

# UW System Administrative (SYS) Policy Orientation Guide

The University of Wisconsin [System Administrative \(SYS\) Policy series](#) is a comprehensive set of policies that apply to the Universities of Wisconsin (except for policies in the 1200 series which do not apply to UW-Madison). These policies utilize consistent formatting and templates, as well as a standard review practice to ensure that key stakeholders can provide feedback on new policies before they are implemented. The Office of Administrative Policies oversees the drafting and revision of SYS policies, procedures, and guidelines and manages communications to stakeholders regarding policy changes.

This document describes the different policy practices of UW System Administration (UWSA), including the rationale for and types of policy drafting/revisions, the two committees organized to review draft documents, the feedback and approval processes, and the annual policy prioritization process.

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## **POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND GUIDELINES**

The SYS policy series includes three types of documents with different levels of authority. All utilize standard templates and review processes. A more detailed description of the document types is as follows:

**Policy-** The UW System Administrative policy set falls into two general areas:

1. Academic and Student Affairs Policies
2. Finance and General Administration Policies

In both categories, policies are developed to establish standards to comply with applicable laws, regulations, and Regent Policy Documents. Policies apply universally to all UW institutions, except policies in the 1200 series which apply to all institutions except UW-Madison. Policies are designed to promote efficiency, reduce risk, and/or enhance operational objectives of the Universities of Wisconsin.

**Procedure-** Procedure documents list action steps required to implement and comply with SYS Policies. They may include specific instructions and forms to assist in complying with the policy they support.

**Guidance-** Guidance documents support policies by providing best practices or advice on interpreting or complying with a policy.

## **POLICIES ON POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

All development of system administrative (SYS) policies is governed by the provisions of [SYS 1, \*Development, Revision, and Approval of UW System Administrative Policies, Procedures, & Guidelines\*](#), which promotes consistency in formatting, timely updates, and communication practices across the policy set.

Division of Academic and Student Affairs policy development (100 series) is further governed by [SYS 2, \*Development Revision, and Approval of Academic and Student Affairs Policies\*](#).

Finance and General Administrative policies (200 series-1200 series) include topics such as human resources, finance, procurement, risk management, and information security. These policies are also subject to the provisions of [SYS 3, \*Development, Revision, and Approval of Finance and General Administration Policies & Procedures\*](#).

## **REASONS FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT, REVIEW, AND REVISION**

There are many reasons for policies, procedures, or guidance to be considered for development or revision, including:

- New external regulations that necessitate the drafting of a SYS policy to enact requirements;
- Changes to external regulations that conflict with current policy;
- Changes to internal processes that do not reflect content of current policy;
- Scheduled review date triggers the review and reconsideration of the policy content.

Sometimes these needs can be anticipated in advance and are included in the Annual Policy Prioritization Plan that is drafted by the Office of Administrative Policies with input from institution stakeholders, policy owners and UWSA leadership. This plan helps stakeholders to anticipate the distribution of the burden of policies to review in the coming year and is utilized to guide the Office of Administrative Policies work, though emerging priorities also come up throughout the year. It is finalized and distributed to campuses in late June, just prior to the start of the new fiscal year.

For a more detailed timeline of the prioritization process, see [Appendix A- Annual Policy Prioritization and Policy Priorities Plan](#).

## TYPES OF POLICY REVISIONS

The Office of Administrative Policies distinguishes between three different types of policy/procedure/guideline revisions.

- **Substantive:** Amendments to policies, procedures, or guidelines that change the meaning or intention of the document. Substantive revisions go to the relevant policy committee (see below) and institutions for review before being routed for signature and approval.
- **Technical:** Amendments to policies, procedures, or guidelines that do not provide substantial change to the content or meaning of the document. Examples of technical amendments include, but are not limited to, updates to formatting, updates to contact information, changes in office names, cross-references to additional information, and rate changes. Technical revisions go to the relevant policy committee for review (but do not go to the institutions) before being routed for signature and approval.
- **Typographical:** Amendments to policies, procedures, or guidelines that correct typos in the document (spelling errors or capitalization errors) or fix broken hyperlinks. Typographical revisions do not require review or re-approval.

## RESOURCES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY OWNERS AND RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS

The [Resources for Administrative Policy Owners and Responsible Officers](#) page contains links to templates and the policy style guide to assist in policy writing and encourage formatting consistency in the SYS Policy series.

