

## SAVING EMAILS AS RECORDS

All official emails created by University staff in the course of business must be captured to TRIM either as sent, or as a 'thread' when the communication is complete. For routine internal exchanges a thread may be filed (see text box below). For transactions requiring clear evidence, particularly where there is potential for litigation, individual emails should be filed.

### Who captures emails?

- a) If both correspondents have rights to the relevant folder, they are captured by the section upon which the decision impacts of the exchange.

Example: if a document is sent to a manager for approval, the initiator captures both submission and approval. If a manager initiates an exchange with a staff member, the manager will ensure it is filed, either personally or by assigning the task.

- b) If only one correspondent has rights to the relevant folder, they are captured by the officer responsible for the process under discussion. This is the officer whose role normally creates and controls the record of this process.

If a query is raised from outside the unit on an activity that is that unit's responsibility, it is the unit's role to capture the exchange. The officer responsible will be the staff member to whom the matter is referred.

Conventions will need to be developed for these roles, and when the responsibility is unclear, discussion may be necessary to make sure it is captured. Within a unit, the manager may assign particular responsibilities for updating records, which should be noted in staff members' performance plans.

### Registration/cataloguing to Records Manager

Registration (cataloguing) is the capture of a document's key features into Records Manager (RM). This information enables the future retrieval and processing of the document. Key features include:

- A unique identifying number
- A brief title
- The date the document was written
- The date received
- The author
- The format (e.g. email, agreement, report etc.)

When a new document is registered, RM allocates the next number available. This is a single system sequence, not related to a particular folder. The number is in the format: DOC12/989, for example, which is the 989th document registered in 2012.

## Document titling conventions

All documents, electronic or hard-copy, must be titled when catalogued into RM. The title is how they are going to be found, so it is important to form business conventions in your area that ensure consistency, and reflect the ways in which you will need to retrieve the email, or any other documents. The notes field of the registration form can also be used to add alternative search terms.

It is particularly important to re-label emails. Records Manager will default to the subject line, which typically will be uninformative, e.g. "Meeting, RE: Meeting, RE: Tuesday", or just "RE:".

### *Some guidelines:*

- a) Consider whether the title includes likely search terms – e.g. vendor or product names
- b) Consider whether it is well enough described for other users to tell whether it is relevant without opening it
- c) Consider acronyms – should the term be spelled out fully? Will the acronym mean anything to users in 10 years' time? Consistency is important – ASQC will not find Quality, or vice-versa.
- d) Always spell-check. Misspelt words will not be retrieved in a search. The standard spelling used should be British English.
- e) Do not needlessly repeat terms that are in the folder titles, as it may be preferable to return the relevant folders and open them, rather than get all of their contents returned in the same search.

**Email threads:** Saving only a last email of a thread has some record-keeping consequences. Text of prior emails can be altered if included in a reply or forwarded email. For this reason they cannot be taken to be a fully authenticated record. Where evidence values are high for emails, they must be saved individually.

Note also that earlier emails will not be found in a search for their authors, or for the date originally sent. Where there are gaps of many days between elements of the discussion, the current state of the matter is unclear on the record. There is also an increased risk of forgetting to file, because an expected reply never comes. The user should judge whether any of these risks are significant for their processes.

The USP Records Management policy outlines the responsibilities and accountabilities for record keeping and can be viewed at [www.usp.ac.fj/records](http://www.usp.ac.fj/records)

For further information or for advice please do not hesitate to contact the Records Management office.