



**GREAT FALLS
COLLEGE**

**MONTANA STATE
UNIVERSITY**

5 Tips for Writing Policy

Whether you are new to policy writing or a seasoned pro, there are tips and tools that can help you write the most effective policy possible. Below are 5 suggestions on how to approach policy writing.

1. **Research and create.** When creating a new policy, start by identifying your goals. What are you trying to achieve with this policy? Once you answer that question, do some research to determine whether there is already policy on the subject. If there is, consider whether it may be more appropriate to revise that policy than create a new policy. Next, determine if there are higher-order policies (e.g., state statute, MUS policy) that make the creation of new policy unnecessary. If it is necessary to create new policy, look at how other colleges or universities have done it. A good policy from another campus can be used as a starting point and revised/adapted to meet your needs. **Bonus tip:** Check related policies to ensure that your policy is not in conflict with another college policy. If it is, coordinate with the appropriate responsible office to resolve any issues.
2. **Use the approved template.** The college has a basic policy & procedure template available.
3. **Use plain language.** Policies should not be written in legalese. They should be easily understood by the entire college community. Assume that readers have a basic understanding of the college campus and community but limited knowledge of specific policies.
4. **Be broad but clear.** Your policy should be broad enough and clear enough to apply to changing and unexpected circumstances. Policies are not meant to anticipate every possible situation. Remember, further detail can be provided in accompanying procedures and guidelines. **Bonus tip:** Choose words carefully. The words “should” and “may” imply a choice, while “must” and “will” imply a requirement.
5. **Make it enforceable.** A policy should explain why it exists, who it affects, major conditions and restrictions, and when and under what circumstances it applies. **Bonus tip:** To help readers understand the purpose of the policy or why it is needed, use the introduction and purpose field in the template. Do not include the conditions, restrictions, exceptions, or exclusions of the policy in the introduction and purpose field—those should be included in the policy details section.