

Tertiary Education Management Conference 2010

Crown Convention Centre, Crown Promenade Hotel 3 - 6 October 2010

Benchmarking to Identify Good Practice University Policy Frameworks

Brigid Freeman, University of Tasmania

Brigid.Freeman@utas.edu.au

Abstract

This paper presents the outcomes of web-based research examining 16 Australian and New Zealand University Policy Frameworks. The research explored the various ways in which Australasian Universities articulate University Policy Frameworks (through Policy on Policy, or 'meta-policy' statements and other mechanisms), and undertake policy development and review. The paper explores the hierarchical relationships between governance and policy instruments, approval authorities and University policy scope. The paper examines various Australian University Policy Cycle models, including those identified as 'value adding'. The paper explores policy promulgation methods including Policy Websites and Policy Repositories, and examines the range of tools available to support the Policy Cycle. The role of ongoing monitoring and evaluation is examined, and policy review mechanisms to support continuous policy 'quality' improvement. The research suggests some key criteria for the quality management of University Policy Frameworks from an Australasian, cross-Tasman perspective.

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents the outcomes of a *University Policy Benchmarking Project*, and discusses how the research findings were applied at the University of Tasmania. The *University Policy Benchmarking Project* was initiated as a collaborative research venture between myself (Brigid Freeman, Manager Policy and Delegations, Governance and Legal with the University of Tasmania) and Dr Kai Jensen, foundation member of the Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) *Policy Development Network*, and now Deputy Director University Policy and Governance with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT).

The *University Policy Benchmarking Project* was undertaken to:

- Examine the state of policy and policy development in Australasian universities as reflected through university websites;
- Identify good practice exemplars and features;
- Identify quality resources supporting the university policy development cycle; and
- Establish models for university policy management.

The research contributed to the formal review of the University of Tasmania *Operational Policy Development and Review Policy, Procedure* and associated *Manual* (which enshrines the University Policy Framework), the University Policy Repository and the University Policy Website. Whilst the University of Tasmania's *Operational Policy Development and Review Policy* was approved for implementation in 2006, the research exposed the extent to which the University of Tasmania trails behind other Australian universities in establishing a comprehensive suite of policy in accordance with the provisions of the approved *University Policy on Policy*.

RESEARCH METHOD

The *University Policy Benchmarking Project* involved a review of relevant research literature, and an examination of 16 Australian and New Zealand university policy systems over the period February to April 2010. The research findings contributed to the University of Tasmania review, which was completed in July 2010.

The research sample included:

- 13¹ universities spanning all Australian States and Territories (except Tasmania);
- 3² universities from New Zealand (north and south island);
- Both ‘sandstone’ and ‘red-brick’ universities;
- Research-intensive universities, including five Group of Eight (Go8) universities;
- Single (higher education) and dual-sector (higher education / vocational education) universities;
- Metropolitan and regional universities; and
- One private university (Bond University).

Based on information available from university websites, the research involved:

- Comparative analysis of University Policy Frameworks and Policy on Policy statements;
- Comparative analysis of presentation methods and accessibility of University Policy Repositories and University Policy Websites (which in some cases are the same thing);
- An examination of resources available to support the university policy development cycle (for example, through Policy Toolkits);
- Comprehensive benchmarking of a ‘core sample’ of four university policies (Plagiarism Policy, Environmental Sustainability Policy, Leave Without Pay Policy and Credit Policy), spanning corporate and academic operations and traditional versus emerging university-sector focuses;
- The development of ‘model’ University Policy Frameworks and Policy on Policy statements;
- The development of skeleton University Policy Websites; and
- Identification of ‘good practice’ core sample policies.

Limitations to this research method relate to the: sample size (i.e. 12 / 39 Australian universities³ and three / eight New Zealand universities); currency of University web-based information; volume of information, which added complexity (and depth) to the project; and varying degrees of accessibility of University web-based information.

POLICY LITERATURE

Cunningham (1963) suggests that “Policy is rather like an elephant – you recognise it when you see it but cannot easily define it” (p229 cited in Hill, 1997, p6).

Policy literature is dominated by public policy concerns. Althaus, Bridgman and Davis define public policy as a “statement of government intent” (2007, p246). Policy is presented by Dye as authoritative, articulating “whatever the government decides to do or not to do” (2005 cited in Colebatch, 2006, p7). Policy is considered purposive (Friedrich, 1963; Anderson, 1984; Colebatch, 1998), being aimed at addressing a “problem or matter of concern” (Anderson, 1984), or seeking “to reach a goal or realise an objective” (Friedrich, 1963, p79, cited in Anderson, 1984, pp2-3).

Much of the literature locates policy within a social construction (see for example Colebatch, 2006), and suggests that public policy is explicitly intended to “change social systems” (Sanderson, 2000, p445). From this perspective, policy is essentially conceptualised as a mechanism for public good. Wildavsky, in his

seminal work *Speaking Truth to Power* (2007), reminds us that “a promise underlies public policy: if the actions we recommend are undertaken, good (intended) consequences rather than bad (unintended) ones actually will come about” (p35).

Policy is expressed through policy instruments or texts, which represent, according to Althaus, Bridgman and Davis, “the means by which a policy is put into effect” (2007, p246) or, according to Behelmans-Videc, “techniques by which governmental authorities wield their power in attempting to ensure support and effect social change” (2007, p3). Vedung suggests that the broad range of government policy instruments includes “regulation (the stick), economic means (the carrot), and information (the sermon)” (2007, cited in Bemelmans-Videc, 2007, p9).

Clearly public policy, including education public policy, differs from public (and private) university-specific policy, and public policy development is fundamentally different from university-specific policy development (Considine, 2005). As such, a more expansive definition of policy may be pursued. Guba (1984) broadly defines policy as “an assertion of intents or goals; a governing body’s ‘standing decisions’ by which it regulates, controls, promotes, services and otherwise influences matters within its sphere of authority; a guide ...; a strategy ... ; sanctioned behaviour, formally ... or informally ... ; (or) a norm of conduct, characterised by consistency and regularity, in some substantive action area” (cited in Owen, 2006, p25). In seeking to define policy, Hill (1997) reminds us that “ ... policy is indeed an extremely slippery concept (which) may really only emerge through an elaborate process ... include(ing) those stages which are conventionally described as implementation” (p133).

In addition to considering university-specific policy, this paper examines university policy on university policy development (i.e. ‘policy on policy’), or ‘meta-policy’ as defined by Dror (1971). In discussing meta-policy, Dror cautions us that “... very little can be done to improve policies by more than incremental bits without reforming the policymaking system, that is, without considering and improving meta-policy” (Dror, 1971, p74). Indeed this project has largely focussed on benchmarking Australian university policy to identify good practice meta-policy.

The Public Policy Dictionary (Kruschke & Jackson, 1987) defines the policy process as “the sequence of events involved in the policy-making process, ranging from the initial conception and definition of a problem to the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of a policy in response to that problem” (p29). Lasswell (1956) is recognised as a leader in efforts to establish a policy process theoretical framework, depicting a staged sequence involving intelligence, promotion, prescription, invocation, application, appraisal and termination (refer Bridgman & Davis, 1998, p21). This sequence was subsequently progressed by Brewer (1974) to include initiation, estimation, selection, implementation, evaluation and termination (refer De Leon, 1999, p21).

More recently, Bridgman and Davis (1998) developed the Australian Policy Cycle as a heuristic or “ideal type from which every reality will curve away” (Althaus, Bridgman & Davis, 2007, pxi). The cycle assumes that “good process is the foundation of good policy” (Bridgman & Davis, 1998, p2). The Australian Policy Cycle articulates the explicit stages of: identification of issues; policy analysis; policy instruments; consultation; co-ordination; decision; implementation; and evaluation, as articulated in Figure 1. Bridgman and Davis (1998) caution that the policy development process is not necessarily “a strictly logical pursuit” (p22), and that the intentionally iterative cycle “can not tame entirely the human and political imbroglio of making public policy” (p24).



Figure 1: Australian Policy Cycle, Bridgman and Davis, 1998.

The cycle approach is but one theoretical lens, and is not without criticism. De Leon (1999) suggests that the focus on individual stages prohibits a holistic examination of the policy development process; and further purports that the linear nature of the process omits “feedback actions or recursive loops” (p23). Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier (1993) roundly criticised the approach, suggesting it had “serious limitations as a basis for research and teaching” (p3, cited in Sabatier, 1993 at p23). Indeed Sabatier later states that “the conclusion seems inescapable: The stages heuristic has outlived its usefulness and needs to be replaced with better theoretical frameworks” (1999, p7).

