

Policy Framework

Section 1 - Purpose and Context

- (1) This Framework establishes the principles and processes for the development, review, approval, publication and management of University-wide Documents in the University's Policy Document System.
- (2) This Framework ensures consistency and transparency of the University's Policy Documents. It does not apply to other documents that are specific to a particular academic or business unit of the University.
- (3) The University's key governance documents include Frameworks, Codes, Charters, Rules, Plans and Policies, Procedures, Schedules and Guidelines. Guidelines suggest how to implement the provisions in specific Policy Documents. Compliance with all other Policy Documents is mandatory for all members of the University community. This includes employees, students, adjunct and visiting academics, contractors, volunteers, and any other individuals as applicable and within the scope of the relevant instrument.
- (4) Controlled and associated entities of the University are generally responsible for establishing and implementing their own policies and procedures, as outlined in the [Controlled and Associated Entities Governance Framework](#).
- (5) This Framework should be read together with the [Charter of Academic Freedom](#), [Delegations of Authority Policy](#), [Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Policy](#), and [Risk Management Policy](#).

Section 2 - Definitions

- (6) The following definitions apply for the purposes of this Policy:
 - a. Administrative or editorial amendments are amendments to existing Policy Documents that do not change the context of any part of the Document but correct an error, update or clarify wording: these include grammatical changes, or updates to reflect such things as organisational unit name changes (without changing responsibilities of individuals)
 - b. Approval Authority is the position or committee who has the authority or delegation to approve a Policy Document
 - c. Associated Information supplements and/or further implements a Policy Document and can be accessed from a Policy Document's "Associated Information" tab
 - d. Charter is a Policy Document that outlines the conditions that apply to a specific area of the University's activity and the rights and privileges associated with it
 - e. Code is a document that outlines the agreed standards of behaviour for a specific cohort of individuals and/or area of activity
 - f. Controlled entity is an entity that the University has the capacity to determine the outcome of decisions about that entity's financial and operating policies in accordance with section 50AA of the [Corporations Act 2001 \(Cth\)](#)
 - g. Embedded Procedures are contained within the Policy under a Procedures section. When a Head Policy has more than one set of associated Procedures, the Procedures are published in separate Policy Documents and named to align with the Head Policy
 - h. Endorser is the position or committee with responsibility for endorsing a Policy Document for submission to the

relevant Approval Authority

- i. Executive Sponsor is the member of the Senior Executive Team (SET) with accountability for that Policy Document
- j. Framework is a document that outlines a system, including underlying concepts, values and processes, in a specified area of activity. These Policy Documents have the same effect as a Policy of the University
- k. Guidelines are advisory or explanatory and operationalise other Policy Documents
- l. Head Policy is a Policy that is designed to provide the underlying principles for a broad area of activity of the University
- m. Major Change is any change in a Policy Document from either the external (e.g., legislative) or internal (operational/management) environment which:
 - i. alters the obligations, rights or expectations contained in the Policy Document
 - ii. changes any principle contained in the Policy Document
 - iii. creates or describes a significantly changed process
 - iv. creates or imposes any new potential sanctions on individuals if they breach the Policy Document
- n. Minor Change is any change in a Policy Document that is more than an administrative or editorial change, such as a minor change in a process, but does not meet the threshold for a Major Change
- o. Parent Policy is the Policy Document to which a Policy Schedule is attached as Associated Information
- p. Plans are equivalent to Policies but have a different title when legislation specifies that they be named thus, or they exist to meet a legislative requirement but support a document either equivalent to or higher on the Policy Document hierarchy
- q. Policies are concise, formal statements expressing the principles underlying an area of the University's business or operations. In the absence of a specific Policy, existing laws constitute the relevant Policy
- r. Policy Document is a generic or collective reference for a University Rule, Policy, Plan, Charter, Framework, Procedure, Schedule or Guideline, unless otherwise specified
- s. Policy Schedules are variations to a Policy Document to meet specific circumstances or requirements as described in Clause (9) and are attached to a Policy Document as Associated Information
- t. Procedures are Policy Documents that outline the key processes for implementing a Policy. They are mandatory, written in a sequential and logical order, and assign specific responsibilities for carrying out those processes
- u. Rules are made under the [Western Sydney University By-Law 2017 \(NSW\)](#) and are statutory rules and have the force of legislation
- v. Unit Head is the person with operational or business responsibility for the relevant Policy Document. The Unit Head is responsible for managing the design, quality, review and compliance reporting for the Policy Documents within their realm of responsibility.

