Policy Framework

Section 1 - Introduction

(1) The University of Newcastle (University) is committed to effective governance and control over its operations, in accordance with the [University of Newcastle Act 1989](#) and the [University of Newcastle By-Law, 2017](#).

(2) This document provides a framework for the development, approval, implementation, and ongoing management of University policy documents.

Section 2 - Purpose

(3) This framework ensures a consistent approach to University policy documents that are:

a. drafted in a collaborative manner and in consideration of risks and opportunities;
b. approved by the appropriate delegated authority;
c. implemented and communicated to ensure operationalisation; and
d. reviewed in a timely manner to ensure ongoing currency and effectiveness.

Section 3 - Scope

(4) This framework applies to all policy documents that are identified in the [Hierarchy of University Policy Documents](#) and published in the University policy library.

(5) The University policy library contains the following types of policy documents:

Type of Policy Document	Purpose of Document
Rule	A Council approved document that is legally binding in the same way that legislation is.
Policy	A document that conveys the University's intent and how identified risks and opportunities will be addressed in a consistent manner.
Procedure	Establishes a logical sequence of consecutive actions to achieve a desired output, or series of outputs.
Guideline	Provides supporting information to help a reader make a decision, or to guide their action.
Schedule	Provides information to support a procedure or policy.
Code	Establishes expectations of behaviour.
Manual	Provides a group of procedures that are related to each other.

Section 4 - Definitions

(6) In the context of this document:

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a. "approval authority" refers to a delegate who has delegated or sub-delegated authority to approve a policy document;

b. "policy document" is a collective term that refers to a rule, policy, procedure, guideline, framework, code or manual, unless otherwise specified;

c. "Policy Owner" refers to the position who is responsible for the operational implementation and review of a policy document; and

d. "Policy Author" refers to the person(s) who will contribute to the drafting of a policy document.

Section 5 - Hierarchy of Documents

(7) The University's approved hierarchy of documents is represented in the [Hierarchy of University Policy Documents](#).

(8) Policy documents lower in the hierarchy must be consistent with higher level documents, and associated legislation and regulations.

(9) Where an inconsistency between documents in the hierarchy may exist, the higher document will prevail.

Section 6 - Policy Development

Determining the Need for a Policy Document

(10) The need for a policy document should be based on:

a. an understanding of the subject and its context;

b. the University's intent and approach to the subject;

c. the factors or events that have triggered the need for a policy document; and

d. an assessment of the current documents (including legislation) that address the subject.

(11) The greater the risk associated with the subject the more likely that a policy or procedure is required. For lesser risks the subject may able to be addressed through other means, such as a strategy or plan, a webpage, or a one-off communication to stakeholders.

(12) A policy should only be developed where the University is committed to, and able to fully implement the document and its requirements to achieve compliance.

(13) Examples of when a policy document may be required:

Type of Policy Document	Examples of when it may be required
Rule	Achieve consistency and make requirements legally binding. Establish the University's requirements for highly sensitive or contentious issues. Compliance is critical to the University's operations, administration, governance or reputation.
Policy	Legal protection is required. Legislative (or contractual) obligations need to be complied with across the whole of the University. Consistent and fair treatment of staff / students is desirable. The University's intended approach to a risk or an opportunity needs to be established and agreed upon.
Procedure	The quality, timing or quantity of output of a process will impact on staff, students or the University. Consistency in process is critical to achieving the desired output. There is benefit in clarifying what is required, when, and by whom. When a process is lengthy, complex, involves more than a few stakeholders, or may change regularly.

Type of Policy Document	Examples of when it may be required
Guideline	Readers need specific information to understand a subject and use this information to make a decision or implement a policy or procedure.
Schedule	Information needs to be listed or communicated; or readers need information that is relative to their work or relative to the University's objectives or obligations.
Code	Establish expected standards.
Manual	Includes a number of procedures that are common to a wider process or system.
Framework	There are a number of factors that contribute to how the University will deal with a particular area of administration or operation.

Assessment of Risk and Opportunity

(14) The development of a policy should be based on an assessment of risk and opportunity. This assessment will highlight the critical issues that a policy may deal with and allow a better understanding of the subject to inform the policy content.

Engagement with Assurance Services

(15) The Policy and Delegations Officer should be contacted in the first instance when it is determined that a new policy document may be required, to:

a. discuss the background of the subject;

b. determine if a policy document is the most appropriate approach; and

c. determine the most appropriate type of policy document.

(16) The Policy and Delegations Officer must obtain approval from the University Secretary to proceed with the development of a new policy document. Once approved, the Policy and Delegations Officer must obtain confirmation of the Policy Owner, Policy Author and Enquiry Contact Person to create a draft document for the commencement of drafting in the software workspace.

