

Creating Successful Record Titles

One of the most important functions of any records management system is to ensure that records can be located now and in the future. A title that provides a concise statement of the content of the record will ensure that the right record will be found efficiently, and its content and context understood.

If the title does not reflect the content of the file, or the individual document, it will be difficult for users to find the information they need. Effective titles distinguish one record from all others.

ASK YOURSELF:

Could someone unfamiliar with your business identify the content of the record based on the title alone?

When creating a title for a record consider the following:

Be precise yet inclusive

Titles should be specific. If the title is too general, unrelated material will be placed on the file, making it harder to find and retrieve the document you need.

Be consistent

Titling files on similar business consistently makes them easier to find. Use agreed terms in situations where there can be variations, for example use 'personnel' – not 'staff' or 'employees'.

Avoid jargon

Jargon tends to change over time making it difficult to find records when usage is no longer current.

Folder Titles

Generally, it is best to avoid using acronyms on their own (please refer to the section titled 'Acronyms' on the next page). However, for any given folder, if there is an acronym that will be used frequently in the title of the documents to be contained within it, if you put the full term followed by the acronym in the title of a folder e.g. Records Governance Services (RGS), then you can use the acronym on its own in the title of all documents and emails placed in that folder (knowing that into the future the folder title will provide context as to what the acronym means).

Document and Email Titles

The name or title of a document/email should describe its purpose or "business" and distinguish the document/email from all others. Record titles should contain sufficient information and be meaningful enough to explain their content without the user having to physically open the record.

Please consider the following when titling your documents:

- Free text is used for titling documents in TRIM. This means the future retrieval of documents is largely dependent on how well you title your records.
- When adding emails and documents into TRIM, the title field in TRIM will automatically populate with the subject line of the email or the current title of the document. This title should be reviewed and updated to ensure the title is appropriate. In addition, ensure you remove "RE:" and "FW:" from the start of your email titles as these may affect search results.
- If records on similar issues are titled consistently, it makes them easier to retrieve. As mentioned earlier, make sure that you use an agreed term in situations where there can be variations (e.g. use 'personnel' – not 'staff' or 'employees', and use 'student' instead of 'pupil'). **It's a great idea to establish local business rules for business units.**

Student Records

A separate document titled 'Naming Convention for TRIM - Student Records' exists to provide guidance on how to title records that are filed within a student cabinet. This document is located on the Records Governance Services [Student records](#) page of the Records Governance Services SharePoint site, but can also be accessed directly by clicking [here](#).

General Titling Principles

Keyword:

When titling documents, include a keyword to identify what the record is. This will allow staff who are searching for records to know what a particular record is without having to view it. The keyword should generally go at the beginning of the title, unless naming conventions dictate otherwise. Example keywords are Report, Business Case, Brief, Work Instruction, Procedure, Letter, Advice, Agenda and Minutes.

Hyphens

Apply hyphens with adjacent spaces to separate titles in to logical 'parts' and aid readability:

- Minutes – Records Governance Services Team Meeting – 21 April 2017
- Feedback – Information Management Strategy – Records Governance Services
- Smith to Jones – Approval for Conference Leave – Records Forum – May 2017

Metadata

Information that is captured in the records metadata (e.g. information automatically captured by TRIM when you create a record, or information you populate when you fill out the Record Entry Form for a record), doesn't need to be included in the title e.g. author, record number, version, related record, date created, date registered.

Short and Sharp

Ensure the title isn't too wordy as it can become cluttered.

- **Before:** Email of 7 September 2016 from Joe Bloggs to Jane Doe regarding the removal of workforce office furniture from Building A to Building B
- **After:** Bloggs to Doe – Removal of Office Furniture – Building A to B – Workforce Department

Uppercase

Using UPPERCASE can make reading titles difficult. Use uppercase only when appropriate. Capitalisation may be used freely.

Shortening and Abbreviating Words:

It's best to avoid shortening or abbreviating words as this can hinder the ability to search **on and** retrieve records in the future e.g. Mtng (Meeting), Re (Regarding), Org (Organisation).

