

Policy Handbook



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Introduction

The Policy Handbook is intended to assist staff at The University of Queensland (UQ) developing policies and procedures. Policy work in a tertiary institution such as UQ can be challenging and may involve reviewing, drafting, consulting, communicating or implementing a policy. This Handbook is one of a number of tools and resources available to staff at UQ designed to encourage the development of policies and procedures that are clear, effective and appropriate. Additional supporting resources referenced throughout the Handbook are available from the [Governance and Risk website](#) and listed at the end of this document.

This Handbook is not a policy or procedure. It is a resource to support staff understand the broader governance and policy environment at UQ, and to provide a central reference point when developing policies. Information in this Handbook does not override anything stated in a UQ policy or procedure. Enterprise Governance welcomes feedback and suggestions from staff to improve this Handbook.

Policy at UQ

At UQ, policies and procedures are documents containing mandatory requirements to enable effective and efficient governance and management. They are developed collaboratively to reflect the diversity of the UQ community, including people belonging to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, LGBTQIA+ communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, disability communities and other diverse communities. As such, UQ policies and procedures use language which is inclusive of people from these communities.

As reflected in the diagram below, policies and procedures provide an important link between UQ's establishing legislation (the *University of Queensland Act 1998*), its governing body (UQ Senate) and its academic and operational practices. One of UQ's key governance policies – the UQ Governance and Management Framework – was approved by Senate in 2018 and provides the overall structure and direction for systematic and disciplined governance and management at UQ. Staff involved in any phase of policy development at UQ are strongly encouraged to read the UQ Governance and Management Framework.

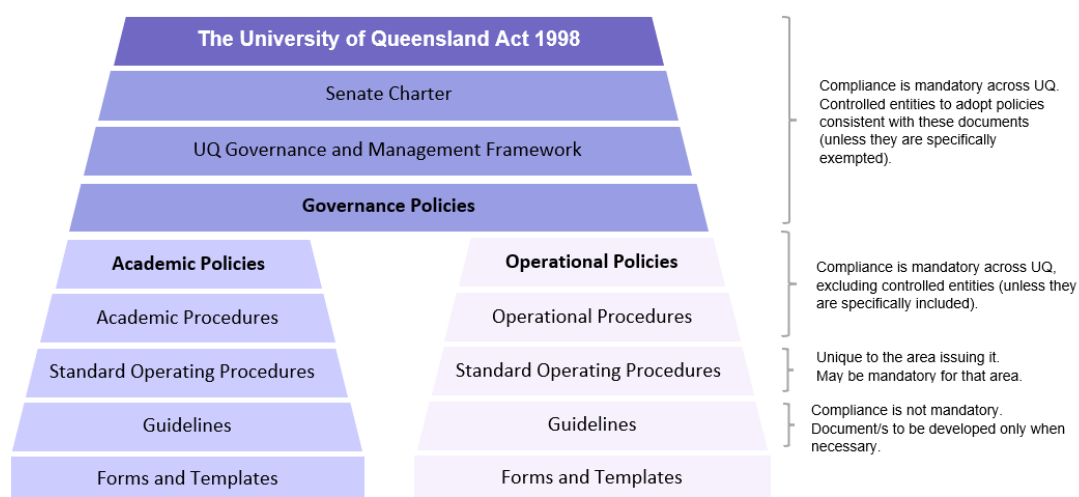


Figure 1: Hierarchy of UQ Documented Controls

What are policies?

Policies at UQ are developed, adopted and managed to realise one or more of the following:

- support the achievement of UQ's objectives and strategic priorities;
- give effect to directions or advice from Senate, the Vice-Chancellor or the Academic Board;
- manage significant strategic or financial risks; or

- demonstrate compliance with applicable laws, regulations, government policies or standards, legal obligations or mandatory professional standards.

Policies are categorised Governance, Academic or Operational and have UQ-wide application:

- Governance policies relate to Senate's reserved powers and governance responsibilities.
- Academic policies govern UQ's teaching, learning and research functions and their supporting strategies and activities.
- Operational policies govern UQ's corporate, administrative and non-academic functions and their strategies and activities.

