RM

Electronic File & Folder Naming Conventions

Purpose
To provide standards for naming folders and files, tips to organize files, and examples of best practices.

Context
Naming conventions and filing procedures can help you properly apply the University of Lethbridge Classification System (ULCS) and efficiently manage the storage and retrieval of records and other information. Although this tip sheet refers specifically to electronic files, similar procedures and conventions should be adopted for the classification of paper files to ensure consistency in identifying records in all formats.

Benefits
The creation and maintenance of a well-organized electronic directory is very important to the efficient and accurate management of electronic records and information, especially for shared network drives. This also:
- Makes content easier to find using Windows or other search tools
- Structures electronic documents into a logical sequence for easier browsing and navigation
- Makes security and access restrictions easier to administer
- Decreases the amount of time spent finding information
- Supports document version control

There are a wide variety of ways to name electronic records. If your office has a system that is working well, continue to use it. What is important is that your department's guidelines are communicated to all staff members and applied consistently.

Naming Conventions
General
1. Name files and folders from general to specific as you navigate down the directory structure
2. Name and organize files in the way that they will be retrieved and/or managed
    - The order of elements, such as date, topic, or version, should be consistent for each record series. For example, minutes and agendas should be consistent, but they may be different from procedures or project records.
3. Keep file names short and relevant
    - File names should describe the contents of the file without the user having to open it
    - Windows imposes a limit of 255 characters for the entire file path
    - Do not use stop words that are excluded from searches (e.g. the, and, for)
    - Do not use common words unless they help with retrieval (e.g. letter, file, document)
    - Use common terminology
    - Use acronyms and abbreviations only if they are widely understood and unlikely to change in the future
4. Try to store all files in folders; avoid "orphan" files
5. Avoid repetition and redundant words in folder and file names
6. Avoid using non-alphanumeric characters and spaces in file names (okay in folder names)
    - Use CamelCase, or hyphens or underscores between words, instead

Naming Conventions, continued

Folders

7. Names for folders containing University records should include the ULCS classification number and title for the type of records. This ensures that, in the future, a retention period can easily be attached to the contents of the folder.
8. Avoid repeating elements contained in parent folder names. For example, use ".../Procedures/Onboarding" instead of ".../Procedures/Onboarding Procedure".

Dates & Numbers

9. When dates are important for retrieval (e.g. meeting minutes and agendas), use YYYYMMDD format to maintain chronological order.
    - If only the year or month is relevant, use YYYY, YYYYMM
10. To keep files in chronological order, like they would be in a paper file folder, name the file with the date first and the subject second. This may be helpful for folders of project or meeting records, for example, but may not be appropriate for other folder structures or "living" documents. Remember that files can be sorted in a folder by date modified.
11. Include a leading 0 for numbers 0-9 to maintain numerical order

Versions & Drafts

12. Include notations identifying the format or version of the document at the <u>end</u> of the file name. Business units should define approved notations that are used consistently.
    - Use DRAFT as a watermark instead of as part of the file name
    - Maintain the same filename throughout the versioning process
    - For versions, use _v01, _v02, _v03, etc. to track only major revisions or _v01-1, v01-2, v02-0, etc. to track both major and minor revisions (e.g. correction of typos, style, small additions or deletions)
    - When using editor's initials to keep track of edits from different people, add the editor's initials instead of changing the version number.
    - When possible, use version control tools built into your software and/or maintain a table (change log) to manually keep track of changes within your document
    - To denote the final version, replace the version control element with FINAL

Names & Initials

13. If needed, write the name of a person using last name followed by initial (e.g. SmithJ)
    - If possible, use the individual's title, rank, or position instead of name

Additional Tips

1. Avoid saving documents to multiple locations; use shortcuts that point to one location instead.
2. When moving files or folders:
    - Use Cut (CTRL+X) and Paste (CTRL+V) instead of drag and drop to avoid mistakes
3. Keep on top of your clutter and review your drives at least once every year
    - Delete transitory information, particularly old versions and drafts
    - Do not use ScanTo folders for long-term storage. Move scanned files immediately.
4. Review your directories against the ULCS to be sure that records are not being kept too long. Keep the number of subfolders to a minimum. Try not to go deeper than seven levels "down" in the filing structure to keep it easy for users to search and utilize efficiently, and to avoid issues with the file path character limit.
5. Searching for files using Windows Explorer
    - In the search box in the upper-right corner of the folder being searched, type in a word or phrase you are looking for and wait for the matched files to be found
    - Use the * wildcard to broaden your search (e.g. *agenda)
    - If you want Microsoft to be able to successfully search the contents of documents, you may need to adjust the "Folder and Search Options"

Examples of Best Practices

File Naming

Do This	Avoid This
20160120_Agenda	20 January 2016 Agenda
20160120_Minutes	Minutes-Jan. 20, 2016
OfficeProcedures_v01	Office Procedures v1
SmithJ_AwardCeremony	Email, Award Ceremony, J. Smith
2015_AnnualFinancialStatement	2015 Annual $$$
2016-06-15_Minutes_d02	Draft Minutes June, version 2
LunchMenuSchedule_20160719	LM & Sch

Folder Structure & Sample File Names

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▲ 🖳 records (\\uldept) (Z:)                   Name
  ▷ 📁 Archives Shared
  ▲ 📁 Departmental shared                       📄 20070920_Agenda
    ▷ 📁 Classification System_540-10            📄 20070920_Minutes
    ▲ 📁 Committees Meetings_540-03              📄 20071119_Agenda
      ▲ 📁 Records Management                    📄 20071119_Minutes
          📁 2007-08                             📄 20080121_Agenda
          📁 2008-09                             📄 20080121_Minutes
        📁 Staff                                 📄 20080303_Agenda
    ▷ 📁 Dispositions_540-16                     📄 20080303_Minutes
    ▷ 📁 Events_810-20
    ▷ 📁 General_540-01
    ▲ 📁 Human Resources_600
        📁 PCQs_605-30
      ▷ 📁 Training Plans_600-01
    ▷ 📁 Policies Procedures_540-00
    ▲ 📁 Publications_750-15
      ▷ 📁 Brochures
      ▷ 📁 Information Sheets
        📁 Website
    ▷ 📁 Reports Statistics_540-04
    ▷ 📁 Resources
    ▷ 📁 Retention_540-11
        📁 Storage Capacity_540-20
    ▷ 📁 Systems Management_530-15
    ▷ 📁 Tendering_350-10
    ▷ 📁 Transfers_540-15
  📁 Scanto
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