

## **Guide to Writing and Maintaining Campuswide Administrative Policy**

This guide is designed to help policy developers at UC Davis with the process of researching, writing, and maintaining their policies. It also explains the review and approval process for campuswide administrative policies. This guide should be used as a resource by anyone who develops or updates campuswide administrative policies for their unit.

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### **Questions and Comments**

Questions, comments, and suggestions regarding this document may be sent to the Campus Policy Coordinator, Offices of the Chancellor and Provost; [policy@ucdavis.edu](mailto:policy@ucdavis.edu).

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## Characteristics of a Good Policy Document

The Administrative Policy Manuals are intended to be practical, administrative guides, with both style and content determined by user needs. The only way this can be the case is if each and every policy and procedure document is developed, written, and updated with the user in mind. Good policy and procedure documents:

- Are reviewed regularly and updated as needed to provide appropriate direction to the campus.
- Are written using simple, clear, concise language.
- Avoid jargon and overly technical descriptions.
- Are written assuming basic knowledge of the campus, but novice knowledge of the specific policy and procedure being described.
- Clearly differentiate between "policy," "procedure," and other appropriate headings within the section.
- Consider why the user will need the information and what the user will likely be doing when looking for information.
- Provide accurate contact information for users who have questions or situations that fall outside of the normal situation.

Remember that policy documents are not marketing documents or creative writing pieces. The goal of a well written PPM section is to clearly explain how to accomplish a specific process at UC Davis with minimal problem, aggravation or risk of non-compliance.

## Preparation and Research

Before you start writing any policy, it is important to gather the information you need to develop an accurate document. To effectively focus your preparation, be sure you are clear on the point of the policy you are about to develop. Is the policy being developed in response to a problem encountered on campus, in response to a new systemwide policy issued by OP or State or Federal Regulation, or for some other reason? You need to determine what you are trying to accomplish, and make sure the point of the policy will be clear to the campus community.

The first place to look for information is on the Administrative Policy Web site. Check the PPM (and other UC Davis administrative policy manuals when applicable) for related policies and information. When you are developing a new policy document, check to be sure you are not duplicating existing information. There may be a PPM section that could be expanded to include the information you are developing, or there may be related policy documents that will help inform the policy you are developing. By gathering this information in advance, you will know where you can cross-reference rather than repeat information, and you can be sure the policy document you develop corresponds with existing policies and procedures.

It may also be helpful to look at any policy document issued at the other UC campuses or other universities regarding the topic you plan to address. Other campuses may have found new or creative ways of addressing issues with which your unit has been struggling. Since we often deal with similar issues, reviewing other

universities policies can sometimes help focus your policy development and give you a good starting point for your PPM section.

You also need to check the Office of the President Web site to see if there is a systemwide policy related to the policy you are developing. Keep in mind that all campuswide policies must be in compliance with systemwide policies. The campus may implement more restrictive policies and procedures, but cannot ever be more permissive than systemwide.

It is important to consult with primary stakeholders in the policy to determine existing processes, problem areas, and to ensure that the policy document you develop will not impede the ability of other units to conduct business. It is not necessary for you to conduct a broad review at this point, but you should consult with those units who play a role in the policy you are developing and those whose regular business may be dramatically affected by the developing policy.

Finally, consult with the Campus Policy Coordinator regularly during policy development. The Administrative Policy Office provides guidance and oversight for campus policy development and should be included early in all policy development activity.

Consult the Campus Policy Coordinator for additional guidance on the initial consultation process.

## **The Template**

The Administrative Policy Office has developed standard templates for use with each of the three administrative policy manuals. The templates are available on the Web site at <http://manuals.ucdavis.edu/resources.htm>. Each template uses standard styles that allow for clean transition from the Word document to the Web. It is important to use the templates and the styles properly to help streamline the review and approval process. When the templates are not utilized properly, the document will be returned to the department for corrections, thus slowing the process.

