



**WCO**

**UNIQUE CONSIGNMENT  
REFERENCE (UCR)**

**WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION**

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## **1. MANAGEMENT SUMMARY**

The Unique Consignment Reference UCR is a reference number for Customs use and may be required to be reported to Customs at any point during a Customs procedure. The UCR should be :

- Applied to all international goods movements for which Customs control is required;
- Used only as an access key for audit, consignment tracking and information, reconciliation purposes;
- Unique at both national and international level;
- Applied at consignment level;
- Issued as early as possible in the international transaction.

The main objective of the UCR is to define a generic mechanism that has sufficient flexibility to cope with the most common scenarios that occur in International Trade. The basis of the UCR is to make maximal use of existing Supplier, Customer and Transport references.

The fundamental considerations behind the current UCR concept derive from the need for Customs authorities to facilitate legitimate International Trade, while, at the same time, not "opening the flood gates" as a by-product of relaxation of controls. The UCR will provide Customs with an efficient tool to exchange information between enforcement agencies.

As one of the leading international trade organizations expressed : "Like an electronic staple designed for e-commerce, a UCR binds information together all the bits of data about a trade transaction, from initial order and consignment of goods by a supplier, to the movement of those goods and arrival at the border, through to their final delivery to the importer".

### **Benefits of UCR**

The UCR enables the various information systems of a Customs service and its trading partners to work together in the most effective way possible. If properly applied, it permits the information from the goods declaration to be joined with that from the manifest at the earliest stage in the Customs process. The many benefits of the UCR include :

- Promoting safe and secure borders by providing enhanced access to information at time of release;
- Helps co-operating export and import Customs to offer authorized traders end-to-end premium procedures and simple integrated treatment of the total transaction;
- Enabling the processing of pre-arrival data prior to the assignment of a Goods Declaration number;
- Contributing to rapid release;
- Helping in the management of the logistical chain and enhancing just-in-time operations;
- Eliminating redundant and repetitive data submitted by the carrier and the importer;
- Reducing the amount of data required to be presented at time of release;
- Provides an additional aid in general cargo reception, handling and servicing at ports;
- Allows commercial and official contacts/enquiries at any point in the logistical chain;

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- Reducing compliance costs;
- Promoting greater Customs co-operation.

### Implementation of the UCR

The implementation of the UCR should take place at the national level. However, the UCR is most effectively implemented on a bilateral or multilateral basis thereby assisting co-operation between Customs administrations, to provide services and procedures fully adapted to the increasing trend to centrally manage international trade transactions.

The implementation of the UCR should take place only after close consultation with trade as requested in the UCR Recommendation. It is recognized that the implementation will happen over a period of time thus requiring flexibility from all parties.

As mentioned above, the focus should be on the eventual full implementation and both Customs and trade should reflect this in their long-term business and investment plans. Since the WCO Customs Data Model already incorporates the UCR, due consideration should be given to a simultaneous implementation of the two initiatives.

Further detail is contained in the Accompanying Guidelines.

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**2. ACCOMPANYING GUIDELINES TO THE UCR**

**2.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW**

The fundamental consideration behind the UCR concept derives from the need for Customs authorities to facilitate legitimate International Trade, while, at the same time, introducing control instruments necessary for efficient and effective audit-based controls. The obligations of Customs to protect society (admissibility) and to collect the right amount of revenue are paramount. Whilst there is an increasing trend for Customs authorities to move revenue aspects away from the border, admissibility will always remain a border control activity, for both Imports & Exports. From this division of Customs responsibilities arises the need to maintain a comprehensive audit trail from the origin to the destination of the total trade transaction.

In the context of security and facilitation of the international trade supply chain as contained in the WCO Guidelines on Advance Cargo Information (ACI Guidelines), it is envisaged that the UCR will, initially, provide an opportunity to limit the amount of transactional information required to be presented to Customs by enabling Customs to carry out risk assessment prior to the importation of the goods. In the long term and in the context of authorized trader regimes and the Authorized Supply Chain, the UCR has the capability to replace the traditional Cargo and Goods declarations and to provide or give access to the necessary data for the accomplishment of all obligations pertaining to a given international consignment. However, this can only be contemplated by Customs on the condition that the 'end-to-end' audit trail is complete. For this reason, the allocation of the UCR at source is deemed mandatory.

**2.2 BASICS OF THE CONCEPT**

From the Customs point of view, the UCR is intended to provide continuity of the audit trail from source to destination to facilitate the move to more audit-based controls.

The main objective is to define a generic mechanism that has sufficient flexibility to cope with the most common scenarios that occur in international trade. The focal point of defining the mechanism is to consider the objectives of the international supply chain rather than the current processes employed (figure 1).

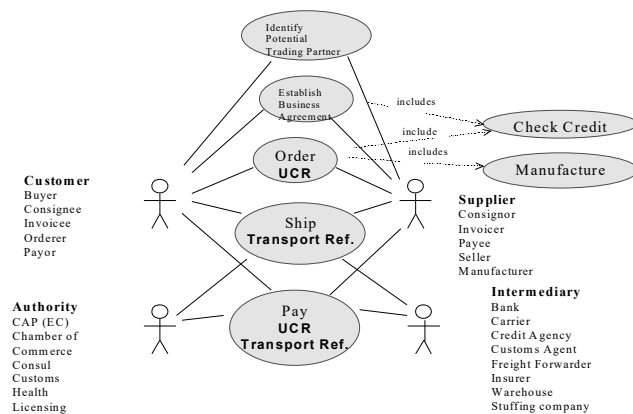


Figure 1 (Based on UN/CEFACT Reference Model)

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Whilst there are several possibilities in achieving this objective, the concept recognises the need to take account of trade exigencies and have minimal impact on them. The basis of the UCR is to set regulatory requirements for the use of existing Supplier/Customer references preferably on the basis international standards such as ISO 15459-1 (The ISO License Plate). In conjunction with existing Transport References, or in case the UCR is already being used as the transport reference, this concept provides :

- The Trade with a tracking capability
- Customs with a 'Source to Destination' audit trail
- Access to the underlying Commercial data that is of interest to Customs and other regulatory bodies.