Whilst focused on Australian government public policy development, the concept of a stepped policy development process as outlined in the Australian Policy Cycle was used as a conceptual framework for the *University Policy Development Project*, as a number of Australian universities have implicitly adopted this process in their meta-policy.

University policy development is contextualised by Commonwealth Government higher education public policy. The introduction of the Unified National System in 1988 under Minister Dawkins heralded fundamental change to the university sector, including the collapsing of the system to 36 universities (by 1994); corporatisation of university management; and intensification of reporting and accountability requirements (Marginson, 1997). More recently, the *Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report*, or ‘Bradley Review’⁴ recommended a package of reforms, including a new approach to higher education accreditation, quality assurance and regulation. The Commonwealth’s subsequent policy statement, *Transforming Australia’s Higher Education System*, articulated the governments’ attainment, participation and quality targets, and foreshadowed the replacement of the Australian University Quality Agency (AUQA) with a new regulatory body, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). Whilst the role of this authority continues to emerge, it is anticipated that TEQSA initiatives will further entrench the “growing accountability agenda” (Salmi, 2009, p4), and concurrently, drive the academic standards debate.

Coates (2007) proposed a range of academic standards indicators related to ‘higher education learners’, ‘higher education teachers’ and ‘higher education institutions’⁵. The extent to which the academic standards setting exercises and related performance management debates drive university strategic planning and academic policy development and review remains to be seen.

Despite the wealth of public policy research literature, there appears to be a scarcity of research specifically relating to university policy, and university policy development. Smith and Williams-Jones (2008; 2009) examine policy instrument text for legalistic versus ‘inspirational’ content, and report findings (Krimsky and Rothenberg, 2001; Krimsky, 2003; Lipton et al, 2004) suggesting that university policy is “subject to being misunderstood, overridden or simply ignored” (p435). In relation to the policy development process, Smith and Williams-Jones (2008, p9) recommend that “the ideal policy would be relatively comprehensive yet still reasonably concise, would be written in an accessible and not overly legalistic style, and would focus on educating readers and on encouraging ethical behaviour” (p9), ideally

resulting from “an iterative process of drafting, testing, and re-drafting” (2008, p10). Clearly, more work needs to be done in this area to provide a comprehensive, underpinning theoretical lens for university policy development research.

UNIVERSITY POLICY FRAMEWORKS

The *University Policy Benchmarking Project* involved the location and consideration of University Policy Frameworks, which may be articulated in a stand-alone document or reflected in a Policy on Policy (or ‘meta-policy’) statement. 11 of the 16 targeted Universities had stand-alone Policy on Policy documents or statements regarding their University Policy Framework⁶. For the purposes of this exercise, the terms ‘University Policy Framework’ and ‘Policy on Policy’ may be used interchangeably. The research found a considerable degree of variation in this area. Some universities sought primarily to establish clarity and consistency in policy documentation presentation (supported by standard policy instrument templates), whereas others had broader objectives.

Features of a Comprehensive University Policy Framework

The research suggests that a comprehensive University Policy Framework:

- Defines university policy;
- Establishes the range of policy instruments (e.g. Policy, Procedure, Guideline);
- Specifies approval authorities for all policy instruments (e.g. Council, Vice-Chancellor, Senior Executive, local heads);
- Identifies policy development cycle stages; and
- Defines the application of policy instruments (i.e. university-wide and/or section-specific or local).

These details are generally derived from provisions of university founding legislation (in Australia), delegations of authority⁷ arrangements and Policy on Policy provisions. The research clearly indicated, however, that having an effective policy framework is one of many ingredients for having effective policy.

Defining ‘Policy’

Universities use the term ‘policy’ to refer to:

- All levels of text in a University Policy Framework, including that specifically termed ‘policy’;
- Decisions taken by committees which are only recorded in minutes;
- In Human Resources and Finance sections in particular, Operating Manual Chapters written as work instructions or process documents;
- In relation to teaching and research academic policy, high-level governance instruments such as Statutes, Rules or Regulations, with supporting Procedures, Guidelines and Checklists.

The term ‘policy’ is also used to refer to practice, strategic directions and plans, whether or not such things are framed in formal policy documents. Accordingly, this project adopted a very broad definition of university ‘policy’, particularly when considering the core sample of policy statements where ‘clusters’ or linked texts were examined.

The research identified a range of terms for university governance instruments, including: university legislation (Australian universities only), University By-Laws, Statutes, Rules, Regulations, Orders and Ordinances. Overall, University legislation, and the terms By-laws, Statutes and Rules were most prevalent. The research suggests that the closer the governance instrument to legislation the more likely it is to be phrased using legal terminology. This is particularly the case for governance instruments (and

policy provisions embedded in governance instruments) focussing on misconduct and disciplinary matters.

More variation was recorded in relation to terms used for policy instruments identified in University Policy Frameworks or Policy on Policy statements. This included:

Table 1: Policy Nomenclature

Policy Instrument	Variety of Terms Used in University Policy Frameworks / Policy on Policy Statements
Policy	Policy, Council Policy, Governance Policy, Operational Policy, Academic Policy and Management Policy
Procedures	Procedures, Operating Procedures, Protocols and Processes
Guidelines	Guidelines, Standards and Manuals
Local policy and other documents	Policy, Local Policy, Faculty Governance Documents, Unit Rules, Directions, Instructions and Procedures, Operational Directives, Standard Operating Principles and Procedures, Resolutions, Work Instructions

However, the most commonly used terms for policy instruments were: Policy (for university-wide and local policy); Procedure and Guideline.

Approval Authorities

Policy approval authorities were primarily the:

- Council; or
- Council and/or Vice-Chancellor; or
- Council and/or Vice-Chancellor and/or Senior Executive (member or committee); or
- In a small number of instances Academic Board/Senate.

Hierarchy of Instruments, Approval Authorities and Application

The *University Policy Benchmarking Project* findings suggest that University Policy Framework components may be contextualised by governance instruments and considered in terms of a hierarchy of approval authorities and sources. Table 2 provides an overview of the hierarchical relationships between governance and policy instruments, their respective approval authorities and sources of authority generalised for the universities sampled.

Table 2: Hierarchy of Instruments, Approval Authorities and Application

INSTRUMENTS	APPROVAL AUTHORITY	AUTHORITY THROUGH	APPLICATION
University legislation	Government	Australian Constitution	University-wide
University By-Laws	Government or Council	Australian Constitution or University legislation	University-wide
Statutes	Government or Council	University legislation	University-wide
Rules	Council or Academic Senate	University legislation or Delegations of Authority	University-wide
UNIVERSITY POLICY FRAMEWORK	Policy	Council and/or Vice-Chancellor and/or Senior Executive member	University legislation or <i>Policy on Policy</i> or Delegations of Authority
	Procedures	Various	<i>Policy on Policy</i>
	Guidelines	Various	<i>Policy on Policy</i>
	Local policy	Various	<i>Policy on Policy</i> and practice
			University-wide OR Local
			University-wide OR Local
			Local

This suggests that as instruments progress from high level governance and policy principles to local processes, so too do approval authorities range from high level government and university bodies to various local authorities. Approval authority is derived from a hierarchy of sources descending from the

Australian constitution, through university legislation, delegations of authority statements and Policy on Policy statements to local practice. High level documents generally apply university-wide whereas local statements apply only on the local level.

Understanding the University of Tasmania Hierarchy of Instruments

In comparison to the selected universities, the University of Tasmania is:

- Aligned with other Australian universities in having foundation legislation and ‘By-laws’;
- Aligned with most other Australian and New Zealand universities in having high-level governance instruments referred to as ‘Rules’;
- Unique (from the sample selected) in adopting the term ‘Ordinances’ for high level governance instruments, which are more generally referred to as ‘Statutes’; and
- Unique (from the sample selected) in establishing ‘Governance Level Principles’⁸.

