Policy Framework

1 Purpose

To establish the framework for the management of Policy Instruments at the University and to ensure alignment with relevant Regulatory Compliance Instruments, as appropriate.

2 Scope

This framework applies to all Policy Instruments at the University.

3 Policy Statement

This framework establishes categories of Policies and sets out requirements and standards for each step of the development and review process. All Policy Instruments must be developed, deployed, monitored and revised in accordance with this framework, which is approved and overseen by the Council.

This Policy aligns with:

- *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*: Standard 6.2 Corporate Monitoring and Accountability

4 Principles

This Policy Framework establishes that all Policy Instruments will:

- align with University strategy
- reflect the University values of respect, integrity and excellence
- be relevant and transparent in their intent and meaning, and developed in consultation with key stakeholders
- support the University to achieve efficiency in its operations
- align with Policy Instruments at a higher level in the hierarchy and comply with relevant legislation and regulations

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- comply with the University's Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy
- assign responsibility for actions and decisions required under the Policy Instruments
- be reviewed regularly, typically on a five-year cycle, from the date they come into effect
- support the management of institutional risk and compliance.

5 Content

5.1 Policy Instruments

Policy Instruments are arranged in Policy suites which consist of a head Policy and may include subordinate Procedures and Schedules. Procedures and Schedules can only be subordinate to a single Policy.

5.1.1 Policies

Policies are concise formal statements of principles that indicate how the University acts in a particular aspect of its operation. In this way, Policies regulate and direct actions and conduct. There are three types of Policy categories at the University as per the table below:

Category	Definition	Notes
Governance Policy	Governance Policy sets out principles and guidance in relation to functions that are retained by Council and its standing committees. This normally includes matters relating to risk management, financial and investment management, Policy Framework, complaints, corruption and whistle blowing, honorary awards and recognition, delegations of authority and other corporate governance matters.	The Vice-Chancellor is the default Accountable Officer. Alternate Accountable Officers may be approved by Council.
Academic Quality Policy	Academic Quality Policy sets out principles and guidance in relation to setting, maintaining, and assuring the quality of the University's academic standards and outcomes. This normally includes matters relating to teaching and learning, programs and courses, research and research training, and Student participation and attainment.	
Executive Policy	Executive Policy sets out principles and guidance in relation to management of the University's operations. This normally includes	The Accountable Officer is determined by the Vice-Chancellor. In the rare

	matters relating to facilities and infrastructure, administration, human resources, finance, information technology, marketing and records management. It generally covers matters that are the responsibility of executive management.	instance that the Vice-Chancellor is the Accountable Officer, Council will become the Approval Authority for the Instrument.

5.1.2 University Procedure

A Procedure is subordinate to a Policy and describes in detail the steps to be taken in order to implement the principles of the Policy. Procedures evolve over time in response to changes in the external or internal environment, or to reflect changes and improvements in practice or business processes.

5.1.3 Schedules

A Schedule is normally subordinate to a Procedure and may be developed to provide information on unique activities or requirements that support the implementation of a particular aspect of the Procedure. A Schedule may be developed where those activities or requirements cannot be clearly set out in the supporting Procedure, or to increase readability and ease of use of the Procedure. Schedules may include lists, tables, formulas, decision matrices, detailed process steps or timelines.

Guidelines, work instructions and manuals do not generally qualify as Schedules and should instead be stored locally and linked to the relevant Procedure connected via related link.

5.2 Policy Instrument hierarchy

Policy Instruments are organised within a hierarchy. Each level in the hierarchy is in order of precedence. Content lower in the hierarchy must be consistent with content higher in the order of precedence.

The hierarchy of Policy Instruments at the University is as follows:

1. University Policies
    a. Governance Policy

    b. Academic Quality Policy

    c. Executive Policy

2. Procedures

3. Schedules

The Vice-Chancellor has the authority to approve reassignment of an approved Policy Instrument to a lower level in the hierarchy. Where there is any doubt about the classification of a Policy Instrument within the hierarchy, its status will be elevated to the next appropriate level for approval.

5.3 Proposing new Policy Instruments

New Policy Instruments are normally initiated by the submission of approval to commence development to the Policy Team.

Issues that trigger development of a new Policy Instrument include:

- recognition of a need for a new Policy Instrument (for example, audit outcomes)
- changes in strategic direction and plans of the University, or changes in the external environment (including legal or regulatory requirements)
- identification of content gaps or overlaps across or between Policy Instruments.

5.4 Review

The Accountable Officer is responsible for ensuring Policy Instruments are reviewed, normally on a five-year cycle from the date they came into effect or the date of the last review. An earlier review of the Policy Instrument may be initiated if there is a need identified. A Policy Instrument under review remains in force until the revised Policy Instrument is approved.

