Introduction

In order to ensure consistency in the formatting, content development, and approval of policies, the Policy Development and Management Policy was established. This guide will cover the following topics related to that and other University policies addressing policy management:

- Guidelines for writing policy
- Use of the approved policy template
- Formatting for accessibility
- Policy Approval Workflow

Writing Policy

What is a policy?

Policies are clear, simple statements of how the University intends to conduct its business. They allow the University to identify requirements and define expected behaviors. They also provide a set of guiding principles to help with decision making.

Policies fall into three categories:

- Policies that enhance the mission of the University
- Policies that ensure compliance with applicable laws, rules and regulations; or
- Policies that promote operational effectiveness and efficiencies and reduce institutional risk.

Policy vs. Procedures

Policies and procedures go hand-in-hand to clarify what needs to be done and how to do it. Procedures should always have an associated policy. Procedures describe how the policy will be put into action by outlining what steps must be taken, roles and responsibilities, and which forms or documents to use.

While policies have a defined template, the format for procedures can vary depending on the content. Sometimes the information can be covered with just a few bullet points, other times detailed step-by-step instructions are required. Procedures can also be organized as forms, checklists, or flowcharts.

In some cases, it may be necessary to combine policy and procedures in the same document, but most often it is best to keep the two separate. This gives the department more flexibility to change or update internal procedures as needed without the need to put them through the policy review workflow.

Policy Language

- Policies should be clear and concise and written in third person.
- Keep the language simple and the sentences short. Since the audience can vary, the best practice is to write for an 8th grade reading level.
- Words need to be selected carefully. Words such as should and may imply choice.
- Do not use information that may quickly become outdated such as employee names or names of software products, unless such information is specifically required. For example, certain regulations require an individual to be named as the contact for reporting.
- When using acronyms, spell out the words the first time, then indicate the acronym in parenthesis, e.g. Division of Finance and Operations (FO).
Approved Policy Template

The current approved template is available from the Policy Manager. Since the template may be updated from time to time, it is best to check with the Policy Manager for the newest version before proceeding. The template is composed of six sections.

**Heading**

Ensure that each of following fields are completed.

- **Policy Title:** This should be the official title of the policy. The word “Policy” should be part of the title.
- **Unit:** The Unit should be department responsible for the policy. Please provide a hyperlink to the departmental webpage.
- **Effective Date:** The Effective Date should reflect the date that policy first went into effect.
- **Revision Date:** The Revision Date should reflect the date of the most recent revision.
- **Contact:** Enter the name of the individual responsible for the policy. This will usually be a department head, director, or it could be a person with designated responsibility.
- **Title:** Enter the official title for the contact person.

**Purpose**

The information in this section answers the question as to why the policy exists. Key areas that may be addressed include: legal or regulatory reasons, description of conflict or problem the policy will resolve, and overall benefits.

**Policy**

This is the most important section of the policy. It is where the details of the policy will reside. It is acceptable to add sub-headings within the policy section to help organize the content.

**Scope**

To whom does this policy apply? The explanation in this section should be brief and could be limited to a single sentence listing the groups who are subject to the policy. Possible groups could include: students, faculty, staff, contractors, volunteers, or others.

**Approval**

Once the policy has been reviewed and approved, information will be added to document the approval. In some divisions this will include a signature.
**Footer**

The policy template is set up to display the policy title and page number in the footer section. To update the footer, double click on the section. Once the edits have been completed, double click the body of the document to close the footer editing view.

**Formatting for Optimal Accessibility**

The Division Policy Manager is available to help with accessibility formatting. Policy owners may also reach out to the Technology Accessibility department or the Office of Compliance, Ethics, and Regulatory Affairs for assistance.

The approved Policy Template has been developed to incorporate basic document accessibility principles to ensure that individuals using assistive technology (screen readers, magnifiers, braille devices, etc.) will be able to make use of the content. However, there are formatting steps that must be taken in the policy writing phase to promote optimal accessibility.

**Policy Title**

The title of the policy must be entered in the Title attribute in the document properties. To access the document properties, click the File tab. The properties information will be displayed on the right. Enter the full name of the policy in to the Title Field.

**Heading Structure**

It is important to use the heading structure available from the Styles section of the Word Tool bar. The headings will provide the navigational structure for the document. It is not acceptable to approximate headings by making regular text bold, italics, or changing the font size or style.

- Heading 1: (Calibri, 16 pt., Bold) Policy title only
- Heading 2: (Calibri, 11 pt., Bold, Crimson) Major sections: Purpose, Policy, Scope
- Heading 3: (Garamond, 12 pt., Bold, Italic) Sub-sections within the Policy section. The sub-sections may be numbered, if desired.
- Normal: (Calibri, 11 pt.) Section content.

**Images**

While images within a policy may be rare, they are sometimes necessary. It is important to note that there are steps that must be taken to make them useful for reader using assistive technology.

**Word Wrapping**: Images should be formatted “in-line” with the rest of the text on the page. This ensures that screen readers will find them in a logical order.