The University of Tasmania hierarchy of governance and policy instruments (and some local documents) may be represented as follows:

Table 3: University of Tasmania Hierarchy of Instruments, Approval Authorities and Application

INSTRUMENTS		APPROVAL AUTHORITY	AUTHORITY THROUGH	APPLICATION
<i>University of Tasmania Act 1992</i>		Government	Australian Constitution	University-wide
<i>University By-Laws 1993</i>		University Council	<i>University of Tasmania Act 1992</i>	University-wide
Ordinances		University Council	<i>University of Tasmania Act 1992</i>	University-wide
Rules		University Council or Academic Senate	<i>University of Tasmania Act 1992</i> and Delegations Register	University-wide
Governance Level Principles		University Council	<i>Ordinance 1 – Role of Council</i> and Council Resolution and GLP 1 – University Governance	University-wide
UNIVERSITY POLICY FRAMEWORK	Policy	Vice-Chancellor or University Council	<i>Policy Development and Review Policy</i> and <i>Delegations Register</i>	University-wide
	Procedures	Policy Maker	<i>Policy Development and Review Policy</i>	University-wide OR Local
	Guidelines	Policy Maker	<i>Policy Development and Review Policy</i>	University-wide OR Local
	Standards	Policy Maker	<i>Policy Development and Review Policy</i>	University-wide OR Local
Faculty, School, Centre, Institute or Division, Section or Work Unit decisions / statements of principle to implement Plans, Principles and Policy		Dean, Head, Director / Principal or Head of Division, Section or Work Unit	<i>Delegations Register</i> and Position Descriptions	Specific to Faculty, School, Centre, Institute or Division, Section or Work Unit
Work Instructions		Various	Various	Specific to Faculty, School, Centre, Institute or Division, Section or Work Unit
Forms and information		Various	Various	University-wide OR Local

Using Benchmarking Outcomes to Enhance the University of Tasmania Policy on Policy

The *University Policy Benchmarking Project* was timed to complement feedback received from University of Tasmania Policy Stakeholders and inform the review of the University of Tasmania *Operational Policy Development and Review Policy*, *Operational Policy Development and Review Procedure* and *Policy Development and Review Manual*. Fundamentally, the *University Policy Benchmarking Project* confirmed

the need to establish, through the (reviewed) *Policy on Policy*, a comprehensive University Policy Framework which:

- Defines University policy;
- Establishes the range of policy instruments;
- Specifies approval authorities for all policy instruments;
- Identifies policy development cycle stages; and
- Defines the application of policy instruments (i.e. university-wide and/or section-specific)⁹.

This is reflected in the reviewed (draft) University of Tasmania *Policy Development and Review Policy*.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT CYCLE

The *University Policy Benchmarking Project* revealed that University Policy Frameworks explicitly identify distinct policy development cycle stages, and these generally fall within one of three approaches. In the majority of instances examined – represented as Model 1 (below) - University Policy Frameworks identify the stages of drafting, consultation, approval, promulgation and review.

Table 4: University Policy Development Cycle Stages: Models 1, 2 and 3

Model 1	Majority	Most of: drafting, consultation, approval, promulgation and review
Model 2	Some	Most stages from Model 1, and one or more of: identification of policy requirements, nomination of responsible officers, endorsement, implementation, records management
Model 3	Few	Most stages from Models 1 and 2, and one or more of: benchmarking, revision, quality control, monitoring, evaluation

Some universities identify both ‘Model 1’ stages and additional ones. This may be represented as Model 2 – involving one or more of the following: identification of policy requirements, nomination of responsible officers, endorsement, implementation and records management. It could be expected, however, that most university policy development cycles involve these stages whether or not they are explicitly articulated in the University Policy Framework.

In a few instances – as represented by Model 3 - University Policy Frameworks identify other policy cycle stages which clearly add a ‘quality’ dimension to the process. Model 3 is a mature model which includes one or more of the following: benchmarking, revision, quality control, monitoring and evaluation. University Policy Frameworks articulating such quality-related cycle stages could be expected to produce high quality policy. As University Policy Frameworks mature, more universities may well focus on such value-adding policy cycle stages.

Using Benchmarking Outcomes to Enhance the University of Tasmania Policy Cycle

Based on these findings, the University of Tasmania *Policy on Policy* was redrafted¹⁰ to incorporate an explicitly defined *University Policy Development Cycle*, including a number of quality-related cycle stages. The full cycle included the following key stages:

- Identification of Policy Requirements
- Nomination of Policy Owner and Policy Delegate
- Drafting
- Benchmarking
- Consultation
- Revision
- Endorsement
- Quality Control
- Approval

- Promulgation
- Implementation
- Implementation and Compliance Monitoring
- Implementation and Compliance Evaluation
- Review and
- Records Management.

The *Policy on Policy* notes that the cycle is staged, but not necessarily sequential.

POLICY WEBSITES AND POLICY REPOSITORY

Policy Website

Almost all universities sampled had one central Policy Website¹¹. This central Policy Website generally functioned as:

- The online interface with the University Policy Repository; or
- A portal to provide information regarding the University Policy Framework; or
- A portal to provide resources supporting the university policy development cycle.

University website search functionality varied considerably. Success varied considerably such that web navigability became a focus of the research.

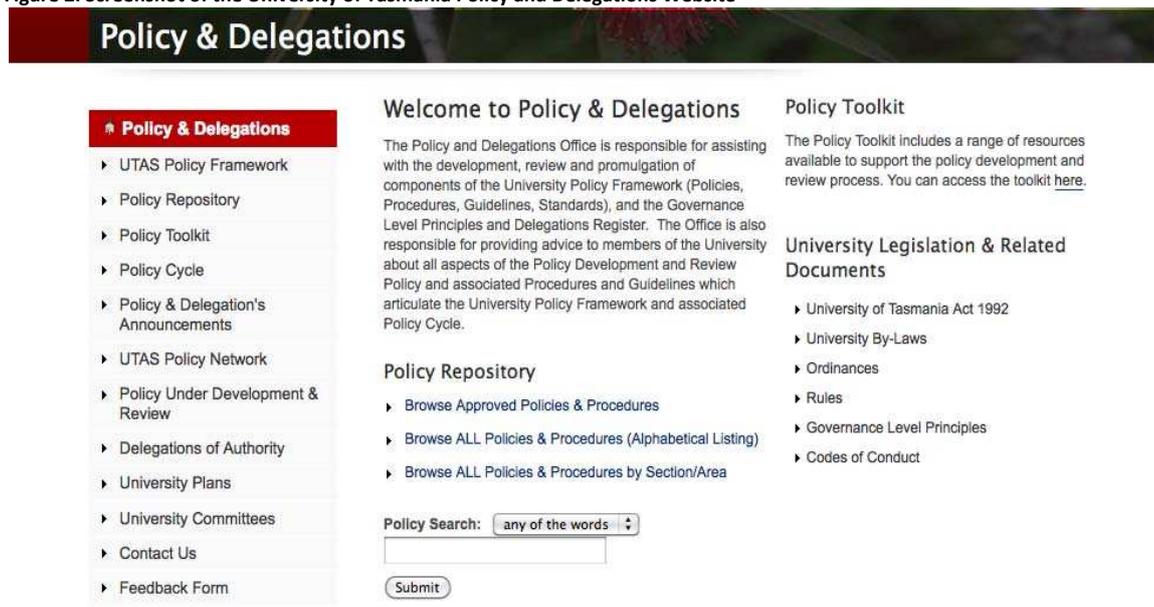
The findings from the *University Policy Benchmarking Project* suggest that a ‘good practice’ skeleton University Policy Website would include information regarding the following:

- University Policy Framework
- University Policy on Policy
- University Policy Repository
- Policy Toolkit
- Policy News
- Records Management
- Legislation
- Governance
- Delegations of Authority
- Codes of Conduct and Charters
- University Plans and University Committees
- Agreements
- Contact¹²

Using Benchmarking Outcomes to Enhance the University of Tasmania Policy Website

The *University Policy Benchmarking Project* was undertaken concurrently with a *Review of the University of Tasmania Policy Website* (available: <http://www.utas.edu.au/governance-legal/policy>). Based on the findings of the research and other outcomes from the website review, the University of Tasmania Policy and Delegations website was substantially restructured and redeveloped to include the following pages and links:

Figure 2: Screenshot of the University of Tasmania Policy and Delegations Website



University Policy Repository

The research found that well-developed University Policy Repositories provided the authoritative source for (generally) university-wide policy. In most instances, relevant university-wide policy was also made available through other websites (e.g. academic sites and administrative organisational unit pages). Where the integrity of the University Policy Repository is maintained, duplication of policy documentation in this manner increases accessibility and facilitates policy implementation. However, in some instances it was not clear which policy documentation represented the authoritative source, or whether some 'local' policy statements only available through local work/organisational unit websites complied with the University Policy Framework. Indeed in some instances it appeared that such local policy statements did not conform to University Policy Framework (or Policy on Policy) requirements. The online presentation of policy documents, for example under policy themes or along organisational lines (e.g. teaching and learning, research, corporate sections) provides a useful overview for users and may lead to the coalescence of comprehensive suites of university policy.

