



national treasury

Department:
National Treasury
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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TO ALL PERSAL CONTROLLERS

PERSAL NOTICE NUMBER 371

DATA DISCREPANCIES – REPORTS

1. The purpose of this notice is to create awareness of possible data discrepancies and enable departments to declare them when it is identified.
2. The following factors may cause data discrepancies:

2.1 Snapshot vs. live environment

- Snapshot data is extracted at a specific date/time and stored/published as such. Depending on the transaction update date and time, some records may be included or excluded. Backdated transactions that are processed on the system for a period before the snapshot extraction date, but after the snapshot run, will not reflect on the snapshot data, as it was updated afterwards. Examples are the Vulindlela HR Oversight data, PERSAL Powerstats, PERSAL MIS monthly data.
- Live environment data includes the latest updated information at the time of extraction. Most PERSAL System reports are transactional driven and may differ if extracted on the same date at different time intervals due to transactions that are constantly processed and updated.

2.2 Data extraction completion time

- Data that is intended for a specific day of the month (first/last) will be influenced by the actual extraction date and it can result in differences. The date/time the report is submitted might be on/for the last day of the month, but the completion of the extraction task might be at a date/time on the next day.
- During the extraction, the data on the system/information is reflected at the time the databases were accessed and it can happen that transactions were



processed during the time the extraction job was running. This can influence the outcome of the data. E.g., If an extraction job is submitted on 31 March but only completes on 1 April, any resignation for 31 March that was processed on 1 April while the extraction was executing, will now be included/excluded in the data.

- The data extraction jobs on PERSAL cannot run stand-alone due to the PERSAL System being an HR and payroll system where constant updating and processing of data takes place. This can cause data to change the whole time while the extraction jobs are running.
- The data extraction time is determined by high data volumes, higher prioritized transactions waiting to update, maintenance of the mainframes and downtime of the PERSAL System.

2.3 Sources of data extraction

- All data on the PERSAL System are grouped and stored in different files. Some files are overwritten with the latest information, and some keep history. Not all records are linked between different files.
- Using a specific file as the starting point of the report might cause discrepancies between current and historic data. The more files accessed to retrieve data, the greater the chances for discrepancies.
- For example, information regarding the service record is reflected as current data (latest information with no history) vs salary payslips that have historic data for every payment made. Should a report be requested regarding the notch of the person, it will make a difference on whether the report is extracted using the service record or the payslip history, should there have been backdated transactions influencing the person's notch.

2.4 Business rules

- Several reports are generated for different institutions e.g., DPSSA or systems e.g., Vulindlela, using PERSAL as the Source System, each with unique business rules (Meta Data) for the specific requirement. These rules determine how data is identified and extracted.



- It is advisable to utilize detailed data files from the original reporting institution/systems using the same business rules, for verification thereof.

2.5 Split and merge of departments over periods

- If information is requested backdated and departments have since split or merged, the data needs to be extracted per organization as it existed for that period and then combined afterwards.
- Information can only be derived from an organization for the period it was active.

2.6 FTP and download of data

- Records may get lost when downloading data from the mainframe to the PC. The data line or mainframe may go down for some reason. Downloading of data and the utilization of software packages may also cause problems. The packages (example Excel) only cater for a certain number of lines and if data consist of more lines, then some data may get lost.
- It is important to know the number of records in a file before downloading and to verify that the same number of records are contained in the file that was downloaded.

2.7 Human and program error

- Despite standard procedures in place to ensure the correctness of data, the complexity of the system and constant changes to adhere to the legislature, do not safeguard Departments against errors which may occur.
- However, departments are not exempted from the responsibility to verify their data properly.

3. To report accurately on data from a live transactional system, such as PERSAL, is a continuous challenge. Data must be managed properly by departments by utilizing the related system reports, as well as available exception reports. Discrepancies can always be verified, by utilizing function #6.9.10 (Transaction File), to declare recent changes (user/reviser/date/time).



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4. Your co-operation in bringing the contents of this notice to the attention of all parties concerned is appreciated.

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ACTING DIRECTOR: PROJECTS MANAGEMENT
FOR DIRECTOR-GENERAL: NATIONAL TREASURY
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