Following the review, the Accountable Officer recommends one of the following outcomes:

- no change
- amendment
- repeal.

5.4.1 No change

If it is determined that no change is required, the Accountable Officer notifies the Policy Team to update the Policy metadata and a new revision date is set.

5.4.2 Amendment

If an existing Policy Instrument requires amendment, future actions depend on the type of amendment. The University Secretary, or their nominee, will assess the level of change based

on the following guidelines to ensure consistency with the Framework.

Should the Accountable Officer disagree with this assessment, the Responsible Officer for the Policy Framework facilitates a resolution process that may include seeking input from the Approval Authority (or their representative).

Table 1: Amendment Types

Amendment type	Description	Details
Editorial amendment	Changes of a superficial or typographical nature or to bring a Policy Instrument into conformity with legislative, regulatory or University structural changes	Editorial Amendments may be used to: • correct typographical or grammatical errors; • correct a stylistic or formatting error or clarify wording; • update terminology, unit names, committees, position titles etc, in response to an organisational or regulatory change; • add, remove or update links or references.
Minor amendment	Amendments that reflect changes to legislative/regulatory requirements or operational practices that do not meet the criteria for Major Amendments. Appropriate consultation and deployment actions (as determined by the Accountable Officer) are still required to be confirmed before publication.	Minor Amendments may be used to: • reflect changes to external regulatory or legislative; requirements; • clarify or enhance existing Policy Instrument details or initial intent; • re-assign the Accountable Officer for a Policy Instrument to a subordinate Employee; • include a change to, or introduction of, a specific operational requirement or process that has no negative impact on the scope, objectives, resourcing or application of the Policy Instrument to Students,

		University Members or enterprise systems.
Limited major amendment	Amendments to a Policy Instrument that have major impact but are such that a full consultation and endorsement process is not required prior to final approval of the change by the relevant Approval Authority. Appropriate consultation and deployment actions (as determined by the Accountable Officer) are still required to be confirmed before publication.	Limited major amendments may be used to: • make changes to definitions, processes, reporting requirements etc. resulting from changes in external requirements or sector-wide practices, or implementation of University strategic projects/priorities; • re-assign the Accountable Officer of a Policy Instrument to an equal or higher- level position.
Major amendment	Amendments to a Policy Instrument that change the overall focus of the Policy Instrument's purpose or scope, or significantly change the substance or content of a Policy Instrument. Major Amendments follow the same process as new Policy Instrument development.	Major Amendments may be used to make changes: • which alter the intent or objective of the Policy Instrument; • to the rights or obligations of any person under the Policy Instrument; • to delegations or rules for Decision-makers; • to global definitions related to the Policy Instrument; • that result in significant impact on the implementation or resourcing requirements of the Policy Instrument.

5.4.3 Repeal

When a Policy Instrument is deemed unfit for its intended purpose or no longer relevant, it may be repealed. This can be carried out:

- as part of the deployment process of another Policy Instrument; or
- by submitting a memo to the Approval Authority.

5.5 Approval Authorities

Policy Instruments have different approval pathways depending on their hierarchy within the Policy framework and the change type, as per the table below:

Action	Policy Instrument	Approval Authority
• No Change (following review of entire instrument)	All Policy Instruments	Accountable Officer (via memorandum)
• Editorial • Minor Amendment		Accountable Officer
• Limited major amendment • Major Amendment • Repeal • Development	Governance Policy	Council
	Academic Policy	Academic Board
	Executive Policy	Vice Chancellor (or nominee)
	University Procedures and Schedules	Vice Chancellor (or nominee)

Structural changes to the University may result in changes to the Approval Authority or other roles referenced in a particular Policy Instrument.

Until such time as an amendment is formally made, the existing Policy Instrument remains in force and the Vice-Chancellor may nominate an alternate member of the University to operationally undertake the associated actions.

The Policy Team provides advice and guidance during the endorsement and approval process and confirms that the pathway taken is consistent with the Policy Framework. In the event of disagreement, the Responsible Officer for the Policy Framework facilitates a resolution which may include seeking input from the Approval Authority, or their representative.

5.6 Drafting and due diligence

Policy Instruments are written on the appropriate template (provided by the Policy Team) and

are presented:

- in plain, unambiguous, everyday English, without the use of unexplained jargon, technical or legal terms, acronyms or abbreviations
- with a succinct title that is easily understood by potential users
- with a logical structure and appropriate headings and sub-headings
- in conformity with the Policy and Procedure Style Guide
- succinctly, and preferably in no more than two pages of length for Policies, excluding the Policy Information Table
- in inclusive and non-discriminatory language
- with consistent use of terminology (definitions must be consistent with the Policy and Procedure Definition Dictionary).