Using Benchmarking Outcomes to Enhance the University of Tasmania Policy Repository

A review of the University of Tasmania Policy Repository was implemented concurrently with the *University Policy Benchmarking Project*, and a number of changes were made to enhance accuracy, provide information regarding the 'status' of various policy projects, and provide contact details for Policy Delegates (to enhance communication mechanisms).

To some considerable extent the University of Tasmania Policy Repository reflects the lack of progress transferring 'old' policy documents across to the University Policy Framework in accordance with the provision of the *Policy on Policy* initially approved in 2006, such that the Alphabetical Listing includes a substantially larger number of 'policy' documents than the subset of Approved Policies and Procedures. Over time, the contents and nature of the University of Tasmania Policy Repository will change. In the interim, some lessons learned through the benchmarking exercise, not the least of which includes the requirement to establish one University-wide authoritative source, have been incorporated into the reviewed Policy Repository.

POLICY TOOLKIT

The *University Policy Benchmarking Project* revealed a number of good practice Policy Toolkit resources:

- Policy Templates (i.e. Policy, Procedure, Guideline, Standard, Work Instruction);
- Policy Submission Coversheets;
- Policy Review Submission Coversheets (i.e. no/minor/major amendment);
- Policy Dictionary/Glossary of Policy Terms and Acronyms;
- Policy Implementation Feedback / Issues Log;
- Policy Workshops/Training Programs;
- Policy Evaluation and Review Guide;
- Frequently Asked Questions.

A number of initiatives identified have been pursued; of particular note, University of Tasmania specific *Information Sessions* and *Training Workshops* have been conducted to build capacity in policymaking, and a *UTAS Policy Network* has been established as a professional networking, consultation and communication mechanism supportive of the policymaking process. Additional resources will be released following approval of the new University of Tasmania *Policy Development and Review Policy*.

INDIVIDUAL POLICY STATEMENTS

The *University Policy Benchmarking Project* also involved an examination of four discrete university policy statements to appreciate how University Policy Frameworks, Policy on Policy and policy development tools translated to ‘actual’ university policy. The policies identified included:

- Plagiarism Policy (as an assessment-related, high risk academic policy);
- Environment Policy (as a corporate policy of topical interest);
- Leave Without Pay Policy (as a corporate, human resources policy); and
- Credit Policy (as a core ‘gatekeeper’ academic policy).

The method used to examine and benchmark the policy statements located included the identification of key policy provisions; and ‘bundling’ of key policy provisions.

PLAGIARISM POLICY

The web-based search located Plagiarism Policy documentation for all but two of the selected universities¹³. This included stand-alone Plagiarism, Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct Policies, Procedures and Guidelines; governance instruments (e.g. Statutes and Regulations); policy provisions embedded in Codes of Conduct or Student Charters;¹⁴ and policy statements reflected in information resources¹⁵. As such, university policy regarding this matter is both mature and widely dispersed across a range of instruments; indeed more widely than any other discrete policy examined. The research also found a much closer relationship between plagiarism statements and high level university governance instruments, in this instance dealing with misconduct, than other policies examined.

An examination of Plagiarism Policies confirms that the higher the governance or policy instrument the more likely the document is to be framed in ‘legalist’ language. With only a few exceptions, the language is more legalistic where Plagiarism Policy provisions are embedded in governance instruments such as Statutes and Regulations, and where Plagiarism Policy provisions are directly related to student misconduct and appeal procedures. The extent to which language is legalistic also depends on the extent

to which university practice (as embodied in policy) emphasises punitive or educative approaches to plagiarism.

The research found a significant point of differentiation in this regard, with some universities adopting a progressive, educative approach, whereas others – generally those which continued to rely primarily on student misconduct Statutes and Regulations – framed provisions in punitive terms¹⁶.

A progressive, comprehensive Academic Integrity (Plagiarism) Policy would:

- Be framed in educative, non-legalistic terms;
- Clearly define plagiarism, differentiating between poor academic practice (i.e. ‘careless’ plagiarism) and intentional plagiarism (i.e. academic misconduct);
- Encompass undergraduate, postgraduate coursework and research students;
- Outline academic staff responsibilities (e.g. educate students about good academic practice and adopt good practice assessment design);
- Outline student responsibilities, including responsibility to maintain standards of integrity;
- Clearly establish procedures for informing and educating students about good academic practice and academic integrity;
- Clearly identify, as the University of Queensland does, “procedures for investigating and assessing suspected cases of misconduct [including plagiarism], the jurisdiction and penalty powers of decision-makers, and the consequent penalties for misconduct”¹⁷;
- Ensure procedures are fair, consistent, transparent, confidential, equitable, and provide for appropriate representation and support;
- Establish differential responses to:
 - naïve plagiarism or poor academic practice and intentional plagiarism;
 - suspected plagiarism within formative and summative assessment exercises;
 - consequent approaches may include providing resources and advice regarding good scholarship and giving penalties for academic misconduct in the form of plagiarism;
- Identify whether differential penalties will be applied at ‘breakpoints’ based on the proportion of material plagiarised, where both quantitative and qualitative assessments contribute to an overall determination (e.g. quantitative - >10% minor; 10-25% moderate; <25% major; qualitative – contextual factors or mitigating circumstances¹⁸);
- Refer to student appeal and grievance procedures;
- Maintain a central academic misconduct register or database for management and monitoring purposes;
- Establish a position on the use of plagiarism detection software (e.g. Turnitin, MOSS, SafeAssign) for both educative and plagiarism detection purposes as one component of the institution’s approach to fostering good academic practice¹⁹;
- Where adopted, advise students through a range of avenues that such software will be used and copies of works may be held in software databases (e.g. assignment coversheets, unit outlines, assessment guides, introductory lectures, university website etc);
- Procedural templates, including flowcharts and notification letters and reporting proformas;
- For New Zealand universities, resolution processes in keeping with commitments under the Treaty of Waitangi.²⁰

Good examples identified include the University of Queensland *Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy*²¹ and *Procedures for Dealing with Student Discipline and Misconduct Matters*²²; the University of Adelaide’s *Plagiarism Policy*²³; and University of Western Australia’s *Guidelines for Faculties and Other Teaching and Supervision Sections at UWA: Ethical Scholarship, Academic Literacy and Academic Misconduct*²⁴.

The position of the University of Tasmania on plagiarism is enshrined in a *Student Discipline Ordinance*; the University does not have a discrete Plagiarism/Academic Integrity Policy. This has been flagged for development.

ENVIRONMENT POLICY

The web-based search located 10 Environment or Environmental Sustainability Policy statements²⁵. An examination of these policy statements suggests that environment policy development is an emerging priority for Australian universities, whereas the Victorian University of Wellington's approach suggests that either the Victorian University itself, or the New Zealand higher education sector more generally, is well progressed in this field.

Most Australian university environment policies examined included minimalist information regarding the organisation's position on the environment, or environmental sustainability²⁶. Indeed most environment policies foreshadowed limited activity prior to the establishment of Environment Committees and/or Environmental Management Plans. It may well be that Environment Policy development has been undertaken to fulfil legislative, regulatory or audit requirements before the organisations themselves have established their positions or developed expertise in this area.

As Environment Policy sophistication increases, additional policy provisions are found where the university commits to the introduction of a range of initiatives, plans, structures and campaigns²⁷.

