UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Managing Electronic Records in Shared Network Drives – Good Practice Guidance

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction

The records created, received and used by the University are essential to its efficient and effective functioning. They provide evidence of its activities and provide important information about its status, the rights of its staff and students and its relationships with other organisations. In order to realise the true value of this asset it is essential that records in all formats are managed appropriately.

The following guidance is intended to inform good practice in the creation, storage, management and disposition of the substantial volume of the University's recorded information held in electronic document formats. Following this guidance will benefit all staff in terms of business efficiency as well as helping to ensure the University complies with relevant legislation which affects record keeping, particularly the Data Protection Act (1998) and Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

2. Glossary of Terms

The following definitions are given for terms used in this guidance

Document:
Discrete, individual item of written information in any form (paper or electronic) which constitute the smallest unit of filing. This includes traditional paper letters, memos and reports as well as electronic formats such as word processing documents, spreadsheets, emails and databases. Documents become records when they meet the definition of "record" below.

Record:
Information "created, received and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business." [1]

Filing System:
A system of organising, storing and identifying documents and records to enable their retrieval, use, and disposition. Can be either paper or electronic.

Filing:
The physical process of placing documents and records in the appropriate location and order within a filing system.

File:
A set of related documents and records (regardless of format) organised and kept together

Electronic Folder:
An area on the computer where electronic documents can be filed and organised, within the Windows operating system environment.

Shared Network Drive:
Electronic storage location on network accessible to a defined group of users.

[1] BS ISO 15489:2001

3. Use of Shared Network Drives

Shared network drive spaces accessible to staff working in the same administrative area or academic department should be used to store and manage the University's electronic records. This approach brings the following benefits:

- All electronic records held together in one place
- Electronic records easily accessible to all those who need to refer to them
- Electronic records backed up and recoverable in the event of system failure
- Promotes a culture of sharing information as an organisational resource, rather than individual ownership
- Reduces the proliferation of duplicate copies of documents in the personal folders of numerous individuals. Users can send an email link to view a draft of a document in its single shared network location, rather than attaching multiple copies.

University records **should not** be held on personal network drive space where they cannot be accessed by colleagues (although there may be exceptions for sensitive or confidential information) and **should never** be stored on a computer's local 'c' drive where they are both inaccessible and, in the event of disaster, unrecoverable.

3.1 Filing Structure

The shared network drive space of each department or administrative area will need to be organised into a logical, structured, hierarchical filing system using appropriately named electronic folders.

This should:

- Be as clear and simple as possible and appropriate to the needs of users and the department/administrative area.
- Use appropriate titles which indicate the folder's content and reflect logical elements, such as the business functions and activities to which the records contained relate or theme/subtheme relationships. **Detailed guidance on the titling of electronic documents and folders is given in section 4 below.**
- Limit the number of folder/subfolder levels in the hierarchy to avoid confusion and promote clarity and useability. Think carefully about the higher level categories and try not to exceed 5 levels in the hierarchy.

Example 1: Filing Structures Based on Business Functions and Activities

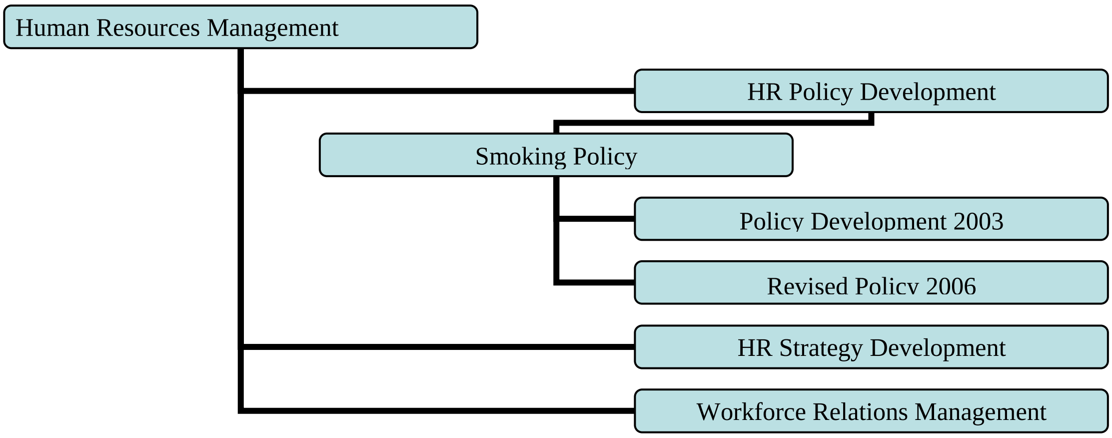
1.*

Level 1. *Human Resources Management –*	Top Level Function
Level 2. *HR Policy Development* -	Main Activity
Level 3. *Smoking Policy* -	Sub-Activity
Level 4. *Revised Policy 2006 –*	Sub-Activity

2.

