

How to Write a Policy

Last Updated June 14, 2010



commerce
undergraduate
society

Writing a policy should not take minutes to write, it should take hours. It can very easy to put words on the page and call it “policy.” Policy needs to be all-encompassing, professional, and finite. In other words, it needs to be mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. While the occasional addition is fine, policy should last for years without having to make major changes year after year. It’s important that the proper process is taken to ensure that every policy is of the utmost quality. The following steps should be taken to draft a policy:

- 1) **Stop and Think**
- 2) **Ask, Then Ask Again**
- 3) **Start Writing**
- 4) **Get Feedback**
- 5) **Write Again**
- 6) **Get More Feedback**
- 7) **Finalize the Policy**
- 8) **Present**
- 9) **Revise, If Necessary**

1) **Stop and Think**

Before writing any policy, you must *stop and think* about what it is you are about to write. Some of the questions you should be asking yourself include:

What is this policy about?

Who is the policy for?

Who is impacted by the policy?

What are some the important ideas for the policy?

Are you the best person to write this policy?

Should you consult someone first about what should be in the policy?

Do I need any materials prior to writing the policy (such as other policies, or old documents)?



Answering these questions will point you in the right direction and give you a clear vision about the policy prior to even writing a single word of policy.

2) Ask, Then Ask Again

Did you complete step 1? If you did, you should have realized that you will have to do some consultation prior to drafting the policy, as what you about to write will have some impact within the Commerce Undergraduate Society. For example, if you writing a Marketing Policy (or something related to public relations, communications, branding, etc.), you should consult with the VP Marketing. Contact whoever is appropriate to consult with, think about the questions in Section 1, and come up with some ideas collectively. Once that is complete, ask someone else what their thoughts are on the ideas you have come up with. Chances are the second person you talk to with have a different perspective.

3) Start Writing

This is the tricky part. Before writing anything, there are a few rules when drafting a policy:

1. Standard formatting and language is used when drafting a policy. These include things such as wording, bullets and numbering, and presentation. See any previously drafted policy for examples.
2. All points must be clear in nature with no ambiguity. Remember who it is that you are writing the policy for and assume nothing. You may know what you are talking about in a policy, but others will not.
3. Policies are cross-referenced. If you mention something that is outlined in another policy, you must cross-reference it. For example, if one point in your policy is referencing hiring within the CUS, you must reference the Hiring Policy.
4. A macro concept must come before a micro concept. Macro concepts are items such as scope, nature, and application of the policy. Micro concepts are items such as restrictions and exclusions.
5. You must define a concept before you can use it commonly. In other words, your policy must have logical flow to it. For example, procedures come before exceptions and definitions come before procedures. If you were to reference a “traditional sponsor” you must define what that is before you can commonly use it.

As an approach to drafting your policy, start with the main ideas. Put them in a list and make small notes as to what you want to talk about. Draft the preamble as well. The preamble usually contains the purpose of the policy, who can update the policy, or anything you want to call attention to the reader. From here, start to draft the points within the major headings.

4) Get Feedback

At this point, feedback is essentially proofreading. You may have made a mistake or two in either grammar or spelling, or may have made a mistake in making a point in the policy as a result of bad wording or fatigue. Have someone read the policy over *that is not the main stakeholder*. For example, if you are writing a Reimbursement Policy, you would not ask the VP Finance for feedback. Don't worry; the main stakeholder will get their chance soon.

5) Write Again

As your first draft is proofread, there may be a chance that a new idea has come up or you missed an important detail the first time around. Make any revisions necessary.

6) Get More Feedback

At this point in time, you should be running the policy by the major stakeholder. Again, there may be a chance that a new idea has come up or you missed an important detail that only the major stakeholder would have known about.

7) Finalize the Policy

Simply put: make whatever changes you need to make.

8) Present

Bring the policy to the CUS Board of Directors. When you do, you may want to have two or three points of interest to bring to the Board rather than reading the entire policy. However, for due diligence, the policy may be read in its entirety.

9) Revise, If Necessary

When the policy comes to Board, it may or may not pass; it's the nature of the Board. After presentation to the Board, you may need to go back to Step 6. Collect feedback, revise, present again as needed. If it is passed the Board, congratulations! Your policy is now official. Remember to keep it updated!

