Appendix 3 Guidelines for writing good policies

1. **Content**

Policies have a lot in common with strategy documents, in that they both outline the desired state of the organisation. However, a strategy document may recognise that the desired state differs from the current state. A policy document expresses the desired state in terms of the current status quo. In other words: it is assumed that the policy can be executed by the organisation in its current form.

1. **Policy vs. Procedure**

The key test of to distinguish policies and procedures is: "Will this document only need updating when our organisational structure, goals or objectives change?" If the answer is yes, you have successfully written a policy.

1. **Writing Style & Quality**

Policy documents should:

* Be clear and understandable to a general audience,
* Be written in the active voice,
* Use gender inclusive language
* Omit unnecessary words, and use short words and sentences,
* Avoid jargon and acronyms,
* Avoid specifying information that may be subject to change, requiring the document to be updated.

Attention should be given to the overall quality of the document which will be enhanced by proof reading throughout the process and especially for drafts that are circulated to committees, Executive Management Team, committees of Governing Body and Governing Body.

1. **Policy Title**

The policy title should capture the content of the policy.

Policy titles should be easy to search online and elsewhere. Do not use the word “policy” in the title, unless it comes at the end, so it is easy to find documents alphabetically. There is no need to include SETU in the title.

1. **Common Terms**

To ensure consistency across documents,the same terms should be agreed upon and used:

* The full name “South East Technological University” should be used in the first instance.
* “SETU” should be used as the short-hand version every time thereafter.
* Use “the University”.
* Use the term “programme” (not course) to describe a programme of study leading to an award.
* In the first instance, write “Academic Council”.
* Thereafter, it may be described as “Academic Council” or “Council”.
* Use full titles, eg, Vice President not VP.

Do not capitalise general terms such as “external examiners”, or “examining system” etc., unless they are active, named systems/services/posts within SETU, e.g., President, Registrar, Vice President, Disability Service, Access Programme or Quality Office, etc.

1. **Currency and Version Control**

All issuing and re-issuing of policies should be done through one designated position in a unit. In this way, amendment records can be appropriately maintained, and issuing controlled.

The standard format of policies and procedures includes an issue date and version number. The first time a policy or procedure is approved by Governing Body and issued it should be numbered ‘1’, with subsequent amendments numbered ‘2’, ‘3’, ‘4’ if substantial or ‘1.2’, ‘1.2’ if minor etc. Until the policy is issued, mark it as a draft document. For further information on version control see Appendix 6

1. **Visual Formatting Guidelines**

The Policy template can be downloaded at this [link](https://www.setu.ie/policy-management-framework)

Standard font is inter 12. Further Brand Guidelines are available [**here**](https://www.setu.ie/about/brand-guidelines)

Avoid underlining, italicising or bolding text.

Left align text (do not justify).

Finished documents should be published online in PDF format.

Prior to publication, all documents should be proofed to make sure they meet accessibility guidelines.

1. **Consider partners, stakeholders and collaborators**:

In developing and or reviewing a policy consider:

* Who are the partners/collaborators in developing these policies and procedures?
* What is needed from them?
* At what stage will they be involved?

1. **Consider Gender Balance**

In developing or reviewing a policy consider whether the team involved is gender balanced and as diverse as possible, and includes members of minority/underrepresented groups across the university to negate possible unforeseen negative equality impacts.

1. **Additional Resources**

The following may provide good practice reference points and samples of documents that we have not yet developed in SETU.

Other Irish universities: <https://www.iua.ie/ouruniversities/>

The Russell Group of universities: <https://russellgroup.ac.uk/about/our-universities/>

The University of Bath <https://www.bath.ac.uk/>

The League of European Research Universities (LERU): <https://www.leru.org/members>