(17) The Policy and Delegations Officer will provide advice and assistance to the Policy Author to support the development work.

Review of Associated Legislation and Policy Documents

(18) Prior to the commencement of drafting, the Policy Owner or Policy Author must identify and become familiar with any relevant or associated legislation, University Policy documents, and the University Strategic Plan so there will be no repetition, overlap, or inconsistencies in the document being drafted.

Consultation

(19) Consultation with key stakeholders will be critical to ensuring that the policy, once approved, can be implemented and is reflective of the University's intent and practices.

(20) The Policy Owner or Policy Author must identify all relevant key stakeholders to understand their needs and engage with them prior to commencement of drafting. This consultation may be undertaken as part of the assessment of risk and opportunity. Ongoing consultation with key stakeholders must occur throughout the drafting phase to ensure that all stakeholders are in agreement, where possible, with the final draft.

(21) The University Legal Office must be consulted where the subject matter relates to legislation or where any legal

risk is identified.

Drafting

(22) Drafting should, wherever possible, occur within the policy library workspace. Where a valid reason for not using the workspace is identified, the Policy and Delegations Officer must be notified.

(23) Only one Policy Author is able to work in the policy draft in the workspace at one time. Where a number of Policy Author(s) may be drafting the document, the Policy and Delegations Officer will need to be advised whenever a change in Policy Author is required, to provide the new author with access to the draft document.

(24) The Policy Style Guide provides supporting information to assist Policy Authors when drafting.

Quality Review and Feedback

(25) When a final draft has been agreed upon by the Policy Owner and Policy Author, the document must be reviewed by the Policy and Delegations Officer and the University Secretary prior to being submitted for approval. Further amendments may be required following this review. Policies submitted for approval without Assurance Services review may be rejected.

(26) The bulletin board within the University Policy library may be used to seek feedback on the final draft. The Policy and Delegations Officer can advise on the function of the bulletin board and the feedback workflow. Draft documents should not be placed on the bulletin board prior to a quality review being conducted by Governance and Assurance Services.

Implementation Plan

(27) Where the publication of a policy document may have a wide ranging impact on the University, an implementation plan may be necessary, and may be recommended or sought by Governance and Assurance Services prior to finalising their quality review.

(28) An implementation plan should identify what actions are required and by whom to successfully implement and comply with the policy. This may include, but is not limited to:

    a. communications;
    b. training;
    c. changing or updating resources;
    d. changing practices; and
    e. seeking new authorities, or changes to delegated authority.

(29) Please see Implementation Plan template.

Section 7 - Approval of Policy Documents

(30) All policy documents must be approved by the appropriate delegated authority, prior to their publication and implementation. (Please see Delegation of Authority).

(31) Rules must be approved by Council.

(32) Policies that relate to the quality and assurance of academic matters must be approved by Academic Senate.

(33) Operational and management policies must be approved under the Vice-Chancellor's sub-delegated authorities,

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and must be recommended for approval by the Executive Committee.

(34) The Policy and Delegations Officer can provide support and assistance in identifying the appropriate approval pathway and approval authority.

(35) Prior to submitting a policy document for approval, the following must be undertaken:

a. appropriate committee endorsement/review must be sought, where relevant;
b. identification and preparation of all associated information that will be linked to in the policy library;
c. completion of a paper for submission for approval, and if necessary, cycle through the appropriate committee's for recommendation, including preparation of appropriate resolution(s). (See Council - templates, guides and resources); and
d. where the document has been drafted outside of the policy library workspace, the final content being submitted for approval must be transferred into the workspace and the Policy and Delegations Officer advised that it is being submitted for approval.

(36) Resolutions for approval must be considerate of any related matter that may also require approval in implementing the policy. For example, where approval of a new policy document will result in the rescission of another policy, approval should be sought for the rescission at the same time, providing both approvals can be provided by the same delegated authority.

Approval

(37) Confirmation of approval must be provided to the Policy and Delegations Officer to enable publication of the approved document. Confirmation may be in the form of:

a. committee meeting minutes; or
b. an email from the appropriate approval authority.

(38) The University Secretary may authorise publication of a policy document without the above confirmation where the provision of the confirmation may be delayed but immediate publication is necessary.

Section 8 - Policy Implementation

Publication

(39) The Policy and Delegations Officer will publish approved policy documents upon receipt of the confirmation of approval.

(40) The effective date of the policy document will be the date of publication, or a later date. Backdating of policy documents is not permitted.

