

ACU Policy Development Resources

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Policy Writing Tips

When developing a policy or procedure, it is important to provide your target audience with information that is easy to read and understand. The policy and procedure documents should also provide the right level of guidance to support and inform all individuals affected by the content of the policy.

Following is a list of good policy writing tips for consideration when developing a policy and/or procedure:

Before getting started:

- Read the [Policy Development and Review Policy and Procedure](#) to understand the requirements and process. Determine if you are developing a new policy or reviewing an existing policy.
- Seek advice from the Directorate of Governance on any proposal to develop a new policy to ensure there is not an existing policy, or section of an existing policy, that already covers the issue using the using the [Policy Notification](#).
- Determine the appropriate approval pathway (i.e. the Responsible Officer, Governing Authority and the Approval Authority). Refer to the [Policy Development and Review Policy](#) and the [Delegations Policy and Register](#) if in doubt.
- Identify the appropriate stakeholders and consider the communication and consultation required for the development of your policy.
- Conduct a detailed scoping and research exercise to clarify objectives, consider operational impacts and ensure alignment with other ACU policies.
- Review existing legislative or regulatory requirements (if applicable).
- Benchmark against other universities' policies and procedures to compare sector standards and practices.

When drafting the policy:

- Aim for positive messaging rather than punitive.
- Use plain English. Write clearly and succinctly and use terminology consistently throughout the document.
- Use the active voice to provide clear and direct guidance. The subject should appear first, followed by the verb and object. For example:

Active: Staff *identify* possible vendors to supply a good or service
Passive: Vendors who supply a good or service *are identified* by staff
- Avoid being too informal or using abstract words or colloquialisms. Where obligations are set out ensure the language is not discretionary e.g. use “must” instead of “may” or “will” rather than “should”.

- Use gender-neutral and inclusive language so that the policy content is accessible and meaningful to a broad audience.
- Determine what headings are required for the policy and the information that goes into each heading. The Policy Template includes a list of commonly used headings.
- Use sub-headings when you want to draw attention to a specific topic. The preferred style is [1., 1.1, 1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.1.1 followed by a alphanumeric list e.g. a), b), c) and then roman numerals.]
- Use numbering and not bullet points for easy referencing. Lists should always be in the form a), b), c) and then followed by roman numerals if there is a nested list e.g.

3.1.2 This is paragraph text

- a) This is an alpha list
- b) This is an alpha list
 - (i) This is a nested list
 - (ii) This is a nested list
- Be clear about the difference between a policy and a procedure. A policy establishes the key principles and provisions that govern the decision-making processes, while procedures provide the steps on how to implement and/or comply with the policy.
- Be prepared to draft the policy structure with respect to sections, headings etc, and circulate it for review. Be prepared to do this more than once, depending on the complexity of the policy and how it will relate to procedures, guidelines etc
- Use diagrams and tables where relevant to provide visual representation and clarity of content.
- Introduce hyperlinks in the document when making references to external resources or other published documents.
- Use position titles of the relevant officers and not the individuals' names.

For more information, please refer to [ACU Brand Guidelines](#), [Content Publishing Policy for the ACU Web](#) and [Checklist of Checkpoints for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#).

Policy Development Checklist

General

Have you:

- Read and understood the [Policy Development and Review Policy and Procedure](#), and consulted the [Policy Development Resources](#) section on the website?
- Established the need to develop or review the policy or procedure?
- Determined your target audience for the Policy i.e. who will be the key representatives of staff and/or students affected by this policy?
- Made contact with the Directorate of Governance to advise that the need for a new policy has been established, via the [Policy Notification](#)?

Development or Amendment of Policy

Have you:

- Identified the Responsible Officer, Governing Authority and Approval Authority?
- Undertaken research and analysis, benchmarking or sought expert advice (where necessary)?
- Drafted the document using the ACU Policy or Procedure Templates found on the [Policy Development Resources](#) section on the website?
- Ensured that the word 'DRAFT' is included as a watermark on all new and revised policies and procedures prior to approval, and that the draft document is only available internally until final approval?

Consultation

Have you:

- Consulted with key stakeholders as appropriate?
- Collated feedback and revised the draft policy or procedure as required?

Review and Finalisation

Have you:

- Sought expert advice on the revised draft policy or procedure to ensure compliance?

Endorsement and Approval

Have you:

- Prepared a brief and implementation plan to submit to the Governing Authority and Approval Authority alongside the Policy or Procedure, using the templates found on the [Policy Development Resources](#) section on the website?
- Removed the the 'DRAFT' watermark at the point of seeking the necessary endorsement or approval. The accompanying brief referred to above will indicate that the document is subject to approval. If the policy or procedure is not approved, the watermark must be re-inserted.
- Sought endorsement or approval of the draft policy or procedure from the Governing Authority as per the [Policy Development and Review Policy and Procedure](#)?
- Provided the policy or procedure to the Approval Authority for consideration and approval as per the [Policy Development and Review Policy and Procedure](#)?

