

NAMING CONVENTIONS

RECORDS MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK

GUIDANCE TITLE: 02 Naming Conventions

GUIDANCE PURPOSE: Provide rules on titling documents/ records, so the Trust has a consistent approach, and to aid storage and retrieval.

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Question: Why do we need naming conventions?

Answer: To assist with the storage and retrieval of records

Naming records consistently, logically and in a predictable manner distinguishes one from another, and helps with storage and retrieval. Naming records to agreed conventions makes it easier because staff will not have to re-think the process.

There are eight basic rules to follow. The use of some of the rules will be dependent on the type/ importance of the document/ record being dealt with, as to whether the rule is appropriate.

RULE NUMBER	DESCRIPTION OF RULE
1	Keep file names short, but meaningful
2	Avoid unnecessary repetition in file names and file paths
3	Use capital letters to separate words, not spaces or underscores
4	Numbering:
4- a)	When including a number in a file name always give it as a two-digit number, i.e. 01-99, unless it is a year or a number with more than two digits
4- b)	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
5	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
6	Order the elements in the file name in the most appropriate/ usable way to retrieve the record
7	Correspondence:
7- a)	The file names of correspondence should include the name of the correspondent, indication of the subject, date of the correspondence and whether it is incoming or outgoing
7- b)	The file name of an email with an attachment should include the name of the correspondent, indication of the subject, date of the correspondence, 'attch' as an indication that an attachment was sent with the email
8	The version number of a record should be indicated in its file name by the use of 'V_' followed by the version number. This should be at the end of the file name.

1) Keep file names short, but meaningful

Long file names, mean long path names and URLs, which increases the likelihood of error; are harder to remember and recognise, and harder to transmit as they often 'break' when used as hyperlinks.

Staff should also keep in mind though that they should avoid using:

- Initials;
- Abbreviations not easily understood; and
- Codes that are not commonly understood.

See appendix 1 for a list of common abbreviations.

Rule 1: Example	
File name	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">✓ InfoGovtTeamList</div> <div style="text-align: center;">✗ The_Information_Governance_Team_Members_List</div> </div>
Explanation	Some words do not add to the meaning, e.g. 'the' and 'a'. As long as the content is meaningful these words can be left out.

2) Avoid unnecessary repetition/ words in file names and file paths

Unnecessary repetition or words increase the length of file and path names, which is incompatible with rule 1.

Rule 2: Example	
File name	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">✓ /.../Agendas/20190615TeamMeeting /.../Policies/RecordsManagement 'or' /.../Correspondence/20071025Closure LetterFromMrSmith</div> <div style="text-align: center;">✗ /.../Agendas/20190615TeamMeetingAgenda /.../Policies/RecordsManagementPolicy 'or' /.../Correspondence/EmailClosure LetterFromMrSmith</div> </div>
Explanation	<p>In the first example the folder is called 'Agendas', so it is not necessary to include the word Agenda in the name, as all records in that folder are obviously agendas.</p> <p>In the second example the folder is called 'Policies' so it is not necessary to include the word 'policy' after Records Management.</p> <p>In the third example the word email is not needed in the title as it would be evident from the file extension or symbol that it was an email- the format is not relevant, the content is what matters.</p>

3) Use Capital letters to separate words, not spaces or underscores, or any other character

Avoid using spaces and underscores in file names. Using characters instead of spaces increases the file name length which is incompatible with rule 1. Where acronyms are used they should be in capitals, and the first letter of the following word should also be capitalised.

Rule 3: Example		
File name	✓	✗
	/RiskManagement /UHBRiskManagment	/Risk_management & /Risk management /UHB_risk management university of birm hospitals Trust
Explanation	Removing spaces or underscores, reduces the length of the file/ path name. Using capital letters instead ensures the file name is still easily readable and recognisable.	

4) NUMBERING-

4. a) When including a number in a file name give it as a two-digit number

The file directory will display names in alphanumeric order (sort by alphabet and then numbers). To maintain the numeric order, when file names contain numbers it is important to include zero before the main number for all single numbers 0-9, (e.g. 02 or 04), so all numbers have two digits. Once above 9 use 10, 11 etc... up to 99.

This helps when looking to retrieve records as the numbers will appear consecutively in a windows directory.

Rule 4.a): Example		
File name	✓	✗
	/HROfficeProceduresV01 /HROfficeProceduresV02 /HROfficeProceduresV03 /HROfficeProceduresV04 /HROfficeProceduresV05 /HROfficeProceduresV06 /HROfficeProceduresV07 /HROfficeProceduresV10 /HROfficeProceduresV11 (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)	/HROfficeProceduresV1 /HROfficeProceduresV10 /HROfficeProceduresv11 /HROfficeProceduresV2 /HROfficeProceduresV3 /HROfficeProceduresV4 /HROfficeProceduresV5 /HROfficeProceduresV6 /HROfficeProceduresV7 (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)
Explanation	The example shows successive versions of a HR office procedure. If 2 digit numbers are used, the latest version will be at the bottom of the directory list, as the zero appears first; whereas in the right hand example, 10 and 11 appear after 1, then 2, as all the 1's are clustered together; this is confusing. This is because only single digits have been used.	

4. b) If using a date ensure it is stated 'back to front', and use four digit years, two digit months and two digit days (YYYYMMDD)

Putting dates back to front means the chronological (date) order of the records is retained and files will be listed in date order in a windows directory. They will be listed by year, month and then date. This helps when retrieving records.