Level 1. *Module Development – Environmental Geography –*	Top Level Function
Level 2. *Earth and Landscape Evolution (*36E3) -	Main Activity
Level 3. *Module Documentation* -	Sub-Activity
Level 4. *Module Assessments* -	Sub-Activity
Level 5. *Essay Questions -*	Sub-Activity

***Representation of Functional Filing Structure as in example 1**



- Keep titles concise to avoid overlong, unwieldly pathways and try to limit redundancy by minimising repetition. Consider the title of any one folder in the context of the whole path.

Example 2: Appropriate Length File Paths	
Use:	*Records Management/Freedom of Information/Training/Internal/Reps Updates*
Not:	*Records Management/Freedom of Information/Freedom of Information Training/Freedom of Information Internal Training/Freedom of Information Reps Updates*

Each department or administrative area should assign one individual with responsibility for creating and naming new folders in the filing structure, who should also keep a register of the hierarchy of folders in the structure. This ensures:

- Consistent folder naming
- Minimal duplication or overlap between folders
- Up to date record of filing structure available for all staff to use.

3.2 Relating to Paper Filing Systems

Although many records are now created, received and maintained in electronic formats, the University still creates and receives records in paper form which are stored in established paper filing systems.

In many cases it may be appropriate to organise the electronic filing structure to mirror an existing paper system, with electronic folder names and hierarchies matching those of the paper files. This allows easy association between records relating to the same matter held on different formats, enabling all records on a particular matter to be readily identified and accessed.

When operating mirrored paper/electronic filing systems it is useful to cross reference between the two to indicate to users accessing either a paper or electronic file that there are additional records in the other format held elsewhere. Possible approaches could include:

- Note attached to the inside cover of a paper file to indicate existence and network location of any mirror electronic folder which should also be referenced to locate relevant documents.
- Notepad document placed within an electronic folder which indicates the existence of related paper documents on a mirror paper file.
- Note in database field to indicate existence and file location of associated paper documents.

Example 3: Cross Referencing Between Paper and Electronic Filing Systems

Paper file cover note (attached to inside cover):

Please also consult electronic folder "FOI S1 Requests" for related electronic documents at: \\Esk\reg\Records Management\Freedom of Information\FOI S1 Requests

Notepad document placed in electronic folder, with title:

NOTE – Related paper documents held on file "FoI S1 Requests" in RM Office main filing cabinet.

However, there is no point in replicating an existing paper filing system in the electronic environment which isn't working well. In such cases, the creation of an electronic system will provide a useful opportunity to re-think the approach and structure which will apply to both systems.

3.3 Security of Sensitive Information

Some information held on shared drives will be considered sensitive or confidential, either on business grounds or through being the personal information of individual staff, students or others. Such information needs to be held securely and access to it strictly limited to those members of staff who need to refer to it as part of their job. The following measures should be taken:

- Users should take care to protect their passwords and avoid leaving their computers logged on when unattended.
- Levels of access by users to shared drive folders and the individual documents contained within should be controlled as appropriate, using the security permissions settings under folder or document "properties". This function allows varying levels of access control ranging from full permission to create, read, write and edit, to read only permission (where all users can view a folder's contents, but only specified users can edit them) to folders and documents accessible only by one or more users.

Particular care should be exercised by managers with information relating to personnel issues and, to minimise any risk of inappropriate access it may be appropriate for such to be stored on personal network file space.

For detailed advice and assistance on managing permissions for your network shared folders, please contact the IS Information Centre.

3.4 Disposing of Documents and Records

Regular review of the documents and records stored in shared drives, deleting any which are no longer required, is essential to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of the filing structure. Check to ensure:

- Unnecessary duplicates of draft and final documents are deleted
- Working copies of documents which are no longer required are deleted
- Documents which have no continuing operational value are deleted
- Records whose retention is covered by University retention policy, schedules or guidance (available on the Records Management website) are disposed of in accordance with them.

4. Naming Conventions for Electronic Records and Folders

Naming conventions are a set of rules which enable the titling of folders, documents and records in a consistent and logical way which ensures that the correct records can be located, identified and retrieved from a filing system in a timely fashion. Although aimed primarily at the electronic environment, the principles of this guidance can apply equally to the paper environment.