Communication and Implementation

Have you:

- Uploaded the policy or procedure onto ACU's Policy Content Management System (i.e. the policy library on the website), via the [Policy Notification](#)?
- Confirmed that the landing page, policy page and procedure page have all been updated accordingly and accurately reflect the approved policy and/or procedure?
- Ensured that older versions of the policy or procedure are archived appropriately?
- Notified the Directorate of Governance and the ACU community via appropriate communication channels?

Policy Review

Have you:

- Liaised with the Directorate of Governance via the [Policy Notification](#) to ensure that the policy or procedure is reviewed prior to the scheduled date?
- Revisited the [Policy Development and Review Policy and Procedure](#), for information on undertaking a review?
- Identified the relevant stakeholders to engage with as part of the review?

Policy Cover Page and Table of Contents Guide

Name of Policy	Insert a brief and meaningful title for your policy. The word 'Policy' should be at the end of your title i.e. 'Parental Leave Policy' not 'Policy on Parental Leave'.
Description of Policy	Brief statement about the policy purpose, e.g. 'This policy covers the provision of parental leave for Academic and Professional Staff at ACU'.
Policy applies to	<input type="checkbox"/> University-wide <input type="checkbox"/> Specific (<i>outline location, campus, organisational unit, etc</i>) <i>Tick the appropriate box to indicate if the policy is University-wide or has specific application.</i> For specific application, please list details.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff only <input type="checkbox"/> Students only <input type="checkbox"/> Staff and students <i>Tick the appropriate box to indicate whether the policy applies to Staff, Students, or Staff and Students.</i>
Policy status	<input type="checkbox"/> New policy <input type="checkbox"/> Revision of existing policy <i>Tick the appropriate box to indicate if this is a new policy or a revised policy.</i>

Approval authority	This should be the Vice-Chancellor or delegate.
Governing authority	This should be either the relevant decision-making Committee or a Senior Executive Group member.
Responsible officer	This should be a member of the Executive.

Refer to the Delegations of Authority Policy and Register and/or relevant Committees Terms of Reference for further details.

Approval date	List the date when the policy was first approved by the Approval Authority.
Effective date	List the start date of the policy (this may be the same as the approval date or later).
Approval date of last revision	List the date when the policy was last revised.
Effective date of last revision	List the start date of the revised policy (this may be the same as the approval date of last revision or later). You can leave the last approval date and policy review date for editorial changes.
Date of policy review*	List when the policy is due to be reviewed (up to five years from the Approval Date, or more frequently if appropriate).

**unless otherwise indicated, this policy will still apply beyond the review date*

Related legislation, policies, procedures, guidelines and local protocols	Please list the key related policies, procedures, guidelines, local protocols, template and documents.
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Suggested headings for Table of Contents

1.	Purpose	8
2.	Scope/Application	8
3.	Policy Statement and Principles	8
4.	Roles and Responsibilities	8
4.1.	Approval Authority	8
4.2.	Governing Authority	8
4.3.	Responsible Officer	8
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1. Purpose

State the rationale for the policy i.e. why the policy is required. Include reference to the issues to be addressed or objectives to be achieved.

2. Scope/Application

Sets out who the policy is relevant to and/or the circumstances in which it will apply. You may also wish to explicitly state who the policy does not apply to. If the policy replaces an earlier version, a reference should be included under this section e.g. this document replaces [insert name], which is rescinded from the date of effect of this policy.

3. Policy Statement and Principles

This section forms the core of your policy. You may start off by identifying a statement of commitment or the high-level principles of the policy i.e. what are the requirements or provisions established by this policy.

The substantive elements of the policy should be articulated here. Note: detailed procedural information about how stakeholders should comply with the policy should be listed in the procedure document.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Please identify the Approval Authority, Governing Authority and Responsible Officer and elaborate on their roles. It is also useful to state whether these parties may delegate their functions (having referred to ACU's Delegations of Authority Policy and Register).

4.1. APPROVAL AUTHORITY

The Vice-Chancellor (or delegate who is either a decision-making Committee or a Senior Executive Group member) must be listed here. Please note that in web editing (HTML) version, the field will automatically default to the Vice-Chancellor.

4.2. GOVERNING AUTHORITY

The Governing Authority should be a decision-making Committee or a Senior Executive Group member. The Governing Authority must be distinct from the Approval Authority. If the Governing Authority is a Committee, please also list the chair of the committee. For a list of ACU Committees, please visit

http://www.acu.edu.au/staff/our_university/committees.

