



## **GUIDE TO CREATING A DEPARTMENTAL HANDBOOK AND WRITING DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

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## 1. Purpose of Guide

This guide contains information about the ongoing process to create, distribute and maintain department-wide policies and procedures and/or department handbooks. It is Gonzaga's objective to seek equitable and consistent policies, procedures and practices applicable to all.

Whether you are updating an old set of department policies or creating new ones, be sure that a valid need exists for each policy. Ensure that the issue is not already adequately addressed elsewhere in existing Gonzaga policies. Departmental Handbooks should be a "living document" – very much dynamic – subject to change.

New department policies are more readily adopted and followed by the staff when the staff has had some significant role in their development. It is helpful to present draft versions of policies and procedures to your staff and solicit feedback and then incorporate revisions to maximize the chance of compliance to your policy. Employees and managers at all levels will be likely to support a policy that makes sense, is easy to follow, and minimizes interference with getting the job done. The best way to get such a policy is to have all affected parties involved in the development process.

## 2. Tips on Writing a Departmental Policy or Procedure

Ask yourself these questions about each potential policy or procedure:

- How have we handled this issue in the past?
- Does the size of our department justify having a policy or procedure about this issue?
- Are we willing to invest the time it takes to keep the policy or procedure up to date?
- What do we hope to accomplish with this policy or procedure? What are the outcomes?
- Will this policy or procedure foster something our University and department believes in and is reflective of the mission?

Other tips:

- Keep your writing simple
- Don't obscure meaning by using unfamiliar words and phrases
- Use terms consistently. (For example, "payment" is not used in one place, and "remuneration" in another.)
- Ensure special terms are defined
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short
- Ensure fairness and flexibility so that there is room for managers to be flexible and respond to individual circumstances
- Select your words carefully. Whenever possible, use as few words as possible to state a case.
- Techniques like bullet points, photographs, illustrations, graphs, and charts make your message easier to convey

## 3. Policy and Procedure Definitions

A department policy is a directive that:

1. Guide the department towards the achievement of the university strategic plan
2. Connect the university's mission to individual and department conduct
3. Clarify institutional expectations
4. Enhance productivity and efficiency in the university's operations.
5. Provides the principles which dictate how the members of the department will act.

6. A written statement that reflects the employer's standards and objectives relating to various employee activities and employment-related matters.

Procedure Definition: A procedure is a formal statement describing the actions or steps to be taken to implement a policy or an aspect of a policy. Procedures will be followed by all department members to avoid variation and inconsistency in the application of policy.

The role of the procedure is to:

- Provide clear instructions on the way policy will be implemented
- Ensure uniformity and compliance across the department
- Allow monitoring of policy implementation

#### **4. Updating/Revising/Withdrawing a Policy**

Updating a Policy – on an as-needed basis, a department may make routine changes (such as new contact names, position titles, and e-mail or web addresses) to an existing policy document

Revising a Policy – changes to the policy's substance should be approved by the area vice president and Human Resources

Withdrawing a Policy – occasionally the department head and area vice president may deem it appropriate to withdraw an existing policy or consolidate with another policy and will inform Human Resources of this intent

#### **5. Policy and Procedure Approval Process**

Department policies and procedures must be approved by the area vice president, Human Resources and reviewed by corporation counsel to ensure consistency throughout Gonzaga and compatibility with the *Gonzaga University Policy and Procedures Manual*

#### **6. Human Resources Role**

Human Resources works with specific departments and divisions to create specific policies, procedures and guidelines to assist in the management of issues applicable to a certain work unit.

It is Human Resources objective to seek equitable and consistent policies and procedures applicable to all departments of Gonzaga University. It is the responsibility of each supervisor to carry-out the policies and procedures in a manner consistent with Gonzaga's mission and overall employee relations. The Human Resources staff is available to assist with sample policies and/or procedures as well as assist in communication and training.

