their image. The customer will be given guidance during this step, to help them capture an acceptable digital photo.

After the customer submits their photo online, AMS will create an alert with a bring-up for that day, telling you (the examiner) that the customer has uploaded a new photo.

You, the examiner, must:

- review the photo
- if it is acceptable, you must case note the application.
- repeat the process, if you decide not to accept the replacement photo

How to resend an AMS letter

You may need to resend a letter. For example, if the customer has not received the original letter. To resend a letter:

1. Click on **Letter History** in the **Examination** screen (the 'Letter History' screen will show).
2. Click on **View** to display the letter.
3. Click **Print** to reprint the letter.

How to send a letter from an AMS lost or stolen report

If you are examining an application to replace a passport that was lost or stolen and need to send a letter to the customer, you must:

1. Examine the lost and stolen (LS) application as much as you can.
2. Make sure you do not need to ask the customer for more information.
3. Record any related LS Notes.
4. Open the **New Letter screen**.

You can open the screen from the:

- **Authenticate LS Record** screen by selecting **Fail with Letter** in the 'Next Actions' menu
- **Letter History** screen by selecting the **New Letter** button
- **Cancellation Passport Record** screen by selecting the 'Yes - Cancel with Letter' link in the 'Next Actions' menu

The Header and Footer fields are pre-populated with details from the Main Index application record.

Only phrases that have been set up with the type LSR will show on the screen.

How to setup an AMS lost and stolen letter

To set-up a lost and stolen letter, you must:

1. Enter a description of the letter in the Description field.
2. Click on the **Phrases** tab page.
3. Click on the **Template** drop down (a list of LS templates will appear).
4. Click on the letter you need.
5. Click **Add** (a list of paragraphs will show).
6. Click the box next to each paragraph you need.
7. Enter any relevant text in the text substitution boxes.

If you do not complete the text substitution box, the message 'Substitution text must be entered', will appear. To clear this warning, you must:

1. Select **OK**.
2. Enter suitable text in the text substitution boxes.

To finish setting up the letter, you must delete the phrases you do not need:

1. Click the tick box next to the phrase you do not need.
2. Select **Remove**.
3. Repeat these steps for every phrase you need to remove.

AMS contact letters

You may need to send a letter to the customer asking them to contact HM Passport Office.

When sending this letter, you, must insert your Skype number. You must not use the Advice line telephone number.

Individual letters on Microsoft Word

Individual letters written using Microsoft Word are also known as Admin IT letters. Before sending them to the customer, you must have the customer assurance team check them.

To create an individual letter for a customer, you must:

1. Check there are no system phrases that include the information you need.
2. Draft the letter using the letter template.
3. Read the letter and confirm the content flows, is clear and free from errors.
4. Email the letter to customer assurance for approval.

After customer assurance approves your letter, you must:

1. Send the letter to the customer.
2. Add a case note detailing what the letter is about.
3. Send the application to the correct pigeon hole.
4. Scan a copy of the letter on to the application record.

Replying in the Welsh language

If a customer applies in the Welsh language any letters you send back must be in Welsh.

To send a letter in the Welsh language, you, must:

1. [Compose the letter on AMS](#) or draft an [Admin IT letter](#).
2. Email the letter to customer assurance for approval.
3. Once approval is received email the letter to the Big Word for translation.

When the translated letter is received, you, must:

1. Post the letter to the customer.
2. Scan a copy of the letter on to the application record.
3. Post the translated version of the letter to the customer.
4. Delete the email from your inbox.

How to ask for a change to an AMS system letter

If you find an existing letter that needs updating or identify a need for a new common paragraph, you must email a copy of the changes to customer assurance for approval.

The customer assurance team manages customer communications. They will consider your request and reply to you.

Related content

[Contents](#)

AMS applications: how to send emails

This section tells HM Passport Office staff using the Application Management System (AMS), about when and how to send standard email messages when contacting a customer, countersignatory or digital referee. It also includes what to do if it is send to the wrong email address and if the customer does not reply. This also applies for Digital Application Processing applications that are transferred to AMS.

If a customer, countersignatory or digital referee provides their email address on the application, we can contact them electronically.