The UCR provides the access 'key' to the Supplier/Customer commercial data whilst the transport reference(s) provide the access 'key' to the Carrier data. In case the UCR is also used as the transport reference it automatically provides also access to the underlying forwarder and carrier data.

### 2.3 BENEFITS OF UCR

The UCR enables the various information systems of a Customs service and its trading partners to work together in the most effective way possible. If properly applied, it permits the information from the goods declaration to be joined with that from the manifest at the earliest stage in the Customs process. The many benefits of the UCR include :

- Promoting safe and secure borders by providing enhanced access to information at time of release;
- Helps co-operating export and import Customs to offer authorized traders end-to-end premium procedures and simple integrated treatment of the total transaction;
- Enabling risk assessment and processing of the declaration prior to the arrival of the goods;
- Contributing to rapid release;
- Helping in the management of the logistical chain and enhancing just-in-time operations;
- Eliminating redundant and repetitive data submitted by the carrier and the importer;
- Reducing the amount of data required to be presented at time of release;
- Provides an additional aid in general cargo reception, handling and servicing at ports;
- Allows commercial and official contacts/enquiries at any point in the logistical chain;
- Reducing compliance costs and
- Promoting greater Customs co-operation.

### 2.4 PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

This document is intended to provide :

- An outline of the implementation and use of the WCO Recommendation on the UCR;
- A description of the relationship between the UCR and transport references and how this relationship can be used for Customs purposes;
- An illustration of the potential of the UCR for the Customs business;
- Guidelines for the integration of the UCR (and Customs procedures) within the international supply chain.

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### 2.5 CRITERIA FOR UNIQUE CONSIGNMENT REFERENCES

The WCO Recommendation on the UCR contains a number of criteria, which each of the suggested technical solutions for the UCR will have to comply with. In the following each of these criteria is explained in detail to facilitate implementation.

#### 2.5.1 Trade consultation

The WCO Recommendation on the UCR recommends that Members of the Council and members of the United Nations Organization or its specialized agencies, and Customs or Economic Unions, should **adopt and implement a Unique Consignment Reference (UCR) in close consultation with their trade bodies and transportation industries.**

Formal trade consultation has been a recommended best practice by the WCO for many years. Trade consultation has become a central part in the revised Kyoto Convention and has received the status of an obligatory standard in the General Annex (Standard 1.3 and 8.5). Trade consultation is also a central requirement in the ICC Customs Guidelines.

#### 2.5.2 Scope

The WCO Recommendation requires the **UCR to be used for all international trade transactions.** The requirement includes all transactions, including those with non-commercial character. The Recommendation allows the UCR to be issued by or on behalf of the party initiating the international transaction. [Many consignments, in particular those with non-commercial character, are being transported by integrated transport operators, which are applying reliable tracking and tracing systems. For such consignments it is therefore possible and advisable for the supplier (consignor) and the customer (consignee) to use the "tracking number" issued by the integrated transport operator as the UCR.]

#### 2.5.3 Consignment level

**The UCR has to be applied at consignment level,** with a consignment being identified as "the total number of items specified in the commercial contract between the supplier and the customer and transported in a single or in multiple shipments". This definition takes account of the two determining activities in international trade, the commercial contract between customer and supplier and the contract of carriage with the forwarder or carrier.

The commercial contract (in most cases a contract of sale) is the agreement between the Supplier and Customer for the supply of the designated Goods. This contract is given a reference that is either defined by the Supplier or Customer or agreed between both parties. It is entered into both parties' records, becoming the start and the end of the 'source to destination' audit trail.

As for the contract of carriage with the forwarder or carrier, provision is made for the fact that goods can be consigned in either in a single or in multiple shipments.

Example: An order to a Supplier may be for 1,000 items (all of the same, or different articles). If the 1,000 are despatched from the Supplier in whole a single UCR is all that is required. This includes the possibility that the goods cross the border either on one means of transport (single shipment) or on more than one means of transport (multiple shipments). If, however, the 1,000 items are transported in equal lots of 250 over a 4-

month period, each shipment would constitute a separate consignment and thus require each a UCR.

### 2.5.4 Access key

**The UCR serves as an access key** for audit, consignment tracking, information consolidation and reconciliation purposes. This means that the UCR is not intended to be the source of but the access key to information relating to the consignment held by the various parties in the supply chain.

Not being the source of information will also ensure confidentiality of commercial information. In addition, the implementation of the UCR and its use by regulatory bodies including Customs should ensure that Customs and other official regulatory bodies involved in international trade have access to only those particulars to which they are entitled by law.

### 2.5.5 Uniqueness

The UCR has to be able to **uniquely identify data related to individual international trade transactions** between a supplier and a customer at both the national and international level for a sufficient period of time in accordance with national data retention rules.