## **Structure of the Document**

PPM sections are structured using standard outline format. This format helps you keep the section organized and easy for the reader to find the needed information. A standard PPM document is divided into the following 7 parts:

### **Header**

The header for each policy section includes the chapter number and name, section number and name, approval date (will be entered after the PPM section is approved), supersedes date, responsible department, and source document.

If you are developing a new PPM section, you will need to contact the Campus Policy Coordinator to determine the chapter number/name and the assigned section number.

Section names should be as simple and clear as possible to aid users finding appropriate policy sections. The source document listed should be the document that provides primary guidance for the policy and procedures that follow.

**I. Purpose**

Briefly summarize the information covered in the section. A concise summary of the objectives may also be given if it helps to clarify the subject matter. The purpose statement should inform readers why the section was issued and what information they will find there. If applicable, provide reference to the related UCDHS policy section or other policy manual section for specific procedures addressed elsewhere.

**II. Definitions**

When the subject matter requires a precise understanding of terms, include them here. This allows a reader to approach the content in a more knowledgeable manner, and to easily refer back to the definition as needed when the term is used frequently throughout the policy section. When a term has more limited use, it can be defined in the body of the section and Definitions may be omitted.

**III. Policy**

The policy statement is the governing principle, plan, or understanding that guides the action. It states what we do, but not how. The policy statement(s) should be brief, and is supplemented by the information within the rest of the section.

**IV. Procedures**

Procedures describe how the policy is implemented at UC Davis locations. The action steps included here should clearly and accurately describe the process and responsibilities for accomplishing tasks governed by the policy. Procedures are the *required* process for the specific situation. In addition to supplying procedures, you may want to include guidelines. Guidelines provide suggested methods for accomplishing tasks governed by the policy, but are not mandatory procedures and may be maintained on the department's Web site rather than in the policy.

The procedures should be organized for ease of use. Some policy sections may require multiple procedure headings for the different tasks addressed. Some policy sections may find it useful to include individual responsibilities as a separate heading rather than within the procedures. While procedures are organized as a chronological series of steps required to accomplish a task, responsibilities are organized as lists of tasks that must be completed by an individual or department.

**V. Further Information**

Provide an office name and telephone number, email address, or Web address for individuals who may need assistance or additional information regarding topics covered in the policy section.

**VI. References**

List the sources upon which the policy section is based, including Federal and State laws, Systemwide policies, and other UC Davis policies. In addition, list other UC Davis policies that are related to or referenced in the section.

**Exhibits**

Certain supplemental information can be included as Exhibits if desired. The most typical exhibit to include with a PPM section is a form referenced in the section. Others find it useful to include information such as

flow charts, lists, or other guidelines as exhibits related to the section. It is important, however, to remember that exhibits are meant as supplemental information, and they should not be relied upon to convey significant policy information.

Generally, it is recommended that forms and other supplemental information be maintained on the department's own Web site rather than as an exhibit to the policy. By maintaining it separately, the department can more easily maintain the information when it needs to be changed or updated.

### **Modifying the Standard Structure**

In general, it is best to stay as close to the standard structure as possible. The closer you are to the standard, the easier it will be for users to find the information they need in your PPM section. However, there are occasions where you may need to add different parts/headings to the policy to increase ease of use.

Whenever you add a part/heading to the policy, it should be something that identifies a significant aspect of the policy. Any headings should be descriptive of the information to follow. All of your part headings should be of equal importance within the PPM section as a whole.

No matter how many headings you determine you need to clearly communicate your policy, you should retain the outline structure for all documents developed for the PPM. Documents that are submitted in narrative structure may need to be rewritten and re-reviewed before starting the formal review process.

Contact the Campus Policy Coordinator for assistance with the structure of your PPM section.

