Operational policy framework

1. Overview

This mandated framework provides structured and mandatory steps for the development and review of operational policy within the department.

The term 'policy' used in the framework refers to operational policies, procedures, guidelines, frameworks and standards.

2. Scope

2.1. In scope

This framework applies to all departmental staff.

Staff must follow this framework when editing, developing and deleting policies in all areas of the department.

2.2. Out of scope

2.2.1. Strategic policy

The development of strategic policy, which is defined as a large-scale, system-wide, complex strategy that is monitored by Senior Executive Group (SEG) members.

Refer to the Strategic Policy Model (staff login required) for more information.

2.2.2. School and preschool local policy

The development of school and preschool local policies must still align to an overarching department policy.

3. Contents

4. Detail

4.1. Policy development and review process

4.1.1. New policies

The creation of a new policy is considered when a system of principles is needed to guide decision-making and operations. A new policy may also be created by integrating key elements of several existing policies into 1 document to simplify and streamline advice or information.

When a business area identifies the need for a new policy to be developed, they must follow the step-by-step process outlined in the [process for making major edits or new policies](#).

4.1.2. Edits to existing policies

If an existing policy requires an update or edit, the responsible policy officer will assess whether the amendments constitute a minor or major edit. Refer to the minor and major edit sections of [creating, updating and deleting operational policies](#) for more information.

If a major edit is required, all related policies and supporting webpages must be considered to determine if they too need to be amended or in some cases if they can be deleted, where the major edit supersedes or duplicates their content. Related policy amendments and deletions must be done at the same time through the major edit process.

If you're not sure about what edit type is appropriate, contact Operational Policy (OP): education.policy@sa.gov.au.

Once policy edits have been approved, policy officers must ensure any public information that relates to the policy is updated. This includes electronic and printed material (for example sa.gov.au, online portals or school websites).

4.1.2.1. Policy reviews

All policies must be reviewed by the responsible policy officer at least once every 3 years. However, reviews can occur at any time, for example in response to a legislative or practice change.

OP will remind policy officers at the 3 and then 1 month mark before the policy expires.

If no changes are required at the 3-year review cycle (the policy is up-to-date and current, including links, template and naming conventions), then the [minor edit process](#) should still be followed.

If a policy is undergoing a major edit that won't be submitted before the review due date, a policy review still occurs as a minor edit to indicate the current content remains accurate while the major edit is underway.

You can discuss these options with OP by emailing education.policy@sa.gov.au or phoning 8226 3443.

Where a policy reaches 1-month past expiry date and policy officers have not responded to the overdue alerts or other OP contact attempts, the policy will be temporarily suppressed (not able to be viewed). The

policy owner (Executive Director or equivalent) will be advised 24 hours before this happens.

The policy will be reinstated immediately following confirmation from the policy owner in writing that the document is correct and does not contravene current legislation.

This action is a necessary last option to ensure correct and up-to-date advice is always accessible to staff to guide and support decision making, and departments processes and decision making are transparent to stakeholders and the public.

4.1.3. Policy deletion

Policies can become obsolete as legislation and mandated processes change. This can occur:

- following the introduction or updating of legislation

- through updates of existing polices or creation of new policies

- due to a change in practice.

Once authorisation to delete the policy has occurred, it will be removed from the intranet and internet (if applicable) and a historical copy will be retained by OP.

See process for deleting a policy.

4.1.4. Policy templates and formatting

You must use the policy document templates for all policy development or edits. The only exception is interagency or cross sector policies.

4.1.4.1. Interagency or cross-sector policies

If you are developing an interagency or cross-sector policy, please contact OP at education.policy@sa.gov.au during the drafting stage to discuss how your design can comply with this framework, if you intend for it to sit on the departmental policies A to Z page (staff login required).

4.1.4.2. Simplified policy extract

A simplified version of an existing policy can be created as a policy extract template for schools to use for parents and families. A policy extract must be linked to the existing policy. New, or changes to existing policy extracts, are submitted to OP along with the existing policy (with link added within) as a minor edit. Approved policy extracts are published on the local policy development for schools and preschools page (staff login required) in an editable Word document that allows schools and preschools to add their own branding. The policy extract templates should include instructions to indicate what information cannot be altered and where schools and preschools can add information according to their specific processes. An example of a policy extract is complaint management in schools and preschools (DOCX 78KB) (staff login required).

4.1.4.3. Appendices

Appendices are treated as part of a policy and can provide guidance, actions or instructions that are either

mandatory for staff to follow or recommended best practice. Appendices should be contained in the policy itself and not on webpages. This ensures:

- staff can easily recognise their work obligations

- the information is subject to review at least once every 3 years

- content cannot be altered without executive approval

- a record of the information is retained by OP.

Web pages and other documents that support a policy but are not part of the policy itself are treated as 'supporting information'.

