Document History and Version Control Guidelines

Introduction

Document history and version control are used to record detail of minor and major amendments (reviews) to University documentation over time. It allows anyone accessing the document to know if it is the most current version; when it was last amended; what was changed from the previous version; and who approved the document including any amendments made to it.

Definitions

Document history - a document history is a written summary about a document over time and may include any changes (amendments) to the document; who authorised the changes and when the changes were authorised.

Official University documents – is a collective term and includes any document that is written for the University to be used across the University as a whole including, but not limited to policies, procedures, guidelines, plans, strategies and forms.

Version control – is a numbering system to enable the various iterations of a document to be tracked. At the University it also shows if the document had minor amendments made to it or a major review was undertaken.

Guidelines

Document History and Version Control Table

All official University documents* should contain a document history and version control table on the final page (before any appendices) and any amendments should be noted in this final section as well as the name of the University authority giving the document approval and the date it was approved for use within the University.

*In the case of forms a document history and version control table should be kept also, however this may be best kept separately in a secure drive by the document owner.

Although version control provides a mechanism for knowing the currency of the document, it is not sufficient in itself to reflect details of minor amendments and reviews. The use of document history records the details of any amendments or reviews.
For minor amendments, details of those amendments are required. For reviews it is sufficient to record ‘Major review of document’. This may be qualified further with something like: “major review of document in line with changes to XYZ legislation”.

Each document history and version number entry shows:

- the date each version was issued;
- who authorised the amendment or review; and
- details of the amendments made or if the document was reviewed.

All official University documents must be reviewed regularly to ensure compliance and currency with any changes to legislation and/or best practice. In general, this should happen at least every year and at a maximum every three years.

Note: This may be extended under special circumstances such as documents about animal ethics which go through an audit process every five years.

All official University documents must have a ‘Document History and Version Control’ table on the final page separate from the rest of the document, as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version History Entries</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Approval Authority</th>
<th>Action Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All version histories start from 1.00 (minor amendments are then 1.01, 1.02, 1.03 etc. Reviews are 1.00, 2.00, 3.00 etc.)</td>
<td>Make this as succinct as possible. Include any position title changes, amendments/additions to document and details. Give reason for amendment. (e.g. &quot;Assistant Vice-Chancellor Research changed to Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research to reflect change in title&quot;).</td>
<td>Which approval authority in the University approved the amendment or review (e.g. Vice-Chancellor, Chair, University Council or Chair, Academic Board)</td>
<td>Written as Mmm/YYYY. This is the date the last amendment or review was approved. (e.g. Apr 2013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Version Control Numbering – (Minor) Amendments and (Major) Reviews**

Version Numbering consists of a number followed by a point then two more numbers i.e. x.xx

The number to the left of the dot point describes the number of major reviews from the date of original issue.

The numbers to the right of the dot point describe the number of minor amendments from the time of issue or, from the last review.

The first version of every document is always 1.00 and after the first minor amendment, will result in 1.01.
For example, therefore, the 12th minor amendment without any review would appear as 1.12 (this would not normally occur as a review would usually take place prior to the 12th minor amendment, nevertheless, it is acceptable).

Each major review would result in the number to the left of the point incrementing by 1 and the number to the right of the dot point reverting to two zeroes.

The real benefit of this system of numbering is that it provides document information at a glance. If the version is 1.00 then there have been no changes since issue. However, if for example the version number was 7.06 this would reflect six major reviews since the first version was created and six minor amendments since the last review. In other words this particular document has been kept current and been reviewed regularly.

Minor Amendments

A minor amendment is generally a change to a document that is not large in size and/or does not change the original intent of the content.

For example, a change in position title; a formatting or grammatical change, extending the review date of the document and minor word changes to standardise language.

Major Reviews

A major review is generally when the appointed contact officer or approval authority for a document reads over the document content thoroughly and either confirms the document content as current and accurate (with or without minor amendments) or, makes significant changes to the content and/or intent of the document.

A major review is usually triggered by the assigned review date however, if there have been important changes in legislation and/or best practice, then this may also lead to a major review of the document.

Document Footers

The footer of the front page and all subsequent pages need only be annotated with the document name, the version number and the page number (set out as ‘Page X of X’). It should also have a copyright warning and/or confidentiality warning.

It is the University Policy Unit’s responsibility to update the document history and version control table and also the footer of each document prior to releasing the document online.

Example of footer:
Information and Records Management

Information can be a vital corporate resource. The implementation of best practice records’ management will support University business in many ways, and is significant for a number of reasons. The University is committed to accurate information and records management and this is achieved through the IRM team who advocate compliance with Government legislation on retention and disposal schedules and who manage the corporate repository for all documentation.

Best practice records management is to maintain a record of each version of an official document so that any changes can be tracked over time and it is easy to verify when a particular version of a document was created and/or released. Having an accurate document history and version control table on official University documents ensures there is a brief summary that can be referred to quickly.

Good records management:

- Improves the conduct of business in an orderly, efficient and accountable manner;
- Supports compliance with statutory obligations;
- Supports and documents policy and managerial decision-making;
- Protects the interests of the University and the rights of students, staff, and stakeholders;
- Maintains a corporate memory for the University; and
- Guarantees tangible savings in time and resources.

For further information on good records management refer to records@canterbury.ac.nz

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Approval Authority</th>
<th>Action Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Creation of original document and posting to UCPL</td>
<td>Senior Policy and Risk Advisor</td>
<td>Sep 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>