If you need to ask for more information or documents from the customer, countersignatory or digital referee, you (the examiner) must:

- [create a letter on the Application Management System \(AMS\)](#)
- use Microsoft Outlook to send the email and AMS letter
- send the email from your own team's mailbox

AMS: how to contact a customer by email

When emailing a customer, you must:

- use the customer contact email template
- add the system letter as an attachment

AMS: how to contact a countersignatory by email

When you email a letter to the countersignatory (or digital referee), you must use the countersignature email template and add the system letter as an attachment.

AMS: how to contact a member of His Majesty's Armed Forces

If you are examining an application from a member of HM Forces or their dependents, you must:

- email all letters to the unit office that made the application
- use the HM Forces contact email template
- add a system letter, asking the customer for the information, as an attachment

AMS: how to contact a British overseas territories citizen

If a British overseas territories citizen (BOTC), applies for their passport through an overseas territory office, you (the examiner) must send an email directly to the overseas territory that sent the application.

AMS: how to set up an automatic email response

When the customer sends an email to your team mailbox, the mailbox will automatically send the customer a response.

To set up the response template for the first time, you must:

1. Open your team mailbox.
2. Click **File** in the toolbar at the top of the screen.
3. Click on **Automatic Replies** button.
4. Select **send automatic replies** radio button.
5. Click on Outside my Organisation tab.
6. Select the **Auto-reply to people outside my organisation** checkbox and add a tick.
7. Select **Anyone outside my organisation** radio button.
8. In the dialog box, add the standard template:

If we asked you to contact us using this email address, we will be expecting your email – we will identify you by your reference number.

We are unable to respond to general email enquiries.

You can track your application at: www.gov.uk/track-passport-application

To get information or to find out how to contact us, please visit:
www.gov.uk/browse/abroad/passports

On behalf of His Majesty's Passport Office

9. Click **OK**.

AMS: when we can and cannot accept emails

Where we do accept emailed information from a customer (or countersignatory) we must already have their email address on the application. We cannot accept information from an email address not shown on the application.

We do not accept most documents or information we need for a passport application by email. As we need to check these documents are genuine, the customer must send them by post. For example, we do not accept:

- core nationality documents (such as birth or marriage certificates, naturalisation or registration certificates)
- court orders (unless from a trusted source)
- identity documents (such as change of name documents)
- letters of authorisation or additional consent

This list is not exhaustive.

AMS: if a customer changes their email

If a customer has changed their email from the one on their application, you must:

1. Select the customer's contact and delivery on the Application details tab.
2. Check the new email address against the information on the customer's application to see if there are any areas for concern, for example:
 - does the new email match the digital referee or countersignatory's email (see Confirming ID: countersignatory and digital referees)
 - is there a third party involved and do we have consent to change the email contact address (see authorisation and consent)
 - do you have any fraud or safeguarding concerns about the new contact details
3. Update the customer's contact details on AMS and add a case note to record:
 - your decision and the actions you take
 - the new email address

You must refer the application for investigation, if:

- there is evidence of fraud (see risk indicators)
- the customer may be vulnerable (see vulnerability considerations for passports) and the change of email address has not been authorised by someone who is acting on their behalf

How DCS customers track their application after a change

Digital Customer Services (DCS) will not update the [tracker page](#) with the customer's new email address. The customer will:

- need to use their old email address to sign into the tracker
- not receive some progress email updates which will be sent to their old email address

How to send an AMS letter to the customer by email

When you need to email a letter to the customer, you, the examiner, must:

- only send the email from the team email mailbox not a personal mailbox
- use only the [customer's title](#), surname, first forename and initials on the Application Management System (AMS) letter
- remove the address and replace it with:
 - the customer's email address
 - the phrase 'sent by email'
- compare the customer's email address on the application to the email address on the system
- correct the email address on the system (if you need to)
- turn off the autocomplete button so the emails of the other customers who have previously been emailed do not appear. You can do this by:
 - going on Microsoft Outlook

- clicking the **File** tab
- clicking the **Options** tab
- clicking the **Mail** tab
- deselecting the tick box 'Use Auto-Complete List to suggest names when typing in the To, Cc and Bcc lines' under the **Send messages** heading

