



Policy Style Guide

DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

1. Consult the Policy Framework to determine the most appropriate level of document (policy, procedure, guideline etc)
2. Use the policy template in the [policy toolkit](#). New sections may be added or redundant sections removed if required.
3. Break content into clear, logical sections

LANGUAGE

1. Use Plain English:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use familiar, everyday words that readers will understand. - No marketing jargon e.g 'UON believes', 'UON is a world leader committed to' - Use short sentences and express one principle/action/idea per sentence (average about 15-20 words per sentence). - Break up dense strings of nouns or nouns and modifiers (such as 'the outline development plan land package release condition'). - Avoid euphemisms, clichés, and overused or 'trendy' words or phrases. - Prefer simplified sentence frameworks, avoiding convoluted constructions such as double negatives (eg: 'not unlikely'). - Avoid using additional words that do not add meaning, eg: Use 'now' instead of 'at this point in time' - Avoid unnecessary capitalisation that creates an artificial formality (e.g., 'Leave of Absence' when 'leave of absence' would be sufficient to convey meaning). - Explain acronyms and technical terms that some readers may be unfamiliar with the first time these are used in the document. 	
2. Use an active rather than a passive voice:	Active: <i>The Vice-Chancellor may approve exceptions to the process outlined in section 3</i>	Passive: <i>Exceptions to the process outlined in section 3 may be approved by the Vice-Chancellor</i>
3. Be clear about what action is required or optional:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If an action is mandatory, use 'must' or 'will' - If an action is optional use 'may' 	
4. Ensure language accurately reflects the University's compliance obligations:	Binding: <i>'Staff are expected to', 'Students have the right to'</i>	Aspirational: <i>'The University aims to', 'Students can'</i>
5. Ensure language does not limit discretion:	Appropriate: <i>'The Vice-Chancellor may suspend a student for such period of time that the Vice-Chancellor deems appropriate.'</i>	Limiting: <i>'The Vice-Chancellor may suspend a student for up to 20 working days.'</i>
6. Be consistent with terminology:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Don't use different terms to refer to the same thing - Define terms consistently across documents - Reference the University directory for position titles of individuals or units 	
7. Use gender neutral and inclusive language:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use 'their' rather than 'he'/'she' - Use 'person' rather than 'man' (eg. chairperson) 	

MAINTAINABILITY

1. Refer to titles rather than names
2. Only include contact details in the 'About this Document' table
3. Do not repeat, restate or rephrase the same content from another document (inc legislation / professional charters) in a policy document

NB: Further guidance on styles for writing documents can be found [here](#)