5.6.1 Alignment with the Australian higher education legal framework

The legal framework which governs the Australian higher education context consists of several acts and standards, and it is an obligation of registration that all registered higher education providers meet, and continue to meet, the requirements of these regulatory instruments. To assist in demonstrating compliance, where applicable, Policy Instruments must include a reference in the Purpose section to relevant standards in the:

- *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*
- *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000*
- *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018.*

5.6.2 Assessment of operational impact

The Responsible Officer is responsible for ensuring adequate planning and preparation for deployment of a Policy Instrument has been undertaken, including:

- assessment of the impact on other Policy Instruments, stakeholders, business processes, University systems, and secondary materials/websites
- an analysis of constraints on deployment and options for resolution

- communication and training strategies to support deployment and understanding.

The scope and level of detail of deployment and communication planning required is informed by the complexity and sensitivity of the Policy Instrument and its implementation. At a minimum, key development actions must be recorded in the University's corporate record-keeping system.

5.6.3 Definitions

Definitions are defined terms contained in published Policy Instruments. Definitions are clear and concise with distinct meanings that are easy to understand and that apply across all Policy Instruments that use the term. It is not necessary to define a term if the Policy Instrument uses the term according to its commonly understood meaning. Terms should only be defined within Policy Instruments where additional or specific parameters apply to its use within the University. Definitions that relate only to a particular Policy Instrument are listed in the appropriate section of the Policy Information Table of that Policy Instrument.

Changes to existing Definitions or proposals for new Definitions will normally occur as part of the review or development of a Policy Instrument and therefore are approved by the relevant Approval Authority, as outlined in section 5.3. Where a Definition needs to be changed or developed outside of a Policy Instrument review or development process, the Vice-Chancellor or their delegate is the Approval Authority.

5.6.4 Consultation

The process for development or review of Policy Instruments should provide stakeholders with an opportunity for sufficient and timely consultation. The extent of the consultation required is informed by the scope of the proposed new Policy Instrument or the likely impact of review outcomes.

Consultation processes normally include some, or all, of the following:

- formative discussion, involving initial discussion of the Policy Instrument by the relevant working party, committee, or subject matter experts
- discussion with individuals and organisational units affected by deployment of the Policy Instrument
- dissemination to a wider audience of stakeholders (this may be a particular group, or the wider University community) for broader consultation for a set period of time
- in the case of Policy, gazettal to the broader University community for a minimum period of 10 University Business Days.

A written log of all consultation undertaken and feedback received should be kept throughout

the Policy Instrument development or review process. The consultation log should reflect changes that have been accepted, rejected or deferred and the reasons for this. At a minimum, key consultation activities and outcomes must be recorded in the University's corporate record-keeping system.

5.6.5 Alignment with Policy Framework

The Policy Team provides advice and guidance during the drafting process to ensure that the Policy Instrument complies with the Policy Framework, conforms with drafting requirements and meets quality standards. This includes a formal review process which takes place prior to gazettal or the endorsement and approval process. Feedback from this review is provided for the consideration of the Accountable Officer and, where applicable, the Approval Authority.

5.7 Publication

Following appropriate, documented consultation and approval by the relevant Approval Authority, the Accountable Officer, or their nominee, will inform the Policy Team that the Policy Instrument has been approved and is ready for publication. Appropriate approval evidence must be provided at this time.

The effective date of a new or modified Policy Instrument (including a request to repeal a Policy Instrument) is the date of approval, unless otherwise specified by the approval evidence. All Policy Instruments published in the Policy Library are publicly accessible, unless the Approval Authority determines that the Policy Instrument must be accessible via secure login only.

The University Secretary is the custodian of the Policy Library as well as the Policy Instrument Style Guide.

5.8 Exceptions

Accountable Officers may authorise exceptions to Policy Instruments if sufficient rationale exists and it does not result in non-compliance with legislative or regulatory requirements. Any exceptions to a published Policy Instrument must be noted in the University's exceptions register. The exceptions register notes the Approval Authority, reason, and start and end date of the exception.

5.9 Record-keeping

Upon approval or publication, a Policy Instrument becomes a corporate record. All necessary documentation is transferred to the University's corporate record-keeping system.

To ensure version control, a new document number must be allocated to the Policy Instrument following approval of either substantive or editorial changes by the designated Approval Authority. Policy Instruments that are endorsed without amendment by the designated Approval Authority do not require a new document number.

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5.10 Monitoring and reporting

An annual report is submitted to Council by the Responsible Officer of the Policy Framework, via Chancellor's Committee, providing:

- a summary of new, repealed and major changes to Policy Instruments in the reporting period
- issues arising from implementation of the Policy Framework, including any resulting proposed amendments to the Policy Framework.

