



POLICY FRAMEWORK POLICY

Policy Document Administrator	Chief Operating Officer
Policy Document Approver	Board of Directors
Responsible Body/Person	Board of Directors
Next Review date	August 2028
Superseded documents	None
Related documents	<i>ACT Glossary</i> <i>ACT Style Guide</i> <i>Document Development Procedure</i> <i>Document Dissemination Procedure</i> <i>Policy Document Register</i> <i>Policy Document Templates</i>
Related HE Standards	1.1, 2.2, 2.4, 5.2, 6.1.3, 6.2, 6.3
Related National Code Standards	Standards 6, 7, 8, 10

1. PURPOSE

To set up a policy framework and procedure which ensures consistent, consultative and effective policy for the Australian College of Theology.

2. DEFINITIONS

ACT is the Australian College of Theology Limited.

ACT Body is any board or committee established for the proper functioning of the ACT.

ACT Glossary is the set of word and term definitions to be used in all ACT documentation.

ACT Style Guide is a document setting out standards of style for matters such as spelling, punctuation and other editorial decisions, which applies to all ACT documentation.

ACT Website is the website for the ACT, at www.acttheology.edu.au

Affiliated College is an institution approved to offer an accredited higher education award of the ACT.

Dean of the ACT means the Dean and Chief Executive Officer of the ACT.

Guidelines are a **policy document**. They are similar to **rules** in that they clarify application of policy. However, unlike rules, no sanctions are specified. Rather, guidelines operate at the level of recommendation. They suggest how to comply with policy, often with a particular issue or narrower scope. They can explain how policy can be understood in certain cases. They help to ensure best practice. Guidelines require less formal approval.

Policies are **policy documents**. They are statements that provides principles for how the ACT and its Affiliated Colleges will act in a particular area, in line with ACT



objectives and relevant standards. These principles guide how decisions will be made within this area. Policies impact the behaviour and decisions of the institution as a whole. They usually require approval by a high level body, such as the Academic Board. They are also useful for educating the ACT community about the aims of the ACT, and their own responsibilities and benefits.

Policy Documents are any documents which come under the Policy Framework.

Policy Document Approver is the approving body, such as a committee or board, or approving person, such as the ACT Dean, for a particular policy document.

Policy Document Administrator is the officer responsible for ensuring a particular policy document is properly administrated according to the *Policy Framework Policy*.

Policy Document Register is the central registry of all policy documents, detailing their owners, approvers and updating schedule.

Policy Document Templates are the approved pro-forma documents for setting out the different policy document types.

Policy Framework is the system and hierarchy of policy documents, set out in the *Policy Framework Policy*.

Procedures are **policy documents**. They describe how policy, rules or other objectives will be put into action. Procedures outline step by step who is responsible, what steps need to be taken, and what forms or documents are to be used.

Responsible Body/person is delegated the authority to manage a policy document by the document approver.

Rules are **policy documents**. They are less formal than a policy. They tend to have more limited scope than a policy, and are approved at a lower level. They may clarify how a policy is applied in a particular case. They differ from guidelines in that they define what will be accepted, and specify sanctions if the rules are not followed.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all policy documents of the ACT, and to all staff and Affiliated Colleges involved with such documents at any point of the policy document cycle, the life cycle of a policy document, from development to review.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

The Australian College of Theology requires all its business to be conducted in alignment with its policy documentation. This ensures that the ACT and its Affiliated Colleges operate in ways that are fair, transparent and of the highest standard.

5. PRINCIPLES

Policy Framework

5.1.1 The policy framework comprises four main document types: policy, guidelines, procedures and rules. All of these are known as policy



documents for the purposes of this framework. The definitions of each type in this policy provide guidance as to which type is appropriate in which circumstances. The *Document Development Procedure* also details how to choose a policy document type.

- 5.1.2 Every policy document should be consistent in its principles with every other policy document. In any case of inconsistency, the higher level policy should be followed. A higher level policy is that which is owned by the higher level ACT body.

Authority

- 5.2.1 Authority for every policy document is as outlined on the policy document, and recorded in the Policy Document Register.
- 5.2.2 The body or person who approves a policy document is known as the Policy Document Approver.
- 5.2.3 The Policy Document Approver can delegate their authority to manage a policy document to another responsible person or body and this should be included within the document.
- 5.2.4 Authority to approve any particular policy document includes the authority to repeal or amend that document.
- 5.2.5 The Policy Document Approver nominates an officer who is responsible for the administration of a policy document, who is known as the Policy Document Administrator.
- 5.2.6 The **Dean of the ACT** has authority to amend the presentation of policy and related documents, such as implementing relevant document templates, drafting changes without any change of substance, inclusion of clarifying statements, and any consequential changes as a result of changes to other policies or ACT structure.

Development

- 5.3.1 Development of all policy documents should follow the *Document Development Procedure*.
- 5.3.2 Based upon the scope of the document, relevant stakeholders or their representatives should be given a chance to respond to any new or amended policy document before it is approved.

Approval

- 5.4.1 Every policy document needs to be approved in the due process set out by its Policy Document Approver.
- 5.4.2 Policy documents should only be approved if the document is determined by its Policy Document Approver to be:
- a) In accordance with the principles of regulatory necessity, risk and proportionality as applied to the higher education sector in Australia



- b) Necessary to achieve the objects of the ACT as set out in the ACT Constitution
- c) Consistent with the values of the ACT
- d) Consistent with relevant law
- e) Consistent with any relevant higher level policy documents

Policies

- 5.5.1 Policies are binding. They outline principles for how the ACT and its Affiliated Colleges will act in a certain area in line with ACT objectives and relevant standards.
- 5.5.2 The authority to develop or amend policy is given to the relevant ACT board or committee as set out in the Policy Document Register.

