Instructions for Writing a University Policy

These instructions are to be followed when developing new and revising existing policy and should be read in conjunction with the Policy Instrument Procedure.

Once the Policy and Procedure Development Proposal has been approved, a new container will be set up in Content Manager which will include a policy template that you will be able to edit. An Annotated Policy Template is available to assist with formatting but is not intended to act as a template for drafting purposes. Please note that in many cases these instructions build on and provide greater detail than the Annotated Policy Template.

There are separate Instructions for Writing a Procedure.

Policy and procedures must be written in clear, concise, grammatical plain English. Aim to capture the essential features of the policy as succinctly as possible.

Use:

- everyday words

- the same word for the same concept throughout

- terms that are unlikely to change or become outdated (e.g. use position titles rather than the names of individual staff members)

- refer to 'the University' rather than 'USQ'

- short sentences

- short paragraphs of no more than 4-5 lines of text

- caution when using terms such as 'must/will/normally' as these terms can create compliance obligations (if used casually/inappropriately, the University could find itself in a situation where there is audit risk due to a compliance breach of a self-imposed obligation)

- active rather than passive voice

- gender-inclusive language (or make gender-specific pronouns plural or reword; avoid the use of 'he/she')

- the third person in preference to the second person (e.g. 'they' rather than 'you')

- the format DD/MM/YYYY for dates (e.g. 21/10/2006).

Avoid:

- wordiness and long chunks of text

- jargon

- the use of double negatives

- acronyms and abbreviations except where necessary - use the full term on the first occasion with the acronym immediately after in brackets; e.g. 'Chief Financial Officer (CFO)', then use the acronym in the remainder of the document.

1 Images/graphics

Any images or graphics included in policy must be inserted as a picture only; i.e. jpeg, png, bmp ('SmartArt' will not display on the web). Alternative text must be added to assist readers with a disability. To add, right click over the image, select 'format picture', 'alt text' and insert a short title and description of the image.

2 Common terms and definitions

Definitions of defined terms contained in policy and procedure are contained in the Definitions Dictionary. All occurrences of a definition must be capitalised.

Definitions are normally developed in conjunction with the relevant policy or procedure. If you wish to recommend inclusion of additional terms in the Definitions Dictionary, please contact Policy Services. Please also refer to the Instructions for Writing a Definition.

3 Tables and figures

Number and label tables and figures and refer to them by number. Insert a table title before the table and figure title after the figure, using the following convention:

Table 1: <insert title> (bold text, before table)

Figure 1: <insert title> (bold text, after figure)

4 Hyperlinks

It is very easy for hyperlinks to become broken when they are contained in the body of a policy or procedure. To increase usability, minimise the number of broken links in procedure and ensure ease of update, insert hyperlinks in the relevant section of the metadata table at the end of the policy.

5 Template Fields

Policies should be written as though they are already approved. The language used should reflect that.

6 Policy Title

The title of the policy must not start with the words 'The', 'USQ', 'University' or 'Policy', or contain an abbreviation. Policies will be listed alphabetically within policy

categories, and the first word of the policy should be informative to facilitate recognition when scanning the list. 'Policy' must be the last word of the title (e.g. *Enrolment Policy*, rather than *Policy on Enrolment*).

The title of the policy must use key descriptors that reflect accurately the policy scope. Where there are multiple descriptors, the title should begin with the broadest descriptor and then be refined with narrower terms following a colon; for example, *Assessment: Alternative Arrangements Policy* rather than *Alternative Arrangements for Assessment*.

6.1 Purpose

Describe why the policy is needed. This must be based on the outcomes of the research and analysis phase of policy development. Begin the sentence with 'To', followed by a verb.

Example 1 – Assessment Policy

To articulate the principles and practices that underpin the approach of the University to assessing Student learning.

Example 2 – Academic Integrity Policy

To articulate the University's expectations for maintaining principles of Academic Integrity and honesty and provide a framework for dealing with allegations of Academic Misconduct committed by Students. Allegations of Employee Academic Misconduct would be managed in accordance with the Disciplinary Action for Misconduct or Serious Misconduct Procedure, or relevant employment contract.

6.2 Scope

Identify who the procedure applies and identify any exclusions. Where no exceptions are identified, the scope may be described as follows: 'This procedure applies across the University'.

Indicate, as appropriate:

- the members of the University community to whom the policy applies (all Employees and Students; academic Employees; postgraduate research Students, etc.), with particular reference to the following key definitions:

    o Employee

    o Student

    o Research Worker

    o University Members;

- the functions and/or situations to which the policy applies;

- the type of course or program to which the policy applies (undergraduate courses; research programs; transnational courses, etc.); and

- if necessary, the boundaries separating the scope of this policy from that of related University policies.

Example – Academic Programs and Courses Policy

This policy applies to all Academic Programs including pathway Programs offered by the University.

6.3 Policy Statement

This must be a concise, formal statement of the overarching objective/s of the policy, consisting of no more than a paragraph or two. The policy statement must be capable of guiding decision-making in areas within the scope of the policy, even if not explicitly mentioned in the policy or its related procedures. Start with the words 'The University, followed by a verb.

The Policy Statement section must include any mandatory requirements to be covered in related procedures.

Example – Admissions Policy

The University establishes the expectations and requirements for Admission through this policy. Admission is determined on the basis of Academic Merit or the capacity for university level study. The University recognises that this can be measured by formal qualifications and by means other than formally recognised educational attainment. The Admissions Procedure sets out the criteria which an Applicant must satisfy in order to be admitted to the University.