Section 3 - Hierarchy

(7) The University's governance documents operate in the following hierarchy, from highest to lowest:

- a. [Western Sydney University Act 1997 \(NSW\)](#) (University Act) and other relevant Commonwealth or New South Wales laws with which the University is required to comply, including the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#)
- b. [Western Sydney University By-law 2017](#) (University By-Law) which is a statutory regulation and has the force of legislation
- c. Rules created under section 41 of the [University Act](#) and clause 13 of the [University By-Law](#)
- d. Codes, Charters, Plans, Policies and Frameworks

- e. Procedures
- f. Policy Schedules
- g. Guidelines

(8) Policy Documents must always be consistent with legislation, including regulations, by-laws or statutory rules and are invalid to the extent of any inconsistency.

(9) A Policy Schedule may be developed to:

- a. support specific activities or external requirements (within or outside Australia) where these cannot be adequately set out in the Policy. This includes, for instance, operations of University controlled entities in the circumstances described in clause (16) below, or
- b. temporarily vary a Policy in emergencies or urgent circumstances (see clauses (51) and (52) below).

(10) If there is an inconsistency between Policy Documents, the approval authorities for those documents will decide the appropriate interpretation, on the advice of the Policy and Governance Unit, who may itself seek advice from the Office of General Counsel.

Section 4 - Approval Authorities

(11) Published Policy Documents must be endorsed and approved as follows, unless an alternative approval pathway has been advised by the Policy and Governance Unit:

Document Type	Endorser	Approver
University Rules	N/A	Board of Trustees
Codes, Charters, Frameworks or Policies related to the governance of the University	Relevant standing committee of the Board of Trustees	Board of Trustees
Charters, Frameworks or Policies related to the quality and assurance of academic matters affecting the University	Academic Senate Policy Committee	Academic Senate
Charters, Frameworks, Plans or Policies relating to the management and operations of the University	Executive Sponsor	Vice-Chancellor and President and other authorised bodies or officers designated in the Delegations of Authority Policy
Procedures	Unit Head	Executive Sponsor
Guidelines	N/A	Unit Head
Policy Schedules	The endorser of the Parent Policy to which the Policy Schedule is attached as Associated Information	The approver of the Parent Policy which the Policy Schedule is attached as Associated Information

(12) If any changes to the University's organisational structure result in there being a gap or different Approval Authority reference in a Policy Document referred to in the clause above, the existing Policy Document will remain in force or the Vice-Chancellor and President may designate an alternative Approval Authority for the purposes of the Policy Document until its amendment or replacement.

Section 5 - Principles

(13) The content of all Policy Documents must:

- a. uphold and be aligned with the University's core values, mission and strategic goals, including alignment with the [Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Policy](#) and the [Charter of Academic Freedom](#)
- b. be informed by, and consistent with, all relevant laws including the [University Act](#) and the [University By-Law](#)
- c. provide a clear distinction between governance and management
- d. be concise, in plain English and clearly articulate expectations, consequences, and responsibilities for actions and decisions
- e. ensure that the student voice has been consulted and considered when the document relates to, or impacts on them
- f. articulate Policy separately from Procedures and Guidelines (and vice versa)
- g. manage risks in line with the [Risk Management Policy](#)

(14) University Policy Documents are structured based on a Head Policy model, which is characterised by:

- a. lead policies that bring together and outline the principles underlying a broad area of the University's activity
- b. embedded or separate Procedures

(15) The process to develop, implement and review all Policy Documents is:

- a. appropriately consultative but also as expeditious as is practical (Guide to Developing Policy Documents('the Guide'))
- b. informed by continuous improvement and consistent with best practice in the higher education sector and other domains where appropriate
- c. compliant with legislative requirements and informed by the University's strategic plan

(16) In the case of University controlled entities, the University's Board of Trustees may notify that entity that a particular Policy is to be adopted at a local level and applied to that entity or that entity may itself resolve to adopt a policy in accordance with the University's [Global Network Policy](#). Depending on the particular activities, a Policy Schedule may also need to be attached to the Parent Policy to meet specific requirements applicable to that entity. Policy Schedules must include the date of approval and the approval authority.