The findings of the *University Policy Benchmarking Project* suggests that a comprehensive Environment Policy may articulate how a University will:

- Sustainably manage the University's *natural environment* (i.e. natural and physical resources; and promote the concept of a 'harmonious campus');
- Sustainably manage the University's *developed environment* (i.e. infrastructure; transportation options including the University vehicle fleet; sustainable procurement; footprint reduction strategies);
- Sustainably manage the University's *use of natural resources* (i.e. minimise consumption of water, energy and materials; reduce greenhouse gas emissions; sustainable waste management, infrastructure design and engineering solutions);
- Undertake quality teaching and research with an environmental sustainability focus;
- Establish environmental emergency procedures (e.g. to cater for pollution);
- Recognise the interdependence of the physical and cultural environments; and
- For New Zealand universities, implementation consistent with the Treaty of Waitangi (e.g. consideration of Maori perspectives and the exercise of environment guardianship and stewardship).

A good practice example is provided by the Victorian University of Wellington's *Environmental Policy*²⁸ and *Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Guidelines*²⁹.

While the University of Tasmania does not have an Environment Policy, there is a high level *Built Environment Governance Level Principle* containing minimalist policy provisions, and a *Sustainable Built Environment Designs Policy*. These documents will be reviewed.

LEAVE WITHOUT PAY POLICY

The web-based search did not readily locate Leave Without Pay Policies for ¼ of the sample³⁰. Where the search did locate such policies (12), over half³¹ had discrete Leave Without Pay Policies, and the remainder³² had broad Leave Policies with sub-sections focussed on various forms of leave (including Leave Without Pay in all but one instance).

Benchmarking both discrete and consolidated Leave Without Pay Policies suggests that a 'good practice' policy may articulate university principles in relation to the following 'ingredients'³³:

- Compliance (awards, industrial instruments and legislation);
- Purposes (personal reasons; reasons which are of mutual benefit; reasons which are in the national interest);
- Eligibility and assessment criteria;
- Minimum / maximum time limits;
- Approval authority;
- Impact on other entitlements;
- Superannuation arrangements;
- Responsibilities;
- Application procedure;
- Advice.

The University document which best reflects this 'good practice' skeleton is the University of Technology Sydney *Leave Without Pay Guidelines*³⁴.

The University of Tasmania has a discrete *Special Leave With or Without Pay Policy*, however this policy has yet to be transferred to the University Policy Framework, and provides extremely minimal information regarding the University's position on this matter.

CREDIT POLICY

Credit, Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning Policies were located for most Australian and all New Zealand Universities³⁵. As a 'gatekeeper' academic policy, credit and recognition of prior learning/current competency policies may be presented in Credit Regulations or Rules, and mirror implied or explicit statements regarding academic quality, integrity and institutional standing. Credit Policy development has been influenced by a substantial body of work from Commonwealth and State government and non-government organisations (e.g. Universities Australia documents³⁶; Codes of Practice³⁷; Vocational Education and Training (VET) developments such as the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)³⁸; and national and international qualification recognition services³⁹).

Credit Policies, whilst mature and well developed across the sector, vary from conservative through progressive. For example, some university Credit Policy statements embrace recognition of prior informal learning and cross-sectoral articulation, whereas others limit credit to like higher education credit transfer. To a much greater extent than any other 'core sample' policy examined, university-wide Credit Policy is frequently supported by Faculty or local policy as Faculties generally administer credit application, assessment and approval processes.

The *University Policy Benchmarking Project* identified some consistent themes in comprehensive Credit Policy statements including:

- Qualification portability and articulation (VET ↔ HE);
- Inter-sectoral linkages and collaboration⁴⁰:
 - between universities (e.g. Go8, Australian Technology Network of Universities);
 - across sectors (e.g. Registered Training Organisations ↔ TAFE ↔ Higher Education); and
 - within dual-sector institutions;
- Developments regarding the recognition of various modes of formal and informal learning;

- Efficiencies in the education and training system;
- The role of credit and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) approval in maintaining qualification and institutional integrity; and
- The capacity of RPL, in particular, as an equity mechanism.

Swinburne’s comprehensive suite of Credit Transfer and Exemptions Policy statements⁴¹, spanning their higher education and TAFE sectors⁴² represent a good practice model, as does Edith Cowan University’s⁴³ comprehensive *Advanced Standing Policy, Course Assessment Guidelines* and *Appeal Guidelines*.

The University of Tasmania does not have a Credit Policy, although some Faculties/Schools do have *Faculty Credit Policies*. The findings of the *University Policy Benchmarking Project* will contribute to the development of a University-wide Credit / Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.

EMERGING ‘SKELETON BENCHMARKING METHOD’

The *University Policy Benchmarking Project* provided an opportunity to refine an approach which may be referred to as a ‘Skeleton Benchmarking Method’. This stepped approach may be used in the ‘benchmarking’ stage of the *University Policy Development Cycle*, and indeed is increasingly being implemented in University of Tasmania policy development initiatives.

Figure 3: Skeleton Benchmarking Method

Step 1 - IDENTIFY KEY POLICY PROVISIONS	Step 2 – BUNDLE KEY POLICY PROVISIONS	Step 3 – PREPARE POLICY SKELETON BASED ON BENCHMARKING	Step 4 – EXAMINE CURRENT POLICY & ADD HOME UNIVERSITY POLICY PROVISIONS	Step 5 – IDENTIFY AND ADD ANY ‘GAPS’	Step 6 – DELETE UNWANTED POLICY PROVISIONS	Step 7 – FINALISE POLICY SKELETON BASED ON BENCHMARKING
University X Policy A, B, D, E, F, G 16	Relevant Policy Provisions A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, X, Y <i>(keep)</i>	A B C D E F G H	A		B	A C D E F G
University Y Policy A, C, D, H 1, 2, 3	NOT Relevant Policy Provisions 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 16 <i>(discard)</i>		I J K		H	I J K L M X
University Z Policy X, Y 1, 2, 3, 9, 10		X Y		L M	Y	

CONCLUSION

The *University Policy Benchmarking Project* has demonstrated that benchmarking can be used to identify good practice University Policy Frameworks, and provide a framework for quality university policy management. Good practice University *Policy on Policy* is clear – clear in relation to definitions, clear in relation to the range and application of university-wide (and/or local) policy instruments, and clear in relation to the various instrument approval authorities. Good practice University Policy Frameworks also explicitly articulate the respective policy development process, including any ‘value-adding’ components. The progressive incorporation of such features by the University of Tasmania, through genuine policy stakeholder consultation and, fundamentally, cultural change, is underpinned by a commitment to improved University policy process. As Dror (1971) suggests “A stoic view of reality combined with missionary devotion to the improvement of policymaking is required ... in order to achieve long-range and insistent impact on policymaking” (p75).

