# HOW TO PREPARE POLICIES, REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

# A GUIDE
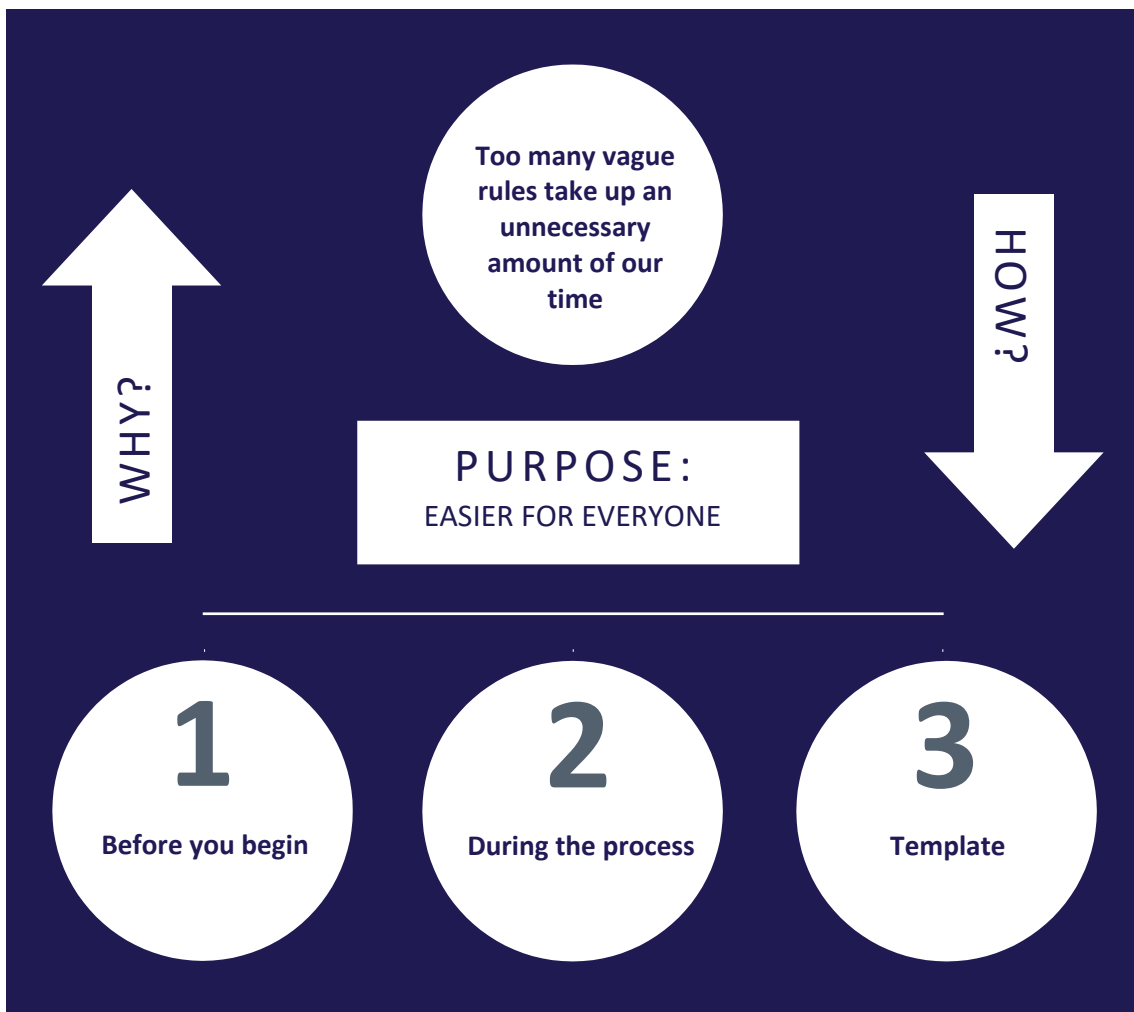
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# WHY?

At Aalborg University, we want our internal policies, regulations and procedures to be simple and meaningful; they should be easy to use and easy to understand.

But this is not always an easy task. This guide will assist you in the process.