1. Click on the image to see the Text Wrapping icon.
2. Click the Text Wrapping icon and choose “In Line with Text.”

**Alt-Text:** All images including diagrams and icons should be assigned “Alt-Text”. This provides a description of the image for screen reader users. Alt-Text descriptions should be concise, but informative. It is not necessary to begin with “image of” or “photo of” as screen readers will provide that verbiage automatically.

a. Right click on the image and choose “Format Picture.”

b. The Format Picture menu will be displayed on the right shoulder of the screen. Click on the Layout and Properties icon.

c. From the Layout and Properties menu, click “Alt-Text.”

d. Enter a description of the image in the “Description” box.

**Policy Tracking Form**

A completed Policy Tracking Form must accompany all new or substantially revised policies submitted for review and approval. The form is used to collect the information that is necessary for Board Review under Board Rule 108, but it also provides policy owners with guidance on sources to be considered in the development process. It is best to provide a full but concise answer to each question.

**Policy Information**

- **Why is the new or revised policy being proposed?** This is where you will explain why the policy or revision is needed. Have legal requirements changed? Are you trying to address a common problem or provide clarification on an often-misunderstood issue?

- **If revising an existing policy, summarize the proposed changes.** If you are revising an existing policy, please track changes within the document. Use this section to give an overview of what has been changed.

**Existing Policy Review**

Board Rule 108 requires that similar policies at our sister institutions must be considered. In this section, you will indicate which policies at the other system campuses have been reviewed and explain how the proposed policy compares. Use the comments section to explain and justify any differences. Attach additional information if more space is needed.

**External Reviewers**

It is expected that the sponsoring department will solicit feedback from University Counsel and any affected departments or divisions. Use this section to explain who you consulted and provide a summary of feedback.

**Additional Information**

If there are other factors that should be considered in the review of the proposed policy, please provide an explanation here.

**Approval Workflow**

Policies are generally developed by a unit to address a need for a specific audience. Policies must be reviewed and approved according to the workflow described below. Any substantive revisions made during the review process will be returned for the approval of the originating department/unit.
**Division Approval Process**

1. The department/unit responsible for the policy drafts the policy using the approved template and submits it along with a completed **Policy Tracking Form** to the Division Policy Manager.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Affairs</td>
<td>Joel Brouwer, <a href="mailto:joel.brouwer@ua.edu">joel.brouwer@ua.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advancement</td>
<td>Allison Drake, <a href="mailto:adrake@advance.ua.edu">adrake@advance.ua.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Affairs</td>
<td>Carol Agomo, <a href="mailto:cnagomo@ua.edu">cnagomo@ua.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jim McLean, <a href="mailto:jmclean@ua.edu">jmclean@ua.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and Operations</td>
<td>Jennifer Clark, <a href="mailto:jclark@fa.ua.edu">jclark@fa.ua.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marcy Huey, <a href="mailto:mhuey@fa.ua.edu">mhuey@fa.ua.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and Economic Development</td>
<td>Lauren Wilson, <a href="mailto:lawilson@research.ua.edu">lawilson@research.ua.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tanta Myles, <a href="mailto:cmyles@research.ua.edu">cmyles@research.ua.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Communications</td>
<td>Monica Watts, <a href="mailto:monica.watts@ua.edu">monica.watts@ua.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lindsey Hughey, <a href="mailto:lindsey.hughey@ua.edu">lindsey.hughey@ua.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Life</td>
<td>Steven Hood, <a href="mailto:steven.hood@ua.edu">steven.hood@ua.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Erika Mason-Imbody, <a href="mailto:emasonimbody@ua.edu">emasonimbody@ua.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tim Salazar, <a href="mailto:trsalazar@ua.edu">trsalazar@ua.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. The Division Policy Manager coordinates with the UA Policy Manager to review the policy for formatting and potential conflicts with existing policies and coordinates with other departments who may be affected by the policy. A tracking form will be requested if needed.

3. The policy and tracking form are forwarded to the Vice President of the division or their designee for review and approval.

If the policy applies to other divisions, it will progress to the UA Policy Approval Process at this point.

**UA Policy Approval Process**

The UA Policy Manager will shepherd the policy through the UA Review process outlined in the **UA Policy Development and Management Policy**.

- The policy and tracking form will be reviewed by the University’s Chief Counsel.
- The policy and tracking form will be posted for review by the University’s Policy Administration Review Committee (PARC) for a minimum of five days.

New or substantially revised policies, manuals, handbooks, and guides will be forwarded for system review.

**System Review Process**

- The policy and tracking form will be forwarded to for review by the Chancellor’s designee.
- Upon approval, the policy will be converted to a PDF and posted to the UA and divisional policy webpages, and a link will be provided to the originating department/unit.

**Communication**

One of the most important pieces of policy management is ensuring that new and revised policies are communicated effectively. It is expected that the originating department will be responsible for ensuring that the appropriate individuals are notified. In developing a communication plan, the following avenues should be considered:

- Add it to the agenda to be covered in regular departmental/divisional meetings.
- Include a notice in divisional newsletters.
- Submit for inclusion in the “Inside UA” campus-wide news.
- Feature it on your departmental website.
Periodic Review

All policies must be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are accurate and kept up-to-date. Consult with your Division Policy Manager for more information or to determine the required frequency for periodic review.

Tips:

- Check all links to make sure they are still valid.
- Verify that the contact and their title are accurate.
- Look for any procedural information that may have changed.