## REQUIRED DOCUMENTS FOR POLICY REVIEW

If you have a policy/procedure/guideline to be included in the policy distribution cycle, provide the Office of Administrative Policies graduate fellow with the following documents (templates available on the [Resources for Administrative Policy Owners and Responsible Officers](#) webpage):

- Clean proposed document
- Tracked changes document from previous version (not used for new policies)
- Policy summary document

## POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEES

There are two policy review committees within UWSA. Both committees meet monthly to discuss policies, procedures, and guidance documents being drafted or revised.

The Finance and General Administrative Policy Committee (FGAPC) is chaired by the Vice President for Finance and Administration (or their designees) and consists of Associate Vice Presidents and representatives from offices including Procurement, Budget and Planning, Capital Budget and Planning, Learning and Information Technology Services, Human Resources, Financial Administration, General Counsel, University Relations, Information Security, and Compliance, Integrity & Risk Management, as well as a representative from the Office of the Board of Regents and the UW System Senior Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer. The chair of the Division of Academic and Student Affairs Policy Committee (ASAPC) also serves on the FGAPC to facilitate the transmission of information between groups. Committee

members help to draft policies from their business areas and perform initial reviews of Finance and General Administrative policy, procedure, and guidance drafts. They also participate in other aspects of the policy review process and consult on initiatives from the Office of Administrative Policies.

The ASAPC is composed of one representative from each of the following areas or their designee: Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs (who chairs the committee or appoints a designee to do so), the Vice President for Finance and Administration, the Associate Vice President of Policy Analysis and Research, Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, Associate Vice President of Enrollment & Student Success, Associate Vice President of UW Extended Campus, UW System Senior Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Officer, and Chair of Finance and General Administrative Policy Committee (FGAPC). This committee reviews drafts of Academic and Student Affairs policies, procedures, and guidance documents at their monthly meetings before voting to include the drafts in the institution distribution.

## **POLICY REVIEW PROCESS**

Newly drafted or substantively revised policies, procedures, and guidance documents are first reviewed by the relevant policy committee and UW System President and leadership team. They are then sent out to representatives from the institutions for review and comment. Distributions are always sent to Chancellors, Provosts, Chief Business Officers, Senior Student Affairs Officers, and Senior Diversity Officers, as well as a list of individuals identified by their institution's leadership who receive all policy communications. Other groups (such as Chief Human Resource Officers or Chief Information Officers) are also included in the distribution for comment depending on the subject matter of the policies for review.

For a complete look at the FGAPC's monthly policy review processes, see [Appendix B- FGAPC Policy Review Cadence](#).

For a detailed description of the ASAPC's policy review practices, see [Appendix C- ASAPC Policy Review Cadence](#).

## **POLICY APPROVAL**

Once a policy owner has determined that a policy, procedure, or guidance document is ready for finalization and that all comments have been considered, the final documents (including the clean copy, tracked changes document, and policy summary) are sent to the Office of Administrative Policies graduate fellow for a final review and packaging. The Office of Administrative Policies utilizes DocuSign to obtain the necessary signature for a policy, procedure, or guidance document to be approved.

**Policies-** SYS Policies are reviewed by the Policy Analyst, Division of Finance and Administration, the Associate Vice President or Director over the policy subject area and the responsible System Vice President. They are then approved by the System President.

**Procedures-** SYS Procedures are reviewed by the Policy Analyst, Division of Finance and Administration and the Associate Vice President or Director over the policy subject area and are then approved by the responsible System Vice President.

**Guidance-** SYS Guidelines are reviewed by the Policy Analyst, Division of Finance and Administration and the General Counsel. They are then approved by the responsible Associate Vice President or Director.

After all necessary signatures have been obtained in DocuSign, the graduate fellow updates [the UW System Administrative Policies & Procedures](#) webpage with the new content.

After the document has been signed, the Office of Administrative Policies drafts a communication that summarizes the changes and distributes the message via email to the Provosts, Chief Business Officers, Senior Student Affairs Officers, Chief Diversity Officers, and other relevant campus stakeholders. A newsfeed story is also posted on the [UW System Administrative Policies & Procedures](#) website.

## **SCHEDULED REVIEW DATE PRACTICES**

All new and recently revised SYS policies have a scheduled review date that prompts the policy owner to re-evaluate the policy's content to ensure it is still up-to-date and accurate. The standard review period is five (5) years after the most recent revision.

