Guide to Writing Policy and Procedure Documents

Preparing a policy or procedure document for UC Santa Cruz' *InfoSlug* on-line policy and procedure system is not as mysterious or difficult as you might think. This guide is designed to explain the campus' policy and procedure framework, to help policy and procedure owners organize their written documentation, and to act as a resource as they navigate the approval process. You will find the information in this "how to" guide helpful if you are responsible for formulating or documenting new or existing policies and procedures.

See Also

University Policy and Procedure Formulation, Approval, and Dissemination (internal working draft dated October 28, 1994).

Why create an on-line policies and procedures system?

Over the past several years the campus has been actively examining its decision-making processes with an objective of locating decision-making authority at the lowest appropriate levels. Improvements in the campus' process for documenting policies, procedures, and delegations of authority will enable this effort by addressing a number of issues:

1. *Ease of Access*. Currently there are too many manuals and loose memos—an information flood. Users don't know what is important. Policy and procedure manuals that do exist are not always up-to-date and users cannot always find the documents they need to make informed decisions. An up-to-date, on-line system will permit those who use or are directly affected by policies and procedures to have the access they need.

2. *Cost Effectiveness*. Currently, individual offices must dedicate resources to maintaining files of relevant campuswide policies and procedures. Alternatively, the offices responsible for policy must respond to requests for policy documents as they are needed by individual users—using scarce human resources within those offices which might better be assigned to other activities.

   Making written policies and procedures readily available and identifying a single office (or position within an office) in the policy (or procedure) documents to which questions can be directed should result in the following benefits:

   • Less time spent on the telephone (or using electronic mail) to locate a person to whom a question can be addressed;

   • Fewer errors; and

   • Consistent answers.

3. *Responsiveness*. The ability to quickly update and disseminate procedures enables the campus to meet changing customer needs and to adapt to new environments.

4. *Accountability*. Clearly written, available policies and procedures are one of the foundation elements of any system in which individuals and units are held accountable for adherence to campus policies and procedures.

A campus policies and procedures manual can quickly become out-of-date if an effective policy coordination function is not coupled with the effort. The creation of a Policy Coordinating Office responsible for the maintenance and distribution of policy records and up-to-date procedures along with providing guidance to you as policy (and procedure) owners will make your investment in preparing written documents a more rewarding effort.

Why separate policy and procedure?

Important

Policies reflect the "rules" governing the implementation of the campus processes. Procedures, on the other hand, represent an implementation of policy and should evolve over time as new tools emerge, new processes are designed, and the risks associated with an area changes in response to internal or external environmental changes. (In fact, there should be an expectation that individuals will "challenge" outdated procedures and call them to the attention of their owners.) As a consequence, rather than combine "policies," "procedures," and "guidelines" in a single document, it is recommended that—as a general rule—policies and procedures appear as separate documents.

This separation will also assist TQM (Total Quality Management) or process redesign teams in distinguishing University requirements from the existing body of standard practices. As the technology advances, entire manuals will be placed on-line. Therefore, a distinction between what is University policy and what is not becomes very important.

Who are the users of the *InfoSlug* policies and procedures system?

Because the campus' policy and procedures system is (or more precisely, *will be*) accessible by the entire campus community (and by off-campus users who may have Internet access), documents must be written so that they can be understood by a wide audience. Users of campus policy and procedure documents include individuals in both academic and administrative offices. For example,

- Campus administrators,
- Faculty,
- Unit managers,
- Administrative support personnel,
- Service center staff,
- Teams involved in TQM or process redesign initiatives,
- Individuals who need to understand the "rules" by which the campus must abide,
- Anyone who fills out forms and wants to generate error-free transactions,
- Action approvers,
- Support groups and volunteers,

- Leaders of student organizations,

- New employees,

- Trainers, and

- Others who need to make decisions about the most effective way to carry out their daily tasks.

Thus your efforts to make policy and procedure information widely accessible will provide your colleagues with the tools needed to effectively move decision-making to more appropriate levels within the campus' organization, will help them streamline campus administrative processes, and will provide a basis for individual and departmental accountability.

