



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND

Understanding Policy and Policy Development

*Office of the Academic Registrar
Student and Administrative Services Division
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1 Introduction

This Guide addresses:

- policy development and reporting;
- policy documentation; and
- the relationship between policy documents and the approval process - 'what' has to happen and 'when'.

While this Guide may prove useful for any member of University staff involved in policy development, it is primarily intended as a tool for those staff involved in the University's formal Committee processes.

2 What is a University policy?

A University Policy establishes key principles and values that have University-wide and long-term application. Formal University Policy is approved by Senate.

A distinction should also be made between 'policies' and 'procedures' or 'guidelines'.

In some instances a policy will stand alone. However it will often include associated procedures or guidelines that are developed to ensure consistency of application.

While policy expresses the University's official position on a particular issue, procedures/guidelines detail how the policy is to be enacted or implemented.

Procedures/guidelines may also stand alone, but will usually be developed with reference to the policy, statute, rule or government legislation, which they are designed to effect.

The term 'policy' should be used only where the above definition applies. Procedures or guidelines which have been developed locally by organizational units, for example within a faculty or school, to give effect to a University wide policy are sometimes incorrectly referred to as 'policy'.

3 Policy documentation

University Policy may be expressed through:

- Legislation (The University of Queensland Act, University Statutes and Rules)
- Senate Rules
- Policy statements
- Strategic Plans

3.1 Legislation

The University of Queensland Act 1998 sets out the legislative basis for the establishment, functions and powers of the University.

The Senate has the power under the UQ Act to make ***University Statutes*** in certain circumstances. University Statutes are defined under the Act as subordinate legislation e.g. *Statute 1 'Election of Elected Members of Senate.'*

The University may also make **University Rules** under a University Statute to provide policy in a range of issues e.g.. *Assessment Rules; Fee Rules*

Statutes and rules may also be accompanied by procedures or guidelines that are developed to ensure consistency of application. Promulgation of the statutes and rules follows a formally approved process.

3.2 Senate Rules

Senate has decided that in the case where the UQ Act and Regulations do not provide sufficient authority it will issue **Senate Rules** to cover administrative actions e.g. *Senate Rule – The Academic Board*.

3.3 Policy statements

A policy statement indicates the University's position on a particular matter. It provides guidance to staff and students in responding to a situation in such a way as not to compromise the University or contradict the University's stated position e.g. Academic Program Approval (HUPP 3.20.3).

University policy statements are approved by Senate and are binding on all staff and students. They establish a consistent, University-wide approach to the full range of University activity, including academic matters, management and administration, personnel, financial management, and physical infrastructure.

A policy statement is directive in style and its accompanying action plan should clearly define the course of action to which the University is committed. That is, the policy statement should always be written as if it has been approved. Words such as "will", "shall", or "is" are appropriate. Generally, the present tense is used.

Policy statements should be clear and concise. Historical background information or explanations of research methodology should not be included. Legislation should not be reproduced but made readily accessible via web links.

All formal policy statements are included in the Handbook of University Policies and Procedures (the HUPP) as the University's authoritative reference source on its operations (<http://www.uq.edu.au/hupp/>).

3.4 Strategic plans

Strategic plans are designed to communicate and prioritise University activities. They are statements of intended action, which are usually strategic and temporal in nature. All major University plans require Senate endorsement and have the status of University policy e.g. The Teaching and Learning Enhancement Plan.

While there are a number of different types of plans, including strategic, action and implementation plans (See page 3), the plans referred to here are stand-alone and have the status of policy.

The University makes use of a range of discrete strategic planning documents, which guide activities for a fixed time period (e.g. the *University Strategic Plan*). These plans can be lengthy and require regular revision. Although these plans are policy statements, they do not, as such, meet the requirements for inclusion in the HUPP although relevant personnel might consider whether the key principles of a plan are appropriate for inclusion as a HUPP entry. This would ensure that the HUPP remains an authoritative reference source of all major University policies and procedures.

4 Policy implementation

Once approved, a policy should be implemented or actioned. Implementation can take many forms, ranging from awareness raising, to taking action and changing a procedure or activity in keeping with the policy. Implementation of a policy to be included in the HUPP might focus on communicating the existence of the policy to staff.

Implementation and action plans may be developed in association with the policy to specify implementation directions and procedures/guidelines may be provided to ensure consistency of application.