What are procedures?

Procedures at UQ describe the processes and activities that help to reach the outcomes defined in the parent policy and are categorised to align with their parent policy. Procedures state how outcomes need to be achieved and when. The requirements of a procedure should be stated with precision, be concise, action-oriented and their underlying merits so obvious and convincing to the audience that there is a very high degree of acceptance and compliance.

Who approves policies and procedures?

All new UQ policies or amendments that are not administrative to UQ policies may only be published with the written approval of the approval authority. The Vice-Chancellor or Provost is the approval authority for the majority of UQ policies and Senate is the approval authority for UQ policies that have been specifically reserved for Senate approval. The list of [Senate reserved policies](#) is published on UQ's website.

All new UQ procedures or amendments that are not administrative to UQ procedures may only be published with the written approval of the approval authority. For most UQ procedures, the approval authority is the relevant policy owner.

Document	Category	Approval
Policy	Governance	Senate
Policy	Operational or Academic	Vice-Chancellor [^]
Procedure	Academic	Relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor*
Procedure	Operational	Policy owner*

[^] Depending on its categorisation, the Vice-Chancellor may delegate approval to the Provost, relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor or the Chief Operating Officer. * Unless specifically reserved by the Vice-Chancellor

How are policies and procedures published?

UQ's [Policy and Procedures Library](#) (PPL) is the central repository for all UQ policies, procedures and guidelines. Administration of the PPL is managed by Enterprise Governance within the Governance and Risk Division. For new documents or amendments to existing documents to be published in the PPL, requesting staff need to [contact Enterprise Governance](#) providing the requested changes and accompanying written approvals.

Freedom of speech and academic freedom / human rights

The UQ Governance and Management Framework provides a commitment to promoting and protecting freedom of speech and academic freedom at UQ. To help achieve this commitment, the drafting, review or amendment of all UQ policies and procedures must have regard to UQ's [Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Policy](#). UQ's Freedom of Speech Assessment Group assesses UQ policies and procedures, prior to their approval, to ensure they are compatible with the policy.

Furthermore, UQ is required to assess any new or amended policies and procedures for their compatibility with human rights, as set out in the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld). To streamline the assessment process, a single assessment form has been developed to enable UQ to assess the compatibility of a policy and procedure with the principles of freedom of speech and academic freedom and human rights.

A Statement of Compatibility Form must be completed for new and amended policies and procedures. Enterprise Governance can assist with completing this form and progressing assessments through the Freedom of Speech Assessment Group. More information about UQ's commitment to the principles of freedom of speech and academic freedom is available on the [Governance and Risk Resources website](#).

Policy development

The following section outlines the general phases of policy development at UQ. While not all policies and procedures will require the sequential adherence to each phase, some requirements are mandatory, therefore staff should consider each phase and apply as required. These phases are also summarised in the [UQ Policy Cycle](#) online training module.

Phase 1: Needs assessment

- Undertake a needs assessment to identify and confirm the need for a new policy or procedure at UQ.
 - Review existing related content (e.g. in the PPL or on UQ's website) to determine whether a similar policy, procedure or other documented process already exists.
 - Contact other relevant Organisational Units across UQ to check whether related content or processes may already exist.
 - Consider whether it may be most effective to amend or improve existing content or processes.
- To assist with this process, refer to the Preliminary Assessment Review Form available from the Governance and Risk website.
- The proposed or existing Policy Owner should be consulted to assess whether a new policy is needed or changes to existing content or processes would be more effective.
- The Policy Owner should consult the relevant executive member of the [University Senior Executive Team](#) (USET) for in-principle support to develop a new policy.
- A new policy or significantly amended existing policy must not progress through development to final stages of approval without early prior endorsement from the Provost, relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor or the Chief Operating Officer.