Section 6 - Document Development and Approvals

Summary of Stages

(17) Unit Heads are responsible for the maintenance of their Policy Documents and must ensure that the development of all new or revised Policy Documents are:

- a. proposed and approved to proceed by the General Counsel and University Secretary for new Policy Documents or Policy and Governance Unit for Policy Document reviews
- b. drafted with the support of a reference group including key stakeholders (at the discretion of the Unit Head)
- c. consulted on with targeted groups and broadly, as appropriate for the Policy Document, then
- d. progressed for endorsement and approval.

(18) The level of consultation and approval required for new or revised documents will vary according to the type of

Policy Document, whether new or existing and the extent of change required.

Process Initiation

(19) Issues that trigger the need to review an existing Policy Document or develop a new Policy Document include:

- a. legislative, audit or other external imperatives
- b. changes to the University's strategic direction or structure
- c. content gaps or overlaps
- d. mitigation of specific risks
- e. scheduled Policy reviews.

(20) The Policy and Governance Unit will advise on:

- a. where the proposed new or revised Policy Document fits within existing Policy groupings and what document status is most appropriate
- b. whether the Administrative, Brief or Full development and approval Channel is required.

(21) All Policy Documents (except Guidelines) must be developed and published in the University's Policy Document system.

Development and Approval Channels

(22) There are three key channels for the development and approval of new or amended Policy Documents:

- a. Administrative or editorial changes
- b. the Brief Channel or
- c. the Full Channel.

(23) The Policy and Governance Unit will determine which channel of development and approval is appropriate.

Administrative or Editorial Channel

(24) The Policy and Governance Unit will facilitate administrative or editorial amendments to Policy Documents in accordance with the [Delegations of Authority Policy](#).

Brief Channel

(25) The Brief Channel is used for the development or amendment of Procedures and Policy Schedules, a Minor Change to a Policy Document or where the Unit Head of a Policy Document due for a timely review considers limited changes are required. This process requires:

- a. targeted consultation with the key stakeholders
- b. endorsement from the Unit Head and approval by the Executive Sponsor as per the Development and Approval Channels table.

Full Channel

(26) All new Policy Documents, any proposed Major Change to existing Policy Documents, Rules or the review of a Policy Document that is past its standard review period, must use the Full Channel. This process requires:

- a. both targeted and broad consultation

b. endorsement and approval from designated committees/positions as defined in Development and Approval Channels table.

(27) Development and Approval under the Brief and Full Channel processes are:

Policy Document	Type of Development or Change	Development and Approval Channel	Type of Consultation	Endorser:		Approver:	
				(a) governance		(a) governance	
				(b) Academic quality and assurance		(b) Academic quality and assurance	
				(c) University management and operations		(c) University management and operations	
Rule	Minor Change	Brief Channel	Targeted, at least	Relevant Board of Trustees Standing Committees	Board of Trustees		
	All other changes or review	Full Channel	Targeted and Broad				
Policy, Plan, Charter, Code and Framework	New	Full Channel	Targeted and broad	(a) Relevant Board Standing Committee	(a) Board of Trustees		
	Major Change			(b) Academic Senate Policy Committee	(b) Academic Senate		
	Overdue for review			(c) Executive Sponsor	(c) Vice-Chancellor and President		
	Minor Change	Brief Channel	Targeted	Unit Head	Executive Sponsor		
Procedure	New	Full Channel	Targeted and broad	(a) Relevant Board Standing Committee	(a) Board of Trustees		
	Overdue for review			(b) Academic Senate Policy Committee	(b) Academic Senate		
	Amendments			(c) Executive Sponsor	(c) Vice-Chancellor and President		
	Timely review	Brief Channel	Targeted	Unit Head	Executive Sponsor		
Guideline	Any change or review	Brief Channel	Targeted, at least	N/A	Unit Head		
Policy Schedule	New	Brief Channel	Targeted	Endorser of Parent Policy to which the Policy Schedule is attached as Associated Information	Approver of Parent Policy to which the Policy Schedule is attached as Associated Information		
	Major Change						
	Minor Change	Brief Channel	Targeted	Endorser of Minor Changes to the Policy Schedule's Parent Policy	Approver of Minor Changes to the Policy Schedule's Parent Policy		

Consultation

(28) All new and changed Policy Documents must be subject to at least targeted consultation.