4.1 Procedures

*While a policy statement will set a broad commitment to a topic, **procedures** provide the detail or 'working out' of that commitment. Procedures give effect to the policy.*

4.2 Guidelines

***Guidelines** are non-binding statements, which suggest approaches to the implementation of a policy. The aim of guidelines is to establish a regulatory framework within which the policy may be applied consistently and in accordance with best practice e.g. *The Provision of Alternative Academic Programs for Students with a Disability (HUPP 3.40.7)*.*

The term 'guidelines' is used here to indicate a distinct statement on a particular aspect of University activity. Guidelines are sufficiently flexible to provide for a necessary diversity of practice including where a regulatory framework is intended to complement existing decision-making or resource allocation structures.

The approval of guidelines progresses along a similar path to policy statements – either through administrative channels or arising out of a committee or working party report. Guidelines may require approval by Senate as a HUPP entry.

4.3 Implementation plans and action plans

***Implementation and action plans** are not policies in their own right. They state the process for implementation or action arising from a new or changed policy and identify the officer or organisational unit responsible for implementation. An implementation or action plan should therefore allocate responsibility for certain actions and specify a date by which the action should be completed.*

For example, an implementation/action plan may identify a strategy for instituting a staff training scheme that is recommended by a working party report and to which the resulting policy commits the University:

- The report recommends that staff training on a particular issue is needed;
- the policy states that the University supports the principle that staff should have certain skills; and
- the implementation plan identifies how and by whom training will be delivered and the steps that need to be taken to do so.

5 Writing a HUPP entry

The web based *Handbook of University Policies and Procedures* (HUPP) is the definitive and authoritative reference source on policies and procedures on a variety of academic, management, administrative, personnel, and technical matters and physical facilities that have been approved by the Senate for University-wide application. The policies contained in the HUPP have a long-term rather than transient application.

A template has been developed to which all HUPP entries must conform (see Appendix 1) and mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that HUPP entries remain up-to-date and relevant.

An entry approved by Senate for inclusion in the HUPP needs to be developed for

- Policy statements;
- Guidelines; and
- Procedures.

In some cases, it may also be appropriate to prepare a HUPP entry setting out the key principles of a major strategic plan.

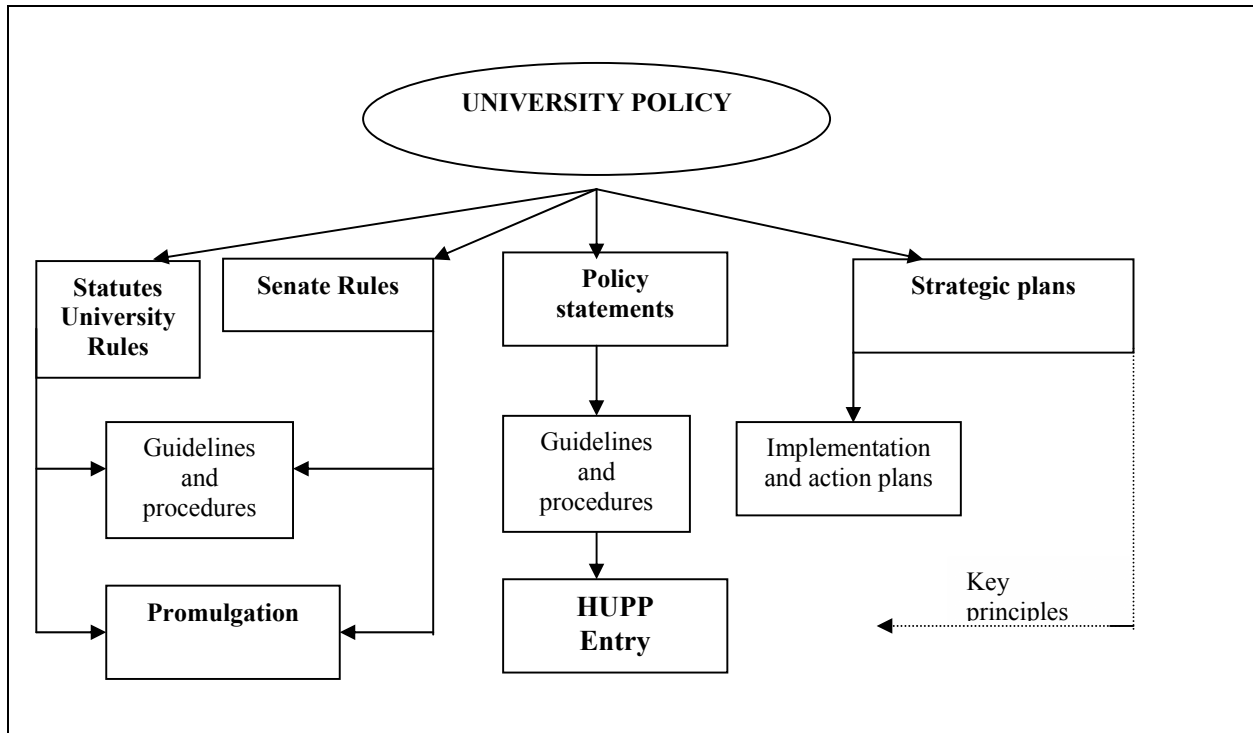
HUPP entries should be concise and set out according to the template as determined by Senate (refer to template at Appendix 1) and at: <http://www.uq.edu.au/hupp/template.asp>