Bibliography

- Althaus, C, Bridgman, P & Davis, G 2007, *The Australian Policy Handbook*, fourth edition, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Anderson, JE 1984, *Public Policy-Making*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Sydney.
- Auckland University of Technology 2010, *AUT Policies*, Auckland University of Technology, viewed February – April 2010, <http://www.aut.ac.nz/staff/policies/pd_home.php>.
- Australian National Audit Office 2001, *Some Better Practice Principles for Developing Policy Advice*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Australian National University 2010, *ANU Policies Website*, Australian National University, viewed February – April 2010, <<http://policies.anu.edu.au/>>.
- Bamberger, M, Rugh, J & Mabry, L 2006, *Real World Evaluation Working Under Budget, Time, Data, and Political Constraints*, Sage Publications, London.
- Bemelmans-Videc, ML, Rist, RC & Vedung, E (eds) (2007), *Carrots, Sticks & Sermons: Policy Instruments & Their Evaluation*, Transaction Publishers, London.
- Bond University 2010, *Policies, Procedures, Guidelines & Forms*, Bond University, viewed February – March 2010, <<http://www.bond.edu.au/student-resources/student-administration/policies-procedures-guidelines-and-forms/index.htm?myListType=2>>.
- Bridgman, P & Davis, G 1998, *Australian Policy Handbook*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Bridgman, P and Davis, G 2003, 'What use is a policy cycle? Plenty, if the aim is clear', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 62, no. 3, pp. 98-102.
- Campbell, S, Benita, S, Coates, E, Davies, P, & Penn, G 2007, *Analysis for policy: evidence-based policy in practice*, HM Treasury, London.
- Charles Darwin University 2010, *Policies and Processes*, Charles Darwin University, viewed February – April 2010, <<http://www.cdu.edu.au/governance/Policies.htm>>.
- Charles Sturt University 2010, *Administration Manual*, Charles Sturt University, viewed February – April 2010, <<http://www.csu.edu.au/adminman/>>.
- Coates, H 2010, 'Defining and monitoring academic standards in Australian higher education', *Higher Education Management and Policy*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 2-17.
- Colebatch, H 2006, 'Mapping the Work of Policy', in Colebatch, HK (ed), *Beyond the Policy Cycle The policy process in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, pp. 1-19.
- Colebatch, HK (ed) 2006, *Beyond the Policy Cycle: The policy process in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Commonwealth of Australia 2008, *Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Commonwealth of Australia 2009, *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Considine, M 2005, *Making Public Policy*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Davies, HTO & Nutley, SM 2001, 'Evidence-based policy and practice: moving from rhetoric to reality', paper presented at *Third International, Inter-disciplinary Evidence-Based Policies and Indicator Systems Conference*, University of Durham, July 2001.
- Deem, R 2008, 'Producing and Re/producing the Global University in the 21st Century: Researcher Perspectives and Policy Consequences', *Higher Education Policy*, vol. 21, pp. 439-456.
- Deleon, P 1999, 'The Stages Approach to the Policy Process: What Has It Done? Where Is It Going?' in Sabatier, PA (ed), *Theories of the Policy Process*, Westview Press, Oxford, pp. 19–32.
- Deleon, P 2006, 'The Historical Roots of the Field', in Moran, M, Rein, M & Goodin, RE (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 39-57.
- Dror, Y 1971, *Design for Policy Sciences*, American Elsevier Publishing Company, New York.
- Edith Cowan University 2010, *University Policies*, Edith Cowan University, viewed February – April 2010, <http://www.ecu.edu.au/GPPS/policies/?_q=admin>.
- Etzioni, A 2006, 'The Unique Methodology of Policy Research', in Moran, M, Rein, M & Goodin, RE (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 833-843.
- Gardner, C 2006, 'An opportunity missed? Trajectories of one education policy in the Tasmanian Government school system', Thesis (PhD), University of Tasmania, Tasmania.
- Hill, M 1997, *The Policy Process in the Modern State*, Pearson Prentice Hall, Sydney.
- Howard, C 2005, 'The Policy Cycle: A Model of Post-Machiavellian Policy Making?', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 64, no. 3, pp. 3-13.
- Kezar, A & Eckel, PD 2004, 'Meeting Today's Governance Challenges: A Synthesis of the Literature and Examination of a Future Agenda for Scholarship', *Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 75, no. 4, pp. 371-399.
- Larsen, IM, Maassen, P & Stensaker, B 2009, 'Four Basic Dilemmas in University Governance Reform', *Higher Education Management and Policy*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 33-50.
- Locke, W 2009, 'Reconnecting the Research-Policy-Practice Nexus in Higher Education: "Evidence-Based Policy" in Practice in National and International Contexts', *Higher Education Policy*, vol. 22, pp. 119-140.
- Marginson, S 1997, *Educating Australia: Government, Economy and Citizen Since 1960*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Marginson, S 2003, 'University rankings, government and social order: managing the field of higher education according to the logic of the performative present-as-future', in Simons, M, Olssen, M & Peters, M (eds), *Re-reading Education Policies: Studying the policy agenda of the 21st century*, Sense Publishers, Rotterdam.
- Marginson, S 2010, 'Assessing the governance and performance of higher education', paper presented at *Setting quality standards and benchmarks in higher education*, Committee for the Development of Australia (CEDA) seminar, Melbourne, 26 August 2010.
- Marginson, S 1993, *Education and Public Policy in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Meyer, LH & Evans, IM 2003, 'Motivating the Professoriate: Why Sticks and Carrots are only for Donkeys', *Higher Education Management and Policy*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 151–167.
- Moran, M, Rein, M & Goodin, RE (eds) 2006, *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Otago University 2010, *Policies and Regulations*, Otago University, viewed February – April 2010, <<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/index.html>>.
- Owen, J 2006, *Program Evaluation Forms and approaches*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Page, EC 2006, 'The Origins of Policy', in Moran, M, Rein, M & Goodin, RE (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Public Policy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 207-227.

- Peters, BG & Pierre, J 1998, 'Governance Without Government? Rethinking Public Administration', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, vol. 2, pp. 223-243.
- Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology 2010, *Universities Policies and Organisation*, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, viewed February – April 2010, <<http://www.rmit.edu.au/policies/a-z>>.
- Sabatier, PA (ed) 1999, *Theories of the Policy Process*, Westview Press, Oxford.
- Salmi, J 2009, 'The Growing Accountability Agenda: Progress or Mixed Blessing', *Higher Education Management and Policy*, vol. 21, no. 1.
- Sanderson, I 2000, 'Evaluation in Complex Policy Systems', *Evaluation*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 433-454.
- Schlager, E 1999, 'A Comparison of Frameworks, Theories and Models of Policy Processes' in Sabatier, PA (ed), *Theories of the Policy Process*, Westview Press, Oxford, pp. 233–260.
- Smith, E & Williams-Jones, B 2009, 'Legalistic or Inspirational? Comparing University Conflict of Interest Policies', *Higher Education Policy*, vol. 22, pp. 433-459.
- Swinburne University of Technology 2010, *Policies and Procedures @ Swinburne*, Swinburne University of Technology, viewed February – April 2010, <<http://www.swinburne.edu.au/corporate/registrar/ppd/>>.
- Taylor, S 1997, 'Critical Policy Analysis: exploring contexts, texts and consequences', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 23-35.
- University of Adelaide 2010, *Policy Directory / University Policy Framework*, University of Adelaide, viewed February – April 2010, <<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/policies/>>.
- University of New South Wales 2010, *Policy*, University of New South Wales, viewed February – April 2010, <<http://www.secretariat.unsw.edu.au/council/policy.htm>>.
- University of Queensland 2010, *Handbook of Policies & Procedures*, University of Queensland, viewed February – April 2010, <<http://www.uq.edu.au/current-staff/index.html?page=10289>>.
- University of Technology Sydney 2010, *UTS: Policy*, University of Technology Sydney, viewed February – April 2010, <<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/index.html>>.
- University of Western Australia 2010, *University Policies*, University of Western Australia, viewed February – April 2010, <<http://www.universitypolicies.uwa.edu.au/>>.
- University of Wollongong 2010, *UOW Policy Directory*, University of Wollongong, viewed February – April 2010, <<http://www.uow.edu.au/about/policy/>>.
- Van Der Meer, FB & Edelenbos, J 2006, 'Evaluation in Multi-Actor Policy Processes: Accountability, Learning and Co-operation', *Evaluation*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 201-218.
- Victoria University 2010, *Staff Policy*, Victoria University, viewed February – April 2010, <<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/default.aspx>>.
- Wildavsky, A 2007, *Speaking Truth to Power: The Art and Craft of Policy Analysis*, Transaction Publishers, London.
- Williams-Jones, B & MacDonald, C 2008, 'Conflict of Interest Policies at Canadian Universities: Clarity and Content', *Journal of Academic Ethics*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 79-90.

Endnotes

- ¹ University of Queensland, Charles Darwin University, Bond University, University of New South Wales, University of Technology Sydney, Charles Sturt University, University of Wollongong, Australian National University, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University, Swinburne University of Technology, University of Adelaide, University of Western Australia and Edith Cowan University.
- ² Auckland University of Technology, Otago University and Victoria University of Wellington.
- ³ Universities not included in the sample were: Australian Catholic University, Central Queensland University, Curtin University of Technology, Deakin University, Flinders University, Griffith University, James Cook University, La Trobe University, Macquarie University, Monash University, Murdoch University, Queensland University of Technology, Southern Cross University, University of Ballarat, University of Canberra, University of Melbourne, University of New England, University of Newcastle, The University of Notre Dame Australia, University of South Australia, University of Southern Queensland, University of Sydney, University of Tasmania, University of the Sunshine Coast, University of Western Sydney and Victoria University (Australian universities) and Lincoln University, Massey University, University of Auckland, University of Canterbury and University of Waikato (New Zealand universities).
- ⁴ Commonwealth of Australia 2008, *Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- ⁵ The full set of indicators proposed by Coates (2007) includes the following:
- "Higher education learners: outcomes (graduation rates, graduate destinations, learning outcomes, graduate capabilities, work readiness, satisfaction); processes (student engagement, retention and progress); inputs (entry levels, entry pathways, student diversity, student characteristics, student aspirations);
 - Higher education teachers: outcomes (teaching experience, teaching resources); processes (teaching processes, course management, support systems); inputs (staff characteristics, university enculturation, educational resources, curriculum);
 - Higher education institutions: outcomes (institutional growth; institutional reputation; community engagement); processes (academic governance; academic management; academic culture; staff development; quality systems); inputs (institutional characteristics; institutional resources; industry engagement)" (p7).
- ⁶ Auckland University of Technology - *Guide to Creating and Reviewing a Policy*; Australian National University - *Policy on Policies*, and *Policy on Policies Guidelines*; Charles Darwin University - *Governance Framework Description (Policy 1.0)*; Edith Cowan University - *Policy Framework*, and *Guide for the Drafting of Policy Instruments*; RMIT - *Policy on Policies*, and *Policy Development and Review Procedure*; Swinburne University of Technology - *Policy Framework*, and *Policy & Procedure Development and Management*; University of Adelaide - *University Policy Framework*; University of New South Wales - *Policy Framework*; University of Queensland - *Policy Statement on Handbook of University Policies and Procedures*, and *Understanding Policy and Policy Development*; University of Technology Sydney - *UTS Policy Framework*; University of Wollongong - *Standard on UOW Policy*, and *Procedure for the Development and Management of UOW Policy*, and *Policy Development Flowchart Policy Development Stages Checklist*; Victoria University of Technology - *Policy Documentation Development Information*. Policy on Policy statements were not located for: Charles Sturt University, University of Western Australia, Bond University, University of Otago.