This guide includes three steps:

Step 1) Before you begin
Step 2) During the process
Step 3) Template

The purpose of this document is illustrated in the model below:

Too many vague rules take up an unnecessary amount of our time

WHY?

HOW?

PURPOSE:
EASIER FOR EVERYONE

**1**
**Before you begin**

**2**
**During the process**

**3**
**Template**

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## POLICY, REGULATION,

Policies, guidelines, administrative procedures, manuals, procedures, instructions... We have many names for all sorts of documents.

It would be advantageous for us all if we seek to weed out the many different titles and stick to just a few. We recommend using one of the terms below. Policies, regulations and procedures must be complied with.

### POLICIES
Our policies define the overall values which we wish to follow. Policies must be complied with.

### REGULATIONS
Our regulations describe how we have decided to do certain things within the organisation. Regulations must be complied with.

### PROCEDURES
Our procedures describe how regulations must be interpreted and complied with in practice. Procedures must be followed.

## OUR LEGAL EXPERT EXPLAINS

### POLICIES
A policy provides an overall description of an issue. It provides a benchmark against which the performance of a predefined area may be measured. A policy must be complied with; not in a literal sense, but it must govern the direction of an area. A policy must not include regulations on the administration of an area. Instead, the practical administration of an area must be defined in regulations and procedures; moreover, best practice guidelines and interpretations should not be included in a policy. A policy must define its intended implementation and observance within the organisation, such as through the issuing of regulations, the appointment of committees overseeing a specific area, etc. Example: Staff Policy for Aalborg University

### REGULATIONS
A regulation stipulates an approved set of rules regulating activities or processes within an organisation. Regulations have previously been defined as 'instructions' or 'guidelines'. Regulations are stipulated by persons or bodies authorised to issue regulations; moreover, regulations are applicable to those concerned and must be observed at all times. In the event that a specific process or activity is not governed by regulation, interpretative aids, such as policies, minutes from meetings or previous cases, etc. may be used. When you prepare a set of regulations, you must also consider whether these should include a procedure or whether the individual units covered by the regulations must establish individual administrative procedures. Example: Delegation of the Rector's Authority

### PROCEDURES
Procedures describe how regulations must be interpreted and complied with in practice. Procedures are often defined as 'administrative procedures' or 'manuals'. Procedures aim to provide examples of how individual cases may be dealt with and specify where in the organisation and how they must be dealt with. Procedures may need to be prepared as a result of new external regulations being issued (legislation, ministerial orders) and internal regulations. Example: Application Process for Academic Staff

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## REFLECT FOR A MOMENT: DOES THIS NEED TO BE WRITTEN –

We have many policies, regulations and procedures. In many cases, these may be very helpful, but it might also get out of hand. We do not want this to happen. Some of them are also difficult to understand and therefore, difficult to comply with. We are not interested in such documents.

Therefore, before deciding to prepare a new policy, regulation or procedure, you must consider whether this is indeed the best option – and if so, how you might go about it in the best possible way. Below, you'll find a list of important questions which might help you clarify whether you need to prepare a policy, a regulation or a procedure.

### IS THIS ALREADY COVERED BY LEGISLATION?
If the area is already covered by current legislation, preparing an internal policy/regulation is unnecessary. However, preparing an internal procedure or an internal summary of the legislation applying to a specific area might be relevant.

### DO WE ALREADY HAVE A POLICY/REGULATION/ PROCEDURE FOR IT?
Avoid repetitions; thoroughly go through existing documents to see whether similar policies/regulations/procedures exist.

### IS IT NECESSARY?
Consider whether preparing a policy/regulation/procedure is necessary. Would the document solve a general problem, or does it merely address an isolated issue? If the latter is the case, you should not prepare a policy/regulation/procedure.

### DOES IT CREATE ADDED VALUE?
Would the policy/regulation/procedure improve the work of you and your colleagues by making your work easier or making you more productive – or could it bring about

### ARE THERE ANY EXCEPTIONS?
Can you think of any cases in which the regulation/procedure should not apply? Or any cases in which certain parts of the regulation/procedure might need to be omitted? This might be the case for procedures covering large projects vs. small projects, since the processes might differ. You might want to set a triviality limit or prepare two sets of documents that allow your users to work with both a simple and extended model.