Uniqueness is a very important criteria for the UCR and has to take into account a number of factors. The individual solutions for building the UCR as referred to in these Guidelines show, that uniqueness at national and international level requires at least a unique party identifier and a unique sequential number.

The UCR Recommendation refers to national data retention rules for Customs and other purposes determining the period over which a UCR would have to remain unique. Due to the global nature of international trade, harmonization of these rules is recommended. Without international harmonization, business will be required to apply the strongest rule in a given transaction. Example: Provided country A requires 3 years data retention over 5 years required in country B, the UCR for a consignment from country A to country B would have to satisfy the 5 year rule in country B.

It will be the sequential number part in any of the existing numbering systems, ISO 15459 compliant or proprietary, that would have to contain a mechanism ensuring uniqueness of the UCR over a sufficient period of time. One solution that would ensure uniqueness over a period of at least 10 years, a period that would satisfy all currently known requirements, would be to require the first digit of the sequential number part contains the last digit of the relevant calendar year. The sequential number itself, that would follow the last digit of the calendar year, would have to have a sufficient length ensuring that numbers do not reoccur over a period of one calendar year.

Example based on ISO 15459-1: UN1234567893123456789

UN – Issuing agency code assigned to DUNS

123456789 – DUNS number identifying the assigning entity

3123456789 – sequential number with the first digit identifying the year 2003.

Although the WCO Recommendation expresses a preference for the use of ISO Standard 15459-1, the Recommendation allows for other equivalent technical solutions to be used for building the UCR as well. The criteria of uniqueness has to take this flexibility into account by requiring the use of an identification mechanism for the type of UCR applied. This could be achieved by specific qualifiers in electronic data exchanges

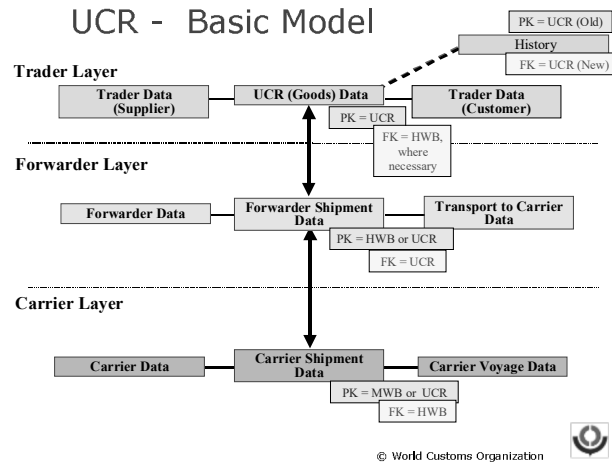


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indicating whether the UCR follows either the ISO 15459-1 standard or other recognized formats.

### 2.5.6 Association with transport references

The UCR has to be associated with other relevant trade or transport references to establish an origin to destination information and documentation trail for the individual consignment, in case that the UCR, as defined in the accompanying Guidelines is not already used as the transport reference. Figure 2 shows the basic model of the UCR and illustrates the different layers in the transaction.



The primary role of the UCR is to establish a unique reference to the commercial layer of the transaction between the customer and the supplier. This reference must relate to the agreed “Contract of Sale” reference agreed between the Supplier and the Customer. It becomes the most critical function of the UCR.

The UCR has also the potential to be shared with the transportation layer, hence providing the reference to both, with the forwarder. In individual cases, the UCR could even be used by the carrier as the reference number, provided the consignment is not consolidated with other consignments. The different roles and functions a party can play in the international transaction is described in more detail in Chapter 5.

However, in a number, if not the majority of cases, the UCR will only represent the trader reference and therefore will have to be linked with the transport reference(s) in order to create the capability to navigate from the trader layer to the transportation layer and vice-versa. A transport reference for the purpose of this document is a generic term used to refer to, for example, an Air Waybill No., a Bill of Lading No., a Road Haulier’s carriage note No. or a Rail Company’s carriage note No. This, in turn, maintains the audit trail by providing a unique record of specific Goods carried under specific transport references, as illustrated by the following diagram (figure 3).

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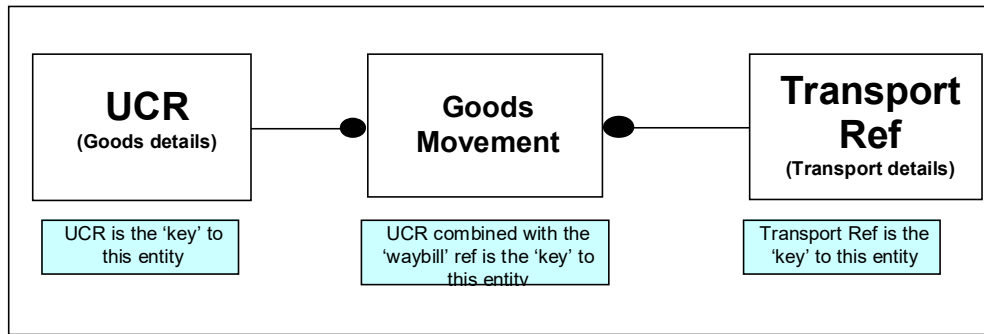


Figure 3

To maintain the continuity of the audit trail, a relationship between the UCR & the Transport Reference is created. An essential element of creating this relationship is the necessity of Forwarders to include the UCR in the transport document, typically the house waybill. Such a relationship must be able to handle the 3 most commonly used transport methods:

