



## DEVELOPING APPROACHES, SYSTEMS AND RESOURCES FOR UNIVERSITY POLICY REVIEW

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Source: <http://www.gapingvoid.com/now%20what.jpg>

- Method and research questions
- Place of policy review in university meta-policy
- University policy suite review projects
- Review models
- Emerging picture of policy review
- Challenges
- Approaches, systems and resources
- Triggers for policy review
- Conclusion



Examined policy research literature and publicly accessible Australian university meta-policy (37 public and 3 private, where available)

Three research questions:

- How does university meta-policy **define policy review**?
- How does university meta-policy **prescribe policy content** and **policy implementation review**?
- What **approaches, systems and resources** have been established for policy review?

**Caution:** many inconsistencies in documentation examined

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**University policy** - formal statements of principle generally housed in university policy repositories.

**Meta-policy** - ‘policy on policymaking, that is, policy dealing with the characteristics of the policymaking system’ (Dror, 1971, p. 3).

**University meta-policy** – ‘policy on policy’ or ‘policy framework’ or equivalent which establishes the range of university policy instruments, specifies approval authorities, articulates policy development (and possibly review) cycle and defines the application of policy instruments.

**Evaluation** - ‘systematic assessment of the operation and/or outcomes of a program or policy, compared to a set of explicit or implicit standards, as a means of contributing to the improvement of the program or policy’ (Weiss, 1998, p. 4).

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Most universities (65%) have meta-policy.

Where there is meta-policy, most refer to *policy review* (either in meta-policy or associated documentation) in terms of:

- review **timeframes** (in most)
- **discrete review stages** or **requirements** in the policy cycle (some) and
- explicit reference in the **policy title** (6) (Monash, VU, Sydney, Flinders, UTAS and CQU).

A small number have developed review resources.





Review is defined as *‘an investigation into the extent of implementation, effectiveness, and currency of a policy and, where appropriate, its associated procedures’*

(University of the Sunshine Coast, 2010, p. 1).

Policy review must determine *‘whether the objectives of the policy are being achieved by the policy; ... whether the policy should continue to apply; and ... whether any amendments should be made to the policy’*

(University of Sydney, 2011, p. 8).

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University meta-policy conceptualises ‘policy review’  
as review of **policy text (content)**  
and/or **policy implementation (effectiveness)**





## PRESENTATION

## PRACTICE

### Focus of review - is policy:

- formatted to template
  - simple (accessible)
  - correctly categorised
  - written consistently
- accurate (reflect practice)
  - compliant (with legislation, strategy and delegations)
  - benchmarked for good practice

(continuum)







## PRESENTATION

## PRACTICE

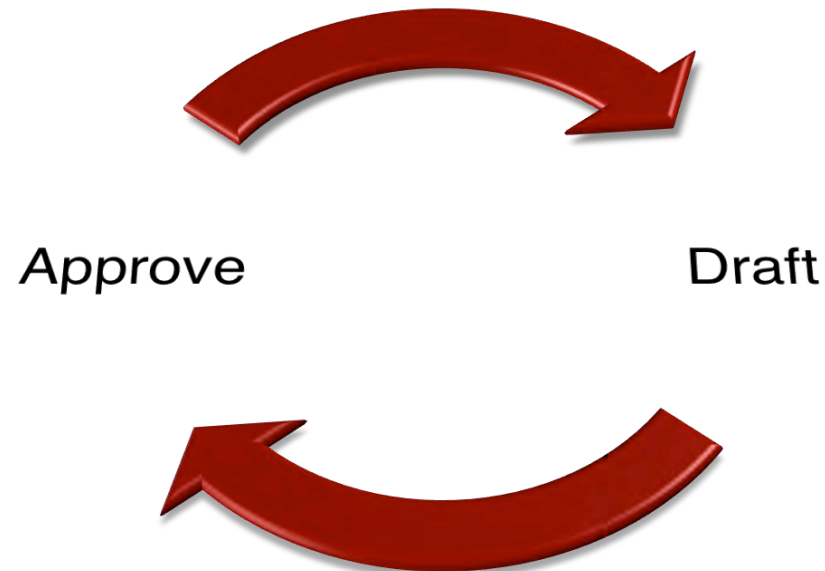
### Focus of meta-policy:

