

UK Research and Innovation

Guidance on Operational Policy Development

Guidance statement

This document is to ensure a structured approach to UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) operational policies. It acts as a framework to ensure that UKRI policies are:

- Reflective of regulations and best practice, and up to date,
- Considered for equality impact assessments,
- Clear, easy to understand and unambiguous,
- Easily accessible to employees across the organisation.

The document sets out best practice in the development of policies and authors and/or owners should follow this as far as possible.

Management Statement

This document is for policy owners and authors to follow in development and review of operational policies. The guidance is owned by UKRI Governance and is applicable across all functions of UKRI,

This document is guidance rather than policy but is in a policy format to aid drafting policies.

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1. [Policy Template](#)

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Scope

1. This document provides guidance on developing operational policies for all UKRI functions (e.g. Finance, HR, IT, Grants etc.). The scope does not include external facing scientific or strategic policy. These different types of policies are described below:
 - 1.1. **Operational policies** provide frameworks for day-to-day general management. Operational policies translate strategic policy into practical actions. All policies of this type are in scope of this document.
 - 1.2. **Scientific policies** have a direct impact on the research carried out (directly or indirectly) by UKRI. Policies of this type are not in scope of this document.
 - 1.3. **Strategic policies** have an overall impact on the direction of UKRI, typically framed in a business case context or high-level strategic direction, e.g., UKRI will not fund research that directly advances weaponry. Policies of this type are not in scope of this document.

Principles

2. A policy ensures that there is an effective and efficient framework in place to give sufficient, continuous and reliable assurance on organisational stewardship and the management of the major risks to organisational success and delivery of improved, cost effective, public services.
3. The need for a policy may arise for several reasons:
 - A new or amended piece of legislation,
 - Developments in best practice,
 - To help employees do their roles,
 - Government direction.
4. A policy can only be developed where there is a clear operational benefit. The more detailed operational instructions for particular activities are not considered as policies. The overall intent is to minimise the number of policies.
5. The Head of Function is the policy owner for policies related to that function. They will assess the impact of a policy when considering the most appropriate approval route which could include the People, Finance & Operations Committee, UKRI Executive Committee, UKRI Remuneration & Nominations Committee, or UKRI Board. The Head of Governance should be contacted when a policy is ready to publish and be communicated.
6. Whilst UKRI is committed to ensuring that policies are in place to cover key procedures, these policies should not place excessive administrative burden on employees or managers. Therefore, policies must be:
 - 6.1. Usable and accessible to the audience that the policy serves.
 - 6.2. Support modern agile working, based on eligibility rather than entitlement and reinforce the UKRI commitment to being a good and fair employer.
 - 6.3. Support line managers in making decisions.

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- 6.4. Reduce dependence on central functions through greater line manager discretion and accountability.
7. Policies perform a different role than guidance. Policies are formalised statements that apply to a specific function or task. Policies are mandatory, e.g., non-compliance of a policy may lead to disciplinary procedures. Guidance is general and written as recommendations. It is important for UKRI to have a clear distinction between guidance and policy, as it helps line managers and employees understand expectations. As such:
 - 7.1. Policies need to reduce prescriptive process descriptions. Any descriptions of substantial length should not form part of the policy and instead appended as guidance.
 - 7.2. It is important to consider language when developing policies, as documents that confer rights and obligations on employees may be determined as contractual in a court of law. Policies considered contractual need consistent application, which is not necessarily the case for non-contractual policies. This is regardless of any policy or guidance labelling.
 - 7.3. If a policy does not confer specific rights or obligations, then this may prove a test to whether the document is guidance rather than an operational policy.
8. The Governance team will maintain policies for consistencies and ensure regular reviews take place by the responsible Head of Function in consultation with the appropriate stakeholders.
9. Trade Unions have a mandatory role in reviewing policies that affect employees, particularly their terms and conditions of employment. Non-contractual policies require meaningful consultation, whereas contractual policies may require negotiation. This is in line with the UKRI Trade Union Recognition Agreement.
10. A policy that affects employees can be both contractual and non-contractual, so will need to include consultation by the UKRI Governance team with the HR Function so that the difference between the two needs is clearly and visibly defined. Text boxes around contractual elements is one way of achieving this and using the management statement is the best way to define the difference. However, it may be clearer to articulate the difference as policy and appended guidance.
11. Any policy development should consider risk in line with the risk policy and associated guidance (The Governance - Risk team will be able to advise). This may include:
 - 11.1. What risk(s) is the policy managing
 - 11.2. What is the risk to UKRI should the policy not be implemented on schedule?
 - 11.3. Details of any potential outcomes that may result in risks to the UKRI?
 - 11.4. How will the risks be mitigated/managed?
12. All policies must contain a document control sheet, which clearly articulates the owner, author(s) and approval bodies. An example of a control sheet is located with the policy template referenced on the front page of this document. Placing the control sheet at the end of the document ensures that it can easily located without interfering with the usability and accessibility of the actual policy.