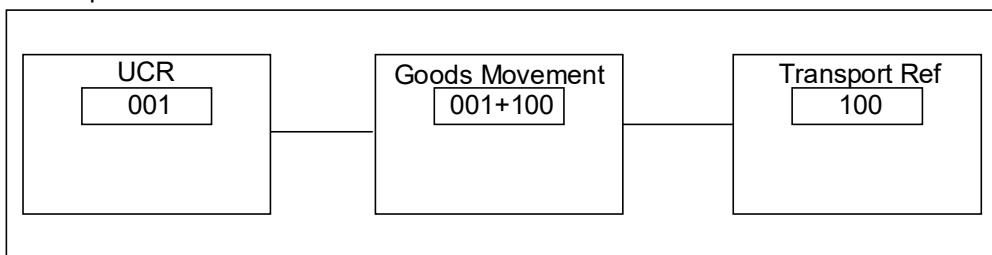
- Consigned completely under a single Transport Reference;
- Consigned along with other (unrelated) Goods under a single Transport Reference (typically a 'consolidation') or
- Part shipped under different Transport References.

For an integrated transport operation the UCR used by the supplier (consignor) or the customer (consignee) will generally be the Integrator's own reference. Where this is not the case, a UCR issued by the supplier or the customer would have to be linked with the Integrator's own reference (which is a 'through reference') as all other relationships are already established within the Integrator's systems. This scenario can also apply to a forwarder who has the capability to allocate a single reference for the transport of the WHOLE consignment throughout from source to destination. Provided the Forwarder system is able to maintain the relationships between all other transport references in the 'chain', then the only relationship that needs to be established with the UCR is that forwarder reference. To take this a stage further, if both the Supplier and the Customer agree to use the 'through reference' in their own system as opposed to their own references, then the 'through reference' becomes the UCR.

The three scenarios are depicted in the following diagrams:

### Example 1

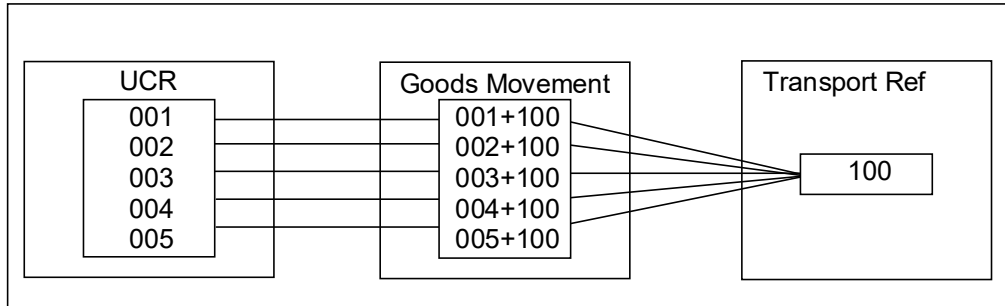
Single Supplier with total Goods (single UCR) transported in whole under a single Transport Reference



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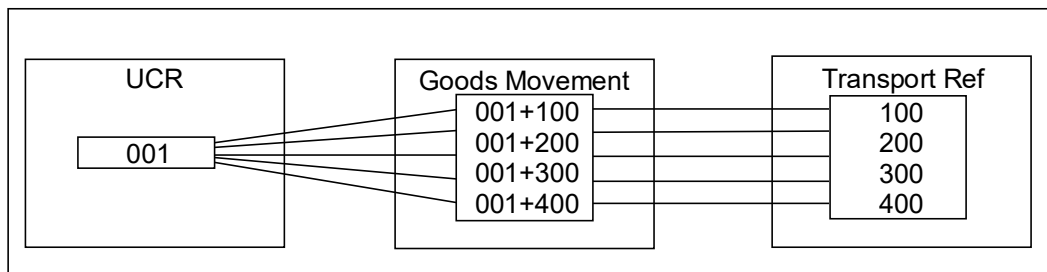
### Example 2

A typical consolidation. Many Goods (each referenced by an individual UCR) transported under a single Transport Reference



### Example 3

A 'Split' – Total Goods (single UCR) transported under many Transport Reference numbers



### 2.5.7 Issuing party

The UCR has to be issued for all consignments by or on behalf of the party having initiated the international trade transaction.

The Supplier and the Customer are the two important parties in an international trade transaction. In the majority of cases, the Customer initiates the international trade transaction by placing an order with the Supplier (mostly purchase orders). The delivery term chosen and agreed for a particular trade transaction determines who initiates and is responsible for arranging the transport of the consignment. This will consequently also have an impact on whether the Supplier or the Customer will be responsible for issuing the UCR.

Delivery terms can be generally divided into two categories, namely "departure terms" and "arrival terms". For "departure terms" such as EXW - Ex Works, FOB – Free On Board or CIF – Cost, Insurance and Freight, a great portion if not the entire transport has to be arranged by the customer. The transfer of risk takes place in the country of departure. In these cases it appears to be logical that the Customer is responsible for issuing and communicating the UCR to the Supplier. For "arrival terms" such as DAF – Delivered At Frontier, DDU – Delivered Duty Unpaid or DDP – Delivered Duty Paid, the responsibility for arranging the transport rests with the supplier. In these cases the transfer of risk takes place in the country of delivery and consequently the Supplier should be responsible for issuing and communicating the UCR to the Customer.

The Supplier will be responsible for supplying the UCR to the Customs in the Export Country. In the majority of cases, the Supplier is expected to be the Exporter who will be operating a computer system and be responsible for discharging Customs and other regulatory obligations. There are, however, exceptions to this generalisation. In such cases, a 3<sup>rd</sup> party “agent” will take responsibility for Supplier obligations. Whatever the commercial arrangements, the organisations responsible to Customs must supply the UCR either directly or on behalf of the Supplier.