Important

Of course, it will be impossible to address every aspect of policy and procedure in a written document. Lacking information on which office to call, users could "shop around" for answers to policy or procedure questions. In order to limit the opportunities for conflicting answers, it is important for you to designate a policy "expert" (or similarly a procedure "expert") readily available to faculty and departmental administrators to interpret and to resolve problems.

What are the characteristics of good policies and procedure documents?

The overall goal for any policy or procedure document is for the design to be *simple*, *consistent*, and *easy to use*. In order to ensure a consistent format between documents, the campus has developed a number of *Microsoft Word* templates to help the writers of policies and procedures get started.

Good Policies.

- Policies are written in clear, concise, simple language.

- Policy statements address what is the rule rather than how to implement the rule.

- Policy statements are readily available to the campus community and their authority is clear.

- Designated "policy experts" (identified in each document) are readily available to interpret policies and resolve problems.

- As a body, they represent a consistent, logical framework for campus action.

Good Procedures.

- Procedures are tied to policies. Making explicit this relationship along with how the procedure helps the campus achieve its goals or strategic plan helps ensure understanding and compliance.

- Procedures are developed with the customer/user in mind. Well developed and thought out procedures provide benefits to the procedure user.

- There is a sense of ownership among procedure users. For this reason, it helps to involve users in the development of campus procedures.

- The procedures are understandable. Procedures should be written so that what needs to be done can be easily followed by all users.

- When feasible, procedures should offer the user options. Procedures which are unnecessarily restrictive may limit their usefulness.

Writing Style for Policy and Procedure Documents.

- Concise, minimum of verbiage.
- Factual—double-check accuracy!
- Don't include information that may be quickly outdated (e.g., names).
- If you use an acronym, spell it out the first time you use it.
- Include step-by-step instructions for completing (paper or electronic) forms *(procedures only)*.
- Not too technical—simple enough to be understood by a new employee.

Design and Layout of Policy and Procedure Documents.

- Generous use of white space.
- Presentation is structured so that the user can quickly focus on the aspect of policy or procedure relevant to their decision/task at hand.
- Use a flexible, modular outline to make the document easy to modify (and therefore keep up-to-date).
- Use labels to introduce key points (headings and labels in margins need to be consistent ... i.e., location on each page, type size, etc.).

> **Tip**
> You may wish to obtain a diskette containing templates, icons, and defined styles for headings, labels, and margins (in *Microsoft Word* format for Windows or Macintosh). These disks are available from the Policy Coordinating Office.

Icon Definitions.

Icons are a useful way of pointing out critical information. The following set of icons (adapted from standards used at Stanford University) are UC Santa Cruz standards:

Points the reader to information they need such as training classes, other source documents, and phone numbers of departments or individuals who can provide assistance.

Briefly states or refers reader to specific policy documents available in *InfoSlug* or other campus formats.

Suggestions for handling a form or procedures efficiently.

A critical piece of information that, if overlooked, could cause an error.

A way of doing something that is an exception to the general rule and a description of *why* it is an exception.

A specific example of an activity, a document, etc.

Explains key terms.

A checklist that the user can follow to complete a task.

Responsibilities of Policy and Procedure Owners.

Policy and procedure "owners" are accountable for the timely review, updating, and dissemination of policies and procedures in their functional area. Assignment of responsibility for policies or procedures is accomplished partly through a series of delegations of authority. Delegations of authority assign authority and responsibility for actions and/or activities to specified campus administrators. Alternatively, in the absence of a formal delegation, authority will rest with the unit which has been assigned operational responsibility for an area.

An up-to-date index to campus delegations is (or more accurately, *will be*) a part of the *InfoSlug* policies and procedures system.

When developing new policy or revising existing policy, policy owners have an obligation to identify those who will be directly affected by new or revised policies and to consider their views early in the policy development discussions.

Similarly, when developing new or revising existing procedures, procedure owners have an obligation to identify those who will be directly affected by new or revised procedures and to consider a representative sample of their views early in the procedure development discussions. They must also ensure that their procedures adhere to the principles of and achieve the objectives for campus process redesign, including the principles of incorporating "customer voice" and ensuring each campus process "adds value" to the service delivered to "customers." For more information about these process redesign principles, check *InfoSlug*.

