File Naming Conventions: *simple rules save time and effort*

✓ ***Why use naming conventions?***

- Naming folders and files in a consistent, logical and predictable way means that information may be located, identified and retrieved by yourself or colleagues, as quickly and easily as possible.

- The simple rules apply equally to electronic and physical files and folders. They provide assurance that the correct item is retrieved and cannot be confused with other documents.

- The file name describes, at a glance, what the document is about, making it easier to browse files more effectively and efficiently.

✓ ***To get the best results***

File Names must be

- Unique
- Indicate what the file contains
- Reflect how you work with your information – what is significant, what is most likely to be searched for, who is the audience
- Naturally ordered
- Consistent and understood by everyone

- The objective is to ensure that the elements included in a file name are ordered in such a way as to facilitate the quick retrieval of the file during the course of everyday business. The guidelines offer flexibility and Schools/Directorates/Departments can decide the most relevant order for their files.

- It is good practice to adopt the naming conventions from the creation of the document.

- It is recommended that the file name and path is included in the footer of a document. Make sure documents can be identified on their own - not dependent on the folder they are saved in

- It is not proposed to retrospectively review the naming conventions that are currently in place unless there is strong business reason to do this.

✓ **Simple Key Rules**

1. Keep file names short and meaningful

2. Avoid unnecessary repetition and redundancy in file names and paths

3. Use capital letters to delimit words, not spaces, dots or underscores

4. *For* numbers 0-9, always use two digit numbers to ensure numerical order – (01, 02, 03 etc.)

5. Dates should always follow same format: YYYY-MM-DD

6. When including a personal name give the family name first followed by initials with no comma in between.

7. Avoid using common words such as 'draft' or 'letter' at the start of file names unless doing so will make it easier to retrieve the record.

8. Order the elements in a file name in the most appropriate way to retrieve the record. Use agreed University abbreviations and codes where relevant.

9. The file names of records relating to recurring events should include the date and a description of the event, except where the inclusion of these elements would be incompatible with rule 2.

10. The version number of a record should be indicated in its file name by the inclusion of 'V' followed by the version number (eg V01, V03 etc.) and where applicable 'draft.'

11. Avoid using non-alphanumeric characters in file names.

Examples:

1. **Keep file names short and meaningful**
    File names should be kept as short as possible whilst also being meaningful. Long file names mean long file paths which increase the likelihood of error and are more difficult to remember and recognise.

However, avoid using initials, abbreviations and codes that are not commonly understood. This is particularly important for records which have to be kept for a long period of time as the meaning of the acronym may not be known over time.

Rule 1 Example

	Correct	**Incorrect**
File name	LearningAndTeachingSubCommitteeTermsOfReference.doc	Learning_and_Teaching_Sub_committee_terms_of_reference.doc
Explanation	Some words add length to a file name but do not contribute towards the meaning, for example words like "the", "a", and "and". Where the remaining file name is still meaningful within the context of the file directory these elements can be removed. Sometimes words have standard abbreviations, e.g. "cttee" is a standard abbreviation for "committee"; where this is the case the standard abbreviation can be used.	

2. Avoid unnecessary repetition and redundancy in file names and file paths
Avoid redundancy in file names and file paths. Unnecessary repetition increases the length of file names and file paths which is incompatible with rule 1.

This rule assumes that appropriate file structures are in place to support the efficient management of documents.

Rule 2 Example

	Correct	**Incorrect**
File name	/.../Court/20131030Minutes.doc /.../Procedures/Appeals.doc	/.../Court/20131030CourtMinutes.doc /.../Procedures/AppealsProcedures.doc

Explanation	In the first example the folder is called "Court" so it is not necessary to include the word "Court" in the file name because all the records in that folder are Court records. In the second example the folder is called "Procedures" so it is not necessary to include the word "Procedures" in the file name because all the records in that folder are procedure records.

3. Use capital letters to delimit words, not spaces or underscores

Avoid using spaces and underscores in file names. Some software packages have difficulty recognising file names with spaces; this can be a particular difficulty for files when they are published on an external website.

Using underscores and hyphens in your file names increases the length, which is incompatible with rule 1.

Where capitalised acronyms are used in file names the acronym should appear in capitals and the first letter of the following word should also be capitalised.