- policy templates
- policy instrument definitions
- policy categories
- differences between policy and procedures

- benchmarking to identify good practice
- implementation monitoring
- evaluation requirements
- review regime

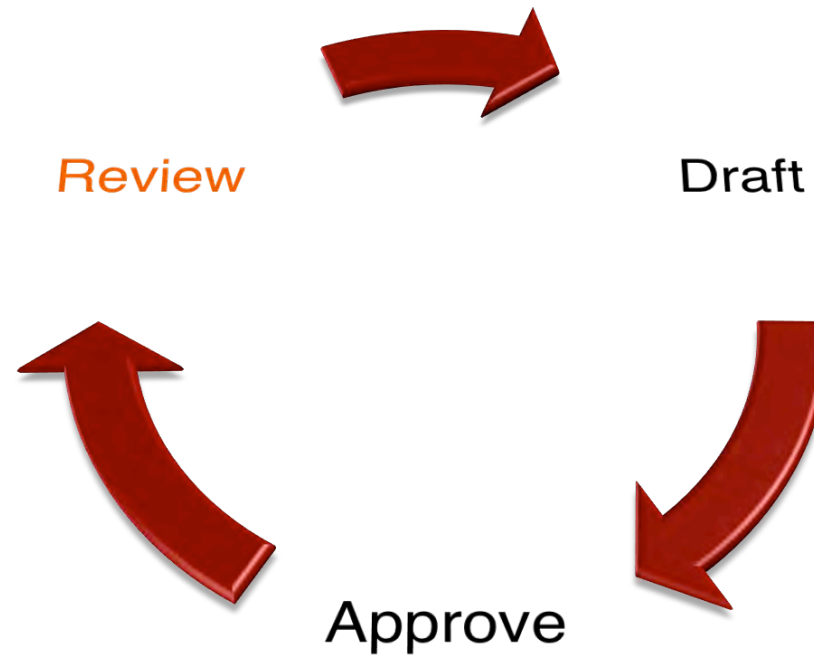
(continuum)





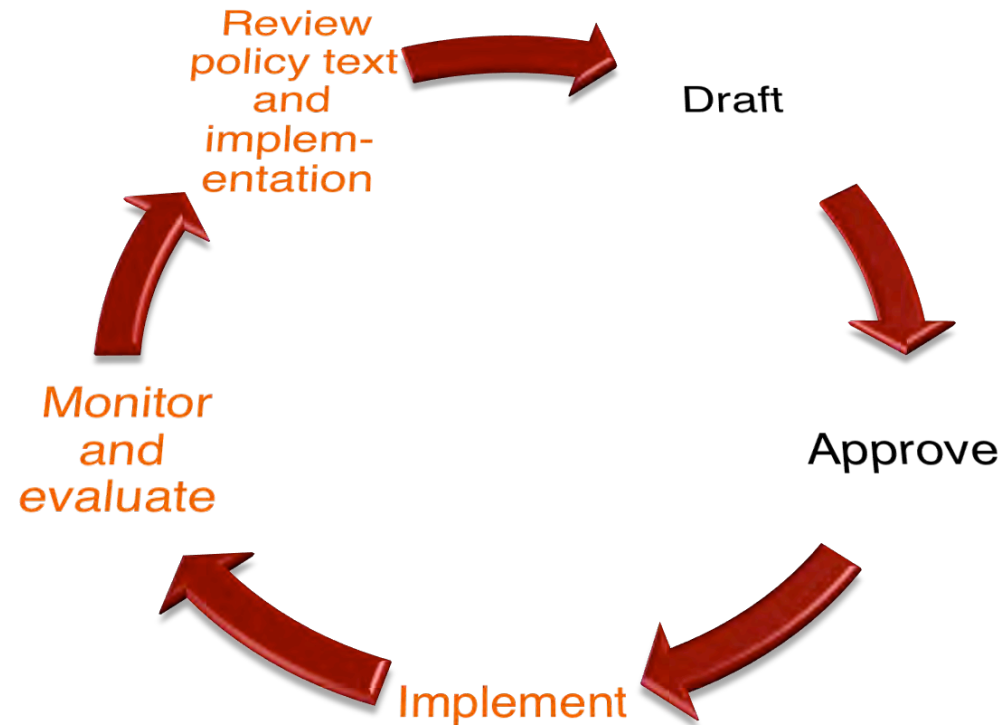
Model A – Policy cycle with no review phase  
[note: for the purposes of this exercise,  
other cycle stages are hidden]