How to download a letter to a customer

To download a letter to the customer, you must:

1. Go to the AMS letter templates and select the correct letter and phrases (the letter will display in a new window).
2. Click on the **Download** icon.
3. Select the **Save File** option to download the document to your team folder (do not tick option 'Do this automatically for files like this from now on', as it will stop saved letters from displaying in future and will automatically print and download the letters instead. Examiners will not be able to see or edit saved letters on AMS screen).
4. Open your team folder.
5. Find the letters folder.
6. Left double-click to open the folder.
7. Click **Save and** save it in the folder using the customer's surname and the application reference number.

How to attach an AMS letter to an email

To attach a letter to an email, you must:

1. Select New email.
2. Select your team's shared email box from the dropdown in the From field.
3. Insert the customer's email address in the **To** field.
4. Insert the following text into the **Subject** field: 'Passport Application - HMPO Ref: Your Team/Your initials/Application ref'.
5. Select the **Insert** tab from the menu bar (a second menu bar will display).
6. Click **Attach File** (a list of folders will display).
7. Go to your team folder.
8. Open the letters folder.
9. Select the letter you need (this will attach the letter to the email).
10. Send the email.

After you send the email, you must:

1. Case note you have sent the letter by email.
2. Pigeon hole the application for 2 weeks.
3. Delete copies of the letters and photos from the:
 - folder
 - recycle bin

Sending an AMS letter to the countersignatory by email

Before contacting a countersignatory, you (the examiner) must:

- complete all countersignatory checks
- confirm the countersignatory's address, in reference books and with directory enquiries.

If you have concerns over the genuine nature of the countersignatory's details, you must refer the case to a manager who can offer advice. You can also refer the application to an Enhanced Application Checks (EAC) examiner.

You must phone the countersignatory to ask for an email address. You must only email letters to a countersignatory's:

- work or professional email address
- email address linked to their name (for example, John Smith at j.smith@email.com).

If you cannot email the countersignatory's business address or email linked to their name, you must send the letter by post.

When contacting a countersignatory you may need to send them a copy of the customer's photo, if you do you must also follow the instructions in [How to add the customer's photo to an email](#).

To email a letter (and photo image) to the countersignatory, you must:

1. Select New email.
2. Select your team's shared email box from the dropdown in the **From** field.
3. Use the email address the countersignatory gave us.
4. Insert the following text into the **Subject** field: 'Passport Application - HMPO Ref: Your Team/Your initials/Application ref'.
5. Use the wording in the countersignatory template.
6. Select the **Insert** tab from the menu bar (a second menu bar will show).
7. Click **Attach File** (a list of folders will display).
8. Go to your team folder.
9. Open the Letters folder.
10. Select the letter you need (this will attach the letter to the email).
11. Select the image you need (this will attach the image to the email).
12. Send the email.

When you have sent the email, you must:

1. Case note you have sent the letter by email.
2. Pigeonhole the application for 2 weeks.
3. Delete copies of the letters from the:
 - folder
 - recycle bin

How to add a customer's photo from AMS to an email

You must use the Microsoft Paint application to add a customer's photo onto an email to a countersignatory. To do this you must open Paint 3D from your desktop and use it to crop the image from AMS.

To copy a customer's photo from AMS and crop it to the correct size you must:

1. Open the application on AMS to the Photo & Sig tab.
2. Check that the photo is clearly visible on the screen.
3. Press the Fn and Print Screen buttons together on your keyboard to copy the screen image.
4. Open the Paint 3D application (previously saved onto your taskbar).
5. Select New.
6. Paste the screenshot into Paint 3D.
7. Click on the Crop button on the top left of the screen to crop the photo out of the screenshot and remove any application details from the image.
8. Click on the screenshot (the screenshot will be outlined with circles and a line).
9. Click on a circle one at a time and crop the screenshot to the correct size.
10. Click on the Done button.
11. Click on the Menu.
12. Select Save.
13. Save the photograph in the Letters subfolder of your team folder.