Phase 2: Policy drafting and consultation

- Templates – UQ's templates must be used for new and amended policies and procedures. Refer to the [Governance and Risk Resources website](#) for templates.
- Consultation – Identify which areas of UQ are the key stakeholders in the policy. Who will be most impacted by the policy when it is implemented and enforced (e.g. students, members of staff, faculties, institutes or divisions)?
 - Under the UQ Governance and Management Framework, consultation with the Academic Board or relevant Academic Board Committee is required for all academic policies and procedures.
 - Consult with and involve key subject matter stakeholders early in the development or review of the policy.
 - Consult with key advisory stakeholders (refer to page 9) for advice on matters such as governance, risk, compliance, legal issues and independent assurance.

- For all Senate reserved policies, UQ Legal Services are to be consulted early in the review process.
- Contact and engage with other relevant Organisational Units across UQ that may have an interest in the policy or be able to assist and advise on particular aspects.
- Under the Enterprise Agreement, any additions, deletions or other changes to a policy listed in Schedule 1 requires consultation with the relevant staff consultative committee. Reward and Workplace Relations, within the Human Resources Division, can assist in consulting the relevant staff consultative committee.
- Provide key stakeholders with ample opportunity to provide feedback and views on the policy as it is developed.
- Seek input and advice from relevant subject matters experts across UQ as needed.

Open, transparent and regular consultation with key stakeholders during policy drafting will enhance the quality of the final policy and increase its profile and adoption when implemented.

- Enterprise Governance maintains a [webpage](#) to list policies and procedures under review and out for consultation. Policy Owners should notify Enterprise Governance when consulting on a policy/procedure for its inclusion on this webpage.
- Audience – Identify the primary audience of the policy and draft the policy so that it is understandable to the audience.
 - Use plain and easy to understand language; avoid using technical terms and acronyms.
 - Try to be as concise as possible and focus on including 'need to know' information; avoid long sentences and paragraphs, or repetitive information that can be found elsewhere.
 - Use gender neutral language (e.g. 'they' or 'their' instead of 'he' or 'she').
 - Maintain the use of consistent terms throughout the document.

Policies and procedures that cannot be understood by their intended audience will have limited effect and adoption.

- Context – Consider the broader operational and regulatory context of the policy or procedure. Consideration should be given (and advice sought if needed) to the following:
 - [UQ's Strategic Plan](#), Enterprise Agreement and other UQ policies, procedures, sub-plans and strategies.
 - [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency \(TEQSA\)](#) Threshold Standards; Higher Education Standards (HES) Framework; the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) legislative framework; and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).
 - Commonwealth and State regulation on workplace health and safety, financial management and administration, public sector ethics and accountability, record-keeping, privacy and data management.

- Modern slavery risks – UQ is committed to taking a robust and sustained approach to addressing modern slavery risks within its operations and supply chain and ensuring that its frameworks and processes identify and minimise these risks. Contact the Anti-slavery Working Group for advice (antislavery@uq.edu.au).
- Comparison and benchmarking against other Australian universities.
- Industry standards, guidelines and codes of practice.

Phase 3: Endorsement and approval

- Some policies and procedures may need to be reviewed or endorsed by a committee or other group prior to being approved.
 - Depending upon the document's subject matter, these processes will vary and be determined by the Organisational Unit or policy owner responsible for leading development of the policy.
 - Any proposed changes to Senate reserved policies must be reviewed by USET and Senate Governance Committee. All Senate reserved policies must be reviewed by UQ Legal Services before referral to USET (Note: UQ Legal Services requires two weeks to review any proposed changes to Senate reserved policies).
 - During this phase of policy development, further changes to the document may be required in response to feedback and comments. If major changes are proposed, re-consultation with key stakeholders may be needed.
 - If approval of the policy is time critical, consider and factor in any committee or other review and endorsement processes ahead of the approval deadline.
- A committee's endorsement of a policy or procedure does not equate to approval.

Only the relevant approval authority can approve a new or amended policy or procedure (i.e. Senate, the Vice-Chancellor or delegate, or policy owner).