Six (6) months before the scheduled review date, the Office of Administrative Policies sends the policy owner an email reminding them of the upcoming scheduled review date and prompting them to begin looking over the policy's content. (At this point the policy owner should also look at any associated procedure or guidance documents to ensure alignment with the policy and current practices.) Three (3) months before the date, follow-up will be conducted at the FGAPC or ASAPC meeting to ensure that the policy owner has looked at the policy and begun drafting any necessary revisions.

If no content revisions need to be made, the Office of Administrative Policies graduate fellow will work with the policy owner to process a technical revision that changes the scheduled review date to inform readers that the policy has been reviewed and is still up to date.

If substantive revisions are required, the new clean version, tracked changes document, and policy summary should be presented to the FGAPC no later than the month before the scheduled review date to ensure time for review and approval before the scheduled review date.

## **INTERIM POLICY ACTIONS**

Interim Policy Actions have a faster review cadence and are reserved for addressing high level concerns that require a policy be in place sooner than would be allowed by the full SYS policy review process, or temporarily amending/waiving provisions of an existing policy. The implementation of interim policy actions is governed by [SYS 1, Development, Revision, and Approval of UW System Administrative Policies, Procedures, & Guidelines](#).

Interim Policy Actions are drafted by policy owners/subject matter experts. We require that a summary document also be completed, which includes a justification for the interim action as well as a summary of the content the interim action addresses or amends. Following the drafting of the interim action, the policy is approved via DocuSign by the policy analyst, relevant associate vice president, relevant vice president, and the UW System President. Following this approval, the interim action updates the UW System Administrative Policies & Procedures webpage with the new content. Interim Policy Actions will have an expiration date, which is no longer than one year after the action is approved. The action may be extended under extraordinary circumstances. If revisions need to be made to the action prior to its expiration, the revisions follow the same approval process as the original Interim Policy Action.

## Appendix A- Annual Policy Prioritization and Policy Priorities Plan Timeline

- **University recommendations (February-April):** The annual policy prioritization process begins in March with a request for campus leadership to provide feedback on up to five (5) policies per campus they believe should be drafted, revised, or rescinded in the coming fiscal year. The four systemwide Shared Governance groups (Academic Staff, Faculty, University Staff, and Student Government Representatives) are also offered the ability to provide up to five (5) policy priority proposals. The policy analyst will reach out in February to each of the Shared Governance Statewide Representative Councils to schedule a meeting to explain the process and provide a timeline. Shared Governance Groups are encouraged to connect with university leadership, as well as their stakeholders on campus when developing their recommendations. Feedback from the Shared Governance groups must be consolidated and submitted by the chair of each Systemwide Representative Council.
- **Policy owner priorities (May):** The Office of Administrative Policies compiles this feedback and sorts it by policy series. These recommendations are then provided to the relevant policy owner to discuss with their team. Policy owners are given three (3) weeks to consider the feedback and develop their comprehensive list of policy priorities (including new policies, policy revisions, and policy rescissions) with the quarter that they would like to target for distributing the policy (if known). Each policy owner provides their list of priorities to the Office of Administrative Policies graduate fellow. Policy owners take the recommendations from university stakeholders into consideration, but ultimately may not include all university recommendations in their list as they must work within the constraints of required policy work and time/workload limitations.

The graduate fellow reviews the priorities for all policy series and compiles them into one comprehensive memorandum from the UW System Vice Presidents and the Chancellors, Provosts, Chief Business Officers, Senior Student Affairs Officers, and Senior Diversity Officers.

- **Vice President Review (June):** UWSA Vice Presidents are provided a copy of the draft memorandum to review and ensure they agree with the policy priorities listed for their area.
- **President Review (June):** After the Vice Presidents agree with the memorandum, the Office of Administrative Policies provides the draft to the President for awareness and verbal approval.
- **Vice President Signature (June):** The Office of Administrative Policies graduate fellow loads the final memorandum into DocuSign for signature by the UWSA Vice Presidents.
- **Policy Priorities Plan Distribution (end of June):** The Office of Administrative Policies distributes the Policy Priorities Plan to institutions prior to the beginning of the new fiscal year to inform campuses of the anticipated policy work in the coming year so they can plan and begin resource allocation.
- **Quarterly Policy Priorities Updates:** Throughout the year, quarterly memoranda from the Policy Analyst, Division of Finance and Administration to the UW System Vice Presidents are shared with the institutions to track progress against this plan.

## Appendix B- Finance and General Administrative Policy Committee Policy Review Cadence

The following table contains the key FGAPC dates and deadlines for the current calendar year. A detailed description of each step can be found below.