Rule 4.b): Example		
	✓	☒
File name	/20060401Agenda /20060401Minutes /20060401PaperA /20050502Agenda /20050502Minutes (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)	/2May2005Agenda /2May2005Minutes /1April2006Agenda /1April2006Minutes /1April2006PaperA (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)
Explanation	This example uses minutes, agendas and associated papers. By stating the date 'back to front' the minutes, agendas and papers from the most recent meeting will appear at the bottom of the list and the oldest records at the top (dependent on system setup)- in the order the meetings took place. The column on the left is much easier to understand than the one on the right that uses words in its dates.	

5) Avoid using common words such as 'draft' or 'final' at the start of file names, unless doing so will make it easier to retrieve the record

This rule may be ignored on occasions, but only if starting the file name with these words will genuinely aid the retrieval of records (See rule 7). These types of words should usually go at the end of the file name.

Rule 5: Example		
	✓	☒
File name	/.../Publicity/ /AdvertisingV0_1Draft /AdvertisingV1_0Final /BudgetReport2002-2003V2_0Final /BudgetReport2003-2004V0_1Draft (Ordered as files would be in the directory list)	/.../Publicity/ /DraftAdvertising /DraftBudgetReport2003-2004 /FinalAdvertising /FinalBudgetReport2002-2003 (Ordered as files would be in the directory list)
Explanation	The file directory lists in alphanumeric order. This means file names beginning with 'Draft' will be listed together. When retrieving records it is more useful to find the draft budget report next to the previous year's, rather than next to an unrelated draft record.	

6) Order the elements in the file name in the most appropriate/ usable way to retrieve the record

The elements to be included in a file name should be ordered according to the way the record will be retrieved; this depends upon the way your area works.

For example, if records are retrieved according to date, the date should appear first. If records are retrieved according to description, the description element should appear first. If in doubt put the date first as then records will appear in chronological order and will show the chain of events.

7) CORRESPONDENCE

7. a) File names of correspondence should include the name of the correspondent, indication of the subject, date of the correspondence and whether it is incoming or outgoing

This rule should be used when correspondence has been scanned into a computer as an image. Staff should include:

- Name of correspondent- name of person who sent the correspondence, name of person you sent the correspondence to.
- Subject description, where it is not given in the folder title;
- Date of correspondence;
- If incoming correspondence, include '*rcvd*';
- If outgoing correspondence, include '*out*'.

When ordering the elements consider rule 7. It will probably be appropriate to order in the same order as the above list, as it is likely correspondence will be retrieved on the basis of the correspondent. Also consider rule 2; a description of the subject may already exist in the folder title.

7. b) File names on email correspondence with attachments should include the name of the correspondent, indication of the subject, date of the correspondence, and 'attch' as an indication an attachment was sent with the email

Sometimes emails are received with attachments that need to be kept or text in the body of the email; in these cases save the email in 'Outlook Message Format' (.msg), as the attachment will also be saved. Sometimes the email will just be a transmission record (like an envelope), with no value, and does not need to be saved. Staff should make this judgement based on their knowledge of the information they work with.

The file name of the email should contain the following information:

- Name of correspondent;
- Subject description;
- Date of email;
- '*attch*' to indicate there is an attachment;
- 2 digit number to indicate the number of attachments (if applicable), e.g. 01, 02;
- If incoming correspondence, include '*rcvd*';
- If outgoing correspondence, include '*out*'.

When ordering consider rule 7; what is most relevant? Also consider rule 2, as a description of the subject may already exist in the folder title.

Rule 7: Example		
	✓	✗
File name	/.../Complaints/ /JonesM20060516attch01rcvd /JonesM20060611out /ThomasS20050403rcvd /ThomasS20050409out (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)	/.../Complaints/ /AttachmentFromMJones16May06 /EmailFromSThomas3April2005 /EmailToMJones11June065 /EmailToSThomas9April05 (Ordered alphanumerically as the files would be in the directory list)
Explanation	This shows incoming and outgoing correspondence with complainants. On the left it is easy to see all off the correspondence is together, ordered by date and it then highlights if there are any attachments and if it was incoming or outgoing. The other example is muddled and it is not until half way through the file name it becomes clear which complainant the file concerns.	

8) The version number of a record should be indicated in its file name by the use of ‘V’ followed by the version number

Some records will go through a number of versions and it is important we are able to differentiate between these versions by giving them their own number.

Where a version is used it should appear as the last element of the file name of the record, so that the most recent can be identified and retrieved, e.g. *RecordsManagementV0_1*, and *RecordsManagementV1_0*. The ‘V’ should always be a capital in keeping with rule 3.

For full guidance on versioning please see ‘*Version Control*’ guidance.

Contact Details/ Further Information

If you have any question regarding the creation/ receipt of files please contact:

- *Information Governance Lead (*Information Governance Team*)
 - Email: InformationGovernance@uhb.nhs.uk

Appendix 1- Abbreviations

*List of standard abbreviations which Trust staff are permitted to use in their day to day file naming.

Abbreviation	Full Wording
<i>BSI</i>	British Standards Institute
<i>Cttee</i>	Committee
<i>Email</i>	Electronic Mail
<i>Dept</i>	Department
<i>Xml</i>	Extensible Markup Language
<i>FoI</i>	Freedom of Information
<i>DPA</i>	Data Protection Act
<i>EIR</i>	Environmental Information Regulations
<i>Govt</i>	Government
<i>No</i>	Number
<i>Tel</i>	Telephone
<i>UK</i>	United Kingdom
<i>VAT</i>	Value Added Tax
<i>Mgmt</i>	Management
<i>UHB</i>	University Hospitals of Birmingham
<i>CSU</i>	Commissioning Support Unit
<i>CCG</i>	Clinical Commissioning Group
<i>IT</i>	Information Technology

NB: This is not a comprehensive list. Your department may well use other abbreviations as part of daily processes. These abbreviations should be recorded and distributed to all new and existing staff for reference.