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Model B – Policy cycle with review phase following approval

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Model C – Policy cycle with implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review phases



- Review frequency: 3 years (majority where defined consistently)
  - Picture emerging of universities struggling to keep to established review schedules
  - Policies overdue for review
  - Review schedules highlight overdue reviews
  - Few provisions for breaches (exception: Swinburne University *Policy Framework*)
  - What is the issue (timeframes, resources, capacity or something else)?
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Need to clarify different approval authorities:


- initial and review approval
  - categories of policy (academic/admin)
  - policy instruments
  - review outcomes (no amendment, minor amendment, substantive amendment, rescission)
  - consequential amendments
  - amendments to delegations of authority
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- Few resources (e.g. [VU](#), [Macquarie](#), Ballarat, UTAS, Wollongong, UWS)
  - Few systems (e.g. [Adelaide](#), Wollongong, Swinburne and UTS issue logs; [Ballarat online database](#); [RMIT](#) and [Wollongong review schedule](#); SCU and USQ policy registers noting review timetables)
  - Some universities make drafts available online (Ballarat, [UTAS](#), UNE, Curtin)
  - There is an urgent need for resources and capacity building in monitoring, evaluation and review
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Policy review may be triggered by factors along a continuum:

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- minor amendments to position titles or nomenclature
  - changes to information technology systems (student, \$, HR, research)
  - significant issues or discrepancies revealed via implementation
  - benchmarking which suggests alternatives or identifies additional good practice principles
  - significant institutional risks requiring an urgent policy response
  - changed professional association accreditation requirements
  - shifts in university strategy
  - amendment to subordinate university legislation requiring consequential policy amendments
  - structural reform (amalgamation, entities, overseas footprints)
  - change to government legislation, regulation or higher education policy





Consideration of:

- **internal factors** (nomenclature, IT-based systems, structure, strategy and planning, legislation)
- **external factors** (professional accreditation requirements, government reform, regulatory authority developments such as those occurring through TEQSA, overseas jurisdiction requirements)
- policy content (**text**)
- policy implementation (**examination of current practice**)



Recommendation – University meta-policy should:

- be detailed about **policy presentation** and **implementation** review requirements
  - include requirements for implementation **monitoring**, formal implementation **evaluation**, and formal **policy review**
  - identify **approval authorities** for initial and subsequent review
  - **anticipate** all review **outcomes** (no amendment; minor or substantive amendment; rescission; consequential amendments; delegations amendments)
  - identify review **timeframes** consistently
  - require **draft revised policy** documentation to be made **publicly available** to promote broad consultation
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Changes at the University of Melbourne include:

- introduction of **new *Policy on Policy***, with explicit provisions regarding policy review (including monitoring, evaluation and review; various approval authorities; review outcomes)
  - new **Policy Consultation webpage** to complement **Melbourne Policy Network** (450 members)
  - **Feedback Form**
  - **Issues Log**
  - **Policy Review Schedule** (what, when, who)
  - **Information Sheet – Policy Review**
- .... need: **evaluation and review capacity building and ongoing professional development**
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- Policy review is emerging at the “pointy end” of the university policy agenda now that universities have established comprehensive suites of academic and administrative policy and online policy repositories.
  - Attention is now required to embed policy implementation monitoring, evaluation and review.
  - This will require a fundamental shift in focus from policy presentation to policy practice.
  - This will also require evaluation and review capacity building and the development of review resources and systems to tackle this challenge.
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THE UNIVERSITY OF  

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MELBOURNE