Distribution Month	Deadline to Request Assistance with Draft Policy Documents*	Deadline to Submit Draft Policy Documents*	Date of FGAPC Distribution	Deadline for FGAPC Review	FGAPC Meeting	Date of University Distribution	Deadline for University Review
December	Nov. 22, 2024	Nov. 29, 2024	Dec. 2, 2024	Dec. 16, 2024	Dec. 18, 2024	Dec. 20, 2024	Jan. 10, 2025
January	Dec. 27, 2024	Jan. 3, 2025	Jan. 6, 2025	Jan. 21, 2025	Jan. 22, 2025	Jan. 24, 2025	Feb. 14, 2025
February	Jan. 24, 2025	Jan. 31, 2025	Feb. 3, 2025	Feb. 17, 2025	Feb. 19, 2025	Feb. 21, 2025	Mar. 14, 2025
March	Feb. 21, 2025	Feb. 28, 2025	Mar. 3, 2025	Mar. 17, 2025	Mar. 19, 2025	Mar. 21, 2025	Apr. 11, 2025
April	Mar. 28, 2025	Apr. 4, 2025	Apr. 7, 2025	Apr. 21, 2025	Apr. 23, 2025	Apr. 25, 2025	May 16, 2025
May	Apr. 25, 2025	May 2, 2025	May 5, 2025	May 19, 2025	May 21, 2025	May 23, 2025	Jun. 13, 2025
June	May 23, 2025	May 30, 2025	Jun. 2, 2025	Jun. 16, 2025	Jun. 18, 2025	Jun. 20, 2025	Jul. 11, 2025
July	Jun. 27, 2025	Jul. 3, 2025	Jul. 7, 2025	Jul. 21, 2025	Jul. 23, 2025	Jul. 25, 2025	Aug. 15, 2025
August	Jul. 25, 2025	Aug. 1, 2025	Aug. 4, 2025	Aug. 18, 2025	Aug. 20, 2025	Aug. 22, 2025	Sep. 12, 2025
September	Aug. 22, 2025	Aug 29, 2025	Sep. 2, 2025	Sep. 15, 2025	Sep. 17, 2025	Sep. 19, 2025	Oct. 10, 2025
October	Sep. 26, 2025	Oct. 3, 2025	Oct. 6, 2025	Oct. 20, 2025	Oct. 22, 2025	Oct. 24, 2025	Nov. 14, 2025
November	Oct. 24, 2025	Oct. 31, 2025	Nov. 3, 2025	Nov. 17, 2025	Nov. 19, 2025	Nov. 21, 2025	Dec. 12, 2025
December	Nov. 21, 2025	Nov. 28, 2025	Dec. 1, 2025	Dec. 15, 2025	Dec. 17, 2025	Dec. 19, 2025	Jan. 9, 2025
January	Dec. 26, 2025	Jan. 2, 2026	Jan. 5, 2025	Jan. 20, 2026	Jan. 21, 2026	Jan. 23, 2026	Feb. 13, 2026

- **Deadline to Request Assistance with Draft Policy Documents**
  - If committee members need assistance drafting the documents required for policy review, they let the graduate fellow know.
- **Deadline to Submit Draft Policy Documents**—1 week later
  - Committee members send policy review documents for every policy being distributed that month to the graduate fellow.
- **FGAPC Distribution**—following Monday

