

Determining Whether a Document is a Policy, Procedure, or Guideline

The following definitions, criteria, and fictitious examples are intended to aid in the “clean-up” of university policies, to ensure that policies are “ready” for entry into the online policy library.

Policy	Procedure	Guideline
Definitions		
<p>A general written document that establishes a standard by which the institution manages its affairs. This written statement mandates, specifies or prohibits conduct that enhances the institution’s mission, ensures coordinated compliance with applicable laws and regulations, promotes operational efficiency, and/or reduces institutional risk.</p>	<p>A description of the operational processes necessary to implement policy. Procedures include information on the offices and positions responsible for policy implementation, instructions to campus constituents regarding how to affect the policy, where to turn for information, and the like.</p>	<p>General non-mandatory recommendations that provide readers with helpful information about how to achieve a particular aim; these might include recommendations, administrative instructions, best practices guidance or frameworks in which to operate.</p>
Criteria		
<input type="checkbox"/> States an institutional position.	<input type="checkbox"/> Outlines standard practices for applying policy in specific situations.	<input type="checkbox"/> Gives a general recommendation.
<input type="checkbox"/> Mandates, specifies, or prohibits behavior.	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides instruction.	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides helpful information about how to operate (e.g., based on a best practice).
<input type="checkbox"/> Has widespread application.	<input type="checkbox"/> May have narrower focus/scope than policy.	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides advice about how to achieve a policy’s objectives in various situations.
<input type="checkbox"/> Is non-negotiable.	<input type="checkbox"/> May be “customizable” and adaptable by unit.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not mandatory.
<input type="checkbox"/> Change infrequently.	<input type="checkbox"/> May be changed as needed to improve efficiency.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Tells “what” should be done, and sometimes “why.”	<input type="checkbox"/> Tells “how” something should be done, “who” should do it, “when” it should be done, and/or “what” steps should be taken.	

Policy	Procedure	Guideline
Examples (Fictitious)		
Example 1: Process Drills (Fictitious)		
<p>All university facilities are required to hold a process drill every 6 months. At the time of a drill, when the alarm sounds, all occupants of the facility, including residents, visitors, guests, employees, and attendants, must vacate the facility in an orderly fashion and not return until the “ALL CLEAR” signal is given by the process department.</p>	<p>University facilities should take the following preparatory steps to ensure adherence to the university’s process drill policy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diagram and post two routes to the outside from all rooms in the facility. 2. Designate a meeting place outdoors that is clear of entrances and at least 50 feet from the building. 3. Establish a way to call 911 near the designated meeting place that does not involve re-entering the building. 4. Establish a method to account for those known to be in the building at the time the alarm is sounded. 	<p>Individual campus units are encouraged to establish a process to periodically review process drill procedures with staff.</p>
Example 2: Financial Aid Programs (Fictitious)		
<p>Administration and resource coordination for the university’s financial aid programs, including scholarships, loans, grants, fellowships, assistantships, student stipends, and work-study, must be handled through the Financial Aid Office.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A standard application is required for most of the financial aid programs. 2. There is an established filing period for priority consideration. 	<p>Sending repeated reminders of application deadlines for financial aid programs can help ensure that those with financial need obtain the assistance they are entitled to.</p>
Example 3: Use of Widgets (Fictitious)		
<p>The use of widgets is prohibited in or on all university property except for research purposes.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All students, staff, faculty and visitors are expected to comply with this policy. 2. University Relations is responsible for communicating the policy to campus. 3. Facilities is responsible for placing signage on campus informing persons of this policy. 	<p>Researchers are encouraged to submit a Widget Use Plan prior to submitting funding proposals.</p>