

## University of Warwick – File Naming Conventions

When you create, and then store a file, developing a good name for it (following a naming convention) makes retrieving it for future use easier. Being able to identify a file’s content from its title can also help you manage its lifecycle according to the [University Records Retention Schedule \(RRS\)](#).

A good file name is one that enables not just you, but also others, to identify its content and context without always having to open the file itself. This is particularly important when saving information to a shared information system (e.g. M Drive) which others need to access for legitimate business reasons (e.g. where the contents of the file has value to the wider University for a period of time).

As files stored in shared University information systems have the potential to be utilised by others careful consideration must be given to the range of details a file name contains and its access arrangements (e.g. ensure that access is restricted to only those that need to identify and use a file).

**N.B.** In the limited instances when it is absolutely necessary that a file name contains personal data or other sensitive information particular attention should be given to ensuring its storage arrangements are in line with the University’s: [Information Classification Policy \(IG05\)](#) and [Information Handling Policy \(IS04\)](#) and adhere to [Data Protection](#) obligations.

A good file name should be:

- Objective
- Meaningful
- Concise
- Standardised

**Objective** - File names which make perfect sense to you might be far less clear to someone else, especially if they are unfamiliar with the work you do.

Poor Practice	Good Practice
Current team chart	ITServicesOrganisationChart20180412

**Meaningful** - File names should always be meaningful, avoid abbreviations and personal shorthand terms. You should also consider the University’s guide on Document Control (Version Control).

Poor Practice	Good Practice
AcBd mins 0418	20180412AcademicBoardMinutes

**Finding files** - When files are retrieved according to their date, the date element should appear first. If files are retrieved according to their description, the descriptive element should appear first.

Some files you will want to order by date:

Poor Practice	Good Practice
Agenda1Feb2018	20180201Agenda
Agenda20Jan2018	20180120Agenda.doc
Minutes1Feb2018	20180201Minutes
Minutes20Jan2018	20180120Minutes.doc

Other files you will want to order by subject:

Poor Practice	Good Practice
20180630StaffBarbecue.doc	StaffBarbecue20180630.doc
20180905TimeHigherAward.doc	TimesHigherAwards20180905.doc

**Concise** - Long and imprecise file names can also make it hard to scan quickly through lengthy lists of files to locate the correct one. Try and keep file names as concise as you can without losing the important contextual information.

Poor Practice	Good Practice
Trip report and other thoughts relating to records management from the JISC conference in Birmingham by John Smith	20180313JISConferenceTripReport
Learning_and_Teaching_Sub_committe_terms_of_referece.doc	LearningTeachingSubCommitteeTermsOfReference.doc

**Standardised** - Agreeing and following standards is the key to ensuring your file names are as widely understood as possible. Each office will have a need for different standards – the aim is for consistency. For instance the representation of dates and times (e.g. in documents) can conform to International and British standards (I.E BS ISO 8601:2004). If using a date in the file name always use four digit years, two digit months and two digit days: YYYYMMDD

Poor Practice	Good Practice
1 Dec 2018 Agenda	20181201Agenda
2 Oct 2018 Agenda	20181002Agenda
3 Jan 2018 Agenda	20180103Agenda

In other instances it might be a list of approved terms that can be used in each area:

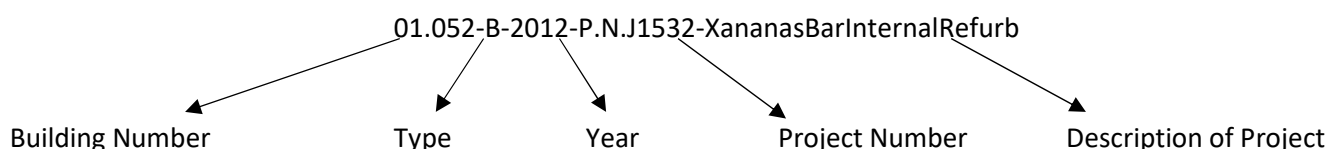
- Department/Faculties
- Subject Areas
- External Bodies and Agencies
- Types of information (e.g. minutes, agendas, project initiation documents etc.)

Avoid using non-alphanumeric (\*:?\<>|"?'[]; etc.) characters in file names as they are not recognised by all computer operating systems. Consider:

- Dashes, e.g. file-name.doc
- No Separation, e.g. filename.doc
- Camel case, where the first letter of each section of text is capitalised, e.g. FileName.doc

### Specific Naming Conventions

Certain Departments within the University will have specific naming conventions they need to adhere to. Please see the example from the University Estates Department below:



Please check with your Departmental head whether you need to adhere to any professional/sector/subject specific naming conventions.