To add the cropped customer's photo to an email as an attachment you must:

1. Select Insert.
2. Select Attach File.
3. Go to the folder you have saved the photo in.
4. Click on the photo to add it to the email as an attachment.

You must delete the letter and photo from the team folder once it has sent.

Operational Team Leaders (OTL'S) must monitor all letters and photos have been deleted from the team folders.

How to create a desktop shortcut for the Paint 3D application

When you use the Microsoft Paint 3D application for the first time you must create a shortcut and attach it to your desktop toolbar.

To create a shortcut, you must:

1. Open the start menu (the Windows flag icon on the bottom left hand corner of your screen).
2. Select the Paint 3D icon in the Tools area, to the right of the start menu open screen.
3. Right click the mouse on the Paint application and select Pin to Start.

After you complete these steps, the Paint 3D application will be on your taskbar every time you log on, you will not have to do it again.

AMS: if you send an email to an incorrect email address

If you send an email to the wrong person, you must:

- forward it to the correct email address
- report the loss of data to the security liaison officer through your team manager

To forward the message to the correct customer, you must:

1. Go to 'sent' emails.
2. Find the email with the incorrect email address.
3. Select the email and click on the forward button.
4. Delete:
 - 'FW' from the Subject field.
 - any details that do not relate to the person you are sending the email to (for example, the incorrect email address)
 - any record of the incorrectly sent email (including details of the sender and the time the first email was sent)
5. Check the email to make sure the information is correct.
6. Insert the correct email address.
7. Send the email.

If the email returns an 'undeliverable message', you must contact the customer (or countersignatory) by phone to confirm their email address.

Related content

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How to send emails from Digital Application Processing

This section tells HM Passport Office staff how to send email messages from the Digital Application Processing system (DAP).

You, the Digital Application Processing system (DAP) examiner, may need to contact a customer to ask for documents or more information, or to tell them something (and not expect a reply).

If it is a simple question, you must try to resolve it on the phone. If you cannot resolve it by phone, you must contact the customer by email. There are 2 ways to create a customer email, depending on:

- the task you are processing
- whether the email template you need to use is included in:
 - the 'Comms builder'
 - a separate letter template

Sending an email in DAP: Comms builder templates

To create an email using a Comms builder template, you must:

1. Click on the Send an email tab (the Send an email page will display).
2. Open a new browser window or tab in your current window, and open the 'Comms builder'.
3. In the 'Comms builder' select email template from the drop down list.
4. Select the correct radio button and check boxes to answer the onscreen questions to create the email.
5. Click Copy email subject and paste it into the subject field in DAP.
6. Click Copy email message and paste it into the message field in DAP.
7. On the Send an email tab click Preview to view and check the message customer's details are correct. You must check you have used the right message options.
8. Follow the instructions to edit the return address if emailing a customer to ask for further documents or more information.
9. Change the email, if necessary, by clicking Continue editing and making the changes, (for example, if you have forgotten to include the subject field, or have selected the incorrect template or message options).
10. Click Preview again to check the message is correct.
11. Click Send.

Sending an email in DAP: using a letter template

To create an email using a letter template, you must:

1. Click on the **Send an email** tab (the Send an email page will display).
2. Open a new browser window or tab in your current window, and open the 'Comms builder'.
3. In the 'Comms builder' select email template from the drop down list. This will only add the email footer.
4. Select the correct letter template.
5. Copy and paste:
 - the header from the letter template into the **Send an email** tab
 - the appropriate paragraphs from the letter template into the **Send an email** tab
6. Only use the template phrases and do not make any changes to them.
7. Follow the instructions to edit the return address if emailing a customer to ask for further documents or more information.
8. Select **Preview** and check the content, layout, spelling and grammar.
9. Select **Save**.
10. Select **Submit** when the task is complete.

Sending an email in DAP: asking for more documents

If you, the DAP examiner, need to email a customer to ask them to send us further documents or more information, you must:

1. Follow the instructions to create an email using the Comms builder template.
2. Click **Preview** to view the message and then highlight the address using your mouse (hold the left mouse button and drag over the address to highlight).
3. Right click on the highlighted address and select **Copy** from the options.
4. Select the **Edit** tab.
5. Replace **_OFFICE_ADDRESS_** with the address you have copied by right clicking and selecting the **Paste** option.
6. Add **RQ** before the customer's applications number in the address details (for example, RQ PEX 123 456 7890).
7. Click **Preview** again to check the message is correct.
8. Click **Send**.