In addition to documenting the approved policy or procedure, the owner should develop support and training options, if appropriate, for the customers/users who are attempting to adhere to their policy or procedure. This includes, at a minimum, the designation of "experts" to which departmental staff or faculty can turn for guidance or to resolve problems.

For more information (or for a copy of the full written policy concerning "owner" responsibilities), check the *InfoSlug* policies and procedures system (when it becomes available) or contact the Policy Coordinating Office.

Templates for policy and procedure documents.

Components of Policy Documents.

Campus policy documents should use a paragraph numbering system that permits them to be cited easily and they should include each of the following components:

1.	**Headline banner**	*UC Santa Cruz Policy*, the policy title, issuing date, and an identification block which includes: Policy number, Page Number, Effective Date, "Supersedes" notification, Office of Origin, and Policy Approval Authority. The Policy Number and Page Number would appear on all subsequent pages; the footer of each page should repeat the Issuing Date and the Policy Title.
		Note: The policy title should be carefully selected so that it is simple and clearly conveys the policy's content.
2.	**Purpose of the policy/ Policy statement**	A *concise* statement of the rationale for the policy, including if appropriate, reference to external regulations, further policy discussion, etc. Summary (one paragraph) clearly stating the important policy content.
3.	**Detailed policy statement**	Complete policy statement. If the effective date is different from the issuing date in the headline banner, and then an appropriate discussion of when the policy applies should be included with the policy statement.
4.	**Applicability**	Exactly who the policy applies to and the consequences for non-compliance, if applicable.
5.	**Definitions**	Definitions of terms (as needed).
6.	**Cognizant office(s)/ Getting Help**	The office and specific individual position title (with telephone number and electronic mail address, as appropriate) that should be contacted for interpretations, resolution of problems, and special situations.
7.	**Policy authority**	The highest administrative or academic officer or group authorizing the policy. If appropriate, one might also note the next required review date.
8.	**Related policies/ References for more information**	Information about related policies or procedures, guidelines, forms, etc. Give complete references and ensure that documents cited are readily available (i.e., either as widely distributed manuals such as the Business and Finance Bulletins, Accounting Manual, Contracts and Grants Manual; or available in the on-line campus Policies and Procedure Manuals). If needed, provide additional background discussion here.
9.	**Implementation procedures**	Reference to detailed procedures that are recommended in order to carry out the intent of the policy.

Components of Procedure Documents.

Campus procedure documents should use a consistent format applying standard language and icons so as to become an easy-to-use reference and training tool for both academic and staff employees. They should include the following components:

Headline banner	*UC Santa Cruz Procedure*, the procedure title, issuing date, and an identification block which includes: Procedure number, Page Number, Effective Date, "Supersedes" notification, Office of Origin, and Procedure Approval Authority. The Procedure Number and Page Number would appear on all subsequent pages; the footer of each page should repeat the Issuing Date and the Procedure Title. *Note*: The procedure title should be carefully selected so that it is simple and clearly conveys the procedure's content.
Overview/procedure description	Describes the overall objectives, functions, or tasks that the procedure is designed to accomplish and the circumstances under which the procedure should be used.
Areas of responsibility	Lists departments, units, offices, and individual job titles for those who have responsibility for aspects of daily control and coordination of the procedure, authority to approve exceptions to the procedure (if applicable), and procedural implementation (including responsibility for any required electronic or written forms). Sets forth the scope of such department's, unit's, office's, or individual's responsibilities under the procedure, the procedural areas subject to discretionary modification (if any), and the responsibility for implementation.
Procedure details	Using an approach which is customized to the subject (i.e., can be a statement in outline format of each step required, a checklist of what needs to be done, an explanation of how to complete the necessary forms or screens—including copies of the forms or screens, or an appropriate combination of techniques), provide the reader with the necessary procedural and "how to" information. Included in this section should be definitions of unique terms or terms subject to different interpretation and copies of all forms needed to complete the procedure. A transaction flow chart might also be included in this section.
References	UC Santa Cruz policies (i.e., University-wide and campus-specific), federal and state laws and regulations, or other references directly applicable to the procedure.
Help page	A table which points users to training programs, classes, University offices, other University documentation, telephone numbers, and other sources of help completing forms or carrying out procedures.