- ⁷ The Public Policy Dictionary defines 'Delegation of Authority' as "The assignment of decision-making authority and responsibility to lower-ranking officials in a bureaucratic hierarchy" (1987, p15).
- ⁸ Whilst authority to establish 'Ordinances' at the University of Tasmania is enshrined in the *University of Tasmania Act 1992*, authority to develop 'Governance Level Principles' (GLPs) is provided through Council-approved *Ordinance 1 – Role of Council* (which states that Council has authority to develop policy) and *GLP 1 – University Governance* (which states that there will be GLPs on a range of areas). It may well be that as more policy is transferred across to the University Policy Framework the need for GLPs diminishes and the University of Tasmania would move further toward mainland university models where 'principles' are embedded in policy statements rather than Governance Level Principle statements.
- ⁹ Overall, the University of Wollongong's *Standard on UOW Policy* and associated *Procedure for the Development and Management of UOW Policy* represent a good practice approach. Quality features are also represented in the Victoria University of Wellington's *Policy Documentation Development Information* statement, Swinburne University of Technology's suite of documents, including the *Policy Framework* and *Policy and Procedure Development and Management* statement; and University of Adelaide's *University Policy Framework*.
- ¹⁰ At the time of writing, the *Policy Development and Review Policy* draft had been submitted to senior committees for endorsement, and approval was pending.
- ¹¹ Charles Sturt University maintained two Policy Websites reflecting their approach to policy presentation (i.e. an *Academic Manual* and *Administrative Manual*), both of which represented authoritative policy sources. Bond University did not appear to have a central Policy Website.
- ¹² **University Policy Framework** - within information provided about:
- Components (e.g. Policy, Procedure, Guideline, Standard, Unit/Work Instruction);
 - Approval authorities;
 - University policy development cycle.
- University Policy on Policy** - within links to Policy on Policy, and associated Procedure and Guideline.
- University Policy Repository** – with the following:
- Confirmation that the University Policy Repository is the authoritative source of policy;
 - Good search functionality (e.g. the ANU Policy Repository is searchable by topic, title, type, audience, alphabetical list);
 - Capacity to search the Policy Repository by policy category/theme (e.g. corporate, teaching and learning, research, community), which may reflect organisational structure to some extent;
 - An interface between the Policy Repository and individual policy documents (e.g. the Edith Cowan University Policy Summary page lists: policy code, title, keywords, summary, revision date, file number, Policy Owner, txt and pdf versions, direct URL and category information);
 - Consideration of the policy file format for ease of reading (e.g. html, pdf, txt, other; including screen readers for vision impaired).
- Policy Toolkit** – with links to:
- Policy on Policy (and associated Procedure and Guideline);
 - University policy development cycle flowchart;
 - Policy Templates (i.e. Policy, Procedure, Guideline, Standard, Work Instruction);
 - Policy Submission Coversheets;
 - Policy Review Submission Coversheets (i.e. no/minor/major amendment);
 - Policy Dictionary/Glossary of Policy Terms and Acronyms;
 - University Style Guides;
 - Policy Implementation Feedback / Issues Log;
 - Policy Workshops/Training Programs;
 - Policy Evaluation and Review Guide;
 - Frequently Asked Questions;
 - University Calendar.
- Policy News** – with:
- A list of policies under development;
 - Links to drafts policies for comment;
 - A policy review schedule (e.g. University of Wollongong Policy Review Schedule).
- Records Management** – with:
- Information about the university records management systems and links to relevant webpages;
 - Information about policy versioning;
 - Access to previous versions of policies in case of complaint/dispute;
 - Reference to university information / knowledge management.
- Legislation** – with links to:
- The foundation University Act;
 - Relevant Commonwealth and State Government legislation (e.g. through Legal Unit webpage)
- University Governance** – with links to the:
- University's Governance Unit and Council webpage;
 - Governance instruments (e.g. By-laws, Statutes, Ordinances, Rules, Regulations).
- Delegations of Authority** – with links to the:
- Delegations of Authority Policy or Register (where established).
- Codes of Conduct and Charters** – with links to the:
- University Codes of Conduct/Practice/Ethics (e.g. Teaching and Learning, Research, Graduate Research)
 - University Charter (where established).
- University Plans** – with links to the:
- University strategic plan;
 - Thematic plans (e.g. Teaching and Learning, Research);
 - Local plans.

University Committees – with links to:

- University governing body/council;
- Peak decision-making committees.

Agreements – with links to:

- Industrial agreements;
- Relevant high level Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs).

