Policy Writing Guidelines

The following guidelines will help you apply the principles for clear communication as you write a policy.

1. Know precisely why you are writing the policy.

2. Investigate and understand the needs of the people who will use the policy (your users). What do they need to know or do?

3. Use the appropriate policy template to help you break your information into manageable topics and order them so they will make sense to your users.

4. Write a descriptive heading for each subtopic. (The template provides a heading for each main topic.)

5. Eliminate any information your users do not need.

6. Structure each topic according to its information type—fact, concept, principle, process, procedure.

7. Focus on meaning and making your information accessible to your users.

   - Be helpful and respectful.
   - Use simple language and terms. Define any terms your users may not be familiar with.
   - Write short, simple sentences.
   - Use the active voice.
   - Be specific.
   - Use the present tense.
   - Write objectively. Avoid hyperbole.
   - Use positive language.
   - Spell out common and trademarked abbreviations the first time you use them in the policy. Avoid uncommon abbreviations.

8. Spell correctly and consistently. (Adhere to the guidelines in the University's approved dictionary.)

9. Punctuate and capitalize correctly and consistently. (Adhere to the guidelines in the University's Online Style Guide.)

10. Take advantage of opportunities to make your information interactive, but be sure the interactivity is appropriate.

11. Incorporate audio, visual, and multimedia elements where they add value.

12. Send a draft of your policy to your reviewers (the policy owner and other stakeholders as determined at the beginning of the project) for their feedback.

13. When you get reviewers' feedback, analyze it and revise your policy if/as necessary.