The Customer is the end recipient of the Consignment and will supply the UCR to Customs in the Import Country. In the majority of cases, this is expected to be the Importer who will be operating a computer system and be responsible for discharging Customs and other regulatory obligations. There are, however, exceptions to this generalisation. In such cases, a 3<sup>rd</sup> party ‘agent’ will take responsibility for Customs obligations. Whatever the commercial arrangements, the organisations responsible to Customs must supply the UCR either directly or on behalf of the Customer.

A Forwarder, who is the party responsible for arranging the transport of the Goods, may also act as the 3<sup>rd</sup> party ‘agent’ in respect of the discharge of Customs obligations.

For consignments with non-commercial character, e.g. private consignments, where the sender of the consignment is a private person and where the consignment is sent through an integrated transport operation (e.g. Fast Parcels/Couriers), it is expected that the UCR is regularly issued on behalf of the sender by the party carrying out the transport and delivery of the consignment.

### 2.5.8 Communication

The UCR is to be **used in all relevant communications by all parties involved in the entire supply chain** with regard to Customs and all other relevant regulatory agencies. In order to establish a complete information and documentation trail of a given international transaction, the UCR has to become integral part of all relevant documentation and communication between the various parties involved in the transaction such as the purchase order, commercial invoice, waybills, cargo declarations, goods declarations, etc. While it will not be necessary to make the UCR the primary key in all these communications, the UCR will have to become a required and over time mandatory piece of information.

To support this undertaking, the WCO Secretariat will promote the use of the UCR with other bodies, in particular with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) to include the UCR, for example, in the United Nations Layout Key (UN/ECE Rec. No 1) and corresponding electronic messages.

### 2.5.9 ISO 15459 Part 1 and Part 2

The WCO Recommendation does not contain a numbering structure but refers to the existing international standard **ISO Standard 15459 Part 1 and Part 2 on unique identification** and future updated versions. This international standard is the preferred option for the implementation of the UCR, since it provides an already established, international, well-documented and open standard.

ISO 15459 Part1 specifies the general concept of ISO 15459-1 compliant numbers, which is a unique, non-significant number for transport units. The term “transport unit” is not meant to refer to a physical transport unit, but rather to a unit of commodities to be

transported. This concept is in line with the concept of a “consignment” used in the Recommendation and these Guidelines.

ISO 15459 Part 1 also specifies the basic rules for ISO 15459-1 compliant numbers, which

- (a) shall start with a string of characters, the issuing agency code (IAC), assigned to the issuing agency by the Registration Authority; ISO 15459 Part 2 specifies that individual organizations or companies wishing to issue ISO 15459 compliant license plates shall do so through umbrella organizations such as their trade associations, or a public or state agency.

This indicates that issuing agencies as defined in ISO 15459 Part 1 and 2 are not necessarily identical with the party responsible for issuing the UCR. Example: ISO 15459-1 compliant numbers issued by member companies of Odette carry the identification “OD” for Odette as the issuing agency code. However it is the individual company that is assigning the ISO 15459-1 compliant UCR.

- (b) shall conform to a format specified by the issuing agency;
- (c) shall be unique in the sense that no issuer re-issues a number until a sufficient period of time has passed so that the first number has ceased to be of significance to any user responsible to the issuing agency;
- (d) shall contain only numeric and upper case alphabetic characters drawn from ISO/IEC 646 (not including lower case characters or punctuation marks);
- (e) shall not contain more than 35 characters;  
NOTE: For efficient use within bar coding systems, it is recommended that wherever possible the number of characters be maximum 20. However, any data processing system shall be capable of processing numbers of 35 characters.

As for the issuing agencies as defined in ISO15459 Part 1 going to use their ISO 15459-1 compliant solutions for UCR purposes, they will have to conform with the rules and criteria set out in the Recommendation and these Guidelines. This relates in particular to criteria c) on the uniqueness of the number.

ISO 15459 Part 2 specifies the registration procedure for entities wanting to become an issuing agency. The Registration Authority responsible for the registration procedures is the Dutch standardization body NEN (Nederlands Normalisatie-instituut, [www.nen.nl](http://www.nen.nl)).

All details relating to this standard are contained in the official ISO documentation ISO/IEC 15459-1:1999(E) and ISO/IEC 15459-2:1999(E), which can be obtained from the ISO ([www.iso.ch](http://www.iso.ch)) or from national standardization bodies.

A number of case studies showing how ISO 15459-1 operates in practice are attached.

### 2.5.10 Other existing industry solutions

Where this ISO standard is not yet applied, the WCO Recommendation provides for other existing relevant standards or industry specific reference numbers to be used as well provided they are not exceeding 35 alphanumeric characters and enable a unique origin-to-destination information and documentation trail of the entire international trade transaction.

There are business sectors, in particular the integrated transport operators, which have developed their own solutions and applying them successfully for many years. They are not yet applying or will not apply ISO 15459 Part 1 and Part 2, but have developed equivalent systems.

Although it would be desirable to have one single international standard used in the global supply chains, the WCO Recommendation recognizes these existing proprietary standards as well. However, wherever possible migration to ISO 15459 Part 1 and Part 2 is recommended. Also, where a company or a business sector that is not yet applying any of such referencing systems has decided to develop such a system, they will have to develop a ISO 15459 Part 1 and Part 2 compliant solution.