(41) A Policy Document must not be published in any form other than the accepted University Policy library unless a valid reason exists and approval from the University Secretary is obtained.

Communication and Implementation

(42) Once published, the Policy and Delegations Officer will notify the Policy Author of the publication. The Policy Owner is responsible for ensuring that any communication and implementation actions are then completed.

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Monitoring

(43) The Policy Owner, or their nominee, is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy.

Minor Amendments

(44) Minor amendments may be made to the policy document where the amendment does not make a contextual change to the content. Requests for minor amendments should be sent to policy@newcastle.edu.au. All minor amendments must:

  a. be approved by an appropriate delegated authority prior to publishing any amendment;
  b. recorded in the status and details of the policy document;
  c. be reflected in the policy document record management file held within the University's approved record management system.

(45) Where a Minor amendment may also impact on the delegations register (such as to a position title), the Policy and Delegations Officer will consult with an appropriate Senior staff member to gain an understanding of the position title change in relation to any authority sub-delegated to the position prior to effecting any change in the policy library database.

Issues Register

(46) Policy Owners are responsible for maintaining a policy issues register to record any issues identified with the policy. The issues register is reviewed to inform the policy review.

Section 9 - Policy Review

(47) In general, policy documents must be reviewed every three (3) years. Some documents, however, may be required to be reviewed on a more regular basis depending on the subject matter.

(48) The Policy Owner is responsible for ensuring the policy review is completed in a timely manner.

Assessment of Change and Consistency

(49) Review of a policy document should entail a full assessment of changes that may have occurred during the period that the document has been published. This assessment should include a review of:

  a. all associated information, including legislation;
  b. roles, titles, communication and reporting lines;
  c. the University strategic plan; and
  d. practices and processes.

(50) A review of the policy issues register and consultation with key stakeholders must be undertaken as part of the above assessment.

Residual Risk Assessment / Risk Based Thinking

(51) The document should be examined to determine if the original risks have been mitigated, and if the residual risk remains acceptable to the University. A review of any associated internal audit findings may assist with this, where they are available. Where an unacceptable residual risk remains the Policy Owner should consider further implementation activities post approval of the revised document.

(52) A policy review should also gather information to determine if the original objective of the policy has been achieved.

Determining the Ongoing Need

(53) The policy review should consider whether the document is still required and relevant, or if the content could be consolidated with another document, or be in another format.

Edit and Review

(54) To revise a policy document that is due for review, contact should be made with the Policy and Delegations Officer to discuss the review process, and arrange for a draft document to be made available to the Policy Author in the policy library workspace.

(55) The edit and review process must be undertaken in a timely manner to ensure that the content remains current throughout the review.

(56) The Policy and Delegations Officer can provide support and assistance in completing the review.

(57) Revised policy documents must undergo the same review processes as for new policy documents as outlined above in Clauses 25 to 29 above.

Approval and Implementation

(58) The approval and implementation of a revised policy must comply with Section 7 and 8 of this framework, unless the existing content requires no changes.

(59) Where no changes will be made to the policy document, an email should be sent to the Policy and Delegations Officer (policy@newcastle.edu.au) to request the policy review date be extended for a further period. The Policy and Delegations Officer will undertake a quality review of the policy document, and may seek approval from the University Secretary or an appropriate delegated authority for approval of the review date extension. The Policy Owner will be advised accordingly.

Rescission

(60) Rescission of a policy document from the policy library must be approved by a delegated authority, and a copy of this approval provided to the Policy and Delegations Officer.

(61) The Policy and Delegations Officer is responsible for removing the rescinded policy from the policy library. Where the rescinded document may be referred to in other policy documents, rescission of the policy may be dependent upon approval of amendments to the linked policy documents.

(62) The Policy Owner is responsible for communicating rescission of the policy document to all key stakeholders once approval has been obtained.

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	9th March 2020
Review Date	9th March 2023
Approval Authority	Director, Assurance Services
Approval Date	9th March 2020
Expiry Date	5th October 2023
Responsible Executive	Daniel Bell University Secretary
Enquiries Contact	Carol McGrath Policy and Delegations Officer +61 2 49216487 Governance and Assurance Services

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Risk" - Effect of uncertainty on objectives. Note: An effect is a deviation from the expected, whether it is positive and/or negative.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Minor amendment" - Is a change to a current policy document, as defined by the Policy Framework, that is of an insubstantial nature, not affecting the intent of the document.

"Policy library" - The repository of policy documents published on the University website.

"Senior staff" - Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Global Innovation Chair, Global Innovation Professorial Fellow, Head of School, Director or equivalent.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.