DAP: Tell someone something – I'm not expecting a response

You must use the **Tell someone something – I'm not expecting a response** radio button if you need to tell a customer information after completing their application. For example, when we:

- refuse to issue a passport because the customer has no claim
- withdraw their passport because the customer is not entitled
- withdraw their application at the customer's request
- send a travel document to the Home Office
- have processed a lost and stolen application

After you have written the email, it will be saved. The email will not be sent to the customer until the application is completed (for example, the new passport issued, or the application withdrawn).

DAP does not yet have the functionality to process some of these application types. You must only use the letter templates if other guidance tells you to.

DAP: how to view sent emails

To view an email sent from DAP, you must:

1. Access the Timeline tab.
2. Scroll down and find the email you want to view.
3. Click on the message details link, a copy of the email will display.

DAP: how to delete a draft email

If you write an email to a customer about their application and do not send it to them, it will be saved on the application as a draft email. If there is a draft email saved on an application, it is shown in a banner, above the task list.

You must delete a draft email if you decide:

- the email is no longer needed
- a more suitable email can be used

To delete a draft email, you must:

1. Click on the Send an email tab (the Send an email page will display).
2. Click Delete, at the bottom of the draft email.
3. Click Confirm to delete the draft email.

DAP: dealing with the customer's reply

When a customer replies to a letter or sends in documents, the Document Management Service (DMS) will scan the document onto DAP.

DAP will create an alert called Documents received. This is in the **Tasks** tab with any outstanding tasks. You must:

1. Open the Tasks tab.
2. Click View document, check the document the customer has sent, and complete the actions on the original task.
3. Select I've checked the documents.
4. Click Save.

DAP: if a customer changes their email address

If a DAP customer changes their email address from the one on their original application, you must assess the change using the information in the DAP change of customer's phone number or email address guidance.

Related content

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Email: undelivered or delivered to wrong person

This section tells HM Passport Office staff what to do when an email sent to a customer has not been delivered or has been sent to the wrong person.

When you are sending an email it is important to check the email address you are contacting is correct. An error in the email address can result in the email:

- not being received
- being sent to a different person, resulting in a potential data breach

AMS: undelivered email report

HM Passport Office email addresses are set to retry sending an email for 2 hours. If, after 2 hours, the email has not been successfully sent, you will receive a failed delivery report notification by email.

Where an email has failed to be sent you will receive an email from either MAILER-DAEMON, noreply_csmtpgw@homeoffice.gov.uk or smtpgw@homeoffice.gov.uk with a subject heading such as:

- “Delivery delayed: ...”
- “Delivery failed: ...”
- ‘Undelivered Mail Returned to Sender’

When you receive this email you must review the delivery report enclosed to see why a particular email has failed.

If the email has failed because of an incorrect or mistyped email address (for example, hotmall instead of hotmail or ouilook instead of outlook), you must correct the email details and resend the email.

AMS: email sent to the wrong person

If you send an email to the wrong person, you must:

- check the email address held on AMS (the Application Management System)
- resend the email to the correct email address if you have clearly mistyped it, for example, if a letter is in the wrong order
- report the loss of data to the security liaison officer through your team manager

AMS: resending an email to the correct email address

To resend the message to the correct customer, you must:

1. Go to 'sent' emails.
2. Find the email with the incorrect email address.
3. Select the email and click on the forward button.
4. Delete:
 - 'FW' from the Subject field.
 - any details that do not relate to the person you are sending the email to (for example, the incorrect email address)
 - any record of the incorrectly sent email (including details of the sender and the time the first email was sent)
5. Check the email to make sure the information is correct.
6. Insert the correct email address.
7. Send the email.

If the email still returns an 'undeliverable message', you must contact the customer (or countersignatory) by phone to confirm their email address.