A HUPP entry should include:

- the name of the policy;
- the date the policy was approved;
- the date the policy is to be reviewed (3-5 years after approval);
- a list of any related policies;
- a Contact Officer who can field inquiries about the policy (a position title should be specified as opposed to a person);
- a brief overview of the topic (i.e. the issue the policy is addressing);
- the policy statement / guidelines/ key principles of a plan; and
- any related administrative procedures.

Staff involved in drafting HUPP entries should be aware that this approved policy statement will be available on the University's Web site. Reference material and any related documents, e.g. guidelines need not be summarised as these can be linked to the HUPP entry.

The HUPP is published only in a Web-based format.

FIGURE 1

6 Policy development

A policy may be developed:

- by senior management;
- through the University's committee structure and processes
- as a result of external legislative and associated accountability requirements.

6.1 The committee process

Many policies are developed through the University's committee structure. For example, most academic policy is developed by committees of the Academic Board, often through working parties which are set up to examine particular issues.

The recommendations of a working party might include a recommendation that an appropriate policy statement (and accompanying guidelines / operational plan) be developed based on the findings of the report. Ideally, the working party will already have developed a draft of the associated policy, preferably in the format of a draft HUPP entry, so that it can be included for consideration with the report. The report of a working party is not a policy document.

Working party reports do not always follow a linear approval path. A working party will submit a report for comment to the committee that commissioned it. The working party will then incorporate feedback

into the report before submitting it again, this time for approval. For example, committees or working parties of the Academic Board will sometimes submit a draft report for comment to the Academic Board before resubmitting a final report for approval.

It is important that working party secretaries or project officers liaise with the secretary of the overseeing committee to which the draft policy statement is to be submitted for consideration. The secretary should also seek comments from the relevant business area on the application of the proposed policy.

A brief (one page) agenda item recommending approval of the policy to the overseeing committee will need to be prepared which includes:

- the key principles of the policy and its application/implications; and
- a recommendation that the report and/or policy be noted / approved / supported / or considered for referral to another committee.

It should be noted that any proposed University Rule change arising from the policy should be drafted by the Legal Office before it is submitted to the Academic Board or its committees.

Once the policy has been endorsed by the relevant committee or senior executive, a HUPP entry stating the endorsed policy, will need to be prepared for approval by the Senate.

A working party report is not usually submitted to Senate for approval (i.e. Senate approves the *policy statements* such as a HUPP entry).

It might be necessary to liaise with the assistant secretary to Senate about implementing the policy once the Senate approval has been obtained. This will allow a list of matters for consideration, including implementation measures, to be referred to in the covering item.

The Secretary and Registrar, as Secretary to Senate, will notify the HUPP Manager and the Contact Officer that approval has been granted.

7 Policy review

All policies and their HUPP entries must be reviewed regularly – usually every 3-5 years after initial approval by Senate – and a mechanism is in place to ensure that the Contact Officer is notified that the policy is due for review.

Nonetheless, it is desirable that the working party which is drafting policy should include a section on review in its report. It should also identify performance indicators by which the effectiveness of the policy can be assessed when it is reviewed. Thus, the officer/working party that has been charged with reviewing the HUPP entry has a starting point from which to begin.

8 Appendix 1:

**Template for
Handbook of University Policies and Procedures entry**

Policy Name	
Policy Number	The next number in the index of entries
Date last Reviewed/Amended	Date of any subsequent amendments
Date of Approval	Senate approval date
Date of Review	Date 3-5 years from approval for Contact Officer to review policy
Related Policies	Any related policies by number and title
Contact Officer	Staff member responsible for the policy

1. Overview

In this section provide an overview of the policy, including any background information which provides the context to the policy determination. State the purpose of the policy and the reasons the policy was developed.

2 The policy

- In this section details of the policy statement should be set out.
- Short paragraphs are preferable. Each major section or sub-section should be consecutively numbered. For example minor headings under Section 2 would be numbered 2.3, 2.2, 2.3, etc.
- Administrative procedures required to implement the policy should be clearly set out.
- Any forms required for implementation should be included as an annex.

Note: The term ‘policy’ should be used by organizational units only where the policy has University wide application and has been approved by Senate. Procedures or guidelines which have been developed locally, for example within a faculty or school, to give effect to a University wide policy are sometimes incorrectly referred to as ‘policy’.