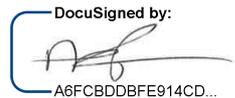


Research Governance Standard Operating Procedure 17 – Electronic Signatures

Document details	
Version	v1.2 06/02/2026
Effective from	09/02/2026
Review date	09/02/2028
Owner	Research Governance
Originally Prepared by	Adam Taylor, Head of Research Governance (adam.taylor@bristol.ac.uk
Reviewed by	Adam Taylor, Head of Research Governance, adam.taylor@bristol.ac.uk
Approved by	Adam Taylor, Head of Research Governance, adam.taylor@bristol.ac.uk
	 A6FCBDDDBFE914CD...
Superseded documents	None

Document history						
Version	Review date	Reviewer	Section(s) Amended	Updated version	Approver	Effective date
v1.0	20/01/26	Adam Taylor	Missing text added to section 5. Footer amended to include URL.	v1.1	Adam Taylor	20/1/26
V1.1	27/01/26	Emily Avent	Typos corrected.	V1.2	Adam Taylor	09/02/26

Table of Contents

1. Glossary	3
2. Background	3
3. Scope	3
4. Responsibilities	3
5. Procedure	3

6. Related documents..... 4

1. Glossary

The Research Governance Glossary can be found here: <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/red/documents/research-governance/research-governance-glossary.pdf>

2. Background

This document sets out the manner in which electronic documents can be 'signed' for authorisation or to confirm a review.

3. Scope

Any documents generated or referred to as part of a project overseen by Research Governance that require authorisation or confirmation of review.

4. Responsibilities

Anyone authorising or reviewing a document as part of a relevant project should be familiar with and follow this procedure.

5. Procedure

Any 'signature' applied to a document is intended to evidence that a specific individual has reviewed and approved that document. There are multiple ways that this can be achieved for a digital document, the following sets out which are and are not appropriate, in relevant circumstances.

Acceptable Approaches

Printed, signed and scanned

A document which has been printed out, in full, by or on behalf of the signee, physically signed and then scanned to create a new digital document is appropriate.

Certified e-signature

A document signed using an e-signature service, such as *DocuSign*, is appropriate, so long as the file is saved in such a manner that the signature can be authenticated.

Confirmed by e-mail

A document with a typed name and date of approval, accompanied by an e-mail from the signee's professional, secure e-mail account is appropriate – so long as there is a means of storing a copy of the e-mail along with the document, and that this is done.

Use of a digital system with restricted access

Confirming by completing a checkbox, selecting an option, or by similar means, within a digital system, such as an online database is appropriate – so long as access to the database is restricted; by a secured account, by a unique URL sent to a secured e-mail account, or by similar means. If the confirmation being provided requires the signee to have a particular qualification or have been delegated a particular task, the system must include appropriate access restriction, managed by an appropriately delegated individual.

Unacceptable Approaches

Pasted Image of Signature

A scan or photo of a signature pasted into a document is not, under any circumstances, acceptable as a signature. *Such images should not be created or retained.*

Typed only

With the exception of certain standard NHS agreements, where this is the specifically approved process, a typed name alone does not constitute a signature.

Other Approaches

Any approach not described here should be assessed against its ability to satisfy the intention of evidencing that a specific individual has reviewed and approved the signed document.

6. Related documents

None