Those parties using their existing proprietary solutions for UCR purposes will have to conform with the rules and criteria set out in the Recommendation and these Guidelines. This relates in particular to criteria of the uniqueness of the number.

A number of case studies showing how these proprietary solutions operate in practice are attached.

As explained earlier in these Guidelines the criteria of uniqueness will have to take into account the possibility of having more than one numbering system used for building the UCR. This could be done by requiring the use of an identification mechanism for the type of UCR applied. This could be achieved by specific qualifiers in electronic data exchanges indicating whether the UCR follows either the ISO15459-1 standard or other recognized formats.

### 2.5.11 Notification to the WCO

Members of the Council and members of the United Nations Organization or its specialized agencies, and Customs or Economic Unions which accept this Recommendation are requested to notify the Secretary General of the Council of the date from which they will apply the Recommendation and of the conditions of its application. The Secretary General will transmit this information to the Customs administrations of all Members of the Council. He will also transmit it to the Customs administrations of the members of the United Nations Organization or its specialized agencies and to Customs or Economic Unions that have accepted this Recommendation.

The official acceptance and notification of acceptance is a very important aspect of WCO instruments such as recommendations. They provide easily accessible information on whether a country is applying an instrument or not. While it is also very important that the principles of an instrument are applied without necessarily going through the official notification process, the official notification and the publication thereof contributes significantly to the important and necessary transparency in international trade procedures.

Customs administrations are therefore strongly urged to follow the notification process.

### 2.5.12 Co-ordination with other bodies

The WCO Recommendation on the UCR also requests the Secretary General to work with relevant international organizations such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe to ensure that this Recommendation is being reflected in their respective instruments and recommendations.

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This aspect of the Recommendation is to ensure that instruments of other relevant intergovernmental bodies are compatible with this WCO instrument. This relates in particular to the United Nations Layout Key (UNLK), developed and maintained by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE). It will be important that this UN standard makes provision for the UCR to be included in all UNLK compatible trade documents. In addition to the UNLK for paper documents, the WCO will seek the co-operation with the UN on making references to the UCR in the e-business standards developed and maintained by the United Nations such as UN/EDIFACT and ebXML.

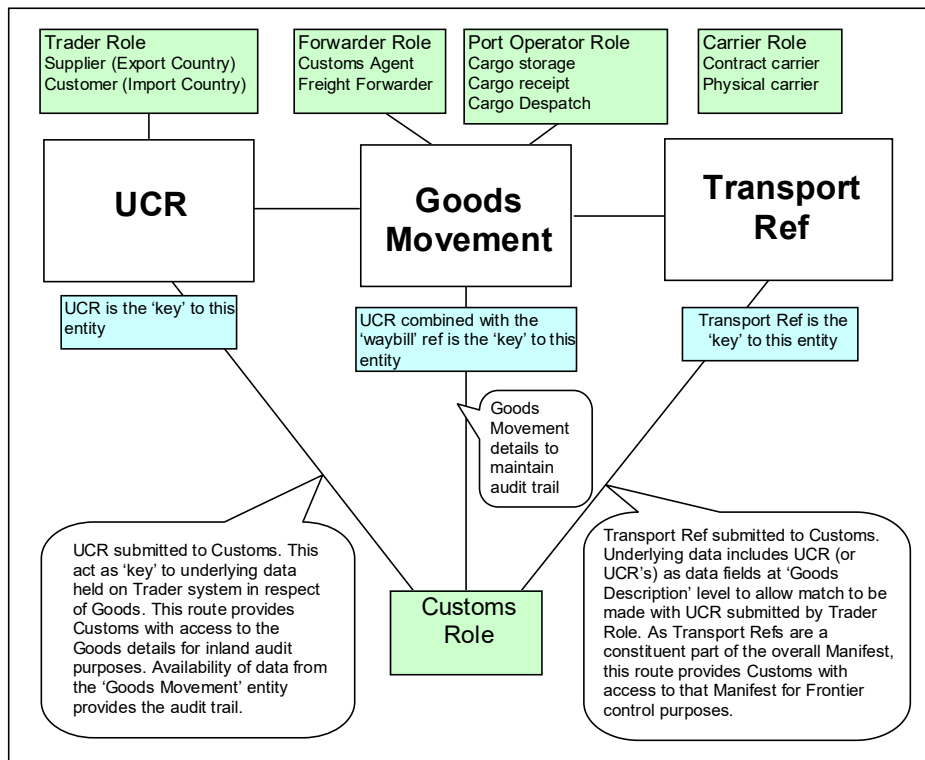
In addition, the WCO will seek the co-operation with the IMO and ICAO on including the UCR in their respective instruments such as the IMO FAL Convention and the ICAO Chicago Convention Annex 9 containing provisions on the cargo declaration.

2.6 ROLES

Within the scope of the UCR, five distinct roles exist, four commercial and one Customs role. Establishing the roles in this way allows specific events/functions to be allocated to each and is thus fundamental to providing flexibility in the use of the concept. For example, a single organisation may arrange the shipping and actually transport the Goods, whilst an Exporter may arrange shipping and thus interact commercially directly with a Carrier. Basing the concept on parties rather than roles would give rise to many variations. Use of roles focuses attention on the 'common' themes and minimises the variations.

A further point is the actual issue of the UCR. This section therefore includes some sample scenarios to illustrate variations that may arise and suggestions as to how they are handled within the concept.

