Records Management Tip Sheet
Digital Signatures

What are Digital Signatures?

There are many different formats of digital signatures and all will come with different levels of reliability, authenticity, and integrity.

Common examples of digital signatures:

- A scanned handwritten signature

- Clicking through an online agreement or form (for example checking a box or clicking an "agree" button)

- Using software to authenticate identities and manage signatures (examples include ConsignO; DocuSign; eTokens*)

Important! For digital signatures to be considered reliable and authentic:

- Both parties must agree to use a digital signature for the transaction.

- The signature must be unique to the person signing and reliable.

- The process for applying the signature must also be reliable.

*eTokens may already be familiar as they are required to access certain applications at the University of Toronto.

What requires a signature?

Not everything requires a signature!

Some types of documents have their signature requirements detailed by law (for example: wills and codicils, powers of attorney, negotiable instruments), many other document types do not.

Most **external** agreements, approvals, memorandums, contracts, transactions, etc. that legally bind the University require a reliable signature.

- This can be a traditional handwritten signature or a highly secure digital signature.

- You usually need to be recognized as a signing authority by the University to be involved with the signing of these types of documents.

Digitalbevaring.dk

Most **internal** documents or transactions, created and circulated around the University for staff approval, do not require any signature.

- These documents may need a signature to fulfill specific departmental policies or procedures.

- If required by policy or procedure, the signatures can be a traditional handwritten signature or any type of digital signature either agreed to or specified in the policy or procedure.

Not sure? Please talk with your Manager in case legal advice is required.

Questions?

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