

1001-G7: USU Policy Style Guide

Good policy should strive for:

- simplicity;
- consistency; and
- clarity.

General formatting guidelines

Use [Chicago Manual of Style, 17th ed.](#)

The font for all USU policies is Arial Narrow in various font sizes, as indicated in the USU Policy Template.

Utilize the USU Policy Template

The [template](#) provides font name, size, color, and style. Each policy should include the same categories as outlined below:

I. Purpose and Scope

This section will address what the policy intends to accomplish and who the policy applies to.

Example statement: *The University is committed to [mission aligned objective or values]. To promote [mission aligned objective or values] this policy is established to [what] and outlines the responsibilities and expectations for [who]. This policy establishes the framework to ensure [mission aligned objective or values].*

II. Policy

A policy statement should address areas such as:

1. Expected behaviors, prohibitions, and requirements.
2. Exceptions to policy.
3. Monitoring and enforcement of policy.

III. Responsibilities

Identify who is responsible for what. Define roles and responsibilities by department and job title.

IV. References

Include a bullet list of references to applicable Federal, State, and municipal regulations or USHE/Board of Higher Education policies. See the Citations section for information on how to reference these sources.

- V. Related USU Policies
List any relevant USU Policies.
See the citations section for information on how to reference these sources.
- VI. Definitions
List specific terms utilized in the policy and their standard meaning.
- List in alphabetical order.
 - Definitions do not include requirements for individuals.
 - Capitalize the term anytime it is referenced in the policy.
 - Definitions only apply to the specific policy they are defined in.
- VII. Resources
List procedures, standards, or guidelines to support this policy. Each document should include the version date in the footer.
- VIII. Policy History
Lists important dates such as when the policy was implemented, revision dates, and approval dates.

General Writing Guidance

- Use **plain language**.
 - Do not use idioms.
 - Use literal language.
 - Avoid **problematic words**.
- Keep the policy general and simple. Avoid jargon, abbreviations, and technical information.
- Articulate who is responsible for what.
- Make it relevant to the intended audience.
- Use "must" instead of "shall". For example, use:
 - "must" for an obligation,
 - "must not" for a prohibition,
 - "may" for a discretionary action, and
 - "should" for a recommendation.
- Define any significant terms included in the policy.
- Be consistent.
 - Ensure the use of terminology is consistent across related policies.
 - Continue to use the same word for a concept rather than synonyms.
- Write policy in the third person.
- Use **active voice**.
 - Look for the word "is" or a form of the verb "to be" in a draft policy to find potential passive voice.
 - Use verbs in place of nouns.
- Write in **present tense** and positive tone when possible.
- Use **bias-free language**.

Use a mix of [person-first or identity-first language](#) when referencing people with disabilities, unless or until a group clearly prefers either person-first or identity-first language. If in doubt, seek guidance from the Institute for Disability Research, Policy & Practice or other local stakeholders and advocacy groups where disabled people's voices are centered.

- Consider [digital accessibility](#).
- Spell out whole numbers from zero through one hundred. Use numerals for values over one hundred.
 - *Participants may return the agreement within thirty days.*
 - *Groups of 200 or more will need to request an exception.*
- When listing items in a series, use the Oxford or [serial comma](#).
 - *All faculty, staff, students, and visitors should register their devices.*

Organization

- Do not underline words to emphasize them. Instead, use italics. Underlined words are easily misinterpreted as hyperlinks.
- When amending policy, use the 'track changes' feature in Microsoft Office to indicate new or amended content.
- Use bulleted lists to organize content visually.
- Always use an office, department, unit, or job title instead of an individual's name. Check contact information, job titles, emails (not individual's email address), and web links to ensure they are current.

Citations

1. When referencing other sections of the same regulation, include the section number only
 - b. Section 1002.413
2. Citations to other University regulations
 - Cite the entire policy title, but do not include the specific section
 - i. USU Policy 1001: University Policy System
3. Citation to Utah Board of Higher Education Policies
 - If possible, cite the full policy rather than a specific section.
 - i. UBHE Policy R345: Information Technology Resource Security
4. Citations to State Law
 - a. *Titles, Chapters, and Parts*
 - i. Title 53B, State System of Higher Education
 - ii. Title 53B, Chapter 17, Utah State University
 - iii. Title 53B, Chapter 17, Part 6, Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art
 1. Use the name of the most specific part of the code found at le.utah.gov.
 - b. *Sections*

- i. Within the *References* section, use the symbol §: Utah Code Ann. § 53B-17-601 (2021).
 1. Within the text of the policy use the word *section*: Section 53B-17-601 of the Utah Code.
 - ii. Multiple sections: Utah Code §§ 53B-17-601 through 53B-17-605 (2018) or Sections 53B-17-601 through 53B-17-605 of the Utah Code.
 - iii. Subsection: Utah Code Subsection 53B-17-601(2) (2023)
 1. Use subsection citations sparingly, as they become inaccurate if the Legislature amends a statute.
5. Citations to Utah Administrative Law
 - a. Utah Admin. Code R805-1 (2021)
6. Citations to Federal Law
 - a. Include the official name of the act, the published source, and the year the source was published or passed. Reference federal law by citing the United States Code.
 - i. Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. § 12102
 - ii. "Et seq." refers to multiple sections of federal law.
 1. Endangered Species Act of 1973, 16 U.S.C. § 1531 et seq.
7. Citations to Federal Rules
 - a. Cite the Code of Federal Regulations instead of the Federal Register unless the rule is not published.
 - i. 20 CFR 1901.1 (2023)

Sustainable Policy Practices

- Consider how to enforce the policy. How will you monitor the effectiveness of the policy or compliance with the policy?
- Check related policies to ensure your policy does not conflict with another university policy. Is it clear when each policy will apply if two policies are interrelated?
- If a policy is no longer relevant, suggest retiring the policy.
- Confirm if any changes to laws or statutes have occurred. Check with the Office of General Counsel for guidance.
- Internal administrative procedures should generally not be part of the policy document. Pull out procedures and place them in a separate document linked to the policy.

References

Hansen, Kenneth A., Nancy Lancaster, Chris Fawcett, and Michael Broschinsky, eds. *Rulewriting manual for Utah: Rulewriters* (12th ed.). Utah Division of Administrative Rules. <https://rules.utah.gov/agencyresources/manual-rulewriter.pdf>

U.S. General Services Administration. (2011). "Federal plain language guidelines." Accessed February 29, 2024. <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/media/FederalPLGuidelines.pdf>