Students seeking entry to programs at the University must satisfy the general Admission principles outlined in this policy as well as the specific entry requirements as detailed in the Admissions Procedure.

6.4 Principles

This section should focus on high level principles that align with the policy's purpose, and address the objectives in the Policy Statement. Principles should be clear and concise and not contain background information or detailed explanations. Any procedures or other supporting documents that follow from this policy should align with these principles.

Apply caution when using terms such as 'must/will/normally' as these terms can create compliance obligations. If used casually/inappropriately, the University could find itself in a situation where there is audit risk due to a compliance breach of a self-imposed obligation.

It is important not to get into a level of operational detail that belongs in the associated procedures.

Example – Admissions Policy

The Admission principles of the University are:

1. Admission to University Award Programs is determined on the basis of merit, specific program requirements and perceived probability of success.

2. Non-Award Programs and Courses do not have Academic Merit Admission requirements.

3. The University supports the Admission of Applicants who are considered to have a reasonable chance of success in the program to which they apply.

4. The University may establish and use alternative entry programs to assist the Admission of under-represented community groups.

5. There are a limited number of places available in each program. Where demand for a program exceeds the available number of places, Admission to the program may be denied, despite the Applicant meeting the minimum entry requirements.

6. The University may cancel the Enrolment of Students.

7. Admission requirements will be made available for Applicants.

6.5 References

Use the APA referencing style to insert any references to publications used in the development of the procedure. If specific sections of legislation are referred to in the content of the procedure, also add that piece of legislation as a reference.

6.6 Schedules

The following standard statement is included in all templates:

This policy must be read in conjunction with its subordinate schedules as provided in the table below.

Refer to the following section for more information regarding schedules.

7 Policy Information

7.1 Subordinate Schedules

Schedules contain content that is subordinate to the policy and is too long to include in the policy document. Inclusion of detail in a separate Schedule aids readability and usability as they are published separately and can be referenced directly.

7.2 Accountable Officer

The Accountable Officer will be determined by the Policy Type and must be referred to by position title only (refer Table 1 below).

7.3 Policy Type

Indicate whether the Policy Type is 'Governance Policy', 'Academic Quality Policy', or 'Executive Policy'. The Policy and Procedure Framework provides guidance on determining Policy Type. Table 1 (below) provides an overview.

Table 1: Policy type and approval authority

Type	Examples of Policy Subject Matter	Accountable Officer	Approval Authority
Governance Policy	Delegations, privacy, fraud and corruption control, intellectual property, codes of conduct, risk, public interest disclosures and anti-discrimination	Vice-Chancellor (some exceptions)	University Council
Academic Quality Policy	Admission, academic courses and programs, appeals, assessment, learning and teaching, academic standing, academic misconduct, research	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education)	Academic Board
Executive Policy	Student administration and support, external engagement, marketing and communication, human resources, financial management, records and information management, campus facilities and environment, work health and safety, crisis management, planning and quality	Various	Vice-Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor's nominated officer
Regulated Policy and Procedure	***Note***: *At the date of writing, this category was no longer in use*		

7.4 Date Approved

This is the date the policy was approved by the relevant Approval Authority. No text needs to be entered in this field as it will be updated during the publication process.

7.5 Effective Date

Unless otherwise determined by the Approval Authority, the policy will become effective from the date it is approved. No text needs to be entered in this field as it will be updated during the publication process.

7.6 Review Date

All new policies or major amendments to policies are to be reviewed three years from the date the policy comes into effect, unless an earlier or later date is approved by the Approval Authority. No text needs to be entered in this field as it will be updated during the publication process.

7.7 Definitions

There are three types of definitions used in policy and procedure. To develop a new definition, refer to the Instructions for Writing a Definition.

Terms defined in the Definitions Dictionary have a common meaning across the University. When these terms are used in a policy or procedure they should be capitalised in the body of the policy or procedure and listed in the metadata table with (Approved) written next to the definition.

If the development of the policy or procedure identifies new terms proposed for inclusion in the Definitions Dictionary, they should also be capitalised and captured in the metadata table, with (For Approval) written next to the definition.

Finally, terms that require explanation but are not likely to have a common relevance across the University should be captured in the metadata table as 'Definitions that relate to this policy only'.

Definitions should be listed alphabetically and should not be inconsistent with ordinary dictionary definitions. There is no need to define commonly-understood terms, however definitions can be used to define terms that change frequently; e.g. the name of government departments that are referenced through policy or procedure.

Acronyms should not be included here but may be included in the body of the document, with the first use cited in full, followed by the acronym in brackets. On separate lines, state each key term followed by a colon, followed by the definition.

7.8 Related Legislation

Use exact titles of Regulatory Compliance Instruments and hyperlink with reference to the Compliance Register. Italicise the full titles of legislation and regulations.

7.9 Related Policies

Use exact titles of directly related policies, as approved and recorded in the Policy and Procedure Library. Indirectly related policies should not be listed.

7.10 Related Procedures

Use exact titles of directly related procedures, as approved and recorded in the Policy and Procedure Library. Indirectly related procedures should not be listed.

7.11 Related Forms, Publications and Websites

List any related documents, other than legislation, policies or procedures. Any documents referred to in the body of the policy must be listed in alphabetical order and hyperlinked and may include forms, publications, websites etc.

7.12 Keywords

Users can search for policies and procedures in the Policy and Procedure Library by keyword. Any word in the title or body of a policy or procedure as a keyword is automatically included in keyword searches and should not be listed here. Instead, list any other words that users may enter to search for this document. Provide in a single line, in lower case, with each entry separated by a comma.