### SHOULD THIS BE ASSIGNED TO YOU?
Should this task be assigned to you, or would it be more appropriate if another staff member within the organisation were to prepare this particular policy/regulation/procedure?

### HAVE YOU INVOLVED RELEVANT COLLEAGUES AND STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PROCESS?
In preparing policies/regulations/procedures, it is essential that you remember to involve relevant colleagues and other stakeholders and include those with special knowledge of the area (or their representatives) in the process.

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## EFFECTIVE WRITING

Communicating clearly in writing can be difficult, and writing effectively so that your readers understand the message and actually want to read it is particularly difficult. Below, you'll find useful tips for effective writing.

Before you move on to our writing tips, you'll need to ask yourself a few relevant questions using these 4 helpful 'WH words'. These questions should help you write a comprehensible, clear and interesting text.

## 4 HELPFUL 'WH WORDS'

### WHY?
Why is this important? Why do I need to write this? What issue does this address? Look ahead: Which particular situation do I want to create, and which particular situation do I want to avoid? Look back: Are there any past experiences, good or bad, that I need to take into account?

### WHO?
Who is this relevant to? Does this address an issue which the reader is already familiar with? In which particular situation will this be read?

### WHAT?
What do I want to tell my reader? Can I arrange the information in headlines/themes? What are the key points I need to communicate first? How can I organise my text?

### HOW?
How do I make my text comprehensible? How do I make my text clear? How do I make my text interesting?

## WRITING TIPS

### USE ACTIVE LANGUAGE
Address your reader directly.
This makes your text more accessible and relevant to your reader. Use 'you' and 'we' instead of the passive voice. For example: ~~Participation is not a requirement.~~ You are not required to participate.

### MAKE YOUR POINT
Avoid long and complex sentences – and get to the point.
– Consider if you could leave out parts of the text without interfering with comprehension.

### TAKE YOUR READER BY THE HAND
Consider how you can write a text that helps your reader; your text should be useful and not be an obstacle. For example, using headlines and bullet points improves readability.

### EDIT YOUR TEXT
Avoid using long words when short words will do, and reduce unnecessary and outdated words and phrases. This makes your text clear and easy to read. For example: ~~Provided that an approval is available, we will initiate the process.~~ Once approved, we will start the process.

### READ BETWEEN THE LINES
Consider how your choice of words frame your text. Many words contain attitudes and values.

### GET THE TONE RIGHT
Remember to write in a respectful and proper tone – and consider that tone is also in the punctuation. For example, using too many exclamation marks (!) will make your text 'shout'.

# A COMMON STANDARD

A common standard makes it easier for everyone to navigate our policies/regulations/procedures.
Use the template to structure your text.

| | |
|---|---|
| TITLE | A short, descriptive and unambiguous title |
| SUBTITLE | This might be a subordinate or more detailed title, such as TECH-FSU 15.8 |
| PURPOSE AND SCOPE | Provide a brief description of the policy/regulation/procedure and any cases in which it may not be applicable. |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | If your document is lengthy, generating an interactive table of contents allows for your readers to easily find and access the section they need to read. |
| CONTENTS | Insert the text of the policy/regulation/procedure. Remember to use the writing tips on page 5 of this document. |
| ORIGIN, BACKGROUND AND HISTORY | Provide information on when and on what grounds the policy/regulation/procedure was prepared, revised and approved as well as information on the department/unit and person responsible for this. You may also specify any special circumstances that may apply to the termination of the document. |
| OVERALL FRAMEWORK | Is this policy/regulation/procedure related to any other policies/regulations/procedures to which you may need to refer? This applies to internal as well as external framework documents, such as legislation, collective agreements etc. |
| CONTACT/RESPONSIBILITY | Provide information on which department/unit is responsible for the policy/regulation/procedure and who to contact with questions etc. |
| DEFINITIONS | If the document uses any terms or definitions which might be unfamiliar to your readers, please provide a description of these in this section. |
| APPENDIX | Insert links to the appendices at the end of the document. Remember to supply each appendix with a descriptive title to allow easy access to relevant appendices. |

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