DAP: customer tells us they have not received an email from us

When sending an email to a customer from Digital Application Processing (DAP), the DAP system does not recognise if the customer has entered an incorrect or misspelt email address. You will only be aware of this if you contact a customer by other means and they claim never to have received any emails.

If the customer has provided someone else's email address in error, you must report the loss of data to the security liaison officer through your team manager.

If a customer wants to change the email address held on DAP, you must follow the DAP: change of customers phone number or email address guidance. If you then want to resend a previous email you must follow the create an email using the Comms builder template guidance.

How CSMT communicates with customers

This section tells HM Passport Office staff about how the Customer Services Management team contacts HM Passport Office customers and the Customer Service Liaison team.

The Customer Services Management team (CSMT) is based in Southport. They deal with:

- customer complaints
- general correspondence
- correspondence for applications not live on the Application Management System (AMS) or Digital Application Processing (DAP)
- a deceased person's passport
- cancelling passports returned by frequent travelers, after we issue them replacement passports
- calls, emails and web chats that TP sends

How CSMT contacts customers

The CSMT will contact customers by phone, email and letter, if they need to respond to their questions or complaints. They will add a case note (or passport note) on the system.

How CSMT contacts the Customer Service Liaison team

If the CSMT needs to contact Customer Service Liaison team (CSLT) at an Application Processing Centre, they will email or phone.

If a customer asks us to escalate their phone call or complaint (for example, if they ask to speak to a manager) you, the CSMT member must refer to the customer complaints guidance.

Guidance for specific CSMT tasks are on the CSMT SharePoint site.

Related content

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How Counter Fraud teams communicate with customers

This section tells HM Passport Office staff how Counter Fraud teams communicate with HM Passport Office customers.

Counter Fraud teams (CFT) will contact customers by phone, email and letter, when dealing with referrals and casework.

Counter Fraud Teams: sending letters by email

Counter Fraud teams generally use Microsoft Word templates to write letters, instead of using system generated letters and send these letters to customers using email.

You, the counter fraud investigator, must convert the Word template to a PDF format before emailing the letter to the customer.

This is to stop us sending a letter in a format which may allow the recipient to view other subject details, from the template, and breach data protection rules.

How to create a PDF format letter

If you need to change the format of a Microsoft Word letter to a PDF version, you must:

1. Open the letter.
2. Click **File** in the toolbar at the top of the screen.
3. Select **Save As** and add:
 - where to save the letter
 - the name of the letter
4. Click **Save as type** dropdown box and select PDF.
5. Click **Save**.

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How Teleperformance communicates with customers

This section tells HM Passport Office staff how Teleperformance communicates with HM Passport Office customers.

Teleperformance (TP) is our external contact centre provider. They handle first and second line customer contact and answer general questions about applications.

Teleperformance responsibilities

TP is responsible for:

- providing telephone, email and webchat support to customers, including:
 - dealing with questions
 - requests for application packs
 - customer feedback forms
- booking passport interview and counter appointments for customers unable to book online
- sending out passport interview invitation letters
- taking payment from customers
- coordinating with British Sign Language interpreters for customers who need an interpreter
- providing the Passport Validation Service
- providing services to the Ministry of Justice

TP will communicate with customers in Welsh, if the customer asks for this. TP will escalate question they cannot deal with to the Customer Service Management team

TP can transfer calls, by:

- cold transfer (transferring the call directly without an explanation)
- a warm transfer (where the TP explain the details of the question or complaint)

If a customer asks for an upgrade, TP will email the Customer Service Liaison team (CSLT) who will contact the examiner.

If TP needs to escalate a call when our offices are closed, they will email the CSLT and ask for a call back.

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Customer communication courses available for staff

This section tells HM Passport Office staff about customer communication courses available for staff.

HM Passport Office has 2 training courses available to support staff communicating with customers on the telephone or in letters.

Telephone communications

Operational learning has developed a 1 day classroom course called 'Customer Communication' that focuses on telephone communications. Line managers must email: Operational Training to ask for this course.

Customer communications e-learning course

HM Passport Office staff who write letters or use free text must take the Customer Communications e-learning course.

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