



GUIDE TO DEVELOPING AND REVIEWING

# AUB POLICIES

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AMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY  
OF BEIRUT

Office of  
Compliance

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# INTRODUCTION

The American University of Beirut (AUB) conducts university affairs through policies consistent with applicable laws, its [principles of ethical conduct](#), and accepted best practices. The process of policy management and development must meet university standards for (i) legal compliance, (ii) consistency among policies, (iii) consistency with accreditation standards, (iv) consistency with accepted best practices, and (v) accessibility to the university community. The purpose of this document is to provide clear guidelines on developing and reviewing AUB policies to help policy owners achieve their goals.

## I. BENCHMARKING

### A. Purpose

The first step for developing or reviewing a policy is to benchmark with [peer or aspirational universities](#). This will allow you to learn how others approach or solve the issue you wish to address in your current policy. *Benchmarking is presented as one of the key tools to help organizations become more learning oriented, to adopt a more systematic and rigorous approach to problem solving and to become more engaged in learning from others.*" Auluck (2002: 109; italics added).

### B. Process

- First, try to define the main objectives of the policy you intend to develop or revise. Which questions/problems does the new policy addresses/resolves? Alternatively, if you are reevaluating an existing policy or process, identify the loopholes and challenges you are facing.
- Then, try to state a core question that translates the policy elements that you want to bring answers to. You can have more than one core question. For example, if you are developing a privacy policy, examples of core questions could be: What data categories are covered in a privacy policy? Which office is responsible for protecting the privacy of data? Under which conditions can data be disclosed?
- Now, you can start gathering data. The selection of comparison data is crucial in benchmarking. You need to select from other policies only the relevant parts that will help you understand what other universities are doing to address your core question.
- Finally, you can consolidate all the data you have gathered in one document which will reflect how each peer university responded to your core question, identify the learning outcomes and decide on the best approach to adopt.

### C. Universities to Benchmark With

You can select three or more from the below universities:

- Peer Universities: Drexel University ; George Washington University ; Loyola University Chicago ; Saint Louis University; Tulane University; University of Vermont.
- Aspirational Universities: Brown University; Case Western Reserve University; University of Miami ; University of Rochester; Tufts University; Dartmouth College; Georgetown University.

## II. CONSULTATIONS

Once you select the best approach to address your topic, you should consult with other relevant stakeholders and/or subject-matter experts to make sure that the policy you wish to adopt is:

- consistent with applicable laws and regulations;
- consistent with accreditation standards;
- consistent with other AUB policies and procedures;
- consistent with accepted best practices.

Relevant stakeholders and/or subject-matter experts include but are not limited to faculty subject-matter experts, legal counsel (U.S. and Lebanese), Internal Audit, CFO, Comptroller, or others. Consultation with appropriate faculty and/or student representative bodies is required for policies that affect faculty, students, and or the research/education/student services functions of the University, even if the policy is not categorized as Academics and Research or Student Life. Consultation with the Office of Financial Planning (OFP) is required if there is a financial impact related to the policy change and/or additional resources required for implementation.

## III. TEMPLATES AND STYLE GUIDELINES

Use the AUB Policies Template and the below style guidelines:

- Calibri font, size 11
- Margins of 1.25" left and 0.75" right
- Use the styles of the main title, table of contents and headings as set in "styles Pane" of the template
- Do not use Appendices in the policy
- Use hyperlinks to refer to other policies or forms
- Use the formatting and tabs/indenting used in the template
- Refer to the [AUB Style Guide](#)

## IV. TITLE

Choose a title that describes the main subject of the policy in as few words as possible. You should not use the word "policy" or "AUB" in the title (e.g. "policy on management of events at AUB" should be "events management" and "policy on management of data and privacy" should be "data privacy").

## V. TABLE OF CONTENTS

Include a table of content automatically from Microsoft Word. Make sure you update it when you complete drafting the policy.



## VI. DOCUMENT TYPE

Indicate if your document is a policy, a procedure or both.

A **policy** is an enforceable course of action or conduct designed to set direction, guide and influence decision-making. It aims at promoting consistency and enhancement of the university's mission and core values as well as mitigating significant institutional risk. It describes “what” the institution stands for and can be compared to principles or codes that govern the way things should be done within the institution. As such, policies are general statements adaptable to as many situations as possible.

A **procedure** describes “how” the institution operates. Procedures aim at promoting operational efficiency and compliance with established policies. They describe the steps or sequences that should be taken by members of the community to comply with policies and therefore they should be specific and include clear instructions.

## VII. SCOPE

Indicate who the policy applies to. It could be generic categories such as academic personnel, staff, students, suppliers, visitors or more specific categories like research assistants (which are part of the academic personnel), or consultants (which are part of the supplier generic category). Sometimes the scope may not be defined in terms of categories of individuals but in terms of specific items. An example is the policy which covers electronic material, or university vehicles, or data. The scope should determine which data or vehicle or material is covered by the policy. In this section you should also identify any category that is excluded from the policy. For example, “*RAs that are appointed for less than a one year term are exclude from this policy.*” However, when you exclude a category, you should always indicate the policy it is subject to.

