Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): File Naming Conventions and Version Control

1. Purpose

This SOP defines **file naming conventions and version control** to ensure consistent organization, easy retrieval, and effective management of digital documents. It outlines standardized naming protocols, version numbering systems, and guidelines for updating, storing, and archiving files. The purpose is to enhance collaboration, maintain document integrity, and prevent confusion by establishing clear, uniform procedures for file management across the organization.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all employees and contractors who create, modify, store, or manage digital documents within the organization.

3. Responsibilities

- **All Staff:** Adhere to the naming and versioning conventions outlined in this document.
- **Managers:** Ensure staff compliance and periodic reviews of stored files for accuracy.
- **IT Team:** Provide technical support for file management systems.

4. File Naming Conventions

4.1 General Principles

- Be descriptive and concise.
- Use underscores `_` or hyphens `-` to separate words; avoid spaces.
- Include relevant identifiers such as project name, department, date, and version.
- Use consistent date formats: `YYYYMMDD` (e.g., `20240615` for June 15, 2024).
- Do not use special characters (`\/:*?"<>|`).

4.2 Standard File Name Structure

Format:

`[Project/Department]_[DocumentType]_[Description]_[YYYYMMDD]_v[Major].[Minor].[UserInitials].ext`

Example:

`HR_Policy_RemoteWork_20240615_v1.0_JD.docx`

Component	Description
Project/Department	E.g. `HR`, `Finance`, `IT`
DocumentType	E.g. `Policy`, `Report`, `Minutes`
Description	Short detail about the file's content
YYYYMMDD	Date of file creation or update
v[Major].[Minor]	Version number (see section 5)
UserInitials	File creator or editor's initials
ext	File extension (e.g. `.docx`, `.xlsx`)

5. Version Control

5.1 Versioning Format

- **Major:** Increment for significant changes, new releases, or approvals (e.g., `v1.0` to `v2.0`).
- **Minor:** Increment for minor edits, typos, or corrections (e.g., `v1.0` to `v1.1`).

- Each file update should reflect a new version number and editor initials.

5.2 Example Version Progression

- `HR_Policy_RemoteWork_20240615_v1.0_JD.docx` : Original draft
- `HR_Policy_RemoteWork_20240620_v1.1_AS.docx` : Minor corrections
- `HR_Policy_RemoteWork_20240625_v2.0_JD.docx` : Major update/approval

6. Updating and Archiving

- Update file names and version numbers with each significant change.
- Retain previous versions for reference in a dedicated archive folder (`/Archive`).
- Archive obsolete or superseded files periodically based on department policy.

7. Storage & Access

- All files must be stored on approved shared drives or document management systems.
- Organize folders by department/project and within by year, then DocumentType.
- Apply permissions according to data sensitivity and role requirements.

8. Review & Compliance

- Managers must review file structures quarterly to ensure compliance.
- Non-compliance may result in corrective action per organizational policy.

9. Revision History

Date	Version	Author	Change Description
2024-06-15	1.0	JD	Initial SOP drafted