Rules

- 5.6.1 Rules are binding. They serve to clarify how policy is implemented in particular situations and circumstances.
- 5.6.2 The authority to develop or amend rules is given to the responsible body or person who has responsibility for the area in which the rules will apply, unless otherwise stated in a relevant policy.

Procedures

- 5.7.1 Procedures are not binding, unless explicitly determined to be so within policy or rules. Procedures serve to aid implementation of policy or rules.
- 5.7.2 Procedures to implement policy can be developed by the responsible body or person of the policy or rules to which they are related.

Guidelines

- 5.8.1 Guidelines are not binding, instead serving to aid understanding or implementation of policy or rules.
- 5.8.2 Guidelines to aid in implementation or understanding of policy or rules can be developed and approved by the Policy Document Administrator of the document to which they are related.

Consistency

- 5.9.1 Every policy document should follow the *ACT Style Guide* and be written in clear English.
- 5.9.2 Definitions and terms should be taken from the *ACT Glossary* where possible. If specific definitions are needed for any particular document, this must be spelt out within the Definitions section of the document.
- 5.9.3 Each type of policy document has its own template which should be used in developing or revising the document. The most up to date version of the template should be used. The Document Development Procedure sets out the details of these templates.
- 5.9.4 Every policy document must include a record of the Policy Document



Approver, and the responsible body/officer if different from the Approver.

- 5.9.5 Every policy document must include a record of the dates of approval and effective dates of each version (see further Document Control below). Every policy document must include a record of when it is next due for review.
- 5.9.6 Every policy document must include a statement of purpose and a defined scope for the document.

Effectiveness

- 5.9.7 ACT's Higher Education Standards Framework Education Standards Register, which is maintained by the Higher Education Standards Review Group and reported to the Academic Board, outlines the quality assurance mechanisms related to each relevant Higher Education Standards Framework requirement. This ensures that ACT maintains the ability to demonstrate achievement of the Higher Education Standards, and ensuring the effectiveness of the relevant policies which contribute to compliance.
- 5.9.8 Where practicable, policy documents should identify explicit mechanisms for measuring the effectiveness of the organisation in achieving the objectives of each policy.

Legality

- 5.10.1 All policy documents should conform to any relevant legislation.
- 5.10.2 Any such related legislation should be detailed in the policy document.

Attribution

- 5.11.1 All policy documents should reference any documents either referred to within the documents or utilised in any significant way in their development.
- 5.11.2 ACT documents referred to should be listed as related documents, and any external documents should be included in a reference list.

Review

- 5.12.1 The *Policy Framework Policy* is to be reviewed every four (4) years, or earlier where needed.
- 5.12.2 The schedule of review of all policy documents is as set out in each document, and as documented in the Policy Document Register.
- 5.12.3 Unless otherwise determined by the Policy Document Approver, every policy document should be reviewed every two to four years.
- 5.12.4 In the event of a review not being conducted at the set time, the Policy Document Approver needs to give good reason why the review has been delayed, which will be entered into the Policy Document Register.
- 5.12.5 Reviews should consider whether:
 - a) The policy document is still consistent with the ACT mission, values and practice



- b) The policy document is still consistent with higher level policy
- c) The policy document is still consistent with relevant law, and
- d) Whether the policy document is achieving its objectives. In considering whether the policy document is achieving its objectives, the policy review should consider any existing or new explicit mechanisms for measuring the effectiveness of the policy objectives.

5.12.6 The review can decide to maintain, amend or repeal a policy document.

Policy Document Register

- 5.13.1 A register of all policy documents is to be kept by the ACT, maintained by all Policy Document Administrators. This register is known as the *Policy Document Register*.
- 5.13.2 The Policy Document Register is available to all ACT Staff, and on request by any member of the Board of Directors.
- 5.13.3 Access to various policy documents themselves is determined by the Policy Document Approver. This forms part of the dissemination range.

Dissemination

- 5.14.1 Policy document dissemination should follow the *Document Dissemination Procedure*.
- 5.14.2 Once a policy document is ready for dissemination, the Policy Document Administrator should be responsible for disseminating the policy and updating the Policy Document Register, preferably within one business day.
- 5.14.3 The dissemination range of the policy document, which includes who has access to it and who needs to be informed of changes, should be based upon the stated scope of the document. It is to be set by the Policy Document Approver.
- 5.14.4 Policy documents are to be disseminated at least by updating them on the ACT website as soon as practicable after any approval as well as any relevant further relevant notifications to stakeholders.

Document Control

- 5.15.1 In order to ensure the most recent version of policy documents are being used, all requests for policy documents should be referred to the relevant 'permalink' for the policy document on the ACT website wherever possible.
- 5.15.2 A history of amendments to a policy document should be included in a version history in the document, and each policy document should be labelled with its version number.

Higher Education Standards Framework

- 5.16 All policy documents should include references to the key areas of the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#)



6. RELATED LEGISLATION

[Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#)

7. REFERENCES

[Macquarie University Framework Policy](#)

[The University of Sydney \(Policies Development and Review\) Rule 2011](#)

[The University of Sydney Policies Development and Review Procedures 2012](#)

8. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Changes made
1	Board of Directors	01 August 2020	01 August 2020	New document
2	Board of Directors	17 August 2024	17 August 2024	Policy review; improvements to practice; updates to related documents; inclusion of explicit mechanisms for measuring the effectiveness of policy objectives
2.1	Board of Directors	14 October 2024	14 October 2024	Insert authority for Dean of the ACT to undertake limited changes to policy and related documents

Any hard copy of this electronic document may not be current as the ACT regularly reviews its policies. The latest version can be found online at <https://www.actheology.edu.au/documents/>