

# Records Management Toolkit – Good Practice Guide: Document control

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## 1. Purpose

This guidance is intended for those who create and edit documents and require guidance when working with multiple versions. This document has been prepared as part of the University's approach to information and records management. It aims to assist with improvement in the University's management of documents and records by establishing coherent standards of practice.

It is intended to provide a common set of rules to ensure the control of digital records.

The conventions are primarily intended for use with documents such as word-processed documents, spreadsheets, presentations, emails and project plans.

This document contains guidelines that follow good practice in terms of records management and are generally recommended for use within the University. It is recognised that other protocols and systems may be in use which meet the different business needs of schools, Schools and Departments in the University.

## 2. Purpose of document and version control

Document control, along with version control, enables the management of multiple versions of the same document.

Version control is important for documents that undergo revisions as they are developed. These documents may undergo changes by a number of users or groups over a period of time and these changes may not be immediately apparent. Examples of documents where this is relevant includes: policies, procedures, guidelines and formal reports.

A common sense approach should be taken and features including track changes should be used at an early stage of the development of a document prior to adopting a formal version control system.

File naming conventions are also relevant and reference should be made to the File Naming Convention Guidelines for guidance on this.

## 3. Version control

There are a number of techniques that can be used to record the version of a document.

### 3.1 Simple documents

Simple documents are unlikely to have a number of different versions and do not require to undergo a formal approval process. This may be a document that an individual member of staff or a group is developing. Examples include: letters, training material, forms.

For these the word 'draft' or 'final' in the name will be sufficient to indicate the status of a document.

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For formal Committee minutes the convention is to mark minutes not yet approved by the Committee as Unconfirmed or Unconfirmed draft. When the minutes become approved they become Confirmed and if there are any changes, the version becomes version 2 eg if APC13-99-01 is the unconfirmed version submitted to the Committee for approval and some changes are made, the confirmed version would then be APC13-99-02. A Version Control Table is not required.

### 3.2 Documents which develop and are revised

A unique number should be used to distinguish one version from another. This should be used for all documents where more than one version exists, or is likely to exist in the future.

### 3.3 Formal documents which develop through an approval process

The most appropriate system for formal documents, and for documents that require approval or review on a regular basis, uses version numbers with points to indicate minor changes and whole number to indicate a release or approved version.

For example, version 1.0 (first version), version 2.0 (major change to version 1.0 and issued as a new version), version 2.1 (second version with minor change).

### 3.4 Minor changes

Normally can be made by an authorised member of staff and do not need formal approval. Information relating to minor changes can be summarised when a new version is issued. Indicated by points, for example, V1.1 contains a minor change to V1.0.

### 3.5 Major revisions

An appropriate authority should usually approve major revisions. Each major revision should contain a summary of all the minor changes that it incorporates, in the version control table. Whole numbers are used to indicate a revised version, for example, V2.0 is a revision of V1.0.

These documents require a version control table and will also need a document control table as described below.

When including a number in a file name always give it as a two-digit number unless it is a year or another number with more than two digits. The file directory displays file names in alphanumeric order. 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

- Poor practice –  
OfficeProceduresV1  
OfficeProceduresV10  
OfficeProceduresV11  
OfficeProceduresV2  
OfficeProceduresV3  
OfficeProceduresV4  
OfficeProceduresV5  
OfficeProceduresV6  
OfficeProceduresV7
  
- Good practice -  
OfficeProceduresV01  
OfficeProceduresV02  
OfficeProceduresV03

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OfficeProceduresV04  
OfficeProceduresV05  
OfficeProceduresV06  
OfficeProceduresV07  
OfficeProceduresV10  
OfficeProceduresV11

(Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list) This example shows the successive versions of an office procedures document. This includes the versions created as the document was developed from the initial document V01 through to the first approved document V10 and the subsequent minor revisions to it as version1.1 (filename V11). If two-digit numbers are used the latest version will always be at the bottom of the list

### **Avoid using common words such as ‘draft’ or ‘letter’ at the start of file names**

Avoid using common words such as ‘draft’ or ‘letter’ at the start of file names, or 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. The file directory will list files in alphanumeric order. This means that all records with file names starting “Draft” will be listed together. When retrieving files it will be more useful to find the draft budget report next to the previous year’s budget rather than next to an unrelated draft record.

### **The version number of a record should be indicated in its file name by the inclusion of ‘V’ followed the version number and, where applicable, ‘Draft’ or ‘Final’.**

Some records go through a number of versions, for example they start out as working drafts, become consultation drafts and finish with a final draft, which may then be reviewed and updated at a later date. It is important to be able to differentiate between these various drafts by giving them each their own number. A document becomes version 1.0 when it is approved (FilenameV10).

Where a version number is applicable, it should always appear in the file name of the record so that the most recent version can be easily identified and retrieved.

#### Example

- Poor practice –  
LTAS2009/10\_draftv.3.htm  
LTAS2009/10\_finalv1.htm  
Org\_Hier\_2012\_v.2.xls  
Org\_Hier\_2012\_v.3.xls  
Org\_Hier\_2012\_v1.xls
- Good practice –  
LTAS2009-2010V03Draft.htm  
LTAS2009-2010V10Final.htm  
OrgHier2012V02.xls  
OrgHier2012V03.xls  
OrgHier2012V10.xls

The first example shows two versions of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy for 2009-2010, version 03 is a draft version and version 10 is the final version. The common abbreviation for the strategy is used. The years are given in four-digit format. The version number is given with two digits so that the versions will appear in numeric order.

## **4. Version control table**

The Version control table can be used to keep track of changes made to a document as it is being developed, as well as when and who made them.

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The location of this will depend on accepted School/Directorate or Departmental style but common places for version numbers are the document cover (recorded in the Version control table) and the header or footer text for each page.

The Version Control Table should be updated each time a change is made to the document. It should record the following information:

- Version number
- When the change was made
- Who made it?
- What was changed?

The table below shows an example of a Version control table.

Version control			
Version Number	Date issued	Author	Update information
V01	30.08.2013	Basil Bulstrode	Initial draft document
V02	15.09.2013	Archie Abernethy	Changes identified by Steering Group
V03	30.09.2013	Basil Bulstrode	Amendment to paragraph 4 to reflect procedural change
V04	12.10.2013	Basil Bulstrode	Changes to service name

### 5. Document control

Document control should be used for formal documents, especially those that relate and refer to other documents. This information should be recorded in the document control table.

Details may include:

Document title	Related documents
Prepared By	Acknowledgements
Authorised By	Version number
Source Location	Classification
Published Location	Review date
Other documents referenced	Status

The location will depend on School/Office/Departmental style but it is good practice for the document control table to be in the document cover following a title page. This is normally page 2 of a Word document.