Policy Development and Procedure for Academic Affairs

The Office of the VPAA at Southwestern Christian University oversees the policy development process related to Academic Affairs. The policy development process reflects SCU’s shared governance structure and its commitment to accountability and transparency. This guide articulates the criteria that directs policy development and review, establishes standard procedures to ensure that policies are developed, approved, and reviewed consistently, and provides a single point of reference for information related to policy development and review. The process is designed to ensure that SCU policies undergo comprehensive review and meet all standards governing the university and higher education.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness collaborates with the respective policy owners to develop and revise certain Academic Affairs policies and coordinates review with the Faculty Senate, Academic Council, and Graduate Council. Review of these policies is determined in accordance with the University’s ongoing systematic policy review cycle.

## Academic Affairs Policy Development: Process

* Academic Affairs policy development process should be clearly defined, transparent, and widely understood.
* Academic Affairs policy development follows a standard process from drafting to review to approval.
* Academic Affairs policy development is based on engagement and broad consultation. Academic personnel solicit, analyzes, and integrates input and feedback from the academic dean and other stakeholders which is used to refine policy concepts and language.

## Academic Affairs Policy Development: Content

* Policy applies broadly across the University’s campuses and delivery methods.
* Policy is reflective of best practice. Policies align with the University’s mission, values, and principles. Policies provide specific direction for operations, administration, or programs.
* New policy and policy revisions are consistent with existing university policies.
* Policy is reflective of current law. Policies are compliant with current federal and state requirements.
* Policy is written clearly. Policies are written using simple, clear, concise language that can be understood by everyone in the community, including non-subject matter experts. Policies use consistent terminology and complement each other. Specialized terms are defined.
* There are five key stages involved in the policy development process, though some policy initiative and process may follow slightly different timelines.

## Development Process:

Initiation, development, review, approval, and implementation and maintenance. This Guide defines and describes the elements within each of the six stages:

1. Initiation.

Any member of the University community may suggest the need for new policy or revisions to existing policy, related to Academic Affairs, by submitting a request to the Academic Council. Issues may emerge from trends on the campuses, through federal or state legislation or regulation, changes in best practices, new mandates, or in a variety of other ways. When reviewing a request, the Academic Council will determine whether a need exists for policy change. They will then select a faculty member to oversee the policy change procedure. Additional faculty members may be appointed as an ad hoc committee.

The selected faculty representative conducts research and analysis of university policy archive files, comparator institution policy, current campus practice, and existing policy including university by-laws, academic affairs, and academic catalogs (to identify overlap). A policy consultation path and timeline are determined and a drafting team is identified, comprised of colleagues and/or constituents with subject matter expertise.

Policies pertaining to federal compliance or university accreditation may be drafted, altered, and/or implemented immediately by the VPAA without the consultation of governing boards to ensure the integrity of these areas. In these rare cases, the policy is moved directly to the implementation stage.

1. Development

Academic personnel discuss policy concepts and changes with the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness, Accreditation Officer, and Academic Deans. Other department representatives are consulted based on subject matter. Conceptual discussions take place with Academic Deans and, when relevant, consult representatives for subject matter expertise. The drafting team prepares an initial draft, incorporating input from these discussions, benchmarking, and best practice information as appropriate.

1. Review

Academic personnel formally circulates the proposed draft policy to solicit feedback from Faculty. This feedback is reviewed, and policy revision or amendments to the language is considered by the faculty member or ad hoc committee overseeing the policy draft.

1. Recommendation

A formal proposal is written and submitted to the Academic or Graduate Council (whichever applies) for discussion and review. If approved, the policy will be submitted by the Chair of the Academic/Graduate Council to the VPAA and recommend implementation.

1. Approval.

Upon the recommendation from the Academic/Graduate Council, the VPAA maintains the sole authority of approving policies related to Academic Affairs.

1. Implementation and Maintenance

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness is responsible for recording the final policy and ensures its inclusion in the University’s archives. New or revised policies are given to the Director of Institutional Effectiveness to be posted to the University Website for public transparency. The university community is notified of the new or revised policy through Faculty and Staff Councils.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness is responsible for placing new policies in the ongoing policy review cycle.

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