Delegation

Heads of Function (as the Policy authors and owners) have the responsibility and freedom to amend policies in compliance to the guidance set out in this document. The UKRI Head of Governance has responsibility to ensure adherence to the principles of this document. Non-compliance may result in a request to rewrite a policy.

Appendix A - Style Guide

General Principles

1. The UKRI policy template will ensure consistent format across all UKRI operational policies. A reference to the template is on the front page of this document.
2. All policies must be developed in line with UKRI's [Brand Essentials](#) guidelines and house style. Policies should use plain English and avoid excessive use of specialist terminology, technical jargon, and acronyms.
3. All policies should have the potential for release into the public domain and therefore should not include any sensitive or confidential material.
4. All policies should adhere to standard document versioning. V0.1, V0.2 or V1.1 etc. for minor drafts and V1.0 and V2.0 for major published drafts.
5. All policies should have simple titles to enable employees and managers to access those using 'search' functions.
6. All policies will reference the relevant source documents e.g. the name of an Act of Parliament, nationally produced guidance, or industry standard guidance.
7. All policies should make clear compliance implications and should outline how the policy will be enforced, monitored and how non-compliance may be addressed.
8. Good content is essential to ensuring we communicate effectively with our audiences. The UKRI Content Style Guide provides information that will help ensure that research councils produce clear, consistent and user-friendly content.

Policy Statement

9. The policy statement is a high-level summary of what the policy requirement is; it's better short and to the point and should;
 - Answer a question, e.g. does this protect UKRI from a particular risk?
 - Be written in the third person, e.g. UKRI is committed to, or UKRI takes the view that.
10. The policy statement should be included in a text box to highlight it from the main document and should form the opening statement of the actual policy content or located on the front page.

Management Statement

11. The management statement summarises the management position on the policy or guidance, indicating the visible distinction between the two.

Contents

12. This contents section should list the main headings of the document and all appendices, with hyperlinks to the actual document sections.

Policy Scope

13. The policy should describe the application. Examples include, this policy applies to UKRI HR Services only or this “policy applies to all UKRI office employees, whether permanent, temporary, contractors, consultants, or secondees.
14. If needed the policy can give more background about the policy if it helps to better articulate the scope.

Aims and Objectives

15. The Aims and Objectives section should cover the standards and values of the policy and describe the objectives.
16. It should also clearly articulate any consequences of non-compliance with the policy if there are any. This should be defined in consultation with the HR Function

Delegation

17. The delegation section should make clear who has authority to make decisions within the policy, be that Heads of Function, designated roles or line managers etc.

Additional Information

18. To ensure maximum usability, the main policy section should be as short as reasonably possible. Beyond that, authors must consider whether the remaining content is guidance.
19. The additional content could be a separate guidance document, appendix, or annex. The distinction of the three types of additional information is described below:
 - 19.1. Use separate guidance documents when it makes sense to break the policy from the guidance. An example being, a policy that has both an internal and external scope but the guidance just one.
 - 19.2. An appendix is a supplement to a document, usually of an explanatory guidance or statistical or data nature. Typically, this is where the majority of additional guidance information is located.
 - 19.3. An annex is an attachment that could be a standalone document in its own right, usually an additional policy or paper.

Approval and Sign-Off

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20. The Head of Function is the policy owner for policies related to that function and will be responsible for signing and maintaining those policies, working with the Governance Team and other departments as appropriate.

Appendix B – Policy Development Considerations

Assessments

1. Policy authors need to consider whether the policy has any impact on equality. An Equality Impact Assessment can help consider how the policy will affect different groups of people in different ways. The Governance – Risk team are able to provide guidance on Impact Assessments.
2. Further impact assessments may need consideration depending on the subject of the policy. This may include a data impact privacy assessment, a security impact assessment, an environmental impact assessment, and a financial impact assessment, Fraud impact assessment as required. The Governance- Risk team can provide guidance on Impact Assessments.
3. The policy owner has the responsibility ensure the necessary impact assessment(s) is completed as part of the policy development.

Consultation with stakeholders

4. Consultation with relevant stakeholders is imperative during policy development and it is a recommendation that this commence at an early stage. Identify stakeholders by mapping those with an interest and influence on the policy and consider their needs when implementing too.

Publishing policies

5. The policy owner is responsible for storing the master copy of the policy on the relevant UKRI site and Workday equivalent as appropriate. HR and Finance policies need cross referencing with the UK SBS Knowledgebase page.

Implementation

6. It is a recommendation that policy owners/authors consider an implementation plan alongside any policy development Implementation plans details the process of defining how to bring the policy objective to life.

Reviewing Policies

7. It is important that policies be subject to regular review to ensure they remain current. Each policy must have a review date set at an appropriate interval, with the maximum period of three years (from the date the policy gains approval to review completion).
8. The review should consider if the policy achieved what it set out to. This may include:
 - Can changes in the document enable it to reach a higher level of achievement?
 - Does the requirement for the policy still need addressing?
 - Has there been changes to legislation or Government guidance that affects the policy
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- Is the policy therefore still required or has the issue changed and the policy amended accordingly?