Symbols

Try to avoid using symbols in place of words as it can hinder searching. This includes common place symbols such as ampersand ('&' – standing for 'and'). Symbols should always be spelt out in full. Punctuation such as apostrophes and inverted commas should not be used in record titles (names of people, business units, schools, companies etc. are exempt from these rules)

Names

Personal Names: Include any punctuation such as hyphens or apostrophes. E.g.

- Henry O'Grady (not Henry O Grady or Henry Ogrady)
- Jean Black-Smith (not Jean Black Smith or Jean Blacksmith)

Organisation/Company Names: Include any punctuation such as hyphens or apostrophes.

Dates

Dates are often not required in titles as the TRIM metadata captures this information automatically e.g. 'date created'. However, dates should be captured when they are vital for the record, for example, with meeting minutes/agendas, travel/conference records, contracts/agreements. The following formats for placing dates in titles should be followed:

- **Monthly Meetings:** September 2016, April 2017
- **Occasional Meetings:** 15 September 2016, 21 April 2017
- **Contracts/Agreements:** 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017, 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017
- **Calendar Year (and University Financial Year):** 2015, 2016, 2017
- **Financial Year:** 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17
- **Strategies/Plans:** 2012-2022, 2017-2021

YYYY.MM.DD is the only date format that will ensure your records can be sorted by chronological order. This format can be used when specified and authorised for use in Local Business Rules.

Acronyms

Try to avoid using acronyms on their own as they can mean different things to different people. If you do need to use an acronym place it in brackets after spelling the acronym out in full, for example:

- Records Governance Services (RGS)
- Information Communication and Technology (ICT)

Hint: Common place acronyms such as NSW and UoN are acceptable.

In addition, a list of currently approved acronyms can be found by navigating to the Records Governance Services [Student records](#) page of the Records Governance Services SharePoint site, or by clicking [here](#).

Examples of Naming Conventions for Common Documents

Record	Title Structure	Examples
Agendas and minutes	Agenda/Minutes – [Meeting Name] – [Area/Location] – [Date]	Agenda – Records Governance Services – March 2016 Minutes – Faculty Progress and Appeals Committee Meeting – April 2017
Agenda items	Item [Item number] – [Name of agenda item] – [Meeting Name]	Item 1.1 – Draft Recordkeeping Policy – Policy and Procedures Committee Item 1.2 – Review Terms of Reference – Work Health & Safety Committee
Briefs	Brief – [Title of Brief] – [Area/Location]	Brief – Evaluation of HP Records Manager (HPRM) – Office of the Chancellor Brief – Refurbishment of Hunter Building – Callaghan Campus
Business cases	Business Case – [Title of business case] – [Area/Location]	Business Case – SharePoint TRIM Integration – Resources Division Business Case – John Smith Records Forum Attendance March 2017 – Records Governance Services
Complaints	Complaint – [Complainant] – [Subject of Complaint] – [Area/Location] – [Date – if required]	Complaint – John Smith – Car Parking Availability – Callaghan Campus Complaint – Lisa Jane – Error in unofficial transcript – School of Engineering
Contracts/Agreements	Contract/Agreement – [Name of Contract] – [External Parties to Agreement] – [Date]	Contract – Credit Transfer Arrangement – University of New England – 1 September 2016 to 31 August 2019 Fully Executed Agreement – Lease of Printer MF546 – Fuji Xerox Australia Pty Ltd – 1 November 2016 to 31 October 2017
Letters	Letter – [Subject] – [Area/Location] – [Date – if necessary]	Letter – John Smith Offer of Employment – Administration Officer Resources Division – 3 June 2016 Letter – Feedback for Records Management Policy – NSW State Archives and Records
Emails	[Sender Surname] to [Recipient Surname] – [Subject] – [Date – if necessary]	Kennedy to McElhinney – Update on TRIM Implementation Project – March 2017 Brown to Smith – Outstanding Tasks – Graduation Ceremony – April 2017
Reports	Report – [Name of Report] – [Location]	Report – TRIM Usage – Student Central – 2016 Human Resources Support to Records Governance Services – Cessations List – April 2017