Rule 3 Example

	Correct	**Incorrect**
File name	RiskManagement.doc REFInstructions.html	Risk_management.doc Risk management.doc REF_instructions.html Research Excellence Framework.html
Explanation	Removing the space or underscore reduces the length of the file name but by using capital letters to differentiate between the words, the file name is still readily recognisable.	

4. 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.

Rule 4 Example

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	OfficeProceduresV01 OfficeProceduresV02 OfficeProceduresV03 OfficeProceduresV04 OfficeProceduresV05 OfficeProceduresV06 OfficeProceduresV07 OfficeProceduresV10 OfficeProceduresV11 (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)	OfficeProceduresV1 OfficeProceduresV10 OfficeProceduresV11 OfficeProceduresV2 OfficeProceduresV3 OfficeProceduresV4 OfficeProceduresV5 OfficeProceduresV6 OfficeProceduresV7 (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)
Explanation	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.	

5. If using a date in the file name always state the date 'back to front', and use four digit years, two digit months and two digit days: YYYYMMDD or YYYYMM or YYYY or YYYY-YYYY

Dates should always be presented 'back to front', that is with the year first (always given as a four digit number), followed by the month (always given as a two digit number), and the day (always given as a two digit number). If dates are listed back to front, 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.

Rule 5 Example

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	20130324Agenda.doc 20130324Minutes.doc	1Feb2013Agenda.doc 1Feb2013Minutes.doc

	20130324AP13-53-01Exceptions 20130201Agenda.doc 20130201Minutes.doc (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)	24March2013Agenda.doc 24March2013Minutes.doc 24March2013AP13/53/01 (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory)
Explanation	This example shows the minutes and papers of a committee. By stating the year 'back to front' the minutes and papers from the most recent meeting appear at the bottom of the directory list. Committee papers which are numbered using the University's "house style" should have a hyphen between the numbers rather than a slash and should have a descriptive word or words to aid finding.	

6. When including a personal name in a file name give the family name first followed by the initials

It may be appropriate to include within a file name the name of an individual, usually when the record is a piece of correspondence.

When it is appropriate to include a personal name it should be given as family name first followed by initials, with no comma, as it is most likely that the record will be retrieved according to the family name of the individual.

Rule 6 Example

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	BrownSR20131201.doc	SamRBrown20131201.doc
Explanation	This is a letter to Mr Samuel R Brown. By putting the family name first the file directory will display this file next to the B's, which is where you would expect to find a letter to Mr Brown.	

7. 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. See rule 8 for further details.

Rule 7 Example

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	/…/Publicity/ AdvertisingV01Draft.doc AdvertisingV05Final.doc BudgetReport2012-2013V20Final.doc BudgetReport2012-2013V15Draft.doc GrantS20120312.doc	/…/Publicity/ DraftAdvertising.doc DraftBudgetReport2012-2013.doc DraftOfficeProcedures.doc FinalAdvertising.doc FinalBudgetReport2012-2013.doc

	OfficeProceduresV10Draft.doc ThomasA20121205.doc (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)	LetterAThomas.doc LetterSGrant.doc (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)
Explanation	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.	

8. Order the elements in a file name in the most appropriate way to retrieve the record
The elements to be included in a file name should be ordered according to the way in which the record will be retrieved during the course of everyday business.

This will depend on the way you work. For example, if the records are retrieved according to their date, the date element should appear first. If the records are retrieved according to their description, the description element should appear first.

Rule 8 Example

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	/…/AcademicPolicyCttee/ 20120630Agenda.doc 20120630Minutes.doc 20130120Agenda.doc 20130120Minutes.doc 20130201Agenda.doc 20130201Minutes.doc /…/Events/ Staff Barbecue20110630.doc TimesHigherAwards20120905.doc Chancellor'sDinner20130304.doc (Ordered alphabetically as the files would be in the directory list)	/…/AcademicPolicyCttee/ Agenda1Feb2013.doc Agenda20Jan2013.doc Agenda30June2012.doc Minutes1Feb2013.doc Minutes20Jan2013.doc Minutes30June2012.doc /…/Events/ 20130304Chancellor'sDinner.doc 20110630StaffBarbecue.doc 20120905TimesHigherAward.doc (Ordered alphabetically as the files would be in the directory list)
Explanation	The first example shows minutes and agenda of the Academic Policy Committee. Minutes and papers of a meeting are likely to be retrieved on the basis of the date of the meeting, it is therefore best to have the date at the start of the file name, otherwise all the Agendas will come at the top of	

	the directory list, followed by all of the minutes, and then by the papers. The second example shows the file names of the files in the Events folder. Because events are likely to be retrieved by the name of the event rather than the date of the event, it is most useful to have that element first.	