4.1 Use of Standard Terms

Decide on standard terminology and forms of names to use in folder and document titles, and apply consistently. Avoid any technical jargon which may change over time and make future identification and retrieval difficult.

The following should be considered:

Names of Bodies, Activities, Projects and People:

Either use the full name form or an acronym, but never mix both. Agree a standard form of naming and apply it consistently.

Example 4: Standard Naming Terms (bodies, activities, projects and people)

EITHER:	*Policy Planning and Resources Committee*	**OR**	*PPRC*
EITHER:	*Scottish Funding Council*	**OR**	*SFC*
EITHER:	*Student Records Project*	**OR**	*SRP*
USE:	**Post titles rather than post holder names e.g:**		
	Finance Director	**NOT**	*John Gordon*
	Academic Registrar	**NOT**	*Douglas Wood*
USE:	**Standard descriptive terms for activities e.g:**		
	Progress Report		
	Funding Application		
	Strategy Document		

Names for document types:

Agree standard names for different document types, such as letters, minutes etc, and apply consistently. There is no need to include descriptions such as “presentation” or “spreadsheet” in document titles, as this information will be apparent from the icon or .ppt/.xls file extensions.

Example 5: Standard Names for Document Types:

Use standard descriptions of document type in titles e.g:

Agenda	*Minutes*
Report	*Memo*
Guide	*Leaflet*
Letter	*Policy*
Handout	

4.2 Structure of Titles

Document titles must contain enough information to identify the document if it becomes separated from its holding folder, but shouldn’t substantially repeat information apparent from the folder titles forming its file path (see example 2 under 3.1 above). The logical identifying aspects of the document type need to be identified and listed in an order which enables easy identification and retrieval. A balance must be struck between brevity and usability. The following should be observed when titling documents and folders:

Example 6: Rules for Structuring Document and Folder Titles

Personal names should be structured in Surname, Forename order e.g
Smith, Arthur Appointment Letter
Jones, Margaret Contract Variation Memo

Dates should follow the yyyy/mm/dd format to ensure files and folders order chronologically e.g
20040512 Brown, Tim Appeal Hearing
20051112 Bloggs, Joe Appeal Hearing
20051206 Smith, Euphemia Appeal Hearing

Combine elements of the title so the most useful information to aid retrieval appears first (mindful of the information already contained in the folder structure within which the document or subfolder sits) e.g

20040512 Brown, Tim Appeal Hearing	(Folder Title)
Brown, Tim Appeal Letter	(Documents within Folder
Brown, Tim Appeal Minutes	
Brown, Tim Appeal Outcome Letter	

Thus the entire folder path within which these documents would sit could be:

Academic Administration/Student Academic Appeals/2004/05/20040512 Brown, Tim Appeal Hearing

4.3 Version Control

It is important to conisistently identify and distinguish versions of documents by including a version number as part of the title. This ensures a clear audit trail exists for tracking the development of a document and identifying earlier versions when needed. The following should be observed:

Example 7: Document Version Control Conventions

Indicate version by structuring the title as follows:

<document name> <version number>* <status: draft/final> e.g:

Brown, Tim Appeal Minutes V1 DRAFT
FoI Compliance Report 2005 V2 FINAL

***A common form for expressing document versions is to use ordinal numbers (1,2,3 etc.) for major version changes and the decimal for minor changes e.g V1, V1.1, V2.6

Including document title and version information in the footer of documents is also good practice.

4.4 Folder Titles

In addition to the guidance on naming conventions above, the following general principles should be kept in mind when titling electronic folders (and paper files):

<u>The Title Should Describe the Content of the Folder</u>

- The title should accurately reflect and indicate the content of the folder to make it easy to locate the documents and records contained and help users readily identify the correct folder to which new records should be added.
- It should differentiate the folder from all others on related matters
- If the subject, content or function of the folder changes, it should be renamed to reflect the change or closed and a new folder created.

<u>Avoid Folder Titles which are too General</u>

- If a folder title is too broad, more material will be filed under it and it will be more difficult to identify and retrieve records when needed.
- It is preferable to have several folders (subfolders) relating to specific matters rather than one relating to a broad area.

<u>Avoid Folder Titles which are too Specific</u>

- If the title is too specific, the records of a particular matter will end up spread across a large number of very small folders, making it more difficulty to view and retrieve them.

- It is important to try and achieve the right balance between generality and specificity in folder naming.

For further advice or assistance on this matter please contact the Records Management Office:

Records.management@stir.ac.uk
www.rec-man.stir.ac.uk
x6672/6670

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Sources

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