



# Management of Electronic Records

## File Management Guidelines

### PURPOSE

This document provides guidelines and advice in the management of Athabasca University's electronic records.

### OVERVIEW

Athabasca University's physical and electronic records and information assets are its corporate memory. They are the evidence of how the University performs its functions and why decisions were taken, and as such they are vital for its ongoing operations. Controls must be applied to the creation, maintenance, use, and disposal of an institution's records, including retention scheduling, vital records protection, and storage and administration of inactive records. These controls will ensure that the University's records and information assets are:

- ◇ Trustworthy and managed accountably, effectively, and responsibly
- ◇ Readily accessible
- ◇ Understandable and usable
- ◇ Part of the University's approach to risk management
- ◇ Meeting their purpose
- ◇ Secured and protected

### KEY STEPS

The four key steps in the control of University records are:

- 1) Organize
- 2) Manage
- 3) Secure
- 4) Dispose

The organization of all records systems, paper or electronic, should be consistent. Organize shared drives and/or other content management systems such as SharePoint according to the University's records classification system wherever possible.

Avoid creating a complex folder structure of folders-within-folders. The folder structure should be as flat as possible based on the function that the records support, then the activity they detail. Creating folders on shared drives also encourages user access through navigation of the folder structure. Clicking through a multitude of folders is frustrating when searching for information. The same principles of folders also hold true for Outlook records (see Email Management Guidelines).



Files should always be sorted into an appropriate folder – avoid “orphan files”, which do not have a home and are left “loose” and uncategorized.

## EXAMPLE

LEVEL 1 – Records Management Office

LEVEL 2 - ADMINISTRATION

LEVEL 3 – Training

LEVEL 2 - RIM SERVICES – GENERAL

LEVEL 3 – Project Plan

LEVEL 3 – Framework

LEVEL 3 – Policy

LEVEL 3 - Classification

It will not always be possible to create just three or fewer levels of folder hierarchy, but an effort should be made to keep it as flat as possible. Try to think from the perspective of a new team member trying to find their way to specific records. This will help ensure your folder structure is logical and clear.

## FILE NAMING

Departments must ensure that the records under their care are secure, authentic, and reliable. Multiple documents stored on shared drives, or in systems such as SharePoint, can become unruly quickly. Without a naming convention it is difficult for users to determine what a particular record is, let alone the revision status and whether the record has been acted upon. All records should be named consistently with a method for naming that is documented, shared, and agreed upon by the department.

### Document Naming checklist – Quick Guide

- ◇ Seek agreement on the order of the elements that will make up the filename
- ◇ Separate elements using an underscore
- ◇ Separate revision status on documents by using an underscore
- ◇ Use a clear, consistent code when drafting (A, B, C or v1, v2, v3) and use a specific code when the document is final (such as 0)
- ◇ When sending a final document by email, save and send it as a PDF rather than the native file
- ◇ Use tags or keywords in the properties of the document

## Naming Elements

The name of the document is made up of elements that when brought together will form the file-name. Using naming elements is beneficial because once staff become familiar with the agreed upon naming convention, its use efficiently relays a lot of information.

Key elements can include:

- ◆ Project or account number
- ◆ Subject or activity
- ◆ Document form
- ◆ Date or revision status

Elements to avoid:

- Vague file names like “Miscellaneous” or “Various”
- Using names or initials (“BobsReport” or “ProjectPlan\_hm”)
  - Long term meaning behind them may be lost or obscured!
  - Additionally, it is difficult to tell which version is the most current!

Each unit or department may come up with their own combination of the elements identified above and explained below. However, whichever arrangement is chosen, it is critical that this choice be documented and adopted by the entire unit. **Consistency is key!**

## Element overview

A sample title using all of the elements is shown below:

RMAdvice\_HumanResources\_GUI\_20220408\_v0.pdf

The document’s name tells the reader that the document is Records Management advice, created for Human Resources dated April 8, 2022, and that its both final and acted upon. The name can be further broken down like so:

Subject	Faculty/Dept/ Unit	Document Form	Date	Revision	File Extension
RMAdvice_	HumanResources_	GUI_	YYMMDD_	v0	.pdf

## Document Form

Use one of the abbreviations below to identify the document form. These are suggestions only; a formal list will be developed with the final guidelines.



AGD	Agenda	LTR	Letter
AGR	Agreement	MEM	Memo (internal)
ANN	Announcement	MIN	Minutes
APP	Appendix	MNL	Manual
BRN	Briefing Note	MTG	Meeting
CON	Contract	PLN	Plan
COV	Cover Page	POL	Policy
DRT	Directory	PRC	Procedure
EXA	Example	PRF	Profile
FCT	Fact Sheet	PRO	Proposal
FRM	Form	PRS	Presentation
GRA	Grant	PRL	Press Release
GUI	Guidelines	RPT	Report
INT	Interview	SCH	Schedule
INV	Invoice	SUM	Summary
INX	Index	TOR	Terms of Reference

## Date Standard

When dating the document, use the ISO Standard (ISO 8641) format for dates:

YYMMDD (no dashes between year, month, or day)

The Date element can be replaced with a sequence number where warranted, especially in cases where many of the same document type exists and the addition of the date would not make the document title unique. For example:

RMAdvice\_HumanResources\_GUI\_0001\_v0.pdf

RMAdvice\_HumanResources\_GUI\_0002\_v0.pdf

RMAdvice\_HumanResources\_GUI\_0003\_v0.pdf

Date information should be displayed elsewhere, in the document’s metadata and on the document itself. Should the date be considered the most important part of the organization of documents, a department may choose to list the date first:

20220420\_RMAdvice\_HumanResources\_GUI\_v0.pdf

20210519\_RMAdvice\_HumanResources\_GUI\_v0.pdf

In this example, the date is first, likely because advice was provided on different occasions, each unique from the next.

Dates are not recommended as a way to differentiate between versions, as multiple revisions could be made on the same date by different people. However, they can be useful in organizing final documents.