Components of "RoadMap" Documents.

Policies and procedures which affect the UC Santa Cruz community will reside in multiple locations (e.g., in our own *InfoSlug* on-line policies and procedures manual, on the UC Office of the President gopher server, in paper-only documents, etc.). In that it is not cost-effective to duplicate electronic manuals available elsewhere (but rather to provide references or electronic links to such resources), a "roadmap" template (in addition to the "policy" template and the "procedure" template) should be utilized.

The "roadmap" document enables the policy or procedure owner to place in the campus' *InfoSlug* policy and procedure system a reference to policies and procedures which reside in other systems. There are a number of different formats for policy and procedure information and different indexing methods are used by these resources. Accordingly, this new template provides end-users with easy, consistent access to the specific policy and procedure documents needed to complete their work.

For selected, often used areas for which there is no campus-specific policy or procedure, the "roadmap" template provides a listing of appropriate policies and/or procedures which the user should consult in order to get the information they need to complete a task/make a decision. In addition, the template guides the user to appropriate on-campus resources for help and assistance. Because this information has been pre-compiled (and appropriately indexed), queries to the electronic manual will guide each user to the same base of information.

Headline banner	*UC Santa Cruz Policy (or Procedure)*, the title, issuing date, and an identification block which includes: Page Number, Effective Date, "Supersedes" notification, and Office of Origin. The Page Number would appear on all subsequent pages; the footer of each page should repeat the Issuing Date and the Procedure Title.
Overview/description	A concise summary of the policy (or procedure).
References	Reference to the appropriate policy or procedure documents (including how to access such policy or procedure documents).
Help page	A table which points users to training programs, classes, University offices, other University documentation, telephone numbers, and other sources of help completing forms or carrying out procedures.

Getting Started.

Checklist

The following steps will help you get started.

1. Consult with the Policy Coordinating Office for questions about the components of a policy or procedure, the recommended templates, and the standard language and terminology that should be used in campus policy and procedure documents.

   The Policy Coordinating Office has responsibility for

   • maintaining delegations, policies, and procedures inventory/"manual" (and database) and coordinating their update,

   • setting standards for written policies and procedures, and

   • providing training/consulting to preparers of policies and procedures.

   You can also work with the Policy Coordinating Office to research the policy context and identify related policies and procedures. Thus the Policy Coordinating Office can be a valuable resource to you as you develop written policies or procedures.

2. Develop a document outline.

3. Verify the outline with your supervisor and other subject matter experts.

4. Determine who will be the writers/reviewers of your policy or procedure.

5. Consult the style guidelines contained in this document (see page 5).

6. As you develop your policy or procedure, keep the Policy Coordinating Office informed of your progress and seek their assistance where appropriate (e.g., as you determine the approvals that may be required).

7. Designate appropriate policy (or procedure) "experts."

8. Obtain the appropriate approvals.

9. Provide the final policy or procedure document to the Policy Coordinating Office in both electronic and hard copy form.

Policy and Procedure Approval Checklist.

Checklist

Policies.

A detailed diagram/flow chart illustrating the policy formulation and approval process steps is available upon request from the Policy Coordinating Office. The following check list, however, can serve as a guide to the policy owner:

1. Check for existing policies and responsible individuals:
    *   Check policies and procedures manuals (i.e., campus and systemwide).
    *   Check delegations of authority (or unit with operational responsibility).
    *   Check with Policy Coordinating Office if you cannot locate policy and/or responsible office from other sources.

2. Identify cognizant administrative office/officer and policy gap:
    *   Work closely with Policy Coordinating Office to research policy context and to identify related policies and procedures.
    *   If the policy has academic implications, check with Academic Senate Office on the need for further consultation.
    *   If the policy affects specific groups for which explicit consultations are required, check with the appropriate principal officer or unit manager for additional instructions (e.g., policies with labor relations implications must follow a specific process).

