GUIDE TO USING THE CSU POLICY TEMPLATE – CONTENT

The Charles Sturt University Policy, Procedure, Guideline and Rule Template must be used in preparing policies, procedures, guidelines and rules for all sections of the University.

The Template has been designed to ensure a consistent format for all University, Faculty, Research Centre, Divisional and Office policies, procedures, guidelines, rules and forms (“the document”) prepared by all Budget Centres and controlled entities of the University. The use of a standard and predictable format assists staff and others to access information reliably, helps decision-making and problem-solving, ensures more accurate electronic indexing and searching, and removes unnecessary costs arising from multiple and inconsistent document formats. The standard adopted includes five sections, each of which is described below.

Charles Sturt University (“the University”) applies this structure within a pre-defined MS Word template and the authors of these documents should contact policy@csu.edu.au for a copy of the template and to organise training in its use.

A Governance (Policies and Related Documents) Rule 2014 will be published to prescribe the minimum requirements for policies, procedures, guidelines, rules and forms for Charles Sturt University and the expectations of staff. In general, all documents must be clear, concise, written in plain English, easy to follow, efficient to implement and manage, and consistent with the University Act (“the Act”), mission and values.

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This section is used to provide an introduction and background information as to why there is a need for the document. It is intended to contain a simple and brief introduction, including an explanation of what the document is about (i.e. the rationale behind it. For example, "This Policy sets out the University’s expectations for the management of payroll transactions") and its scope (i.e. to whom it is relevant. For example, "This document applies to all staff"; "This document applies to all users of University property and facilities"; "This document applies to staff in the School of Dentistry and Health Sciences only”).

(2) This section might also make reference to statutory or legal requirements. If the document relates to a single statute, the full name of the statute should be included in this section. Where it relates to multiple statutes, it is recommended that this be broadly indicated in this section (rather than listing every piece of legislation) and the reader will be referred to the document’s Associated Information page, where the statutes will appear in list form, with a link to the actual legislation.

Section 2 - Glossary

(3) This section of the document is intended to contain clear and concise definitions of terms that require clarification for the reader to understand the document.

(4) Acronyms and abbreviations should be avoided wherever possible. Policies and related documents are intended to broaden a person’s understanding of the organisation, its processes and principles, and therefore should be written as though the reader knows little of the organisation but for the guidance provided in the document. Acronyms and abbreviations have been used in the past to avoid
repetitive handwriting of common terms, but there is little reason for them in the age of computing. They add complexity to a new reader’s ability to understand an organisation, are not plain English and can be viewed as exclusionary and confusing. Acronyms and abbreviations should therefore only be used where they are in regular and common usage outside the University (e.g. V-C for Vice-Chancellor). Where used, acronyms and abbreviations should not be treated as a definition and should not be included in this section, but rather embedded in the text of the document at the first point of appearance. For example, "The Vice-Chancellor (V-C) is responsible for ……". In all future clauses V-C shall then be used in preference to the full text, unless the document is quite long, in which case the embedded reference should be repeated every five pages.

(5) The University has established a Common Glossary of terms. For example, terms such as "University", "Student", "Prospective Student", "Academic Staff", "Professional/General Staff", are already defined in the Common Glossary section of the CSU Policy Library and do not need to be defined again in each document. This will ensure a consistent approach to the classification of common terms. You must therefore check the Common Glossary of terms prior to preparing your document, and apply the definitions in the Common Glossary rather than create your own. You may only create a new definition if it is not in the Common Glossary. If the definition applied in the Common Glossary does not adequately address the meaning you intend, you must use another word to avoid any confusion. The definitions in the CSU Policy Library's Common Glossary take precedence over any inconsistent definition or usage in a document.

Section 3 - Policy

(6) This section of the document is intended to contain the University’s policy statement. A policy statement sets out the University’s position on the issue considered by the document, explains its requirements and/or obligations, outlines its objectives, and may include standards/values/principles or a statement on how this position aligns to the Act, values and strategy. It is important to remember that when a decision maker is interpreting a document, the policy statement will guide the decision maker in all of his or her actions. Any process or procedure that is inconsistent with the policy statement, or that would lead to an outcome clearly not intended by the policy, may be challenged on the basis of the policy. For example, if a policy states that the University will not discriminate on a particular basis against a person, but the application of a procedure may lead to a discriminatory effect, the matter must be referred to a senior officer and the procedure modified to remove the effect that is inconsistent with the policy. A person cannot act inconsistently with a procedural requirement, but may challenge the application of the procedure on the basis that it is inconsistent with the policy.