4.1.4.4. Supporting information

Policies may contain links to supporting information as an additional source or summary that helps the audience's understanding. This supporting information must not introduce any new guidance, actions or instructions outside of what is contained in the policy. However, it can be a useful additional source of information and give:

- context to policy application

- rationale for why it's required

- a summary of key issues or a quick reference.

To make updates or amendments to non-essential information webpages linked to a policy, contact the Communications Directorate directly. Information about how to submit a request to Communications Directorate can be found on the request updates to your web content page (staff login required).

4.1.5. Diversity, inclusion and gender equity

The department is committed to embracing diversity and being an inclusive workplace for all employees. To ensure a workforce culture where everyone is valued, respected, connected and able to contribute, all new and updated policies must consider the principles of gender equity, and workplace equity and respect.

This includes:

- gender equity

- older adults or seniors

- people with disabilities

- LGBTIQA+ community

- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

For more information, see:

- applying a gender lens in the workplace (PDF 633KB)

- workplace equity and respect (staff login required).

4.1.6. Aboriginal consultation

Aboriginal voice and expertise are to be embedded at all levels of the department's policy making. The [Aboriginal Voice: Aboriginal education policy consultation framework (PDF 283KB)](#) provides a mechanism for input from Aboriginal staff at all stages of the development and design of departmental policies, procedures, guidelines and frameworks.

4.1.7. Children and young people in care

To ensure the rights of children and young people in care are respected and supported, you must consider the principles of the [Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care (PDF 643KB)](#).

4.1.8. Child safe environments compliance

To ensure compliance with child safe environments legislation, policy officers must submit any changes to policies listed on the [child safe environments compliance](#) page to Engagement and Wellbeing (education.KCS@sa.gov.au) for review before seeking final Director approval.

4.1.9. Accessibility

Policies must be written in simple, clear and inclusive language accessible to a wide range of audiences. Refer to the department's [writing style guide](#) (staff login required) to make sure your documents are compliant. Information about how to write in plain English can also be found in the Australian Government's [style manual](#).

4.2. Internal compliance

4.2.1. Legislative compliance

Responsible policy officers must consult with the department's [Legal Services Directorate](#) (staff login required) for all new policies, major edits and policy deletions. This ensures content is compliant with legislative requirements. Consultation with Legal Services must occur in step 2 and can occur in step 5 of the [process for making major edits or new policies](#).

Refer to the [legislative compliance policy (PDF 145KB)](#) (staff login required) for more information.

4.2.2. Aboriginal Impact Statement declaration

Responsible policy officers must consult with the Aboriginal Education Directorate on all new policies, major edits and policy deletions. This ensures:

- the education, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people, and the needs and interests of Aboriginal people and their communities are considered
- where relevant, these needs are appropriately incorporated into departmental policies.

Consultation with Aboriginal Education must occur in step 2 and can occur in step 5 of the [process for making major edits or new policies](#).

4.3. Strategic alignment

Responsible policy officers must ensure that the development and review of operational policies aligns with the department's strategic priorities, as set out in the Strategic Plan and divisional business plans.

The governance framework (PDF 497KB) is the department's overarching framework. It outlines the requirement for policies to be developed in line with this framework. Policies must provide clear guidance around applying and complying with specific legislation (Acts and regulations) and the core business and objectives of the department.

4.4. Consultation

Consultation practices that engage key stakeholders result in increased understanding, awareness and commitment to the implementation of the policy.

The number and type of stakeholder groups consulted (internally and externally) depends on the subject matter of the policy.

Stakeholders are to be consulted on new or amended policies early in the process and throughout, as key aspects change. Once key stakeholders are consulted and the final draft document is developed, it will be published on the department public website and the intranet (EDi). It will be promoted to all staff via the Update newsletter (staff login required) to allow broader feedback and consultation. See 'step 5 – broader consultation process' in creating, updating and deleting operational policies for more information about publishing a new policy or a major edit of an existing policy, for broader consultation.

Broader consultation can be between 2 to 6 weeks depending on the subject. A minimum of 2 weeks is required. Consultation should occur publicly if the policy is publicly available. The policy officer is to record all feedback received through consultation activities for future reference.

Consideration a is to be given during the internal or external consultation phase to promote this via other sources such as appropriate social media platforms, newsletters and gatherings.

See the Better Together principles of engagement for more information about effective stakeholder and community engagement.

4.5. Implementation and communication plan

Implementation and communication plans ensure policies are embedded as practice and communicated to users. All new policies, major edits and policy deletions must be communicated using the most appropriate avenues and tools available for the target audience. This might include (but not be limited to):

- social media platforms
- audience specific online portals
- group emails
- regular staff newsletters such as Update or Linked.