3. Develop new or revised campus administrative policy.
    *   Work closely with Policy Coordinating Office to identify affected parties and appropriate review bodies.
    *   In the early policy development stages, consult with/consider the views of those who will be directly affected by the new or revised policy.
    *   Draft new or revised policy.
    *   Review final draft of policy with Policy Coordinating Office (for clarity, readability, and consistency with other policies and procedures).
    *   Review final draft of new or revised campus administrative policy with cognizant University officer (per delegation of authority or operational responsibility).

4. Working closely with the Coordinating Office, conduct additional review/consultation as appropriate.
    *   Forward draft policy to Policy Coordinating Office.
    *   Take to appropriate campus review bodies.
    *   Take to appropriate senior administrative officers.
    *   Engage in additional review/consultation (as may be suggested).
    *   Revise policy (if necessary).

5. Ensure that appropriate procedures are developed or revised. Contact Policy Coordinating Office for assistance.

6. Disseminate policy.
    - Prepare materials for Policies and Procedures Manual.
    - Forward to Policy Coordinating Office for posting to electronic manual.
    - Provide notice to affected population.
    - Provide training/orientation (as appropriate).

Procedures.

The check list for procedure owners is quite similar except for the review process. Note that with procedures, the review process is less formal although it is expected that procedure owners will incorporate the principles of "customer voice" into their process:

1. Check for existing policies, procedures, and responsible individuals:
    - Check policies and procedures manuals (i.e., campus and systemwide).
    - Check delegations of authority (or unit with operational responsibility).
    - Check with Policy Coordinating Office if you cannot locate procedure and/or responsible office from other sources.

2. Identify cognizant administrative office/officer and need for procedure:
    - Work closely with Policy Coordinating Office to research policy context and to identify related policies and procedures.
    - If the procedure requires the development of new policies, follow the steps in the policy formulation and approval process.

3. Develop new or revised campus administrative procedure.
    - In the early procedure development stages, consult with/consider the views of those who will be directly affected by the new or revised procedure.
    - Review the principles and objectives for campus process redesign and ensure that they are achieved as new or revised procedures are developed.
    - Review final draft of new or revised campus administrative procedure with cognizant University officer (per delegation of authority or operational responsibility).

4. Conduct additional review/consultation as appropriate.
    - As appropriate consult with Policy Coordinating Office.
    - Engage in additional review/consultation (as may be suggested).
    - Revise procedure (if necessary).

5. Disseminate procedure.
    - Prepare training program for new or revised procedures.
    - Prepare materials for Policies and Procedures Manual.
    - Forward to Policy Coordinating Office for posting to electronic manual.
    - Provide notice to affected population.
    - Hold training workshops/orientation (as appropriate).

Additional Help.

This document—as should each of your documents—concludes with a help page that points users to training programs, classes, University offices, other University documentation, telephone numbers and other sources of help with completing forms, carrying out procedures, or interpreting policy.

If You Need Help With	Contact
Questions about this guide or the policy and procedure formats.	Policy Coordinating Office.
Finding a good example of a policy document as a model for your policy.	Check *InfoSlug* for examples, or contact the Policy Coordinating Office.
Finding a good example of a model procedure document.	Check *InfoSlug* for examples, or contact the Policy Coordinating Office.
More information about the steps involved in the policy or procedure approval process.	Policy Coordinating Office.
Microsoft Word templates for policies and procedures.	Policy Coordinating Office.
Inserting an icon into your policy or procedure document.	Review the README file on the templates diskette, or contact your computing coordinator or the CATS Information Resource Center.
Microsoft Word.	Your computing coordinator or the CATS Information Resource Center.
Obtaining additional training.	Policy Coordinating Office or Employee Development.

The Policy Coordinating Office is temporarily located within the Office of Planning and Budget (3rd floor Kerr Hall, 408-459-2446).

Also available for consultation and advice are the members of the Policy and Procedures Team. Call the Policy Coordinating Office for assistance in contacting the members of this team.