Version 1.0
Approved: 1 May 2015

Guidance Document: Version Control

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What is Version Control?

Version Control is the management of multiple versions of the same document. Version control enables us to tell one version of a document from another.

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Why is Version Control Important?

Version control is important when documents are being created, and for any records that undergo a lot of revision and redrafting. It helps us to track changes and identify when key decisions were made along the way. It is particularly important for electronic documents that are being reviewed by a number of different users.

Knowing which version of a document you are looking at is important if you are trying to find out which version of a policy is currently in force, or which version of a policy was in use at a particular time. It forms good records keeping practice which is particularly important in meeting our obligations under the Freedom of Information Act.

Aim

The aim of this document is to provide best practice guidance for applying version control to different types of document at the University of Nottingham. This guidance covers best practice use of:

1. File Naming conventions
2. Version Numbers
3. Version Control Tables
4. Document control Tables

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Version Control Options

There are various options you can adopt to version control your records. Use the most appropriate option depending on the number of iterations you expect and the number of individuals involved in the process. Some documents will only need the simpler techniques, such as the use of naming conventions, but some complex and formal documents will need a version control table.

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File Naming Conventions

At the simplest level you can use file naming conventions to identify the version of a document. Use the file name of the document to determine both the version and status alongside the subject , for example:

> Records Management Policy_Draft_v0.1
> Records Management Policy_Final_v2.0

Remember to update the version number on the file name as well as the header (or footer) of the document itself. It is easy to update a document and forget to rename the version number on either the file name or the document which can lead to confusion.

Unless you don't need to keep previous versions of the document, always save updated versions as 'Read-only' tag to ensure you are forced to create a new version the next time to go to update it.

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File naming conventions alone will not tell you who made the change and what the change was. If it is important to record this information use a version control table.

Version Numbers

Version numbering helps to distinguish one version of a document from another. For some documents, you may decide that a simple numbering system consisting of consecutive whole numbers is sufficient to help you keep track of which version you are working on. However, documents that go numerous stages of development before a final version is reached, and for those that are developed through input by multiple individuals, you may decide to adopt version numbers to keep track of both minor and major changes to that document.

> Minor Revisions
> Minor revisions are small changes made to a document such as spelling or grammar corrections, and other changes that… Minor revisions to a document are reflected by making increments to the decimal number.
> Major Revisions
> Major revisions are changes to a document that require the document to be re-approved (either by an individual or a group). Major revisions are reflected by incrementing the whole number by 1.

Version	Examples
A minor change to draft document is reflected by increasing the decimal figure incrementally. This may include the file name 'Draft' if preferred.	Draft_v0.1 (first version of draft) Environmental Policy_ 0.2 (second version of draft) Strategic Plan_0.3 Draft (third version of draft)
A major change to a document, such as when it is approved, is reflected by increasing the whole number by 1. This may include the file name 'final' if preferred.	Final Version 1.0 (first approved version) Environmental Policy 2.0 (second approved version) Strategic Plan_v3.0 Draft (third approved version)
A minor change to an approved document (ie a change that do not require the document to be re-approved) is reflected by increasing the decimal number consecutively.	Document Version 1.0 (first approved version) Final_v1.1 (minor amendment of first approved version) Policy 2.1 (minor amendment of second approved version)

Version Control and Document Control Tables

Version control tables provide historical data about each update made to a document.   It is useful to include the author, date and notes about each change made so you can refer back to what these changes were.

Version Control			
Version	**Author**	**Date**	**Changes**
0.1	Jennifer Rochfort	26-03-2014	First draft
0.2	Jennifer Rochfort	11-04-2014	Changed dates in section 2
0.3	Jennifer Rochfort	10-05-2014	Minor change to Table of Contents
1.0	Jennifer Rochfort	01-06-2014	Approved by Board

Example Table Format

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In addition to a Version Control Table, it may be useful to include additional information in a Document Control Table which might include the following relevant information:

Document Control	
Document Title	
Version Number	Author(s) (name, job title and Division)
Date Approved	Document Status
Effective Date	Approved By
Superseded Version	Date of Next Review

Example Table Format

See Appendix A: Example Policy with Version Control Table and Document Control Table.

Where to keep your Version Control /Document Control Tables?
Version control tables are useful to have at the start of a document whilst the document is being developed. Alternatively, they can be created as a separate document to that document and filed in the same electronic folder for reference purposes only.

Document Control Tables if used should be inserted on the front page of a document.

Best Practice Considerations

Document Owner
If there are numerous parties involved in drafting a document it is good practice to have a single person nominated to manage the overall version control. This may require the collation of numerous versions of a document with track changes or other changes suggested.

Keeping Draft Versions
Once you have finalised a document, a decision should be made on whether the drafts now need to be kept or whether they can be deleted.

In the majority of cases it should be possible to delete drafts once the final version of a document has been agreed. This will help to reduce the confusion caused by the duplication of documents and means that there is less danger of earlier versions being accidentally used.

You should keep drafts if you think it is necessary to preserve a record of the process of developing the document. This may be, for example to maintain a record of why particular changes were made or to help when the document is redeveloped at some future date.

Remember that draft versions of a document may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

Further Guidance

For further guidance please contact:

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