

Corporate Records Management Standards – Standard Naming Conventions for Electronic Files, Folders and Records

UPR IM11 Appendix V version 07.0

Policies superseded by this document

This document replaces version 06.0 of UPR IM11 Appendix V, with effect from 1 September 2024.

Summary of significant changes to the previous version

See Appendix I, UPR IM11.

Glossary

A glossary of approved University terminology can be found in [UPR GV08](#).

Table of contents

1	Introduction	2
1.1	Purpose	2
1.2	Why use naming conventions?	2
1.3	How should documents be titled?.....	2
1.4	Naming conventions at a glance: Key Rules	3
1.5	Standards	3
2	Conventions	4
2.1	Make file titles meaningful	4
2.2	Make sure documents can be identified on their own	4
2.3	Demarcating words in titles	5
2.4	Using numbers in file names	5
2.5	Using dates in file names	5
2.6	Using personal names	6
2.7	Words to avoid using at the start of file names	6
2.8	Ordering the elements in a file name.....	6
2.9	Naming correspondence records (including emails).....	7
2.10	Applying version number and draft status	7
2.11	Use of non-alphanumeric characters in file names	8
3	Further Information and Advice	8

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

University of Hertfordshire is increasingly using electronic document and record management. This document sets out the rules and conventions for naming files and records in the University Document Management system and in University shared storage areas (X: drive, OneDrive, SharePoint or MS Teams as appropriate.) These guidelines refer to documents created in all formats.

1.2 Why use naming conventions?

Electronic document and records management enables the use of search technologies to find accurate, up to date information, so it is essential that information can be easily identified and retrieved.

Consistency in the use of metadata and how we name documents, emails or folders is important to be able to identify information quickly and easily. Putting time and effort into naming records consistently and logically will distinguish similar records from one another at a glance, and by doing so will facilitate the search and retrieval of records and enable users to browse file names more effectively and efficiently.

Naming records according to agreed conventions should also make file naming easier for colleagues because they will not have to 're-think' the process each time.

1.3 How should documents be titled?

The conventions provided in this document offer practical advice on how to title documents. How the general rules given here are applied across the University will depend on how each Business Unit works and it is advised that specific rules are created by each SBU to reflect working practice. In general, a title should be:

- descriptive – it says what the document is about;
- helpful – it distinguishes the document from others on the same/ similar topic;
- consistent – it follows the convention described in this document.

Documents should always contain one or more of the following elements listed below:-

- date;
- subject;
- document type;
- version or status.

The sequence of the elements will vary depending on the document being named. Each element should be separated by a hyphen (-).

eg. Date-Subject

2007-04-02-Information Management Strategy

Sometimes these rules can produce longer titles but this is important as it will help you and others see at a glance whether it is the right document, saving time in the long run.

1.4 Naming conventions at a glance: Key Rules

- Titles should be as concise as possible – keep them short but meaningful. Avoid use of personal names and uncommonly understood abbreviations. Commonly understood abbreviations are permissible (e.g. UH).
- Use the agreed University abbreviations and codes where relevant.
- Make sure documents can be identified on their own without the folder they are saved in
- Numbers 0-9 in filenames should always be written as two-digit numbers (01,02,03,04 etc.) to ensure they are stored in numerical order.
- Dates should always follow the BS ISO 8601:2004 format, YYYY-MM-DD, to ensure documents are stored in chronological order.
- When adding personal names, always put the Surname first (e.g. Smith B).
- Avoid using common words such as Draft, Letter or memo at the start of a file title.
- Documents stored in a repository that maintains version information, such as the Document Management System or Office 365, should not include version in the filename.
- Make sure elements in the file title are ordered in the most appropriate way to retrieve the record. This will depend on the audience and/or the way the SBU works.
- Correspondence record titles should always include the following elements: name of correspondent, subject description (if not already in folder name), date of letter, email etc. and 'rcvd' if incoming correspondence.
- Apply version number or status to documents where required. This will be captured automatically in the Document Management system.
- Avoid use of non-alphanumeric characters in file names (i.e. * : / \ < > “ ! + = £ \$ & ,).