(7) A policy statement may also contain an expression of delegated authority with which the responsibility rests. It will not explain how matters are progressed to the position or body that holds that delegated authority, as that is a question of procedure (see section 4). Please note that a delegation cannot be conferred in a policy. The policy can only describe an existing (or intended) delegation. Delegations must be granted separately by the University Council, and a policy or related document cannot come into effect until this has been done.
A good indicator that you are on the right track in regard to what you may include in a policy statement is the brevity of the content; policy information is not normally subject to continual, frequent or regular change.

POLICY TEMPLATE SUB-STRUCTURE

While the section format is mandatory for all documents, the use of Parts, Major headings and Minor headings will vary according to the nature, size and complexity of the document. They are the mechanisms by which paragraphs and information are organised into logical and manageable groupings to facilitate understanding. Further, they are used by the policy database to generate the side menu or index for the policies, and so authors need to think of them in the same terms as the contents section of a book.

Part A - Parts

Parts are the major sub sections and are numbered A, B, C, etc. sequentially through the document. These are major groupings or chapters of information within sections and, for example, could be used to deal with the major categories or stages within a procedure. They should be used sparingly and would not normally appear in the policy statement section.

Major headings

Minor headings

These headings are key organisational elements for the document and, as such, group paragraphs according to the subject matter. It is not essential to use both but, where both are used, all minor headings under a major heading should relate to that major heading. Long and complex documents that cover a wide range of matters should use these to generate a logical and complete index for the document.

Clauses

All clauses in University documents are numbered in the standard format as follows.

Clauses are numbered sequentially throughout the document:

a. First level sub-clauses are denoted by lower case alphabetical numbering and indented (as shown here);
   i. Second level sub-clauses by lower case roman numerals (i., ii., iii., etc.) and indented (as shown here);
   • and the final, third level sub-clauses by bullet points and indented (as shown here).

Section 4 - Procedures

This section is intended to contain the steps, actions and decision-making points exercised by the user to progress a matter through to completion. A detailed statement should be provided here about how to give effect to the policy statement. It is the ‘how to’ section that provides the standard way a matter must be handled. The procedure must be consistent with the policy statement and should start at the beginning of the process, walking the reader step by step through to the finish.
Procedures must only include mandatory requirements such as steps that must be followed, the order of those steps, information that must be considered in making a decision, etc.

(15) Lists of responsibilities/contacts, flowcharts and forms are not procedures. These documents are supplementary information that aid the reader and are to be contained in separate documents, appended in the "Associated Information" page for the document.

Section 5 - Guidelines

(16) This section can be flexible in terms of providing a range of advice and guidance on what would be best practice. It fills the gaps in the policy and procedure, guiding the decision makers on how a decision might be made, or how particular steps might be approached in different circumstances. Where a procedure stipulates, for example, that a person must act in a certain way, a guideline would provide them with advice, examples and insights to aid them in making a fair and reasonable choice. A guideline might also provide non-mandatory information to assist a person in choosing the right option when the procedure presents them with two or more pathways for completion, such as explaining the various factors they may or may not need to take into account in reaching their decision. For example, a procedure may contain a requirement that certain information is to be considered in making a decision. The guideline in turn might provide advice on how to access this information, what categories of information might meet the requirements of the policy, what emphasis might be given to different types of information sources, how similar decisions have been made in the past, etc. Guidelines are not mandatory; they are intended as advice to the user in the application of the policy and procedure, and to clarify options or considerations that may assist in carrying out their responsibilities. They may contain examples, checklists, further clarifications or extrapolations, etc.

NOTE: Rules of the University may only be developed in consultation with the University Secretary and must be approved by the University Council in accordance with the Charles Sturt University By-law 2005 (cl. 108). The University Secretary may be contacted via policy@csu.edu.au.