

Office of the University Secretariat

Glossary and Style Book for Writing Policy/Procedure Documents

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Glossary of Terms Used in Policy/Procedure Development

"A" Policy

Educational policy approved by the **Board**, requiring advice from Senate.

A policy/procedure shared *for advice*. A determination that there is some direct relevance of the policy/procedure to the group being asked for advice, and there is legislation (Section 35.2(6) of the University Act) that directs such input, is to be sought. When input is not integrated by the holder of the policy/procedure then a rationale must be provided. The authority to develop or modify rests with the Board and is actioned by a proponent.

"B" Policy

Educational policy approved by **Senate**

The authority to develop or modify a policy/procedure rests with Senate, and is generally actioned by a proponent (Standing Committee, Executive or delegate).

"C" Policy

Institutional policy approved by the **Board**

A policy/procedure intended to provide for the efficient operation of the University that may be developed in order to provide clear direction to employees of the University.

- i. A policy/procedure shared for information – a particular committee or individual can make a decision to respond, or not, to the policy/procedure through the holder of the policy/procedure.
- ii. A policy/procedure shared for review and a determination that there is some direct relevance of the policy/procedure to the group being asked to review – a response is warranted to the holder of the policy/procedure.

Administrative Responsibility

The administrator responsible for the respective policy and procedure based on area of responsibility, consistent with the organizational structure. Normally, this individual is the proponent of a policy/procedure.

Departmental Practice

A Departmental Practice is developed by an individual University department and defines the standard practices used to manage issues within the department.

Executive Responsibility

The Executive member responsible for the respective policy and procedure based on area of responsibility, consistent with the organizational structure.

Housekeeping Changes

Changes to existing policies and procedures that do not change the content may be considered housekeeping in nature, and may include the following:

- department name changes
- review date changes
- job titles
- spelling and grammar changes

Housekeeping changes to Board policies and procedures may be approved at a single Regular Board meeting, providing there is unanimous agreement.

Housekeeping changes to Senate policies and procedures go through the regular Senate Policy Approval Process (see Section J).

Impact Statement

A briefing document that proposes a new policy/procedure or major revisions to an existing policy/procedure. The document describes the background, justification, and the likely impact of the new or revised policy/procedure. It is presented by the proponent to the various review committees. The proponent is responsible for “championing” or “shepherding” the policy/procedure throughout the review process.

Modifications

Modifications to existing policies and procedures include revisions to content and/or rescissions (deletions) of text or the policy/procedure in its entirety.

Policy

A policy is a formal statement of principles which indicates how the University will act in a particular situation. A policy addresses broad issues and, since it includes a statement of principles, should serve an organization over an extended period of time without the need for frequent review or change.

Procedures

Procedures define the manner in which a policy is to be implemented. Procedures tend to be reviewed and updated more frequently than policies in order to ensure that the procedures reflect the most current organizational structure, regulatory framework, and any other relevant changes in circumstances.

Proponent

Person who propounds, or puts forward, a policy. Normally, the administrator responsible is the proponent; however, in some circumstances a committee chair may serve as the proponent.

Secretariat

The Office of the University Secretariat has responsibility for coordinating and managing the development and review of policies and procedures.

University Community

All employees and students of Vancouver Island University.

Writing Policies

The Policy/Procedure Document:

The office of the University Secretariat is responsible for maintaining the policy/procedure document template. One of the primary reasons for having only one office overseeing the writing of policies/procedures is to leverage best practice and to maintain consistency of documents to aid compliance. To maintain the necessary consistency, the Secretariat holds the policy/procedure document to specific standards to maintain the documents' integrity and professional appearance. Below are general rules about writing policies and information about composing policies in the university's policy template.

Policy Statement:

The Policy Statement describes who should follow the policy and when policy applies. It summarizes what the people involved are required to do, but does not describe procedures. In addition, it may state major conditions or restrictions that apply. It is generally one to three sentences. Avoid the use of phrases like "as outlined in this policy" or "must follow this policy." This is a given, as the whole purpose of the policy is for it to be followed, so the phrase adds no value to the statement.

Reason for Policy/Procedure:

The Reason for Policy/Procedure recognizes the legitimate interests of all parties, describes the problem or conflict the policy/procedure will resolve, and cites any legal or regulatory reasons for policy/procedure. It is generally two to four sentences.

Definitions:

The first sentence of a definition should not be a complete sentence, but a fragment. In general, definitions for other parts of speech begin with the same part of speech, as exemplified below.

- The definition of a noun should begin with a noun (that may be separated by a modifier), such as, "Brander: An electric tool with interchangeable numbers."
- The definition of an adjective should begin with an adjective (that may be modified), such as, "Ordinary: Normal, in the course of university business."

Responsibilities:

The responsibilities listed in a university policy/procedure must mirror responsibilities outlined in the policy/procedure. A responsibility always begins with a present tense verb (e.g., "Review documents"). Each action should be listed as a separate responsibility. In General:

1. The Office of the Secretariat follows the *Chicago Manual of Style* writing standards.

2. The best-written policies/procedures are written with the reader in mind. Simple, specific, and precise terminology must be used, and jargon should be avoided, if possible. A university policy must be well-understood by everyone in the community, including non-subject matter experts.
 3. All policy/procedure documents are written in the third person. For example, "If the request is approved, the Office of the VP Administration & Finance will work with the department to determine a bank account." Or, "Departments that have a bank account must establish appropriate controls for maintaining the accounts ..."
 4. Use lists whenever possible and when it makes sense, but always after an introductory sentence or paragraph.
 5. If someone does not really *have* to do anything, why is the policy in existence? Unless an action is not really required, the term "must" is to be used, rather than "should." Use of "should" may imply that the action is not really necessary.
 6. Having a policy/procedure that cannot be enforced is worse than not having a policy/procedure at all. Therefore, do not use the word "ensure," because the university generally cannot ensure actions of its community members (trying to do so would be a compliance and monitoring nightmare). The words "to achieve" are useful in these instances.
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Using the University Policy/Procedure Template

In most instances, once a policy/procedure has entered the editing stage, policy developers will be given a Microsoft Word version of the policy/procedure to mark up (using track changes). The Office of the Secretariat is responsible for maintaining the integrity of the policy/procedure document and template, and keeping track of all versions of the draft policy. Therefore, please follow these rules when using the policy/procedure template to compose policies/procedures.

1. Do not rename files that are sent to you. The document numbering system is in place to assist us in keeping track of what document was created, and when.
2. Do not concern yourself with the formatting and layout of the template. The policy in the official template is shared in a protected document format so that (1) the policy writer can focus on the content instead of formatting, (2) the policy office can tell what changes were made and where, and (3) the text styles and formatting of the document are preserved.