1.5 Standards

These Naming Conventions have been based on the following standards and guidelines:

- BS ISO15489-1 and 2: 2001- Information and Documentation – Records Management;

- BS ISO8601:2004 - Data elements and interchange formats - Information interchange - Representation of dates and time;
- Management, appraisal and preservation of electronic records – The National Archives;
- Standard Naming Conventions - University of Edinburgh;
- Naming Conventions for electronic documents – University of St Andrews.

2 Conventions

2.1 Make file titles meaningful

File names should be meaningful to anyone who needs to access them. The wider the audience, the clearer the title should be. Simple rules are:

- ensure the title accurately reflects the contents;
- avoid using initials, abbreviations and codes that are not commonly understood;
- avoid using words like ‘and’, ‘or’, ‘a’, ‘the’ etc. as they add length but not meaning, to a file name;
- use a hyphen to separate each element of the title for clearer identification of documents.

Suffixes such as .pdf or .doc are unnecessary as the system will capture file extensions and document icons automatically.

Example:

Finance General Purpose Cttee- Minutes (Subject-Record Type)	rather than	The finance and general purpose committee minutes or FGPC minutes
---	-------------	---

2.2 Make sure documents can be identified on their own

Consideration should be given to the document’s intended audience, searching requirements and how the document may be identified when retrieved on its own without the folder or if it ever becomes relocated or detached from the folder. For example, a large number of documents entitled 2004-2005-Minutes is not helpful.

Example:

Audit Committee/ 2008-01-31-Audit Cttee- Minutes	rather than	Audit Committee/ 2008-01-31-Minutes
--	-------------	--

NB Although this may look fine when browsing through the file structure, a search will return the document as 2008-01-31-Minutes, which is not very descriptive.

2.3 Demarcating words in titles

- Use a space to separate words and a hyphen to separate each element of the naming convention.
- Do not use running filenames.
- Avoid using other separation marks (underscores, slashes etc.) should be avoided as these affect searching capabilities.
- Capital letters can also be used at the beginning of each word.
- Where approved capitalised acronyms are used in file names the acronym should appear in capitals.

Example 1:

Risk Mgt-Annual Report	rather than,	Risk_management-Annual_Report, or Riskmanagementannualreport
------------------------	--------------	--

Example 2:

UH Brand-Template	rather than	University_of_Hertfordshire_Brand_Template
-------------------	-------------	--

2.4 Using numbers in file names

To maintain the numeric order when file names include numbers it is important to include the zero for numbers 0-9. This helps to retrieve the latest record number.

Example:

Paper 01		Paper 1
Paper 02		Paper 10
Paper 03		Paper 11
Paper 04		Paper 2
Paper 05	rather than	Paper 3
Paper 06		Paper 4
Paper 07		Paper 5
Paper 08		Paper 6
Paper 09		Paper 7
Paper 10		Paper 8
		Paper 9

(Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list.)

2.5 Using dates in file names

Dates and times should always follow the BS ISO 8601:2004 basic format:

- YYYY Year eg 2008
- YYYY-MM Year and month eg 2008-03
- YYYY-MM-DD Year, month and day eg 2008-03-31

Putting the dates ‘back to front’ means the chronological order of the records is maintained when the file names are listed in the file directory. This helps when trying to retrieve the latest dated record.

In following the basic format everyone will be able to tell that 2007-12-07 means December 2007 and not 12 July 2007.

Months entered alphabetically do not file in chronological order.

Example:

2004-03-24-Audit Cttee-Agenda	rather than	1Feb2005-Agenda
2004-03-24-Audit Cttee-Minutes		1Feb2005-Minutes
2004-03-24-Audit Cttee-Paper-A		13Sep2005-Agenda
2005-02-01-Audit Cttee-Agenda		24Mar2004-Agenda
2005-02-01-Audit Cttee-Minutes		24Mar2004-Minutes

2.6 Using personal names

When including a personal name (e.g. to correspondence) type surname first followed by initials as it is most likely that the record will be retrieved according to the family name of the individual.

