University Policy Development FAQs

1. **What policies are posted to this site?**

    Only those policies that apply across the University are posted to this site. Many Northwestern schools and units maintain their own policy pages, featuring policies that do not apply beyond the school or unit, and therefore are not posted to this site. But as an additional resource for the University community, we have organized a page with links to those school- and unit-related policy pages.

2. **Can a school, department, or unit adopt its own policy on a matter already governed by a University Policy?**

    Yes, so long as the school, department, or unit policy does not conflict with the University Policy and is made accessible to the University community. The school, department, or unit policy may be more restrictive than the University Policy.

3. **I am responsible for reviewing and updating policies at my school/unit. Should I notify anyone of these changes?**

    Our aim is for this site to serve as a convenient resource for those throughout the University community to access current policies. If your school or unit houses a University Policy on its webpage, we encourage you to please share any policy updates (including changes to the policy's URL) with Karen Halverson Cross, Associate Director of Policy Management, at (847) 467-6172 or karen.cross@northwestern.edu. FAQs 10 and 11 contain additional information on reviewing and revising policies.

    To assist us in maintaining our links to school- and unit-related policies, we also welcome and appreciate learning about updates to policies that are specific to your school or unit.

4. **Who can address questions relating to a policy's interpretation or implementation?**

    Please refer to the policy document for information on where questions regarding the policy's interpretation or implementation may be directed. Generally, such questions may be directed to the Responsible Office for the policy. The designated Responsible Office is typically the office that developed the policy and therefore charged with the policy's review and update; the Responsible Office should be specified in the policy document.

If you are unable to determine the Responsible Office for a given policy, or if you have additional questions regarding a policy after contacting the Responsible Office, please contact the Associate Director of Policy Management, Karen Halverson Cross, at (847) 467-6172 or karen.cross@northwestern.edu.

5.   What is the role of the Policy Review Committee?

The role of the Policy Review Committee is to approve proposals for new policies or policy revisions; to ensure that policy proposals are properly and expeditiously developed, approved, and implemented; and to advise the Northwestern community on policy development and implementation. The Associate Director of Policy Management facilitates the Committee's work.

6.   What are the differences among guidelines, procedures, and policies?

Guidelines—documents that serve to explain existing policies or otherwise do not mandate or restrict action—may be adopted at the school, department, or unit level without following prescribed procedures for developing University Policies. Similarly, procedures that detail the steps necessary to operationalize and implement policies may be adopted without formal review. However, documents should not be labeled as guidelines or procedures as a means of avoiding the policy development and approval process.

At the same time, not all communications need to be adopted in the form of a University Policy. When reviewing policy proposals, the Policy Review Committee may determine that the proposed policy should be implemented at the school, department, or unit level, or that it should be adopted as guidelines or a procedure instead of a policy.

Questions as to whether a given document is set of guidelines, a procedure, or a University Policy may be submitted to the Associate Director of Policy Management, Karen Halverson Cross, at (847) 467-6172 or karen.cross@northwestern.edu.

7. Who can initiate a new policy?

Any Northwestern school, department, or unit may initiate a new policy by preparing a New Policy Proposal, using the [new policy proposal template](#) and submitting the proposal to the Policy Review Committee for approval. Approved proposals are developed in collaboration with the Responsible Office for the policy and other interested stakeholders, as designated by the Policy Review Committee.

Members of the University community who are interested in initiating a new University Policy are encouraged to contact the Associate Director of Policy Management, Karen Halverson Cross, at (847) 467-6172 or karen.cross@northwestern.edu.

8. How are policies developed and approved?

Once a proposal for a new policy is approved, the Policy Review Committee will designate (or approve the designation of) the Responsible Office for the approved proposal. The Responsible Office will work with the policy initiator and with interested stakeholders to develop the policy. Policies should be drafted using the [standard policy template](#). The Associate Director of Policy Management will work with the Responsible Office and the Policy Review Committee to review and edit draft policies.

Policies are to be approved by all Approving University Officials designated by the Policy Review Committee. Once approved, draft policies are posted for 45 days on the [Policies Under Review page](#) for review and comment by the Northwestern community.

A [flow chart outlining the policy development and approval process](#) is available.

9. How is the Northwestern community notified of new policies or policy revisions?

The Responsible Office, in coordination with the Associate Director of Policy Management, will coordinate the announcement and distribution of new policies and policy revisions. Newly-adopted policies and policy revisions, like other policies, are available in the searchable repository on this website. New policies and policy revisions are also posted to the [Newly Added Policies page](#).

10. Who is responsible for reviewing and updating policies?

The Responsible Office for a policy is charged with ensuring that the policy is assessed in a timely manner, reviewed, and updated; this site provides guidelines for conducting a thorough and thoughtful policy review. The Responsible Office should be indicated on the first page of the policy document. The Associate Director of Policy Management will notify the Responsible Office when policies are due for assessment or review.

11. Do revisions to existing policies follow the same procedure applicable to new policies?

Generally yes, except that relatively minor changes to existing policies need not be posted for 45 days of review on the Policies Under Review page. Additionally, routine changes to an existing policy that do not change its substance may be implemented without formal review. Examples of such non-substantive changes include correcting typographical errors or changing hyperlinks, cross-references, position titles, or contact information in the policy document. Please communicate such changes to Karen Halverson Cross, Associate Director of Policy Management, at (847) 467-6172 or karen.cross@northwestern.edu.