The implementation and communication plan template (DOCX 1MB) considers:

- stakeholder groups or staff who will be affected by the policy

- other department policies

- broader departmental considerations, such as financial implications.

For more advice on developing a communication plan, contact Internal Communications, education.InternalComms@sa.gov.au.

4.6. Access to department policies

In accordance with section 10(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 1991, a list of all approved policy documents must be published on the department internal and external websites. All of the department's policy documents will be made available to members of the public upon request. The exceptions are where there is evidence that a document should be exempt by virtue of schedule 1 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1991*. If unsure, contact education.FOI@sa.gov.au.

4.7. Records management

In line with the State Records Act 1997, all approved policies are official records. Policy officers must maintain records of all policy development in a departmental file in line with the information and records management policy (PDF 139KB).

For more information contact Information Management, education.records@sa.gov.au.

4.8. Document control

Document control is essential to track the changes that occur throughout a policy's life cycle.

4.8.1. Version numbers

To accurately record revisions, policy officers must ensure:

- new policy version numbers always start at 1.0 after approval

- for each minor edit, the version number increases by 0.1 (this also applies if no changes were made)

- the version number only changes 1.0 (or the next whole number) on a major edit.

4.8.2. Approvals and review dates

You must update the approval and revision record fields each time there is an edit to a policy.

The next review date is 3 years from the executive's approval date.

It's the obligation of the responsible policy officer to ensure the policy is updated when changes occur, follow the document control protocol by using the current policy document templates and provide the final approved documents to Operational Policy, education.policy@sa.gov.au.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1. Senior Executive Group

SEG members are authorised by the Chief Executive to make, amend, or approve policies, in line with the process outlined in this framework.

Each SEG member is responsible for ensuring the policies for their area are compliant with this framework.

5.2. Operational Policy

OP is the authority for the management, development and oversight of operational policies. OP retains a master electronic copy of each version of an approved policy in a historical catalogue. Enquiries and copies can be requested at education.policy@sa.gov.au.

In addition, OP:

- maintains a current central policy register

- oversees and reports on the status of policies scheduled for review

- coordinates the publishing of approved documents

- provides advice about the development or editing of policies, in line with this framework.

OP monitors a policy inbox and will respond to general policy process related enquiries.

5.3. Policy officers

Policy officers refers to the nominated contact person in each business area, division or work team responsible for editing operational policies in line with the mandatory processes described in this framework.

Policy officers must engage and liaise with OP to ensure policies are:

- maintained to a high standard

- reviewed within required timeframes.

- Updated when any changes occur to practice, legislation, responsibilities or policy

See [your responsibilities as a public sector employee](#) (staff login required) for a summary of the roles and responsibilities applicable to all staff.

6. Definitions

6.1. policy

A policy is a concise, definitive statement of direction, which is mandated and provides a framework for decision-making. It demonstrates legislative compliance and strategic alignment.

Use of the term policy referred to throughout this framework relates to all operational policies, procedures,

guidelines, frameworks and standards.

6.2. policy or procedure extract

A simplified or summary version of a mandated and approved policy or procedure under the framework that is designed to provide a simple overview of information for parents and families in schools.

6.3. policy owner

The business unit, directorate or division responsible for an operational policy, procedure, standard, guideline or framework.

6.4. procedure

A series of mandatory step-by-step instructions that states how a policy or decision by executive directors must be implemented.

6.5. standard

Specifies operational criteria for products, services and systems to make sure they are safe, reliable and consistently perform the way in which they are intended. Standards must only be used to complement legal or industrial related requirements. For example, if there are superseding national or state standards.

6.6. guideline

A recommended course of action centred upon evidence-based best practice. It provides specific detail on matters that are the subject of legislation, regulation, policy or decision by executive directors and are discretionary.

6.7. framework

A structure or frame of interlinked content. For example, the governance framework (PDF 497KB) is the department's overarching framework document.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Creating, updating and deleting operational policies

8. Supporting information

Applying a gender lens in the workplace (PDF 633KB)

Better Together principles of engagement

Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care (PDF 643KB)

Local policy development for schools and preschools (staff login required)

Plain English alternatives (staff login required)

[Writing style guide](#) (staff login required)

8.1. Related legislation

[Freedom of Information Act 1991 (SA)](#)

[State Records Act 1997 (SA)](#)

8.2. Related policies

[Governance framework (PDF 497KB)](#)

[Information and records management policy (PDF 139KB)](#)

[Legislative compliance policy (PDF 145KB)](#) (staff login required)

9. Record history

Published date: October 2024

9.1. Approvals

OP number: 161
File number: DE20/10784
Status: approved
Version: 5.5
Policy Officer: Data and Policy Officer, Operational Policy
Policy sponsor: Director, Customer and Information Services
Responsible Executive Director: Chief Operating Officer
Approved by: Director, Customer and Information Services
Approved date: 1 October 2024
Next review date: 1 October 2027

9.2. Revision record

Version: 5.5
Approved by: Director, Customer and Information Services
Approved date: 1 October 2024
Review date: 1 October 2027
Amendment(s): 'Creating, updating and deleting operational policies' appendix updated to align with consultation requirements prescribed by the Aboriginal Voice: Aboriginal education policy consultation framework. Instructions on Aboriginal Impact Statement declaration condensed.