Example:

Brown SR-2004-12-01 rather than SamR Brown-2004-12-01

There is no need to use the person’s title (Mr, Miss, Dr) unless it is required for business purposes. Where this is needed, use the format:

Brown Prof SR
(Surname /Title/ initials)

2.7 Words to avoid using at the start of file names

Avoid using common words such as ‘draft’ or ‘letter’ or ‘memo’ at the start of file names, otherwise all of those records will appear together in the file directory, making it more difficult to retrieve the records you are looking for.

You may only ignore this rule if starting file names with these sorts of words aids the retrieval of the records. See 2.8 for further details.

2.8 Ordering the elements in a file name

The elements to be included in a file name should be ordered according to the way in which the record will be retrieved. For example, if the records are retrieved according to their date (eg. meeting minutes) the date element should appear first. If the records are retrieved according to their description (eg. Events) the description element should appear first.

Example 1:

2004-06-30-Audit Cttee-Agenda	rather than	Agenda-1Feb2005
2004-06-30-Audit Cttee-Minutes		Agenda-20Jan2005
2005-01-20-Audit Cttee-Agenda		Agenda-30June2004
2005-01-20-Audit Cttee-Minutes		Minutes-1Feb2005
		Minutes-20Jan2005
		Minutes-30June2004

Example 2:

Garden Party-2004-06-30	rather than	2004-06-30-Garden Party
Procurement Award-2004-09-05		2004-09-05-Procurement Award

2.9 Naming correspondence records (including emails)

File names of correspondence should include the following elements so that the record can be easily identified and retrieved:

- name of correspondent, (i.e. the name of the person who sent the letter/email/memo or to whom you sent the letter/email/memo)
- subject description, where it is not given in the folder title
- date of letter/email/memo (and time HH:MM for string emails)
- for all incoming correspondence, include 'rcvd'

When saving emails, rename messages so they can be identified and delete any prefixes such as RE:, FW:, etc.

Example:

Evans W-Appeal-2004-07-15-rcvd	rather than	William Evans-15Jul04
Evans W-Appeal-2004-08-20		William Evans-20Aug04
Evans W-Appeal-2004-09-05		William Evans-5Sep04

2.10 Applying version number and draft status

Version control procedures should be applied to documents which are frequently updated (policy etc.). Including a number and date on the title page (and within footers) will reduce confusion over which document is the current version, as well as providing an audit trail for tracking changes.

A version control table on the document could also be used to keep track of what changes have been made and by whom.

Decimal increments should be used so that a distinction can be made between major and minor changes. You can add 'Draft' or 'Final' to show the difference between drafts and published versions.

For example,

- the first draft would be v0.1 draft then 0.2 draft etc.
- once the document has moved to a final version then the integer values should begin, so the first final version should be V1.0 Final. Any minor revisions made after this would then be V1.1, V1.2 etc. The second final version would be V2.0 Final etc.

2.11 Use of non-alphanumeric characters in file names

Avoid the use of non-alphanumeric characters in file names as these can affect search results and don not add much meaning

Avoid: * : \ / < > | " ? [] ; = + & £ \$, .

However, hyphens (-) can be used to separate elements of file titles as specified in this document

Example:

Guidelines and Regulations **not** Guidelines & Regulations
Budget-2006-2007 **not** Budget 2006/07

Replace characters with words where required, eg. "&" can be replaced with "and".

3 Further Information and Advice

For further information or help on devising SBU specific naming conventions please contact the Records Manager.

Sharon Harrison-Barker
Secretary and Registrar
Signed: **3 January 2023**

Alternative format

If you need this document in an alternative format, please email us at governanceservices@herts.ac.uk or telephone us on +44 (0)1707 28 6006.