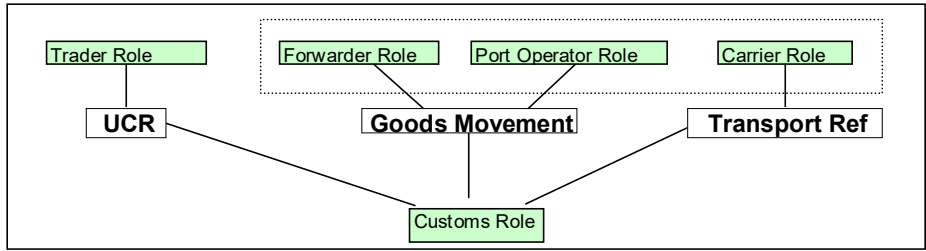
The following diagram illustrates these roles in context of the overall 'chain'. It is followed by further diagrams illustrating how some of the variations in practice can be accommodated by this basic 'model' by superimposing the parties on the roles.





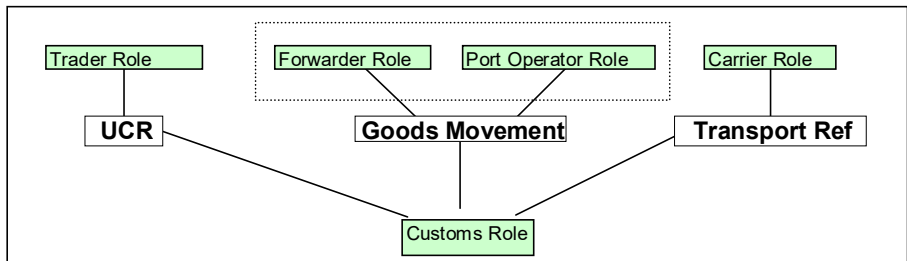
**Example 1**

The Forwarder operates its own Cargo handling premises and also acts as the Carrier.



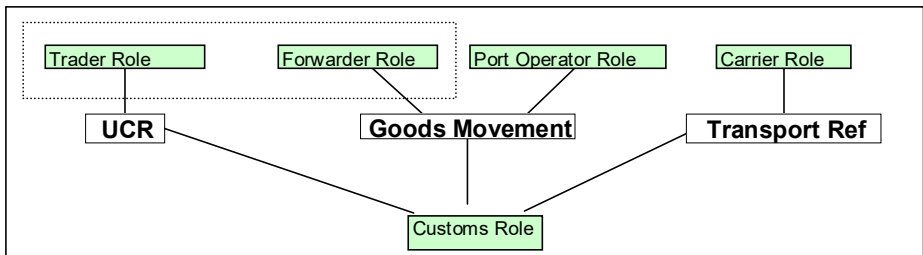
**Example 2**

The Forwarder operates its own Cargo handling premises



**Example 3**

The Trader operates its own 'Shipping Department' and thus interacts directly with the Carrier

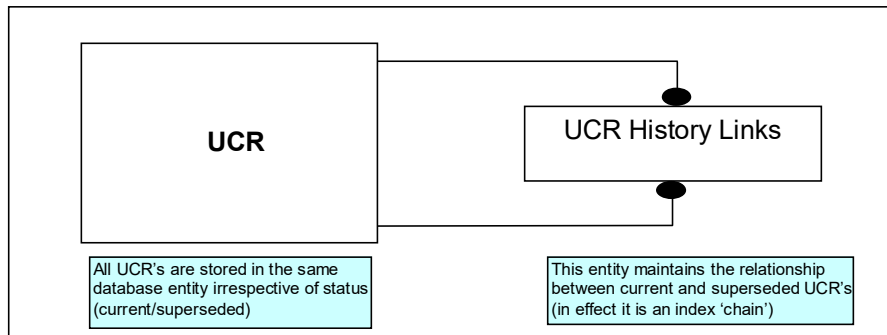


**2.7 FURTHER VARIATIONS**

In the majority of cases, consignments will use a single UCR from source to destination. However, there are scenarios that may cause the UCR to change during the transportation from source to destination. The example chosen is where the commodity is re-sold 'on the high seas' (e.g. crude oil).

The simplest solution is to maintain the original UCR and require the Supplier or Customer to link them to the new Order Reference, thus continuing the original UCR.

However, should this not be advisable, or possible, then in order to maintain the continuity (i.e. the existing links between the UCR and the Transport Ref(s)), it is necessary to provide a 'UCR History'. It is envisaged that this will operate by linking the 'new' UCR with the one it is replacing. In the same way that the relationship between the UCR and the transport reference is 'many-to-many', the relationship between the current UCR and any previous ones is also 'many-to-many' in order to handle situations whereby 1 UCR is replaced by several UCR's and the converse where several UCR's are amalgamated into a single UCR. The following diagram illustrates the relationship.

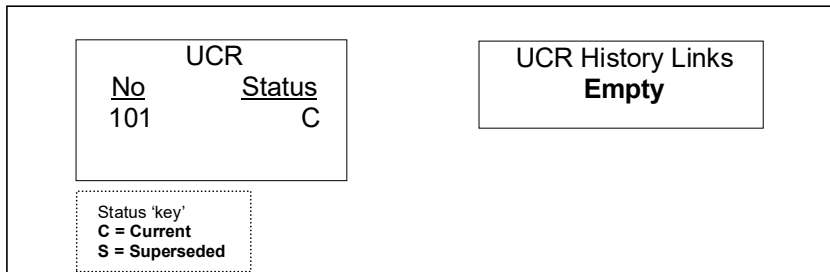


To illustrate the 'UCR History' approach in operation, the following scenario has been drawn up :

- UCR 101 is created as the original UCR
- The Goods are 'sold on', but to 3 separate Customers, thus requiring 3 'new' UCR's (201,202,203) which need linking to the original UCR
- 2 of those Customers 'sell on' their Goods to a single Customer (UCR's 201,203). This requires the new UCR (301) to link to the 2 it supersedes.