9. The file names of records relating to recurring events should include the date and a description of the event, except where the inclusion of either of these elements would be incompatible with rule 2.

The file names of records relating to recurring events (e.g. meeting minutes and papers, weekly, monthly or annual reports, event management and budget planning documents) should include both the date and the event name or event description so that the record can be identified and retrieved.

When deciding the order of the elements consider rule 8. Date first will usually be appropriate for events that are time specific and recurring. Event first will usually be appropriate for events that are infrequent but regularly recurring.

The event description could be the title of the event or the subject of the event but whatever description you choose, ensure that it is short, to the point, and readily recognisable to you and the colleagues you work with.

Rule 9 Example

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	/…/Website/ 20130301WebStats.doc 20130401WebStats.doc /…/Planning/ Budget2012-2013V10.xls Budget2013-2014V01Draft.xls (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)	/…/Website/ WebStats20130301.doc WebStats20130401.doc /…/Planning/ 2012-2013BudgetV10.xls 2014-2014BudgetV01Draft.xls (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)
Explanation	The first example shows the website statistic reports which are created on a monthly basis. Because the reports recur frequently and are retrieved by date it is most appropriate that the date is given first. Also remember rule 2; in some cases it may be appropriate for the folder to be called "WebStats", in which case the file names only need to include the date. For another example see the first rule 8 example. The second example shows annual budget reports. Because the reports are annual and likely to be retrieved by the description rather than the date, it is likely that it will be most appropriate for the description element to come first. Also remember rule 2; in some cases it may be appropriate for the folder to be called "Planning2012-2013", in which case the file names only need to include a description. For another example see the second rule 8 example.	

10. 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.

Rule 10 Example

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	LTAS2009-2010V03Draft.htm LTAS2009-2010V10Final.htm OrgHier2012V02.xls OrgHier2012V03.xls OrgHier2012V10.xls	LTAS2009/10_draftv.3.htm LTAS2009/10_finalv1htm Org_Hier_2012_v.2.xls Org_Hier_2012_v.3.xls Org_Hier_2012_v1.xls
Explanation	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. The second example shows a number of versions of the organisational hierarchy for 2012. In this case none of the versions are marked as draft or final because the nature of the record means that 'draft' and 'final' are not applicable.	

11. Avoid using non-alphanumeric characters in file names.
Different operating systems (e.g. Linux, OS X, Windows) have different file name requirements, in particular different characters that they do not recognise in file names.

The use of these characters can cause problems. Even if your operating system allows you to save the file you may encounter difficulties if you try to transport the file to another operating system, for example the file may not be recognised, or if you send it to someone else they may not be able to open it. It is therefore recommended that you avoid the use of non-alphanumeric characters in file names

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

However, hyphens (-) may be used.

Rule 11 Example

	Correct	Incorrect
File name	SmithJohn20130507.txt DavidLaingCollection.rtf GuidelinesAndRegulations.pdf Budget2012-2013	Smith,John20130507.txt "DavidLaingCollection".rtf Guidelines&Regulations.pdf Budget2012/13
Explanation	Most non-alphanumeric characters can be omitted without much loss of meaning, e.g. commas and quotation marks. Others can be replaced with alphanumeric characters, e.g. "&" and "+" can be replaced with "And" and "Plus". Hyphens can be used in place of forward slashes and brackets.	

Acknowledgements:

The National Archives
 http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/electronicrecords/advice/default.htm#toolkits.

 University of Edinburgh
 http://www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk/InfoStaff/RMstaff/RMprojects/PP/FileNameRules/FileNameRules.htm

 Glasgow Caledonian University
 https://www.google.co.uk/?gws_rd=ssl#q=glasgow+caledonian+university+and+file+naming+conventions

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December 2014