### **Writing Tips**

When writing your PPM section, keep in mind that you are an expert in the area on which you are writing, but that the users of your section will not be. Many people referring to your section may be new to their current position, or new to the campus altogether. This means you need to keep your procedures as simple and straightforward as possible. Provide enough information for users to understand the section, but not so much that they become confused. Keep your language straightforward, and write with attention to what the general campus population needs to know, not what a specialist in your own unit needs to know. Remember that you can always provide supplemental information on your own Web site, and provide a cross-reference in the PPM section for those users who may need more assistance with the procedure.

Do not confuse "policy" with "procedures" or "guidelines." The term "policy" refers to a very specific aspect of the PPM section. That part should include only the governing principles that explain the reason why the remainder of the PPM section exists. It explains why we have certain procedures or guidelines, but not how to accomplish tasks. Procedures and guidelines are similar, but procedures are the required steps a user must take to be in compliance with policy, while guidelines are recommended best practices for departments to accomplish tasks but are not required to be in compliance.

Procedures should be presented in a step-by-step manner and should include locations of electronic systems or forms that are part of the procedure, and links to that information. Word choice in this section can also make a big difference in how easily your procedures can be used. For example, using the word "shall" or "must" indicates that something is required, while the term "should" implies that there might be other options, or that a department could bypass the task associated with that step.

If you are unsure of any campus or grammatical standards, refer to either the Campus Editorial Guide maintained by University Communications (<http://ucomm.ucdavis.edu/downloads/styleguide.pdf>) or The Chicago Manual of Style. The Campus Editorial Guide addresses common editorial issues on campus (e.g., capitalization of position titles, capitalization of quarter designations). The Chicago Manual addresses common grammatical issues.

Avoid including the type of information that is likely to change frequently. Instead of using an individual's name, use the position title. Instead of including a building name, refer just to the department name. By carefully considering the type of information you include in the document, you can help ensure better accuracy for a longer period of time.

Finally, remember that when it comes to writing policy, less is more. Don't use ten words to say what could be said in four. Keep your statements clear and to the point. If you are able to develop a user-friendly policy, you increase the likelihood that users will refer to the policy rather than call you, will work to stay in compliance, and will contribute to increasing efficiency across campus.

### **Formal Review Process**

When you have completed a draft of the policy, checked all of your facts, and consulted with the appropriate individuals, follow the steps as established by your vice chancellor's/vice provost's/dean's office. Generally, you will submit your draft to the unit policy coordinator to conduct additional fact checking and resolve any editorial or structural problems before submission to the Campus Policy Coordinator. If your unit policy coordinator does not conduct this review, it is your responsibility to do so before submission. With your draft, you also need to submit a list of individuals who have been consulted during development, a list of individuals you believe should be included in the formal review, and a summary statement of the changes or purpose of the policy.

Once submitted, the Administrative Policy Office will review the draft for compliance with applicable policies and regulations, compliance with other campus administrative policies, and delegations of authority. If the unit finds any discrepancies between the draft and other regulatory documents, a member of the unit staff will contact you for resolution.

In addition, the unit will review the draft for structure, style, and usability; and will make any necessary editorial or structural changes to bring the draft in line with the standards for the manual. If the draft requires significant changes, the unit will contact you to request or discuss the changes, or to review a revised draft. If you have followed the guidelines regarding structure and style provided in this document and have regularly consulted with the Campus Policy Coordinator during development, the Administrative Policy Office review will likely be very quick.

Once the final preparations of the draft have taken place, the Campus Policy Coordinator will distribute the draft policy to the appropriate campus stakeholders for review and comments. The review period is typically 2 weeks long, but may sometimes be extended by request when the draft requires review by larger committees, requires review by collective bargaining units, or during periods of unusually heavy workload (e.g., during fiscal close).

When the review period closes, the Campus Policy Coordinator will take care of any comments that can be resolved without consultation (e.g., issues resolved by systemwide policy or other regulation), but will contact you or the unit policy coordinator regarding anything that requires input from the policy developer.