University Calendar / Important Dates

Policies by Category

- ¹³ Auckland University of Technology where no documentation was found (noting that much is staff restricted); and Edith Cowan University, where references to plagiarism were found in the *Assessment Policy* and *Academic Misconduct Rules*, but no discrete policy statement was located.
- ¹⁴ For example, the Australian National University *Policy: Code of Practice for Student Academic Integrity, Procedure: Code of Practice for Student Academic Integrity*; University of Technology Sydney *Student Charter*; University of New South Wales *Student Code of Conduct*; and Otago University 'Code of Student Conduct' in their *Discipline Regulations*.
- ¹⁵ For example, refer to the University of Western Australia *Plagiarism Statement, Guidelines on Plagiarism Detection Software: Minimum Essentials, Notes on Preventing Plagiarism, Recognising Plagiarism Checklist, A Brief Guide to Searching Online for Sources of Plagiarism and Plagiarism and Referencing: Guidelines and Penalties*, which support their comprehensive *Academic Conduct: Guidelines for Faculties and Other Teaching and Supervision Sections at UWA: Ethical Scholarship, Academic Literacy and Academic Misconduct*.
- ¹⁶ The University of Adelaide *Plagiarism Policy* (2009) specifically notes that: "University rules, policies and guidelines tend to focus on the punitive aspects of procedures rather than the educative and often fail to articulate to students why the conventions of citing and referencing are an integral part of developing scholarly writing skills, and why plagiarism is considered a serious offence in the academic environment" (p7). The University of Queensland's *Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy* (2006) is both non-legalistic and educative, and states, for example, that: "... learning rests on and builds on the work and ideas of others. However, it is important that students in their learning acknowledge, through appropriate referencing, earlier work and research from which they have drawn conclusions or interpretations or might advance new ideas. This is fundamental to the concept of academic integrity in the western tradition" (p2).
- ¹⁷ University of Queensland 2007, *Procedures for Dealing with Student Discipline and Misconduct Matters*, University of Queensland, Brisbane, viewed 5 March 2010, <<http://www.uq.edu.au/hupp/?page=25134>>.
- ¹⁸ University of Western Australia 2007, *Guidelines on Plagiarism Detection Software: Minimum Essentials*, UWA, Perth, viewed 19 February 2010, <<http://www.teachingandlearning.uwa.edu.au/staffnet/policies/conduct/plagiarism>>, pp3-4.
- ¹⁹ The University of Western Australia examined practical, legal and ethical issues associated with the introduction of plagiarism detection software in their *Guidelines on Plagiarism Detection Software: Minimum Essentials* (ibid). Swinburne University of Technology's *Plagiarism Policy* (2010) specifically "outlines the use of plagiarism detection tools, and details how these tools should be used primarily for educative purposes and as only one element of the overall strategy aimed at encouraging academic integrity, honest and ethical scholarly practice" (p2).
- ²⁰ For example, the Victoria University of Wellington's *Student Conduct Statute* (2008) states that "The University is committed to acknowledging the Treaty of Waitangi by working in partnership with Maori. The spirit of tikanga is to seek resolutions to disputes and complaints in a manner that encourages a facilitated open exchange of views with a view to seeking consensus and acceptance from all parties as to the resolution" (p6).
- ²¹ The University of Queensland 2006, *Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy*, Brisbane, viewed 12 March 2010, <<http://www.uq.edu.au/hupp/?page=25128>>.
- ²² University of Queensland 2007, *Procedures for Dealing with Student Discipline and Misconduct Matters*, Brisbane, viewed 12 March 2010, <<http://www.uq.edu.au/hupp/index.html?page=25134&pid=25134&ntemplate=674>>.
- ²³ University of Adelaide 2006, *Plagiarism Policy (unrevised)*, Adelaide, viewed 12 March 2010, <<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/policies/230>>.
- ²⁴ University of Western Australia 2004, *Guidelines for Faculties and Other Teaching and Supervision Sections at UWA: Ethical Scholarship, Academic Literacy and Academic Misconduct*, Perth, viewed 22 February 2010, <<http://www.teachingandlearning.uwa.edu.au/staffnet/policies/conduct>>.
- ²⁵ Charles Sturt University has a *Campus Environmental Committees Structure and Terms of Reference* statement; however this does not articulate university policy. Policy statements were not located for: University of Adelaide, University of Western Australia, Otago University or the Auckland University of Technology.
- ²⁶ The 'minimalist approach' results in Environment Policy provisions which:
- Confirm the university's commitment to meeting environmental obligations, locally and globally;
 - Commit the university to the implementation of 'best practice' environmental management (without stipulating detail);
 - Confirm the university's commitment to complying with relevant legislative and regulatory requirements;
 - Assert that the Environment Policy will comply with related university policy and meet ethical environmental obligations;
 - Commit the university to implementing generally non-specified environmental sustainability-related initiatives;
 - Promote broad 'green' principles (e.g. 'avoid, reduce, re-use, recycle'); and
 - Commit to undertake best practice environmental sustainability focussed teaching and research.
- ²⁷ Introduce a range of continuous performance monitoring, improvement and reporting processes (e.g. through the establishment of an Environmental Management System);
- Develop an Environmental Management Plan detailing principles, targets and initiatives;
 - Establish an Environment Committee with responsibility for overseeing university environmental sustainability-related initiatives, monitoring and reporting systems;
 - Promote environmental awareness and community outreach; and
 - Minimise environmental risk(s).
- ²⁸ Victorian University of Wellington 2008, *Environmental Policy*, Victorian University of Wellington, viewed 5 March 2010, <<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/facilities.aspx#environment>>.
- ²⁹ Victorian University of Wellington 2008, *Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Guidelines*, Victorian University of Wellington, viewed 5 March 2010, <<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/facilities.aspx#environment>>.
- ³⁰ University of Wollongong (staff restricted), Bond University, Edith Cowan University, Auckland University of Technology

-
- ³¹ University of Queensland, University of Adelaide, University of Western Australia, University of Technology Sydney, Otago University, Auckland University of Technology
- ³² Charles Darwin University, Charles Sturt University, Australian National University, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Swinburne University of Technology
- ³³ Compliance (Awards; Industrial Agreements; and Legislation (e.g. *NZ Holidays Act 2003*)).
- Purposes
- *Personal reasons* (e.g. compassionate grounds – illness, family, cultural, or carer responsibilities; supplement to parental leave; or for recreational, sporting or vacation purposes);
 - *Mutually beneficial to University and applicant* (e.g. education; professional development; secondment; alternative short-term employment; consultancy; research); and
 - *In the national interest* (e.g. employment with a government or public body; appointment under an international assistance scheme; or contesting Federal or State Parliament elections).
- Eligibility and Assessment Criteria
- Category of staff (e.g. continuing and fixed-term staff; probationary staff; casual staff excluded);
 - Paid leave balance (i.e. balance must be exhausted, other than for applications for carer responsibilities, secondment, or appointment under international assistance scheme);
 - Operational needs of relevant work or organisational unit;
 - Likelihood of return to work following completion of leave without pay;
 - Capacity to keep the applicant's position open during the period of leave without pay;
 - Consideration of alternatives (e.g. secondment or staff exchange); and
 - Exceptions at the discretion of the Approval Authority.
- Minimum / Maximum Time Limits
- Minimum: 1 hour/1 day/12 hour security shift;
 - Maximum: 1/2/3 years;
 - Maximum time limits may differ depending on the stated purpose for leave without pay;
 - Leave without pay may be taken on a part/full-time basis; and
 - Extensions at the discretion of the Approval Authority.
- Approval Authority
- Approval Authorities clearly stated; and
 - Differentiation based on leave without pay application length.
- Impact on Other Entitlements (e.g. LWOP over 20 days)
- Calculation of continuity of service;
 - Accrual of annual leave, sick leave and long service leave;
 - Eligibility for parental leave, study assistance and the special studies program;
 - Granting of salary increment(s);
 - Workers Compensation;
 - Probation;
 - Payment for public holidays; and
 - Exceptions at the discretion of the Approval Authority.
- Superannuation Arrangements
- Responsibilities (Manager/Supervisor; and Applicant (e.g. re-arrange salary deductions; Superannuation; remain informed of university activities)).
- Application Procedure
- Complete *Application Form*;
 - Applicant agreement to exhaust accrued/accruing paid prior to taking leave without pay;
 - Approval process; and
 - Return to work notification provisions.
- Advice
- ³⁴ University of Technology Sydney 2007, Leave Without Pay Guidelines, University of Technology Sydney, viewed 18 March 2010, <<http://www.hru.uts.edu.au/manual/4cond/conditions.html#4.6>>.
- ³⁵ Charles Darwin University did not have a Credit Policy however the *Students Policy* made minor reference to credit. Searches did not locate the ANU Credit Policy or Bond University Credit Policy.
- ³⁶ Some Credit Policies specifically refer to the *Credit Transfer Principles: Guidelines on Recognition of Prior Learning*, and *Guidelines on Cross-Sector Qualification Linkages and Provision of Education to International Students Code of Practice and Guidelines for Australian Universities*.
- ³⁷ Some Credit Policies refer to the *National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students, 2007*.
- ³⁸ Some Credit Policies specifically refer to the Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board, *National Principles and Operational Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning, 2002* and *Guidelines on Cross-Sectoral Qualifications Linkages, 2002*.
- ³⁹ For example, the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) register of Higher Education providers, the National Tertiary Information System (NTIS) register of Registered Training Organisations (RTO) and National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR).
- ⁴⁰ For example, agreements in place include the *Group of Eight Credit Transfer Agreement (March 2007)* and *Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN) Guidelines*.
- ⁴¹ Swinburne University of Technology 2008, *Credit Transfer – TAFE Policy and Procedure*, Swinburne University of Technology, viewed 29 March 2010, <<http://www.swinburne.edu.au/corporate/registrar/ppd/>>, p3.
- ⁴² Credit Transfer Agreements – Approvals Policy, Credit Transfer and Exemptions – Higher Education, Credit Transfer and Exemptions – TAFE, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – Higher Education, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – TAFE, Swinburne Credit Transfer Database
- ⁴³ Advanced Standing Policy, Guidelines for Assessing Courses of Other Institutions for Entry Into, and Advanced Standing for, ECU Courses; Advanced Standing Appeal Guidelines.

University Library



MINERVA
ACCESS

A gateway to Melbourne's research publications

Minerva Access is the Institutional Repository of The University of Melbourne

Author/s:

Freeman, B

Title:

Benchmarking to identify good practice university policy frameworks

Date:

2010-11-01

Citation:

Freeman, B. (2010). Benchmarking to identify good practice university policy frameworks. Tertiary Education Management Conference 2010, TEMC.

Persistent Link:

<http://hdl.handle.net/11343/290753>