4.3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

List here the responsible Member of the Executive.

4.4. OTHER RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS *[LIST CATEGORIES OR TITLES OF RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS]*

List here any other relevant stakeholders and any associated expectations and responsibilities.

5. Review

State how often the policy will be reviewed and provide details in the table below. Most University-wide policies are reviewed every five years. You may use the following line:

“In line with the University’s [Policy Development Policy](#), this policy is scheduled for review every five years or more frequently if appropriate.”

6. Revisions made to this Policy

Date	Major, Minor or Editorial Revision	Description of Revision(s)
Date of revision/new policy	Refer to Glossary of Terms in the Policy Development and Review Policy for definitions of major, minor and editorial amendments	Please outline the main changes made to the policy. For New Policies, please state ‘New Policy.’

7. Further Assistance

Suggest any further resources that will aid the readers (this could be an online resource or a contact in charge of the policy).

8. Glossary of Terms/Definitions*

It is recommended to list the definitions, key terms or acronyms related to the policy. If the same terms are used outside of this policy (in other ACU documents), please use existing definitions.

For academic policies, this section may appear at the beginning of the policy rather than the end, consistent with practice to date.

**This section may appear at the front of the policy*

Procedure Cover Page Guide

Name of Procedure	Insert a brief and meaningful title for your procedure.
Governing policy	Insert a reference to the policy to which the procedure relates.
Description of Procedure	Brief statement about the purpose of the procedures, e.g. 'This document sets out how ACU will manage breaches of the Privacy Policy'.
Procedure applies to	<input type="checkbox"/> University-wide <input type="checkbox"/> Specific (<i>outline location, campus, organisational unit, etc</i>) <i>Tick the appropriate box to indicate if the procedure is University-wide or has specific application.</i> For specific application, please list details.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff only <input type="checkbox"/> Students only <input type="checkbox"/> Staff and students <i>Tick the appropriate box to indicate whether the policy applies to Staff, Students, or Staff and Students.</i>
Procedure status	<input type="checkbox"/> New procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Revision of existing procedure <i>Tick the appropriate box to indicate if this is a new or revised procedure.</i>

Approval authority	This should be the Vice-Chancellor or delegate.
Governing authority	This should be either the relevant decision-making Committee or a Senior Executive Group member.
Responsible officer	This should be a member of the Executive.

Refer to the Delegations of Authority Policy and Register and/or relevant Committees Terms of Reference for further details.

Approval date	List the original date when the procedure was first approved by the Approval Authority.
Effective date	List the start date of the procedure (this may be the same as the approval date or later).
Approval date of last revision	List the date when the procedure was last revised (this would be the latest approval date by either the Governing Authority or Approval Authority). You can leave the last approval date and policy review date for editorial changes.
Effective date of last revision	List the start date of the revised procedure (this may be the same as the approval date of last revision or later)
Date of governing policy review*	Please list when the governing policy is due to be reviewed (up to five years from the Approval Date, or more frequently if appropriate).

**unless otherwise indicated, this procedure will still apply beyond the review date*

Related legislation, policies, procedures, guidelines and local protocols	Please list the key related policies, procedures, guidelines, local protocols, templates and documents.
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Brief and Implementation Plan Template

Brief to [Insert Governing Authority or Approving Authority as appropriate]
Subject: [approval of xxx Policy]

Recommendation

That the [Governing Authority] endorses OR [Approving Authority] approves the [name of policy/procedure] for effect on and from [date].

Background

Insert a brief description of the background of the policy/procedure development which should include the following:

- Internal or external factors that contributed to need for the development (or review) of the policy/procedure e.g. change to government legislation.
- Process of consultation undertaken (identify which stakeholders were consulted and whether feedback was incorporated).
- Reference to any other associated documents in the policy hierarchy e.g. University Statute or Regulations.

Implementation Plan

Outline the actions to be taken post-approval as part of implementation which may include any of the following:

- How will the policy/procedure be accessed i.e. published on ACU's content management system and any other dedicated webpages?
- Identify any IT systems changes or administrative changes that are necessary as a result of the policy/procedure.
- Identify consequential amendments that need to be made to other governing documents e.g. guidelines or local protocols.
- Communication strategy and methods of dissemination i.e. how will ACU Staff and/or students be notified once the policy/procedure is approved?
- Identify any potential barriers to successful implementation and identify a mitigation strategy.
- Whether any other resources are being developed to assist with the promulgation of the policy/procedure e.g. training or information sessions.
- Measures to support ongoing monitoring and enforcement of the policy.

Sign off by the Responsible Officer