- The graduate fellow sends committee members links to, and summaries of all policies/procedures being considered that month.
- Committee members have 2 weeks to review the included policies with the specific lens of how the policy/policy revisions would interact with policies/practices in their area.
- **Deadline for FGAPC Review**—2 weeks later
  - Policy owners with policies in that distribution are provided with the committee's feedback and have 4 days to make any revisions before the policy is sent to institutions for comment.
- **FGAPC Meeting**—2 days after feedback is due
  - Hour-long meeting of the committee to discuss policies progress in the administrative policy review cycle. Discussion includes policies in many stages of the cycle, including:
    - Policies from that month's FGAPC distribution (opportunity for policy owners to ask questions of commenters if they have any concerns about the feedback provided);
    - Policies that have already been distributed to the institutions for feedback (policy owners provide an update on final revisions being considered to address feedback and an estimate of when the policy will be ready for final signatures and approval);
    - Policies from the policy priorities plan slated for review/consideration in the current quarter (policy owners provide and estimate of the month that they anticipate the policy being included in the distribution cycle);
    - Policy implementation review of policies that were approved in the last 60 days (opportunity for policy owners to report on any issues or further feedback that they received from stakeholders adjusting to compliance with the new policy);
    - Other administrative items (report from the Office of Administrative Policies about proposed enhancements to the policy process or initiatives (such as scheduling the next year's FGAPC meetings and the annual policy prioritization process); and
    - A review of key dates in the policy distribution cycle for the upcoming three months.
- **Policy revisions based on internal review due**--1 day after FGAPC meeting
  - If policy owners would like revisions based to policies in the distribution based on committee feedback, they send revised documents to the Office of Administrative Policies graduate fellow for inclusion in the institution distribution.
- **Institution Distribution**—Friday after FGAPC meeting
  - Institution representatives (Provosts, CBOs, SSAOs, SSEOs, CDOs, other groups relevant to content of policies included such as CIOs or CHROS, Shared Governance representatives, and individuals identified by campus leadership) are sent an email with links to and a brief summary of all policies/procedures being considered that month. This message also may include notice of approved policies, notice of upcoming policy effective dates, notice of upcoming interim policy action expirations, monthly summaries of policy work completed, and quarterly memos of policy worked expected in the upcoming quarter
  - The length of the institution comment period varies based on the policy content and number of policies in the distribution. The standard period for Finance and General Administrative policies is 3 weeks, unless discussed with the policy owner. The standard



period for Division of Academic and Student Affairs policies is 60 days. The date and time on which feedback is due will be listed under the list of policies/procedures being considered that month.

- A distribution reminder will be sent out at the end of the second week. The reminder contains the same information as the original distribution, but may contain additional notices.
- **Deadline for Institutional Review**—3 weeks after original distribution
  - Policy owners with policies in the distribution are provided with the institution's feedback. Policy owners are encouraged to review the feedback with their teams and utilize the fields in the feedback form to internally respond to the feedback and make any necessary revisions. Institution comments and concerns, along with the response from the policy owner will be included in the policy summary.
  - The policy analyst may also individually follow up with commenters, providing them with a response from the policy owner regarding their comment. This follow up would occur prior to a notice of approval being sent out.
  - Policy owners provide updates to the FGAPC in subsequent monthly meetings until the policy is approved.

## Appendix C- Division of Academic and Student Affairs Policy Committee Policy Review Cadence

- **Second Tuesday of Month 1-** First reading
  - The policy owner presents the proposed policy revisions to the ASAPC during their monthly meeting.
  - Committee members are given an opportunity to ask questions and provide comments or recommendations for further revisions. Policy owners respond to this feedback and, if necessary, make further revisions before the next month's meeting.
- **Second Tuesday of Month 2-** Second reading
  - The policy owner presents the proposed policy revisions to the ASAPC during their monthly meeting. If no revisions are made, the policy is still presented to the ASAPC a second time.
  - Committee members are again given an opportunity to ask questions and provide comments or recommendations for further revisions.
  - The committee takes a vote on the readiness of the policy for institution review. If the policy passes, it will be included in the current month's institution distribution. If the policy does not pass, the policy owner responds to the additional committee feedback and makes further revisions before the next month's meeting.
- **Thursday before institution distribution (generally 9 days after second reading)-** Policy materials due
  - Policy owners with policies in the distribution revised documents to the Office of Administrative Policies graduate fellow for inclusion in the institution distribution.
- **Friday (2 days later)-** Institution distribution
  - Institution representatives (Provosts, CBOs, SSAOs, SSEOs, CDOs, other groups relevant to content of policies included such as CIOs or CHROS, Shared Governance representatives, and individuals identified by campus leadership) are sent an email with links to and a brief summary of all policies/procedures being considered that month. This message also may include notice of approved policies, notice of upcoming policy effective dates, notice of upcoming interim policy action expirations, monthly summaries of policy work completed, and quarterly memos of policy worked expected in the upcoming quarter
  - The length of the institution comment period varies based on the policy content and number of policies in the distribution. The standard period for Division of Academic and Student Affairs policies is 60 days. The date and time on which feedback is due will be listed under the list of policies/procedures being considered that month.
- **(60 days later)-** Institution feedback due
  - Policy owners with policies in the distribution are provided with the institution's feedback. Policy owners are encouraged to review the feedback with their teams and utilize the fields in the feedback form to internally respond to the feedback and make any necessary revisions. Institution comments and concerns, along with the response from the policy owner will be included in the policy summary.

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- Policy owners provide updates to the ASAPC and the Senior Advisor, Division of Academic and Student Affairs, updates the FGAPC in subsequent monthly meetings until the policy is approved.