

**POLICY ON POLICIES**

**1. OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that a consistent framework, format, and approach is applied to all policies at the University.
- 1.2 This policy also draws a distinction between what constitutes a policy and a supporting document, defining the terms for clarity.
- 1.3 This policy sets out areas of responsibility relating to policies as well as the process for creation, approval, review, and revision of policies and supporting documents.
- 1.4 This policy aims to ensure that policies at the University are:
  - Effective in enhancing operational efficiency;
  - Working to support compliance with legal and regulatory requirements;
  - Easy to access and understand; and
  - Subject to regular checks to ensure they remain fit for purpose, correct, and up to date (e.g. in relation to related legislation, University structures and processes, etc).

**2. SCOPE**

- 2.1 This policy applies to the creation and maintenance of all policies at the University.

**3. RESPONSIBILITIES**

**3.1 The Information Manager**

- 3.1.1 The Information Manager is responsible for having oversight of policies across the University and for providing support and guidance to those tasked with drafting policies.
- 3.1.2 The Information Manager is responsible for the creation and amendment of the approved University Policy Template and for development and management of a central University Policy Bank.

**3.2 Heads of Schools and Directors of Professional Services Divisions**

- 3.2.1 Heads of Schools and Directors of Professional Services Divisions are responsible for ensuring that policies falling within the remit of their School or Division are assigned a Policy Owner and Lead Contact (author).

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### 3.3 The Policy Owner and Lead Contact

- 3.3.1 The Policy Owner is the team or institutional area ultimately responsible for the policy in question.
- 3.3.2 The Lead Contact is the named role responsible for the development and regular review (including revision and update, where required) of any given policy.
- 3.3.3 The Policy Owner and Lead Contact are responsible for ensuring that the necessary supporting documents are in place to sit alongside the policy and that other relevant related institutional policies and guidance are linked accordingly to the policy.
- 3.3.4 Policy Owners are responsible for arranging to have their policies published on the relevant area of the University's website and, in the case of University Policies, for liaising with the Information Manager to ensure that policies are linked from the central Policy Bank.
- 3.3.5 Policy Owners are responsible for raising staff awareness of their area's policies (in conjunction with the Communications team), and for facilitating and arranging the appropriate training of staff (where required).

## 4. POLICY

### 4.1 Definitions

- 4.1.1 A '*policy*' is a high-level statement of guiding principles or set of ideas adopted by a group of people or an organisation which is used as the basis for taking actions or decision making in relation to a specific topic or area.
- 4.1.2 A '*University Policy*' refers to a policy that applies broadly across the University, reflects the University's values, and articulates expectations and requirements. Policies of this nature can address legal, compliance and regulatory requirements; regulations and internal standards; and/or seek to reduce institutional risk. University policies should ensure consistency of approach throughout the institution.
- 4.1.3 A '*Local Level Policy*' is an operational policy which is specific to a Division, School, or area (e.g. dress code relating to lab or research areas) but should not contradict or conflict with any University policies. These policies will be very limited and usually local level documents will be made up of guidance and process documents only rather than policies.
- 4.1.4 '*Supporting documents*' are related guidance and procedural documents that refer to specific processes and practices which enable adherence to the policy. These are living documents that can be updated as systems and processes change. Standalone guidance and procedural documents may also exist separately and be unrelated to any policy.

### 4.2 The Policy Format

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- 4.2.1 Each policy must follow the format of the agreed University Policy Template (linked at the end of this policy or available from the Information Manager).
- 4.2.2 Each policy must include a 'Review / Contact / References' box at the end of the document, as well as the control box at the bottom of each page.
- 4.2.3 Policies should be written in clear, accessible, and straightforward language.
- 4.2.4 Policies should generally not include the specifics of internal processes or procedures, as these should be detailed in the supporting documents.
- 4.2.5 Supporting documents should be included as separate appendices to the policy.