- New and amended policies and procedures must also be submitted to UQ's Freedom of Speech Assessment Group (outlined above) for assessment of compatibility with the principles for the protection of freedom of speech and academic freedom.
- Following any committee processes and freedom of speech assessment, the policy or procedure can be submitted to the approval authority for final approval.
 - The Vice-Chancellor normally approves academic policies following consideration by the Academic Board.
 - The Vice-Chancellor normally requires operational policies to be referred to USET for endorsement before approval.
 - The Provost normally requires operational policies to be referred to the Vice-Chancellor's Risk and Compliance Committee for endorsement before approval.

Phase 4: Communication and implementation

- New or significantly amended policies and procedures should be well communicated to the staff and/or students most impacted by their requirements. Examples of communication include:
 - email notification from the policy owner;
 - publicising on a UQ webpage that is well known and frequented by the policy's target audience;

- verbal updates at relevant network and group meetings; and
 - incorporation into related training.
- Implementation of policies and procedures may require a changed process or system, delivery of new training or additional obligations on staff. These factors should be considered by the policy owner and Organisational Unit primarily responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policy ahead of the commencement of the policy.
- Enterprise Governance has developed a template Communication and Implementation Plan that staff can use to plan this phase of the policy process. Staff are encouraged to use the plan to accompany policy approval requests, demonstrating to the approval authority that the responsible Organisational Unit is prepared for the policy's communication and implementation. The Communication and Implementation Plan template is available from the Governance and Risk website.

Assistance

Governance and Risk Division

- Enterprise Governance assists UQ staff in the review and development of policies and procedures through the provision of support, resources and training. The team is also responsible for administration of the PPL, including publishing changes to policies, procedures and guidelines. Contact [Governance](#) for support with any aspects of policy development outlined in the Handbook.
- Enterprise Compliance helps to ensure UQ manages its compliance obligations and commitments efficiently and effectively. UQ operates in a highly regulated environment and the breadth of its operations places a wide range of legal and regulatory compliance obligations upon all aspects of its educational and business activities. Contact [Compliance](#) for assistance when assessing policies and procedures.
- Enterprise Risk promotes a risk aware culture at UQ where everyone considers risks in their daily decision making to achieve their objectives. The team provides best practice risk leadership and consistency in approach via UQ's Enterprise Risk Management Framework. Contact [Enterprise Risk](#) for assistance with incorporating appropriate risk management controls into policies and procedures.

Legal Services provides legal advice and services to the Senior Executive, administrative, research and academic areas across UQ. Contact [Legal Services](#) for advice identifying and managing legal issues and risks in policies and procedures.

Key Consultation Stakeholders at UQ

Key Stakeholder	Purpose	Contact
University Senior Executive Team (USET)	Endorsement and advice from UQ's senior executive.	ovc.agenda@uq.edu.au
Academic Board and its committees	Advice on UQ's academic functions.	academic.board@uq.edu.au
Faculty Executive Managers	Advice on Faculty management's ability to implement and comply with new or amended policies or procedures.	executivemanagers.faculties@uq.edu.au
Institute Deputy Directors of Operations	Advice on Institute management's ability to implement and comply with new or amended policies or procedures.	deputydirectors.institutes@uq.edu.au
Directors of Central Services and Divisions	Advice on divisional management's ability to implement and comply with new or amended policies or procedures.	directors.centralservices@uq.edu.au
Legal Services	Advice identifying and managing legal issues and risks in policies and procedures.	legalservices@uq.edu.au
Internal Audit	Independent advice on the effectiveness of governance, management processes and internal controls within UQ.	internal-audit@uq.edu.au

Resources

The resources referred to in this Handbook are outlined below. These and other resources to assist UQ staff with policy and procedure development are available on the [Governance and Risk Resources website](#).

- Statement of Compatibility Form (freedom of speech and academic freedom)
- Preliminary Assessment Checklist for new policies
- Policy template
- Procedure template
- Communication and Implementation Plan template

Contact details

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