6 References

Nil.

7 Schedules

This policy must be read in conjunction with its subordinate schedules as provided in the table below.

8 Policy Information

Accountable Officer	Vice-Chancellor
Responsible Officer	University Secretary
Policy Type	Governance Policy
Policy Suite	
Subordinate Schedules	
Approved Date	4/12/2023
Effective Date	4/12/2023
Review Date	4/12/2028
Relevant Legislation	Standard AS 3806-2006 Compliance programs *Copyright Act 1968* *Fair Work Act 2009*

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	Financial Accountability Act 2009 Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 *Information Privacy Act 2009* (Qld) *Privacy Act 1988* (Commonwealth) *Public Records Act 2023* *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994* Queensland Information Standard 44: Information Asset Custodianship *University of Southern Queensland Act 1998* Enterprise Agreement *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Qld)
Policy Exceptions	Policy Exceptions Register
Related Policies	Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy Code of Conduct Policy Delegations Policy Enterprise Risk Management Policy Records and Information Management Policy Student General Conduct Policy
Related Procedures	Records and Information Management Procedure
Related forms, publications and websites	Endorsement and Approval Pathways Policy and Procedure Style Guide
Definitions	**Terms defined in the Definitions Dictionary**
	Accountable Officer The person or entity accountable for the Policy or Procedure including development, implementation, monitoring and review. The Accountable Officer may nominate a Responsible Officer to manage this on their behalf.

Approval Authority

The person or entity occupying the level indicated in the Framework Hierarchy that has the authority to approve a new Policy or to approve major changes to an existing Policy.

Council

Council means the governing body, the University of Southern Queensland Council.

Editorial Amendment

A housekeeping change to a Policy or Procedure such as updating a section or position name, contact person or reference to legislation, changing the approved name of a role, position, division or administrative unit, or a typographical error requiring correction.

Employee

A person employed by the University and whose conditions of employment are covered by the Enterprise Agreement and includes persons employed on a continuing, fixed term or casual basis. Employees also include senior Employees whose conditions of employment are covered by a written agreement or contract with the University.

Major Amendment

Changes to the purpose, scope or significant changes to the content, responsibilities, limits, assignment of powers etc. of a Policy or Procedure.

Minor Amendment

A change to a Policy or Procedure which does not alter the general meaning, scope, purpose or intent of the document.

Policy

A high level strategic directive that establishes a principle based approach on a subject. Policy is operationalised through Procedures that give instructions and set out processes to implement a Policy.

Policy Instrument Definition Dictionary

A dictionary that contains standard definitions used for Policy Instruments at the University.

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Policy Instrument

A Policy Instrument refers to an instrument that is governed by the Policy framework. These include Policies, Procedures and Schedules.

Procedure

An operational instruction that sets out the process to operationalise a Policy.

Regulatory Compliance Instrument

An external compliance instrument provided by legislation, regulation, standards, statutes or rules, including subordinate instruments.

Responsible Officer

The person assigned by the Accountable Officer who is responsible for operationalising Policy Instruments.

Schedule

A Schedule is normally subordinate to a Procedure and provides a greater level of detail on a particular aspect of the Procedure to support effective implementation.

Student

A person who is enrolled in a UniSQ Upskill Course or who is admitted to an Award Program or Non-Award Program offered by the University and is: currently enrolled in one or more Courses or study units; or not currently enrolled but is on an approved Leave of Absence or whose admission has not been cancelled.

University

The term 'University' or 'UniSQ' means the University of Southern Queensland.

University Business Days

The days of Monday to Friday inclusive between 9am and 5pm Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST), with the exclusion of gazetted Public Holidays for the relevant campus location, plus the closure of the University between 25 December and 1 January in the following year inclusive as specified in the Enterprise Agreement, as well as any closure of the University either at one or several

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	campuses in accordance with a direction of the Crisis Management Team. University Members Persons who include: Employees of the University whose conditions of employment are covered by the UniSQ Enterprise Agreement whether full time or fractional, continuing, fixed-term or casual, including senior Employees whose conditions of employment are covered by a written agreement or contract with the University; members of the University Council and University Committees; visiting, honorary and adjunct appointees; volunteers who contribute to University activities or who act on behalf of the University; and individuals who are granted access to University facilities or who are engaged in providing services to the University, such as contractors or consultants, where applicable. Vice-Chancellor The person bearing the title of Vice-Chancellor and President, or as otherwise defined in the University of Southern Queensland Act 1998 , including a person acting in that position.
	Definitions that relate to this policy only
Keywords	
Record No	13/386PL

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