(29) All new and changed Policy Schedules must be subject to targeted consultation and only require the Brief Channel process.

(30) Policy Documents requiring the Full Channel process must be available to the broad University community for comment via the University [Policy system](#) for a period of at least two weeks (refer to The Guide).

(31) The Policy and Governance Unit are considered key stakeholders for all Policy Documents.

(32) The Staff Agreements require the University to provide employees and applicable unions with the opportunity to comment on any new Document and any significant change to an existing Document that affects working conditions before final approval. The Policy and Governance Unit will facilitate this consultation for relevant Documents in association with the Office for People.

Review

(33) All Policy Documents have a set review date which is stipulated at the time of publication.

(34) All Policy Documents should be reviewed at least once every three years or as soon as changes become necessary (for example, because of changes to laws, Higher Education standards, the University's strategic goals, its structure or systems).

(35) Policy Documents which have passed their standard review date or Major Changes are required, must follow the Full Channel process.

(36) Policy Document Unit Heads must initiate reviews at the published review date or provide a reason why the review is delayed.

(37) Review dates of Policy Schedules should, unless determined otherwise, be aligned to their Parent Policy.

Endorsement and Approval

(38) All new or changed Policy Documents must be endorsed by the relevant endorser prior to submission to the approver.

(39) Rules and Codes are approved by the Board of Trustees.

(40) The approver of new or changed Policy Documents depends on the status and intent of the Document (governance, academic quality and assurance, or University management and operations), and the type of development or change.

(41) Guidelines are approved by the relevant Unit Head.

Publication

(42) All University rules must be published in accordance with clause 13 of the [University By-Law](#).

(43) All University Policy Documents (except Guidelines) must be published on the University's [Policy system](#). These documents must not be published in any other form or in another location without the prior approval of the General Counsel and University Secretary.

(44) Units should make arrangements with the Policy and Governance Unit to publish or link their relevant internal documents as Associated Information to the relevant Policy Documents in the University's [Policy system](#).

(45) Some Policy Documents are confidential and public access may be restricted.

Implementation

(46) It is critical that any new or changed Policy Documents are communicated and implemented effectively, including through training initiatives. All Unit Heads are required to prepare and submit an implementation plan when submitting a Policy Document for final approval.

(47) A Policy Document takes effect on the date of publication.

(48) Unit Heads are responsible for arranging an implementation review of any new Policy Documents within 12 months of approval. An implementation review does not constitute a full review but its purpose is to ensure the provisions in a Policy Document have been implemented properly and are working effectively (see the Guide).

Repeal or Sunset Dates

(49) In general, Policy Documents do not have a specified sunset date. They remain in effect even where a review date has passed.

(50) If a Unit Head considers a Policy Document should include a sunset clause or be repealed (whether or not there is a Document to replace it) they should first obtain advice from the Policy and Governance Unit. The Policy and Governance Unit will seek approval of the relevant approval authority.

Suspension or Variation of Policies in Emergencies or Urgent Circumstances

(51) Under the [Delegations of Authority Policy](#), the Board of Trustees has delegated authority to the Chair, Academic Senate to suspend or vary Policy Documents approved by the Academic Senate where there is an emergency or an urgent circumstance. This authority may only be exercised subject to certain conditions specified in the [Delegations of Authority Policy](#).

(52) The consultation and approval requirements in this Framework do not apply to any suspension or variation made by the Vice-Chancellor and President, in respect of a Policy Document where that suspension or variation:

- a. is reasonably necessary to respond appropriately to an emergency or urgent circumstance including, without limitation, a natural disaster, a health pandemic or epidemic, civil unrest or armed conflict and
- b. is for a specified period of time (but it may be extended or renewed for a further specified period of time) and
- c. is promptly notified to all affected staff and students of the University.

Section 7 - Guidelines

(53) For copyright advice, refer to the [Copyright Policy](#) or contact the Copyright Officer (refer to the University [Copyright Web Page](#)).

(54) For legal advice, contact the Office of General Counsel.

(55) Policy Resources:

- a. [Policy Development and Review Resources](#)
- b. Policy and Governance Unit

Related Policies and Procedures

(56) This document should be read in conjunction with the information provided at the Associated Information tab of this Policy.

Status and Details

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Effective Date	15th January 2025
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Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor and President
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