Policy Writing Guide

Policy Template

The Policy Template, approved by the Administration, is used for all College (uppercase "P") Policies. It has four sections.

1. Policy
- This section is a short, concise statement explaining the policy's purpose and clarifying to whom the policy applies.
- Keep the policy statement short.

2. References
- References include laws and rules that require or allow the college to create the policy.
- Do not list other college policies or manuals in the references section.
- Use the Bluebook citation system to cite references. (The Policy Office can assist you.)

3. Definitions
- Definitions explain terms that may be confusing, need clarification, or are subject-specific.
- Keep definitions short—one sentence, if possible. It can be a phrase or a clause.
- Don't define a term that is not used in the policy.
- Do not include policy requirements in a definition. (Generally, definitions should not include the words 'must' or 'shall.')

4. Procedures
- Procedures describe the steps to follow to carry out the policy.

Policy Writing Expectations

Policy writing at the college aims to improve the accuracy, relevancy, comprehension, and readability of our policies.

Guidance and Tips
- Clearly organize the policy content, focus on the most important provisions first, stating the what before the how, and rules before exceptions.
- Use plain language.
  - Use clear and direct words. Avoid legalese or jargon.
    - Avoid using phrases like "set forth," "pursuant to," or "herein."
  - Write in active voice.
    - Use "Rae posted the video." instead of "The video was posted by Rae."
  - Try to keep sections short. Avoid long sentences or paragraphs, as they can hide key information.
- Use gender-neutral language, e.g., use "they" instead of "he" or "she."
- Avoid using slashes in words, e.g., "and/or." Instead, use "You may have ice cream or a candy bar, or both."
- Use precise section references within the policy, e.g., use "except as outlined in section 4.A.1" instead of "except as outlined above."
- Hyperlink to other SLCC Policies and supporting documentation or resources that may need to be updated more than once every 5 years.
- Do not include graphs, tables, or spreadsheets in policies.

Remember – the policy will be read by people who **are not content experts**. Consider the point of view of someone outside of your area, and ensure you explain terms and subject matter in a way that anyone in the college community affected by the policy can understand.

- For further policy writing guidance and assistance, contact the Policy Office or read through the Policy Template.

Policy Office Review

The Policy Office will review your policy draft and provide revision suggestions before it is "finalized" and delivered to the policy sponsor. This is part of the process for every College Policy and involves reviewing the following:
- Policy Formatting (template compliance)
- Active Voice, Grammar, and Style Guide Compliance
- Plain Language and Legalese or Jargon Usage
- Clarity, Readability, and Reading Comprehension Level
- Consistency within the Policy (terminology use, etc.) and with other College Policies