Many drafts can move to final approval relatively quickly following the review, but others may require more work. If there are a significant number of comments, or if the comments question substantive portions of the policy, some negotiation may be required to resolve the issues. The Campus Policy Coordinator acts as a moderator in these situations, leading the negotiations, and can meet with the parties involved to discuss the disputed issues and facilitate resolution. The Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor holds the final authority to resolve disputes regarding campus administrative policy if agreement cannot be reached.

### **Final Approval Procedures**

Following the resolution of issues, the Campus Policy Coordinator will send the draft for final approval. Every PPM section must be approved by the policy developer; the appropriate department head (as required); and the appropriate vice chancellor, vice provost, or dean. The policy is not considered official until all of the signatures have been gathered and the approval is returned to the Campus Policy Coordinator.

Once the approval is returned, the Administrative Policy Office will post the new policy on the official Web site, and a description of the new or revised policy on the appropriate revision page. The approval date is the date of the final approving authority's signature on the approval.

The Administrative Policy Office sends a weekly notification email of all new and changed policies to the Policy Updates email list.

### **Technical Updates**

Technical updates are updates that occur between review cycles to provide clarification or minor procedural changes (e.g., changing a department name in procedures to reflect an organizational change). Technical changes can be requested and made without going through the formal review process or final approval process.

- Technical updates cannot be used to make significant changes to policy or procedures.
- The number of technical updates to a single policy document must be minimal. When a policy requires multiple technical updates, it indicates that the policy needs a more thorough review and it should be fully updated.
- Technical updates will not be made to policies that are due for update and already require a full review, but can be made on policies that would otherwise be reissued.

### **Revision Dates**

When a technical update is made to a policy document, a revision date is appended to the approval date. The revision date does not modify the normal review cycle for the policy. The policy will still require a full review and update four years following the approval date.

## **Responsibilities of Policy Developers and Departments**

The primary responsibility of policy developers is to ensure the continued accuracy of the policies they have been assigned by their units. Users across campus rely on the policy manuals to provide accurate guidance, and regularly make important business decisions based on the information contained within the manual. Whenever the source document or related information for the policy section is updated, the policy developer is responsible for reviewing the local policy manual section for compliance.

All policy sections must be reviewed and updated at least every 4 years. The vast majority of policies do require some type of update, even if only a minor update, within this time span. If, after reviewing the policy you determine that it remains accurate exactly as published, contact the Administrative Policy Office to request that the policy be reissued. The policy will not go through a formal review process, but will require formal approval verifying its continued accuracy. By regularly reviewing, updating, and reissuing policies as needed, you send a clear message to campus users that they can rely on the accuracy of the policy sections owned by your department.

Another important responsibility of departments that own policy sections is to monitor ease of use and compliance. When there is a high level of non-compliance across campus or when there is a large number of questions regarding a process, the department should review the policy section to identify problem areas that may be introducing confusion. It is important to recognize that systems, processes, and the campus culture are constantly changing and evolving, and the policy manuals must keep pace with those changes. A policy section that was adequate for campus needs 10 years ago may not be today. Departments and policy developers need to recognize when it is time to reorganize or restructure the information in an existing policy, in an effort to keep the policy manuals the practical guides they were meant to be.

## **Other Resources**

Assistance and guidance with all stages of policy development is available from your unit policy coordinator (<http://manuals.ucdavis.edu/resources/coordinators.htm>), or from the Administrative Policy Office, Offices of the Chancellor and Provost (<http://manuals.ucdavis.edu/policystaff.htm>).

Additional information regarding procedures and policy structure is available in Development and Management of Campus Administrative Policies (<http://manuals.ucdavis.edu/PPM/Preface.htm>).

Other resources for policy developers, including the Policy Writers Checklist, templates, and the list of policies due for update, are available on the Administrative Policy Web site (<http://manuals.ucdavis.edu/resources.htm>).