Version: 5.4
Approved by: Director, Customer and Information Services
Approved date: 8 April 2024
Review date: 8 April 2027
Amendment(s): Amended 'creating, updating and deleting operational policies' appendix for clarity,

including highlighting expectation to run broader consultation publicly where possible. Child safe environments compliance sub-heading added. Updated email for Aboriginal impact statement declarations. Updated hyperlinks. Replaced references to 'policy information' with 'appendices'.

Version: 5.3
Approved by: Director, Customer and Information Services
Approved date: 7 February 2023
Review date: 7 February 2026
Amendment(s): Amended the wording that appears under the heading 'Access to department policies' in accordance with section 10(1) of the *Freedom of Information Act 1991*.

Version: 5.2
Approved by: Director, Customer and Information Services
Approved date: 9 January 2023
Review date: 9 January 2026
Amendment(s): Inclusion of Aboriginal Consultation and reference to Aboriginal Voice: Aboriginal education policy consultation framework.

Version: 5.1
Approved by: Director, Customer and Information Services
Approved date: 2 February 2022
Review date: 2 February 2025
Amendment(s): Included information about the need to consider the Guardianship of Children and Young people in policy development. Minor administrative edits to content and terms to improve clarity of language.

Version: 5.0
Approved by: Chief Operating Officer, Office of the Chief Executive
Approved date: 9 December 2020
Review date: 9 December 2023
Amendment(s): The requirement for the Chief Operating Officer to endorse documents already approved by a SEG member for new policies or major edits to a policy has been removed to now only require the approval of the SEG member. Minimum public consultation period reduced to 2 weeks. Review period for the Office of the Minister, Office of the Chief Executive and Media Unit extended to 5 days. Added authority for Director's to commence Aboriginal Education and Legal Services reviews for major edits, new policies and deletions. Approval templates have now been changed to electronic and online forms. The process and responsibilities for creating and editing linked policy content on other webpages is now more clearly defined.

Version: 4.3
Approved by: Director, Customer and Information Services
Approved date: 5 June 2020
Review date: 5 June 2023
Amendment(s): Minor administrative edits to content and terms to improve clarity of language. The addition of gender equity, diversity and inclusion considerations for policy officers when developing policies.

Version: 4.2
Approved by: Director, Customer and Information Services

Approved date: 23 January 2020

Review date: 7 October 2021

Amendment(s): Ensuring policy owners are reviewing sa.gov.au and contacting the Internal Communications for help determining communication channels when preparing major edits and new policies.

Version: 4.1

Approved by: Director, Customer and Information Services

Approved date: 21 October 2019

Review date: 7 October 2021

Amendment(s): Minor edit of policy document – updated to reflect SEG member's responsibility.

Version: 4.0

Approved by: Chief Operating Officer

Approved date: 7 October 2018

Review date: 7 October 2021

Amendment(s): Major edit of policy document – including addition of mandatory internal compliance.

Version: 3.1

Approved by: Director, Customer Services Business Support

Approved date: 9 April 2018

Review date: 2 February 2021

Amendment(s): Administrative edits to update hyperlinks, improve clarity of language, and update template.

Version: 3.0

Approved by: Chief Operating Officer

Approved date: 2 February 2018

Review date: 2 February 2021

Amendment(s): Major edit of policy document approval processes to reflect changes to the role and operations of the Senior Executive Group.

Version: 2.3

Approved date: 8 September 2017

Review date: 8 September 2020

Amendment(s): Clarification of administrative edits.

Version: 2.2

Approved date: 19 June 2017

Review date: 19 June 2020

Amendment(s): Minor edit to approval process due to transfer of operational policy functions from Strategic Policy and External Relations to Customer Services and Business Support, Office of the Deputy Chief Executive.

Version: 2.1

Approved date: 3 December 2015

Review date: 3 December 2018

Amendment(s): Correction to numbering. Rewording of content on approval process to remove ambiguity.

Version: 2.0

Approved date: 3 September 2015

Review date: 3 September 2018

Amendment(s): Streamlined approval process for development and review of policy documents. Addition of framework definition. Changes to process for uploading approved documents.

Version: 1.0
Approved date: 27 February 2014
Review date: 27 February 2017
Amendment(s): First publication.

10. Contact

Operational Policy

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Email: education.policy@sa.gov.au