

Policy Writing Guide

Introduction

Policies and procedures are an important part of governance at the College of New Caledonia (CNC or “the College”). These documents guide employees and students through specific situations, and ensure fairness, transparency, and consistency.

Policies and procedures should be written in simple, easy to read language. When readers understand a policy, they are more likely to follow it.

The difference between policies and procedures

Many policy developers have questions about the differences between policies and procedures. Here is a brief summary of the purpose for each document.

Policies establish guidelines and principles that guide decision-making and set the College’s direction for a particular topic area. Policies also establish scope (to whom and in what situations a policy does and does not apply).

Procedures are narrower in focus; they outline specific steps to carry out the policy. They state acceptable practices, set boundaries, and establish who is responsible for each step of the process.

Procedures may be updated and reviewed more often, without always needing a review of the related policy and its underlying principles.

Procedures are not the same as an instruction manual or guide. Instead, procedures give high-level steps for how to follow the policy. Instruction manuals or guides may also be developed to give more detailed instructions or advice to employees or students.

Getting started

You can find an overview of each of the steps for policy development and review on the [CNC Policy webpage](#). In this guide, you will find tips and suggestions for how to research, plan and write policy documents.

Policy Work Approval & Research

Before starting to draft or review a policy it is important to reach out to the Executive Committee member responsible for the policy (known as the Executive Sponsor) to discuss your proposed policy work. With their support, you can then submit one of the following forms for the Executive Sponsor's review and approval:

- [Policy Development form – Admin](#)
- [Policy Revision form – Admin](#)

Policies that fall under Education Council (EdCo) must be taken to EdCo for discussion. If the group is in favour of the policy work, the Policy Subcommittee Chair completes the Policy Review and Development form and approves the work.

Once the policy work has been approved, you can begin initial policy research and planning.

For policies approved by the Executive Committee, the PPS team will provide a Teams site to coordinate the policy development or review. The site will have editable versions of all existing policy documents (such as the policy, procedures, and related forms) along with additional resources and support.

The PPS team will also provide you with a policy scan to help you review similar policies and procedures at other Canadian colleges and universities to provide a starting point for your policy work. During the review, pay attention to the approval date as more recent policies tend to better reflect current legislation or best practices

Use the approved CNC policy templates

CNC uses templates to make sure policies and procedures are organized consistently and include all essential information. These templates are available through [Policy, Planning & Strategy](#).

Use plain language and accessibility principles

CNC intends for all new policies to be written using plain language principles. As existing policies are reviewed, plain language principles will be added wherever possible. Additionally, it is important to review all policy documents, including any related forms, for accessibility.

We encourage you to read [CNC's Plain Language Guide](#) on the CNC Policy Webpage. This easy-to-read guide explains how to use plain language principles in your writing and why this is important.

Prior to beginning your first draft, we encourage you to answer the following questions:

- Who is going to be reading and using the policy documents?
- What is their reading comprehension level?
- What words might they not understand?
- Will this policy be used in emergencies or high stress situations? (In these situations, it is extra important to be clear and concise)

Once you have identified your audience, try to understand their needs and how they might use the information.

Create an outline

It is helpful to create an outline to organize your thoughts before attempting to write a draft policy or procedures. Your outline does not need to be fancy or complicated. Simply write key topic areas keeping similar ideas together.

As you build your outline, try different formats such as organizing information chronologically, by responsibility, or by order of importance. It is much easier to move information around on an outline than in a fully-written policy or procedures document. If you are reviewing or developing a policy on behalf of a team or an administrator, it is also recommended that you get their feedback on the outline before you start writing.

While it's tempting to skip this step, building an outline often saves time in the long run.

The example below shows how using an outline to first organize similar information together makes it easier for the reader:

Example 1	Example 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College is responsible for tracking employee and student completion of the annual training • Employees and students will complete the training each September • The College will develop the online training and review it annually for necessary updates 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. College Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College will develop online training and review it annually for necessary updates • The College is responsible for tracking employee and student completion of the annual training 2. Employee and student responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees and students will complete the training each September

Follow the policy style guide

All CNC policies and procedures follow the [Canadian Press \(CP\) Stylebook](#). The Communications team and PPS team both have subscriptions to the online CP Stylebook should you have questions.

Additional style guidelines for policies and procedures documents include:

- Follow the [CNC Brand Guidelines](#)
- Use Open Sans fonts
- Align left, do not justify the text
- Capitalize:
 - CNC department names
 - Position titles
 - “College” when referring to CNC
- Italicize:
 - CNC policy names and numbers (for example, *Academic Conduct E-1.29*).
- Language:
 - Follow [CNC’s Plain Language Guide](#)
 - Avoid words that imply choice (for example, “should” or “may”), unless choice is intended
 - Keep sentences short and to the point
 - Avoid using jargon or “legalese” language
 - Write using an active voice, in the third person, and using present tense
 - Use as few words as possible to clearly state the policy – edit ruthlessly
 - Acronyms and initialisms must be spelled out completely the first time used with the acronym following in brackets
- Definitions:
 - Provide definitions for technical words and those that have multiple meanings or may be unfamiliar to the reader
 - Contact Policy, Planning & Strategy for a list of existing definitions prior to developing new ones to avoid contradiction between policies
 - Definitions should be listed alphabetically

If you need more help

The PPS team is available to provide policy support including:

- One-on-one policy writing overview sessions
- Templates and guides
- Research
- Editing, proofreading, and formatting
- Leading policy development or review teams
- Collecting and compiling stakeholder feedback

The type of support available depends on the type and scope of the policy, the capacity of the PPS team, and direction from the Executive Committee.

The Policy, Planning & Strategy team is here to help.
Contact us at policy@cnc.bc.ca or extension 5283.