

Version Control Guidance

What is Version Control?

Version Control is the management of **different versions** of the **same document**. It enables us to tell one version of a document from another. It can track the development of a document up to the final version. Following the release of the final version, it provides an audit trail of any subsequent revisions. For further support on implementing version control, please contact records-management@lancaster.ac.uk.

Why is Version Control needed?

Version Control is important for any document that is to be published externally or internally. This includes University policies and procedures and other communications with the public.

It is particularly important when:

- It is expected there will be multiple versions of the same document;
- It may be necessary to know which version was in operation at a particular time e.g. student policy, staff privacy notice, fees policy;
- Working collaboratively on the development of a document with others.

Benefits of Version Control

Effective Version Control can have the following benefits:

- Documents can be linked to decisions, contributors, and time – this is particularly the case if a version control table is used.
- Older versions of a document may be destroyed, reducing clutter, and helping to [remain compliant with the retention schedule](#).
- The latest version of a document can be easily identified.

Version Control conventions

Your department/division may have established its own Version Control system. This guidance provides conventions that are commonly used and your own systems can be checked against these conventions.

- **Draft versions**
 - Typically, each successive draft of a document is numbered sequentially e.g. 0.1, 0.2, 0.3 until a finalised version is complete.
 - The sub-version number should increase when minor changes are made to a document. You may make several changes to a document and update the number at the point that this is republished.
 - These version numbers should be within the body of a document – typically in the header, footer or version control table as well as within the file name.
- **Final version**
 - The first final version should be version 1.0. If version 1.0 is to be revised drafts would be numbered as 1.1, 1.2 etc. until version 2.0 is completed, approved and published. A good indicator of when a new version should be used is when senior approval has to be sought.
 - These version numbers should be within the body of a document – typically in the header, footer or version control table as well as within the file name.
 - Final versions should be made available in a format that does not easily allow others to make changes e.g. PDF, read-only document.

- A master copy in the records original readily editable format should be kept by the relevant team to ensure further versions can be produced if necessary.
- **Version Control Tables**
 - These are useful for formal University procedures, policies, strategies, and project documentation. They provide further details of what changes were made to a document, when and by whom.
 - Typically, a version control table will have the following information:
 - The new version number.
 - The date of the change.
 - The purpose of the change or the change itself.
 - The person making the change.

An example is given below:

Version	Date	Description of changes and name and job title of person responsible for making changes
0.1	01/08/2017	Initial draft-to line manager (Jason Smith, HR Manager)
0.2	18/08/2017	Feedback from line manager (Jason Smith, HR Manager)
0.3	29/08/2017	Feedback from working group (Jason Smith, HR Manager)
1.0	01/09/2017	Final version – approved by Director of HR
1.1	10/11/2017	Revision of paragraph 12 to clarify procedure (Ying Chang, HR Advisor)
2.0	02/02/2018	Final version – approved by Director of HR

- **Document Details Tables**

In addition to the version control table an additional table with document details is useful. This can list the document owner and give details of the review period for the document. An example is given below:

Document Reference	Reference Number
Document Status	DRAFT/FINAL
Document Owner	
Target Audience	
Review Period	3 years
Date of First Approval	2018
Date of Next Review	2021
Version Number	V1.2

Version Control and the Retention Schedule

Draft versions do not need to be kept when they are superseded, unless there is a good operational reason why you may need a record of the development of the document. A better alternative to keeping drafts is to document any changes within the version control table.

Previous final versions will need to be kept in line with the University's retention schedule, available on the [Records Management webpage](#).