The following diagrams depicts the build up of the 'chain' for this scenario

**Step 1 – original UCR 101 is created**



**Step 2 –UCR’s 201,202 & 203 supersede UCR 101**

UCR		UCR History Links	
<u>No</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Status ‘C’</u>	<u>Status ‘S’</u>
101	S	201	101
201	C	202	101
202	C	203	101
203	C		

Whilst the actual UCR records themselves are retained on the UCR entity, they are each held as individual unique records. The relationship between them is maintained on the UCR History Links entity. Within this entity, the UCR’s appearing on the left denotes that they have superseded a previous UCR, whilst those on the right denote that they have been superseded. Viewing it in the horizontal plane, each UCR on the left is associated with one on the right. This established the relationship between current and superseded UCR’s. In this case, UCR 101 appears 3 times as it has been superseded by UCR’s 201, 202, 203, and has to appear against each one to properly maintain the relationship with them. It is, effectively, a ‘split’ of UCR 101. The approach to constructing the ‘chain’ allows that ‘chain’ to be as long or short as circumstances dictate as the mechanism is able to be reiterated as many times as required.

**Step 3 –UCR’s 301 supersedes UCR’s 201, 203**

UCR		UCR History Links	
<u>No</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Status ‘C’</u>	<u>Status ‘S’</u>
101	S	201	101
201	S	202	101
202	C	203	101
203	S	301	201
301	C	301	203

UCR 301 has been created as a result of an ‘amalgamation’ of UCR’s 201 & 203. Within the UCR History Links entity :

- A UCR appearing on the left only denotes that is has superseded a previous UCR
- A UCR appearing on the right only denotes that is has been superseded by a later UCR
- A UCR appearing on both the left and right denotes that whilst it has superseded a UCR at an earlier event, it has itself subsequently been superseded.

Whilst this approach has been outlined using the ‘sold on’ scenario, the principle is equally applicable to other similar scenarios, for example, Warehouse control.

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**3. WCO RECOMMENDATION ON A UCR**

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION<sup>1</sup>,  
CONCERNING A  
UNIQUE CONSIGNMENT REFERENCE (UCR) FOR CUSTOMS PURPOSES**

(June 2004)

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THE WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION

HAVING REGARD to the global nature of international trade

DESIRING to contribute to the security and facilitation of the international movement of goods through Customs and other administrative procedures and to reduce the burden associated with international trade procedures to a minimum

DESIRING to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs Administrations in dealing with international trade transactions

RECOGNIZING the increasing importance for international Customs co-operation to ensure better Customs compliance and facilitation of legitimate trade

RECOGNIZING the efforts and investments made in particular by the private sector in modern logistics, inventory control, manufacturing and information systems

TAKING ACCOUNT of existing standards developed by the International Standards Organization (ISO) and the United Nations on unique numbering systems

RECOMMENDS that Members of the Council and members of the United Nations Organization or its specialized agencies, and Customs or Economic Unions, should adopt and implement a Unique Consignment Reference (UCR) in close consultation with their trade bodies and transportation industries which should be,

- used for all international trade transactions;
- applied at consignment level, with a consignment being identified as "the total number of items specified in the commercial contract between the supplier and the customer and transported in a single or in multiple shipments";
- used as an access key for audit, consignment tracking, information consolidation and reconciliation purposes;
- able to uniquely identify data related to individual international trade transactions between a supplier and a customer at both the national and international level for a sufficient period of time in accordance with national data retention rules;
- associated with other relevant trade or transport references to establish an origin to destination information and documentation trail for the individual consignment, in case that the UCR, as defined in the accompanying Guidelines is not already used as the transport reference;

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<sup>1</sup> Established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC), hereafter referred to as the Council

## WCO Unique Consignment Reference (UCR)

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- issued for all consignments by or on behalf of the party having initiated the international trade transaction;
- used in all relevant communications by all parties involved in the entire supply chain with regard to Customs and all other relevant regulatory agencies ;

FURTHER RECOMMENDS that the Unique Consignment Reference as specified in this Recommendation and its accompanying Guidelines be structured in accordance with :

- ISO Standard 15459 Part 1 and Part 2 on unique identification (The ISO license plate) and future updated versions;

or where this standard is not yet applied

- other relevant standards or industry specific reference numbers not exceeding 35 alphanumeric characters enabling a unique origin-to-destination information and documentation trail of the entire international trade transaction.

REQUESTS Members of the Council and members of the United Nations Organization or its specialized agencies, and Customs or Economic Unions which accept this Recommendation to notify the Secretary General of the Council of the date from which they will apply the Recommendation and of the conditions of its application. The Secretary General will transmit this information to the Customs administrations of all Members of the Council. He will also transmit it to the Customs administrations of the members of the United Nations Organization or its specialized agencies and to Customs or Economic Unions that have accepted this Recommendation.

FURTHER REQUESTS the Secretary General to work with relevant international organizations such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe to ensure that this Recommendation is being reflected in their respective instruments and recommendations.

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#### 4. CASE STUDIES

##### 4.1 EAN International

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