## VIII. PURPOSE

In this section, you should describe the main purpose of the policy. The “purpose” should answer one or more of the following questions:

- What is the main objective of this policy?
- Which questions/problems does it resolve or loopholes does it address?
- What is the background of the policy (the circumstances that led to its adoption)?
- What are the overall benefits of having this policy?
- Which legal and regulatory obligations does it address?

Do not include information on how the policy was developed, nor what the policy actually is. The more you develop the policy purpose, the more reasonable it will sound to those who should comply with it. The policy will be perceived as an opportunity to improve operations rather than a limitation.

Examples: “The purpose of this policy is to ensure equality and transparency in the recruitment process of faculty members ...,” or “The purpose of this policy is to comply with Law X or Directive Y pertaining to ...,” or “The purpose of this policy is to provide a uniform and consistent administration of space usage and to facilitate the use of resources and facilities that are made available for meetings, conferences, activities, events, and ceremonies.”

## IX. DEFINITIONS

Terms are defined in this section. Defining unfamiliar terms contributes to the reader's understanding of the policy. In general, terms that should be defined are unfamiliar or technical words and terms that have a special meaning in the policy. If you use terms that are defined in other policies, it is recommended to use the same definition and refer to the policy for consistency purposes (e.g. if the notion of “casual worker” is defined in policy A, use the same definition and refer to the policy when you are defining casual worker in policy B).

## X. POLICY STATEMENT

The policy statement is the most important part of the document. Policies are rules that assist members of the community in taking decisions. They are principles or codes that govern the way things should be done within the institution. As such, policy statements should be general and adaptable to as many situations as possible and more importantly, they should include an instruction that will allow the reader to understand what is expected of him/her. The more the policy statement is well written and designed the more members of the community will comply with it. Below are some recommendations that will help you state conditions within a policy in a clear and concise manner:

- Use an “active voice” stating the subject that is performing the action (e.g. “Faculty and staff should respect the privacy of student records” rather than the passive voice “the privacy of student records should be respected”);
- Include the instruction you are trying to implement (e.g. “*Faculty and Staff must disclose potential conflict of interests they have.*”
- Indicate the Office which is responsible for taking implementing the policy;
- Use terms that are easily understood and clear;
- Do not refer to procedures or operations in the statement;
- Do not include historical or legal background details (these should be stated in the Purpose);
- Use short sentences and as few words as possible;
- Select the words carefully (e.g. “Faculty and staff should not smoke in class”. This may be interpreted as they shouldn't smoke but will be allowed if they do. Instead, use “Smoking is not allowed inside University buildings”);
- Never use acronyms;
- Avoid using specific labels (i.e. names of software, people, etc...) which will require a constant update of the policy. Instead, use generic terms.

## XI. PROCEDURES

While policies describe “what” the institution stands for, procedures show “how” the institution operates based on these policies. This is why policies should be made separate from procedures, as sometimes different procedures may be based on one policy. However, until a separate process for developing procedures is put in place, you should describe in this section the steps that individuals to whom the policy applies should take in order to comply with the policy. Generally, and unlike the policy statement that is generic, procedures should be as specific as possible. Below are some recommendations that will help you state procedures, which will indicate to readers what to do:

- Develop a process that is simple and efficient. Try to minimize the number of steps and always include a time frame for each step.
- Use a solid and precise plan of action that is to the point.
- Include a flow chart describing the process.
- Refer to forms and guidelines that are part of the procedures by inserting a link to the document. Readers should be able to find all the information they need in the document.
- Use action-oriented terminology.
- Outline each step of the process separately and the order in which they need to be taken.
- Use short and instructional sentences.

## **XII. EXCEPTIONS AND SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

If there are any exceptions or special circumstances to the policy, you should include them in this section and describe how they should be handled. If there no exceptions, remove this section from your policy.

## **XIII. NON COMPLIANCE**

Compliance is the ultimate goal of policies and procedures. In this section, you need to describe the plan of action to address policy violations. This plan would include the below:

- the way you will address noncompliance allegations;
- if necessary, how you will investigate allegations in a timely manner;
- for corrective and disciplinary actions, you should refer to HR;

Examples include: recruitments made in violation of this policy will result in a cancelation of the appointment, or events made in violation of this policy will be canceled, or access granted in violation of this policy will be denied, or applicants who do not comply with this policy should resubmit their application; violation of this policy constitutes an act of gross misconduct and is therefore grounds for termination of employment and/or tenure and expulsion from educational programs; violation of this policy will lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination as well as arrest and prosecution for any criminal acts.

In any event, you should clearly encourage the community to report violations of the policy and indicate how and where people can report these violations.

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