

POLICY WRITING INSTRUCTIONS

Choosing the right template

- Combining a policy and the corresponding procedure or guidelines is AFTRS' preference, as it offers easy access to the policy matter as a whole. Having a single point of reference, it encourages a comprehensive approach when read and reviewed.
- If a policy covers or is intended to cover the related subject matter contained in a procedure or a guideline, and the audience is the same as the Policy, then use the appropriate consolidation templates such as *Policy with Procedure Template* or *Policy with Guideline Template*.
- However, when assessing whether the documents should be consolidated or not, think about the audience and the cycles of review:
 - If the procedure or guideline must be reviewed annually and the policy is every three years, then separate documents may need to be retained.
- Use this *Policy Only Template* as a stand-alone policy in cases where
 - there is no related procedure / guideline; or
 - if separating a policy and the corresponding procedure / guideline will improve readability. For example, in cases where there are multiple associated procedures/guidelines, or the issues addressed are complex.; or
 - where the audience for the policy and procedure/guideline is different. For example, where the policy is also external (public) facing, and the associated procedure or guideline is internal facing only, the model of separate stand-alone documents would be retained.

Aligning legislation and policy documents

- A Policy (and all *Policy Documents*) must align with relevant legislative, regulatory or organisational requirements, such as a strategic priority or goal or operational necessity.
- Policies refer to legislation and government policies but do not duplicate their content.

Choosing the right language

- AFTRS staff and students come from diverse backgrounds and rely on policy documents for essential information, so writing clearly, concisely, and simply is important. To help you achieve this, write with the reader in mind and follow these tips:
 - use short, easy-to-read sentences in plain English to express each principle, action, or idea
 - use language that is positive and inclusive, e.g. gender-neutral ('their' not 'he' or 'she'), gender-inclusive (e.g. chair not chairman)
 - use active voice rather than passive voice
 - use terminology consistently (i.e. consistent across the document)
 - use words that are clear about what is mandatory (e.g. must, will) and what is discretionary (e.g. may)
 - use commonly understood language rather than jargon, which requires specialist knowledge
 - remove redundant words (e.g. 'now' instead of 'at this point in time'; 'to' instead of 'in order to')
 - explain in full what acronyms mean when using them, and
 - use generic contact details (i.e. policy@aftrs.edu.au) rather than specific details that date quickly.
- There is no place in public discourse, legally or ethically, for insensitive, inaccurate or derogatory language stereotypes based on ability / disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, or cultural background. Used with care and sensitivity, language can play a powerful role in minimising conflict and building connections between individuals and groups. It can play an important part in building a society in which all people are valued and feel included. Please speak to the People & Performance Team if you need help or advice on inclusive language.

Writing in active voice

- Writing in active voice gives the reader a sense of action, identifies who or what is taking action, is more direct and often requires fewer words than writing in passive voice. Some examples are below.

Active voice	Passive voice
The student must submit an application.	An application must be submitted by the student.
Staff are responsible for implementing this policy.	Implementing this policy is the responsibility of the staff.
Y must consider X.	Due consideration needs to be given to X by Y

Referring to legislation

- When first mentioned in the document, the full title of the legislation is in italics (*Australian Film, Television and Radio School Act 1973*), but not when used subsequently and shortened, e.g. 'AFTRS Act' or 'the Act'.
- Subordinate legislation, such as standards and regulations, and government or other policies are not italicised, e.g. Public Governance and Accountability Rule 2014.

Using hyperlinks

- Hyperlinks help find information quickly, but their tendency to break is frustrating, especially when a message says 'page not found' and there is no redirection information given. Internal links (links to other sections in the same document) don't work or can break when the document is modified, and links aren't checked to ensure they are 'active'.
- To minimise these problems when using hyperlinks, apply these rules.

AFTRS policy documents	Name the document and link to the BaseCamp Policy Library ' <i>POLICY DOCUMENTS A-Z</i> ' page, not to the specific documents
Other AFTRS Governance or Corporate Documents	Name the document and link to the BaseCamp Policy Library ' <i>OTHER KEY CORPORATE OR GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS</i> ' page, not to the specific documents
AFTRS webpages	Describe the information or name the document and link to the relevant webpage, not to specific documents
External organisation webpages	Describe the information or name the document and link to the organisation's homepage
Legislative documents	Name the document and link to the Australian or State legislation website homepage, whichever is relevant
Other sections in the same document	Check all links are working before saving the final document

Naming the document

- If initially creating a new policy and procedure document, consider the reader and how they can find the information when choosing a title.
 - Where possible, use the main identifying word as the first word in the title.
 - Keep titles short and simple.
 - Choose words that best reflect the primary or overarching subject matter and those that readers will understand.
 - AFTRS no longer puts 'AFTRS' in the title of the document.
- The type of document is included at the end of the title only. For example, 'Use of Inclusive Language Guideline', not 'Guideline for Use of Inclusive Language'.

Finding information fast

- The contents table, hyperlinks (internal and external) and numbered paragraphs/lists help readers find the information they need; they are helpful, especially in lengthy documents.
- Ordering topics logically and choosing headings and sub-headings that best describe each topic in a few words will help readers find what they need quickly.
- When using numbered statements/paragraphs, keep it simple. Limit numbering to three levels:
 - first level (i.e.1, 2, etc.)
 - second level (i.e. 1.1, 1.2, etc.)
 - third level (i.e. 1.1.1, 1.1.2, etc.) (only use third-level numbering if absolutely necessary. However, the template is set as default for this level to be bullet points).
 - The use of bullet points within each level is acceptable also.