Guide to Writing University Policy

About This Manual

This guide contains information about the process to develop, revise, maintain and distribute University-wide administrative policies, procedures, instructions and forms. This manual is broken into two major sections for your reference:

1. Administrative Policy Format
2. Writing an Administrative Policy

The policies and procedures that you write will become part of the ***University Administrative Policy Library***.

A policy is divided into three levels/parts of information – the actual policy, any applicable procedures and the necessary instructions and forms. Please refer to the Formulation and Issuance of University Administrative Policies for a detailed definition of administrative policies.

Policy Format

Administrative policies will use a standard format to lend structure to policy information and ensure consistency from one policy document to another. By standardizing the way that policies are presented to the reader, the University hopes to make policies easier to read and understand.

The template contains suggested formatting along with major sections representing broad sections of policy information. These major sections appear in every policy document, providing the framework for the information, which should be further divided into subheadings when necessary.

When building your policy in the template, please keep the formatting as close to the original format, so that it may be used in the ***Online Policy Library*** with the greatest efficiency.

In the **Footer** of the document, include the version date and number to aid in tracking changes and policy review.

Policy (Document) Contents

The ***first page*** of each University policy contains the **Title Block**.

Title Block contains

- Title of the policy
- Policy number (to be added upon approval by the Policy Approval Committee)
- Effective Policy Date (to be added upon approval by the Policy Approval Committee)

Policy Statement
A summary statement with descriptions of the activities addressed by the policy and who is governed by the policy and when the policy applies. It does not describe procedures. (It is generally one to three sentences.)

Reason(s) for the Policy
Recognizes the legitimate interests of all parties, describes the overall benefits, as well as the (competing) concerns that the policy seeks to manage. Reasons for a policy are often not clear to an end user, so this section is intended to provide some basic explanations for the considerations and requirements that call for a policy.

Primary Guidance to Which This Policy Responds
Any policies or regulations--such as those put forth by the City, State and Federal government-- that are the reason for the creation of this policy or inform the policy content in any significant way.

Responsible University Officer & Office
The individual charged with the responsibility for the development work on the policy, for its maintenance, and for any inquiries that may arise regarding the policy.

Under the direction of the Responsible Officer, the office that develops and administers a particular policy and procedures and will be accountable for the accuracy of its subject matter, its issuance, and timely updating.

Revision History
List references to previous versions of this policy by name and date.

Who is governed by This Policy
Members of the University community who have the responsibility to adhere to the policy, such as Staff, Faculty and Students. Others governed by the policy may include people working on behalf of the University, visitors, and others involved in certain administrative transactions.

Who Should Know This Policy

People by nature of their role and responsibility at the University who have a particular responsibility to be familiar with the contents of the policy.

Exclusions & Special Situations
List any locations or organizations (internal or external to the University) that are excluded from the policy; additionally list any funding sources or job classifications that are excluded from the policy. If there are no exclusions, a statement to that effect should be included in this section.

Special situations should contain information about important circumstances that affect only a few people or circumstances that occur infrequently.

Policy Text
This section specifies the basis for the policy and states what requirements this policy establishes. It will usually be the largest section, with the various topics and content of the policy laid out in various sections. This section allows for a fuller description of the issues that are being conveyed to the reader. Within this sections, headings for each topic or subtopic should be considered in order to help the reader navigate and understand the policy components.

Responsibilities
Summarizes major responsibilities for key roles with respect to the policy. Key roles may be for an individual, a group or a department.

Definitions
Define unique terms that, by being defined, would add to the reader's understanding of the policy.

- List terms in alphabetical order
- Define unfamiliar or technical terms
- Define terms with special meanings

The following three sections—Contacts, Cross References to Related Policies, and Web Address—are part of the policy document, but can be updated by the Responsible Office without review by the Administrative Advisory Council or the Policy Approval Committee.

Contacts
Name, title, contact information for people who have official roles in helping others to understand and/or carry out the policy. Explain the role of a contact if it is not clear by the person's title. Contacts might include the Responsible Officer, the person responsible for compliance and/or exception approvals, a person who processes forms or other requests. Any general inquiry line (phone or email) should also be included.

Cross References to Related Policies

A policy topic may be addressed in more than one policy. It may also be useful to list related policies for certain transactions or constituencies. A referral may also be made broadly for informational purposes to another policy.

Web Address
The URL address that is an active link the reader can use to map to the actual referenced document.

Appendix
Appendices are used for informational material that is directly related to the implementation of the policy. All information here should be arranged under additional subheading within this section.

Information in the appendix-- such as procedures, forms, instructions, Frequently Asked Questions—can be updated by the Responsible Office and does not require review by the Administrative Advisory Council or the Policy Approval Committee (though the Responsible Officer may decide to submit them for a review.) These items should be reviewed and approved by the Responsible Officer before they are included in an updated policy document.

- ***Procedures***
  Some university policies must contain procedures for compliance. The level of detail contained in the Procedures document of the policy is determined by the Responsible Office. * All Procedures are created in a separate document. *

  When creating procedures use the following format:
    - *List steps to follow in order to comply with the policy*
    - *Divide section marked by headings (when necessary)*
    - *Use an introduction section for complex procedures or those with options*
    - *Clearly identify options, cautions, or warnings*
    - *Refer reader to:*
      - *Related Documents*
      - *Relevant Appendix Entries*
      - *Relevant Special Situations*
    - *Notify the reader if procedure is time-consuming or time sensitive*

- ***Forms***
  Forms should be included with information on how to obtain forms or complete any online processes (of those forms) that are required for compliance with the policy.

- ***Other Related Documents***
  The Related Documents lists related university and external documents that are required to complete the procedures or that provide helpful, relevant information. A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document may be included. Such a document should build on information in the policy. The question is always whether the need

for FAQs speaks to a need to improve information in the policy document itself.

Document Types (Examples)
Contracts
Laws & Regulations
External Guidelines
Relevant Programs & Training Courses

Writing a Policy

Basic Tips for Policy Writing

- For clarity, policies should, in general, be written in the third person.

- Because policies are written for a diverse audience, they must be complete yet simple and easy to read.

  Select your words carefully. Words like *'should'* and *'may'* imply a choice. For example, *"Faculty and staff should not smoke in class"*.

  This means they should not smoke but it's perfectly fine if they do.

- Whenever possible, use as few words as possible to state a case. For example, *"All faculty and staff must …"*

  The word *'all'* is redundant. Simply stating *"Faculty and staff"* implies all unless an exception is also written.

- Sometimes, over clarifying a statement can alter its meaning. For example, *"All university faculty and staff, under the leadership of its officers, are obligated to ensure that university funds are used only for mission related purposes"*.

  This statement implies that only those *"under the leadership"* are required to follow the policy.

- Lastly, the best written policies are written with the reader in mind.