#### 4.3 **Development, Approval and Dissemination**

- 4.3.1 Departmental Level policies can be initiated locally by individual teams or business areas, Schools, or Professional Services Divisions.
- 4.3.2 University Policies are required when there is a need to make clear obligations in relation to legislative or regulatory requirements, to formalise agreed University values or aims, and/or to communicate expected behaviours throughout the institution. These are often created upon instruction from the University's Executive Group or individual members of the University Leadership Team.
- 4.3.3 For support in relation to the drafting of policies, use of the policy template, or the application of this policy, Policy Owners and/or Lead Contacts should engage with the University's Information Manager.
- 4.3.4 The University's Office of the General Counsel should be consulted where necessary during the drafting (or updating) of policies – for example, where they relate to a legal requirement, or where legal advice is required.
- 4.3.5 Policies must be approved through the appropriate Group(s) and/or Committee(s) at the University; areas of policy responsibility are outlined in the 'Organisation of the University' and its Statutes.
- 4.3.6 Supporting documents are not subject to the same formal approval process that policies are and can be created and amended as and when required.
- 4.3.7 When drafting policies, consideration should always be given to overarching University requirements or strategic areas of focus (e.g. Equality and Diversity, Sustainability, Value for Money) to ensure that related matters or concerns are addressed within the policy as necessary.
- 4.3.8 As outlined in Section 3.3, the publishing of the policy, communications, and training related to the policy are primarily the responsibility of the Policy Owner.

#### 4.4 **Storage and Archiving**

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- 4.4.1 All University and Department Level Policies should be uploaded to one consistent location (URL) only on the relevant area of the University webpages and always replaced using the same the URL to ensure that only one and the latest version is available at any given time and to avoid broken links.
- 4.4.2 The URL referred to in section 4.4.1 should also be linked from one central location (the University Policy Bank – see section 3.1), to be managed by the Information Manager.
- 4.4.3 Documents used in the development of policies, and previously approved versions of policies, should be retained locally / archived in line with the University’s Master Records Retention Schedule.

**4.5 Review and Revision**

- 4.5.1 Policies should always have a default review date that is three years from the date of approval or last revision, unless a shorter review timeframe is customary or required for any other reason (e.g. changes to legislation).
- 4.5.2 Where changes are required to policies following review, these must be approved through the same appropriate Group(s) and/or Committee(s) that the original policy was approved by, or in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation (see Appendix 1).
- 4.5.3 As outlined in 4.3.6, as supporting documents do not need to follow the same review and approval processes as policies themselves, they should be reviewed and updated as and when required.

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<b>Review / Contacts / References</b>	
Policy title:	Policy on Policies
Date approved:	23 May 2022
Approving body:	University Executive Group
Last review date:	May 2022 October 2019
Revision history:	Version 2: May 2022 Version 1: October 2019
Next review date:	May 2025
Related internal policies, procedures, guidance:	Policy Guidance and University Policy Template: <a href="https://www.sussex.ac.uk/ogs/policies">https://www.sussex.ac.uk/ogs/policies</a>  Organisation of the University & University Statutes <a href="https://www.sussex.ac.uk/ogs/govdocuments">https://www.sussex.ac.uk/ogs/govdocuments</a>  Records Management Guidance and Master Records Retention Schedule <a href="https://www.sussex.ac.uk/ogs/information-management/records-management">https://www.sussex.ac.uk/ogs/information-management/records-management</a>
Policy owner:	Division of the General Counsel, Governance and Compliance (Information Management team)
Lead contact / author:	Information Manager (Karen Blackman)

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## Appendix 1: Policy on Policies – Scheme of Delegation

	Standard approval process, e.g. University Executive Group approval	Approval via delegated authority (as agreed by the original approving group / committee)	No formal approval required
New policies	✓		
Substantial amendments and/or a change in policy position	✓		
Minor / basic revisions following standard 3-yearly review		✓	
Accuracy updates <b>only</b> e.g. changes to School or Divisional names, job titles, updated name of processes			✓

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