#### **7. Suggestions on topics to include in a Departmental Handbook**

- The daily routines and processes to accomplish work tasks
- General expectations
- Services provided
- Customer service expectations
- General office etiquette
- Dress code

Human Resources is available to consult and provide examples of these and many other policies and procedures.

## 8. Policy Template

A standard, yet flexible, policy format ensures consistency from one written policy to another.

The beginning of each Policy should include:

- Title of Department Policy
- Date Policy was approved/revised
- Approval status (At this stage, the status is "DRAFT") and approved by
- References (List other policies and documents related to this policy, i.e. reference the *Gonzaga University Policy and Procedure Manual*)

### Topics to include in your departmental policies:

#### Policy

There should be a brief statement that explains the content of the policy. In one or several sentences:

- Identify any legislation/strategic priority which has given rise to this policy
- Identify the importance of the policy to the University's mission or to specific values
- Briefly outline the context (perhaps both legislative and institutional) which has given rise to the policy

If the policy is to be supported by a Procedure document or the *Gonzaga University Policy and Procedure Manual*, include a sentence such as: *This policy should be read in conjunction with Procedure (XXX) which supports this policy.*

#### Purpose

This is a brief one sentence statement of the aim or intention of the policy.

Why are we doing it?

- Legal or regulatory reasons
- Description of conflict or problem the policy will resolve
- Recognizes the legitimate interests of all parties
- Overall benefits

#### Definitions

List only unique terms that, by being defined, would add to the reader's understanding of the basic policy.

- Define unfamiliar or technical terms
- Define terms with special meanings
- List terms in alphabetical order

#### Guidelines and/or Procedures

This section constitutes the core section of the policy document. It may include the allocation or responsibility. It will include clear principles, practices or actions that the University supports. Identify and enumerate here the principles which govern the way action will be taken on the issue.

#### Application

This section describes who the policy applies to and in what context.

## 9. Procedure Template

A standard, yet flexible, procedure format ensures consistency from one written procedure to another.

The beginning of each procedure should include:

- Title of Department Procedure
- Date Procedure was approved/revised
- Approval status (At this stage, the status is "DRAFT") and approved by
- References (List other policies and documents related to this procedure, i.e. reference the *Gonzaga University Policy and Procedure Manual*)

### Topics to include in your departmental procedure:

#### Purpose

The opening paragraph should identify the document(s) that the Procedure supports, i.e. *This procedure supports the implementation of the (policy) and must be read in conjunction with that document.* It should also explain why it is necessary to have a specific procedure on this topic.

#### Definitions

Definitions will not always be required in a Procedure document. If necessary List only unique terms that, by being defined, would add to the reader's understanding of the basic policy.

- Define unfamiliar or technical terms
- Define terms with special meanings
- List terms in alphabetical order

#### Eligibility and Application

This section describes who is eligible for participation and who the procedure applies to and in what context.

#### Procedures/Guidelines

The procedure describes the conditions required to implement a specific policy by giving numbered, step-by-step instructions for carrying out the policy. The extent and detail of the procedure will depend on the complexity of the subject matter.

## 10. Policy and Procedure Handbook Distribution

Once policies and procedures have been approved it is important to ensure each member of your department receives a copy. All department policies and procedures should be in one centralized publication such as one electronic file or had copy binder/portfolio. You can distribute the Handbook or individual policies and/or procedures as a printed document or via electronic distribution (email or Web site). Also ensure that each new member hired to the department receives a copy of the departmental policies and procedures.

To help staff to fully understand policies, they may need to see and hear a presentation – an interactive experience that goes beyond the document, email, and PDFs. Interactive department meetings may be helpful for opportunities to explain and clarify the policies and procedures as well as address any questions.

To access the *Gonzaga University Policy and Procedures manual* go to <http://www.gonzaga.edu/Campus-Resources/Offices-and-Services-A-Z/Human-Resources/Personnel-Policies-and-Procedures-Manual/default.asp>.